

JULY
2001

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SHOWDOWNS

Narn versus Centauri



Based on an image by Santeri Pusa

The heart of the Lion

An analysis of the Centauri battlefleet

Know Thy Enemy, Know Thyself

Before selecting even the first ship for your Centauri fleet, it can often prove very useful to determine what race(s) it will have to face in battle. If you are engaging in a straight one-on-one skirmish with some other power, then you can do a great deal of customization to best capitalize on any advantages you might have. If fighting against a select number of other races, you may still be able to do some customization to your force if your various opponents are more similar than complimentary (e.g. there would be far more reason to have a strong anti-fighter defense if facing a combined Drazi / EA force verses fighting a collection of Drazi and Pak'ma'ra). If the nature of your enemy is completely unknown, such as in a tournament setting, then it is always best to design a balanced force lest you leave yourself with a glaring weakness that the right opponent can easily exploit.

While knowing your enemy's strengths and weaknesses is important, knowing the capabilities and limitations of the Centauri is even more crucial. Keep the following factors in mind, as they will greatly influence not only the composition of your fleet, but the tactics you will use with it as well:

Advantages

Rapid Fire Weaponry

Hits from Centauri weapons are often not as damaging as those employed by most other races, but they usually compensate for this with a higher Rate of Fire (ROF). The spreading of less damage over more shots also means that the Centauri can recover from a few bad to-hit rolls better than a race dependent on high damage, low ROF weapons.

Good Interception Capabilities

The high number of Twin Arrays in Centauri service mean that most ships will generally be able to put up a -2 or -3 penalty on most incoming fire. Also, the Centauri Guardian Array can intercept shots destined for another ship, which is a capability unmatched by all but the Hyach.

Generous Weapon Arcs

Centauri warships often sport weapons coverage

The Centauri Royal Navy boasts one of the largest selections of combat units in known space. The wide array of hulls allows the Republic the luxury of designing ships and fighters specialized for one or two particular roles, rather than as less capable and/or more expensive jack-of-all-trades.

GIANNI LIBURDI argues that such diversity and specialization can prove to be both a boon and a curse for those players who are just getting acquainted with playing the Centauri.

over the forward 240° arc, making it difficult for an enemy to evade fire by coming in on the sides. This provides an excellent complement to the high ROF of most Centauri weapons, ensuring that their low cycle times will be used to maximum effect.

Battle Lasers

Very few younger races have a long-range weapon as good as the Battle Laser. Combining superior fire control and great reach with a quick (for a heavy weapon) recharge rate, good damage and non-interceptability, Centauri ships armed with this weapon can often score the first strike on a target with impunity and still have their main guns recharged in time to lash out again when the enemy gets in closer. In addition to this, the optional piercing mode can work wonders against opponents with multiple non-rakeable structures.

Plasma Accelerator

Capable of doing more damage than a Heavy Plasma Cannon and firing at a variable rate, the Plasma Accelerator is commonly found on Centauri fast attack vessels with the speed and maneuverability needed to get it into close range. While a single Vorchan might not seem like much of a threat, four of them unloading their superheated plasma into an enemy warship can rapidly funnel through to the vulnerable primary structure and obliterate most targets.

Heavy Arrays

Big brother to the Twin Array, this short-range bruiser chews up enemy ships and fighters with ease. Able to do as much damage as a Battle

Laser in two concentrated shots each turn, this is easily one of the deadliest weapons in use by the younger races.

Matter Cannon

Effective at stripping ships of their systems as well as knocking out the occasional cocky assault fighter, this medium weapon is often overlooked in favour of the more advanced Battle Lasers and Ballistic Torpedoes. Few things, however, strike fear into an enemy quite like a Matter Cannon shot to the primary section of their prized warship.

Ballistic Torpedoes

While relatively short ranged compared to some other ballistic weapons, this weapon exemplifies both the versatility and high ROF characteristics of Centauri weaponry. Able to put out a lot of torpedoes in very short order, this weapon can quickly send out a half-dozen torps into the path of an oncoming assault fighter flight or enemy wolfpack. Several launchers combining their fire can be very devastating by quickly saturating portions of an enemy's fleet with ballistics.

Plasma Stream

Designed as a support weapon, the Plasma Stream does not so much hurt the enemy by itself as it increases the effectiveness of other incoming fire. A volley or two from the Streamer, followed up with a lightning strike by Havens and/or Sentris can do wonders for their damage curve.

Twin Arrays

While short ranged, this primarily anti-fighter weapon is found on almost every hull in the



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Centauri Royal Navy. Not only do enemy fighters need to worry about fast, Twin Array armed escort vessels blasting them into scrap, but even Centauri cruisers can readily mount a capable defense all on their own. A Centauri fleet sporting a good mixture of both small and large Twin Array platforms can mount a credible fighter defense against most opponents with little to no fighters of their own.

Superior Sensors

With sensor ratings on their smallest ships as strong as those of some other race's capital ships, the Centauri are never lacking in this department. All those sensor points are useful for everything from burning through a turtled enemy's DEW to maintaining a strong lock-on to multiple targets simultaneously.

Maneuverability

They may not use fully gravitic drives, but the Centauri can still make a cruiser that dances better than the destroyers and frigates of some races. Given the abundance of smaller, more maneuverable medium and heavy combat vessels in the Centauri Royal Navy, outflanking an enemy reliant on slow, heavily armed warships can be accomplished with relative ease.

High Armor

Centauri ships generally have moderate to high amounts of armor on their exterior sections, and very high levels protecting the valuable primary systems. This makes low damage weapons, such as those used by most fighters, far less effective against Centauri vessels.

High Initiative

The Centauri boast several common ships, such as the Haven, Vorchan, Darkner and Centurion, all of which benefit from a +2 initiative bonus over and above what their particular class of vessel would normally receive.

Excellent ELINT

The modern Royal Navy sports no less than three separate ELINT vessels, ranging from the cheap-as-dirt Vorchan to the high-powered Covran to the combat capable Dargan. With such selection available to them, the Centauri are rarely at a shortage for ELINT support.

Wolfpacks

Heavy and Medium Combat Vessels form the bulk of any Centauri fleet, with Capital Ships

forming its core. The preponderance of cheaper ships paired with the minimal reliance of fighters means that Centauri fleets will often outnumber their opponents in ships quite significantly, unless fighting another small ship loving power like the Drazzi.

Capable Interceptor Fighter

Although many have shunned the Senti for its low damage guns, this fighter truly is truly designed to excel at only one mission, fighter interception. While it may not have the knock-out punch of most other fighters used by the Major powers, it is an excellent dogfighter and does a superb job of making enemy fighters feel like they are being nibbled to death by cats.

Stealth Fighters

The Rutarian Strike Fighter is one of the best anti-ship fighters in the game, as its stealth system protects it from the majority of ship-based weaponry while the ion bolt hammers them from afar. The only real threat to these high-tech wonders are enemy fighters.

Disadvantages

Fragile Hulls

Centauri ships generally can't take that much punishment compared to those belonging to the other Major powers. A smart Centauri commander must make the best use of his good maneuverability, high sensors, ELINT support and weapon-fire intercept capabilities to avoid taking too many hits.

Glass Jaw

A high percentage of Centauri ship have a problem when it comes to taking damage to the front. For Capital Ships, their noses are often noticeably weaker than their sides, and cannot absorb much punishment before falling off. HCVs, on the other hand, often have a significant portion of their weaponry fixed on the forward section, and risk losing most or all of their firepower should that section be destroyed.

Large Profiles

Compounding the problem that Centauri ships cannot absorb much damage is the fact that they are also easier to hit due to their slightly larger than average profiles. Once again, this flaw can be counterbalanced by liberal use of the common Centauri assets previously listed.

Rear Blind Spot

Few Centauri ships mount rear facing weaponry, and most can bring little to no firepower to bear within the rear 120° arc. Centauri commanders need to compensate for this through superior maneuvering, as well as proper placement of screening units to make attacks on the rear quarter too costly for any enemy to attempt.

Short-Ranged Light Guns

While the Twin Array is effective against most fighter types out there, it can have problems against those with jammers or ballistics. Escort ships and/or fighters which can effectively intercept these units will be required to mount a competent defense against these units.

Lower Damage

Almost all Centauri weaponry inflicts less damage than similar weapons used by other races. While this does mean that the Centauri lack the one-turn crunch power of some races like the EA and Pak'ma'ra, this is usually adequately compensated for in the longer run by their higher than average ROF.

No Common Assault Fighter

The lack of a readily available anti-ship fighter for the Centauri may seem like a huge flaw for some, but veteran commanders know that the Centauri use massive numbers of cheap ships instead. The Haven and Vorchan cost 325 and 360 respectively, which compares favorably with a flight of EA Starfuries at 342, a flight of Nam Frazis at 348, or a flight of Minbari Nials at 636. For a true Centauri, the bulk of your fighters are only there to intercept enemy assault fighters making attack runs on your ships.

Weak Fighter Guns

Due to the Centauri focus on ships rather than fighters, their mainline fighter, the Senti Interceptor, sports some of the weakest guns in service. Its older sibling, the Razik, is even worse in this regard. While this has caused many to complain about the lack of raw power, the Senti is still a threat to most enemy fighters if used correctly.

It Takes All Kinds of Lions to Make a Fleet...

Because of the often specialized nature of most Centauri units, they can easily be broken down

into one of seven classifications: Sniper, Attack, Brawler, Escort, Carrier, Assault and Scout.

Sniper

Sniper units epitomize the Centauri's well known ability to strike the enemy at ranges where most cannot effectively retaliate at. While many Centauri ships carry the long-range Battle Lasers, only the Primus Battlecruiser and Octurion Battleship really epitomize this classification. Both are relatively fragile next to similar ships of their size, but sport good maneuverability, weapon arcs, and sensor suites to easily blast the enemy at range. As an added bonus, both ships have a plethora of small weapons which can either be used to intercept incoming fire, attack enemies at close range, or be shut down for a generous sensor boost.

Attack

Attack vessels are generally designed to engage the enemy at medium ranges, using some mixture of Battle Lasers, Matter Cannons and Ballistic Torpedoes. Some, like the Centurion Attack Cruiser, Darkner Fast Attack Frigate, and Altarian Magnus Destroyer Leader have the speed and maneuverability necessary to either outflank an enemy's cruiser line, or quickly vector in and eliminate a particular target. Others with less maneuverability, like the Elutarian Bombardment Cruiser and Kutai Gunship, tend to deal with the enemy best by confronting him head-on and throwing up a wall of fire in his path. Rutarian and Sitara strike fighters also fit within this class, as their respective stealth systems and high offensive bonuses when paired with the long range of the ion bolt let them avoid the traditional point-blank attacks that most anti-ship fighters must employ.

Brawler

If Sniper vessels can be viewed as the artillery of the Centauri Royal Navy and the Attack units as its tanks, then the Brawlers are without a doubt its infantry. Standing at the forefront of any formation, they exist only for one purpose: Close with and Destroy the Enemy. While the Vorchar Warship and its big brother the Demos Heavy Warship are certainly the two best known examples of this class, Mograth Frigates and Mogratti Battle Frigates provide Centauri fleets with even more agile counterparts to these staples.

Escort

Assigned to a role often lacking in glory while high on danger, the Escort vessels of the Centauri Navy not only intercept and destroy incoming fighters and fast attack vessels, but intercept fire directed at their charges. Altarian Destroyers, Sulust and Vasachi Escort Destroyers, Maximus Defense Frigates, and Haven Patrol Boats are a necessary part of any well-rounded Centauri fleet. The Senti Interceptor, along with its elder siblings the Razik and Razarik, are also members of this class, but tend to focus primarily on intercepting enemy fighters. Most of these units are also capable of operating in an attack capacity, should escort abilities no longer be required.

Carrier

Centauri Carriers tend to be rather average when compared to those of other races, but they can still get the job done. The Balvarin Carrier is a good complement to any fleet requiring a massive infusion of fighter cover, and can provide decent escort coverage for slower vessels in the

fleet. The newer Balvarix Strike Carrier operates quite differently, bringing not only a healthy dose of anti-ship fighters to the fray in addition to interceptors, but also having the speed and weapons needed to attack the enemy itself. The smaller Amar Fast Carrier is best used for providing fighter cover for high-speed wolfpacks, and can double as a competent, if close-ranged, fast attack vessel to boot.

Assault

Designed more for seizing planets rather than participating in fleet actions, Centauri assault ships are prized as much for the troops they carry as their combat ability. If exposed to combat, the Decurion Assault Cruiser has tends to operate best in the Escort role, while the Secundus Assault Cruiser clearly excels as a close in Brawler.

Scout

ELINT support is not only a common ingredient in many Centauri fleets, but also comes in three different flavors. The Covran Scout's high-powered sensors make it an ideal fleet scout, while its host of Twin and Guardian Arrays give it some secondary capacity as an Escort. The Vorchar Warscout not only offers a cheap ELINT ship to small Centauri formations, but can be used in larger fleets as an expendable means of loaning Offensive ELINT against an enemy fleet more than 30 hexes away from the main Centauri body. The Dargan Strike Cruiser boasts only a moderate strength sensor suite, but makes up for this with its ability to operate effectively in the Attack role, as well as carrying the prized Rutarian Strike Fighter into battle.

Putting it All Together

Once you have set the point total for the fleet you wish to build, there are several factors to be addressed when selecting what ships to use:

Anti-Fighter Capability

One of the most crucial questions a Centauri commander can answer is "How will I deal with enemy fighters?" Against some races which either lack heavy assault fighters or use very small numbers of them, the smattering of Twin Arrays present on almost all Centauri vessels is sufficient to deal with the threat. When confronting a fighter-loving power such as the other Major powers or some League races like the Brakiri or Cascor, greater number of escort ships and fighters will be needed to counteract the threat. The goal of the escorts may not necessarily be to destroy the enemy fighter threat, but rather to simply tie them up long enough for the other Centauri vessels to destroy their carriers.

Engagement Envelope

Generally, a good balance of long, medium and short ranged firepower is the best mixture for any Centauri fleet, no matter what opponent it may be facing. The reason for this is that creating a fleet with extreme amounts of firepower tilted to one end of the spectrum often leaves you vulnerable should your fleet be engaged at the opposite end. For instance, a fleet consisting solely of sniper vessels may sound attractive against an opponent sporting mostly short ranged weaponry, but such ships often die quickly when the enemy closes the gap between them. Likewise, a fleet designed purely for short ranged operations can suffer at the hands of a few long range bombardment ships, should they

lack sufficient Battle Laser support. The larger the fleet, the more important the ability to hit the enemy at all ranges becomes.

ELINT Support

While the Centauri have several capable ELINT ships, they should not automatically be included in every fleet. Scout vessels tend to act as a force multiplier, meaning that they increase the combat effectiveness of the fleet they are in by a given percentage. This increase, however, can be counterbalanced by the loss in combat effectiveness due to sinking points into a ship which often cannot effectively project offensive firepower. The general inability of the Covran and Vorchar to operate offensively can make them poor choices for an independent squadron, where firepower is often at a premium. The Dargan makes a better choice for small fleets, as it is one of the few ships in existence capable of providing ELINT support while still having a decent array of weapons.

Dividing Ships into Squadrons

Often, fleets of more than four or five ships will be broken down into smaller squadrons or wolfpacks. These will usually be composed mostly of ships belonging to the same class (i.e. Sniper, Attack, Brawler, etc.), with one or two miscellaneous ships, usually escorts, attached to them. Several squadrons of different classifications working together as part of a larger whole can give a fleet greater flexibility than if it were attempting to operate as a single formation.

Wolfpack Speed and Maneuverability

While dividing a fleet into squadrons may allow individual ships the necessary flexibility to maneuver into the ranges best suited for their weapons loadout, it is very much a chain that is only as strong as its weakest link. I would not make sense, for instance, to assign an Altarian to safeguard a wolfpack of Darkner Fast Attack Frigates, as they would either be hobbled greatly in their maneuvering or forced to leave their anti-fighter support behind. Likewise, the aforementioned Altarian might make a better choice for escorting slower vessels such as a pack of Kutais, than would a blazingly fast Sulust or Maximus. Proper selection of support vessels which match the capabilities of the core units will ensure that a wolfpack is not overly restricted in its movement options by one or two ships.

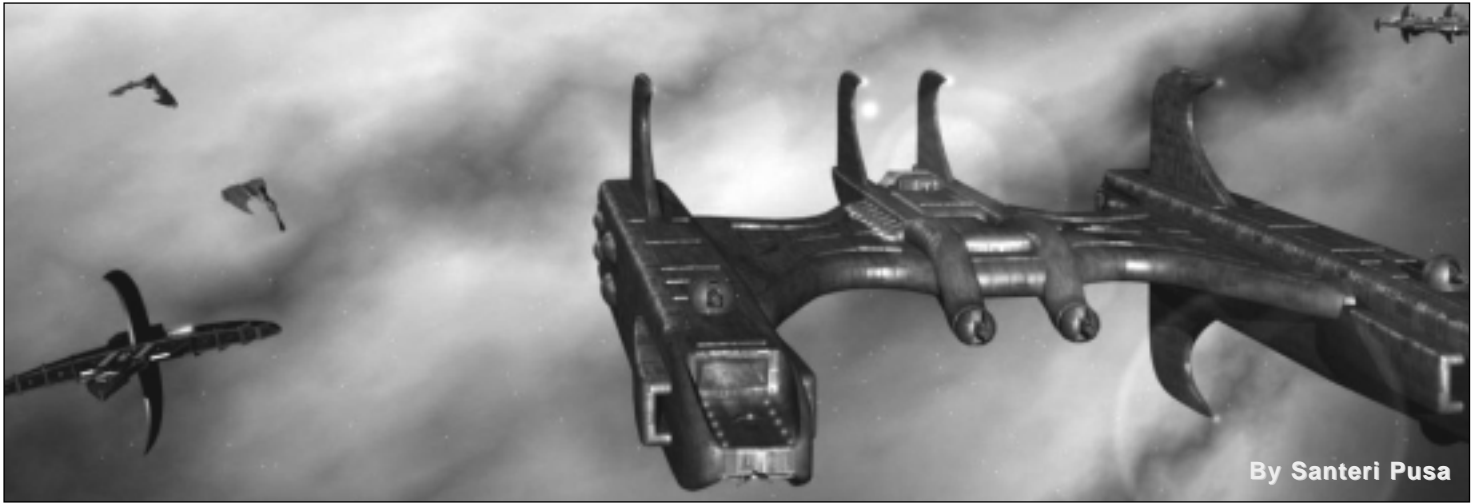
Conclusion

While everyone has their favorite ships to use and those which they shun, part of the beauty of the Centauri Royal Navy is that every one of their units has at least one area in which they excel. This means that it is not so much a task of determining which units are good and which are not, but rather which one can perform a particular task with the optimum effectiveness for the points invested in it.

By following these guidelines, newly-minted Centauri commanders can learn to embrace the wide selection of ships and fighters available to them, rather than being overwhelmed by it.

* * *

Tackling the Narn



By Santeri Pusa

By REID HUPACH

THIS is an essay on the tactics which the Centauri forces use fighting the Narn regime. First it is nice to know your enemies' strengths so you can avoid them. The Narn have probably the best-balanced ships in the game. They are maneuverable, have good weapon arcs, large structure blocks, good armor and one of the most varied weapon selections in the game. Despite all of this the Centauri are able to beat the Narn if you play wisely and are, above all things, patient.

Centauri tactics against the Narn can be split into three basic divisions. The long-range sniping game, the close and hose game, and the "What are my fighters going to do?" game. I will cover each of these as best I can.

In each I will give the Narn strengths and how to counter them and how to turn each situation to your advantage.

Sniping: Long range sniping is probably the best option you have against the Narn. The Narn have three long-range weapons, the Heavy Laser, the E-Mine and the Ion Torpedo. The strengths of these are not as awesome as they look. The Heavy Laser at -1 per 3 hexes to hit is very hard to use past 40 hexes. The E-Mine is a "Guess where he's going to be?" weapon and the Ion Torpedo is easy to intercept with Twin and Guardian Arrays. Also at 50+ hexes the Narn have literally no chance to hit. The Centauri on the other hand have the Battle Laser and much superior EW. If you look at the numbers for a battle at 52 hexes, the Ion Torp and the E-Mine can't hit. The Heavy Laser is -18 to hit. For the Centauri the Battle Laser is only -13 to hit, add to that the usual 1 or 2 point advantage from sensors and you are looking at a 30 or 35 percent advantage in firepower. At these ranges the Narn player almost has to go full offensive EW to have a chance to hit. The Centauri, on the other hand, has the option to use some defensive EW or go full offensive if he chooses. In a G'Quan vs. Primus battle the numbers will come out like this. G'Quan, full OEW, firing at the side of a Primus at 52 hexes. The Primus side def. is 17.

HL fire control +3. Full OEW +8, range penalty of -18, equals a 10 to hit. The Primus firing back at the G'Quan. Front def. is 15. +4 fire control, +10 OEW, -13 range penalty equals a 16 to hit, a 30 percent advantage. Couple that with the superior re-cycle rate of the Battle Laser and you have a true advantage. This doesn't take into account turning off TA's for extra EW, which increases the Centauri advantage even further.

Now the real trick to this tactic is how to keep the range this far out. Fishtailing lets you bring your side arcs into play on different turns but still moves you closer to the enemy. Retrograding is also a tactic but several players won't chase you and the game ends without any real casualties. Then there is the Roll method. After firing your first volley, on the next turn roll your ship and stop. Fire your lasers at -4, next turn roll and stop. Wait a turn, then fire at no minus. Now in a 4 turn sequence you have fired six Primus lasers to the G'Quan's two, three times as many and at better numbers. Doing this with an Octurian, Darkner, or Centurian will cause the Narn fits; if he wishes to close he has to keep his fragile nose heading toward you.

Close and Hose: Now things actually become dangerous for the Centauri, the Narn are experts in this kind of warfare. The Centauri have to use their patented wolf pack tactics to win this battle. Your weakness when closing is the fragility of your nose sections. Therefore always go around the flank protecting your nose and dart in when you are ready to fire. Centauri wolf pack ships are the Demos, Vorchan, Mograth, Kutai and Haven. Other ships to include for fighter cover are the Sulust, Vasachi, Maximus and the perfect wolf pack Elint ship, the Vorchar. Most pack tactics are relatively obvious, pick a target and gang up for the kill. A four Demos pack can kill or cripple most capitol ships and only lose one Demos in return, not a bad exchange. Now two of the pack ships have somewhat different tactics: The Haven (covered in Babcom 1) and the Kutai.

The Kutai pack can use a slightly different attack mode to some success. The roll tactic used

above can be used with these also. Try to maneuver so as to pass real close to your enemy after you fire. On the next turn pay for your roll but don't stop. Then during your turn, turn into your enemy. Now as your loaded Matter Cannons come to bear, fire them. Next turn keep rolling and do the same. Each turn you get to fire three matter cannons and use your thrust to keep the firing side in arc, this actually plays to the Kutai's lack of maneuverability having to turn less and keep your nose out of arc.

Now remember the Narn are excellent close and hose tacticians also, expect to take plenty of losses in return, be patient and use your weapons arcs well.

Now comes the hard part when fighting the Narn. What to do with your fighters? Narn ships are well armed with anti-fighter weapons. The LPC, TA, Burst Beam, the E-Mine and the Pulsar Mine are all well adapted for killing fighters. My advice is to not use your fighters on Narn ships unless it's a cripple. Instead use your fighters as interceptors to keep his fighters occupied and off your ships. Always have a few Havens around to help against heavy fighters, they make the Sentries' job a lot easier. If you're taking in your anti-ship fighters, escort them with Mograths to reduce the armor and destroy some of the smaller systems.

In closing the Narn were designed to fight the Centauri. You will never ever be able to play an even point game and get an overwhelming victory unless the dice gods intervene. Be prepared to take losses. But also remember the Centauri were designed to fight the Narn, so he is in the same boat. So remember, try to keep your Battle Laser heavy ships at extreme range and don't close head to head with your wolf packs, always turn a flank. But most important be patient, the longer the engagement the more it is to your advantage.

Cry freedom, and let loose the hounds of war

Bin'Tak Dreadnought

The big dog of the Narn fleet. The Bin'Tak is a true fleet ship mounting weapons for all ranges. Unlike its Centauri counterpart, the Bin'Tak mounts a large variety of weaponry from Heavy Lasers to Energy Mines to Ion Torpedoes.

For close-in anti-fighter work it can choose between the Twin Array and the Light Pulse Cannon. For extreme ranges it can use its Energy Mines or its Ion Torpedoes.

The Bin'Tak is heavily armored and has massive structure blocks. The front structure alone is 58% more than that on the Centauri Octurion. The weak point of the Bin'Tak is in the rear, so watch your back.

The Bin'Tak, due to its weapon layout, is a head-on ship, where it can bring its mag gun to bear. A smart enemy will do everything possible to knock the Mag Gun off before it can be fired, so take precautions to avoid this (zig-zagging).

One of the downsides to the Bin'Tak is its restricted deployment. The Bin'Tak can easily be the only restricted ship in smaller fleets. But realistically this is not bad, as the ship shouldn't be used in small fleets. In smaller battles it's more effective to spend points on smaller ships. The Bin'Tak should be used only in larger fleets, where the design truly shines.

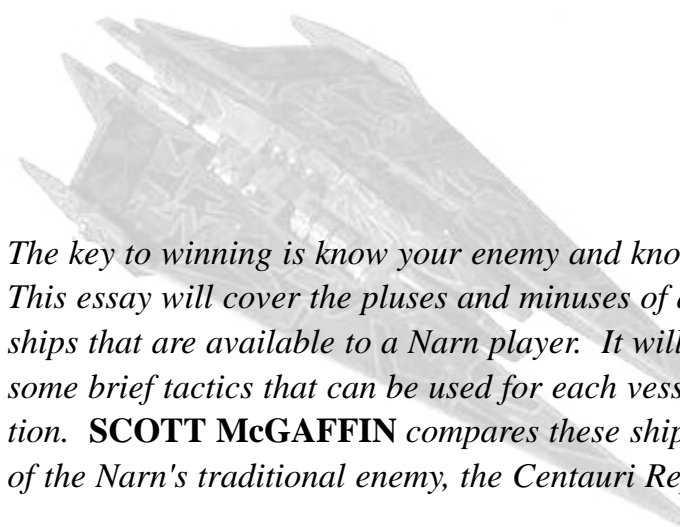
Dag'Kar Missile Frigate

Next to the Minbari White Star, the Dag'Kar is probably the most well known medium ship in the game. And it is probably the best long-range bombardment ship in the game, especially considering its size.

This ship mounts an amazing number of Ion Torpedoes and Energy Mines, even more than are mounted on the Ja'Stat Warbase!

Because of its firepower, it can sit at 50 hexes and rain death on an opponent. The downside to all this firepower is the complete lack of secondary and anti-fighter weapons.

Also it's relatively fragile, so a single fighter flight can inflict serious damage. The Dag'Kar must have an escort, such as a G'Karith Patrol Cruiser.



The key to winning is know your enemy and know yourself. This essay will cover the pluses and minuses of all the ships that are available to a Narn player. It will also give some brief tactics that can be used for each vessel in question. SCOTT McGAFFIN compares these ships to those of the Narn's traditional enemy, the Centauri Republic.

Another downside is this ship tends to attract a lot of attention. Your opponent will probably assign assets to eliminating it or at the very least keep it occupied, so take precautions to prevent this.

G'Karith Patrol Cruiser

The G'Karith is probably the best escort ship the Narns have access to. This is mainly due to the fact that it's the only ship in service that mounts the pulsar mine.

The Pulsar Mine gives the G'Karith the ability to mow down enemy fighters without even locking onto them. Just move to within two hexes of a fighter force and let the fireworks begin.

It also carries a decent array of Light Pulse Cannons and its own flight of fighters.

In dealing with ships that get too close, the G'Karith tends to be worse off, since all it has is four medium pulse cannons. At medium and long ranges, the G'Karith has virtually no offensive capability. It can deal with smaller ships, but anything bigger will tend to come out on top.

G'Sten: This variant is an attempt to remedy to several problems in that it replaces the Pulsar Mines with botha Heavy and a Light Pulse Cannon.

This of course weakens the ship's ability to deal

with enemy fighters, and it still has virtually no ability to fight at long ranges.

G'Quan Heavy Cruiser

The workhorse of the Narn fleet. The G'Quan is an adequate multi-role vessel that really excels at nothing, but is adequate at everything, especially for its point cost.

Compared to its Centauri counterpart, the Primus, it's more durable and faster but at the expense of less armor.

Because of the two Energy Mines on board, a player may think he can go toe-to-toe with a Primus. This would be a bad assumption.

The Primus's superior lasers and EW will win the battle virtually every time.

For a heavy cruiser, the G'Quan's heavy firepower is somewhat lacking, as the Energy Mines can be unreliable because they need a player to guess where an opponent is going to be. And even at close range, the G'Quan will probably lose most of the time due to the Primus's large number of Twin Arrays.

G'Quonth: This variant fixing several problems of the G'Quan base model.

It mounts twice the Heavy Lasers and replaces the Energy Mines with Ion Torpedoes. The two additional Heavy Lasers are placed on the sides



From Wombat Control

and can't be destroyed if the front is lost, unlike the G'Quan that loses all its heavy and long-range firepower if its front is destroyed.

Eliminating the Energy Mines takes away having to guess where your opponent is going to be. All of this comes at the expense of losing the entire fighter contingent.

Against a fighter heavy opponent this can be a potential problem.

Against the Narn's historical enemy, the Centauri, it is not much of a concern.

G'Lan: This is a close to medium range ship. Again be careful of losing your front end as the main anti-ship weapons are still mounted almost exclusively in the front. This is critical for the G'Lan, as it has to survive to close range so its two Mag Guns can be utilized properly.

G'Tal: This is probably the best of the G'Quan hulls. It adds two Heavy Lasers and upgrades the sensor array by 2.

Like the G'Quan and G'Lan, it still suffers from having most of its heavy firepower mounted in the front.

Unlike the G'Quan and the other variants, it has 1 heavy laser mounted in the rear, correcting a serious flaw of the other models. The G'Tal also possesses the usual command ship initiative bonus.

Ka'Toc Battle Destroyer

The Ka'Toc is a frighteningly powerful ship for its size, and should be utilized whenever possible. Mounting 2 Heavy Lasers and a massive Mag Gun, the Ka'Toc is able to fight at long and short ranges.

Alongside the Rongoth it is the Narn's main attack ship, even though it isn't particularly fast or maneuverable when compared to its Centauri counterparts such as the Demos, Vorchar or Darkner.

Because of the large amount of heavy firepower this ship brings to a battle, a player should be aware that his opponent will probably target this

ship early on. The only consolation to this is that the Ka'Toc does have a reasonably small front profile. A good strategy for this ship would be to fire the Heavy Lasers once in range and then race in and fire the Mag Gun.

Don't hold off firing the lasers in the hope of delivering a massive alpha strike once the Mag Gun is in range. One of the other weaknesses of the Ka'Toc is that it can be fighter vulnerable. This has been remedied by giving the Ka'Toc the ability to carry a single flight of fighters, and it would be suggested to use these to help the Ka'Toc survive until it gets into range.

Rongoth Destroyer

Like the Ka'Toc, the Rongoth is one of the Narn Regime's main class of attack ships.

Together they form a devastating 'tag-team' combination.

The Rongoth could be thought of as the opposite of the Ka'Toc. The Rongoth's main anti-ship firepower lies in its two Heavy Pulse Cannons, able to inflict massive amounts of standard damage at close to medium ranges if it gets a solid hit.

The down side to this is the somewhat poor range of the Pulse Cannons.

Its anti-fighter capability is reasonably good, so the ship can function as an escort if necessary, although it does lack fighter carrying capacity. It's also reasonably quick and maneuverable. Like the Ka'Toc, it also has a low profile to protect it till it gets into range.

To do well and survive to hit with the pulse cannons, the Rongoth should move in quickly and get out fast, basically a strafing type attack.

Rothan: This variant is the Rongoth's older brother, which can be seen in its armament. In place of the pulse weapons, it has plasma weapons.

The Rothan is a definite close range vessel, and lacks the overall versatility of the Rongoth. Avoid using this variant if at all possible. The

Rongoth is a mere 25 points more, but is easily a superior ship.

Sho'Kar Light Scout Cruiser

One of the key areas that the Narn fleet is deficient in is ELINT.

Whereas the Centauri have three different ELINT vessels, the Narns have only one.

For a fleet scout, the Sho'Kar isn't very good. It's poorly armored, has considerably less EW than the Centauri main fleet scout (Covran), and its not as maneuverable or fast as any of the Centauri scouts.

To offset these disadvantages, the Sho'Kar has good anti-fighter defenses with good fields of fire and it carries a single flight of fighters unlike the Centauri Covran and Vorchar.

This ship should always carry its fighter complement, because, without them, even the smallest warship can give the Sho'Kar a thrashing.

This ship should never be put right in amongst a fleet's main battle line. The closest it should ever get is on the outskirts of the battle, as it's too much of a target and won't survive being pounded very long.

Thentus Frigate

The light workhorse of the Narn fleet. Although not as maneuverable as it's Centauri frigate counterparts, the Mograth/Mogratti, the Thentus is a powerful little ship that should be included in every Narn fleet.

It's fast, has good anti-fighter and mounts decent anti-shipping firepower for a vessel its size. The medium laser arcs are a full 180 degrees, which further enhances the offensive flexibility of this vessel.

The downside of this is the three-turn recharge rate for the lasers. This means the Thentus should avoid closing to close range with vessels with faster cycling weapons, such as the Mograth/Mogratti.

This ship is great for skirting around an enemy

formation or fleet and sniping away at ships on the edge.

T'Loth Assault Cruiser

The T'Loth/T'Rann are the standard combat carriers of the Narn fleet.

The T'Loth class is a rather poor design, but this can be excused because it is one of the Narn's first ships.

In the modern B5 universe, it has potentially major flaws that need to be corrected. Its anti-fighter defenses which are at best adequate, and its anti-ship firepower, which is pretty good, but hampered by terrible firing arcs.

In a regular frontline combat ship this last point would be potentially devastating, but for an assault ship, it's somewhat acceptable.

The one good thing about the Heavy Plasma Cannons on the T'Loth is that they can't be hit from the front. This is a huge advantage when compared to the Centauri Secundus, which can lose a sizeable piece of its firepower if it gets hit from the front.

Another downside to the T'Loth is it's less armored when compared to its Centauri counterpart. It also has a rather high side profile, which can reduce the survivability of the ship.

A suggested tactic for using the T'Loth is to avoid showing the enemy your sides. Not only does it make you harder to hit, it also guarantees the survival of the Heavy Plasma Cannons.

What's unique about the T'Loth is, unlike the other three major races and all the League-1 races assault ships, it carries a squadron of fighters which can function as escorts for the ship itself or its assault shuttle contingent.

T'Rann: This is the only dedicated carrier in the fleet, which is a serious flaw in Narn doctrine.

It may be adequate but it is far from great, especially for a major power.

Its firepower is adequate considering it is a dedicated carrier and should stay out of the heat of battle whenever possible.

But it only carries a mere two squadrons of fighters. This is woefully inadequate compared to many other races, especially the EA, Minbari and Brakiri. Thankfully for the Narn, the Centauri do not utilize massive fleet and super carriers.

T'Rakk Frigate

A small ship, the T'Rakk's role in the Narn fleet is to rush in, fire it's two Heavy Plasma Cannons and hope to survive for another pass.

It's Heavy Plasma Cannons have poor arcs, its anti-fighter firepower is virtually nonexistent, it's not very tough, it's slow and the T'Rakk has a large side profile for such a small ship.

Against a fighter heavy opponent and without decent escort, these ships are a waste of points.

If the T'Rakk is going to be used, have a 'wolf pack' composed of at least three or four ships. This will help to counter any losses due to ship destruction or being stripped of their main guns.

A smart opponent will knock off the main guns of these ships quickly and just leave them alone as they're virtually useless after.

Var'Nic Long Range Destroyer

As its name suggests, the Var'Nic is a multi-role patrol ship that has the capability to operate far away from the main fleet.

This is evident in its weapon layout, as it has

weapons for long, medium and short range. It even carries a single flight of fighters to be used in whatever role is deemed necessary.

The Var'Nic is reasonably maneuverable and quick, it has excellent EW and it even has a small initiative bonus.

The downside to the Var'Nic is its lopsided configuration which can make it difficult to use (although if you're a Lort player, this isn't a problem). Coupled with one or two other Var'Nics, it can form a deadly long-range hunter-killer force.

Var'Loth: This variant, on the other hand, isn't armed nearly as well. But, unlike the T'Loth, its weaponry has far superior firing arcs.

For a long range strike ship it has to have some sort of escort (Var'Nics can easily fill this role) or it won't last too long. In a straight fleet battle, never use this variant in place of the base model.

Sho'Kos Patrol Cutter

The Sho'Kos is the Narn's main police ship, and in this role it functions quite adequately.

Its anti-fighter and anti-ship firepower is suitable for dealing with Raiders but against a real navy this ship will be crushed easily.

In its favor though, it is extremely fast and pretty maneuverable. It is considerably tougher than its Centauri counterpart.

Sho'Kov: This is much like the EA Tethys Zeta model: it can enhance a small police squadron's flexibility and it's survivability as it can fight at extreme ranges where no Raider can hope to fight back.

Definitely include one of these in a small Sho'Kos based patrol. This ship should be used in the exact same way as the Dag'Kar - keep it way at the back, firing off volleys of Ion Torpedoes.

Arcismus

The standard Narn naval transport, the Arcismus is less armored and not as tough as its Centauri counterpart, the Lias.

It does perhaps have better firepower than the Lias, but it still has no hope versus a true warship. Tactics for this ship - like most true troop transports - is to run and pray help arrives.

Frazi Heavy Fighter-

The Narn fleets standard heavy attack fighter. Well armored and armed, the Frazi is an excellent anti-ship fighter. Its guns are strong enough to crack virtually the heaviest armor. The down side to this, is it's an attack fighter and not an interceptor and will more than likely lose out in a dog-fight.

Gorith Medium Fighter

The standard interceptor used by the Narns. This fighter is more maneuverable than the Frazi and is therefore more of a match against the Senti. Avoid using it against ships though as its weaker armor, structure and guns aren't nearly as good as the Frazi.

Tarza torpedo fighter: This variant makes this type of fighter more flexible by giving it a much improved anti-shipping role. This comes at the expense of losing a ¼ of it's free thrust, so avoid dogfighting with the Tarza.

Mag-guns: What are they for?

CENTAURI are the primary enemy of the Narn, and with the main Centauri attack craft being armed with Plasma

Accelerators, Twin Arrays and Heavy Arrays (all -1 or -2 per hex weapons) the Narn need an effective defense. Enter the Mag Gun. With great hitting power, but limited range, this weapon acts as a defense and deterrent all in one package.

The Mag Gun has a range penalty of -1 per hex, a fire control of +6/+2/--, and can dish out 8d10+10 worth of flash damage every third turn.

One of the greatest mistakes most Narn commanders make is misreading the way to employ the Mag Gun. They look at the massive potential damage the weapon can dish out, then the short range bracket and say "Well, I guess I need to charge the enemy so I can erase him..." This is not the purpose of the Mag Gun.

The Mag Gun, unlike the rest of the Narn arsenal, is actually a defensive weapon. To be effective the smaller attack ships of the Narn's primary enemy, the Centauri, need to get close. The Twin Array, Heavy Array, and Plasma Accelerator are all rapid fire short range weapons. With this in mind the short range of the Mag Gun makes perfect sense. When the smaller Centauri ships finally get into range to fire their weapons, the Mag Gun is also in range. The Mag Gun can wipe the nose off a Demos or Vorchan in one shot (not to mention the other small Centauri ships). Yes the Centauri will be able to get one volley off, but after being hit by the Mag Gun will they really have won the exchange?

Always escort your important ships with Ka'Toc Battle Destroyers or G'Lan Mag Cruisers. Wait for the Centauri to charge, hammering away with E-Mines, Ion Torpedoes, and Heavy Laser fire until the fan-heads get close. Then teach the vaunted Centauri why it is a bad idea to get that close.

- No name supplied

* * *

The Fiery Fate of Flotilla 103



By SCOTT McGAFFIN

DURING the War of Retribution, the Centauri conducted a number of raids into the Ragghesh system to destabilize Narn forces as a prelude to a full-out assault to retake the system.

This was one of those raids.

Narn Flotilla 103 was tasked with patrolling the outskirts of the Ragghesh system, on the lookout for raiding Centauri forces.

Unfortunately, the Centauri were on the lookout for said patrols. A raiding Centauri force composed of fast attack ships was picked up by Flotilla 103 and engaged. Unfortunately for the Narns it was a trap.

Set-Up

Use the standard map setup, with no terrain.

Narns: 3 G'Karith Patrol Cruisers (G'Quan's Moons, Sunfire, Icerain) with 18 Frazi heavy fighters, 1 Var'Nic Long-Range Destroyer (Hawkeye) with 6 Gorith medium fighters, 1 Rongoth Destroyer (Kalin), 2 T'Rakk Frigates (Hammer, Starstruck)

Centauri (Bait): 1 Vorchar Warscout (Stingray), 2 Darkner Fast Attack Frigates (Starchaser, Windracer), 1 Amar Fast Carrier (Quickener) with 12 Sentri medium fighters, 3 Vorchan Warships (Mantis, Locust, Horsefly).

Centauri (Hammer): 2 Centurion Attack Cruisers (Tolonius, Entat), 1 Altarian Magnus Destroyer Leader (Eagle) with 6 Sentri medium fighters, 2 Demos Heavy Warships (Glaive, Halberd), 1 Darmoti Escort Warship (Hornet) with 6 Sentri medium fighters.

The Narns set up within 3 hexes of the left map edge, facing right, speed 8. The Centauri 'Bait' squadron sets up within 3 hexes of the right map edge, facing left or straight up, speed 6. Prior to the Narn player setting up, the Centauri player will select two jump points within 5 hexes of any map edge. The two jump points must be within 3 hexes of each other. The Demos' and Darmoti will arrive through one point and the Centurions and Altarian will arrive through the other. The Centauri 'Hammer' squadron will jump in on Turn 4, going speed 6. All Narn fighters and Centauri 'Bait' squadron fighters can start launched or on their carriers. Centauri 'Hammer' squadron fighters start deployed.

Victory Conditions

The Narns have pretty much no chance of surviving the battle, but they can make the Centauri pay very dearly for their victory.

Narns: The level of Narn victory is determined by how many Centauri ships they destroy or render combat ineffective. Combat ineffective units are units that have no remaining weapons. The Narns achieve a Major Victory if they destroy/render combat ineffective 7 or more ships, 4-5 ships is considered a Minor Victory. Anything less is a Total Loss. If by some miracle the Narns manage to destroy/render combat ineffective the entire Centauri force and survive with even a single fighter, they achieve a Total Victory.

Centauri: The Centauri achieve a Total Victory if they completely annihilate all Narn forces. Anything less is a Total Loss.

Special Rules

Narn forces may not retreat. Any Centauri ship that jumps away is considered destroyed for victory purposes. Ramming is not permitted.

Tactics

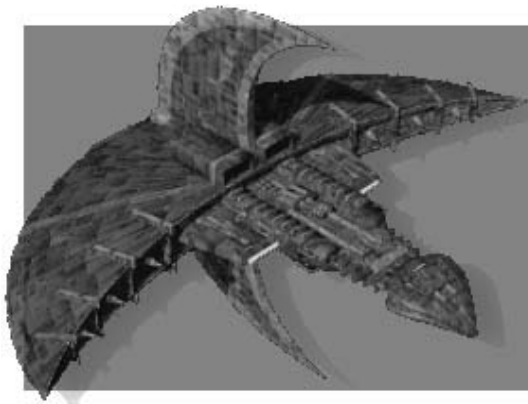
Narns: Close as quickly as possible. Remember that all the Centauri ships in the Bait squadron can be rendered combat ineffective by simply knocking off their fronts. This is where the Narn player should get the bulk of his 'kills'.

Centauri: Stay as far away from the Narns as possible, for as long as possible. Use your Vorchans to pick off Narn units on the fringes. Concentrate fire on the ships with the heaviest weapons (Rongoth, Var-Nic).

Historical Outcome

The Centauri Bait squadron jumped in and immediately jammed the Narn forces' communications. Unable to call for backup the Narns raced in and quickly engaged the Centauri at short range. The Centauri took a pounding as they tried to stay away from the Narns, all the while softening them up for the second wave. The Centauri reinforcements arrived on the Narns left flank and opened up with a devastating volley completely obliterating the Icerain and Hawkeye. The Narn flotilla, realizing that they had fallen into a trap, lost all fleet cohesiveness and tried to get away. But it was too late. The Narns fought valiantly against overwhelming odds but in the end, not a single ship or fighter survived. The only trace of Flotilla 103 found by a search and rescue squadron was a widely scattered debris field.

Prey beware: Vorchan wolf- packs are on the prowl



*The Vorchan is the swift
and deadly foundation
stone of the Centauri
Royal Navy.*

*Reid "The Merciless"
Hupach takes a look at
this versatile vessel*

THE Vorchan, if you go by the show, is the backbone of the Centauri Fleet. That's if you go by the show. But the Vorchan has several problems which have to be addressed.

The first and most glaring is the lack of any long-range punch. Next is having all its weapons in its nose, once it's gone you're toothless. Third is zero firepower to the rear. Fourth is the fact that it is probably the lightest armed HCV in the game except for a few civilian vessels.

After looking at all these bad things you would probably say why would anyone take one of these: heck, the Haven is better armed.

The Vorchan has a few very good things going for it though. First is its price, 360 points for an HCV, is quite cheap. Second, it is very fast and maneuverable for an HCV- making it very dangerous on a flank. Third, being an HCV, it has sufficient armor and structure to absorb a few good hits as long as they aren't frontal shots.

The Vorchan is useful in small fleet actions since its plasma weapon can literally fire every turn if you wish. Add the two Twin arrays and you can kill a few systems each turn on a ship's side. When by itself the Vorchan can usually run down most opponents so it can bring its short range weapons to their best advantage. At

range it has very good EW so it can turtle when approaching. When run in a large fleet action Vorchans are best grouped in wolf packs. A minimum of four is usually a good pack. More is better. Several Plasma Accelerators can ruin an EA or Narn Cap ships day, making him vulnerable to almost any weapon. Dare I say Plasma his side then bring in a flight of Sentris to peck him to death when he has no real armor left. In large battles, Vorchans will usually be ignored by most enemies till they can get close enough to do real damage.

Vorchans will usually be rendered harmless during a long battle so, if you anticipate this, you must use them early and hit hard before they lose their fronts. If I have lost the front off some of my Vorchans I will usually move them off to the sides and have them prepare to open a jump point so I can remove badly mauled ships when I need to. Then have them go through to open the point at the other end.

Vorchans also can make excellent convoy escorts. They are hard for Raiders to kill and the Twin arrays will shred fighter flights. The jump engine is always nice to have when in this role for quick escapes.

To wrap up, exploit the flanks, run in large packs when you can, hit hard early since one good shot can render you toothless.



Narn T'Ken Attack Cruiser

WHEN the Narn development project at Bor'Goth started to produce concrete results they looked at converting existing ships to use these technologies. One of these was the venerable T'Loth, which had undergone various conversions since its original incarnation. The Narn had recently developed the Heavy Laser, a further improvement of their sensor technology, and the Energy Mine. While they were looking to build a ship designed to field the E-mine, they wondered if the other improvements could be built into a T'Loth class hull.

The T'Ken is the product of these musings. These were not built as new construction, but were conversions of existing T'Loths. Several were adapted to see if the class was practical.

The upgrade suffered from a number of limitations, one of them being the firing arcs on the Heavy Lasers, the other being the reduction in both hanger size and anti-fighter capability. The side light mounts were dropped to make room for the Heavy Lasers capacitors, equipment not envisaged on the T'Loth hull when it was built with Heavy Plasmas.

While the T'Ken is an effective attack cruiser, it is only effective as part of a fleet as it requires ships or fighters to prevent it being taken by a wolf pack or concentrated fighter strike.

The Narn fleet decided to go with the revolutionary G'Quan design rather than the T'Ken, and while a few more were constructed to act as fleet support units, the advent of the G'Quonth halted these few conversions as the hull was better and in production.

Two T'Kens survived the War of Retribution, by virtue of being assigned to Bor'Goth as test hulls.

- Design by Ben Rubery

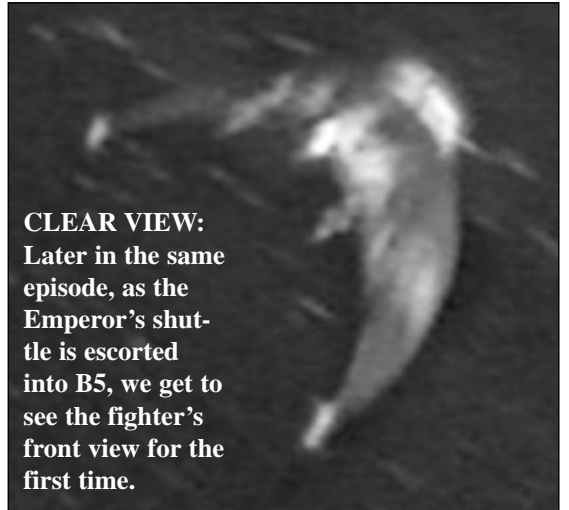
*The Babylon 5 Wars data sheet for this vessel
can be found in the Babcom attachments folder*

Spotting the Senti

OFFENDING SCENE: This scene, from the opening sequence to *The Coming of Shadows*, has caused some debate as to the existence of another Centauri fighter type. The fighter on the left appears to have only one wing. But it is a trick of lighting: Its enhanced companion, below, clearly shows the curve of a wing behind the engine glow.



CLEAR VIEW: Later in the same episode, as the Emperor's shuttle is escorted into B5, we get to see the fighter's front view for the first time.



By **DIOGENES**

WHILE a common part of any game involving the Centauri, the Senti fighter is an elusive sight in the *Babylon 5* television series.

Unlike its counterpart, the Narn Frazi, the Senti is featured only in a couple of episodes. Even then, their presence is fleeting - limited to a few blurred frames as the fighter flashes past on escort duty or in combat.

Perhaps, in part, it is this lack of air-time that has helped given rise to the incorrect belief that there was a second type of Centauri fighter. Combined with confusing camera and lighting angles, the legendary "second fighter" was almost inevitable.

The offending scene is in the opening seconds of *The Coming of Shadows* where two

fighters zip past ahead of a Vorchan as they orbit Centauri Prime. The very first fighter we see appears to follow the fashion of a Star Wars "B" Wing. It flies past at an odd angle. We see one long curved wing that tapers into an engine block and canopy. There appears to be a "counterweight" at the top of the craft, but no wing.

Passing behind this fighter is another: this time it is closer and at a more horizontal angle. As it blurs past, this appears to confirm the "B" Wing hypothesis.

Later in *Coming of Shadows* fighters make another appearance as they escort the Emperor's shuttle. They look different with their heavily forward swept wings.

But closer examination of the opening scene shows they are the same craft. The rear-quarter camera angle combined with a high lighting

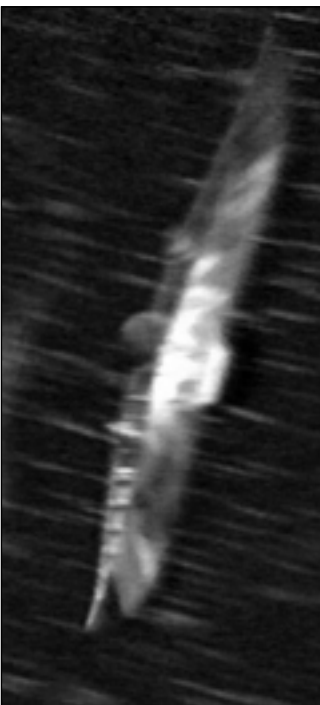
angle and forward sweep of the wings acts to conceal the far side of these craft.

Photoshop enhanced screen captures reveal the full arc of the second fighter's wing, as well as the clearly common cannon blisters and raised cockpit canopy.

This offending piece of footage became "stock" to declare the transition of the storyline to Centauri Prime in later episodes. Interestingly, the first few frames showing the distorted fighter was almost always removed...

The only other episode to provide a good look of the Senti was *Acts of Sacrifice*. Even then, only a good pause function will give you more than a fleeting blur... But one sequence, when paused, does give an excellent profile of this craft (below).

* * *



BELLY-UP: This glimpse of the Senti appears at the beginning of the episode *Acts of Sacrifice*.





Whispering Death

By Craig A Clark, Challenge Graphics

By **ALEXANDER KETTLE**

DURING the dark days of the Narn reversal when the Centauri forces began to turn the tide of battle in the War of Retribution, there occurred several mysterious losses for the Narn. Many ships disappeared without a trace or even a distress call. What the Narn never suspected (and indeed neither did the majority of the Centauri) was that the Centauri were receiving covert assistance from the Shadows.

It was just before the final battle for Quadrant 37, when G'Tal's forces were weakened and the Centauri were preparing for a final assault. Several small Narn squadrons were making their way to the system to reinforce the defenses. None of the squadrons ever survived the trip, and Narn High Command never heard anything from them again. With the collapse of the Narn Regime many commanders simply assumed that the forces had arrived but were destroyed by the Centauri. In truth the small groups were intercepted and wiped out in Hyperspace by Shadow ships. Often caught between beacons at their most vulnerable, none of the ships ever came close to escape except for one squadron.

A small task group of support ships was assembled with escorts to be sent to bolster the defenses of Quadrant 37. However, when in Hyperspace between the beacons in T'llin and Quadrant 37, they were ambushed by a small group of Shadows.

Setup:

The entire map is considered Hyperspace.



*Frontline
scenarios*

Place both maps lengthwise to form a single long map. The Narn may enter from either short end, there is a Hyperspace Whirlpool at the opposite end of the map from the Narn entry point. Narn forces enter map at speed 4, all fighters are on board their carriers. The long map represents the Hyperspace beacon route, Narn ships may not leave the map from any side other than the Whirlpool, otherwise the Shadows will pursue and destroy them, or they will lose the beacon and become lost in Hyperspace. The Shadows may enter from any point on either long side of the map at any speed up to 8. Shadows may use a floating map (to the long sides only) at will.

Forces:

Narn

- 1 T'Rann Carrier - 12 Tarza torpedo fighters w. full torpedo loads + 12 Frazi
- 1 G'Lan Mag Cruiser - 12 Frazi
- 1 G'Quan Cruiser - 12 Frazi
- 1 Ka'Toc Battle Destroyer- 6 Gorith
- 1 Dag'Kar Missile Frigate

Shadows

- 2 Rongoth Destroyers
- 3 Thentus Frigates
- 1 Sho'Kar Scout
- 3 Shadow Cruisers - 18 fighters
- 4 Shadow Destroyers

Victory Conditions:

As the battle is weighted heavily against the

small Narn force, they must try to get any single ship (not fighter) out the far side of the map. The interference of the Whirlpool will be enough to let them pull away and make it to a jumpgate in the Quadrant 37 system, where they will have proof of the Shadow interference. This proof could possibly gain them assistance in the war (or jump start the next Shadow war and kill everyone...who knows).

Narn: Minor Victory - Destroy any Shadow Cruiser.

Victory - Move any single ship (not fighter) off short end of map opposite entry point while at least 10 hexes from nearest Shadow ship.

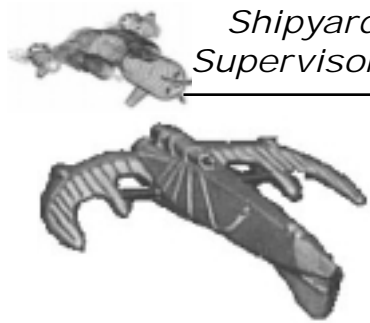
Major Victory - Destroy a Shadow Cruiser and move any single ship (not fighter) off short end of map opposite entry point while at least 10 hexes from nearest Shadow ship.

Outstanding Victory - Escape with the Sho'Kar scout, T'Rann carrier and Dag'Kar off short end of map opposite entry point (not only does the Narn gain the proof, but they manage to also save some of their precious support ships)

Shadows: Victory - Destroy all Narn ships on the board, if any ship escapes, the battle is a loss. The Shadows cannot afford to let anyone escape.

Historically

In the confusion of the battle a single Thentus frigate made it to the Whirlpool but was destroyed just as it entered by a pair of Shadow Destroyers. The Narn High Command never learned of the loss, assuming all ships destroyed in the battle for Quadrant 37.



Centauri Thanos Destroyer

AS the Altarian Destroyer began to fall out of favor with the Royal Navy, the engineers at the shipyards that produced it began experimenting with different weapon configurations.

At the same time, House Duradi was looking for a design to fill the role of the Primus or Centurion in their small fleet.

The engineers proposed the removal of the Matter Cannons and replacing them with the longer ranged Assault Laser. The resulting design changed from a brawler to a sniper, increasing its survivability and making it a deadly pirate hunter or escort.

The Thanos became a moderate success and can be found in most house fleets.

- Designed by **Tim Browning**
aka **TSAIN**
TBSAIN71@JUNO.COM

Centauri Pallas Osat

AN early Centauri OSAT, this and even earlier OSATs were still in use by house forces during the War of Retribution.

With a pair of assault lasers some analysts find these weapons, faster firing than the battle laser, to be useful for engaging ships that close to demolish the OSAT net while the battle lasers are cycling.

Several of these OSATs have been sold to the Gaim, and negotiations to purchase them have occurred with several other minor league races.

- Designed by **Ben Rubery**

The Babylon 5 Wars data sheet for these vessels can be found in the attachments zip folder separate from the Babcom magazine.

Shadow scouts: neither here, nor there

*Black-Hearted Tactics for the
Black Ship Fleet in Fleet Action*

By **KARL JOHNSON**
(AKA Refa Madness)

VICTORY or defeat as a Shadow player rests on one thing and one thing only: proper usage of half-phasing. Before delving into exactly how you'll become an invulnerable killing machine, read the text of the half-phase rule from OAaG:

"A Shadow ship with a phasing system can half-phase as a defensive maneuver. When it is in this mode, it may not fire or be fired upon. Any ballistic weapons that were tracking it suffer a -2 to hit while the cruiser is phased. The cruiser must spend at least 3 full pulses half-phased before it can phase back in." Note, first of all, that the rule does not do any of the following:

1. Define or restrict which ships may actually half-phase; while it does cite a cruiser as reference, it does not specifically limit which ships may half-phase, or phase out at all. Since the Shadows use this method to enter and exit hyperspace, phasing or half-phasing is limited to any Shadow ship with a Jump Drive and, since all Shadow ships have Jump Drives according to their Datacards, all Shadow ships can half-phase.
2. Limit the maximum number of pulses that a Shadow vessel may stay half-phased. The rule cites a 3-pulse minimum before phasing back in, but there's no maximum amount of time that a ship can stay half-phased, nor is there any delay necessary before half-phasing once you've resurfaced back into normal space beyond the one pulse that you phased back in in the first place.
3. Restrict ELINT usage while a ship is half-phased (using ELINT is not firing a weapon).
4. Prohibit the launching of fighter bombs when half-phased (they use the ballistic process to launch but, as they are not a ballistic weapon themselves, you're not firing a weapon while half-phased, thus not violating the rule).
5. Force all ships in a squadron to share the same phasing status. In other words, each ship in a squadron can be in normal space or half-phased at the owning player's discretion.
6. Force a player to preplot when any ship will phase back in.

Elaboration: Always keep your Scouts half-

phased; you'll never lose 'em. Use them to jam the enemy's Fire Control or Defensive ELINT while your half-phased Cruisers, Carriers, Destroyers and Dreadnought maneuver into the optimum position to fire their Slicers and Cutters at short range, avoiding the enemy's more dangerous firing arcs and/or hitting their weaker armor facings. This way, when you phase back in, you'll minimize damage to your own ships while maximizing the effects of a fully-charged (16d10/+2 each die) Molecular Slicer - guaranteed to shred even the largest ships and outright vaporize most any HCV or Medium ship (and even if they perchance survive, they'll be in such sad shape that the squadron will most likely fail its morale roll and jump out anyway). On the next pulse, half-phase again and cruise around until you have a good target of opportunity, your diffusers are discharged and / or self-

repair replaces any necessary pieces of your ship that have been damaged. Also, approach your intended targets from different directions; this forces the positional issue and allows the Shadow squadrons to trap at least one squadron at a time in a good crossfire against the target's weaker flanks and/or rear.

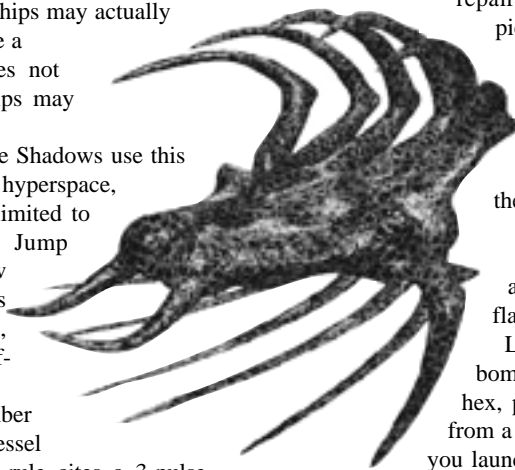
Launch all of your fighter bombs to impact in the same hex, preferably two hexes away from a juicy Capital ship target. If you launched them with Strike mission orders, you'll get at least one attack in the following pulse on faster moving ships, and up to three attacks against a single ship moving at slow speeds (and if you know the target squadron has escort fighters, assign flights to escort your strike).

When half-phasing is used properly, the game becomes more of a cat-and-mouse affair. And in this game, the mouse might scratch the cat, but the cat will, in the end, have a magnificent feast and be spitting out mouse tails after he's gorged himself on the mice.

The point of this exercise is that you're waiting for one of his first-moving squadrons to turn to the wrong facing so that you can phase back in, tear him up, and immediately half-phase again next pulse to avoid retaliation and unnecessary damage to yourself.

You're also buying more time to dump those diffusers and repair damaged maneuver tracks and weapons systems.

* * *



Damn the Fuser torpedoes!

ARGUABLY the hardest hitting (non-First One) weapon in the game, a Fuser Torpedo rarely fails to destroy an entire structure block. When followed up with only a moderate amount of additional plasma weapon fire, nearly any ship in the game will be destroyed outright.

When to fire the fuser is probably the biggest gamble the Pak player is confronted with. To the opponent, the Fuser is a terrifying weapon. So frightening that many will try harder than they probably should to eliminate the threat. Don't be intimidated because most of the time this works to your advantage.

The Fuser puts your opponent between a rock and a hard place. In order for them to take it out early in the game they will have to fire a lot of their heavy weapons at long range which will waste quite a bit of their offensive capability on low to-hit numbers. If they try to play it safe and wait until you get closer, they are playing right into your hands since the Pak are deadliest when they get close.

With this weapon in particular, the Pak player needs to gamble a little. Like a good poker player, you need to be able to read your opponent. See what kind of force he's playing, how his ships are placed on the board, how much time he spends on calculating EW and if you've played against him before, how aggressive he is with his fleet. Anything that gives you a clue as to what he's likely to do will let you know when you should fire the fuser. You'll usually only get one shot and you need to make it count!

If your opponent has a lot of long range weapons, is entering the board at high speed or has a fairly tight formation with his ships, this is an indication that he will be aggressive early in the game. If so, you might want to go full OEW on the ship that is most likely to give you the best chance to hit in the first turn. If he has an ELINT ship, consider that it might be the best target because a lot of players use full blanket protection in the first turn leaving it relatively unprotected. If it turns out that he turtles this first turn, don't fire. There's no point in shooting since you're not going to be attacked.

The other option against this type of opponent is to turtle and hope that your defense and the long range will protect you from the barrage. Range and speed is important to consider, if you're both moving your ships slowly, you'll probably want to turtle, moving quickly and you'll probably go with what I said above. Either way it's a tough call.

If your opponent has placed his ships in a very



Pak'ma'ra Strategy and Tactics:

The Fuser

By TODD BOYCE

wide formation or you know he has mostly short range weapons, he is likely to be defensive and you probably won't need to fire the Fuser until turn 3 when you're on top of him.

If you see he has a good mix of weapons and an adaptable formation, this probably will mean he'll attack when he believes he will be at optimum range to fire. First in turn 2 with his long range weapons, then follow up with the medium range and short range attacks in turn(s) 3 and/or 4. You can probably turtle in turn one and be ok but you'll probably need to fire the fuser in turn 2.

How does range fit into all this? It doesn't really. Target Of Opportunity is the game to play, you fire the fuser when you either have an opportunity to your liking or when you absolutely have to for fear of losing it. What you determine is a good opportunity or when you think the fuser is threatened greatly depends on how lucky you or your opponent tends to be and what sort of playing style you have.

What I usually do (and keep in mind that this is what works for me, it may not work for you) is try to figure out what sort of odds I have assuming better than average rolls for my opponent and below average rolls for myself, because this is usually the case. If my opponent needs 10's to hit, I figure 3 out of 4 will hit. If I need 10's to hit I figure 2 out of 5 will hit. I thus ask myself the following questions:

Will he almost certainly destroy my ship, front structure or fuser this turn?

Yes: Fire the fuser regardless of the odds.

Maybe: Look at odds of firing.

No: Don't fire unless I am in an optimum firing position.

What are my odds?

5 or less: Only fire if I really have to.

6-8: Fire only if there is a fairly serious threat to the fuser.

9-14: Fire as long as I can follow it up with a bunch of additional plasma (2 Mega and 4 medium or the equivalent) that needs at least a 6-8 to hit.

15+: Fire away as long as at least 1 mega and

3 medium or equivalent can also fire that need 9-14 to hit or it is an opportunity that can't be passed up.

Naturally the amount of additional plasma depends on the ship being hit and I have yet to fire the fuser at any ships smaller than a HCV.

When you fire the fuser (or any other plasma weapons for that matter), there are two commandments that you must follow:

THOU SHALT FIRE THE FUSER FIRST and

THOU SHALT CONCENTRATE FIRE.

The Pak don't really have any light weapons, unless you consider a Medium Plasma that can do upwards of 30 points of damage light. This means you don't have anything that can strip the systems away before the Fuser hits. What is more likely, you'll strip away the structure first with all these high damage overkilling weapons forcing the Fuser to use up its valuable damage potential on all the little systems still attached. Since the Fuser is a flash mode weapon, it must destroy every one of those pesky systems before it can proceed to the primary. By firing it first, even though you may hit a system or two, you're assured that most of your damage is going to go where you want it - the structure.

If at all possible, you want to support the Fuser attack with other weapons. When the fuser blows away the structure block (and it most often will!), most of the follow-up damage will funnel directly into the primary structure through overkilled systems and direct structure hits. This is the reason for concentrating fire, much of your damage is through overkill because of the typically high damage yield of these weapons. The fastest way to kill a ship is by destroying the primary structure as fast as you can, which is only really possible on the turn you blow away the side of a ship. Follow this order and concentration of fire and you will easily destroy all but the heaviest battleships.

If you happen to have two Fusers available, in some cases you'll want to fire both at the same target in the same turn. This is more likely to happen when fighting Minbari than any other race though.

Once the fuser has fired, shut it off and use the power for added thrust or sensors. You will most likely not ever fire it again because your opponent's ships should be all dead by the time it would have recharged.

The added power is far more useful when you're in the thick of the battle.

* * *

By ALEX ROBERTS

GROPOS is Agents of Gaming's newest addition to their Babylon 5 stable of products. Gropos covers ground actions in the Babylon 5 Universe, allowing one to play out anything from small company sized actions, up to battalion level battles.

What they Say:

"GROPOS is a complete science-fiction miniatures game system set in the Babylon 5 Universe. It is also the core rules to the Maxim Battle System, a fast-paced miniatures rules set designed to support armies of virtually any type. While designed with 10mm (N-scale) miniatures in mind, virtually any scale will work with these rules."

Appearance and Layout:

The GROPOS core rules book is very nice looking. Printed entirely on glossy paper, the book is filled with beautiful art. This includes both CGI images and traditional media art. The CGI images are especially nice. Numerous CGI images of vehicles and action scenes can be found throughout the book, and are all of a very high standard, even by AoG's regular high quality CGI imagery. These images themselves make the book a pleasure to peruse.

The pages themselves have images faded out and set as the background, rather than a more traditional white. For someone with poor eyesight or insufficient light this may make some sections difficult to read. However, the backgrounds are faded sufficiently that it appears more as a very light gray, and should not pose an issue for the majority of readers.

The layout of the book follows a logical progression, starting with a broad overview, and progressing through basic rules, and then on to morale and advanced rules. Charts and diagrams are included throughout, to help players understand the rules. Most appreciated is the inclusion of an index. Many game publishers today fail to include something as basic as an index, but in the middle of a game this is often the most necessary item. Having an index is a wonderful plus.

The editing is also of a reasonable high standard. Though there are minor spelling errors here and there, on the whole the book is well edited, and none of the errors cause more than a minor annoyance. One vehicle type was also omitted, but as this should appear in the corresponding army book this is not a major error. On the whole it appears that AoG learned from their mistakes with the Fleet Action



core rules, and have run this book through a number of editors.

Game Mechanics:

Troops are chosen by using company templates, within which players can choose the platoons they want, based on the framework provided. One or more companies can be chosen, though one company per person will provide sufficient troops for a very enjoyable game. Further options in the forthcoming army books are anticipated to provide more vehicles and battalion level platoon choices.

The basic mechanics of the game are quite simple. At the beginning of the turn players decide the order in which they will be activating their platoons. Once both players have put down counters indicating the order, the players alternate activating their platoons in the order they previously chose. During activation the platoon may fire, then move, or may move and then fire. Fire is very simply handled, with a player rolling 2 dice at once. These dice together indicate if a hit has been scored, and then one of the dice added to the weapon's damage indicates if the enemy vehicle has been damaged or destroyed. Rolling these dice all at once

speeds game play significantly over similar games, where you must roll to hit and then roll again to resolve damage.

Morale and pinning rules are also included, to allow for units to become pinned, and refuse to move, as well as the degradation of morale due to damage, eventually causing rout or even surrender. Further rules cover artillery, airstrikes, and a variety of terrain, including cities, bunkers, razor wire, and other such obstructions. Advanced rules are also included for a wide range of combat equipment and options. Spotting, smoke rounds, spy and kill satellites, detailed vehicle damage, more detailed order issuing rules, and weather rules are included.

Units:

A good selection of units is included in the core rules for the 4 basic races, Earth, Minbari, Centauri and Narn. Beautiful CGI images are also included with the company templates for the vehicles covered. Weapons stats are included, though separately from the vehicle and infantry stats themselves. More units, as well as VTOLS, are expected to be included in the respective race army books.

In regards to the unit stats, it would have been nice to have the exact cards that are included with the miniatures reproduced in the book, as on the cards all stats are nicely laid out for an entire platoon. Also omitted from the core rulebook are close combat stats, and the EA Loki (artillery vehicle). Hopefully the army books will include exact reproductions of the platoon cards that come with the miniature packs, to enable easier unit comparisons without having the miniatures and cards at hand.

Miniatures:

The miniatures for GROPOS are all in 10mm N-scale, and are priced at \$US15 to \$20 per pack, which includes either 3 or 4 vehicles, or a large number of infantry and support weapons. Also included are quick reference cards, which include all the stats for the units included. These can easily be laminated and used during a game, and are a nice addition.

The miniatures themselves are quite nicely detailed, and infantry bases come pre-flocked. In regards to cost, they are very competitively priced compared to other 10mm game manufacturers, especially in regards to the infantry, where you generally get close to enough for a company in one pack. Considering that a typical fun game will only consist of a company, or perhaps a reinforced company, the cost for a decent playing force is well in line with a Fleet Action fleet, or a small B5W full scale selection of ships.

Conclusions:

GROPOS is a quite enjoyable game of ground combat in the Babylon 5 Universe. Play moves quickly, and does not require a slide rule or a Ph.D. in physics to comprehend. The rules appear to be well edited and play tested. Some small issues like movement fire penalties have appeared, but nothing compared to the editing issues that cropped up with the Fleet Action core rulebook. In addition to its capabilities to simulate ground combat in the Babylon 5 Universe, the forthcoming construction guide, which should allow the design of armies from other game universes and era's, make this a great buy. In this reviewer's opinion, despite some small issues, the GROPOS core rules is well worth the \$US29.95 investment, and should give gamers a nice change from space combat. This product line should also allow for more integrated and involved campaigns, moving from space superiority, down to conquering the planet itself.

* * *

Calculate your own Fleet Action conversions

MANY people have expressed interest in a process that can convert Babylon 5 Wars units to their Fleet Action equivalent. When the first supplement, "My Enemy My Ally" was released I attempted to create such a process in the hopes of converting player created units and those B5Wars units not likely to see publication in the near future. The results were very successful and showed a high degree of accuracy between my conversions and those listed in "My Enemy My Ally".

Unfortunately, applying my formulas to the following supplement, "To The Victor," resulted in a large number of discrepancies that could not be easily explained. It appears that Agents of Gaming have not used a consistent conversion process throughout the supplements.

While not inherently wrong this does create inconsistent performances between B5Wars units and their Fleet Action cousins, and this I believe is a mistake.

It is my hope that the Fleet Action Compendium will include or be followed by a revised set of SCS's for Fleet Action that follow a more consistent conversion process.

That being said, let's take a look at the process I developed and how it fairs when compared to "My Enemy My Ally", upon which it was based. Note that the system has been tweaked towards actual fleet units and does not take a significant look at Osats and bases and completely ignores fighters. Nor does it take anything more than a cursory look as certain system effects such as shields, Guardian Arrays and ancient ones technologies.

STRUCTURE

One of the three biggest areas of discrepancy in Fleet Action conversion is in the area of structure boxes, or simply put, the staying power of Fleet Action Units. For my process, simply total all of the structure boxes on a given B5W SCS (this includes Forward, both Port and Starboard, Aft and finally Primary sections) and divide by 23.25. If the total number of B5W structure boxes is greater than 300 add 0.75 and round down. If the structure is less than 301 then simply round the current result up no matter how



Shipyard Supervisor

Many who play Fleet Action have wondered just how to convert ships from B5W over to FA.

***RICH BAX** has done a very thorough analysis of current FA ships, resulting in instructions and a spreadsheet to enable everyone to convert almost any B5W ship over to FA. Look out for weapons and fighter conversions from Rich soon!*

small the decimal value. For B5W structure totals in excess of 600 add nothing and simply drop all fractions. For example, an EA Omega Destroyer has a total of 310 B5W structure boxes on its SCS. Dividing 310 by 23.25 yields 13.333. However, since the total number of B5W structure boxes is in excess of 300 I add 0.75 and round down. Thus, 13.333+0.75 is 14.083, which rounds down to a total of 14 Fleet Action Structure Boxes.

[Using this method on all of the "My Enemy My Ally" ships produced only one discrepancy; the Whitestar, where I predicted 3 versus the 4 listed. The difference may be due to an error by AoG or simply represents AoG's desires for a better Whitestar.]

SENSOR

The conversion of B5Wars sensors to their Fleet Action equivalent is based on the following table. To use it, simply compare the B5Wars sensor rating (in the case of multiple sensors, simply add the total rating) and compare it to the Fleet Action entry.

See Appendix (B5w2fa spreadsheet) Table 1

DEFENSE RATING

For the Fleet Action defense rating of a ship start by averaging the B5W defense rating of the ship for the six hexes that surround the unit. Thus 2 of the hexes utilize the Fwd/Aft Defense Rating while the remaining 4 use the Port/Strb Defense

Rating. Do not include effects of EM Shields, Interceptor E-Web or similar defense effecting system. For example, an Omega destroyer (with a Non Eweb Fwd/Aft rating of 16 and Port/Strb rating of 18) would have an average B5W defense rating of $(16*2+18*4)/6 = 17.333$.

Use the resulting average value to look up the Fleet Action Defense Rating in the table below. For example, the Omega above has an average B5W defense rating of 17.333.

See Appendix Table 2

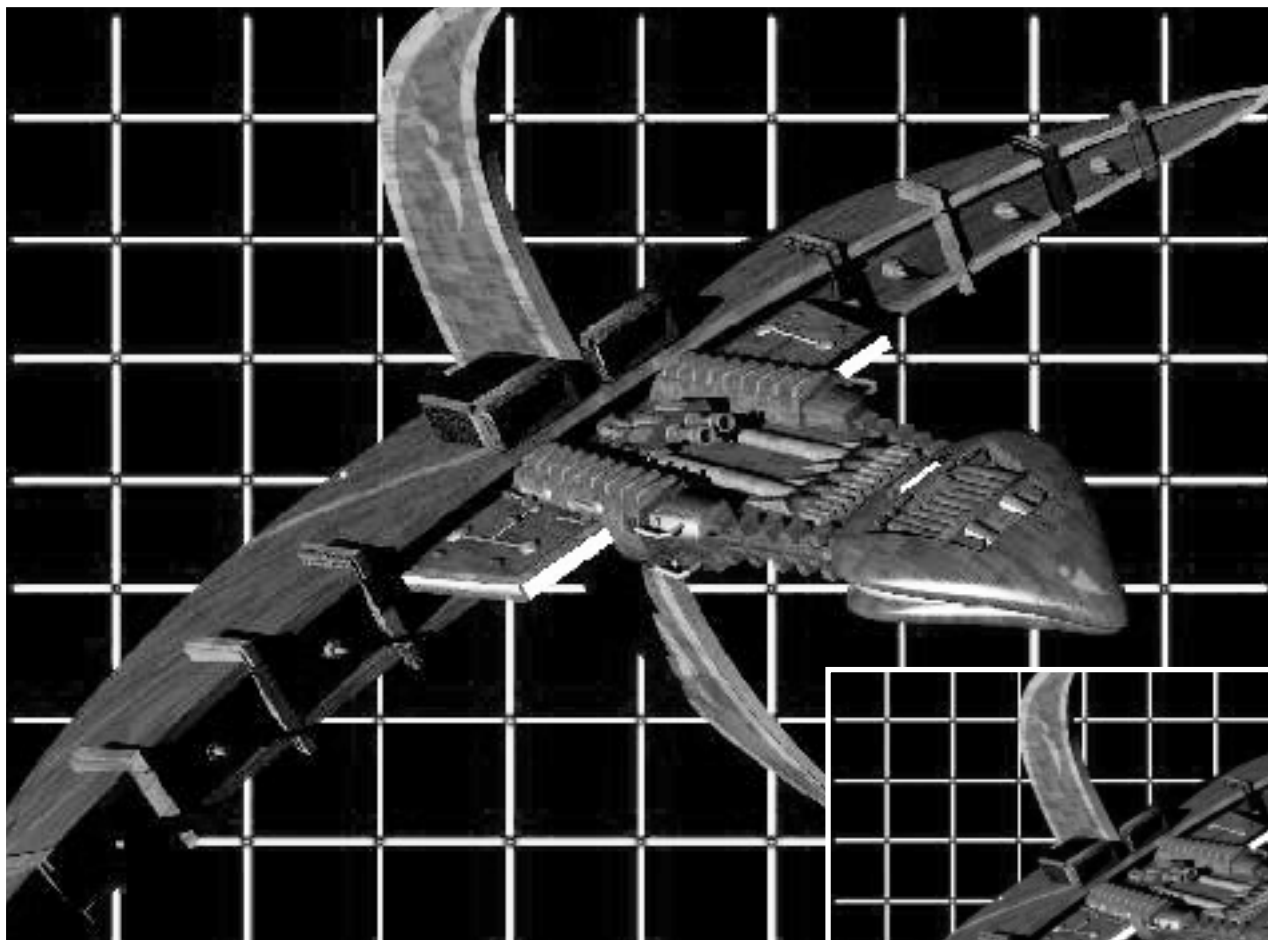
For the Omega example above, the modified interceptor total of 6 results in a Fleet Action Interceptor Level 2. (The placement of the "I"s in the structure track is problematic at best and should simply be distributed evenly throughout the track.)

[Using this method on all of the "My Enemy My Ally" ships produces a perfect match.]

GUARDIAN SHIP LEVEL

To determine the Fleet Action Guardian Array Level of a Guardian Array equipped ship, simply determine the total number of Guardian Arrays and divide by 2 (rounding all results up). For example, a Centauri Maximus has 3 Guardian Arrays, which results in a Fleet Action Guardian Array level of $3/2=1.5$ or 2.

(The placement of the "G"s in the structure track is problematic at best and should simply be distributed evenly throughout the track.)



*Converting Babylon 5 Wars ships to Fleet Action:
Find the conversion spreadsheet and explanatory
tables bundled inside the July Appendix folder*

EM SHIELDS (Preliminary)

At this time no significant effort has been made to develop conversion rules for EM equipped shields. (My efforts are limited by the fact that I have not yet managed to get a copy of "Of Aliens and Giants").

Based on the only two EM Shield equipped units I have (the Minbari Whitestar and the SOTM Vorlon Heavy Cruiser) I have developed the following conversion.

Determine the total number of EM shield icons. To this total add the average EM shield rating. Divide the total by 4 (rounding as appropriate). Thus the Whitestar has 2 EM Shields with an average Shield Rating of 2. The resulting EM Shield Level is $(2+2)/4 = 1$. The Vorlon Heavy Cruiser has 4 EM Shields with an average Shield Rating of 4. Its EM Shield Level is therefore $(4+4)/4 = 2$.

(The placement of the "E"s in the structure track is problematic at best and should simply be distributed evenly throughout the track.)

ARMOR RATING

Another of the more controversial areas is that of armor ratings for the various units. Some surprising numbers have appeared raising significant discussion.

I will not attempt to comment on pros and cons of these numbers but will merely outline the process by which I attempted to recreate the AoG Fleet Action results.

Capital/Enormous Ships

Determine the average armor rating for each section in conjunction with the primary section. For forward armor find the average B5W armor value for the combination of forward and primary icons. For the side, average one side's icons and the primary icons. Finally, for the aft, use the aft and primary icons. The resulting 3 armor averages are compared to the table below to determine the fleet action armor values.

Note: Ignore systems such that do not have definitive Fleet Action icons or can only be destroyed by structure/sensor damage in Fleet Action. Such systems include Interceptors, Guardian Arrays, EM Shields, Tractor Beams, etc (but include the jammer and jump drives).

See Appendix Table 4

For example, an Omega Destroyer has 9 forward, 9 port, 9 aft icons and 7 primary icons (including structure but excluding interceptors for all sections). The total armor for each section is 32 forward, 21 port, 32 aft and 42 for the primary (again including structure but excluding interceptors for all sections). The average armor for the forward section is therefore $(32+42)/(9+7) = 4.625$. The average armor for the side section is $(21+42)/(9+7) = 3.9375$. Finally, the average aft section armor is $(32+42)/(9+7) = 4.625$. Using the table above indicates that the Fleet Action Armor for an Omega Destroyer is 5/4/5.

[Using this method for all capital ships in "My

Enemy My Ally" yielded two ship armor discrepancies. The first is the Minbari Sharaal where I get an armor rating of 5/4/5 versus 4/4/4. The second is the Tigara where I get an armor rating of 5/5/5 versus 5/4/5. I believe both are errors due to the fact that they are based on existing ships (Leshath for Tigara and Sharlin for Sharaal) and use those ship values rather than re-computing new armor ratings.]

Heavy Combat Ships

Heavy combat units use a methodology similar to that above. However, since the HCV has 2 sections other than primary these sections are more emphasized. Therefore, before determining a section's average B5W armor, multiply the primary section total armor and icon number by 0.5 and round up or down as appropriate. Use that result with the table above to determine the armor rating for that section. For example, an EA Artemis has 5 forward, 9 aft icons and 10 primary icons (including structure but excluding interceptors for all sections). The total armor for each section is 26 forward, 38 aft and 56 for the primary (again including structure but excluding interceptors for all sections). Because the Artemis is an HCV the primary armor and icons are multiplied by 0.5 and rounded up. Therefore, $10*0.5 = 5$ for the primary icons and $56*0.5 = 28$ for the total primary armor. The average armor for the forward section is therefore $(26+28)/(5+5) = 5.40$. The average aft section

armor is $(38+28)/(9+5) = 4.714$. Using the table above indicates that the Fleet Action Armor for an Artemis Heavy Frigate is 5/5.

[Using this method for all of the HCV's in "My Enemy My Ally" yielded two ship armor discrepancies. They are the two Artemis based units where I get an armor rating of 5/5 versus 6/6. I believe AoG pushed the Artemis values higher to enhance the flavor of the ships in question though it could simply be an error.]

Medium Ships

For medium ships simply treat the entire ship as a single section and consult the table above for a single overall average armor value. For example, the EA Tethys has a total of 18 system icons (including structure but excluding interceptors) and a total armor of 58 (again including structure but excluding interceptors). The average armor is $58/18 = 3.22$. Using the table above indicates that the Fleet Action Armor is 3.

[Using this method for all medium ships in "My Enemy My Ally" yielded one discrepancy; the Whitestar where I get an armor rating of 4 versus 5. I believe AoG raised the Whitestar's armor rating by 1 to incorporate the effects of its Adaptive Armor for which there is no rules in "My Enemy My Ally".]

MANEUVER RATINGS

The third and potentially most difficult conversion is the determination of unit maneuver ratings. After a significant amount of trial and error I finally discovered a fairly consistent method for determining these values. However, it remains the least consistent of all the conversion methodology.

Max Acceleration

To calculate these values simply take the total main thrust or total free thrust, whichever is lower and divide by the B5Wars Accel/Decel Cost rounding all fractions down. The EA Tethys has Accel/Decel cost of 2, a free thrust total of 8 and a total main thrust of 8. Thus, the Fleet Action max acceleration value is $8/2 = 4$.

Max Deceleration

To calculate these values simply take the total retro thrust or total free thrust, whichever is lower and divide by the B5Wars Accel/Decel Cost rounding all fractions down. The EA Tethys has Accel/Decel cost of 2, a free thrust total of 8 and a total retro thrust of 6. Thus, the Fleet Action max deceleration value is $6/2 = 3$.

Turn Speed

Start by determining a base turn speed. This calculated by first averaging the "B5W Side Thruster Rating" $*2+1$ and the current free thrust and then dividing the result by the turn cost of the unit. For example, an Artemis Frigate has a side thruster rating of 4, 8 free thrust and a turn cost of $2/3$. The average turn thrust is $(4*2+1+8)/2 = 8.5$ and the base turn speed is $8.5/(2/3) = 12.75$.

Next determine the delay factor, which is simply the turn delay rating of the unit times 5. For the EA Artemis, with its $2/3$ turn delay, the delay factor is $(2/3*5) = 3.333$.

Subtract the delay factor from the base turn speed and consult the table below for the Fleet

Action Turn Speed. Continuing the Artemis example, the base turn speed of 12.75 minus the delay factor of 3.3333 equals 9.416. The result of 9.416 falls in the range of 8 through 11.374 resulting in a Fleet Action Turn Speed of 8.

If the unit is a medium vessel then multiply the resulting speed by 1.625 and round appropriately. For example, the EA Tethys has a base turn speed of 25.5 and a delay factor of 2.5 for a final value of $25.5-2.5 = 22.5$. This results in a turn speed of 12. However, since the Tethys is a medium unit, multiply the 12 by 1.625, which equals 19.5, that rounds up to 20.

See Appendix Table 5

Course Correct Speed

To determine the course correct speed multiply the turn speed by 0.5 if the unit is a capital/enormous/HCV, 0.6 if the unit is a medium or 0.75 if the unit is "Agile," dropping all fractions. For example, the "Agile" Whitestar, with its turn speed of 24 would determine its course correct speed by multiplying the turn speed by 0.75. The result is $24*0.75 = 18$.

Hard Turn Speed

To determine the hard turn speed multiply the course correct speed by 0.5 or 0.66667 if the ship is "Agile," again dropping all fractions. If the result is zero, reset the hard turn speed to 1. For example, the Whitestar with a course correct speed of 18 would determine its hard turn speed by multiplying the course correct speed by 0.666667 since it's an agile ship. The result is $18*0.66667 = 12.000006$ or 12.

Come About

To determine the come about speed multiply the hard turn speed by 0.5, again dropping all fractions. If the result is zero, reset the hard turn speed to 1. For example, the Whitestar with a hard turn speed of 12 would determine its come about speed by multiplying the hard turn speed by 0.5. The result is $12*0.5 = 6.0$ or 6.

A number of ships did not match the results of this methodology. They include the Torotha, Tethys and Tethys-L for the mediums, the Hermes and Tinashi for the HCV's and the Poseidon, Sagittarius, Warlock and Tigara Capitals. See the table below for a comparison:

See Appendix Table 6

The AoG Fleet Action Torotha is simply wrong based on the B5Wars statistics, as is the Poseidon. The Tigara also seems to be an AoG error since the Leshath with its identical hull and maneuver statistics is correctly predicted. The Tethys Accel/Decel appears to be an accidental reversal by AoG while the hard turn seems to indicate that AoG treated the Tethys as an agile unit. The Sagittarius may gain some improvement assuming the excess power is used for extra thrust, which would result in a $7/3/1/1$ maneuver rating. The Hermes and Warlock seem to be a tad too maneuverable for the given B5Wars statistics and may have been improved to add flavor.

COMMAND RATING

While there is no hard and fast set of rules the following provides a reasonable breakdown. Each ship receives a base rating dependent on the size of the unit.

See Appendix Table 7

The base rating is modified by the mission classification of the unit. Unfortunately, classification can vary from race to race so this is a bit more subjective. The classification rating is added to the base command rating.

See Appendix Table 8

Fleet Leader - Leads Major Fleet, Poseidon, Shargoti

Leader - Leads Smaller Squadrons, Hyperion, Tethys-L, Sharlin

Combat - Standard battle Units, Artemis, Minbari do not tend to use the combat classification, however the Whitestar is a combat.

Fire Support - Stand Off Bombardment Units, Sagittarius, Nova, Neshetan

Support - Fleet Assets or Specialized Combat Units, Hermes, Leshath

Non-Fleet - Units Not Intended for Combat Missions, Explorer

There is also a technology bonus for the higher tech races. In this case, the Minbari gain a +2 (the Whitestar +3) to their Command Bonus while the EA are +0. For example, a Sharlin is a capital ship that is considered a leader this results in a command rating of 8 for the capital classification plus 2 for being a leader and +2 more for being Minbari resulting in a Command Rating of $8+2+2 = 12$.

COMMAND COST

Again, while there is no hard and fast set of rules the following provides a reasonable breakdown. Each ship receives a base cost dependent on the size of the unit.

See Appendix Table 9

The base cost is modified by the mission classification of the unit. Unfortunately, classification can vary from race to race so this is a bit more subjective. The classification rating is added to the base command rating.

See Appendix Table 10

There is also a cost modifier if the unit operates fighters, assault shuttles and breaching pods in any significant numbers. To calculate the carrier modifier total the standard load of fighters, assault shuttles and breaching pods on the SCS and compare the result to the table below:

See Appendix Table 11

There is again a technology modifier, however, it actually acts as a penalty to the cost so higher tech races such as the Minbari who have higher command ratings also have slightly higher command costs. Simply divide the technology bonus above by 2 (dropping all fractions). Thus the Minbari have a +1 (the Whitestar is also +1) to their Command Cost while the EA are still +0. For example, the EA Poseidon is a capital ship that is considered a fleet leader that carries 96 fighters. This results in a command cost of 3 for the capital classification plus 0 for being a fleet leader, +2 more for being a large carrier and +0 for EA technology. The resulting Command Cost is $3+0+2+0 = 5$.

Note: Only Fleet Leaders can have Command Costs greater than 4. If a non Fleet Leader has a Command Cost greater than 4 then drop the cost to 4.

MORALE RATING

Morale Rating is a combination of sheer size of the vessel (after all, who likes to see their big

fleet units die), and their usefulness to the fleet. To determine the number of Morale Boxes a unit has start by dividing the number of Fleet Action structure boxes it possesses by 6. Add to that result the mission modifier, the carrier modifier and the ELINT modifier (dropping all fractions). If the result is 0, reset the Morale Rating to 1.

See Appendix Table 12

For the fighter count, remember to include assault shuttles and breaching pods.

See Appendix Table 13

ELINT bonus is based on Fleet Action ELINT Level

See Appendix Table 14

For example, the EA Omega has 14 structure boxes, 24 fighters and has a standard mission of combat. The moral rating is therefore $(14/6) = 2.3333$ for structure, plus 0.7 for fighters, plus 0 for combat mission and plus 0 for ELINT for a total of 3.03333, which when rounded down yields a Moral Rating of 3. (The placement of the morale boxes in the structure track is problematic at best and should simply be distributed evenly throughout the track.)

WEAPON SYSTEM FIRING ARCS

At this time there is no system to convert B5W weapons to Fleet Action weapons (though I am in the process now of developing one).

ANTI-FIGHTER RATING

As can be seen in the Fleet Action SCSs, certain weapons have anti-fighter ratings in the lower left corner of the weapon entry. The anti-fighter rating for a given system is based on the average "x" value in the surrounding hexes of the firing arc diagram for that weapon. Simply sum up the number of hexes for each given "x-value." Continue until all hexes have been counted (including the 0-rating hexes but excluding the center hex). The total number of hexes should be 90. Now multiply each "x-value" to the appropriate number of hexes. Sum the resulting values and divide by the total number of icons (i.e. 90) and round up or down as appropriate. For example, the Standard Particle Beam on the right has the following break down of hexes for each given x-value (note the total hexes of 90).

Shown in Appendix Table 15

Multiplying each group and adding yields $(8*5)+(4*65)+(2*20) = 340$. Dividing 340 by 90 results in 3.77777. Rounding results in an anti-fighter rating for this system of 4.

* * *

Editor's Note: see the July Appendix folder for the calculator spreadsheet and tables referred to within the text of this article.

Test of wills



By NADAB GOSCU

By **THOMAS WELLER**

Part I:

SHIP'S log, EAS Corinth, April 7th, 2265, Captain William Trevors commanding; we have been assigned to commercial/anti-raider patrol in Sector 47. Raider activity has risen in this sector tremendously. Earth Force has already lost the EAS Shasta, an Olympus Class Corvette, along with three Tethys Police Cutters and over a dozen civilian freighters transporting goods including foodstuffs, light machinery, and electronics. We have been on station now for eleven days, but I guess an Omega Class Destroyer will scare any raider group back into their holes. We will be relieved in two more days by Police Cutter 214. Then we can get back to deep range patrol.

"Well Pete, what have we got now?" said Cpt. Trevors to his XO.

Commander Peter Hokum, a man in his late forties, soon to have his own command, replied "Sir, we just sent the freighter Money Pit through the jump gate, and the forward port heavy pulse cannon's targeting matrix is going off-line for maintenance."

"Sir!" Lieutenant Junior Grade Richard Porton shouted "Multiple jump points forming."

Cpt. Trevors bolted upright in his command chair, "Sensors, number and position of jump vortexes?"

Lt. JG. Porton's reply was "Four separate jump points forming, sir, all around us; Sensors indicate four capital class ships coming through the vortex."

Cpt. Trevors shouted "General quarters! All hands to battle stations! Activate the defense grid! Communications, contact the raider fleet and order them to stand down."

"Sir!" Lt. JG. Porton's voice cracked, "Hostile ships are firing on us."

The bridge turned into a small sun for an instant as the blasts hit the ship causing many secondary explosions in the bridge controls.

Cmdr. Hokum pushed himself off the deck, and he looked at the command console. A structural integrity beam was resting in the same spot where just moments ago Cpt. Trevors had been sitting.

Coughing smoke and fire retardant chemicals, Cmdr. Hokum shouted, "Damage report!"

Lt. JG. Porton's reply was "Forward section gone, starboard section more than 70% damaged, port side 40% damaged, main thrusters off line, sensors took a direct hit, portside interceptor responding as well as three of the portside particle beams. Two starboard particle beams green lighting as well, Sir."

Cmdr. Hokum finally got his first ship command; his first order "Helm, bring us about, try and keep the portside to the attackers. All weapons fire as you bear. Communications, send a distress call with position and situation." This would be the last order given by Cmdr. Hokum before the Corinth was destroyed under the hail of fire from the aggressor fleet.

EAS Merlin, Warlock Advanced Destroyer, Captain Alexander Jagerson commanding: We just completed the refit at the Proxima shipyards with artificial gravity systems and some minor adjustments after our shakedown cruise. "Sir," Ensign Robert Hickory, the communications officer interrupted, "We have a distress signal coming in from the Corinth."

Captain Jagerson said, "Let me hear it." "This is the EAS Corinth we are under attack, coordinates are Sector 47 Grid Zeta. Hostile forces are composed of" SHHHH <STATIC>. "That is all sir. We seem to have lost the signal. They must have stopped transmitting," was all Ensign Hickory could say.

Captain Jagerson's orders were, "Tell the yard boss that we are moving out. Order the squadron to form up on me. Inform Fleet Command that we are moving to assist the Corinth."

To be continued

Meet the legendary cast



WERE it not for J. Michael Straczynski's working knowledge of the sciencebehind science fiction, the birth of his sprawling space-station saga *Babylon 5* might well have been the death of him.

"I was in the shower when I suddenly saw the entire five-year story in one blinding moment of clarity," he admits to TV Guide Online.

"I bolted out of the shower, dripping wet, and went to write it down. "But not at the computer," he adds with a laugh. "I'm not that stupid!"

Having been without their regular fix since the show aired its final episode in 1998, fans already are eagerly anticipating the spinoff movie, *Legend of the Rangers*, airing later this year on the Sci Fi Channel.

"It's set in the year 2265, which is about two years after *B5* ended," says the writer, who teases his



legions of hopeful followers by hinting: "They asked us to create something that, if it works, can become a series."

And while actor Andreas Katsulas's reptilian alien Citizen

G'Kar is the only major player catching the shuttle from *B5*, Straczynski hopes others might make appearances - should he begin spinning *Legends* on a weekly basis. "We know where

our players are in terms of their universe, so that makes it possible for these new characters to go to those places and, whenever possible, see a few familiar faces."

- www.b5lr.com

FOX has ordered a two-hour *Battlestar Galactica* movie which will stand as a pilot for a proposed *Galactica* series.

The telemovie will be made by Studios USA with the resultant series expected to be screened in the 2002-03 season.

The new series, based on the short-lived 1970s series of the same name, will run jointly on Fox and The SCI FI Channel, Sarah Timberman, president of Studios USA Programming, said.

X-Men director Bryan Singer will helm and will also executive produce with Tom DeSanto, Dan Angel and Billy Brown.

"We're tremendously excited to be bringing the originality and immense talent of Bryan Singer, Tom DeSanto, Dan Angel and Billy Brown to bear on reinventing what was clearly such a pop culture phenomenon," Timberman said in a statement.

The next-generation *Galactica* will be set after the seventh-millennium time frame of the original series, which ran on ABC from 1978-80.

"Our goal is to take the *Galactica* franchise and move it forward in



both style and character, while bringing the scope and sensibility of epic science-fiction filmmaking to the small screen," Singer said.

Dan Angel and Billy Brown--who will produce and run the upcoming *Battlestar Galactica* series--told SCI FI Wire that the proposed series will feature some characters from the classic 1970s *Galactica* TV series.

"Some of the characters will be revived," Brown said in an inter-

view, but declined to say which ones. Angel added: "All that is in discussion stage right now, but absolutely, the intention is to keep in the spirit of what was there before and to preserve - as Billy said - what was there."

Angel and Brown will run the series, which is being developed with X-Men producer Tom DeSanto and director Bryan Singer.

"Hopefully, what we're trying to

aim for is, there will be new characters, there will be some of the old characters," Brown said.

"But since it's not totally written and totally signed off on--and also because there's such a huge fan-base - we don't want to get out false rumors and have people, like, go crazy. But I think one thing we can say is that we're very much aware of the old fans.... We want to honor the old show. We don't want to violate anything. It's like, if you watch the show, you're not going to go, 'Oh, well, they totally contradicted what was in the old show. There won't be any contradictions, but there will be a taking it further and taking it further in time."

Brown added that he and Angel were working on the script for a two-hour pilot for the series, which will advance the original storyline.

"It does take place in a not-so-distant future from the end of the old show," Brown said.

"It's going to be a sprawling, family saga that is set amongst the travails and adventures of the human colony."

- www.scifi.com

Campaign feedback

RESPONSES to a query by Agent One relating to the form of a future campaign system have had an unexpected effect: AoG is now considering two systems.

"Readers indicated there was a market for both types of game, so we're evaluating the possibility of doing both of them," Agent One said. "The structured game, tentatively named Babylon 5 Strategic Wars (B5SW), would be done by a freelancer or freelance group, as we won't have enough time to write it ourselves while working on the other one.

"The unstructured one (which we'll refer to as the Campaign Guide) will be written by AOG and tested over a several month period, probably using the successful "playtest pack" system. "B5SW will be extremely historical, with detailed fleet lists, orders of battle, and scenarios for the big wars (Narn-Centauri, Earth-Minbari, Dilgar, Shadow, etc.). "The Campaign Guide will be open, with each player using a race, building up an empire, and fighting for supremacy. Scenarios will be included for historical wars, but the focus will be on creating your own conflicts."

* * *

Rangers impact

LEGENDS of the Rangers, the new television movie being made for the SciFi Channel, is also having an influence on Agents of Gaming decision making.

According the Agent One, work has been suspended work on Alliance Contact and other products focusing on the "future" (post-Crusade) era of Babylon 5. "We can't even touch the era hundreds of years in the future, for fear LotR or the possible new series might do something that would affect it," he said.

"For example, if we did a product involving the Drazi, but then in the new show the Drazi were wiped out by some catastrophe, we'd be hosed. On the good side, with the new movie & possible show set well after the end of the B5 series, and our wise avoidance of the Crusade era in most of our books to date, we shouldn't see any other adverse effects."

* * *

Agents seek to strengthen their position

AGENTS of Gaming is changing course. The minefield of market forces is playing its part, as is a recent explosion in the cost of paper and the near saturation coverage of the major races for Babylon 5 Wars and Fleet Action.

The recent release of GROPOS is an indicator of these moves, as will be the upcoming League II sourcebook. Color has been dramatically cut back, as has the use of computer-generated illustrations and card-based inserts.

In a recent email interview, Agent One (Bruce Graw) said this was the result of an evaluation of Agents of Gaming's pricing structure.

The aim was to determine whether Babylon 5 products were both competitively priced and profitable enough to continue producing.

"Too high a cost and people won't buy the product, but too low and you can't make money, so you can't stay in business," he said.

"We found that our miniatures were mostly priced correctly (compared to an equivalent figure from other companies, they aren't noticeably more expensive).

"Black and white books were also appropriately priced, compared to their design and printing costs, and versus similar products in the marketplace.

"But the color books were another matter entirely. By the time we've paid for the art, printing, royalties, and other concerns, we're actually losing money (slightly) on them. Our options were to raise the cost, or go to black and white."

This does not represent the demise of the full-color product. Agent One said core products would likely remain full color. Supporting products, such as race sourcebooks, would likely be limited to color inserts of unit listings and vehicle illustrations.

Card counters will not be a part of the GROPOS product range.

"GROPOS is a miniatures game. It's entirely centered around the miniatures. They are the reason for its existence, as it were," Agent One said.

But card counters are not being abandoned. Strong feedback from the forums and mailing list convinced Agents of Gaming to continue producing counters for its Babylon 5 Wars and Fleet Action lines.

"We've decided (after reading recent comments on the public list and forums) to include the counters after all. As always, we appreciate all the comments, even negative ones, that helped us reach this decision. I often



Counter-Intelligence

By Diogenes

wonder how companies were ever able to get feedback from their customers before the Internet."

However, Agent One emphasised the importance of miniatures to the product lines and Field Agent's roles in promoting them.

"We should be able to provide enough miniatures to a Field Agent to put on a reasonable demo," he said. "The goal is to demonstrate the game and its components. It doesn't matter if the Agent himself doesn't like miniatures. One of his responsibilities as an Agent is to promote AOG's products..."

The burden of this responsibility is not expected to be shouldered entirely by Field Agents.

Agents are being shipped packs of miniatures for scheduled demos, and the company intends to continue and improve upon this process.

Incentive programs for Field Agents have assisted many in assembling large collections of miniatures, Agent One said, and they can return this favor through using them in demonstrations.

The expense and time needed in commissioning computer artists to design new three-dimensional models for the younger races are among the reasons for a reduction in the use of this type of illustration.

"So far as I know, there aren't any CGI models for anything in League-2, so if we were to do computer art, there's also the lead time for model design, as well as the cost of commissioning that work," Agent One said. "All freelance art is expensive, takes a long time, and is difficult to fix if done incorrectly. All art has to be approved by WB as well, so it has to be finished well in advance, and if disapproved, either delays the product or must be thrown out."

But Agent One said artwork was not being neglected. "We have a staff artist now, and she'll be doing the top views for the League-2 countersheet shortly," he said. "She drew many of the pieces in the GROPOS book (such as the Centauri guardsmen in the forest). She has (also) done a lot of concept sketches for sculptors and computer artists."

* * *

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A fan-produced
magazine for players
of Babylon 5 Wars,
Fleet Action and
GROPOS

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produced voluntarily by
fans for fans of Babylon
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Enterprise unwrapped

ENTERPRISE, registry NX-01 and captained by Jonathan Archer (played by Scott Bakula), looks very similar to the design of the Akira-class ships seen in the Next Generation movies. In the script for the pilot episode, Broken Bow, the writers describe the vessel as "more rocketship than starship"

This is an odd description for a ship that is very "Next Generation" in its appearance.

Put it alongside the Enterprise A, (supposedly the successor to this earlier class of ship) and the later ship looks like something of a dinosaur... Pundits had been expecting to see something more like the first generation "rocket starship" as seen in Contact.

But industry sources have allegedly confirmed the authenticity of this image. We'll just have to trust Brannon and Braga's "vision" again.

The pilot once again uses time travel as a cornerstone of its plot, bringing some "dark villain" from the distant future to dominate a race



known as the Suliban. A 7-foot-tall Klingon, carrying vital information to his homeworld regarding the shape-shifting Sulibans, is shot down over Oklahoma and pursued through cornfields by evil Suliban agents.

The Klingon manages to kill his pursuers but gets shot by a red-necked farmer who (like all other

humans of this era) oddly speaks no Klingonese.

While transporting the delirious Klingon home, captain Jonathan Archer encounters more Suliban, who invade his ship (a pre-Federation warp vessel dubbed "Enterprise") and kidnap the Klingon. This failure by the Earthlings upsets the Klingons...



SHADOWS OF GAMING BACKGROUND SCREEN: INSIDE THE JULY ATTACHMENTS FOLDER