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Shadow Allies

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FEBRUARY  
2002

Issue No. 10

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LEGEND OF THE RANGERS:

# To Live or Die in Starlight

Review  
By DIOGENES

## OVERVIEW

**T**O LIVE AND DIE IN STARLIGHT contains enough promise to provide the necessary interest - and hope - for a pilot to be successful. It is not as shaky as *The Gathering*. But nor is it as seamless as *In the Beginning* (which had the luxury of not being a pilot).

Without spoiling the plot, I will say the story was light but involving. It ended up being a pleasant walk in the park.

Unfortunately, TLADiS got off to a very shaky start. The teaser sequence before the opening credits was tacky. Not in terms of its CGI, but because of the utter woodenness and contrivance of the acting aboard the bridge of the Ranger warship Enfali.

The whole scene was not necessary and would have served much better as flashback during the Captain's trial.

But TLADiS goes from bad to brilliant. The very next scene, where G'Kar and the Ranger leader meet in the Minbari holographic chamber, is both powerful and mysterious. I was left wondering why this was not the teaser. Here were two actors eminently comfortable in their roles, dealing with background material that kicked off the whole show.

Unfortunately, the magic of this scene was not to be recaptured very often later in the movie.

Andreas Katsulas, as G'Kar, ended up being something of an anchor for the whole movie. Katsulas has had many years to develop and relax with his on-screen persona. And it is this professionalism that helps carry the younger, more inexperienced, actors through some shaky moments.

In saying that, the young cast displayed flashes of the abilities that got them through the auditioning process. But like most actors in pilots, they are still obviously seeking just what it means to be their particular characters. Katsulas had none of these fears. The



choice of G'Kar - a plot device, for his familiarity and his actor's competence - was one of JMS's better moves.

## BACKGROUND

As details emerged about the plot of TLADiS before I saw the show, I became more and more worried. Oh no, not another ancient enemy that can squash us like ants. Isn't this ground we have covered before? Oh, sure, I \*know\* nothing is ever as it seems in JMS plot arcs. But TLADiS was not a plot arc. It was a pilot. It needed to be strong within itself.

Well, upon seeing the movie, I was mollified. It is obvious that much of the hype behind these "superbeings" is only the propaganda of their sycophantic servants. At least at this stage.

It will be interesting to see what JMS does with this new uber-race. The premise behind them sounds exactly the same as in *Thirdspace*: evil superbeings from another dimension. The twist is that these are said to have been locked away...

Perhaps these are the fallen Vorlons corrupted by the *Thirdspace* race? Perhaps it is just another Shadow ally seeking to take the place of their masters - with a healthy dose of propaganda? Perhaps they don't exist at all?

# LEGEND OF THE RANGERS:

I do hope it ends up fitting in with the B5 continuity. The events of Crusade are due to begin in only a few years time.

There was no hint of this "Hand" then.

## CGI & SCENERY

The first thing I noticed about the look and feel of TLaDiS was "different". But I was not disappointed - mainly because I was expecting it. I was gobsmacked upon hearing how Warner managed to lose the computer models for all of the B5 and Crusade ships and settings. I hope the SciFi channel got a significant rebate for the loss of this vitally important material. I hear they eventually recovered \*some\* low-res models from Sierra - the company that pulled the plug on the Into the Fire computer game. But these arrived too late to have any impact on the show. Though, if you look very very carefully - you can see something that looks like a Narn Cruiser and a few White stars when they show the Minbari homeworld.

So, there were no White Stars. No Omegas. No Sharlins.

The Ranger uniforms were different, though based on what we had seen before. Cloaks are obviously not in fashion this year.

And there was no familiar orange or blue entry and exit hue to the new wispy hyperspace jump points. Go figure.

So it was left to the makeup departments and the presence of G'Kar to provide us with the links to the familiar B5 universe.

The Ranger warship Enfali is vaguely Minbari. It looks like an overweight Liberator from Blakes 7, with a green hull that looks more organic than we're used to associating with Minbari.

The Liandra - despite being a coppery orange-green - does have a whole lot more Minbari feel to it. It has the sleekness, the slippiness that we have come to associate with Minbari vessels. It has the familiar fins and curves. But it is also different enough to suggest it comes from an earlier design philosophy.

The Liandra's interior sets are very different from the Sharlin and White Star. There are no bright latticeworks, crystal controls, wide corridors or tall ceilings here. It looks very Earth-tech, with lots of metal panels, support beams and bulging pieces of machinery. The Minbari interior decorators of this ship appear to have been suffering from a hangover. Which is a major concern, given Minbari don't drink...

The Valen is ugly. But it is established early on that it is supposed to be. It is the first attempt at a combined Minbari-Earth design. There were obviously some, ah, disagreements about how it should shape up. The resulting compromises produced the Valen. Lets hope they learn from their mistakes...

And, travesty of all travesties, Warner has obviously lost the CGI for Babylon 5 and Epsilon. We see the station in the final scene of the movie. But it is distant and not obviously rotating, and there is no familiar stark brown planet in the background...

## CHARACTERS

### Captain David Martel

#### (I'm looking for something):

**Character:** I have to say, I was concerned that JMS would serve up another of his Boy Scout commanding officers. I was not wrong. But I was surprised. Actor Dylan Neal was able to strip away much of the cheesiness associated with this stereotypical role and project a character that I was able to relax with - and believe. This is no small achievement for a pilot. And it is an achievement that gives me great hope for the series. The character - thanks to both JMS and Neal - carries an endearing earnestness. This is not the supremely self-confident captain of the Kirk, Picard or Sheridan genre. This is a young Captain that is struggling to balance the ideals of the Rangers with his own common sense and inexperience. This comes across immediately, and stays with us for the remainder of the episode.

**Actor:** Dylan Neal obviously put a lot of thought into this role. As he should, being the principal character. It is through the inflection and presentation of his lines that he manages to avoid the Boy Scout pitfall. Neal is one of the few actors in the pilot to come across as somewhat relaxed in his role. This does not mean that his character is relaxed. It means that Neal does not seem to be straining to project his message. Captain Martel is obviously struggling with the responsibilities of his command, with the challenges of keeping his ship flying and in one piece - while maintaining the ideals of his fanatical organization. This is no small task for any actor. Kudos for Dylan Neal.

### Second Officer Dulann (I live for the captain)

**Character:** He is warm. Knowledgeable. Loyal. And, unlike most Minbari, he seems to enjoy partaking in the human concept of humor. It is in the banter between Dulann and Captain Martel that this character reveals itself. There is ample evidence of a deep friendship between these two beings, and a loyalty born of mutual respect - not of authority. Perhaps we will once again see the enjoyable friendship between opposites that we glimpsed in the Trek movies between Kirk and Spock.

**Actor:** Despite being stuck with the "wounded hero" role for this pilot, Alex Zahara proves himself capable of making the most out of limited opportunities. He may have to work on toning down the "mystic" side of things to make his psychic gifts more acceptable. But, on the whole, Zahara seems to have the character of Dulann figured out.

### Weapons Officer Sarah Cantrell (I live to serve, I serve to live)

**Character:** Perky. Confident. Competent. JMS seems to like these qualities in his senior female officers. And Weapons Officer Sarah certainly fills this role. That this woman can look after herself is left in no doubt. She's the first to step forward to defend her Captain's honor. She's the first to chime in with some smart retort. Cantrell's companions obviously respect her - and she has no need to remind everyone that she can do her job. On the "softer" side, there is a hint that Cantrell and the Captain have some sort of history together - but whether this is merely as shipmates or of a more intimate nature is left

entirely to the preference of the viewer.

**Actor:** Like most secondary characters in any pilot, there was little establishment of Weapons Officer Sarah. But actress Mirian Sirois manages to make her presence felt with what limited screen time she had. Perhaps it was just the unusual weapons pod scenes. Perhaps it was her red hair. But I'm more inclined to credit her with good delivery of lines and screen presence than mere sex appeal. While Sirois is no Claudia Christian when it comes to screen presence - yet - she clearly has the potential to relax and assert herself in this role. While obviously a little over-earnest in her determination to make her mark on the pilot, Sirois knows how to use her eyes - though she tends to clench her hands rather tightly behind her back...

### Covert Operations Officer Malcolm Bridges (When I dream, I do not see my face)

**Character:** This character did not have a central role to play in this script. But the job description of Covert Operations obviously will have an important part to play in any on-going series. As a result, this character is something of a dogsbody in the pilot. One minute Bridges is conducting tactical analysis discussions with his captain, the next he's playing the fool when caught like a naughty schoolboy doing impersonations of G'Kar. There is, perhaps, a darker side to Bridges. During his welcoming ceremony the character states that, when he dreams, he does not see his own face. One wonders whether this has any link to the dead not seeing the face of their betrayer. Is this another Talia Winters in the midst of the crew?

**Actor:** Dean Marshall is obviously a little nervous about his role, broadcast mainly through the uncertainty in his posture and fidgeting of his hands. Nevertheless, Marshall manages to avoid being annoying and provides enough of a presence for any future character development.

### Doctor Firrel (My heart speaks infrequently)

**Character:** From the limited screen time given to Firrel, one could almost be forgiven for asking the question "what character?" But despite Firrel's lack of words, it is her facial expressions that speak the most - and lift her out of 2D land. From the start we accept Firrel as a born and bred Religious Caste Minbari. Competent. Quiet. It is in the way she walks, talks, moves and breathes. This doctor is no witch doctor. But then again, she's no Dr Kildare either.

**Actor:** Enid-Raye Adams manages quite well to exploit a lack of character development in her script to generate an air of typical Minbari mystique. Adams obviously spent a lot of time watching Lennier's and Delenn's characteristics in B5 episodes. Adams acts with her eyes and facial expressions, even when in the background, to convey her character. This is most notable when she silently makes it clear she disapproves of the Captain telling lies to the wounded Dulann about the condition of the ship. This bodes well for an actor playing a character that was established right from the very start as being "quiet".

### Engineer Na'Feel (I understand nobody else would take me)

## JMS's reaction to ratings, critics

**W**HAT I've learned over the years is that no matter what one does, there will be a certain percentage who love it uncritically, an equal (but often much louder) percentage who hate it uncritically, with the majority somewhere in the middle.

The thing you have to do is make sure the number stays more in the middle or leaning toward liking something than not.

And adding it all up, it seems to have done the job. It's been overall far more positive than negative.

Criticism? Sure.

That's what a pilot is \*for\*, to find out what does and doesn't work. You try shit. You experiment. Some will like it, some won't, which is all to the good.

The fulcrum on which all this now rests is the ratings, which have gotten kinda weirdly skewed.

We heard what we initially thought were disappointing figures, that we'd done a 1.7 when SFC was hoping for a 2.6 or better. It kind of puzzled everybody because the B5 audience is generally pretty reliable. It became even \*more\* puzzling when the more detailed figures came in, showing that by quarter-hours, the show \*gained viewers\* and did not lose them. Meaning folks who came on the show by accident, stayed to watch.

It should have been much higher than it was.

Then the final market-by-marked figures came in from the studio, and we had our mystery resolved.

The east coast ratings got hammered by the football game, which was the highest rated such game in something like 5 years. The B5 male demos are pretty much the same as for sports, and we lost heavily to football. So there we did not do well.

By contrast, on the west coast, where the show aired \*after\* the game had finished, we not only met but \*exceeded\* SFC's expectations, getting a 3.2 or 3.6 in many markets, which is actually pretty unheard of for a basic cable network.

The problem is that the average, 1.7, is still what's used for advertising. So we have to see if SFC will look past the show getting hammered by a big football event on the East Coast to look at the West Coast figures and see that there is, indeed, a market.

It's in the hands of the TV gods from this point on.

- JMS, 27/01/02

(Editors note: the second screening of B5LR scored only 0.9)

**Character:** So far, Na'Feel is little more than the standard female Narn accomplice. Blunt. Crude. But gets the job done. I hope she doesn't suddenly turn saccharin, as Voyager's B'Ellana did after season one. Every workplace has its livewire. Na'Feel is Liandra's. Such characters, as JMS well knows, are needed to provide the contrast necessary to get a message across without having to tell the audience over, and over, again.

**Actor:** With the few moments she had on screen, Jennie Rebecca Hogan was able to project the essence that was behind N'Toth in the original series. Hogan played the humor behind her volatile character with good comedic timing, without falling into the trap of hamming things up too much. Na'Feel is already a believable Narn female.

### Navigation Officer Kitaro Sasaki (I'm just glad to be here)

**Character:** The role of Sasaki in TLADiS is to point the ship and ask questions that don't really need to be asked. In the fight for screen time in a pilot, Sasaki came out near the bottom of the heap. We're told he can do much, much more. But we're not shown - yet.

**Actor:** Warren Takeuchi is able to inject an endearing air of cheekiness into his lines that saves him from mirroring the bland doormat that is Ensign Kim in Star Trek: Voyager. Perhaps it's just his pearly-whites. Or his timing. I don't know. All I know is that, despite the odds, Sasaki is neither totally boring or irrelevant. The role of ship's pilot is almost always a dead-end for most sci-fi actors.

But JMS has given Takeuchi a reprieve by tacking on the job of linguist. Again, the casting agents have found an actor that is competent enough to show that he has potential despite his limited opportunities and a nervous over-eagerness to impress.

### Drazi Tirk (I carry really big things)

**Character:** With Tirk we can only hope JMS is going to pull one of his famous tricks on us, the audience. For at the moment, Tirk appears to be nothing more than the comic relief. Why would someone who's primary qualification is "lifting heavy things" be on the command staff in the first place? We're not told. Nor are we shown. Judgement on this character will have to be reserved until - and if - we are ever given more to chew on.

**Actor:** For the moment, all I can say is that Gus Lynch suits the role because he is big, can speak in monosyllables, and can "carry heavy things" - just as his script demands. But I have faith that Lynch has been chosen because he can inject the subtle hints of character that will evolve into something far more significant if a series eventuates. Remember Vir?

### Minister Khafta

**Character:** We've come to expect something of a set pattern with JMS's "baddies of the week". With the exceptions of the intimidating Shadows and the brilliant Bester, these often seem to fall into the category of sneering gang leaders - with the odd sneering assassins for variety. With To Live and Die by Starlight, we

get a new variation on the mix - a sneering ambassador. There is no character establishment for Khafta in the script. Nor is there any real role other than that of an opportunistic politician out to please his masters.

**Actor:** Mackenzie Gray did not have much of a chance to do anything with this character. One minute he was just another face in the crowd. The next he was shooting a Drazi that specialized in carrying "really big things". It's a tough role to pull off. In the end, Khafta never really came across as scary. Instead, the ambassador seemed more fopish than a threat.

### "Hand" Stooge

**Character:** I guess that one should expect that where you find Rangers, you should expect Ringwraiths. Or is that a different universe? The creatures that JMS calls the Hand's "flunkies" are an obscure grafting of Vorlon characteristics with the dark cloaked shadowy figures so fresh in our minds from Lord of the Rings. They have dark hooded heads and deep flowing robes. But funny little curled horns come out of the shoulders. The overall effect is not unlike the Vorlon encounter suits. Perhaps this link is not unintentional. Perhaps it is supposed to indicate these "flunkies" are old - and corrupted by their masters. However, their fast-taking deep voices seem somewhat out of place - despite the reverb.

## CONCLUSION

For a JMS pilot, To Live and Die in Starlight is average. It is patchy. But it is also enjoyable.

I feel it is on a par with The Gathering, though it does not have the same intensity of intrigue.

One cannot compare it to A Call to Arms. That movie - while better - was not a pilot. It focused on the well established character of Sheridan and his involvement in the events that led to the circumstances of Crusade.

In the Beginning is not a fair comparison either. This featured actors that had five years of experience with their characters. They were making a prequel and covering ground they had been over before.

The best comparison is the few episodes of Crusade we got to see before TNT pulled the plug. Crusade had a much more obvious "purpose" - finding the cure for the Drakh plague. It also had a more believable B5 appearance - thanks largely to the now lost B5 effects assets. But, with one or two exceptions, it did not have a terribly inspiring cast.

TLADiS does not have the focus of Crusade or the political intrigue of The Gathering. Perhaps, like Trek and Andromeda, the anathema with which plot arcs are presently regarded has influenced the SciFi Channel's thinking. If so, Legends of the Rangers has been established as an action adventure kind of show.

But JMS has injected enough hints to allow for a developing story if he is allowed to do so. And all the key actors he has chosen have already displayed the potential to inject life into their roles.

With the closing credits I had to accept that my cynical nature had been mollified and that I had a sense of anticipation - and hope - that Legends of the Rangers would become a reality.

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# A close look at the Ranger Attack Ship Liandra

# Hunk of junk

# or lethal?



Review:  
By DIOGENES

## RANGER ATTACK SHIP LIANDRA

"The Liandra isn't like the Enterprise, it's more like a PT boat . . . It is also, by design, a small, fast (crew of maybe 20) patrol ship designed to go on the edge, it's not meant to go out there and pulverize fleets. It would have been instantly outgunned and destroyed in the Earth-Minbari war's bigger battles."

- JMS

THE ATTACK ship Liandra is not your ordinary Minbari warship. It was not built to the specifications of the Warrior Caste.

Rather, it is a patrol vessel built specifically to meet the needs of the Rangers.

The Rangers, before the Shadow War, were mostly involved in intelligence gathering and reconnaissance. What they needed in a ship was flexibility, speed, maneuverability - and the ability to slip in and out of tight places unnoticed.

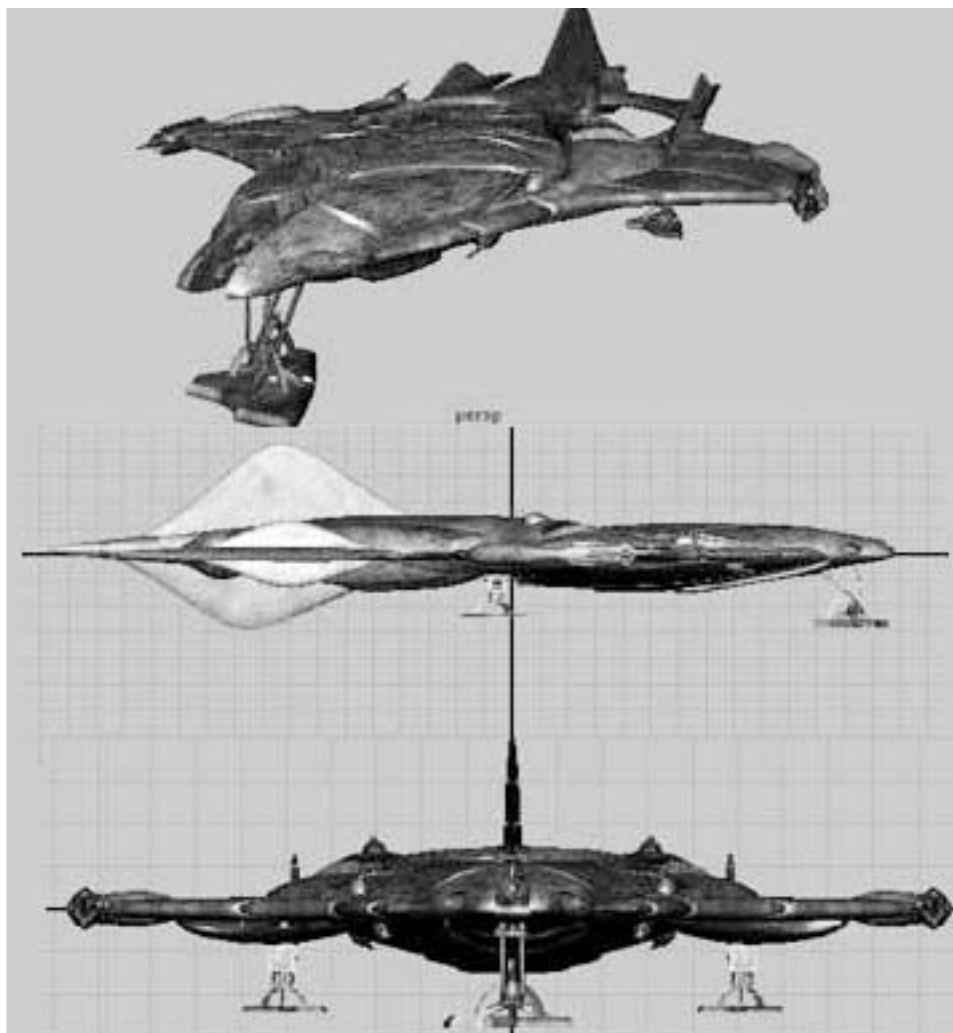
The pre-Shadow War Rangers did not need ships that could take on the best the enemy could field against them. They needed ships that could look after themselves against anything capable of catching them - and run away from anything that could do them harm.

## DESIGN

"Her lines and colors represent the Shinali sense of design. Until recently we strove for a certain aesthetic in our ships. A design both lethal yet pleasing to the eye. Then humans became involved in designing ships for the alliance."

- First Officer Dulann

The Liandra is a new kind of ship we haven't seen, a kind primarily used by the Rangers. The designers were given the difficult task of incorporating known Minbari features into a smaller ship than the Sharlin or Tinashi. It was also to be



in some way an obvious precursor to the White stars.

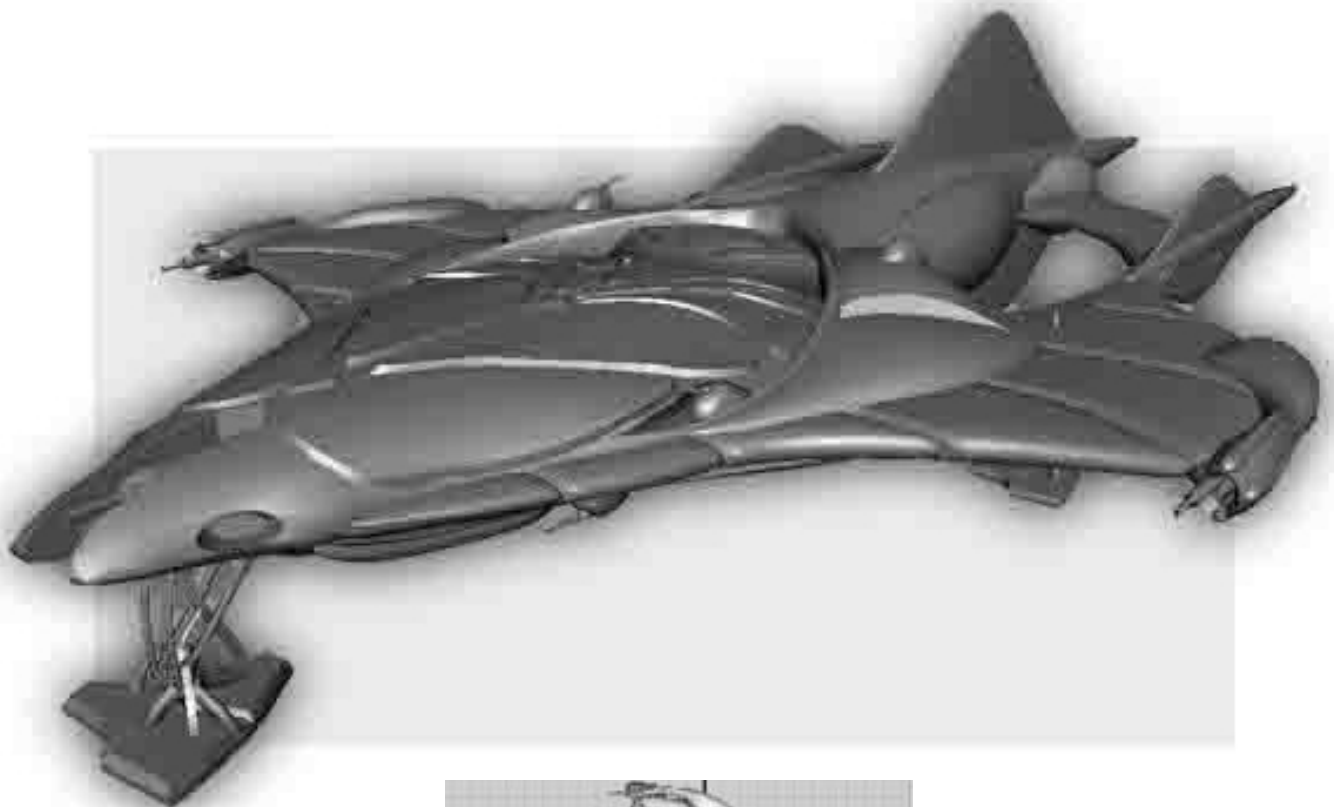
The designers were told to use nuclear attack submarines - such as the United States Los Angeles class and the British Trafalgar class - as the template for the ship's size and capabilities. Designer Steven Geagen said it was to have the same tight environment of low ceilings, narrow

walkways and small rooms as one would expect in these vessels. But the Liandra was also to have the feel of a Patrol-Torpedo (PT) boat of the World War II era - lightly armored, lightly armed, but fast.

The outcome of these demands is a very different ship that has a very familiar flavor to it.

The Liandra has small but distinctive Minbari

# LEGEND OF THE RANGERS:



fins and outrigger weapon pylons not unlike the White star. It has the obligatory sleek and aquatic look and feel of shapes curving and blending into each other.

Where the Liandra differs from other traditional Minbari vessels is the shape of its main hull. Instead of being tall and narrow like a sun-fish, the Liandra is flat. Where Centauri battle cruisers can be compared to manta rays, the Liandra is more of squid.

The bridge is placed in the middle of the upper hull - similar to a White star, though not raised - at the junction of the main wing structures and the tail.

Four turreted cannons surround this very inconspicuous structure. At least two similar turrets are visible on the underside - though it is likely the space for another pair at the rear would be taken up by the landing gear. Two larger barrels are housed in White star-like wingtip casings, while the largest barrel of all is recessed within the nose.

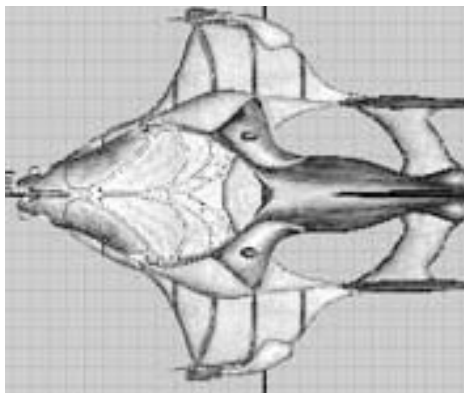
## AGE

"Right, top condition for a cursed 20-year-old ship that's been through, what, two wars, four crews - some of which are still there in a sort of - dead kind of way."

- Weapon's Officer Sarah

Among fans there has been some concern about the link between the Liandra's age and its poor condition. Many expected the Liandra to be an ancient ship, falling apart due to its advanced years.

The Liandra is said to be 20 years old in 2264, so it was built in 2244 - shortly before the Earth-Minbari war. An age of 20-years is perfectly acceptable in "real world" navies. The implication has been that space vessels in B5 can serve



for hundreds of years.

A classic example of such extended service life is the B52 bomber. Designed in the 1950s, this airframe is now likely to continue in service for many more years to come because of the continued need for its capability, along with an economic reluctance to replace it. Updated internally beyond recognition, these aircraft are prone to breakdown and mechanical failure.

With the Liandra, this is not the case - despite the appearance of some comments attributed to JMS by the ship's designers. These comments need to be taken in their correct context: a context of "design concept".

In an interview with B5LR.com, show designer Steven Geagen had this to say about JMS's early concepts: "JMS had a very strong vision of the Liandra as an antique craft, one which in its day would have suggested the tall-ship romance and elegance of a schooner. He wanted the hull of the ship to suggest tarnished bronze, a patina of graceful age. The ship also had to be sleek, maneuverable, atmosphere-capable, and armed to the teeth."

Co-designer Chris Wren, in the same interview, was a little more accurate: "The script specified an older Minbari vessel, one that had

seen better days." From these quotes we can interpret that the Liandra's design was supposed to have the look and feel of an old, graceful schooner. As a ship, it was supposed to have been battered and worn from extended service.

It may be that the design of the Liandra is "ancient". It's just that the Liandra itself is the result of one of the final production runs...

We know that shortly before the Earth-Minbari war the Rangers were demanding funds for new ships and increased recruitment. It is unlikely that they would have had the economic backing to produce many different designs - or even frequent updates - for the ships in their service.

While one of these earlier designs, the Liandra is obviously not obsolete.

It is, however, a very battered ship.

It is said to have been severely damaged on several occasions. It has been hard used. And being "just" a patrol vessel, it always seems to come last in the refit and repair queues.

With the heavy losses among the White stars and other Ranger ships during the Shadow war, and the formation of the Alliance, that has all changed. The Liandra has been salvaged despite being "lost for a week" and sustaining severe enough hull damage to kill its previous crew.

It is battered and buckled. But with adequate repair work and maintenance, it is likely to return to being a useful ship in the Ranger's fleet.

## SIZE

"The Liandra isn't like the Enterprise, it's more like a PT boat"

- JMS

The actual size of the Liandra is a bit of a problem. We're told it is "small" and that it has a tiny crew. But it could be bigger (or smaller)

# LEGEND OF THE RANGERS:

than we think as we never see it against an object that provides scale - other than the Valen, which is no help as we don't know how big that is either.

Against the Valen it is simply dwarfed. But the Valen is never seen in the company of something more familiar - such as a Sharlin.

We are told that the Liandra is a small ship for its jump ability, and that it is too small to have a powerful weapon system. But its capabilities are obviously regarded as suitable for the escort role.

The engineering bay is capable of holding the forty or so diplomats that escaped the destruction of the Valen. But, in response to their demands for accommodation, the ministers are told the best the Liandra can offer is a few corridors and closets.

At no point is it indicated the Liandra is carrying Flyers. But it is not ruled out, either.

Once all these factors have been balanced, it is likely the Liandra would be classified as a Medium ship.

## CREW

"Word is her last crew died on board, and nobody knows who or what killed them. They couldn't even find the ship for a week afterwards. It just fell off the charts. It's been through hell, that's for sure. Some folks think she's cursed."

- Weapon's Officer Sarah

Eight command staff take part in the ceremony of names. Yet this is not the entire crew. As the Liandra struggles with its wounds to escape the Hand, other crew members are seen examining equipment and conducting repairs.

Given the assumption that the crew would outnumber the command staff. It would not be unreasonable to expect about 40 to 80 beings manning the Liandra. But we are told in an off-the-cuff quote from JMS that the Liandra has a crew of about 20.

This would be the minimum number to staff a warship. It would allow a three-shift rotational roster of six people each, with the Captain and Doctor on call 24-hours a day.

Once again, it is likely the Liandra's design reflects the needs of the era in which it was designed. Before the Earth Minbari war, we know there were few Rangers. Most Minbari believed them to be redundant - an out-of-fashion throwback to a time long gone by. Recruitment must have been difficult - as would have been paying and equipping them.

Ranger ships would have had to be capable of operating with minimal crew numbers. Obviously, this would have resulted in a higher degree of automation - and innovations such as the Liandra's weapons targeting pod.

## MANEUVERABILITY

"This ship is being held together by little bits of wire and good intentions"

- G'Kar

One of the most noticeable qualities of the Liandra is its ability to open its own hyperspace jump point. For such a small ship, this appears to be in conflict with previously established standards for such capabilities.

Captain Sheridan thought it was a big deal when he found out that the White star, another small Minbari vessel, had jump engines in 2260.

JMS replied: "He also didn't know everything about Minbari ships and classes."

But this is not as glib a statement as it may sound. JMS also clearly indicates the ability of the little ship to jump has its tradeoffs.

One of the unusual features about the Liandra is that it does not have the distinctive Minbari "green slicer beams".

JMS's reply was equally to the point: "Not a big enough ship with a big enough power source."

So the Liandra is a ship with design tradeoffs. Its power sources are mostly devoted to its maneuvering systems and jump engines. It is not a front-line combat ship. It is a patrol ship.

As a small ship the Liandra is clearly nimble. It twists and turns energetically when defending the Valen against the minions of the Hand. It jinks to dodge the comet debris. It also gyrates wildly in its bid to out-maneuver a minefield.

But - at first impression - the Liandra does not seem to be significantly more maneuverable than a White star.

## WEAPONS

"I feel like a jackrabbit: in, out, in, out..."

- Sarah

The location and size of Liandra's visible weapons have been outlined above. But it is interesting to note that one of the ship's designers - Steven Geagan - mentions "hidden" weaponry. It will be interesting to see what he means if the series is ever approved.

But we can extrapolate some information from the effects of the ship's weapons as seen in the pilot movie.

We see the Liandra firing volleys of orange-red pulses. These move fast, but are obviously not laser weapons.

These orange-red pulses appear to have a slightly varying intensity, depending on from where they are fired. The "heavier" pulses appear to emit from the wingtips. Less intense pulses come from the small turrets mounted above and below the hull.

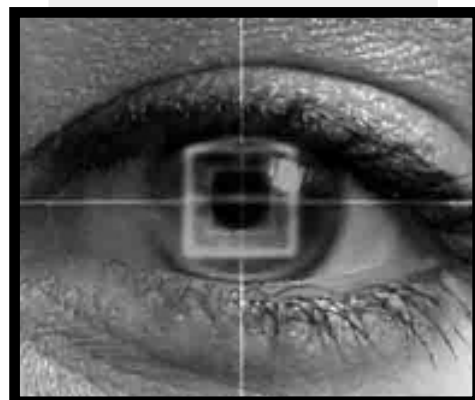
Some also appear to be Intercept capable. A shot fired from one of the smaller hull turrets is guided by the Weapons Officer to intercept a green pulse aimed at the Valen.

This is not the Liandra's only method of intercepting enemy fire. A form of Chaff is emitted at one point and left drifting in the vessel's wake. This chaff reacts with enemy weapons fire, absorbing much of the energy as it passes through.

The virtual targeting system is something that has attracted considerable fan attention - and some undue criticism. Some point out the simple three-dimensional view provided by the pod would be of limited assistance. But the pod is also shown projecting targeting information directly into the Weapon Officer's eye: the holographic display is merely there to provide depth perception and an uninterrupted tactical view of what is going on around the ship.

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## VIRTUAL WEAPONS POD



DIRECT OPTICAL INPUT



HOLOGRAPHIC CONTROLS



VIRTUAL PUNCH



VIRTUAL KICK



This is the second piece of fiction released by Agents of Gaming with the intention of introducing the Turning Point universe for Fleet Action 2. The first can be found in the October issue of Babcom.

## **US Solar Operations HQ: Admiral Granston's Offices 26 March, 2193**

"Rank hath its privileges, my ass," Sam Granston mumbled to himself as he scanned the various data pads scattered across his desk. It looked as though the entire day would be taken up playing catch-up. "Rank hath its paperwork is more like it."

Sitting down at his desk he began to sort through the mess, prioritizing the work ahead. Before he got too far, a knock at his door interrupted him. Shaking his head, he thought this was the reason he could never stay caught up on this stuff - too many interruptions.

"Yes? Enter." The door opened and in walked his yeoman, Ensign Hanson.

"Sir, I thought I should tell you I've secured transport back to Harbor. We'll be departing in two weeks aboard the USS Hartford. I've made all the necessary arrange-

ments to get the offices ready to depart and informed all the necessary people here."

"Very good, Robert. Please see to it I'm not bothered for the rest of today. I'd like to catch up on all this paperwork today if possible."

"Yes, sir. I have just one more thing. With our imminent return to Harbor Base, I requested up-to-the-minute reports for your review. They arrived a few minutes ago. Nothing too exciting, though you may want to check out the highlighted report." Handing Sam the pad, the Ensign quickly made his exit from the office, quietly shutting the door behind him.

Activating the pad and keying in his authorization codes, Sam quickly scanned the contents. Towards the bottom, he spotted the highlighted document Robert had mentioned and opened it.

Contact Report - 24 March 2193

Location - Europa Inner Marker:

Jovian System

Filed By: Lieutenant David Benning

184th Fighter Squadron

Contents:

While on routine patrol, consisting of my wingman Lieutenant McAlister and myself in our SSF-88 Raptor Interceptors, sensors identified a previously unidentified piece of debris. Following standard procedures we

altered our course for a close inspection/identification and tagging pass.

As we neared, the contact sensor reclassified it as a possible small craft contact. It was emitting no active emissions of any sort. We immediately altered course and attempted to open communications with the contact.

Almost immediately the contact fired engines and radically altered course. All communication attempts were unanswered. It undertook rapid acceleration on a course directly away from us. We attempted to give pursuit but were unable to close with contact. No positive identification was made of target. However, its high acceleration leads me to believe it was a military grade fighter of some type - probable South Am smuggling run attempting to skirt the standard shipping lanes.

End of Report

Sam reviewed copies of the sensor data attached to the report. On any other day he would have likened the contact as a South Am smuggler or drug runner that got unlucky and was spotted by a patrol. Today, however, he wasn't so certain. He keyed in a couple of commands, and a copy of the report was placed on his desktop. He also sent copies of it to Admiral Perriweather and the Intel boys that worked for him. Maybe they could glean a little more information out

of the sensor logs. That done, he pushed the report to the back of his mind and set himself to the task at hand: catching up on paperwork.

## **British Cargo Barge Dad's Pride, 14 April 2193**

"Son of a bitch! Bloody piece of junk this is," Richard Donnard yelled to no one in particular as he scanned the instrument panels splayed out in front of him. Several displays had angry red icons flagging several engineering systems related to the transit system. The holo-display that dominated the center of the series of panels showed a rotating model of the transit engine and the various support systems that allowed it to work. A series of conduits were glowing the same angry red, indicating serious malfunctions.

Opening a line to the engineering section, Richard said, "Mativa, you found the problem area yet? Please tell me we can fix this quickly. Got a deadline to meet or we're out a lot of money."

"Don't get your knickers in a bind, Richard. I'm checking into it now. We've got a small breach down here, nothing to worry about, but I bet you we ate a bit of space junk. I've got Jerry tracking it down. He says he thought he felt



something right before everything went to hell."

"Fine, fine. You have any idea how long this is going to take?"

"I haven't even found the...wait a minute, think I've found it. Damn...Looks like whatever hit us fragmented. I see at least half a dozen severed conduits and trunks. Doesn't look like any critical systems are compromised, mostly electrical. First guess is a couple days to get things back online."

Richard started messaging his temples at this news, mumbling to himself at the same time. "Any chance of speeding things up, Mati?"

"No promises. Damage is in about the worst possible area, only room for one person in here so we can't gang up on the damage much. I'll have people working round the clock getting things back online, but that's the best I can do."

After closing the channel Richard leaned back in his seat shaking his head. First the delay at the Oran station, now this. At this rate all the profits from this run would be gone in no time flat. Leaning forward again he began a systems check of the rest of the ship just to make certain there were no other developing problems waiting for another inopportune time to reveal themselves.

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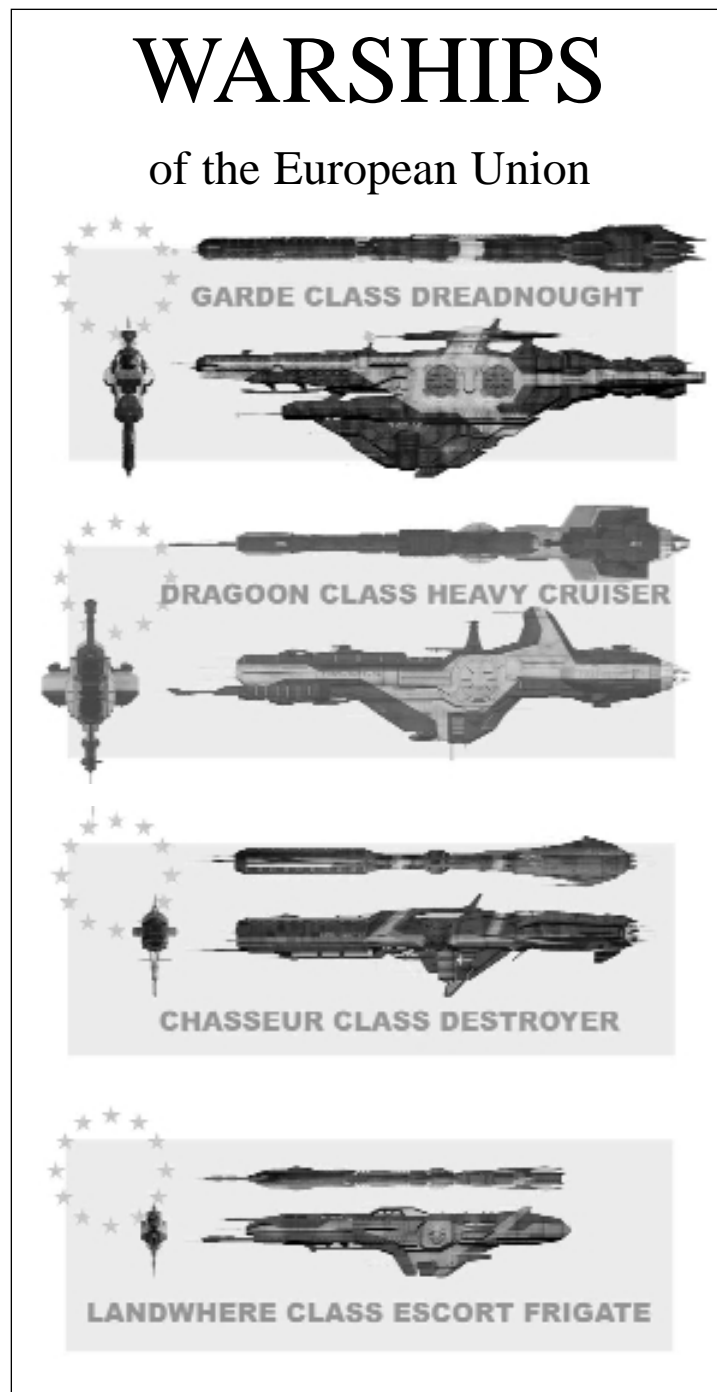
Mativa was greeted by an empty bridge as the door slid opened. Much of the repair work had been completed and she wanted to give Richard the good news. The damage had turned out to be less extensive than it first looked and they would be able to get underway within a couple hours. Heading over to the communications station she opened a ship-wide line.

"Mativa to Richard, please come up to the bridge."

A few moments later she was rewarded with a bleary reply, "On my way Mati. Was grabbing some shut-eye."

Grabbing a chair, she leaned back to await his arrival. Running her eyes over the various instruments she was pleased to note only a couple red flags remained. Satisfied she started leaning further back in the chair when a brief flicker caught her eye. Startled, she glanced at the source, the sensor display, to ascertain what it was. Just as she stood up the door opened revealing a somewhat haggard looking Richard.

"Morning Mati. Good news I take it?"



Taking one last glance at the sensor display she shoved the event aside in her mind and said, "Yep. Damage looked a lot worse than it really was. Most of the damage repairs are done and the breach was easily sealed. I expect we'll be able to fire up the TD in two hours."

"You're a godsend, Mati. Maybe we'll still be able to keep our schedule after all. I'll start working on the new nav plots and alter our course appropriately. Let me know as soon as you're set to warm up the drive."

"Will do, Rich. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got some work to finish. I expect you'll be buying the ale at port this time." Smiling she headed back to the engineering sec-

tion, the sensor flicker now forgotten.

...

Two hours later, after some maneuvering to bring the ship to the new heading, Richard was ready to fire up the transit drive. It would be good, he thought to himself, to finish this run. Bad luck had plagued it from the beginning and a couple weeks break before the next one would be a welcome diversion for him and his crew.

Opening a line to the engineering section Richard asked, "Everyone strapped in down there?"

"We're ready down here. Everyone's in their couches. I'm watching the displays down here

for any sign of trouble so you can fire her up whenever you're ready."

"All right. Prepare for transit drive in 30 seconds." With that he entered a command into the computer and watched as the count-down began. At 15 seconds, he could feel the vibrations of the powerful engine coming to life through the deck plating. At 20 seconds, the maneuver drives began the pre-acceleration sequence. At 28 seconds, the maneuver drives shut down and all the power they normally used was redirected to the transit drive. Finally, at 30 seconds the transit drive roared to life.

From outside the ship it first appeared that nothing happened. Then a telltale flicker could be seen ringing the outer edges of the exhaust ports. Almost immediately the ship began to accelerate rapidly. A few seconds later the transit drive glowed with the fire of the sun and the cargo barge accelerated at such a speed it would have disappeared from the view of anyone watching in just a few seconds.

On the bridge of the old ship Richard nervously watched the screens. A holo-display once again showed a rotating model of the transit drive system. It showed no signs of problems and Richard began to relax. The ship was 5% of the way into her acceleration curve. Leaning back in his chair he smiled and silently thanked God that everything was working when suddenly his chair was rocked by a massive vibration. Alarm lights lit up as the vibrations grew worse. From over the din of noise he heard Mati say she was shutting down the drive. A few moments later everything grew silent once more.

"Damn it! Damn it! Damn it!" was all Richard heard for a few moments, whether from himself yelling it or Mati he couldn't recall.

"What happened, Mati?"

"From the readings I'm getting it looks like an energy spike during the power-up process fried the energy output sensors. I'm running a simulation of the run-up now - give me a minute to digest this."

Richard filled the time checking the status of the rest of the ship. They'd progressed through almost 7% of the acceleration curve and the ship was moving incredibly fast at this point, though not nearly as fast as was necessary. He'd have to flip the ship around and use the maneuver drives to bring the ship to a more reasonable speed so they could maneuver if necessary. The

## TURNING POINT:

maneuver drives were definitely not made for this and it was going to use a large quantity of their reaction mass, not to mention almost two solid days of deceleration to do it. Hopefully Mati would have good news and be able to fix this without the need.

As he finished the thought Mativa spoke up, "Oh, this is bad Richard. From what I can gather from the data I've got, both the energy output sensor and its backup blew when an energy spike burned out their associated surge protectors. I'm guessing they'd been damaged from the impact and we just didn't see it. With those sensor relays out the computer thought the engine had cut out and went through an auto-restart sequence. With the TD already engaged, well, it was like cranking an old IC engine that was already running. We've got some serious damage here, some of which is going to require us to go outside to repair. We can fix things, but its gonna take a good while, at least a week, and its likely going to deplete our stores. I can start things inside now. How long is it going to take you to bring us to a stop?"

"That's a couple of days of constant deceleration."

"If necessary we could risk EVA at speed."

"No, one wrong move and we'd lose whoever was out there. Do what you can inside for now. I'm calling in an emergency distress once I bring our speed under control. We'll get towed in and do the external work in dock."

"What about cargo, we can't get towed in with the sled attached?"

"I'll arrange for it to be picked up. God, this is going to cost us a small fortune."

"I hear that. I'll keep you updated Rich."

...

A day and a half later Dad's Pride had nearly completed its deceleration. The repairs were progressing steadily and nothing else had happened. The call for assistance had been made and answered but it would take at least two weeks for a recovery ship to arrive. Arrangements had also been made for another barge, the Ravishing Dilettante, to pick up the sled. Things were as good as Richard could expect them to be under the circumstances. What he didn't know is that they were about to get worse...much worse.

"Hello, what's that?" Richard

mumbled to himself. He was looking at the sensor display that had just picked up at least half a dozen contacts on the edge of his range. "Mati, come to the bridge please. I want you to take a look at something."

A few minutes later the door opened to allow Mativa onto the bridge. "What you got?"

"Take a look at this," Richard indicated the holo-display which now echoed the display sensor readout. "When I called you I'd just picked up half a dozen contacts. It's up to over a dozen now. No IFF transponders and they're too far for us to identify with this ship's instruments."

Mati leaned forward, staring at the display. As she watched, another four contacts appeared. "If there are that many ships nearby, why didn't they answer the distress themselves? Looks like a couple big ones - at least class 5, maybe 6 - they would have no problem towing us and a fleet that size is bound to have some support ships with it."

As she finished her sentence a dozen more contacts suddenly appeared halfway between the first contacts and the Dad's Pride. The sensors indicated they were heading their way.

"Looks like they know we're here. Pirates you think?" Mativa wondered aloud.

"I can't see that. We are out in the middle of nowhere and most ships here would be traveling at transit speeds - too fast for a pirate to do more than wave at. Those new contacts have to be fighters. That would be why we didn't see them until they were that close. And look at their speed. They'll be here in less than two hours." Richard tapped his fingers on the console for a few minutes, thinking to himself.

"Could they be South Ams? It could be they have a processing plant out here. It would certainly be their style."

"Possible." A pause, "I hope not. They may not take kindly to our presence. Only one way to find out." Reaching around to another panel Richard opened a communications channel.

"Commercial barge Dad's Pride to unidentified contacts, please respond." Several seconds passed by with no response. After several more attempts were made Richard said, "I don't like this. I'm going to dump our feeds into the buoy. Prep the life raft for launch. I want us to be a long way from this ship when those fighters get here. Hopefully

they won't pick us up when we launch. Get everyone ready to evacuate."

"You're scaring me, Richard." Mativa said, the nervousness echoed thickly in her voice.

"I'm scared. Just get to it. Hopefully this will turn out to be nothing. Probably just some fleet on maneuvers no one is supposed to know about," then, almost to himself, "That still doesn't answer...Just get the boat ready. Stock it with as many supplies as we can fit. I'll be down in ten minutes."

As Mativa left, Richard could hear her shouting orders. As he started preparing to abandon the ship, Richard programmed the buoy to continue recording all feeds, then, should the ship be attacked, to launch and make for the nearest British port. He then attempted to contact the incoming fighters once again, only to discover his communication channels seemed to be jammed. Cursing to himself, he made his way from the bridge to the lifeboat launch bay.

In the bay he saw that all dozen of the crew were assembled and loading the last of the supplies on board. It was packed with food, water and medical supplies with barely enough room for the crew. Everyone was displaying overt signs of nervousness and tension and when they saw him everyone began asking questions at once.

Holding his hands up to calm things down he said, "Look, I don't know what is going on. We have some unknowns heading towards us, and a rather large fleet at the edge of our sensor range. They aren't communicating, so I'm assuming they don't intend us any good will. We're going to be away from this ship long before they arrive. Hopefully they'll fly by the ship, see we're just a harmless barge, and leave. Then we'll return and everything will go back to normal. Now let's get onboard the boat and get out of here before they get close enough to detect the launch."

With that the crew filed aboard the ship. Within a few minutes they watched as the Dad's Pride receded in the distance. Richard took great pains to keep the bulk of the massive cargo sled between the lifeboat and the incoming contacts. A laser feed to the boat from the barge echoed the sensor readouts on various screens in the lifeboat, enabling the crew to watch the unknown craft close in. When the distance from the barge was to great to continue to hide behind Richard cut the

engines to the boat and reduced energy usage to a minimum. Almost immediately the temperature in the cabin cooled off considerably, though not enough to be a danger to the people on board.

After nearly 90 minutes the unknown craft closed on the barge. Massive EW from one of the fighters prevented the barge's low-grade sensors from identifying them with any certainty. The crew watched in horror as half the fighters suddenly let loose a devastating salvo. Automated defenses on the barge attempted to defend it from the incoming attack and managed to destroy some of the incoming missiles. The fighters themselves stayed a good distance away, preventing the ship from returning fire. Within a few seconds the salvo reached the barge and ripped into it. Immediately the laser feed was lost but the crew could see light from the explosions in the distance. First there were several small flickers from smaller explosions. Then the cabin was lit with the harsh light signaling the breaching of the ship's reactor core.

For a time, the crew sat in stunned silence. They were adrift in the middle of space. In the silence Richard spoke up, "Okay, we have two ships headed our way. We'll wait a few hours then I'll fire up the drives and take a heading the will let us meet up with one of them a good ways from here. We'll report the attack and justice will be served to whoever is behind this. The authorities will have the equipment necessary to get more out of the sensor logs than we ever could. We have the food and-"

Just then, Mativa pointed out a viewpoint and gasped in horror.

"God help us," she whispered. Everyone looked where she pointed. In the distance they could make out a distinct boomerang silhouette. Two smaller glows were racing towards the small lifeboat. Richard attempted to quickly power-up the drives but the process was to slow. Then, two missiles ripped tore through the thin skin of their escape craft. One missile blew completely through the boat before detonating on the opposite side. The second one detonated a few meters shy of the ship. Caught between the force of the two explosions, the ship was torn to shreds. As the light died down all that remained was a cloud of debris quickly dissipating into space.

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# The avalanche has already started. It is too late for the pebbles to vote.



*GROPOS*

By ALEX ROBERTS

**E**VER enigmatic, the Vorlons hide from the younger races in their encounter suits, pulling their strings with the skill of a master puppeteer. The Vorlons rarely engage in active hostilities, but when they do they generally use their powerful fleet. The Vorlons are too few in number and valuable to dirty their hands with ground combat, preferring to direct their younger race allies in such distasteful tasks.

The Vorlons are not, however, without defense. Occasionally a Vorlon advisor assigned to "manage" a particular younger race individual or group may be drawn into battle outside of their ship. At other times, a Vorlon may be targeted for assassination, either by the Shadows upset with the activities of that Vorlon, or by a younger race, as was the case with Ulkesh.

In such a situation, the Vorlon will use their formidable telepathic and telekinetic powers to strike at their assailants. Should their sturdy encounter suits be broken, it is possible to see the true form of the Vorlon, as a dragon-like Being of Light. Such sights are generally short lasting, as the now enraged Vorlon will be ill inclined to let these interlopers survive for long.

## Units:

**Vorlon Advisor:** Shrouded in an advanced metal encounter suit, Vorlons stand about 8 feet tall. These suits are slow moving, and appear to almost glide across the ground, the bottom of the suit hidden by a cloak that surrounds the suit.

These suits, however strong, are less for protection than to hide the Vorlon's true form from those of the younger races.

Genetic breeding and powerful telepathic powers allow the Vorlons to appear as the messiah for religions of races around the galaxy, with the notable exception of the Centauri. Their true form, however, is much more frightening.

Outside of their suits, the Vorlons are Beings of Light, having transcended from the physical state millennia ago. When all pretense is dropped, a Vorlon appears as a large 20-30 foot long wingless dragon like being, with large glowing eyes.



## SPECIAL RULES:

**Being of Light:** Vorlons will almost always begin a scenario within their encounter suit. This suit functions as an armored unit, as per its stat card. However, the suit only represents a portion of the Vorlon's defensive abilities. Should the encounter suit be destroyed (or the Vorlon choose to leave his encounter suit, which may be voluntarily declared at the beginning of its activation), replace the encounter suit with a new counter, which represents the Vorlon revealed as a Being of Light. From this point on you no longer use the encounter suit datacard. Instead, use the Being of Light datacard.

While a Being of Light, the Vorlon has the following abilities and restrictions. These do not apply while in an encounter-suited state.

- 1) May only be harmed by energy weapons. Other weapon types only pass through the Vorlon's energy state and cause no harm.
- 2) The Vorlon becomes enraged, rife with anger at the beings who had the impudence to try and harm the Vorlon. From now on, the Vorlon must roll a d10 when activated. On a 5-10, the Vorlon moves at best speed (minimum advance order) towards the nearest enemy unit, and attacks it, using its powers as listed below. For powers that affect more than one stand, one of the stands must be the closest enemy stand. On a 1-4 the Vorlon may move and attack at the player's discretion.
- 3) Immune to morale checks. It is unthinkable that they could be harmed, and as such cannot be shocked into retreat or surrender.
- 4) Regardless of experience, all Vorlon Being

of Light stands can take 5 points of damage.

## Level 15+ Telepath:

Vorlons are among the most powerful telepaths in the galaxy. When pressed, they are more than willing to demonstrate their power, and are capable of causing great havoc across a battlefield. Each turn a Vorlon advisor may use any one of the following powers in lieu of shooting. The power takes effect automatically, following the rules listed below.

**1) Telekinetic Slam:** Pushing out a wave of force, the Vorlon slams its opponents back with terrific force. The Vorlon may attack any 2 enemy stands within 12" with an automatically hitting DVD attack of strength 8. Roll the crew die as normal to ascertain damage.

**2) Energy Bolt:** A strong bolt of psychic energy streaks out from the Vorlon, piercing through the strongest armor as if it was butter. The Vorlon may attack any enemy vehicle within 12" with a DVA value of 11. The attack must roll to hit and to damage as normal.

**3) Dominate:** Using its fantastic psychic powers, the Vorlon may subvert enemy units, taking control of them and directing them to fire on their opponents. The Vorlon may choose one single enemy DVD unit within 10". Roll a d10 and subtract 1 if veteran and 2 if elite. On a 1-4 nothing happens. On a 5-10, that unit remains under the control of the Vorlon player for the next 2 turns. If the stand is still alive at the end of 2 full turns (not including the turn in which it was taken over), it reverts to the control of its original player.

While under control of the Vorlon, the unit activates when the Vorlon activates. It may take a free activation and attack in the turn in which it is taken over. This power has no effect against other Ancients. Subtract a further -1 from the roll if the defending stand is also a telepath.

## DEPLOYMENT:

Vorlon Advisors may be purchased by any non-Shadow allied army as a Support option. This option may be purchased twice, taking up 2 support slots. Though rare, Vorlons will sometimes work in pairs when assisting very important individuals.

## Additional Support Option:

1 Vorlon Advisor

Cost: --/32/54/76

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## Defining Order

The fundamental definition of Order is structure. Orderly societies run a tight ship. They are on time. They keep their promises to the letter. They are methodical in achieving their goals. Paperwork is vital. These races embrace logic over sentiment. They believe everything has its place, and there is a place for everything. An orderly race will have a plan for the future. Order and Discipline are the guiding principles for their people's lives. Individuals love structure and thrive in environments where their role and responsibilities are clearly defined. They are creative, but only in a context where creation has a purpose and a place. They hate it when things are uncertain.

Orderly creatures never like to make decisions on the spot. Orderly societies are likely to have many police officers, lawyers, scientists, drill instructors, and high school principals.

Orderly races believe that the needs of society outweigh those of the individual. For a society to be a cohesive unit, the needs and wants of some people will have to be restrained in order to transfer resources to the needy. Orderly societies also do not like new or radical ideas, such as different sexual mores and non-conformist ways of life. At the same time, an Orderly society believes it is only as strong as its weakest link. Welfare and social support structures are abundant. Nobody deserves to go hungry. Strong work - within the bounds of regulation - is rewarded. Afterall, it is the goal of society to build a better future for its children.

The basic rules of Order are:

- 1) Discipline is the guiding principle for life.
- 2) The needs of society trump that of any individual.
- 3) The head should rule and control the heart.

# Disciples of chaos

## Following in the footsteps of Shadows

"Invention, it must be humbly admitted,  
does not consist in creating out of voice,  
but out of chaos."

- Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

**T**HE Shadows have a clear purpose: to stir-up conflict and chaos in the universe to promote evolutionary processes.

The doctrine of the Shadows is more than a theory to the Drakh. It is a religion. They worship the Shadows as living demigods.

As with all disciples, the Drakh strive to emulate their masters and continue their work.

So how do the Shadows operate?

### What do you want?

The Shadows enact their policies through a simple question: "What do you want?"

Desire is the tool of the Shadow. But not the satisfaction of that desire.

Instead, the Shadows focus on the negative baggage of desire: envy, greed, dissatisfaction, nostalgia, passion and hatred.

It is an unfulfilled dream that the Shadows home in on. It is the quest to attain that dream which is so easy to manipulate.

And one person's dreams are inevitably contradictory to another's... and when they clash, they result in conflict.

Londo's motives were especially susceptible to the manipulative powers of the Shadows. He wished to see his world's legendary empire restored. He sought personal greatness, and success for his family. He lusted after revenge for Adira's death.

The Shadows singled out these desires, and fed them...

Similar exploitable weaknesses can be seen in many characters. Cartagia's maniacal desire for immortality; Refa's desire for the throne.

Others had the desire, but failed the Shadow's test - whether through the lack of strength or other reasons - such as G'Kar's murderous wish for revenge.

The Shadows know to reward their subjects just enough - but not completely. The desire for more - like an addictive drug - provides the subservience the Shadows need.

President Clarke wanted power. But he wanted it for a reason: to bring security and cultural purity to his people. So the Shadows gave him a taste of their

technology. At a price. And there was always more to give - at an ever-increasing price.

The Shadows did not seem concerned that the desires of their subjects would often come into conflict. Londo's and Refa's ambitions would obviously clash. But the Shadows manipulated each in isolation - preventing each from knowing of their involvement with the other. Besides, the conflict between Refa and Londo was part of their technique. And if one of them was to let the Shadows down, the other could be used to dispose of him. Either way, the best Centauri would win. Survival of the fittest. Evolution.

The Drakh are less subtle.

In the case of Londo, they use direct coercion and control. They have mined Centauri Prime with nuclear weapons. They have implanted him with one of their Keepers. But he went willingly, and knowingly, into this situation because he wanted the Emperorship and to save his people.

### What do you want to see?

Like the Vorlons, the Shadows seem eager to hide their true identity and physical form. They are reluctant for direct contact with outsiders.

But instead of hiding behind mysterious encounter suits, the Shadows put on a pretty face.

They use smiling and pleasant looking agents. Outwardly, Morden is the happiest person on the station. He is always smiling, speaks calmly, and always appears generous and understanding.

Another Shadow agent is Justin. The kindly, wise old man invites Sheridan for a cup of tea and engages him in a friendly conversation. He sounds oh so reasonable...

The arrival of Sheridan's ex wife is another demonstration of Shadow methodology. They use her looks and her relationship with Sheridan as a manipulative device. To deny Anna's requests would be much harder than refusing Morden or Justin.

Only Sheridan's knowledge of what is right and wrong saves him from this combined maneuver. He knows what the horror is beneath the pleasant facade of these people. To Sheridan, Anna's beautiful face is nothing but a mask on a dead husk. He can see the Shadows behind her.

The use of these agents marks a major difference between Vorlon and Shadow.

The Shadows live and work with their allies on their home world, Z'ha'dum. They appear willing to take advice from their subjects.

The Vorlons, however, are much more prideful. They instruct. They give orders. And they remain aloof from their subjects.

The Drakh also appear to have recognized the value of good public relations. While we don't know if they have their own "Mordens" in circulation, they clearly operate behind the authority and reputation of the Centauri Regent and Emperor Mollari.

Most notably, they used Emperor Mollari to give the Sheridans a beautiful vase as a present - containing a hidden keeper, ready to pounce on their son...

### Strategy

The Shadows are the agents of chaos. They believe that evolution results only from conflict. They make - and manipulate - alliances with the intention of sparking interstellar war.

It is clear the Shadows consider any 'weaker' species as expendable; and that they might need to die out for the 'superior' species to achieve their destiny.

Only through conflict can a race's mettle be tested, and the weak separated from the strong. It is only through weeding the garden that the flowers can be made to bloom...

The Shadows are not afraid of enlisting allies to help achieve their goals. And their allies are both overt, and covert.

The Shadows receive material and physical support from allies such as the Strieb and Drakh.

But they also receive political support through their more covert alliances - such as Londo and Refa, Earthgov and the Psi Corps.

It does not matter if these alliances contradict.

It does not matter if these races or individuals have competing interests. In fact, it is desirable.

Chaos is the Shadow's strategy.

And it is also the Drakh's.

It is possible the five-year delay on the nano-virus released on Earth was no accident. The panic of the populace and the government is a major motivator for chaos. The imposition of the quarantine would only make matters worse.

Desperate people take desperate measures. There's no telling what behavior Earth would have resorted to had the Crusade series continued.

### When do you want it?

The Shadow plan appears to have a distinctive cycle. They wake; sow the seeds of chaos - then retreat, only to wake a thousand years later.

In "Z'ha'dum" Morden and Justin compare the Shadows' deeds to stepping on an anthill. This may be the reason for the thousand-year-old slumber: One can't step on an anthill continuously without killing all of the ants, something the Shadows don't want. Therefore they choose to spread chaos every once in a while, letting the ants rest for a while, the races rebuild their organizations (and themselves gather

strength), before they move in again. It is a cruel way of promoting evolution, but both Shadows and Vorlons generally seem beyond compassion.

Perhaps the cycle is not so predictable. Unpredictability is, after all, a key element to chaos.

But the Shadows, like gardeners, know that the bush needs to be allowed to recover once it has been pruned...

The Drakh, however, are angry. Their gods have been expelled. They want revenge. And as a younger race, they are impatient.

They are hell-bent on breaking up the Interstellar Alliance responsible for evicting the Shadows. And they are willing to use any means necessary.

Like many things, knowing when to stop is only one attribute of maturity.

### Overthrowing one's parents

JMS has repeatedly said the relationship between the interstellar worlds, the Vorlons and the Shadows was an analogy to a child struggling for independence from abusive parents. He even used the parent analogy in the way the Vorlons and Shadows use the voices of character's fathers - as in 'Hour of the Wolf', "Interludes and Examinations", and "Dust to Dust".

The Shadows and Vorlons appear to believe they have the authority to determine the future of the younger races. They make decisions on their behalf - without consultation or consideration. They treat these races as uncomprehending children who don't even need to be told what is going on.

One parent constantly orders its children about.

The other, the Shadows, causes the children to fight among one another.

At some point, the teenagers have to

become adults - and decide their future for themselves.

In the case of the Drakh, they did not want to leave home. They found comfort in the presence of their "parent" gods. They had purpose, authority and direction.

That has been taken away from them. The Drakh want the old ways to return, or at least to prove themselves worthy successors and avengers of the Shadows.

### Victory?

Did the Shadows get what they wanted?

Did they not successfully prune the races over past millennia to produce the Humans, the Minbari?

Did not the chaos these races confronted make them stronger?

Was not the chaos the Shadows brought with them responsible for the evolution of the beliefs, alliances and strategies that won the war?

Was not the outcome the most desirable achievement - for the students to become greater than their teacher? Are the Drakh merely upset "teacher's pets" that failed the final grade?

\* \* \*

## Defining Chaos

The fundamental definition of Chaos is constant change. A chaotic action is to make changes at a moment's notice. In human terms, this is not to say an individual is incapable of committed action, but that they listen to their hearts more often than their heads.

Emotional outbursts - and actions - are perfectly acceptable. As are their consequences. "I felt like it" is a perfectly good excuse. "I don't feel like letting you" is a perfectly acceptable response.

The fight that results is just a normal part of life.

Chaotic races are free with their emotions and often pursue things with a wild abandon. Individuals perform the best when they are given no external instructions, and are allowed to create their own methods and plans. They hate anything that reduces their options.

Chaotic races believe in an extreme form of freedom. They believe that the individual is supreme, and any society is just an attempt to impose a form of behavior on its members. Chaotic races and individuals will actively oppose anything that attempts to limit their actions, be it an older race, a government, a religion, or any other organization. Ideally, government and regulation is kept to a minimum. Anything else is regarded as being restrictive.

Dispute and conflict resolution is left to the parties involved. Social services and support structures are superfluous. Why should one person be forced to help look after a weaker individual? The winner takes all... while the weak fall by the wayside.

Darwinian theory is a way of life. It applies at all levels, and to all facets of life, from conception to the grave.

The basic rules of Chaos are:

- 1) The only constant in life is change.
- 2) The rights of the individual trump the rights of society.
- 3) The heart rules the mind.



# What we have seen, and where



**LINES OF COMMUNICATION**



**IN THE KINGDOM OF THE BLIND**



**ALL MY DREAMS, TORN ASUNDER**



**FALL OF CENTAURI PRIME**

By

By **DIOGENES**

## **LINES OF COMMUNICATION**

"I felt it as soon as I saw them. I have been to Z'ha'dum. I saw the evacuation. We defeated their masters, and now they seek to become masters themselves and destroy those who defeated the Shadows. Now that they know who I am they will attack, as soon as it is safe to do so."

- Delenn

In "Lines of Communication" we get our first look at what may be a Drakh. We are shown a Drakh emissary. It appears to have difficulty with the White Star's gravity and/or atmospheric density. It walks as though it was walking on the bottom of a swimming pool, with slow, poorly coordinated movements. It has a cranial exoskeleton that we associate through later episodes as belonging to the Drakh serving or warrior class.

The significance of its shimmering field of translucency can be discarded as JMS has described how this was applied to mask a very poor costume. However, it could also be adopted as "canon" for a variety of uses.

## **IN THE KINGDOM OF THE BLIND.**

"I'm glad we got there in time to save you. You were the only one to treat me well when Cartagia was here. But he is still here, isn't he? His legacy..."

- Centauri Regent

At this point the Drakh are secretly using Centauri cruisers to stage attacks upon interstellar trade. The Alliance is aware of the raids, but doesn't yet know of the Centauri connection. However, Londo is suspicious.

There is a scene where G'Kar is occupied fighting black robed assassins and Londo is cut-off by a blast door. A Centauri noble throws a dagger at Londo, but it stops in mid-flight, turns, and whips back into the noble's own heart. We then see a Drakh similar to that seen in "Lines of Communication" appearing - as if out of nowhere - behind Londo. Do these Drakh have telekinetic and invisibility powers? Was it some

kind of device that allowed this Drakh to intercept the knife thrown at Londo? Had the Drakh merely been hiding in the shadows?

A point to consider is that this creature does not seem upset by Centauri gravity, it does not shimmer and it has red eyes that glow.

Later in the same episode we get a brief glimpse of a Councilor variety of Drakh causing a Keeper to punish the Centauri Regent. This Drakh stands obscured in the shadows, with only part of its bony face illuminated.

## **ALL MY DREAMS, TORN ASUNDER**

"Yes. He will be sufficient"

- Drakh Councilor

Here Londo is abducted from the cell he shares with G'Kar. A group of the "knuckle-headed" surgeons wheels him to a surgery where they conduct some kind of operation upon him. During the procedure we briefly see the Councilor we saw in "In the Kingdom of the Blind". The surgeons are similar to those seen by Lyta Alexander in the mind of another telepath (Exercise of Vital Powers) and the creatures Caroline Sanderson (Ship of Tears) saw operating on herself.

The surgeons are described by the Babylon File II as conducting a physical test on Londo to determine his fitness for a Keeper. The Drakh indicates at the end of this short scene that "he will do." All My Dreams, Torn Asunder also demonstrates the Drakh capable of a similar form of memory control used by the PsiCorp against Talia and Garibaldi. Neither Londo nor G'Kar had any serious inkling of the abduction, or what happened afterward.

## **FALL OF CENTAURI PRIME**

Centauri Regent: "They say the Shadows were their masters. Served them. Believed in them. Loved them. Then they went away and left us behind to escape on our own. But, without our masters, what are we? In the end, what are we but..."

Drakh Councilor: "... a shadow of a shadow. An echo of what was. Our home, Z'ha'dum, destroyed. We wander..."

# DRAKH EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

In this episode Londo and the Regent were observing the bombardment of Centauri Prime by the Drazi and the Narn. Londo demanded to know who is behind the conspiracy. At this point a Drakh Councilor moves into view. It is during this conversation we gain our greatest insight into the motives of the Drakh. They seek revenge. But they also seek something else: a home.

Londo: "What do you want?". Drakh Councilor: "A home. Our new home."

In this episode we also learn of the relationship between the Keepers and the Drakh. These spidery creatures of telepathic control appear to be symbiots. They are "plucked" from a plate of bone in a Drakh's chest. They can move with the use of the same tendrils they use to latch on to their prey. And they have a single eye - an eye exactly the same as that of their Drakh Councilor parent.

Is the relationship between Drakh and Keeper part of their evolutionary history? Are they Drakh larvae? Or is the relationship Symbiotic? Or are they both a product of Shadow genetic technology? We are given no answer.

Several of these early encounters with the Drakh give the impression of telepathic communication. "Fall of Centauri Prime" gives the strongest clue. Not only when the Drakh Councilor talks with the Regent, but also when Londo asks his new Drakh master what happened to Delenn's White star. Londo's reaction clearly reveals he was given specific information in the voiceless reply.

## WAR ZONE

A crashed Drakh warship contains survivors, some of which march on a nearby human archaeological dig. The bulk of these survivors are the white boned, no mouthed servant-warriors. They are equipped with blue-beamed weapons mounted on their forearms. These are not just anti-personnel weapons. The combined weight of four or five of these easily took down an Earth shuttle.

When the crew of the Excalibur arrive at the Drakh ship's crash site, they find it occupied. The servant-warriors are willing to fight to the death to protect one among their ranks - a representative of the Councilor caste.

The Drakh commander refers to himself as a councilman. This is a strong indication there is a Drakh government above the military and reinforces the caste/authority relationship between the two apparently different species.

Once again these differences in appearance and attitude imply a ruling caste and a serving caste. Or a ruling race and a serving race... But, if they are different races, the visual difference is clearly no more significant than that of the Minbari from Humans.

The "Councilor" has the distinctive finer, intricate and darker faceplates of his caste - and, this time, what appears to be a third glowing red eye in his forehead.

This important individual becomes the first Drakh prisoner of war. As such, it offers the first opportunity anyone in the Interstellar Alliance

has had to gain an insight into this mysterious race. Unfortunately, TNT pulled the plug before this story arc was taken significantly further...

## CASTING SHADOWS

"One of our kind studied humans centuries ago. A Drakh took up residence there. Few saw him, but word of him spread. Word of the dark one, the monstrous one, who kept to the shadows. Who drained victim's souls... and ruled them thereafter. They called him Drak'hul. His legends live on, so I am told."  
- Drakh Councilor Shiv'kala

This, the first of the Technomage trilogy of books, provides another glimpse at the nature of the Drakh.

A mage known as Osiyron studied the Drakh surreptitiously, and collated data on them. This information was made available to his companion mages. These contained images, anatomical scans, language description, culture and beliefs. But the novel does not tell us what these are...

A Drakh was encountered in the novel on Zafran Eight. The novel tells us the Drakh do sleep, and that they smell slightly moldy.

The Drakh worship a god. But that god is not the Shadows. The god is said to have been the source of the Shadows. The Shadows were this god's highest servants, and the Drakh were the next in line.

The image of this god "looks like a black sun, with a shifting, spiky black corona. In the center of the dark sun were four piercing points of light."

The Shadows spoke to the Drakh through subspace directly into their temporal lobes - the lower bony protrusions from the back of their head.

## SUMMONING LIGHT

"Focus the anger upon Sheridan. Upon the Alliance."  
- Drakh Councilor Shiv'kala  
"Why, what purpose would that serve?" - Londo  
"The Alliance is the light. Let your people look at it in anger, so that they will be blind to the shadows around them."  
- Drakh Councilor Shiv'kala

More details on the Drakh's involvement with the Shadows and their plan for the Shadow War is revealed in this, the second, book in the Technomage trilogy.

One of the major bases for the Shadow forces was a system called Tau Omega, otherwise known as Thenothk - the fourth world in that system. This planet was used as an administrative center for the Shadow Allies. It had one major city that spiraled out from a central black-glassed building that was the Drakh's administration building. This complex was described as a vast living machine with similar qualities to that of a Shadow warship - particularly the skin.

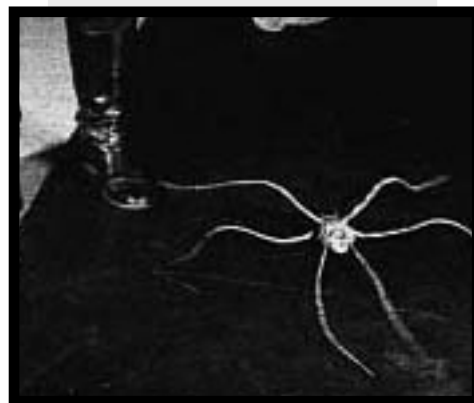
The different races that were the Shadow allies openly mingled within this city.

The Drakh guards use plasma weapons that are said to be superior to those of the Earth Alliance. They are also described as wearing armor impervious to light weaponry.

The novel also reveals that the Shadows tasked the Drakh with the mission of tracking down the Technomages with the ultimate aim of



FALL OF CENTAURI PRIME



FALL OF CENTAURI PRIME



FALL OF CENTAURI PRIME



A CALL TO ARMS



WAR ZONE



WAR ZONE



WAR ZONE



WAR ZONE

eliminating them.

## INVOKING DARKNESS

"They have no glory of their own. They bask purely in the evil of the Shadows. The Shadows were far greater than their servants, but if the Drakh believe they are attaining the Shadows purpose, they will assume an air of invincibility."

- Technomage Galen

Even though the Drakh clearly had some sort of advanced mental abilities, these were hardly portrayed as limitless. This book shows they were able to broadcast into someone's dream state, and were probably capable of receiving transmissions.

But the Drakh were not really capable of reading minds. Or at least they couldn't read a mind that wasn't co-operating.

That the Drakh are masters of Shadow technology is left in no doubt. They even go so far as to offer to relieve Londo of his ageing body. How they would restore such youth is not revealed, however.

The Drakh are revealed as utilizing troop transports described as huge black-skinned vessels. Perhaps this is the same black skin as found on the Shadow's warships?

In this book the Keeper was able to communicate with its target - David Sheridan - and accuse him to its presence long before it attached itself. Again this puts an emphasis on the telepathic abilities of the Shadow's bio-weapons.

Dr Franklin gets another chance to examine a keeper in this book. He reveals that the tendrils of the keeper had attached themselves to David on a basic neurological level. "If we tried to remove the thing by force, it would be equivalent of tearing out his central nervous system," he said.

He goes on to tell us more: "As near as I can tell - based on the brain wave readings I've gotten from the keeper - it draws a sort of strength from it's point of origin (the Drakh that made it). Kill the Drakh and you kill the Keeper."

When the Keeper dies, it falls off and shrivels - looking something like a clump of seaweed. It leaves behind a severe reddish mark where it was on the body.

## THE LONG NIGHT OF CENTAURI PRIME

"You are now what we need you to be - a beaten, resentful people who will have to rebuild, who will have to rely on our good graces, who can be used and guided as we wish to guide you. Perfect ground for us to do our work quietly."

- Drakh Councilor Shiv'kala

This book starts from the events of the Babylon 5 episode Fall of Centauri Prime.

It tells us that the Keepers, rather than being Drakh offspring, are born in a "techno-nest" from a parent Keeper that dies and dissolves into a black husk with the birth. The Keeper suckles on the Drakh in a nourishing pouch in the chest, and grows to maturity in three days.

The novel explains the Drakh "greater consciousness" as "the Drakh Entire". Essentially, this is a kind of organic Internet where Drakh leaders can hold a virtual teleconference in their minds.

Once the Keepers are attached to their host,

the Keeper can convey its host's emotions to the Drakh it suckled from.

This novel tells of a plot by the Drakh to kill ISA President Sheridan. using a palm-sized creature with thick fur, black, with six tentacles and a stinger. It was hidden inside a Centauri vagrant planted in Babylon 5's "Down Below". The creature wipes the memory of its host and sleeps until a signal from the Drakh arrives. It was described by a Technomage as being "left-over biotech from the Shadows".

## ARMIES OF LIGHT AND DARK

"The Drakh have been rebuilding their vessels, preparing themselves, but the Death Clouds were intended to tilt the balance utterly in their favor."

- Technomage Gwynn.

This book reveals the Drakh have necks that can be broken like humans, indicating they have a similar spinal column.

The Drakh also use pistol-type weapons that look like PPG's but fire flechettes - finger length slivers of an unknown material.

Shadow tech is still widely available among the allies, and is still in use. We are told it was built to be "user friendly", designed for any of their subject races to easily understand and use.

The Drakh had the Centauri conduct an archaeological dig on the world K0643. The dig was to reveal a secret jumpgate. Drakh ships were capable of communicating with this gate, which opened and allowed them through. The gate used a "wormhole" to link with a null-field. Inside the null-field was an active Shadow base - the size of a large planet. Here was the completed Shadow Cloud that was tested on Daltron 7 and later Earth. Two more death clouds were under construction.

This book also reveals that Keepers cannot be implanted against the will of their host. "The bonding can only occur when the recipient is willing to allow it to happen," Technomage Galen tells Vir.

It also explains how the Drakh suggest "ideas" to their subjects. In the case of Durla, they chose the form of the beautiful Lady Mariel - one of Londo's ex-wives whom the Centauri Prime Minister lusted after - to give him "revelations" on what the "best" actions were to take.

A Drakh cloak of invisibility was described in this novel. It was a fine silvery weave of fabric, best used at night. It did not work when folded in upon itself. If completely covered by the cloak, you could see yourself. But if any part of your body was exposed, you could not see yourself. However, the Drakh can negate the effects of their own technology.

\* \* \*

# Frame-by-frame analysis of Drakh warship performance

".... any ships, we are being attacked. Please help.  
Engines hit. Life support no longer functioning.  
Dark enemy...."

- Pak'ma'ra military transport crewmember.

By **DIOGENES**

**A**S WITH all vessels and craft, any Drakh ships in Babylon 5 Wars and Fleet Action need to "look and feel" as they did in the original TV show.

But this is no easy task. Different episodes provide different perspectives, different camera angles and, as JMS puts it, different zoom lens factors. Some would say some CGI artists simply got it wrong.

Whatever the cause, many argue there appears to be a significant difference in scale between the Drakh in B5 and the Drakh in Crusade.

This problem of scale must be understood and overcome before the ships are to be created.

The Drakh aren't the only race who worked for the Shadows, but they are the one we get to see the most of. Neither the surgeons nor pilot in "Ship of Tears" nor the Shadow-warrior in "The Long Dark" were Drakh in appearance, though the latter may have shown some resemblance when it was shown briefly reflected in Mariah's tube.

Obviously there was some degree of "evolution" of the Drakh concept during the series, through the movies and into Crusade. This affects the depiction of both the Drakh species and their vessels - making it all the more difficult to settle on any one interpretation of abilities.

## RAIDER OBSERVATIONS

"I indicated a flower-like design. With the lethality behind them, it seemed like a nice contrast."

- JMS, newsgroup comment

These nimble craft appear to be a counterpoint to the Minbari White star but appear to be deployed in much larger numbers. They are small ships with an apparently light structure

based on a narrow superstructure terminating at a globe-like weapon system, with five prongs jutting forward from the stern. They are shown to have only one weapon, but it appears capable of sustained and burst fire.

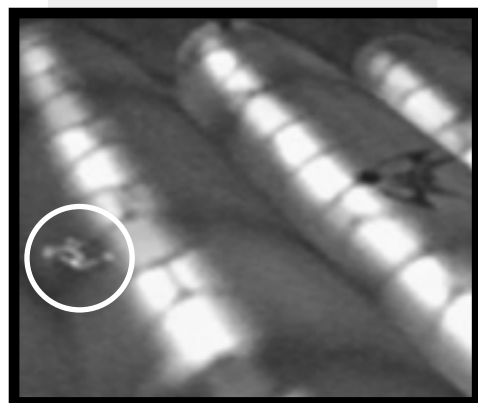
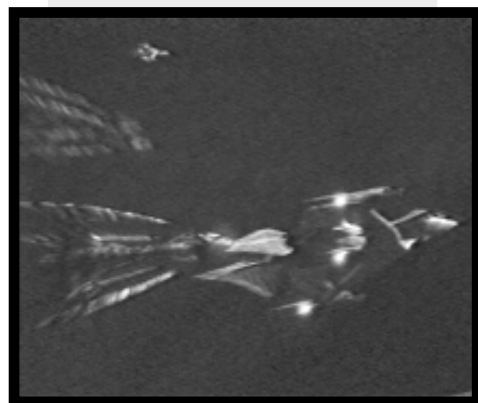
"Lines of Communication" gives a person with a good pause button and frame-jog option on their VCR several opportunities to examine the Drakh Raider. The first indication of scale is the scene where the Raiders are clustered about a crippled Pak'ma'ra ship - obviously a Drazi design. Is it a Sleekbird Assault Cruiser? Whatever it is, there is a Drakh ship parked directly alongside and slightly below it. Another Raider makes a slow pass behind as another crosses above. The Raiders appear to be about one third to one half the length of the Sleekbird and about one quarter the mass.

The next scene is when the squadron of White stars follow the Raiders back to their Tender. One shot, from a fixed vantage point, shows the Raiders fly past with the White stars immediately behind. Comparing their passage through the same point in space, the Raiders seem to be about half to two-thirds the length of a White star.

One final opportunity to establish perspective is given during the White star escape sequence. One White star is shown maneuvering hard, with a Raider almost colliding with its tail. Again, the appearance is that the Raider is about two-thirds to three-quarters the length of the White star.

A Call to Arms and Crusade also show the Drakh Raiders regularly. But little opportunity - if any - is provided to establish scale. They are deployed in similar numbers to Earthforce's fighters. They are not immune to those fighters. Thus these episodes do little other than emphasize the Drakh's fighter-like doctrine when it comes to deploying these craft.

The raider appears to be remarkably nimble for its size. In most combat scenes it seems even more maneuverable than a White star. But the





dialogue and the combat sequences of *Lines of Communication* reveal it is not as fast and cannot accelerate as quickly.

## TENDER OBSERVATIONS

In "*Lines of Communication*", this was clearly intended to be an enormous vessel. Only when watching "A View from the Gallery" - where a White star "skin-dances" B5 itself - is a similar sense of scale depicted.

The White star "escape" sequence is the only opportunity to gain a perspective on the Tender's scale. It takes some time for the White stars to accelerate past this ship. At some points White stars appear to slip between its structural ribbing. The best indicator of scale is when the White stars pass the external "eyestalk" pods near the front of the vessel. One is shown to pass behind and then alongside one of these pods - revealing them to be of similar size.

The weaponry of this vessel is another matter altogether. In neither of the two combat sequences where this ship was involved was it shown to fire any weapon at all. No close in weapons were shown as the White stars "skin-danced". However, it could be argued that this was because of the close proximity of the Raiders.

But the second attack sequence provides no such explanation. The White stars jump in, attack the Raiders in their docking bays, and sweep past the Tender - even stopping directly in front of it.

Clearly, this was not intended to be a heavily armed or armored vessel.

As with all combat scenes in B5, we are only shown "key" moments. We never know how many hits a ship takes. What previous damage it has sustained. While the Tender obviously took punishment from the White stars tasked with neutralizing the Raiders, it was clear the White star commanded by Delenn was capable of doing severe damage by itself.

## WARSHIP

By the time "*A Call to Arms*" and *Crusade* were penned, JMS had the need for a Drakh combat ship. The Tender, as shown in *Lines of Communication*, did not suit this role as it was solely a fighter carrier. But budgets are tight. So the Tender was "evolved".

In *A Call to Arms* and *Crusade* the Drakh ship is shown to be at least as maneuverable as the Earthforce Omegas and Warlocks. In *Crusade* It is also shown firing a main weapon from between its forward tendrils and opening its own jump-point. This behavior is significantly different to that shown in "*Lines of Communications*" where it is sluggish and requires a jump-gate.

Yet, in "*A Call to Arms*", after the *Excalibur* escapes from the null-field that contains numerous Raiders and at least two Drakh heavy ships, Sheridan clearly says he does not believe the craft to be jump capable. Perhaps he was referring only to the Raiders. Perhaps not. Perhaps

the heavy ships seen inside the null-field were Raider Tenders.

Whatever the case, it is clearly necessary to create a different vessel for the Drakh primary warship.

However, it is very difficult to determine this vessel's scale. "*A Call to Arms*" and *Crusade* adopted a very different approach to depicting space combat to *Babylon 5*. The emphasis was on showing the vastness of space. Only rarely do ships from opposing forces share the same camera viewpoint.

At one point, a Drakh warship is seen from the perspective of a Star fury pilot going head-to-head with a Brakiri Avioke and a Drazi Sunhawk. It appears to be slightly taller than the Avioke's main nose structure and is clearly much longer. The Sunhawk is dwarfed.

Shortly after, a similar looking Drakh warship is seen to explode after taking hits from all of a Victory-class's nose-mounted Neutron Lasers (though it does not explode from only one beam as the *Hyperions* and *Novas* do during *In the Beginning*). Just before the *Excalibur* opens up with its "god" gun against the *Shadow Planetkiller*, five Drakh warships are shown pursuing it. These are clearly not enormous units on the scale of *Excalibur* itself.

While obviously big and powerful, and at least capable of mixing it up with the likes of an Earthforce Omega, the specifications of the *Crusade* Drakh warship is wide open to interpretation. The same applies to its weaponry and armor.

It is most certainly not as difficult to destroy as a *Shadow* vessel. Nor is it capable of cutting large swathes through Earthforce capital ships. But where they fall in relation to other races, such as the *Narn*, *Centauri*, *Drazi* etc is clearly a matter of individual preference.

## MOTHERSHIP

A glimpse of this super-massive vessel is provided in "*A Call to Arms*" before its more significant appearance in *Crusade*'s "*I Dream of Home*".

In "*A Call to Arms*" two are shown following up the main Drakh attack fleet. In the short grabs of the battle that follow, there is one fleeting image of a Mothership taking hits from a Victory class's Neutron Lasers. These appear to do substantial damage to the outer hull. We do not see if the ship is destroyed by that volley or merely damaged, nor do we know how much prior damage the Mothership had taken from the main body of the Earthforce "flying wedge". We do, however, see three Omegas pass underneath. These appear to be on a similar scale to the Drakh warships seen escorting the Mothership in "*I Dream of Home*".

In this *Crusade* episode another Mothership jumps in with several attending warships to reinforce a group of ships engaging the *Excalibur*. The Mothership is clearly shown launching another warship from one of six bays in its side.



Assuming another six bays are on the opposite side - a fair assumption given the ship's symmetry - it must be capable of holding at least 12 warship sized vessels.

Unfortunately, Excalibur is not shown in the same shot as the Mothership. Only the Drakh warships provide any sense of scale.

Despite being apparently super-massive, these ships do not appear to be strong. The Excalibur's "god" cannon was able to destroy one in hyperspace with a single hit.

At no time is this ship shown firing any weapons.

Clearly, by Crusade this ship had taken the place intended for the Tender in Lines of Communication: A huge, lumbering, but vulnerable mobile base for the Drakh.

## TANKER

This ship is seen in no episode and only in the movie "A Call to Arms".

And what we see is not clear.

The scale appears to vary between shots. When first shown, the tankers are amid a group of warships moving towards Earth. Here they are clearly small, anywhere between one eighth and one tenth the size of the cruisers around them.

The next shot is when they are deploying the plague clouds over Earth's atmosphere. This time they appear to be almost equal in size - if not larger - than the accompanying cruisers. Perspective could be argued to account for this. Either way, it is somewhat confusing.

The Drakh Tanker has a rather organic look to its shape and skin. The same applies to the manner in which the venting doors open in its side.

It is not shown emitting any weapons or maneuvering in any fashion.

## WEAPONS

"Of course, you have no way of knowing how many previous hits it took during the fight, and are assuming it only got two."

- JMS, referring to the apparent ease with which White star 16 was destroyed by the Drakh Raiders in Lines of Communication.

The Drakh Raider is given the most coverage in the series when it comes to combat. Thus its weapon is more clearly known. It emits a bluish-green beam, with pulses of energy contained within that beam. It is shown fired in short bursts and in more sustained modes. A single hit clearly damages a White star. But does not destroy it outright.

In A Call to Arms and Crusade the Drakh warships are shown firing two types of weapon: a blue beam from a front mount between the forward swept tendrils and a yellow-pulse from the rear. The blue-beam is shown to have the potential for a high rate of fire. We don't get enough shots of the yellow-pulse to give us sufficient information - other than when it slams into an already damaged Omega's bow.

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# A real surprise



By **ROMAN ALEXANDER PERNER**,  
(ShadowScout)

with a little inspiration from Scott Rose



*Frontline  
scenarios*

**W**HEN the Drakh first heard about the new EA Warlock Destroyer, they were worried. These ships seemed a powerful obstacle to their plans to pay back Earth for their part in the fall of the Shadows. But soon they got better news from their spies - Earth designers had erred badly by using Shadowtech to enhance the ship's computer system, Shadowtech that could be overridden by the Drakh's Shadowtech.

Maybe.

It had to be tested...

And so they sent a small force to intercept a lone Warlock during its virgin voyage...

## 22. July 2262

When the unidentified ships appeared on their screens, the EA patrol group wasn't too worried - they outnumbered them three to two, and had heavier ships besides, among them the pride of EA engineering, a Warlock Class Advanced Destroyer. But as they moved to intercept the unknowns, hoping to catch a bunch of Raiders, the brand-new Warlock started acting strangely...

## EARTH ALLIANCE:

1 Warlock Destroyer "Summoner" w/ 24 Thunderbolt fighters  
1 Olympus-Delta Corvette "Cassandra"  
1 Tethys-Kappa Police Cutter "Essex"  
Deployed within 5 hexes of the lower

edge of the bottom map, speed 4 - two flights of fighters on patrol, carrying two missiles each, the others in their bays (without missiles).

## DRAKH:

1 Attack Ship "She'thal" w/ 4 Raiders  
1 Patrol Ship "Kal'turia"

Enter from a jump point within 3 hexes of the top of the upper map (use "jumping into combat" rules) at speed 8.

## VICTORY CONDITIONS:

**Drakh total victory** - no EA survivors, Attack Ship intact.

**Drakh marginal victory** - kill all EA ships, but loose Attack Ship.

**EA marginal victory** - at least one EA ship survives to spread the word, but the Warlock is destroyed.

**EA total victory** - keep Drakh from destroying the helpless Warlock.

## SPECIAL RULES:

At the beginning of turn two, the Warlock shuts down as the Drakh activate the hidden Shadowtech override. Deactivate all systems, even sensors and engine. If any fighters remain in its bays, they cannot launch.

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# The method behind the madness of building a Drakh SCS

By SHADOWSCOUT

After I made my "corrected Shadow Omega SCS", my personal Drakh were just a matter of time...

I liked Wraith's Drakh ideas, but wasn't satisfied with them. The first point was that he followed the Shadow Omega's weapon schematics, which I didn't like. And he did a few other things I disliked - like the advanced armor his second-version Drakh had.

So I set about doing the Drakh for myself - basing them on my remodeled weaponry for the Shadow Omega.

The hardest part was interpreting all the contradictions between episodes when it came to the Drakh. In LoC (Lines of Communication) the Raiders looked only slightly smaller and less powerful than White stars, while in C (Crusade) they seemed to act more like fighters.

When it comes to the Drakh warships, virtually every episode has its own interpretation of that ship's scale...

## ATTACK SHIP AND TENDER:

In LoC the big ship was clearly enormous and moved slowly and sluggishly, but displayed no weapons and needed a jumpgate, while in C these hulls were fast and at least as agile as any other big ship like a G'Quan or Primus, while having their own jump engine and some serious armament.

The Attack Ships displayed two weapon systems in Crusade - a blue beam from the front, exactly the same CGI as the Shadow Omega's main gun, and yellow pulses from the rear. They also were destroyed quickly, even without the Excalibur's "magic gun"...

These differences were a bit too much to be combined within one hull without some massive suspension of logical thinking, so I figured that these must have been two ships with completely different capabilities that just by coincidence looked very, very similar.

The Tender from LoC is a big but rather helpless LCV carrier - something akin to Earthforce's Explorer. A hull looking just like it but displaying quite different capabilities in Crusade became my "Attack Ship" (I figure the ships of that appearance

in ACtA were Attack Ships too - it would have made little sense bringing these helpless Tenders to assault Earth...)

The attack ship seems smaller in WZ (War Zone) where it's pursued by an Omega.

It also moves more like a nimble ship - not something an enormous ship should be able to do. In the few scenes we see it, the Attack Ship moves at least as nimble as a G'Quan, maybe even as much as a Vorchan/Demos.

The one that couldn't escape an Omega was probably a bit damaged at the start of the chase, since the ones that went against the Excalibur seemed a bit better on their feet - enough to leave a EA brick behind normally...

The type blew up quickly, even when only faced with the Excalibur's Neutron Lasers... especially when compared to what damage Omegas could 'eat' from the White Star's Neutron Lasers in the EA civil war...

Not to mention the Mothership carried quite a few of them... all in all I made them HCVs, a bit bigger than an Altarian IMO...

## MOTHERSHIP

Actually I wish the show guys hadn't made that one - it creates a lot of problems. But I treat it as a "mobile base", something the size of a Vorlon PK...

Enormous is too small a category for this one, though I figure on it being mostly hollow to store the Attack Ships (and keep the structure down to a level that allows the Excalibur to blow it away with a lucky shot from its magic gun... and even with a few NL hits in ACtA)

It may also undertake a fleet coordination flagship and transport role: if it can store Attack Ships, it can surely store other stuff too. As for command - why else should one have been part of the Drakh fleet attacking Earth in ActA?

No weapons were shown used in the show, so I just gave it minimal defensive guns - LtPolPulsars again. Its "main batteries" are in its hangers/docking bays...

As for maneuverability. What maneuverability? At this size level, maneuverability doesn't really come into it - slow the ship to speed 0 if you want to do any turning...

The Mothership is more of a "scenario only"



# DRAKH OBSERVATIONS OF A SHADOWSCOUT

unit, but if anyone really wants to use in in free form battles it's restricted to one per fleet (no matter how large). That's why it's point value is in parenthesis BtW...

## TANKERS:

Tankers, Freighters and general Drakhy transports. I consider these to be the Drakh almost-civilian ships...

It's hard to say anything on scale since we never get too good a look at them. But they seem a bit smaller - though fatter - than the Attack Ships in ACTA. And they blow up even quicker, though that's no surprise since they're facing the EA defense grid at that time...

I made it a capital ship though, following the example of the Civilian Luxury Liner. It does have less total structure than the Attack ship, and can carry enough supplies (or nasty plagues) for Drakh purposes

It was never seen to fire anything, though neither were most of the civilian ships in B5, and all of those have at least one little gun for anti-fighter work. So I gave them a similar defensive armament... a bunch of LtPolPulsars...

It's not a real combat vessel, so it doesn't need to be quick and agile. It's a freighter, and it has a freighter's maneuverability (though at Drakh tech levels)

## RAIDER

I see this as the standard Drakh small ship. It takes the place of fighters in their fleet - though it also is sometimes sent on longer-ranged patrols (like the ones jumping League shipping far from their Mothership in LoC or the ones checking out Daltron-7 in ACTA).

Probably LCV's for that extra range, so they can fight while their carriers sit back farther than usual, so far that no counter-strike can find them...

In LoC they clearly were LCV's. Smaller than White stars - check. Not enough "bang" for medium ships with their single weapon - check. Agile enough to catch White stars - check. Go boom quickly when fired at by White stars - check.

And in Crusade they behaved like fighters, though conclusive material is hard to find. I think LCV agility at the Drakh's tech level would be enough to dance with fighters...

Besides, in my eyes the LoC info takes precedence - since when I made them, AoG firmly had the license to do show stuff, but not Crusade. So I figured - make them so that AoG can use them if they like...

## DRAKH WEAPONS

Let me give you a quick review - Basically I have three weapon ranges for my Drakh:

Multiphased Beams (the blue beam also on the Shadow Omega, a pre-primordial Shadow weapon that was the predecessor of Multiphased Cutter and Molecular Slicer, with an enhanced "Accelerator" version to explain why the Drakh ships in "Each Night I Dream of Home" shot such short beams which also failed to do any serious damage to the Excalibur - the fools should have waited for greater charge...)

Polarity Pulsars are the yellow pulses the Drakh Attack Ship fired at the pursuing Omega in "War

Zone", another pre-primordial Shadow weapon that found its way into Drakh hands; it was the predecessor to their Phasing Pulse Cannons while a lighter version of it became the Shadow's fighter weapon...

Phase Disruptors are the beam & pulse-type weapon their Raiders use, with a light and heavy version for big ships, this one is a Drakh invention.

**Multiphased Beam:** This is the blue-beam CGI that is used by both the Drakh and the Shadow Omegas. But I didn't want to use AoG's Light Molecular Slicer Beam.

I simply feel very, very strongly that AoG made a mistake with that one.

The Shadow Omega in the show never used any pulse weapons (and considering the mass of White stars around, and their success against Clarke's elite squadron, it seems likely they would have used anything they could, including bricks thrown from the airlocks...) their beams were cyan-blue where every MSB we see is purple; and their small turrets used the very same beams in a weaker version.

So I took the Light Multiphased Cutter from AoG's Shadow Omega and used it as a base for my Multiphased Beam range - adjusting the power to something the Shadows would have discarded as obsolete millions of years ago - with a result that is quite capable and performs more like the ship in the show. And it avoids the problem of making it too easy to mount First One's weapons on Younger Race hulls...

Thus was my corrected Shadow Omega born. And I reused the weapon range for the Drakh Attack Ship, since its blue beam uses the same CGI as the Shadow Omega. Only there I made it a slightly enhanced "Accelerator-type" weapon, for one to reflect that the Drakh kept the best weapon of this line for themselves, for another to explain it's quick, short blasts in "Each Night I dream of Home"

**Polarity Pulsar:** The yellow pulses I first wanted to make Phasing Pulse Cannons, but I had second thoughts - PPC's are purple after all, and their shots are the quick torpedo-shaped energy bolts we see from the Shadow Scout, while the Drakh weapon fired round, yellow balls of energy. Besides, I thought the PPC a tiny bit too good to put in younger race hands... then I realized that the Drakh pulse gun did have some similarity with another Shadow weapon - the Polarity cannon they use on their fighter!

So my "Polarity Pulsar" was born; it is supposed to be another obsolete Shadow weapon that they gave to their minions...

So, that was the aft pulse... but if the Drakh put such a gun aft, surely they also put such guns front, right?

Thought, done, made them "medium" to explain why we don't see them more often (short-ranged) and added a suite of Light PolPulsars as standard "Drakh flak" to round out my Assault Ship's armament.

**Phase Disruptor:** The Raider's weapon was the hardest. How to do something that isn't out of place in a LCV, displays the "beam with pulses" effect and fits the Drakh stuff?





## PATROL SHIP

Some time after I began making my Drakh I saw a concept drawing in the now discontinued Babylon 5 Magazine, issue No. 19, p.45, of a ship that looked suspiciously Drakhy. And I just couldn't resist making it part of my Drakh fleet... so I started thinking of what & how it could be. It looked rather small and agile, so I decided on making it a Medium Ship.

The drawing shows two parts on the forward side hull that with a bit of imagination could be taken as crystalline projectors just like the ones on the Drakh Raider, so I gave it two Phase Disruptors. That wasn't enough armament, so I also added Polarity Pulsars - one light to keep fighters off its back, and one heavy in the front to hunt enemy starships with. And so it was done - a nice little Drakh ship. I called it a patrol ship to explain why we never saw it in the show - patrolling ships would stay out of offensive actions, and those were the only ones we saw.

## SCOUT SHIP

Once the Patrol ship was done, the Scout Ship quickly came into being when the Babcom producer accidentally called it "Scoutship" in our e-mail discussion, anticipating a variant I had been thinking about.

I just reduced the weapons to lighter versions, added a ELINT sensor array, and there it was, the Drakh equivalent to the Shadow Scout, used to quietly check out areas of space and supply a bit of ELINT support to smaller attack groups...

I finally settled on my "phase disruptor", with the variable rake mechanic to represent the pulses in the beam. Low rake damage represents the beam only, medium rake damage = beam and a few pulses, high rake damage = beam and many pulses hit the target.

I made the weapon molecular because it's similar in color to the Multiphased Beams I had from my Shadow Omega.

I set the damage at a level I felt sufficient to explain its effects in the show, but not too nasty to clash with their ineffectiveness in Crusade, or be too much for a LCV...

Then I also included a "may split it's rakes between different targets, if they're within one hex" rule, inspired by the Shadows "sweeping" slicer beam and the Pentarray game mechanic. Now it's more effective against fighters (One Phase Disruptor can now hit a flight of fighters, and give three fighters 3d6 each...). That gives the Raider a bit better anti-fighter capability, and a group of them working together can seriously endanger fighter flights...

Nevertheless, one Raider alone is dead meat, since the fighters can easily park in it's rear and tear it apart... not that this is inaccurate, since we see Drakh Raiders fall to our hero fighters every time they tangle in Crusade...

## DRAKH SENSORS

The Drakh sensors are at the same level as the Minbari (actually even a bit more advanced, since they had the chance to ask the Shadows for helpful advice - they are about as effective as the White Star's Vorlon-enhanced sensors), and therefore are unaffected by Minbari Jammers (and every similar system the Minbari may ignore...)

I am not too sure about other stealth systems - the Drakh should ignore Hyach stealth, at least partly; while they should be fully affected by Technomage stealth, same for Torvalus. By the way, the Drakh Deflector Field is not effective against advanced sensors, just in case anyone was wondering.

## DRAKH DEFENCES

**Hull Armor:** The Drakh certainly have the tech for good armor values - they are supposed to equal the Minbari after all.

But you'll notice the armor values are, well, nothing special.

You will also notice that the Raider is a bit better armored than the rest of the ships, and the Attack Ship a bit better than the non-combat ships.

As for the episodes and movies showing the Drakh "going down" so quickly... well, that one can only be explained by lucky shots, at least for the Mothership. It helps a bit that both times the attacks came from the front/back, so they didn't have to get past the "docking bay damage sink". But even then the shots must have hit something real vital, otherwise a ship of the size NetterDigital put on the screen couldn't be taken down that easily.

As for the rest of the Drakh going boom soon... well, for Raiders it's no surprise, and the Tankers are pretty fragile too.

Attack ships can take more of a beating, but go down quickly too if hit in the right spots. And the one time we saw the Tender it did take some time dying...

The armor itself though... well that one started as

a discussion with Wraith. His designs had "Advanced Armor" in their second version, and I just thought that it was wrong - not only too good, but also problematic since their ships never displayed the "living metal" effect of Vorlon & Shadow ship skin, and a couple of Advanced Armor effects depend on that.

But just giving them standard armor didn't sound right either for a race with an almost middle-born tech level and Shady technical advice available.

So I suggested using a new type of armor, called it "Enhanced Armor" and suggested letting it have extra protection against armor ignoring attacks (Plasma & Matter) - just like Advanced Armor - and limited protection against non-damaging EM effects, halving any special effects, while lacking the reactive capabilities against ballistics, the special structure that makes Adv.Armor immune to armor-destroying weapon effects like Molecular Disruptors, Plasma Streams or Molecular Flayers, and the "shifting around" that defends against docking clamps and breaching pods. Wraith liked it, and incorporated it into his Drakh; I liked it and used it for my Drakh.

**Deflector Field:** This started with Wraith's interpretation of the Drakh: I wasn't entirely happy with his Scramblers, so I started my Deflector Field idea. At first it was just an "Energy Web" projector, which was nice, but a bit too weak to really satisfy my intentions.

For a while I couldn't decide what to do with it, since all my ideas would make it too powerful, and we know from the show that Drakh are not that hard to kill (at least not for our heroes). But then Scott "Pendragon" Rose gave me the idea of a effect that would be perfect - something that just added a bit of extra range to enemy to-hit calculations.

It was just what I needed, so I added that effect to my Drakh Deflector Fields. And there we are.

## SPECIAL RULES

**Phase Disruptors** can split their damage by rakes between different targets within one hex - usually that will be fighters (example: a PD can hit a flight of fighters, and assign one rake to each fighter, hitting 3 of them with 3d6 damage per fighter...)

**ELINT** Arrays function just like normal ELINT sensors, only that they have an arc and cannot be used on anything out of this arc; they cannot be used for any non-ELINT sensor function and they cannot combine with any other sensor array. (for example if a Drakh ship had two of these, it could not combine their ratings to use them for one big ELINT effect, but it could use one for blanket protection and the other for OEW loan...)

**Enhanced Armor** - a lesser form of the ancient Advanced Armor, it has the same partial immunity to "armor-piercing" attacks (Matter and Plasma), and limited protection against non-damaging EM effects (it halves their special effects) but no other benefit (no extra armor against ballistics, no protection against docking attempts, no immunity to armor-destroying weapons)

\* \* \*

# Try peeling an Electric Onion without frying...

**A**FTER the Shadow war, several League races started rebuilding their lost infrastructure. Some of them, less affected than others, even ventured out a little bit as new opportunities presented themselves.

One race, the reclusive Ipsha, began a tentative expansion into nearby systems, unclaimed by other League races. Severely short of jump capable starships, when they moved into a system, they would bring through disassembled sections of one of their Ring class battle stations, assemble it in record time, then quickly start laying out a defensive perimeter of mines. Once in place, these stations became a bastion against any threats that may appear. Some have likened attacking a fully emplaced Ring station akin to peeling an onion. They imply that it is very difficult to get at one of these stations as they have a layered defense system that makes close in space a very deadly place for an enemy.

The Drakh, in their continued attempts to destabilize the rest of the Galaxy, decided to test their mettle against just such a target. The Entire paid little heed to what the other races claimed about the Ipsha, knowing they would easily sweep away any lesser race, especially one as limited as the Ipsha. To that end, the Drakh deployed several patrol ships to skirt the outer edges of Ipsha space, looking for a prime target to teach the Ipsha a lesson.

In a minor system, anti-spinward of Eklor, a newly assembled Ring station commander faced a dilemma. His sensor sweeps had reported a frequent contact with an unknown vessel. It was exceedingly hard to get a fix on, and when he sent his fighters to investigate, the ship always seemed to disappear. He cursed his luck. The Ihsian Barony had ventured substantial resources in this system in the hope of exploiting the few resources they could from the two inner planets. But, with the Barony's shortage of jump capable ships, he was behind on the last couple shipments of emplaced weapons. When he reported the unknown, the fleet commander chose to send some reinforcements to back up the immobile station. The reinforcements were less than an hour away when the Drakh attacked.



## Frontline scenarios

By JAMES SCOT ROSE

The resulting battle made the Drakh realize they had been too overconfident. They learned just how difficult it was to peel an onion, except this was worse. This onion had an electric sting.

### SET UP

Use Standard map.

#### IPSHA

Deployed at start, in center of the map.  
One RING class base station, with 24 URCHIN Heavy Fighters.  
(Station has Expert Surge Officer) Deployed in hex 3315  
12 SPORE Explosive Mines  
12 CYST Captor Mines  
8 BLAST DEW Mines  
These can be deployed by the Ipsha as per the normal mine rules, but are restricted to within 14 hexes of the station. No mines within 4 hexes of any other of like type.  
This field is far from complete.

#### Arriving on Turn 5

One CUBE Carrier, with 24 URCHIN Heavy Fighters.  
One SCOUT WHEEL  
One BATTLEGLOBE  
Two TETRASHIPS  
Enter by standard Jump. All fighters deployed.

#### DRAKH

Arrive Turn One from one of the two short edges of map, Speed 10.  
Two ATTACK SHIPS  
Two PATROL SHIPS  
Eight RAIDER LCV

#### COMMENTS

The Drakh have to be very quick in attacking the station as the Carrier and its escorts can make a sticky situation even worse.

- Pendragon



## DRAKH IN FLEET ACTION

**Enhanced Armor:** Enhanced armor follows points 1, 2, and 4 of Advanced Armor as detailed in OAAG. These are the points dealing with benefits re Plasma Weapons, Matter Weapons, and EM weapons. Ships with Enhanced armor do not gain the other benefits noted for Advanced Armor.

### Multiphased Beam

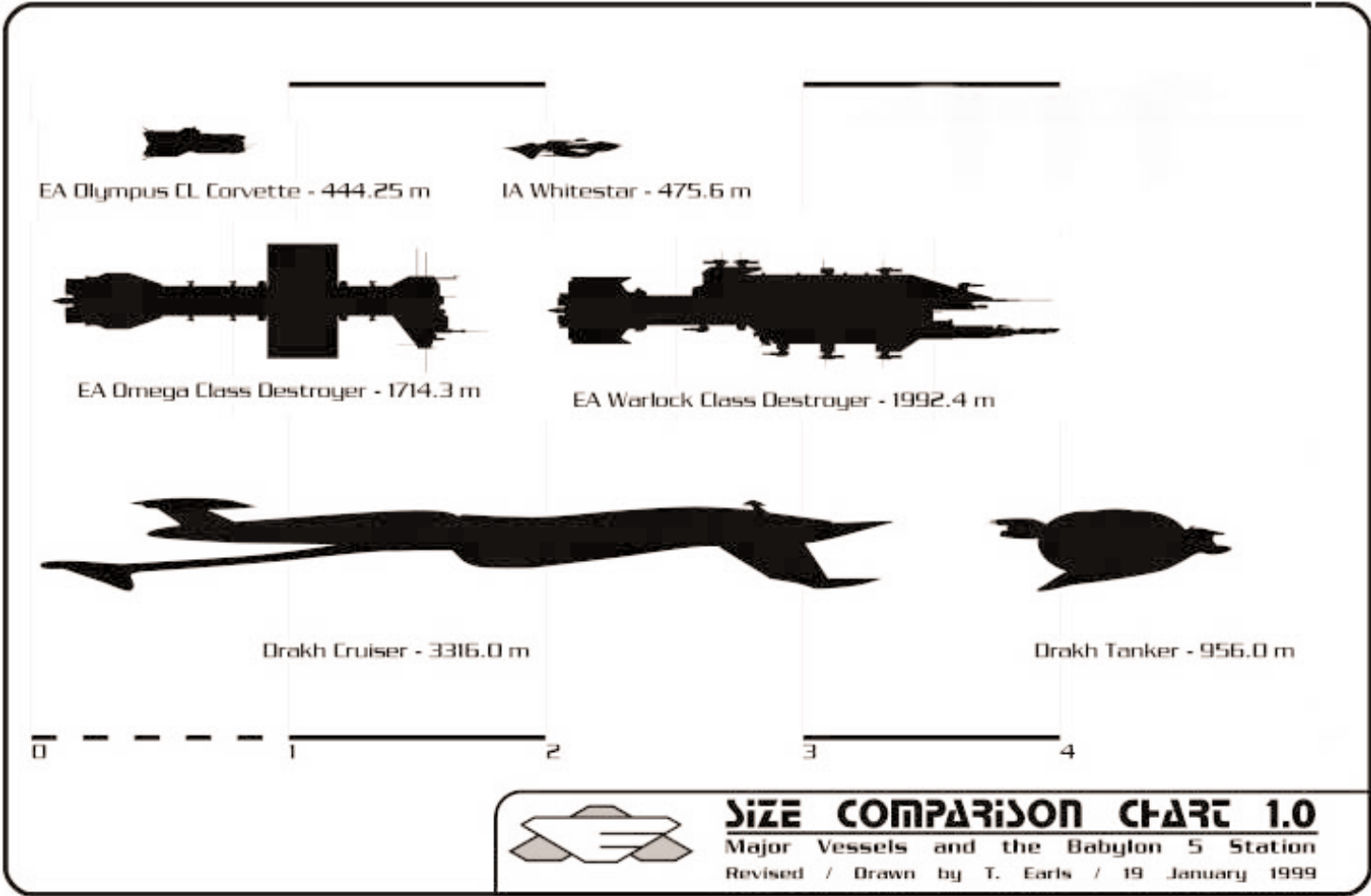
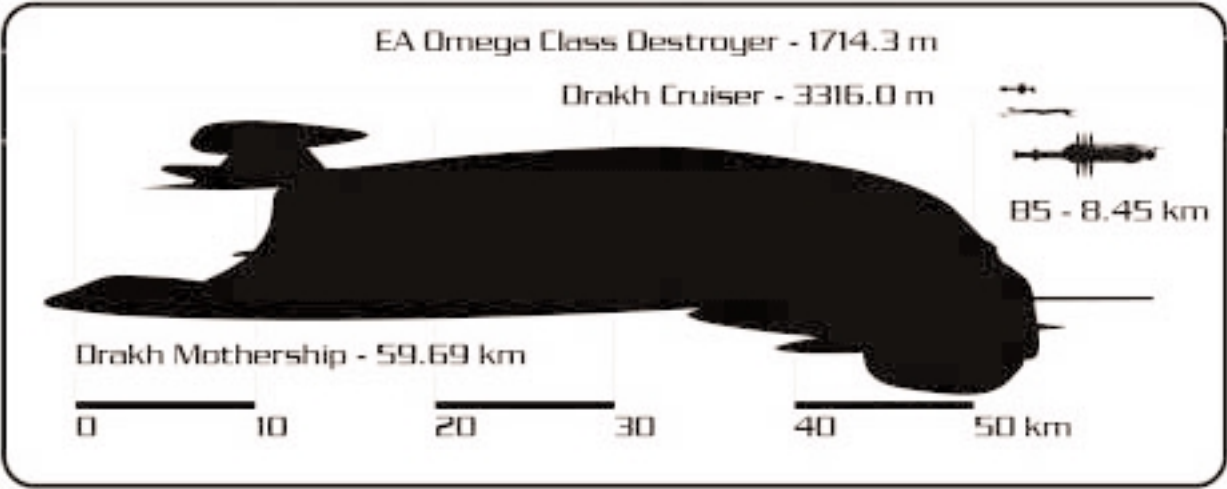
**Accelerator:** This weapon may fire in various rates of fire, in exactly the same manner as Shadow slicer weapons. In addition, they treat all armor as if it were 2 points less than the listed value (just like plasma weapons).

**Slicer Weapons:** These weapons follow the rules for Shadow Slicer weapons from OAAG.

**LCV's:** Many Drakh ships are noted as able to transport LCV's. This has little game value, but essentially all ships except for the Mothership may carry LCV's through jump gates on external rails. For game purposes LCV's are purchased and fight individually however. Raiders carried within a Mothership may launch on any turn, just like fighters, and from that point on fight as a normal ship would.



Several charts were created by Netter Digital, and they were to be released in a similar manner to the ship recognition poster made available early in the series. These charts, after the demise of Crusade, made their way on to the web. They can be found at: <http://warlock.isnnews.net/resources/sizencharts/index.html>



# What is canon? What is workable?

**NETTER DREADNOUGHT**

JMS and other show producers realised there was an problem of scale when it came to ships shown in the series. This is not surprising after some six years of story development, evolution of plot and variation in CGI artists. So they reportedly sat down and worked out some standards for Netter Digital’s CGI artists to follow.

The Drakh would have presented a problem: use the Tender as seen in Lines of Communication as the Drakh’s major ship, or spend money on designing a new one?

They chose to use the Tender. But to do this,

they adjusted the scale. They settled on a length about twice the size of an Omega and eight-times that of a White star. While this is obviously inconsistent with Lines of Communication, it made the Drakh fleet more of a reasonable opponent for the Interstellar Alliance while maintaining a sense of “hugeness” for the Drakh vessels.

Netter Digital scale charts give the Drakh Cruiser a length of 3316m, the Omega 1714m and the White star 475m.

Whether or not one accepts these scales is a matter of personal preference. Living with

them in a game system such as B5W or Fleet Action is another issue altogether.

THE Drakh Dreadnought SCS included in this edition is an attempt to please those who decide to accept Netter Digital’s compromise on scale.

It is presented as a possible alternative to ShadowScout’s Attack Ship.

The Dreadnought also has AoG’s Light Molecular Slicer Beam. This is to provide an option for those who wish to keep with AoG’s “standard” equipment and give the Dreadnought a level of firepower appropriate to a ship of its enormous size.



# Tackling Earth's darker side

By CHRIS NASIPAK

THE SHADOW WAR ended in 2261 when both the Shadows and Vorlons departed the galaxy forever. It was only a few months later that the Drakh would prove that this did not mean eternal peace and friendship. The Interstellar Alliance would face challenge after challenge for decades, even centuries, to come.

One of the most problematic of these threats was another legacy of the Shadows: technologies bearing their programming, left in the hands of the younger races, such as the secret Earth Alliance program that produced the Omega-Epsilon cruiser. It was believed that all of these ships were destroyed in battle with the White Star fleet.

Late in 2265, however, a patrol unit hunting Drakh escapees caught a fleeting glimpse of something Omega-shaped on their sensors. It was very difficult to hold a track on the ship, but the best imagery they returned clearly showed evidence of the Shadow manipulations on the vessel's hull. A strike force was promptly dispatched to locate and eliminate the nightmare vessel before it could become a threat to local shipping and colonies.

## SETUP

### INTERSTELLAR ALLIANCE:

Select a 4,000 point fleet following the standard deployment rules, or use one of the published BattleForces below.

### SERVANTS OF CHAOS:

1x Omega-Epsilon with 2 flights Thunderbolt fighters (no missiles or navigators)

1x Drakh Patrol Ship (use SCS from this issue's Attachments folder)

2x Drakh Raider (use SCS from this issue's Attachments folder)

MAP: Place one standard map. Have the

Alliance player put 40 Asteroid counters in place. The Chaos player then places his ships using Hidden Deployment. The Alliance ships enter via a map edge chosen by the player or by jump point.

**SPECIAL RULES:** The Shadow Omega's jump drive has recently been reactivated after completing repairs. It may not open a jump point for another 12 turns.

**VICTORY CONDITIONS:** Destroy the Omega-Epsilon. Any other result is a loss for the Alliance force.

## THE BATTLE FORCES:

### Centaury Reconciliation Squadron

(reisen@poczta.onet.pl)

1x Dargan Strike Cruiser	750
12x Rutarian Strike Fighter	900
1x Primus Battlecruiser	830
12x Senti Interceptor	504
3x Haven Patrol Boat	975
Total	3959

The Dargan and Primus try to maintain range and avoid forward firing arcs of the Omega, while trying to snipe and fill tendrils (and if possible destroy light weapons). Havens & Sentries brawl enemy fighters and try to eliminate them, backed by Ruties (which must be protected if possible).

When fighter threat is minimized, most dangerous things are Multiphased Cutters. If there is enough remaining fighters, attacking a side at range zero should overwhelm defenses and a number of hits will guarantee Lt Multiphased Cutters destruction. If not, Ruties must try and snipe at range 11 (still pretty good chances to hit).

### EA Patrol Fleet (Brian Blaney)

2x Hyperion Patrol Cruiser

4 flights Star fury Aurora

1x Oracle Scout Cruiser

1x Olympus Gunship

This fleet was hastily put together to find the Shadow Omega. The Hyperions should flank the Oracle with the Olympus in the lead. Star furies stay with the fleet until the sighting of the Omega, so they aren't completely wasted. When sighted, the fleet would speed up with the Star furies in the lead supported by the ships. And the rest is history one way or the other.

### Alliance Pursuit Squadron

(Ken Marquetecken)

1x Brakiri Tashkat Advanced Cruiser

2x Earth Alliance Olympus Corvette

2x Pak'ma'ra Urik'Hal Destroyer

2x Gaim Slyach Frigate

All right the fleet should operate something like this. The Tashkat is more maneuverable and faster than the Shadow Omega. He should be able to avoid the heavy weapons of the thing (certainly with his gravitic shifters). He's escorted on both sides by the two Olympi. They can use their medium pulse Cannons to keep the fighters away and use their missiles and railguns to add a lot of standard damage. The two Urik'hal lay back and wait until there is an opening in the Shadow Omega. Then they put the pedal to the metal, race towards it and blow it up with their nice plasma cannons. The Slyach are there to hunt any fighters on the board and they can use their battle lasers to annoy the Omega even further.

[Compiler's note: I'm seeing a dramatic decline in submissions for these contests. This is why I'm only printing three fleets this month. If you enjoy this column, please, help make it work! Seeing your ship selections and tactical analyses are the whole point, and it's been quite fun so far. Let's keep it going strong!]

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# Strieb

## Watchers from the shadows...

**T**HE STRIEB are one of the great enigmas to the other races. The only thing that is known for sure is they send their heavily armed but poorly constructed 'Collectors' to abduct fighters for reasons unknown.

The Minbari, with their religious drive to search for threats to other races, assume that the reason is to prepare for conquest. Others speculate that they might see this as defending themselves, a few see it as some obscure cry for help. All that is known is that the ships are powerful, advanced, and the race has no interest in communicating with others. Some have remarked on a resemblance to the Vree. None knows what the truth really is.

The truth is all of these things and none.

The origin of the Strieb dates way back to when the Vree were first reaching for the stars. For the Strieb are Vree, or at least used to be.

Buried in the vaults of the Vree history files is the story of the first use of the System Jump Gate. At the time, if anyone cared to read them, they would see the story of the warring factions, as various companies and interest groups competed for the use or for the shutting down of the gate. Many were opposed to its use for various reasons and plotted to seal it forever, others saw great opportunities and laughed at the dangers for reasons of ignorance and greed. It was agreed to build one vessel, and only one, filled with the finest and latest technology, a prototype jump drive, and enough crew and supplies for a long journey's self sufficiency. In essence it was a sleeper ship, but one meant to return through the gate. As debate raged in the planet below, the gate was activated, and the ship, the Varac-Strieb, flew into the Vortex. As it vanished, however, there was a bright flash and a detonation was clearly seen, screams came clearly over the com channels, and the ship was presumed destroyed. Certainly there were no communications with the ship ever again. The factions opposed to use of the gate were proven right. At the very least,

**J.J. O'SHAUGHNESSY (Archangel) presents  
his interpretation of the Strieb's place in the  
Babylon 5 universe...**



new technology needed to be developed, if the thing was not just a huge trap. The gate was shut down and abandoned, and all research into it was effectively abandoned for another half century.

The ship was not destroyed, but limped through hyperspace. There had been an explosion and a catastrophic computer failure. The jump drive was found to be totally ineffective. But the crew worked desperately to escape. For they were angry. Anger that grew into an almost religious hate. During the repairs they had discovered that they had been abandoned. The ship computers had contained a virus program that had crashed the system when the gate had been activated. They found evidence that the ship had been crippled with explosives wound into the ship hull, which could only have been placed during construction. It became obvious to them that the government had gotten rid of the most powerful supporters of exploration in one swift blow. But they would make them pay for what they had done.

A way out of hyperspace was found when it was discovered that the jump drive, while ineffective at what it was meant to do (a fact that only made the crew angrier) could create a hyperspace whirlpool if 'fired' into a Hyperspace disturbance or storm. The ship, by some miracle, made it through the maelstrom into normal space, and found themselves at the planet now known as their homeworld.

The planet was a very rich world, with abundant natural resources. Particularly encouraging was the discovery of an extremely tough metal alloy on the rocks, which now serves as ship

armor for the fleet. The only snag was the high interstellar radiation that required great advances in medicine and environmental science to overcome. This was done, however, and the race survived and prospered. On the Earth year 1705, they declared themselves a new race, which they called Strieb in honor of the ship that had brought them to their new home. They also declared their undying hatred of the Vree; the race that in its greed had tried its level best to kill them.

Such things would have to wait however. They had a head start on space travel, and the time in hyperspace had given them an understanding of that realm that has since grown to a level no younger race can match. However it was the science of medicine that captured their imagination for the moment. They had lost many lives in the voyage, and had to resort, temporarily, to cloning in order to boost their numbers. This and the relatively heavy background radiation lead to radical advances in genetic research. During this research they discovered some anomalies in the genetic code of everyone in the colony. These were subtle constant factors, exactly the same for each individual, which interacted with only certain genes, which also showed no variation. It was with a shock that they realized that someone or something had altered the gene patterns of the race! Speculation was rife. Perhaps the Vree government had done it, perhaps some alien race? Regardless of the truth, they determined to fix the damage, to return to their 'true race'.

The work took many years to complete, dur-

ing which time the Strieb began to exploit the system, building rudimentary mining ships and some jump capable explorer vessels that began mapping various systems. The region of hyperspace was perilous, but the Strieb quickly learned to adapt to it, their mastery of jump technology growing by the year. Finally, however, the work was ready. A simple treatment was developed (and tested) which would begin the process of reversal, planned to take many years of slow stages to reduce the risk of genetic trauma. Every Strieb took the treatment, and at first everything seemed fine.

For about a week.

The Strieb had only scratched the surface of the genetic knowledge possessed by the first ones, and the Vorlons are no exception. The Vorlons had programmed the modules in the cells for this moment, a moment that would mark the growth into adolescence of a growing race, and had a built in fail-safe. The modules activated, communicating with one another, and once no untreated Strieb were in the immediate vicinity (a star system or so) they were programmed to begin the genetic reversal process without any further interference.

It was like being reborn. Every Strieb screamed in agony, their whole world view, their thoughts being rewritten, their bodies in open revolt as every cell changed its composition. After an unknown time (nobody bothering to keep the time during those weeks) the Strieb opened their eyes to see a New World.

There are advantages to the Vorlon manipulation. Every sentient being has slight telepathic ability, and the Vorlons had tuned them to the same channel. This resulted in a slight (what telepaths call) 'buzzing' as worlds communicate through the void of space. No one notices it, but the Strieb did now because it was gone. They were alone. Utterly alone. They looked much the same but their thoughts, speech, everything was different. They saw things with slightly different colors, things tasted differently. Some Strieb went stark, raving mad. All suffered from extreme psychic shock. They looked at a universe that was unfamiliar, strange, and they knew there was no going back.

A persistent legend remains that many Strieb saw glowing balls of light depart from their bodies after it was all over.

Soon after a terrifying sight jumped into the system. A Vorlon cruiser jumped into the system in full view of the orbiting satellites and ships, and transmitted a simple message "In unity you have found strength and grown to your full potential. Your destiny is your own now. Do not interfere." After scanning the planet and ships the Vorlons departed, leaving the Strieb terrified. What was out there? This fear soon became a nagging curiosity. They would find out.

The Vree in their original state are a passionate people. This is reflected in the present Vree as a deep inner greed. This is reflected in the Strieb by a curiosity. They no longer understand any other race like they once did, so they feel they should try and understand more about the

other races. Their ordeal has awakened deep and powerful telepathic abilities, and in many respects the Strieb should be considered a Middle born race.

They have a deep connection to "the race", while not a hive mind by any stretch of the imagination, means they share a deep connection to one another. No Strieb would ever betray the race to anyone, as it is the only comfort and companionship they feel they can have in this universe. And the Strieb as a race are loyal to only two concepts: Knowledge and revenge.

And so they sent the first ships out, first to watch then to collect a few 'samples' as their confidence grew. This was not yet a major occupation of the race, however, and they were still mindful of the Vorlons warning.

Similar to the Ipsha, their environment facilitated the production of powerful electromagnetic weapons. However, in combination it also produced the inspiration of a new class of laser. Questions about the validity of this research were answered when the Shadows came for them.

The Shadow's eye had noticed the Strieb first steps out into space, and sent a ship to their system. They, arrogant as ever, thought that this race, free from Vorlon conditioning, would listen to the Shadows. After all, were the Shadows not in the right?

They were wrong. The Strieb listened to the Shadow, their thoughts probing the seeming pleasant facade, sensing the arrogance and bloodlust within. As one they called it a liar and a bully to its face. The Shadow, enraged at the slight powered its ship's weapon and attacked. The Strieb were shocked to discover that their electromagnetic weapons had no effect on the Cruiser as it approached the homeworld. As it neared firing range a squadron of the new laser armed vessels were sortied as an act of desperation, and their Blast Laser's bit deep into the core of the ship. However, the Shadow had already released its fighters, as these spread a deep dark cloud over the World as their parent fled... The plague had come.

The next years were difficult for the Strieb. Even though their race would not die out with the conclusion of the plague (they had already established scientific colonies on other planets) the compulsion to find a cure was all. They sent an unprecedented number of ships out hunting specimens to study, as their advanced medical science laboured to find a cure (this lead to the disastrous expedition into Minbari space in 2016). Finally, with mere months to go, they found it, by combining different hormones from various sentient beings. The Shadows had thought to create a plague what required endless killing to cure! The Strieb were able to synthesise it, but not before many had died as time ran out.

The Strieb were 'pissed'. They had done nothing to deserve it but had been 'attacked' by two powerful races, if in different ways. They decided to use these races as they had been used, to find out more about the universe through their

eyes, if these old races truly had answers to give.

So the Strieb 'offered their services' to the Shadows and the Vorlons. Even though the Shadows slept, the Drakh gratefully accepted the Strieb's knowledge and expertise in recognisance and Genetic Biology, not to mention their great and growing knowledge in the universe's physiology. Such things would be very useful. The earlier unpleasantness was explained away by stating that they had since thought about it and become convinced of the truth of the Shadow's words, an explanation that appealed to the fanatical Drakh. The Vorlons were less easy to convince, but the Strieb's store of knowledge (which the Vorlons were finding difficult to acquire without being noticed) and their pleas for 'enlightenment to ease the conflict in their race' won them over.

Their involvement with the Ancients consists of leaving a few of their race to 'learn' while they send collector ships to acquire samples for study. This information is sent to the two powers though their 'students'. Certainly some of these students have been truly won over by the arguments they heard, but their first loyalty is always to the race. The Strieb do not contribute to the work directly, but provide information. In turn they receive information, of places and events long ago, of philosophy and learning. They also send scientific expeditions independently of their work for the Ancients, studying the various phenomena of the universe. The universe is the ultimate store of knowledge to the Strieb and they are pledged to understand it all. . Their work for the Ancients is, after all, only for the Strieb's convenience.

To other races the Strieb probably seem mad, but they simply think differently now. And they seek understanding of everyone else as to them we are mad. They cannot understand us, so attempts at communication is pointless to them.

One place they will not go to, however, is Vree space. Firstly, they already know all about the Vree, so there is little point to 'collecting' them. Second, they are convinced that the Vree know all about their connection to the Strieb (actually, it has never been realised and the incident with the ship has been forgotten) and will respond violently to the incursion, sparking a war which would draw the wrath of the Vorlons. Third they do not want to bleed the Vree's strength away by one single fighter. When the war comes they will face the Vree at full strength, and let the universe decide who is in the right.

Someday the Ancients will be gone, and the Strieb will be free to strike. Someday they will face the Vree and ram their greed and arrogance down their throats. Someday their time....

.... has come...

To be continued...

\* \* \*



# CHECKMATE

**S**HORTLY after the defeat of Clarke's forces at Earth, the prototype Warlock advanced destroyer EAS Warlock found itself fleeing the victorious rebels. After fleeing to the Brakiri system of Gamma 7, she ran afoul of a small Brakiri convoy. After a brief battle in which she dispatched the escorts and began capturing supplies from the freighters, the Hyperion cruiser EAS Vigilance arrived. Once again however, after a quick exchange of fire, the Warlock opened a jump point and fled, fearing Brakiri and EA reinforcements. Unfortunately for the crew of the Warlock, a group of Torvalus detected the Shadow elements in the ship while deep in hyperspace and attacked.

Having escaped the Torvalus in the tides of hyperspace, and battled its way through both Cascor and Descari space, the Warlock, desperate to avoid further battles and escape to a safe haven to plan for their return to liberate Earth from the alien led rebels now sets out on a desperate and dangerous course back through EA space. However this time, they're not alone.

Sitting quietly in his ready room just off the bridge, Captain Blake of the EAS Warlock, studied the starmaps on his computer, planning his next move. Having only narrowly escaped capture and defeat in a long series of battles ranging from the lowly Cascor to the First Ones themselves, Blake was double checking his course for the start of what was sure to be a dangerous plan. While deep in thought, it took a few moments for the Captain to hear the beeping at his door.

"Who is it?"

"It's Commander Tucker sir, you called?" answered the intercom.

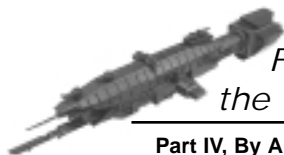
"Yes Commander, come in." called Blake.

As the door slid open and the tall first officer walked in Blake continued.

"I think I have a way out Commander, we can't keep fighting through these damned alien systems being pecked to death while the rebel task force keeps chasing us, we'll never make it that way."

Tucker frowned, "True sir, but we aren't strong enough to turn and fight...especially if Sheridan has those bloody Minbari helping him."

"Maybe we don't have to commander...we're going to be entering the Tlad'tha system shortly, from there I intend to make a run through Eridani and Epsilon systems to Quadrant 15, then on to Gorash...if all goes well we should find a safe haven there. The Centauri have no reason not to honor the treaty they had with us



## *Flight of the Warlock*

Part IV, By ALEX KETTLE

before the war."

Tucker stroked his chin for a moment looking down at the jump maps, "Sir, why not go from Eridani through Sh'lassan space to Raghesh, the Sh'lassan don't have anything that could catch us and we'd save ourselves a jump past Babylon 5...you know that's the heart of this rebellion, it's always well defended."

"The borders with the Centauri are being guarded...heavily, Sheridan doesn't trust the Centauri, if we try for it right away we'll have to fight. If we get to Quadrant 15 and avoid any Minbari problems we should be able to make it to the Centauri...and the jump routes inside the alliance are less likely to be heavily guarded. Any other thoughts?"

Commander Tucker straightened up, "No sir...this just might work. Only problem is how do get past the border defenses to Eridani, it's well defended."

Captain Blake smiled knowingly, "Don't worry Commander, I've already thought about that and signaled an old friend of mine. He was able to get in touch with some other friends of Clarke's that should help us fight our way through. We should be hearing from them soon. They'll meet us en-route to the Eridani system."

A few days of quiet travel later, somewhere in hyperspace between the Tlad'tha and Eridani systems.

"Captain I'm reading multiple contacts, coming into our hyperspace lane approaching fast, I read one IFF friendly, indeterminate # of unidentifieds", Commander Tucker reported.

"Captain, signal coming through for you on Com-channel Red-one", the comms officer called out.

Captain Blake turned in his seat, "Put it on the main screen, they're right on time."

A dark image resolved itself on the screen, showing what looked a bit like the Bridge of an Omega destroyer, but somehow it was more menacing, darker and alien. A single person was visible sitting in the captain's chair, but the movements of others off screen could be heard at the controls of the ship.

"Captain Blake? I'm Captain Ericson of the Omega-X destroyer Dominion, Captain

Donaldson sends his regards. He asked me to offer his apologies for not being here in person, but he was intercepted by a group of White stars and is fighting his way out of the Epsilon Indi system, he asked us to assist you."

Captain Blake smiled at the screen, "Glad to have you with us Captain, I'm sorry to hear about Donaldson but I'm sure he'll slip away yet. I'd heard about your ship but never seen one, if it's anything like the reports you'll be a welcome addition. I must ask however are you alone? We're detecting a number of unidentified contacts with you."

The face on the screen smiled thinly before replying, "Not to worry Captain, just some more friends anxious to help any ally of Clark. I think you'll find them most helpful in the next battle. We'll be in position to enter the Eridani system in a few hours, when we leave hyperspace you should move at full speed for the next beacon, we'll engage any system patrols long enough for you to escape then retreat ourselves. Good luck commander, if you make it we'll meet you at the Gorash system in a few weeks."

Captain Blake nodded, "Sounds good Captain, my thanks again, and we'll see you there. God speed."

The screen once again faded to the swirling orange glow of hyperspace, and, just then becoming visible was the faint image of an all black Omega, seemingly covered with long black spines, alongside which flew a number of small dart like ships and one larger warship. The battle was soon to be joined.

Little did Captain Blake realize that his move was not unexpected, and the EAS Vigilance was waiting.

### FORCES:

#### Clarke:

- EAS Warlock + any surviving fighters from previous battles. If playing as a one-off scenario then use full fighter compliment. Expert Navigator, Expert Technician, Expert Security Officer.

EAS Dominion- Shadow Omega Destroyer + 24 Thunderbolt assault fighters with 2 missiles each.

1 Drakh Attack ship

5 Drakh Raiders

#### Earth Alliance:

EAS Vigilance - Hyperion Command Cruiser - Elite Crew - 6 Star fury heavy fighters



EAS Neptune- Omega Destroyer - 24  
Thunderbolt assault fighters  
EAS Rommel -Nova Dreadnought - 24 Star  
fury heavy fighters  
EAS Archer - Sagittarius missile cruiser  
EAS Striker, Glory, Sacrifice - Artemis Heavy  
frigates

#### SETUP:

This is a fairly big battle- recommend using two full sets of maps setup side by side. If only one map is available, set it up by short ends to create a longer map. Either way it should create a longer than normal playing surface.

**Earth Alliance:** May setup anywhere on the Right half of map.

**Clarke:** All forces must jump in within 10 hexes of the left side of the map. Jump scatter rules in effect with following exceptions: No ship may scatter off of the map, all ships must be moving to the right after scatter (ignore direction scatter).

#### VICTORY CONDITIONS:

**Earth Alliance:** The true traitors have returned and the battle is joined, now is your chance to rid the Alliance of one of her most dangerous enemies and greatest embarrassments.

Minor Victory: Destroy the EAS Warlock

Major Victory: Destroy the EAS Warlock and EAS Dominion

Outstanding Victory: Destroy ALL enemy forces.

If the EAS Warlock escapes the battle is a loss.

**Clarke:** Escape is within your grasp, you are almost within reach of the second jump beacon, once past these pitiful rebels you'll be on your way again and away from these traitors.

Minor Victory: EAS Warlock must exit off of the right side of map.

Victory: EAS Warlock exits right side of map, EAS is able to withdraw back off the left side of map (or jump out).

Major Victory: EAS Warlock and EAS Dominion both escape, EAS Vigilance is destroyed.

Outstanding Victory: EAS Warlock and EAS Dominion both escape, all defending forces destroyed.

#### HISTORICAL:

In a long and brutal battle, the trap sprung by the defending forces worked. The Warlock was able to battle its way past the defenders with the help of the Drakh raiders, but the EAS Dominion was caught at close range by the EAS Rommel and crippled, then finally destroyed by the EAS Vigilance. While the battle was lost to the defenders with the Warlock slipping away deeper into EA space, destroying another of the Shadow Omegas and several ships from a mysterious alien force (Drakh) took the sting out of the loss. And the Vigilance turned once again to resume pursuit of the Warlock, this time heading out to make repairs at Babylon 5. For the now battered Warlock, it was a narrow escape, the rebels had been waiting.

Time was running out.

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# Why Centauri thank the Great Maker

#### Variants 4 Review By REID HUPACH

Ahhhh at last I get my hands on a copy of V4. Being the fanhead I am, I turn to the pages upon which my precious Centauri vessels are printed. With much glee I look upon these beauties and start to think of the evil amounts of damage I will be causing to my opponents. Finally a few ships worthy to be called Lions of the Galaxy. So enough drooling on my part. I will now explain why I feel these were some of the best ships put out for the Centauri.

Let's start small, the Lupa, ever since the first (now illegal) versions of the Lupa were made Ship of the Month a while ago I have been waiting for official versions. I am not disappointed. While the rules for LCVs do limit the uses of their EW, that applies to all of them so I have no gripes there. The Lupa comes in 4 flavors, the Matter Cannon, the Particle Cannon, the Med. Plasma Cannon and an Escort variant. All are agile and atmospheric capable. The first three are excellent quick strike and run away units, just right for an advance attack to weaken an enemy fleet before your big boys come in to mop up. They also can exploit an exposed flank or strike hard at a special unit (scout, etc.). The Matter Cannon and Particle Cannon versions are also great for chasing down cripples, being able to do enough damage fast enough to spoil an escape. The escort version is just that, a fast agile platform for 4 Twin arrays, able to either protect a ship from fighters or hunt them down and destroy them before they can do any damage. All 4 of these are well worth the points, use them well.

The Altaron, finally, an official ship armed with Assault Lasers. This weapon should be used on many more ships than it is, fast firing, long ranged and a good heavy hitter. The Altaron is a good ship to take along an enemy's flank peppering him with laser shots at ranges where only heavy weapons hit back well. Since most heavy weapons have forward fire arcs most ships have to turn to engage the Altaron thus exposing their flank to the heavy hitters in your main fleet. The



Altaron, an annoying pain in the Flank.

Now for the main course the PRIMUS MAXIMUS COMMAND CRUISER. If this wasn't such a good ship I would have to make a few bad jokes about whoever named it has seen Gladiator a few times to many. This is one real bad mean ship. Somehow AOG has decided to replace 2 Twin arrays with 2 battle lasers. That's 6 (count 'em) 6 Battle Lasers firing forward. Several Narn Admirals are going to lose lots of sleep over this. The Maximus is what the Primus should have been, the ultimate sniping platform for a cruiser sized ship. If I was a gambler I would bet on most of the Tournament fleets containing one of these this Gen-Con. The best way to use this ship is to just sit back at 40+ hexes and blow holes in enemy ships and laugh heavily when they can't hit you back (keep it to quiet snickers if they're Minbari). It still has 6 Twin Arrays for point defense and carries 12 fighters just for kicks. The Maximus is probably the Best Cap ship designed for the Centauri to date.

Well that's how I rate the Centauri ships printed in Variants 4. My final words are, Narn hide boots will be in style this year on Centauri Prime.

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# Uncle Mike's used starship lot

By CHRIS NASIPAK

## PART 2: WEAPONS

LAST month's column reviewed some of the hulls available on the open market. Some of them are quite useful, some of them rather less so. The key to all of them, however, is how well the buyer can arm them, and how well their sailors can employ what they end up with. So, this month, Uncle Mike will take some time to look at the interstellar arms market.

**Proprietary Technologies:** Gravitic and Molecular weapons are well liked by those who use them. But there's a reason they're not widespread: They're not for sale. Or, when they are, they usually come with some unpleasant conditions, such as continuing maintenance requirements, obligations to military action on behalf of the seller, or a vastly higher price than anyone who doesn't already have them can afford.

**Plasma:** Plasma weapons are powerful, hard-hitting, and simple. They tend to be robust and easy to maintain. Because of this, they are often available cheaply or can even be locally manufactured by an up-and-coming star nation. Even better, they tend to be smaller than most weapons of their size category, often allowing more to be squeezed into a single hull. The Heavy Plasma Cannon is one of the most powerful weapons available on the market. Drawbacks, however, are extensive: low accuracy, low range, and slow rate of fire, combined with an almost complete lack of viable anti-fighter defense. The plasma arsenal is best suited to beginning nations wishing to field heavy-hitting weapons on a budget.

**Particle Beams:** The Light Particle Beam is one of the first defensive guns most starting navies deploy. It's positively tiny, it can be mass-produced in huge numbers, and it makes a very useful interceptor. Superior to it is the Standard Particle Beam, slightly larger but with equal intercept capabilities, increased damage, and doubled range, making for an excellent anti-fighter weapon. Often compared to it is the Twin Array, which packs two light beams into a housing about the size of a Standard gun, providing excellent defensive capacity with anti-fighter firepower.

**Particle Cannons:** The Particle Beam's bigger, badder brother, Particle Cannons offer a slight reduction in rate of fire for a more concentrated blast. The mounts are larger -- definitely requiring a medium hardpoint -- and the fire control is optimized for targeting ships rather than small craft. Robust and easy to maintain, they are often mounted in wide-arc turrets, dealing out rapid slashes of beam fire. Their primary drawbacks are high power requirements, often straining weaker reactors, and the interceptability of their fire. (Countering this, their high rate of fire allows them to be pressed into service for intercept fire themselves in emergencies.)

**Bolters and Pulsars:** First developed by the Dilgar and quickly copied by many other races, these weapons were typically abandoned as Pulse technology arrived with its higher burst rate and improved fire control. Capable of ladling out healthy amounts of damage, pulsars are limited by the usual scattershot nature of

pulse fire. Bolters lack this limitation, delivering a fixed amount of standard damage only slightly lower than the average plasma shot. Considerably more power-efficient than Particle Cannons, they are often fielded by navies whose shipbuilding budget takes precedence over their research.

**Pulse Cannons:** The next step up from Pulsars, they are a favorite of many navies, including the powerful Narn Regime and Earth Alliance. The Medium Pulse Cannon is considered by some naval theorists to be the ideal medium weapon, combining excellent anti-fighter capabilities with shattering anti-ship firepower.

**Lasers:** High on maintenance and low on rate of fire, lasers are still popular on the battlefield for two reasons. First, there are very few defenses against them. Second, they dish out generous amounts of damage for a much lower power requirement than the Particle Cannon. Raking-mode fire allows them to slice through structure and systems with equal ease. They are of limited usefulness against enemy fighters, but this is easily compensated for with batteries of lighter guns, or by fielding fighters of your own.

**Missiles:** Ballistic weapons are another favorite, offering a flexibility that many weapons lack. Their independence of range, outside of their fuel limits, gives them a degree of accuracy unseen in other commonly available weapons. The common S-type launcher (and the more expensive, but worth the price, L-type), fits well into medium mounts with a generous ammunition allowance. The logistical problems of keeping them supplied are the major drawback most nations run into, but it is a cost many are willing to pay.

**Matter Weapons:** Prized for their ability to punch through armor, matter weapons are low-tech, robust, and powerful. They suffer from some of the same logistical problems as missiles, but their ammunition is considerably cheaper and easier to manufacture. They deliver a powerful punch, capable of eliminating weapons and thrusters or demolishing large chunks of hull in a single hit. Unfortunately, they lack the ability to penetrate the target more deeply than the initial location hit, but this is rarely a problem. The Gauss Cannon (first fielded by the Orieni two hundred years ago) is a fast-firing, incredibly robust weapon, copied by many races as they take the first steps to the stars. Slightly more advanced is the Railgun, with a rock-hard punch and good range with only a slight loss in rate of fire.

And that, gentlemen, is what's out there, and the pros and cons. Uncle Mike himself favors a good mix of weapons: you'll want something with good range for a first strike, something small and fast-firing for defense, and something hard-hitting for ripping the other guy to pieces. When fitting them to hard-points, keep in mind the traverse arcs available and the amount of maneuvering required to unmask each battery. The 'waggle' approach may look a little silly, but it works well, and a good heavy broadside can be even better if you've got it set up right.

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