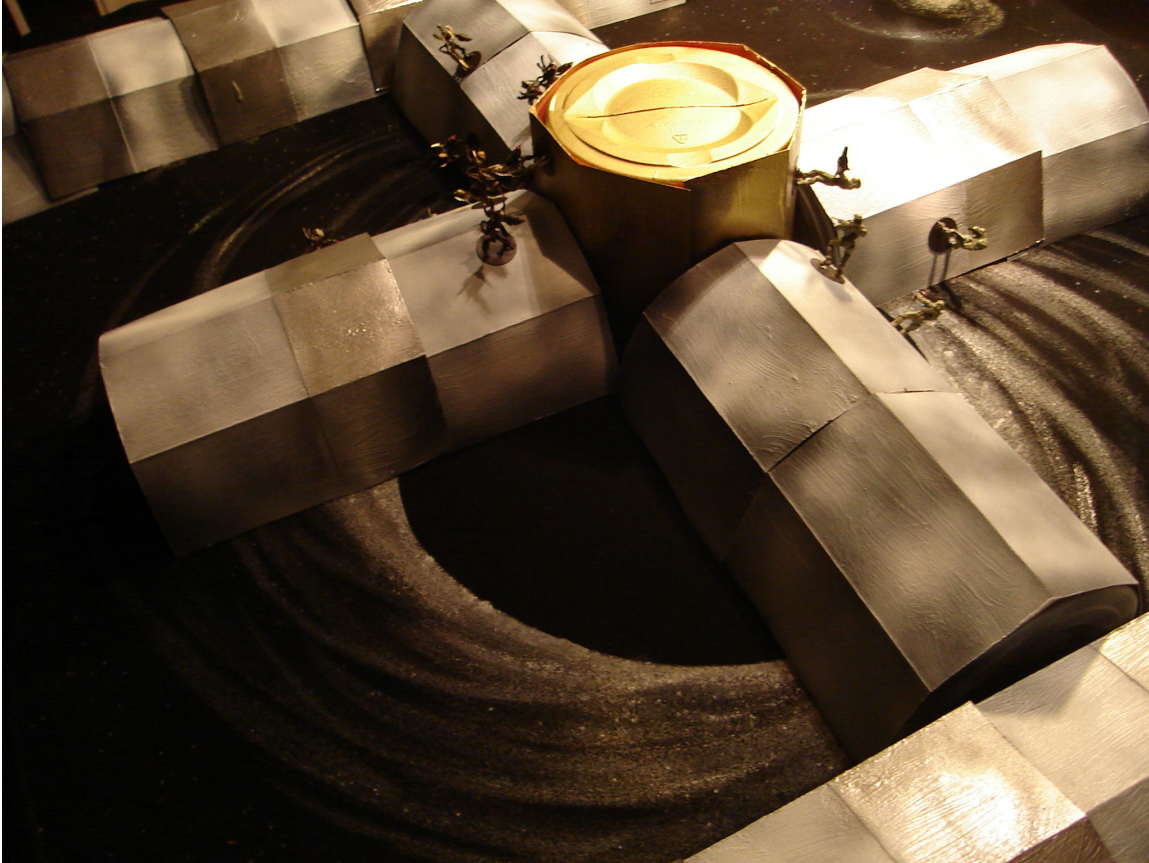


Combat: Alien War After Action Reivew
04 FEB 2012 @ the Williamsburg Muster
www.odms-club.com



Long Description: The abandoned space station has wandered off on its own for over a century. Now, somehow, it has found itself precariously balanced on the edge of the black hole Charybdis. It should have been sucked in decades ago. Strange energy readings have been noted. Strange enough to make your scientists think it is worth risking lives to find out what is going on. An anomaly? A new phenomenon? Someone's bold experiment?

Whatever it is, you will need to land a team, reach the central hub, set up your gear, and transmit data back home. It appears that you aren't alone, either. other teams have been detected heading in the direction of the black hole. Better bring enough ammo, too...

Genre: Science Fiction Miniatures Scale: 28mm
Ruleset: Combat: Alien Wars (Howard Whitehouse)

Notes: If there are fewer than four teams engaged on the station (like when a team gets eliminated), a new team will be briefed, dock, and board the station.

This game was set up to be a rolling “king-of-the-hill” scenario with teams being killed and replaced on a continuous basis (which provided a renewed threat to a team that had control fo the central hub. It worked pretty well in playtesting, with a team able to hold the top for about five turns until the combination of other teams wiped them out. Well, it didn’t run out like that at the con. We ended up with two separate four player games; one with kids (10-12) and one with adults (18-fuggedaboutit).

There is a detailed breakdown and tutorial for the Scylla, **the magnetic space station of doom**, at www.inlgames.com/scylla.htm . The game used the Combat: Alien War rules by Howard Whitehouse, with a couple mods to fit the scenario (the cheatsheet we used is at the end of this AAR): (1) The USMC teams got two retaliate options to even things out as they were outgunned on one side and outnumbered on the other, (2) The Uh-oh! conditions were tailored to the scenario (which the rules advocate), and (3) Each player was allowed one interrupt per round (i.e., until his turn came back again) instead of one in each other player’s turn.

The kids (and adults) picked up on the rules pretty quickly as the cheat sheet walked down the turn sequence fairly well. (There’s a lot more in the game, but it was condensed down to only the stuff that was needed to play this scenario. F’r’ex, there were only three types of teams on the board, so instead of listing all the possible armour types, the cheating death table was slimmed down to the applicable cases.)

Likewise, this was a bit of a unique piece of terrain, so the levels of cover provided were based on the scenario. If you haven’t read or figured it out yet, the station is magnetic and the figures are on magnetic bases, so they can move up, down, and over walls just like there was no gravity. The sides of the station are an octagonal prism, which gave a nice delineation for the types of cover. The conditions were:

- Shooting along the same surface, no cover
- Shooting to an adjacent surface, light cover
- Shooting further (if not blocked), moderate cover
- Shooting over your head (like to the central hub), heavy cover
- Shooting down (from the central hub), no cover

In the first game with the kids (who had the mercs), the youngest one had a little bad luck with the Activation and Uh-oh! rolls and ended up reaching the hub significantly later than the other teams. The Marine team that started closest to the mercs, decided the better part of valor was to hide on the sides of the station and sneak around out of line of fire rather than to be shot in the back by a team that was behind you.

The other two teams (USMC and Aliens) decided to slug it out on top of the main branch, resulting in numerous wounded. When the Marines got an advantageous Uh-oh! that healed their wounded, the Aliens beat a hasty retreat to the back side of the hub.

This resulted in the second USMC team reaching the hub first. This team had SSW teams, so they were well poised to defend the top of the hill. That is, until the other Marine team remembered that they had grenades and that grenades are capable of

defilade fire. They positioned on the vertical walls of the hub, blocked behind the gun mounts. Their shots weren't very effective, but they were better than the blocked line of fire to them.



While this went down, the Aliens (who were a low-grad by high number team) had regrouped and decided to swarm the top of the hub and engage hand to hand. Lots of figures bit the dust now. Both teams did a good job at finishing off the wounded. It was getting crowded with all the figures laying down.

At this point, the mercs, who had seen no action yet (and thus, taken no casualties) arrived in sniping range. And snipe they did. The merc player continued to hold back and shoot long range, which turned

out to work well. The players on the hub kept saying they should just cooperate and take him out. But they mostly kept shooting at each other instead.

Once things were fairly thinned out, the mercs pressed up the side in earnest. They had taken a couple of casualties now, but still had the upper hand. The last few Marines and Aliens on the top were cleared out. But there still was one grenadier on the back side of the hub (he had retreated there, so he wasn't sniped with the rest of his team), who was able to chuck a good round right in the middle of the mercs and take the last two out. Then he just walked up the side on his turn and finished off the wounded.

All in all, a good wring out of the rules (well, the subset of the rules that applied to this scenario with the prepicked teams) and a fun time had by all.



Now to the gr'ups. After the kids finished, we were able to convince enough (three) guys that even though the kids could play it easily, this wasn't necessarily a kids game, if you had the tactical acumen to make it so. One of our crew filled in the fourth slot, and the station was under siege again!

This time the players were more conservative at the start. Most players held back and wanted to sneak around to the hub as much as they could. Everyone used their interrupt during the first round to sneak another move in.

Once pretty much in the stalemate if we don't move position, the real bloodshed started. Fortune favors the bold, and it was the Aliens who took the initiative. They went over the top (literally) into the faces of the waiting Marines. Since they started where the

Marines had no line of fire to them, neither team got to shoot during the charge, they just started in with hand to hand.

The Marine player wanted to know if he could “jump” through space to another leg of the station. While this wasn’t planned, we saw no reason not to. We decided this meant his figure would move in a straight line while in space, at any speed between 1” and 6” he wanted. We also decided that he would roll a d6 and if he rolled the desired speed or less, we would add a d12 roll to the o’clock of his angle. This meant that the harder his guys pushed off, the more likely they were to go in an undesired direction.

His SSW and ASSW figures decided to jump for safety and shoot while floating. We considered that to be an “Are you kidding?” level of cover (see, I knew there was a reason to have that on the table.). He jumped successfully (one of four was displaced by “1 hour” (30°), which wasn’t a big deal. He only jumped at 3”, so it would take a couple of turns to get there.

Meanwhile the other Marines decided to chuck grenades at the mercs, who used their interrupt to run away. Unfortunately, they still ended up in range, and took two casualties, which is what you get when you run away.

Reconsidering, the mercs changed course and went right up the side of the hub, in plain sight of everyone.

In the ensuing turns, everyone took pot shots at the merc, and none hit, though a few got shot back at. Meanwhile, the Aliens split forces with some still engaging the Marines and the rest running for the top of the hub. The floating Marines again shot and missed, while their compatriots shredded their Alien confronters (down to one left). The SSW guys even hit. Finally! The other Marine player decided to lay back and chuck grenades at everything, to marginal effect (one Alien and one opposing Marine).



This time the consensus to gang up on the one hiding and sniping was achieved. Everyone took aim at the grenadier team and the grenadier team took heavy casualties. At least they used their interrupt to shoot (instead of run away) and they took out both mercs, who had just obtained the top of the hub. When it came time for the grenadiers to act again, they got stuck in place by a station shudder, so they just opened up with everything they had again.

Now the Aliens had the hub and moved to the center where there was no line of fire, so opponents would have to rush them. They might have eaten it from a grenade first if the SSW player hadn’t mowed the rest of them down.

The remaining Marines took two turns to position themselves completely surrounding the Aliens from below. The Aliens just stood there and waited, sharpening their claws.

The final rush came and blood and guts (green and red ... a little like Christmas) filled the void. The end result was one Alien on top in a pile of corpses.

This game also went fairly smoothly. The subset of the mechanics used were picked up fairly quickly, leading to more focus on tactics and less on rules. The changes in the tide of the game were especially influenced by the interrupts. I was personally pleased that attempts to run and hide met with hot metallic death.



Activate:

Roll	Aliens	Mercenaries	Marines
1	All aliens get two actions	All mercs get two actions	All Marines get two actions
2	All aliens get two actions	All mercs get two actions	All Marines get two actions
3	All aliens get two actions	All mercs get two actions; no interrupt	NCO led Marines get two actions
4	All aliens get two actions; no interrupt	Two mercs get two actions; no interrupt	NCO led Marines get one action
5	All aliens get two actions; no interrupt	Two mercs get one action; no interrupt	One element gets one action
6	“Uh-Oh!”	“Uh-Oh!”	“Uh-Oh!”

Uh-oh!

Roll	Result
1	EMP! No comms - Roll activate one column to the right.
2	Aurora Flash - Roll activate, but no interrupt no matter what.
3	The Station Shuddrs - Roll activate, but no movement allowed this turn.
4	EMP! Targeting Fritz - Roll activate, but no attacks allowed this turn.
5	Cosmic Rays - All damaged figures on your team are dead.
6	Ha! I got it! - All damaged figures your team are no longer damaged.

Actions

Action	Result
Hit the Deck!	Element is pinned down (+1 cover, can only creep or shoot until rally)
Rally	Roll a die, if the result is less or equal to the highest CV in the element, it is no longer pinned down
Creep	Move up to 4” and count them as pinned down at the end of the move
Walk	Move up to 6”
Run	Move up to 6” + die roll
Walk and Shoot	Move up to 6” and shoot using one less die.
Shoot	Attack a target element within 12” using two dice or within 24” using one die
Chuck a Grenade	Lay down a grenade template within 12”; attack using one die per figure in the template
Suppressive Fire	Attack a target element within 18” with four dice. No damage; two or more hits pins down target

Attack Table

CV	No Cover	Light Cover	Moderate Cover	Heavy Cover	Are You Kidding?
2	3	2	1	1, then 1-3	1, then 1
3	4	3	2	1	1, then 1-3
4	5	4	3	2	1
5	5	5	4	3	2

Cheating Death!

Roll	Aliens	Mercenaries	Marines
1	Retaliate	Retaliate	Retaliate
2	OK	OK	Retaliate
3	OK	OK	OK
4	OK	OK	OK
5	Damaged	OK	Damaged
6	Dead	1-3 Damaged; 4-6 Dead	Dead

A damaged figure cannot shoot and needs help to move. The damaged figure and the figure that helps move 1” less than normal.