

THE GREAT MACHINE

ISSUE 12 December/January 2004/2005



New Frontiers



HELLOOOOOOOO!

Oh my, it has been much time since Zathras has been tellings you what is going on at the Great Machine. Many sorries, but Zathras have been very busy working and toiling for Draal. Very busy we are!

What does Zathras know so he can tells you... hmm... Ah, yes! Draal has been talking to a very nice Vorlon and received a special present for great holiday. Gave gift in honor of Valen, he did, yes. Twelve gifts total, four sets of three.

The other day Zathras saw many things that Draal told him to look up. Ancient ships of darkness – they scared Zathras, but Zathras used to it by now, Draal is very scary person. Zathras know they were Shadow ships, used in a great war many, many, MANY years ago.

But Zathras also see many other interesting things. Somewhere out there is great system which acts as Nexus. Very important, yes. That area be very important to all before too long. There was also much talk of the Vernakki Horde. A threat to everyone, but mysterious. Even Draal is concerned about them.

While looking for bugs in the dirt, Zathras saw Fwiffo run past. Moving very quick he was, yes. He had a roll of duct tape on his head and many sharp pointy things in his small, scrawny arms. That is a sneaky Spathi, Zathras think to himself. Probably hoarding all of the good bugs, yes. At least Zathras not have to worry about hoarding pointy ears, as Zathras knows Romulans have those.

Well, Zathras must get back to work! If Zathras no work, he does not get health benefits. And without health benefits Zathras life that much harder than it already is, and that is never good for Zathras.

Zathras,
CARETAKER

Contents

2 The Twelve Variants of Christmas

It is the Hour of Scampering, and Santa Kosh is here for a transport loaded with presents for good little warlords!

9 Ships of the Primordial Shadow Fleet: The Kirishiac War

A final installment in this series details the advanced ships fielded by the Shadows during the war with the Kirishiac.

12 The Tal-kona'sha

David Ainsworth revisits Max Blagg's Tal-kona'sha, the neighbors of the Dilgar who never were released.

21 MarsGuard: All Units Scramble!

25 The Nexus Universe

The brothers Stano bring you a new B5W setting. The Sal-bez and Craytan are previewed in this issue.

33 Prometheus: The Rise of the Horde

The Vernakki Hordes are invading the region of space? Who you gonna call? The Cytherans, Shidari, and Equesse-zan!

44 Freespace Conversions

45 Winter-een-mas Ships

46 The Romulan War

54 The Ashes of Eden

55 Ge'kad'ian Syndicate

59 Next Issue



The Twelve Variants of Christmas

By Paul Brown & Tyrel Lohr

Introduction

Through the wonders of the Great Machine and the Ghost of Vorlons Past, we are happy to present to you the Twelve Variants of Christmas! From the halls of the

Variants Rejects come all of the variants that are variants from across the globe. We scoured our hard drives looking for the best of the best in old variants, and these should whet the palate of even the most discriminating Babylon 5 Wars player! We have variants for the EA, Drazi, Hyach, Orieni, Centauri, and more!

Some of our more astute readers may realize that it is no

longer the Christmas season, nor are we in fact in the year 2004 any longer. To these skeptics in our audience, there is only one thing that we have to say, "Never use this tool." It was good enough for Zathras, it's good enough for us, too.

Without any further ado, let our good friend, Kosh, usher in the new year with these fabulous variants!

REJECTED VARIANT #1: Orieni Judgement Laser Frigate

The Storm Front Missile Corvette proved itself a capable ship killer, the problem in the design however lay in its reliance on expendable munitions. During the 2003 upgrade of the Vengeful Laser Frigate, numerous ships were instead refitted to a new design. Mounting a battery rapid-firing Light Laser cannons the Judgement Laser Frigate was an experiment to create a capable close-quarters ship killer using non-expendable armament. Though the design looked appealing on paper, the battery of light lasers simply could not compete with the firepower of a heavy missile barrage and as a result the ship failed to gain popularity among the Orieni Strike Forces. The few ships produced remained in service, but did not receive additional refits.

Rejected design from Variants-6 contest, by Paul Brown.

REJECTED VARIANT #2: Drazi Wyvern Attack Corvette

During the massive military effort of the Freehold during the Dilgar War, the Drazi produced more ships in a small time frame than at any other point in their history. Despite the unprecedented levels of co-operation, the military build up was not without supply problems. Many ships and other weapons of war were missing vital components due to shortages, or low prioritisation as shipments were re-directed to other endeavours.

One notable instance was the shortage of particle cannon weaponry in late 2330. The shortage



led to all available supplies being used to arm larger warships. Meanwhile, smaller craft such as the Throkan were left only partially completed in Drazi shipyards. To alleviate this problem, the Drazi made several purchases from foreign governments, including the Pak'ma'ra. A shipment of the relatively low-tech, yet lethal Plasma Torches were installed on retrofitted Throkans. The Drazi had witnessed the brutality of these weapons in the hands of the aggressors, and were all too willing to implement them for their own fleets. The retrofitted hulls were re-designated as Wyvern Attack Corvettes, and served primarily as an attrition unit. Many of the ships were also equipped with partial or obsolete equipment, particularly sensor arrays. Due to the volatility of the Plasma Torch, the Wyvern was treated purely as an attrition unit. As such they took heavy losses during the war, though performing admirably against Dilgar ships. Those that survived were soon taken out of service as Drazi fleets reduced to peace-time levels.

Rejected design from Variants-3 contest, by Paul Brown.

REJECTED VARIANT #3: Drazi Scute Serpent Mine Fighter

Based on the design of a Drazi Sky Serpent, the Scute Serpent is an older variant designed to deploy Drazi mines during a battle. This fighter may carry up to three (3) Drazi mines and can launch them at a rate of 1 per 2 turns. This slow rate of fire is due to mechanism limitations in the fighter's mine launching device. The Serpent spaceframe was barely capable of supporting a de facto ballistic mine launcher in the first place, but Drazi stubbornness prevailed.

When loaded with mines, the Scute Serpent cannot turn as quickly as normal for fear that it might accidentally detonate newly laid mines. Because of this, the fighter has a Turn Delay of 1/2 Speed when carrying mines, but will revert to its normal 1/4 Speed Turn Delay once all mines have been launched.

The mine launching devices takes up considerable amount of space on the Scute Serpent. This necessitated a redesign of the fighter guns mounted on the craft. The particle blaster was stripped from the hull and instead placed with two wide-arc particle gun turrets.

These turrets are included for the express purpose of defending the Scute Serpent Mine Fighter from enemy fighter interceptors.

Original rejected variant submission by Jay Waschak, "reimagined" by Tyrel Lohr

REJECTED VARIANT #4: Irokai Tal Frontal Assault Cruiser

The Hyach do not normally require assault vessels in their fleet due to their non-expansionistic policies. However, in the past, there has been need for ships designed for precision strikes to break down enemy starbases and exact retribution against the Hyach's enemies. The extent of any assault operations were usually limited to retrieving a stolen artifact or subjugating a border outpost.

The Irokai Tal is not a full-scale assault cruiser, though it can carry an entire division of troops if need be. Rather the Irokai Tal carries heavy bombardment weaponry used for shattering enemy fixed defenses. In addition, a light cadre of assault shuttles and breaching pods are based on the ship for the insertion of troops and marines.

Two versions of this failed Variant for Variants 5 are included. The first is the initial submission model that replaces a maser and medium laser on each side with a blast laser, giving the ship the firepower to break open enemy bases and OSATs with ease. The second variant is an alternate design that adds a new weapon, the Lasing Torpedo, in place of the blast lasers. Rules for the Lasing Torpedo are below.

Rejected design from Variants-5 contest, by Tyrel Lohr.

Lasing Torpedo

A weapon similar in function to the Kor-Lyan proximity laser, the lasing torpedo differs from that weapon greatly in the means by which it delivers its ballistic laser damage. The Hyach have developed such high levels of miniaturization that it became possible for them to mount a modified light laser cannon into a typical torpedo housing. The modifications made to the laser and torpedo to allow for the mating of technologies.

For almost all purposes, the lasing torpedo is treated as a ballistic weaponry. The weapon is, thus, still subject to cumulative interception, making it much weaker compared to other Hyach weapons. However,

when the lasing torpedo successfully hits, the damage scored is considered laser for purposes of advanced armor.

The lasing torpedo, due to being a raking (8) weapon, is mitigated more by armor than other ballistics. Because of this, the lasing torpedo is seldom seen within the Hyach fleet. The primary utility of the lasing torpedo is to strip off light weapon systems on enemy ships to allow heavier weaponry—such as the spinal laser—to exact more damage on their own strikes.

REJECTED VARIANT #5: Drazi Stalkbird Raiding Cruiser

The Stalkbird is a stripped down Warbird designed by the Drazi for support of raider organizations within and on their borders. A small warship capable of carrying 12 fighters on external side-mounted rails (typically Delta-V's or Star Snakes), the Stalkbird also provides additional heavy firepower to raider fleets.

Stalkbirds are typically loaned to raider groups for only a short amount of time, and usually are kept under Drazi command in order to protect their investment. Some raiders that have proved their worth



and loyalty to the Drazis, however, have managed to purchase several Stalkbirds for their own use, though this is a rare circumstance.

The typical use of the Stalkbird is by raider organizations for providing a little more firepower and a sturdier, faster hull to lead their other, cheaper craft into battle.

Rejected design from Variants-2 contest, by Tyrel Lohr.

REJECTED VARIANT #6: Cascor Norqacci Fleet Carrier

Developed before the supercarrier project began, the Norqacci Fleet Carrier was designed in the mid-2220's as a "glory" ship showcasing the strength of the Cascor navy and symbolizing the spirit of Cascor herself.

The Norqacci was designed as a fleet flag vessel from which Cascor admiralty could direct a battle while providing hangar capacity in excess of the typical Cascor capital ship. As such, Norqacci's stay towards the rear of the fleet, assisting in a command and tactical support role only. To this effect the ship was stripped of most of its offensive weaponry, replacing the ship's volume with expanded hangar decks and related equipment.

The Norqacci fleet carriers served valiantly during the Dilgar War, though the lives of the few Norqaccis were cut drastically short—all of the ships of this class were destroyed within the first few months of war, the Dilgar actively seeking them out and destroying them. The

underlying theories behind the Norqacci proved to be solid, however, and later demonstrations of Dilgar fighter might (in particular the Garasoch and Mishakur-B carriers) lead the Cascor to further develop the idea of the supercarrier after the war.

Rejected design from Variants-5 contest, by Tyrel Lohr.

REJECTED VARIANT #7: Centauri (House) Mostaran Raiding Cruiser

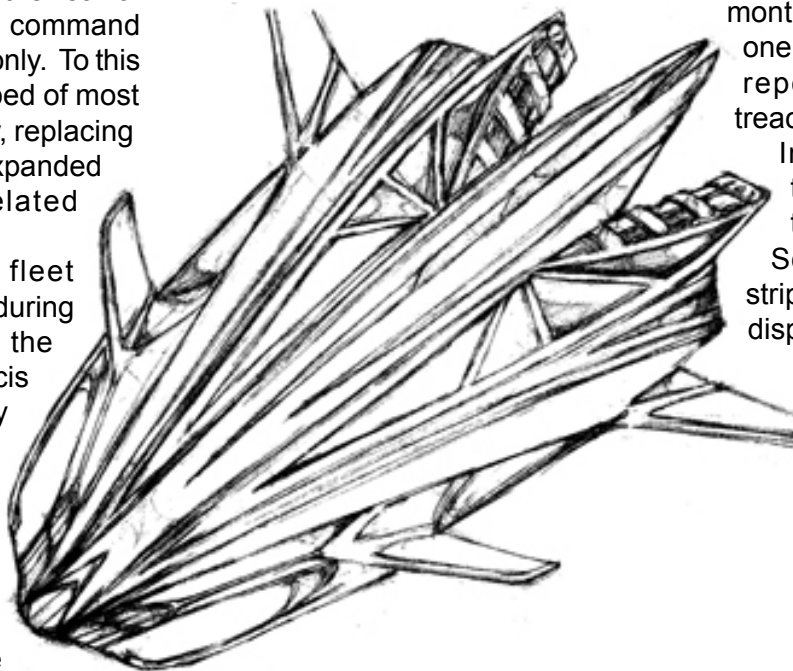
After 2001, the Drazis had been effectively cowed by Centauri strikes into their territory and were no longer a major factor in the war, the Centauri's focus instead switching to the desperate Orieni theater. Many houses with interests along the Drazi border were dismayed by this situation as they had dreamed of conquest within Drazi space and felt slighted.

Among these disaffected houses there stood one house that had a particular interest in re-igniting conflict with the Drazis. This house was House Scaladdo. House Scaladdo schemed for a way to reverse their fortunes. Through backwater channels House Scaladdo secured the assistance of a Drazi raider faction that was down on their luck and looking for new avenues to gain influence and riches. Lord Scaladdo convinced them to sell several Drazi manufactured weapon systems to him and to send a detachment of their numbers to aid in a "great campaign."

With the Drazi weapons in hand, Lord Scaladdo's shipyards began covertly modifying several Celerian Warcruisers to operate the Drazi weapon systems. His intent: to use these ships, with the assistance of the Drazi mercenaries, to raid Centauri shipping lanes and frame the Drazis, inciting the Centauri to war — a war in which House Scaladdo would reap the benefits!

Lord Scaladdo's plans were cut short. It only took a little over a month for a survivor to escape one of the Scaladdo raids and report House Scaladdo's treachery. A group of Centauri Imperial naval ships on their shakedown cruises then neutralized House Scaladdo, and they were stripped of their position and dispersed.

Rejected design from Variants-6 contest, by Tyrel Lohr.



REJECTED VARIANT #8: Pak'Ma'Ra Sik'val'ka Defense Cruiser

During the course of the campaign against the Drazi, some Pak'ma'ra began to get nervous about the relative proximity they were getting to Melat. Though it was unreasonable that the Dilgar would ever penetrate through Drazi space, others had thought this of their previous conquests, and the Pak'ma'ra that met briefly on the issue agreed something had to be done.

A few transports already in drydock were thus converted over into makeshift defense cruisers. The Pak'ma'ra hoped merely that they would be able to field a vessel that could possibly do at least moderate damage to invading forces before being destroyed. They did not believe such a ship would survive the first Dilgar volleys. Luckily no Sik'val'ka ever was forced into combat, but it did lay the foundation for the design philosophy which would later create the Thar'no'tak Plasma Cruiser.

Rejected design from Variants-3 contest, by Tyrel Lohr.

REJECTED VARIANT #9: Hyach Urutha Tal Battleship

The Hyach introduced this variant in 2260, shortly after the Shadow War, in an effort to maximize the offensive potential of the Urutha hull. However optimization came at the cost of integral fighter support. Some military commanders felt that the base Urutha Kal Dreadnought

lacked sheer offensive firepower, especially at the long engagement ranges where the Hyach's edge in sensors and targeting systems could be put to greater use.

Rejected design from Variants-5 contest, by Dennis Marshall.

REJECTED VARIANT #10: EA Nova Early Dreadnought

In the early development stages of the Nova Dreadnought, Earth Alliance Research and Development first experimented with new plasma technologies. Laser technology was still undergoing testing at the time, while a separate department attempted to push Plasma as far as it could. A seldom-known early model of the Nova was equipped with a weapon that is roughly equivalent to the modern day Dual Plasma Cannon in use with the Descari. The ship had problems with the design however, as the massive power drain forced several

of the weapons to be offline at any one time, as well the weapons themselves were prone to malfunction. Several years after its introduction, the Medium Laser Cannon entered common service and the newer Novas received the latest models. Though the new Medium Lasers utilised only one of the barrels in each turret, the hull retained its two-barrel configuration. Later these same turrets would be upgraded with the new Laser/Pulse Arrays well after the Dilgar War.

(Editor's Note – I was originally given the task of creating a Nova Alpha with a Twin Heavy Plasma mount, which was functionally identical to the Hvy Plasma with a RoF of 1 per 2 turns. Based upon this design, I have used existing weapons to create something that is hopefully slightly more balanced, though probably not. I'm not sure something with twenty-four Medium Plasma can ever be balanced.)

Based upon a more 'true-to-show' Nova by Nathan Meade. SCS by Paul Brown.



REJECTED VARIANT #11: Hyach Evirol Kel Terror Cruiser

As the ground war on Balos dragged on the Hyach realised the need for a dedicated orbital bombardment unit. Their logistical freighter was an abundant unit and handfuls were quickly converted over to the new specifications. The Evirol Kel mounts a Mass Driver and several advanced Bomb Racks capable of delivering a sustained bombardment. They are typically loaded with conventional warheads although non-conventional weapons are not uncommon if needed. A fleet of these ships were involved in the destruction of Balos and it is believed they are now being moved to the rear rimward lines to prepare for the renewed assault.

This variant is from the Plague Wars history by Paul Brown. Go to <http://members.shaw.ca/pbcbrown/> for this alternate history of the Babylon 5 timeline.

REJECTED VARIANT #12: Dilgar Nishatur Battlecruiser

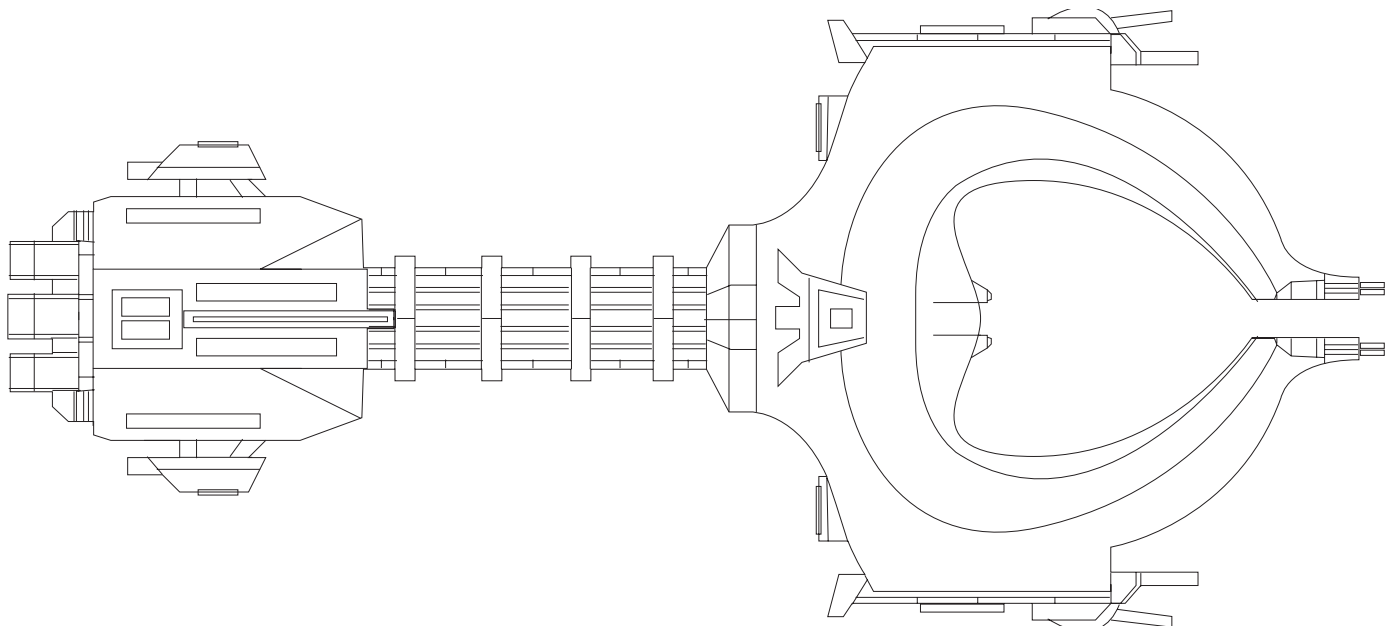
Designed by the Dilgar following their successful invasions of Alaca and Balos, the Nishatur was an attempt by Dilgar engineers and weaponry experts to design and construct a warship capable of fulfilling the attack role of the Targath Strike Cruiser in a small fleet situation without necessitating the maintenance normally needed for the Targath's 24 fighters.

A stripped down version of the Targath, the Nishatur Battlecruiser exchanged the Targath's fighter complement for increased engine output and weapons power. It did not take long before the original concept of a "cheap Targath" grew unto its own, becoming something different than the initial light cruiser proposal. The final build was only slightly less expensive than a Targath, and similarly suffered from fragile structure blocks. The Nishatur was much faster than other Dilgar

cruisers, a factor that was included so that the Nishatur could accelerate into battle alongside smaller units such as the Ochlavita Destroyer and Jashakar Frigate.

In the end, few Nishatur Battlecruisers were constructed, with most naval shipyard facilities being instructed to maintain construction of the more popular Targath Strike Cruiser. The Nishaturs that were produced, however, served with distinction, though their lives (and those of their crews) were typically short-lived. Fatality rates of Nishatur cruisers which foolhardily charged enemy positions recklessly were extremely high.

* * *



SHIPS OF THE PRIMORDIAL SHADOW FLEET: The Kirishiac War

A Look at Shadow Ship Development

By Stephen Radlett

OVERVIEW

These vessels are the last Shadow ships to spring from my twisted mind and are possibly the most frightening things I have ever created (next to the Xha'Dam Starbase...now *THAT* is *really* scary, think Kirishiac Citadel with Shadow Weapons, diffusers and its own OSATS!!!). I realise I will most likely receive a fair bit of negative feedback with these and I admit that they are quite crazy. My reason for doing so was based on a simple thought I had one day while reading *Wars of the Ancients*: 'why do all the other First Ones vessels mount multiple weapons while the Shadows don't?'

The result was the ATTACK ships. In order to justify the additional weapons I removed the Vortex Disruptors and reduced the fighter capacity. Given that the Kirishiac could mount Gravitic Shields¹, Phasing Pulse Cannons seemed to be appropriate. These weapons must have existed at the time of the War; *Coming of the Shadows* states

that these weapons were used against the Vorlons long before the Shadow War period. I also felt that some anti fighter defences would be appropriate as well, in the form of Multiphase Cutters.

As I continued to work the ships developed into two distinct series, one, based mainly on the smaller Cruisers for defensive purposes, the other specifically for massive attack missions. In the end there were three vessels for each series which I felt were satisfactory (the Attack Dreadnought is particularly terrifying!). Those vessels are presented here. In addition, I have included the Shadow Anti-Vorlon Cruiser, a ship dating from a time long before the Kirishiac War that mounts multiple Phasing Pulse Cannons.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Kirishiac War...a war so wide spread, so devastating that very few races actually survived it. The vast majority of those races that would today be considered "Middle Born" were wiped out as the Giants clashed in all their fury.

Long before the first Shadow War, the Lords of Kirish desired to

rule all that they saw. After all, they were the strongest, most powerful species in the galaxy...at least, so they thought. None could stand against their mighty Lord Ships and Conquerors. They went where they wanted and took what they saw. No one could stop them.

Then they made two very costly errors of judgement. The first saw the annexing of virtually all the territory claimed as refuge by the ancient race known as the Walkers. Finding only orbital defence systems blocking their path, the Kirish quickly overran walker territory until they threatened the border with the Vorlons. It was only at this point that the Lords of Order finally contacted their brethren. Furious, the Walkers began to recall their vast fleet to do battle. The second great mistake of the Kirishiac was their decision to invade the territory of the most ancient of the hyper evolved First Ones: The Shadows. Considering the Shadows hibernation an open invitation for invasion, the Kirish quickly began to overrun what little automated defences guarded the Shadows territory.

The quick and easy conquests would soon end.

Once awakened and made aware of the situation by the Walkers, the furious Lords of Chaos

were prepared to wipe away these upstarts before the tide of evolution. The Triad, however, demanded that the Shadows hold back their anger and not unleash their Death Clouds, wiping the Kirishiac from existence. Instead, the Triad insisted that the Shadows and Walkers just show the young and naïve Kirishiac the error of their ways. Reluctantly, the Shadows agreed not to wipe out the Kirishiac but they would show them just what it meant to anger the Lords of Chaos.

While the Shadows had been the most war-like of all the First Ones, they had not had to fight a large-scale war in many hundreds of Millennia. The Kirishiac on the other had been fighting for their entire existence and had developed weapons and armour technology that reduced the effectiveness of even the deadly Molecular Slicers of the Shadows and Hyperplasma Cutter of the Triad. Coupled with this was the fact that, being the youngest of the First Ones, the Kirishiac had a much higher birth-rate than the Shadows or Walkers. Put simply the Ancients were vastly outnumbered.

To make up this disparity, the Shadows began to implant lesser beings into their ships and artificially accelerate the growth and development of their ships. Though resulting in far less powerful vessels, this did allow them to rapidly close the gap in terms of numbers.

The second step to cope with the numerical superiority of the Lords of Kirish, the Shadows adopted a leaf from the Lords own playbook, one that had not been used since the Shadows earliest conflicts with the Vorlons. The vessels of the Kirishiac were often armed with one primary weapon,

usually the Hyper Graviton Blaster, however this was usually backed up with a combination of up to eight Hyper Graviton Beams and Anti Gravity Beams. The result was a match for the Molecular Slicer, but more easily able to divide it's fire between targets and defensive purposes. During large-scale fleet actions, the literally hundreds of Vortex Disruptors fielded by the Shadow Fleet would serve little to no purpose. Coupled with this was the fact the no matter the odds, the Kirishiac would not retreat, rendering the Vortex Disruptor redundant. Masters of genetic engineering and construction, the Shadows responded by altering the genetic code of as much as 1/3rd their primordial fleet, shedding the Vortex Disruptor and reducing fighter capacity and increasing the weapons payload with Multi Phase Cutters and Phasing Pulse Cannons and upping reactor output to compensate for the increased demand. Two distinct classes of ship resulted from the experiment. The first featured multiple Multiphase Cutters; perfect for anti-fighter protection and guarding the more vulnerable Carriers were dubbed DEFFENDERS. The second class

mounted Phasing Pulse Cannons, perfect for punching through the Shields being outfitted on newer Kirishiac vessels. These heavily armed warships were referred to as Shadow ATTACK Ships.

The upgrade to ATTACK class was usually limited to the larger cruisers and Dreadnoughts while smaller vessels were developed into the DEFENDER series. It should also be noted that ATTACK ships are very rare as the Shadows were loath to pull a ship from active service for the time needed to modify the genetic code. DEFENDERS are slightly more common.

NEW UNITS

ATTACK CRUISER

This variant of the Standard Shadow Cruiser features a forward firing Medium Phasing Pulse Cannon and two Light Multi Phase Cutter with 180 degree arcs of fire, giving the cruiser 360 degree fighter cover. The Attack Cruiser does sacrifice it's Fighter Bomb in order to make room for the Pulse Cannon in order to keep the Standard Molecular Slicer.

HEAVY ATTACK CRUISER

This Heavy Cruiser Variant has the same weapons layout as the Attack Cruiser, but increases the weapons to Heavy and Standard calibre. A Pulse Cannon was added to the rear firing arc and the Multiphase Cutters upgraded to the standard version, increasing the rate of fire. These weapons act as to dissuaded Warrior Projectiles striking at the previously vulnerable rear section of the



ship. Again fighter capacity is sacrificed to just six.

ATTACK DREADNOUGHT

While to many it seemed that the pinnacle of the Shadow fleet needs no improvements, already mounting two huge Heavy Molecular Slicers and capable of absorbing and diffusing enormous amounts of damage, the Shadows knew that it could be improved to match the Kirishiac in firepower. The Attack Dreadnought incorporated four additional Heavy Phasing Pulse Cannon and Multiphase Beams giving the ship a 360-degree arc of fire with two Pulse Cannons and Cutters facing fore and aft. These changes were made at the cost of the Vortex Disruptors and half the Fighter Capacity. This monster was incredibly rare with it being unusual to see more than one at a single engagement, the Battle of the Shadow Homeworld being a notable exception.

DEFENDERS

The Defender series of variants shed their Vortex Disruptors and Fighter bays for increased speed and the addition of Multiphase Cutters for anti-fighter defence. It was felt that fighter bays were not required on such vessels as they would invariably serve as Carrier escorts. They are also far more common than the ATTACK series, as they were quicker to produce.

LIGHT DEFENDER

A variant on the Shadow Light Cruiser designed to act as a carrier escort and fleet anti-fighter defence. The Light Defender sacrifices Light Cruisers Molecular Slicer, downgrading it to a Light Slicer, but adds 4 Multiphase Cutters to its arsenal. Mounted one forward,

aft and each side, the arcs of the Cutters are as wide as possible, allowing two to bear on most targets.

STANDARD DEFENDER

A variant on the Primordial Standard Shadow Cruiser, the Standard Defender sheds it's fighter bays and vortex disruptor to mount 4 Multiphase Cutters, retaining the Slicer and multiple Diffuser arrays.

HEAVY DEFENDER

A variant on the Shadow Heavy Cruiser and bigger brother of the Light Defender, this design serves as the core of a Shadow fleet's anti-fighter defence. Sacrificing the Heavy Molecular Slicer and vortex disruptors, as well as halving the fighter capacity, the Heavy Defender mounts an arsenal consisting of a standard Molecular Slicer and SIX Heavy Multiphase Cutters. Like the Light Defender, these are mounted to allow multiple weapons to bear on any arc, each mounted at 60 Degree points on the hull.

THE SHADOW ANTI-VORLON CRUISER (Rare Heavy Cruiser Variant)²

When the Vorlons and Shadows first came into conflict untold Aeons ago, the Vorlons had one major advantage over the Lords of Chaos: Shields. This technology severely hampered the effectiveness of the Molecular Slicer. In response, the Shadows began to look for a way around or through the Vorlon shields and combined with their unique form of half-phasing between dimensions developed a pulse cannon that could pass through shields un-impeded. A number of Heavy Cruisers were modified to this design, mounting

huge numbers of the new weapon and proving to be highly effective against the Vorlon fleet until the Vorlons were able to adjust their shields to block the phasing effect. In terms of structure, diffusers, sensors, etc., this ship is identical to the Heavy Cruiser on which it is based. It's weapons payload is considerably different, mounting a Standard Molecular Slicer and Six Phasing Pulse Cannon but lacking Vortex Disruptors and Fighters. This variant is unlikely to be encountered any time during or after the Kirishiac War.

Well, that's the end of the SHIPS OF THE PRIMORDIAL SHADOW FLEET. I hope you have enjoyed the articles and Fluff History and that some of these ships may find their way into games. It has certainly been fun creating them, and I should thank Hyperion for his excellent SCS's (did you know he is a telepath?) and suggesting the Anti-Vorlon Cruiser.

Stay tuned for more ships of the Ancients...

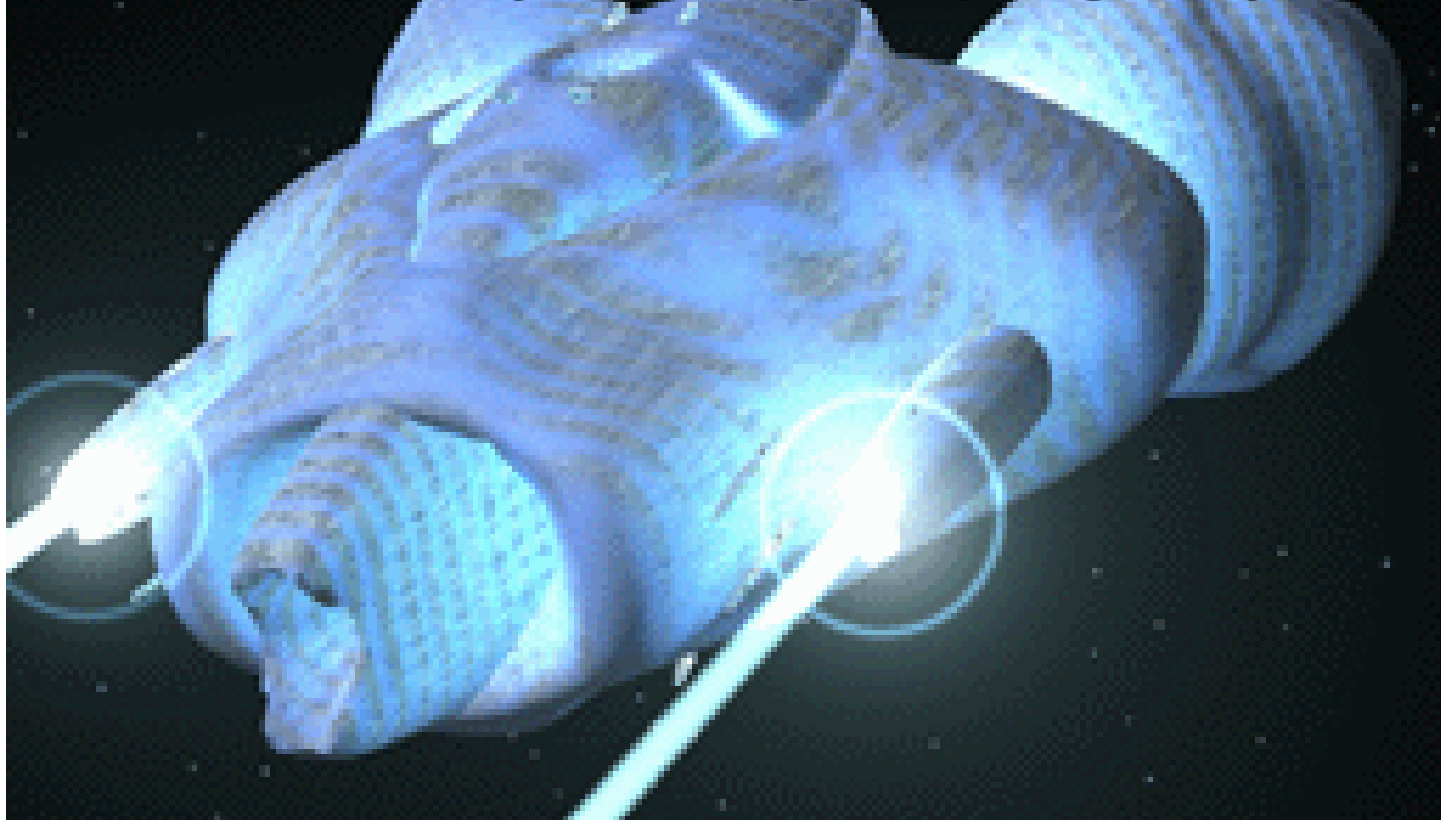
(Footnotes)

¹ In response to the armour ignoring effects of Molecular Slicers?

² Note that the SCS for this ship says it is a Heavy Defender. Hyperion sent this SCS to me while we were finalising the designs for these variants...I think this was draft #3...or possibly 6...he later suggested that we use this ship as the example of the Anti-Vorlon ships mentioned in the fluff text.

* * *

The Tal-kona'sha



Revisiting an Elusive Midborne Species

By David Ainsworth

Background

The Tal-kona'sha are one of the few extant middle-born races, a race which reached out to the stars long after the primordial era but long before the oldest of the younger races began to walk upright. Most of what is known of the race itself and its history was passed on as legend to races like the Minbari and the Yolu; some was revealed by Vorlon or Shadow agents or uncovered through archeological digs on other worlds. The Tal-

kona'sha were probably evolved from burrowing mammals, and are variously described as heavily cyborgized or as composite or symbiotic creatures. A few tales suggest that they may have had a pheromone-based gestalt mind, or that their minds were plugged into a virtual network via their mechanical implants. In any event, they may well have evolved beyond their physical forms and passed beyond the rim, or they may have been wiped out by some accident, disease, catastrophe, or attack. The ships they built to defend their territories remain very much alive, and quite dangerous.

Little is known of the Tal-kona'sha homeworld, but it appears that almost no predatory animals

evolved there (perhaps a result of Vorlon tampering). One legend states that multiple intelligent species developed on their planet, establishing a peaceful and mutually dependent relationship. Not long after they first left their planet, a small group of Vorlons arrived and attempted to awe the populace. The Tal-kona'sha perceived these Vorlons as angelic beings, but firmly believed that real angelic beings would never appear in the cosmos in such a form. (Legends suggest the Tal-kona'sha belief system was closest to Earth's Zen Buddhism in its character.) Though wary of the Vorlons, they did greet these aliens and learned how to employ and construct jump-gates.

Initial Tal-kona'sha

expansion was quite rapid, perhaps due to a high birth rate or sophisticated genetic engineering. Their borders soon approached that of other middle-born races. The Tal-kona'sha displayed little curiosity and even less enthusiasm for trade or exchanges of ideas, prizing self-sufficiency almost as much as they did harmony, but over the centuries their neighbors contacted them, and even conducted a bit of trade. After witnessing several wars and racial conflicts, the Tal-kona'sha withdrew themselves from galactic affairs, cutting off contact with other races and setting their automated, living ships to guard the borders.

The Tal-kona'sha did not believe in violence, not even in a ritualized form (like the Yolu), and while they recognized the need to defend themselves in a hostile universe, they found even the prospect of conflict distasteful. They therefore turned their considerable biogenetic and biomechanical skills to the creation of a race of cyborg ships, living creatures in symbiotic relationship with computers and nanomachines. These ships were genetically and electronically programmed to protect the Tal-kona'sha and guard their borders; further, they were designed to grow and develop in response to outside challenges. Thus, the ships themselves would advance their weapons systems, defensive systems, sensors, tactics, etc, completely insulating the Tal-kona'sha themselves from conflict. With more than enough worlds to provide raw materials, the Tal-kona'sha set this new race of living ships to reproducing themselves, and almost all withdrew to their homeworld and a few inner colonies. The apparent decline in the race's population has been attributed either to their genetic manipulations of themselves, or to an increased number of Tal-kona'sha who replaced

most of their bodies with machinery.

When one of the Vorlon-Shadow conflicts tore apart their section of the galaxy, the few Tal-kona'sha who were outside their territories quietly withdrew, and the race never returned to the galactic stage following that time. Several ancient legends tell of an epic conflict between the Shadows and Tal-kona'sha ships and defenses, which ended with the Shadows giving up in disgust as they had yet to encounter a single actual Tal-kona'sha. The Tal-kona'sha had discovered that actual symbiotic relationships with alien species were not likely and were even disturbing to many aliens, and they felt that contact with other races made conflict inevitable. Unwilling to involve themselves, implicitly or explicitly, in such conflict, they chose to isolate themselves, leaving their living ships to vigorously defend their borders.

Government

Nothing is known of the Tal-kona'sha government, although researchers speculate that they operated as a theocracy, or as a collective mind, or in a way similar to the Pak'ma'ra. In any event, their total withdrawal from the rest of the galaxy suggests that the entire race was capable of acting in unison, given that they seem unlikely to have used force on dissidents.

Technology

As a middle-born race, the Tal-kona'sha were technologically inferior to the ancient races, but superior to the Minbari and the Yolu in most respects. There is no dispute that their bioengineering abilities far outstrip the younger races. Perhaps the best comparison is with the Technomages, who themselves exist in a sort of

symbiotic relationship with modified Shadow technology, and employ nanotechnology to achieve effects resembling magic. The Tal-kona'sha combined this talent with a capability to manipulate organisms approaching the Vorlons. Their nano-technology also differed from Shadow tech in that the Shadows, when melding machine and living organism, preferred to set the two in conflict. The Shadows believed that in the contention for control and dominance between machine and man, each would grow stronger. The Tal-kona'sha emphasized symbiosis, setting machine and organism in a delicate and supportive balance.

Nowhere is this balance better seen than in their ships. Some say that the base organisms which the Tal-kona'sha modified to produce their ships were originally related to those which the Vorlons employed; certainly there is a certain resemblance, although Tal-kona'sha ships look much less like squids and much more like whales, though covered with mechanisms as whales are barnacles. Computer and living minds are one, and no real distinction is made between programs embedded in circuitry and those seeded into genetic code. Indeed, whenever possible both systems reinforce and support each other: conventional reactors may feed the living portions of the ship when on a long patrol, while the ship's vital energies are harnessed during battle. A few Tal-kona'sha ships have living quarters capable of sustaining other life forms, perhaps a left-over from when the race traveled the stars, but most lack interior quarters or much else which resembles conventional spacecraft. At best, small access tunnels allow materials to pass from one section of the ship to another, while hordes

of nanobots perform routine maintenance.

Tal-kona'sha weapons were originally based on those of other races, with all further developments made by computers and the ships themselves. While not individually a match for the weapons of the Ancients, most Tal-kona'sha weapons function better with numbers. Since Tal-kona'sha ships require little in the way of life support, and effectively augment reactor power with the energy of the living ship itself, they typically possess considerable extra power, which they can use to maneuver, improve their sensors, or augment some of their weapon systems.

Tal-kona'sha systems exist as assemblies of nanites operating towards a common function, tied in to the living processes of the ship. Systems on the outer hull closely resemble implanted devices (comparable, say, to a pacemaker), while primary systems function more like vital organs.

Structural System Replacement

Similar but less effective than SelfRepair systems, Structural System Replacement reflects the ability of the TKS nanomachines to rapidly reconvert one system to another as needed. During the SelfRepair step, any system which is eligible for SelfRepair (ie. damaged or destroyed the previous turn, etc) can be "rebuilt" out of the structure facing that side of the ship, so long as the structure block has enough unused structure remaining. Critical hits cannot be repaired using this system and remain in full effect, unless the system is destroyed completely, in which case when restored the system functions like new. Only systems on a ship side

can be "repaired" using Structural System Replacement—primary systems cannot be regenerated rapidly enough, since they depend more heavily upon a ship's "internal organs."

Each TKS ship has a primary system which manages the Structural System Replacement. It has two statistics: a conversion rate (the number of system boxes which can be rebuilt in a turn), and an efficiency (which represents the number of structure boxes which must be "destroyed" to perform the replacement). Most TKS ships require 2 boxes of structure to replace one system box; a few older ships require 3:1, and the newest convert at a 1:1 rate. TKS ships may "purchase" extra boxes of conversion by allocating additional power to the Conversion system: use the same rules used for purchasing extra sensor points. System replacement happens during the Self Repair phase.

Special Structure Rules

TKS ships, regardless of size, have only primary structure. Unlike most ships, this structure is divided into "sides" on the primary. Only structure on a particular "side" can be used for system replacement on that side. However, loss of all structure on a primary "side" does not cause the loss of any other systems—it simply means that no further systems on that "side" can be replaced using the Structural System Replacement. All fire coming in from a given direction hits structure on that "side" first (armor applies). If that structure block is destroyed, then damage carries over to any "adjacent" structure block of the owner's choice (armor applies again). Any selected structure box must suffer all allotted structure

damage until it is destroyed or no damage remains from this weapon—no spreading raking damage across multiple blocks, for example.

Flash weapons are resolved normally until all systems on the damaged side and all structure facing that side has been destroyed. At this point, roll on the side's hit location chart: a structure hit means remaining flash damage is applied to another primary structure block (if it is destroyed by this damage, roll again using this rule). Any hit besides a structure hit rolls on the Primary chart—if the target system is destroyed and flash damage remains to be resolved, roll again on the side hit location chart.

Immunity to Boarding

Since TKS ships do not generally possess corridors or accessways of any kind, standard boarding actions are simply not possible. There may be one or two passenger-carrying TKS ships which can be boarded, as indicated.

Tal-kona'sha Reactors

TKS ships rely on reactor power for most functions, but their combination of living ship and independently powered nanotech allows them to operate at reduced efficiency if their reactors are destroyed. If a TKS ship's reactor is destroyed, the ship is not automatically destroyed. Instead, apply the effects of a 27+ reactor crit (-10 power, percent chance of exploding equal to the ship's total reactor damage). In addition, during the Power phase of each turn, if the ship survives the percentage roll, it suffers an additional power loss of 1d6 points. Apply this loss every turn until the ship is destroyed, out of power, or voluntarily shuts down all powered systems.

Remote Coordinator

TKS Remotes are small fighter-sized craft which can swarm across the hull of a TKS ship and perform basic repairs. Under combat conditions, their work is not very reliable. The Tal-kona'sha designed the Remote Coordinator to enhance the effectiveness of their Remotes in combat. The Coordinator can grant all Remotes within 10 hexes a +2 bonus to all attempts to make repairs.

Discharge Array

Loosely based on the Vorlon Discharge Gun, this massive turreted weapon is only mounted on TKS bases or their larger capital ships. It retains most of the flexibility of the Vorlon weapon, but has reduced damage and requires more power to operate. Discharge arrays draw from whatever extra power a TKS unit has at the moment of firing, although they are considered to fire 2 shots per turn at their default damage without applying any extra power.

Molecular Concentrator

Similar in function to the Gaim Particle Concentrator, the Molecular Concentrator sweeps a molecular beam across space towards its target. This beam may combine with other beams on the way to its destination, improving its damage and accuracy. Some have compared the weapon's appearance, when firing, to a mixture of the Shadow Slicer Beam and the combined fire of a Vorlon Lightning Cannon, although the Concentrator's shots do not combine until they are closer to the target. The weapon is difficult to intercept, and only defenses capable of intercepting laser weapons can hinder it.

Use the rules for the Gaim Particle Concentrator, with the stats below. Each additional Molecular Concentrator adds 1d10+5 damage to the combined total, in addition to the +2 to hit, up to a maximum of +5d10+25 and +10 to hit.

The Molecular Concentrator is one of the main TKS weapons, and they are particularly fond of fielding packs of MCVs armed with several.

Ion Defender

Carried only on specially bred TKS ships capable of withstanding the intense radiation of the weapon, the Ion Defender is a long-range, powerful point defense weapon capable of intercepting incoming fire on allied ships. Because of their power requirements, ships equipped with Ion Defenders rarely carry other weapon systems, though a few also carry Advanced Ion Torpedoes.

Ion Defenders may intercept fire against other (friendly) ships if several conditions are met:

1. The TKS ship with the Ion Defender must have a lock-on to the TKS ship it wishes to protect.
2. The enemy ship whose fire is being intercepted must be in the weapon arc of any Ion Defenders intercepting.
3. The intercepting ship must be closer to the ship it is defending than the attacker. For example, if the attacker is 1 hex away from its target, the intercepting ship must be in the same hex as the target. If the attacker is 10 hexes away, the intercepting ship must be 9 or fewer hexes away. Relative positions of the three ships are not important—the target may be between attacker and intercepting ship, or the

intercepting ship may be between the target and the attacker.

Advanced Ion Torpedo

Without concern about the effects of radiation on the crew, TKS ships can carry more powerful and effective Ion Torpedo launchers. These launchers do not extend the range or damage of this marvelous weapon, but do improve the fire control. They also allow for up to four shots to be held in the weapon at a time, and for the recharge rate to be increased through use of extra power during the Power Segment.

The four torpedoes may be launched at up to four separate targets. If more than one torpedo is fired at a single target, resolve the attack as a single die roll somewhat like the Saturation Mode of Ballistic Torpedoes. For every 3 points by which the to-hit roll is exceeded, one additional torpedo will hit (up to the number fired). However, unlike the BT, all Advanced Ion Torpedoes will hit the same location (apply armor against each hit separately). When fired against fighters, use standard pulse rules.

Point Defense Beam

This particle weapon serves as the main anti-fighter and defensive gun of the TKS fleet. While less damaging than a Fusion Cannon, it is slightly more accurate, and is a more effective intercept weapon.

Plasma Flamer

This mid-ranged plasma weapon is most notable for its ability to drastically increase its damage through application of extra power, and most closely resembles the Plasma Accelerator in its characteristics.

Cone Focus Beam

An advanced weapon which draws considerable power, the Cone Focus Beam and its larger cousins are generally mounted on Tal-kona'sha bases and OSATs, though they have also experimented with smaller versions of the weapon. The Cone Focus Beam is also the main weapon of the fearsome Killer Whale Gunship.

The Cone Focus Beam fires in two different modes: at long ranges, it fires an accurate but unfocused beam to lock onto its target, then fires a sustained and focused burst immediately following; at short ranges, it can sweep a nearby section of space, damaging its target and all nearby ships and fighters.

Military

No actual members of the Tal-kona'sha race serve in their military. Their military is entirely composed of automated units, controlled by sophisticated computers and nanotechnology, and by their living ships-cyborgs. These devices constantly analyze and develop tactics and technology, producing new defenses and ships as they deem necessary. While the Tal-kona'sha remain inferior to the Ancients, their automated defenders fight to the death and do whatever they consider necessary to fulfill their mission objectives, and they have a vast advantage in numbers.

Consider, for example, the legend of a Shadow attack on a major Tal-kona'sha planetary base. The initial Shadow fleet met fierce resistance from a Tal-kona'sha fleet, augmented by a planetary base, defense grid, and a set of advanced mines. The Shadows were able to destroy the base and most of the defenses, but withdrew in the face

of Tal-kona'sha reinforcements. They returned a few days later with one of their Planet Killers, only to find a substantial portion of the defense grid replaced by stockpiled OSATs stored in bunkers beneath the planet's surface for such an eventuality. After sweeping aside the defending units (suffering serious losses in the process), the Shadows deployed their Planet Killer, which launched thousands of missiles at the planet's surface. At this point, the defenders activated a hidden atmospheric defense system, which obliterated the missiles, and boiled off the planet's atmosphere along with a portion of its crust, revealing a reinforced buried layer of planetary defenses. When the Shadows realized that all this destruction had happened without one member of the Tal-kona'sha race being injured—for that matter, without them being *aware* of the combat—they decided that further conflict was pointless, so long as the Tal-kona'sha remained uninvolved in galactic affairs.

Tal-kona'sha ships do not communicate with other races, except to play the same three automated warning messages to any intruders within their borders. Only the gradual changes in the language of these messages, which is now broadcast in Interlac, demonstrate that these ships are actually aware of galactic events and capable of communicating should they so choose.

The Tal-kona'sha automated defenders fight to win, stockpile thousands of years in advance without regard for philosophy or ethics, and fight without fear of death or fear of atrocity. If defeated, they simply regroup and return in greater strength.

Starships & Fighters

Some researchers believe that the species the Tal-kona'sha modified to create their ships was the same species employed by the Vorlons, and this may be true. Where Vorlon ships look something like squids, with elaborate and beautiful skin coloration, most Tal-kona'sha ships resemble nothing so much as whales, long and thin with skin mottled by lumps of machinery like barnacles. A few of their ships, primarily the smaller ships, look more like manta rays.

Tal-kona'sha maintain some huge dreadnaughts which are deployed against serious attackers in instances where the Tal-kona'sha are superior. Along their borders, or when forced to fight Ancients, they rely on their excellent MCVs, deployed in large numbers.

Tal-kona'sha operate three types of fighters: light fighters designed to intercept enemy fighters, heavy fighters which operate lighter versions of the TKS Molecular Concentrator, and TKS Remotes whose sole purpose is to perform damage control on TKS ships.

Most Tal-kona'sha ships are identified by nicknames assigned to them by other races. A few ships presented below still possess their proper Tal-kona'sha names, presumably passed down through legend from the time the Tal-kona'sha communicated with other races, or possibly revealed by Vorlon or Shadow agents.

Manta Patroller

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

As the single most numerous and most encountered ship in the Tal-kona'sha fleet, the Manta is an

exceptional MCV: speedy, heavily armed and armored, and capable of exceptionally long-ranged fire thanks to its Molecular Concentrators. The ship's main drawback is its inability to concentrate its weapons' fire against a single target, making it most effective when deployed in groups of three to five ships.

Or-kala'na Defense Frigate

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The Or-Kala'na Defense Frigate is equipped entirely with Ion Defenders, and generally serves as close escort for a capital ship or provides cover for a group of Mantas. It is not a particularly tough ship, but can be deployed in large numbers.

Tal-kala'na System Defender

Base Hull (Restricted Deployment)

This capital ship is ELINT-capable and equipped with a mixture of Ion Defenders and Advanced Ion Torpedoes. It also carries a squadron of fighters. As such, it serves as a potential fleet flagship, capable of engaging in long-range bombardment while defending itself or its escorts. Only the difficulty in breeding such a large ship with resistance to ionic radiation keeps the Tal-kona'sha from fielding more of these excellent vessels.

Stingray Attack Craft

Manta Uncommon Variant

While Mantas can be very effective in numbers, they have somewhat less close-in firepower than many races' wolfpack ships. The Stingray Attack Craft was an attempt to mix a few ships with more close-in firepower in to packs of

Mantas, in the hopes of punishing any MCVs which close with the pack. The ship never quite fit the tactics the Tal-kona'sha preferred, and remains an uncommon variant.

Humpback System Monitor

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The Humpback, so termed because of the high density of weapons protruding from its hull, is one of the larger Tal-kona'sha vessels. This ungainly ship serves as a mobile base, a weapons platform which brings two squadrons of fighters to a battle. Its mixture of Molecular Concentrators, Plasma Flamers, and Discharge Arrays enables it to engage at any range. Further, unlike most Tal-kona'sha ships, it can concentrate most of its firepower against center-lined targets. The ship's main disadvantage, besides its sluggishness, is a lack of extra power coupled with an inefficient Structural Replacement System. Humpbacks thus often carry a squadron of Remotes to administer repairs.

Kalona Dreadnought

Base Hull (Restricted Deployment)

This massive ship, the mid-born equivalent of the Yolu Yuan or the Minbari Shargoti, exists primarily to dominate battles against determined Younger Race fleets. The Dreadnought carries too much firepower to ignore, but is also an exceptionally tough ship. It has tremendous reserves of power and the most advanced technology available to the Tal-kona'sha. Capable of engaging at any range and carrying a mixture of conventional fighters and Remotes, the Kalona Dreadnought generates the kind of fear usually reserved for

the Ancients.

Pilot Whale Carrier

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The Pilot Whale Carrier can bring a mixed group of heavy and light fighters to any location needed. Often, Pilot Whales are found leading small groups of Mantas on patrol duty. The Carrier itself carries a few Molecular Concentrators, allowing it to support other ships, but is most notable for its heavy Discharge Array armament. The Pilot Whale is one of the few Tal-kona'sha ships capable of carrying cargo or passengers: its cargo bays can also be used to carry people, although normally they sit empty or carry materials used to manufacture nanoprobes and Remotes.

Narwhale Support Ship

Base Hull (Limited Deployment)

The dedicated Tal-kona'sha fleet scout, the Narwhale is so named because of the sensor array which protrudes from the front of the ship. The craft has a secondary sensor array not to boost its sensor power (in terms of EW), but in order to function as an Advanced ELINT vessel, on par with the Ancients (though somewhat weaker in power). If the forward sensor array is destroyed or loses power, the ship loses the Advanced Sensors attribute, but regains it if the array is repaired. The Narwhale is underpowered and underarmed for a Tal-kona'sha vessel, but carries a squadron of fighters.

Blue Whale Mothership

Base Hull (Restricted Deployment—maximum one per fleet)

The Blue Whale design exists primarily to act as a mobile fleet base in case operations in hostile territory become necessary

(pursuing an invading fleet in order to destroy it, for example). Theoretically, the Blue Whale would also make an excellent explorer vessel. This enormous ship carries a reasonable array of weapons, but its main characteristics are its large number of fighters, and its ability to support and repair substantial numbers of other Tal-kona'sha ships. A Blue Whale is never seen without, at minimum, an escort of 4-6 Mantas. The Tal-kona'sha try to keep Blue Whales out of engagements whenever possible.

Grey Whale Strike Cruiser

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

A smaller cruiser, the Grey Whale is designed to operate alone or with a pack of other ships. As such, it depends upon its light fighters to provide close escort and intercept, while relying on its broadsides of Molecular Concentrators to rip apart enemies at range. While lacking crunch power, the Grey Whale is an effective ship in numbers or with adequate escort. The limitations of the hull size have been compensated for as much as possible with heavier armor and the most advanced equipment available.

Remora Repair Craft

Base Hull (Limited Deployment)

The Remora was an experimental design to serve as a sort of fleet tender for the automated fleets. The ship itself is capable of repairing both organic and nanotech damage, and given time can regenerate another Tal-kona'sha ship from a wreck, so long as the other ship remains alive. Remoras also carry a squadron of Remotes, and possess a special control system which allows them to

enhance several flights of Remotes, lending them a bonus to hit which translates to a better chance of successfully repairing the target.

The Remora carries almost no weapons, but has the ability to attach to units of MCV size or larger like a huge breaching pod. Once attached, the Remora can "loan" its own structure to the other ship to enhance its repair process during combat, although this is only possible with other Tal-kona'sha units. The Remora also possesses a limited self-repair capacity.

Attachment: The Remora attaches to another unit (MCV or larger) using the breaching pod rules, but using the Remora's accel/decel rating to determine the maximum difference in speed. The Remora may attach to units with advanced armor. Because of its size, the Remora blocks all fire aimed at the side of the ship to which it has attached (for HCVs or MCVs, it blocks fire against forward or aft), and blocks all weapon arcs from that side for the ship it attached to. Any incoming fire against that side of the ship rolls against the Remora; use the rules for Enormous units blocking lines of fire (so the firing ship may redirect OEW from the original target to the Remora). Treat the Remora as facing in the same direction as the ship it is attached to. The Remora's weapons remain effective while it is attached, and use the standard arcs, unless of course the Remora is attached to an Enormous Unit, which would block fire in its direction.

Procedure: While attached, the Remora may use its Structural Replacement System to replace systems OR structure on the side of the ship it is attached to. Only systems or structure facing that side can be so replaced. The Remora loses structure normally when doing

this. The Remora can NOT loan its self-repair points to the other ship, but may use these points to repair its own structure or systems.

Killer Whale Gunship

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

Most races operate gunships designed to close with the enemy and deliver a ship-killing blow to a single target. The Killer Whale operates under somewhat different principles, built around the Cone Focus Beam, an accurate long-range weapon, and several Molecular Concentrators. A small wolfpack of Killer Whales can lay down a withering long-range barrage; alternately, a single Killer Whale can work with a pack of Mantas, delivering a little extra punch. The main weakness of the Killer Whale is its lack of point defense weapons: it relies entirely on the flash mode of the Cone Focus Beam to fend off attacking fighters.

Fighters and Shuttles

Remotes

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

A unique concept made possible by Tal-kona'sha nanotechnology and of no interest to the Ancients, Remotes are drones whose primary purpose is to perform battle repairs to Tal-kona'sha ships. While theoretically capable of fighting using their maintenance lasers, Remotes are best used to repair or "heal" Tal-kona'sha ships, functioning like a mobile Self Repair system.

If a flight of Remotes is in a friendly ship's hex during the repair portion of the turn, it may roll on the Flight-level Combat chart with a target number of "11." (Subtract for

jinking as normal—Remotes dodging incoming fire find it harder to do repairs.) Every fighter which “hits” as a result of this roll acts as 1 point of Self Repair for this ship for this turn, under all the standard restrictions for Self Repair. Remotes have no theoretical maximum on the number of times they can perform repairs, within the likely timeframe of a combat, but they must roll each and every time.

Dolphin Light Fighter

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The Tal-kona’sha interceptor, the Dolphin, couples its small profile with a single, powerful weapon, making it capable of engaging enemy fighters or attacking enemy ships as needed. The fighter is designed to protect Tal-kona’sha ships, especially Mantas and their variants, but is sometimes used to strike at enemy MCV wolfpacks. Ordinarily, Dolphins hang back within the envelope of their fleet’s defensive weapons.

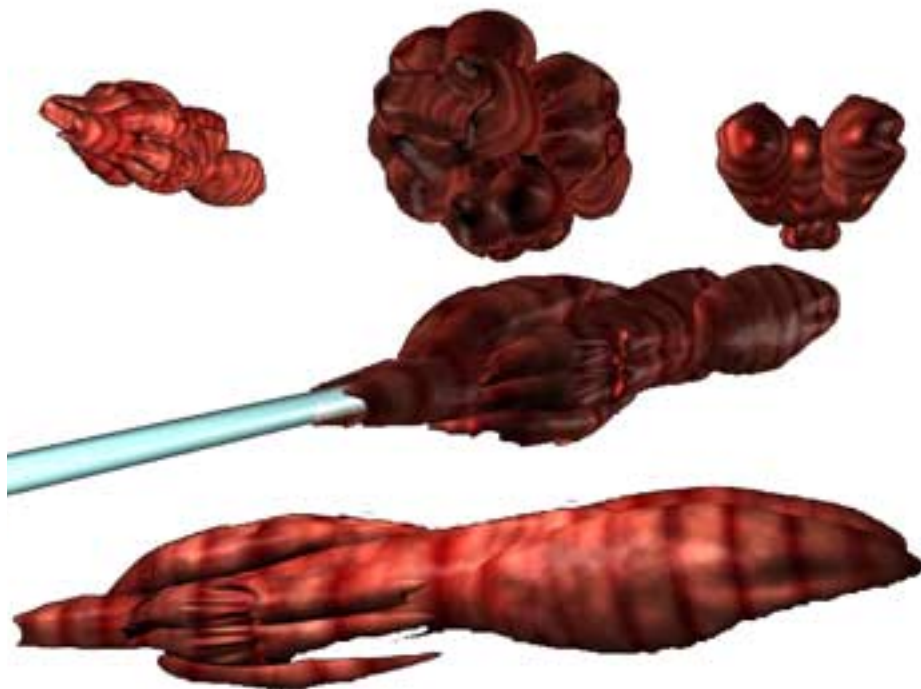
Dolphin fighters are automated, and can link themselves to a Tal-kona’sha ship to assist in point defense. A Dolphin flight in the same hex as a Tal-kona’sha ship may intercept incoming fire against that ship if it chooses, but no more than one Dolphin flight may intercept for a single ship each turn. Dolphin intercept follows the standard fighter rules.

Piranha Heavy Fighter

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The Piranha is an acceptable heavy fighter, able to dogfight if necessary and possessing heavy armor, but a single Piranha is not much of a threat. Like many Ancient fighters, however, the Piranha can combine fire with other Piranha (in its flight or with any flight in the same or adjacent hex), increasing the damage of its Light Molecular Concentrator as well as its accuracy. Use the standard Concentrator weapon rules, with the following

modifications and adjustments: Each fighter beyond the first which fires in combined mode adds 1d6+1 to damage, up to a maximum of +5d6+5 for 5 additional fighters. Each fighter beyond the first also adds a +2 bonus to the chances to hit. Do not resolve combined fire using the flight level combat system: if the attack hits, it deals its full damage to a single location as a single weapon hit. If one fighter in a flight fires in combined mode, all other fighters in that flight must also fire in combined mode at the same target. A fighter may not combine fire with a fighter in another flight unless there are less than 6 fighters in its flight. In cases where this results in 7 or more fighters firing in combined mode, execute multiple shots in combined mode divided as the controlling player chooses (3+4, 5+2, etc). Combined fire mode may be used against enemy fighters but will only hit a single fighter, so it is generally better to fire in normal (non-combined) mode using the regular flight level combat rules.



Bases & Defenses

Tal-kalak’nor Star Fortress

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The Star Fortress is a living base which at a distance appears something like a giant encrusted starfish. The “standard” version has 6 arms, although there have been reports of Tal-kalak’nor fortresses with as many as 12. The Tal-kalak’nor functions as a mobile command post, repair depot, and production facility, capable of docking with and repairing as many ships as it possesses arms. (The fortress can be towed from place to place by a Blue Whale or by several

Humpbacks.) The fortress is designed to operate on its own if necessary, and thus carries no Molecular Concentrators, instead depending on Cone Focus Beams as its main armament, and Discharge Arrays and fighters for close defense. If supported with mines or OSATs, the Tal-kalak'nor is entirely capable of destroying small fleets at range or up close, especially if its intrinsic flights of Remotes are working to repair damage.

Unusually for a base, the Tal-kalak'nor possesses a jump drive. When necessary, the Tal-kona'sha can tow a fortress into place and then shut down a system's jump gate. Because of its size, the Tal-kalak'nor uses the standard structure rules, and each section has its own structural replacement system. The primary structural replacement system may use primary structure to repair any non-structural damage to any of the sections so long as the section has not fallen off.

There are rumors of larger, more conventional Tal-kona'sha bases dating back to the days when the race itself was spacefaring, where their ships are birthed and where the giant master-brains perform R&D and develop new tactics. Presumably, these bases would be in place around the main Tal-kona'sha systems, at the center of their space.

Coral Defensive Platform Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The main OSAT employed by the Tal-kona'sha, the Coral Platform actually focused on projecting firepower against attacking enemies, and is fairly vulnerable to fighter attack. In the absence of defending ships, the Tal-

kona'sha rely upon DEW mines to protect Corals, or mix in a few of the Coral variants (stats for the Coral-II and Coral-III are provided below, too). Corals mount two Cone Focus Beams and one Advanced Ion Torpedo launcher, giving them a nasty punch. However, they lack the durability of most TKS ships.

Coral-II Defensive Platform

Coral Common Variant

Coral-IIs are designed to provide close defense, and are usually found deployed around TKS bases or mixed with Corals and Coral-IIIs. They carry a Discharge Array and a sizable battery of Ion Defenders.

Coral-III Defensive Platform

Coral Common Variant

Coral-IIIs are usually deployed as a temporary measure to defend a point until a base can be towed into position. Armed with three Molecular Concentrators, they become very deadly in groups.

Tal-kona'sha Mines

The Tal-kona'sha employ a variety of mines, most of which are composed entirely of nano-tech devices assembled together. They do not particularly like to use proximity or captor mines, relying almost entirely on DEW types. All TKS mines possess the Command Controller and Identify Friend or Foe enhancements at no cost. TKS nanotechnology keeps mine signatures high, although many of their DEW mines have poor signatures once activated.

The Tak'a mine sees frequent deployment around TKS bases and OSAT nets.

Na'sha Proximity Mine:

Cost 25, Damage 24, Signature 5.

Al'ka Captor Mine:

Cost 40, Range 6, Accuracy +6, Damage 20, Signature 5.

Tak'a DEW Mine:

Cost 50?, Range 6, Accuracy +6, Signature 4 (1), Armor 0, Structure 6. Fires an Ion Defender.

Tal'lo DEW Mine:

Cost , Range 6, Accuracy +6, Signature 4 (0), Armor 1, Structure 10. Fires a Point Defense Beam.

Kal'am DEW Mine:

Cost, Range 10, Accuracy +5, Signature 5 (1), Armor 2, Structure 12. Fires a Plasma Flamer.

Kor'tal DEW Mine:

Cost, Range 25, Accuracy +2, Signature 2(-1), Armor 3, Structure 15. Fires an Ion Torpedo. The Tal-kona'sha weren't able to equip a mine with their Advanced launcher but could outfit a conventional Ion Torpedo on a mid-sized mine.

Editor's Note: This issue contains ship control sheets for several Tal-kona'sha units, but not all of them. The remaining units will be created and placed into future issues. If any readers are interested in finishing up these sheets for us, please let us know!

* * *

MARS GUARD: ALL UNITS SCRAMBLE!

by Steve Cross



Fort Lincoln MarsGuard Air Base 0217 Mars Standard Time

The howling alarms tore Pilot First Class Jansen from a particularly enjoyable dream and from his warm bed. Bleary eyed and startled by the alarms he automatically got dressed. It was because of foolish and time wasting stuff like this that Dwayne Jansen had signed off and was due to leave MarsGuard service in two months time, he simply didn't need the hassle. Just as he finished putting his boots on the door to the accommodation was flung open, in stepped Captain Singh the Commander of 3rd Group.

"Get a move on people, MarsGuard Command has issued a full planetary alert, report to your fighters immediately, NOW PEOPLE!"

Sgt O'Brien spoke up, clearly irritated that he was up so damn early.

"Cap isn't it too early for an exercise? We didn't even know about this one, what's goin on Sir?"

"God knows, we'll find out when we are in orbit."

The entire group, seventy two pilots in all sprinted from the sleeping quarters to their locker rooms and hurriedly donned their pressure suits. It took two minutes for Jansen to don his suit before he joined the rush of pilots as they went out to the landing strip.

The strip was impressive, large enough to hold a cruiser if needs be, Fort *Lincoln* was home to over two hundred fighters from Delta V Trainers to the latest Saber Fighters it was also home to a force of small craft including three dozen Interceptors and a wing of Enforcers. Defending the base was an impressive mix of missile launchers and particle beams, more than enough to see off all but the most determined attacker.

Every fighter was surrounded by a swarm of techs making their final checks and arming the weapon systems. Just over a kilometer away Jansen could see the Eagle Class Cutters MGSC *Rodney* and *Barnham* lifting off. Fighters were already warming up their engines in preparation for launch. Jansen climbed aboard his Freedom Fighter Interceptor *Dolly* (named after the famous Earth singer Dolly Parton) and begun his pre-flight warm up. The techs had already started the engines and the radar was already calibrated. All Jansen had to do was wait for Singh to give the word to lift off.

"This is Angel 1, we will be your SWACS this morning, keep us covered boys, this may only be an exercise but lets treat it like its real."

"This is Mad Dog (Singh's call sign) roger that, Angel, we'll keep you covered, you just tell us where to go and what to do."

"Ha! Roger that Mad Dog,

Angel 1 out."

The radio was filled with pilots checking radios and reporting their status, whilst MarsGuard was a young service it had trained hard and was quite professional, all the pilots sounded eager and ready.

"Fighters this is *Lincoln* Command, you are go for flight ops, repeat all craft are cleared to launch, co-ordinates are Defense Grid position Delta 39 Lima, I repeat Delta 39 Lima."

On the command from the flight controller every fighter begun to lift off, VSTOL craft like the Saber and ancient Delta's took no space to get airborne whilst the Freedom Fighters needed a 'classic' take off. It took twenty minutes to get every fighter and small craft airborne. Across the surface of Mars this was being repeated at Forts *Washington*, *Franklin*, *Patton* and *Bradley*.

Mars Defense Grid Position Delta 39 Lima 0239 MST

Grid Delta 39 Lima was the primary defense point of Mars, right over the Capital of Eden City was *Georges Melies* Station an Orion Delta Starbase and headquarters for MarsGuard.

Space was swarming with ships and fighters of every shape and size, Jansen could only remember one previous incident

where there had been a full scale scramble. In Exercise 'Terror Rising' MarsGuard ships and fighters 'defended' Mars from an EA 'attack' in a major test of MarsGuard's operational capabilities. Radio chatter filled Jansen's ears as order and counter order was issued by flight commanders to their pilots. Angle 1 and its fellow SWAC's were extremely busy trying to position the swarms of fighter into their combat positions.

"Captain, any clue on what's goin on yet Sir?" It was O'Brien again, but others in 3rd Group were asking the same question.

"Wait one, getting orders now."

The wait dragged on for what seemed an eternity. Jansen remembered back to Terror Rising and what happened that day. Orders and information was quickly and efficiently passed on, but this was something different. If the Space Controllers onboard the SWAC's and *George Melies* knew what was going on it had effected their efficiency a hell of a lot, they seemed panicky.

"3rd Group listen in, President Sheridan has issued a system wide alert for the Sol system and has the whole of EarthForce on full scale alert. We have all been briefed about the Drakh, and it seems that they are on their way to here and Earth. Command is sure that Mars is a target and must be defended. Once we defend our home, then we help the Earth."

"Cap stop fooling around, what's really going on?"

"I ain't fooling with you, pilot, this is really happening!"

Just as Singh finished berating the unnamed pilot, a transmission from the *Melies* overrode all the chatter on the net.

"This is Fleet Command, hostile forces detected at extreme

range, estimate over a hundred and fifty vessels on approach vector to Mars and our position. All Warships are to concentrate fire on hostiles, fighters are to engage the Drakh Raiders and assist the ships where necessary. SWAC's have approach vectors and are receiving real time data from our sensors. Let's defend our home ladies and gentlemen."

The fighters of 3rd Group moved into their designated position. It seemed the space around Mars was full of ships, a veritable Martian Battle of the Line. The SWAC's were constantly relaying data to the fighters and ships until the Drakh attackers came into the sensor range of fighters.

"Jesus, how many are there?"

"I knew this wasn't an exercise."

"Shoulda' stayed in bed."

"This is Fleet Command, hostiles entering missile range in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 all missiles FIRE NOW!"

Jansen had never seen such an awesome display of fire. Missile after missile leapt from the *Melies* and roared towards the Drakh fleet. Class-L rack armed OSATs joined in firing a minute later and even more missiles were heading towards the Drakh but it was not enough, they just kept coming.

"All ships, all fighters weapons free, engage at will, God be with you."

Hundreds of fighters, LCVs and breaching pods roared forward to be met by the Drakh's own LCVs. The technological difference between the two sides was quickly and horrifically demonstrated. MarsGuard LCVs and fighters were obliterated by pulsing energy beams and bolts. MarsGuard return fire slammed into Drakh hulls and battered their ships but few fell in the initial volley. The Delta-Vs and Delta

Sentinels proved to be almost useless, their small guns could barely dent the Drakh ships hulls. It often took two flights of fighters to take down a single Drakh LCV, whilst the MarsGuard LCVs were totally outclassed.

Jansen pulled the *Dolly* into a tight loop with the rest of his flight as they caught a Drakh Raider in their crosshairs. Missiles pelted its hull and uni-pulse cannons fired for all they were worth. The sleek Drakh vessel was pulverized by the combined fire of the entire flight, but its wingman got revenge. A sweep of its cannon saw three Freedom Fighters destroyed. Not one pilot had the chance to eject.

A pair of Revere Pursuit boats dived into the fray, particle beams firing as quickly as they recharged. Although technologically outclassed the MarsGuard ships could still hit hard.

Jansen took the chance to have a quick look around to see how the battle was going. He quickly wished he hadn't. Dead or lifeless MarsGuard vessels drifted in orbit. The flagship *Blackhawk* was venting atmosphere and had a significant fire on her port side. There was suddenly a blinding flash and the radio was suddenly filled with panic.

"My GOD, that was the *Winchester*...did anybody see any life pods?"

"Lord, look at her, her reactors gone, and taken most of her stern with it."

"This is the *Hamilton* we have detected life pods, looks like some of the crew got out in time, requesting that Samaritans go and rescue the pods."

"This is Samaritan flight 8, we hear you *Hamilton* but we need some cover if we are to save those guys."

"3rd Group, 8th Interceptor

Group provide cover for the Samaritans and keep those lizards off their backs. The *Appleseed* and *Valley Forge* will provide covering fire from Drakh raiders."

"All right 3rd you heard the man, form up in an attack wedge, watch your six and concentrate fire." The surviving fighters of 3rd Group swarmed round the *Appleseed* and *Valley Forge* as they surged forward. The Samaritans took position at the center of the formation, protected by both the firepower and bulk of the two warships. Whilst the Samaritans were dedicated rescue ships and painted clearly to indicate this, the Drakh probably were not taking any prisoners.

"Mad Dog, this is Angel 1, we have a Drakh HCV and Raiders heading your way, vector 66/31/ Epsilon."

"Thanks for the warning Angel 1, we've got em, Mad Dog out."

"This is the *Valley Forge*, we'll try and buy the *Appleseed* and Samaritans some time. Mad Dog, have your fighter's reform, lets get these lizards."

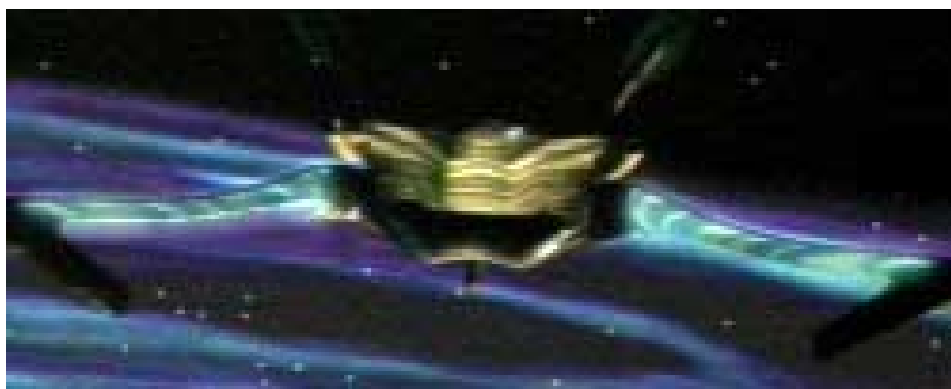
The Drakh Attack ship and its Raiders tore towards the *Forge* and the fighters. A railgun round from the Destroyer fatally crippled one Raider before it could fire, and the rest tore into 3rd Groups survivors. The Drakh HCV was entering firing range when she shuddered and suddenly exploded in a flash of white hot plasma and fusion fire.

"What the hell was that!"

"Who cares, that's some crispy fried lizards!"

"This is the *William Clark*. we thought you could use a hand, *Valley Forge*."

Jansen immediately knew what had obliterated the Drakh ship: the slow firing Rail Cannon on the *Clark* had obviously hit something



vital, probably the reactor.

"Thanks for the assist Clark, tell you gunners we owe 'em one."

The surviving Drakh raiders were quickly finished off by the combined firepower of the fighters and destroyer. Cheers and bravado echoed over the net but the battle was not won yet.

"Flight this is Mad Dog, well done guys now, lets get back into the fight."

"Roger that Sir," Jansen replied, 'maybe we will get through this after all.'

"Don't count your chickens, Dust Devil (Jansen's call sign), we've got to...JESUS, 3rd GROUP, BREAK NOW! JANSEN, JINK MAN, JINK FOR GODS SAKE!"

Mars Defense Grid Position Delta 39 Lima 0715 MST

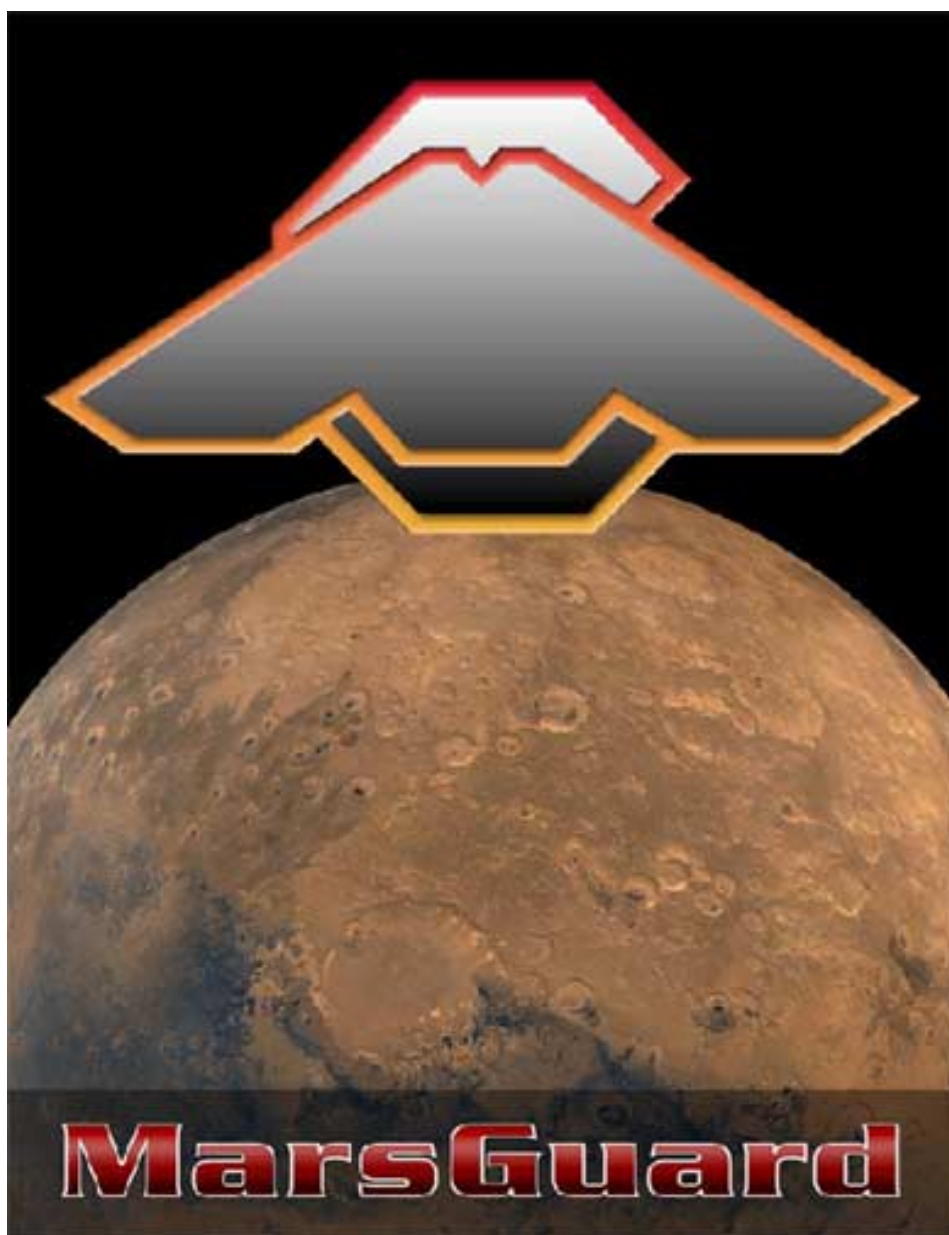
The battered and burnt out hulks of MarsGuard, EA, League and Drakh vessels hung around Mars like a funeral shroud. Hundreds, maybe thousands, of lives had been lost in the Battle of Mars. But the worst news was coming from Earth. The Drakh had attacked with some kind of planet killer device, but when that was foiled by a heroic sacrifice the Drakh had seeded the Earth with some kind of

bio weapon. No one knew what its effects were, it was simply too early to tell.

Jansen heard it all over the radio, and had been forced to watch the battle reach its climax as a massive Drakh Dreadnought entered the battle, smashing all those who stood before it. But MarsGuard had held, and held long enough for reinforcements from the IA to arrive and finally see off the Drakh. The Dreadnought was destroyed by the valiant sacrifice of the MGSC Colt which rammed the massive ship in a final act of defiance. Singh was dead, so too was most of 3rd Group, a pack of Drakh Raiders slipped through and tore into them as they were reforming. If it hadn't been for the 12th Interceptor Wing, supported by a ragged collection of fighters, the entire group would have been wiped out and the Drakh could have turned the MarsGuard flank.

Sitting in the cockpit of his destroyed fighter Jansen realized that Mars was going to need fighters and pilots more than ever during this unprecedented emergency and quickly made a mental note to destroy the signing off paper work as soon as he was picked up by a SAR craft.

* * *



A Review of the MarsGuard Supplement

By Tyrel Lohr

Last year, Steve Cross and Anthony Pakizer sent me the materials for their MarsGuard supplement, a book outlining the possible fleet operated by a free and independent Mars in the post-Earth Civil War era. This 19-page book contains a number of new ships, designed by Cross and Pakizer, that

are a combination of new and old hulls.

The MarsGuard forces receive some new technologies, but mostly they rely on stock Earth Alliance and Belt Alliance technologies. Similarly, most of the MarsGuard units are based on hulls belonging to the aforementioned powers. Unfortunately, none of the units have point values—even tentative point values—which will be a turnoff to some players.

All in all, this supplement provides a large enough variety of

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SHIPS #1

units to make a MarsGuard faction fully playable in your local pick up battles or in a campaign. These ships join the Free Human Union as an expansion of the basic EA doctrine and technologies and players should check them out, if for no other reason than to give the authors feedback. These ships are sure to fuel the discussion of the Mars fleet.

To download the MarsGuard supplement and the associated ship control sheets, please visit <http://planetside.firenebula.com/supplements/>.

* * *

The Nexus Universe

**The Nexus Universe:
The Sal-bez & Craytan**
By Geoffrey & Jeremy Stano

Introduction

The story of Nexus is a tale describing the rise of nearly a dozen races and factions in a setting completely separate from the Babylon 5 Universe. While the setting covers several centuries of history for these races and, in particular, follows the rise of the Sal-bez and Velrax to regional superpowers, the world of Nexus is the key to the whole story. The eleven planets that make up the Nexus system received their name through a singularly unique occurrence in nature. In fact, it is the only system to be explored by no less than ten different races and then be given the same name, albeit

in different languages. Nexus lies at the center of a massive, parsec-spanning anomaly in hyperspace. In almost the same way a compass always points towards the magnetic north pole, the gravitational field seems to be directed toward Nexus. Most of known space has this unique gravitational signature. It was not until the Known Powers began to send exploration missions well beyond their spheres of influence did the telltale distortion of the gravitational field die away. However, to reach that point, the explorers had to traverse a boundary of extreme hyperspace terrain, which as far as current explorations have found, surrounds the entire local region of the galaxy where the Known Powers reside. Curiously, this feature has been documented to be expanding over time. At this point, this would have left the Nexus system as only a scientific curiosity to the major races. The reason it is

not is the reason why the system has acquired the name Nexus. Nexus contains no less than 47 accessible (and discovered) jump routes, which connects it to nearly 62% of the known systems within the explored territories of the Known Powers. The accessibility to the rest of the region by holding a single system has enormous military repercussions. Whoever could hold Nexus held the high ground. It is faster to jump directly to Nexus and then switch to another jump lane away from Nexus to the destination than it is to take other routes, although exceptions exist. There are so many jump routes that emanate from Nexus that the nearly two-dozen jump gates in Nexus use only local direction beacons to direct ships. In normal jump routes, only a handful of routes can be linked to the gate, as its navigational beacons need to be able to be unhindered by other beacons and be “heard” between the

far-flung jump gates. While this is true for travel between other systems in the region, at Nexus, short-ranged beacons direct ships to specific locations within the Nexus system, as there is simply not enough physical space to maintain long-distance beacons along all of the jump routes. Since hyperspace is so tranquil around Nexus (due to the Void) and the gravitation field acts as a compass, ships headed toward Nexus simply follow the gravitation field, while ships leaving Nexus align themselves along outgoing beacons towards their destination. Once the outbound ship is far enough from Nexus, generally after passing through the Ring, long-range beacons from another system's jump gate are locked on to and travel proceeds as normal. Loosing ships in hyperspace is a surprisingly uncommon event as ships that drift off of regular jump routes can align themselves to the gravitational compass and travel to Nexus. This has allowed the races in the region to expand and explore at an astonishing rate with much less difficulty than most other races first exploring hyperspace. The obvious exception to this was the earliest explorations, which would have been destroyed if they drifted into the Ring. The early explorations could still use the gravitational compass, but without a proper jump route, it was not always successful and losses still occurred.

The battles to control Nexus became known as the First War of Control and will be documented at a later date. What is presented here in the Great Machine is a snapshot of two of the early races involved in the Nexus story. The first, the Sal-bez, has already been mentioned. The first story in this setting describes the early years of the Sal-bez Coalition and the disastrous first

encounter with the Union of Craytan States. While a peace between the two races was achieved, it was this first interstellar conflict for each race that would sharply define tactics, doctrines, and designs for many years to come. The ships and histories presented here present a brief snapshot of the events in this era.

Why We Did It

My brother and I can track the original idea of the Nexus Universe back to my days in high school where we were thinking of new races for Star Fleet Battles. At the time no more than a few names and ideas for ships were developed. Slowly, the initial story began to evolve, but nothing came of it until two years ago. Jeremy and I picked up the pieces of our story after we had been playing Babylon 5 Wars for a while and felt that we could adapt our ideas to the game. The final inspiration came from seeing the excellent work done by Tyrel for his Escalation Wars Universe. Our goal has been to create a setting that follows several races from their first steps into the stars to their struggle for dominance and survival in the region. Both Jeremy and myself have worked to create unique races and to create ships and design philosophies that relate to each race's particular experiences. Each race will evolve and grow with time.

Since this was an opportunity for both of us to indulge our imaginations, Jeremy and I made a conscience effort to tweak or alter rules in order to create a completely different feel for our setting. One of the largest changes involves ballistics. The original reason was due to the use of Swarm Torpedoes by the Sal-bez. This was simply a ballistic pulse system. While it was felt that swarm torpedoes were harmless in small

numbers, they quickly overwhelmed opponents in numbers. As a result, we adopted the current rules where ballistics are fired during the weapons fire declaration step of one turn and impact during the usual ballistic weapon resolution step of the next turn. This allows ballistics the same advantage of hitting before normal weapons fire, but allows the target to shift its EW and defensive guns in anticipation of the attack. This was felt to be more realistic of the "slowness" of ballistics. Intercept of ballistics still works as usual. While we found this to degrade the effectiveness of ballistics, it opened new tactical options. Now, a ballistic user can force their opponent to divert EW away from offensive operations if the target does not want to present itself as a huge profile. While a little cumbersome at first, it has turned out to be a fun dynamic to play with.

Light combat vessels saw large alterations. In the Nexus Universe, LCVs are much more versatile, albeit fragile, units. While Nexus LCVs can certainly become tough targets to hit if they go fully defensive, they are still prone to fighter attacks and can only take a few hits before losing combat effectiveness. We wanted to allow LCVs to have this versatility in order to add another dimension to the various Nexus race fleets. Overall, we did not fear LCVs becoming "impossible" targets if they went fully defensive. In the Nexus Universe, LCVs are the main picket units and patrollers, allowing larger fleet units to perform more important tasks. LCVs are more important due to the unique effects Nexus has on interstellar travel. As the vast majority of systems can be reached via Nexus, inexpensive, yet flexible units were needed to keep active patrols in any given star system.

The Sal-bez Coalition

Physical Appearance

The Sal-bez are an insectoid species whose civilization dates back several thousand years. The current Coalition is run by several hundred clans descendent from a head matriarch. Unlike the Gaim, the Sal-bez are a highly individualistic society respecting the rights of the individual, but still maintaining the ability to work as a whole for the greater good of their species. This "enlightenment" has come at a great cost to the Sal-bez in their early history.

Physically, the Sal-bez are an amazing living machine. They are quadrapedal with a third pair of legs that have evolved into arms. Individuals stand around four and a half feet tall and range in color from brown to emerald green to vivid blues and purples. Individuals also have colored highlights throughout their chitinous exoskeleton. What is truly remarkable is that the Sal-bez have an endoskeleton as well. While this adds to the actual weight of an individual Sal-bez, they are known throughout the sector as being one of the toughest opponents physically despite their small stature. Individuals have been known to withstand hits from both projectile and energy based weapons without any ill effects. This endoskeleton is made of a flexible material, much like the chitin of their exoskeleton. The result is that their skeletons act as springs when a Sal-bez runs or

jumps, resulting in remarkable feats of mobility. Their lungs are also particularly hardy, which grants them the benefit of being able to breathe in many different atmospheres.

Early History

Originally, the Sal-bez paralleled the development of the Gaim. The Sal-bez developed across their planet in small groups dominated by a single queen. The individual workers were non-sentient and worked at the bidding of their queen. The Sal-bez at one point had hives numbering in the hundreds of thousands. As individual groups grew they would come into contact with the other hives and vicious battles over resources would be fought. The victor was the queen who could outnumber her opponent and literally slaughter all opposition. In the midst of the carnage, a select group of workers would rush their queen to safety and more often than not, sacrifice themselves to allow the queen to flee and begin anew.

These battles for resources raged for centuries and often alliances would develop between individual queens. However, Sal-bez society, as it was, was stagnant and did not afford the luxury of science or advancement. Life continued this way with the workers serving, unquestionably, their queens. About three thousand years ago, one of the greatest changes to occur to a single race began.

The First Awakening

Nearly three millennia ago, the Sal-bez began to change. With each succeeding generation, the workers began to live longer and grow larger. Initially, the Sal-bez were the size of a Terran cat. It was

this size that served as a defense against predators, although not completely. Very rarely, a worker would be born with the ability to think on its own and to learn, but required the queen's guidance for most tasks. This Awakened caste as the queens called them were treated like special pets. Often they found duty working on solving problems for the queen, and became the scientists of the age. Sadly, these awakened generally acted as tacticians for the horde armies of the queens.

At first, the queens felt no alarm as they found their own lives lengthening and their own physical size increasing. However, they were almost completely unaware of the extent of the changes. As more generations of Sal-bez grew, the Awakened became self-aware. Historians agree that the first recorded instance of this occurred nearly 1800 years ago. These new sentient Awakened finally realized their plight and the utter control with which the queens ruled them and their worker cousins. This knowledge did not allow much in the way of action as the Awakened, while far smarter than the workers, were still not much more intelligent than the youth of most races. It was this self-awareness though, that finally fanned the flames of change.

The Enlightenment of Fire

The Sal-bez continued their amazingly fast evolution. By only 1120 years ago, the average worker or awakened stood four and a half feet tall and were remarkable living machines. The Awakened had developed the ability to think fully on their own and had intelligence on par with the queens. More importantly, their numbers were increasing and

they had the ability to raise their own queens, which they wisely kept hidden. Historians believe that the Great Awakening, as it is called, is almost as significant in the evolution of the Sal-bez as the transcendence of the First Ones to non-corporeal beings. The queens, still believing the Awakened were no more than intelligent pets, were unprepared for what happened next. The Awakened rose up against the queens.

The queens were shocked. Their pets had turned against them. Not only this, their pets had the ability to think and take control of some of the workers. The result was probably one of the most horrific conflicts for any sentient race. The queens of nearly all of the hives commanded their remaining workers to purge the Sal-bez of the Awakened. The Awakened for their part attempted to teach the workers under their control and bring them understanding. To a degree this worked. The workers who the Awakened had freed could only understand simple concepts. However, they understood that the Awakened meant to help them and they offered their lives to fight the queens' armies.

The initial counter attack by the queens decimated the ranks of the Awakened. Those who could not flee were swarmed and killed and many of the Awakened queens, now calling themselves the Enlightened, were found. However, many of the Awakened, Enlightened, and workers supporting them fled to remote locations across the planet and began a guerilla resistance. The Awakened soon began to develop technology, mostly as a way to defend against the staggeringly superior numbers of the Queens. It was this fundamental change that eventually led to the Awakened

defeating the hordes sent by the Queens, who knew no other tactics than swarming the enemy. The Queens still utilized new Awakened to lead their worker armies, but kept such a tight leash on them, that they did not have the independent thought of their free cousins.

This conflict lasted generations, as the Queens would find strongholds of the Enlightened and utterly destroy them and as the Enlightened would outthink their opponents and eliminate one of the Queens. After nearly 278 years of conflict, the surviving Queens surrendered to the Enlightened. Although the Queens still had superior numbers, the Iron Age technology of the Enlightened proved too much. At this point in history, both the Queens and Enlightened were producing almost exclusively Awakened Sal-bez. Even the few workers that were born had more intelligence than the earlier generations.

The New Age

With the war won, the Enlightened took over the rule of the new Sal-bez coalition. The Enlightened were given the power to rule and make decisions that concerned all Sal-bez, but individuals were given the right to choose their own path. Just as the Enlightenment by Fire brought great sorrow to the Sal-bez, this new battle to develop a sense of self was wrought with strife but also great promise. Well over a billion workers had survived the war and required special teaching and training for them to understand what had truly happened. The Sal-bez themselves had to learn how to live without the ever constant command of the Queens. However, the Sal-bez set to work trying to develop a new world

for themselves. It was also during this time that the evolution of the Sal-bez ended its break-neck pace.

The Modern Sal-bez

The history of the Sal-bez became rather quiet after the Enlightenment of Fire. They focused mainly on developing a new culture with the Enlightened providing the direction needed for the individual Sal-bez. By the year 2025, the modern space age had developed. The Sal-bez were rapidly beginning to strain the resources of their homeworld and began to expand into their solar system. With the unity the Sal-bez enjoyed, it only took about 15 years to establish colonies on both of their planet's moons.

In essence, a new golden age had dawned on Sal-bez society. Their world was peaceful and their solar system was yielding resources which would continue to improve the quality of life among the Sal-bez. At this stage, Sal-bez ships were little more than cargo vessels to take them throughout their system. The most unusual aspect about the Sal-bez space program was that it was not born out of military research. Since the end of the Enlightenment of Fire, no major wars had been fought on their homeworld. While the Sal-bez did have an army per se, it was not seen as a major institution to uphold. Therefore, as the Sal-bez reached for space, their ships mounted no weaponry, except for very small mining lasers.

By 2062, the Sal-bez had survey ships scouring every corner of their solar system. Several plans were being made to create massive colony ships which would travel to other stars, albeit at sublight speeds. Just as these plans were being finalized, fate chose this moment to

once again alter the course of Sal-bez civilization with a singular event. The survey ship, *Av'rtz*, detected by chance an object of an unknown compound floating at the edges of the solar system. Curious, the crew set out to intercept and investigate the strange object. As they approached, the crew realized the significance of their discovery. It was not a natural object, and from what they could tell, quite old. Immediately, the *Av'rtz* altered course for home.

The find of the *Av'rtz* caused uproar within Sal-bez society. Here was the undeniable truth that they were not alone. Scientists immediately set up studying the object. After months of study, the Sal-bez were able to do little more than to confirm that the object was some sort of data storage device made out of an advanced, artificially created crystal. In addition, it was very old, dating back almost 25,000 years. Besides this, they were unable to learn more, until the object helped things along. The object suddenly came to life and began to interface with the Sal-bez research computers. Despite being truly

astounded by the activity, the scientists did not interfere. As it turns out, the object was indeed a data storage device, but turned out to be more than the Sal-bez could possibly dream. The object contained technical readouts on numerous advanced technologies as well as some sensor logs from the ship that had once carried the object. Overnight, the Sal-bez could revolutionize their technological base, as soon as the object could be fully deciphered. While daunting, this process was helped by the object easily giving up information. Two things were more important than the rest, though. First, and amazingly, schematics for a jump drive were found. Although far in advance of any of the theories the Sal-bez had, the schematics provided the Sal-bez with their first plans for a faster than light craft a mere eight years after the object was initially investigated. Following this was the sensor logs. Although the logs provided no details of the ancient ship's location, it did show that the ship had been in what was suspected to be a battle and destroyed, which had prompted this

particular memory core to be ejected from the ancient ship. This prompted a radical change in Sal-bez civilization. The Enlightened deemed it necessary for the Sal-bez to create a modern army and space navy in order to safeguard their world. Hoping to never use the destructive powers they could develop, especially with the remembrance of the Enlightenment of Fire, the Sal-bez took to the stars.

The Union of Craytan States

Beginnings

The Craytan hail from a temperate world located towards the coreward side of the Nexus system. Upon first glance, the Craytan appear to have a distinct reptilian lineage, as their skin is very tough and leathery. However, the Craytan are better described as a type of bipedal mammal. Their leathery appearance has developed in response to the low ozone content of their atmosphere, which allows their world to be constantly bombarded by ultraviolet radiation. While harmless to the Craytan, few offworlders can spend extended periods outside. Compared to the radical physiology of their closest neighbors, such as the Sal-bez, Polarens, and Makar the Craytan appear to be quite pedestrian.

Much like their physiology, the early society of the Craytan was not as singular as that of their neighbors. The first major



settlements developed around water and food sources on several of the major continents. Unlike most worlds, the Craytan homeworld is mostly land, punctuated by bodies of water. While these bodies were quite massive, they would not be considered oceans on most worlds. This gave the Craytan homeworld the unique distinction of allowing an individual to travel by land around the world. Much of the homeworld's fresh drinking water was not located in surface bodies, but in vast underground wells and caves. Initially, this meant that prime areas of development occurred around large cave complexes where access to water was easily obtained. Typically, these water sources were quite stable and would provide water for generations. Only shallow wells appeared to run out of water in an individual's lifetime.

The close ties to water sources were a major limiting factor in the development of the Craytan, as it forced them to remain in one location. Fighting amongst the various city states was common, especially when population demands forced expansions. As time passed and technology improved, the Craytan realized that deep water wells were practical in many locations. In fact, the Craytan began to theorize that their planet's water system was almost entirely underground. Tropical regions received the most rainfall and had the vast majority of surface, fresh water, which rapidly drained into underground rivers and lakes that formed a network across most of the various continents. As the early Craytan engineers began to understand how to reach this deep water source, the strains of the Craytan population and water supply were mostly solved. The ability to access this water ushered in a

relatively peaceful stage in Craytan history, which saw a massive population explosion as well as the growth of science, art, as well as the rise of full-fledged nations.

During the mid 1600s, the Craytan were well into their industrial revolution and the various nations began vying for control of the raw materials that would drive industrialization. Much like their need for water, the Craytan found most of their resources underground. By now, the Craytan had developed mining and drilling into an expert science, and would become known throughout the region of space as some of the best miners. While vast tracks of land were available, the nations inevitably squabbled over the best locations. For the most part, these wars resulted in large changes in borders as one nation or another took for their own prized real estate. However, no one country was able to dominate as no nation truly had an isolated location thanks in part to the lack of major bodies of water to separate the land. Over the next 150 years, 14 separate nations rose to prominence on the Craytan homeworld.

Around 1810, amidst each nation's attempt to find ways to vault itself to the top position, technology rapidly developed. Theories about rockets, nuclear technology, and the beginnings of advanced computers abounded. Espionage among the nations ran rampant and was actually successful in keeping many of the nations in parity with one another. During the chaotic times of the 1840s, several major wars were progressing among nations close to the southern pole. This region was heavily populated as it was one of the most fertile regions of the planet. Historians are not sure what triggered the escalation in the

conflict, but this regional war went nuclear.

The end result could only be described as a holocaust on a massive scale. While long range missiles were not available, long range bombers were. The entire southern polar region was devastated and the five nations involved ceased to exist in any coherent form. The rest of the world seemed to have stopped as the understanding of the events which had taken place occurred. The staggering loss of life sobered the rest of the Craytan into calling a cease-fire to the ongoing border wars across most of the world. In 1849, each nation sent envoys to the remote city of Weltiman. This city had been spared during most of the conflicts, as it was not near any major water or valuable resource sites. For the next 12 years, the majority of Craytan nations negotiated, quite bitterly at times, the formation of a union between many of the nations. Dubbed the Union of Craytan States, a formal worldwide government system was brought into existence in 1861. The goal of the Union was to prevent the utter and senseless carnage that had occurred in the southern regions, now called the Sacred Lands. While several notable nations abstained from joining, the Union did succeed in unifying the Craytan.

Looking Outward

The Union set about developing its rules and policies throughout the 1860s and 70s. The main policy of the Union was to develop a comprehensive world plan, which would tackle the problems of resources, pollution, and disputes among nations, now called states in this system. During

this time, the Craytan Union began a massive space exploration and development program. Drawing upon the combined resources of the various states, the Union was able to put the Craytan into space by 1921 and begin the process of developing their solar system. The first colony was established in 1974 and mining operations were widespread by 1978. The key to all of this was that the Union was granted sole rights to all resources, installations, and technologies with regards to the space program. Any state attempting to duplicate the Union's efforts simply could not compete with the unified resources of the Union. As a result, the Union developed its main power base and truly became the government for all of the Craytan.

New Rules for the Nexus Universe

The ships and races of the Nexus Universe have been designed to operate with the existing Babylon 5 Wars mechanics. However, in some cases, it was felt that twists to the existing rules would be necessary to get the right feel out of our creations. The following rules indicate the changes that my brother and I have made and explain any new systems that we have introduced.

Crude Jump Drives

Not every race is capable of producing a fully functional jump engine. The primary cause of this is when a race is developing jump

technology on their own without technical support or assistance, or from attempting to copy jump technology in a short period of time or from a substandard source. Crude jump drives are characterized by fewer hit boxes to represent their fragile nature, more severe criticals, and lesser capabilities.

Crude Jump Delay Times

Crude jump drives generally have longer jump delays than equivalent jump engines of other races. Typically, the best a crude jump drive can obtain is 40 turns.

Crude Jump Point Vortex Operations

Crude jump drives follow the same procedure as normal jump drives when opening and closing a jump point, but are under the following restrictions.

- The jump point may only be within 2 hexes directly ahead of the generating ship. (Directly ahead refers to the facing of the ship, not its direction of motion.)
- The facing cannot be selected. The jump point always faces the generating ship.
- Jump points close as per the standard rules.
- Crude jump points may not be maintained.

Crude Jump Gates

Crude jump gates do not suffer from any of the restrictions to opening a jump point since they are larger and have dedicated reactors to sustain them. However, crude jump gates may not maintain a jump vortex and suffer from all critical penalties as crude jump drives.

Jumping Into Combat

All ships equipped with a crude jump drive suffer a +5 to the

roll on determining the scatter of the jump vortex.

Crude Jump Drive Criticals

Crude jump drives roll for criticals like normal jump drives. However, a penalty of +15% is added to the chance of being destroyed if the jump drive is used.

Light Combat Vessel Operations

The light combat vessels play a much larger role in the Nexus Universe than they do in the standard Babylon 5 Universe. This is in part due to political concerns (ie: the *Treaty of Nexus*) and the need to maintain cheap patrol units in many locations. As a result, light combat vessels received more attention than their counterparts in Babylon 5. This grants Nexus Universe LCVs several distinct advantages.

Movement

Any LCV in the service of one of the Nexus Universe races is capable of traveling, independent of a tender, through hyperspace to near-by systems. Of course, this requires a unit capable of forming a jump point for the LCV. This represents the fluid nature of the Nexus Universe and the need to be able to redeploy forces rapidly. However, LCVs are simply not made for long-range cruises and will require the services of a base or tender upon reaching their destination. In game terms, this means LCVs are legal units to purchase in any setting, whether defensive or offensive.

The only exception to this rule is for LCVs wishing to transit to

or from the Nexus system. Due to the instability of the Ring, LCVs do require a tender to transit. The Polarens provide a unique exception as their LCVs are designed to act as full fledged naval units. This is a possibility mostly due to the Polaren's unique physiology. Polaren LCVs can operate for extended periods of time without service and may transit the Ring with or without a tender's support.

Electronic Warfare

In much the same way as Nexus LCVs have received more resource allocation than their Babylon 5 counterparts, their sensor arrays are more advanced. While not as large or capable of regular sized starships, Nexus LCVs use fully functional sensors. This allows any Nexus LCV to use its electronic warfare points as the owner sees fit. There are no restrictions as to what the LCV can or cannot do.

Ballistic Weapons

This question has seen much debate on the Babylon 5 Wars Forums. My brother and I had many discussions on this subject and elected to give the Nexus Universe a different feel. As a result, ballistics maintain some of their advantages, but are not grossly overpowered, especially in numbers.

Sequence of Launch and Impact

Any Nexus Universe ship armed with ballistics will use the following rules. First, any ballistic launches are declared at the same

time as regular weapons fire. However, the ballistic weapons do not impact that turn. All ballistics weapons damage is resolved on the subsequent Ballistic Weapons Resolution step of the following turn.

In the case of torpedo weapons, which can use EW to enhance their chances to hit, the attacker requires no offensive EW on the turn of launch. The second turn is when the attacker must allocate at least one point of offensive EW on the target in order to avoid any range penalties. In addition, range to the target is calculated from the launch hex, not the location of the launching unit on the following turn.

Example Missile-type Weapon

A Craytan refitted Epiron cruiser wishes to fire a Plasma Bomb at a near-by Sal-bez Heavy Frigate, which is 10 hexes away. The Epiron does not announce this until the weapons fire declaration step of the current turn (Turn 4 for our example). At the start of Turn 5, the Heavy Frigate elects to go fully defensive with its EW and to put all of its light particle beams in defensive mode to defend itself from the Epiron's attack. If possible, the frigate will attempt to get to 16 hexes from the bomb's launch hex in order to outrun the bomb. The plasma bomb then makes its to-hit roll during the ballistic weapons resolution step of Turn 5, the turn after launch. Therefore, any weapons destroyed during this part of Turn 5 will be unavailable to fire during the following weapons declaration and

resolution step. Since this is a missile-type weapon, the Craytan Epiron does not require a lock-on or offensive EW to the targeted Heavy Frigate.

Example Torpedo-type Weapon:

Torpedo weapons operate the same as missile-type weapons. The sole difference is that the firing ship may add its own EW to enhance the attack and requires a lock-on to the target during the second turn. For example a Sal-bez New Patroller launches an Early Swarm Torpedo at a near-by Craytan Corvette on the same turn as the example above. On Turn 4, the launch of the swarm torpedo occurs during the normal weapons fire declaration step. The Sal-bez is not required to put any offensive EW against the target this turn. On Turn 5, the Sal-bez puts 5 offensive EW against the targeted Craytan Corvette to enhance its shot. The swarm torpedo's result is not determined until the ballistic weapons resolution step of Turn 5, which allows it to destroy weapons pre-emptively if they are destroyed this turn.

* * *

PROMETHEUS: THE RISE OF THE HORDE

“ The Great Nations now sit upon their old alliances and ancient grudges, like so many proud and stubborn old men. ”

The Rise of the Horde: A Prometheus Preview

By Travis Watson

Penned by the scribe Syntios, in the month of Hama, in our year of 745, aboard the Ceronnia.

It is now the 30th Cyran month that I have traveled aboard the *Ceronnia*. I have spoken frequently with Lord Hassus, who usually has dinner with some of the

senior officers and I, and it has been with his urging and words of confidence that I now deviate from the poems and fables I am accustomed to writing. For as we have traveled the outer reaches of Cythera, a fear and a whisper have been growing in my mind. Each time we stop for rest or supplies we are greeted with suspicious glances and mutters of discontent, and everywhere one hears the murmurs of allegiance and vengeance.

The Great Nations now sit upon their old alliances and ancient

grudges, like so many proud and stubborn old men. Each arrogant treaty and grudging truce is as a log in a pile of dried tinder. When the inevitable spark comes, igniting one, so to will the rest catch flame.

And so it comes to pass that the Sector stands upon the lip of the tinderbox. I have spoken with Lord Hassus of my thoughts on the matter, and he agrees - most emphatically, in fact; I believe he is looking forward to battle. I myself am not so pleased with the prospect. Hassus has encouraged me to

record the events to come, so I believe the best way to start would be to record such information as I know about the major powers and the current political situation, and I will endeavor to provide an accurate and objective account of such. Hassus has directed his young protégé, Hylios, to assist me with respect to military matters, on which I am thoroughly out of my league. May history smile upon us.

-Syntios, Hama 7th, 775 A.R.
THE STATE OF THE SECTOR

Introduction

The region of the galaxy in which most known nations are located is known as the Aethus Sector, usually simply referred to as the Sector. In this sector there are a number of nations, but the four who are generally recognized as having the most influence are the Confederacy of Shidar, the Egessezan Empire, the Phaaran Caliphate, and Cythera herself. In addition, there are the two barbarian nations, which, while chaotic and volatile, manage to command a great deal of power, if not respect, by virtue of their territorial strength. These are Hahn'gahrrosh and the Horde of the Vernakki.

Of course, there are numerous smaller, but nonetheless necessary, nations dotting strips of space around the Great Powers, some more bizarre than others. However, they lack sufficient influence on Sector affairs to merit detailed discussion. Perhaps at a future time I will have the means and need to provide a more accurate account of the lesser players of the galaxy.

THE CYTHERAN ARISTOCRACY

The beginnings of the Aristocracy are best described in a particular legend, which is generally accepted by most Cytherans.

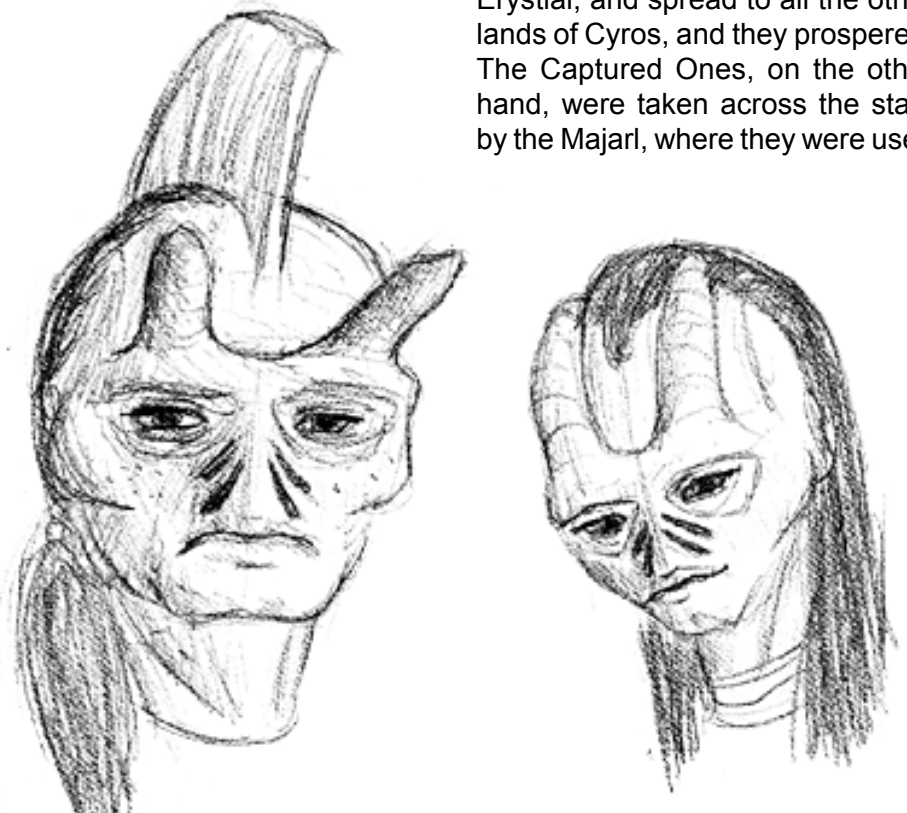
Hemos, the King of the Gods, directed Hyae, the Sculptor, to create a creature in his image. Hemos looked upon this reflection of his image and breathed life into it, and was pleased, and named it man. He then instructed Hyae to create woman, and Hyae gave to man and woman the gifts of intelligence, speech, and ingenuity, so they may overcome the many beasts that roamed the lands. Man and woman were placed in the Verdant Groves of Erystial, and, for a time, all was good.

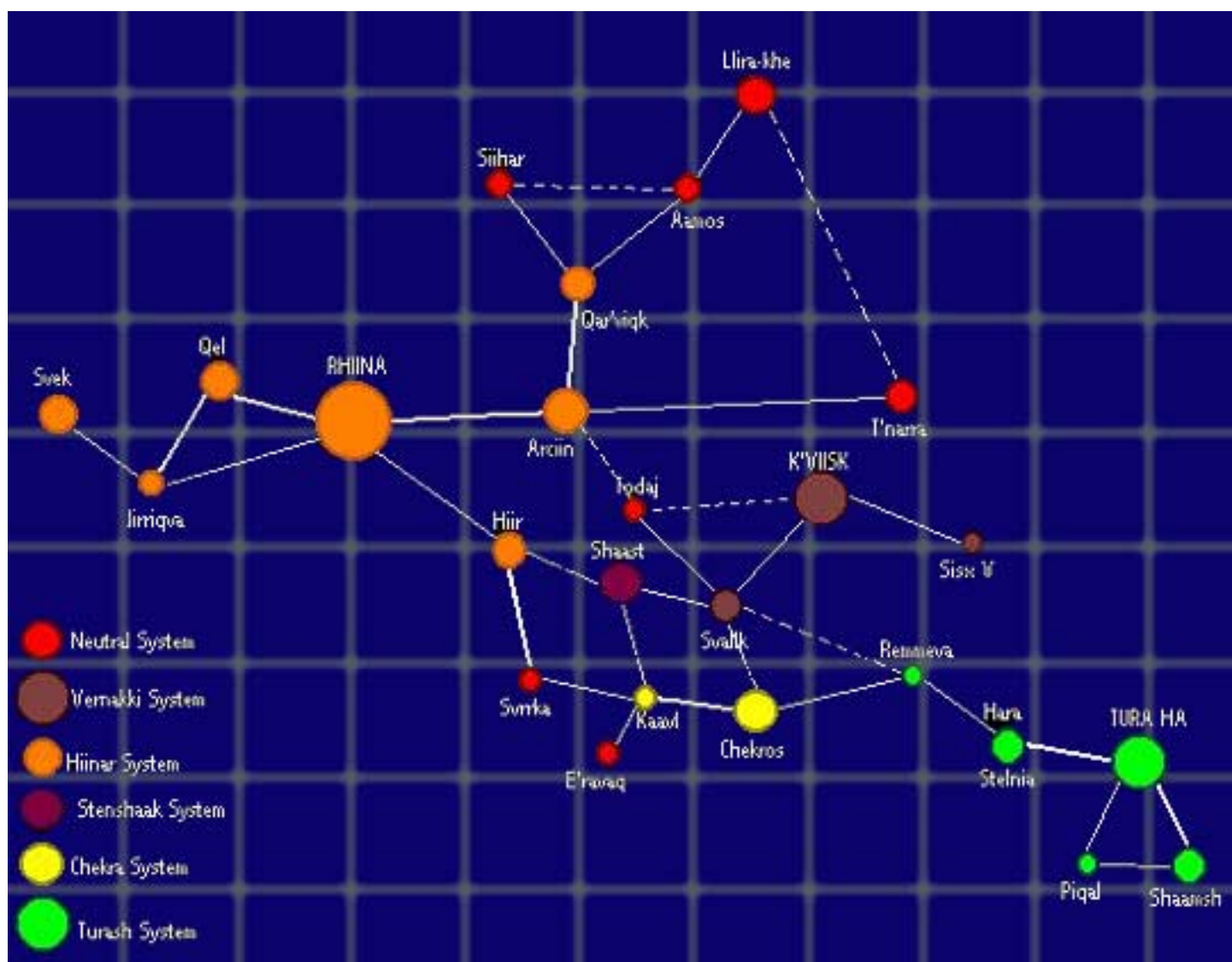
But Velkar, the God of Chaos, scorned the easy life given to man in Erystial. Hemos favored

man and woman, and so the predators avoided them and the demigods of weather and disaster would not harm them. And so Velkar came to Hemos with a wager: that the Erystians would not be able to survive even a single obstacle, because they were weak from the years of stagnation. Of course, Hemos could no more turn down a wager than the sun could refuse to rise, and besides, he thought, it will do good for his people to have a bit of competition.

And so Velkar's servants, the Vedikkae, searched long and hard for something suitable for Velkar's part of the bet. And they found the Majarl.

They led the Majarl to Erystial, where they descended to the cities in great airships. The Majarl wreaked devastation upon the cities of Erystial, captured hundreds of the greatest workers and warriors of the Erystians, and left. The remaining population dared not risk another Majarl attack. They left Erystial, and spread to all the other lands of Cyros, and they prospered. The Captured Ones, on the other hand, were taken across the stars by the Majarl, where they were used





A Hiinar map procured from the Chelra.

to build great monuments and colossal airships. Hemos tried to follow and rescue his people, but Velkar stopped him, saying that any intervention would void their divine wager. And so eventually the Majarl left, for lands unknown, and the Captured Ones founded Psatar.

It is seldom agreed upon who won the bet, Hemos or Velkar. On the one hand, Hemos' people did survive, but it is undeniable that Velkar's attack strengthened them. It is thought that Velkar had to pay Hemos, but he did so willingly, smiling to himself.

Cythera is composed the two main powers, Cyros and Psatar, and the minor states. Cyros and Psatar are almost polar opposites; the Cyrans are great inventors and philosophers who view combat as a last resort, while the Psatarese are militant warlords who see science and philosophy as a means to an end. The Cyrans place great stock on personal ownership and wealth, while the Psatarese tend to view their belongings as part of a communal wealth.

It was in the year 0 that the lords of Cyros, Psatar, and the satellite nations joined together to

form the Cytheran Republic, or the Cytheran Aristocracy as it is known to outsiders. Physically, Cytherans are anthropoid, bearing four limbs, each ending in five digits, a definite head, and a spinal nerve column. The central nervous system is located in the head, as well as optical, auditory, and olfactory sensory receptors. Cytherans walk raised vertically on their hind limbs and have two sexes (male and female). There is minor sexual dimorphism—the female's hips are wider to be able to birth the offspring, they lack a dorsal crest, and their

supra optical crests are curved backward.

The Aristocracy is not ruled by any one particular group—it tends to be made up of those who gain power through means of wealth, intelligence, military strength, or pure force of will. It is this balance and diversity which has allowed Cythera to maintain its' dominance of Sector affairs for the last 500 years.

CYTHERAN MILITARY

Not surprisingly, the Psatarese tend to dominate the Aristocratic Navy. Cyrans usually serve as strategic planners, technicians, medics, and linguistics officers, and occasionally in command roles, and Cytherans from the satellites serve in roles according to their capabilities—Aelarri usually serve aboard scoutships, Hyaer as engineers, etc.

In addition to the Aristocratic Navy, most of the nations (and, indeed, individual lords) maintain private fleets for defense in the event of civil war or national betrayal. The most highly trained of these fleets are the Cyran, Psatarese and Atyrri fleets. These tend to follow a different fleet doctrine from the Aristocratic Navy, which prefers balance and flexibility—the Cyrans prefer range and accuracy, the Psatarese like speed and hitting power, and the Atyrri use a greater quantity of specialty ships, such as carriers and gunships. It should be noted that, due to the animosity between the Cyran and Psatarese states, their respective national fleets will not cooperate except under the most dire circumstances.

CYTHERAN WEAPONS

While Cytheran weapons are not a terribly incredible affair, we have always managed to keep our technology one step ahead of the galactic norm. As such, Cytheran weapons tend to resemble established weapon types, but with certain modifications.

Phalanx Laser

Class: Laser

Modes: Raking, Piercing

The Phalanx is the standard ranged weapon of the Cyrans and the Aristocratic Navy. With a dependable damage range, excellent targeting system, and piercing ability, the Phalanx is a powerful, if predictable, weapon.

Heavy Hailfire Cannon

Class: Plasma

Mode: Pulse

The Hailfire series was originally developed by the Psatarese during the mercantile wars, and is capable of inflicting heavy damage at close range. Unlike standard plasma cannons, the Hailfire fires in a spread of smaller blasts, allowing more total firepower at the expense of accuracy. The Hailfire is the mainstay weapon of the Psatarese Fleet as well as many of the Psatarwards satellites, but the heavy version is also maintained on the larger Aristocratic ships for close range fighting.

Tracking Particle Beam

Class: Particle

Mode: Standard

The standard Cytheran interceptor. The Tracking Particle Beam (TPB) is rather like a Standard

Particle Beam, but the addition of tracking antennae in place of one of the particle concentration chambers has resulted in vastly improved accuracy at the expense of overall damage.

Gravitic Shielding

The Cyrans invented the gravitic shield in the 7th century A.R. based on experiments with the field produced by the gravitic drive. The shield had barely progressed beyond the experimental phase during the initial deployment of the Trireme, but it has since proven its' value. Cytheran shielding is functionally similar to all other known forms of gravitic shielding.

CYTHERAN SHIPS

Trireme War Cruiser (Base Hull)

The Trireme has been the mainstay class of the Aristocratic Navy since the days of the HahnGahr Migration. The current model's weapons loadout is flexible and straightforward – Phalanxes, Hailfires, and TPBs give it good cover against a variety of units at all ranges. The main complaint of fleet commanders is the low output of the shield generator, which has not yet seen fleet-wide upgrade. Triremes generally serve two to a fleet, commanding groups of Arcus frigates and Prodomos destroyers.

THE SHIDARI CONFEDERACY

The Shidari are a race of merchant-marinesmen who occupy a chain of systems jinward ("west") of Cythera. The Shidari have six limbs, four of which are locomotory, and a defined head. They have "eyes," but they see in the ultraviolet spectrum and think of "normal" lighting as being drearily dim. They have a large, crescent-shaped crest that extends vertically from their head, which seems to be a sign of virility and good health.

It is unknown exactly when the Shidari achieved space travel; they tend to avoid combat, and their biggest influence on Sector affairs has been the subtle way in which they supply certain minor races with

advanced weaponry, changing the local balance of power to suit their own agenda. The first major war they participated in was the Mercantile War between themselves, the Xotyl Assembly, and the now-extinct Hiinar Commonwealth, in 580 A.R. By the time of the war their trading-empire was already well established, and their victory against the Xotyl and Hiinar (and the subsequent elimination of the Hiinar at the hands of the Vernakki) further solidified their grip on Sector economics.

While the Shidari are traditionally a cowardly and subtle people who would sooner cut a deal than a throat, lately friction has been building between them and the Lords of Cythera. The disruption of several shipping contracts, as well as obvious weapon-trading between the Shidari and the Hahn'Gahr, have led to increasingly tense contacts between Cytheran patrol fleets and the Shidari Trading Guard. It seems likely that the main battle to come will be between Cythera and Shidar, and their allies.

SHIDARI MILITARY

The Shidari military exists for two purposes: guarding the trade lanes and securing new trade lanes. The more affluent merchants tend to buy their own pet fleets (usually just to showcase their own success), and these serve as the main offensive power of the Shidari navy. The Shidari Trade Guard is a sort of coalition between the merchant-lords, designed to patrol and clear shipping lanes, escort convoys, and hunt down raiders.

Shidari ships are usually rather ornamental, and many bear a striking similarity to a Shidari

head-crest. They don't usually fly their own fighters; most use remote fighter-drones, controlled via stations in the C&C.

SHIDARI WEAPONS

A Shidari proverb says, "Death is unfortunate. Decay is a tragedy." This applies nearly universally to their weapons and vessels. All are designed to incapacitate an enemy for later capture (and, more likely than not, resale). Since the Shidari themselves are nearly immune to the deprecating effects of gamma radiation, most of their weapons focus on transferring radioactive materials to the target or bombarding them with gamma rays.

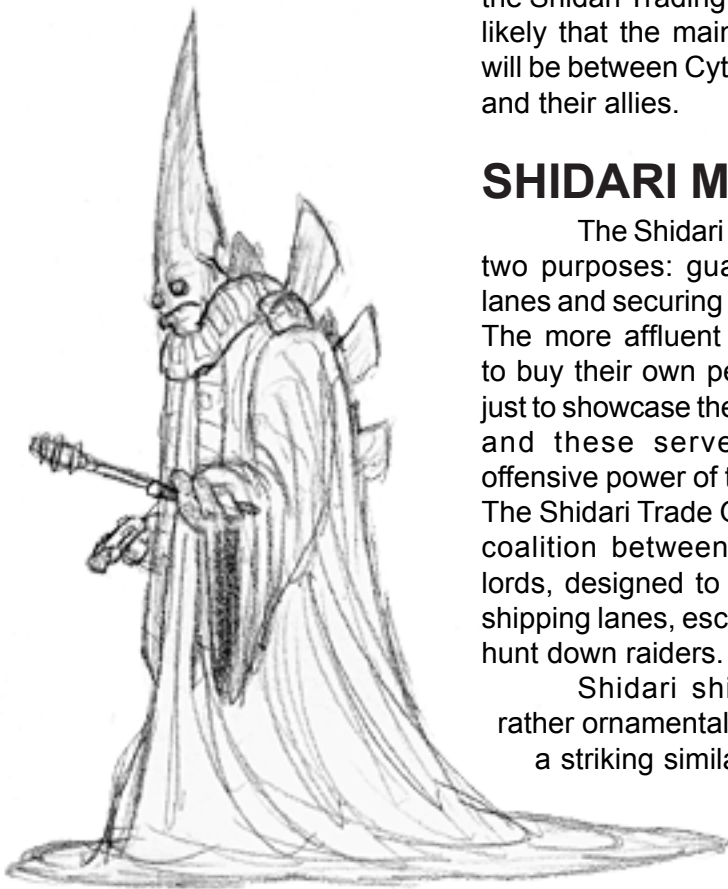
In combat, Shidari ships are nearly always flooded with gamma radiation in order to prevent breaching (the exception is ships that are tactically surprised). All marine crews attacking an irradiated Shidari ship receive a -1 attack penalty. In addition, some Shidari weapons irradiate enemy ships. Once irradiated, a system is marked as such and must be "cleared" in order to make it inhabitable again. While irradiated, said system is considered inactive until cleared (note that this does NOT cause reactors to go critical and detonate). A ship may "clear" a number of systems per turn equal to its number of sections (i.e. a capital ship could clear 5, and HCV 3, etc.).

Gamma Irradiator

Class: Radiation

Mode: Special

The Gamma Irradiator is an array of gamma-emission modules, designed to blast a section of the enemy ship with radiation to eliminate the crew and marines. The weapon eliminates 1d4+1 marines



in the target section, and provides the follow other effects:

Weapon: irradiated. A weapon's full recharge rate is required to "clear" it.

Thruster: no effect.

Cargo: no effect.

Hangar: roll 1d6 for each unit in the hangar. On a 1 or 2, that unit is considered to have dropped out for the remainder of the scenario.

Sensor: irradiated.

Reactor: irradiated.

C&C: irradiated.

Engine: irradiated. Controls may be rerouted to the C&C at the expense of 4 power, so that the engine takes the highest level engine critical rather than deactivating.

Jump Engine: irradiated.

Shield Generator: no effect.

Computer: no effect.

Jammer: no effect.

Connection Strut: no effect.

Any other systems are considered to be irradiated unless otherwise noted.

Medium Rad Bolter

Class: Radiation

Mode: Standard

The Rad Bolter series is the main weapon of the Shidari navy. The bolter does light damage compared to analogous weapons used by other races, but the level of radiation conveyed by it is sufficient to kill fighter pilots and does significant damage against densely

manned systems, such as command and control.

Dual Rad Array

Class: Radiation

Mode: Standard

The Dual Rad Array is essentially two Light Rad Bolters on a single mount. The Shidari prefer it over other anti-fighter weapons due to its' ability to disable fighter pilots.

SHIDARI SHIPS

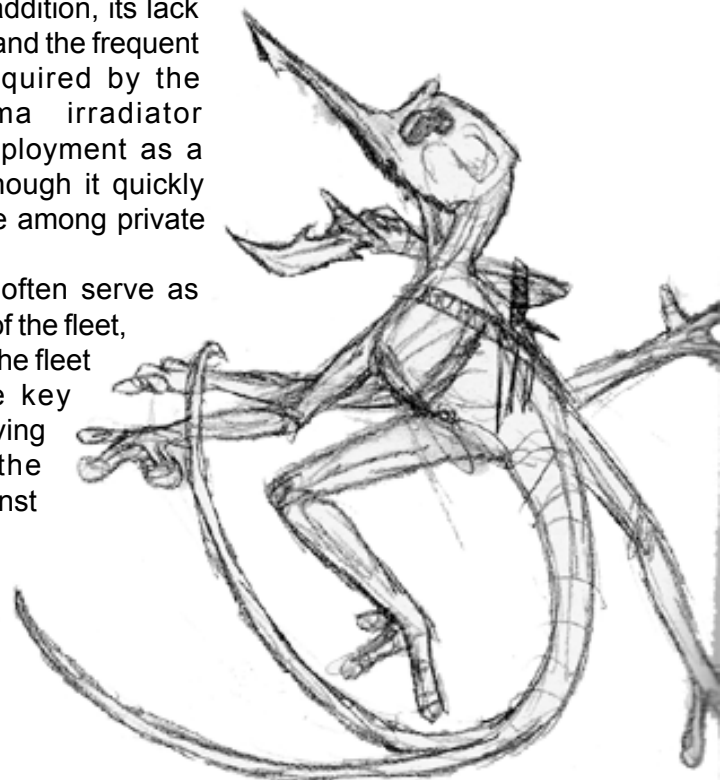
Darshar Light Cruiser (Base Hull)

One of the most common "pet" cruisers, the Darshar was originally developed by the Trade Guard as a weapon which could convoy small trade fleets on its own and capture enemy raiders without support. In this role it was only partially successful. While it could easily engage and capture a single raider, multiple targets could quickly overwhelm it. In addition, its lack of fighter support and the frequent maintenance required by the massive gamma irradiator prohibited its deployment as a convoy escort, though it quickly became a favorite among private fleets.

Darshars often serve as the "skirmishers" of the fleet, moving ahead of the fleet early to disable key targets, then moving back to guard the heavy hitters against frigate wolfpacks.

THE VERNAKKI HORDE

The Vernakki were first seen in the early 600's. Little is known about their history prior to their arrival marlward of Ikarra in the early 7th century. The little information they share is faded into mythology. What *is* known is that in the 620's their early assault ships began pouring into the territory of a small, unimportant merchant race named the Hiinar. There were few races bordering the Hiinar, and they were so insignificant that no one paid attention to their pleas for aid. By the time a philanthropic Cytheran lord decided to investigate the matter, it was too late—the Vernakki were finishing off the last resistance at Svek, and the lord's navy was barely able to salvage a few Hiinar records from the ruins of the burned planet.



From this point on, their history is a period of wars with their neighbors and subsequent periods of rebuilding. While they have made war with nearly every race within a suitable distance from their territory, they maintain special enmity towards the Egesse-zan Empire and Nenh'tu Freehold. The wars between the Egesse-zan and Vernakki have been some of the most bloody conflicts in recent years, and the Vernakki have been launching campaign after campaign against the Nenh'tu since the Nenh'tu entered the interstellar community.

A Vernakki is approximately half as tall at the shoulder as a Cytheran. They have six legs, all of which end in three opposable digits, and a cartilaginous skeleton, supported by a tight system of tendons. Their nervous system is comprised of twin notochords extending down the spine, which allow an almost uncanny reaction speed. Their most distinctive feature is the head, which is decorated with hollows and crests which assist in echolocation, and a long proboscis through which they “drink” their food. They have very high metabolisms, and must eat about once every 6 hours to stay alive, and they feed by sucking their prey’s innards through their proboscis. Vernakki will readily convert to cannibalism if more convenient prey are not available, and will eat prisoners as well. The only clothing they wear is a set of belts that hold personal effects and sidearms, and they regularly participate in ritualistic scarring.

It is unclear to outsiders exactly what the Vernakki government is and how it operates—researchers have infiltrated Vernakki society to study such things, but have invariably “gone native,” as it were. There seems to be no clear leaders above the rank of captain,

and yet Vernakki still manage to cooperate in sync, almost like fish schooling. This trait has led them simply to be referred to as “the Horde.”

VERNAKKI MILITARY

There is no difference to the Vernakki between a civilian and military being—any Vernakki may be expected to fight at any time, and, indeed, seem happy to do so. Due to border pressure, they have been somewhat sedentary in recent years, but Turash records show that through much of the 7th century the Vernakki were quite nomadic, until war with the Egesse-zan forced them to fortify that border.

The Vernakki navy consists of a core of assault cruisers (all of which are referred to as the Ki’vassk), escorted by swarms of frigates, gunboats, and micro-destroyers. They have a few larger, cruiser-sized classes, but these are few and far between.

Vernakki marines have an uncanny ability to infiltrate air ducts, maintenance tubes and all sorts of other cramped areas on ships, and are demons in hand-to-hand combat. Vernakki marines get a +1 bonus to all marine attack rolls. They also neutralize all enemy Giant Crew bonuses.

VERNAKKI WEAPONS

Vernakki weapons are, at best, usually piecemeal adaptations or hybrids of common weapons such as plasma cannons, railguns, and missile racks. Their ships are, traditionally, merely a means to convey troops from planet to planet; as such, almost all have some troop

capacity, and all but the very largest are atmospheric capable.

Hhashk Gun

Class: Plasma

Mode: Flash

A variation on the medium plasma cannon, the hhashk gun is a common anti-ship weapon in use by the Vernakki navy. While it’s damage is a bit on the light side, the Vernakki favor it over traditional weapons for its flash damage and quick rate of fire.

Rail-ivz Launcher

Class: Ballistic

Mode: Standard

A sort of blending between a railgun and missile launcher, the rail-ivz is a very flexible weapon, with ivz (ammo) dedicated to bombardment, homing, anti-fighter, targeting, and seek-and-destroy missions. The standard ammo has a shorter range than a missile and poorer targeting, but has the potential for more damage. Different types of ivz are to be detailed in future supplements.

Antimatter Torch

Class: Antimatter

Mode: Standard

A very early antimatter weapon, based on designs stolen from the Hiinar. The antimatter torch operates almost exactly like its’ sister weapon, the plasma torch, except that it deals damage using antimatter instead of plasma.

Screamer

Class: Plasma

Mode: Flash

An upgrade over the earlier flak cannon, the Vernakki prefer the screamer for its higher damage yield, despite the fact that it does not have the flak cannon’s armor-

piercing abilities or higher interception rate. There are rumors that the Vernakki have developed a hybrid flak-screamer, but it has yet to see fleet-wide replacement.

VERNAKKI SHIPS

Ki'vassk'kha Assault Cruiser (Base Hull)

This is the fourth version of the Ki'vassk hull, produced shortly before the second Egesse-zan/Vernakki war. The latest intelligence suggests that, despite newer upgrades being available, many of the ske models are still in service—hardly a handicap, as the Ki'vassk'ske is still a ship to be feared. The Vernakki navy is built around wolfpacks of Ki'vassks; seldom do they operate alone.

THE PHARAAN CALIPHATE

For centuries, the Pharaan Caliph has been hegemon of the dealward races. They are old, very old. It is no longer a secret to anyone that they are in a decline—their power has been fading since the War of Spirracle, when their greatest allies, the mighty Darroth, fell before the hordes of the Nim-ta'kar.

The Pharaans themselves are great seaworms. They are very sensitive to electromagnetic fields and can sense the faint impulses given off by the nervous systems of many animals (and some plants). Most of their planets are completely aquaformed, all of them at least partially covered by water. The only things decorating their surfaces are

the great monolithic relics and wonders constructed above the lapping waves in the distant past, for long-forgotten, arcane reasons, hardly belying the massive, advanced cities below. Many recall visions of the cultures before the caliph, though few remember them clearly.

The caliph is the ruler of the Phaarans. He must be both a theocrat and a merchant-prince, and so is usually both honest and sensible—few other leaders can boast the same, and few are held with such respect as the royal family of Kemt.

The remission, the fading of the power of the caliphate, seems to permeate all aspects of Phaaran culture. It is in the abandoned outer clusters of their cities, in their ships, designed in memory of greater vessels of times past, in the long, slow, sad marches and overtures that are played at their ceremonies. The caliphs still maintain, through force of both military and will, command over their neighbors, but more and more the younger ones rile beneath the will of the caliph and eye the wealthy outer worlds of his empire. The Phaarans know it will not be long before one of them strikes, and it is then that the others will rally to the cause.

PHAARAN MILITARY

The Pharaan military is a highly traditional one, holding fast to the practices of old to retain its former glory. The Phaaran ships mix classical building techniques with advanced technology, resulting in a fleet which is beautiful, deadly, and limited. They usually mount a few very effective weapons and a DEMF, or destructive electromagnetic field,

disabling an enemy so they can be picked off in only one or two salvos.

Their ships use an ancient building technique of constructing an outer frame of support beams, tapered at the fore and aft, with the structure in between, and are referred to as kebenits. The kebenits bear a strong resemblance to Phaaran pictographs of ancient exploratory vessels. A Phaaran crew typically consists of 60% slaves and conscripts, non-compulsory Phaarans, and 10% upper class command staff. Many of the smaller frigates (and, especially, the fighters) are entirely slave- and conscript-run. Phaaran slaves are extremely well trained and are unlikely to rebel; indeed, their devotion and relative expendability make them among the most effective Phaaran troops.

PHAARAN WEAPONS

While the Phaarans have the capability to produce highly advanced laser and particle weapons, they tend to stick to electromagnetics, a realm in which they are a cut above nearly every other race in the Sector.

Electron Repeater Class: Electromagnetic Mode: Standard

The Electron Repeater is the standard, all-purpose weapon of the Phaaran fleet. An improvement over the earlier Electron Blaster, the E-Repeater, by virtue of a highly efficient cooling system, is able to discharge as many shots per turn as power can be supplied for them. This, in addition to its dropout-inducing effects, makes it the favored light weapon of servants of the caliph.

Heavy Electron-Laser

Class: Electromagnetic

Mode: Raking, Piercing

The heaviest version of the E-Laser series, this weapon is not a true laser but rather a highly concentrated stream of electrons. A prime example of excellent Phaaran engineering, this weapon is superior to conventional lasers in almost every aspect, has a variable recharging system, and a knack for overloading enemy power grids to boot. Unfortunately, it also requires a massive cooling system and as much power as most jump engines.

The E-Laser's powerful cooling system allows it to be fired 1 turn faster than the normal rate each time 6 power is applied, to a maximum of once per turn.

b-DEMF mk-II

Class: Electromagnetic

Mode: Special

Since time unknown, the Phaaran ships have been virtually defined by the use of Destructive Electromagnetic Fields in battle. These weapons project a field around the ship which damages, shorts out, magnetizes, or just plain fries many enemy ships' systems, though the Phaarans use some sort of specialized armor to make themselves immune to the detrimental effects of DEMFs.

The DEMF does not roll for attack, but automatically effects any enemy units immersed in its 15-hex radius. On the Mark-II version, effects include:

1). Reduction of target free thrust by 2. Enemy engine ratings are reduced by two, and fighters and shuttles lose two points of thrust.

2). Reduction of target EW by one and OB by two. Most conventional sensor systems have difficulty functioning in a DEMF

similar to that experienced in a moderate-sized nebula. The simpler systems of a fighter targeting system feel the effects even worse.

3). -2 initiative. Shortouts in the command section of a ship and increased sluggishness in fighters reduce the ability of enemies to react quickly.

While the fields are strong enough to produce a host of detrimental effects singularly, they have no significant increase in ability when used in sync; a ship may only be effected by a DEMF once per turn.

PHAARAN SHIPS

Aastraph Kebenit

(Base Hull)

The most common model of kebenit currently in service, what the Aastraph lacks in quantity of weapons it makes up for in quality. It sports enough of a power surplus to allow quite a bit more flexibility to its armament than one would think, and, of course, has the traditional b-DEMF. Working in small wolfpacks, the Aastraph is a deadly opponent.

THE EQESSE-ZAN EMPIRE

Built, quite literally, upon the ashes of the now-extinct Darroth Republic, the dynasty of the Zan Throne has been one of the great powers of the galaxy since a mere eighty years after their rise in the early 6th century. The Empire is dominated by a grandiose emperor ruling from deep within Imperial territory. While the rule of each emperor is distinctly different, most

emperors have maintained a solid grip on their vast territories by means of a highly loyal caste of lords, baronets, viscounts and other distinguished aristocrats. Membership in this high-ranking group is generally achieved through military prowess or extremely adept political maneuvering, though favored members of the Emperor's family and the particularly affluent have been known to enter lordship despite a notable lack of redeeming qualities.

Eqessi are multilegged, semi-radial creatures. As they age they grow additional legs, with the infants possessing 3 limbs and the oldest, most well treated individuals sometimes bearing as many as 10. One of these limbs contains the primary oral opening, and is generally recognized as the "head" despite the even distribution of nervous and sensory organs throughout the rest of the body. Each arm is terminated by three flexible tentacles and a respiratory cycling organ. A calcium-silicon compound grows in segments around each limb, with a larger shell around the hub-like body. The Eqessi can roughly control the growth of these shells, and the style in which they are grown usually reflects the policies of the current Emperor—outgoing, xenophilic Emperors tend to encourage growth that appears similar to the form whatever race they most favor, while isolationist rulers promote a very "homey" (to the Egesse-zan people anyway) style. They are highly sensitive to touch, particularly rapid changes in air pressure (such as those generated by objects moving nearby) and electrical fields and disturbances.

The traditional enemies of the Egesse-zan are the Vernakki, as the two have been fighting (in a

notably inconclusive fashion) since contact about 50 years after the rise of the Horde. They are on-again, off-again allies of the Cytherans and Pharaans, though this varies according to each Emperor's preference.

EQESSE-ZAN MILITARY

Due to the feudalistic division of the military between various lords, practices between varying divisions are often significantly different. All lords have access to the same basic set of hulls, though most lords develop custom vessels and variants to better suit their combat practices. The Equesse-zan rely heavily on bulky, long-range dreadnoughts and gunships, and are frequent users of slave-manned galleys. The individual size of the Eqessi themselves, even those specially raised for pilot service, restricts them to using heavy- and very large medium-class fighters. Recent emperors have shown a particular preference for torpedoes and ion-class weapons, supported by scrounged Darroth and lishii tech. There are rumors that they have also found stores of old Nim-ta'kar DreadTech, but these are unconfirmed.

EQESSE-ZAN WEAPONS

Equesse-zan fleets tend to be made up of a few large ships of the line, usually of dreadnought or gunship class, and an equivalent amount of smaller support ships, such as war galleys, torpedo ships, and fighter-killers.

Heavy Laser Cannon

Class: Laser

Mode: Raking, Sustained

The Heavy Laser Cannon is an older weapon that is common on hulls built between 620 and 680. In 678, the Emperor Rassqa-nadei took the throne and instituted widespread fleet weapons upgrades based on newly located Darroth fleet stores, ending the use of generic beam weapons within the fleet in favor of racial-specific ones.

Ionic Battle Lance

Class: Ion

Mode: Raking, Piercing

The ultimate result of Rassqa-nadei's attempts to replace the Heavy Laser Cannon, the Ionic Battle Lance is a colossal weapon which is used to skewer opponents at range to soften them up for attack with closer-range weapons. Slow-

firing for an ionic weapon, it sports a nearly ridiculous range and a decent amount of damage. The weapon is primarily designed for piercing enemy ships to take out vital systems in the opening salvos of a battle, and so experiences only a -2 to-hit penalty when in piercing mode, instead of the normal -4.

Scatter-Torp

Class: Ballistic

Mode: Pulse

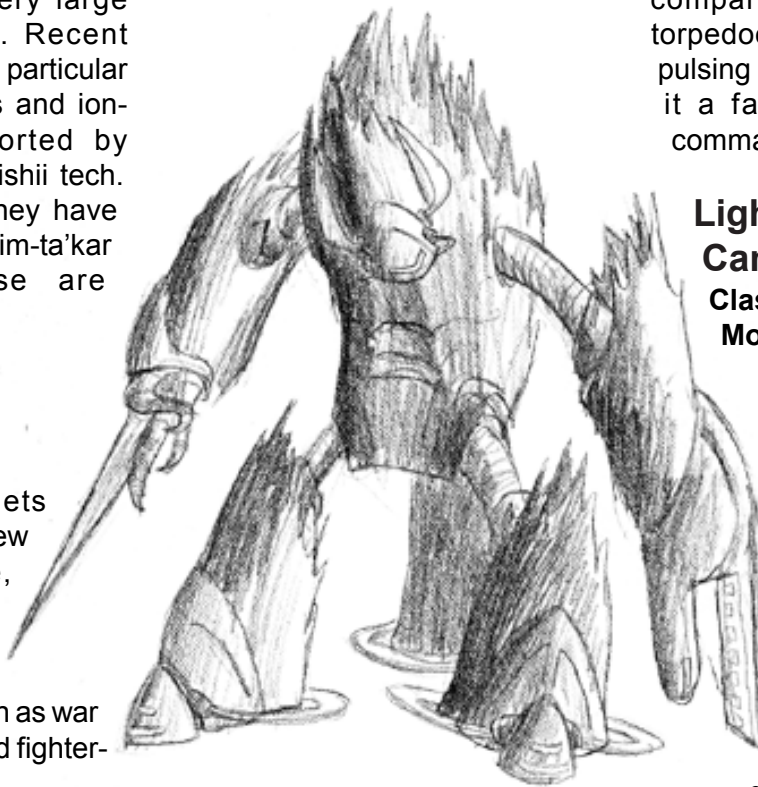
One of most popular types of Equesse-zan torpedoes, the Scatter-Torp represents 6 smaller warheads loosely encased in an aluminum alloy shell, which is remotely fragmented when the torpedo reaches a certain proximity to its target. This releases the smaller warheads to detonate at separate locations across the enemy's hull, potentially destroying multiple enemy thrusters and weapons. While short-ranged compared to other Equesse-zan torpedoes, the high damage and pulsing effect of the weapon make it a favorite with Equesse-zan commanders.

Light Ion Pulse Cannon

Class: Ion

Mode: Pulse

The Equesse-zan use a variety of anti-fighter and interception weapons since no two lords can quite decide which version is best. One of the more common ones is the Light Ion Pulse Cannon. The smallest-caliber version of the ion pulse series, the Light Ion Pulse Cannon is still quite large as interceptors go, and many consider it overkill for



taking on enemy fighters. In addition, it's prone to equipment failures and circuitry malfunctions, so maintenance is required for it much more frequently than other light weapons.

While not at all close to being a perfect interceptor, many commanders select it for its effectiveness against Vernakki frigates, citing that "we have carriers for a reason."

EQESSE-ZAN WEAPONS

Aqaz War Galley (Base Hull)

In the early 670s, war was heating up between the Egesse-zan

and the Horde—increasingly bold raids into Imperial space and obvious mobilization on the border confirmed the Egesse-zan's fears about the Vernakki's intentions. After several furious, close-range skirmishes it was determined that a multipurpose long-range unit was needed, one which wouldn't require a large crew. The scatter-torp, as the Emperor's newest toy, was chosen as the primary armament, with a heavy laser cannon slung under the hull for versatility. It was made to operate under a minimal Egesseii crew, relying on slave labor for most manual tasks.

The ship performed quite well at its task, and gradually won popularity amongst the lordship, despite a notable lack of light weaponry. In the slackening of the

navy which followed the First Egesse-zan—Vernakki War, the dozens of Aqaz which had been pumped out lay in mothballs along the border. When the Second Egesse-zan—Vernakki War broke out three years ago, they were quickly reactivated and most had their heavy laser cannons replaced with the more popular ionic battle lance. Despite devastating casualties in the war, several are still in service, though production of new hulls has all but stopped in favor of the Quezan.

* * *





FREESPACE CONVERSIONS

Inferno: Additional Ships for Freespace 2

By Paul Brown

Introduction

For those of you who have not played Freespace, the first title in the series ended with the Sol system being severed from her colonies and the Vasudan Empire. During the second game, the GTVA acquires ancient alien technology that could be used to re-establish a link to Earth. It is believed by many that a theoretical Freespace 3 would have involved the story of re-contacting Earth, but as it was never produced it has fallen into the hands of the dedicated fan community to write the continuing history of

Freespace. One such fan project is Inferno, which in its initial release detailed a violent first contact with a hostile Earth Alliance. The few ships included herein are a taste of some of the ships available in this conversion. These ships are by no means cannon but hopefully they will be fun to play.



EA Eclipse Class Cruiser

The Eclipse is the Earth Alliance's main anti-ship cruiser. Heavily armoured, the craft has a forward facing Neutron Cannon and four smaller Cannons to either broadside. Its anti-fighter defences include an array of particle, flak and missile turrets. Though its beam weaponry is slow to rearm, the ship is a considerable threat to even enemy Destroyers. The main weakness of the Eclipse is its dreadfully slow speed, which is about on par with the older Leviathan.

EA Claymore Superiority Fighter

Though relatively old, the Claymore is a general-purpose fighter derived in part from the Great War Valkyrie. Extremely fast and manoeuvrable, the fighter can run

circles around most other fighters. Its hull is exceptionally strong for its smaller size, which is important as it is equipped with only light shields. The Claymore can be equipped with a variety of primary weapons, and several potent missiles including the EA's Stinger, a derivative of the Hornet with twice the number of homing missiles. This deadly missile is often found on EA warships as well.

Shivan Scylla Class Corvette

The Scylla is a new breed of corvette which far surpasses previous Shivan designs. Extremely fast and well armoured, the Scylla has more than twice the firepower of the older Moloch. Its main armament is an Anti-Proton Cannon, with four more light cannons along its sides. The Scylla is also equipped with an array of laser turrets, and rapid-firing missiles. Two Cerberus Cannons round out its lethal firepower. The ship is best dispatched by high-yield bombs or matter-weapon equipped fighters. With no fighters of its own, the Scylla must rely on other ships for its fighter screen.

Check out knossos.firenebula.com for additional ships as they become available.

* * *



Winter-eeen-mas Custom Ships For All... Special Preview

Introduction

Robert Green (ducttapeherald) has put together a series of unique ship variants based on the personalities that frequent the b5wars.net. We will be featuring one or more of these special variants in each issue. The first ship to be released is...

D'Elf Ballistic Cruiser

Race: Narn

Forum Member: Elf86

Original Hull: T'Loth Assault

Cruiser / Dag'Kar Ballistic Frigate

In the initial Narn explosion for territory after the Centauri departure, the military debated the use of the T'Narn as the primary ship of the Narn fleet, with the ability to use interchangeable side pods (also seperatable for emergency use / more dedicated patrols). Of this, the T'Rakk was created, and soon thereafter, a second pod was being developed, but the project was later scrapped.

40 Years later, a young commander found himself in a minority in terms of fleet selection. Beleiving that the Energy Mine and Ion torpedo were the best wepaons in the narn arseneal. In command of a small squadron of Dag'Kars, his continued reports and articles found the attention of an elderly shipwright, who showed to him the old project files. Immediately, this brought an idea to this young commanders mind. Perhaps if by using the Dag'Kar as a "side pod", the T'Loth could become

the ultimate ballistic platform he's always been dreaming of commanding.

And so, with some lobbying, and some major convincing, A T'Loth hull was selected to undergo the conversion. the 2 existing side pods were removed (and later converted to T'Norr Frigates), and in their place were set 2 Dag'Kar frigates from the commanders squad. Once the initial trial run went through, the ship set off, with minimal fanfare. Initial wargames showed that the firepower was almost TOO great for the T'Loths reactor to handle, so secondary reacotrs were installed in the new side pods. In addition, because the ship was NEVER beleived to be in any sort of Assault role, the hangar bay was converted to carry only fighters. The ship was rated at an overall "much better to have around then 2 or 3 Dag'Kars, because of it's fighter capacity and token defence ability, but once ANYONE realized it's capabilities, it quickly became the target of highest priority".

The Ship fought in the Narn-centauri war, and was destroyed relatively early in the war. but the commander survived, and after fighting out most of the war in a Dag'Kar, was away from homeworld when the Centauri attacked it. He retreated to Bor'Goth, and helped train a young group of Narn captains on the usefulness of Ballistics.

* * *



A Preview of Units from *The Romulan War* By Tyrel Lohr

Introduction

The Romulan War is certainly coming to *Enterprise*, the latest Star Trek series whose fate is currently in doubt. But, before the season's end, we will be seeing more of the Romulans and the seeds for the Romulan War will have been sewed.

The war between Earth and Romulus is one of the more interesting aspects of the pre-history of the Star Trek universe. The conflict, either directly or indirectly, acted as a catalyst for the formation of the United Federation of Planets. The Romulans, always the sneakiest of sneaky people, had been attempting to invade or undermine the Vulcan, Andorian, and Tellarite governments for years before the outbreak of war. How *Enterprise* will reconcile the diminished status of Earth to the supposedly major contributions to the war is anyone's guess.

This will be the first time a Star Trek series has tackled the Romulan War, outside its first mention in the original series episode "Balance of Terror." In that episode, and other original series episodes concerning the Romulans, it was established that the Romulans are a Vulcan off-shoot, a passionate people that left Vulcan following a long ideological war. During the war, no visual contact was made with the Romulans. All dealings with them were performed via audio communications only. The Romulans also did not possess any cloaking technology at the time of the conflict, contrary to *Enterprise*'s previous encounter with the Romulans. The Romulans also seem to have a predilection towards painting large avian imagery on their starships, a fact that dates back as early as the Romulan War based on comments by crew in the original series. So the amount of information that we know, be it canon or pseudo-canon, is fairly limited.

Although this is the first time that a series has taken on the topic of the Romulan War, many of the Star Trek licensees over the years have attempted to fill in the gaps, to varying degrees of success. The

FASA Star Trek game was perhaps one of the most notable attempts, if my research bears true. FASA built the premise of its early-Federation history on the works of Stanely and Fred Goldstein as outlined in the Star Trek Spaceflight Chronology, published in 1980 with illustrations by Rick Sternbach. Anymore the Spaceflight Chronology, as with most written Star Trek material printed over the years, is viewed as almost wholly apocryphal. At the time however, the Spaceflight Chronology was actually used as a reference for the early Next Generation writers.

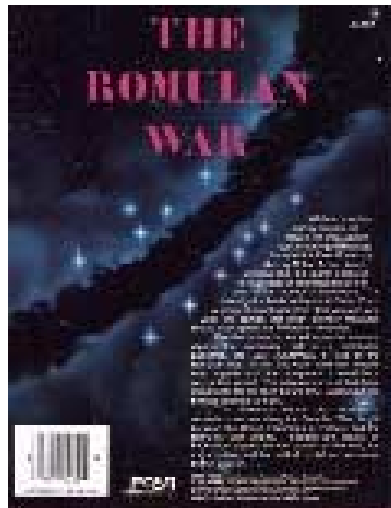


The FASA developers used information from the Spaceflight Chronology to supplement their own creative works set during the Romulan War era. The use of this information was a rare point of continuity between license-holders, something rarely if ever seen in the Star Trek universe. FASA mapped out their history of the conflict in their *The Romulan War* supplement, including additional details and illustrations. Both of these books are extremely rare and hard to come by, which is not unexpected, and most of the information I have been able to get from these books has been through online sources.

In addition to licensed works, other fan projects have looked at detailing the conflict. The largest and most successful of these projects is the Starfleet Museum (<http://www.starfleet-museum.org/>), created by Masao Okazaki. The material on the Starfleet Museum website was created over many years and pulls heavily from the now apocryphal information on Romulan and Terran ships found in early Trek literature. Still, Okazaki paints a very interesting background and history for the conflict that is well worth taking a look at, even if it flies in the face of *Enterprise's* new continuity.

My Romulan War Project

About a year ago, I decided that the Romulan War era would be a great place to look into developing new ships and units. *Enterprise*, despite its flaws, has given us more information about the time period leading up to the Romulan War. More than that, the rest of Season Four promises to heavily feature the Romulans, even if we (hopefully) never seen any on screen with the



existing cast of characters. Trying to reconcile *Enterprise's* version of events to other works is quite a challenge, but a challenge that should be quite a bit of fun.

I have been collecting various research materials off of the Internet for some time and have started putting it all together for eventual formatting into a possible web supplement release. Nothing too fancy, mind you, just something interesting for people to smirk at before looking at the ships. I just think it would be a fun exercise compiling the information and creating a version of events that I'm happy with and putting it to rest, no matter what other changes to the Star Trek timeline come down the pike in the future.

For reference I am relying on web resources and screen evidence, where applicable. From what I have found, the information originating in the FASA books and the Spaceflight Chronology will probably be at the top of my list, though I will keep myself open to including any and all materials that don't widely detract or contradict the rest. The final version of my Romulan War document is likely going to be a complete hodgepodge of different sources.

The Teaser

Since the project is really barely started, I can't offer much of a date at which things will be finished. What I can offer, though, is a preview of some of the ships that I have completed thus far. The ships will likely be released on the website far in advance of when the web supplement itself is completed.

New Technologies

Spatial (Light) Missile

Both the Terrans and Romulans made use of Light Missiles like those used by the Alacans, though the referred to them as 'Spatial Torpedoes.' Spatial Missiles have a shorter range and do less damage than Basic Missiles do, but were still fairly powerful against the weak shields and armor of the period.

Cell Rupturer Missile (Romulan Only)

The Romulan Cell Rupturer Missile is a small, fast firing missile designed to saturate a target's defenses. Cell Rupturer Missiles do very little damage to their target and have a shorter range, but the Romulans sometimes found them necessary when dealing with enemies whose anti-ballistic firepower was significant.

Two Cell Rupturer Missiles can be fired at the time of firing. Each Cell Rupturer Missile still occupies a single missile slot in a rack's magazine; Romulan ships that rely on these missiles will quickly find their ammunition reserves exhausted in short order.

Star Bomb Missile

(Romulan Only)

The Star Bomb Missile was the bane of the Allied forces during the Romulan War. This extra-large missile weapon causes a massive explosion upon detonation, incinerating ships caught at the epicenter of the blast and damaging other surrounding ships.

Star Bomb Missiles are fired like normal Ballistic weapons and scores damage in Flash mode. However, the area of effect of the weapon is greater than that of normal Flash weapons. Upon a successful hit, the Star Bomb Missile scores 25 points of damage against all units in the target's hex (including the target itself), 10 points of damage to all units one hex from the target, and (finally) 5 points of damage to all units two hexes from the target.

Romulan ships can carry only one Star Bomb Missile per missile rack. This severely limits their ability to deploy large quantities of Star Bomb Missiles in battle.

Spider Defense Missile (Terran Only)

Starfleet developed the Spider Defense Missile as a means to protect their slower starships from torpedo and missile weapons. Spider Defense Missiles are incapable of damaging enemy ships but are quite adept at intercepting incoming ballistic weapons. They are also useful at combating enemy small craft, such as fighters and shuttles.

Very few of the newer Starfleet ship classes, including the NX Class, have ever been equipped with Spider Defense Missiles. They are considered advanced enough not to need to sacrifice valuable offensive capabilities for the limited

defensive improvements that Spider Missiles would provide.

Stealth Cloak

The Stealth Cloak is an advanced electronic counter-measures (ECM) system developed by the Romulans and Suliban to evade detection. Some people liken this effect to a very primitive form of cloaking technology, but the two have little relation beyond both being ECM systems.

Functionally, Stealth Cloaks are treated like Cloaking Devices, except that Stealth Cloaks always have a Cloak Rating of 0, regardless of the ship's sensor rating. If the unit's sensor rating is reduced below its original value, including if the Sensor unit is destroyed, reduce the ship's Cloak Rating by the difference between the lower sensor rating and the original value. In essence, as a unit equipped with Stealth Cloaks loses EW its stealth will begin faltering and the ship will be detectable to ships, even if they have not allocated EW to Cloak Detection.

Example: A Romulan Vastagor Vastarum Warbird is equipped with a Stealth Cloak. The ship has not taken any damage or criticals to its sole Sensor system. When active, the Stealth Cloak is treated like a Cloaking Device, but has a Cloak Rating of 0.

The Vastagor Vastarum is hit by one of the Enterprise's phase cannons, and one of the raking volley strikes the Vastarum's Sensors. The damage does not destroy the ship's Sensors, but does manage to inflict a -2 EW critical on the system. The loss of 2 EW from the Sensors gives the Vastagor Vastarum a -2 Cloak Rating on the following and subsequent turns. Any unit that enters without 2 hexes of

the Vastagor Vastarum will now be able to detect the ship, even if they have not allocated EW towards Cloak Detection!

New Terran Units

Marshall Destroyer

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)
Source: Space Flight Chronology, FASA

The Marshall Destroyer entered service just prior to the beginning of the Romulan War. The destruction of the *Patton* at Romulan hands was one of the flashpoint events that precipitated the war.

This class is known for its distinctive hammerhead design. It was not the most powerful ship in the Terran arsenal, but its low expense meant that Marshalls could be produced in vast numbers. The Marshall proved a very successful design and remained in active service for fifty years, with continued production of new model destroyers throughout the period. The Marshall Destroyers were eventually integrated into the United Federation



of Planet's fledgling Starfleet and served extensively in its service.

The last Marshall Destroyer was pulled from service in 2207. Ships of this class included the *Patton* and *Hannibal*.

Pioneer Heavy Cruiser

Source: *The Starfleet Museum*

Starfleet purchased several Bison Transports for conversion to military service in the early 2150s. The new Pioneer Heavy Cruiser received extensive modifications to meet Starfleet operational requirements. The ship was shortened and its internal spaceframe reinforced. The ship also received an upgrade to its polarized hull plating, bringing them up to military-grade standards.

The Pioneer Heavy Cruisers were designed exclusively as convoy escorts. The high strategic speeds of the Bison class, on which the Pioneer was based, allowed the Pioneer to keep pace with the convoys. The large number of missile tubes installed on the Pioneer provided full, spherical defense coverage for its charges,

detering enemy pirates from striking at Terran convoys.

Unfortunately, the Pioneer class was ill suited for the realities of interstellar war and suffered greatly at the hands of the Romulan Star Empire. Early on in the conflict, the Terrans relied on the Pioneers as ships of the line, but this changed as greater numbers of more advanced cruisers became available.

Few Pioneers survived the conflict. Those that did survive were stationed as monitor forces at the border worlds, keeping watch for possible Romulan violation of the armistice.

Yorktown Carrier

Source: *The Starfleet Museum*

A hybrid of the Pioneer and Bison classes, the Yorktown Carrier was the result of a crash development project resulting from early encounters with the Romulans and their extremely maneuverable light craft. Starfleet's tactical analysts that a class of large, short-range warp fighters would be the best short-term defense against the threat posed by Romulan gunboats.

However, Starfleet at that time did not field any carriers capable of supporting or ferrying such craft.

The Yorktown Carrier was the largest Terran ship of the day, and in fact was still one of the largest Terran-built ships until the commissioning of the Federation Ambassador Heavy Cruiser in the 2330s. The Yorktown stripped the cargo bays of the Bison in favor of a large, roomy hangar capable of berthing five super-heavy fighter craft. Extensive upgrades to ship systems also took place as part of the class' development, including the additional of improved reactor and warp engine systems. The Yorktown also has the distinction of being one of the first non-prototype Terran vessels to use a four-nacelle design. This configuration gave the Yorktown impressive warp speed capabilities compared to its predecessor, the Pioneer Cruiser.

The fighter/carrier reaction proved a success and the Yorktowns earned a great deal of respect from friendly, allied, and enemy commanders during the conflict.

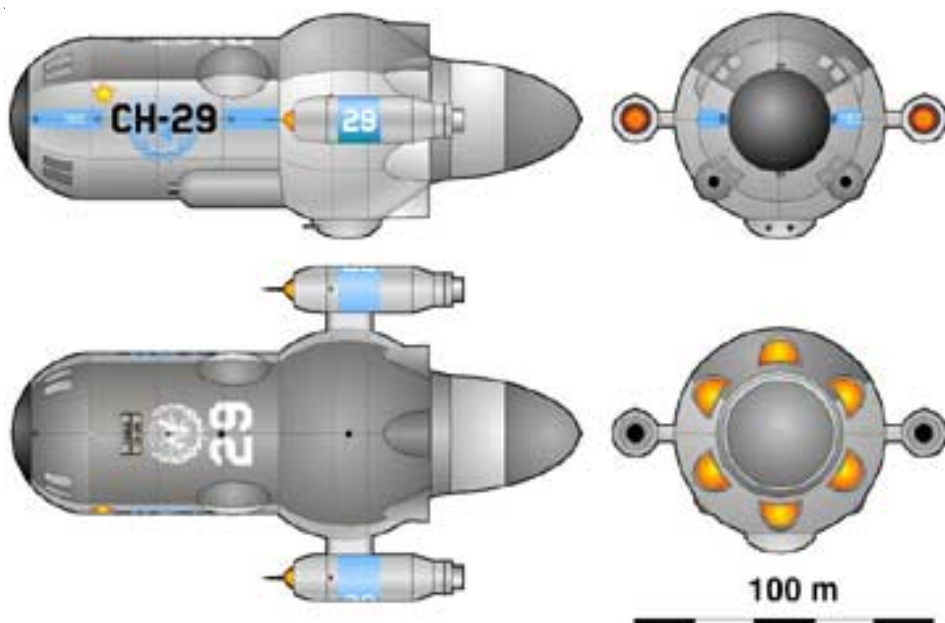
Minotaur Long-Range Fighter

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

Source: *The Starfleet Museum*

An extremely large fighter, the Minotaur Long-Range Fighter proved invaluable to the Terrans during the Romulan War. The Minotaurs were faster than the Romulan gunboats and nearly as nimble. An arsenal of laser and missile weapons provided the Minotaurs with significant firepower, enough to cripple even a Romulan cruiser over the course of a running engagement.

Unlike most shuttles of the period, the Minotaur Long-Range Fighters were equipped with small



warp engines. These engines did not allow for interstellar travel, but they did give them the ability to maintain pursuit of the enemy at warp speeds.

The size and expense of the Minotaur would be its ultimate undoing. The Minotaurs were as large as some smaller starship classes and required the services of extremely large and equally costly carriers to be fully utilized. This decision by the Terrans would eventually impact the military doctrines of the United Federation of Planets, and a comparable long-range small craft would not be deployed until the 2360s when “runabouts,” such as those of the Danube class, began to be deployed throughout the Federation.

New Romulan Units

Daetra Teidr Destroyer Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The Daetra Teidr Destroyer was an older class of destroyer operated by the Romulans for 75 years before the Romulan War. The class was frequently called upon to serve as system patrol boats and light combat craft during times of crisis. During the period 2120-2145, these destroyers saw extensive combat service as the Romulans launched massive military campaigns against neighboring worlds.

Despite their lack of concentrated firepower, Daetra Teidr Destroyers were effective combatants during the Romulan War. Their low cost and above average agility allowed them to outpace the larger, more ponderous Andorian and Vulcan cruisers. Fast slash attacks against the flanks of an enemy fleet would leave Daetra Teidr squadrons in shambles, but the

damage they could score to enemy starships was telling.

Against Terran opposition, the true menace of the Daetra Teidr's were their deflector shielding. Oftentimes this shielding, meager as it was, prevented the Terran's own destroyers from effectively combating them.

Daetra Teidr Destroyers continued to serve even after the cessation of hostilities. A final major refit was applied to the class in 2172, upgrading the now aged deflector shields and reactors to the newest types available to the Star Empire. This upgrade allowed the destroyer class to serve for another decade for obsolescence forced their retirement.

Author's Note: The image of the Daetra Teidr is from the Vintage Starships website. I liked the looks of the graphic, but preferred the ship and history as presented on the Ships of the Romulan War site. I created new stats and background for the class to match where I thought it fit in the history of Romulan military development.

Dhael'diadaen Warbird Base Hull (Limited Availability 33%)

This larger Romulan cruiser design was intended to serve as a fleet command unit during times of war. The class borrows heavily from its sister class, the Vastagor Vastaram. The same military contractor produced both classes,

thus the visible similarities in appearance.

No expense was spared in the construction of the Dhael'diadaen, the class name meaning “heavy bird” in Rihannsu. The best in shielding, armor, and electronics were all installed as standard equipment on the warbird. A large, spacious bridge was also incorporated into the class' design. This large command and control center allowed a Romulan admiral and his or her staff the area necessary to plan and execute their brilliant stratagems.

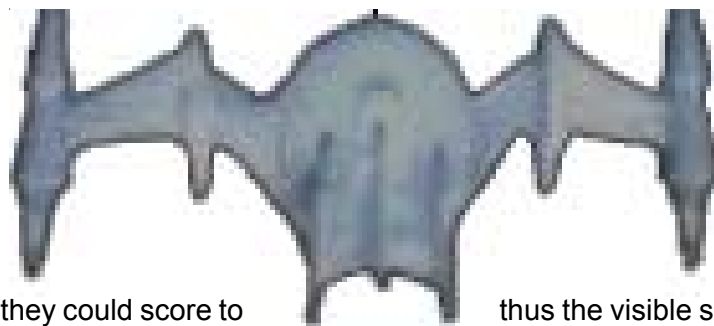
The only flaw of the design, if one can call it that, is the complete absence of long-range ballistic weaponry. The internal volume required for the well-protected internal magazines on the class was needed elsewhere, notably for the installation of the larger, much more powerful shielding system.

Stelai Deletham Cruiser

Source: FASA, Vintage Starships

The Stelai Deletham-A Cruiser entered service in 2150 and quickly became a favorite of the Romulan admiralty. The cruiser benefited from strong deflector shielding and large amounts of internal volume, more than enough space to arm the ship to the teeth. The Stelai Deletham Cruisers was the fastest ships in the fleet at the time of its commissioning.

The class was produced in one of two variants. The Stelai



Deletham-A mounted twin plasma cannons, whereas the Stelai Deletham-B instead was armed with missile racks. No matter the arsenal, ships of this class were designed to operate in packs.

On October 14, 2157, a Stelai Deletham fired the first shot of the declared war, when it fired a single star bomb into the *UES Patton* near Eta Leonis VI. Three Stelai Delethams closed in on the *Patton*, and it got only one message off before it was destroyed, but that message was "War!"

Stelai Deletham made up a large part of the fleet that engaged the Earth forces near Gamma Hydra, which then engaged further forces under Admiral Larson on May 2, 2159.

Most Romulan fleet actions during the war saw the Stelai Deletham Cruisers used as the main ships of the line.

Original background and text by Steve Bacon (Vintage Starships)

Stelai Deletham-B Cruiser

Source: FASA, *Vintage Starships*

This common missile variant of the Stelai Deletham Cruiser was developed to provide ballistic weapon support to Romulan fleets. The Stelai Deletham-B's four missile racks are capable of maintaining a slow but constant barrage of enemy targets.

Logistical problems plagued the Romulans during the end of their first campaign. Ships like the Stelai Deletham-B were the worst hit by these supply problems. Without a persistent flow of ordnance to the frontlines, missile dependent ships found themselves relying on stock spatial torpedoes instead of the more effective and desirable star bombs and cell rupturer missiles.



Vastagor Vastaram Warbird

This advanced, experimental cruiser was the first Romulan ship to successfully demonstrate limited stealth technology. The Vastagor Vastaram Warbird was equipped with a stealth cloak, a more primitive version of the later cloaking device. This dedicated ECM system allowed the Vastagor Vastaram to be rendered virtually invisible to enemy sensors beyond a certain distance, but it was not infallible. The ship could still be detected if it strayed too close to the enemy.

In combat, the Vastagor Vastaram's performance was mixed. The ship had adequate anti-ship capabilities but lacked the strong deflector shielding found in some other ship classes. In particular, shield regeneration suffered as a result of the power-hungry stealth cloak.

Vastagor Vastaram Warbirds had little active impact on the war. Ships of the class were used extensively previous to the outbreak of open war, performing invaluable commerce raiding and reconnaissance duties, but the ships were too expensive to risk in combat.

The Romulan Star Empire would eventually abandon stealth

technology for nearly a century, until the development of the true cloaking device would give them a decided edge in combat.

Conclusion

I have more ships completed as of this writing, but am waiting to decide on any major changes that should be made to them to get them to all fit together into one fluid timeline. I would appreciate any and all comments on the playtest ships included here. E-mail me at tyrel_lohr@wyoming.com if you have any playtest reports or even general comments on these ships.

Related Links

The Starfleet Museum

<http://www.starfleet-museum.org/>

Vintage Starships

http://homepage.ntlworld.com/steven.bacon/vintage_starships.htm

Rihannsu Language Dictionary

<http://www.pcnet.com/~jdukka/trek/dict/>

Starships from the Romulan War Era

<http://www.geocities.com/Xenodharma/TrekRWarships.html>

Vessels of Starfleet

<http://steve.pugh.net/fleet/>

* * *

Enterprise Era Playtest Rules

When developing ships for the Enterprise era, it has been very difficult to show a real distinction between technological sophistication of ships from the 2150 and 2260 periods. During the process of putting together the Xindi and Romulan War vessels, I came to the conclusion that a few modifications might be needed to make the use of power more important than it currently is.

Some of the following rules may already exist in the Star Trek Conversion rules document, but I am including them here for purposes of clarity.

Deflector Shield Hardening

This optional rule exists to more greatly demonstrate the superiority of deflector shield technology over pre-existing polarized hull plating. This rule can be unbalancing in later areas, but is recommended when playing any and all pre-2270 battles, as it may make for much more interesting battles.

Under the Deflector Shield Hardening rule, ships with deflector shields are capable of having their shields 'hardened' against incoming damage. This has the effect of providing an armor benefit against all weapons fire, including all individual sub-volleys (including raking sub-volleys!). The one exception to this rule is Pulse Phaser Cannons, such as those found on the Federation Defiant Heavy Escort. All varieties Pulse Phaser Cannons ignore the effects of shield hardening.

Shield hardening is performed on a shield projection by shield projection basis and requires the payment of extra power. The power cost to harden a shield is equal to the square of the shield hardening level, as illustrated by the following table.

Power Req	Shield Hardening Level
0	0
1	1
4	2
9	3
16	4
25	5
36	6

The maximum shield hardening level a vessel may purchase is equal to 10% of the base shield projection rating, rounding all fractions up. A shield projection may be hardened even if it does not have any remaining absorption capacity. Shield hardening continues to provide benefits even if the projection is completely depleted during the firing phases of the turn. The only prerequisite to hardening a shield projection is that the shield projection must still exist. If no deflector shields remain in arc of the projection, then the projection CANNOT be hardened.

Example 1: A Constitution (Enterprise) Heavy Cruiser has four shield projections, each with a rating of 35. The maximum shield hardening level that any of the shield projections can be increased to is 4. However, the Constitution Heavy Cruiser only generates 28 points of power from its weapons, so the 16 power required to harden any one of its shield projections to level 4 shield hardening will necessitate the shutdown of most of its weapons.

Example 2: A rogue Miranda Light Cruiser attacks the previously described Constitution Heavy Cruiser. The Miranda fires a Medium Phaser at the Constitution's port shield projection. The shield projection has a shield hardening level of 2, and the shield projection has 13 points of absorption capacity remaining.

The Miranda rolls and hits with its Medium Phaser. For damage, the Medium Phaser scores 27 points in raking mode.

The first rake strikes the shield, but is reduced by 2 damage as a result of the Constitution's shield hardening on that shield projection. The remaining 8 points of damage hit the shield, reducing its capacity to 5.

The second rake hits the shield and is similarly reduced by 2 to 8 points of damage. These remaining 8 points deplete the remaining 5 points of shield capacity, leaving 3 damage to hit the Constitution's hull.

The third and final raking sub-volley is 7 points in damage, but it is ALSO reduced by 2 damage points, because of the Constitution's shield hardening. Even though the shield projection has been defeated, the hardening remains. This leaves 5 points of damage that will score damage normally against the facing side of the Constitution.

If using this optional rule, increase the cost of all deflector shield-equipped ships (but not fighter or shuttle units, these remain unaffected) by 5% times the unit's maximum shield hardening level. Using the Constitution Heavy Cruiser as an example, its maximum shield hardening level is 4 ($35 * 10\% \text{ RU} = 4$), so the cost of the ship will be increased by 20% if this optional

rule is in effect. This modifies the cost from 440 to 528 combat points. In the case of some of the later Next Generation era units, the point increase will be significant. A Sovereign Dreadnought would have its cost increased by 35%, from 1750 to 2363 combat points.

Author's Note: This optional rule should go a long way towards balancing the unshielded vs. shielded unit issue that has appeared in the conversion. Under this rule, ships with deflector shields are better defended than those relying on polarized hull or simple armor for protection. It also helps to demonstrate the difference in capabilities between deflector shields over time. The shields on a Galaxy Command Ship are several times better than those on the Constitution just by virtue of its higher shield hardening maximum.

Increasing Shield Projection Capacity

Ships are allowed to increase the capacity of their shield projections by 1 per point of power applied. Shields can only be improved in this manner to a maximum of twice the projection's normal capacity. The decision to increase the capacity of a shield using power is made before deflector shields regenerate shield projections.

This allows Star Trek ships to shutdown systems in order to increase the capacity of their shield projections, allowing them to absorb ever larger amounts of damage before the projection fails. Power used to increase the projection's capacity does NOT act to replenish or regenerate the shield projection in any way. If the power being used to increase the capacity of a shield projection is no longer applied to the

shield projection, reduce the capacity of the projection back to its normal, unmodified levels.

Example: A Xindi Forlorthan Cruiser is locked in a heated standoff with an Andorian warship. The Xindi Primate captain, not wishing to provoke the overzealous Andorians, shuts down all of her light particle cannons, generating an extra 20 power. 16 power is redirected into the forward shield projection while the remaining 4 power is used to increase the regeneration ability of the two deflector shield systems. At the end of the Power Segment, the Forlorthan would now have a 32-point forward shield projection with 24 points of absorption capacity available.

Note: This rule supercedes 2.2.8 Increasing the Capacity of Shield Projections found in the main conversion rules. Playtesting would be appreciated to see if the 1:1 power to capacity ratio is unbalanced.

Warp Engine Power Generation

For each ship, take the number of structure boxes in each warp engine and divide by 5; this is the amount of power that each warp engine generates. The power generated by warp nacelles is not extra power, but instead represents the amount of power that the warp engines themselves generate. For every 5 boxes (round up) of damage scored on a warp engine a -1 power loss is incurred on the ship. If an entire warp engine is destroyed, then all power that warp engine produced is lost.

Note that playing with this optional rule makes warp engines much more important targets and increase the chance of crippling a ship once its warp engines are destroyed, which is fairly easy

considering that most ships have their warp engines located on the aft structure block. The system does, however, reflect a greater resilience to warp engine damage for ships with multiple warp engines, which for many may better reflect the feel of the Star Trek universe.

Alternate Warp Engine Power Generation

Some players may want them warp engines to generate extra power instead of providing power used in normal generations. If this is the case, each warp engine will produce +1 extra power per 5 boxes of warp engine structure (round up). As with the normal Warp Engine Power Generation rules, every 5 boxes (round up) of warp engine damage incurs a -1 power loss.

Having the warp engines produce extra power can be unbalancing. For instance, a Galaxy Command Ship would generate a whopping 16 extra power from its warp engines! If these alternate rules are in play, a surcharge is added to the cost of a unit equal to 15 times the amount of extra power generated by its warp engines. So, in the case of the Galaxy above, the player would have to add 240 points to the cost of the ship, giving a final cost of 1190 combat points.

The advantage to using this alternate rule is that all Star Trek ships will have extra power to play with, allowing them to increase the strength of their shields, cover power deficiencies, and sustain weapons. In many ways it may act to better reflect certain abilities we have witnessed on the different series.

* * *



Scenario: The Ashes of Eden

Phaser banks 4, 5, 6, and 7 are replaced by medium disrupters. Phaser banks 8 and 9 are replaced by light disrupters. Maximum of 10 Photon Torpedoes only.

Victory Conditions

For both sides, this is both business and personnel. A victory is scored if you outlast the opposition

A Star Trek Conversion Scenario

By Keith Carpenter

Introduction

Following the decommissioning of the Enterprise, Captain Kirk retired. A member of the Chal government recruited him to be the core of their self-defense force, along with a vessel, a retired Enterprise saved from being a target ship. Following a refit, the Enterprise is confronted at Chal by a force of two Klingon Mercenary vessels and the USS Excelsior, all commanded by Starfleet's new C&C, Admiral Drake. When it is revealed that Drake is part of the same conspiracy as Admiral Cartwright was, he takes one of the Klingon vessels in a slingshot manoeuvre around Chal's binary suns. The Enterprise follows, and manages to knock the Klingon ship out of warp before it can travel back through time. With everyone's plans in tatters, the fight commences.

Federation Mercenary

1x Constitution Refit Heavy Cruiser

Klingon Mercenary

1x K'T'inga Battlecruiser

Setup

On a floating map (up and down only!), the two vessels are in the middle of the map, twenty hexes apart. The Klingon is heading left, the Constitution heading right, both speed 1. All shields are raised and weapons armed. The far most left and right rows are the surfaces of Chal's Binary suns. The fight occurs in the plasma drift between them.

Special Rules

No OEW. If any shield drops below 8 points for longer than one turn, then the vessel is destroyed. Every two turns, each shield has its strength reduced by one point. To simulate the retired state of the Enterprise, the following modifiers are in effect.

All Shields are reduced to 30 points. Torpedo Tube 1 is unusable (but may be used as a damage sink).

Historical Outcome

After knocking Drake of his trajectory, the two vessels circle in the plasma drift looking for each other. Eventually, Drake's vessel locates the Enterprise, and overloads its shields with a photon torpedo. Drake watches as the Enterprise is consumed by the plasma, only to have his victory turn to ashes as he learns that Kirk's crew was beamed aboard the Excelsior. After waiting too long in the plasma drift, the Klingon vessel is unable to effectively vent its impulse exhaust, and when Drake orders full impulse the vessel is destroyed.

Editor's Note: More Star Trek scenarios written by Keith Carpenter are available on the Planetside website (planetside.firenebula.com) on the Scenarios page. Just click on the Scenarios link on the Planetside site to find them!

* * *

The Ge'ka'dian Syndicate



The Nemesis of the Terran Concordat

By Jason Stadnyk

Overview

Ge'ka'de is an ocean world with very little land mass. Their inhabitants are a Middleborn race who referred to themselves as Ge'ka'dians as early as 68 million years ago. Unlike other middleborn races of that time period, the Ge'ka'dians were cursed with a planet devoid and many raw metals needed to advance technologically. Metal deposits were extremely rare in quantity.

Without being able to depend on technology to assist them, they focused on biological sciences. Their first breakthrough was mild telepathy and telekinesis but they never succeeded in creating strong individuals. Genetic engineering and control lead to the enslavement and control of several sea creatures. These whale-sized fish could be controlled and modified to serve their Ge'ka'dian masters. One species, the Kempla, served as transportation and refinements in genetic engineering even allowed for Kemplas to be used for flight. Within a thousand generations, the Kemplas-cru was designed to break

the atmosphere and for the first time, the Ge'ka'dians were space worthy.

The Ge'ka'dian System had only partial resources for them to exploit. They were careful to not waste these resources and actually harvested the amount available before they even tried to experiment with them. The Kemplas-cru also had trouble for weathering prolonged exposure to vacuum. They had to resort to staying close to the planet.

The Shadows became aware of the Ge'ka'dians when a Shadow cruiser was unearthed from a previous battle 8000 years ago. The Ge'ka'dians were curious with the organic technology and were able to harden their ships to be more durable. The Shadows sent their servants to make contact and the initial shock of aliens sent the Ge'ka'dians into open revolt. The Shadow Agents used this time to allow the Syndicate to take control and gain a possible ally.

The Shadow Agents realized it would be foolish to let the Ge'ka'dians have access to better technology and resources since it could backfire against them, but they realized these new aliens were very patient when focused so they sent small shipments from time to time that allowed the Ge'ka'dians to be hooked. At the same time, the Ge'ka'dian navy finally began to

grow as they awaiting technology to attack the outside world.

When the Shadows realized the threat of the Human Telepaths that were flocking to the Terran Concordat, they realized the proximity to Ge'ka'de could be a boon. In 2051, Shadow Agents delivered 3 asteroids containing several millions of tons of metal ore into the system, where Ge'ka'dian leaped to joy and began doing the final refit to their ships to begin the first attack of their empire against an external foe.

Ge'ka'dian Technology

The ships employed by the Ge'ka'dians are all organic. They had been developed over millions of years using very little resources. Armour-wise, they employ adaptive armour similar in respects to the Vorlons. Weapon-wise, they employ several energy-based weapons. These weapons operate very similar to Blast Lasers and Light Bolters. The newest weapon is found on the Jin'tru Battlecruiser, the Molecular Disintegrator. While not as powerful as weapons employed by the Shadows normally, against the weak Terran Concordat, will prove to be very effective.

Note: While these are organic ships, they do regenerate systems, but in the course of several

weeks. Heavily damaged vessels may actually die if they sustain massive damage. Experimental Rule: On the loss of section, roll a d6, on a 1, the vessel is in shock and takes 40 points of flash damage to the primary table. (Represents feedback and shock from the damage, eg internal bleeding)

Ge'ka'dian Ships

Jin'tru Battlecruiser (Limited Deployment 33%)

A slow leviathan of the deep, the Jin'tru preys on weaker fish. Its array of weapons pales in comparison to its Molecular Disintegrator that attacks defenses with ruthless efficiency. The Jin'tru's weakness is the lack of faster recycling weapons that may make it weaker against a more numerous foe. It relies on other cruisers and its own fighters for protection.

Hrum'belic Cruiser (Unlimited Deployment)

The mainstay cruiser in the Ge'ka'dian Fleet, it can be found in every formation. Grown the easiest and quickest in the forces, it follows a very simple form. A Hammerhead-like appearance, blast lasers attack from its eyes. It brings 2 flights of fighters and more breaching pods to cause devastation were ever it goes.

Cal'tron Destroyer (Unlimited Deployment)

The most numerous vessel in the Ge'ka'dian fleet, it is also the most deadliest. Quick and agile, this MCV can chew through opposition very easily. It also does not help that most commanders of these vessels are determined to rise in rank through daring deeds to gain

promotion. Only a few ever succeed in this endeavour.

Sh'dro Breaching Pods

The deadly Shloc are genetically created insects whose sole purpose is to destroy. They receive a +3 in boarding actions as Ge'ka'dian controllers control them telepathically.

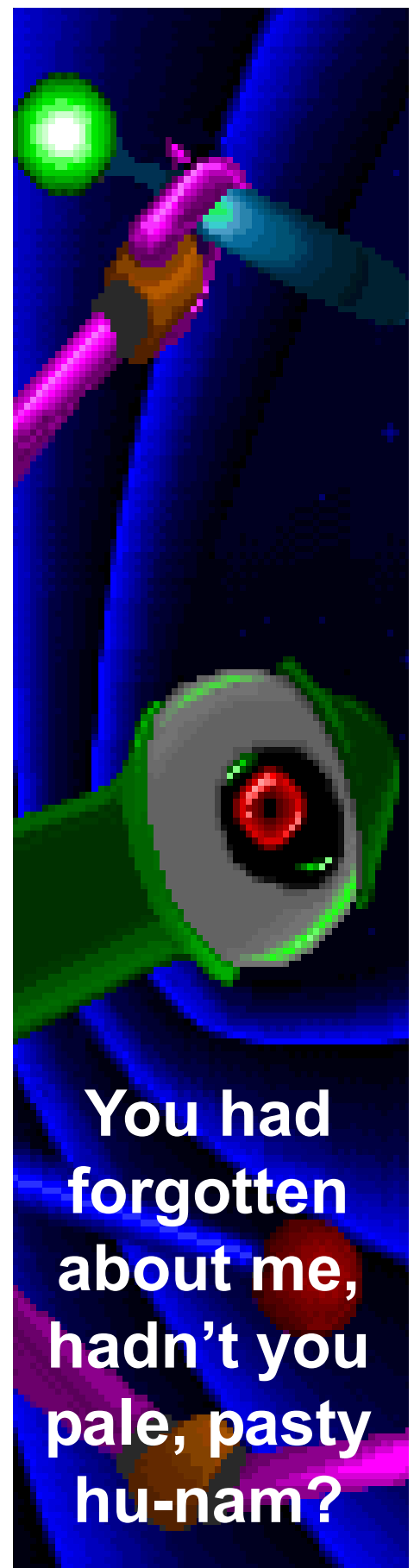
Huk'dralus Attack Fighter

The standard Ge'ka'dian Fighter resembles an organic Nial Fighter. They are deployed in mass waves and their molecular weaponry tear through any opponent.

Notes: no pdf, but 8 hitpoints, armour is 2 every side, 8 thrust, 4 levels of jinking, 70 points and for weapons triple molecular cutters, 1d3 x3 damage molecular.

Editor's Note: The Terran Concordat appeared in Issue 1 of The Great Machine.

* * *



You had
forgotten
about me,
hadn't you
pale, pasty
hu-nam?

SCI-FI NEWS IN BRIEF

BATTLESTAR
GALACTICANew BATTLESTAR
GALACTICA Begins in US

The first episodes of the new, 'reimagined' Battlestar Galactica series has begun airing in the United States on the Sci-Fi Channel. The series debuted in the United Kingdom last fall. The series, starring Edward James Olmos, follows the trials and tribulations of the Battlestar Galactica as it flees Cylon tyranny.

This new incarnation of Battlestar Galactica has been the source of much contention in the fan community, particularly in how it treats the Cylons. However, reviews of the episodes aired to date have been mostly positive.

Battlestar Galactica airs Friday nights on the Sci-Fi Channel at 10/9C. For more information, visit the Sci-Fi Channel's Battlestar Galactica website (<http://www.scifi.com/battlestar/mini/>).

* * *

Ben
Browder
Joins the
STARGATE
SG-1 Cast

Stargate SG-1's ninth season will begin filming in March for a summer 2005 premiere on The Sci-Fi Channel! Ben Browder ("*John Crichton*," *Farscape*) joins the cast for 20 all-new episodes. Browder will play a Lieutenant Colonel who has played a major role in the background of the Stargate universe. Browder's character (known only as M.M. at the moment) is the F-302 pilot that led the squadron that fought Anubis in Antarctica. He was badly injured in the fight, but offered his choice of assignment after his convalescence was complete. M.M. chose to join the SG-1 team, and will likely add an interesting element to the team's chemistry, a chemistry which has been lacking after the promotion of O'Neill.

Joining Browder for a five-episode story arc is Claudia Black ("*Aeryn Sun*," *Farscape*) who will reprise her role as Vala. Black's story arc will coincide with Amanda Tapping's absence early in the system. Tapping will appear in 15 of 20 Season Nine episodes, returning to work in May following the planned mid-March birth of her child.



Season Nine of *Stargate SG-1* will focus on the origin of the Ancients and the Gatebuilders. New villains will be introduced during the season, and the show as a whole will be taken in a new direction.

Series star Richard Dean Anderson will likely not be a regular on *SG-1* for the first time in the show's history. The actor has been reducing his role on the show since Season Six to spend more time with his young daughter in California, but may make guest appearances in Season Nine.

Compiled from GateWorld reports (<http://www.gateworld.net>)

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EDITORIAL

The Memory of Shadows Fiasco

By Tyrel Lohr

Chicken Little could learn alot from *Babylon 5* fans.

The big ruckus on the *Babylon 5: The Memory of Shadows* front right now seems to be that some 'people who know people' are claiming WB is trying to recast existing actors for the movie. To put it bluntly, several members of the *Babylon 5* moderated Usenet newsgroup are wound up tighter than a monkey locked up overnight at Starbucks over this information. Not long after the 'news' was released via online sources, *Babylon 5* fans began a letter writing campaign, aimed at both Warner Bros. and the film's English production company, imploring them not to recast existing characters.

Personally, I think these people are just going to be wasting time and money with their little "let's mail letters to WB and complain now" approach to life. I think this is a problem endemic to the science fiction fan base. Every show that airs, even if for one or two episodes, seems to develop a cult following for no apparent reason, and these fans then feel it is their 'duty' to write letters to the studios after the show is cancelled. I'm sorry, folks, but the age of the studios or networks caring what you think is largely over. Several decades ago, writing campaigns got people's attention, especially back when it was network policy to reply to *each and every piece of mail that they*

received. This is what contributed to the temporary salvation of *Star Trek* in the 1960s.

But today? It is expected that every show — great, bad, or mediocre — will have fans sending in junk mail trying to save it. Very few have done any good. What has done even less good are the massive campaigns that have taken out \$10,000+ ads in industry magazines arguing in favor of a cancelled show. What do the fans hope to gain by doing this? What a huge waste of money. If you don't have a Nielsen box hanging off your neck, you don't matter. Period. No amount of letter writing or ad space is going to change that.

If WB decides to recast, there isn't much more that we can do about it other than protest with our wallets. It just means a lot of people won't see it and the B5 "franchise" will be effectively dead. If it is, as one person put out, a bargaining tactic to show the "established" actors that their position is not set in stone and not to get uppity about their pay, then that would make a lot of sense.

But, to be honest, I don't care at this point. I really don't care. They have strung this process along for enough

time that I personally am apathetic about *The Memory of Shadows*. It has been in the works for two years, and filming hasn't even started yet. To add to that, what little information is available (all of it unofficial) doesn't interest me all that much. At this point, I will believe it when I see it. We can only hope that *Babylon 5: The Memory of Shadows* will be better TV-to-film venture than *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* was, but with the Technomages (or are those the 'Crapnomages,' everyone's favorite deus ex machina?) involved, I don't really have much hope for the movie. In my opinion, the involvement of the Technomages in *Crusade* and in the book series pretty much sours the entire B5 storyline if you accept them as anything other than a flight of fancy, canon or not.

Either way, I guess it will be interesting to see what we end up with. It might be something worth watching, or it might be the final nail in *Babylon 5's* coffin.

* * *



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

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Coming Next Issue...



There has been a lot of talk on the b5wars.net forums lately about Mongoose Publishing's new Babylon 5 tabletop game, *A Call to Arms*. Most of this discussion has centered on the changes that have been made to the units as part of the conversion from one system to the other.

The next issue of The Great Machine is going to focus on some of these changes, brining you new units and rules related to some of the material mentioned on the forums to date. This includes brand new units, created by Mongoose, that have never appeared in the Babylon 5 Wars game system to date!

We are looking for any and all submissions relating to this theme -- for either or both game systems!

As always, remember to send your submissions to submissions@firenebula.com.

Submission Deadline: February 14, 2005
