

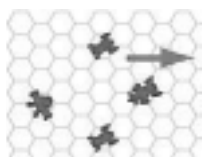
Baboon

MARCH
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INSIDE



New ships
for the Dilgar,
Torata, Alacans,
Centauri and Soul
Hunters



Pak'ma'ra fleet
formation tactics



Tactical guides for
the Minbari and
the use of
gravitic drives

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Home Goal

Fiction:
By BEN RUBERY

THE ADMIRALS were assembled in a chamber around a central imaging array. They were aboard the Hyach Dreadnought, flagship of the fleet, the most advanced ship they had. And they were considering the assault on Balos, the crown of the Dilgar's possessions. The Balosian admiral was pacing in a circle around the display showing his homeworld and a necklace of Dilgar installations choking it. He looked at it and then he looked around at the assembled admiralty, representing most of the League, the Earth Alliance, the Markab, the races hurt and pillaged by the Dilgar. An alliance formed to end the terror the Dilgar had become. But the Balosian admiral still paced. Still stopped, paused, and stared. He was sizing up the beings around him. The Descari admiral commanded seven ships, four of them tiny, only one of them cruiser sized. The Hyach Admiral commanded more than seventy powerful and high tech warships, the Earth Alliance admiral well over a hundred and fifty ships. But would it be enough?

The initial intelligence reports gave Dilgar ship numbers at over five hundred. Most of the Dilgar fleet had assembled to defend the large shipyards they had in the Balos system.

The Balosian admiral, Fstomasss, (the EA commander had made Thomas out of it) had a dozen warships at his command, but he knew he was the key to this operation. At his signal Balos would rise against the Dilgar, harassment attacks would become a full-scale attempt to kill every Dilgar on the planet. That was what he would bring to free his world. He would be buying freedom in blood shed on the warm sands of home. But he would have his home. His mate had been gravid when the fleet was defeated and forced from Balos, he would have children he had never seen if she was still alive. He hadn't asked, communications were

not with his clan, but with one that lived on the other side of the planet. The clan leaders knew what the signal was, but there would be no communication until the fleet jumped in system.

And it would soon be time. He had given every race contributing troops instructions as to where to land, and liaisons for the local clans.

He looked at the display, his world a yellow ball of hot desert, that his Balosian soldiers would thrive in, but most of the other race's warriors would wilt in. The exception was the Gaim troops, but they'd brought few insectoid soldier drones, they made the EA very uneasy given their disregard for life. But this would be a bloody battle. There would not be one with more death unless the Alliance invaded Omelos, and that looked unlikely. The EA senate was looking for a swift end to this war, and Hamoto was committed to giving them what they wanted.

Balos would be the true test, when the League and EA took their chance to destroy the Dilgar war machine.

He'd made a briefing through a translator, impressed upon those assembled the importance of the situation. Now it was Hamoto's turn. "Admirals," he spoke from a small podium, taking in the assembled ranks. "We are at the cusp of history. We know the evil that we face, and we have driven it back, almost to its home. But this is not over yet. So far we have been a growing armada fighting garrisons and holding forces. Now we face the might of the Dilgar fleet. This will be a hard battle, and we will all suffer losses, but we must prevail, or the Dilgar will be able to roll back to the border of EA space, and take every homeworld left undefended. We win here, or we have lost the war. Impress this on your pilots and crews. And be sure the Dilgar commander is doing the same."

There was a hush. A speech was expected, virtually compulsory for the annals of history, either said now or

released after the battle to the news media. But Fstomass had not expected something so realistic.

There were other words, some exchanges between the admirals, but the briefing was over.

A shuttle ride, and Fstomass was seated in his chair aboard his flagship, designated Balos One in the fleet, Frassa yn Crja in his language, but the human mouth could not pronounce it, so it was Balos One.

The ship's captain, Frayqs, had already reported the fleet ready, and formally handed command back to his admiral. A score of ships, a few squadrons of fighters, most of them purchased Delta-Vs, were all the Balosians had to contribute to the battle in space. But the fleet was getting ready to jump into hyperspace, and Balos was not a long journey from here. And then there was the waiting. The bustle of the bridge. Endless checks of the outdated equipment. They must build their own after this war was over. The Centauri had cut off supplies of spares to avoid angering the Dilgar, and had withdrawn technical support for the Assault Lasers they had. They'd been forced to cannibalize parts and borrow spares from the Abbai. But every ship in his small fleet was combat capable, every being under him knew what was expected of them.

It seemed to take forever to make the journey through hyperspace. But then they were there. The plan called for the Balosians to jump in first and then transmit a beacon for the rest of the Alliance fleet to come in on, as the Dilgar were jamming the beacon in the hope of delaying a strike. They were assigned to destroy the small Dilgar base producing the jamming signal and then move to engage the OSAT net and land the first troops, as the rest of the fleet jumped in to engage the Dilgar fleet.

Fstomass didn't think for a second that it would work out so easily, but he would have to eliminate the base jamming the beacon, which was giving out a ghost of a signal. In order to find the system his squadron had a hastily converted electronic warfare craft, hoping to pick up a faint sideband signal outside the blanket jamming or the mass shadow of the Balosian star.

EA ships had swept hyperspace in the region several times for probes, destroying them as soon as the Dilgar deployed them. And they had done the same at Tirrith, as the Hyach had at Shri-shraba, keeping the Dilgar from anticipating scout intrusions into captured systems. Hopefully they had yet to replace the probes here.

The signal from the scout ship came in. They'd detected a probe, but it was not transmitting. Their luck was in, and as the scout found the mass shadow of the Balos system in hyperspace, and used that to hunt down the source of the jamming, the fleet got into formation to stream through the jump point the scout opened. All fighters were launched and formed up alongside their carriers.

Fstomass waited for all the reports to come in

yellow, and then gave the order to jump. Within ten seconds the first half of the Balosian Free Navy had jumped into the home system, and the scout was scanning local space and assigning targets. For once things had gone well and they were less than four kilometers from the jamming station. The fleet locked on and opened fire. Within a matter of seconds the station was an expanding ball of gas, torn apart by fire from Ion Cannons and Assault Lasers. Fstomass signaled the comm officer, and the attack signal was broadcast.

The Dilgar were not slow to respond, and two Pentacans of Destroyers and a Cruiser Pentacan were already moving to intercept the Balosian fleet. Fstomass ordered the fighters to move to engage the Dilgar fighter squadrons, an angry swarm of red darts on the tactical display.

A mixture of Balosian Shasis and purchased BA Delta-Vs broke against the wave of Thoruns moving to attack. Tapping his fingerclaws on the tac board Fstomass ordered two Esthasa destroyers to support the fighters, while designating four of the closing Dilgar frigates as targets for the fleet.

Fire was exchanged, the fighters broke up to fight their private little wars, and particle beams started to stab lone Thoruns out of space. Two Sussa frigates and one Esthasa destroyer had been lost in the first exchange of fire, while all four of the frigates Fstomass had designated were either floating debris or slowly turning end over end in space. Fstomass ordered the fleet to retrograde as he set a target point, hoping to exploit the long range of the ion cannons and wear the Dilgar down. The Dilgar fleet continued to close. The fighter battle was stalemated, as the larger number of Balosian fighters fought the significantly better Thorun Dartfighters. The smaller Dilgar ships were still out of range, the larger Dilgar ships were charging their weapons, but the Balosians had weapons charged now. Fstomass designated three of the Dilgar destroyers, hoping to disable them before they reached firing range. They fired. One of the Dilgar ships exploded under the weight of fire, another went dark as it lost its forward hull section, while the last target kept coming.

The Dilgar were getting closer, and their cruisers fired again. The two Esthasas supporting the fighters vanished in a hail of Bolter and Pulsar fire and some of the Thoruns broke through, heading for the scout. Some of the red darts moving towards the scout snapped out as the nearby ships fired at them, but enough got through for the scout to start to flicker dangerously green on the tactical board.

The Dilgar had closed, and close range fire was being traded between ships. Fstomass watched as one of his Esthasa destroyers slowly began to spin away, one side reduced to slag by the fury of the Dilgar barrage, and a crippled Sussa rammed a Dilgar strike carrier, as the fighter melee continued.

The ship rocked from fire, as a Dilgar Mishakur drew close. The Seffensa that

Fstomass was aboard was the target of the dreadnought, and its return fire was pitifully weak in return. As the dreadnought closed, a flight of Delta-Vs tried to strafe it, only to be shot down by Scatter Pulsars. A destroyer was brushed aside.

Unfortunately the Dilgar ship did not notice the Thosalsi carrier until too late. Pouring the last of its fire into the Dilgar frigate it was dueling with, it pushed its engines to maximum and headed straight for the Dilgar carrier. Life pods started to stream from the bottom of the hull, and a pair of shuttles sped from the central bay. The Dilgar fire directed towards the carrier was too late, it smashed into the side of the Mishakur, one of its side pods coming free as it tore through the dreadnought, rotating and scraping against the behemoths hull.

The detonation of the Mishakur's reactor outshone the Balosian star for a few seconds, but his vision cleared just in time to see the Tratharti gunship come through the wreckage and fire.

The ship wrenched, and he was thrown to the deck. The abandon ship signal was sounded. Explosions started to wrack the ship. Frayqs pulled him to his feet, and moved him from the bridge. Frayqs waved two ratings over, and they carried him from the bridge. He regained his footing, and they began to move down through two decks to the pods. He could hear gentle thuds as pods left the ship. They would head for Balos once launched. Fstomass was climbing down a ladder to the pods when he heard the dull roar. He let go of the ladder and pushed down, using the lack of gravity to float onto the pod deck. The pressure wave hit him, throwing him against the wall. He heard voices, then silence and emptiness.

Fstomass woke slowly. He could feel warmth on his skin. He could feel liquid pouring from one of his ear flaps. The tinny taste of blood was in the air. But he could see the sky. Someone must have carried him to an escape pod.

"We've got to get him inside."

"No, the sun will bring him round in a minute, he's lucky to be alive and he needs to warm up."

"They'll be here in less than two minutes."

"He's awake!"

There was a Balosian face in front of him.

"Sir, we've got to get underground, we've got incoming Dilgar aircraft."

He could only hear on one side of his head. He was helped to his feet, a small group of Balosians around him, an EA trooper by a cave mouth, stooped over some sort of radar. His infra vision picked up several dozen shapes inside the cave. Bright lights in the dark, human, not Balosian. Which meant they'd show up on a heat scan of the region. They had to get further into the cave. Nothing would give him greater pleasure. He grabbed a rifle proffered to him, and walked into darkness.



BATTLEMASTER Tal'Dur glanced over at his command console. His fleet of destroyers, frigates, cruisers and his own heavy carrier lay before him on the screen. Off to the edge lay the approaching Drazi force. His scout told him the composition of the enemy task group. Tal'Dur snickered quietly to himself. Pathetic, he thought. Turning to his communication officer, he gave the launch order. With an arrogant smile he spoke aloud "Now we will see who is the true warrior race".

Weaponry

The Dilgar made use of a variety of original weapons that were the pre-cursor to a number of modern weapons, such as the Pulse Cannon, which is widely used by the Earth Alliance, Narn Regime and various pirate and civilian forces. They also helped introduce known space to the true horror of total, genocidal warfare through the use of mass drivers, nuclear weapons and numerous biological and chemical weapons.

But this article will only cover the shipboard weapons used by the Dilgar.

Bolters - One of the best weapons in use by the Dilgar and still used today by some minor forces. Due to its constant standard damage, it's much easier for Dilgar players (and their opponents) to assess what it would take to eliminate an opponent. They don't have to worry about

February 2228 saw the unleashing of one of the most powerful and devastating war machines ever conceived by a younger race. That of course being the Dilgar Invasion. The Dilgar used weapons and tactics and ships their opponents, the League of Non-Aligned Worlds, could not cope with, and if it wasn't for the timely intervention of the Earth Alliance, the entire League might have fallen.

Scott McGaffin examines the various ships, fighters, weapons and tactics used by the Dilgar. Also included will be some suggested tactics for combating certain period opponents. This essay only uses comparisons and examples from the Dilgar Invasion era.

dragging the damage across an opponent, thereby reducing the amount that impacts the facing structure. Due to its standard damage it is much easier for a Bolter to knock off a structure block as opposed to a raking weapon. This fact alone makes it much easier for Dilgar units to knock out their opponent. The downside to the Bolter is that its Laser contemporaries tend to do notably more damage. For example the Medium Laser does 3D10+12 damage (giving a range from 15-42), whereas the Heavy Bolter only does 24 damage. But, to counter this the Heavy Bolter has better range. Another thing to note is that the bulk of Dilgar opponents (with the exception of the Abbai, Drazi and Earth Alliance) tend to have poor interception capabilities. If using a vessel that has both Lasers and Bolters, consider firing the Laser first to knock

off the weapons, thrusters etc. before firing the Bolter. That way more of the Bolter's energy can be expended against the facing structure block.

Lasers - The Dilgar's other main weapons are the Light and Medium Laser. Although it has the potential to inflict more damage than the Heavy Bolter, this damage is raking and therefore will usually be spread over a facing. See the note above about firing with Bolters. Against high intercept races, such as the Earth Alliance, it has the added bonus of not being interceptable. Use Lasers to rake off an opponent's systems.

Quad Pulsar - The precursor to the Heavy Pulse Cannon. Able to fire at long range (similar to the Heavy Bolter) and with the same recharge rate as the Heavy Bolter, the Quad Pulsar can be

DILGAR WAR: TACTICAL ANALYSIS

a devastating weapon capable of easily inflicting a massive amount of damage. The Quad Pulsar has the capability to destroy virtually any non-primary system facing it (with the exception of certain side thrusters). If possible, get an EW boost from a nearby scout to improve your chances of increasing your number of pulses.

Energy Pulsar - Similar to the Medium Pulse Cannon, but notably inferior. The Energy Pulsar is a mediocre secondary weapon, mainly due to its terrible number of pulses and brutal volley count. Unfortunately the poor volley count is a problem endemic to all Pulsars. Don't count on it to win any battles for you.

Point Pulsar - A rare weapon similar to the Energy Pulsar but with some improvements. Its fire control is considerably better versus capital ships and a little better versus mediums. Its number of pulses generally tends to be superior, it has superior range and it has the added bonus of each pulse potentially being used as a called shot (with only a -4 penalty vs. the usual -8). The only downside to it, is it's terrible at hitting fighters. Don't bother firing at them.

Scatter Pulsar - Very similar, at least in concept, to the Light Pulse Cannon. The Scatter Pulsar is excellent at putting out quite a volume of anti-fighter firepower. Unfortunately the damage is rather weak, a mere six points. Against warships it's only useful if you intend on pecking your opponent to death. Most warships will just shrug off the Scatter Pulsar's fire. Even most heavy fighters, such as the Brakiri Pikitos, will shrug off a solitary pulse. The key to using it is concentration of fire. If you intend on utterly destroying a fighter flight you have to hit it with more than one Pulsar. If facing light fighters such as Drazi Star Snakes, one Pulsar may be sufficient if you can get maximum pulses and you're lucky, otherwise fire two Pulsars. If facing medium fighters such as Markab Droftas, fire two to three Pulsars (you'll have to be the judge). If facing heavy fighters such as the aforementioned Pikitos, fire at least 3 Pulsars. Keep in mind this should be in conjunction with your own fighters.

Plasma Cannons - Should be used in much the same way as Bolters except the range for Plasma Cannons is generally not as good as Bolters but the damage is considerably more. Use them for knocking off large structure blocks. Because of their large damage and short range, hold off firing them until you are extremely close to your opponent. Hit him with Bolters and Lasers at long range and Plasma Cannons at close range.

Plasma Torch - An excellent one-turn recharge weapon capable of inflicting quite a bit of damage. Due to its poor range and overheating, avoid firing until you're virtually guaranteed of hitting, in other words, point blank range.

Mass Driver - A huge weapon capable of inflicting an enormous amount of damage. Unfortunately you and your target have to be

immobile and can only be targeted on enormous units, bases and planets. In situations where you are not attacking one of the above, then shut off the mass driver for extra power. The nine extra power is a huge bonus that can be used to increase thrust or EW.

Class-S Missile Rack - The standard missile rack in use by the Dilgar. This gives Dilgar units the ability to hit an opponent for a good-sized chunk of damage every other turn. Consider taking long-range missiles especially when facing certain races, such as the Pak'ma'ra, who you do not want to get close to. Period opponents either use the S Rack or the poorer SO rack. Remember because of no intercept degradation versus ballistics, you should either saturate a target with missiles or combine it with Heavy Bolter and/or Quad Pulsar shots, thereby giving an opponent trouble as to which heavy weapon to try and intercept.

Structure & Armor

Dilgar ships are known for having poor armor and structure. While their structure blocks have average armor, their systems such as weapons and thrusters have anywhere from mediocre to terrible armor. Compare the Mishakur Dreadnought to its EA counterpart, the Nova. Structure armor is a little higher on the Mishakur, but look at the weapons. The EA Medium Lasers have equal or more than every other non-primary system on the Mishakur. Even terrible ships such as the Mitoc Jomic Frigate are as well armored if not better armored than the Mishakur. Because of this, Dilgar systems are easily susceptible to being raked off. Beware of opponents with large raking weapons such as Lasers, Graviton Beams and Particle Cannons.

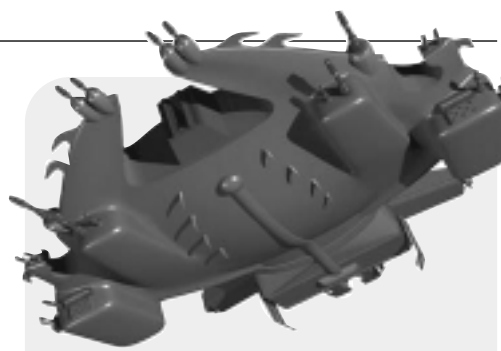
For structure, Dilgar ships are about equal to most of their League counterparts but are notably inferior to their Earth Alliance opponents.

Jump Drives

It's also worth noting that the Dilgar jump drives are rather poor as they have terrible jump delays of 36 turns. Most of the races they face, with the exception of the Grome and Hurr will have better to significantly better jump delays. So don't plan on any quick lightning raids, you're going to be there for a while. Unless of course you have two ships with jump drives.

Dilgar Warships

Leskrati Jumpcruiser - The replacement for the Ni'Tratha Jumpcruiser. The Leskrati compared to other mainline cruisers is somewhat lacking in firepower. Its anti-fighter firepower though is excellent. Due to it being one of the few ships equipped with a jump engine, it should stay well back from the battlefield, as its anti-shiping firepower isn't very good. If there is a lack of jump drives in the fleet, then this ship



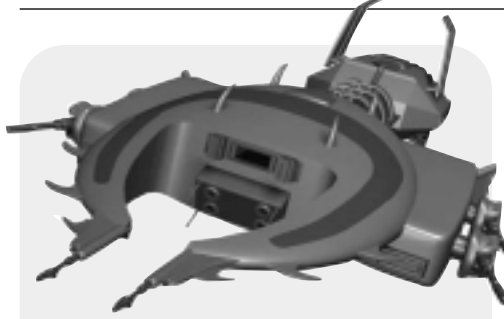
Mishakur Dreadnought - The pride of the Dilgar fleet, the Mishakur mounts a large array of weaponry able to deal with any opponent at any range. For long range it has Heavy Bolters and Quad Pulsars, for medium range it has Medium Lasers and missiles and finally for close in work it has a pair of powerful Plasma Torches. For anti-fighter work it mounts six Scatter Pulsars with excellent all-around coverage. To further complement its firepower it carries a single fighter squadron. Its EW for the period is superb and it possesses a rather high command bonus. The Mishakur is easily a match for most of its period opponents with maybe the exception of the EA Nova Dreadnought and some of the bigger Hyach ships such as the Urutha Kal Dreadnought and Irokai Kam Battlecruiser.

Mishakur-B Supercarrier - The first Supercarrier ever constructed, the Mishakur-B brings six entire fighter squadrons to battle. This of course came at the expense of some of its medium and heavy weapons. In return its anti-fighter firepower was increased by a third. The Mishakur-B still possesses considerable forward firepower and should not be discounted as a threat. Due to its lack of side and rear firing guns, the Mishakur-B should stay at the back of the battleline and snipe at the enemy. Also wherever it goes it should have at least a couple of escorts with it for anti-fighter and anti-shiping duty.

Mishakur-D Command Dreadnought - A unique ship, the Mishakur-D is a monster. Its medium and long range firepower is notably improved with the addition of one forward heavy bolter, two class-S missile racks and two rear mounted medium lasers. Its armor is improved in almost every location making it the most heavily armored vessel in Dilgar service. Its command bonus is further improved by a staggering +3 and it also has two Mass Drivers added to it! And its free thrust is hugely improved, making this ship rather quick and mobile for a vessel of its size. This all comes at the expense of the two Plasma Torches and the fighter hangar and a -18 power deficit (which can be covered by shutting off the mass drivers). Fortunately (for your opponents) there is only one of these ships. Due to losing two of its close range weapons, the Mishakur-D is generally a long-range ship. One tactic to use if close range cannot be avoided is to overrun your opponent. Fire all your forward batteries going in and as you race by, unload with all your rear guns. Remember to fire your Lasers first!

Dilgar renders: FABIO PASSARO

DILGAR WAR: TACTICAL ANALYSIS



Ochlavita Destroyer - The heavy workhorse of the Dilgar fleet. A decent all around ship. Although its firepower is less than amazing, it is adequate for the job at hand. It's the only ship to mount the Point Pulsar (there is one other ship that mounts it, but it's an Ochlavita variant). The Ochlavita is a fast, maneuverable ship that should use its speed and mobility to get in and make called shots with its point pulsars. The Ochlavita does have poor anti-fighter defenses as it only mounts two Scatter Pulsars, which don't cover the forward 90° arc. These ships should be operated in fast attack Pentacans composed of two-three of these base models, a D (destroyer leader) variant and an E (escort) variant.

Ochlavita-D Destroyer Leader - Easily superior to the base model. Has two additional Scatter Pulsars installed to finally give an Ochlavita good 360° anti-fighter coverage. Quad Pulsars are put on which greatly increases the damage potential. This also gives the Ochlavita the ability to fight at greater ranges, which helps prolong its life. Team this ship up with other Ochlavitas to create fast attack groups.

Ochlavita-E Escort Destroyer- Probably the best escort in Dilgar service. Mounts an excellent array of Scatter Pulsars to deal with light fighters and Energy Pulsars to deal with heavy fighters. Every carrier group should have at least one of these. If you're facing lots of enemy fighters, you better take a couple of these excellent ships.

Ochlavita-M Missile Destroyer - A bombardment ship similar to the Athraskala War Bomber, except faster, more maneuverable, equal to better armor, better EW, vastly superior anti-fighter defenses, harder to hit and it's cheaper. You get the picture. The only thing the War Bomber has over it is the two Quad Pulsars. The only downside to this ship is it's rare, and chances are you're only rare choice will be the destroyer leader (unless you are fighting a large battle and can field at least 10 Ochlavitas).

Ochlavita-B Carrier Destroyer - The smallest dedicated Dilgar carrier. Loses the useless bomb rack and downgrades the Medium Lasers to Light Bolters. But in return it can carry a full squadron of fighters. This ship is great for quick raids where you have to get in fast, inflict maximum damage and get out fast.

should definitely have an escort of some kind. Probably an anti-ship escort as it can protect itself against fighters.

Leskrati-D Command Cruiser - The Leskrati-D goes a long way to correcting one of the problems with the base Leskrati model. That being poor anti-ship firepower. All three Energy Pulsars are upgraded to the powerful Quad Pulsar, thereby massively increasing the Leskrati's offensive firepower. The Leskrati-D does lose a pair of Scatter Pulsars, but is still left with six of them, which is more than adequate. Due to the Quad Pulsars, the improved Leskrati is now more than ever able to sit further back from its opponent and hit him. Fire the Lasers first! Don't forget the upgraded command bonus.

Athraskala-C War Bomber - This ship is a nasty surprise for someone who thinks they're attacking the Athraskala base model. Geared almost totally for anti-shipping duty, the war bomber mounts an impressive array of firepower including two of the excellent Quad Pulsars and seven class-S missile racks. Unfortunately it keeps the same dismal anti-fighter defenses as the base design. Due to its general lack of close-in firepower, a Dilgar player should consider taking long-range missiles to hit his opponent at a safe distance. If there's no enemy fighters around, then consider shutting off the two Scatter Pulsars and combine with the extra +4 power to raise your EW from seven to eight.

Jashakar Frigate - The light workhorse of the Dilgar fleet. For 400 points you get a fast, maneuverable, well armed little ship. Packs an impressive amount of firepower for a vessel of its size. Downside is it's a relatively close range ship (which doesn't help its survival). Also it's fighter bait, as it doesn't even mount a single Scatter Pulsar. A suggested tactic would be to shut off the rear Plasma Torches for extra power to increase your speed and/or turning power. Great for operating in small Pentacans.

Jashakar-E Escort Frigate - An excellent little escort ship, second only to the Ochlavita-E. Possesses excellent overlapping 360° Scatter Pulsar coverage. Include at least one of these in every Jashakar attack group. A suggested tactic would be to use the extra power to increase your maneuverability and try and get the drop on any nearby enemy fighter squadrons.

Jashakar-N Minesweeper - The Dilgar's sole minesweeper. Mounts a decent array of Medium Bolters to deal with any pesky mines it is sent out to destroy. It's not too bad against ships either as the Medium Bolters cycle faster than Medium Lasers.

Jashakar-P Pulsar Frigate - An "iffy" variant as it relies on the somewhat lackluster Energy Pulsar. Consider shutting off either the Light Bolters and/or Scatter Pulsars to get extra power to increase the EW. You need it for extra pulses. For more reliable firepower, use the Jashakar-N instead.

Protra Scoutship - The Dilgar's sole ELINT ship (until the improved Protra). Possesses excellent sensors, but its weaponry is poor (which is alright for a scout, but not good for a battle scout). Has virtually no anti-fighter fire-

power. This is exceptionally bad as chances are if this thing's anywhere near a battle, it's going to be fighters that catch it. It's also not particularly fast either. As a battle scout it isn't very good, so use with caution.

Protra-I Improved Scoutship - A much needed upgrade. All of the upgrades were to the ship's weapon suite. Its anti-fighter firepower still isn't very good but it is considerably better than the base model. Also, due to the medium bolters it can stand off a little ways and fight. Also unlike the previous model, which has absolutely zero interception capability, the improved Protra at least has some.

Abrithi Assault Cruiser - The Dilgar's sole assault class ship. To do its job it carries a large array of assault shuttles. To further enhance its cargo survival, the ship is atmosphere capable. It does possess some anti-ship firepower, but unlike most assault ships, it does not have a lot. Avoid attacking other ships if possible, as the Abrithi is too weak in weapons and structure to survive long. Also note its anti-fighter defenses are rather poor, so it may require an escort of some kind.

Abrithi-B Light Carrier - A small dedicated carrier, the Abrithi-B carries a single fighter squadron. Its anti-ship firepower is downgraded in exchange for increasing its anti-fighter defenses. If you're going to have a number of assault cruisers, consider taking at least one of these as the improved anti-fighter firepower and fighter coverage will be needed to help protect the assault ships' troop cargo.

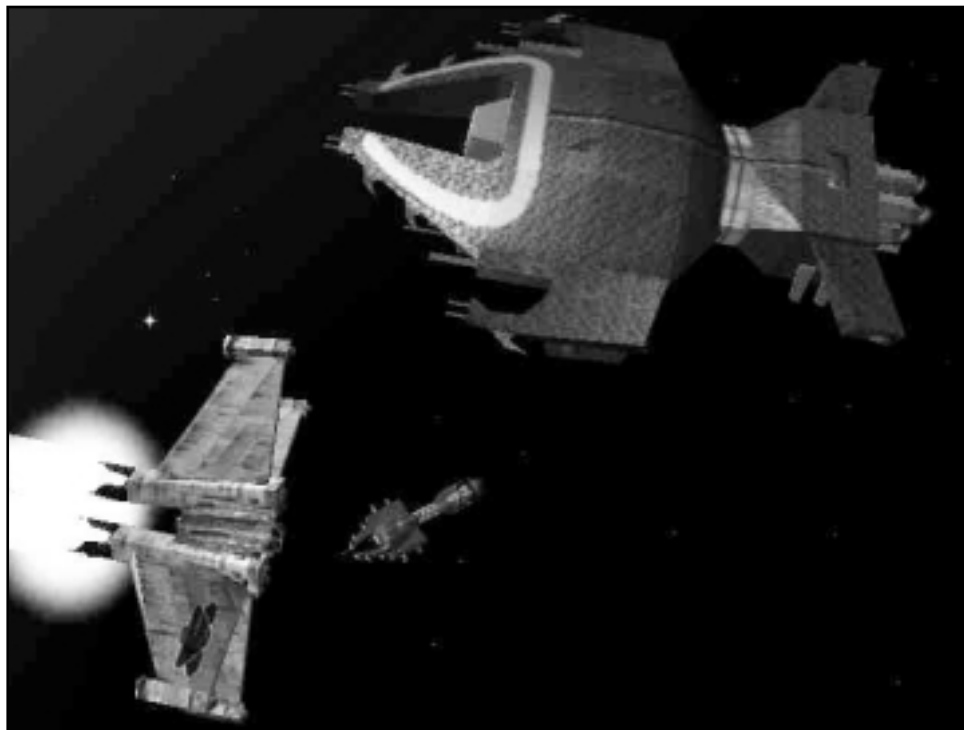
Delegor Suicide Frigate - The ship has one use, that being to fly into enemy ships. Preferably important enemy ships. It is the ultimate kamikaze. Go full defensive EW and head right at the enemy's biggest ship at maximum speed. There are three things you can do with the Pulsars. One, shoot down enemy fighters that are going to be gunning for you. Two, use them for interception as the enemy is going to be doing their best to destroy you before you can complete your task. And three, shut them off to increase your EW. If you can take them, take lots, as they're cheap. Your opponent is going to be shooting at them, which means he won't be focusing on your actual main warships.

Eskravat Refueling Barge - This ship is very similar to the Athraskala Heavy Bomber and should be dealt with essentially the same way. Unfortunately you won't fair quite as well as the bomber as you have no extra power and no mass driver to get power from. But, you do have nicely armored cargo bays to absorb lots of damage.

Eskravat-H Medical Ship - The ship has pretty much no offensive capability, but does have pretty good anti-fighter firepower. Use the assault shuttles as sort of a poor-man's fighter.

Rishakar Early Frigate- An early Dilgar ship. It's reasonably quick and maneuverable. Has brutal anti-fighter defenses, but its anti-shipping firepower is pretty good. But this firepower is limited to close range. Otherwise it's a bargain for 275 points. Race in and fire. Hopefully you'll survive for another pass. Use it to completely destroy smaller enemy ships and if you get destroyed in the process, oh well; it's only 275 points.

DILGAR WAR: TACTICAL ANALYSIS



Ni'Tratha Jumpercruiser - The first Dilgar jump capable warship. Its firepower and capabilities are poor compared to later Dilgar ships, but it's relatively cheap and durable. Otherwise use the Leskrati in its place.

Senschuka Patrol Ship - The Dilgar's sole agile ship. Useful only as a quick attack ship. Its Medium Bolters give it the ability to stand off at more than point blank range. Anti-fighter defenses are rather meager and any real warship will smash this ship aside. Great for anti-raider work though.

Period Opponents

Alacans - The Alacans are a pathetic joke. Their fighters are no match for yours. Their ships are no match for yours. Their capital ships do have weapons that can cause you harm though. Start at long range and crush them. Their Atrimis is probably their best ship. Destroy it first. They have poor anti-fighter defenses so consider sending in some fighter waves to hit them first.

Balosians - Fighting at long range doesn't work so well with the Balosians. In fact they might be able to hit you before you can hit them, mainly due to their long ranged Ion weapons. Their weapons cycle quickly and their ships are well armored. Their ships are flawed in that they do not have a lot of weapons on them. Hit them with your fighters, as they will not be able to deal with swarms of fighters unless they bring a Thosalsi. Bolter and Plasma armed ships may be required to smash through their large armor structure blocks. The Seffensa is their best ship and can cause you the most harm, destroy it first.

Earth Alliance - Here is where you will have a problem. They can match you ship for ship, fighter for fighter. EA ships of this era tend to have a lot of plasma weapons. You will outrange

them usually. Try and keep the range open as long as possible, because once they close, you will start to take serious losses mainly due to your lack of huge damage potential weapons (Plasma, Railguns), and poor structure and armor. EA ships also have excellent interception capabilities, so you'll have to overload your targets defenses when not firing lasers. The scariest ship you'll face is the Nova dreadnought. Kill it as soon as possible!

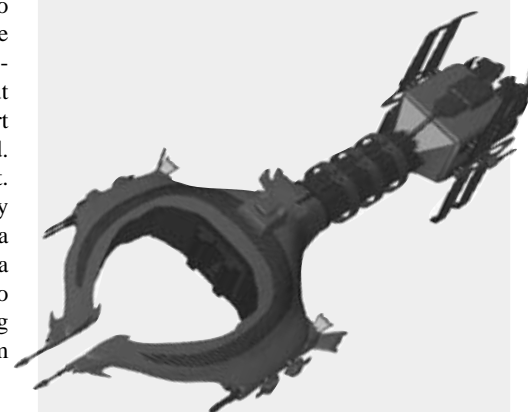
Markab - Markab ships tend to rely on Plasma weapons for their main weapons. Kill at long range. Beware of Plasma Wave armed ships as they can hit you at long range and wipe off numerous facing systems due to their flash damage. Consider sending in Ochlavitas with their Point Pulsars to kill the Plasma Waves with called shots. Try and avoid sending in fighters to do most of the dirty work as Markab ships are armed with the dreaded scattergun, which is easily capable of wiping your fighter squadrons out of space. To this end, wipe out Romak escort frigates on sight if you have fighters launched. The Shafab is their best ship, destroy them first. Pak'ma'ra- Simple, fight at long range. They will be unable to reply unless they have a Pla'sall'e Wave Cruiser on the field. Pak'ma'ra ships also tend to be very weak when it comes to anti-fighter defenses. Sit at 4+ hexes (if using missiles laden heavy Thoruns) and destroy them at will.

Brakiri - Fighting the Brakiri is the exact opposite of fighting the Pak'ma'ra. If you stay at long range the Brakiri will tear you apart with powerful Graviton Beams and rapid firing Grav Cannons. Close to short range. Brakiri close range weapons tend to be few in number. Due to the long range and recharge of the Graviton Beam, you'll have to face the fact that you're going to get hit hard initially. Then when they're recharging, close in and destroy them. Also their



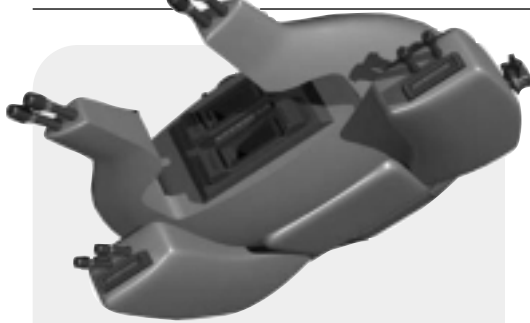
Tratharti Gunship - The Tratharti brings medium and long-range firepower similar to the Mishakur to battle. It is one of only three classes of ships that utilize the Heavy Bolter, and it uses them quite well. It mounts six Heavy Bolters and 2 Medium Lasers, all with excellent wide arcs. To give it the ability to easily bust open bases, it mounts a huge Mass Driver. When not facing a base/planet, turn off the Mass Driver to cancel the power deficit and give you +5 power to do with as you wish. The real disadvantage of this ship is its poor anti-fighter defenses. It only mounts a pair of Scatter Pulsars and these don't cover the front 90° arc. This ship either needs an anti-fighter escort or a flight/squadron on patrol around it to protect it from enemy fighters.

Tratharti-G Heavy Gunship - This variant fixes some of the flaws of the base model. First and probably the best change is the addition of two more scatter pulsars. This gives it full overlapping 360° anti-fighter coverage. No doubt this was added due to encountering heavy fighter forces such as those used by the EA and Cascor. Another change was to its anti-ship firepower. The pair of Medium Lasers were swapped out for an additional pair of Heavy Bolters. This can be a good change and it can be a bad change, depending on your situation and your playing style. Also its anti-base/planet capability was hamstrung as the Mass Driver was removed. Also take note that the EW was slightly improved.



Targath Strike Cruiser - The Targath is probably the main Dilgar attack cruiser and is one the best all around Dilgar ships. It has good, long-range heavy firepower with good arcs, decent anti-fighter defenses, excellent EW and it carries two squadrons of fighters to further increase its tactical flexibility. A force should definitely include a few of these well made vessels.

DILGAR WAR: TACTICAL ANALYSIS

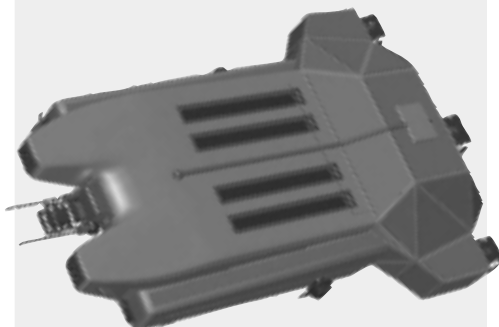


Garasoch Heavy Carrier - The standard Dilgar heavy carrier. This ship exists simply to bring four squadrons of fighters to battle. Its anti-fighter firepower is good; its anti-ship firepower is feeble at best. This ship requires a large number of escorts and should never approach the heart of any battle. Keep it as far away from the enemy as possible!



Thorun Dartfighter - A decent all around fighter. More than a match for most League fighters. An even match for the EA Nova class Star Fury.

Heavy Thorun Dartfighter - A much improved version of the Thorun. Better armored, better offensive bonus, and the ability to carry missiles with a minor loss in thrust make this fighter a serious threat. Easily worth the extra 2 points.



Athraskala Heavy Bomber - The main Dilgar planetary bombardment ship. Not much can be said about this unit, as no one would ever take it in a pick-up battle. This vessel (along with the medical ship) would only appear in a "stop them bombing the planet" type scenario or in a convoy battle. In all cases, the bomber should go full defensive, unless there are enemy fighters buzzing around, in which case put a few points into CCEW. To sum this ship up, its anti-fighter defenses are brutal and its anti-ship weapons are rather poor. It should do whatever it takes not to get hit.



ships tend to have poor anti-fighter defenses. But, beware of Brakiri carriers! Their Falkosis aren't much of a threat to your ships but can keep your fighters very occupied, but their Pikitos are devastating. They can easily shrug off 1-2 hits from a Scatter Pulsar, and their Light Graviton Beam can rip through your ships like they were made of paper. If you see Pikitos, hit them with every fighter available and send an escort their way to assist.

Vree - The Vree will want to get pretty close to you, so keep them at range also. This has the added bonus of reducing the amount of damage you will sustain when they do fire. This is one situation where you may want to bring your scouts in close to reduce the effects of Vree offensive EW. They may not have a lot of weapons but the ones they do have are very powerful. Their fighter defenses on some of their ships are quite poor. Capitalize on this. You will find their ability to 'rotate' damage quite annoying though. The key is to hit them with a massive volley. The Xorr is probably their most powerful ship. It is easily able to destroy your ships with impunity. Beware of their Tzymm Heavy Fighter. It's just like the Brakiri Pikitos. Kill it before it can mulch your ships (it does this really well).

Abbai - Fighting at long range isn't going to work too well as the Abbai Assault Lasers can match you. Therefore close to short-medium range. Abbai interception ability is second only

to the EA, so you'll have to overload their defenses. Due to their shields, Comm Disruptors and Particle Impeders it will take more damage to knock out their ships than at first glance. Abbai ships don't have a lot of heavy weapons on them, if you sit around 10-15 hexes you will out gun them. Avoid sending fighters too close to their ships as the Quad Array is quite good at blowing them up. Also be aware of their small fast attack ships such as the Tiraca and Tulati. They'll outmaneuver anything you have. Make them come to you, avoid chasing them around.

Drazi - The Drazi are a race that you can outshoot at long range, but that won't last long. Their ships are quick, and reasonably maneuverable. They're going to close as quickly as possible, where they can bring their numerous rapid cycling weapons to bear. And they'll outnumber you, as their ships tend to be pretty cheap. Where they do have a problem is in fighter defenses. Pretty much all of their ships have a vulnerable rear arc with no defenses at all. Send in your fighters to tail his ships. Also worthy of note is the small number of Drazi ships that have jump drives.

That concludes this study of the Dilgar ships and tactics.

* * *



Shipyard Supervisor

By ROMAN PERNER

Dilgar Jashakar Testbed Frigate

A testbed for advanced weapons - this ship offers a peek at what Dilgar scientists were working on at the end of the war: The Battle Pulsar was an improvement on the Energy Pulsar, firing an increased number of pulses; while the first Neutron Bolter was to be the beginning of a new generation of Bolter weaponry, using newly incorporated gravitic tech to fire a bolt of neutron particles at its targets - these guns came too late to save them though, since they never entered regular service before the battle of Omelos... The ship also mounted another experiment - a one-shot missile pod, intended to give a little ballistic alpha strike capability to ships too small to carry regular missile racks...

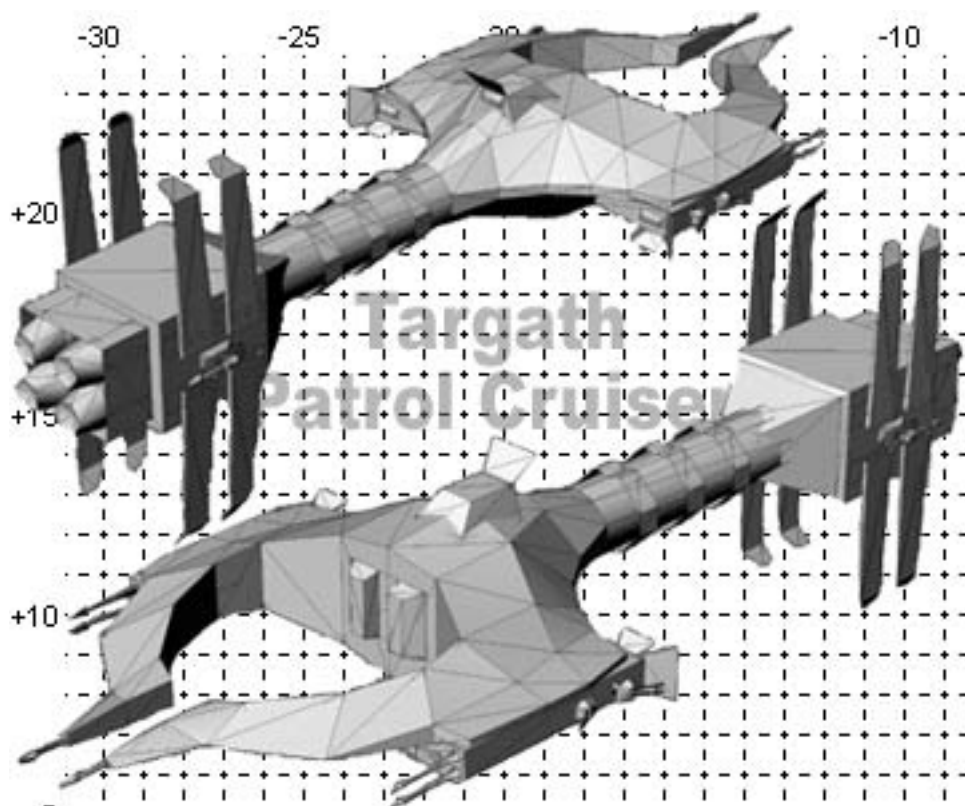
Only one of these ships was finished just after the battle of Balos, and saw action covering the retreat of Dilgar forces from Drazi territory. Strangely it wasn't seen afterwards, and no report of its destruction ever reached allied intelligence. It is assumed the ship was lost in hyperspace due to engine malfunctions caused by battle damage...

Dilgar Kilthra Outpost

This small starbase was actually a compromise born of mismatching Dilgar production schedules... it came into being when the shipyard producing the Ochlavita engine section had a series of breakdowns and accidents, which caused it to fall behind in production. That led to a surplus of Ochlavita fore sections which the Dilgar command didn't want to waste... so their ship designers created the plans for a central section which together with three such sections would form a small starbase, to be used as listening post or fixed defense installation for places that didn't rate a Koratyl.

It could be quickly assembled in captured territories, since its component parts were small and easily towed by capital ships, and fitted together with minimum effort. Usually the Dilgar SOP was to assemble a Kilthra in a newly captured system, to establish some defense while building a Koratyl, and when that one became operational they disassembled the Kilthra again and transported it to its next destination. During the League wars it became evident though that the Kilthra just didn't have what it takes to be effective against any real military assault - namely heavy weapons; almost

every league race could engage the Kilthra from beyond its own effective range. That was the main reason why no new ones were built after the few handful made to take advantage of the surplus Ochlavita hulls - that and the fact that all the hull output of these shipyards was considered put to a better use making new Ochlavitas!



Dilgar Rikhata Gunboat

A Dilgar LCV design from their early days into space, later refitted for training, anti-raider and rearguard action. All Dilgar spacers made their first "real" space flight in the Academy in one of these, and in the end phase of the war when the Dilgar were becoming desperate it also saw action against the advancing allied fleets (sort of "Dilgar Volkssturm"), but fared badly against most bigger ships (it did all right hunting fighters though). Produced with four light weapons, (instead of the more common LCV weapon load of two Lt and one Med.), two anti-fighter guns on the sides, and two main guns in the "mandibles". Concerns were expressed that the four light weapons were too little in the way of guns, but it was decided that two medium weapons would be too much for the hull (especially since it's a second-line unit and therefore not the best the Dilgar could do - they saved that for their combat fleets)... It's also non-atmospheric, the Dilgar quickly embraced non-atmosphere capable designs as an acceptable trade-off for better maneuverability in space.

Dilgar Targath Patrol Cruiser

A "Low Cost" patrol variant - less combat power than the main hull (since it's supposed to deal mostly with raiders only) and increased endurance are the main points of this ship. It was intended to guard the rear of the Dilgar frontline against opportunistic raiders and the like, but was never built in great numbers since yard space was needed for front-line units, and the WarMaster in charge of production decided there was time for building this ship after their fleets had destroyed all opposition (it was supposed to become their main anti-piracy cruiser in their new empire).

The main changes from the base hull give it 12

fighters, with armament a bit shifted towards anti-fighter duties and ease of production... The space gained is used for storage of more consumables, so the ship can stay on patrol longer before needing to restock...

Dilgar Thorushka Stingfighter

(From the Showdowns-4 story p.10). This was the first fighter the Dilgar fielded and the predecessor of their Thorun Dartfighter; it entered service during the end of their battles against the Raiders in Rohric, as a counter to their Delta-V. It was very much like the Delta-V, using similar aerodynamics together with better armor, and Dilgar weapons & propulsion tech. It was not a very good fighter compared to the ones other races had at that time, but sufficient for defeating the Raiders, and the first step toward one of the best fighters the League ever had to face - the Thorun...

The Thorushka still remained in service during the League wars, though not as a space fighter (where it was replaced by the non-atmospheric Thorun) but as an aerospace design, escorting assault shuttles through a planetary atmosphere and providing ground support to Dilgar assault forces; a job it did quite well, even though this design did not have the space needed for upgrading the guns to the Light Bolt Cannons used on the Thorun Mk II.

And in the end, when the Dilgar became desperate, they again entered the battlefield as space interceptors, where they became easy prey for most of the League fighters.

* * *

(FA and B5W SCS sheets for these ships can be found in the Attachments folder.)

TORATA

Regency Fleet

BEFORE THE DILGAR INVASION

By **BEN RUBERY**

GIVEN the Torata's lack of any ships before the Dilgar War apart from the Clovant Scout, Babcom presents you with three ships to use in that era.

The Torata deployed a far smaller range of weapons and hulls in the period leading up to the Dilgar War. They had mainly fought raiders (be they raiding groups or the Llort) and had yet to be involved in a serious conflict. They were only just deploying the heavy cruiser class that would eventually become the Golthar. The Torata had yet to invent the Pulse and Laser Accelerator, and the Pentagon Prray, using instead only the Plasma and Particle accelerators and the Light Particle Beam.

The Torata fleet of the time contained even fewer ships capable of carrying fighters, the Clovant scout, unfortunately, being the most common ship to deploy fighters.

However, the Torata made use of some lighter designs that have now been consigned to the Patrol Fleet for the most part, though some old Agnar light cruisers are still present in all the fleets.

Torata Agnar Light Cruiser

(Unrestricted Availability)

An obvious predecessor of the Golthar, the Agnar sports the best Torata technology available at the time, and is a ship designed for close engagements. It is vulnerable to massed fighter strikes, as most Torata ships are, and the short range of its LPB anti-fighter suite makes defence difficult. This ship was built before fighters had seen any widespread deployment in the Torata

fleets or the fleets that the Torata fought. The Dilgar changed this, leading to some impressively large numbers of LPBs on post war designs like the Toglat.

The Agnar continued to serve as a light cruiser until after the Shadow War, simply being deployed in less important theatres in each conflict. While it handles better than the Golthar hulls of the Reaction fleet, the hull simply lacks the punch the Torata need in the post Dilgar military landscape, and improvements are not possible on this limited hull.

However an escort variant has been produced that replaces the Particle Accelerators with Pentagon Arrays, though its effectiveness is still a matter of much debate.

Torata Fathar Plasma Cruiser

The first of the hulls that would become the Golthar was optimized for short range combat, with three Plasma Accelerators providing a close range punch few ships could stand up to.

Torata doctrine frequently had Fathar Cruisers providing the coup de grace to damaged enemy ships, or striking the slower elements of their fleet.

When combined with Gorac Fast Frigates, and later Atlac Corvettes, this doctrine paid off sometimes, but many Torata enemies learned to withdraw damaged ships within a defensive net and counter the Torata wolf packs with either fast warships of their own or fighters.

The Fathar shown is the earliest production version, armed with Plasma Accelerators and LPBs. By the time the Pentagon Array refits began in the Torata fleet it had been decided to convert

the surviving old Fathar hulls to Golthar variants, and so this class disappeared, with a handful of examples retained by the Patrol Fleet, who found a ship with three Plasma Accelerators useful against Raiders, and who still had the fast frigates necessary for the combined wolfpack doctrine.

Torata Gorac Fast Frigate

This early Torata Frigate emphasises speed and maneuverability over firepower. It is fragile (even more than the delicate Atlac Corvette) but very fast, able to deploy its limited firepower almost anywhere the admiral decided.

These make excellent wolfpack ships, the role in which the Torata used them in the majority of engagements.

However, the ease with which an enemy fleet could decimate a Gorac squadron led to the eventual design of the slightly harder and significantly better armed Atlac, though that ship's lack of agility was a blow to those in the Torata navy who favored the frigate wolf pack. The Gorac remains in service in the patrol fleet, where its speed makes it greatly appreciated for chasing down Raiders. It is often paired with its replacement, the Atlac, and then uses a wave wolfpack doctrine, with Goracs sweeping in to target thrusters and heavy weapons, then Atlacs moving in to destroy the crippled target while the Goracs move on to the next target.

(FA and B5W SCS sheets can be found for these ships in the Attachments folder)

Probing the border

B5W Scenario

The Dilgar had reached the furthest margin of their expansion and were pressing on the Torata border, and moved to test the Torata and Kor-Lyans. The Kor-Lyans successfully repulsed an attack on their homeworld, though mass drivers bombarded one of their colonies. The Torata Reaction fleet was put on alert and elements were moved to Trogoth to head off any Dilgar incursions. When a Cloviant Scout detected the formation of a jump point, the Torata moved to intercept.

SET UP

Terrain: Empty space

Torata: 2 Fathar Plasma Cruisers, 3 Agnar Light Cruisers, 4 Gorac Fast Frigates, 1 Cloviant Scout, 6 Tuka medium fighters, within 5 hexes of the left map edge, facing right, speed 10 or less. Fighters may begin deployed.

Dilgar: Leskrati D Command Cruiser, Targath Strike Cruiser, Protra Scoutship, Ochlivita, Ochlivita Carrier, 36 Thorun Dartfighters, within 5 hexes of the right map edge, facing left, speed 5 or less. All fighters may begin deployed.

SPECIAL RULES:

The Dilgar player must withdraw once he has lost two ships, or if the command cruiser is

crippled. The Protra is scanning the local system, locating astronomical objects, defence installations, and ship numbers. To scan it must allocate six points of EW to scanning, but is free to use the other five points as the Dilgar player sees fit.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The Dilgar win if they destroy or drive off all the Torata ships. They achieve a victory if the Protra completes five turns of scanning, a draw if it completes three.

To win the Torata must destroy two of the following - the Leskrati, the Targath and the Protra. They obtain a draw by destroying more points of Dilgar craft than they lose. Any other result is a loss.

TACTICS

The Dilgar have a large fighter superiority, and wise use of their Thoruns will guarantee victory.

The Torata must engage at close range, and should keep a tight formation in order to prevent Thoruns isolating and destroying a ship. It is tempting to form the Gorac fast frigates into a wolfpack, but this could lead to their loss if they are attacked by the Thoruns. However once the Thoruns are dealt with the Goracs should easily outmaneuver the larger Dilgar craft.

ALACAN
UPDATES

Azan Auxiliary Cruiser

BEN RUBERY

The Alacan High Command was considering the conversion of several of their Azafac armed freighters to this design for several years before the Dilgar invasion, and had finally scheduled the upgrading of half a dozen Azafacs when the Dilgar attacked. Had the Dilgar postponed their invasion by several months, a number of these conversions (as well as the purchase of new ships from the Abbai) would have been

present at the final battle, possibly changing the fate of the galaxy. But the Dilgar invaded early, and history unfolded the way it did in the textbooks. The Azafac sacrifices most of its cargo capacity for a pair of Laser Cutters and a squadron of fighters. This improves the combat capability of the hull significantly. A prototype was constructed in 2224, to demonstrate the viability of the design. Like the Azafacs, it was destroyed during the Dilgar invasion.

Alacan Ithacas LCV

ROMAN ALEXANDER PERNER

- the Ithami's non-civilian brother, with military-grade electronics (reflected in the initiative value). Good for Raider hunting and system patrol, bad for anything else. The missile versions can be nasty though...

The "Class-G Missile Rack" is a light version of the regular Alacan missile rack, this weapon can use light missiles only, and not too many of them either.

Alacan Ithami LCV

ROMAN ALEXANDER PERNER

Famous as the mining ship that had the questionable honor to become the very first ship the Dilgar blew apart when they invaded the Alacan system... (read Dilgar Invasion p.3).

A small LCV with a Light Cutting Laser for use in asteroid mining, or as a transport with a LPB for anti-raider use.

First to Fall II

B5W Scenario

Use the First to Fall scenario written by Bruce with the following alterations:

Alacan forces: 1 Atica Command Cruiser, 3 Artemis Cruisers, 7 Tacomi Patrol Cutter, 6 Azan Auxiliary Cruisers, 4 Azafac Armed Freighters, 12 Ithacas system defense ships (6 missile, 6 cutter), 3 civilian freighters, 4 Ithami transports, 16 Caracas A, 16 Caracas B.

Vree forces: 3 Vymish armed traders, 1 Xorr war saucer, 1 Xecra Trading Post.

Dilgar Forces: The Dilgar player has an additional 3 Athraskala heavy bombers and a Protra scoutship at his command.

Fighters: The Dilgar have 84 Thoruns, all Mk-II's (the additional six months allowed them to complete the retrofitting of their fighters), the Vree have 24 Zorth light fighters, the Alacan have 240 Rotias.

Forces deploy as in the scenario.

SPECIAL RULES

The Vree will fight alongside the Alacan and will not simply retreat. The Alacans will not withdraw, instead transmitting a call for help to the Abbai. This call is activated when the Dilgar player jumps in and jams communications between Alaca and the jumpgate, causing an alarm to trip and a request for help to be sent to the Abbai. This failsafe was originally installed in case of invasion by the Drazi. On turn 20 2 Aldriths and 2 Tulatis jump in. If the Dilgar player has not destroyed every Vree and Alacan ship by the time the Abbai arrive, the Abbai ships will attack the Dilgar and try and force them to withdraw.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

Whichever force has ships remaining on the map will win. Alacans and Vree are not permitted to leave the map.

Hyperion Gamma

By **DIOGENES**

THE HYPERION Gamma variant was an emergency conversion of hulls already on the assembly line, brought about by a desperate need for combat-capable assault ships during the Dilgar War.

The sudden and unexpected nature of the Dilgar War caught Earth force somewhat unprepared. Its fleet had been primarily geared for the defense of Earth's established colonies. It was not trained or equipped for the formation of a cohesive Expeditionary Force for operations beyond Earth's sphere of influence.

Conventional converted liners, merchant ships and bulk carriers were requisitioned and hastily converted as troop transports. But early on in the process, Earth force realised these conversions were simply not suitable for deploying troops and special forces in to a "hot zone" during the initial stages of an assault. Troop ships, while a vital component of the logistic effort, were simply too vulnerable and inflexible to be entrusted with the thousands of valuable special forces troops needed to establish bridge-heads and conduct deep penetration raids.

A small force of well armed and armored assault ships was needed, capable of operations in close concert with escorting warships.

Assault ships, as opposed to troop ships, were needed to be capable of enduring moderate levels of battle damage while providing a competent measure of self defense. They needed to be able to carry a useful number of troops, as well as support equipment and supplies.

Most importantly, they were needed "now".

Designing and building a new specialist class of ships was simply unrealistic. It would take years to settle on a design, construct the manufacturing facilities and run the prototype vessels through their trials. So the job had to be carried out by an existing hull.

The Hyperion was the obvious candidate.

Because of the urgent requirement to build combat vessels during the Dilgar War, the lack of political focus upon dedicated assault ships following that war, and the emergency situation of the Minbari War - the Hyperion Gamma has, by default, become Earth Force's primary front-line assault vessel. First sighted only months after the conversion program was initiated in 2230, the Hyperion Gamma has been a common component of Earth Force fleets for decades.

CONVERSION

The Gamma Hyperion shares the same hull,

engineering plant and basic weaponry of the early model Hyperions. The bulky capacitors for the Particle Cannons were stripped from the Hyperion hulls, as was its independent fire control system and cooling racks. The two side-mounted Medium Plasma turrets and associated internal power couplings and machinery were also removed. Combined, the removal of these two weapon systems opened up a significant amount of space between the lateral bulges in the Hyperion class's main hull.

While this provided the bulk of the necessary accommodation space, further space savings were achieved through the elimination of the secondary bridge, Star fury pilot briefing room and fighter-control offices.

The Hyperion Assault was found to be capable of housing three companies worth of troops - approximately 150 soldiers, officers, pilots and support crews - between the heavy cruiser's network of pressure doors and vacuum-tight compartments.

The fighter bays were extended forward to

the main hull and the Star Fury docking and maintenance facilities removed. This provided space for 12 shuttles - the minimum number needed for the deployment of the three companies.

Blast doors in the back of the main hull opening to the hangar bays allowed the troop accommodation to be removed and loading sleds for about 12 tanks or heavy vehicles to be fitted. The Gamma Hyperion is capable of operating as a squadron command vessel for accompanying warships, but lacks the ability to control both extensive space and ground-based forces.

Space restrictions imposed by the demands of troop-barracks and cargo requirements have largely prevented significant upgrade of this armament ever since.

However, the all-round coverage of their standard particle cannons are considered adequate for self defense as part of a homogenous fleet, supported by a mix of heavy and medium plasma weapons for when attackers break through the escort screen.

The Hyperion Assault ships are expected to retain their current armament configuration until the end of their operational service.

DEPLOYMENT

Hyperion Gamma Assault cruisers are recommended to be grouped in like-hull squadrons, formed about Aegis-Class squadron command vessels. These upgrades of the same Hyperion hull provide substantially improved fire-control and sensor suites, with the advantage of being able to share this enhanced information with vessels in the same command network. The presence of an Aegis vessel greatly improves the Gamma's anti-fighter ability.

A close escort squadron should comprise a mix of Hyperion Delta (pulse) and Hyperion Theta models. These are capable of providing protection for interception by enemy heavy forces.

Both the Assault squadron and close-escort squadron should be part of a full fleet formation.

CONCLUSION

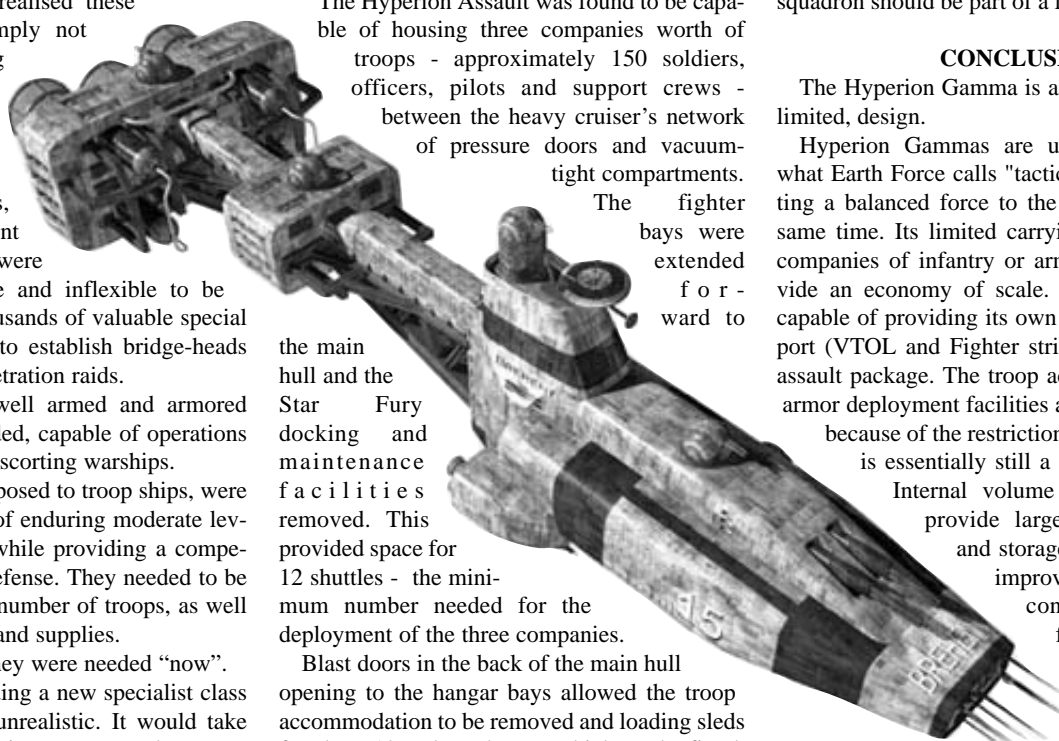
The Hyperion Gamma is an adequate, though limited, design.

Hyperion Gammas are unable to maintain what Earth Force calls "tactical integrity" - getting a balanced force to the same place at the same time. Its limited carrying capacity (three companies of infantry or armor) does not provide an economy of scale. Nor is this vessel capable of providing its own projected fire support (VTOL and Fighter strikes) as part of the assault package. The troop accommodation and armor deployment facilities are barely adequate because of the restrictions imposed by what is essentially still a heavy cruiser hull.

Internal volume is insufficient to provide larger accommodation and storage areas, along with improved command and control and fighter facilities.

Earth Force commanders are calling for a new vessel - one that can carry a complete battalion, along with the supplies and equipment needed in an assault, and land them planetside by either dropship or shuttlecraft. This two pronged capability, with emphasis on rapid deployment, would enable the Navy and Marine Corps to fulfill their present-day duties.

Such assault warships would be uniquely designed to support attacks from space against defended positions planetside. They must be able to sail in harms way and provide a rapid build-up of combat power planetside in the face of hostile opposition. The Design Office has been tasked with providing concept plans for such a vessel.





Frontline scenarios

By DIOGENES

IT WAS one of the most confused battles of the Dilgar War. It was a battle born of political expediency, poor intelligence and plain bad luck.

The multi-national fleet had finished assembling for a major assault upon Balos. It was to be the largest campaign of the war so far.

But before such a large gathering of warships, transports and merchant vessels was to be committed to an assault, action had to be taken to reduce the chance of early interception.

To do this, Dilgar listening posts in and around the Balos system would have to be destroyed.

To this end Earth Force committed three of its newest assault ships - the Hyperion Gamma.

Initially these were to be protected by a balanced task group of Earth Force warships. But the murky politics that held the alliance of nations together soon changed these initial plans.

It was deemed important to give the Free Balosian navy an "significant" - and largely autonomous - task in the liberation of their homeworld. An attack on a Dilgar listening post in their own solar system seemed an ideal candidate.

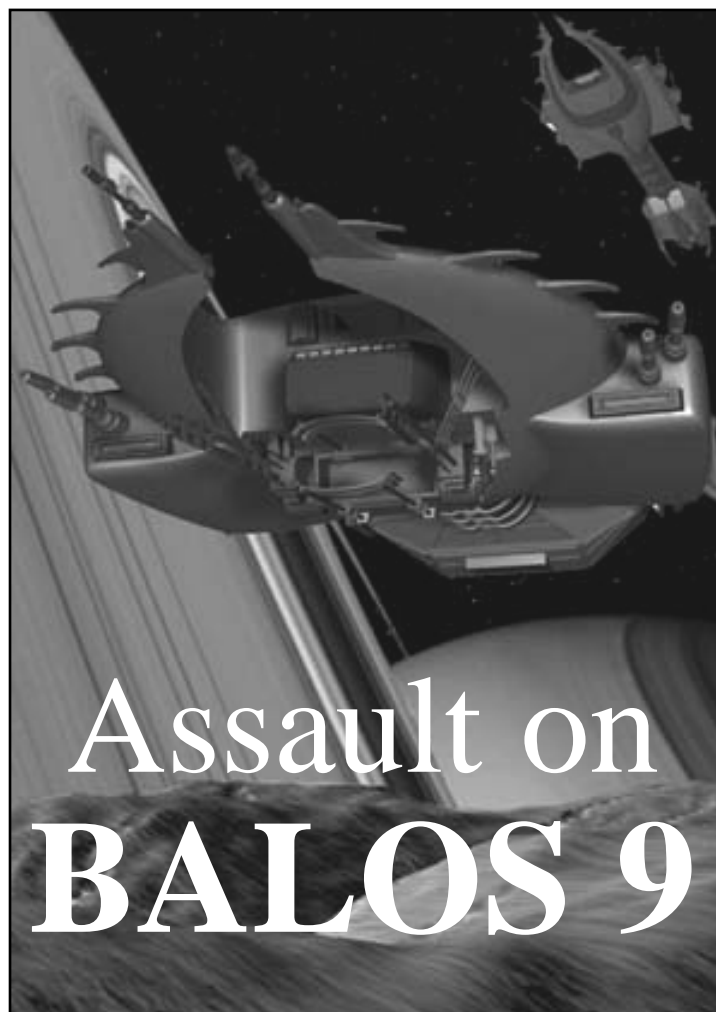
As the Balosians did not have any troops not already committed to battle on their homeworld, allied troops would be needed. The Earth Force GROPOS were available.

Command of this Expeditionary Force was assigned to one of the few surviving Balosian Thosalsi carriers. A Free Balosian Task Force comprising several Seffensa cruisers and Esthasa destroyers was assembled, along with a fast escort group of Susscha frigates.

At Earth Force's insistence, the three Hyperion Gamma's and their Hyperion Alpha command cruiser were accompanied by a squadron of Olympus Beta gunships.

The initial phase of the attack went well. Transmissions from the Dilgar listening post were isolated to a moon of a ringed planet in the outer Balos system. The Expeditionary Force jumped in using the cruisers' jump engines.

Immediately, the Expeditionary Force discovered this was not just a Dilgar listening post. It was a forward



ward staging base for scout ships. And the scout-ships were in the midst of a resupply operation from two Eskravat Refueling Squadrons.

The Expeditionary Force attempted to avoid engagement, focussing instead upon getting the Hyperion Gammas to near-orbit above the listening post. It was expected the Dilgar would retreat to protect their valuable and vulnerable scout ships and refueling barges.

They were wrong. The resulting battle was a confusing furball of scoutships, frigates, assault cruisers and destroyers.

LIBERATION NAVY

Free Balosian Task Force: (2900pts)

Thosalsi Carrier - 750
- 6x Shasi flights
Seffensa Cruiser - 415
Seffensa Cruiser - 415
Esthasa Destroyer - 415
- 1x Shasi flights
Esthasa Destroyer - 415
- 1x Shasi flights
Esthasa Destroyer - 415
- 1x Shasi flights

Free Balosian Escort Squadron: (900pts)

Susscha Frigate - 300pts
Susscha Frigate - 300pts
Susscha Frigate - 300pts

Earth Force Close Escort Squadron: (1740)

Olympus B - 435pts
Olympus B - 435pts
Olympus B - 435pts
Olympus B - 435pts

Earth Force Assault Squadron: (1640pts)

Hyperion Alpha - 365pts
- 2x Nova flights
Hyperion Gamma - 425pts
- 2x Hades flights
Hyperion Gamma - 425pts
- 2x Hades flights
Hyperion Gamma - 425pts
- 2x Hades flights

DILGAR NAVY

Long Range Scouting Squadron: (895pts)

Protra-I Patrol Ship - 355pts
Rishekar Frigate - 180
Rishekar Frigate - 180
Rishekar Frigate - 180

Light Scout Squadron: (420pts)

Senschuka-I - 165pts
Senschuka - 140
Senschuka - 140
Senschuka - 140

2x Refueling Groups:

(1345pts x2)

Nitratha Jump Cruiser - 365pts
Eskravat Barge - 260
Ochlavita Destroyer - 310
Ochlavita Destroyer - 310
Trathati Gunship - 465

2x Escort Squadrons:

(1580 x2)

Torgath Cruiser - 510pts
- 4x Thorun flights
Ochlavita Destroyer - 310
Ochlavita Destroyer - 310
Jashakar Frigate - 225
Jashakar Frigate - 225

SETUP

Liberation Navy: The Liberation Navy squadrons must use the "jump-in" rules. Two jump-points are formed - both by Hyperion Gammas. The jump hexes must be allocated within three hexes of the right-side of the map board. Any "drift" rolls that place the jump-point off the board must be re-rolled. The Liberation Navy squadrons must move through the jump-points as per the official rules.

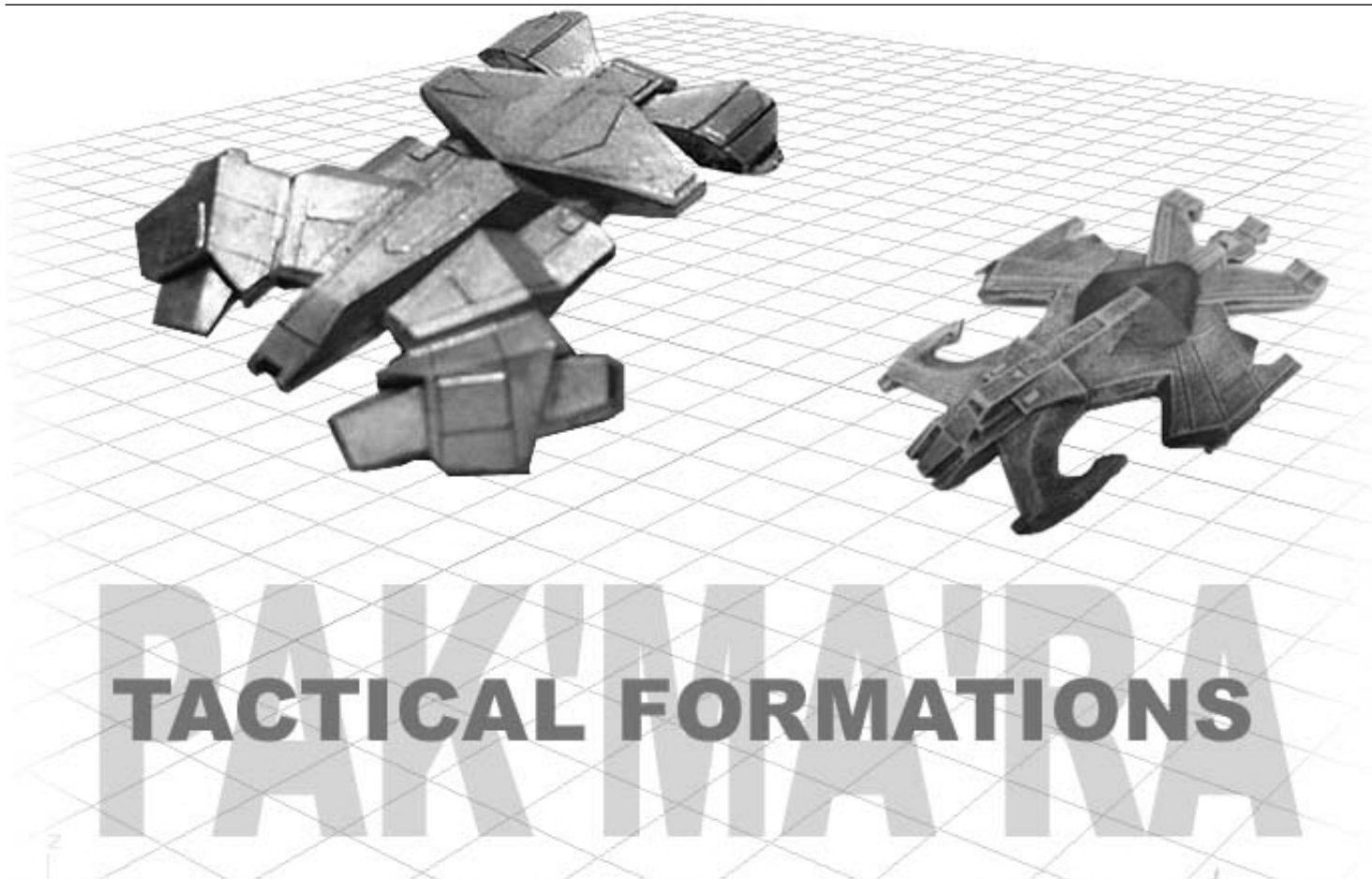
Dilgar Navy: The Dilgar formations are to be considered "surprised" - with all appropriate penalties as outlined in AoG rulebooks. Space the two Refueling Groups evenly within five hexes of the left map board edge. The Scout Squadrons must be placed within three hexes of the Refueling Barges. The Escort Squadrons can be placed anywhere on the Dilgar half of the playing board.

OBJECTIVES

Liberation Navy: To get the Hyperion-Gammas over the Dilgar edge of the map-board safely. All other considerations are secondary. There are a lot of lives on those Assault troop ships. And the destruction of the listening post depends on them being delivered safely.

Dilgar Navy: Once the formations recover from the impact of surprise, the objective of the invading force becomes obvious. You know how important this listening post is for providing early warning of any major assault on the Balos system. You will commit all your forces to prevent the enemy troops from being landed on the moon.

(Note: The Dilgar, Balosian and early EA SCSs can be found via www.robertshome.org)



Pak'ma'ra Strategy and Tactics:

By TODD BOYCE

IN THIS article, I am presenting a variety of formations that are generally useful for any race but are specifically suited for the Pak'ma'ra. Fighters are irrelevant to this subject since they are usually able to fly anywhere they need to in order to provide support.

A word about formations for the Pak'ma'ra - think of moving the ships like a school of fish rather than a precision aerobatic team. Being too rigid with a formation will allow the opponent to predict your actions based on the movement of the first ship and this will become a disadvantage. It's OK if ships swap places or the escorts drift from one side of a formation to another. It is also OK to have a ship break formation in order to take a hit on a less vulnerable side. The battlefield is a fluid situation and the movement of the ships should be the same.

Many times ships will become separated when they get into a furball with the enemy but once disengaged, every effort should be made to return to a formation (or multiple formations). The recharge times of the plasma weapons provide ample opportunity for this to happen. Even when weapons are charged, it's often better to wait a turn for an escort to join an attack than it is to fire each ship as soon as they can. Ships that work together will often survive longer and destroy ships faster than if each ship is acting independently.

In conclusion, every fleet needs to work together in order to succeed. A battle is almost never won on the virtue of a single ship but rather on the coordination of all of the forces available.

CRASHING WAVE
FORMATION



Diagram #1

Almost every fleet has heavy hitting, high value/expensive ships supported by low value/cheap escorts. This formation takes advantage of the fact that opponents usually prefer taking out the high value targets first and worrying about the low value ones once they are destroyed.

It works like this: Place the one or two of the cheapest ships up front (preferably ones that can take a bit of punishment). These ships are followed by the next cheapest that hang back a few hexes. These are then followed by the next cheapest and so on until the most expensive ships sit in the very back as seen in Diagram #1.

As these ships approach, the enemy must make a choice; fire on the ships closest knowing that the more dangerous ships will be on top of them before their weapons recharge, or fire on the expensive ships at much longer range and reduced chances of hitting hoping to survive the close range assault by the smaller escorts.

Whichever choice the opponent makes, it doesn't matter because attacking his ships follows a simple process. The lead ships pick a target, accelerates and attacks it while the rest of the fleet continues their approach. If they destroy or cripple the target, the next ships in line picks a different target, if they don't then they dive in and finish the first target off if possible. Then the next ships take on the following target and so on, generally trying to destroy the opponent's high value ships first if possible but any target will do.

Once the attack has begun, on every turn the opponent is facing two or more ships that are diving down upon them with weapons charged. Like waves crashing on a beach, these waves of ships will descend upon the opponent and overwhelm any possible defense.

This tactic is particularly well suited to the Pak'ma'ra since they often outnumber their opponents and even their smallest ships working in unison can blow off a side or even destroy a capital ship. This tactic works well against races like the Minbari who have few and very expensive ships but against fleets with many small vessels like the Drazi, a different formation might be a better choice.

BROAD ESCORT FORMATION



Diagram #2

This is a fairly good all purpose formation against nearly any opponent, particularly if they have fighters. The escorts fly out front and to the sides of the core group of capital ships thereby enlarging the protective zone of the Plasma Webs. From this position these escorts can also react easily to intercept ships that try to flank or sweep forward to attack. They are also in a position to get the drop on fighters if they beat them in initiative.

Formations similar to this one are often good for the first two turns until the enemy has revealed their plan of attack at which point it is flexible enough to adapt quickly to the ever changing conditions of the battlefield.



Diagram #4

DOUBLE FLANKER FORMATION

The Double Flanker formation is another useful one that can be used in place of a Broad Escort formation. In this diagram, two Tra'shu'li form one of the flankers and two Urik'hal form the other. In this starting position they protect the sides of the capital ships from fighter attack much like they do in the Broad formation. When the enemy draws near however, they are able to spring forward to attack when an opportunity presents itself or occupy the attention of enemy ships that could pose a threat. They are also available to intercept enemy flankers.

Flankers such as these should be made up of pairs of the same ships so that they can move and attack together as a team without worrying about one of the pair not being capable of pulling off a maneuver. In this way the escorts are more flexible than they are in the Broad formation but in turn they may leave one side of the fleet weaker than the other.

WHEEL FORMATION

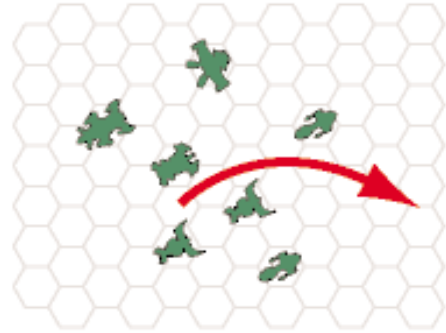


Diagram #3

This is a good formation for when the enemy is off to one side of the fleet or when it is desired to influence the opponent to maneuver to one side. With the escorts close to the main core of the fleet and to the side, they can react to the enemy's actions without straying too far away. It is usually best to keep the medium ships between the capital ships. By keeping the enemy off to the side of the medium ships, the opponent will be reluctant to engage the capital ships at close range since they will have to run a gauntlet of medium ships.

This type of formation is also useful when the opponent has split their forces and is trying to flank in a sort of pincer attack. With the escorts on one side and the capital ships on the other, there are many options available for engaging one flanker, the other, or both.

One method of dealing with an opponent that has split their fleet is to begin flying right down the middle. The opponent will likely widen the distance between his forces to stay far away as he sets up for doing an attack run. On the turn the opponent is going to dive in, wheel the formation over in the direction covered by the escorts. This will get the escorts closest to that half of the enemy's force where their lower sensor ratings and shorter range weapons will do the most good, and the heavier ships with the longer range weapons, and more importantly multiple Plasma Webs, on the side facing the other half of the force.

An alternative is to cross the paths of the escorts and the capital ships while targeting ships opposite of their formation position. This maneuver can, on occasion, surprise the opponent who targeted the ships closest to them. By the end of movement, the escorts will be in position to attack the ships targeting the capital ships and the capital ships will be in position to attack the ships targeting the escorts at the same time giving the enemy range penalties for choosing the wrong targets.

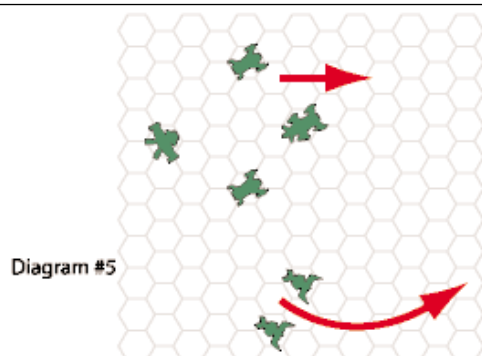


Diagram #5

BOX FORMATION WITH FLANKERS

Sometimes a fleet is built that is heavier on the capital ships than on medium ship escorts. In these cases, the capitals need to become their own escorts and thus should generally adopt a box formation like the one shown (a Plus formation can be used instead as is described below). This maximizes Plasma Web coverage and will limit the directions from which fighters can attack. Meanwhile the escorts can assist on approach but break away and attack independently taking out key targets at opportune times.

This formation is useful when the opponent has a similar composition of forces or is very top-heavy with capital ships.

Diagram #6



PLUS FORMATION
WITH RETAINERS

The Plus formation is another useful one very similar to the Box formation but is particularly good when trying to protect a key ship against fighters or other small threats. In this case, a Sim'sall'e has 4 Tra'shu'li retainers that are protecting it from attack, though the formation can be comprised of any types of ships. Generally the most important ship is in the center and this formation is best in scenarios where a ship is being escorted or guarded.

These are just a few of the formations possible. Every fleet has a different combination of forces and will require different strategies. Larger fleets may use several different formations at the same time and be broken up into smaller units to use those formations to their greatest effect. Small fleets will likely be broken up into several two-ship Leader/Wingman formations.

Pincer attack

USING A PAIR OF URIK'HAL

Everyone knows the Urik'hal is a very maneuverable and heavily armed ship and a pair of them working in unison can be devastating to just about any capital ship. Keeping them in tight formation, however, is not always the best strategy.

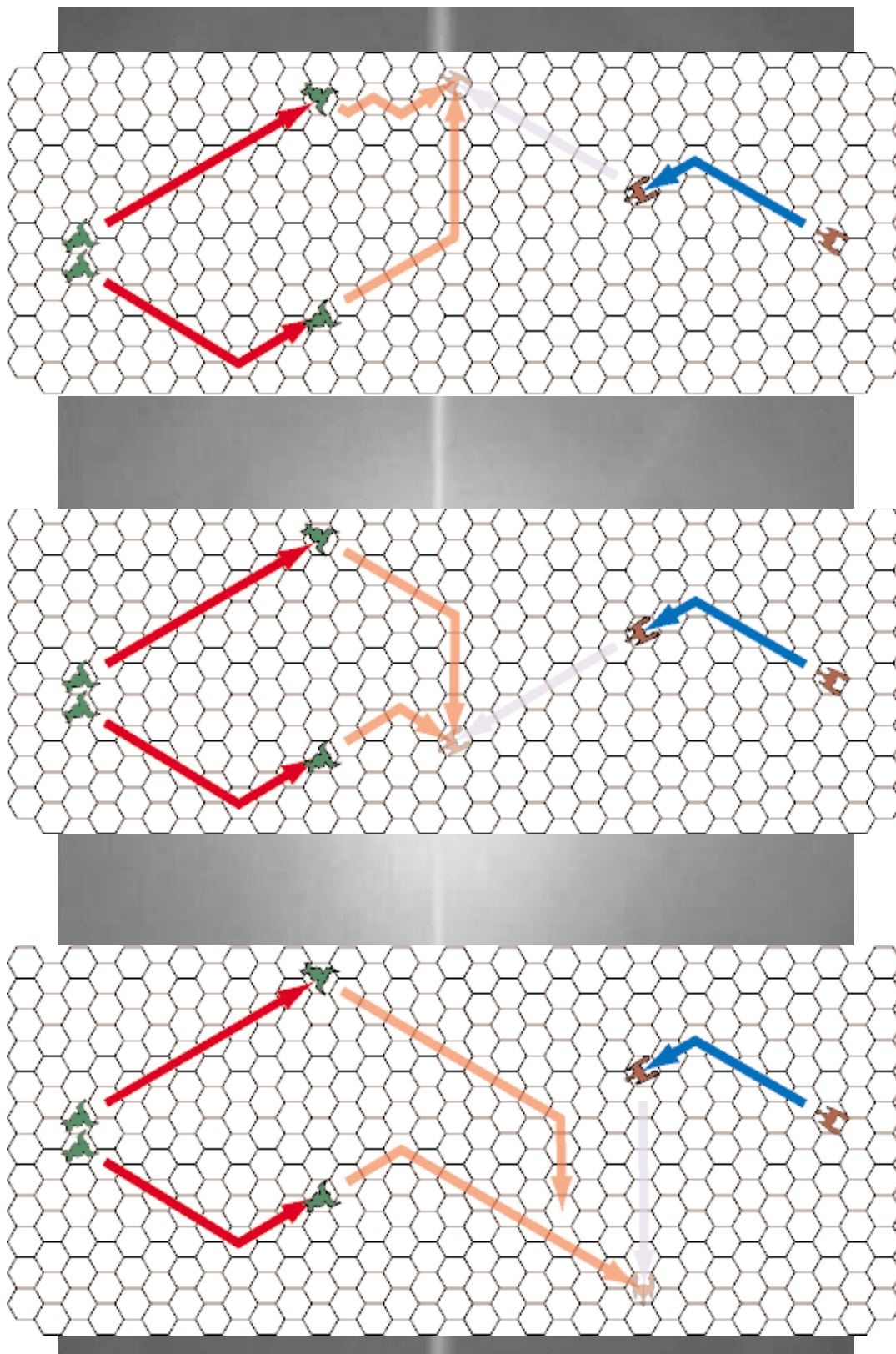
Enter the Pincer Attack.

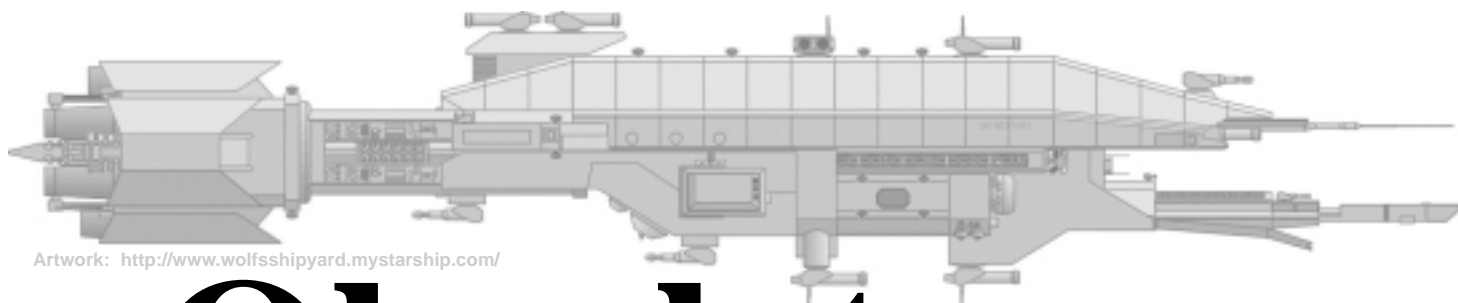
First of all, speed 9 is usually the perfect speed for an Urik'hal. At that speed it can accelerate to speed 12 and still make a turn, make 2 turns while maintaining speed, or reduce speed down to 6 or lower and still make 1-2 turns. This becomes particularly important with this tactic.

When the pair of Urik'hal approach to around 20-25 hexes from their target it is time to split them apart. The opponent will likely continue forward since the tactic won't be apparent right away and the Urik'hals will likely beat their target in initiative anyway. Spread the Urik'hals apart by no more than 10 hexes or so while trying to keep the opponent directly in the middle. Preferably the opponent will be moving around speed 6 and be approximately 12 hexes away.

As you can see from the diagrams, from this position it will be very difficult for the opponent to avoid a point-blank attack by one or both Urik'hals. Also, when the Urik'hals perform their attack, only one is required to slow down which means only one of them has limited mobility on the next turn.

Only when the opponent performs the most extreme maneuvers to escape do they both need to accelerate up to speed 12, which is not a hindrance to the nimble Urik'hal. This same tactic is nearly as effective with a pair of Tra'shu'li and can be used with any two ships working together.





Artwork: <http://www.wolfsshipyard.mystarship.com/>

Obsolete, or omnipotent?

By DIOGENES

DREADNOUGHTS and battlecruisers were, in the early decades of the twentieth century, regarded as the ultimate weapon. The phrase "capital ship" was coined to reinforce their status. It became a doctrine that dominated military thinking long after evidence demonstrating the opposite was seen.

World War II killed the concept. Swarms of cheap and quickly produced aircraft rendered the battleship obsolete and economically unviable.

However, Dreadnoughts remained in the popular imagination for centuries. They were symbols of a nation's might and technological know-how. They were the symbols of a bygone age of imperial sea power.

With the onset of the spacefaring age, Earthforce has again embraced the Dreadnought mentality. Once again, government officials, military officers, engineers and the media debate how many are needed, what characteristics define the ideal Dreadnought, and the best battle fleet composition centered upon them.

Have the lessons of the past been forgotten?

Dreadnoughts represent an enormous investment of capital, resources and personnel. Building and operating these ships is always a matter of controversy. Especially in the face of economic difficulties.

Many argue that the bane of the battleship is still present: cheap, fast and maneuverable fighter craft. To this can be added nimble light and medium combat vessels.

Dreadnought supporters argue that modern defenses are enough to counter these threats.

Design Philosophy

Here the design philosophies behind the World War II upgrade of the Queen Elizabeth class super-Dreadnought and the Earthforce Warlock class "destroyer" Dreadnought are compared.

The comparison is to show the change - or lack of change - in Dreadnought design philosophy.

Queen Elizabeth: The Queen Elizabeth class was the first "true-battleship" design to succeed the original Dreadnought - emerging in the early years of World War I. In essence, it was a ship built solely to carry the biggest guns then available: the revolutionary 15inch cannon. But demands upon and threats to the battleship changed dramatically within a short time. New features had to be incorporated into the design.

In the case of the Queen Elizabeth, this was done during a major rebuild in the 1930s. Heavy anti-fighter weaponry, deck armor and torpedo-protection were key among these improvements.

No less than 20 4.5inch high-angle dual-purpose cannons were added as the ships' secondary armament. The threat from the air - especially in the Mediterranean - was taken very seriously. But the ship still needed rapid-firing guns to defend it against torpedo boats, destroyers and cruisers. The 4.5inch gun did all this.

The eight twin 15inch gun turrets were modified to improve their range, firing arcs and rate of fire. The bridge was rebuilt to house more command staff and new sensor equipment, and armor distributed more evenly.

Despite the fact of all these improvements, the Queen Elizabeth class suffered from the same problem as every other battleship: slow response time and deployment difficulties.

Their reach was simply too small. Their ability to intercept enemy targets was limited by their speed, positioning and range of their guns.

As a result, most actions were conducted by ships belonging to the more numerous and faster destroyer and cruiser classes.

Carriers, because of the long-arm of their airwings, also took part in far more activity.

Commanders were also simply reluctant to commit their battleships - always mindful of the

economic and morale price of losing even one of these ships.

Warlock: Like the Queen Elizabeth, the Warlock is essentially built around its main guns - two massive heavy particle cannons. The low rate-of-fire of these guns has made it necessary to back them up with rail guns, a laser-pulse array and standard particle beams. The dual-purpose nature of most of these weapons reflects the design choice behind the 4.5in cannon on the Queen Elizabeth.

The Warlock's one main advantage over the sea-based battleship is the lack of need for a flightdeck to operate fighters. The Warlock carries a healthy number of Thunderbolts for both self-protection and some strike capacity.

It is this fighter compliment that proponents of the Dreadnought concept use to justify these expensive ships. Odd that the very enemy of the Dreadnought is now touted as its savior.

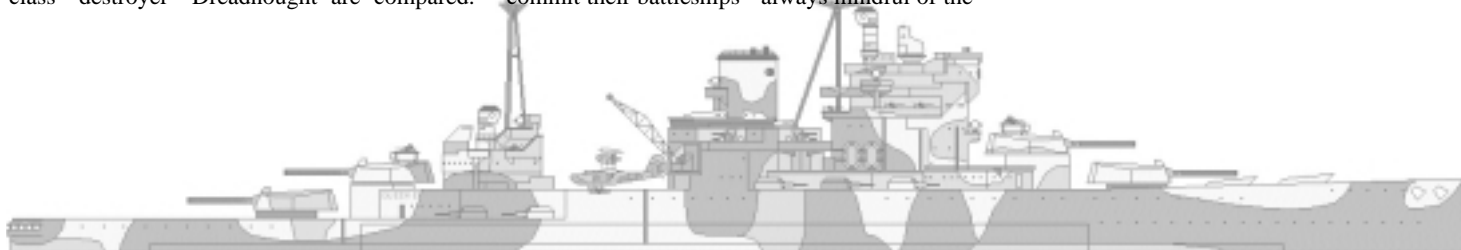
Conclusion

While the Warlock, like the Queen Elizabeth, may not be excessively vulnerable to fighter strikes, it is by no means as efficient as a dedicated fighter-carrier.

But the thinking of Dreadnought commanders still focuses on their big guns. But these weapons are only useful if they are placed in a position where they can be used. The limited number of Warlocks, due to their cost, their low speed and acceleration reduces this potential. The Poseidon, however, can launch its Thunderbolts to cover a broad swathe of space in a short time.

What is certain is that an air of fascination surrounds these giant warships. Their place in the modern spacefaring battlefleet is assured - until the myths of their invulnerability are once again exploded.

* * *





The Minbari are one of the oldest navies in known space. Their ships are powerful, graceful, and beautiful, and are rightly feared by other races. Their tactics are honed by centuries of simulation, training and actual battle experience. They also have one of the largest navies in known space.

That's the theory.

Minbari ships are supposed to operate in fleets of equal or superior numbers to their opponents, slicing them apart with waves of Neutron lasers and keeping fighters at bay with swarms of Nials. In an equal points fight you do not have that luxury. This article will focus on how to fight and win with Minbari units in a game of B5 Wars. First we will examine the general strengths and weaknesses of The Minbari, and then we will move onto specific tactics.

FIRST THE STRENGTHS.

The first of these is obvious, the Jammer. This stealth system doubles your range penalties for all weapons, and halving the range for ballistics. This can render you almost immune to long range fire from a lot of races. I emphasize the almost for a reason. The Jammer is a wonderful tool, but you have to learn its limitations. Basically, with your profiles, if you drop all your defensive EW against someone like the Centauri you are asking for trouble. In general though, it can let you get off the first shot for free using your EW edge to overcome his defenses.

The long range and fast firing Neutron Lasers reinforce this tactic, and brings us to the second of the Minbari strengths, good weapon systems. Your primary long-range weapons are the Neutron lasers, a fairly powerful long range raking weapon with good fire control. However, while good, the Neutron laser lacks the punch of the more short range weapons used by the other races, and you can never really get enough of them on the board without making serious sacrifices elsewhere. The other heavy weapons in your arsenal, Molecular Disrupters and Antimatter Converters, are powerful weapons

J.J. O'SHAUGHNESSY (Archangel) undertakes a strategic analysis of Minbari ships and weapons and the combat doctrine behind their deployment in B5W

and actually very useful in certain situations, but in general you are better off with the laser. It plays to your strengths better.

As for your secondary weapons, the Minbari are blessed with a highly useful gun, the Fusion cannon. The Cannon has a very good punch and range, and can blow everything up to a Heavy Fighter pretty much automatically. Unfortunately, their numbers are limited on most of your ships and you will soon look with envy at the secondary arcs on Centauri and Earth vessels.

The Molecular Pulsar is a very recent addition to the Minbari arsenal. Appearing on very few ships thus far, they are a good fighter hunter weapon and can make ships sweat with their good fire control and grouping bonus. That said their fire control vs. fighters is just ok, and you cannot rely on them for this purpose. All in all though, they are one of the things that make the White Star so dangerous to an unprepared opponent.

The Minbari's other weapons are more specialized in nature. The Shock Cannon and Gravity Net are very useful weapons that can really ruin an opponents day. I am a particular fan of the Troligan, which mounts 6 Grav nets. It plays up to your strengths quite nicely as it can move opposing ships back away from you, perhaps even taking their weapons out of arc. As a bonus, it can only be intercepted by weapons that fire at or before the same time it fires, of which none exist at this time. The Shock Cannon is of great use against both ships and fighters, the

only slight problem being its rather slow rate of fire compared to a Fusion Cannon. If you can live with that though, it is a good addition to your fleet, despite being seen on very few ships.

The Electro-Pulse Gun is at best a mediocre weapon, which does at least provide 3 points of precious power when turned off. However, its ability to choose its fighter kill can be useful at times.

The third advantage you have as Minbari is your toughness. Your ships are generally more sturdy than other ships in their class and those Fusion Cannon cannot be raked off by lasers. Your back hulls are rather less armored in general though so watch out for that.

The fourth advantage you have is the psychological edge. Some people believe the hype about the Minbari to such an extent that they will do the craziest things when fighting them. In a recent game I saw people cringe at 5 Fusion Cannons fired at a ship, despite the fact my Earth ally's Standard Particle Beams only do 3 points less damage and have a better fire control.

ON TO THE WEAKNESSES.

The first of these is obvious, cost. Your ships can cost twice as much as your opponents' equivalent classes, which means you are going to be outnumbered. Most of the time outnumbered badly. In addition to that your opponents will almost certainly outgun you. The skill you are going to have to master is how to choose your targets carefully to provide maximum benefit during the free fire time in the first few turns.

As mentioned above, the second disadvantage is relative throw weight of fire. You can be criminally outgunned, particularly as Minbari ships are designed for all-round defense, which means a lot of your firepower is initially facing away from your opponent. To look at an example: a Sharlin War Cruiser can do, on the average dice, 298 points of damage on a range 0 centerlined strike with all weapons firing. This looks impressive until you see the Omega Destroyer (alpha) which can do 318 under the same condi-

tions (tip... Never, under any circumstances, get centerlined by Earthforce). This on a ship which is worth half the cost of the Sharlin. You have to develop an attitude which can be alien to a lot of gamers: - every point of damage scored on you is worth twice as much as what you are doing back to them. An odd attitude but it has won me a lot of games.

The third disadvantage is Defense numbers, particularly your sides. The advantage that is the Jammer is mitigated by the fact that you are relatively easy to hit; though you do have a lot of DEW to throw in the way. Sometimes however, even that is not enough.

TACTICAL ANALYSIS

Now we come to more specific examples of tactics. I will look at the ships in turn and see how their strengths and weaknesses effect your use of them in the game. I must mention at this point that I usually play on a fixed map, which is probably the most challenging way to play Minbari, but I recommend it if you want to hone your tactics.

First, the Sharlin. Sleek, powerful, this is the ship to inspire terror in your opponents. Well, don't tell them but it's not quite as scary as it seems. First, you really have to work at it to get the thing to turn, and it's a really good idea to keep your nose to an opponent as long as possible. It has 18 Fusion Cannon, but unless you are in a hex grain you won't be able to get more than 7 onto a target (5 if he is facing your side, your vulnerable spot). This is both a blessing and a curse, as if your opponent splits his fleet you can raise terror by firing in all directions at once. It's also not a good idea to take it into a tournament. It's so expensive that you won't be able to fill its hanger bays, forcing you to take an armed flyer along to get more guns on the table. That said, it's very tough, and in the right hands can win battles. You just have very little room for error. The Shargotti is just a bigger Sharlin with a few more Cannon and Grav nets, which could be useful. Its side armament is the same as the Sharlin, however, and its really too expensive to take in anything other than a large engagement.

The Tinashi and its variants are the cornerstone of a B5W Minbari fleet. After flying the Sharlin a few times you will appreciate its 1/1 turn cost, and it can turn inside its speed number, another advantage. It's also very cheap for Minbari. Of course there is a down side. Its arcs are good, but still probably won't get more than 2 Fusion Cannon onto a target in the basic Tinashi. The EP guns can scare fighters, but are probably best shut down in the first turn for extra EW. And it has only 4 Armour to the rear. Which incidentally can tempt opponents to split their fleet to get to your back, allowing you fire more guns than you normally would. If your opponent does your work for you, let them.

The variants of the Tinashi are superb escorts, if in different ways. The Ashinta is a close range bruiser par excellence, able to dish out rapid-fire death to any fighters and ships that come into range. The Eshran is better at contributing to the early long range sniping so vital to Minbari survival and its guns are instant death to fighters. They do fire slower however. The Letann is a rare variant that is a superb scout. It is less well armed than the Ashinta, however, and should be placed in the center if a fleet for protection. The Shantavi is not really an anti fighter escort but a

ship killer. Its defenses are meager and it desperately needs protection from other ships or fighters if it's going to do its job. That said, it could scare the hell out of an opponent.

Like I said, I love the Troligan. I'm not going to repeat my comments on this ship, except to say opponents tend to ignore it, and that can be the last mistake they ever make.

Finally we come to the White Star. This is the unquestioned king of the medium vessels and its shields and Jammer can make it seem un-hittable. Which is reflected in its cost, which is more than nearly every other race's cruisers. It can do the job of fighter hunter reasonably well, but watch out for the fighters flying into your hex, as the shields won't work against them. It's much better in the role of a ship hunter, and can seem invincible in that role right up until it gets hit, where upon it collapses. Personally I don't take it that often. The non standard weapons arrangement means it's meant to attack in swarms and (thankfully) you are not allowed to do that.

Finally the fighters. The Nial is hull for hull the best fighter yet seen in the younger races. Unfortunately the cost means its going to be outnumbered and overwhelmed in short order. If used as an interceptor it desperately needs the support of ship fire to thin down opposing fighter numbers. Otherwise it is dead to strike fighters. As an anti shipping fighter there are few that can equal it, however. The Tishat is unfortunately far too expensive for what you get (basically a smaller starfury with better fire control, Jammer and initiative). I always keep my fighters with the ships, if I bother taking them at all. Unfortunately, with the cost of things, you are almost always better off taking no fighters than just taking one or two flights. Fighters have to close with Minbari ships because of the way the Jammer doubles their range penalties, and your ship guns can do the job.

There are some other ships (particularly the superb variants in Variants 5) but their use is obvious in the context above. I'd like to use them at least once before I comment on them.

BASIC TACTICS.

The first is what I call the "Minbari 'OLE!' maneuver". This takes advantage of the way many opponents will throw themselves full speed at you to try to get to ranges where they can fire back effectively. Fire on their biggest, baddest ship or any ship with fragile front thrusters. If you hit your rakes will probably cut the front thrusters off. Then slide your ships to the side. The ship cannot slow down anymore, and will run screaming helplessly off the board in about 3 turns. Great fun!

Second, when the enemies actually close to medium range, put up lots of defense. Remember that every hit you take is worth more than what you do to the opponent and your Jammer will help your EW. Maximize your strengths to cover your weaknesses.

Third, you know what your weaknesses are. You know what your opponent should do to take advantage of them. Read his intentions and act on them. I've had more than one opponent give up because his high speed run missed me in the last instant and his fleet was now totally split apart trying to turn around towards me again, while I am continuing to hammer isolated ships. (Needless to say, I think they were making a big

mistake)

Fourth, keep your ships together. You need to take advantage of your overlapping arcs of fire if you are going to present a decent point defense envelope to marauding enemies.

Finally, learn to take advantage of the Gravitic drive. The drive is a highly useful tool that can be used to evade combat while still pointing towards the enemy. You turn, pivot in the other direction and stop the pivot, so you are effectively moving sideways along the map line, while still having your nose to the enemy. Your Grav drive still allows you to turn. This is the key to the 'Minbari OLE!' and is a vital general tactic to learn. It does cost a lot of thrust to pull off though, so sit down with a piece of paper and see how much thrust you can get by switching off various weapon combinations. Needless to say, the Jammer is off limits!

EXAMPLE MANEUVER

Here is a maneuver to try with your Sharlin. Start off in the corner moving at low speed, say 4 or even 3. Fire one's lasers on turn 1 (with your Cannons turned off to extra EW, of course). Next round turn immediately, move one's speed, and then turn again. Fire one's rear lasers. Round 3 move to the edge of the map and turn, then pivot in the same direction as the pivot and stop the pivot. One might consider turning off your rear lasers to provide extra power, but if not your cannons will do fine. If on a fixed map your opponent is caught as you are on the map edge and if he over-flies you he loses. On a floating map it still a good move, as one will be moving sideways with one's front to his line of advance, one's lasers about to charge, and will have maximized your fire on the earlier rounds. If he surrounds you, turn into his fleet and give him full front and rear broadsides!

A variation on this might suit a Tinashi fleet with no rear firing lasers (also useful if you want to sustain your front lasers after you fire on turn 1). Same start, but you do not turn to the edge (though you still can if you wish). You simply start the slide on turn 2 and turn as you near the corners.

One final thing. I have had great success with a fleet of 3 Tinashis and a Troligan by advancing against him, turning to bring my lasers to bear and keeping a constant laser barrage going. This works as the Troligan can brake up his fleet as he moves to point blank and one can turn off as he turns around to get to you, then turn and repeat. Even if one loses the back of a Tinashi you can still pivot the ship round while slowing so it's soon back under control, flying backwards!

By the way, I have never retrograded in my life.

IN CONCLUSION:

The Minbari are a deeply challenging, rewarding race to play. They are not the most forgiving of mistakes but are great fun to play and open up a whole range of options for those prepared to take them on. Learn their strengths. Use their weaknesses. And always remember the motto inscribed over the door of the Warrior cast training college on Minbar...

"One must keep your friends close, my children... And ones enemies tied to the other edge of the map!"



Picture: ARCHANGEL

By J.J. O'SHAUGHNESSY
(Archangel)

GRAVITIC Drives are a form of drive that appears on some of the more advanced races in the game, namely Minbari, Vree, Brakiri, Yolu, Hyach and maybe a few others I can't remember.

Most of the Ancients have them as well (with the significant exception of the Shadows). The drive functions as a kind of 'energy' drive, which allows you to focus your movement energy in a way that normal drive ships cannot. It must be mentioned that some more advanced races do not have it because it is not part of their tech tree (or perhaps some internal disorder kept killing off the people developing it, such as the Centauri). In any case, it is one of those things that can seem totally irrelevant, almost totally useless. This article is here to show you that this is not the case and if used cleverly it can be a powerful advantage, and can even be a battle winner.

First we need to define exactly what a Gravitic Drive is. Gravitic Drives are defined on page 29 of the rules compendium. It states that it gives an "enhanced ability to operate while using roll or pivot maneuvers"

"Rolls: A Gravitic Drive allows a rolling ship to perform any other desired maneuver without restriction..."

"Pivots: While Pivoting, ships with Gravitic Drives ignore the restrictions against other maneuvers.... In order to accelerate, it must use the thrusters opposite its direction of motion... Note the thrusters required for other maneuvers, such as turns, are not altered."

I would advise you to look up the rest for yourself. The purpose of this article will be to

show you maneuvers which will allow you to make the most of this rule and perhaps to think in ways that you might not have thought of before. Several examples can be found on my Minbari tactics article on the previous pages. For the purpose of these examples I will use a Minbari Tinashi War Frigate (with its extra power used in buying one point of thrust), a ship which most people should have access to. These maneuvers are applicable to all gravitic ships, however.

The first and most basic maneuver is what I call "The Slide". In its basic form it goes like this. Start with your Tinashi moving up the

“enhanced ability
to operate while
using roll or pivot
maneuvers”

board in direction six at speed five. You then turn to direction 1. You then pivot into direction 6 and stop the pivot immediately. You are now moving at a new direction while having your nose pointed at the enemy's line of advance. I cannot over-empathize how important this is. It allows you to keep your weapons facing forward while not closing the range to the enemy. You can even sideslip away using your front thrusters! You can freely turn when you get to the corners, and even cancel the pivot by simply turning into

it. This is a very powerful tool and one which takes a bit of practice to master. However, this can really give you an advantage, as it is very difficult for an enemy to match your maneuvers if used properly.

In a close range dogfight you can use the Gravitic Drive as well. In a recent game I sent my ships running at the enemy line (It was a pair of Vorlon Battle Destroyers sent into a general melee). After a spread of missiles had been launched at me, I saw that I could not evade the missiles and keep my weapons toward the enemy very easily at the speed I was traveling. So I ran my ships through his hex, then at the end of my movement pivoted and stopped the pivot, and then turned, effectively doing a 120 degree turn in place, placing my nose towards the launch hex and the enemy rear (and maintaining full mobility!). Later on in the battle I was trying to both evade swarms of fighters and keep hitting at the enemy ships chasing me, so with my one remaining ship I pivoted, stopped the pivot, and turned parallel to the enemy's direction of motion, sliding along them with my guns in full view of the enemy. His fighters (Delta-Vs) found that they simply could not match my maneuver at the speeds they were going (speed 12). I continued to zigzag through their force like this through the battle. If I had been doing this with Tinashis it would have been far more deadly, as the Minbari have weapons pointing in every direction and I could have been firing in all directions at once.

Following on from this it is possible to do a 180-degree "handbrake" emergency turn. Let's take our Tinashi. It is moving speed 4 and an enemy has slipped behind it. A normal

turn would place its side to the enemy and make it far easier to hit, but it has Lasers charged and it needs to kill the enemy. So it turns left twice (8 thrust) and left pivots once (3). This brings it swinging around to face the enemy with its front profile in use. Of course there are downsides. The thrust used will over-thrust the side thruster, you must pivot again next turn and you must not forget the firing penalties. However this is a very useful trick to surprise an opponent with sometime. It's even possible to do it with a Sharlin! (At speed three with two extra points of thrust bought.)

Let's take another situation. Your poor long-suffering Tinashi has lost its back thruster. Normally this would make it almost useless, as it normally cannot turn without a back (apart from speed 1). It could start slowing like mad and go into reverse, but that would take it even closer to the enemy. The solution is to begin a pivot. You can slow down or speed up using your side thrusters. In addition, even though the rulebook is not clear as to exactly when your front thrusters become your effective back thrusters, logically it is the second turn of pivoting. Therefore you can stop right there if you want to, as you can now turn! That's one full turn of straight-line motion instead of two, which is a powerful advantage. Even if you have lost your side thruster you can still pull this off, as gravitic ships can roll and pivot at the same time. Therefore you can begin the pivot, roll, stop the roll and then you can stop the pivot as your thruster is on the other side of your ship. (Reread that. It will make sense eventually, trust me). You can even turn by continually flipping your ship, if you need to.

As stated in the beginning, this article is not intended as a definitive 'how to' of using a gravitic drive. Its purpose is to introduce examples of motion so that you can think of new ways to suit your particular races advantages and needs. For example, the Brakiri can make really good use of the slide maneuver, as they need to keep the enemy away for the maximum amount of time to let the beams recharge. They can also benefit hugely from the other examples due to the large amount of thrust that their ships are blessed with.

It should also be noted that other races can benefit from some of the maneuvers described here, but it is the ability to maneuver while pivoted that makes these really shine for gravitic drive equipped ships.

So, next time you strap yourself into a Minbari cruiser, do a nice circle around an earth ship while pointing straight at him.

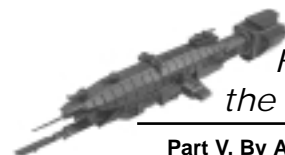
Bliss...

ENDGAME



Picture: CRAIG A CLARK

SHORTLY 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 narrowly escaped the Torvalus in the tides of hyperspace, and battled its way through both Cascor and Descari space, the Warlock was desperate to avoid further battles and escape to a safe haven to plan for their return to liberate Earth from the alien led rebels. Setting out on a desperate and dangerous course back through EA space, the Warlock enlisted the help of another rogue EA ship - the EAS Dominion (one of the powerful Omega-X class destroyers) and a group of mysterious aliens calling themselves the Drakh. However things didn't go as planned, and a small EA task force was waiting for them. The battle was short but brutal with the Warlock slipping away while the defenders swarmed and destroyed the Dominion. Now all that remains for the heavily damaged Warlock is to slip through a jump-



Flight of the Warlock

Part V, By ALEX KETTLE

gate in the very heart of the rebellion they fight against and escape once again into free space.

What else could go wrong?

The thought kept going through Captain Blake's mind as he went over the damage reports from their last battle in the Eridani system. Damage suffered in a well planned trap sprung by the captain of the EAS Vigilance, who had been chasing them since the Warlock had first slipped out of EA Space.

There was a beep from the door; wondering what was next, Captain Blake let out a long sigh before calling out, "Who is it?"

"Commander Williamson sir." Commander Williamson had taken over as first officer after Commander Tucker was killed in the last battle, the result of an exploding comm panel caused by a strafing fighter.

"Come in commander", the door slid open, admitting the short commander, "What is it?"

"Sir, we're having navigation problems again. We'll never be able to link up with the next hyperspace beacon unless we come out of hyperspace first." The commander's reedy voice gave away his thoughts on their success if they dropped out of hyperspace.

Continued PAGE 22



Centauri Devoras

ROMAN ALEXANDER PERNER

THIS is the automatic/remote-controlled ship we all see attacking helpless League shipping in S-5.

Special rules:

It's Shadow-tech control system usually works in semi-autonomous mode; then it has only half it's usual initiative bonus, and has to choose a target which it will single-mindedly follow and attack until it is destroyed, then switch to another one, while ignoring all other ships or fighters (which is the reason this shadow tech was never very popular as sole control system for their ships - a dead technology).

The system can also work in remote mode, then it needs a "control ship" nearby (within 150 hexes), suffers no penalties, and can be controlled fully by its player. And it can be turned off and the ship given a crew, in which case it functions normally.

Control ships with "stronger" shadowtech can wrest away control from the initial controller (right now the only ones with access to stronger shadowtech then the Drakh would be the Shadows themselves, but there may be yet unknown ShadowMinions who also have access to such tech... minions who were working for the Shadows longer then the Drakh, and therefore had more time to understand the systems). This will work even if the ship is crewed, since the ShadowTech systems are designed to allow overriding the crew - just in case. And since the Drakh have stronger systems than the pods themselves, and pod-controlled ship can be controlled by a Drakh ship, even if the Drakh player is the enemy (something the Drazi might want to learn before they use the control pods captured from the Centauri in season-5)

If the ship has to switch modes (because it's command ship is destroyed and it goes semi-auto, or because a command ship appears and takes control) the ship's control system is "distracted" for the turn "changing modes" (changing mode is declared during EW phase, and takes effect at the end of the turn) and suffers a -1 penalty to initiative and all to-hit rolls. It also has one less point of thrust.

Though the ship has shuttles in it's hangar, it cannot launch them without having someone present to operate these shuttles (remember the ships were initially constructed as standard ships with crew, and only later secretly refitted by the Drakh with their control pods).

And finally these ships can always ram, no matter what the scenario says (semi-auto ships will automatically attempt to ram once they have no weapon left, remote ships will do so if and when the player controlling them wishes)

(B5W and FA SCSs are in the Attachments folder)

From PAGE 21

"We may not have a chance to recharge our jump drives after we jump out, B5 is just too close...options?" Captain Blake began to wonder if they really had any options this time.

"Two options sir, one we turn back and probably run into the rebels coming up behind us...or at least the EAS Vigilance...option two, we jump in as close to the B5 jumpgate as we can, and make a run for it. If they're not expecting us we might have a chance to slip away again."

"That's a bloody big 'if' commander...but I think you're right...I don't see any other options right now. Okay, how far out are we?" Captain Blake knew they'd been through far worse, but something this time didn't strike him as quite right.

"We're almost there", Commander Williamson looked down at his watch, "another 20 minutes to real space, captain."

"Alright then, but we go in prepared, get the pilots into ready-five, all fighters are to be launched as we enter real space."

"Yes sir." With that, Williamson saluted, spun around and rushed out of the room, barking orders at the bridge moments later.

Twenty minutes later, the Warlock entered real space, its objective in sight.

"Captain...jump gate is in sight, we'll be within range in a few minutes...CAPTAIN, I'm reading many fighters, count 48 heavy fighters around jumpgate. It's the station, B5's fighters are deployed and beginning attack runs, they were waiting for us..." the young tactical officer's voice cracked, he knew exactly what was to follow.

Captain Blake stood up to face his bridge crew, "I know it looks bad, but we're out of options...surrender means internment and brain washing at the hands of those alien bastards that took Sheridan, our only hope is to try and push our way through the fighters and activate the jump gate...In the memory of Clarke, and for the good of Earth- forever free, God help us all." With that the Warlock's massive thrusters lit up, hurtling the Warlock into the battle, grasping at one last faint chance, never knowing that only minutes away the EAS Vigilance was preparing to activate the jump gate in pursuit of their foe.

FORCES:

Clarke - EAS Warlock (if played as campaign, Warlock should have any damage suffered in last battle) + any surviving fighters from previous scenarios (if played as a one-off scenario, Warlock has 18 Thunderbolt assault fighters with navigators and 2 basic fighter, 2 dogfight missiles each).

Navigator, Expert Technician. (Commander Tucker was the expert security officer and

was historically killed in the previous battle, and is therefore no longer available).

Earth Alliance - 24 Star Fury heavy fighters + 24 Thunderbolt assault fighters w. navigator and 2 basic fighter missiles each.

Turn 5- EAS Vigilance - Hyperion Command Cruiser - Elite Crew - 6 Star Fury heavy fighters

SETUP:

Setup the two pieces of the standard map edgewise (short end to short end) to create a long map. 10 hexes in from the far right side in the center of the map place a jumpgate.

Clarke: EAS Warlock enters from anywhere on the left edge of the map, all fighters may begin deployed.

Earth Alliance: All fighters must begin within 10 hexes of the jumpgate and 15 hexes of the right edge of the map.

On turn 5 if the Warlock has not activated the jump gate sequence, the EAS Vigilance enters through the jumpgate, resetting the jump gate recharge.

VICTORY CONDITIONS:

Clarke: Survive! That's all that left to hope for.

Victory - activate the jumpgate sequence and escape the trap.

Draw - destroy the EAS Vigilance...you may go down, but you can take those alien-loving bastards with you!

Any other result is a loss.

Earth Alliance:

Victory - Destroy the Warlock, there is nothing else, no middle ground, stop her here and now.

Any other result is a loss

Historical: The Warlock was swarmed by Babylon 5's fighters and despite suffering massive damage pushed its way forward, mainly thanks to the bravery of her fighter pilots, who threw themselves at the rebels with great fury. Unfortunately, just before they could activate the jump gate, it was activated from hyperspace by the EAS Vigilance, who came through with guns blazing. A brief attempt was made to convince the crew of the Warlock to surrender, an offer which her commander rejected moments after watching the Captain die from injuries sustained in the Vigilance's initial attack. The EAS Warlock, having made its last stand, broke apart in a series of massive internal explosions, and was finally destroyed with all hands.

The End.

HARVESTING SOULS



GROPOS

By ALEX ROBERTS

OF ALL the races alive now, only the First Ones likely know the early years of the race known now as the Soul Hunters, and they aren't talking. What is known is that they have been around for thousands upon thousands of years.

Ancient Minbari records show their knowledge of the existence of the Soul Hunters going back 40,000 years, and some races speculate that the Soul Hunters have been operating up to 1,000,000 years ago. Neither their home planet nor their current base of operations is known. Individual Soul Hunters live for thousands of years. An age of 4000 is considered young amongst Soul Hunters. They can breathe most atmospheres without encounter suits, and all nutrition needed is provided by equipment in their ships.

What is known is that the Soul Hunters are everywhere, and can sense the impending death of individuals across vast distances. The Soul Hunters do not believe in an afterlife, and consider it their life mission to ensure that important individuals are not lost to the void. Rather, the Soul Hunters capture their spirits and imprison them in globes that can hold them safely eternally.

These globes are then ensconced in "Whisper Chambers", spread throughout space. These chambers are large spherical halls, within which thousands of soul spheres are placed, allowing them to "talk" to each other, as well as safeguarding them from thieves. Extensive automated guardians are placed on worlds containing these "Whisper Chambers", though not always are these protections effective.

As can well be imagined, most races who believe in an afterlife find the Soul Hunter's activities anathema. However, after eons of practicing their life's mission, the Soul Hunters are well equipped and practiced in their craft, and are rarely prevented. In fact, there is only one recorded instance of the Soul Hunter's failing to gather a soul. Upon the death of the great



Minbari leader Dukhat, the Soul Hunters came to the Grey Sharlin to collect his soul. However, defensive fire from the Minbari ships, coupled with a final line of

Minbari bodies managed to stop the Soul Hunters long enough to allow Dukhat's soul to escape into the afterlife.

SPECIAL RULES

Inferno Shield: In order to board unfriendly vessels, Soul Hunter vessels are equipped with a special energy field that is capable of burning through the toughest of hulls, negating any defensive fields or countermeasures. In addition to allowing the Soul Hunter vessel through the hull, it also acts as a sealant, preventing decompression upon the entry of the Soul Hunter.

If an Inferno Shield equipped vessel ends the phase in the same hex as an enemy vessel, the Soul Hunter may board the vessel and

pick up the soul of someone who is about to die. If no one is about to die, some Soul Hunters are not above "accelerating" the natural progress of life. Roll 4d10 and compare this to the remaining

structure

of the

ves-

sel

(primary structure for stations).

If the die roll exceeds the structure of the vessel, the attack is successful. Due to the confusion caused on board by the entry of the Soul Hunter, the vessel counts as Out Of Command for the next 2 pulses. The Soul Hunter may continue to move on as normal after completing their boarding action. They may not fire any other weapons on the same turn they use their Inferno Shield.

In addition to its offensive effects, the Inferno Shield always provides the defensive benefit of a Level 2 EM shield.

Advanced Shock Cannon: This is a vastly improved version of the Minbari Shock Cannon, and has been in use for eons to weaken or short out defensive systems before the Soul Hunter vessel attempts to board. It functions as per the Shock Cannon in MEMA.

Anti-Proton Cannon: Though the Soul Hunters are loath to intentionally cause any loss of life, they are not above defending themselves if the cause arises. They are also not above destroying those who steal souls or other devices from their repositories.

SHIPS

Gatherer: The Soul Hunter Gatherer is the standard Soul Hunter vessel, and has not changed for tens of thousands of years. It is well equipped and defended, and carries one Soul Hunter. Although these vessels usually travel alone, it is not unknown for them to gather in large groups in cases such as gathering the lives of an entire planet, or retrieving their Soul orbs from thieves.

(FA SCS in Attachment folder)

Pirate Hunting

Edited by **CHRIS NASIPAK**

RAIDER activity in the sector has continued to worsen for some time now. Investigation has finally uncovered the reason why - three smaller bands operating in the region have all been taken over by a new, more aggressive group, which has been coordinating their actions and may well be plotting something violently revolutionary. The government, of course, cannot tolerate such a thing, and has assembled a naval squadron to assist the patrol forces in clearing them out.

Setup:

PATROL FORCES - select a squadron from the list of Battle Forces below or design your own following the same rules (5000 points total, at least two police/patrol units). Patrol squadron will enter from a map edge or by jump point after the Raider player has set up his forces.

RAIDERS - Set up on-map with the following units:

- 1x Marcanos 'Civilian' Station in hex 1515
- 1x Raider 'Sanctuary' Base in hex 2220
- 4x EA Light OSATs, in 5 hexes of either base
- 650 point minefield (Contact, Captor, or light DEW only)

Deployed within 10 hexes of the Sanctuary base, at velocity zero:

- 2x Wolf Raider
- 1x Brigantine

- 1x Sloop
- 3x Civilian Freighter
- 1x Civilian Fast Freighter
- 4x Gunboat

Deployed within 10 hexes of the Marcanos base, at velocity zero:

- 1x Dragonship
- 1x Barque
- 2x Sloop
- 1x Felucca
- 1x Civilian Ore Barge
- 1x Civilian Tug (no cargo pods)
- 4x Gunboat

Deployed anywhere on the map (placed after the Patrol player chooses his entry point)

- 3x Gunboat
- 1x L'Karus Raider

The civilian vessels are recent prizes. The Raider player is under no obligation to identify his converted civilian units; use the Ship Identification rules from the Compendium unless the units make it obvious by their actions.

All units have a full complement of appropriate fighters. Raider units will have Delta-Vs, one in four flights will be Double-Vs with 2x Basic Fighter Missile each; the Marcanos will have Centauri Razik light fighters. Up to four flights of Gorith medium interceptors may be substituted for Double-V flights.

Victory Conditions:

- Both bases and all jump-capable Raider units destroyed: Total Patrol victory
- Both bases destroyed or captured: Patrol victory
- One base destroyed: Draw
- Any other result: Raider victory

THE BATTLE FORCES

Belt and Braces (Jason Thompson)

The raider activity in this sector has meant a substantial increase in revenues for the BA. However, the trading companies have brought considerable pressure to bear for these pirates to be brought to justice, terminal justice. To this end the BA have temporarily suspended some of their escort contracts, brought in two of their Heavies and concentrated their ships into one fleet in order to remove the main reason for their income (good business sense huh!).

Each Medium Gunboat should loosely pair up with two Light Gunboats. This gives 3 hunter-killer elements with the Heavy acting as back-up where needed. The Escort Carrier should stay out of the way as much as possible, only being brought into the fray if things are dire.

24 Delta-Vs and 12 Star Foxes with Class-Y missiles should be able to deal with the Raider Delta-Vs and Double-Vs; The Star Foxes should use their missiles first, saving the Matter-Guns for possible anti-ship action.

- Heavy Gunboat (2 out of 4, must be serious)
- Escort Carrier * 1
- Medium Gunboat * 3
- Light Gunboat * 6
- Delta-V Fighter * 24
- Star Fox Fighters * 12
- Dogfight missiles * 24

Leaving 154 point to spend on specialty ammo for the Blast Cannons

Mob Justice

(UpthaIrons@aol.com)

- 1x Raider Battlewagon 540 points
- 1x Civilian Pirate Hunter 425 points
- 3x Civilian Bulk Freighter 840 points
- 2x Civilian Missile Barge 1100 points
- 3x Civilian Q-Ships 1050 points
- 30x Delta-Vs 960 points
- = 4915 points total

The most recent pirate raid resulted in the total destruction of the Civilian Liner City of New Orleans, a ship captained by an old and respected spacer admired by civilian operators throughout known space. Angered beyond reason, a sizable armada of civilian vessels has gone hunting these raiders with the intent of extracting justice with extreme prejudice. The civilian fleet has already captured one pirate ship, a Battlewagon that wisely surrendered after the loss of half of its fighters convinced the ship's captain that this fleet wasn't joking. After wringing the location of the main pirate stronghold from the crew, the odd fleet has decided to use the raider ship with its jump engine to engage the pirates directly.

The commander of this ersatz armada, a retired Earth Force officer, intends to use his fighters to swarm the enemy led by the Pirate Hunter. The Missile Barge and the Q-Ships will stay at range as much as possible and pound the pirate base into oblivion with missiles with the Bulk Freighters providing anti-fighter support and using their Plasma Cannons to discourage close and hose tactics as much as possible.

Losari's Losers

(Gianni Liburdi)

Commodore Losari was not happy.

Sitting in his office on the Marcanos Base orbiting Polgrath VI, he once again reviewed the dispatch from High Command. Once again, he both welcomed and cursed the news it brought.

Commercial shipping in the Marigol sector had been suffering heavily at the hands of Pirates as of late. After months of pushing his meager naval assets to locate the source, he finally had the intelligence he sought. Intelligence had pinned down the suspected location of a major Raider base to a small area on the outskirts of Centauri territory. That, along with a directive to assemble a strike force to eradicate this threat to civilian commerce, had been welcome news

indeed.

The problem, however, proved to be finding ships to do it with. Losari had found that his requests to the Admiralty for ships-of-the-line such as Primus Battlecruisers and Demos Heavy Warships were met with cordial rejections detailing how such prized ships could not be spared thanks to the chronically under funded and overworked state of the Marigol Sector Fleet. Undeterred by this, he revised his proposals to request slightly older designs, such as Centurion Attack Cruisers and Vorchan Warships. These too, were met with rejection for the same reasons as before. After a series of unsuccessful fleet requisition requests, Losari was beginning to wonder if High Command intended him to tackle the Raider base with nothing more than a space suit and a PPG.

As always with the Centauri, politics were everything. Losari had spent an incredible amount of effort as of late calling in all manner of individual favors owed to him, until he had no influence left to spend. Looking from his office at the fleet he had managed to assemble, Losari could only sigh in frustration. Three Haven Patrol Boats were all that he could spare of his normal policing vessels without leaving the local trade routes severely vulnerable to other Raiders in the region. They were currently grouped into an impromptu fast-attack group, lead by a Mograth Frigate visiting the Base for a little R&R only to be pulled back onto active duty after its Captain lost heavily to Losari in the Casino. Two Escort Lupas formed a late addition to that group, having been temporarily reassigned from base defense by virtue of the two cases of very good Bravari now sitting in the Base Commander's office.

If the smaller ships at his disposal gave him cause to despair, then the heavier ones only added to it. The pair of Altarians he had acquired, and the squadron of Raziks they carried between them, would normally be off escorting high-value shipping, and might still have been if the officer in charge of them had not been an old classmate of Losari's. His mood soured more when he recalled his stirring words to the Admiralty about providing powerful attack ships which would demoralize the Raiders by their presence alone, only to find a couple of battered Kutai Gunships delivered to him in response. And while he hadn't the gall to request an Octurion Battleship or Primus Maximus Command Cruiser with which to lead his forces into victory, he had at least expected something better than the flagship that he was currently saddled with. At the heart of his motley collection of ships, sat an Optine Battlecruiser that had managed to convince one of the House Lords recently hit hard by the Raider attacks to provide on loan from his personal Navy. Signs of shod-

dy or non-existent repair work dotted its hull, and trial runs had shown the weapons to have an annoying tendency to misfire at the most inconvenient times, but it was still the most powerful vessel in the rag-tag squadron he had managed to assemble.

Losari sighed once again, taking one last look at this symbol of the might and strength of the glorious Centauri Republic. As his computer flashed a message indicating his shuttle was ready to transfer him over to his new command, he wondered yet again if assaulting the Raider Base armed with only a PPG wasn't such a bad idea after all...

Lets face it, police work isn't the primary focus of most Navies out there. As such, top quality units generally aren't going to be made available for such mundane tasks, except perhaps when they are using Raiders for live-fire targeting practice. Since the CRN is far more susceptible to the influence of politics when deciding naval deployments, the following is the result of one frustrated Centauri Commodore trying to carry out his orders as best he can:

- 1 x Optine Battlecruiser
- 2 x Kutai Gunships
- 2 x Altarian Destroyers
- 1 x Mograth Frigate
- 3 x Haven Patrol Boats
- 2 x Lupa Attack Boats (Escort Variant)
- 12 x Razik Interceptors
- Cost: 5,000

Basic deployment: The Optine and Kutais carry most of the heavy firepower in this fleet. The cruiser will try to employ its Battle Lasers to maximum effect, either crippling the Raider base from outside of its effective weapons range, or attacking any large Raider vessels such as Battlewagons or Dragonships. The Kutais will generally act in support of the Optine, using their batteries of rapid-firing MCs to either annihilate enemy vessels, or cripple them for later capture with well-placed called shots. The Altarians will flank this group, providing anti-fighter coverage with their TAs and Raziks for the main body, as well as additional Matter Cannon support.

The Mograth and Havens have two options. If Raider fighter presence is heavy, they can choose to break and attack, relying on their TAs to rapidly whittle away the number of Delta-Vs in short order. Should fighter activity be light, they would choose instead to form one large wolfpack. The Mograth's Plasma Streamer will help to soften up targets for a barrage of TA fire, which will likely strip enough systems to let the Matter Cannons focus in on ripping the light structure blocks of the Raider vessels to shreds. The pair of Escort Lupas will generally always operate on anti-fighter duty, covering the rest of the fleet as needed.

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Minbari house cleaning service (JJ O'Shaughnessy)

1xTrolata Armored Cruiser - 1100
1xTinashi War frigate - 850
1xAshinta Close Escort - 850
1xShaveen Police Leader - 600
2xShaveen patrol Cutter - 1050
1xToratha Assault Frigate - 550
= 5000

Tactical situation.

Ok, I can bet there will be a lot of fighters on the other side of the table. Granted they're Delta-Vs, but those are dangerous to low armored opponents. So, we have included the Ashinta, and 3 Police ships, which combined will give a good bit of fighter cover to the fleet, and as a bonus will do good work on any of the fast moving Raider LCVs that might be there.

Anti-ship power is provided by our next selections, the Tinashi and the Trolata. Modeling a very fetching 5 Neutron Lasers and 2 Antimatter Converters, not to mention even more Fusion Cannons, these ships should be able to impress their superiority on any enemy shipping. This is backed up by the Torotha, with 2 Molecular Disruptors to caress anyone who gets too close. The Ashinta will help in this regard as well.

Ok, the Trolata has one primary job, and that is slide up to the base and let rip with its Antimatter Converters. The rest of the fleet is there to deal with the fighter swarms and other threats that might show up. In other words, make sure it gets there.

Basic plan going in. The base is armed with short range weapons so can be safely ignored while other threats are being dealt with. If the fighters have not launched when we arrive, fire on the base with the lasers in the hope to blast some of them off. The Converters are 1/3 turn weapons, and so can be used on other threats while the fleet works its way towards the base. The Shaveen's incredible initiative bonus should allow them to get the drop on people. They are fragile though and should be careful. Aside from that basic Minbari tactics should prevail.

Task Force Scrubber (Kizarvexis)

To: Joint Chiefs, EarthForce, Earthdome

Fm: Commodore Smith - Task Force Scrubber

- I have detached the Oracle EAS Farsight from the 8th fleet and the Orestes EAS Molasses from the Proxima III defense fleet for more carrier space. Task force will also include the Hyperion Patrol Cruisers EAS Tampa, EAS Maintz and the Tethys Police Cutters EAS Snook and EAS Tarpon. Task Force Scrubber will jump into the XP-7E system, execute a spiral search pattern to neutralize Raider shipping before assaulting the base. Detainees will be transferred to Proxima III for shipment to Earthdome. I will try to minimize any collateral damage, but are considering ships in the XP-7E system to be hostile raider forces.

To: EAS Molasses, EAS Maintz, EAS Tampa, EAS

Snook, EAS Tarpon, EAS Farsight

Fm: Commodore Smith - Task Force Scrubber

Situation: Raider forces based in XP-7E system

Mission: Neutralize Raider base

Execution:

The EAS Maintz will open the jump point into the XP-7E system at 145.87.167. The EAS Molasses will form the core of the fleet along with the EAS

Farsight. The Farsight will provide blanket protection while the EAS Tampa and the EAS Maintz protect the flanks and process defense ships as they present themselves. Fighter Squadrons Alpha and Charlie will screen the task force and assist the Tampa and the Maintz in neutralizing targets of opportunity.

The fleet will move in a spiral search pattern through out the system to sweep any ships and fighters, before neutralizing the base. The Tampa, Maintz and Molasses will use heavy laser fire supported by the Farsight to neutralize the base prior to boarding actions of any disabled ships. Any detainees will be transported to the Tampa for return to Proxima III.

Service and Support: The EAS Tampa, Maintz and Molasses are currently undergoing SPB gun sight refit. The EAS Farsight will provide ELINT support. Marine detachment (along with the Claw and the Penetrator) assigned to the EAS Snook and the EAS Tarpon. The Proxima III system base will provide all outside service and supply for the Task Force.

Command & Signal: I will lead the taskforce from the Hyperion Eta EAS Tampa. Captain Jaeger on the Hyperion Eta EAS Maintz will be second in command, followed by Captain's Hiroshi (Orestes EAS Molasses), Chang (Oracle EAS Farsight), Adams (Tethys Kappa EAS Snook), and Gustanov (Tethys Kappa EAS Tarpon). Comm channels will be assigned per section 32-47. Weapons Free, Condition Red. System XP-7E is a free-fire zone. All ships encountered are to be considered hostile Raider forces.

-
One thing the raiders don't have is ELINT. By requisitioning an Oracle from a sector fleet it provides a force multiplier that raiders just can match. Two patrol Hyperions, maybe three at most is all that could be assembled to provide carrier space. By using an Orestes from the Proxima defense fleet, much needed carrier space is added as well as heavy lasers for the final assault. The Orestes and Oracle escort each other with the Hyperions guarding the flanks. The Hyperions and fighters, with the Oracle and Orestes providing support fire, engage raider pop-up targets. The gun sight refits to the Hyperions and Orestes, increase the SPB's FC to 5 for all ship types helping the anti-fighter cause. The breaching pods on the Tethys are for capturing crippled ships and the Tethys themselves provide anti-fighter and light ship attacks as needed.
