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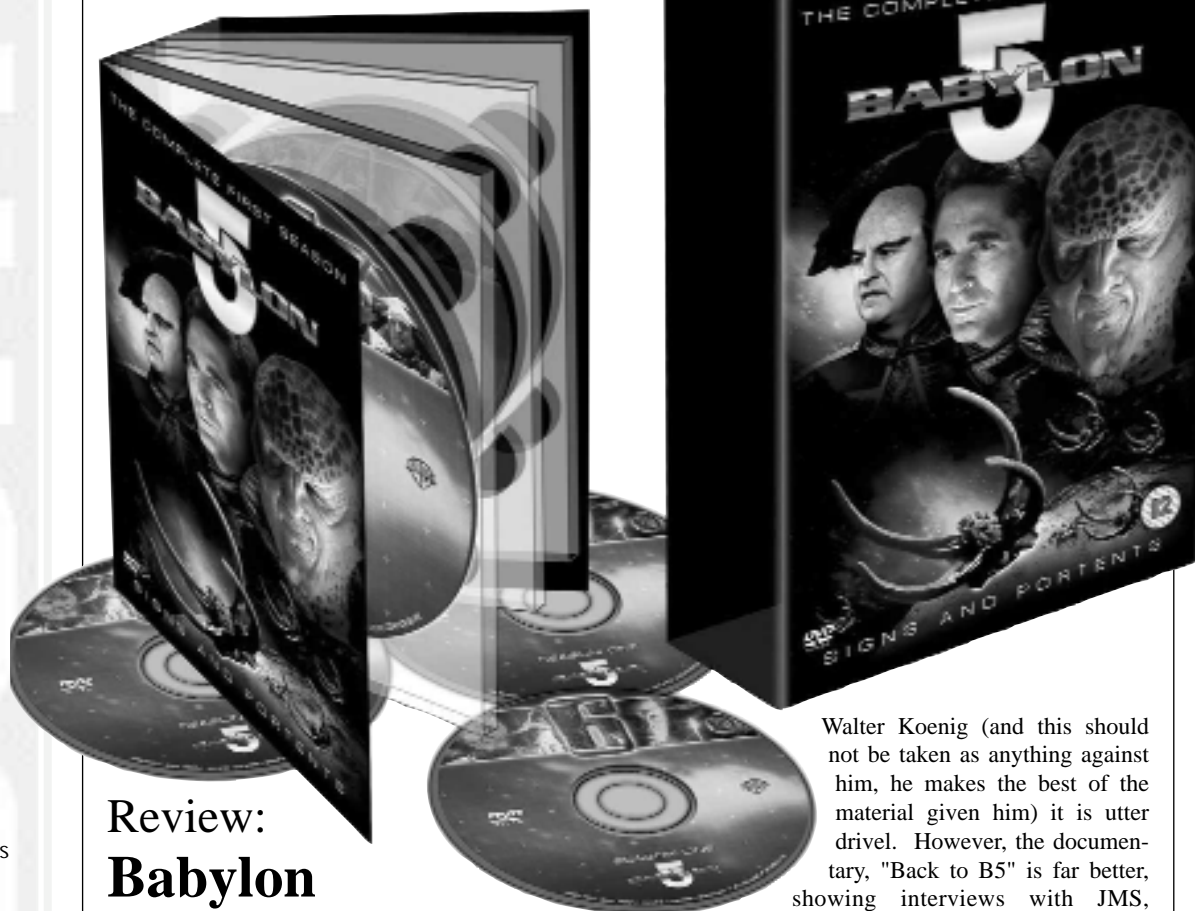
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CONTENTS

- 1 Cover art: Unknown
- 2 Review: DVD set
- JJ O'Shaughnessy
- 3 B5W Tactics Part I
- Todd Boyce
- 6 GROPOS: Drakh
- Alex Roberts
- 8 Fleet System: Shadow Dance
- Tyrel Lohr
- 9 Scenario: Comes the navy
- Richard Bax
- 10 GROPOS: Minbari Infantry
- By Hardlec
- 11 FA Rules: Improving Matters
- Karl Johnson
- 12 Fiction: Lorien
- JJ O'Shaughnessy
- 14 Evidence: ISA Victory
- Diogenes
- 18 Evidence: EA Excalibur
- Diogenes
- 22 Opinion: Not so uber Excalibur?
- Diogenes & JJ O'Shaughnessy
- 24 Shipyard: Victory & Excalibur
- Charles Taylor
- 28 Shipyard: Victory & Excalibur
- Richard Bax
- 30 Shipyard: Victory & Excalibur
- Kizarvexis & Hyperion
- 31 Shipyard: Excalibur
- Phillip Wright
- 32 Shipyard: G'Kar class cruiser
- Anthony Pakizer (Hyperion)
- 33 Shipyard: Psi Corvette
- JJ O'Shaughnessy
- 34 Evidence: Tak'Cha
- Diogenes
- 36 Shipyard: Tak'Cha
- JJ O'Shaughnessy
- 37 Fiction: Lightning Strike 3
- Phillip Wright
- 38 Battleforce
- Chris Nasipak
- 40 News: Battlestar revival
- 43 News: Galactica concept
- 44 News: Galactica characters
- 45 News: Galactica defence

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Review: Babylon 5 Season One Boxed Set

By J.J. O'SHAUGHNESSY

THIS is certainly one of the more eagerly awaited purchases for me this year. Like a lot of people, I have not seen a great deal of season one. All I saw, was what I could catch while hiding in the video room at night at a science fiction convention. Not the best place for a fair perusal of a new science fiction show.

In any case, the boxed set is reasonably well presented, the episodes spread across six DVDs, with a leaflet showcasing the episodes. The episodes themselves I will leave to the viewer's personal taste. As in everything, one man's Mozart is another man's 'Mary Immaculate Choir for Tone Deaf Cat Impersonators'. However, I think it is fair to say that there are a number of really bad episodes in there. On the other hand, the episodes after 'A Sky Full of Stars' are in general (with, if I may say, one exception) excellent. The series as a whole is certainly better than the third or fourth seasons of certain other science fiction shows. Every episode is worth seeing, if only for the little threads that will come into play later on.

The Special Features are again, a bit of a mixed bag. They have "station tours", which is interesting if, like me, you didn't know what "blue" or "green" sector meant. The profiles and tech shows are standard 'watch once and forget about it' material. The meat is in the various documentary stuff that comes with it. Bad stuff first. The "Making of B5" is a standard marketing documentary, showing how 'brilliant' the show is, really! Despite being presented by

Walter Koenig (and this should not be taken as anything against him, he makes the best of the material given him) it is utter drivel. However, the documentary, "Back to B5" is far better, showing interviews with JMS, Douglas Netter, Christopher Franke and a number of cast members. It is very interesting, showing a number of the thought processes that went on in the show, and what people thought about what they had achieved. It also really brings out the love that was showered on the show by everyone involved. There is something of a fierce sense of pride in the show from everyone involved, and to be frank it's somewhat inspiring to see.

The special stuff from my point of view is a running commentary on two episodes in the show from JMS, namely, "The Coming of Shadows" and "Chrysalis". This is done via a voiceover from JMS, which comes over the sounds on the screen while the episode plays. This is highly entertaining and quite often bears no relation to what's happening on the screen. The revelation of the true beginning of the special hairstyle of the Centauri, what he thinks Kosh looks like and what we all would like to do to Morden are highlights, but its all relevant, informative and deeply funny. He also says that he had stored the whole arc of B5 in a folder in his office in plain view. Anyone could have taken it. This is said with a certain amount of glee.

My overall impression of the set is that it is well worth having. It has taken a place of pride in my small but growing DVD collection (beside 2010 and Batman Returns, definite top billing).

However, I was left with a certain amount of regret. Michael O'Hare was truly excellent in the role of Sinclair. I could not help feeling a sense of how much better B5 could have been if JMS could have kept him on. The explanation given in the commentaries of why he left is at best weak. It is one of the unresolved regrets of this fine series.

In any case, why are you still sitting there? Go out and buy this set. In the words of Kosh...

"LEAVE! NOW!!"

B5W TACTICS

Part One: By Todd Boyce

Preface

In this series of articles I'll be trying to explain general tactics and the thought processes behind them. Explaining things I've been doing mostly on instinct and ingrained methodology, most of which is from playing a lot of different games over many years, has so far been extremely difficult.

This series of articles is written on the assumption that the players are playing on a fixed tournament-sized map or that they don't often fly their ships outside of the borders of a floating map. To use these tactics on larger and/or floating maps will probably require some adjustment. The overall concepts are the same though and they may just be more difficult to implement in order to work.

My plan, as my writing progresses and I realize just how long the scope of this dissertation is going to be, is to have the first and probably second article be a kind of broad-stroke coverage of the general ideas about controlling the battle. The third and possibly fourth article will deal with how the various concepts are combined into a battle plan and set into motion. These will finally be followed up with an article or two on dealing with the unexpected and adjusting battle plans to counter the opponent's tactics as well as possibly a detailed multi-part battle report outlining how I have approached a battle and what sorts of things I considered as the battle progressed.

Ultimately I hope these articles will provide some insight into the dynamics of a battlefield. However, the style of play greatly influences the progression of a battle and what works for me might not work for every reader. Also keep in mind that this is not a "how to win in ten easy steps" kind of article. Concepts I present may or may not be useful to every reader and application of these concepts is a very tricky thing indeed.

Tactics Part I:

Controlling The Battle

By TODD BOYCE

KNOWING when to fire, who to fire at, and when to hold your fire for a better opportunity later, is often the thing that players focus on the most. Almost to the exclusion of all else. This type of playing may seem like strategy and tactics but in essence, it is reactive playing and misses a very big part of achieving battlefield dominance.

To consistently win battles, a player must control the battlefield. While this can be partially accomplished with an appropriate fleet selection, one that forces the opponent to work around its strengths, but the rock/scissors/paper nature usually prevents a consistent or even predictable result. This is why there aren't any "perfect" fleets for any given race.

To truly control the battlefield, a player must sense the ebb and flow of the battle and conform it to his overall plan. A player who hands control to the opponent by playing reactively has already lost. This doesn't mean a player can't react to what the opponent does, quite the contrary. It means when it is necessary to react to the opponent's actions; it is done as an adjustment to an overall plan and not simply a reflex to save a ship. Control of the battlefield is the primary concern, everything else is secondary.

Controlling the battlefield can be done one of two ways (1), control the center or control the opponent. If a player can control both, he can't lose except to extremely bad luck.

Controlling the Center

Put simply, control the center of the map. By forcing the opponent to the edges of the map,

their strategic options are limited and they become much more predictable. In this way, controlling the center makes it easier to control the opponent or at the very least know what to expect from the opponent.

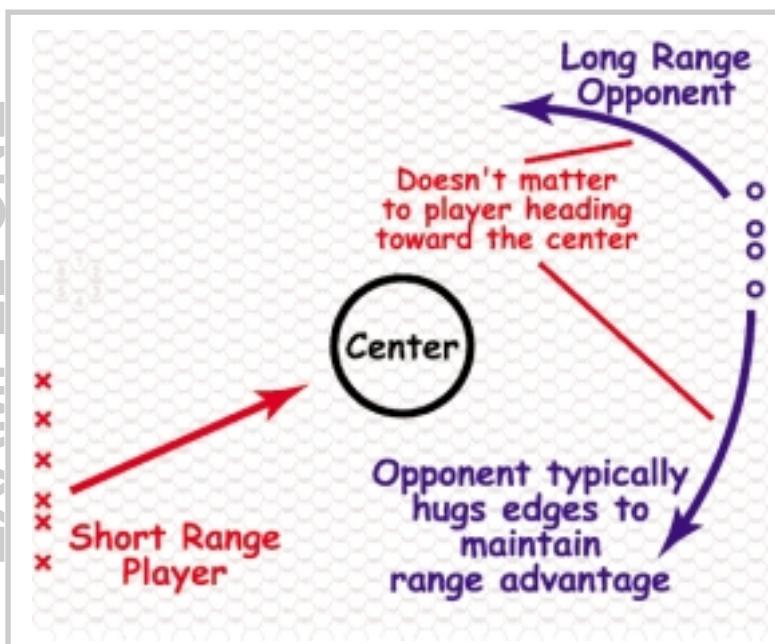
Controlling the center can occur several ways. The first and foremost, which is covered in this article, is by simply moving the fleet there before the opponent does. Players will rarely fly their fleet straight through an opponent's fleet, so by placing a fleet in the center it makes it much more likely the opponent will circle. This works best for short to medium ranged races like the Pak'ma'ra and Drazi, but I believe it can work equally well for races like the EA and Narn when facing the Minbari or Centauri who are usually best when maintaining their range advantage.

(See example 1, next page)

For the prime example for this first article, we have a player running a short-range race versus an opponent who is using a long-range race (2). The player heads toward the center and the opponent, wanting to keep the range as open as possible for as long as possible, will commonly move his fleet fairly close to the edge of the board in one direction or the other.

What the opponent does at this point is generally irrelevant because the overall plan for the player is to get to the center with the main part of his force. Since movement happens after EW declaration, if the opponent targets a ship while at extremely long range it's acceptable to have that ship temporarily break formation to maximize range penalties. The objective is to reach the center though, and the opponent targeting a ship should not affect that goal. This can result

EXAMPLE ONE



in a somewhat scattered formation but that's ok because once the player is in the center, there are many tactical options with regards to controlling the opponent.

There are only a few races where moving to the center of the map is not a good idea. From my experience for the younger races, the Hyach and the Minbari work best by maintaining their range advantage for as long as possible. The Centauri and Brakiri are wildcards, it really depends on their fleet selection. EA, Narn, Drazi, Abbai, Gaim, Pak'ma'ra, Vree, Dilgar, and most of the others will likely benefit from controlling the center in the manner described here.

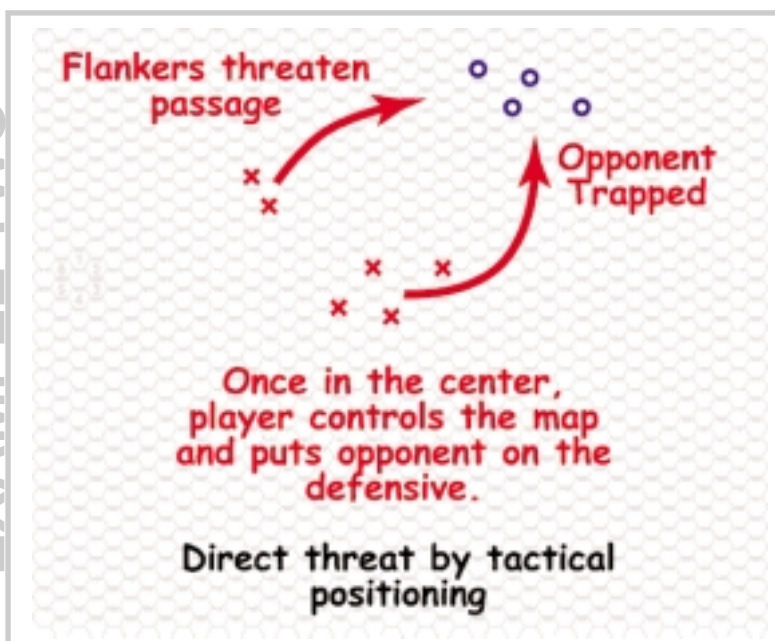
Races not mentioned I probably haven't played or played against so it's hard for me to say but a general rule of thumb is that any race that consists of primarily long range combatants shouldn't try to get into a furball with the opponent in the center of the map.

Fast, Moderate or Slow?

If controlling the center of the map is so important then it stands to reason that getting there as quickly as possible means a quicker win, right? Not necessarily! If the player's fleet flies too fast it can overshoot the center and the opponent can more easily escape or take control of the center himself while the player tries to regroup. If the player flies too slow, the opponent can more easily predict his movements and more easily alter his strategy, again putting the player on the defensive. A moderate pace may seem like the right answer but it too can have similar consequences.

So what's the right answer? None of these, because concentrating on an appropriate speed is shortsighted and ultimately irrelevant. Forming a battle plan and sticking to it as best as possible will determine the speed the player needs to move. Adjustments to the battle plan such as accelerating or decelerating will happen as an adjustment when the player sees what the opponent is doing. Start off at the speeds best suited to the race being played and go from there, it's that easy. The strategy determines the speed, not the other way around.

EXAMPLE TWO



What Now?

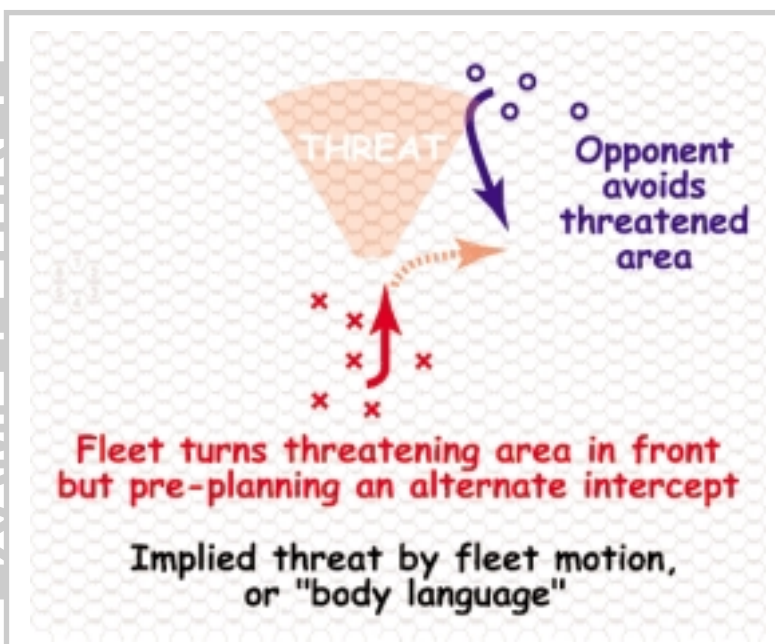
Assume the player gets to the center and now has many more options than the opponent in this example, but the game is still far from being won. Holding the center does not necessarily mean the player can control the opponent but there are three basic strategies for doing so.

Direct Threat

One of the most straightforward strategies for controlling the opponent is by positioning ships in such a way that allows few options for escape.

(See example 2)

EXAMPLE THREE



In this example, the player has sent out flankers to cut off the escape route of the opponent in a form of pincer attack. The opponent is trapped and is forced to decide between facing massive amounts of short-ranged firepower or turning tail and running. Either option is fine for the player because he is in control and is in a position to maintain control. (See the Pak'ma'ra tactics article in March 2002 Babcom for other for-

mations and ideas that can be used with this strategy.)

Implied Threat

Fleet movements on a map have its own form of body language. When a fleet turns in a given direction, the threat it poses changes as the other player anticipates what the fleet's options are one, two or even three turns ahead. By subtle manipulation of the opponent's expectations it is possible to control the opponent in ways that makes him believe he's making his own choices.

(See example 3)

In this example, the player turns his fleet as if he were planning to intercept the opponent moving across the top of the map. The opponent senses the threat and turns away believing he can escape as the player has committed his fleet to that direction. Or has he? By careful consideration of the thrust needed, the player anticipates this action by being prepared to turn the fleet back to intercept. The player is subtly influencing the opponent to commit to an action that will ultimately put him in a poor tactical position.

There are many ways to manipulate an opponent. A clever use of feints by flankers, S-manuevers, extreme and unexpected maneuvers, threatening without attacking and so on.

Setting Up Traps

Traps can range in complexity from simply having a ship act as bait lulling the opponent to go in a desired direction, to a clever collection of ruses to manipulate the opponent's decisions about EW and power allocation. The more one can manipulate his opponent, the more control he has over that opponent.

(See example 4)

This example of a simple bait trap has a ship (likely a capital ship or HCV of some kind) that seems to be flanking and trying to cut off the escape route of the opponent. However, it is only one ship and easily overpowered by the bulk of the enemy's forces since it is separated from the main fleet. This makes it a juicy target for the opponent.

The idea is that once the opponent takes the bait and attempts to fly across the top of the map, he will likely target the bait expecting it to target him in return and fly in and go toe-to-toe with near-auto-hit chances (due to the implied threat).

What happens instead is it turtles and turns away while the rest of his fleet attacks the opponent's flank. The opponent will have his EW tied up in locking onto a turtled and distant target while the player's own fleet has much greater chances to hit.

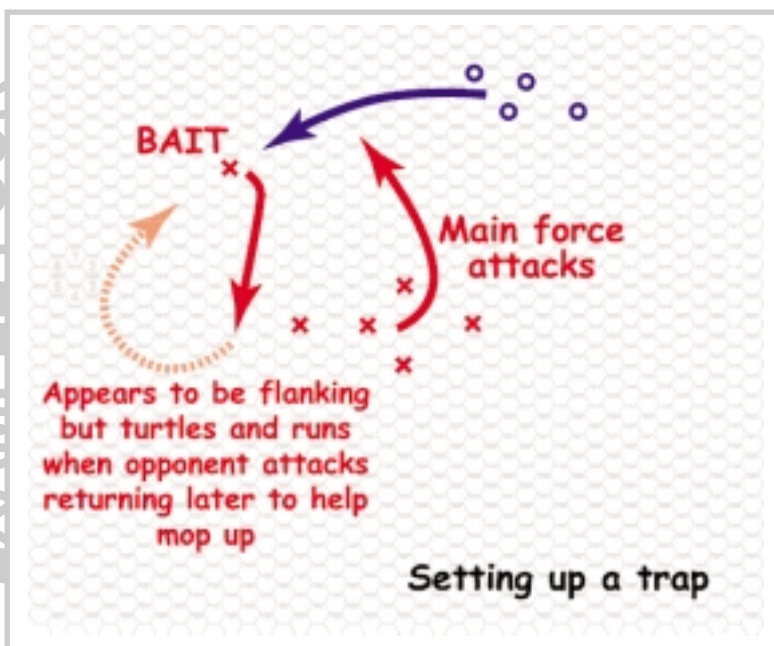
Later the ship that was the bait turns around to join in the fray, at which point the enemy is surrounded and unable to easily escape.

Naturally, traps are the most difficult of strategies to execute because it is difficult getting the opponent to do something specific. When one does work though, it is indeed a beautiful thing.

Here ends Part One.

Part Two will cover controlling the center with a long-range race.

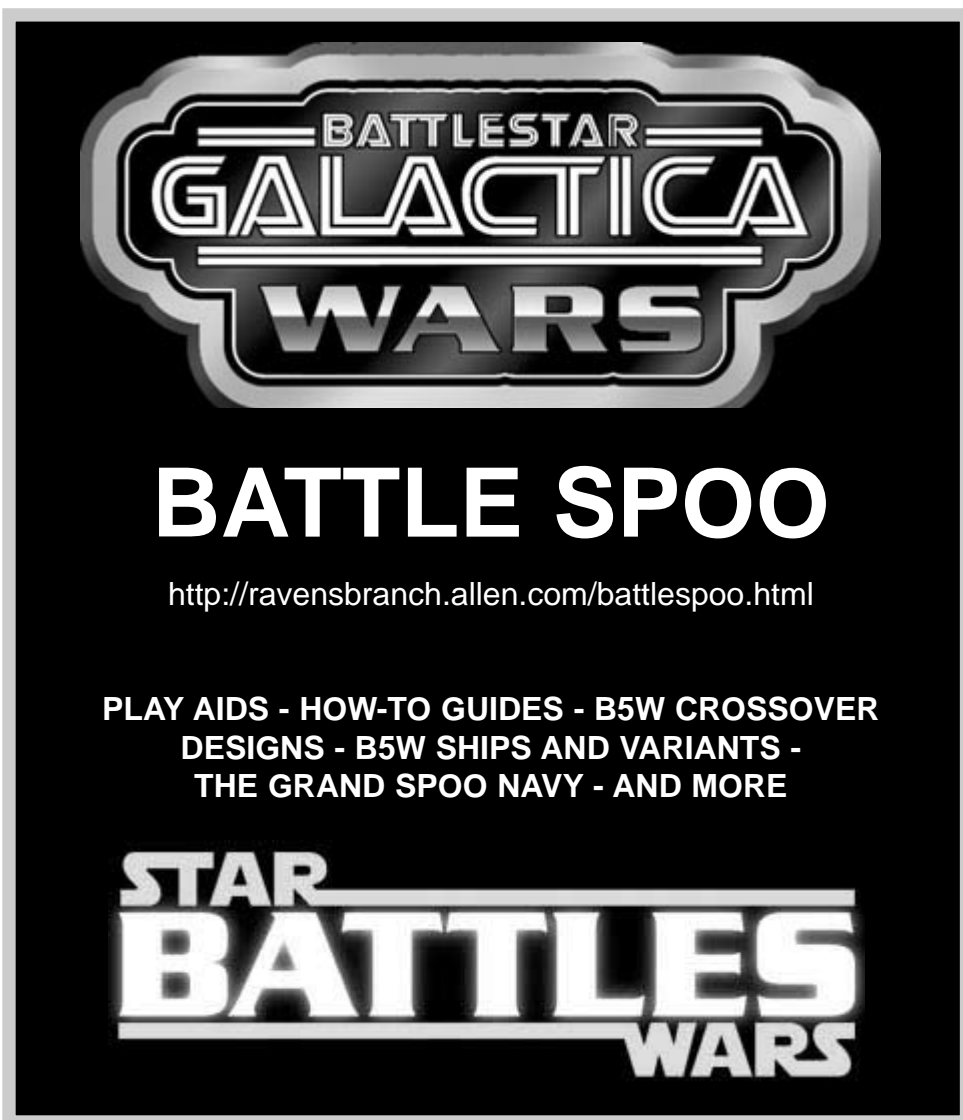
EXAMPLE FOUR



Footnotes:

(1) There are actually more than two ways but these are the big ones. Others require specific tactics or situations to occur and that's material for future articles.

(2) Since short-range races typically have cheaper ships, they often outnumber long-range races so that's how it will appear in this example. More examples will be forthcoming of different opponent strategies that include more ships but for the scope of this portion of the article it doesn't matter.





By ALEX ROBERTS

TECHNOLOGY / SPECIAL RULES

UNITS

THE Shadows have many allies, and many servants. Foremost among them are the Drakh. It is unknown exactly how long the Drakh have served the Shadows, but it is certainly for at least several hundred years, if not far longer. The Drakh revere the Shadows as if they were gods, and in return, the Shadows treat the Drakh as their most favored servants, using them for important missions that don't require natives to carry out.

Being the Shadow's most favored servants, the Drakh are granted knowledge into many (though certainly not all) of the Shadow's secrets, including the locations of important bases and manufacturing centers. Drakh even serve on Z'ha'Dum itself, a place where few outsiders are permitted to pass.

Because the Shadows are loath to engage in combat themselves, the Drakh are often tasked with carrying out any of the Shadow's dirty work that cannot be dealt with through judicious use of Shadow Cruisers and Molecular Slicers. Their forces are fast moving and heavily armed, perfect for bringing chaos to the universe.

Stealth Cloak: Some Drakh infantry and assassins are equipped with the expensive and rare Drakh Stealth Cloak. This Cloak renders the wearer completely invisible. Even people barely 5 feet away cannot tell that a wearer is nearby. The stealth equipment is too sensitive, and too fragile to mount on vehicles.

Special Rules: Any stand equipped with a Stealth Cloak may declare at the beginning of any activation that they are donning the Cloak. From that point on, they may not be targeted by any enemy units, with the exception of Drakh, Technomages, and First Ones, who are not fooled by the Cloak's technology. If the stand equipped with the Cloak opens fire, they are immediately revealed, and may not re-hide until the beginning of another of their actions.

Linked Minds: All Drakh are able to communicate with each other over vast distances of space. As a result, the Drakh are not subject to "Delayed Reaction" per page 78 of the GROPOS rulebook. As soon as an enemy unit is spotted, all Drakh are aware of its exact location.

Light Infantry: Drakh Light infantry form the bulk of Drakh ground forces and rear area personnel. Armed with a quick firing needle rifle, they can be deadly against enemy infantry and civilians, but are virtually useless against enemy armor.

Stealth Infantry: Stealth infantry are Drakh equipped with the rare Stealth Cloak. They are armed with needle rifles, and are tasked with assassination missions, as well as spreading chaos throughout the rear of enemy forces.

Special: Self Ordering, Stealth Cloak

Recon Infantry: These are Drakh reconnaissance forces. They are equipped with stealth cloaks and needle rifles.

Special: Forward Observer, Stealth Cloak, Self Ordering, May Call for Orbital Bombardment

Command Infantry: Drakh command forces organise and coordinate Drakh forces in the field. Although all Drakh can communicate with each other across great distances, it is still helpful to have forces of authority on site. They are armed with Needle Rifles.

Special: Forward Observers, Company

DRAKH: GROPOS

Command Unit, Call for Orbital Bombardment

Heavy Infantry: Frontline Drakh infantry are often equipped with heavier equipment than regular Drakh personnel. Armed with Portable Phase Cutters strapped on their arms, they are deadly opponents, fully capable of cutting open tanks, cutting shuttles down from the sky, and carving swathes through enemy infantry forces.

Quenn'Ah Transport Vtol: As part of their rapid strike missions, the Drakh have numerous Vtols. The troop transport Vtol is one of several Vtols that allow the Drakh to quickly move in, cause chaos, and escape before their opponents can mount a sufficient defense. Transport Vtols are armed with Light Phasing Pulse Cannons on each side of the Vtol.

Special: Transport 4 (0V)

Prelvan Strike Vtol: Strike Vtols are heavily armed Vtols used by the Drakh to support their fast moving infantry and armored forces. They are equipped with dual forward facing Medium Polarity Beams, as well as side mounted Light Phasing Pulse Cannons.

Tarshin Recon Vtol: These quick moving Vtols are small, and lightly armed, but equipped with powerful sensor suites, enabling the Drakh to keep track of their opponents, and find the perfect place to strike and cause the most damage to the enemies of their masters. They have a single forward mounted Light Phasing Pulse Cannon.

Special: Self Ordering, Forward Observer, May Call for Orbital Bombardment

Duvos Light Attack Tank: The Light Attack Tank is a fast moving hover vehicle equipped with a Medium Polarity Beam, as well as a Light Phasing Pulse Cannon. They are designed to harass and take out medium armor and APCs.

Quenn'Thon Assault Transport: The Drakh Assault Transport is a speedy hover APC, enabling heavily armed Drakh infantry to quickly redeploy across the battlefield. It is armed with a forward facing Light Polarity Beam as well as a Light Phasing Pulse Cannon.

Special: Transport 2 (0V)

Dukell Strike Tank: the Drakh bring in these heavy tanks when strong enemy fortifications need to be breached. Although lightly armored compared to other race's heavy armor, they are quite fast moving, and heavily armed with Dual Heavy Polarity Beams, as well as a Light Phasing Pulse Cannon.

Pren'tas Air Defense Vehicle:

To provide AA defenses for forward Drakh bases, the Drakh make use of their Air Defense Vehicles. Although slow moving compared to other Drakh vehicles, they are armed with Dual Medium Phase Cutters, as well as a Light Phasing Pulse Cannon, and a tracking system powerful enough to enable these vehicles to clear the sky of enemy air assets.

Shal'dov Artillery Support Vehicle: When artillery support is required, the Drakh bring in this vehicle. Armed with a Heavy Antimatter Cannon, it is capable of firing powerful shells filled with Antimatter, or shells of Antimatter sub munitions that can clear wide areas of enemy infantry. It is also armed with a Light Phasing Pulse Cannon for self defense.



DRAKH TO&E

Drakh Strike Force:

This is the typical Drakh assault force, designed to get in and out quick, while sowing the maximum amount of chaos amongst the younger races.

HQ: 1 platoons
Unlimited platoons: 3-6
Limited platoons: 0-3
Support Units: 0-3

HQ:
1 Command Infantry Stand
2 Heavy Infantry Stands
Cost: 26/52/78/110

Unlimited Platoons:

Line Platoon:
3 Assault Transports
6 Heavy Infantry Stands
Cost: 156/312/468/620

Light Platoon:
3 Assault Transports
6 Light Infantry Stands
Cost: 128/256/384/520

Strike Platoon:
3 Strike Tanks
Cost: 120/240/360/480

Harasser Platoon
3 Light Attack Tanks
Cost: 96/192/288/390

Limited Platoons:

Air Assault Platoon:
2 Transport Vtols

8 Heavy Infantry Stands
Cost: 124/248/372/510

Air Attack Platoon:
2 Strike Vtols
Cost: 88/178/254/370

Support Units:

Ground Recon Unit:
2 Recon Infantry Stands
1 Assault Transport
Cost: 56/112/168/220

Artillery Platoon:
2 Artillery Support Vehicles
Cost: 80/160/240/340

ADA Platoon:
2 Air Defense Vehicles
Cost: 60/120/180/250

Assassination Team:
1 Transport Vtols
3 Stealth Infantry Stands
Cost: 64/128/192/260

Drakh Garrison Force:

This force is typical of Drakh forces at their semi-permanent bases or Shadow installations.

HQ: 1 platoons
Unlimited Platoons: 3-6
Limited Platoons: 0-1
Support Units: 0-2

HQ:
1 Command Infantry Stand
2 Heavy Infantry Stands
Cost: 26/52/78/110

Unlimited Platoons:

Garrison Platoon:
3-6 Light Infantry Stands
Cost: 7/14/21/30 each

Support Platoon (Max 2 per company):
6 Heavy Infantry Stands
Cost: 60/120/180/250

Transport Platoon (Max 2 per company):
3 Assault Transports
Cost: 96/192/288/390

Harasser Platoon (Max 2 per company):
3 Light Attack Tanks
Cost: 96/192/288/390

Limited Platoons:

Strike Platoon:
3 Strike Tanks
Cost: 120/240/360/480

Support Units:

Ground Recon Unit:
2 Recon Infantry Stands
1 Assault Transport
Cost: 56/112/168/220

Artillery Platoon:
2 Artillery Support Vehicles
Cost: 80/160/240/340

ADA Platoon:
2 Air Defense Vehicles
Cost: 60/120/180/250



By TYREL LOHR

REPLAYING the battles between the Army of Light and the Shadows can be a lot of fun. However, even pointed pick-up battles and scenarios will never be able to truly capture the flavor of the battles as presented on Babylon 5. This scenario structure goes a long ways towards replicating those battles for players that want to relive "Shadow Dancing" and battles like it on the gaming table.

FORCE SELECTION

Rather than using combat point values for purposes of fleet selections, players should instead select a number of fleet points to bring into the scenario.

These fleet points will decide how many units either side can purchase. Refer to the accompanying chart for fleet point costs. All costs are represented in a split notation with the first value representing the number of ships and the second being the actual fleet point cost to add that many ships of the class to your fleet.

For example, two fleet points could purchase you four heavy combat vessels or you could instead decide to buy a single capital ship and two flights of heavy fighters. You cannot spend fractional fleet points in order to buy more or less units. In the case of fighters, where it is possible to purchase more flights than there is capacity for in a fleet, any additional flights are lost.

Classification	Fleet Point Cost
Enormous Ship	1/3
Dreadnought	1/2
Capital Ship	1/1
Heavy Combat Vessel	2/1
Medium Ship	3/1
Light Combat Vessel	3/1
Super-Heavy Fighter	4/1

Heavy Fighter Flight	2/1
Medium Fighter Flight	3/1
Light Fighter Flight	4/1

All classifications except one adhere to the standard ship classification nomenclature. This exception is the Dreadnought class. This represents the most powerful battleship or dreadnought in a nation's navy. Examples of these types of ships include: the EA Nova Dreadnought, Warlock Advanced Destroyer, Poseidon Super Carrier; the Minbari Shargoti Battlecruiser; the Centauri Octurion Battleship; the Narn Bin'Tak Dreadnought; the Brakiri Corumai Dreadnought; the Vree Xonn Dreadnought; the Dilgar Mishakur Dreadnought; the Hyach Urutha Kal Dreadnought; the Shadow Dreadnought; and the Vorlon Dreadnought to name just a few.

Players must use their own judgement in determining what ships are heavy enough to constitute a Dreadnought classification. For modern era ships, this classification can be applied to most ships with a point value in excess of 1000-1200 points. However, in older settings this won't necessarily hold true, as ships and technology are less effective and damaging, which leads to lower point values.

When playing as the Army of Light, a player may select ships, fighters, and other units from any of the involved races. For those that wish to better reflect the show and the major powers involved, such fleets should include primarily Minbari, Brakiri, Narn, Abbai, Pak'Ma'Ra, Vree, Drazi, and Gaim ships. Earth Alliance Aurora and Thunderbolt Starfury fighters may be purchased, but no other Earth Alliance ships may be selected to be involved in the scenario.

All fighters must be capable of being supported by ships based in the scenario and, except in the case of the Earth Alliance fighters noted above, only fighters of the same race as the bas-

ing ship are allowed to be purchased for placement on their carriers.

When purchasing vessels with fleet points, the Army of Light player does not have to restrict his/her selection to a single race per fleet point. For example, you are purchasing a group of two heavy combat vessels with one fleet point. You would like to purchase a Drazi Sunhawk. Purchasing one Drazi heavy combat vessel does not mean that the other heavy combat vessel selection need be a Drazi ship. It could instead be a Brakiri Antoph or any other valid heavy combat vessel from another race.

Ship availability restrictions are still in effect but are based on the number of hulls purchased, not the combat or fleet point values. This will keep fleets purchased under the fleet point system resembling those that would be assembled if combat point values were still in effect. So a fleet that ended up with 18 ships would be able to have up to one Restricted Availability (10%) ship (1.8 rounded down) and up to six Limited Availability (33%) ships. Variant restrictions are even easier to apply, and function as normal and remain based on the number of base hulls purchased within the fleet.

Given the fleet point system the opportunity exists for some gamers to attempt to maximize the performance of their fleet by picking only the highest point-valued ships from each class when forming their fleets. This type of conduct is highly discouraged. When designing your fleets keep this potential pitfall in mind and, wherever possible, design your fleet selections as if you were taking the fleet into a pointed battle where cost was an issue. Having only the best of everything will make for a dull game - not only for you, but also for your opponent!

SCENARIO SETUP

The player controlling the Army of Light should place any and all members of his fleet on

the map of choice. The player is allowed to keep as many of his ships as wished in reserve fleets, so long as each reserve fleet contains a ship with a jump engine. Pre-game orders must be written down determining on what turn and in what hex each reserve fleet will open a jump point and enter the battle. In many cases no reserve fleets will be used, as dividing your forces against your opponent could give them an easy win.

Once all Army of Light forces are either placed on the board or placed in reserve fleets with jump-in orders, the Shadow player will place his/her ships on the board in the edge hex row opposite the Army of Light starting position. If using hexless play or larger hex maps, this number should be at least 50 hexes but no greater than 100 hexes.

At this point play can begin normally.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The battle will be a hard fought one for the Army of Light. The chance of a total success is very slim and the Army of Light player has to accept from the beginning of the scenario that the only real goal is survival. Not only will the enemy out point you but also stand a good chance of having nearly the same amount of ships as you in an even fleet point battle.

In general, the following victory conditions will apply (rounding all values up):

Army of Light

Major Victory - Destroy at least one ship/flight per two ships/flights lost

Minor Victory - Destroy at least one ship/flight per three ships/flights lost

Minor Loss - Destroy at least one ship/flight per four ships/flights lost

Major Loss - Destroy less than one ship/flight per five ships/flights lost

Shadows

Major Victory - Destroy at least five ships/flights per one ship/flight lost

Minor Victory - Destroy at least four ships/flights per one ship/flight lost

Minor Loss - Destroy at least three ships/flights per one ship/flight lost

Major Loss - Destroy less than two ships/flights per one ship/flight lost

CLOSING

The fleet point system can just as easily be applied to other more 'realistic' fleet match ups between other powers. Most notably, this system can also be used to capture the feel of the battles of the Earth/Minbari War where one side is hopelessly outmatched by the other because of technological disparity. By matching opposing forces by force size rather than point value, the player can get a better appreciation of how fleet battles between classic enemies such as the Narn and Centauri might have played out under similar numerical odds. In the end, there will always be some that want to take control of the underdog and see if - by luck or skill - they can pull off a victory against unbelievable odds.



HERE COMES THE NAVY

SCENARIO

By RICHARD BAX

FOLLOWING the discovery of the Arctic in Mentab space, President Clark ordered a task force be formed to hunt down and destroy the Arctic. The task force never managed to catch up to the Arctic and was ultimately recalled to help defend against Sheridan's match on Earth. Had they found the Arctic and her erstwhile Raider ally's things would have gotten very interesting. What might have happened?

Set-Up

Singh/Raiders: Heavy Cruiser Arctic, along with any Thunderbolts remaining after the four previous scenarios with the lost Thunderbolts now replaced with Aurora's in hex 0506, speed 4, and facing direction 3. Raider Sloop Deep Pockets with 6 Delta-V's is in hex 0704, speed 4, and facing direction 3. Sanctuary Base Well Bottom with 36 Delta-V's and 12 Double-V's (with navigators and missiles) in hex 0303 (player set rotation).

Clark EA: Omega Destroyer-Alpha Medusa, with 12 Aurora's and 12 Thunderbolts (with navigators and full load of missiles) in hex 3927, Artemis-B Hammer in hex 3625, Tethys Police Leader Miranda in hex 3628, Tethys Police Cutter ESP-1121 in hex 3924. All are at speed 4, heading 6.

Asteroid Field: There are a of total 20 asteroid clusters randomly scattered throughout the map. No asteroid cluster may be within 5 hexes of another cluster, nor can they be within 5 hexes of the Sanctuary Base or 1 hex of any starting unit on the map. Since the map is floating, anytime an asteroid cluster falls off the map add another randomly in the exposed new section. The asteroids clusters are very large and encompass the hex the counter is located in and the adjacent 6 hexes. All 7 resulting hexes of an asteroid cluster block line of site. Units in any of the 7 hexes of and asteroid cluster have there line of site limited only those units in the same hex. Any non

fighter unit that enter an asteroid cluster hex or adjacent hex takes 10 points of raking damage per point of speed at the time it enters the hex. The unit also has its speed instantly reduced by 1 (it is therefore possible that by entering multiple asteroid hexes the speed of the unit can be reduced to 0). Fighters take only 1 point per hex entered times the sum of the speed plus the jinking level. Direction of incoming damage is based on the side that first enters the hex.

Special Rules

Use a floating map.

All fighters may be deployed within 5 hexes of their mother ship, course and speed the same (speed 6, facing 3 for the Sanctuary Base fighters). Fighters may not ram.

The Arctic is fully repaired with the exception of the balky heavy particle cannon (see below). If there are any Thunderbolts left after the previous 4 scenarios, they may be armed with full loads of fighter missiles. However, no navigators are available.

The heavy particle cannon on the Arctic continues not operating correctly. On any turn the heavy particle cannon attempts to fire roll a d6. On a 1, 2, or 3 the cannon fires, on a 4 and 5 the cannon safety interlocks prevent firing but the cannon can still fired in later turns (the arming is not lost but re-roll the die again). On a 6 the cannon refuses to fire and shuts down. If the cannon shuts down, it is unavailable for the remainder of the scenario. The power may be used for other activities and the weapon can still take damage.

Victory Conditions

He who holds the field wins.

Historical Outcome

That's for you to decide.

(The SCS for the Arctic was published in the June edition of Babcom)



THE Minbari have some of the best infantry available, which may seem unusual at first. The Minbari have the best military technology of any young or middleborn race, and they are not at all embarrassed to use it.

Infantry is not as readily enhanced by technology as ships or vehicles are. An infantry trooper needs lots of personal training and experience. An elite trooper with an Assagi is more than a match for a green trooper with a Martini-Henry breech-loading rifle, as the British learned at Isandhlwana. Later at Roark's Drift, the not-quite-elite Zulu's encountered a British unit with the Martini-Henry again, this time wielded by men with skill and resolve (enough to earn 11 Victoria Crosses). Technology is a good thing, and the wise commander will make the best possible use of the best technology available, but: technology is no substitute for valor. Poor troops with great equipment are still poor troops. The Minbari have both technology and valor.

ARMOR

With the best armor available, it is often necessary to advise a Minbari player to "take at least some infantry". But the opposite should be closer to the truth: take infantry and at least some armor. Minbari infantry have very high profile and discipline values. Opposing vehicles typically have Anti-Personnel (AP) weapons that are



GROPOS

By **HARDLEC**

only effective at a very short range when the vehicle is close enough to be destroyed by infantry weapons. The Seti missile is probably the best weapon available to support infantry against enemy armor. Friendly carriers can lay back six inches from the infantry they are supporting, behind hills or cover, and deliver effective indirect fire against enemy vehicles that are still beyond the range of their AP weapons.

The Minbari have five infantry carriers: the Firesprite, the Chrysalis, the Shard, the Talishan Heavy Infantry Transport and the Star Rider Assault Tank. In addition, the Minbari have Jump infantry (infantry as fast as vehicles while as mobile and flexible as foot troops).

The Firesprite is very fast, and the Seti missile gives it respectable firepower. The Minbari "Armored Recon" unit, a recon stand and a Firesprite (recon), is by far the better option for a scout unit than a pair of Sprites. The Recon stand is much harder to spot, to hit and to destroy than a Sprite. Both units are also capable of fighting.

The Sprite is not an effective combat unit. Firesprites configured as infantry carriers can conduct the "Panzer Blitz" attack; move to con-

tact with the enemy- that is 14 inches or closer - then dismount the infantry and "close assault" the enemy. This works best with assault troops, but regular infantry can do pretty well also.

The Chrysalis has good anti-armor capability, but it is not a tank and should not be used as one. Deploy the Chrysalis under or behind cover and use the infantry to find armored targets - then pop-up or use the Seti indirectly. The light disrupter is very effective against infantry carriers, and can damage tanks, although infantry with Gravinades are better for this. The Chrysalis itself lacks the armor to face off with a tank. It must use an ambush, pop-up or indirect fire attack to succeed and survive.

The Shard carries the molecular pulsar, which has a high rate of fire. It is largely ineffective against all but light armor, but very effective against enemy infantry. Here also keep the carrier out of enemy line-of-sight, and let the infantry spot. Have the Shard pop-up and spray the enemy with green death. Be sure to select as many Gravinade troops as possible when using Shards. With no Seti missiles and a weapon weak against armor, any AFV and almost all IFVs are more than a match for a Shard.

Both the Shard and the Chrysalis are as fast as many scout units. It is not a bad idea to dismount the infantry very early and then use the IFVs to seek and destroy enemy scouts. The Shard is a recon-infantry killer, the Chrysalis is

Type	Points	Move	Profile	Sig	Disc	Srch/Spot	Clse Cmbt		Equipment		
Regular	7/14/21/32	3	9	6	9	d8/2	6		Sha'Nar		
Assault	7/14/21/32	3	9	6	11	d6/2	8		Sha'Nar/Baton		
Gravinade	9/18/27/41	3	9	6	9	d8/2	6		Sha'Nar/Gravinade		
Recon	8/16/24/36	4	11	7	10	d10/3	4		Sha'Nar		
Infiltrator	12/24/36/54	4	10	8	11	d8/2	5		Sha'Nar/Gravinade		
Jump											
Regular	9/18/27/41	6	9	6	9	d8/2	6		Sha'Nar/Gravinade		
Assault	9/18/27/41	6	9	6	9	d8/2	6		Sha'Nar/Baton		
Gravinade	11/22/33/48	6	9	6	9	d8/2	6		Sha'Nar/Gravinade		
Recon	10/20/30/45	6	11	7	10	d10/3	4		Sha'Nar		
System	Range		Rof	DvA/DvD	AA	AoE	Move	Prof	Arm	Sig	
Sha'Nar Rifle	2/4/6		2	4/6	no	---	---	---	---	---	
Tal'Falni Assault Gun	6/12/18		3	6/8	yes	---	3	11	12	5	
Gravnade	15/--/--		1 or 2	10/6	no	1" R	---	---	---	---	
Baton	cls cmbt		1	--/--	no	---	---	---	---	---	

a good slayer of scout vehicles.

The Talishan is a Falishan chassis with a light disrupter, a grav mortar, and a six-stand carrying capacity. As a fire support platform, it is unimpressive. As a way to move a lot of troops, it is unequalled. Make sure it carries a good mix of troops, especially Gravinade troops to defer enemy armor. The grav mortar can provide some indirect fire support, and the light disrupter has modest anti-armor capabilities. The greatest asset of the Talishan is that it offers more protection and carrying capacity than any other carrier, save one.

The Star Rider Heavy Assault Tank lacks weapons that can destroy enemy tanks, but carries enough firepower to mow down whole platoons of enemy infantry in a single volley. It carries an impressive anti-air capability. The only weapon it needs to fear is enemy artillery. Just like the Shard and Talishan, make sure it carries as many Gravinade equipped anti-armor troops as possible. Perhaps the most cold-blooded use for the Star Rider is to dismount the infantry early and use it as a sort of "wild weasel" and let the enemy spend turn after turn of artillery to try to kill this monster.

As a note: this author carved a Star Rider out of balsa wood. It took some work, and it is not an AOG quality master, but it is good enough for me. I don't sell them, but I can provide guidance to people who want to make their own.

TROOPS

The Minbari employ "jump" troops, infantry with grav belts that are as mobile as infantry, as fast as many vehicles, hard to see, hard to hit, and carry an impressive punch. A platoon of jump assault infantry can chase down and destroy a platoon of Centauri Hexus battle tanks. Think about that for a minute: infantry chasing tanks. These infantry are armed with sticks. When they do catch the tank, the tank comes off second best. Kind of spooky, isn't it? Jump troops are the perfect infantry: fast enough to keep up with vehicles, mobile enough to get into tight spaces and dig out enemy troops, and with enough firepower to give out better than they get.

A new grid of Minbari infantry and abilities is presented here. The official publications do not list "jump-gravinade" but it is reasonable to assume they exist.

The Tal'Falni turret is mobile, tough, and deadly. It is usually out of place in a rapid response unit, as it fills the whole Firesprite, or with jump units (it is too slow to keep up with jump troops) but it is a major asset for other units. One per platoon is usually a good idea.

There are too many options for companies with infantry to analyze them all, except perhaps as a series of articles intended to do only that. The Star Riders are infantry heavy and actually offer better assault possibilities than the Windswords. The Windswords have the edge in speed (mostly). If they cooperate, the Star Riders can bludgeon open a gap and the Windswords can pour through. By following good basic infantry doctrine, Minbari Infantry can do the job.



Improving Matters

Alternate Matter Weapons Damage
Resolution for Fleet Action
By KARL JOHNSON

RECENTLY, work on converting ships from the outstanding Wars of the Centauri Republic for use in Fleet Action commenced. While the basic hull conversions have become almost second-nature (thanks to Rich Bax's conversion article and notes, found in Babcom #3), weapon damage conversions have been a bit more subjective, especially since there are some inconsistencies between weapons with similar damage profiles in the officially published books.

For example: raking-only weapons receiving a -1 per die penalty - this is not applied universally, nor is the +1 per die for each +15 B5W bonus damage applied consistently; these items don't even cancel each other out when both attributes are present on the same weapon!

The most problematic weapons damage conversion to date appeared when the Orieni Gatling Railgun was examined (2d6 Matter damage). Were this weapon to resolve damage in any other mode, it would probably translate well into FA damage of 1d6, possibly 1d6-1. Since matter weapons roll on a dedicated damage chart in Fleet Action, this wasn't an option.

The first, simplest, solution was to assign a negative modifier to the weapon's damage, indicating a die roll modifier to be applied to the roll on the Matter Table against all but fighter targets (which still lose one fighter per hit). In the case of the Gatling Railgun, the damage is 1 (-2) which gives results of no damage on a roll of 1-2, one structure damage on a roll of 3-6, a maneuver hit on 7 or 9 and a secondary weapon hit on an 8 or 10.

While this is satisfactory in that the larger and better armored and protected Sensor and Primary Weapon systems can't be damaged by a weapon with such a low damage yield, it still doesn't feel quite right, statistically speaking, due to the linear nature of single die roll results.

The following method for matter damage resolution is presented as an alternative to the official rule:

1. Use the provided Matter Damage Table, rolling 2d6 and totaling the result.
2. If the weapon's damage receives a modifier (such as the aforementioned -2), subtract the base modifier (2 in this case) from the die roll if the result exceeds 7; add the base modifier to the die roll if the total is below 7.

Matter Damage Table

DR	Result
2	Sensor + 1 Structure
3	Secondary Weapon + 1 Structure
4	Maneuver
5	Secondary Weapon
6	Structure
7	Secondary Weapon
8	Structure
9	Maneuver
10	Structure
11	Primary Weapon
12	Primary Weapon + 1 Structure

Example: Three shots from a Gatling Railgun strike a Centauri Optime Battlecruiser. The dice roll totals are 11, 9 and 4. Since the Gatling Railgun has a base '2' modifier, the table results are modified to 9, 7 and 6, causing one Maneuver hit, one Secondary Weapon hit and one Structure hit. Note that this weapon can only roll a final (modified) result between 4 and 10, inclusive.

Also note that while the probability of hitting the sensor suite of a B5W capital ship varies between a couple of percentile, the official FA matter table allocates a full 10% of all matter damage to sensors.

While there are still some discrepancies between the possible B5W and FA damage results (and possible room for improvement in the proposed alternate table), this method also brings the probabilities for hitting any of the listed systems closer to being "in-line" between both game systems.



Fiction:
By JJ O'SHAUGHNESSY

THE WATCHER floated in silence, drifting in a prison of its own making. IT's mind was not imprisoned, it roamed through the stars, seeing places, sampling thoughts far away.

IT's awareness was unmatched among the mighty races that had arisen after its genesis. IT knew their motivations and their passions. IT sensed the great tragedies, the loves and hatreds that grew around the galaxy like a million twinkling diamonds in the twilight. IT knew of the arrogance and hatreds that drove it all. And IT knew grief for the many things that would never be allowed to exist. IT knew grief for the mistakes of the past, and for the great mistake that had been allowed to sicken the galaxy. IT looked on the galaxy and knew sorrow.

Now IT's attention was drawn to the space around its genesis world. The star in this system should have long since died, IT knew, but IT could not resist keeping its fire going. IT had little use for small pieces of cosmic flotsam like this system, but this place still had a kind of sentimental attachment for IT. IT allowed itself this small interference in the natural order of the galaxy. But now something new was happening. IT could feel it as the barriers between the layers of reality warped and twisted, and in the sub layer of time a bubble burst.

IT watched as a hole was forced in the fabric of space, and a group of organisms appeared. IT saw they contained yet more organisms, some of truly exceptional power. IT watched as the ancient defences surrounding IT's world began to awaken and move towards the intruders. They were slashed apart without mercy as the main unit began to move quickly towards IT's planet, the smaller units flying around it in a dizzying pattern of protection. The dancing lights in IT's form began to move in concentrated rhythmic patterns, indicating perplexed curiosity. This was definitely something new. IT watched as the organism took up orbit around IT's planet, and a small organism detached from the large ship. It flew down into the carpet of gasses trapped by the planet's gravity, heading for a rift in the planet's surface. IT turned IT's attention

back to the fleet waiting above, and noted that while the battle continued, they were in no danger. The defences had been designed to ward off fledgling species, but not beings with the power of IT's true students. IT remembered the name these had given themselves. Vorlons.

IT turned its attention back to the ship heading for its audience rift. IT studied the being inside carefully. IT sensed age and weariness about this one. This was one of the oldest of its kind, and it was taking the trouble to visit IT's solitude. It would be good to speak to one of IT's children again. But first IT had to make preparations. IT concentrated. IT shrank in the space of a moment, becoming a humanoid male, seated on rocky ground that rapidly spread out and became a cave. A fire burned in the centre of the cave IT formed out of its thoughts and realm. IT opened its new eyes, totally at ease in IT's new form and smiled softly. A perfect place to receive IT's guest. And perhaps a lesson in humility for this one. IT caused the Vorlon ship to become surrounded by a large cave and watched as it landed on the bare rock. Then IT closed its eyes and waited.

After a while the Vorlon appeared. It chose to come encased in a brown shell. The Watcher watched its brain patterns at work. It was unsure of itself, IT saw. Again something new. This would be something most interesting.

The Vorlon floated slowly up to the campfire. Its iris opened slowly, surveying the figure seated before it. It looked around, surveyed the walls, the way the light of the campfire played flickering shadows on the walls, the darkness above. Finally, it shyly looked down at the figure seated before it. Breathing tubes rotated uncertainly. It floated a little closer, then its shell rested on the ground with a dull 'click'. It then stood still for a long time, looking at the watcher across the flames.

Finally the musical notes of the Vorlon speech broke the silence, echoing slightly off the walls. "Who are you?"

IT opened IT's eyes, staring directly into the iris of the Vorlon. "Who are you?" IT responded. The question hung there.

The iris narrowed almost to a point. The Watcher sensed something new from the Vorlon.

Something he would not have expected from any of IT's children, the emotion of shame.

"Father" the Vorlon intoned. "The circle grows hot. Two dancers are enslaved. Soon the flame will ignite. All will end in fire. We need your guidance."

"My guidance? What can I do that you cannot do yourself, Vorlon?"

"We cannot stop. Should we stop the others will consume all."

"Would they? Can you be so sure?"

"Yes."

The Watcher paused, the truth of the Vorlon's words ringing home. IT tried a different angle. "And if they stopped, what would you do?"

The question stung the Vorlon. Its encounter suit rocked slightly, and the iris closed completely. The watcher waited patiently, watching the energy flowing inside the encounter suit, watching the fevered thoughts racing around the brain of IT's child.

"It would end in Ice."

The watcher's eyes narrowed. "Yes, it would. But you could end it yourself. You could bring your people here, and speak with the others. Together you could find a solution to this."

"They will not listen. The Others will no longer speak with us. We.."

"MAKE THEM LISTEN, VORLON!" Lorien shouted. He stood up, the long sadness at the state of the galaxy turning to anger. "You and your people helped create this situation. You are as guilty as the others!"

The fire began to roar. It flared up as the Vorlon's iris opened completely in shock. The flames began to spread as Lorien continued to speak, till the Vorlon was surrounded by flame.

"You have been blind, Vorlon. I allowed you this responsibility. The Highest responsibility. I assumed you would help bring the young into the light, as I did with your race. You and the others have squandered this responsibility and replaced it with HATE!"

The Vorlon's Eye flared. "Why are you so quick to anger, father? The Sword-wielder stains its blade, but the stain travels to the one that lets him."

The room vanished. The Vorlon now hung suspended before Lorien the Watcher, blazing in

IT's full glory.

The Vorlon raised its head defiantly. Then light flared as the scant protection of its encounter suit opened. The Vorlon emerged, still suspended, and the suit fell into the darkness below.

"I lead my people, Father, but I am the prisoner of the many. I have no choice in my actions. I try to teach, but my brethren act. In this, few will listen. I do what I can to hold back the void, but in time I will fail and it will end in fire."

Lorien did not move.

"You are angry. You are the white that rages against the black. Let the storm burn, and blow a leaf to an unknown shore. But you must end this."

A light grew within the sparkling body of The Watcher, it shone out and enfolded the Vorlon. A moment of blinding light. A moment of pain. And then blackness.

Light grew, a yellow warm light. It coalesced into a fire, burning between two figures. One encased in a suit of concealment, with a light shining from within. One a simple humanoid, with peace in IT's eyes.

"Good, Vorlon. Very good indeed"

"You will do as I ask?"

"No"

The Vorlon's iris widened.

"Things have gone too far already, Vorlon. Both your people and the Dark Ones are blinded by their hatreds. They will not stop, not even for me. Some will listen, but the conflicts would spark a war that would end all."

The Vorlon's iris closed "Then all is lost. There is no hope"

"There is always hope. You widen your vision."

"The Silent Ones?"

"Some would intervene, certainly, but they are too few and have their own concerns."

There was a pause.

"Widen your vision, Vorlon."

The iris opened a fraction. "They have little strength. They are a song against the storm."

"There is strength, and there is Strength, Vorlon. Do you know the difference between the two?"

The Vorlon's iris opened slowly. The Vorlons delighted in riddles, and it's mind quickly grasped the implications of what Lorien was suggesting.

"Yes"

"It will require one like you are now. One willing to die but desperate to live. One willing to risk all to save all. You must teach it, guide it, so it will be ready."

"I shall find it. I shall bring it to you. Farewell."


The Vorlon's iris closed in farewell. It turned away and began to float away.

"This may be your end, Vorlon. Will you be ready for that?"

There was no answer. The Vorlon floated away into the darkness.

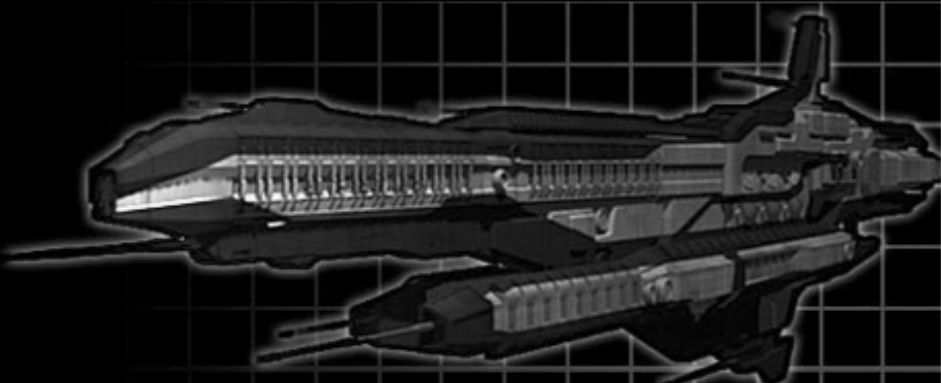
The Watcher looked out across the Cosmos, listening to the murmuring of the Dark Ones awaking above. It looked at the cosmos, about to be subjected to another turn of the balance. So it would look for many long Millennia. But IT looked now with a new, more pleasant emotion. IT looked on with Hope.

* * *



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Fleet Action Rules

Ships and Races

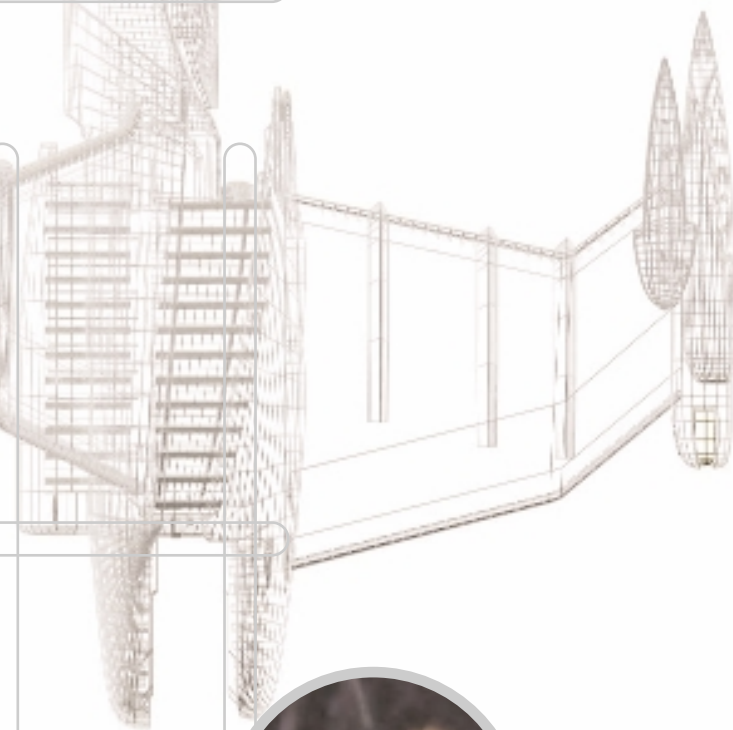
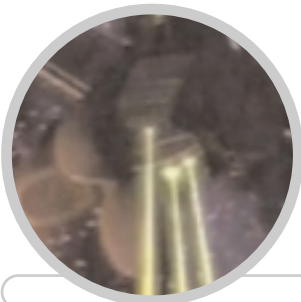
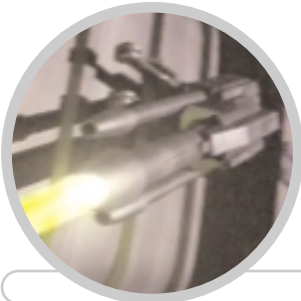
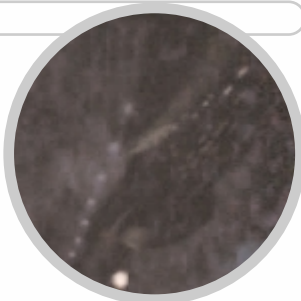
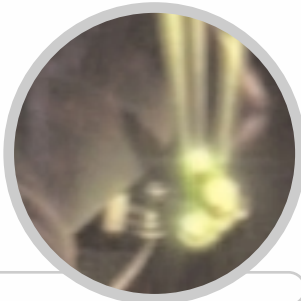
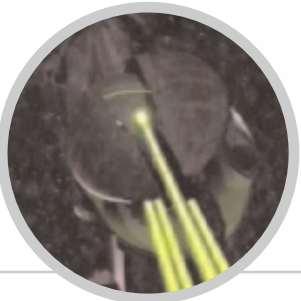
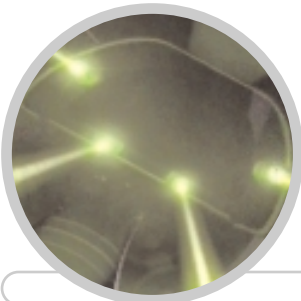
Alacans	The Balosians	Cascor
Civilians	Centauri	Descari
Dilgar Imperium	Earth Alliance	The First Ones
Gain Intelligence	Grome	Hurr
Hyach	Ipsha	Kor-Lyans
Interstellar Alliance	The Llort	Minbari Federation
Mitoc	Markab	Narn
Raiders	The Streib	Torata
Thirdspace Aliens		The Moradi (NEW)

Play Aids, Background, and General Rules

Thirdspace Background	Play-Aids
FA Faq	FA Tiered Ship Rarities
FA Ship Points Calculator	LCV Rules
	League 2 Rules

Conversions to Fleet Action

The front page was getting crowded, so all the mods for FA on my site can be found below





Strength through superior firepower: The Victory Class

A Call to Arms

This is the telemovie in which the Victory Class warships are first introduced.

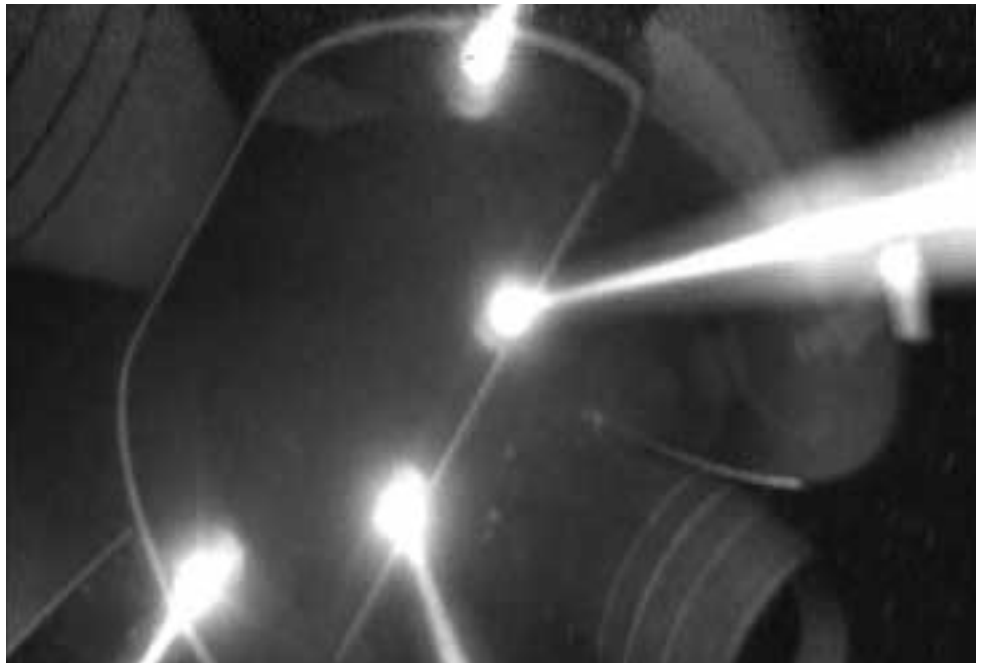
It is immediately apparent that JMS intended these warships to be something special.

This "specialness" is the cause of much dissent and disgust among Babylon 5 Wars fans. As JMS' plot intends, these ships are superior to everything in the Interstellar Alliance. Unfortunately, in game terms, this represents a major imbalance. Or does it?

All through the show, the Victory and Excalibur are only compared with Earth technology...

JMS also introduced several major flaws for the Victory Class in his script. He is at pains to emphasize their "prototype" nature.

Do these flaws represent a balancing factor? Can they be used as an "excuse" to balance these vessels in terms of B5W? Let the reader decide. Here is a frame-by-frame analysis of the performance of the Excalibur and Victory during this telemovie.



REVELATIONS

"A job like this. Reverse engineering Minbari and Vorlon technology so it'll work with Human tech... it's never been done before."

- President Sheridan

"Yeah, but once we're done, you are going to have the leanest and meanest fleet on the block."

"Of course, once the other races find out about it, they're going to go nuts!"

- Garibaldi

President Sheridan is introduced to the new Interstellar Alliance warships via the viewscreen of a White Star. He sees a large rotating construction facility, with two static pylons jutting from either side. The ships attached to those pylons look like a throwback to the 1950s cartoons that Michael Garibaldi is so fond of watching. They are a sleek, three finned vessel as seen in Duck Dodgers. They differ only in the detail from ships seen in shows such as Flash Gordon. Soon, President Sheridan is ushered aboard one of the ships for a "special tour".

"So far we've only been able to get the Gravitic

propulsion system to provide a workable gravity of slightly less than 1g. After three months of trying, Mr. Garibaldi suggested we declare victory and move on."

- Head of Construction, Samuel Drake

From the point of introduction, the condition of the Victory and Excalibur is emphasized as being in the final phase of fit-out (where all internal appliances, fittings, stores, amenities are installed). Welding is even continuing on the entrance shaft to the main bridge. These ships are obviously not finished.

"We decided on a non-standard bridge configuration based on the submarine model, linear, instead of circular. From the captain's chair it's a straight throwback and across to the other compartments - map room, conference room, navigation and helm controls, com system, weapons. We designed the controls along Earthforce lines to make them easier for us to deal with. The system's very intuitive. You can run it like any other ship. It's what's inside that sets her apart from anything else that's out there."

- Samuel Drake

Here JMS reveals his desire for these ships to have large Earth crews. Not necessarily Earthforce, but at least a majority of Earth-sourced Rangers. Naturally, it's a convenient plot point - for the crew of an Earth Omega destroyer to quickly take effective control of the ships. And for Gideon's crew from his Explorer class vessel to take over the Excalibur on behalf of Earthforce in Crusade.

Once again, JMS emphasizes the unfinished status of these ships. He introduces propulsion system problems - an engine flareout on the first operational test. This proved difficult to rectify - as the ship required towage to the firing range by two dozen shuttles.

"All hands prepare for level one test firing, repeat, prepare for level one test firing..."

- Samuel Drake

"Well, I'm a little disappointed. That wasn't much more firepower than the average White star. Now these ships are supposed to pack a bigger punch."

- President Sheridan

"Well, then I guess we're going to have to deliver on that promise. You see, that was Level 1."



Excalibur defence grid

Excalibur's tertiary armament - its defensive grid or anti-fighter weaponry - is the hardest to discern from the visual evidence.

There simply is not a lot of it in A Call to Arms. And what there is is not clear.

We know it exists: we see the streams of blue pulses lashing outward from both the Victory and Excalibur.

But the source of these pulses is often hidden.

The clearest location of one of these guns in just under the docking bay "chin".

Other streams appear to come from under the main bridge.

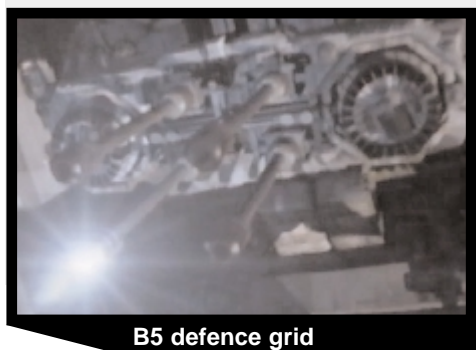
One scene appears to indicate streams coming from the midpoint of the right wing and the right wing nacelle.

An interpolation of this points to a possible eight emplacements - two mounts on each wing, one mount under the bridge and another under the docking bay.

We do not see them as gattling guns in A Call to Arms. Only Crusade. But the gattling guns in Crusade fire the same blue pulses. I assume this means the guns were added when money became available for CGI - and were there all along.

In my mind, these are clearly weapons on the scale of Babylon 5's defensive weaponry. Their rate of fire and blue pulses are almost identical.

The gattling guns are almost exclusively shown used against fighters and small combat craft - except during the Victory's suicide plunge into the Shadow Death Cloud.



B5 defence grid

Drake, go to Level 2."

- Garibaldi

Front Guns: This is a most revealing sequence. With these words, JMS' places a component of the Victory class' firepower in direct relationship with another known vessel - the White Star. The firepower used in the test firing consists of a volley from the four secondary guns in the nose. These beams are a yellow-green. It appears they have much more yellow in them than the Minbari beams we are used to seeing. For someone wishing to establish a start-point for building a Victory class SCS, establishing the average firepower of a White Star should not be difficult. The four guns in the nose cone are not "much more firepower than the average White Star". How much extra firepower "not much more" means is subjective - but is not likely to be more than 25 per cent.

"Sir, about the main guns. There's a slight... complication. The enhanced weapons array is based loosely on Vorlon designs. They're intended to be used in ships far more advanced than we're capable of building with a far greater energy reserve. Firing the main guns takes virtually all of our power - so they should be used only as a last resort..."

- Samuel Drake

Hero Gun: Here JMS introduces us to the "Hero Weapon". A mega-cannon "based loosely" on Vorlon tech. We are shown - through brightness and excessive flare - that this gun is both big and powerful. It also smashes a large asteroid with ease. Impressive. As it is supposed to be. But JMS has, in the past, proven he has a fascination for "Hero Weapons". How many nukes did he explode? But, in this case, he introduces a flaw...

"As I said, it drains nearly all our energy, leaving barely enough for gravity control. We can't navigate or fire again for at least one minute."

- Samuel Drake

"Which leaves the ship vulnerable."

- President Sheridan

"Yes sir, for one minute."

- Samuel Drake

"A lot can happen in a minute."

- President Sheridan

JMS specifies it takes one minute before the Victory class establishes power for propulsion, navigation and self-defence. He does not specify how long it takes to build up the energy reserves to fire the "Hero Cannon" again. In fact, nowhere in the movie - or in the short-lived Crusade series - does the Excalibur or Victory ever fire more than one "Hero Cannon" shot per engagement. As JMS states through Drake, it is a weapon of "last resort". How does one minute of defencelessness, lack of steerage, convert to B5W? Again, this is subjective. But - whatever the case - it should be a window of opportunity to inflict great harm on this "super-battleship".

"The hull is a plasteel crystalline alloy capable

of reflecting 80 percent of energy weapons used against it, although, as I'm sure you can imagine, 20 percent can mount up pretty fast in a major battle..."

- Samuel Drake

Armor: Drake boasts as though this armor is something new - at least in Earth technology terms. But we don't know how much "energy weapon" fire Earthforce armor can deflect. We don't know how much Minbari armor can deflect. Perhaps the same amount? Perhaps a little less? Put simply, we do not know. We see Drakh Raiders firing on White Stars in Lines of Communication. Some hits appear to do little damage. Others penetrate the White Stars' armor and do severe damage. The same applies to A Call to Arms. Some hits "flash" upon the surface of the armor. Others are shown to open up the hull, ripping apart internal structure and weapon systems.

"Well, speaking of which Mr President, we may have a serious problem. The type of forces you're talking about is beyond anything I've fought before. Now my ship can take us into the battle. But against odds like this you're going to need something a lot bigger and nastier than an Earth destroyer."

- Captain Anderson

Before battle is joined, JMS once again feels the need to emphasize to the audience that the Victory class is clearly superior to most known vessels. The Omega is one of the more powerful ships demonstrated in the series - other than the Sharlin. Obviously, Captain Anderson was suitably impressed by the Victory in comparison to the EAS Charon.

ENGAGEMENT 1

The prototype ISA destroyers are quickly put to the test. But the first test is hardly severe. Or perhaps it is - depending on what scale you accept the Drakh Raider to be.

The two Victory class destroyers encounter four Drakh Raiders. But are these Raiders the same that appeared to be about 3/4 the size of the White Stars in Lines of Communication? Or are they Superheavy fighters - five to six times longer than a Thunderbolt (as shown in the final battle of A Call to Arms where three Thunderbolts chase a Raider past a Warlock firing its missiles). Let the reader decide. In this engagement, two Raiders attack and two break off in an attempt to inform their home fleet.

ELINT: The Victory class ships are successful in jamming their transmissions.

The Drakh raiders open fire on the Victory first. Their cyan beams contain blue, wispy pulses. These are very similar to what was shown in Lines of Communication.

"Minor damage to the outer decks. The hull appears to be refracting away most of the energy."

- First officer



Armor: JMS once again points out the Victory classes improved armor. The Victory returns fire. **Front Guns:** The four forward guns open fire - for the first time - in anger. In this shot the yellow-green beams are shown to be rather thick - at least twice as wide as a Drakh Raider. If a Drakh Raider is 3/4 the size of a White Star - as shown in Lines of Communication - that makes these beams very big. If they are the superheavy fighters as implied by the single shot alongside the Warlock, then the size of the beam is not so significant. However, the Victory bridge crew do call them "ships", not "fighters". But, even in modern militaries, fighters are sometimes called "ships". Even on a fighter scale, when compared with the Minbari beams fired against Star Furies in the Battle of the Line (In the Beginning), these beams are much thicker.

Interestingly, it takes seven shots from the nose-mounted secibardt guns before a hit is registered on the first Raider.

The second Raider flees from the Victory, which pursues. We are not shown the outcome of this chase. The Excalibur continues its chase of the two that fled from the start of the engagement. It closes to within "2000 km to optimum firing range, closing fast...". Excalibur required 60 seconds before its greater speed made up that 2000 km deficit. However, the CGI seems to show the Excalibur right on the Raiders' tails... Artistic license? Either way, the Raiders were outside range of the front beams.

Hero Cannon: The "Hero Cannon" was the Excalibur's only option to prevent the Raiders from reporting. The mega-beam simply causes the Raiders to cease to exist. But Excalibur coasts - out of control - into the null-field.

Rear Guns: With power restored, the Excalibur is capable of doing an emergency 180 degree turn and flee - firing its four rear beams. These beams have the same yellow hue dominating the green composition. Like the forward guns, these rear guns appear to cycle - with two beams firing at any one time. The weapons rotate their firing pattern, allowing two to regenerate while the other two engage. As one beam powers down, a third starts up.

ENGAGEMENT 2

Front Guns: The Earth and Interstellar Alliance ships engage the Drakh Fleet.

Excalibur opens fire against one of the Drakh capital ships - similar in appearance to what was seen in Lines of Communication. But scale is, once again, an issue. We don't know how big they are. They certainly don't seem to be as big as Babylon 5 itself - as it did in Lines of Communications. The Drakh warship takes a hit from all four secondary guns and is ripped in half. This compares with Earthforce ships in "In the Beginning" being destroyed by single hits from Minbari beams. Does this suggest the Drakh warships are tougher? Or is it artistic license? Victory opens fire with its four forward guns on a Drakh Mothership. These appear to penetrate the outer skin - but inflict only superficial damage - to its upper-left quarter hull.

Sensors: The Victory and Excalibur race to the



front of the main fleet. Excalibur uses its forward guns to probe the Shadow Cloud at a range of 10,000 km. "Fire forward guns, maximum power, full dispersion pattern.... Sir at this range the beams will disperse. It won't do any damage... I'm not looking to do any damage, I want to find out what that thing is made out of". An interesting use of guns. But one that produced results. Minutes later, the effort proved unnecessary.

"Scanners to maximum. Full spectrum, starting at infrared and moving outwards. Nothing we ever had before can penetrate that thing, lets see how advanced this ship really is.... C'mon, C'mon. I can paint this thing in oils by now."
- President Sheridan

The Excalibur's sensors (assisted by the main gun fire?) are - with more time than is convenient - able to penetrate Shadow stealth technology. Or perhaps simply reach further than previous sensors.

Turrets: The Victory class ships leave behind the forward peak of the Earth Alliance "flying wedge". As the Excalibur and Victory move into the midst of the enemy fleet, they switch - for the first time - to their turrets. We have previously been given close-ups of these turrets. And we are again here. Each turret has three barrels. One large central gun, flanked by two smaller barrels. The guns have the same yellow-green hue as the forward and rear guns - though perhaps less thick. Both these turrets are able to fire at the same time as either - but not both - the front or rear quad batteries. We see the rear quads firing at the Drakh attempting to pursue. The turret beams sweep from side to side at Drakh warships.

Tertiary Armament: Background chatter reveals that the tertiary weapons - the blue pulses, which appear so similar to the four-barreled guns seen in Severed Dreams - have difficulty getting target locks on the Drakh Raiders. It is not until Crusade that we see these gatling mounts look different to those on Babylon 5. But their pulses are very similar.

In the final sequences of the battle, there is a lot of the cyan-tube/blue pulse fire from the Drakh vessels. There are also a lot of tertiary blue pulses from the Victory and Excalibur. In some scenes, it is hard to distinguish the two - though

the ISA weaponry is more defined as a pulse.

"Sheridan, standard weapons fire isn't getting through..."
- Captain Anderson

Front Guns: The Shadow Death Cloud's technology is still superior to the basic armament of the Victory Class.

In desperation, one ship resolves to fire the Hero cannon - while the second provides covering fire during the ensuing minute of vulnerability.

Hero Cannon: The first mega-gun burst smacks down most ships in their path.

The Victory abandons the powerless Excalibur, forging ahead.

Turrets: We see the Victory's two turrets firing three sets of yellow/green beams from each mount at the defending Drakh Raiders.

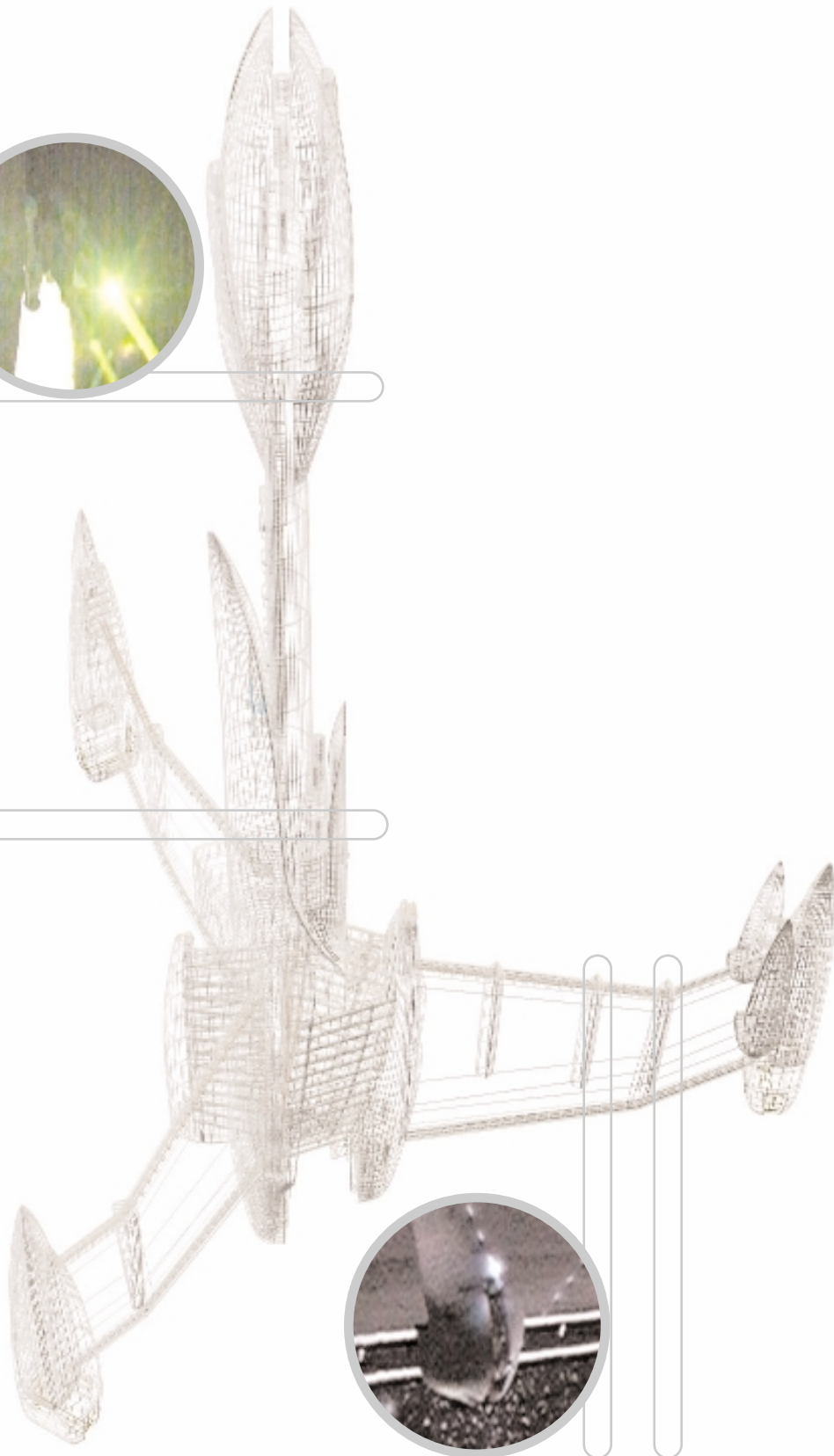
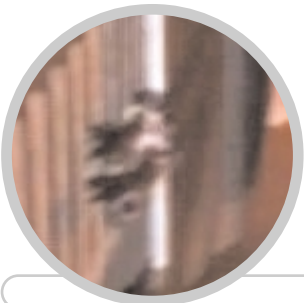
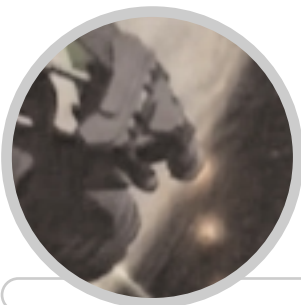
Tertiary Armament: We see streams of blue pulses fired forward at the rapidly closing Shadow Death Cloud command centre. If you've ever seen footage of AA fire from during the Gulf War, that's what this looks like. Adding to the confusion, there are cyan-blue Drakh beams - also coming from behind - missing the Victory. These close range beams also come at the Victory from the command centre - after its magenta beams have fired.

Careful analysis of the shots shows the secondary blue pulses coming from:

- A strong cluster of shots comes from under the main bridge
- Streams appear to come from the mid-point of each "wing"
- Streams appear to come from the nacelles at the end of each "wing"
- A stream is shown firing from the "lip" under the docking bay.

Some blue pulses appear to be coming from behind Victory. Perhaps this is Excalibur providing covering fire? Perhaps not - if it is still afflicted by a power outage. That is not answered - but the Excalibur is able to power up its engines to maximum to flee the closing of the Death Cloud. As Excalibur runs, there is more close-range defensive fire.

There are three streams of blue beams coming from its side superstructure: perhaps from under the bridge, the left-wing midpoint, and the left-wing nacelle.





Gunship diplomacy?

A close look at the refitted Excalibur

TRANSITION

JMS reveals his intentions for the future of the surviving Victory Class destroyer - the Excalibur - at the very end of A Call to Arms through the words of President Sheridan:

"We'll turn the Excalibur into a travelling research vessel, manned by the best crew we can find. The Rangers will search every corner of space, looking for clues to a cure. Then the Excalibur, and her crew, will go in to follow it up. Legend said that one day the real Excalibur would return in our greatest hour of need. I guess this is it..."

The Drakh hit the construction dock on their way out. Years of work wiped out in a second. Oh we'll start over, but it will take time. Until then, the Excalibur is the only one of her kind."

Crusade

"We need the right ship and the right person to find that cure. The right ship is the Excalibur, prototype destroyer, top of the line..."

- Planetary Security Operative Ames

In keeping with President Sheridan's words, the Excalibur in Crusade is not exactly the same as the vessel seen in A Call to Arms. It looks the same. But there are key differences.

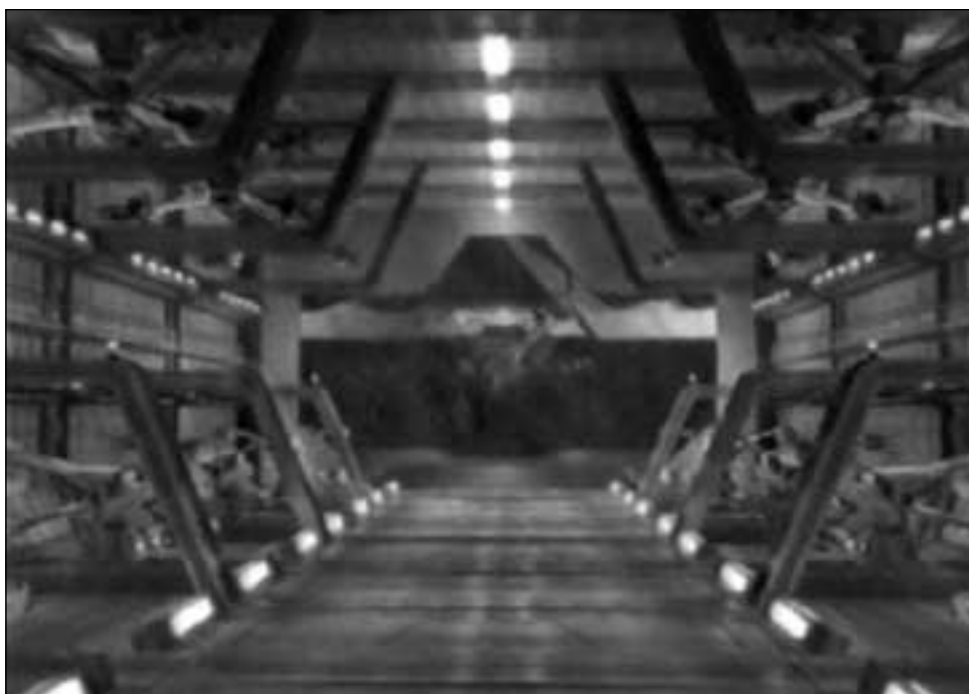
- The turrets have different properties
- The tertiary armament is redistributed.
- The ship has a full fighter compliment.

The Excalibur is not in an ISA commission. It has no aliens on its crew. It has no Rangers aboard as crewmembers either. It is entirely crewed by Earthforce personnel. Most, we are told, come from Captain Gideon's previous command - an Explorer class vessel. But there are obviously Marine/Gropos detachments, military and scientific teams, fighter squadrons and support staff... and many more.

War Zone

"A mile and a quarter long. The most advanced and fastest ship ever built by humans. It's beautiful."

- Captain Gideon



This is both a boast - and a leveller. One cannot miss the rider - "built by humans".

It is also the first open declaration of the Excalibur's size. Now there is something quantitative to start scaling the vessel from.

"She's quite a ship. We're still screwing down some of the nuts and bolts, but I think she'll be just fine."

- First Lieutenant John Matheson

Several Drakh Warships arrive, deploying fighters.

We get a deep-field shot of the Excalibur firing its yellow/green forward and rear guns in self-defence. No turrets are engaged. No tertiary armament fire. Just the glow of its fighters in close escort. A cut to a close-up, shows the main forward beams cycling through their firing pattern. Then, for the first time, we cut to a close-up of a tertiary armament emplacement. This is the first we have seen of this emplacement - partway up the upper fin. Several streams of blue pulses are being emitted from rotating gatling-type guns. These blue pulses are the same as seen in A Call to Arms.

They are similar to that seen in Severed Dreams.

This leads to the speculation that the gatling guns are a new version of the defensive weapons previously seen on Babylon 5. This armored emplacement holds three of the gatling guns. Two can fire to each side. The central gun has the widest available arc - forward and to each side.

Front Guns: There is a shot where three of the forward yellow/green beams converge on a Drakh Warship - vaporizing it. It is a much more dramatic impact and explosion than where we see a Victory cut a Drakh warship in half during A Call to Arms.

Turret: The forward turret is also shown doing something different. It is firing red/orange pulses from its larger central barrel. It is firing while the forward beams are firing - but none of the other beams or turrets appear to be firing in that particular shot.

Tertiary Armament: A short scene showing Drakh Raiders advancing on the Excalibur shows the gatling guns engaging. These blue pulses are shown to hit and damage - and to hit and destroy - these Drakh craft. The gatling guns are not one-shot wonders against these craft.



Victory Class turret

The turrets during A Call to Arms are a triple mount shown firing one big yellow/green beam, and two smaller yellow/green beams.

This conforms to the single long, large central barrel and two thinner barrels on either side.

One unusual feature of the forward mount is that it sits on an extendible bar-bette.

When in its "base" position, the forward turret has a firing arc limited to its rear quarter. When extended, it can fire over the huge armored "petals" that encompass the nose of the ship.

These "petals" appear to be very constricting - affecting the arcs of the turret and the four main guns encased in the bow. However, these armored plates are obviously there to protect sensitive machinery and sensors from the flare of the "Hero Cannon's" convergence. Without the "petals", the weapons and sensors would likely be damaged.

In A Call to Arms, we often see one turret firing and either the bow or stern set of four main guns.

When we see the two turrets firing together, the bow and stern guns are silent.

By the time of Crusade, the middle gun is replaced by a red pulse. Perhaps a Heavy or Medium Pulse?

It is an upgrade that was likely made to enhance the anti-fighter ability of the Victory class. This is the primary role that the red-pulse turret is observed in during the short-run Crusade TV series.

"Last cruiser is on an intercept... She's going to ram us. Forward guns out of commission."

- First Lieutenant Matheson

This is the only indication in the episode to this point that the Excalibur has taken damage. But it may not mean the ship has been hurt. It may be that these new guns have simply failed - as the King George V's guns failed in its engagement against the Bismarck. (King George V was rushed into service - with construction workers still aboard - to hunt down the German raider).

Turret: Only the forward turret - shown firing its pulses against Drakh Raiders - remains in action. At no time during the episode do we see the second turret - under the bridge - in action.

Hero Cannon: In its moment of peril, Excalibur uses its Hero Cannon to destroy the flaming enemy cruiser before it hits. Excalibur suffers power-down, but the remaining Drakh Raiders are occupied by the defensive fighters.

Racing The Night

Sensors: The Excalibur's sensors were able to "focus the scanners and pick up the electromagnetic traces". From these scans, the Excalibur is capable of penetrating underground and determining high-resolution imagery of the network of tunnels - and what is in them. Right down to the scale of cryogenically suspended life forms and the architecture of the hall they are stored in. Sensors then detect the planetary launch of robot fighters.

"Primary and secondary weapons array online. Fighters taking up defensive positions."

- First Lieutenant Matheson

Fighter Launch: We have seen craft recovered by the "chin" docking bay in the past. Both shuttles and fighters. But in this episode we see a hydraulic pylon extend from beneath the ship holding three Thunderbolts, ready to launch. These fighters may be an "Alert 5" response wing - fighters held at action stations at all times to be the initial response to an emergency. The remainder may launch from the "chin", or other hydraulic systems. We are not shown how many of these "hydraulic launchers" there are. One shot reveals the first "wave" of fighters launched from the Excalibur include three Star Furies and nine Thunderbolts. Subsequent shots show many more fighters than this - but not more than we would associate with the standard Omega.

A flight of Thunderbolts moves away from the Excalibur as a forward intercept group. No Star Furies are seen in this shot - implying the Star Furies are used for close escort. This flight consists of 17 Thunderbolts. They do not stop all of the robot fighters from breaking through. These close upon the Excalibur, which activates its forward pulse turret and four front yellow/green beams. In one very brief shot, we see a stream of orange/red pulses coming from the second turret, which is positioned just before the main bridge. Seven of the Excalibur's Thunderbolts have been sent on a strike mission to the planet's surface. That brings the observed total to 24

Thunderbolts. Another shot shows Star Furies in close proximity to the Excalibur engaging the robot fighters.

Tertiary Armament: There are no "blue pulses" in this sequence - or any preceding this - other than what we see coming from the Star Furies. Then the Thunderbolts join the fray. These also fight in close proximity to the Excalibur. Again, there is no sign of Excalibur's secondary armament. Another shot shows Thunderbolts and Star Furies in action around the Excalibur, with the Excalibur's forward red-pulse turret taking snapshots. Again, we see no activity from the gatling pulse guns.

"Sir, firing the main guns takes up all available power except gravity and life support. We'll be dead in space for at least a minute afterwards."

- First Lieutenant Matheson

"I've read the driver's manual, Lieutenant".

- Captain Gideon.

"Power loss. 53 seconds until rebuild".

- Crewman

"Routing all power reserves to life support and gravity control".

- Crew woman

Main Gun: The explosion on the planet's surface looks similar to a major meteor strike. Bigger even, than the impact events shown when the Centauri bombarded Narn. Mass drivers may be banned under interstellar convention. But it looks as though the ISA has got around the problem by building an energy weapon that falls outside the terms of that treaty - but produces an even more devastating effect. And they've handed it over to Earth.

Memory Of War

Sensors: The Excalibur is shown deploying hundreds of golf-ball sized probelets from orbit. These exit the ship from a hatch just forward of the docking bay "chin".

They have some form of propulsion, as they are shown dispersing above the atmosphere. Given the on-board sensor power as displayed in "Racing the Night", one wonders what they are needed for.

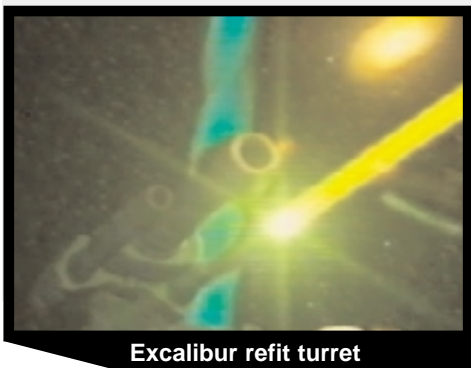
Each Night I Dream Of Home

"Sir we have three Drakh Heavy Attack Ships on approach, just came out of hyperspace".

- First Lieutenant Matheson.

Six ships jump in on the Excalibur: three Heavy Attack Ships from the front, two Heavy Attack Ships and a Mother Ship from the rear. The battle jumps to showing solid blue/cyan beams being emitted from the front of these Drakh ships.

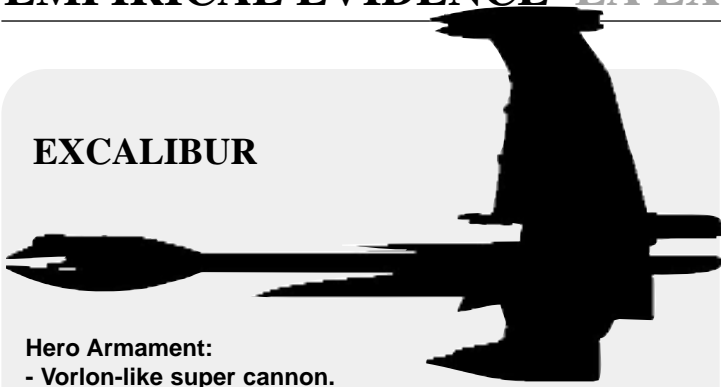
Tertiary armament: A cut to the Excalibur shows the beam hitting the Excalibur's upper wing - but being refracted. In the same shot, a Raider flashes past - and we see the Gatling gun emplacement firing in multiple directions. However, we also see two streams of blue puls-



Excalibur refit turret



EXCALIBUR



Hero Armament:

- Vorlon-like super cannon.

Secondary Armament

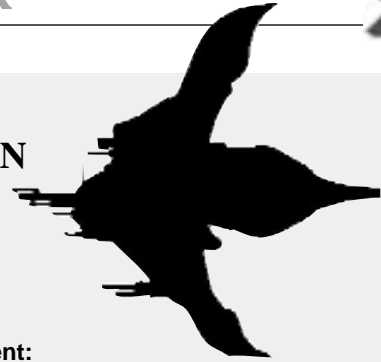
- Forward Main Guns: 4 beams
- Rear Main Guns: 4 beams
- Two turrets: each with one pulse, two beams

Tertiary Armament

- Three gatling guns in upper wing emplacement
- Each of the three wings has two emplacements, each with three gatling guns.

Fighters = 24(?) Thunderbolt, 12(?) Star Fury

SHARLIN



Hero Armament:

- Heavy green beam from bulge at base of upper fin (As seen in Season 1 B5 and Thirdspace).

Secondary Armament

- 4 Forward firing Neutron Lasers
- 2 Rear firing Neutron Lasers

Secondary Armament

- 1 Forward electro pulse gun
- 10 forward and side fusion cannons
- 8 rear and side fusion cannons

Fighters = 24 Nial

es coming from the junction point above it. This implies that all of the "bulges" from Excalibur's "wings" hold at least two - possibly three - gatling guns. To emphasize the gatling guns, we are given a close-up of a barrel firing from one of the emplacements - which emplacement is not clear. A later shot - of a Star Fury dodging a beam from one of the warships with the Excalibur in the background - confirms that there are two active gatling emplacements on the fin above the bridge.

Damage: After two hits from the Drakh's main gun, the Excalibur reports damage.

"Targeting system hit. Accuracy down 30 percent".

A third hit registers: *"Hull integrity down 10 percent".*

A fourth hit registers: *"Manual controls. We need room to manoeuvre, they're going to start pecking away at us until something gives".*

Fighters: We are given what may be a "stock" shot of Thunderbolts surging away from the Excalibur. About 20 fighters can be counted.

Turrets: We see one of the turrets in action. The three-barreled gun is seen firing yellow/green beams from its outer barrels - and firing red/orange pulses from its central barrel. Unlike some reports, I have not seen this central barrel firing a yellow/green beam at all during the Crusade series.

"We've taken out two more but they're getting replacements from the Mothership... Ship to ship com is hit, we've lost contact with the fighters".

- First Lieutenant Matheson.

The Drakh Mothership is shown launching a further two Heavy Attack Ships - bringing the total Attack Ship force opposing the Excalibur to seven.

Secondary guns: The Excalibur's four forward beams are shown firing. This time the beam - as in A Call to Arms - does not dwarf the Raider.



Instead, the four beams pass it by - until two converge upon it, destroying it. Is this a return to the White Star sizing of the Raider? Or are the CGI artists still unsure?

Raider: A few frames of bridge footage, where Matheson returns to his console, shows a Thunderbolt being pursued by a Raider - the raider's cyan beam fragmenting into pulses. This Raider looks to be four or five times longer than the Thunderbolt. Clearly, it is not at the 3/4 White Star scale as in Lines of Communication. An earlier shot shows two missiles fired from a Thunderbolt strike an oncoming Drakh Raider. The Raider explodes.

Damage: Excalibur is being badly battered. Captain Gideon determines he has to run from the three surviving Heavy Attack Ships. He resolves to "scare" the Mothership back into hyperspace by appearing to attempt to ram it. When it enters hyperspace, Gideon intends to use the same jump-point before it closes. Gideon is even prepared to abandon his entire fighter wing. He must be convinced that the

Excalibur is facing a threat beyond its ability to survive.

Secondary guns: Excalibur flees, firing its forward battery of four beams and aft battery of four beams. The turrets have fallen silent. The rear beams are shown firing at, presumably, pursuing Raiders and Heavy Attack Ships. The forward beams are shooting at the Mothership, without any obvious effect. Excalibur follows the Mothership into hyperspace. Her fighters, having guessed Gideon's intent, are clustered safely close by.

Main Gun: The Vorlon-based cannon is used once again to save the day. The beam at first misses, and is then shown slicing through the rear engine extensions of the Mothership. The ship then explodes. The Mothership was enormous. But its scale against the Excalibur is unclear - though the impression given during the pursuit is that it is much bigger. How can the "Hero Cannon" take down such a ship so easily? Perhaps it was the volatility of hyperspace. At least, I hope that's a good excuse...

DOES the Excalibur have to be the super battleship it is so often presented as?

I don't think the evidence supports this. The ship - as presented in "A Call the Arms" and "Crusade" - is by no means the perfect fighting machine. But it is a very exciting ship for the Earthforce personnel who see it. It is always compared to Earth tech. And Earth is by no means the most advanced race on the block. Sure, it has a Hero Cannon. That, in itself unbalances the ship. But the rest - including main guns, armor and fighter compliment - is nothing exciting. And why should it be? It is mostly "reverse engineered" Minbari technology. Reverse engineered does not mean the tech is better than Vorlon or Minbari technology. It just means it is alien technology modified to suit Earthforce systems. As the Minbari are the toughest boys on the block, their weapons and armor must represent a "high-water mark" for the bulk of the Victory class' systems, weapons and armor.

The Hero Cannon

The main gun - "reverse engineered" Vorlon technology, is repeatedly portrayed as a "one-shot" weapon. Not even in the extensive Battle of Earth does the Victory or Excalibur fire this weapon more than once. This may represent more than just a fear of the vulnerability during the "power-up" phase. The blast drains the ship's power banks. It takes one minute before the reactors can push enough energy back in to the ship's systems for them to become operational. But what does this mean? Are the main guns operational?

The Hero Cannon - as a plot point - has only been used so far to "end" an engagement. At best, we see the Excalibur at high speed, fleeing the Shadow Death cloud, firing its secondary armament. The lights coming back on after one minute certainly does not mean the "power banks" are recharged. It just means the reactors have been able to meet existing demand. These power banks can be assumed to be huge batteries. An awful lot of energy would have to be stored to power the Hero Cannon. Given the openly declared "weakness" of Earthforce reactors compared with Vorlon energy sources, it would probably take a long time to recharge these batteries.

It would be far, far longer than



one minute. It would be far more than just a few hours. I imagine it would take up to a day of hard work on the reactors behalf to generate enough energy - energy equivalent to a medium sized asteroid impact. That's hundreds of megatons.

Once fired, the Hero Cannon is useless. And there may be severe consequences

I suspect with the reactors diverting power to recharging the energy banks - that there is not enough left to fully power the engines, the main guns and the secondary armament.

A new "power bank" device would have to be created for any SCS. Perhaps this energy could - under special rules - be tapped by other systems in emergencies. But, most likely, this energy would only be suitable for the Hero Cannon.

Armor

Apart from the Hero Cannon, the only other major contentious issue is the armor of the Victory class. We're told this refracts 80 percent of energy weapons. So what?

Does Earthforce armor refract 20 percent? Does Minbari armor refract 75 percent?

This armor must be "reverse engineered" from Minbari or other tech. The Vorlons use organic

ships. These ships would not have crystalline armor. For the first time in the Babylon 5 series and movies, we directly see the ablative effects of armor. A flash on the hull, a scorch mark.

But we've seen other ships - both White Stars and capital ships - take hits without producing secondary explosions before. Crusade does give us some measure of the Excalibur's protection. In "Each Night I Dream of Home", the ship is hit repeatedly by Drakh Heavy Attack Ships. The Excalibur is forced to flee. Its captain does not believe it can win - or survive - the engagement with seven Drakh warships and one mothership. There is some hint of critical systems being affected with each hit - see the Empirical Evidence article for details. So the armor is not impervious. Nor may it be significantly stronger than Minbari armor.

Main Guns

The main guns of the Victory class are as poorly defined as any other weapon system shown in B5. Remember the Minbari beams vaporising Hyperions, Novas and (prototype?) Omegas in "In the Beginning"? Compare this to "A Call to Arms" in which four of the

Excalibur's beams are needed to cut a Drakh warship in half.

Obviously, you cannot compare. Equally obvious, in my mind, is that the Excalibur's main guns are no more powerful than existing Minbari weaponry. Sheridan expresses his disappointment during the test firing procedure. Being barely better than the firepower of a White Star may have been a bit of a harsh statement on Sheridan's behalf. But the Excalibur is almost certainly only barely better than a Sharlin. We're told the Victory class is "reverse engineered". Not "new" technology. Therefore, I believe the main guns would be nothing other than Improved Neutron Lasers.

Fighter Compliment

What sort of fighter capacity does the Excalibur have?

Well, judging from what we see during Crusade - this is not a super carrier.

At any one time we can account for generally no more than 24 Thunderbolts. And the Star Furies are always depicted as being fewer in number - lets say 12.

In the episodes Each Night I Dream of Home and Racing the Night we see Thunderbolts and Star Furies "braced" against the floor and ceiling of the Excalibur's entry bay in four rows of six. In earlier episodes - and in the telemovie - this section is shown as being empty. There are also a few Thunderbolts and shuttles shown on turntables along the back wall.

In my opinion, the standard number of fighters would be 24 Thunderbolts and 12 Star Furies.

In an emergency, the Excalibur can probably carry an extra 12 Star Furies and 12 Thunderbolts in the entry bay.

Propulsion

In "Crusade", the Excalibur is almost always shown virtually dead in space, with enemy ships moving around it. In "A Call to Arms", we see Excalibur out-run, but not substantially, Warlocks and Omegas. We are told at the start of "Crusade" that it is the fastest ship Earth has ever built. Let's face it, that's not hard to do... The Victory class looks to be only marginally more manoeuvrable than a Sharlin. It is clearly out-manoeuvred by Drakh Heavy Attack Ships. It is certainly not nimble.

By ARCHANGEL
Based on the notes by
DIOGENES

Victory class

Lightning Concentrator

This weapon is the most spectacular example of Interstellar Alliance technology, causing massive amounts of damage when it hits. The designers bill it as a case of reverse engineered Vorlon technology. While this is partially true, it is also a spectacular case of wishful thinking.

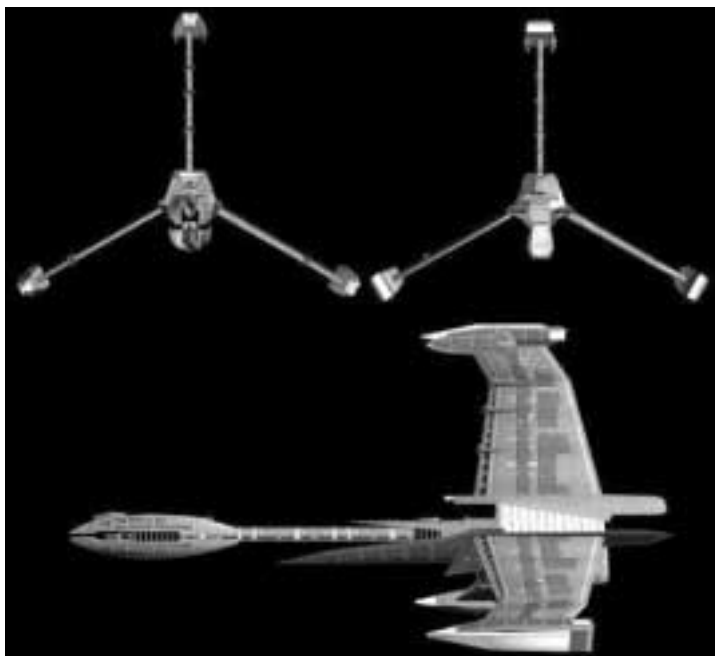
When the need for an Interstellar Alliance fleet was being discussed, the Gaim wishing to improve their standing amongst the interstellar community (and win friends against some future disagreements), offered to supply examples of their Particle Concentrator technology for the project. A human engineer (coming from the one race that had never faced a Vorlon ship in battle and going on vague descriptions of their weapons) saw the description of the concentrator; he thought that he had the answer to the Lightning Cannon.

The development team (composed of many races) became very enthusiastic about this idea and applied the various bits and pieces of Vorlon technology supplied by the Minbari to the weapon.

They had vague theories about how a Lightning Cannon worked and knew that it had an onboard energy source. So they built a prototype with an energy battery, applied the various Vorlon technologies they had and let rip.

The resulting beam, while a slightly different colour, was exactly the same as a Gaim Particle Concentrator.

The team worked for weeks altering configurations with no results, until finally the weapon did not work at all, just gave a vague glow. Out of sheer frustration, the Team Director (a Narn) ordered every bit of energy from the storage device poured into the array. The results were needless to say, spectacular. The array formed a cone of energy that began absorbing every bit of energy from the research station, several freighters, a nearby mining ship and a couple of diplomatic ships that happened to be passing by. It then released a totally uncontrolled beam of energy, which blew a hole through three asteroids and finally blew out the main TV relay for the entire sector (much to everyone's relief).



The development team sat in silence inside the smoke filled control room, and thought they might be onto something.

GAME INFORMATION: The weapon as fitted in the Victory Class Destroyer can best be described as a Vorlon mutated Particle Concentrator. When activated, it uses the stored energy to create a self-sustaining runaway energy reaction that pulls all surrounding energy into itself. The main control the designers were able to place onto it was limiting the drain to the firing ship. When it has run out of readily available energy it releases it in a beam of electromagnetic force, which blows straight through the target. When it hits the damage is split into piercing segments as normal. However, each volley is resolved as a standard volley in its specific segment of the hull (similar to a Shadow Heavy Molecular Slicer)

The consequences on the firing ship are severe. First every system on the ship shuts down for four turns and cannot be activated till the four turns has passed. The ship operates under the effects of a maximum C&C critical till this time is over, beginning the round after firing. After this time has elapsed however, the ship is not out of the woods. First, it operates as under the 21-23 on the C&C critical chart for the next three turns. Second, the Energy Storage device begins to recharge itself once the ship is back online, draining an amount of power from the ships systems equal to the number in the Power Bank icon. Systems must be shut down to cover this loss. Note: Much as he

might like to, the Captain cannot "shut down" the Power Bank. Part of the energy is going into stabilising the Energy Concentrator array after firing. If that energy is not paid, the array will start cutting into the hull with uncontrolled releases of energy (if people really want me to write rules for this option, I will). If the Bank is destroyed, half the listed energy must still be paid to cover this until it is repaired. This restriction lasts until the Bank is refilled, at which point the Lightning Concentrator may be reused. Assume that each box can hold 12 points of power. Note: it is not possible to hot load the capacitor by pouring more power into it. If the Bank has been damaged, reduce the Concentrator damage by a quarter for each seven points of damage suffered. If you have lost a Concentrator Array reduce damage by a third for each one lost. These effects are cumulative.

Proton laser

A lighter version of the Standard Minbari Neutron Laser; this weapon is not generally used by the Minbari except on light vessels and some Civilian escorts. The Minbari find the Neutron Laser adequate for their purposes. This laser was a welcome addition to the Victory class armament.

Triple Laser-Pulse Array

The Earth Alliance has become adept at fitting multiple weapons into a single housing. Utilising this knowledge, along with advice from the Abbai and Vree, they produced the turret. All guns in the turret are independent weapons, though if

they select different targets they must be within the same 60-degree arc. The Heavy Pulse Cannon is the standard version found across the galaxy. The Quantum Laser is a light laser no longer used by the Minbari, who disliked its short range, relatively high power consumption, and slow recharge time. It's perfect for use in this turret however.

The forward turret on the Victory may be withdrawn into the hull at any time by the captain, who makes the decision during the Adjust Ship Systems for Power Segment. This is also the assumed status at any time other than full alert. When it is inside the hull it uses the second armour value in brackets

Advanced Heavy Interceptor Battery

This is the primary defensive weapon on the Victory. It cannot generate an energy web, but it gains the ability to shoot at Light Combat Vessels as well as Fighters. In all other respects it is identical to the Earth Alliance version

Excalibur refit

Ready Hangar

This is a new experimental launching platform installed in the Excalibur. All the Thunderbolts in the hangar are available to launch at any time, no matter the alert status of the ship. However the stresses on the relatively flimsy launch spindle are extreme and the ship cannot manoeuvre or accelerate/decelerate on the launch turn in order to prevent damage to the fighters. If it does so, roll a d6 for each fighter. On a one the fighter immediately drops out, due to smashing off the side of the launch bay and suffering damage. The captain need not launch both flights at once.

Fighters cannot land in this hangar. They must use the Main hangar to land. Fighters may transfer from one hangar to the other at the rate of one flight per turn.

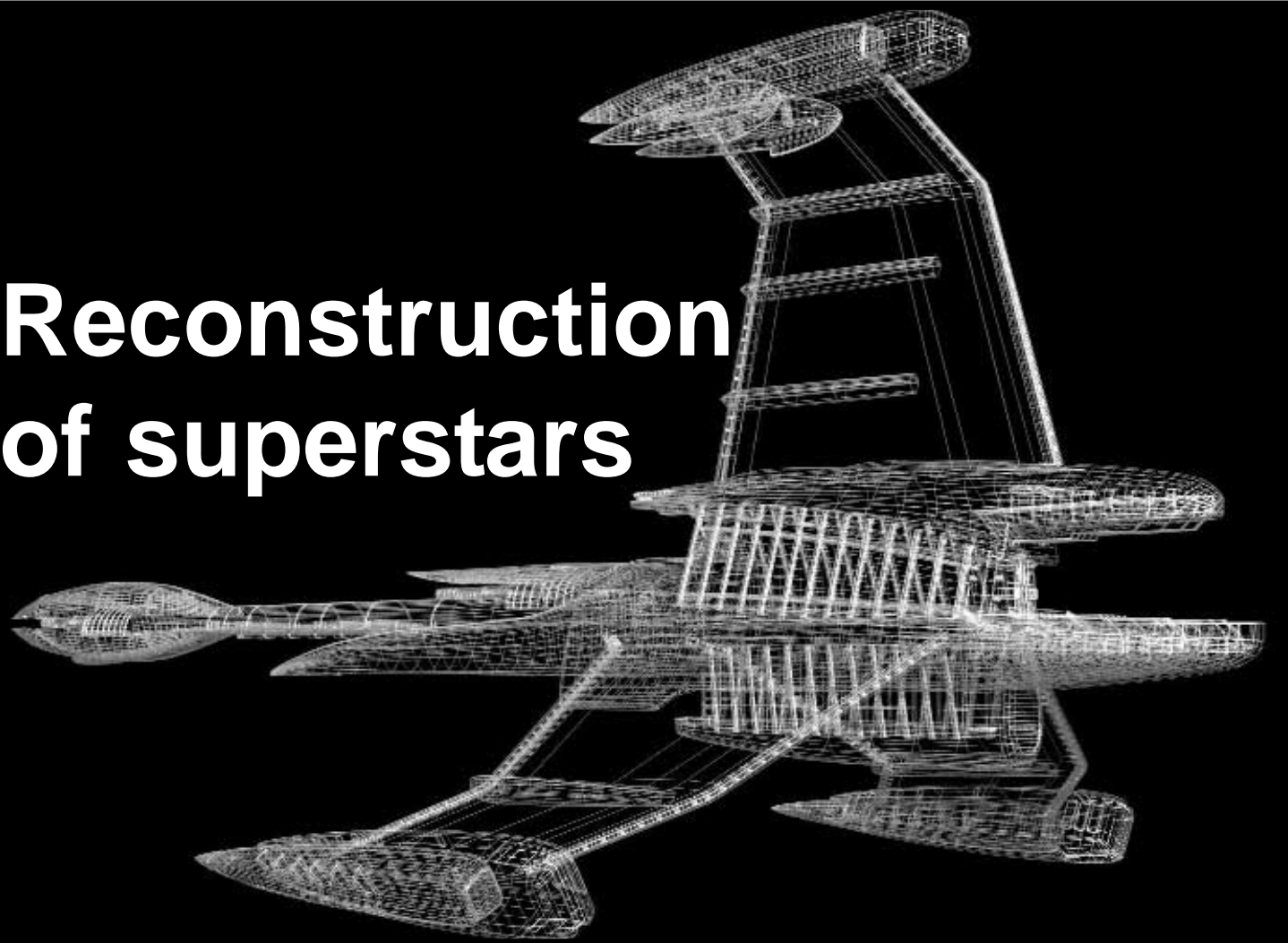
Power Bank

It was necessary to increase the capacity of the batteries as various instabilities were noticed in the beam during final testing in the refit yards. This also had the effect of increasing the power drain from the capacitors, but increased the margin of safety dramatically.

* * *

(The SCSs for these ships are in the Attachment's folder)

Reconstruction of superstars



I.S.A. Victory Class Advanced Destroyer
By CHARLES TAYLOR

AS PROTOTYPES of a new generation of advanced starships, the Victory Class Destroyers feature a number of unique, experimental systems in their construction. As the 'flagships' of the Interstellar Alliance, it was hoped that they would be representative of the combined efforts of the I.S.A. member states. In the end, only four really contributed to this project. The Earth Alliance and the newly independent Free Mars gave the largest contribution in the form of construction facilities and engineering from the Edgers/Garibaldi Industries Space Technologies Division.

Given the early I.S.A. political situation, the Victory program was possibly a political sop to the post civil war EA and post independence Free Mars (possibly an attempt by President Sheridan to heal the rift between humanities two oldest worlds as well).

The Minbari provided technical assistance on several of the 'new' technologies used on the Victory class ships, as well as an advanced sensor suite and command-and-control systems. They also provided the Vorlon weapon components (a legacy of the White Star program) as well as expertise gained on the White Star program.

The only other member state to contribute was the Abbai, who provided their Particle Impeder technology.

Special Rules and Notes



Discharge Lance

This is the most experimental system on board the Victory Class Destroyer. It is an attempt to install a Vorlon weapon system onto a younger race hull, and can be considered less than wholly successful. The actual weapon started out as a Discharge Cannon, one of two originally destined for a proposed Minbari/Vorlon hybrid technology cruiser (possibly the Rath'Dial strike cruiser) that never went into full production with that weapon, probably due to the same energy-management problems that plagued their installation on the Victory class. The Discharge Gun and Cannon weapons, like their larger 'cousins' the Lightning Gun and Cannon, comprise four 'prongs' each of which contributes to the overall output. By the time of the Victory prototypes (several years later), one of the prongs (which were in storage) had deteriorated for an unknown reason. It was decided to install the three remaining prongs from each cannon in each hull, leaving one prong for future experimentation. After much testing, experimentation, and after vastly enlarging the associated power conduits, it was found that the three remaining prongs could still make a formidable weapon, but at a cost. The resulting hybrid weapon, named the Discharge Lance, shows several differences from its original form.

Firstly, the hybrid weapon lacks the traverse capability that enabled the Vorlons to steer their beams through a wide arc from a fixed weapon, with the result that the weapon is limited to firing pretty much straight ahead with only slight deviations. This also reduced the fire control rating against smaller ships, and completely removed the anti-fighter and intercept capability of the weapon.

Second, although capable of more penetrating rakes than almost all younger race weapons (12 point rakes), its capability is reduced compared to the discharge cannon (15 point rakes).

Thirdly, it has proved capable of piercing fire, although it is not yet known whether this is a new capability, or an existing one that was not used much, as the Vorlons depended on their larger lightning weapons for piercing attacks.

Fourthly, the power management system (assuming there was one) seems totally incompatible with younger race power grids. When activated, the weapon will drain all power available, and will channel it into a single massive blast. The massive energy drain will cause the power grid to shut down, and the continued power drain will cause a succession of brownouts and dangerous power surges when the power grid tried to come back on-line. It was found that the safest thing to do was to keep the grid shut down for one minute after firing.

With the destruction of the Victory during the Drakh attack on Earth, only one functioning Discharge Lance and one Discharge Cannon prong remain in the hands of the I.S.A. (as far as we know), although the Minbari may have some

'left over' Discharge Guns as well.

In game terms, the weapon fires a succession of three shots (representing the single blast lasting a certain amount of time); the three shots can be split among multiple targets, but only if all are within a single hex. When attacking a single target, treat each shot as a separate volley; note that all attacks must be in the same mode (raking or piercing). The power cost for the weapon only applies on the turn it is fired, and the total given applies for all three sub-components (i.e. it requires 60 power per shot, not 180!). In the Adjust Ship Systems Segment of the turn on which the Discharge Lance fired, all power-using systems and the engine on the ship are automatically de-activated for 6 turns. Younger-race weapons cannot intercept this weapon.

Should any of the sub-components of the Discharge Lance be damaged, each rolls for critical hits separately, but the result is applied to the whole weapon. Should any of the sub-components be destroyed, the weapon can no longer function.



Assault Laser

This is actually independently developed from the common Centauri version, using technical assistance from the Minbari to develop a 'next generation' laser weapon using gravitic focusing (the actual I.S.A. name is Improved Technology Medium Laser). The aim was to develop a weapon that could be built by advanced EA or Free Mars technology, allowing for the production of largely 'home grown' I.S.A. ship designs with only a minimal input from the currently beleaguered Minbari economy. Both these and the I.S.A. Tactical Lasers are built under license by the Edgers/Garibaldi Industries Weapons Division, and are not currently available to other customers. Yet.

Turreted Weapons



The Victory Class Destroyers mount two turreted weapons arrays, initially these each consisted of a single Tactical Laser flanked by a pair of Improved Particle Beams. The turrets

operate like Vree turrets, however their fire arcs are restricted to those shown, and they can partially retract when locked directly forward, increasing their armour by +1, but reducing their fire arcs to that of the Discharge Lance, with only the Tactical Lasers being able to fire.

After studying the performance of the Victory Class Destroyers during the Drakh attack on Earth, it was decided to replace the Tactical Lasers with Medium Pulse Cannons, giving greater hitting power and intercept capability at the cost of a shorter range. Vree turret critical hit results also apply to these turrets, however a jammed turret not only cannot turn, it cannot retract (or un-retract) either.



Tactical Lasers

These were developed as part of the same program that produced the I.S.A.

Assault Lasers (the 'official' name for these is Improved Technology Light Lasers). It should be noted that the I.S.A. Tactical Laser shows some improvements over the older version (although not sufficient to alter the game stats) and are somewhat smaller.



Improved Particle Beams

These are an improved technology version of the ubiquitous Standard Particle Beam that came out of the same program that developed the I.S.A. versions of the Assault and Tactical lasers. They are currently undergoing evaluation to determine if the slight increase in firepower and accuracy warrants the increased cost of manufacture.



Gatling Interceptor Array

This is a development of the Earth Alliance Interceptor weapons, but uses arrays of rapid-firing ultralight pulse cannons as an anti-fighter/interception weapon. In defensive mode, each Gatling Interceptor Array can intercept three times each turn, each interception having a rating of -3. If multiple interceptions from the same array are applied against a single attack, the normal degradation rules apply.

In offensive mode, each Gatling Interceptor Array may attack up to three times each turn, and each attack is independently targetable. Unlike standard Interceptors, the Gatling Interceptor Array is capable of targeting units larger than fighters. There is no delay period when switching modes, (c.f. Heavy Interceptor). If the Gatling Interceptor Array is deactivated, the guns retract within their armoured housing, increasing their armour rating by +2. There is no interceptor energy web installed upon the Victory Class Destroyers, but a purely EA built vessel mounting these weapons could well have one. Like the Quad Array, a Gatling Interceptor Array that fires at its full rate of fire will tend to overheat, using exactly the same rules as for a Quad Array.

Should the Gatling Interceptor Array roll a 20+ for a critical hit, one of its three guns is destroyed (c.f. Twin Array).



Fighter Spindles

These are a revolutionary new launch technique being tested on the Victory Class Destroyers. Each spindle mounts three fighters, and drops down through the bottom of the hull, allowing rapid launch in any direction.

Unfortunately, like the Babylon Station's Cobra Bays, the Fighter Spindles do not allow recovery of the fighters, who must land using the cavernous docking bay. The Fighter Spindles on the Excalibur are designed to take EA Thunderbolt fighters, however the spindle system is modular, and with only brief work at a shipyard they could be swapped out to accommodate other fighter designs. Designs for fighter spindles to take Minbari Nials and Vree Zorths exist (the Zorth design can pack 6 per spindle), others may be possible.

Damage to a Fighter Spindle reduces its capacity and destroys fighters in the same way that damage to a hanger does, however, instead of the normal hanger critical hits, on a critical hit

The Excalibur

Following the loss of the Victory during the Drakh attack on Earth, the Excalibur was re-fitted to lead the search for a cure for the Drakh plague. During the refit, the engine problems were solved, the Tactical Lasers were replaced with Medium Pulse Cannons, and the ship was fully stocked with shuttles and fighters (18 Thunderbolts on the spindles, and 24 Aurora Star Fury Gammas in the Docking Bay).

Often during her voyage, the Excalibur will carry Galen's Technomage Pinnacle in her docking bay. On occasions, the sensor suite of the pinnacle is interfaced to Excalibur's, enhancing their performance. In game terms, the Excalibur gains 6 additional EW points, but cannot spend them on OEW, DEW, CCEW, or any ELINT use other than identification, any other use is permitted.

Due to the urgency of her mission, it is possible that the Excalibur was assigned an Elite Crew, on the other hand, the expedition was put together in a hurry, and there appears to be some political manoeuvring going on in the background, so this need not be the case.

Also on board are:

- 1) Galen, a powerful Technomage, although I'm not sure just what he is capable of in a Babylon 5 Wars battle! (+unknown BPV)
- 2) Lt. Mattherson, an ex-psicop P-12 telepath, who knows that Shadow ships are vulnerable to telepaths (+600 BPV).
- 3) Neryna, an Expert Analyst (+20% BPV).
- 4) Other Expert Officers to taste, using EA costs.?

roll of 13+ the spindle jams in place and can no longer launch fighters.



Docking Bay

The hanger on the Victory Class Destroyers is sufficiently large to permit the docking of some light vessels as well as fighters and shuttles (for example, a Technomage Pinnacle). Its actual capacity is 24 heavy fighters and shuttles. Typically, only half the shuttle bays are filled, with the excess left free for visiting shuttles from encountered ships or worlds (or Galen's pinnacle). Each LCV so docked occupies two hanger boxes, and counts as two ships for the purposes of recovery and/or launch. The number to the left of the slash for the launch/recovery rate applies to fighters and shuttles, while the number to the right applies to LCVs and Super-Heavy Fighters.

Sensors

The sensors on the Victory Class Destroyers are among the most advanced in use by the younger races, being based on Minbari technology with a few developments from the White Star program. They are capable of penetrating the Energy Dampening Field of a Shadow Death Cloud (at least one that is operated by the Drakh). In game terms in addition to the sensor capabilities listed (rating 14 ELINT), the Victory sensors ignore Minbari Jammers and Centauri Chameleon Sensor Suites.

Engines

The only feature of note concerning the engines of the Victory class ships is that they were initially unreliable (the Excalibur had to be towed to the firing grounds to test her weapons). This problem appears to have been fixed some time after that, although we have no certain evidence when.

Special Hit Location Rule

This only applies to weapon #1, the central Discharge Lance component, and #19-#21, the centre fin Gatling Interceptor Arrays. These weapons are shown in the forward section, but are actually, in some respects, both in the forward section and both side sections. Any attack from the front that hits the Discharge Lance can hit any of the three Discharge Lance components (that have not yet been destroyed) at the defenders choice, while an attack from the side that hits it, can either hit the component on that side, or the central (forward) one, again at the defender's choice. Should such an attack destroy the Discharge Lance component, any overkill damage will be inflicted on the facing structure block for that attack. The same mechanic applies for the Gatling Interceptors, #19, #20 and #21. Additionally, a similar rule applies for the turrets, as they can be hit from the sides as well as from the front.?

Hypothetical 'Production Victory'

Such a ship would be lacking the Discharge Lance, probably replacing it with three Heavy Lasers, 'Battle Lasers' (Improved Technology Heavy Lasers), or even Minbari import Neutron Lasers. It would lose the Command & Control

bonuses and ELINT capability (unless a command variant), replacing them with two additional Assault Lasers forward. It would have the primary and structure block armour ratings reduced by one (again, except for the command variant).?

Reasoning and Justification

My primary concern was to try and come up with a ship that was playable, and whose existence didn't open any more cans of worms if at all possible. In many respects I have erred on the side of reducing the ships firepower (I hope!).

The 'main gun', the Discharge Lance as I called it, obviously proved the biggest problem, as due to its unfortunate 'shut down the whole ship for one minute when fired' and 'kill everything it hits' features. Obviously, it had to be sufficiently more powerful than the forward guns to be worth using at all (at a guess, at least twice as powerful), while at the same time there is a common argument that it should be less powerful than the Vorlon Lighting Cannon when fired in 'Mega' mode (there is a counter-argument to this, which I will leave to others). It should be noted that the 'Victory Main Gun' seen in the series was not all-destroying, as twice it was targeted at a planets surface, in both cases the damage was, at most, equivalent to a few thousand tons of TNT (i.e. kiloton rather than Megaton range).

As I had chosen a weaker secondary armament than most Victory designs, I had more freedom to chose a weaker 'main gun' that would still be worth firing. The weapon I chose was a toned-down version of Entilzha's suggestion of an 'out of control' discharge cannon. The change I made was to limit it to three 'shots' when fired, and to reduce its fire control ratings against small targets. I decided such a weapon was too unwieldy to be used against fighters or for interception purposes. I also decided that the combination of Vorlon, Minbari, and Human technology represented by this weapon when installed in the Victory class hull, was less efficient than the Vorlon original, and raised the power requirement accordingly.

Determining how long in game terms the use of the Discharge Lance would disable the ship was a problem, as it is a known fact that the observed timescales of battles seen in the series are often compressed to increase dramatic tension and to shoehorn the battles into the episode length, so the shutdown duration could be chosen based on game-balance issues rather than a straight timescale match. Given the fact that most battles I have fought (usually two or three ship skirmishes) rarely last much over 10 turns, I decided that a six-turn shutdown was sufficient. The ship was given a power shortage such that it would have to shut down almost all systems except the sensors to fire the Discharge Lance, and the shutdown rules had to include the engine, as in ACTa, the ship was unable to manoeuvre while shut down, while in Babylon 5 Wars, engines are not a powered system.

Finally when I wrote the fluff text to explain where the weapon came from, I decided that the

The special officers

I assigned the Excalibur are derived as follows:

- 1) Galen's capabilities in (or out of) game terms are unknown at this time.
- 2) We know that Lt. Mattherson is a telepath, and from a story about his past, we are told he was a psicop, it was stated, if I remember correctly, that all psicops are P-12s. I'm assuming that the Shadow ship vulnerability to telepathic assault is fairly common knowledge by this time (from dramatizations of the events, current events programs, telepath 'word of mind' etc.).
- 3) Making Neryna an Expert Analyst matches her thieflly ways; also her ability to locate the real control node of the Shadow Death Cloud is similar in flavour to the abilities of a Llort Expert Analyst. As she is not a Llort, I doubled the cost. I added the possibility that the crew may be Elite, although I also added reason why not. The BPV I gave for the Victory assumes no expert officers or elite crew, while that for the Excalibur assumes the presence of Mattherson and Neryna, but not Galen (who's BPV cost I cannot begin to estimate) or the possible Elite Crew.?



one in the Excalibur is effectively the last of its kind, unless the I.S.A. get their hands on some more Vorlon technology. I did, however, leave an opening for a weaker version based on the Discharge Gun.

The 'secondary' batteries (the two sets of four green/yellow beams firing directly forward and aft in both ACTA and Crusade appear to be fairly rapid-firing weapons) I first considered a lighter, faster-firing version of the Improved Neutron Laser, then after some discussion with a friend I had an inspiration - the Victory class ships were largely built by humans, so instead of using state-of-the-art Minbari weapons, how about some 'bleeding-edge' human technology, built with Minbari assistance.

I turned to the 'grav-focussed' laser weapons, and felt that the Assault Laser, although considered obsolete by the Centauri, was a very good weapon. Its range matches that of an EA Heavy Laser, it has a rate-of fire equal to that of an EA light laser, and it is widely used, so it shouldn't draw too many complaints. Besides, it may be out-of-date for the Centauri, but for the humans, who have only just been given gravitic technology, to produce one with about five years, even with Minbari technical assistance, is quite a feat! I was also felt safe on CGI grounds - we have never seen an Assault Laser fired on the show, so who's to say they are not green/yellow? My only problem is that a close examination of the front of the ship reveals six, not four gun barrels, and indeed all six seem to fire, but never more than four at a time. I did consider a 'triple array' type weapon, that had three barrels, but could only fire two at once, but rejected it as too complex.

The Turrets represent the two retractable turrets. For the ACTA version they are armed with a combination of Tactical Lasers and Improved Particle Beams, the source for these being given in the 'fluff' text above. I used the existing rules for Vree turrets, with the additional rule on retraction to represent the fact that we often see the forward turret rise up as the ship prepares for battle. The ability of the Tactical Lasers to still fire, but only straight forward, when the turret is retracted is based on the purely visual observation that the largest barrel of the turret appears to be un-obstructed when the turret is retracted.

The use of Tactical Lasers for the centre,

large barrel was decided based on the fact that these beams appeared to be capable of raking fire, based on the scene where the Excalibur cuts her way out of the construction yard in ACTA.

The Improved Particle Beams chosen for the smaller Turret Guns are slightly upgraded Standard Particle Beams (an EA staple). The 'Improved' tag and slightly enhanced stats are to represent them being developed in parallel with the similarly coloured Assault and Tactical Lasers.

The refit that replaced the Tactical Lasers in the turrets with Medium Pulse Cannons is to represent the change in CGI for the turret centre barrel from a continuous green beam to a reddish 'pulse' type weapon. I chose Medium Pulse Cannons rather than Molecular Pulsars as the CGI does not match that of a Molecular Pulsar (either a single large green pulse or a pair of smaller, white-purple pulses, depending which of the White Star's Molecular Pulsars is depicted), although it probably doesn't match a Medium Particle Beam either.

The Gatling Interceptor Arrays are actually based on Quad Arrays, but with interceptor-like qualities. My first idea was to treat them as three Gatling Pulse Cannons (the weapon mounted on the Thunderbolt fighter) in a triple 'array' mount, but the resulting weapon was far too powerful in the numbers obviously installed on the Victory class, also they are visibly different from the guns on the Thunderbolts. The 'overheating' problem is based on the fact that we see one or more barrels going 'off-line' on a number of occasions. The retractable capability is based on the afore-mentioned onscreen evidence.

The Particle Impeders are taken from the 'countermeasures' described in the unfilmed scripts for the last episode of season one of Crusade. The fluff text above describes their source, as I would vote the Abbai as the 'race most likely to actually try and make the I.S.A. work'.

The Fighter Spindles are a specialized form of rapid-launch hangar, from their design I assumed they could launch their fighters in any direction, but could not recover fighters at all. The ability to swap spindles to allow for a wide range of fighters to be carried, is based on the

assumption that the Victory class ships were prototyping some systems for general use within an overall I.S.A. fleet and hence the ability to crew them with various I.S.A. member races.

The Docking Bay is based on that used in the updated version of the Traveller in Wars of the Ancients. Its use was mandated by the observed ability to dock a Light Combat Vessel (a Technomage Pinnacle) in it. I added the Tractor Beam to represent the 'docking fields' seen in one episode.

The Sensor capabilities appear a bit excessive, however the ship was represented as having better sensors than almost all other younger race ships, and it did manage to penetrate the energy dampening field of a Shadow Death Cloud, while the sensors on a White Star had failed to penetrate in an earlier encounter. I gave the ship ELINT and Command & Control capabilities on the assumption that these new ships were to be the 'flagships' of the I.S.A. fleet.

The Engine unreliability is based on the scenes in ACTA where they could not get the engines working. As this problem never shows up after the ships leave dock, I assume that the ships are lucky during the remainder of ACTA, and that the problem is fixed when the Excalibur gets her refit prior to Crusade.

Crystalline Armour, I decided, is in fact, standard Minbari hull armour, as there is some evidence that it is resistant to energy attacks in the show. Also, in Babylon 5 Wars, all armour is effective against energy weapons (less so against Plasma) but is ineffective against matter weapons. I gave the Victory class ships armour ratings typically one point better than those on a Sharlin, representing thicker armour, as this neatly reduces the damage of most younger race energy weapons in raking mode by 80%, matching Drake's claim. A production 'ship of the line' version of the Victory class would probably have thinner, cheaper armour.

The power shortage was carefully chosen, under normal operations the Discharge Lance will not be in use, freeing up 60 power, and the remaining 4 shortfall can be made up by shutting down one of the aft Assault Lasers (they recharge quickly, anyway). When the Discharge Lance is fired, all but the sensors and other systems whose power requirement is a total of 8 or less must be shut down, I left the 8 spare to allow some leeway for the ship taking damage. The refit to the Excalibur freed up an extra point of power.

Summary

In summary, I have provided two SCSs, one for the Victory, that represents the two ships during ACTA (although there may be differences between the two prototypes) and the other for the Excalibur, representing that ship during Crusade.

(B5W SCSs for the Victory and Excalibur can be found in the Attachments folder)



The Victory and the Excalibur

Enigmas wrapped in Mysteries

By RICHARD BAX

WHEN the movie "A Call to Arms" first appeared there was an immediate hue and cry for an "official" Victory class destroyer. Unfortunately, Agents of Gaming's license did not allow use of material from the latest movies, thereby frustrating B5Wars fans across the globe. This frustration rose even higher as the shortened Crusade TV series came and went from the TV screen. With the subsequent closing of Agents of Gaming, the appearance of an official and definitive Victory is gone for good.

Here then is my attempt. Based on the TV series and the movie "A Call to Arms" a number of facts can be gleaned. Based on these facts, I then massaged the data into a series of playable rules that do not necessarily follow precisely that which is seen in the show and movie, but should provide a representative feel within the confines of the existing game system. My hope is to capture the high points of the systems in question, define my thought process and stay as true to existing game rules as possible.

1.0 WEAPON SYSTEMS

The weapon suite of the Victory series of destroyers from the original movie were as follows:

- 4 Nose mounted beam type weapons
- 4 Rear mounted beam type weapons (similar to nose weapons)
- 2 Turrets that mount 1 major and 2 minor beam type weapons
- and, of course, the Main Guns

The subsequent TV series produced a slightly modified weapons layout that included two major changes:

- The addition of the gatling type weapon on the upper fin
- The replacement of the center turreted beam weapon with a pulse type weapon

Clearly these two changes were as a result of the EA's possession and subsequent refit of the remaining Victory when Sheridan turned it over to the EA to help find the cure for the Drakh plague.

1.1 Nose Mounted Beam Weapons

The four nose weapons are first seen when they are tested in the original movie as Sheridan looked on. In the demonstration they fired relatively short bursts and when queried about their effectiveness, Sheridan commented that he was "disappointed" since it wasn't much more than a standard White Star.

In B5W a White Star firing an Imp. Neutron Laser for three sustained turns can do $12d10+54$, for a maximum damage of 174 points. The second option would be to fire the Imp. Neutron Laser in its non-sustained mode in conjunction with the 4 molecular pulsars. The four pulsars can land a maximum of 7 pulses each (when fired after a two turn recharge) but for this analysis we will assume 5 as the standard number of hits. The result is $4d10+18$ from the laser and 20 10-point pulses in the first turn followed by 20 more 10 point pulses in turn 3. This results in a maximum damage of 458 points of damage. However, every pulse will be mitigated by armor where the sustained 3-shot INL will quickly start ignoring armor. Assuming a base of 4 for armor and sufficient armored systems to absorb the entire first turn of sustained raking fire sub-volleys, the first option does a maximum damage minus armor of 150 while the laser+pulse option does 274.

Using the 274 damage value as the firepower

Sheridan was claiming for a standard White Star, there is no way the four forward beam weapons can be Imp. Neutron Lasers. If they all fired at sustained for three turns the maximum damage would be 696 and the maximum after armor would be 600, which is much too high.

In addition, the color of the Victory nose beams was similar to the original Minbari Neutron Lasers seen in the B5 TV series as compared to that fired by the White Star. Checking against regular Neutron Lasers firing sustained for two turns, yields a maximum damage over three turns of 440 and after armor 360, which is again too high.

Therefore this must be a new weapon. In "A Call to Arms" Garibaldi discusses the difficulties of taking Minbari and Vorlon technology and making it work with EA tech. Garibaldi states "its never been done before". Let's assume that EA scientists took the original Neutron Laser and couldn't manage to make it work quite right. Instead they hybridized something else that is more than anything the EA have but less than the Neutron Laser:

ADVANCED MEDIUM NEUTRON LASER

Class:	Laser
Modes:	R, S, P
Damage:	$3d10+15$
Range Penalty:	-1 per 3 hexes
Fire Control:	+4/+3/+2
Intercept Rating:	n/a
Rate of Fire:	1 per 2 turns
Power:	5
Boxes:	8

Examining these damage levels produces a maximum 3-turn damage of 360 points and after armor, 280. That is only slightly better than a standard White Star. The reduced range penalty is still state of the art for the EA and with a sig-

nificant rise in the fighter fire control based on the fact that these weapons were regularly used on the much smaller Drakh "fighters/super heavy fighters/LCV's".

1.2 Rear Mounted Beam Weapons

Assumed to be identical to the nose weapons.

1.3 Turret Weapons

Having established the nose weapons, lets turn to the turreted weapons. Again the green beam is seen firing in the movie from two turret locations (forward, behind the nose and near/under the bridge structure). Equally clearly seen is fire from all three-weapon barrels with the center barrel being larger than the outer barrels implying a large weapon. However, the larger center barrel is still smaller than the nose mounted barrels. Therefore it must represent a set of smaller weapons.

For these I settled on existing B5Wars weapons with the use of the Fusion Cannon as the side weapons and the Hvy. Fusion cannon at the center. Being similar weapons they would fire similar colored beams and via the B5 TV series the Fusion Cannons seem to fire beams very similar in color to the Neutron Lasers.

I chose the Vree Turret concept as the basic means to implement the three-weapon system based on the weapon change in the Crusade series. In "Each Night I Dream of Home" the center weapon fires a series of red pulses similar to EA pulse cannon fire, while the side barrels continued to fire the green beams. I therefore assumed that the EA replaced the Heavy Fusion Cannon with a Heavy Pulse Cannon to improve anti-fighter protection when they took possession of the Excalibur. A weapon array could not be easily modified but a weapon in a Vree turret could be as indicated already in the B5W game system.

1.4 Main Gun

The real problem is the main gun. It basically kills everything its fired at with the sole exception being the Shadow planet killer. In game terms this one creates an almost impossible situation where the weapon cannot be pointed since a fleet of small ships renders it far less useful then a similarly pointed fleet with a few large ships. In addition, the entire concept of a minute delay must also be countered since there is no true time scale in B5W.

As a result I selected the Lightning Gun from the Ancients book as the basic weapon of choice rather than the Vorlon Lightning Cannon. It's logical that the modified EA version would less capable than current Vorlon standards and thus would fall along the lines of the older version.

Firing in Mega mode, the Lightning Gun can do 4d10+64 in Raking 20 and Piercing mode up to twice per round. That's worse in terms of total damage than the Hvy Particle Cannon and its 6d10+60 (though the Hvy Particle Cannon can be intercepted and does Rake 10 damage). Since the Lightning Cannon does 8d10+64 I chose to split the difference and use a damage of 6d10+64 with the caveat that there is the power loss that follows.

Speaking of which, the power loss was set to last 2 turns after the firing of the Main Guns with no other weapon being allowed to fire the same

turn as the main guns. Three turns was selected as a balance against the fact that the Main Gun is no longer the one shot one kill wonder weapon. It's the system you fire when you need a single big shot (with big raking) to take out the heavily armored target. Otherwise it's a game breaker.

The range was left as -1 per 3 as again the main guns have never been seen firing at targets outside the range of the existing nose lasers and again this dovetails with state of the art EA tech. Piercing was retained since in the episode "Each Night I Dream of Home" the Drakh mother ship is killed by a burst from the main gun rather than a sustained beam indicating that a shot was potentially piercing and managed to hit something vital.

Therefore the final weapon is:

LIGHTNING GUN (MEGA)

Class:	EM
Modes:	R (20), P
Damage:	6d10+64
Range Penalty:	-1 per 3 hexes
Fire Control:	+4/+4/--
Intercept Rating:	n/a
Rate of Fire:	Special Rules
Power:	Special Rules
Boxes:	11

1.5 Gatling Type Weapons

In "Each Night I Dream of Home" we see gatling weapons firing at Drakh fighters from the top wing of the Excalibur. They are never seen firing from the Victory or Excalibur during "A Call to Arms" and therefore were added by the EA when the Excalibur was turned over, again to improve anti-fighter capability.

The Hvy Intercept Battery was selected as it has the ability to do damage capable of destroying a Super Heavy Fighter in one shot (assuming the Drakh use a Super Heavy Fighter). Four discrete sets of bursts were identified and thus 4 Batteries were included.

I included no E-web effect for the Excalibur after the EA takes possession since I doubt the ship could easily be fitted with the web after its construction and I am making the assumption that the new armor is incompatible. How can one overlay an "energy" web when the armor it's laid over is energy reflective?

2.0 PLASTEEL/POLY-CRYSTALLINE ARMOR

Described by Drake in "A Call to Arms" of being capable of reflecting 80% of any energy weapon used against it. The question is what does 80% represent? Current steels have an energy reflective ability and advanced armor in the 2260's would have even higher reflective abilities, so 80% may not be as significant as it would first seem. Still it does come across as impressive and so certain steps were taken to make it so.

Simply put, I started by taking the basic Warlock SCS for guidance and adding 1 to every similar system for my Victory/Excalibur. Second I used a number of the Advanced Armor Rules from the "Coming of Shadows" sourcebook. Specifically, I kept any rules from the advanced armor set that involved energy fire, i.e. plasma, armor destroying energy weapon and EM type weapons and effects. However, since

this is hardly organic technology, I ignored the anti-breaching pod and ballistic anticipation. I revised the matter weapon rules to matter weapons subtract 3 from the armor rather than ignoring the armor entirely.

Finally, due to the "crystalline" statement, I took the note from the Hardened Advanced Armor of the Kirishiac Lords and included a rule that states that Raking Weapons do not ignore the armor the second time that system is hit within the same rake and instead said they used half the armor rating (round down).

The resulting armor is therefore very tough, on par but not quite at Advanced Armor and does so within game terms.

3.0 FIGHTERS

Again using "Each Night I Dream of Home" I noted approximately 36 fighters in total (about 24 thunderbolts and 12 Auroras in the battle). When Lochley's damaged fighter is recovered, I noted that the front of the bay had 4 distinct racks of fighters followed by a number of fighter/shuttle revetments. However, as can be seen in every starting sequence of the Crusade Series there is a unique method for deploying some of the fighters.

I call the systems "Launch Spindles". Due to the small size of the hangar bay doors (as compared to the huge opening in the Omegas from "Severed Dreams") designers created the Launch Spindle to rapidly launch a wing of fighters. Difficult to reload after the battle, the spindles allowed the fastest fighter deployment possible. For rules simplicity I stated that the spindles had 6 fighters and that there were two such systems on a Victory.

4.0 MANEUVER

Simply put, I aimed for a vessel more maneuverable than the Warlock. Since the Warlock has 10 thrust, I gave the Victories 12 and stated that Gravitic is simply another name for Gravitic Drives. Scenes in the movie defined the number of main thrust and retro thrust. Retro thrust is seen firing as they come to a stop before the null field and main thrust was simply the fact that there were three glowing bits, one on each wing that glowed to life when the main drive was lit.

5.0 OTHER SYSTEMS

Most other systems were sized, based on the Warlock SCS. The sensor rating was equivalent to the Delphi and the Jump Delay again used the Warlock.

* * *

(SCSs for Richard Bax's versions of the Victory and Excalibur can be found in the Attachments folder)

Keeping the stupid simple: The KISS approach to building B5's most controversial ship

The Victory Class Destroyer
By **Steve Austin (Kizarvexis)**
and **Anthony Pakizer (Hyperion)**

THE REASONING

I WANT to preface this discussion on the Victory Class Destroyer with the statement that this design is based on the KISS principle. Keep It Short & Simple was a guiding principle along with trying to keep the design balanced. Anthony Pakizer (Hyperion) offered suggestions to the final design and made the excellent SCS for it.

Standard Weapons

I reviewed the Excalibur in 'A Call to Arms' (ACTA) and the Crusade series and participated in discussions on the B5Wars forum to determine the weapon loadout for the Excalibur. The beams fired from the fore and aft of the ship are very similar in appearance to the beams fired by Minbari ships. IMO, the Improved Neutron Laser (INL) isn't that much more effective on a non-agile hull than the Neutron Laser (NL) and the Minbari would be reluctant to part with their highest tech weapon in any case. So the ship has six NL's to the front and four NL's to the rear in 120-degree (fore/aft centered) arcs. The ship also has two turrets with three weapons apiece on the forward dorsal section of the ship. The smaller weapons fire beams and the larger weapon is seen firing a beam and pulses. With the KISS principle in mind, one turret has two Fusion Cannons (FC) and one NL and the other turret has two FCs and one Heavy Pulse Cannon (HPC). Each turret has a 300-degree (forward centered) arc and all weapons must fire in the same 60-degree arc. One turret is placed on each side of the ship on the SCS. When a turret is hit, roll randomly among the weapons to determine which one is hit. If a weapon that is destroyed is hit, apply the damage directly to structure as in any other destroyed weapon hit.

There has been much discussion over the interceptors on the ship being Heavy Interceptors (HI), but I preferred using Mk-II Interceptors (MK-II) for balance reasons. Also, the gatling type interceptor does not necessarily have to be a HI, but

could very well be a Mk-II from a different company that provided the interceptors for Babylon 5. The Excalibur is observed with three interceptors over the bridge section and fore/aft interceptors on the three wings. I went with three Mk-II's in the primary section for the over the bridge weapons and one each Mk-II in the sides and aft for the wing interceptors.

The weapon loadout is optimized for ship-to-ship combat, which is what the show Excalibur seemed to be optimized for, but the ship also has vulnerabilities. Almost all of the weapons fire either forward or aft leaving the sides vulnerable. There are only four medium weapons (FC's) and they are restricted by the turrets (all weapons in a turret must fire in a 60 degree arc when firing at the same time). The interceptors are the dedicated anti-fighter weapons, but will have a problem intercepting and firing on fighters at the same time.

The Main Gun

I really wanted to make a main gun that would be powerful, but not too munchy. Even though it was stated in Crusade that the main gun was loosely based on Vorlon tech, I still think in game terms it should be equated with a Mega Lightning Cannon (MgLC) shot. But it will only have a few features of the MgLC.

It only fires in Piercing mode. No other mode is allowed and the shot must always come from the forward Lightning Cannon (LC). All other weapons lose power during the turn the main gun fires, meaning that the E-web provided by the interceptors drops right before the combat step of the turn

sequence. I placed four LC's, one in each outer section, to represent the massive nature of the weapon and also to make it vulnerable from all sides. Any and all critical hits to any of the LC's are cumulative when firing the weapon. If any LC is disabled or destroyed, then the main gun cannot fire. The main gun can only be repaired in an IA drydock where Victory Class Destroyers are built. I used Piercing that way overkill goes to structure, to simulate the heavy firepower of the ship. The Insta-Kill nature (patent pending J) of the main gun as seen in the show, is due to the hero nature (double elite) of the show crew.

Armor and other systems

The crystalline armor is represented in this ship, by the eight armor value on the outside structure blocks (KISS principle again). Even though the ship is larger than the Omega it is a spindly shaped vessel, so the structure is roughly the same as the Omega Destroyer (this also served to not make the ship too munchy). Earth Alliance (EA) jump engine tech and sensors were used on this vessel. Minor Minbari refinements to the sensors, mean that they are as strong as the Delphi scout (w/o ELINT abilities), but are cheaper to build. The Excalibur, during the final battle in ACTA, seemed to be slightly more maneuverable than an Omega. So the engine is slightly more powerful than an Omega, the thrusters are slightly better, and the turn cost and turn delay are the same. The ship has a Gravitic Drive system, which also provides artificial gravity.

The ship has a 24-fighter hanger (four shuttles), which can support any fighter Heavy sized or smaller. The show had the Excalibur launch as many as 36 fighters at a time, but so did Omega's on occasion, so the hanger was downgraded to 24 to make it less munchy.

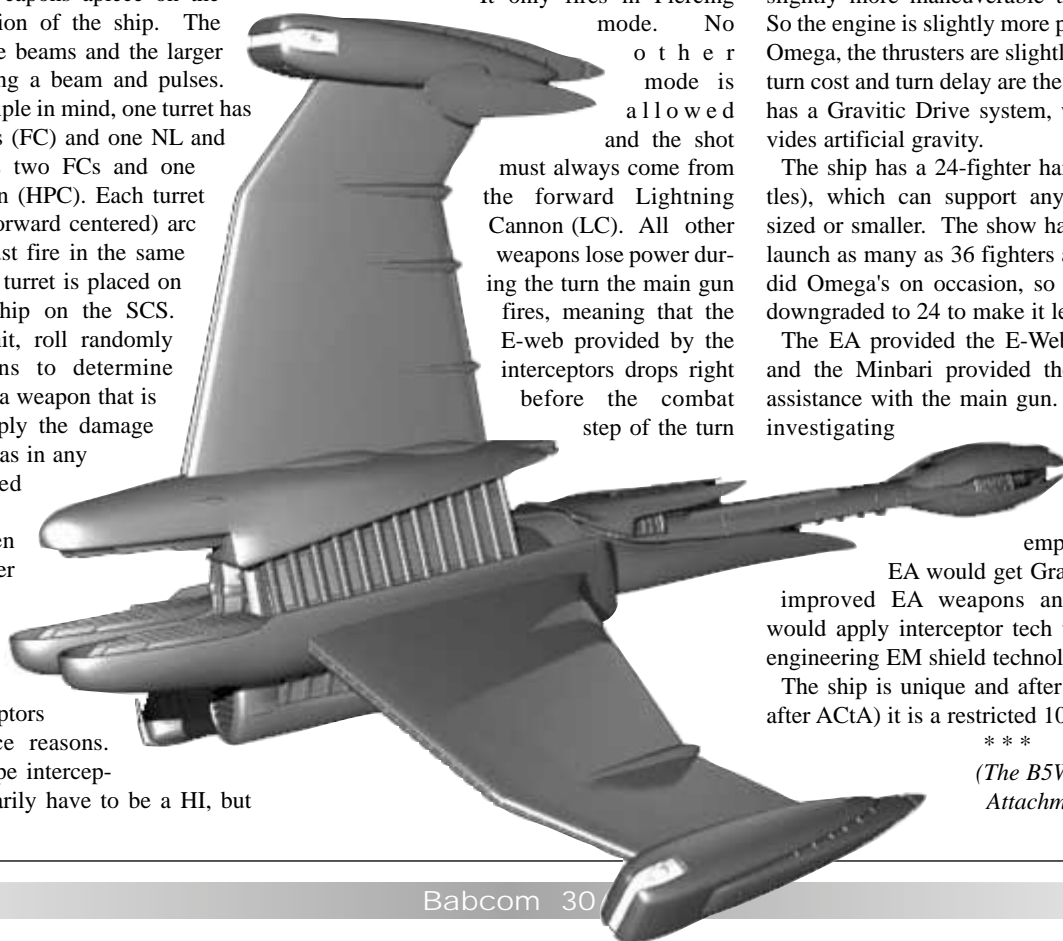
The EA provided the E-Web to the project and the Minbari provided the weapons and assistance with the main gun. Both races are investigating

the tech of the other for future (2280+) employment. The

EA would get Gravitic drives and improved EA weapons and the Minbari would apply interceptor tech towards reverse engineering EM shield technology.

The ship is unique and after 2278 (11 years after ACTA) it is a restricted 10% IA only unit.

(The B5W SCS is in the Attachments folder)



One man's crusade to build a better Victory

Victory Class Destroyer
By PHILLIP WRIGHT

WELL HERE is my version of the Victory Class Destroyer based on what I have seen in "A Call To Arms" (ACTA) and "Crusade" and is quite different from many other versions I have seen. This study pretty much only covers the weapons used on the Victory.

First of all I decided to create a new class of laser: the Heavy Neutron Laser, based on what was seen in ACTA. The forward guns have a beam, which is notably thicker than that used on the White Star, and considering the size of the Victory and Excalibur, the beams have been seen to slice into a Drakh Cruiser, which is substantially larger than a White Star. Also, with close-up shots of these forward guns firing, you can see that they only fire four bursts from where they are located, indicating that they only have four guns in that section.

Also in ACTA and the Crusade episode "Each Night I Dream of Home", you see what looks like four Neutron Lasers in the aft section. From observation these do not have the same thickness as the Heavy Neutron's so I have decided to make them Improved Neutron Lasers.

I have also implemented the use of turrets (as used by the Vree). As clearly seen on the shows, the Victory has two turrets along the forward section. Take for example ACTA where Sheridan first steals the Excalibur. He needs to destroy the clamps holding the ship in place. If you look closely you see two turrets. One destroys the clamp to the left and the other destroys the one on the right by firing what looks like Neutron Lasers. If you look at the turret (which you get close-up shots of especially in ACTA and "Each Night I Dream of Home") there is a big barrel in the center and two smaller ones on either side. It would be reasonable to say that the center barrel is an Improved Neutron Laser but, it is hard to say what the smaller ones are. I have decided for them to be Heavy Fusion Cannons. The first turret I also added a Heavy Pulse Cannon due to what was seen in a few of the Crusade episodes.

Note: this version of the Victory is the one seen in Crusade. The ACTA version replaces the Heavy Pulse Cannon with another Neutron Laser. For example in "Appearances and Other Deceits" when Sheridan flushes the body infected with the non-corporeal parasite

into space, you see the large turret pop up and blast it to pieces. But if you also look on the sides of that very cannon, there are barrels on each side, which look like Neutron Lasers as seen on the second turret.

Now for the little turrets just above the bridge, I have seen many different varieties of what they are: Gatling Railguns, Heavy Interceptors...etc. But in my own reasoning I decided to use the Quad Particle Beam in this case, as it is a weapon already created and actually seen on "Babylon 5" (see "Severed Dreams" when the Thunderbolts try to take out B5's C&C). They have the same colored bolts as you also see in ACTA and Crusade. Another reason why I use the QPC instead of other weapons, is that they are rapid fire as we all know, and in the Crusade episode "Warzone" we see those same turrets firing on Drakh Fighters. It's reasonable to say they must have a decent ability to intercept fighters for the sole reason that the Victory was supposed to be the main capital ship for the ISA, which should mean that it surely would have to have good anti-fighter defences. Of which the Gatling Railgun would be not suitable for, I'm afraid.

Does it fit the profile for the Heavy Interceptor? I'm afraid not, as the Heavy Interceptor can reasonably only intercept incoming fire and destroy nearby enemy fighters/shuttles. But if you look in ACTA when the two Victory destroyers approach the Shadow Deathcloud, you see streams of blue bolts firing towards it from the Victories. So in that case, the Heavy Interceptor isn't really suitable.

A point against the QPC, it states in the Rules Compendium that due to power linkage

lems, the Quad Particle Beam could only be installed on bases. But that was in the original series' timeframe. Since then it is quite possible that with the technological capacity of the ISA, that they were able to overcome that problem. Also the Victory is a big ship at a mile and a half long. So it is

probably the same size as a small base and so probably does have the capacity to use the Quad Particle Beam.

Now this is the biggest controversy and I'm a bit worried about this aspect of my design of the Victory: the Main Guns. Seeing as how I am a player with no opponents in my area, I have not played many games and have not had any experience in playing the Vorlons. I created the Discharge Cannon (which is probably totally off, if anybody has any suggestions on how to replace them or improve them so they perform better, I will be happy to receive them).

Now this also is sort of new territory. This design of the Victory dates back to about late 1999 when I first saw Crusade on Australian TV and has been updated quite thoroughly through the years. I had the basic design but had to come up with a concept for the Crystalline Armor that they later spoke of when I saw ACTA. It took a little bit of work out, but I just decided on the simple concept of that whatever energy weapon strikes the ship, the base armor is increased by 2.

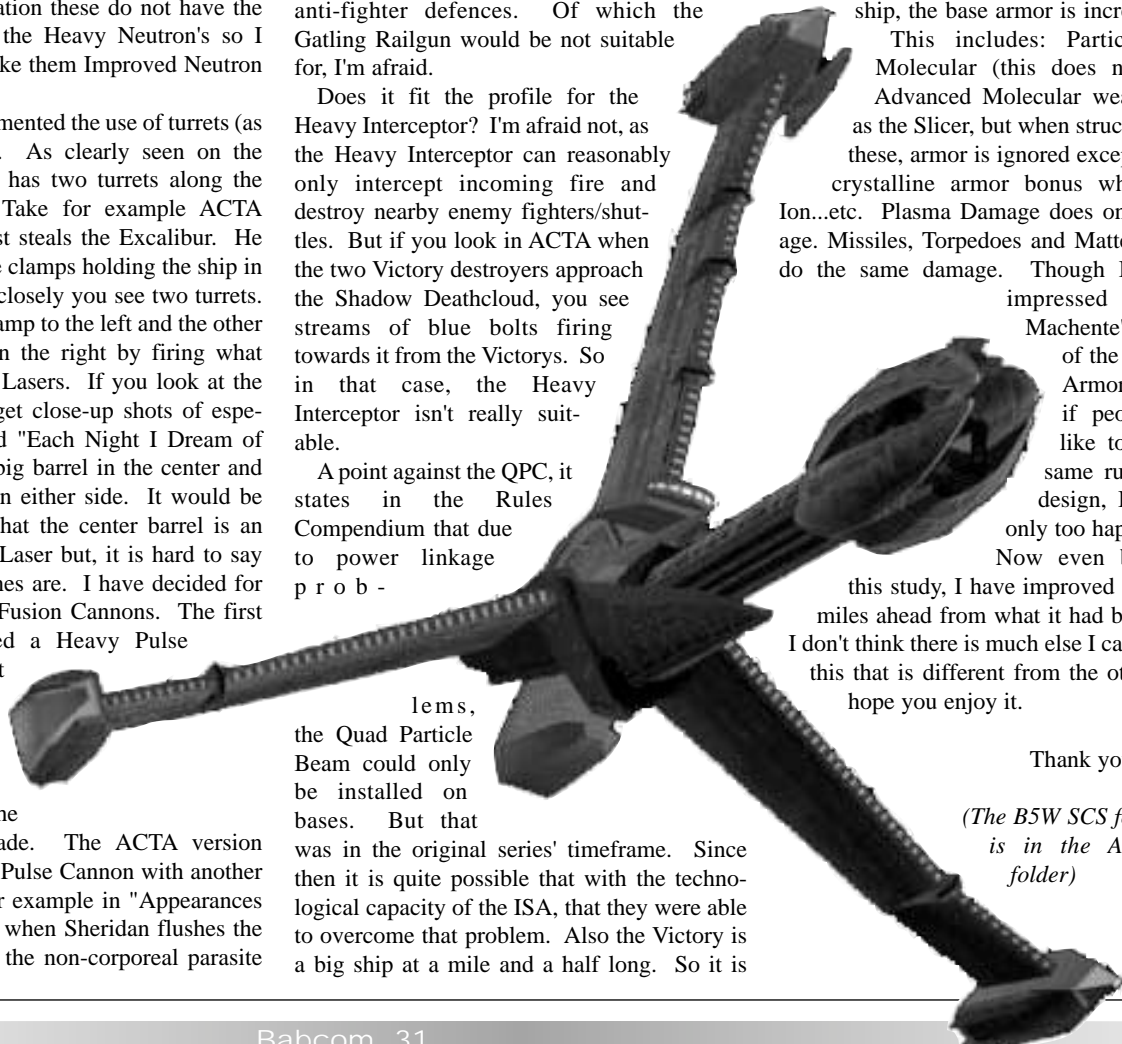
This includes: Particle, Laser, Molecular (this does not include Advanced Molecular weapons such as the Slicer, but when struck by any of these, armor is ignored except for the crystalline armor bonus which is 2), Ion...etc. Plasma Damage does only ¼ damage. Missiles, Torpedoes and Matter weapons do the same damage. Though I am quite impressed by

Machente's handling of the Crystalline Armor rules and if people would like to use these same rules for my design, I would be only too happy.

Now even by writing this study, I have improved my version miles ahead from what it had been before. I don't think there is much else I can say about this that is different from the others. So I hope you enjoy it.

Thank you

(The B5W SCS for this ship is in the Attachments folder)



NARN to the rescue



Interstellar Alliance
G'Kar Class Cruiser
By **ANTHONY PAKIZER**
(aka Hyperion)

AFTER the Drakh attack on Earth and the unexpected unveiling of the new Victory class Destroyers, a call for more intergovernmental projects went up. The rest of the races, while not entirely pleased with the secretive construction of these new vessels, were glad to see the Interstellar Alliance beginning to actively undertake the buildup of an independent navy thereby allowing League races to support the new Alliance with fewer ships, as many of their own were being diverted from their own territory.

The unfortunate part of this were the dry-docks used for the construction of the Victory class ships were destroyed by Drakh operatives. No new Victory class ships were going to enter service for some time. Throw into that the fact that one of the IA's major contributors, the Earth Alliance, was in chaos because of the plague that was threatening to destroy all life on Earth. The IA vowed to help the EA find a cure for the plague, assigning the remaining Victory class ship, IAS Excalibur, to the Earth Alliance for use in finding the cure. With the addition of new, smaller, faster to build cruisers, the chance of finding the cure increased.

New ship construction would have to be done by other member races. The few Alliance races with the production capability to build the ships en masse came forward to help. The Drazi, Narn, and Minbari all were willing to help with the construction of ships. The Drazi's design left something to be desired, in that they wanted to mount multiple heavy weapons on a cruiser hull. While incredibly powerful, the ship was seriously lacking in anti-fighter capabilities.

The Minbari design was quite feasible, and closely resembled the Victory class in its armament, but it would take some time to squeeze the design into the production schedule. Minbari ship construction was still busy replacing the ships lost in the Shadow War, as well as the loss-

es from the Minbari Civil War that followed. Since production was needed almost immediately, the Narn were chosen. They were bouncing back nicely after the War of Retribution and had just opened up a new shipyard at Binan.

As an added bonus for building the ships, the IA granted foreign technology to the Narn. The Minbari helped them develop a slightly more reliable hybrid gravitic/ reaction drive than the system found on some Raider ships. The drive itself can usually go about four months before it begins to degrade and act like a Raider drive. On ships with even more experienced engineering crews, the drive's operational life between yard services can be extended to six months.

The sensor array was an enhanced Narn array, similar to the one found aboard the Sho'Kar light scout cruiser, but lacking the ELINT capabilities. The EA lent interceptor technology, but withheld the E-Web part of the system as proprietary technology. The IA agreed to the EA's stipulation where the E-Web was concerned, and soon advisors from EA shipyards began to arrive in Narn space. To allow for faster and cheaper construction, it was decided to not use the crystalline armor that was installed on the Victory class. The Drazi supplied a more traditional armor, since the Narn had a noticeable lack of raw materials and the credits needed to buy the increased quantities of such materials, even after years of Centauri reparations.

The ship resembles a smaller Victory class ship built by the Narn, i.e.: it looks like a Victory painted like a T'Loth. The ship's systems were based off of the G'Tal variant of the G'Quan heavy cruiser. Three Heavy Laser Cannons were the primary armament forward. Six medium pulse cannons, three twin arrays, and six Mk II interceptors minus the E-Web supported the heavy weapons. The ship's hangar could handle a flight of six fighters and four shuttles. Any fighter deployed by the IA's member races could be accommodated (Nials, Thunderbolts, Star Furies, Frazis, etc.).

Once the design was finalized, the Narn began construction of the prototype. Because of his innumerable contributions to the Narn Regime,

as well as being one of the founding members of the Interstellar Alliance, Citizen G'Kar was chosen as the individual the class should be named after. The IAS G'Kar, prototype for the class, slipped its moorings in mid 2268. The class entered full production after an abbreviated shakedown period. The first regular production G'Kars entered service in early 2269.

Playability notes

The Hybrid drive aboard the G'Kar is more advanced and reliable than that found on the Raider Hybrid Saucer. The G'Kar's hybrid drive acts as a normal gravitic drive until the engine receives its first point of damage, at which point it begins to behave like the Raider version.

Author's Note: This is not my original idea. I used the picture on the SCS without permission, but I am going to provide all the information that I can about its origins. It is based off a design that can be found at the following address <http://efni.org/index.htm>

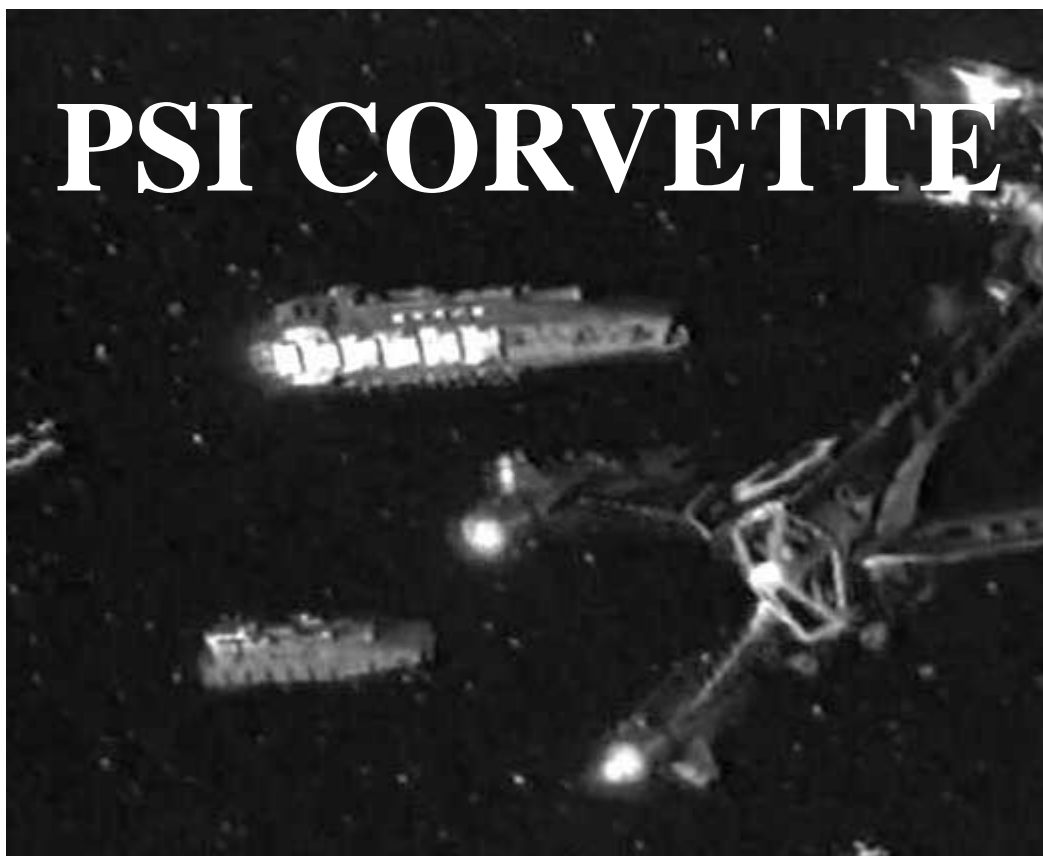
With the design found here: http://efni.org/Galen_2.htm

The above website follows the B5tech.com site more than Babylon 5 Wars when it comes to starship design and systems descriptions. That isn't a bad thing; just the thought processes that went into the design on the site were a bit different than what is needed for Babylon 5 Wars.

The design for the ISA Cruiser is from someone who goes by the moniker "Galen." He submitted a sketch and a text description to the site owner of the above web site. The site owner does not have an e-mail address, or else I would have asked for permission. I appreciate creativity in all its forms, and I deemed this design cool enough to deserve my attention and translate its general idea into Babylon 5 Wars.

(The B5W SCS for this ship can be found in the Attachments folder)

PSI CORVETTE



By JJ O'SHAUGHNESSY

The Psi-Cop looked out at his newly acquired ships floating in the space dock. Well, not his of course, but it was hard not to think of them as his. It was his program they were going to serve; his program that inspired their acquisition. He allowed himself a small moment of self-congratulation. These ships would be most useful. He sighed. He would have to head home soon. His wife was waiting. His stomach seemed to contract at the thought. He closed his eyes, then opened them again. That could wait, he decided. He continued to look out at the ships. Impulsively he opened his mind, sending a part of himself out and running an incorporeal finger along the hull of the ship. He smiled, despite the familiar acid headache beginning to crawl along the front-top of his head. Withdrawing, he chuckled to himself. Norms were irrelevant, he knew; teeming, wasteful, they were nothing to him. Their ideas however, were not irrelevant. Some of them were truly cunning and vicious. Ideas such as these deserved to be copied and expanded upon. The Norms had tossed these ships at them, he knew. Old, obsolete, useless, they had basically seen giving these crapped out old hulks as a nice convenient way of getting rid of them. He nodded in satisfaction. Fools, he thought. Oh, getting them running would be difficult, but valuable lessons would be learned. Opportunities would be seized. More ships would be granted now that the door had opened a crack. These ships were the beginning, and the beginning meant that the end was inevitable. He turned and walked to the door. Tomorrow, the work would begin.

Even before the Laertes Corvette was discontinued from service, many examples found their way into Raider forces, which found it a quick and easy ship to build. They modified them and added the ability

to carry fighters on external rails. A few however found their way into the hands of some rather unsavoury organisations, among them Psi-Corp. They were given to Psi-Corp because they were expendable ships, and the government was pleased not to have to undertake the expense of scrapping them. They were meant to be used by Psi-Corp in their police actions, but they were refurbished and refitted to house the Star Furies of the Black Omega squadron, Psi-Corp's new Starfighter wing. These ships were then used ostensibly for hunting down rogue telepaths, but in actuality were used in several, shall we say, shadowy operations.

Most of these vessels were destroyed in a battle outside the jump point leading to Babylon 5 in 2260. Persistent rumours abound that they were replaced however, using shipyards granted by Clark during his reign of terror. The truth has yet to be seen...

Designers notes:

This ship is my interpretation of the ones seen briefly in the aforementioned battle. The comparisons to the Sloop are obvious. They never fired during the battle, so their armament is open to conjecture, but was obviously short ranged. I felt that Light Particle Beams might be appropriate, but there was no way that the ship could not have Standard Particle Beams when they are so common in space. I retained the ship's frankly pathetic thrust rating, as the ships were not that nippy in the episode, but the interceptors were boosted to Mark I. It did however lose the Plasma Cannons. The resulting ship should play fairly close to the motherships in the show, right down the external rails for the Black Omega to launch and die for the cause.

* * *

(An SCS for this ship is in the Attachments folder)

They just don't get it...

Tackling the fanaticism of the Tak'Cha

"My people were dedicated to Valen. We came to him when he called, joined him in his war against the Shadows. We were directionless and he showed us the way. He gave us purpose. And we built upon his teachings... and were rejected."

- Zarwin, Tak'cha aide to Valen

THE TAK'CHA appeared in a comic series written by JMS, called "In Valen's Name". The insectoid race was at advanced space-faring stage of development during the last Shadow War.

They were one of the first to respond to Valen's call for allies to join the Minbari resistance.

But the Tak'cha had a very insecure psyche. They did not have meaning in their lives. They sought purpose and understanding. And Valen's wisdom offered them that.

The Tak'cha were a warlike race. But their social insecurity led them to develop a strong sense of religion.

They strove to be Valen's finest and most dedicated servants and worshippers - even though they did not fully understand what he said.

In their new-found confidence, they took very literal interpretations of what Valen said - and grafted his words onto their own ancient warrior-like philosophy.

Like many religious states, the Tak'cha developed an unfortunate sense of superiority. Their unbending dedication to Valen's word led them to believe that anyone who did not follow his teachings were "savages". These savages, of course, were not deserving of "civilized" treatment.

Compassion and tolerance were not words in the Tak'cha vocabulary.

PHYSIOLOGY

The most distinctive feature of the Tak'cha is their elongated scull and chitoned, insectoid features. They have faceted green insect-like eyes, but their bodies are remarkably humanoid.

The bipedal life-form had developed its own

form of martial-arts. It was from the Tak'cha that the Anla'shok derived the use of their fighting pike - the Barrka in the Tak'cha tongue.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

"Glory is found in war. There is no greater death than one found in battle on behalf of a greater cause".

- Zarwin, Tak'cha aide to Valen

It appears the Tak'cha have a religious-caste structure, with their "priests" - or Ramde in their tongue - acting as community and military leaders.

There is evidence of a sub-lieutenant class (or military commander). These are given the title of Ramdela.

Religion and war appear to be indistinct. Violence is a natural consequence of religion. Those who do not obey Valen's will must be punished. Violence is the natural punishment.

PSYCHOLOGY

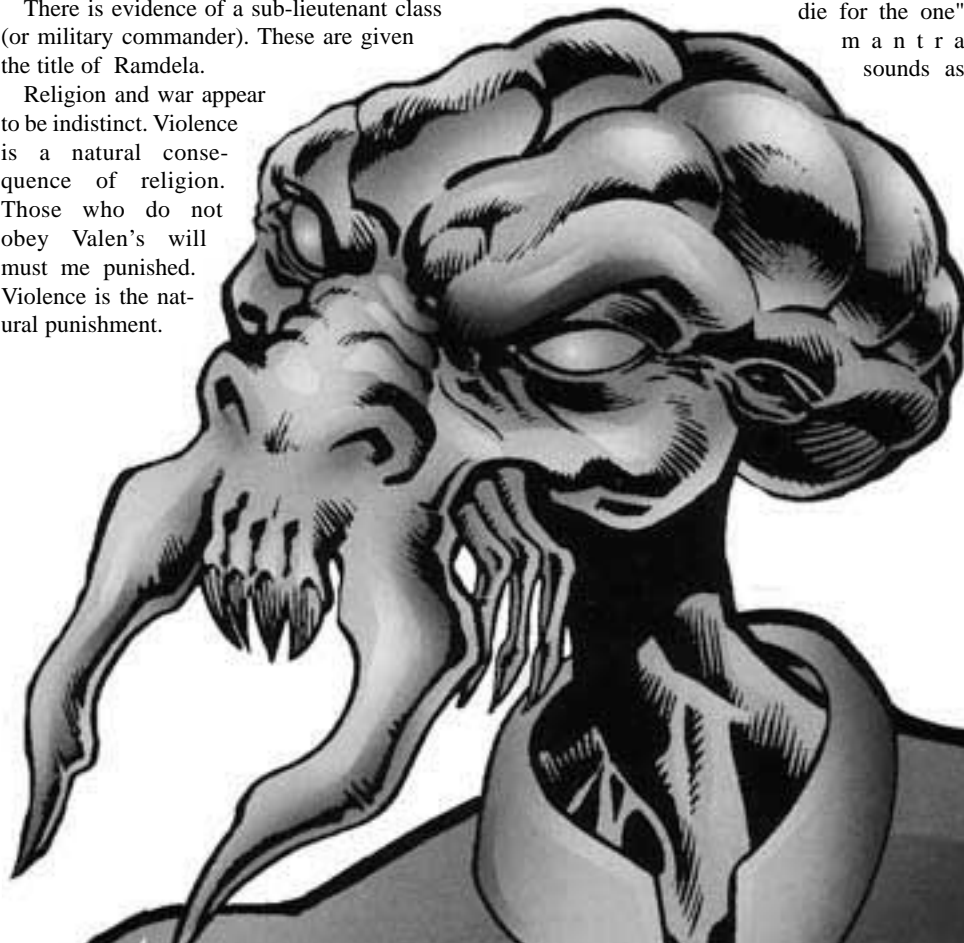
"Those who do not follow you into darkness, into death, they do not deserve to follow you. And so, instead, must precede you."

- Zarwin, Tak'cha aide to Valen

The Tak'cha were obsessed with Valen. And they considered themselves his greatest disciples. Combined with their ancient warrior culture, this produced a race of religious zealots.

The Tak'cha's overly exuberant warrior-code appears to have found its way into the Anla'shok's culture. The "we live for the one, we

die for the one"
m a n t r a
sounds as





Tak'cha warship

though it came directly out of the Tak'cha's holy books. Especially the emphasis on "we die for the one" component.

But the zealotry of the Tak'cha was to be their eventual downfall.

The war against the Shadows had not yet reached its height. The recruitment drive among the younger races was still under way.

The Tak'cha were given the task of signing the Yolu to Valen's cause. The Yolu declined. They did not understand the war, and did not want to get involved.

The Tak'cha interpreted this as an insult against their high-prophet, Valen. Their warships proceeded to bombard the Yolu homeworld.

Valen was outraged at their arbitrary action. He banished them from the Alliance of Light, ordering them into exile.

The Tak'cha were devastated.

They could not understand how they had offended Valen. But they obeyed. And for hundreds of years sought to understand the error of their ways. Valen had said there had been a "misunderstanding" and that they must show "compassion". These were both foreign concepts. They had to be understood before they could, once again, call themselves worthy followers of Valen.

FIRST CONTACT

"And we pray, Z'ondar (Valen), that we will be able to prove ourselves worthy of you once more. That you will welcome us to your way. For we fell from your grace centuries ago. We, your loyal disciples, the exiles, the wanderers, and now we have an opportunity to return to your greatness.

And we will not fail."

- Ramde Haxtur.

Memory of the Tak'cha was either lost or erased from the war-shattered records of the younger races. Even the Minbari forgot.

But, in 2261, shortly after the end of the Shadow War as prophesied by Valen, the Tak'cha ventured back into civilized space.

Why is not entirely clear.

They had followed the development of the Shadow war from their exile. Perhaps, now that Valen's prophecy had come to pass, they felt

their term in exile was over.

Perhaps they detected Babylon 4's distress signal. The Tak'cha may have interpreted this as a means of redeeming themselves.

An automated distress signal from a derelict Babylon 4 was detected in Sector 730 by 12 by 9 (40 hours, 14 minutes and 18 seconds travel time by White Star from Babylon 5). After nine centuries, the bastion of the last Shadow War had revealed its presence.

The Tak'cha had also detected the distress call. This was their most holy place returned from the depths of time - the fortress of their great prophet Valen. It had to be protected from looters and scavengers...

MODERN TAK'CHA

"Unlike some others, we are not savages. And to leave them in such a helpless state would be tragic and barbaric. Mercy Killing. Only thing for it. The teaching of the Z'ondar (Valen) would agree, do you not think so? Compassion is the greatest gift that one can give. Never forget that."

- Ramde Haxtur.

The Tak'cha, despite the passage of 1000 years, have still not fully grasped the finer points of the word "compassion".

A rescue and salvage mission was launched by the ship assigned to examining Babylon 4. A nearby Pakkel ship was disabled in a violent encounter with an un-named opponent.

Upon hearing that "strange savages" had entered Babylon 4, the Tak'cha commander decided to "prioritize"

They had to save their holy place from desecration. But many wounded Pakkel aboard their ship could not be moved.

The only "compassionate" course of action the Tak'cha could come up with was a "mercy killing": Destroying the Pakkel ship, killing the wounded before they died a painful death.

However, the misunderstanding caused by events aboard Babylon 4 - where Delenn, Sheridan, Ivanova and Garibaldi were seeking answers to ancient mysteries - was overcome.

The Tak'cha recognized the prophesied Delenn and forgave the bumbling humans their mistakes...

The comics do not give the Tak'cha any noticeable degree of technological development between the two Shadow Wars. Perhaps their race had been hard-pressed by the rigors of exile. Perhaps the entire mental ability of this race had been devoted to comprehending the meanings of "misunderstanding" and "compassion" for 1000 years.

Either way, the ships shown were the same.

They are ugly ships. Non-symmetrical, semi-organic in appearance.

They look, in some ways, like mutated Vorlon transports - with the distinctive forward tendrils and mottled green hull. However, grilles, radiators, "turbocharger" ducts and flash-fins add a somewhat disturbing chunkiness to the design's aesthetics. They carry between 20 and 34 fighters

The Tak'cha fighters look like mutated Star Trek shuttles, with three fins - the lower two swept forward, the rudder swept back.

Drawings of the interiors of the warship show a yellow-green resin-like hull. From some angles it looks like the structure of a beehive. From other it looks like swiss-cheese.

However, interweaved metallic walkways and terraces fill the cavernous halls with multiple-tiered workstations and command-decks.

The only weapon system shown fired by this warship is a rearward-arc yellow beam, fitted to one of the out-board bulges in the side of the ship.

Their fighters are shown firing small yellow beams from their lower fins.

The Tak'cha infantry had a traditional weapon that was later adopted by the Rangers, the Barrka. But they are also shown carrying heavy rifles, light rifles and pistols. These also fire yellow beams.



Tak'cha infantry

The zelots of Valen

The Tak'Cha Ro'than Cruiser
By JJ O'SHAUGHNESSY

THE Tak'Cha are a race with a slightly unusual tactical mindset. At their heart, they are basically insects, albeit insects who have gained self-awareness. Insects perform one job in a structured society, some are warriors, some are nurses, some are farmers, some are scavengers, etc.

When the Tak'Cha entered space they became aware of the various threats around them. From this they formed a tactical doctrine that involved capital ships being built with the sole purpose of fighting capital ships, fighters to fight fighters etc. The ship described here is their workhorse cruiser, though both larger and smaller ships exist, (including persistent rumours of an immense "Hive Ship"). These may be presented in future issues of Babcom.

The Ro'than Cruiser is a maneuverable and powerful (if somewhat small) ship designed to fight other mainline cruisers. Its weapons (described below) are designed to wreck the systems of an enemy vessel before it can close to point blank and destroy the ship. Its lack of rapid-fire small guns is unusual, but makes sense in the context of a fleet with other ships designed to hunt medium vessels and the like. Besides, it has good defence capability in its defensive guns that partially compensate for this stand-alone weakness.

NEW SYSTEMS

Zeon Disrupter

This is composed of a powerful particle beam that acts as the carrier for a stream of electrons in its core. As it rakes across a ship's hull it overloads electronic systems in addition to the raw damage effects. For this weapon, calculate the critical roll modifier at double its normal value. Ipsha are immune to this as their ships are shielded against the effects of electromagnetic weapons. The weapon has no special effect against a ship's structure (the charge is dissipated across too wide an area).

Zeon Defender

This sprays a mist of charged particles in the path of an incoming shot. The charge has no

special effect against lasers but is highly effective at blocking most other forms of weaponry.

Armor Self Repair

This highly advanced system began as an experiment in organic hull technology shortly before the previous Shadow War. It has since been upgraded to a full self-repair system, though in this case it is far too slow for tactical combat use (perhaps one box every hour). It is the primary reason why the Tak'Cha have been able to survive in deep space for so long. Even crippling damage from meteor impacts will eventually repair itself.

In combat, it has the ability to repair lost armor points from weapons such as Plasma Streams, Molecular Flayers, and Solar Cannons. It does this on a system-by-system basis. Each system point counts as one use of the armor repair for the purpose of tracking repair use. It does this at the same time as normal self-repair usage, and follows the same rules.

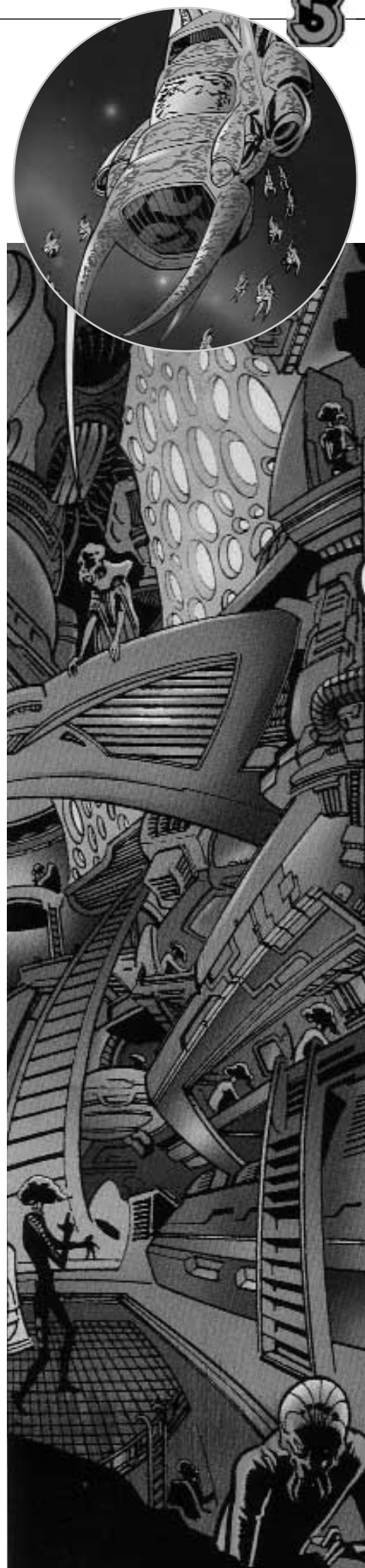
For example:

A Centauri Plasma Stream hits a Ro'than Cruiser for 21 points of damage. It is resolved as two hits on the structure, one on the thrusters and one on two separate Zeon Disruptors. The Tak'Cha captain chooses to begin repairing the two points on structure, one thruster and one Zeon Disruptor. Note that no damage is actually repaired in these systems, only the lost armor values. For weapons that do not reduce armor, the system has no value, though the ship will fully repair itself if it survives.

Sircos Medium Fighter

This fighter is used to counteract other fighters. Carried in large numbers by their cruisers, it is not meant to go against ships but to tie up enemy fighters. In many ways it's akin to the Senti, but is larger and not as accurate. Its guns however, fire a concentrated charge of electrically charged particles. These give a -1 to the dropout roll of enemy fighters, with the exception of Ipsha units and those with advanced armor. They have no extra effect against starships.

(An SCS for this ship can be found in the Attachments folder)



THE Lenkov sailed slowly through space near the battered Magellan, as it had first done since arriving, except now things had changed. A deep red glow could now be seen on both ends of the Omega destroyer, as the call for battlestations had been given and the weapons began charging. Charging for a fight that was soon to be coming. Turrets that lined the dorsal and ventral structure of the Earthforce capital ship slowly turned and rotated, aligning themselves into position that would provide the Lenkov with the full combat capability that would make them ready for an enemy, no matter which direction they struck.

Nestled deep and protected within the destroyer's mid-section where the Command and Control was located, Captain Kasrov stood with his hand rested under his chin as his eyes stared into a single display screen that showed all-around sensor readings. It showed nothing but the usual sensor scans, but Lieutenant Franks had said that the radiation spilling from the nearby sun could be having an impact on them and so he wasn't sure. Since the ship's sensors showed nothing and the pilots of the Thunderbolt squadron had visually seen nothing, it should be safe. The feeling that Oscar felt in his stomach told him otherwise, he knew that something was happening out there.

As he looked around the bridge, he had noticed the glances from some of his crew and even they wondered what was going on. Battlestations being called in a somewhat peaceful environment of which Delta squadron on their patrol had discovered. In Kasrov's mind though all the evidence mounted up and he had come to the conclusion that this was a perfect place for an ambush and a battle would be expected soon.

"Commander, have we any more news from Delta wing?"

"Lenkov to Delta Wing, please report your status" Commander Roberts requested as he stood alongside the communications station. Oscar watched his Executive Officer for a moment awaiting a response.



"Delta Wing reports that the EVAC shuttles are about to lock-on to the habitation module of the Magellan" William said as he moved back towards the center of the bridge, taking up a personal position beside his Commanding Officer.

"I don't like this, Bill." There was a slight hint of alarm on the Russian's face as his mind was busy, evaluating and analyzing their current situation.

"Lieutenant, do we still have life-signs aboard the Magellan." Kasrov turned to the young Lieutenant at the sensor station.

"Yes sir, all fifteen are stable." "There's something not right about this." As if he had been prodded in the back of his mind, Kasrov spun around facing William with now a stern expression on his face.

"Commander, get Alpha, Beta and Gamma squadrons prepped and ready for launch in the next ten minutes."

"Aye, sir." William did not stand idle for even a second as he nearly leapt towards the nearest console to relay the captain's order to the hangar deck. In moments, pilots

would be scrambling to their fighters and maintenance crews would be preparing each fighter and making sure everything checks out before launch.

Delta Leader felt nervous as his fingers flexed and twitched across his joystick. He had noticed the Lenkov approaching and even from this distance could see the slight glow from its forward cannons which meant that something was out here and they were obviously going to be ready for it. Delta squadron was still on patrol and as it slowly passed alongside what remained of the Magellan, he saw the two shuttles attach themselves to the circular habitation module.

"Delta Leader to Lenkov, the EVAC shuttles have docked to the Magellan." The flight leader reported in on what he had just seen seconds ago as the Thunderbolts, the menacing fighters of the Earth Military forces, made another sweep by the battered wreck.

"Confirmed, Delta Leader. Resume patrol, report anything suspicious." The calm voice sounded back through his solid helmet from the officer who sat in safety, deep

within the hull of the destroyer. They were calm and relaxed while he was out in the openness of space seated in a small fragile craft that could be blasted into pieces in mere seconds. It was the fighter pilots that did the real work, faced the real combat, he thought.

"Affirmative, control." The pilot spoke as he returned his focus to the controls of his advanced Star Fury as well as the immense star field outside that harbored any danger that he could imagine.

Through the century or so since mankind began their journey into the stars, that space had been the site of billions of deaths. The campaign in reversing the Dilgar advance into the League of Non-Aligned Worlds, at the hands of the race of felinoids that had caused genocide on a massive scale and did not care about the lives of the species that they bombed, conquered or experimented on. That singular point in time that will forever be remembered by every man, woman and child during the Earth/Minbari War, where the entire fate of humanity rested within the hands of the advanced culture. One decision in only a matter of minutes that could have lead to the destruction of Earth, had instead led to the Minbari's suddenly surrendering. The human race was given a second chance. From then on the Earth Alliance had been involved in minor skirmishes with races such as the Centauri and the Sh'lassen. That was until chaos once again erupted on Earth. Civil war broke out, man turned against man, ship against ship and it seemed again like it would cause the destruction of humanity's freedom until one man stood up and said no. That man having personally undertaken the campaign to free Earth from its oppressor and restoring freedom.

As he banked his Thunderbolt around the hulk of the Explorer he thought that there were going to be many more battles in the future and that it would never end. There was even the immense probability that his death loomed just around the corner.

And the sad part was... that he didn't know that he was right.

- To be continued...



DEFENSE OF BABYLON 5

Coordinated by
CHRIS NASIPAK

TWO months ago, the forces of President Clark made their first attempt to seize the Babylon 5 station. They were repelled by the courageous efforts of Human and Minbari warriors. Your squadron has just arrived at the station, ready to take up its own part in guarding against future assaults when the word comes in: they're on their way back.

SCENARIO SETUP:

Use a single standard 42x30 mapsheet. Place the Babylon 5 station in hex 1215, all its fighters are in hangars save for one flight, patrolling within six hexes of the station.

Place a Jump Gate in hex 3225, facing towards the station.

The defending player may place his units as he desires. Use a 4,000 point fleet or one of the prepared BattleForces below. Up to 1200 points of this may come from races other than your selection, representing whatever passing vessels are able to contribute to the defense. Enhancements for the station will come from this smaller pool (unless your main force is EarthForce Rebels). Add to this:

- Babylon 5 Battle Station
- 24x Starfury Fighters
- 24x Thunderbolt Fighters
- 10 Narn marine contingents

The EarthForce player may enter the mapboard via the Jump Gate or by forming his own Jump vortices.

EarthForce fleet:

- EAS Bismark, Omega-Alpha DD
 - 18x Thunderbolt Fighters
 - 36 Basic Missiles
 - 18 Heavy Missiles
 - 6x Starfury Fighters
- EAS Tirpitz, Omega-Beta DD
 - 12x Thunderbolt Fighters
 - 24x Basic Missiles
 - 12x Starfury fighters
- EAS Scharnhorst, Hyperion-Theta CA
 - 6x Starfury Fighters
- EAS Gneisenau, Hyperion-Zeta CA
 - 6x Starfury Fighters
- EAS Moltke, Olympus-Delta CVT
- EAS Graudenz, Artemis-Beta FF

All shuttles have been replaced with Breaching Pods. Each ship carries its maximum permissible load of additional Marine squadrons.

The attacker's objectives:

- 1) Seize control of the Babylon 5 Station. This can be accomplished by completing a "take control of the ship" mission on each section of the station.
- 2) Apprehend John Sheridan and Delenn. If the station is captured, they may attempt to

flee aboard a shuttlecraft, if they fail they are captured automatically. They can also be targeted directly with individual "Rescue a Captive" missions on the station's Primary section.

- 3) Discourage aliens from interfering in Earth's affairs. Destroy all non-EarthForce vessels of HCV size or larger present.

Fulfilling two or more of these victory conditions results in a Victory for the attacker. Fulfilling only one is a Partial Victory. Destruction of the Babylon station is a loss for both sides, each needs it for its political and economic value. Any other result is a victory for the defense.

THE BATTLEFORCES:

A New Hope ("Zero")

Four months ago we almost failed - only timely arrival of Delenn saved the station. This time we cannot count on this. We will not fail.

Free EarthForce squadron:
Nova (beta) 1350
2xHyperion (theta) 1410
21xAurora 1197
Total 3957

As it is, this force has alien support - although its commander doesn't know about it yet. The great

Centauri Republic, in its wisdom (or rather Londo's wisdom and House Mollaris influence), sent a ship to gather intelligence on the station and - if need be - protect Centauri citizens onboard. This task is currently carried out by one of the newest CRN vessels, CRS Shadow Stalker - Dargan class Strike Cruiser, with half her fighter complement (other half was exchanged for passenger shuttles, in case of evacuation of B5). An attack on the station is undoubtedly direct threat to her Centauri inhabitants...

Centauri surveillance group:
Dargan 750 (disguised as Centauri governmental freighter)
6xRutarian 450
Total 1200

Shadow Stalker came here as a freighter with an official mission of giving a safe place to run for any Centauri citizens wishing to do so - so it may stay there. No one would suspect anything except intelligence gathering. If there are more freighters at the moment of attack, the Dargan has a good chance of remaining unnoticed and choosing its first strike. Before that time, however, she would be unable to launch fighters without gaining attention. The EA commander would probably be suspicious, besides Centauri and EA computers may not work well together - so no OEW support from Dargan. DEW, however, is fully appropriate.

The EA squadron is designed to buy as much time as possible and deny any aggressor access to B5 itself. The Nova's lasers and pulse cannons and the Hyperion's plasmas will smash any vessel closing in, while Hvy Lasers may support fighters in case offensive action is needed.

In such case, 24 T-Bolts together with 45 Auroras should attack enemy ships, or at least gain fighter superiority. Otherwise (or if the enemy brought even more fighters), fighters will form a shell around the ships with a hail of fire, killing anything trying to get close.

Dargan support will depend on the situation: if it's detected early it can support the EA with blanket EW or add Battle Lasers for long-range fire, if it enters late its first salvo should be a close-range alpha strike - hopefully crippling one opponent before he knows what hit him.

In both cases, Rutarians should look as menacingly as possible while trying to remain alive - a single flight may not be able to do much, but can snipe much better than EA fighters (-1/hex weapon!), and possess quite a high 'fear factor'.

Orbital Lawyer Strikes ("Agnostic Angel")

Main Force (Raiders): 3,958 points
Battlewagon

--12 Delta-V (Light Gun)
--12 Delta-V

Dragonship
--12 Delta-V

2xWolf Raider

Assault Sloop

--3 Extra Contingents

--Mako

Allies: 1200 points
Xill
2 Commercial Freighter
Expert Security Officer for B5
4 Gaim Troop Units for B5
4 Narn Troop Units for B5

Therefore, I have as follows:

B5 with expert against boarding (and a really big gun too), Gaim and Narn Troops, and 15 "spare" troops on an assault sloop. Two Wolf Raiders and two Freighters to help give them cover (and a good disguise). 36 Delta V's should have some trouble handling fighters, but no trouble handling breaching pods. The Xill should have little to no trouble handling fighters. Not much in terms of battle power, but it has creativity, and that's what counts, no?

The Last Homely Station ("Kizarvexis")

Ranger fleet

1 Command Whitestar

3 Whitestars

1 Letann Scout (Attached from the Religious caste)

3980

2 Maitau Pursuit Frigates

1200

The Babylon 5 Battle Station

24x Starfury/Aurora

24x Starfury/Thunderbolt

Elder Rakor glanced around the bridge of his frigate. Word from Babylon 5 had just been received that a hostile force was coming through the jump gate and his crew was racing to stations.

The sensor tech, Jalur, spoke over the quiet din, "Jump gate opening. Earthforce fleet arriving insystem."

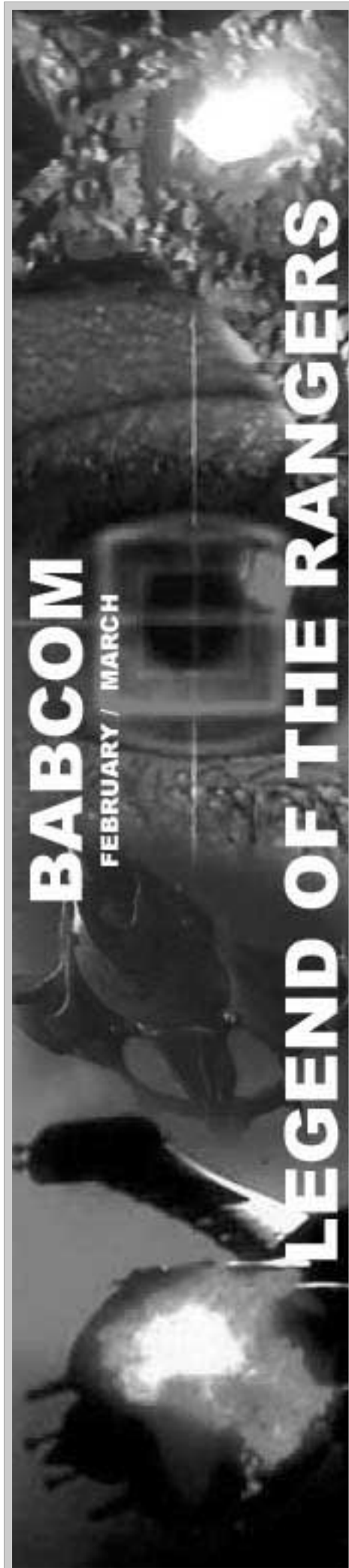
Rakor was about to give an order, when the comm tech reported, "Message from the Whitestar Command ship, Elder."

"Put it on speaker." rasped the Elder.

"...(t)he Minbari. Repeat. This system is under Minbari and League protection. Withdraw your forces, before you escalate this situation into a war between Earth, the League and the Minbari."

'Presumptuous', thought the Elder 'But if that prevents hostilities....' Quickly, he barked orders to the bridge crew, "Prepare all weapons. Sensor tech, get a minimum lock on all Earthforce cap ships. Maneuvering, set course 32 by 113 by 25 to come up on the weak side of the Earth formation."

'Maybe aggressive action backed up with the threat of war with powerful nations would convince the Earth fleet to leave in peace.', thought Elder Rakor.



Saga of a lost sci-fi series

September 2002

Q&A WITH RONALD D. MOORE

Sponsored by

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Do you plan on using any story lines from the old series?

Possibly. We're obviously using the story from "Saga of a Star World" to launch the series, and I have had ideas about using one or two others as we go along. "Living Legend" is the most obvious one that cries out to be included, but beyond that I'm going to take a wait and see approach. First, the mini-series, then we'll see about the series.

Mr. Moore, do you understand why fans are passionate about this show?

I understand the feelings, sure. I was a passionate fan of the original Star Trek series in the 1970s and I know what it's like to be in love with a show that's been cancelled and possibly never revived. I think it's hard to know exactly what are the "magical" elements in a show which cause it to be embraced by an audience -- the reasons I fell in love with Trek may be totally different from someone else's. I do think that I'm crafting a version of Galactica that an audience can fall in love with -- I'm in love with it already. As to what exactly those magical elements are, I've got to leave you with a dissatisfying answer: You'll have to watch it. The central narrative still revolves around the family Adama, which is one of the reasons I think the original was beloved in its day, and many of the original characters are present and fulfill similar roles. The central narrative and mythos of the Galactica world is much the same. Much has remained the same, much has changed as well. Whether it's enough for you to fall in love... we'll see. I hope so.

When does the new mini-series start production and when can we expect to see it on TV?

We're still waiting for a firm airdate from SciFi. If it's Fall '03, we'll begin prep very soon, if it's Xmas '03 or later, we'll start prep later. Filming itself will probably begin 9-10 weeks after the formal start of prep, last for 40-50 days, then several weeks of post-production before we have a finished product. In all, figure roughly nine months start to finish.

Attempts to revive Battlestar Galactica continue, though their chances do not look great. the SCI-FI Channel, who recently acquired the show's rights and announced plans for a "re-imagining", has recently lurched away from science-fiction programming, cancelling the likes of Farscape and Legend of the Rangers. Here, show producer Ronald Moore tries to alleviate fan concerns.

Are there going to be vipers in your idea of galactica? if not why.

There will indeed be Vipers in addition to new Colonial fighter craft.

How much budget has sci-fi given you to produce this project?

They don't like us to give out actual numbers, but suffice it to say that it's well into the 8 figure range.

What will be the plot line? what/who are going to be the focus of the new mini series?

The story will follow the basic contours of the original pilot, sans the Ovion plotline. Thus, it will focus on setting up the characters and the Colonial world, then telling the story of the Cylon attack, and finally the escape of Galactica and the rag-tag fleet.

What advantages does the reimagining have over a continuation?

In my view, remaking Galactica provides an opportunity to explore the entire Galactica universe with a fresh approach, while a continuation would lock in elements from the original and strait-jacket the storytelling both from a character standpoint and from a plot standpoint. This is a chance to revisit the Galactica world explore it in new ways. It also gives us a chance for a Galactica that might be embraced by an even larger audience

beyond the fanbase and allow a new series to get a longer lease on life than the original did. And as long as we're on the subject (the subject everyone wants to talk about) let me talk briefly about I came to this project and how I've approached it. In the beginning, I was told the Singer/DeSantos project was being shelved and I was asked whether or not I was interested in coming up with a new take for a Galactica series. I thought about it and said yes, and my pitch was to remake the series. Did I think about doing a continuation? Sure, it was an obvious (and creatively valid) idea, but in all honesty it didn't interest me as much as the possibilities inherent in going back to the beginning and retelling the story from a fresh perspective. Why? To put it simply, I think this is a better CREATIVE approach and I think I'll do a better job telling this version than I would a continuation. That's not to say a continuation couldn't be done or that it's a bad idea

-- it's not. But I think a remake will open up



This is a model of a "re-imagined" Cylon centurion, probably for the abandoned DeSanto Galactica project. It was made by Vincent Guastini Productions

more and better creative opportunities to explore in both the miniseries and the series, and in my opinion, making the best show you possibly can is always the bottom line (or at least should be). It's also worth bearing in mind that at the time I was coming up with my pitch, there was no hue and cry for a "continuation or death" on the internet that I could discern and that it materialized only after the deal had already been sealed and the project was announced. As I said in my earlier posting on the SciFi board, I have listened carefully to the feelings of some of the fans since that time and I do understand their feelings, especially after having travelled such a long road already with multiple attempts at getting a new *Galactica* on the air. But that sympathy and understanding didn't suddenly make me decide that a continuation is a better approach. The audience may still reject this show. It may fail. But it won't be because I didn't try to make the very best show I thought I was capable of making. And in the end wouldn't you be disappointed if the executive producer of the new *Battlestar Galactica* said anything else?

Will the new show focus on characters of all ages or younger actors and actresses?

The characters run the gamut of ages from Adama to Boxey, but I'd say the median age range is probably 30s.

Will there be space battles similar to what was portrayed in the original series?

There will definitely be space battles, but part of the challenge of this project was how to do a dogfight and not have it just look like the same old thing yet again. We have come up with a new approach to filming the battles, but you don't really expect me to give it away now, do you?

How much of the 'look' of the original series will be incorporated into the new series?

There will be definite design elements which harken back to the original show, first and foremost among them the design of *Galactica* herself which I consider something of a classic and have no desire to screw around with.

Has the sudden cancelation of *Farscape* changed the way you are approaching *Galactica*?

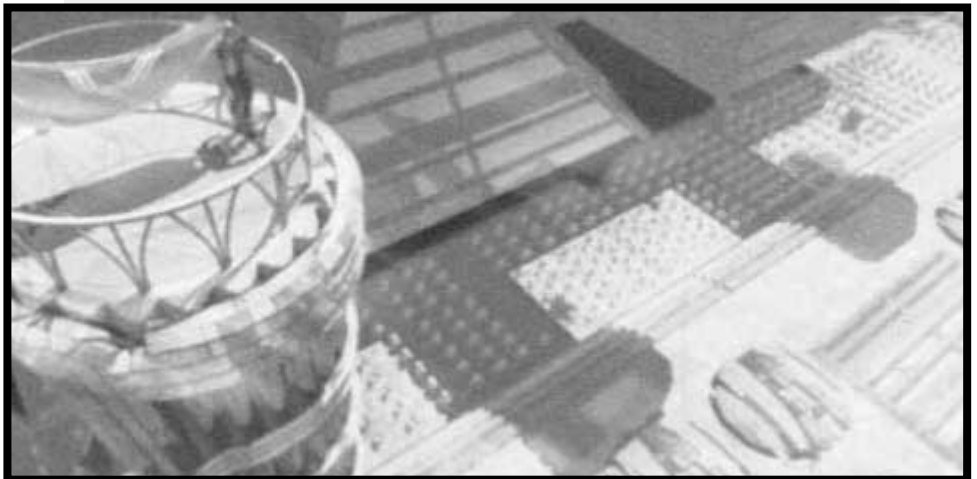
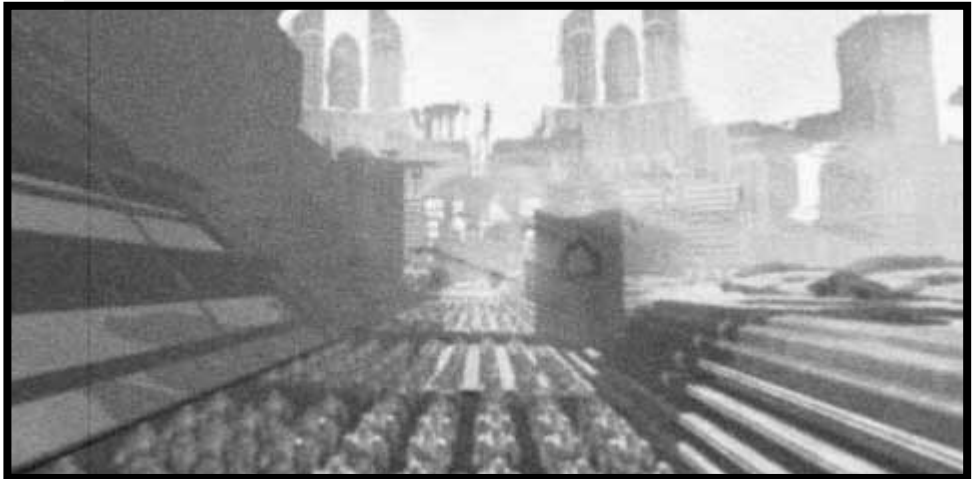
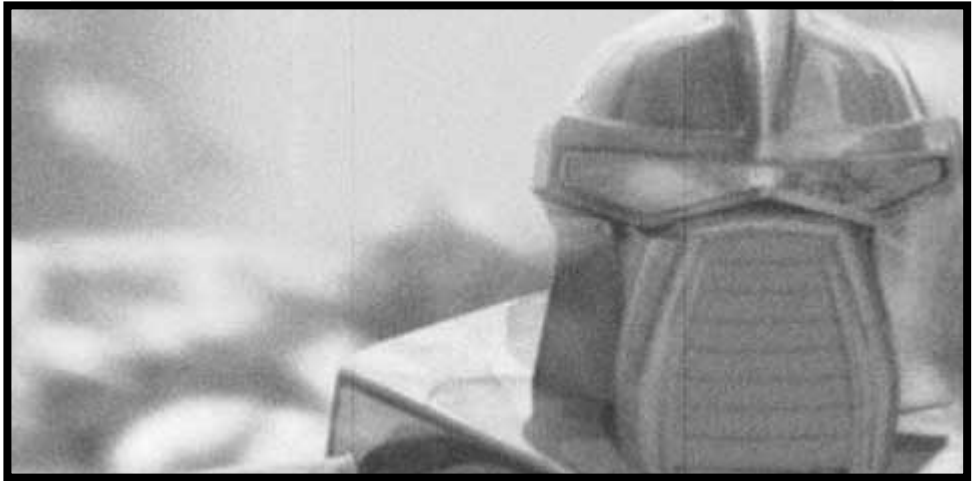
It hasn't had much affect on what I'm doing at this point. It does remind me to keep looking over my shoulder, but that's a lesson I learned in TV a long time ago.

What specific themes from the original series will be incorporated into the new production?

The destruction of an entire civilization through a surprise attack, the escape of a rag-tag fleet, the family relationships and friendships at the center of it, the menace provided by the Cylons and the human story of people banding together to survive and search for a shining planet called Earth.

You mentioned that your version of *Galactica* would be grittier and more down to Earth than what we are used to seeing in contemporary science fiction programming.

As I said above, this was a creative decision. Essentially I'm looking for a more grounded, more realistic presentation of science fiction than traditionally presented in the "space opera" format. Taking the opera out of space opera would be another way of putting it. I'm looking



*These three screen captures are from a short trailer recently released by EDEN-FX. Its purpose is not known, but it may have been part of a pitch to win a CGI contract for one of the attempts to revive *Battlestar Galactica*.*

The trailer shows a Cylon parade through a futuristic city, with traditional-looking Cylon Centurions and Cylon Raiders.

to give you more human characters and more realistic stories which take place in a fantastic setting.

Many fans find it hard to imagine *Galactica* without the original theme music. What type of theme music are you planning?

We're a ways from post-production, so my thinking here is still preliminary. I do think it's time to move past the usual orchestral score and try something different, but that doesn't mean I want

to discard the original theme altogether. I could go on and on in this vein for a while, but it's just way too early for this particular discussion. Suffice it to say that I intend on incorporating the original theme music but not with the classic arrangement.

In your version of *Galactica*, will the subject of Earth come about a little more naturally than it did in the original show, and more importantly, will Earth and the 13th Tribe

play a part in the mini series' storyline?

It will come up at a key point in the story and it will play itself out in a somewhat surprising way. That's all I'll say at this point.

Why are you trying to kill the goose that laid the golden egg? A continuation of BSG with a mix of the old and new cast is a sure winner. Why can't you and TPTB see that?

If I thought that was the case, I obviously wouldn't be doing it. A continuation is far from a slam-dunk recipe for success. I mean, shall we talk about a little show called "Galactica: 1980"? It had a mix of old and new cast members, the exact same costumes, design, theme music, etc. and it stank. Fans sometimes want to pretend it didn't happen or that it doesn't count somehow, but the truth is that "1980" was a continuation and it failed. Miserably. We can all argue about why it failed, but the point is that a bad show is a bad show and doing a continuation is no guarantee of success just as doing a remake is no guarantee of failure.

Will the ships and fighters and what not be CGI or will you be using any models?

The CGI vs. models debate has only just begun, but the economics are such that I'd be surprised if we didn't go the CGI route.

NOTHING is going on with your production! Prove to us there is current movement or move on!

Well, I suppose I could invite you all over to my office to watch me write, but I don't have enough chairs...

Is the original Viper design to be used in the new miniseries?

We do plan on incorporating original Vipers into the new mini. Also, we're giving considerable thought to some of the physics points you've made.

Are there science experts on the production staff's team who can assist with making the new miniseries scientifically realistic

No one's on staff at this point besides David Eick and myself. Eventually, I do plan on hiring a technical consultant. Travel between the stars would take far too long with sublight vehicles for the miniseries ever to develop into the traveling situations portrayed in the original series; however, having small ships such as Vipers and shuttles traveling at light speed or above would be equally unrealistic. For space battles between small ships to be realistic for the TV viewer, speeds must be fairly low or it will not be possible to follow the action.

Are the Cylons going to be reptilian, robotic, organic or a mix?

Can't answer this one, sorry.

Will we know how many ships are ultimately destroyed? And why is the Galactica patrolling without an escort? This isn't normal for any naval fleet.

I have given names to a few other battlestars in the pilot, and they are also drawn from the original pilot. There's a good deal of information on the fate of the rest of the fleet and the numbers involved. The Galactica is not on patrol during the attack.

Why is the SCI-FI Channel pursuing this production, and not DeSanto's?

That's a question for SciFi. The previous production was dead well before I ever came in to pitch the remake. Exactly what went down and why is something I honestly don't have the answer to.

Commander Cain and the Pegasus. The planet Kobol and the magnetic void. Count Iblis and the Ships of Light/Guardians of the Universe. Do you plan to utilize these elements in an ongoing series?

I'm going to wait on this one for a while, but Commander Cain is a strong candidate for a future storyline.

Are you using any of Tom DeSanto's pre-production design work on your show?

We have looked at the design work from the DeSantos project and some of it might work for us as well.

Is the Cylon Imperious Leader going to be seen? Will there be a Lucifer character? Will we understand Cylon culture better than the original series?

The Cylon culture will be understood more clearly than in the original version. I'm not willing to discuss any particulars about them yet, however, including any of the potential Cylon characters.

Are there creative differences between yourself and SCI-FI' executive Bonnie Hammer?

As to the Bonnie Hammer situation, I don't know why this is such a hot topic of internet speculation. Sure, there are creative differences between the show-runner (me) and the network (them), but that's the case in every piece of television ever produced. The question is how big those differences are. At the moment, they're not that big and we've talked through the notes that have come up. If I thought the script was being eviscerated or damaged, I'd raise a stink about it, but that's not the case. So far, they've been pretty reasonable to deal with and I'm not unhappy about the changes I've agreed to make.

Mr. Moore, you are known for good character writing. How could the original characters have been improved? How do you intend to portray Apollo, Starbuck, Athena, Adama, Tigh, Boomer and Baltar in your show?

I'm interested in deepening the character relationships both within the Adama family and without. I feel that a sharper focus on the characters and less focus on the sci-fi plot of the week will create a different kind of science fiction series, one where the human equation is front and center. This is the heart of my approach - make the new Galactica more about people, less about sci-fi hardware and pseudo-scientific tech talk.

As your production is airing on a channel that caters to a specific audience, have you also geared it to catch the non-sci-fi audience?

Capturing the general audience is a priority to us and I very much want people who don't normally watch science fiction to give this one a chance.

Farscape, an intensely popular sci-fi series with an enormous fan base has been can-

celled, and the Sci-Fi Channel focus seems to be shifting from science fiction as fans like their science fiction. How might - or is - this affecting your hoped for production of the BSG mini-series?

It's too early to say how it might or might not affect BG. I was as surprised as everyone else when they cancelled Farscape. So far, it's been a positive experience with SciFi, so I will continue to simply hope for the best.

Will an effort be made to keep the look of the Galactica itself the same? (Including the exterior, naturally, but also the ship's bridge and corridors.)

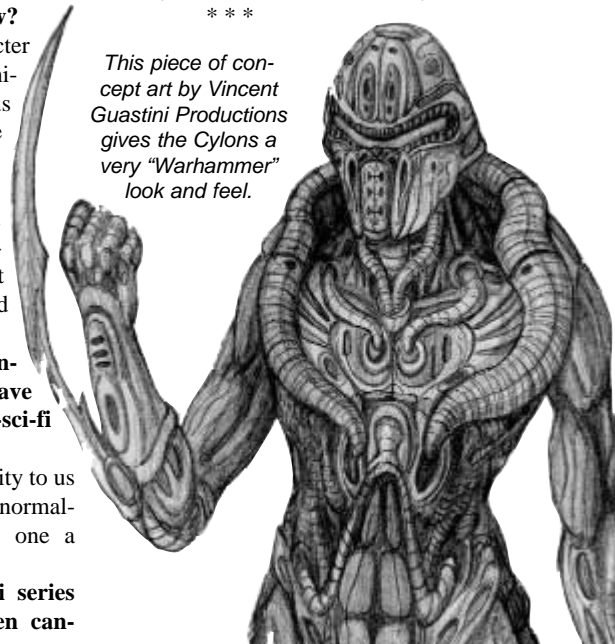
While I want to keep the exterior largely intact, the interiors will probably be different.

From your SCi-fi posts you will retain much of the mythos. Are we not really looking at the same story (essentially) from a different perspective (the civilian view) and that an argument could be made that this is a "refocusing" of the TOS? My comments on the civilian world are probably more directed at the future series than the miniseries. The mini's focus is by necessity on the military world because it's the story of a military attack and its aftermath. The civilian world is set up in the mini but will be enlarged in the series.

Do you respect the efforts made by Richard Hatch to revive the series and has his efforts had any influence on your decision(s) on how to proceed? He has my admiration and respect for his efforts, but it doesn't impact my decision-making. In all fairness, a continuation has had at least three different chances: Galactica:1980, Richard Hatch's project, and then the Singer/Desantos version. So I don't think you could say a continuation hasn't had a fair shot. Let's give the remake at least one try before it's condemned.

In researching Battlestar Galactica, what surprised you about the original series the most? How truly dark it was in the beginning. How they really did try to go for a different format than existed in other filmed science fiction. How even though the Star Wars influence is obvious, it truly does have its own identity.

This piece of concept art by Vincent Guastini Productions gives the Cylons a very "Warhammer" look and feel.





BOLDLY GOING WHERE NO SHOW HAS GONE BEFORE?

Battlestar Galactica Mission Statement: Naturalistic Science Fiction

or

Taking the Opera out of Space Opera

OUR goal is nothing less than the reinvention of the science fiction television series. We take as a given the idea that the traditional space opera, with its stock characters, techno-double-talk, bumpy-headed aliens, thespian histrionics, and empty heroics has run its course and a new approach is required. That approach is to introduce realism into what has heretofore been an aggressively unrealistic genre.

Call it "Naturalistic Science Fiction."

This idea, the presentation of a fantastical situation in naturalistic terms, will permeate every aspect of our series:

VISUAL: The first thing that will leap out at viewers is the dynamic use of the documentary or cinema verite style. Through the extensive use of hand-held cameras, practical lighting, and functional set design, the battlestar Galactica will feel on every level like a real place.

This shift in tone and look cannot be overemphasized. It is our intention to deliver a show that does not look like any other science fiction series ever produced. A casual viewer should for a moment feel like he or she has accidentally surfed onto a "60 Minutes" documentary piece about life aboard an aircraft carrier until someone starts talking about Cylons and battlestars.

That is not to say we're shooting on videotape under fluorescent lights, but we will be striving for a verisimilitude that is sorely lacking in virtually every other science fiction series ever attempted. We're looking for filmic truth, not manufactured "pretty pictures" or the "way cool" factor.

Perhaps nowhere will this be more surprising than in our visual effects shots. Our ships will be treated like real ships that someone had to go out and film with a real camera. That means no 3-D "hero" shots panning and zooming wildly with the touch of a mousepad. The questions we will ask before every VFX shot are things like: "How

The following document was leaked to filmjerk.com. It apparently accompanied the TV movie script to the powers that be at Studio USA and the Sci-Fi Channel and helped get the greenlight for the project.

did we get this shot? Where is the camera? Who's holding it? Is the cameraman in another spacecraft? Is the camera mounted on the wing?" This philosophy will generate images that will present an audience jaded and bored with the same old "Wow -- it's a CGI shot!" with a different texture and a different cinematic language that will force them to re-evaluate their notions of science fiction.

Another way to challenge the audience visually will be our extensive use of the multi-split screen format. By combining multiple angles during dogfights, for example, we will be able to present an entirely new take on what has become a tired and familiar sequence that has not changed materially since George Lucas established it in the mid 1970s.

Finally, our visual style will also capitalize on the possibilities inherent in the series concept itself to deliver unusual imagery not typically seen in this genre. That is, the inclusion of a variety of civilian ships each of which will have unique properties and visual references that can be in stark contrast to the military life aboard Galactica. For example, we have a vessel in our rag-tag fleet which was designed to be a space-going marketplace or "City Walk" environment. The juxtaposition of this high-gloss, sexy atmosphere against the gritty reality of a story for survival will give us more textures and levels to play than in typical genre fare.

EDITORIAL: Our style will avoid the now clichéd MTV fast-cutting while at the same time foregoing Star Trek's somewhat ponderous and

lugubrious "master, two-shot, close-up, close-up, two-shot, back to master" pattern. If there is a model here, it would be vaguely Hitchcockian -- that is, a sense of building suspense and dramatic tension through the use of extending takes and long masters which pull the audience into the reality of the action rather than the distract through the use of ostentatious cutting patterns.

STORY: We will eschew the usual stories about parallel universes, time-travel, mind-control, evil twins, God-like powers and all the other clichés of the genre. Our show is first and foremost a drama. It is about people. Real people that the audience can identify with and become engaged in. It is not a show about hardware or bizarre alien cultures. It is a show about us. It is an allegory for our own society, our own people and it should be immediately recognizable to any member of the audience.

SCIENCE. Our spaceships don't make noise because there is no noise in space. Sound will be provided from sources inside the ships -- the whine of an engine audible to the pilot for instance. Our fighters are not airplanes and they will not be shackled by the conventions of WWII dogfights. The speed of light is a law and there will be no moving violations.

CHARACTER: This is perhaps, the biggest departure from the science fiction norm. We do not have "the cocky guy" "the fast-talker" "the brain" "the wacky alien sidekick" or any of the other usual characters who populate a space series. Our characters are living, breathing people with all the emotional complexity and contradictions present in quality dramas like "The West Wing" or "The Sopranos." In this way, we hope to challenge our audience in ways that other genre pieces do not. We want the audience to connect with the characters of Galactica as people. Our characters are not super-heroes. They are not an elite. They are everyday people caught up in a enormous cataclysm and trying to survive it as best they can.

They are you and me.

- Ronald Moore



Adapted from an article on Filmjerk.com
By EDWARD HAVENS

DURING a Q&A at a convention in October 2002, former "Star Trek" producer - and now Battlestar Galactica producer - Ronald Moore hinted that there was going to be some activity on the horizon. And this time, it looks to be legitimate. USA Cable Entertainment has finally given Moore the greenlight to begin active preproduction on the planned four-hour miniseries-cum-series-pilot, which will begin production in Vancouver this coming March. The new storyline does read much like the storyline for the original series: After decades of peace with the Cylons (robots built by humans but with enough intelligence to turn against their designers), the humans of Kobol are virtually annihilated in a sneak attack. With a small remnant of humanity surviving aboard the last remaining Battlestar, Commander Adama and President Laura Roslin opt to make a run for it in the Galactica, hoping to reach the humans' legendary homeworld of Earth, while pursued through space by the fanatical, now humanoid Cylons...

Recently, a set of casting notes was leaked to the media. This is what it reveals about the "re-imagined" Battlestar Galactica.

President Laura Roslin?

In her 40s to 60s, handsome and confident, with an innate intelligence bordering on the brilliant, she'll begin the series as the Education Secretary, 43rd in the line of succession to be President. Toughly decisive when she needs to be, but not in a bitchy way, Laura will be a woman whose intellect is informed by her emotions (The quality the producer would like to strike us most strongly about Laura is that she has class). She is in essence a school teacher, a cabinet member

who comes out of education. There will be a warmth to her but she'll also have what it takes to play with the big guys. After being diagnosed as suffering from malignant breast cancer, she will go on a routine flight to Battlestar Galactica that will turn out to be far from routine. While en route back, the Cylons attack and destroy her home planet, leaving a swathe of devastation that Laura will barely escape, one which leaves her President of the Twelve Colonies of Kobol. Intent on preserving a nucleus of humanity from the near-total destruction that has already killed billions, Laura returns to Battlestar Galactica and asserts her authority, ordering Adama (much against his will) to cut and run. She orders him not to fight the Cylons, but to find a quiet corner of the universe for humanity to rebuild itself over the course of time. Intelligent, tough-minded, and worried about her own mortality, Laura succeeds in forging a working relationship with Adama, to their mutual surprise.

Commander Adama

In his late 50s to early 60s, Adama is the commander of the Battlestar Galactica. He wears the weight of command easily, like a suit of clothing. He wears a simple day uniform with a minimum of insignia, and his clothes have a well-used, rumpled look. He is a bit of a relic who operates from the gut. Estranged from his son Lee, who blames Adama for the death of his brother Zak, he is a solitary man who knows the burden of command. Adama is old enough to have fought in the first war against the Cylons, robots created for humans who turned against their masters and who now live in distant exile, but he is about to retire after long dull years spent in the peacetime military. But when the Cylons launch a massive sneak attack against the humans, wiping out all the other Battlestars and destroying virtually all life on the Twelve Colonies of Kobol, Adama is the last man stand-

ing, in charge of the Colonial defenses, and hungry to avenge the deaths of billions. But after a verbal battle with the new President of the Twelve Colonies, Adama reluctantly bows to civilian rule and agrees to abandon Kobol and transport a pitifully small remnant of humanity to a distant star system, hoping to cut and run and escape the pursuing Cylons' murderous fury. A thoughtful, insightful military leader, Adama bitterly drinks from the cup of surrender and tries to lead the Galactica's rag-tag fugitive fleet back to their legendary, possibly nonexistent homeworld, known as Earth.

"Apollo" Adama

Lee (call-sign Apollo) Adama, in his late 20s to early 30s, is a handsome hotshot fighter pilot who is briefly assigned to the Galactica. He is more emotional than his father. A man with a long-simmering bitterness against his famous and respected father, Lee believes that his brother Zak was forced into military service by their father, and that Zak's death was due to Commander Adama's demands upon his son. Barely civil to his father when they meet formally, Lee regards visits to the Galactica as incidents to be endured. Friends with Kara, and possibly attracted to her, Lee is something of a local hero, and is forced to prove himself when the Cylons attack. Flying his father's old fighter, Lee is able to launch a few meager volleys against the overwhelming offensive of the Cylons, but is believed to have been killed in the battle. After landing on a distant moon, he's found and ordered to escort a transport ship filled with survivors to Galactica, where President Roslin hopes to escape the Cylons. Stunned by his father's emotion when they reunite, Lee begins to revise his low opinion of his father, as he begins the difficult task of protecting Galactica and its precious cargo of humanity against the Cylons.



Kara "Starbuck" Thrace

In her late 20s to early 30s, is a loner, which makes her an oddity among the Galactica's tight-knit crew of pilots. She's tough and ballsy with a certain worldliness. She's as undisciplined and rebellious out of the cockpit as she is calculating and precise in it. Her mouth has definitely held back her career. Not fond of Colonel Paul Tigh, the ship's Executive Officer, she enjoys both taunting him and beating him at cards. A take-charge woman who runs around the ship in a jogging bra and shorts, who might be attracted to Lee Adama, Kara is a warrior spoiling for a fight, and she gets her chance at battle when the Cylons attack. Forced to fly an antiquated fighter, Kara soon learns that the "modern" spacecraft have been infiltrated by a Cylon computer virus, and that only older fighters can survive in combat. Lucky, smart, and tough, Kara soon finds herself the point woman in Adama's efforts to fight back against the Cylons. But when Adama and President Roslin agree to make a run for it, Kara must use her battle-honed skills not to fight the enemy, but to defend the fragile nucleus of humanity carried aboard the Galactica to an unknown future.

Gaius Baltar

A literal genius. Elegantly dressed and aesthetically handsome, with the affected humility of the truly arrogant, Baltar is a computer technology designer who has won three Magnate Prizes, and who has designed the defense systems for the Colonies of Kobol. He has a tremendous ego, but is deeply flawed. Somewhere beneath the ability (the genius) is the pathological weakness of character. Self-absorbed, sly, guileful, and utterly dedicated to his self-preservation, Baltar has carried on a two-year affair with a woman he believes to be a spy for a private firm, and has allowed her access to his nation's most vital technology. When the Cylons launch their

attack, featuring a computer virus that annihilates Baltar's programs, he realizes that the seductive Number Six is no woman at all, but a Cylon spy in humanoid form. Appalled by the fact that his sexual folly has led billions to their deaths, Baltar is determined to avoid exposure as a feckless traitor, and is pleased to find himself treated with the same esteem he previously enjoyed. Still atop the pinnacle of what's left of society, Baltar is placed in charge of Galactica's research facilities, only to find that Number Six now appears to him in uncontrollable visions, the result of a computer chip secretly implanted in his brain. Teased mercilessly by the ever-present Number Six, Baltar tries to find a way to fight back against the Cylons without exposing his secret source of knowledge about their homicidal civilization.

Number Six

With drop-dead looks and a perfect body, she is a humanoid Cylon, number six of their twelve models of human-appearing robots. Her every move and every gesture is smooth and precise; her eyes are keenly intelligent. Able to be coldly intellectual or coquettishly sexy, Number Six has seduced Gaius Baltar, and over the two years of their affair, she has pretended to be an industrial spy, copying his files for her "company." But in fact she has used Baltar to probe every facet of the humans' defensive network, the better to destroy their military capability in a single blow. Having implanted her image in Baltar's brain via a memory chip, the seductive, sardonic, witty and merciless Number Six toys and teases Baltar, even after he escapes with his life to Battlestar Galactica. Amused by the twists and turns of Baltar's amoral, survival-obsessed mind, she remains visible to him only, a constant reminder of his unwitting treachery.

Right of reply:

EVERYONE out there needs to take a deep breath and relax.

What was leaked to the internet was a character breakdown composed by our casting people. It is neither a synopsis, a character analysis, nor a fair overview of the project. It's a quick and dirty description of some of the characters with a few plot points thrown in to tell the agents and potential actors some of what happens in the script.

It's a jumble of things and was never meant to represent the script as a whole.

It's like saying: HAMLET -- twenties. Prince of Denmark. Broods and sulks. Has close relationship with crazy sister and possible romance with mother. Father's ghost tells him uncle is a killer, and Hamlet puts on a play. Wears tights and dies in botched swordfight after extended self-analysis regarding nature of life. Is that accurate? Yes. Does it convey the depth and complexities of the play or the relationships? Of course not.

A few misconceptions from the breakdown: There are, in fact, non-humanoid classic silver-suited Cylons in the piece. Apollo is not Lee Adama's middle name, it is his radio call sign. Kara Thrace does not "run around Galactica in her bra" she takes her morning run through the passageways of the ship in a jogging top and shorts just like sailors aboard submarines and aircraft carriers do today. Laura Roslin's mortality plays directly into the overall themes of the show, and on and on...

I've said it before and I'll say it again -- The Galactica miniseries is a good piece of work and yes, you will recognize it as Galactica. I've always said that many things have changed and many things are the same. The underlying structure of the original pilot is still intact, and the family and character relationships are still present. I've said in the past that I'd changed the relationship of the Cylons to the Colonials and that I was making the fundamental character relationships more complicated and complex. And that's what I've done.

Sure, I knew some of this was going to be controversial. Did I know that making Starbuck a woman was going to catch flack? You bet. I also think it's one of the best decisions I made and I'll be more than happy to debate that choice with anyone who feels different.

Bottom line here is to relax and wait for more information. I wasn't planning on releasing plot points and character descriptions so soon, but the leak has probably forced my hand. Chances are, someone's going to get their hot little mitts on the script itself before too long and you'll all be able to judge for yourselves anyway.

- Ronald Moore

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