

## OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS

# STARFORCE SCENARIO 10

## A Strategy for Humans

by Tony Watson

Being the first game that I designed from top to bottom, I have an almost unnatural affection for *StarForce*. I pat it on its head every two months when it makes its regular appearance on the SPI Bestseller list; I snarl when its detractors get too close; I make sure it wears its galoshes in the rain; and so forth. So, sit down, have some tea, and read about it a little! Cake? —RAS

So you're playing in Scenario 10 of *StarForce* as the Pan Human Hegemony and you think it's about time to show the uppity aliens just who's on top in this end of the galaxy. Not quite sure how to do it? The following may help.

The first thing to do in any *StarForce* scenario is to look over the Order of Battle, Deployment, and Victory Conditions and judge the relative advantages and disadvantages therein. Comparison of the Order of Battle is pretty simple: just compare numbers there to see who has the advantage. Deployment, both in terms of Gates and forces allotted to them is a bit more involved. Exactly where the StarForces are initially placed will determine how fast they can get into the battle. Deployment of the Gates will tell which Gates can support each other (Gate-to-Gate shift) in case of attack and also, how accessible your Gates are to enemy attack. Finally, Victory Conditions might give special advantages to either or both sides.

In the case of Scenario 10 we have:

**Order of Battle:** The PHH player has 10 StarForces to the DL's 7; a substantial advantage.

**Deployment:** The DL player is at a disadvantage here since the L'Chal-Dah and Rame systems are too far apart to mutually support one another. Within their respective holdings the gates are mutually joined. The PHH player's Gates are all connected in one move but that doesn't matter much since he shouldn't be doing much defending in this scenario. The important thing to remember in this category is the wide split between the L'Chal-Dah and Rame gates. For the most part, deployment favors the PHH.

**Victory Conditions:** This is the category that makes things difficult for the PHH. The game limit of twenty turns forces the PHH to do things fast and not always exactly as they wish. Also the conditions themselves are not that easy to comply with; subjugation of both home systems or four other Gates is no easy task. The DL needs only to hold out, sneak in and zap Sol quickly. The only advantage accrued by the PHH is the fact that Epsilon Eridana and Alpha Centauri do not have to be guarded (since their capture doesn't count towards a DL victory.)

A quick synopsis of the above shows that the PHH must execute a quick initial offensive against the divided League while keeping a watchful eye on Sol.

At the onset, the PHH player must decide in what direction he will attack. In most cases, he can only thrust in one direction; "up" against the L'Chal-Dah or over and "down" versus the Rame. The Rame are probably the better choice since the PHH player can have StarForces adjacent to two gates (36 Ophiuchi and 70 Ophiuchi) in two turns and units adjacent to HR 7703 in three. Though it takes but one turn, with a gate-shift from Sol, to 61 Cygni but units can not be adjacent to the other L'Chal-Dah systems for three turns. The essence of this scenario is speed, and three turns is the fastest L'Chal-Dah forces can reach 70 Ophiuchi Sigma Draconis, and attempting to reinforce either of the other two gates will take even longer. An additional incentive to attack the Rame is the fact they have but three StarForces to defend their Gates while the L'Chal-Dah have four.

Probably the best move in this situation is to thrust the fleet at Alpha C towards the 36 Ophiuchi with a gate shift. The same should be done with the forces at Sol, only these should be aimed at 70 Ophiuchi. You will have to make a decision as to whether to commit all five of the Sol forces or to keep one back to be used with the incoming forces from Epsilon Indi. It goes without saying that the two forces at Epsilon should be shifted to Sol on the first turn.

The first turn should tell you a few things; like whether or not the L'Chal-Dah are coming out of Sigma Draconis to reinforce their allies. If so, shift the forces at Sol to a point midway between Sol and 61 Cygni. There they can provide a credible threat (especially if the DL player believes the move toward the Rame stars to be feints or at best attempts to split the League) to that star and still be in enhanced shift range of Sol.

Down at the Rame stars, the safe plan would be to head for 36 Ophiuchi with the forces from Sol as well as the Alpha C group. You'll be adjacent to 36 Ophiuchi with 7 or 8 StarForces at the end of turn three, just as the L'Chal-Dah shift into the Rame home star. The *maximum* defense of 36 Ophiuchi will be the gate and the three Rame forces; easy enough for the force you can bring to bear. In addition it is unlikely that the Rame will defend it so heavily (to the exclusion of 70 Ophiuchi) so you might even want to send a couple of units back towards 70 Ophiuchi so they can enhance the forces shifting out of 36 Ophiuchi the next turn. Despite any Rame defense you should be able to carry 36

Ophiuchi if your tactics are not off and fortune (the chit) isn't totally against you. Strive however not to lose any forces to randomization needlessly as the game is short and it may take a while to get those units back into play. After 36 Ophiuchi has fallen there should be enough superiority to move on 70 Ophiuchi with a relatively good chance of success while your remaining force is hovering off 61 Cygni or thereabouts tying up the remaining L'Chal-Dah.

If, however, the L'Chal-Dah do *not* head for 70 Ophiuchi on turn one thus delaying the earliest arrival on L'Chal-Dah to turn four, you should be in good shape to threaten both 70 Ophiuchi and 36 Ophiuchi quickly and simultaneously while your force at the center of the map keeps a careful watch on the L'Chal-Dah. The Rame player will probably give you 36 Ophiuchi, choosing to stand at 70 Ophiuchi and depending on what you send to 36, you have 4 to 6 StarForces to battle him there.

After 36 and 70 Ophiuchi have fallen, you're going to have to size up the relative situation to determine your next course of action. Depending on the positions of any of your and Rame randomized StarForces, you might want to spin off a small task force for HR 7703 and take the bulk of the remaining on up to challenge the L'Chal-Dah systems. If you have been lucky and randomized the Rame defenders with small losses to yourself, then things should not be too difficult for you. If not, then the whole war might hinge on one battle at Sigma Draconis. The fact that you hold 70 Ophiuchi should make the DL player hesitant to leave Sigma Draconis weak. The time you won with the quick defeat of the Rame should allow you the turns needed to maneuver and stretch the L'Chal-Dah thin and pick off his systems. You'll have, if things haven't gone too badly for you, a 2 to 4 StarForce superiority. The units hovering off Cygni can always be used for a quick thrust into that star.

Not to appear too partisan, I'll offer a brief word on Defense League strategy.

First off, remember you are on the defensive and both time and the victory conditions are working *for* you. You can afford to lose a system or two saving your strength, and meanest scrapping, for the crucial final battles. Probably the two stars you should always defend are the two home systems, as loss of one will put you in something of a spot.

Basically you are faced with three choices: sending the forces of the unthreatened League member to the aid of the other; defending the two groups of systems with their own initial forces; or abandoning the

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Any deep penetrations in the first two turns will result in the German units being pinned down and the forward Russian positions being unharmed. So, the German player will be caught between his two objectives of breaking the forward and the back positions without enough force to do either effectively. He is now committed and dispersed for the rest of the game and should lose. A mixed policy will achieve even less and probably disperse his forces more. So, the German must attack the egg which brings us to the basic precept of German play — concentration! In fact all the first three turns reinforcement should be used to break this forward enclave. These forces should ensure the demise of the enclave by the end of Turn Four, and possibly Turn Three.

The German's best chance of cracking the "egg" in the first two turns lies on its North side. If penetration is achieved the Russian commander should be overrun to unsupply the enclave. The German has to be careful not to be pinned by forces moving into adjacent wood hexes. Again, this will generally result from dispersion of German forces. On Game Turn Three the 46th and 47th Panzer Corps attack the South and West of the "egg." The 24th Panzer Corps moves to threaten both Smolensk and Roslavl, taking up a position so that it can move back if more force is needed to finish off the "egg."

### 2. The Middle Game

Having disposed of the "egg" the German is now faced with a decision; where should he go to get the greatest advantage. There are four possibilities for the German player to

choose from: he can move to the Northern Section, the "gap," Smolensk or Roslavl. Whichever he chooses must be attacked with the bulk of his forces, to the exclusion of any other attacks since he needs total armor concentration to gain victory.

If he goes North, there is no possibility of a direct outflanking maneuver. Also the terrain is such that it is difficult to dislodge the Russian, while the German can be pinned down. Furthermore, the terrain allows the Russian to form strong subsidiary lines of defense to prevent exploitation. One supplied division in the right place can stop a whole advance. Trying to overrun untried divisions in woods is a heart-stopping practice for the Germans (and should not strictly be attempted) since this is more than likely to be a 1-2 attack.

Should the German attack the gap, he is faced with the opposite problem in that there is nothing firm to grasp. If he is not careful he will flail around ineffectually and without supply. However, the gap does have the potential as a pathway for outflanking either Smolensk or Roslavl. The game will now depend on how the Russian has protected his flanks on each side of the gap. There are advantages to attacking either city. In the case of Smolensk the target is quickly accessible to the majority of the German forces, particularly the infantry which are his most effective combat units. The major disadvantage is that Smolensk is easily reinforced. On the other hand, Roslavl can be isolated from the rest of the Russian forces and may even be unsupplied. However, here the German

may become overextended (and unsupplied himself) which can lead to disaster.

We feel the choice of target depends on the exact situation which must be assessed separately for each game. Whichever the German chooses to do, he must protect himself from sallies from the other center of resistance. These will attempt to pin, encircle and perhaps destroy him. Remember a Panzer division in the open and surrounded is quite weak, although with all those steps it will be "an unconscionable time a-dying." The German protects himself by sheer weight of numbers and by using mechanized infantry divisions as a screen.

In the End Game it may be possible to secure Vyasma, Roslavl, or Yel'nya from Smolensk, while from Roslavl the German can take Yel'nya but should then turn back to take Smolensk. If he moves further East, there will inevitably be counterattacks from the side of the gap he has not attacked. These objectives will occupy him for the rest of the game.

### CONCLUSION

Unlike the old victory conditions the fall of Smolensk or both Roslavl and Yel'nya should give the German a marginal victory (depending on how many divisions he has lost). We feel the game is so finely balanced that the old victory conditions are still applicable. Under the new conditions the best result the German can achieve is a draw. Like all the best board wargames this game brings out the three principles of Logistics, use of Terrain and, of course, timing. We feel it is bound to become a classic. ■

## StarForce Scenario 10

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defenses of either the Rame stars or the L'Chal-Dah systems to the exclusive defense of the others. In option one you're trying to stop the PHH early and not let them get anything cheap, while in option two you should attempt to inflict losses and slow down the advance with the defending forces. Option three is not as strange or stupid as it might sound, for remember the victory conditions force the PHH to occupy systems in *both* of the respective league member holdings. I saw this done (to good advantage) in a game where the Rame StarForces headed for 61 Cygni at the outset. The PHH player, smelling a trap, advanced too slowly through the Rame stars, and didn't have adequate time to defend the combined units in the L'Chal-Dah system. If you do this however, don't be too obvious with your abandonment; bluff him a bit.

Probably the most important tactic the DL possess is to occasionally threaten Sol if things get a bit too hot for you elsewhere. Staging at 61 Cygni is excellent as you can be adjacent with one shift. He'll have to call his forces back, for if he loses Sol he loses the game. ■

## War in Europe

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decisively; he can try to eke out a lesser victory by pulling their fangs and digging in to beat off their eventual counter attacks. He must decide on a strategy initially, and stick with it in broad terms or court disaster.

The Soviet and Western Allied players have little choice initially but to absorb the damage the German inflicts on them, hit him where it hurts at as little cost to themselves as possible, and when he is eventually weak enough, go for his jugular. In general terms, the campaign game *WIEu* should bear a family resemblance to WWII. However, the details will certainly change, and one of the most significant of these is the ultimate winner. ■



### FEEDBACK RESULTS, MOVES 31

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9.	Torgau	6.31
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12.	Playback	5.83
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