

CHALLENGE \equiv SPACE \equiv

GDW's Magazine of Futuristic Gaming



SPECIAL
I S S U E

For 2300 AD—
Ogres in 2300 AD
by Lester W. Smith

For MegaTraveller—
IRIS Characters in
MegaTraveller
by Charles E. Gannon

For Twilight: 2000—
Mortars
by Harold Martin



Sample file



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CHALLENGE

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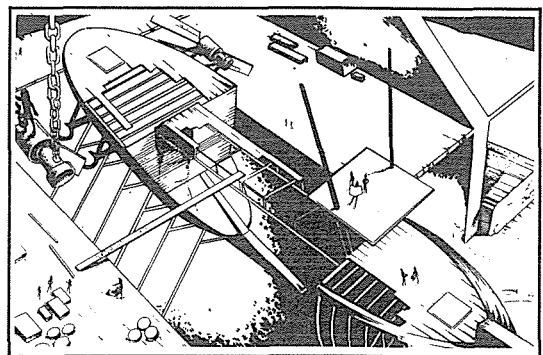
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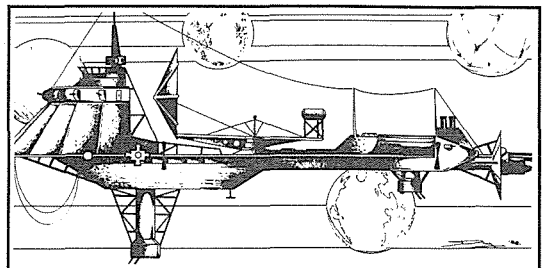
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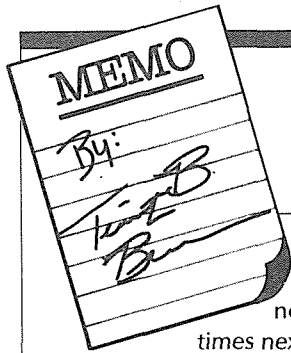
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From the Management

The rumors are beginning to fly, and indeed it is hard to keep a lid on news like this. **Challenge** will appear six times next year. We've decided to go bimonthly in 1989 and continue our 80-page format. We also plan to beef up our coverage of additional games—the response to our *Battletech* and *Star Wars* articles has been tremendous. Subscriptions are now offered on a six-issue basis, and the subscription price has been drastically reduced (see the sub info elsewhere in this magazine).

You may also notice that we started a column in issue 33 on Earth in **2300 AD**. We've decided to discontinue the series in light of the enormous detail presented in the **2300 AD** revision. The revision covers the background material in much greater detail than the original edition. To continue with Earth **Challenge** articles would be to repeat a lot of information. And **Challenge** is crowded enough without reiterating those materials.

—Timothy B. Brown

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JUST DETECTED

CONVENTIONS

TOLEDO GAMING CONVENTION VI

October 1-2, 1988, Toledo, Ohio. The sixth annual Toledo Gaming Convention will be held at the University of Toledo, Scott Park Campus, Toledo, Ohio. Events will include tournament and demonstration games, a miniatures-painting contest, miniatures-painting clinics, seminars, movies, a game exhibitors' and dealers' room, special events, computer clubs and dealers, and auctions. For more information send an SASE to Mind Games, 3001 N. Reynolds Rd., Toledo, OH 43615, or call (419) 531-5540 M-F 4-8 P.M.

ARIZONA CON GAMES I

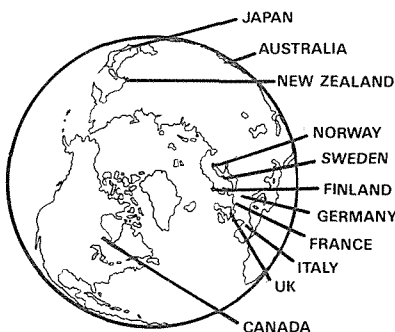
October 7-9, 1988, Tuscon, Arizona. This convention will feature open gaming, 16 con-sponsored games and tournaments, *Twilight: 2000*, *Traveller*, *D & D*, and a variety of wargames. Contact: Arizona Con Games I, PO Box 40998, Tuscon, AZ 85717.

WARGAMERS WEEKEND

October 28-30, 1988, Newburyport, Massachusetts. This convention will be held on the weekend of October 28-30, 1988, at the Disabled American Veterans Hall (DAV), Route 1, Newburyport, MA 01950. The convention will include fantasy role-playing, historical miniatures, and boardgame events and demonstrations. Contact: Chris Parker, C/O The Toy Soldier, PO Box 148, Newburyport, MA 01950 (617) 462-8241.

SILVERCON

November 18-20, 1988, Asheville, North Carolina. Silvercon will feature panel discussions, demonstrations, displays, tournaments, gaming, auction, dealers' room, costume contest, and 24-hour video room. Silvercon is dedicated to the memory of North Carolina fantasy author Manly Wade Wellman. Silvercon will donate its profits to Mr. Wellman's widow to help defray her husband's medical bills. Guests will include science-fiction and fantasy writers. For more information, contact: Silvercon, PO Box 8342, Asheville, NC, 21884.



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Air Strike Designer's Notes

Air Strike is the natural follow-up to a game like **Air Superiority**, as most players want eventually to explore what it takes to attack ground targets, and to play scenarios where fighters are defending against attack aircraft with specific objectives. This, after all, is the primary reason for the existence of air superiority fighters: to destroy air-to-ground threats. But **Air Strike** should be considered more than just an addition of rules for delivering air-to-ground weaponry. I see it as a vehicle for the gamer to experience what the term "airpower" really means. Airpower, being "force projection," means the delivery of violent destructive power to the enemy from the air. It is not as simple as it sounds, considering the enemy doesn't usually cooperate in the process.

There are many distinct types of attack and strike missions, each requiring different and specifically tailored methods of execution. For example, close air support might involve a low altitude, high speed laydown of cluster bombs against armor, yet an interdiction strike might require a high altitude dive to hit the spans of a bridge with 2000-pound bombs. In contrast, armed reconnaissance is best done at medium altitudes with rockets and cluster bombs. Flak-suppression may warrant mixed techniques, low-level run-ins followed by pop-ups to a few thousand feet to fire barrages of rockets. The complexity of attack missions, involving, as they usually do, three-dimensional maneuvers dangerously close to the ground to meet weapons delivery criteria while under hostile fire, becomes immense. In all, an attack or strike mission is probably the most demanding type of military flying that exists. A single raid, which may require perhaps two minutes in a combat zone, takes literally hours to plan. In fact, planning a strike is a consummate science. I know: I've spent many long hours planning, briefing, and even leading a few.

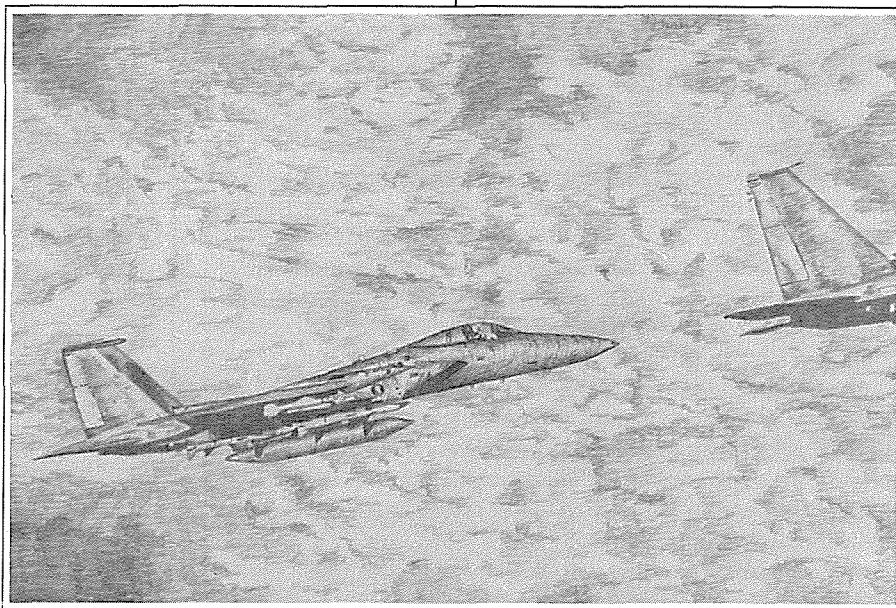
Against the modern air defense systems of today's military forces, an attack crew must carefully consider every aspect of a mission, from the takeoff to the landing. Every phase is critical, and a mistake at any point could be fatal. When a strike mission is ordered, an aircrew is given a specific target to hit and a specific time window in which to hit

it. Planning is usually done from the target backwards. For example, the kind of target dictates the type and quantity of weapons to be used, which determines the load the aircraft must carry, the speed at which it can fly, and the fuel that it will use. This, in turn, dictates the flight profile which the aircraft must follow; from this the time needed to reach the target is calculated and used to determine when the takeoff must occur. No two attack missions are ever the same, either. A hundred things must be considered beforehand: the expected weather, the nature of the defenses, the weapon delivery profile, the effectiveness of countermeasures, the capabilities of the aircraft and crew, and the availability of support assets like AWACS, tankers, Wild Weasels, and rescue forces. A little flexibility to allow for human errors and unexpected contingencies must also be built into the plan. When complete, all the crews involved must be thoroughly briefed, and only then can the raid be attempted.

Air-to-ground attacks against today's heavily defended targets will almost always involve tense, fast-breaking action and sudden death. As a young lieutenant planning strikes, what donned on me, though it's seldom discussed within the squadrons, is the fact that attack jets are the "poor bloody infantry" of aviation. Attack pilots will be the ones exposed to the heaviest direct enemy fire, and losses

will be high. It has now been officially estimated in several studies that a carrier's striking power is only good for three days of missions in a high threat environment. The Argentines figured their attack crews survived an average of 3.5 missions in the Falklands War. NATO, in its most pessimistic mood, estimates 600 tactical jet losses in the first few weeks of a future war. It is true that attrition will be high unless the enemy is overwhelmed in numbers and technology, as in the Bekaa Valley actions of 1982 and Libya in 1986. Playing **Air Strike** a few times will bear this out. Near perfect plans and attacks can be devised to beat any defense, given time and superior intelligence; however, as with everything else in war, nothing goes according to plan, nor is there ever sufficient intelligence when it's needed.

But what I like most about the **Air Strike** module is that it gives the players of **Air Superiority** a chance to see the other side of the coin, to develop a feeling for what it takes to perform attack and strike missions in the face of various enemy defenses. The scenarios allow the players to skip the tedious planning process and throw themselves right into the action, where they must immediately contend with the strategies of how to best evade the defenses and deliver ordnance effectively on the target. While the rules may emphasize weapon delivery parameters and techniques, which is the



methodology of ground attack, the play of the game emphasizes penetration tactics and target destruction, which is the essence of ground attack. Learning to survive and to achieve target destruction is the challenge that makes **Air Strike** as much fun or more fun to play than **Air Superiority**.

Incidentally, I'd like to mention here that the scenarios put you into the attack crews' version of "Nightmare on Elm Street"; that is, against heavily defended targets and tough odds, which is not a smart idea if you want to live long, though it's often necessary. The ideal attack mission, which we always try to plan for, is the one where we catch the defenses totally off guard, paste the target, and leave while the gunners are still running to their weapons and the interceptors are just warming their engines—a great situation for the attack pilots, but not for balanced gaming.

A MiG shot down is a headline in the paper and a medal for the victor; a supply dump blown to oblivion is one or two tank divisions halted in an offensive!

You will notice that **Air Strike** meshes in well with **Air Superiority**, and this was not simply by chance. Several years ago, when I designed the whole game system, I meant to include air-to-ground play, which in fact helped me choose the scale to use. Air combat could easily be broken down into smaller time segments, but trying to simulate a ground raid with a 20-mile run-in, lasting several minutes at five seconds per game turn or less, would require too many turns and too many turns of play. When GDW got its first draft of the rules, it was a monster game with air-to-ground actions included. The first decision made was to break it into two parts: air-to-air rules followed by air-to-ground rules. We didn't want potential buyers to see another giant unplayable game and back off. An unseen benefit is that with the extra time taken, **Air Strike** was developed and cleaned up quite a bit. My original rules were full of holes and ambiguities caused by oversimplification. The success in sales and popularity of both **Air Superiority** and **Air Strike** shows that this was a good move by the company, although for me, as an outsider and an amateur designer, the extra time and work required to see my pet project in print was (seemingly) interminable.

The playtesters, God bless them (fanatics one and all), worked hard with me to keep the game as playable as possible, hence the release point charts and other play aids that have been included. You, the player, will notice that the rules, though many, remain basic and common-sense. Due to the scale, SAMs, like air-to-air missiles, have envelopes that can be flown in and out, giving a sense of purpose and perspective to the game. AAA units were made battery-sized to bring their probabilities of damaging aircraft into gameable parameters. As in **Air Superiority**, a game of **Air Strike** will cycle the players through these key phases of a ground attack mission: 1) ingress; 2) defense penetration and/or evasion; 3) target acquisition; 4) weapons delivery; and 5) egress and escape.

In playing **Air Strike**, you will soon discover that attack pilots

are the unsung heroes of military aviation, the equivalent of pro football linemen doing the dirty work while others get the glory. Shooting down airplanes is glamorous but does not win wars. A MiG shot down is a headline in the paper and a medal for the victor; a supply dump blown to oblivion is one or two tank divisions halted in an offensive! You tell me which one contributes most to the war effort. As an ex-attack pilot, I have my own biased opinion, and I've also heard Air Force A-10 attack guys say, "You can shoot down all the bad guys you want, but if you return to your base and the enemy's eating in your mess hall, brother, you've just lost the war." Have fun, gents!

POSTSCRIPT

Challenge has been kind enough to allow me to have a column for the **Air Superiority/Air Strike** system (actually, Loren ordered several of the **2300 AD** star cruisers to sit around my house and make sure I provide one). I will try to make this happen since there is so much more that can be done with the system. If I can keep up the pace, then it will be a regular feature.

I still don't know what format this column will take, but I intend to feature new scenarios and aircraft data cards on occasion, and to talk tactics in terms of game mechanics on a regular basis. Articles and rules ideas from the readership, as well as questions and answers on game rules, will be included. In the last issue, I reviewed the 1987 **Air Superiority** tournament, and this time I'm offering some of my thoughts on **Air Strike**.

The future of the game system as a whole looks bright. The playtest on the Middle East supplements is complete. In case you're wondering, the Middle East supplements will include rules for individual pilot quality and feature a lot of early jets, the Vampire, the Meteor, MiG-17, MiG-19, Mystere, Hunter and Mirage-IIIc to name a few, as well as newer jets like the Kfir, MiG-25 and others, plus around 40 new scenarios. They are a mix of **Air Superiority** and **Air Strike** actions.

—J.D. Webster

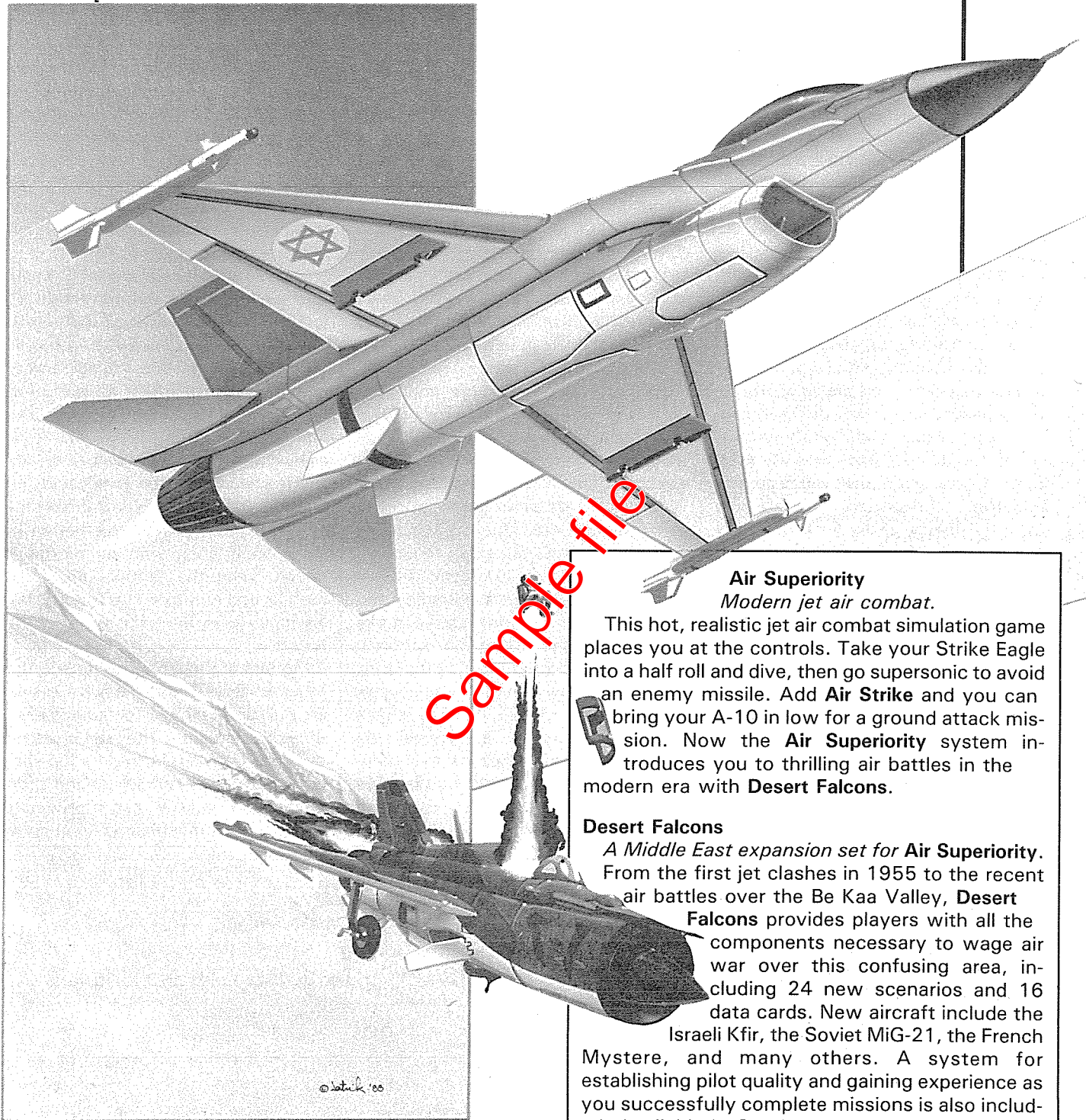
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