NEWS & THINGS

Welcome to our fourth issue of the SFW News! This issue features our first piece of fiction, a detailed article on using long-range drone bombardment, more questions & answers, and a strategy article by a previous Warlord.

As this is being written, we are currently involved in revising the SFW Rulebook. The new version will include a lot more of the details youÕd all like to see, including some of the material from previous issues of the SFW News (such as an expanded example of combat). Many of the orders you used to have to wait to learn about, like BO and RM, are in this new rulebook. We also included all the Starbase Orders.

There will be some new things in the new rulebook, too. Prime Teams (a sort of legendary commando team) will be available, for example. When you receive the new rules, watch for an announcement in any game youÕre currently involved in. This announcement will tell you when (and if) such new features are going to be available in your game.

Naturally, all the new ships mentioned last issue will be part of the new Ship List. This list, by the way, will be in its own booklet separate from the main rulebook. This way youÕll have an easier time photocopying it if you need to, and weÕll have an easier time updating it later.

The new rulebook will be sent to all currently active players FREE OF CHARGE. Watch for it coming soon to a mailbox near you!

SFW HALL OF FAME UPDATE

Game	Turn	Winner	Corporation
13	25	Mark Hall	* SMERSH *

This was the first ÒtrueÓ game of Star Fleet Warlord (as opposed to the older Galactic Conquest games which preceded SFW) and was made up of 100% veteran players. Congratulations, Mark!

AGENTSÕ FAVORITES

These are some of our favorite Corporation names and slogans, the ones we got the biggest laugh out of as we typed them in:

Adios Airlines: *Fry the friendly flies!*

Magellanic Tea Co.: *Nine out of ten lifeforms prefer our tea over being shoved out an airlock at warp 7.*

Vegetarian Crusade: *Put down the steak or weÕll fire!*

United Pkg Smashers: *We run the tightest schlep in the schlepping business.*

Rednecks In Space: *WHOOOO-WEE! Load them torpedoes!*

Weasels Inc.: *Eagles soar, but weasels donÕt get sucked into jet engines.*

Unsteady Eddie: *I got a bomb strapped to my head and I ainÕt afraid to use it!*

Butcherius Maximus: *Ships destroyed, people killed and planets enslaved. Call today!*

Hold the Onions: *Watch out! IÕve got two slices of bread and IÕm hungry.*

Chaos Storm, PGC: *If itÕs not welded down, itÕs mine. If I can phaser it loose, itÕs not welded down!*

ThievesÕ Guild: *Just in case itÕs welded down, we brought crowbars!*

TEN SIGNS YOUÕRE NOT DOING SO GOOD
Humor by David Tipton

10. Your ÒThings Lost Between TurnsÓ list is longer than your ship list.
9. Other players ask you to buy ÒrecyclableÓ ships.
8. Someone built a highway bypass around your Home Office.
7. Other players respectfully refer to you as the ÒDoormat Corporation.Ó
6. Non-player Corporations have a higher stock value than you doÑand itÕs turn 15.
5. Bruce Fiedler pities you.
4. You finally get your sector bonusÑon turn 12.
3. Guido repossesses your entire fleet.
2. Bruce Graw asks if you have a hobby.
1. You keep receiving Initial Build Forms with your turns.

REFLECTIONS
Fiction by Bob Forsythe

Santana leaned back against the wall and grinned. He had assigned the two new ÒbabiesÓ to the Shiftwatch just for this. Sure, everyone has seen them in holos and everybody tells you stories about them. And every new baby thinks they know all about them. But nothing can prepare you for your first Gate.

They tell you that, too, in your first class on Transition Dynamics. And like the 4.5 billion other things they tell you in the Service Academy, you file the data away in that portion of your memory where it can only be retrieved on threat of final exam. But you can never forget your first Gate.

Twenty years of shifting hadnÕt dimmed the memory of that first look. The Service has a tradition of welcoming new babies to space by letting them see a Gate up close and watch a Shift. Romero Santana was ten years retired from the Service but he still held to its traditions. Some of them, anyway.

He had instructed the two kids to look out the viewport while the pilot rotated 180¡ and the Gate swung into view: an immense shimmering screen stretched between eight brilliant silver globes. Over ten square klicks of translucent, blue-white fire, flickering and pulsing with full spectrum lightning against the jewels-in-ink background of deep space. Another ship, a Federation-manufactured Priority Transport, was silhouetted by the Gate as it approached. Normally next to invisible, the FFP appeared as a minuscule black wedge against a backdrop of blue fire.

As the shipÕs nose touched, the point of contact began a rhythmic pulse, sending out waves of deep blue. As the first wave hit the perimeter, all eight globes erupted with ripples of blinding, incandescent sheets of lightning. Gathering in the fire, they arced in to ground on the intruding wedge as it passed through the flame. When the last of the ship passed, another pulse of light throbbed outward from the center. A single, stronger pulse this time and super-nova white, it reached the globes and rebounded, collapsing in on itself as it raced toward the center until just a single white-hot spark remained to mark the Shift point. Then it, too, was gone and the Gate returned to normal.

He turned back to his two newest crew members, both of them standing space-froze, eyes fixed to the screen and mouths gaping. In a few more seconds, heÕd order the sensors down to prepare for his own Shift, but for now, Romero Salvador Santana, Commander, F.S.S. *Retired*, was enjoying the splendor of a Gate as it can best be seen: through the reflection in a babyÕs eyes.

DEFENDING THE HOME OFFICE
Strategy Hints by Warlord Mark Menter

Nothing strikes fear and anxiety into the life of a Corporate CEO as hearing the dreaded words, ÒSir, foreign ships have been detected in our home sector!Ó Without the proper preparations, this can be one of the last reports that you hear. However, you can meet this challenge with a wink and a smile, and send the would-be invader packing with great loss of forces . . . if you only plan ahead.

In general, the defender has the advantage over the attacker. The game was designed this way. The defender gets bonuses for MRS shuttles, battle tactics (after turn 11), and a BIG bonus from defending against the right Corporation using the DC order. So, in theory, you could generate a 50% bonus against the attackerÑand that does not include any Aegis ships!

When defending the Home Office, it is best to remember one of two simple strategies: ÒBounce Then PounceÓ or ÒPlay and Perish.Ó Veterans of SFW have used both methods to great effect.

The ÒBounce Then PounceÓ method is the easiest to employ and offers the greatest flexibility. It also takes the best advantage of the defensive bonuses involved. It entails first concentrating on a LOT of carriers (and, later on in the game, PF tenders) to build up a huge defense factor on the Home Office, then building support vessels to take attrition as you counterattack. The base is kept very smallÑ300 to 600 points of fortifications.

Since the firepower is concentrated on a few ships, the force can be built quickly. Also, since you concentrate on building ships rather than fortifications, you have maximum flexibility. You can easily counterattack once he gets close. Unfortunately, if the enemy actually Ògets in,Ó he will probably win because your defending fleet will be very top-heavyÑthat is, lots of defense factor but not enough hit points to absorb damage.

Hydran, and Lyran ships after turn 15, are very good for this type of defense. The Kzintis and Romulans also have some fine carriers, and donÕt ignore tugs from any race!

Using the ÒPlay and PerishÓ method, you build a force that has a great deal of shield and fortification strength. If the attacker does get in, he will most likely perish against your solid wall of fortifications and shields. The base is very largeÑat least 1000 points of fortifications and fully supported with fighters, and PFs when available. Stationed at a base, these units will last longer than they would on a ship which can be blown up in the first salvo. Andromedans and maulers make good support vessels for this strategy, since they have very high shield factors, but any ship with plenty of shields and/or DF would be a good choice.

The ÒPlay and PerishÓ method works well if you have time to build your defenses, and if you are one of those players who spends ALL of his EPs each turn. If you stockpile EPs for emergencies, the ÒBounce Then PounceÓ method can be quite effective, although you may be limited by the number of orders you can issue to buy ships.

A SFG ship (ÒQÓ variant) should be used in either strategy. If you donÕt have Klingons as a primary, ask to buy one several times in a single turn, but keep the max price limitation set to 150% of the shipÕs cost. You can almost ensure that you get one for the smallest surcharge possible, and that you wonÕt buy a second one you donÕt need at a highly inflated price.

Also, obsolete Romulan ships, and cheap small ships in general, make good defensive tools. When five or ten are added to the force, they draw fire away from other units, which then survive long enough to destroy the attackers. Try to have at least one big ship (a dreadnought, preferably) in the fleet which will survive the first round of combat, thereby dividing the enemyÕs shot in round 2 between that ship and the base. Monitors are another good choice for defense, but gets expensive later on.

Hopefully you will never hear the dreaded words, ÒThe enemy is approaching the Home Office!Ó But if you do, now you are prepared to meet the challenge.

LONG-RANGE DRONE BOMBARDMENT
FOR FUN AND PROFIT

Long-range drone bombardment is a game feature often ignored by players, usually because it is not fully understood. It also has a big inherent disadvantage: your ship has to stay in place for an entire turn when using the BOMB order. Most players like to keep their ships moving, as it keeps them on the offensive, and does not surrender the initiative to their enemies.

However, long-range drone bombardment has its uses. This article will list some of these (others will be left for you to discover) as well as break down the previously hidden variables that affect the orderÕs success.

Bombing Elements

To make a drone bombardment attack, you need two things. One is a ship with drones on it, and the other is a target site in that shipÕs sector (you cannot bomb a site not in the same sector as your ship). The site can be any distance away, but longer ranges will severely affect your success (see chart below).

The amount of damage you do is based on many factors, including a little bit of randomness. The way it works is based on a percentage factor. Start with 100% and add or subtract the bonuses listed in the chart below. When a final percentage has been totaled, that percentage of your drones hit (doing one point of damage each to the fortifications). Any percentage over 100% is reduced to 100% (you cannot hit with more drones than you launch!). Note that it IS possible, with enough penalties, to hit with 0% of your drones (and they would be wasted in this case). Any fractions of 0.5 or more are rounded up, others are rounded down.

The following chart lists all the factors that can affect the success of a BOMB order:

Factor	Adjustment
Range less than 5 hexes	+5% per hex
Range greater than 5 hexes	-5% per hex
Crew level 2[1]	-10%
Each crew level above 3	+10%
Kzinti ship	+10%
ÒLÓ variant ship or ship in ÒLÓ mission[2]	+10%
Legendary Weapons Officer	+25%
Target site has a Battle Station	-10%
Target site has a Starbase[3]	-20%
Target site has a Warbase[3]	-30%
Target site has a Megabase[3]	-50%
Each fighter on target site	-1%[4]
Each PF on target site	-2%[4]
Target has Legendary Weapons Officer	-10%
Target has Legendary Marine Major	-10%
Target site is in NE terrain	-50%
Target site is in CC or GP terrain	+10%
Random factor	±10%

[1]   Note that crew level 1 ships cannot use drone bombardment.

[2]   These are not cumulative. An L-ship in L-mission would get this bonus only one time.

[3]   These are not cumulative with the preceding base levels. Each replaces the previous penalty.

[4]   If a Legendary Ace is present on the site, these are increased to -1.5% per fighter and -3% per PF.

Drone bombardment attacks cannot be fired into antimatter zones or negative energy fields. If you attempt to BOMB such a hex, your order will be cancelled and no drones will be launched.

The terrain in your shipÕs hex or in between the target site does not affect your bombardment at all. The ship is considered to move to the edge of the hex and launch its drones *out* of the terrain. The drones then fly Òabove Ó the plane of the galaxy until arriving at the target hex, when they Òdescend Ó and attack.

Example of Bombardment

LetÕs imagine two ships are making a bombardment attack on a Battle Station. One is a Federation FFA with 8 drones, and the other is a Kzinti Tug (Z-TGC) in ÒLÓ mission carrying 60 drones. The TGC also has a Legendary Weapons Officer.

The site being bombed is 13 hexes away, is located in a nebula, and has no fighters, PFs or officers helping to defend it (but it does have a BATS). The total penalties for distance (-40%), terrain   (-50%) and base size (-10%) is -100%. This modifies the bombingÕs effectiveness to 0% before other modifiers are included.

The F-FFA has a crew level of 4 and thus gains 10% to its effectiveness, but this is the only modifier it is entitled to. The random factor, for purposes of this example, is +0%. 10% of 8 drones is 0.8, which rounds up to 1, so one point of damage is scored on the target site.

The Z-TGC is another matter. It has a crew level of 6 (+30%), is a Kzinti ship (+10%), is in ÒLÓ mission (+10%), and has a Weapons Officer (+25%). Again we will discount the random factor, and the total bonus is thus +75%. This means 75% of 60 drones hit, an even 45.

You can draw several conclusions from this. First, it is very easy to get enough bonuses on a ship (especially using crew or Weapons Officers on Kzinti L-variants) to overcome many of the penalties provided by the target siteÕs defenses or terrain. If the ship had been closer (only 8 hexes instead of 13), all 60 drones would have hit.

What the example does not illustrate is how effective fighters and PFs are at defending against this sort of attack. If the BATS had been loaded out with a full complement of 15 fighters and 6 PFs, that would have been a further -27% penalty. A loaded Warbase (1000 fortifications) would have a combined penalty factor of -120% against any bombardment attack!

Softening Up a Site

Now that you understand a bit more about how bombardment works, why would you want to do it? There seem to be three main uses of the order; the first is softening up a site for an invasion (usually on the same turn). It is important to note at this point that BOMB orders are handled at the same time as regular movement on pulse 1 of your turn, but since combat comes after all movement has been processed (it must, if all ships in a fleet are to work together) , the BOMB will already have been resolved before any combat operations commence.

Generally, Òsite-softenerÓ attacks are done by drone-armed ships which are too far away to attack as part of the fleet that is performing the main invasion. In this way they can at least help out. It is best to do this when the bomber group is sitting on a site or Warp Gate so that they will be of use to you on the defensive after your turn ends, but if they are in open space, so be it. You will also want to think about reloading your ships with drones on the same turn as your bombardment attack is done, so if they are in the same hex as a base, be sure to buy enough drones to restock them. A facilities ship can also be used to this end.

Devastating a Site

Another common use of BOMB is to devastate a site owned by one of your enemies. You will have to hit the site with 50 or more drones *beyond all fortifications* to accomplish this (this can be done using several BOMB orders on your same turn, if you donÕt have a large enough ship to deliver that many all at once). It is normally not worth your time unless you are hitting a critical site (like another Home Office) which you know you couldnÕt conquer and hold. Most players fortify such sites the turn after capturing them, so it is hard to get the timing right, but it can be done.

Feel free to fire as many drones at a site as you can afford to throw at it (if devastating it is your goal). Once the site has been devastated, further drone bombardment attacks on your same turn will be automatically cancelled without being carried out, so donÕt worry too much about overdoing it.

Disrupting Enemy Scans

The last use for bombers (and perhaps the most effective) is to ruin an enemy CorpÕs automatic scans. Most players like to build one base station or battle station in each sector they have interests in (and eventually each sector that borders their home sector). Few players bother to spend more than the minimum amount of fortifications for this purpose (200 for a base station or 300 for a BATS), and even fewer players can afford a second base for scan redundancy (even in a hotly contested sector). You can deny them the information they normally get from these scans by using even a single long-range drone bombardment attack.

The first step is to find out where the enemy base is. Use Starbase Orders for this purpose if you have to, or assign a small ship to move over enemy sites (or raid themÑany failed raid indicates a base). A small enough ship (40 AF or less) need not worry about accidentally attacking and dying on even a Base Station, and if the ship is destroyed, itÕs no big loss.

Once you know where the base is, hit it with a bombardment attack from any drone-armed ship (Kzintis or L-variants are, of course, preferred). Check the chart on the previous page to make sure enough drones will reach the site to knock it down below the minimum level for its type. Since most players put bases up to the minimum level (200 or 300), this should not be a problem. Be sure to take into account unknown factors like fighters that may be assigned to the base, which help out in its defense against drone bombardment. *Remember, ships stationed at the site do nothing to defend it from this sort of attack!*

The effect of this will be quite irritating to your opponent. If the site was a Base Station and is knocked below 200, it becomes ÒdamagedÓ and its automatic scan only has a *chance* of showing each of your ships. (It does not matter how many points below 200 you drop the fortifications.) This adds an element of uncertainty to his operations in that sector and may mask one of your ships or fleets. If the site was a BATS and drops below 300, it becomes a BS and loses the quantity of ships feature of its automatic scan, again helping to hide your main activities (combine this effect with a few well-placed decoys and you will really confuse your enemy). This will be even more effective if your enemy has a Legendary Science Officer at that base and is counting on the Starbase Order he will provide in concert with the BATS.

Upon seeing what you have done, your opponent will also have to spend another order line to re-fortify the site back to its previous level, costing him an order that may have been used to buy a ship. Also note that the origin of a drone bombardment attack is not announced to the victim, so he wonÕt even know for sure it was you who did it!

(Note: There are several ways to defend against this tactic. If your opponent is using Kzinti or Klingon ships, you might consider adding 10% or 15% to the fortifications of all your bases. There are other ways to blunt this tacticÕs effectiveness, but you will have to figure them out on your own.)

And Now, the Flip Side

The obvious down side to bombardment attacks is the overwhelming cost in heavy drones. Every drone you launch will be lost. Figure the percentages and see what you can expect to do to your opponent, and decide if the cost in drones is worth the damage youÕre going to do to him. (If used properly, the three tactics discussed above will be well worth it.)

Also, your ship has to sit still to use this order, as has already been discussed. Stopped ships tend to make good targets for enemy fleets to run over, so donÕt try a BOMB order in a hotly contested area. Try BOMB using a cloaked Orion ship in L-mission (especially if you have no real presence in the sector). Your opponent will have no idea where the attack came from!

In conclusion, then, long-range drone bombardment attacks are quite useful if used properly. Consider the pros and cons and decide if bombing your enemy will be worthwhile, and if it so, bombs away!

ASK THE GALACTIC COUNCIL!

Why arenÕt all the ships from Star Fleet Battles included in SFW? Many of the ships were so similar to other designs in the same class that we didnÕt need both. Also, we wanted to keep the races from having too many different ships, as the supply and demand system breaks down if too many varieties are available. The Hydrans were the race we left the most ships out of (if we included all of them, they would have more types than the Kzintis or Gorns).

Why are combat tactics not available until halfway through the game? Because when we released SFW, we took this feature out, feeling it was an unnecessary complication. Popular opinion convinced us otherwise, but by then many games were in progress. The only way to get it back into the game was to have it become available later on. This situation will shortly be corrected when the new rulebook is released (until then, of course, you will have to wait until the proper year).

What determines how many EPs I get back when I scrap a ship? The shipÕs crew level. You get a base amount of 25% for crew level 3 ships, plus 10% for every level over 3 and minus 10% for each level below 3. You would therefore get 95% of a shipÕs base value when scrapping a crew-9 ship, if you ever wanted to do such a thing. Note, of course, that a ship with speed zero cannot be scrapped because there is no place to write the SCRAP order.

Why would I ever want to build a Warbase? A Battle Station fully loaded and guarded with a couple of small ships would have the same defense factor and costs less! It depends on the situation, of course, but the best value in a Warbase (or any other large amount of fortifications) is in its *potential.* You canÕt add more than 15 fighters or 6 PFs to a BATS, but a WB could easily hold over three times that manyÑand since it would have 1000 hit points instead of 300, it would be a tough nut to crack! Warbases also earn an extra Starbase Order if you have a Science Officer stationed there, and they are far more effective in fending off drone bombardment attacks (see chart earlier in this issue). A Warbase is also pretty much immune to raiding, whereas a big carrier or PF tender can succeed at raiding a BATS. Finally, you might not be able to get ships there to defend the site, and fortifications may be your only answer. It all depends on the situation!

If my Heavy Scout is cloaked, and a base in the same sector makes an automatic scan, will this increment the ÒHSCÓ count on my ship statistic line? No, it wonÕt, because this counter only shows scans which actually detected the ship in question! If a *cloak* scan were made, on the other hand, and it picked up the heavy scout, you would see the number increase in the normal way.

SPECIAL AOG POLICY Q&A SECTION

Why do I have to pay for turn credits in each game IÕm in? Why donÕt we have a central fund I can draw from? Because this requires a network (turns run on either of two different computers), which we havenÕt been able to afford up until now. We just bought one, though, and shortly a new accounting system will be put together to allow just what your question suggests. Watch for an announcement in your turns, and a full description will be in the new rulebook.

If I fax in my late turn, when does it get run? We treat faxed-in turns as incoming mail (we must, as to do otherwise gives an undue advantage to players who have access to a fax machine). Incoming mail is never processed until the day after it is received, so the same goes for incoming faxes.

On my turn there is a Òlast day my turn can be runÓ listed. Does this mean I have to get it to you by midnight on that day? What is the absolute last minute I can get the turn to you before it will get waived? The Òlast day your turn can be run,Ó as listed on your turn sheet, is almost always a Friday. This is because we run our Next Turn Generators (NTGs) on Saturday. NTGs serve to advance the game on to the next year, and do such useful things as handle supply and demand price changes, move the monsters and NPC Corporations, and waive turns for Corporations who are late. We do not run an NTG until ALL late turns weÕve received have been taken care ofÑwhich means we donÕt start them until after weÕve opened the mail on Saturday. So, if you want to be sure you beat the Next Turn Generator, be sure you get us your turn by Saturday at noon Eastern Time. Depending on the workload for any given weekend, NTGs might be run later than thisÑsometimes even on SundayÑbut to be *sure*, get it here by noon!

WARLORD WRITERS NEEDED!

Got an idea, strategy or tactic which you could meld into an article for this newsletter? Or even a short bit of fiction? Send it inÑweÕre looking for some good material! Include any articles with your turns or simply mail them to the address below. You can send them by electronic mail if youÕre on GEnie. There might be a turn credit or two in it for you if your article gets published!

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