



Admiral Blankenstien observed the peaceful, mesmerizing swirl of gaseous clouds across the surface of Thillion out the wide viewport of the cruiser which he commanded. Each curving, coruscating nimbus was a sight to behold, reflecting back untold shades of blues and purples and all but sparkling in the surrounding starlight. So close to the giant's gravitational field, he could even spot what seemed like little flashes of lightning of some sort, storms in the upper atmosphere stirring as all those chemicals reacted to one another. For something so pretty, it was hard to remember that the entire planet was deadly, with not habitable atmosphere to speak of, no real surface, just hundreds of thousands of pounds of pressure containing so many gaseous substances around a super dense metallic core, all superheated and violent and sure to kill not only life but most equipment sent near.

It was a good thing those miners on Thillion's moon were so industrious. Anyone had to be, any time they went about mining gas. He'd been to Bespin, once. Tough folks, if overdressed.

Blankenstien turned away from his observations to scan the bridge again. All his well-trained officers, ensigns, corpsmen, and naval tacticians worked diligently, even on a milk-run like their current assignment. Their deployment was for show more than literally anything else; maybe the slightest bit out of deeply ingrained paranoia on the Consul's part. Blankenstien couldn't say he was in complete disagreement; the Collective were slippery scoundrels, prone to the worst of war crimes, and they couldn't be entirely counted on to keep things peaceful.

Lyra sector, however, just "was not worth it". The area had all of one colony and two industrial operations, here at the moon and one at the shipyards attached to the colony itself. It was actually sad. Blankenstien had been so bored that he had begun reading up on the dossiers for the other uninhabitable planets in the system, and had found himself enjoying looking over Thillion's surface as their internal clocks aboard the vessels ticked down the minutes. They'd been in stationary orbit for almost thirty hours. Surely the diplomats wouldn't take too much longer before a change in position came through?

He really wanted to at least move to the sun-ward side of the gas giant, get a look over there...

A sudden sound that wasn't the typical drone of a ship running smoothly interrupted his thoughts.

"ADMIRAL!" screech-squeaked a man at his terminal. Jenkins, a comms officer. "Admiral, there's— signals!"

"What signals? Is it time for us to wave the flags and show off a bit?" Blankenstien huffed as he approached.

"N-no! Sir! Sir it's contacts, there's contacts, it's—" the man's voice grew increasingly frantic, and the Admiral leaned over his station to observe the radar for himself.

He paled.

"Issue a fleet-wide alert!" he barked, and red klaxons began blaring throughout the bridge and the rest of the ship as his orders were followed. Faces all around him grew wide with fear as more data started pouring in and they projected the incoming targets onto the viewscreen, overlaying the backdrop of Thillion. Contacts began appearing. One after another. After another. After another. "Oh....oh kark. The enemy. No, that's-- THAT'S ALMOST AN ENTIRE BATTLEGROUP! KARK! SCRAMBLE THE FIGHTERS! SCRAMBLE THE BLOODY FIGHTERS!"

Bathed in scarlet warning light, Thillion seemed to bleed.



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Office of Naval Planning and Intelligence

After Action Report: Thillion, Lyra-3K-a

Operation: Cut & Run

SC dir: GJW_13_04c_Omega

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Scenario





Scenario

Operation “Cut & Run”

- In mid-37 ABY, an Arconan Expeditionary Forces fleet contingent was ordered to deploy to the Lyra-3K-a-system, in the Essaga sector, with orders to remain in-system as a strategic reserve and offer the Proconsul a discretionary force projection unit during vital negotiations with the Severian Principate.
- Forces assembled in orbit around Selen, Dajorra-system, commanded by Admiral Blankenstein and departed for Thillion, a gas giant and outermost planet of the Lyra-3K-a-system.
- Transit was uneventful.
- Upon arriving on station in orbit around Thillion, scanners picked up several signatures space-side bearing Collective spectrum identifiers. The hostile fleet element contained several capital ship level contacts.
- Admiral Blankenstein ordered all hands to battle stations and contacted AEF command for instructions.
- Before further orders could be given, Collective vessels accelerated to attack speed and began closing in on the orbit-bound AEF elements with clear intent of harm.
- Admiral Blankenstein gave permission to fire for effect and ordered his fleet to break orbit. With his forces outnumbered and outgunned, and caught in an disadvantageous tactical position, he decided to make for the closest safe jump point and leave the field.
- This is an account of the ensuing engagement.



Order Of Battle





Order of Battle

Arconan Expeditionary Forces

Battlefleet Blankenstein

- 1x Immobilizer 418 heavy cruiser
- 1x Quasar Fire cruiser carrier
- 3x Strike-class Medium Cruiser
- 1x VT-49 Decimator flight
- 10x T-70 X-wing squadron
- 2x A/SF-01 B-wing squadron

Battlefleet Elysium

- 4x Dreadnaught a70 heavy cruiser
- 4x Strike Cruiser M50 medium cruiser
- 3x Lancer s20 frigate
- 1x Ton-Falk Escort carrier
- 5x Z95 Headhunter squadron
- 6x T-70 X-wing squadron
- 2x A/SF-01 B-wing squadron
- 1x Quadrijet bomber squadron



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Ship & Fleet Analysis





Ship Analysis: Dreadnaught a70

A ship of the line for the Collective, the Dreadnaught carries heavy anti-capital ship weaponry with its heavy turbo-laser armament. Although the exact split of the ship's weapons emplacements is not known, it is likely to follow in the vein of the original Dreadnaught design and thus it is expected that they will be spread out to cover all four sectors somewhat evenly, with a 12/10/10/8 split (fore/starboard/port/aft). Despite the ship's 4 warhead launchers, it does not possess significant anti-starfighter capabilities.



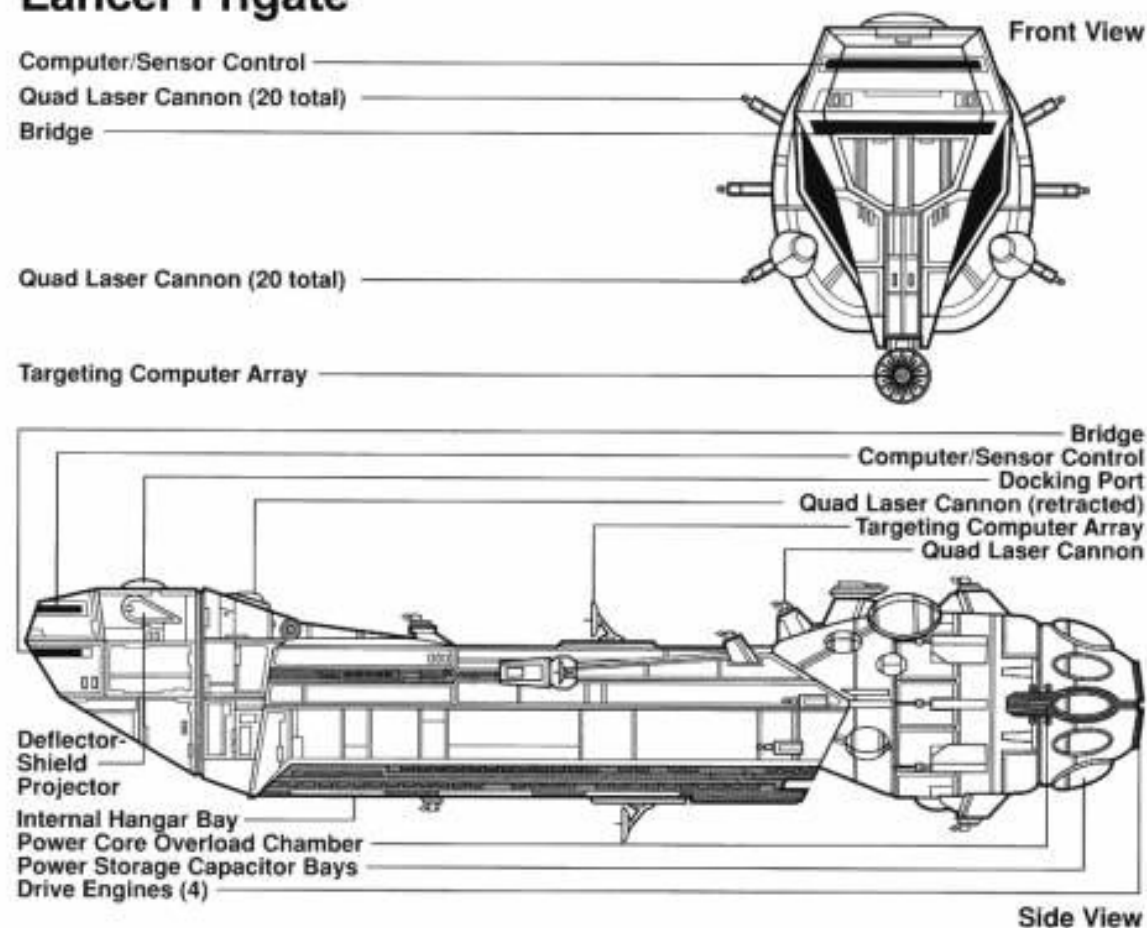


Ship Analysis: Lancer s20

The Lancer frigate shores up the lacking anti-Starfighter firepower for the Dreadnaught. With 28 quad laser cannons mounted in raised pylons like the original design, it poses a deadly threat to any fighters attempting to approach. As per the original design, these guns are most likely divided up in equal amounts on all four sectors.

However, lacking any and all other types of weaponry and with reports showing no added reinforcement to the ship's structural integrity, the frigate serves as a support ship only and cannot stand against dedicated turbo-laser fire, even from escort vessels.

Lancer Frigate





Ship Analysis: Strike-Cruiser

The Strike cruiser serves as a second-rate ship-of-the-line with weapons focused on capital ship engagements. 10 ion turrets, 10 tractor beam projectors and 30 dual turbolaser turrets make the ship a capable vessel against heavy opponents, but it lacks in anti-Starfighter capability. This is somewhat remedied by the included squadrons of Z-95 headhunters and T-70 X-wings, although it is unlikely that Collective doctrine would keep both squadrons as fighter screens for the ships themselves.

Collective variant



Arconan variant



Ship analysis: Ton-Falk

A dedicated starfighter carrier, the Ton-Falk is only armed with laser cannons (10 dual turrets) and a single missile turret. With poor armor and maneuverability, it poses little value in the line of battle. However, the carried six squadrons of starfighters or fighter-bombers are a significant threat and should be considered the main offensive armament of the vessel.

Although of little consequence on its own, destruction of the Ton-Falk should be prioritized as a secondary objective due to the supply functions it provides to enemy starfighter forces.





Ship analysis: Quasar Fire

A dedicated starfighter carrier, the Quasar Fire is only armed with 2 heavy dual turbolasers and 2 tractor beams. With poor armor and maneuverability, it poses little value in the line of battle. However, the relatively small vessel carries four squadrons of starfighters as well as facilities for field repairs of the same. The main use of the Quasar Fire in the Arconan battlefleet is starfighter repair and rearmament, allowing pilots to get out of their fighters during longer deployments and maintaining a high ready-rate.





Ship analysis: Immobilizer 418

At 600 meters long and carrying the heaviest armament of the Arconan fleet (20 quad turbolasers and 20 laser cannons), the main tactical advantage that the *Event Horizon* brings to the battlefield is its four gravity-well projectors which can rip enemy ships out of hyperspace or prevent them from escaping via such means.

Although Arconan doctrine mainly uses this capability for commerce raiding, there have been a dedicated push to expand the tactical use of pin-point gravity wells for *enhanced maneuvers*.





Fleet Analysis: Battlefleet Elysium

- Battlefleet Elysium has the clear upper hand in terms of anti-capital ship weaponry. The upgraded Dreadnaughts carry enough firepower to deal with far heavier ships than the AEF can deploy and even their escorts have decent, if not excellent, anti-capital weapons.
- However, their fleet has very centralized anti-Starfighter firepower in the form of Lancer frigates, which are lightly armored and vulnerable to concentrated firepower.
- The Starfighter complement is solid in terms of numerical strength, although obsolete Z-95 Headhunters make up almost half of their effective fighter base.
- Fleet Command and Navigation is expected to be proficient, but the extent of free thought and tactical know-how is yet unknown. Reports suggest many officers are recently trained and their training was specifically designed to counter Iron Throne and Clan naval tactics. Experience has shown them to be ruthless and aggressive commanders, though, and they should not be taken lightly.



Fleet Analysis: Arconan Expeditionary Forces

- The Arconan Expeditionary Forces consist of multi-role ships which are often slated as primarily anti-Starfighter, but which also carry turbolasers for use against capital ships. Main anti-capital ship firepower lies with the dual squadrons of B-wings as well as the fleet heavy-hitter, *Event Horizon*. It is unlikely to hold up for long against several Collective Dreadnaughts in a pitched battle, however.
- Starfighter complement is more modern than the Elysium counterpart, however, less numerous and relies more on the VT-49 Decimators to make up for this discrepancy. An outright dogfight is inadvisable due to superior Collective numbers and presence of dedicated anti-starfighter Lancer frigates.
- Fleet Command and Navigation is experienced and well-motivated, with Force-sensitive personnel to guide fleet assets through challenging maneuvers.



Tactical Overview





Tactical Overview: Rules of Engagement [ROE]

- Arcona High Command Tactical Risk and Objective Assessment
 - Minimizing of AEF Casualties - High-Priority
 - Preservation of Severian Principate assets - Medium-Priority (until revoked by Proconsul)
 - Destruction of hostile assets - Low-Priority (until changed by Proconsul)
- General ROE Directive: Any individual(s) and/or vehicle(s) that present imminent hostile threat are to be engaged, and if possible, destroyed with extreme prejudice. Navy commanders to preserve fighting strength and avoid decisive battle until ordered to engage by Proconsul. Priority given to preservation of Clan assets until force is committed.
- Naval-specific ROE Directive: Any individual(s) and/or vehicle(s) showing themselves to surrender to Arcona forces are to be considered hostile until neutralized.



Tactical Overview: Space

- Fleets join battle as a meeting engagement, with neither side holding superior readiness.
- Arconan forces outnumbered in terms of starfighters and outgunned in terms of heavy anti-capital ship firepower.
- Reconnaissance is scanner-based only. No time for dedicated probing attacks with interceptors.
- Based on previous engagements with Elysium forces, Collective doctrine will seek to overwhelm Arconan defenses with starfighters screening for their suicide bombers. Lancer frigates will protect their capital assets that offer longer-ranged fire on Arconan vessels.
- Previous tactics focused on the swift elimination of enemy Lancer frigates and crippling of Dreadnaughts via starfighter squadrons are estimated to yield diminishing returns as surviving Collective commanders learn and adapt their own tactics. *Novel approaches required.*



Battle Overview





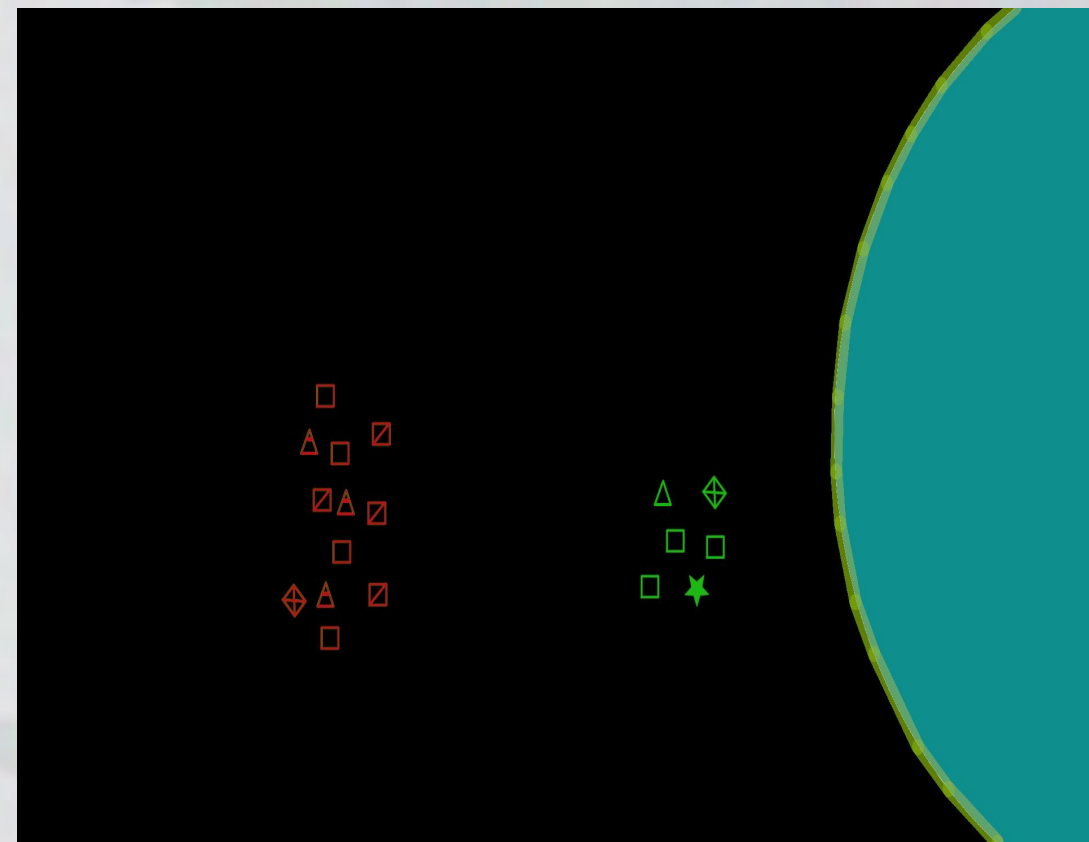
Battle Overview: Deployment

The Arconan Expeditionary Forces (Battlefleet Blankenstein) deploy in standard escort formation in orbit around Thillion, preparing to do a cursory sensor sweep of the area and go into silent running while awaiting further orders from the Arconan Proconsul.

As soon as first sensor returns are analyzed, Collective battlefleet elements, also in convoy formation, are identified at the edges of sensor range. Orders are given to maintain silent running, when Collective ships go into active scanning.

Elysium vessels gain sensor lock and adjust heading, shuffling their capital ships into line abreast with Lancers screening and launch starfighters.

Battlefleet Blankenstein gives orders to accelerate to attack speed and deploys starfighters, matching Elysium's deployment. Battle is likely to be joined near or around the orbiting asteroid field.

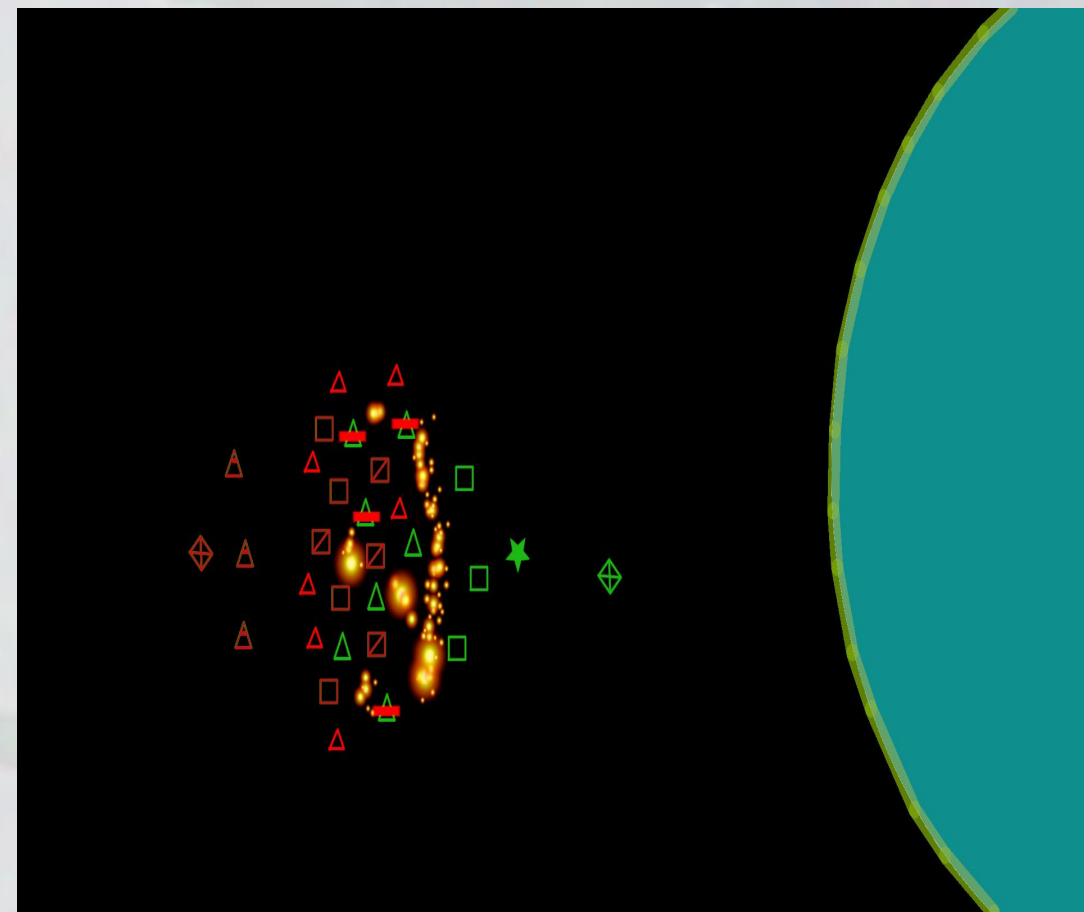




Battle Overview: Phase 1 (First salvos)

Moving at full speed towards the asteroid belt, Arconan forces prioritize Lancer frigates in order to cripple anti-starfighter protection of Elysium capital assets. The enemy, learning from past mistakes, pulls back the frigates and launches counter-attack with their own starfighters.

Collective numbers overwhelm AEF starfighters, though DT-49s give a good showing of themselves, taking out a score of hostiles before being overwhelmed. Arconan fleet forced on the defensive.





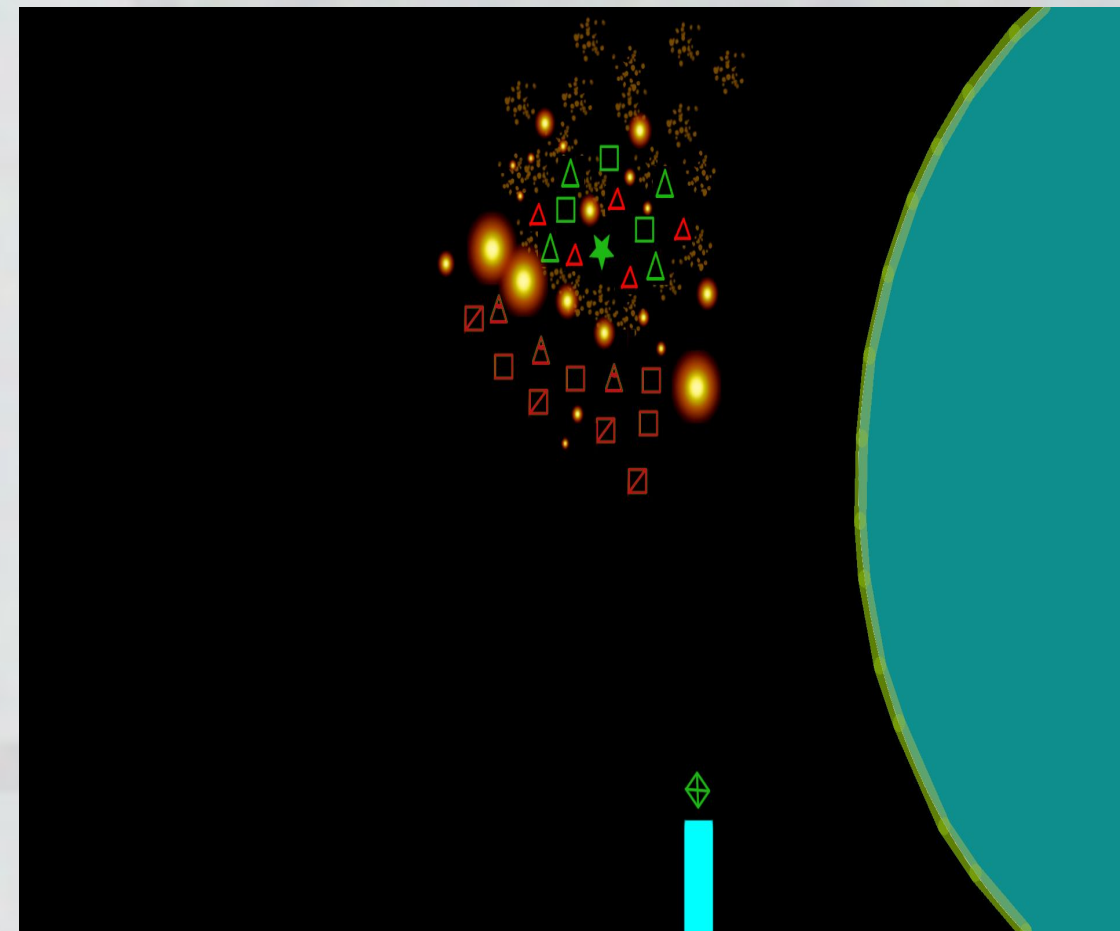
Battle Overview: Phase 2 (Asteroid Retreat)

Battlefleet Blankenstein executes hard turn to starboard and seeks refuge within the asteroid field. Collective forces continue to harass, but closer to their own ships, the AEF fighters are able to hold their own.

Elysium fleet moves in pursuit, pushing Lancers and Strike cruisers closer to the enemy due to lessened threat of starfighters and the smaller frigates' higher maneuverability within the asteroid field.

Blankenstein demonstrates first clever use of the gravity-well projectors, pulsing the generators on and off to disrupt asteroid trajectories in the *Event Horizon's* passing and creating denser clusters of space rocks in its wake.

Seemingly in disarray, a number of B-wing and X-wing squadrons land aboard *Hail of Shadow* and retreat into hyperspace.





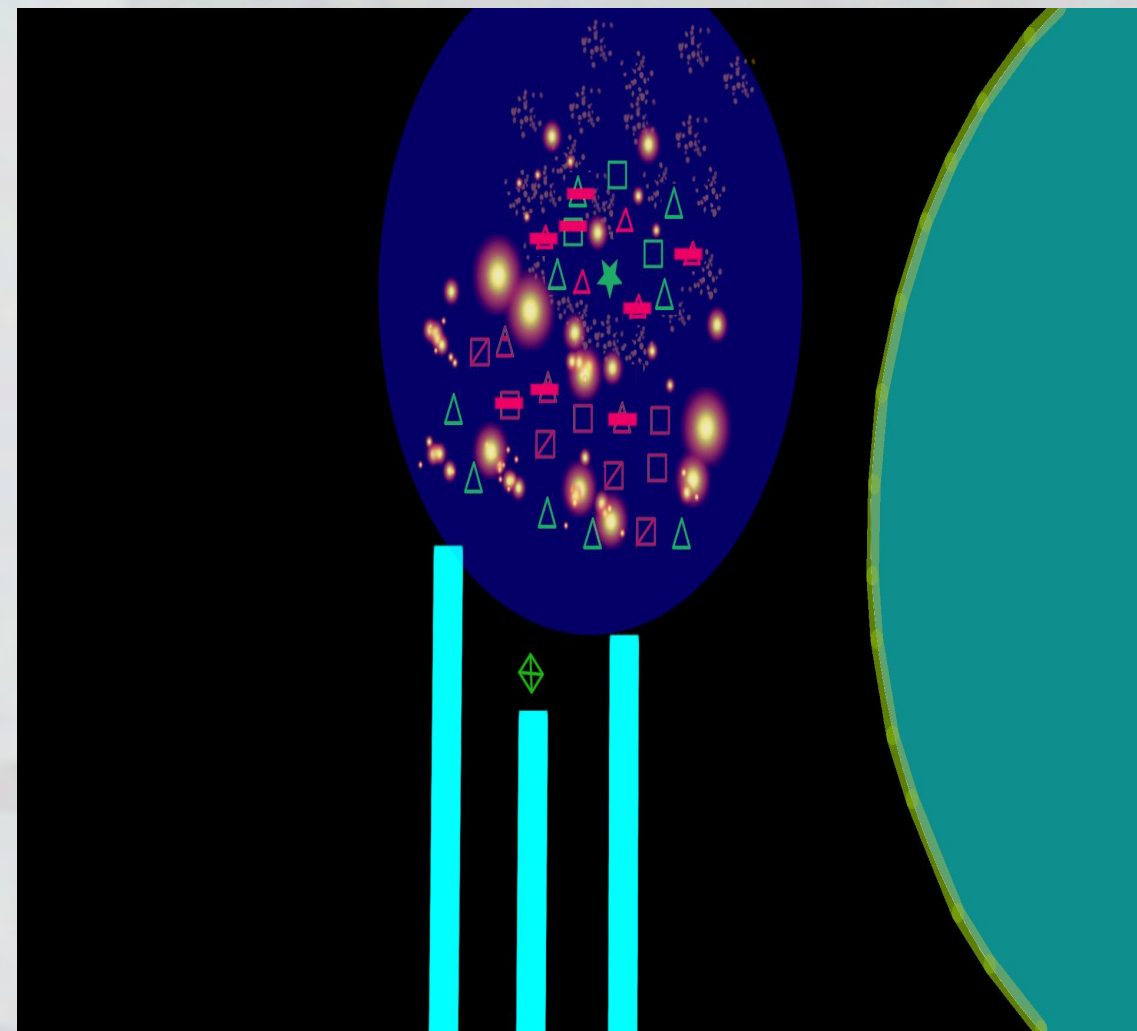
Battle Overview: Phase 3 (Scalpel)

Elysium closes in for the kill, with overwhelming firepower smashing through asteroids and raking the *Event Horizon* with devastating salvos. A Strike cruiser is lost trying to protect the flagship and several squadrons are badly mauled.

Blankenstein plays his trump card and activates all four gravity-well generators, creating a powerful, pre-known anchor point for the returning four squadrons of B- and X-wings. The starfighters jump out of hyperspace *behind* the Collective dreadnaughts and promptly unleash their proton torpedoes into the capital ships' vulnerable engine banks. One squadron is lost during entry, when the pilots, unfamiliar with this maneuver, misjudge their exit and slam into *Obrael*.

Collective dreadnaughts later identified as *Lansford* and *Yorcot* suffer crippling damage to their power systems. *Obrael* is destroyed as X-wing squadron impacts it during hyperspace exit.

Suddenly aware of the peril their capital ships are in, Collective forces make haste for their own ships while surviving Arconan elements clear the asteroid field and retreat into hyperspace.





Conclusions and Recommendations



Conclusions and Recommendation

Conclusions

- The deployed AEF contingent could not hope to defeat Elysium in a head-on battle. Use of available terrain and tactics was the only way to secure victory.
- Repeated uses of similar tactics against Collective fleet formations is not effective. They are capable of self-evaluation and improvement as witnessed here with their redeployment of their Lancers to avoid losing them early in the battle.
- Use of gravity-well projectors was commendable, although deployment within the asteroid field cost momentum. Whenever the projectors are engaged, the Immobilizer's speed is greatly reduced. This almost cost Blankenstein the ship, had it not been for the heroic self-sacrifice of the Strike cruiser *Selen's Song*.
- Enemy losses totalled 1 destroyed Dreadnaught and 2 more mission-killed. Starfighter losses amounted to 3 X-wing squadron and 4 Z-95 Headhunter squadron equivalents.
- AEF losses totalled 1 destroyed Strike-class, 1 destroyed DT-49 flight, *Event Horizon* heavily damaged. Starfighter losses amounted to 4 X-wing squadron equivalents.

Recommendations

- Intensify starfighter training for unconventional hyperspace maneuvers.
- Continue developing novel approaches for dealing with Collective fleet composition.
- Deploy forward scouting units prior to major fleet movements within contested systems.
- Award Blankenstein the Distinguished Service Cross and whole crew of *Selen's Song* the Order of Our Martyred Lady.



Appendix: Contingencies



Contingency planning for Phases 1-3

Situation

1. Elysium force launches starfighter assault ahead of their capital ships during first engagement
2. Elysium force preserves significant anti-starfighter capability near capital ships during asteroid retreat
3. Elysium force splits forces to pincer in Arconan vessels inside asteroid field
4. *Event Horizon* is lost during asteroid retreat

Contingency

1. Close formation and slow to half speed. Draw out the starfighter contingent and engage whilst transiting the asteroid field. Long-range turbolaser fire to shatter asteroids into more debris. Prioritize B-wing and suicide tugs. Use overlapping fields of fire to protect capital ships while starfighters dogfight.
2. Pursue Elysium contingent within the asteroid field with all possible vigor. Long-range turbolaser fire to shatter asteroids into more debris. Cripple the committed units and retreat into hyperspace.
3. Continue with plan as normal, targeting outermost fleet contingent with hyperspace precision jump. Once contingent immobile/cripple, move Arconan fleet to escape vector. Elysium contingent between Thillion and asteroids unable to pursue effectively.
4. Inability to use gravity wells for pin-point jump to enemy's rear leads to mission abort. Disengage while keeping asteroid field as much between Arconan and Elysium vessels and jump to hyperspace when able. Starfighter screen for Strike cruisers.



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