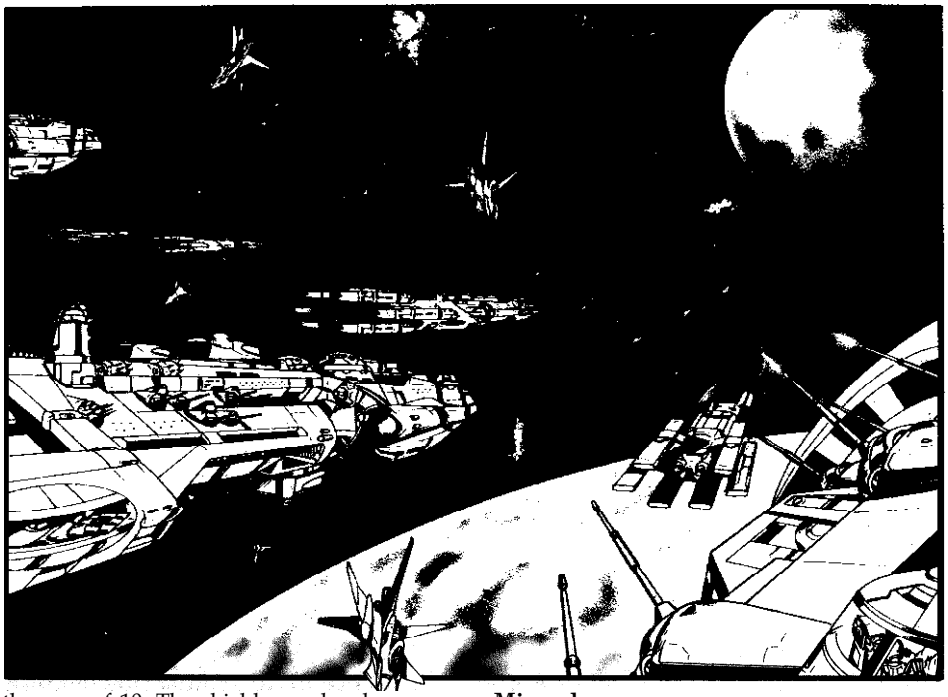
An Interstellar Armory

New defenses and weaponry for STAR FRONTIERS® Knight Hawks gaming

by Gus Monter

Veteran Knight Hawks gamers may find the usual fare of interstellar combat goes better with a touch of the unexpected. This article presents a number of new devices for starship battles in the STAR FRONTIERS® game setting, all of them experimental in nature but certainly worth a try.



New Defenses

Energy shield

Energy shields (E-shields) do not so much deflect attacks as absorb them. This defense activates a plasma field that neutralizes destructive energy entering it. However, the plasma itself is neutralized when it absorbs the barrage. In this way, the shield overloads and becomes useless after so many attacks. E-shields are effective against all laser weapons, shatter drones, and disruptor-beam cannons. An E-shield acts as a reflective hull when activated.

The shield must tap energy directly from the ship's generator in order to function. The total amount of SEU that can be drawn for a shield is equal to the ship's hull size (HS) times 50. The following table indicates how many SEU are required to absorb one hull point of damage from a weapon. Weapon types are from this article and from the Knight Hawks Tactical Operations Manual, page 14.

	LP[1]	LB	LC	SD[2]	DC
SEU	**5**	**10**	**20**	**40**	**30**

[1] Laser piston (see below)
[2] Shatter drone (see below)

For example, a light cruiser finds itself in the unfriendly company of two corvettes, which promptly fire their laser cannons at it. The player of the light cruiser announces that he is activating his E-shield at an SEU of 200. The corvettes both roll hits, then damage is rolled and totalled to the sum of 10. The shield can absorbs (200/20 = 10) 10 hp damage, so the shield is wiped out in absorbing the full barrage. However, the ship still has 400 SEU to place in the E-shield (HS 12, 12 x 50 = 600, 600 - 200 = 400).

Masking field

This is a form of cloaking device that effectively camouflages a ship from detection systems. However, due to the delicacy of its effect, the field instantly drops if the masked ship moves or fires any weapons (this includes the launching of probes, decoys, shuttles, and fighters). It cannot be reactivated until two turns later. Also, the field has a tendency to create 1-4 ghostly holographic images of the hidden ship within a one-kilometer radius of the ship, on a 1% cumulative chance per turn of operation. These images cannot jam detectors, but they work well in fooling them. Of course, once an enemy sees a "ghost ship," it knows that a real ship is in the area as well. . . .

Mine damper

The mine damper is essentially like an E-shield, except that it is only effective against mines. It must be activated before the player's ship enters a mined hex. For a normal mine, 20 SEU are required to absorb a point of damage. It takes 100 SEU to absorb a screen mine.

Reinforced hull

This additional internal framework of struts and bulkheads adds greatly to the ship's ability to handle internal stress. When a ship is down to half its hull points, a -15 modifier is added to the ship's chance to break apart (see Tactical Operations Manual, page 13, "Hull Hits").

Seeker jammer

A seeker-missile jammer is a device that broadcasts a charge which causes a seeker missile to detonate in its current hex. The device has 1-3 charges and has an effective

New defenses: Table of equipment

Defense	Cost (Cr)*	MHS* *	Availability	Program level	Function points
Energy shield	3,000	6	1	3	12
Contact deflectors	1,000	5	1,2,3	2	9
Masking field	4,000	3	1	5	18
Seeker jammer	1,500	4	1	3	6
Armor plating	1,500	6	1,2	NA	NA
Armor plating (heavy)	3,000	12	1	NA	NA
Reinforced hull	800	1	1,2,3	NA	NA
Mine damper	2,000	1	1,2	2	9

* The price listed must be multiplied by the ship's hull size for the final cost.
* * Minimum hull size

range of 20,000 km per charge (i.e., it can have a range of 60,000 km if all the charges are used up). The jammer works as long as it is in range of the seeker missile. A charge only affects one seeker missile.

Armor plating

This is a relatively common form of protection on warships. The armor is made up of two layers of plasteel beneath tritanium surfacing. It is effective against laser pistons, laser power torches, rocket batteries, and mines, giving these weapons a -15% chance to hit. It adds 200 structural points to the hull.

The heavier form of armor is essentially the same as the lighter one, except it has a special ceramic alloy between the two plasteel layers. It adds 300 structural points and is also effective against laser cannons, laser batteries, and electrical beam batteries, giving these weapons a -15% chance to hit and penetrate, -20% against the attack forms affected by the lighter armor plating described above.

Contact deflectors

This is a precautionary device used by starships entering combat, asteroid belts, gas clouds; and uncharted regions. Basically, it insulates the ship from contact with minor asteroids, meteorites, crashing ships, and other forms of space debris. When passing through an asteroid belt, a ship with contact deflectors adds a bonus of 30 to the result in step A in the asteroid movement procedure (see the Knight Hawks Campaign Book Expansion Rules, page 34).

New weapons: Table of equipment

Weapon	Cost (Cr)	MHS	Avail.	PL	FP	DTM	HDR	FF	RD	MPO	LTD	RA
Laser piston	1,500	1*	1,2,3	1	3	0	1-5	FF	RD			6
Tractor beam	35,000	6	1	4	5	0	0		RD	MPO		3
Fusion bomb	3,000	1	1	1	2	-20	5d10			MPO	LTD	0
Screen mine	5,000	7	1	4	3	0	0				LTD	0
Maxi-missile	3,000	5	1,2	1	2	- 5	3d10	FF		MPO	LTD	5

Abbreviations at the top of table are: cost in credits, minimum hull size (MHS), availability, program level (PL), function points (FP), damage table modifier (DTM), hull damage rating (HDR), forward firing (FF), range diffusion (RD), moving player only (MPO), limited supply (LTD), and range (RA).
* Maximum hull size of 2

New combat table

Weapon	Percentage chance to hit against this defense							
	No	RH	PS	ES	SS	MS	AP	AP (h)
Laser cannon	75	60	75	75	75	25		-15
Laser battery	65	50	65	65	75	20		-15
PB battery	60	60	25	70	40	50		-15
EB battery	60	60	70	25	40	50		-15
Disruptor cannon	60	60	50	50	40	50		
Torpedo	50	50	50	50	75	50		
Assault rocket	60	60	60	60	60	60		
Rocket battery	40	40	40	40	40	40	-15	-20
Mine	60	60	60	60	80	60	-15	-20
Seeker missile	75	75	75	75	90	75		
Laser piston	60	45	60	60	60	15	-15	-20
Fusion bomb	70	70	70	70	80	70		
Screen mine	60	60	60	60	80	60		
Maxi-missile	50	50	50	50	70	50		
Tractor beam	60	60	60	60	50	60		

Weapon	Percentage chance to hit using gunnery skills					
	No	RH	PS	ES	SS	MS
Laser piston	55	40	55	55	55	10
Fusion bomb	60	60	60	60	70	60
Maxi-missile	40	40	40	40	60	40
Tractor beam	50	50	50	50	40	50

In other cases (including ramming), dice are rolled, and a score of 15 or less indicates the ship has been hit — but the contact deflectors were useless because the ship was hit head-on. This outcome can be avoided by using the pilot's evasive maneuver ability (3% x pilot skill level) or a ramming pilot's chance to maneuver (10% x pilot skill level). However, if the roll was higher than 15, the deflectors have a 20% chance to avoid ramming damage. For this rule to apply, the ramming ship must be HS 4 or less.

For example, a fighter is down to 2 hull points and the ship's level -4 pilot decides to ram a destroyer head-on, thereby making the destroyer's contact deflectors useless. The base chance is 15%; after adding the pilot's skill (10 x 4 = 40, 40 + 15 = 55), it becomes a 55% chance; but the destroyer's level -5 pilot attempts to evade (3 x 5 = 15). Therefore, the ramming pilot has a 40% chance to hit head-on. He fails his rolls; the destroyer player rolls a 15, so the fighter ship explodes harmlessly against the destroyer's hull.

New Weaponry

Laser piston

The laser piston is essentially a miniaturized version of the laser cannon. This weapon is often used on vehicles, from fighters to hovercycles. A fighter using a laser piston must forsake any other weapons except a fusion bomb or an assault rocket.

Tractor beam

The tractorbeam is not really a weapon. It is a powerfully energized electromagnetic beam which draws large metallic objects toward it. The object is held just within the beam's range-and can be drawn in at a rate of two hexes per turn. The beaming ship must cut its speed to zero before it can draw in the "tractored" object. Spaceships can use this device on any ship eight hull sizes less than the beaming ship's own hull size. The beam must make a roll to hit (modified by the defending ship's pilot's chance to evade), after which the tractored ship can only break free by accelerating to a rate of 10 hexes per turn, at which point the captured ship moves away at one hex per turn. Accelerating to further multiples of ten allows the captured ship to move away at rates reduced to 10% of the ship's acceleration; thus, a ship accelerating at 20 hexes per turn moves at two hexes per turn, etc.

For example, a light cruiser chasing an Imp-class yacht comes into beaming range and, after a successful roll, locks onto the yacht. Because it was not at top speed and its ADF matches the light cruiser's, it is doubtful that the yacht can escape in time before it is boarded. Instead, it fires its laser battery at the beaming ship, which will draw the yacht into boarding position in about one turn.

Maxi-missile

The maxi-missile is essentially a rocket with 3-5 warheads. Therefore, while it has a lesser chance to hit than an assault rocket, it does more damage on contact.

Fusion bomb

The fusion bomb is so deadly a weapon that it is "dropped" rather than fired at an enemy. The bomb's unstable nature is such that reaction drives places near it could trigger the bomb before it reaches its target. Thus, the range of this weapon is merely the same hex as the launching ship. A popular fighter ship tactic is to make repeated bombing runs along a larger vessel, with the result being a chain of explosions eventually consuming the target.

Screen mines

Screen mines operate like other mines, save that their effect upon contact is to destroy any activated screens, fields, or E-shields. ₥