

BABYLON

5
WARS

2ND EDITION



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The Great Crusade

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Commander Korsh Karaka watched another Protectorate ship die under his squadron's guns. The Minbari had been caught totally unaware. Their Protectorate was vulnerable, and logic (according to Karaka) dictated the same was for the Minbari. A quick glance at his sensor readout told him all he needed to know. The few remaining Protectorate ships were being hunted down and exterminated by the Strike Forces. Losses were well below what was expected, and damage to the ships was minimal. Smiling, Karaka turned to his comms officer.

"Signal the bombers they can move in now."

A blip appeared on the sensors and Karaka looked on as six Purifier Bombers jumped in directly over Arnassia, home to over four billion sentient beings.

"Their fate was sealed from the moment they sided with the Minbari. They helped the Minbari in their heresy against the Gods and they are to be punished," Karaka said, addressing the crew of his Paragon. Down below on Arnassia IV, the first city, home to two million, was obliterated in a thermonuclear fireball.

PHASE ONE: ONLSAUGHT - 28th MAY 2268

The months long process of amassing their forces and organising supply chains to support the single largest fleet to ever sail in Orieni space went perfectly. As battlegroups and whole fleets disappeared into hyperspace on the 25th of May, the Orieni rejoiced. They were to punish those who had betrayed the gods, and the Minbari were going to suffer for their heresy. At 0815hrs on the 28th of May 2268, the Orieni received the signal they had been waiting for.

"Punish the heretics."

With that one command the Orieni fleets moved toward their intended targets.

The first attack at Arnassia struck two hours ahead of schedule due to a miscalculation in the distance and the time it would take to travel into Minbari space, but it did not matter. The Protectorate forces in the system received only scant warning before the Orieni jumped in. Not much of a defense could be thrown up within five minutes. Ships and fighters were placed on alert and were powering up just as the first jump point opened. Against two hundred and eighteen Orieni ships, plus fighters, stood eight Rolentha Combat Tugs, two Tinashi Frigates, twelve Torotha Frigates and six Tradana frigates. They were backed up by a relatively weak OSAT grid and a large number of ground launched Tishats. Also in the system were over forty merchant vessels. The Orieni wasted little time advancing on the Protectorate ships, which fought with Arnassia at their back. Although the Protectorate stand was valiant and brave, it proved futile.

The Orieni crushed the Protectorate forces within half an hour. Almost every merchant ship was destroyed, and only two Rogatas escaped the massacre. The Orieni then called in their bombers and troop ships which then proceeded to bombard the planet from orbit for eight hours, until the Arnassians surrendered unconditionally.

The attack on Golthat was just as successful. It again started two hours early, but this time, the Protectorate forces had a chance to signal the Minbari that they were under attack. Golthat itself was a mining colony and was quickly subdued and captured, all resistance finally ceased the next day.

The attack on Vamani was the Orieni's first serious challenge. Vamani boasted a Norgath starbase as well as a large squadron of Minbari vessels. The signals warning of the attack on the Protectorate had reached Vamani minutes after the initial attack. It was here that the Orieni arrived on time facing a ready foe.

Fortunately for the Orieni, they did not face the cream of the Minbari fleet in the form of its Sharlins and Neshatans, but rather its older hulls like Shaarals and Tigaras. The Wind Chaser Clan was viewed by the Minbari as a second line force and had the fewest of

the newer hulls, and it was here, in their area of control, that the Orieni were attacking.

The battle to take Vamani was costly for both sides as the Minbari fought to the bitter end and the Orieni fought with intensity that bordered on fanaticism. With the destruction of the Norgath the orbital defences were broken, the Minbari lines smashed. The Commander of the Shaaral Valens *Flame* ordered the surviving ships to retreat, but many of the Minbari commanders refused to let a Minbari world fall to invaders. This decision to stay cost them their lives, but bought time to evacuate more civilians from Vamani. The Orieni once again called in their bombers, but this time they did not want to capture the world. They wanted to obliterate it. Fleeing transports carrying civilians were attacked with thousands of lives being lost. The bombardment of Vamani II continued into the end of the 29th. When the Orieni left they left behind them a devastated world nothing more than a tomb for nine hundred thousand Minbari.

Vagthusa fell within hours, the system itself being nothing more than a religious retreat and a monitoring station to keep watch on Vorlon space. The Orieni subjected Vagthusa VI to three hours of bombardment before landing troops and taking the system.

THE MINBARI RESPONSE: **29th MAY 2268**

When news of what was happening on their eastern border reached the Grey Council, the Minbari were shocked. The Minbari had discounted the Orieni after their defeat by the Centauri, and wrote them off as never being a credible threat. News that a massive Orieni fleet had attacked them quickly changed this view. The Minbari military was quickly ordered to the eastern border to repulse the Orieni spearheads. It would take time to send the entire fleet from the northern border to the new war zone. The first Minbari counter attack at Vagthusa was a disaster. The Minbari didn't know much of the Orieni's military, their tactics or weapons. Hunter Killers caused heavy

damage against Minbari ships. The eight Sharlins and twelve Tinashi's of the expeditionary force were unable to deal with the swarming Orieni medium ships. Although the Minbari destroyed many of the Orieni ships in the Vagthusa system, there seemed to be no end to their numbers. The Minbari were forced to retreat with 45% casualties.

The Orieni didn't waste time in their operations and, once the four systems they held were deemed secure, the fleets jumped towards their next targets.

THE ONSLAUGHT **CONTINUES: 30th May - 17th June 2268**

Over this period the Orieni advance continued despite heavy Minbari resistance. The Minbari fought for every scrap of space and every planet, but the Orieni pressed on regardless. The Orieni took Sorpigal and Davala Than, whilst a little known jump route from Golthat to Tir and from there to Zendamor was used to continue the Orieni assault on the Protectorate and Minbari. Trosagal fell on the 16th of June to a combined SF/RN attack despite massive Minbari resistance. Losses amongst the Orieni were very high. The Minbari, thanks to their range advantage, were able to hurt the Orieni as they approached, but the Minbari also suffered very high losses. What was worse for the Minbari was that no major construction plans were underway to rebuild the lost ships from the Shadow War. Every Minbari ship lost represented a significant amount of resources, whilst every Orieni ship lost was quickly replaced.

Tir and Zendamor fell to the Orieni with ease, the Protectorate ships, although quite advanced, were massively outnumbered, and the Orieni ships were nearly on par with their own designs. Harassing forces struck at Eshar but it was discovered that Eshar was a major colony and part of the main Minbari defence area. Strikes against Moga and Iklath were more successful and resulted in more Protectorate losses. The Protectorate pleaded that the Minbari send aid, but the

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Minbari had none to give, they themselves trying desperately to hold off the Orieni advances. Despite this, the Wind Swords launched a massive attack on the Orieni over Davala in an attempt to blunt the Orieni advance.

This attack was a partial success, as the Orieni were forced to halt any plans to move on Eshar due to their losses in Davala Than. The Wind Swords offensive fleet had many Sharlins and Neshatans in it, and these vessels were able to wreak fearsome damage on the Orieni at range, but found themselves swamped by the Orieni regardless of their massive long ranged punch. Nials were simply outnumbered by the swarms of Templars and Blazing Stars and could not counter the massive swarms without suffering heavy casualties. The Orieni habit of sending medium ships ahead with their fighters also increased Minbari fighter losses, as the Nials had to contend with not only fighters but also agile anti-fighter ships deliberately going after them.

A PLEA FOR HELP: 18th June - 6th July 2268

The Minbari Grey Council, realising that their fleet in its weakened state might not be enough to counter the hordes of Orieni ships, contacted President Sheridan and requested the intervention of the Interstellar Alliance in the matter. Sheridan immediately dispatched the White Star fleet to the Minbari's aid, but the rest of the Interstellar Alliance was in no position to help. The League of Non-Aligned Worlds had suffered heavily in the Shadow War. Hundreds of ships were destroyed and the League was still trying to rebuild. The Vree and Drazi sent what ships they could, but it was not enough. Sheridan once again set about forming a fleet, but this time not to fight the Ancients, but to fight a race that he knew even less about. The biggest problem about helping the Minbari was the sheer distance involved. That the route to Minbari space passed either through Earth Alliance space, which was restricted due to the recent Drakh

attack and the release of the plague on Earth, or the aggressive Ch'lonas and Koulani. Both races would have to be negotiated with before any help could be sent through their territories, and these diplomatic attempts were largely viewed as a waste of valuable time.

Diplomatic envoys to the EA made pleas for Earth to open her borders, but all of Earth space was still under a strict quarantine. Earth Force was also rebuilding after the attack on Earth and the losses that it suffered on that tragic day and had no forces to offer the Alliance.

When the Orieni appeared over Moga, the terrified Mogans, having suffered numerous attacks, surrendered without a fight. The Protectorate ships in-system fled to Tychola, which was now cut off from the rest of the Protectorate, and to Eudu. The system of Iklath was subjected to a massive bombardment that lasted four days before the survivors surrendered to the Orieni. The Orieni moved in defensive units and held the system whilst strengthening their grip on the other systems they held. The Orieni Logistic Command was busy sending in transports carrying OSATs. Construction of a Penitent was begun at Vamani.

Meanwhile, the freshly arrived White Stars were quickly integrated into the Minbari fleet and began raiding Orieni positions a day after their arrival. Like the much larger Minbari ships, the White Stars had difficulty dealing with massive swarms of ships that were as maneuverable as they were. Attacks on command ships or command elements resulted in high casualties/heavy damage for little gain due to the Orieni habit of heavily defending their command ships, so the White Stars were reduced to raiding the outskirts of Orieni held systems, performing frequent convoy attacks. Long-range strikes by trios of White Stars were successful in long range laser strikes, hitting and withdrawing before coming under fire from the Orieni defenders.

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BREACHING THE WALL: 07th July - 30th July 2268

For a short period both sides rested their main forces. The Orieni busied themselves fortifying the worlds they held and conducted hit and run attacks against other Minbari systems whilst the Minbari rushed everything that could fight to the war zone. Raids carried out by both sides resulted in losses for both the Orieni and Minbari, as well as some gains.

The Orieni discovered the layout of the neighbouring systems and the relative strength of the Minbari, whilst the White Star fleet proved very effective in attacking Orieni convoys and lone warships. All this changed on the 12th of July when the Orieni launched a two-pronged offensive against Esgar and Trigati, with secondary offensives carried out by a mix of Orieni and Rogolon warships against the remaining Protectorate systems. The battle for Eshar was likened to the Battle of the Somme in Terran history. The Orieni threw hundreds of ships at the dug-in Minbari and their defences.

The Minbari were determined to hold Eshar, and the three populated worlds that were in the system. They had amassed a large number of ships to hold the system. The Orieni wanted to capture the system and the resources there. The battle for the system lasted three days, with many smaller skirmishes taking place outside the major fleet engagements. The Minbari lured the Orieni into minefields or asteroids, attacking their flanks while making head on assaults, but the Orieni would not be denied. On the fourth day, with Orieni troopships landing divisions of troops on Eshar III and IV, the Minbari were forced to withdraw. Nearly 65% of the Minbari fleet had been destroyed or crippled. The Orieni lost over three hundred ships, including the Flagship of the Strike Forces the *Vorlon's Fury*. Esgar II was nuked into oblivion whilst the fighting on Eshar III and IV continued for the rest of the month, with the technologically superior but outnumbered Minbari fighting off

the far more numerous Orieni forces who were slowly forcing them back.

The battle for Trigati was more of a sideshow for both sides, the majority of the defenders in Trigati were the recently arrived Interstellar Alliance ships that were able to arrive at short notice. The main Orieni assault consisted of a large Rogolon force with support from the Orieni fleet. It was here that the first battle between technologically equal foes took place. The Rogolon warships were little advanced over the Drazi ships in the system. The Rogolons fought with extreme ferocity. The chance to fight in honourable combat caused command problems, but the Rogolon's numbers offset this. While the Interstellar Alliance forces were still trying to integrate their forces into a cohesive unit, the Rogolons struck at the fleet whilst staying out of the range of the orbital defences present round Trigati. Losses on both sides were very high. By the end of the month, the Orieni were forced to commit more of their forces towards the Trigati front to support their Rogolon allies. The system eventually fell on the last day of the month as the Orieni finally broke the back of the defences with the destruction of the base over Trigati itself. The Rogolon forces were withdrawn to act as a reserve force whilst the Orieni took up the assault.

On the 30th the situation looked grim for the Minbari. Two major systems had now fallen, the Protectorate was almost under total Orieni control, and the Minbari were running out of ships. Frantic efforts to increase ship production and pull ships out of mothballs were working, but the mothball ships required time to be activated and many were obsolete ships that were hastily activated and thrown in the path of the Orieni with little chance of surviving. But everything was not bleak. The manic defence of their systems was bleeding the Orieni fleets. The Orieni had suffered massive casualties in all their attacks, hit and run strikes by White Stars and other small raiding craft were causing considerable casualties and made the Orieni hold more ships in system than they held to defend against the Minbari raids. Not all of these strikes succeeded. The tactic of sending lone

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Shargottis into hostile space worked for a while, until two Shargottis were lost within a day of each other. The dwindling number of these ships led this tactic to be cancelled. The *Black Star* itself still carried out lone strikes but even the formidable flagship of the Warrior Caste was too valuable as a warship and figurehead to loose on a strike.

The Orieni were shocked by the degree of resistance the Minbari were showing. Entire battlegroups were disbanded due to losses the Minbari were inflicting. The Orieni had suffered losses that would stop any less fanatical race, but the Blessed were sure they would have ships long after the last Minbari ship went down in flames.

THE TSUNAMI 01 AUGUST - 28 AUGUST 2268

With a major breach in the Minbari defense net at Eshar, the Hand of the Blessed pushed on further into Minbari space. In the battered Protectorate, the final free systems of Norsa and Eudu fell to the Rogolon fleet. Once the orbital bombardment began the planets surrendered in an attempt to save lives. In the occupied systems the Orieni treated the Minbari like lower life forms. The Nazis didn't hold a torch to the Orieni and their treatment of the Minbari. Meanwhile, the Protectorate races were subjugated and under tight martial law but escaped the worst of the Orieni wrath.

The Minbari system of Tavalan fell with ease. The Minbari, having long since pulled back to Ralfa, destroyed the beacon to Thessin as they departed. This put the main Orieni fleet within three jumps of Minbari itself.

The stream of reactivated ships fresh out of mothballs was having an effect. Entire squadrons of Enfalli patrol ships and hastily reactivated Liandras arrived in time to slow the Orieni advance. Ralfa was the last major defensive system before Minbari itself and boasted two Norgaths. The IA was starting to arrive in meaningful numbers, too. Diplomacy had secured access through Tokati and Deneth space and Minbari scouts had

established a beacon between Gigmos and Nocalo to allow access to Minbari space.

Still the biggest problem the IA had with moving ships was their inability to take the shortcut through Earth Alliance territories. The Earth Alliance quarantine was well maintained. The EA border was well patrolled by Earth Force which denied access to any races ship apart from medical teams.

The timely arrival of Minbari reinforcements and heavy counterattacks stopped the Orieni advance dead in its tracks. The Orieni fleet was at the end of its supply chain. The Orieni were suffering heavy casualties and were not in a favourable position. The attacks by White Stars had caused heavy damage to the Orieni mercantile fleet. Shortages amongst fighters, HKs and missiles were now becoming a major problem as convoys moved from Orieni and Minbari space to the front lines. A massive counter attack at Trigati from a mix of IA and Minbari ships forced the Orieni out of the system with 80% losses to the Orieni fleet. The IA fleet had suffered roughly 45% losses. This attack was made primarily by Sharlins, and Hyach vessels. Their range advantage proved devastating against the short-ranged Orieni ships.

The victory at Trigati was the first major victory against the Orieni for the IA and Minbari fleets. The boost to morale was incredible, and the evidence of how the Orieni treated their people drove the Minbari into a frenzy. The Hand of the Blessed realised that the war was balanced on the precipice for both sides. The next few weeks would decide the outcome of the war. To finally break the Minbari fleet the Orieni formed most of their forward fleet as well as a fair portion of their reserves and threw them at the Ralafa system on the 27th.

The might of the Orieni fleet jumped into the Ralafa system knowing that this battle would be the decisive one of the war. The IA had detected the massed Orieni build up and realised their plan, and met them with everything they had. Brakiri and Gaim ships rubbed shoulders with Sharlins and Tinashis. Kothas flew along side Tzymms and Nials.

The fleet was quite massive and backed up by the heavy defences now in place around the Ralafa systems major colony world. The Minbari had landed entire armies on Ralafa III to defend against Orieni troops. In orbit was a mix of Minbari and IA mines and OSATs waited the aggressors.

The IA waited while the Orieni moved through the system. The mining outposts in the system were abandoned and defenceless and the Orieni ignored them. As the Orieni moved to within extreme weapon range the battle began. The wall of Orieni ships crashed against the defences like a massive wave breaking on the shore. Hundreds of Orieni ships threw themselves at the IA defences, desperate to get in range. The Orieni charged through minefields, ignoring the damage they caused. Fighters and HKs engaged the defences and defending ships and were met by allied fighters. Massed dogfights broke out as the Orieni desperately protected the HKs as they approached their targets.

Dozens of Orieni ships were destroyed or fatally crippled in the charge. The IA gunners picked their targets with ease because there were so many of them. The battle around the first Norgath was ferocious as the Orieni targeted the base with everything they had, desperate to breach the defences of Ralafa III. The first Norgath finally was destroyed when a fatally crippled Prophet slammed into the mauled base. Both the ship and base disappeared in the explosion.

The IA defenders suffered horrific losses to the Orieni fleet, but the Orieni were losing more ships faster than the IA forces. At 1715 hrs local time the *Black Star* was destroyed. The massive ship had destroyed a dozen Orieni warships, including a Paragon and Prophet. The mighty ship was eventually pulverised by repeated HK strikes and a ramming attack from a Benevolent. As his final act, the Commander of the *Black Star* overloaded the reactor of his ship. The explosion took eight Orieni medium ships and a Zealot cruiser with it. Roughly at the same time the *Black Star* exploded the Orieni Paragon leading the attack was destroyed, gutted by the combined firepower of a

Neshatan and two Iroki Kams. The Paragon, later identified as the *Sword of the Blessed*, took the son of the legendary Admiral Hiraka Shrak with her. The sudden loss of command combined with their losses began an Orieni withdrawal, but the Minbari would not permit the Orieni to leave.

Their final reserves of old ships and White Stars jumped in on the withdrawing Orieni ships at point blank range. The Orieni withdraw became a rout as ships and squadrons jumped out as quickly as they could. Those unable to jump out were hunted down and destroyed, or else sacrificed themselves for the cause, charging the ISA forces with all guns blazing.

By the early hours of the 28th the cost of the battle became clear. Hundreds of Alliance and Orieni hulks — ships and fighters both — littered the Ralafa system. Over 60% of the AOL forces were destroyed or so badly damaged that they would not leave Ralafa until completing lengthy repairs. Fighter losses were at a staggering 90% for all the IA races. The losses for the Orieni however had been far worse. Over 80% of the Orieni ships that had attacked Ralafa III were now drifting dead in orbit. Losses amongst fighters and HKs were total, and the surviving Orieni ships were all mauled. The cream of the Orieni fleet had led the assault and almost all of these ships were now dead hulks. The reserves used in the attack represented a major portion of the Orieni strategic reserve. The Orieni survivors fled back to Tavalan and from there the Orieni pulled back to Eshar and the defences that had been built since its capture.

THE TURNING OF THE TIDE

01 SEPTEMBER - 12 NOVEMBER 2268

As the Orieni withdrew from Tavalan to Eshar they left behind a devastated world. All Minbari buildings were destroyed and water sources were poisoned and contaminated. The Orieni fleet began to reorganise itself over Eshar, and withdrew behind the defensive chain they had established. The mauled IA

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fleet had only a few days to recover losses and repair their ships before moving out. Both sides during this period were not quiet. Combined forces of Minbari White Stars and Abbai Tiracas conducted hit and fade attacks against the Orieni forces recovering in Eshar and Trosagal. These raids were little more than pinpricks but always resulted in losses for the Orieni.

The Orieni economy at this time was starting to collapse. The sheer number of losses could not be replaced. The Orieni were running out of materials for jump drive construction and weapons production. Coupled with rationing of energy and food the Orieni economy now found itself unable to keep up production and it rapidly fell off. Inflation during this period was also spiralling and the Orieni Empire faced bankruptcy.

The Orieni now realised that they faced disaster should they lose the initiative to the Minbari. Forces occupying the Protectorate as well as ships from Garrison Command inside Orieni space were sent to the front. The Rogolons also became more involved in the fleet deployment. The Orieni viewed the Protectorate as being suitably subdued and secure to pull their ships out of the Protectorate systems. This influx of ships boosted Orieni fleet strengths, but also served to boost the morale of the few surviving Protectorate ships and resistance groups.

As the Orieni desperately pulled together an effective fleet the Interstellar Alliance struck first. An attack by a combined force of Drazi and Brakiri ships made a probe at the outskirts of Eshar. When no resistance was encountered they pressed on. By the time that the Brakiri realised that something was wrong it was too late. A combined Orieni and Rogolon fleet jumped in almost on top of the IA forces at point blank range. Only a few IA ships managed to jump out of the engagement. The rest were lost in the confusion of the Orieni attack.

A Minbari force struck at Trosagal on the 8th but encountered heavy Orieni resistance from the ships of Garrison Command. The Orieni had recently completed a Penitent and emplaced a grid of

OSATs round the base. The larger than expected number of Orieni ships as well as their defences slowed the Minbari advance, but the Orieni were forced to withdraw to the Penitent and its OSATs to keep their grip on the system.

THE MINBARI COUNTER ATTACK - 29 AUGUST - 24 SEPTEMBER 2268

Having halted the Orieni spearheads, the Minbari and Interstellar Alliance members went on the offensive. Recently arrived Gaim, Pak'Ma'Ra and Vree squadrons were quickly incorporated into the growing IA fleet. The addition of a full battlegroup of Yolu ships also increased the odds in the IA's favour. Hit and fade attacks by White Star led frigate groups were wearing out the Orieni. A system would be raided two to three times a day. Whole convoys were lost and the strikes were lowering the Orieni's morale.

The counter strike began in Trosagal when a group of White Stars entered the system and were engaged by Orieni warships. This feint drew enough Orieni ships away from their OSATs and base to begin the attack. Led by two Neshatans and backed up by a Yolu squadron, the IA made a direct assault on the orbital defences over Trosagal. Caught off guard by the sudden appearance of a fleet near their base, the Orieni reacted slowly to the attack. By the time that they had organised the defence it was too late. The Neshatans ripped the Penitent to pieces. Everything did not go in the IA's favor, though. The Orieni ships and defences caused heavy damage before they were knocked out. The defences killed six assorted IA capital ships while many more were damaged. One of the Neshatans had to return to Minbar for repairs with half a Steadfast buried in her bow.

The ground battle for Trosagal was bloody and prolonged. The Orieni had a large army on the world and even with orbital superiority it took until late December before the final Orieni forces were destroyed or forced to surrender.

Another assault was made on Eshar, but this time the strike was carried out in a more cautious manner. Sensor sweeps revealed the extent of the Orieni forces in Eshar. A full fleet of 80 ships backed up by a Penitent and twenty-four Skyguard Heavy OSATs stood in the IA's path. The base and the approaches to the system were heavily mined. Efforts to clear these mines were severely hampered by HK strikes from Eshar itself. When it was discovered that the Orieni had hidden nuclear warheads amongst the minefields the IA was forced to halt and clear each and every mine. This was a time consuming task, and the mines were able to damage the IA ships again and again. The HK strikes also proved effective. The Pak'Ma'Ra lost one of their prized Pshul'Tau carriers to HK strikes, whilst a Vree Xonn was forced to withdraw in flames.

After six hours the mines had all been cleared and the IA moved on to meet the Orieni fleet. Long-range fire failed to draw the Orieni out, the Orieni's forces keeping close to the system's fixed defences. Seeing that the Orieni could not be coaxed out of their defences the IA fleet began its attack in earnest.

The second battle of Eshar lasted two days as the IA forces picked their way through the OSATs to get at the Penitent. The Orieni and Rogolon ships in system fought with manic courage, throwing themselves at the far larger IA fleet. The losses inflicted by the Orieni and Rogolon forces nearly forced the IA to withdraw when the Penitent was crippled by a series of piercing shots from the four Sharlins that accompanied the IA fleet. The Orieni and Rogolons fought to the last fighter, and many crippled Orieni ships rammed IA ships.

After the destruction of the last Orieni units, the IA paused and began counting the cost. The IA had lost 70 ships with 40 more crippled. Every ship had suffered some degree of damage and many ships would need weeks of repair to be returned to full effectiveness. The Orieni losses were total. Not a single ship had fled from the battle. As with Trosogal the ground war was a long affair.

The IA ground forces suffered heavy casualties against the Orieni troops. The last Orieni combat unit on Eshar was finally neutralised on the 1st of December. Orieni resistance on the ground was likened to the Japanese defending Iwo Jima and Guam. The Orieni fought to the last and didn't ask to surrender.

It was also during this period that the remaining IA races not involved in the fighting sent ships. A limited force of EA ships consisting of two Omegas, four Hyperions and one new Delphi were also deployed alongside a small Narn taskforce.

FIGHTING RETREAT - 25 SEPTEMBER - 24 OCTOBER 2268

Without realising it the Orieni had now lost the War. Their fleet was shattered, their supply chain exhausted and their personnel demoralised. Every attack that had been made on the IA forces now swarming into Minbari space had been repulsed with heavy casualties. The Orieni Officer Corps had suffered massive losses to key command and leadership staff. When the *Sword of the Blessed* went down she took the Orieni's best commander with her. Delaying strikes were having some effect but they were only slowing the IA fleet.

In Orieni space, the Orieni economy was struggling to keep an even keel. Losses amongst merchant shipping in Minbari space drew ships away from the safety of the Empire itself and into the conflict zone. This slowed the imports and exports in Orieni space. Prices soon spiralled and shipments of vital resources were slowed.

In the devastated Protectorate, the Orieni withdrew from Norsa and Edu. This was just in time as the IA launched an attack from Nocalo into Norsa. The attack was mainly a joint Gaim/Pak'Ma'Ra effort and the Orieni fought hard to slow them down and cause damage to their fleets. The devastating range advantage enjoyed by many of the AOL forces was not shared by the Gaim or

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Pak'Ma'Ra and their ships suffered heavy losses in the Protectorate campaign. The IA now believed that the Orieni forces in the Protectorate were trapped because the Orieni had severed the jump beacon from Zendamore to Eshar. Fortunately for the Orieni, their jump route from Tir to Gothat remained secret and the Orieni withdrew from the Protectorate via that jump point.

They left the Protectorate devastated. Most of the Protectorate worlds had been bombarded and irradiated. Their fleets were shattered and the economy and ecology of many worlds was in tatters. Millions had died and many millions more were without food or shelter. As the IA forces moved cautiously through the Protectorate a flood of supply convoys began to reach those devastated worlds.

As the Orieni withdrew they seeded the space lanes with mines, both normal and nuclear. Most of these were cleared with ease, but in one incident a Gaim squadron moved into a minefield only to find that many of them had nuclear warheads. Only one battered frigate escaped.

The IA pushed on with an attack on Vagthusa but were repulsed with heavy losses. After the attack the Orieni destroyed the beacon to Trosogal which bought them some much-needed time. The IA also attacked Davla Than and succeeded in destroying many of the Orieni's fixed defences and mauling the ships in the system before being forced out by the battered remnant of the Strike Forces.

These failed attacks slowed the IA's advance and boosted Orieni morale. The Orieni became more resolved to halt the IA. Many captains vowed that the IA would never get to Orieni space. These hopes were to be cruelly dashed on the 20th of October when a massive IA attack on Davla Than smashed the battered forces the Orieni had in that system. The IA fleet didn't pause for breath and pushed on to Sorpigal.

The battle of Sorpigal was a truly massive engagement. The Orieni ships were outnumbered and outgunned by the IA fleet that had recently claimed victory in Davla

Than. Although the IA ships were damaged and lacking in fighters they still had more than enough craft to defeat the Orieni. The Orieni stand at Sorpigal was a testament to the nature of the Orieni. They fought to the last shuttle and freighter. Crippled ships would ram the nearest IA vessel. Fighters made dry attack runs to draw attention to themselves even when they were out of ammo. The partially complete Penitent and fleet were only destroyed at a great cost. The IA forces suffered losses above 60%. These losses caused the IA to halt in its headlong charge less its fleets be destroyed.

BREACHING THE DEFENCES OF ORIEN - 24 OCTOBER - 01 JANUARY 2269

Many within the Interstellar Alliance could see the writing on the wall. The battles at Sorpigal, Eshgar, Trosogal and Ralafa had bled the once mighty Orieni fleet dry. The Orieni once again had the will but not the ships. The IA's combined fleet was only at 30% of its total strength. Many ships were in urgent need of repairs or refits. Ground troops were exhausted and even the Gaim troops were tired. The Minbari were still enraged at the Orieni attack but they realised they could not destroy the Orieni Empire, they could only end the War and make peace. But the IA realised that the Orieni would not willingly surrender and would have to be battered into submission.

The Orieni had almost totally withdrawn from Minbari space and the advanced sensors of Minbari scouts had finally discovered the jump routes the Orieni had used to get into Minbari space in the first place. The Orieni still conducted strikes against the IA forces now massing in Vagthusa and Vamani but these were little more than annoyances. The first attack into Orieni space was a sobering battle for the IA. They discovered the massive chain of fortifications that were spread through Plutak and Lishtonos. Walls of mines, OSATs and pairs of Penitents blocked their path. Backing up

these formidable fixed defences was the remaining Orieni and Rogolon ships.

The Orieni Empire itself was starting to unravel. The Blessed were divided whether to make peace or continue to fight. Officers in the military saw that they were defeated and urged for peace. Other more fanatical officers and preachers said that the Vorlons would aid them in their time of need, and that the heretics would have to be opposed. Some officers believed that the defences along the Minbari border would hold the IA back long enough for the Orieni to recover their ships and crews and launch a new offensive. A decision on what was needed was not made, as on the 1st of November the IA launched their attacks to breach the Orieni defences.

The battle at Plutak was a bloodbath for both sides. The Orieni were desperate to keep the IA out of their space and the IA was equally as desperate to end the War. Victories were measured in kilometers advanced or strong points destroyed. It was the closest thing to city fighting on an interstellar level that had ever been seen. The Orieni fought like cornered animals, every ship that could fight was thrown at the Interstellar Alliance forces. The Rogolon fleet, the Orieni's last full reserve, was committed to the battle of Plutak. The brave Rogolon crews caused heavy damage before their ships were destroyed. On the 12th of November the IA finally destroyed the last of the three Penitent starbases in the Plutak system. With the loss of the last Penitent the crippled Orieni survivors retreated to Wereng.

On the 1st of December the IA launched its attack into Wereng. The IA fleet was on its last legs, ships' commanders were reporting all types of system failures and eight ships were lost in hyperspace on their way to Wereng. Yet the IA continued to press onwards. The Minbari knew that if they let the Orieni catch their breath they would counterattack and that could not be risked. The Wereng system boasted defences equal to Plutak. Also in Wereng were the remnants of the Strike Forces. Now under the command of Strike Admiral Irekka Korsh, the Strike Force

was going to sacrifice itself in the defence of Orien.

As soon as the IA forces jumped into Wereng the Strike Forces attacked. Leading the attack was the remaining Paragons and Prophets that the Orieni had left. Over 20 of those massive ships threw themselves into the IA fleet, their weapons firing in every arc as they fought and died. One by one the command ships were destroyed, but they inflicted horrific damage on the IA fleet at close range. The last ship to go down was the Paragon *Flame of Purity* and with it went Strike Admiral Irekka, still giving orders from his command bridge as his ship burned around him. The battle to clear the defences lasted until the 8th of December.

With Wereng finally cleared, the IA paused to allow their damaged ships some repair time. Fighters were brought forward, many League ships were reduced to fielding Cascor ultra light fighters as they were the most numerous fighter available. The Minbari and the IA now was in a position to end the War with one stroke. By attacking Orien and forcing the blessed to surrender the Orieni would come to the peace table. But, to attack Orien, the AOL would have to punch through the Orieni homeworld's formidable defences and the last ships the Orieni had massed for the defence of their homeworld.

THE ASSAULT ON ORIEN - 25 DECEMBER

On Christmas day, the Battle of Orien began. Long-range fire from Hyach, Brakiri, Minbari and Cascor ships began to methodically punch holes in the outer OSAT chains. Smaller frigates moved forward to clear the minefields, and the Orieni moved out to engage. The initial Orieni attack was made by a collection of freighters and assault ships. All had had extra weapons added to their hulls in hasty conversions. With them were the surviving elements of the Rogolon 1st and 2nd Fleet. The 3rd fleet had been destroyed in Minbari territory and the 4th fleet was fighting off a Nashaani/Medushan attack on Stannart,

The Great Crusade

Drusa-Kavask and Prenill. The surviving Orieni warships followed their Transport Command brethren into battle.

At 0715 the battle was truly joined as the IA attacked the first of 4 Penitent Starbases. Repeated missile strikes from the base and OSATs caused heavy casualties, but the base fell beneath the guns of Cascor and Hyach warships. Hundreds of dogfights broke out as the Orieni Templar fighters escorted Hunter Killers to their targets. Capital ships and fleet multipliers such as carriers and scouts became the prime targets of the Orieni HKs and manic battles were fought between the IA and Orieni as they alternately defended or attacked these ships.

The actual battle for Orien went on from the 25th of December into the early hours of the 1st of January 2269. A full description of that massive battle would fill a book in its own right. When the gunfire finally stopped the Orieni fleet was no more. The Orieni had a few dozen police ships and a few larger vessels but these were still making their way towards Orien. The IA fleet had lost hundreds of ships and nearly all its fighters. It was later estimated that a number of ships had been lost by the IA equal to the combined Gaim, Cascor and Descari fleets when they had been at full strength.

On Orien itself, the leader of the Blessed, Khorst Rak, was dead, having ritually committed suicide. A coup led by Strike Commodore Irak Rek overthrew the Blessed and accepted the cease-fire offered by the IA. Only a few shots had fallen on Orien, causing little actual damage, but the Orieni nation had suffered a near mortal blow. Their fleet was destroyed; their economy had collapsed despite the best efforts of the Blessed to keep this knowledge secret. The Gods had not helped them, and the Orieni had been defeated in their holy mission.

The Second Treaty of Seliffe was signed by both sides on the 21st of January 2269, and the Army of Light was surprisingly lenient with their demands and clauses. The Orieni were banned from having a set amount of capital class vessels and were only allowed to build vessels for self-defence. The Orieni

would pay reparations to the Minbari and the Protectorate races. Surplus food and building materials would be shipped to the Protectorate border and from there to Minbar. The Elite and Strike Force were disbanded, and IA observers would remain in Orieni space to make sure this happened. The new government would hold power until new elections could take place. The Nashani and Medushaan attack was stopped by the diplomatic efforts of the IA. The Nashani and Medushan had captured four Orieni systems, and refused to return them to the Orieni.

The proud Rogolons had their fleet disbanded; only police ships were retained. The Orieni Empire was banned from ever making aggressive moves towards a neighbouring race unless attacked. Only in self-defence could the Orieni fight. It was estimated that it would take the Orieni over twenty years to pay off the War reparations, and another 50 years to help with the re-building of the Protectorate. The IA patrolled Orieni space in order to keep raiders to a minimum. The Orieni dutifully paid the reparations and didn't protest against the sanctions the IA placed on them. With their economy in ruins the Orieni abandoned many of their less profitable mining bases and withdrew to their more stable coreward systems. The Orieni eventually contracted to an area from Seliffe to Mattren, from there to Phanop and then down to Hulanok. The Orieni ceded systems to the Rogolons, Otac, Ar'Choaka allowing them to run these systems their own way.

Although the material damage to the Orieni could be recovered the moral and spiritual blow was one the Orieni would never recovered from. The Orieni ceased all contact with outsiders other than those races they formally controlled. The Orieni became more introverted and solemn. It was two hundred years before the Orieni again made contact with the IA.

The Orieni Empire

Staring Into the Abyss

After the Centauri/Orieni War, the Orieni Empire was financially, economically and militarily ruined. The once mighty Hand of the Blessed, the pride of the Orieni, was reduced to a fraction of its size. The forced withdrawal from their subject races stipulated by the Treaty of Seliffe weakened the Orieni economy even more. Facing ruin, the Blessed fought hard to hold the remaining Orieni holdings together. Within 20 years the Orieni had recovered enough of their economy to begin the process of rebuilding. The Orieni concentrated on the development of their economy and rebuilding their damaged planets, with fleet resources coming in at a distant third place. To further burden their economy the Orieni were paying the Centauri reparations for the war.

The surviving ships of the Hand of the Blessed, under the command of Strike Admiral Hiraka Shrak, used what resources they had to aggressively patrol Orieni space in order to keep raider numbers to a minimum. By late 2041 the Orieni had managed to repair the damage done to Orieni and their remaining worlds and once again looked to expand. Their first mission to contact the Phanop found their former subjects willing to join with the Orieni.

The Phanop had been under Orieni control for the longest and when the Centauri forced the Orieni to withdraw from Phanos under the Treaty Of Seliffe the Phanop were dismayed. The Phanop kept working using Orieni methods and kept Orieni ideals. When the Orieni arrived once

again, the Phanop choice to rejoin them was an easy one.

This pleased the Blessed as it appeared that their vision of Order still held true despite the biggest catastrophe known to the Orieni. Further contact with other races only served to reinforce this view, as the smaller races caught up in the War were desperate for survival, and the Orieni offered to help these races to get back on their feet, and rebuild their civilisations. All that the Orieni asked for was that they serve in the Orieni Empire as willing subjects, who would be given the respect of all Orieni citizens and treated as such. This appealed to many races, including some that had come through the war suffering terrible damage to their worlds and population.

Thanks to their reinvigorated economy, the Orieni managed to complete the repair of their worlds and resume full-scale production by 2121. The Phanop and three other races rejoined the Empire of their own free will, which further strengthened the Orieni position. With their worlds once again productive the Orieni turned to their neglected Fleet. The Orieni initially simply produced the ships that had served in the Centauri War. A larger number of medium ship class vessels was produced with squadrons based in each system. Due to their high cost and the resources involved in building them the number of command ships produced remained low, by 2133 there were only 6 Prophet Class in service. The Orieni also produced their first cruiser, the Zealot class, but again production numbers remained low.

Rebirth

By 2138 the Orieni had recovered sufficiently to begin moving into the systems the Centauri had forced them from. Many of these worlds had suffered greatly during the War, but the Orieni were determined to make use of them. Whilst the Orieni

The Orieni Empire

expanded the Centauri Republic collapsed into a bloody Civil War. The once great Republic imploded, resulting in the Centauri pulling out of many of their border systems. The devastated region between the Centauri and Orieni was presumed enough to stop the Orieni from expanding towards Centauri space, so the Centauri pulled back from most of the worlds they had fought so hard to keep during the Great War.

The Orieni expanded slowly, doing their best to rebuild damaged worlds and make use of every possible resource. Former mining colonies were repopulated and resumed production, Orieni advances in hydroponics made them less dependent on food imports and made most worlds self sufficient.

The Orieni military received more and more funding, which was placed into further construction as well as research into more advanced systems and weapons. Although the level of funding could not compare to that of the original military budget, the Hand of the Blessed made the best use of every credit. Initially this research paid off in the form of improved armour and sensors, which were incorporated into every serving Orieni ship over a remarkably short time of eight Terran months.

The Orieni Empire had now grown to encompass 30 worlds, and had assimilated the Phanop, Dishari, Huan and Namarons. An Orieni expedition to Usuuthir space found the world devastated, barely 100000 Usuuth living in total squalor. The Orieni having already helped the Arkadan and Thunat survivors began to help the surviving Usuuth. Although the Usuuth treated the Orieni missionaries with outright hostility when they first encountered them, they quickly realised that the Orieni were here to help them, and resistance ceased overnight.

The Orieni expansion continued at breath taking speed. The speed of their

advance surprised even the Blessed, but it again proved that the Orieni were destined to bring Order to the Universe.

Watching from the Light

As the Orieni expansion continued at break neck speed, the Orieni kept contact with the rest of the Galaxy to a minimum. Occasionally a trading vessel appeared at a Centauri outpost or League waystation but generally they kept to themselves. The Orieni watched as the Centauri collapsed in on themselves, watched as the League was born and went through its own birthing pains. The Orieni continued to establish Order on their worlds, and those of their subjects. Their subject races thrived under Orieni control, even the battered Usuuth began to recover (all be it very slowly). Contact was established with the Rogolons with trade and non-aggression treaties quickly following. The Rogolons had been attacked but not invaded during the Great War and had managed to recover quite quickly and had even occupied a former Orieni world. Their military had also learnt from their performance during the war, and had come to realise that active defence is required no matter what the cost in honour.

The Blessed quickly came to realise that the Rogolons would be a useful ally as the only two other races in the area, the Medushaan and Nashani, were hostile towards the Orieni, but both were willing to trade. The Blessed would use the Rogolons to act as their agents and also act as a stabilising influence in the region. The Orieni helped the Rogolons enhance their technology base and improve their weapons designs. Within five years the Rogolons had become a client state of the Orieni.

By 2200 the Orieni economy had totally recovered from the war with the Centauri. Their military was rebuilt. Although not the size of their original fleet, it was strong enough to preserve the Empire.

The Orieni Empire

The Orieni had stared into the abyss and had been re-born as a race and Empire.

Troubled Times

In 2229 the Dilgar stormed out of their space and tore into the League of Non-Aligned Worlds. During the Dilgar War the Centauri were actually contemplating helping the League. It was viewed that the political benefits of helping the League would outweigh the cost in lives. Even with their military in its weakened state, having withdrawn from Narn Space, and with a relatively weak economy, the Centauri still had a very powerful space fleet. But in late 2230 a Covran Class Scout was carrying out reconnaissance of the Centauri spinward border. The scout detected a massive force of Orieni vessels performing military exercises in the Usuuth system.

The Covran fled before it was detected and reported directly to the Centaurum. Within a week over 90 percent of the Royal Navy was deployed along the Centauri border to protect against a possible Orieni attack. The Centauri sent a diplomatic envoy to Orieni space but the diplomatic effort didn't work as planned. The Centauri demanded that the Orieni withdraw from the space near their border or face another war.

The Orieni quoted from the Treaty of Seliffe, as the Treaty had banned the Orieni from any form of aggression towards the Centauri. But they then said that they would not leave their new worlds and would treat any Centauri aggression as an act of war. Because of this the Centauri were unable to intervene in the Dilgar War as nearly all their military was deployed along the border to defend against an Orieni attack. The attack never came, but led to a cold war that lasted until 2236. After 2236 the Centauri pulled back from even more of their old spinward system, which prompted the Orieni to cautiously follow in their wake. The Orieni

occupied Kazat, Beta 10, and Quadrant 3 but advanced no further, finding the worlds in the area to still be devastated from the war 236 years ago.

The next biggest event to shake the galactic scene was the Earth/Minbari War. The Earth Alliance had saved the League and in their arrogance had presumed themselves unbeatable. The Orieni knew how powerful the Minbari were and had always avoided them. They watched as the Minbari tore through the Earth Alliance fleets. That a power like the Earth Alliance could be defeated so quickly, even by a race as advanced as the Minbari, shocked the Orieni.

The Earth Alliance fleet was powerful, large and well trained, but the Minbari had smashed the EA within two years. The Blessed ordered that a massive chain of fortifications be built on the systems directly bordering Minbari space. They also ordered a sweeping refit of the Hand Of the Blessed to make them capable of facing the Minbari in battle. The Hand of the Blessed received massive amounts of funding which was immediately poured into weapons research and ship design. The Hand of The Blessed now worked to cover the holes in its fleet's deployment such as the lack of a dedicated carrier.

Change and Despair

The surrender of the Minbari at the Battle of the Line stunned the Orieni. The Orieni had presumed that Humanity was doomed, that the Minbari would invade Earth and tear down the Earth Alliance. But the Minbari surrendered on the verge of victory. Something had happened that the Blessed had not seen coming, and they realised that this would require further investigation. Benevolent class Scouts were routinely making patrols along the Minbari border, but nothing out of the ordinary was reported. The Earth Alliance

The Orieni Empire

formed the Babylon Project, which surprised the Blessed, as another race was trying to bring Order to the universe and they were no longer alone in their goal. The Centauri, Narns, Minbari and League became members of the Babylon Council, in an attempt to solve their problems without violence.

But it was not long before things started to go wrong.

The War of Retribution nearly signalled the death knell of the Centauri Republic as the Narns tore into Centauri space regardless of what the Centauri did to stop them. Then the Narns started to be pushed back, and it was not long before the Centauri were in orbit over Homeworld obliterating cities with Mass Drivers. This did not concern the Orieni as they felt they were strong enough to fight off any Centauri assault. More disturbing was the rumours of monstrous beings seen in hyperspace. Also the sightings of Vorlon vessels by pilgrims to the Vorlon border had increased ten fold.

Without warning the ancient enemies of the gods returned. The Orieni were not attacked by the Shadows, but they heard of a massive conflict on the other side of Vorlon/Minbari space. The Hand of the Blessed was mobilised and it was preparing to move through Minbari space when the Vorlons made their move. Again Orieni intelligence on what was actually happening was limited. All they knew was that the Vorlons were fighting against their ancient enemies.

Then the galaxy was turned on its ear. The other races of known space turned against the Vorlons. The Orieni discovered this when an Orieni merchant vessel in Drazi space observed a battle between the Vorlons and a host of other races. The Blessed were totally shocked by this turn of events. They could not comprehend why the other races would fight the gods themselves.

At the great battle of Coriana 6 the Shadows and Vorlons were finally brought to account by the younger races and the few remaining ancients. After the battle both the Vorlons and Shadows left for the rim. When news of this reached the Orieni, the Blessed and populace alike were dismayed. Their Gods were gone, banished by young upstarts, who had no inkling of what they were doing.

Fury and War

The anger at the betrayal of the Gods by the other races suffused the entire Orieni population. Religious leaders began preaching that the infidels and heretics should be punished for their heinous act. These messages of hatred swayed the general population enough that they demanded that the Blessed respond. The Hand of the Blessed, which had been on a war footing since the appearance of the Shadows, was ready to move at a moments notice and many Admirals were angry that they had just sat by and did nothing whilst their Gods were driven from the universe. The Blessed began to fear a military coup, and decided to act. The Leader of the Blessed, in an address to the Orieni people and their subjects, declared his intentions in the best political and religious lingo.

"The other races have driven the Gods from our adoration and worship. They used the Gods and then cast them aside. This is the most hideous act that has ever been carried out against our mighty race. The unbelievers, blindly arrogant in their thoughts, do not realise what they have done. They have angered the Warriors of the Gods, and the Warriors call out for vengeance.

We must, we shall punish the heretics for their betrayal, and we shall punish those who used the Gods and their favour, who turned their back on the gods

when the gods fought their ancient enemy. My fellow Orieni we shall punish the Minbari. We will leave no stone standing on their planets. We shall leave no system that harbours Minbari life intact. The Gods will be avenged, and then we shall all receive their eternal blessings and thanks".

Almost every ship in the Hand of the Blessed was moved to the Orieni/Minbari border, the Rolgons contributed all their available ships to the coming offensive. Across every world the number of new military recruits increased tenfold almost overnight. The Orieni shipyards were working night and day producing ships of every size. In a remarkably short time of six months the Orieni had managed to increase their fleet size by over 20%.

Every new ship received crews and training programmes were barely keeping up with the influx of new recruits. The fortifications along the Minbari border were bolstered to protect against a Minbari counterattack, plans were drawn up for the assault, and exploration units began searching for routes into Minbari space.

In the system of Nanbas a Faithful Search found a jump route to the Protectorate system of Golthat and days later a jump route was established to the Minbari system of Vamnami. The High Command of the Hand of the Blessed ordered that a jump lane be established from Nanabas to Lishtonos and that the Kilkameshi be neutralised, either by diplomacy or force.

The peaceful Kilkameshi quickly signed a non-aggression pact with the Orieni and declared their systems open to Orieni ships. This opened up a jump route to Arnassia, another Protectorate system. Finally, a jump route was discovered from Exhur to Vagthusa, another Minbari system. Using these four systems the Hand of the Blessed would storm Minbari space and

from there break into the main Minbari systems in a series of massive attacks.

The Minbari were totally unaware of the thousands of Orieni ships transiting to their border as the Minbari had ignored the Orieni after the War and had presumed that they had collapsed as an Empire. Scouting operations to the Orieni border had revealed nothing, and nothing was detected by the long-range sensor arrays near the border.

Little did the Minbari know that the entire Orieni fleet was waiting in hyperspace for the attack signal. Hyperspace beacons had been tampered with to broadcast false information, further aiding the Orieni. On the Terran date of the 28th of May 2268 the Orieni fleet received the attack signal "Punish the Heretics".

With that one message over two thousand ships began moving towards the Minbari border. The true War of Retribution or the Great Crusade, as the Orieni called it was under way.

ORIENI MILITARY

After the Centauri War, the Hand of the Blessed (HOB) was left with a shattered fleet, only one command ship (*the Paragon Flame of Purity*) had survived and there were barely a hundred smaller ships to patrol and protect the remaining Orieni systems. The rebuilding of the Orieni fleet took decades of slow rebuilding and planning, with ships being modernised when enhancements became available. The Orieni concentrated on modernising their weapon and ship systems. Whilst keeping the same fleet organisation that had served so well during the Centauri War deployment gaps were covered. The Orieni Officer Corps was dramatically enlarged and alien races were allowed to advance up in the ranks. The inclusion of the Rogolon fleet

The Orieni Empire

added an extra dimension to the Orieni fleet, and added extra numbers to the total fleet strength.

Crusader Class Fleet Carrier

Enlightenment Variant (Uncommon)

Limited Deployment 33%

Based on the hull of the massive and roomy Enlightenment Invader, the Crusader was the largest dedicated carrier built by the Orieni. The Crusader lost the Enlightenment's missile and reload racks, its troop quarters and all the storage space, but this was filled with hanger space. The Crusader would field 36 Templar II Fighters, and 24 Blazing Star Hunter Killers. The ships remaining defensive armament comprised of two War Lances, and nine Advanced Gatling Rail Guns (AGRG).

Zealot Class Cruiser

The Zealot was produced shortly after the Centauri War as a cheaper alternative to dedicated command class warships. Initially armed with a mix of Gauss Cannons, GRGs and Light Lasers, the Zealot was under gunned for a cruiser. Quickly updated when more advanced weapons became available, the Zealot was produced in large numbers and used to lead Orieni MCV squadrons and supply jump support to a squadron without having to rely on either a Paragon or Prophet. The design was successful although the cruiser remained under gunned for a cruiser hull, and was little more than a large HCV.

Paragon and Prophet Class

The Paragon and Prophet always were the most important Orieni ships during the Centauri War. The only problem was that there were never enough of them. The Orieni covered this by producing a larger number of Prophets and more Paragons

were produced pushing it to uncommon status.

Templar II Interceptor

The Templar was a superb fighter in the Centauri War, and was never matched by the Centauri. The Templar hull was modified with the main improvements being made to increase the thrust of the fighter, and increase its ammunition. Although vastly more powerful engines were installed, their increased thrust was mostly negated up by the increased mass of the improved targeting computer and extra protection. Frontal armour was slightly increased as well, which turned a superb fighter into one of the best fighters in known space.

For second line units the original Templar is still retained in service.

Blazing Star Hunter Killer

The HK weapon system, although expensive, was devastating against the Centauri. The Orieni continued to advance the Hunter Killer design until they developed the Blazing Star HK, which represented the bleeding edge in the weapon system.

Slightly faster than the Shining Star, the Blazing Star had a number of improvements to increase its chance of hitting its target. The missiles armour was increased over all, its ramming systems were improved (+3 bonus to ram) and its ranging systems were generations ahead of those of the Shining Star (-1 per 4 hexes in ram attempt). The Orieni were unable to increase the amount of damage the Blazing Star could do due to lack of space.

Fielded in large numbers aboard the Crusader, Prophet and Paragons as well as dedicated support ship, the Orieni were relying on the Blazing Star to be a major advantage in the Grand Crusade. The Blazing Star still has totally replaced the Shining Star in Orieni fleet.

Overseer Hunter Killer Conveyer Ship

Vigilant Variant (Uncommon)

The Overseer was built on the hull of the Vigilant Combat Support Ship, and was a dedicated Hunter Killer Carrier. To support their enlarged fleet, massive numbers of new Vigilants had been produced, and the Overseer was an uncommon variant of this unrestricted hull. Instead of its missile racks and cargo sections the Overseer mounted Heavy Gauss Rifles, a single War Lance and nine IGRGs. The cargo pods were replaced with hangars for Hunter Killers, of which the ship could carry four flights and it could control all of them. The Overseer kept the Vigilants original flight of six fighters, and these are commonly used to escort the HKs on their way to the target.

Purifier Bomber

Enlightenment Variant (Uncommon)

The Purifier is another conversion of the Enlightenment hull. Using the ship's massive carrying capacity, the Purifier has replaced all the cargo, troop and missile storage with weapons of mass destruction. The Purifier's primary weapons are two Mass Drivers, with an array of four bomb racks and four missile racks making up its other bombardment weapons. The missile racks are often armed with either fusion or fission weapons, and the bomb racks often carry neutron bombs. These weapons can't be used against ships but the racks can fire as a normal missile launcher.

The only other armament the Purifier carries is an array of eight IGRGs for self-defence. With these ships the Hand of the Blessed would carry out their leaders' promise to leave no stone standing on Minbari worlds.

Storm Front Missile Frigate

Vengeance Variant (Uncommon)

The Storm Front had long been the missile support ship of the Orieni fleet, and advances in Orieni missile technology saw a welcome upgrade to the venerable Storm Front. Fitted with three Class-R racks, the Storm Front could unleash a hail of missiles. It should be noted that Storm Fronts were often crewed by alien members of the Orieni Fleet. Whether this was because of the cramped and uncomfortable nature of the Storm Front or the Orieni's desire not to risk their own people with the rather unstable Class-R rack is unknown.

Vengeance Attack Frigate

The Vengeance is based on the older Steadfast hull, and is the Steadfast's replacement in frontline forces. The Vengeance is designed to take out other MCV's and, when operated in packs, disable or destroy larger vessels. The firepower of the Vengeance was a shock to Interstellar Alliance and Minbari forces and was one of the few Orieni MCVs that could match a White Star in a one-on-one fight.

Flame Of Purity Improved Paragon Command Ship

Paragon Variant (Unique)

The *Flame Of Purity* was the oldest ship in the Orieni Fleet. She was the only command ship to survive the War and took over as fleet flagship. The *Flame Of Purity* was never decommissioned and was instead constantly upgraded throughout her operational life to ensure her readiness for battle. The *Flame Of Purity* was rarely seen in combat in Minbari space and was fitted with the Flak Array as well as two of the brand new Class-LR missile racks.

The *Flame Of Purity* was eventually destroyed leading the surviving Paragons

The Orieni Empire

and Prophets against the Interstellar Alliance forces as they approached Orien. Before being destroyed the *Flame Of Purity* crippled or killed sixed capital ships and mauled many more.

ORIENI WEAPONS

Initially the Orieni didn't advance their weapons after the Centauri war, but with increased funding for research more advanced weapons were developed. The Orieni continued work to enhance their weapons damage. The first success was the War Lance, a fusion of the Centauri Imperial Laser and Heavy Laser Lance that increased the Imperial Laser's damage level and obtained the ability to pierce, allowing it to cause massive internal to the target.

The Gauss weapon systems were altered into what would become the Gauss Rifle series. These weapons had a slightly better damage curve while also enjoying an enhanced range over their predecessors.

The Orieni still felt that the Hunter Killer was the long range weapon of the fleet along with missiles, which the Orieni advanced to Class-L racks, as well as developing the Class-R Rack. The formidable Class-B Rack was also developed for use on the Orieni's fixed defences.

Gauss Rifle

The Gauss Rifle series was a logical progression of the Gauss Cannon weapons from the Centauri War era. The Orieni improved the weapons range and fire control whilst making the housing more compact, therefore allowing it to be mounted on smaller ships

Heavy Gauss Rifle

The Gauss Rifle's big brother, the Heavy Gauss Rifle can cause an impressive

amount of damage and its long range firing ability make it even more formidable. The weapon's size limited its deployment to capital ship hulls however. In the Crusade the Alliance quickly learned to respect the Heavy Gauss Rifle.

Gatling Rail Gun

The GRG had been the bane of Centauri fighters and ships during the war. Realising what a success story the GRG was, the Orieni worked to improve this already lethal weapon. The biggest improvements were an improved tracking system which increased the weapon's accuracy as well as its ability to intercept ballistic weapons. The Orieni were never able to design a GRG with the ability to affect other types of inbound fire. Only one system was ever developed and all the prototypes were lost when the *Flame of Purity* was destroyed with them aboard.

Flak Array

The Flak Array was the breakthrough the Orieni had sought in their defensive weapons research. Based on Grome Flak Cannons from the salvaged wreck of a Mogorta found in hyperspace, the Orieni improved upon the Flak Cannon system until they developed the Flak Array. Instead of being a small weapon, the Flak Array was roughly the size of the Centauri Twin Array. It replaced the GRG on a two for one basis.

When completed, the Flak Array was a showcase for Orieni matter weapon development and was a superior weapon compared to its peers. Capable of ripping fighters or ships apart with its two shots, the Interstellar Alliance was fortunate that the Orieni did not use more of these weapons.

The Flak Array was only deployed on the Orieni fleet flagship, the *Flame of Purity*. The weapons proved deadly but when the ship was destroyed all the prototype

weapons went with her. The Interstellar Alliance later confiscated the technical plans and equipment to make the Flak Array.

Laser Spear

The Laser Spear came about because of Orieni experimentation with the Light Laser Cannon. The Orieni were attempting to produce a more powerful version of the Light Laser but also keep the weapon small. Upon completion the weapon was found to be larger than planned but was otherwise everything its designers could hope for. With a longer range and greater damage potential than the Light Laser, the Laser Spear was an instant success.

War Lance

The War Lance was the final word in Orieni Laser technology. Although short ranged, the War Lance was capable of inflicting massive amounts of damage both in raking and piercing modes. The War Lance was only ever mounted on Orieni Capital ships. Attempts to fit the weapon on smaller ships resulted in constant misfirings and other technical flaws.

Orieni Missiles

After the Centauri War the Orieni continued to develop their missile technology, all be it at a slower pace. By the time of the attack on Minbari space the Orieni had developed the Class L, R and B racks. The Class L saw extensive use on Orieni Capital ships whilst the Class R was limited to the Storm Front Missile Frigate. The Class B rack was only ever deployed on the Orieni's fixed defences.