

# Tactical Primer

## The Alunda Host

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The Alunda Host is one of the more interesting empires in the Omega Octant, being the result of the octopus-like Mirn using the Alunda (which are essentially giant, electric, space whales) as living starships. Alunda living ships operate like standard ships, but with various unique advantages, disadvantages, and technologies.

Alunda ships have four unique weapon systems that define their combat abilities:

- bioelectric bolts (BBs), their main direct-fire weapon;
- plasma whips which can fire like short-range phasers or launch small plasma torpedoes;
- the attraction/repulsion field (ARF) which can push or pull other ships;
- the plasma cloud generator (PCG) which produces a defensive "smoke screen" effect.

### BIOELECTRIC BOLTS

These stand in for both phasers and heavy weapons on Alunda ships. They have a flexible arming cost and can fire every turn except at the heaviest arming level. For 1/2 a point of power, a bioelectric bolt can be fired as a point-defense weapon like a phaser-3. For one point of power, a BB is similar to a phaser-1. At two points of power, a BB operates not unlike a standard-load disruptor. For a cost of four points of power, a BB can be used as a heavy weapon that does more damage than an overloaded disruptor but requires a turn of cooling after firing.

Bioelectric bolts pull power out of a capacitor organ that can hold any amount of power, but loses half of the power stored at the end of each turn. This gives an Alunda captain a great deal of flexibility, as the arming levels of the BBs don't need to be determined during the Energy Allocation Phase. Instead, you can determine the arming level at the moment of firing based on what each BB is needed for and how much power is available. Most of the time, BBs should be fired at the one-point and four-point levels for maximum effect and power efficiency. The 1/2-point level is great for close defense and the two-point level is generally best used for long range (8+ hexes) sniping.

As BBs use two six-sided dice to see if they hit or miss, and Alunda ships get a free point of ECCM for each two points that they generate, BBs also tend to be fairly resistant to EW shifts.

### PLASMA WHIPS

Alunda ships also mount plasma whips, which can fire once every 32 impulses at no energy cost. They do a bit less damage than an Alpha Octant phaser-3, but do double damage to unshielded targets (such as shuttles or missiles). As they can only fire once every 32 impulses, they are less effective at point defense than a phaser-3, and so are often best used for a follow-up attack through an opponent's down shield.

Plasma whips can also be used to launch whipcrack torpedoes, which operate just like plasma torpedoes with a five-point warhead and a maximum range of 16 hexes. These might not seem like much, but when you consider that each plasma whip can fire one of these every 32 impulses, a squadron of Alunda ships can fire a significant volley of mid-ranged plasma torpedoes each turn.

### ATTRACTION/REPULSION FIELDS

These fields give Alunda ships the ability to pull or push other ships one hex per impulse, within a maximum range of six hexes. An attraction/repulsion field can be useful for dragging a foe closer

for a bioelectric bolt and plasma whip strike or it can be used to keep a pursuing enemy from getting too close for comfort. They also can be used on friendly ships to give them a speed boost or push them out of an inconvenient spot.

ARFs are, however, expensive to arm and hold and often it will be best to hold only a single ARF (of the two or so on a given ship) and make sure to engage on the side with the armed ARF. As ARFs can't be used on anything smaller than a PF, such as a fighter or missile, they are no help for point defense.

### PLASMA CLOUD GENERATOR

The plasma cloud generator produces an expanding field of "ink" in space that provides natural ECM and degrades seeking weapons that pass through it. Much like an ARF, the PCG is expensive to arm and hold. In single-ship engagements, the PCG tends to be difficult to employ and will generally be best left unarmed. In multiple ship engagements, where one ship can protect others with a PCG or multiple plasma clouds can overlap and create a wide field to run behind, the PCG is more likely to be useful. Hiding in a plasma cloud while using a wild weasel or bracing for an attack can be handy, but difficult to arrange.

### LIVING HULL

Other unique advantages that Alunda ships have include adrenaline batteries and powerful healing abilities. Alunda batteries hold five points of power each and can regenerate one point of free power per turn per battery "gland" (a group of two or three batteries). The downside of adrenaline batteries is that they can only be rearmed with APRs, so Alunda ships have no access to reserve warp power. As an Alunda ship can only pull energy out of a single battery each turn, don't worry about "wasting" battery power on reinforcement or BBs if you need it, as emptying a battery on this turn doesn't mean you won't have battery power on the next turn and it is always good to have an empty battery to take damage on. With only two or three batteries per ship (except for the Pursuer-class DN), it is easy to lose your batteries to internal damage.

Luckily, Alunda ships can heal quickly in battle, far surpassing standard damage-control capabilities. The Alunda healing track operates in most ways like damage control, but tends to have a higher number than on regular ships and Alunda ships can repair twice the number of systems that a standard ship can. For example, the standard Huntship heavy cruiser has a healing track that goes up to six and can repair 12 systems in a given scenario. This means that an Alunda captain can freely repair a handful of hull boxes to protect his batteries and still have enough repairs to fix necessary weapons and power.

### THE COST OF A LIVING HULL

All of these advantages do not come without a cost, however. As noted, Alunda ships can't use reserve warp, meaning that they need to pre-plot High Energy Turns and can't react to events during the turn with unplotted mid-turn speed changes. When taking internal damage, Alunda ships have a few peculiarities. They have no weapons hit on "phaser" hits on the DAC (BBs are hit on "torpedo" and "drone" Damage Points; plasma whips are hit on "aux con" Damage Points), so they tend to lose their tractor beams quickly. They also only have a single large warp engine that is hit on any "warp" Damage Point. Early in a battle this won't have much of an effect on the ship taking damage, but late in a battle this can mean that more warp engine boxes are lost than on standard ships.

### CONCLUSION

Alunda ships offer many interesting advantages and systems that standard ships don't have access to, and can form powerful squadrons to fight neighboring threats. Consider giving these giant, electric, space whales a try.