

A Call to Arms

Babylon 5 Space Combat

Advanced Fighter Combat

by Matthew Sprange

The fighters in Babylon 5, from the lethal Nial to the solid Thunderbolt, often played an intrinsic tactical part in battles of the TV series, even within huge fleet engagements. The following rules are experimental and we would love to hear your feedback (send all comments to msprange@mongoosepublishing.com). They are designed to give a bit more life to auxiliary craft in *A Call to Arms* and force more tactical choices onto players who enjoy using them in large numbers.

Movement Phase

As stated in Book One of *A Call to Arms*, all auxiliary craft are moved after every ship on the table has been moved. The player who won the Initiative in the current turn chooses whether to move all his auxiliary craft first or force his opponent to do so. Every auxiliary craft in the fleet is moved at the same time.

As you will soon see, the player who has the Initiative must now choose between seeing what his opponent's intentions are and being able to strike first without getting caught up in a dogfight.

Attack Phase

You nominate *every* one of your auxiliary craft on the table to fire as if you were nominating a ship. In this way, every auxiliary craft will attack at the same time, no matter where on the table they are and they can do so at any point in the attack phase, as decided by you. Simply nominate targets for each flight of auxiliary craft and then resolve their attacks, as if you were nominating targets for a ship's weapon systems against different targets.

If you decide to attack an auxiliary craft flight or ship with your own flight, resolve the attack as described in Book One. You will make an

ordinary attack and targets will receive any Dodge applicable. However, if you are in base contact with an enemy flight, then you are considered to be engaged in a dogfight – see the rules below.

Dogfighting

When auxiliary craft launch their normal attacks, they are considered to be engaging at long ranges. This is why other auxiliary craft still retain their Dodge trait against such attacks – at these ranges such strikes are fairly easy to avoid for a trained fighter pilot. If you want to ensure the job is done right, you must close in and start dogfighting! These rules replace the Dogfighting rules detailed on p9 of Book One.

Moving into a Dogfight

Once you move a flight into base contact with an enemy flight of auxiliary craft, you are considered to be dogfighting and will then follow these rules. Auxiliary craft may only conduct dogfights against other flights, not ships.

A dogfight develops automatically by one flight moving into base contact with another and neither may move



Dogfight Score

Every flight of auxiliary craft in *A Call to Arms* now has a new characteristic – a Dogfight score. This is a reflection of the raw potential of a fighter and its potential to manoeuvre into an advantageous position. The Dogfight scores of all existing auxiliary craft are detailed below.

Auxiliary Craft	Dogfight Score
Delta-V	+0
Falkosi	+1
Frazi	-1
Minbari Flyer	+0
Nial	+3
Rutarian*	+2
Sentri	+2
Shadow Fighter	+0
Starfury	+1
Thunderbolt	+0

* The characteristics of the Rutarian can be found in the Centauri fleet box set.

Resolving a Dogfight

You resolve all dogfights your flights are involved in when you nominate your auxiliary craft to attack in the Attack Phase.

When two opposing flights engage in a dogfight, both players roll one die and add the Dogfight score and the Crew Quality of their flight. Note that the Stealth trait never applies in dogfights – the combatants are far too close for stealth systems to have any real effect.

You may add +1 to your die roll for every extra flight you have in base contact with the enemy flight you are targeting. Flights may support any number of dogfights in this manner but they may never conduct a dogfight against a flight they have already helped support against. Other than this, it is up to you how you arrange your dogfights to the best advantage!

The player who scores the highest will win the dogfight and destroy one enemy flight automatically. If the scores are equal, then all flights will be locked together and may not move until another dogfight has been fought and won.

You may only destroy one enemy flight during each dogfight, no matter how many are arrayed against you.

until the enemy has been destroyed – this is why it can be very important to retain the Initiative when moving your fighters.

Firing into Dogfights

Dogfighting flights may not be fired upon by either side for fear of hitting their own fighters. However, in multiplayer games, it is quite possible that two or more sides will be engaged in a dogfight and another force will be quite ready to fire into the melee if none of its own fighters are present. In this case, you must randomise each Attack Die used in an attack against the dogfight.

In practice, this can simply be done by rolling the number of Attack Dice you plan to use and then separating the dice. All dice that score 1-3 will be the Attack Dice used against Fleet A, while all those that score 4-6 are the Attack Dice targeted at Fleet B. Attacks are then resolved normally against both sides. In the unlikely event that three separate fleets are engaged in the dogfight, the Attack Dice can be split by rolling 1-2 for Fleet A, 3-4 for Fleet B and 5-6 for Fleet C.

In general, each flight will only fight one dogfight in each turn. However, it is possible for a flight to fight twice. For example, two flights may dogfight when one player nominates his auxiliary craft during the Attack Phase, reach a draw, and therefore be locked in combat. When the other player nominates his auxiliary craft to attack, the two flights must dogfight once more. By the same token, if a flight is attacked by multiple enemies and wins, it will still have at least one enemy flight in base contact when auxiliary craft are nominated again in the turn.

Supporting Ships

Up to now, you will have been using your fighters to conduct lightning raids on enemy ships and screen enemy fighters at great distances from your fleet. However, fighters are also adept at providing close in support for larger ships and in this duty, they can prove invaluable.

A flight may be moved onto the base of a friendly ship that is within range of its movement at any time. When this happens, the flight is considered to be supporting the ship and will then be automatically moved whenever the ship moves. Flights may also be placed on the base of a ship to support it before the start of the battle. Any number of flights may support a ship, so long as they all fit on its base!

Whenever an enemy flight attacks the ship, the supporting flight is immediately moved into base contact with the enemy and a dogfight resolved immediately. A supporting flight may only do this once per turn but any number of supporting flights may be used to engage an enemy flight.

Whatever the result, the enemy flight may not attack the original target ship if it is intercepted in this way.



A flight within 4" of an enemy ship with the Stealth trait may attempt this action. Scanners to Full! is performed at the end of the Movement Phase before any attacks are nominated. The flight may not attack in the same turn, nor may it be in base contact with an enemy flight.

A Crew Quality check is made with a target number of 10. You may add a +1 bonus to this roll for every other friendly flight within 6" of the target that is also performing this action. If successful, the Stealth score of the target is reduced by 1 for the rest of the turn.

Each flight attempting this action may either make the Crew Quality check or add the bonus. It may not attempt both.

Fighter Special Actions

The rules in Book One of *A Call to Arms* state that auxiliary craft may not perform any Special Actions. This is because the Special Actions listed in Book One are designed for use with ships that have huge crews and awesome power systems. However, there are two Special Actions flights of auxiliary craft may attempt when using these Advanced rules.

Activate Jump Gate!

A flight may activate a jump gate in the same way as a ship can. However, it cannot activate an enemy controlled jump gate (those needing a Crew Quality check to activate) as these small craft lack the technical facilities to hack into the complex computer systems that control the jump gates.

Scanners to Full!

Auxiliary craft may be used to aid larger vessels to gain a lock-on to Stealth capable targets. While fighters are generally small and often ignored on the battlefield, this is a very dangerous role and only the bravest pilots generally attempt it – they will likely be well within the range of any anti-fighter weapons the target possesses.

Campaigns

It may not be obvious but replacement flights in a campaign are bought from the fleet list as Wings. For example, if an Earth Alliance fleet lost 3 Starfury flights in a recent battle, it could spend 5 RR points and purchase a complete Wing of 4 Starfuries (a Patrol level choice). These Starfuries are then split between the ships that suffered losses to their auxiliary craft.

Any 'spare' flights (there is one spare flight of Starfuries in the example above) are noted on the fleet roster as a 'short' Wing. A short Wing can be fielded in its reduced state if necessity demands, but most are simply kept in reserve and the spare flights used as replacements for ships or other Wings that lose flights in the future.