

GameMaster Notes

Incidental Units

Teams are encouraged to look carefully at V16.00, the campaign rules for Incidental Units. These are the civilian and escort units that are inevitably “hanging around” any Base, FRD, or Star System; or are traveling with a Supply Convoy.

The genesis of Incidental Units began simply enough. There's many an epic story in SFB lore of the “assaulting a Starbase” scenario, which was more or less standardized in SG8.0 of the SFB Basic Set. Long-time SFB players will usually have a “guaranteed” way to take out any Starbase – my favorite over the years has been the claim that any Starbase can simply be droned to death. Nice fantasy.

What these claims often ignore is the fact that Starbases (and other sorts of space-borne Bases), despite being in space, don't exist in a vacuum. They are places of commerce and diplomacy, not just military installations. Moreover, no high-level Fleet Command is going to leave a Base without some basic protection beyond its own weapons – they're just too expensive to risk. Bases tend to have picket units, including Police ships, and even real warships (a Starbase will have a light cruiser! [R1.1C]), so you can't just wander in with a few drone bombardment units, sit outside of effective Phaser-4 range, and blow up the Base without a fight. And anyone else in the area who can't run faster than a warship is going to be fighting for the Base that protects them.

Some analysis with a spreadsheet shows the possible effects of Incidental Units on combats, and can reveal some startling numbers. The following table shows the combat BPVs of Incidental Units for various Bases, and an estimate for Supply Convoys (note that the table omits Civilian Incidental Units [V16.90]). As you can see, the news is not always good for an attacker:

Unit	Combat BPV of Incidental Units		
	Min	Max	Average
Star System ^Δ	412	2215	925
Starbase	486	1750	894
Battle Station	249	890	568
Base Station	249	855	552
FRD [◇]	139	914	529
Supply Convoy [‡]	0	412	206

‡ This is an estimate based on a moderate-sized Supply Convoy

Δ This is based on a Star System at Development Level 5

◇ Does not include at ships present for Repair or Refit [V16.66]

Someone attacking a Starbase could easily walk into a hornet's nest of Incidental Units. Even going after a Base Station with a 600 BPV force is a little dicey.

Where does all that BPV come from? Well, a lot, as you'll see in V16.00, is Freighters. Sure, Freighters are an easy kill, but do you **really** want to take your cruiser up against 18 of them, with a Base providing EW support? You'll blow up a few, but 15 Phaser-2s at close range will cripple your cruiser. Food for thought.

Finally, back to the fantasy of droning a Starbase to death. Even before Y175, a Starbase and any likely set of Incidental Units could handle drone waves in excess of 100 drones at a time. And Starbases have a lot more Cargo capacity than any fleet of warships.

End of GameMaster Notes: Incidental Units