SPACE COMBAT
FREE MARS
MINI GAME SYSTEM RULES

1.0 COMPONENTS

Each Mini Game includes 40 game pieces, 18 cards, 1 11" x 17" map, this set of system rules, and a Scenario sheet of scenarios and exclusive rules. Players will need at least one die (d6) to play the game (six is ideal).

2.0 INTRODUCTION

FREE MARS! SPACE COMBAT is a solitaire game system where the player takes command of a squadron of spaceships in Decision Games' **Free Mars** "universe," conducting missions in space during a rebellion in the Solar System. The Opposition Force (OPFOR) is controlled by the game system via a deck of Operations (Ops) Cards. The game is played in scenarios, in which you must accomplish various missions, generated by Mission Cards. Each game includes a campaign scenario allowing you to link the individual missions into a larger campaign. Note that the Scenario exclusive rules will supersede or modify the system rules.

3.0 THE MAP

The map shows a Planetary Object (planet, satellite or asteroid) with Orbital Tracks around it. It depicts the following.

Launch Point: the point in which your squadron is initially placed on the map.

Orbitals: the circular and elliptical pathways.

Transition Tracks: the lines between the Orbitals.

Points: the oval spaces on the Orbital/Tracks.

Nodes: the points intersecting Orbitals and Transition Tracks.

Planetary Object: the world at the center of the Orbitals.

Spaceship Displays: each spaceship has a box in which you place Pods assigned to it. The number in the box is the number of Pods which can be carried. Ships and pods not in play should be kept off to the side of the game map.

NET (Neural Electronic Transfer) Track: This is where you execute NET Runs. It also keeps track of the current awareness of the OPFOR to your activities, and their ability to react.

OPFOR Bin: this is a wide mouth opaque container, such as an inverted space helmet, a convenient place to put OPFOR units when not on the map.

Action Resolution/Results Tables: used to execute various actions and provide the explanation of outcomes.

4.0 PLAYING PIECES

The square cardboard pieces are called *units*. Scenario rules provide more information.

Spaceships are spacecraft.

Pods are modules attached to Spaceships.

Friendly units: units controlled by the player. This may be either the Rebels or the Federation, depending on the game.

Enemy (OPFOR) units: these are the units controlled by the game system fighting against friendly forces.

Unit Status: a spaceship unit on its front side is "Combat Effective." A unit on its reverse side is "Disrupted." A Pod is either combat effective or eliminated/expended.

5.0 CARDS

There are two types of cards: **Mission** and **Operations** (**Ops**). These are explained under their respective rules sections.

OPERATIVE TERMS

May: you have the option to take this action or not.

Must: you must take this action.

Move Down an Orbital: move a unit along a Transition Track in the direction of the planet at the center of the Orbitals.

Move Up an Orbital: move a unit along a Transition Track away from the direction of the planet.

Pick: choose randomly the card or unit indicated.

Reveal: flip a face down card or counter face up.

Select: sort through the cards or pieces indicated and deliberately choose one.

6.0 HOW TO WIN

The game is played in *Missions*. Each Mission will require you to complete one or more Objectives. You win if you fulfill the Objective(s) by the end of the game. You lose if you do not accomplish the Mission Objective by the end of the game (when there are no more Operations cards to draw).

7.0 HOW TO SET UP THE GAME

1) Shuffle the Mission cards and pick one, keeping it **face down**. The rest of the Mission cards will not be used in this game. You will determine the nature of the mission in the course of play.

2) Place the NET Run marker on space 1.

3) Place the Intercept Point markers on the map using the Random Location Procedure.

4) Place all OPFOR units in the OPFOR bin.

5) Shuffle the Ops card deck. Deal out a number equal to the number stated in the Scenario Rules and place them face down. This will be your initial draw deck for the game. The remaining cards are placed in a separate Reserve deck, face down (and may come into play later).

6) Check the scenario rules to determine starting Assembly Points (AP). Create your starting Order of Battle by recruiting friendly units for the scenario with AP. The table gives the costs. Place assembled units on the Launch Point. Place assembled pods on the spaceship display. Place the AP marker to show the remaining AP you have. You can expend them in the course of the game.

7) Place all un-purchased friendly units next to the game map for possible entry during the game.

8) Begin play of the game using the Sequence of Play.

8.0 SEQUENCE OF PLAY

Each scenario will assign a starting number of Ops cards to form the Ops or draw deck. An Op is recorded by picking the top card in the Ops card deck, turning it face up, and implementing its effect.

Player's note: There is no Turn Record track, unlike many games. The Ops cards are used to track turns.

1. Sequence of Play

One turn is defined as taking the following actions in this order.

1) Task Force Declaration Phase: Declare one Task Force (TF) to conduct an operation.

2) Movement Phase: Move that TF via the rules of movement.

3) Operations Card Phase: Pick one Operations Card. Implement the instructions on the card for the TF just moved.

4) Combat Phase: If the TF is in the same space with OPFOR units, it must engage them in combat.

5) Special Actions Phase: The TF may execute any special actions.

6) Mission Resolution Phase: If you have a force capable of resolving the Mission, then conduct the actions called for on the Mission card.

2. End of Scenario

When you have run out of Operations cards, or fulfilled the conditions for victory or defeat, the scenario comes to an end. If you have drawn the last card from the Op deck, you have until the end of that turn to win, otherwise the game is lost.

3. Rules precedence

Special rules in scenarios and cards supersede the Standard game rules.

9.0 MISSION CARDS

1. Each mission will have one Mission card. This is initially placed face down. The other Mission cards are placed aside, face down.

2. Revealing the Mission card

You reveal a Mission Card via NET Run outcomes (see below). A successful NET Run result will allow you to reveal the face down Mission card.

3. Mission Resolution

If you have a unit in the specified orbit around the planet, then do the following:

- **a) OPFOR**: the card will give the number of OPFOR units you must pick and fight. This is in terms of "NET+ #": the current NET level plus the number on the card. Engage in the Combat Routine (this is in addition to any combat that occurred in the Combat Phase as a result of the Ops Card draw). If your force survives, then attempt to complete the Objective.
- **b) Objective**: The NET Level must be at least at the number indicated. Then you must execute the stated action. In some cases, this will require you to have special types of units. If you do not have those units, or if the attempted action fails, then you can try again on a subsequent Op. You would have to engage in combat again with the forces listed under OPFOR.

The Objective will require you to do one or more of the following.

Bombard: You must have one or more spaceships with an Orbital Bombardment capability in a Special Actions phase in close orbit about a planet. Roll on the Special Actions table and receive at least one Positive result.

Build: Build an Orbital Base.

Clear: You must reveal or eliminate some or all Intercept Points.

NET Alert Level: this must be at or above this level before you can initiate the Objective action.

For example: "NET =>3" means the NET level would have to be at three or higher.

Scenario: may give special conditions.

Return: If a Mission calls for return, at least one friendly spaceship (and possibly a particular pod or other item) must end the scenario with a friendly Orbital Base or on the Launch Point.

4. Mission Card Bonuses & OPFOR Enhancement

Apply only in the campaign game.

10.0 TASK FORCE

1. A group of units moving, fighting or conducting any other action together is called a Task Force (TF). At the start of each Task Force Declaration phase, declare one group of spaceships in one point as the operating TF. This can include any or all spaceships in that point.

For example: *There are three spaceships in a point. You could include two of them in the TF, leaving the third behind.*

2. Stacking

You can have an unlimited number of units in a single point. Units must always be located in spaces. Friendly and enemy units may temporarily be in the same point owing to combat or other game actions.

11.0 SPACE MOVEMENT

1. During a Movement phase, you may move one TF. All spaceships in it move together, and all must end in the same point. It can move up to the Energy of its slowest unit.

For example: *there are two units in a force, one with "2" energy and another with "3" energy. It could move two, one or no Points in a single Op.*

Remember*! You designate the operating TF before movement.*

2. Units with "0" energy may not move.

3. Orbital Transition

You can move a force from a higher orbit to a lower orbit, or lower to higher, at Nodes. The Launch Point is considered a Node for Orbital Transition.

4. Intercept Points

A friendly unit must cease movement when it enters the same point as an Intercept marker.

12.0 INTERCEPT POINTS

1. During initial deployment, place Intercept markers at Nodes via the Random Location Table. If more than one is placed on the same space, roll again for it. Also, if the Launch point is selected, roll again—do not place an Intercept marker on the Launch point.

2. Contact

If an operating TF moves into a space with an Intercept Point, it must STOP. It may leave that space on an ensuing Op.

3. Unrevealed Intercept markers

When at a Node with an unrevealed Intercept marker, you **must** make a NET Run (see 15.0) as your Special Action. If you succeed in a NET Run on that space, you place the Intercept marker with any ship in that TF and gain 1 AP. If you fail, the marker is removed from play (but may still count towards Mission objective).

4. Revealed Intercept Points

Certain actions will cause an Intercept marker to be revealed without a TF being in the same point. The revealed marker remains at it's point until a friendly force enters that point, then the revealed marker must be placed with any ship in that TF (treat it as a pod) or removed/eliminated (a NET run is not conducted).

5. Utilization of Enhancements

If you gain control of an Intercept marker, treat it like a Pod (see 19.0).

6. Enhancers

Each Intercept counter has a symbol on it.

- ⚓ = **weapons enhancement**. Increase the weapons system value for this spaceship by +1.
- ◉ = **cyberwar enhancement**. Increase the cyberwar value for this spaceship by +1.
- ⊗ = **bombardment enhancement**. This spaceship gains the Bombardment ability.
- ⊠ = **trooper enhancement**. Adds +1 to any Trooper assault.
- ⚒ = **assembler enhancement**. This spaceship gains +1 Assembly ability.
- ◑ = **fuel enhancement**. Increase energy for this spaceship by +1.

13.0 OPERATIONS (OPS) CARDS

1. During the Operations phase, you must pick one Ops Card for the operating TF. Pick it from the top of the deck.

2. Operations Card Instructions

Events

The player must immediately perform whatever instructions are on the card.

NET Check: Roll one die. If the result is less than or equal (**<=**) to the current NET level, execute the first outcome. If it is greater (**>**), then execute the second outcome.

OPFOR Deployment: Place OPFOR units on the map. Go to the Combat Routine.

Reinforcements: receive the Friendly units indicated immediately with no action or AP required.

Challenge: You must roll one die for each of the values indicated on the line of the Special Actions Table for that value. Success occurs if you roll at least one Positive result. Implement results on the Table. Failure occurs if no Positive results are rolled (or if the Player is unable to roll due to having no matching icons). The card will give the Failure results. If the card calls for either flipping units or losing an Op, and there are no units of the type called for, then you must lose one Op.

Win/Lose: If "win/lose" is printed on the card, and you win that battle, then you gain the designated number of Ops or NETRun Points (your

choice). If you lose the battle, then you lose that number of Ops or NETRun Points.

NET Run: This is an additional opportunity to conduct a NET Run.

3. Gaining Ops Cards

When you gain Ops, pick the designated number of cards from the Reserve deck (face down) and place them on the bottom of the Ops deck. If there are no further cards in the Reserve deck, shuffle the Discard deck and deal the appropriate number of cards and add to the bottom of the Ops deck, then the remaining cards become the Reserve deck.

4. Losing Ops Cards

Conversely, if a card calls for you to Lose Ops, then pick the designated number of cards from the top of the Ops card draw deck without looking at or playing them. Place them with the discards, face down. If this causes the Ops Deck to go to zero cards, then the game ends in a loss.

5. Ops Card Disposition

Generally, after they have been played, Ops Cards are placed in the discard deck, face down.

6. Reshuffle

Some Ops cards may generate a reshuffle. In this case, count the number of cards in the Ops deck, shuffle the discards and the Ops cards together (not the Reserve deck), count out cards equal to the previous Ops card deck count to be the new Ops draw deck, and the remaining cards are the new discard deck.

14.0 THE NET & ALERT

1. The NET marker starts in the space #1. It may go no lower than "1" and no higher than the maximum on the index. The higher the marker goes, the more the enemy is alerted to your presence. But also, the more bonuses you gain.
2. The NET Level goes up or down as a result of NET Run Special Action results or Ops Card outcomes.

3. Effects

The NET Level is:

   a) a Friendly Tactical Edge modifier.
   b) the number of OPFOR units picked for combat.
   c) the number of additional dice you can add to your NET Run special action.

4. Full System Awareness

If at any time the NET marker is in the highest space, you can examine all cards in the Ops deck. You can't change them, but at least you know what's coming up.

15.0 NET RUNS

A NET Run is an attempt to penetrate the NET. Each NET Run can be conducted by one (and only one) Spaceship unit.

1. Prerequisite

A NET Run is executed in the Special actions phase. To do so: you must have at least one of: **a)** a spaceship with a printed Cyber ability; or
b) a spaceship with a Cyber pod, Hyper Cadre or captured Cyber Intercept marker. Further, that spaceship (or its TF) must have executed an Op in this turn.

2. Procedure

Determine your NET Run strength. This is the total of: the Cyber symbols on all spaceships, Cyber pods , Intercept markers, and Hyper Cadres plus the NET Alert level.

3. NET Run Special Action

Go to the Special Actions Table. Roll a number of dice equal to the NET Run value. Apply the results per the table. Positive results allow you to choose from the listed outcomes. Each positive result allows you to choose one action from the listed outcomes. (**Note**: *revealing the Mission card uses one Positive result.*)

16.0 COMBAT

1. Combat is triggered when a friendly TF is in the same space as OPFOR units. This may occur due to Ops Cards or Mission Resolution. All friendly units in a Point must engage all enemy units in a Point. (This includes both units in the operating TF and any other friendly units which may be in its space.)

2. OPFOR Units

OPFOR units are temporarily placed on the map as the result of Ops and Mission cards. They are placed in the same Point as the operating TF. For any OPFOR Pods drawn, place with either side face-up. Roll one die. On a 1-3, flip it to the other side. On a 4-6, leave it as is. OPFOR units are automatically returned to the OPFOR Bin after a battle concludes.

3. OPFOR Deployment Procedure

Pick randomly from the Bin a number of OPFOR units equal to:
   a) the current NET level,
   b) plus any modifier from the card drawn,
   c) plus "one" if in a Node with an Intercept marker.
   d) Place the OPFOR units with the operating TF. OPFOR spaceships are placed on their combat effective side. OPFOR Swarms are printed on both sides. When picking them from the Bin, roll one die to see which side will be used for this combat: **odd** = front, **even** = back.

4. Combat Procedure

Each combat goes through these stages.
   1) Determine who has Tactical Edge.
   a) For the friendly force: roll one die and add to it the energy rating of the single fastest spaceship plus the NETRun level.
   b) For the OPFOR: roll one die and add to it the energy rating of the single fastest spaceship plus "2" if an OPFOR Cyborg ship is present.
   c) The side with the higher total gets the Tactical Edge. The friendly force wins ties.

   2) Battle Rounds
Combat proceeds through a series of rounds.
In each round:
a) The side with the Tactical Edge fires first.
   Use the Weapons Action (below).
b) The side without the Tactical Edge fires second.
   Use the Weapons Action (below).
3) Breakoff. You can attempt to Breakoff during any of your rounds by simply declaring it for any or all of your ships. Those ships do not fire. Instead, roll one die for each one making a Breakoff attempt: if the die roll is less than or equal to their current energy level, they succeed. Otherwise, they stay in place (and do not get to fire). Swarms may not Breakoff.
Successful Breakoff: the unit remains in the space.
   However, it is out of the battle for the rest of that Op.
   Also, it may not conduct any Special Actions that Op.
OPFOR spaceships do not Breakoff.
   4) Next round
a) If there are surviving units on both sides, then continue the Battle rounds starting with step (2a) until only one side has units remaining.

5. Weapons Action

   a) Determine the combat strength for a side. This is the total of all Weapons Systems (spaceships plus Swarms). If there is a combat enhancer (card, captured intercept marker) then add those.
   b) Roll one die per combat strength point. Cross index each die roll with the outcomes on the Special Action Table. A **Positive** will cause one combat effective spaceship to be flipped over, or eliminate one already flipped spaceship or eliminate one swarm.
   Note: *Firing is sequential thus one side will possibly take losses and be reduced in strength before firing back.*

6. Extracting Losses

Inflict losses for both sides in any order.

7. Winning a Combat

You win if the OPFOR is wiped out. Add the designated Ops cards to your Ops deck or NET Points to the NET track.

8. Losing a Combat

You lose if OPFOR remain (that is, all of your ships have broken off or been eliminated). Subtract NET points or remove Ops cards.

9. Post-Battle

a) Place all OPFOR units in the Bin regardless of combat results.

b) All Friendly units eliminated are out of play for the rest of the scenario. Friendly flipped units remain flipped—they recover by expending AP.

17.0 SPECIAL ACTIONS

1. You may conduct a maximum of one Special Action per Special Action phase. These include:

Assembly: this is used to build new Pods and repair flipped spaceships. No ships can be assembled during a mission. The TF must include a ship capable of Assembly. ✗

NETRun: this is used to penetrate into the NET to gain advantages. ◉

Bombardment: this is used to eliminate ground-to-space defenses in preparation for an Assault. ⊗

Assault: this is used to eliminate OPFOR defenses on and under the surface. ⊠

2. Special Action Procedure

1) State the type of Special Action to be conducted.

2) Determine the total Value for that action.

3) Roll a number of dice equal to the Value.

4) Cross index the rolls with the Action Table for that type of Action.

5) Apply the results. The Action Table gives details for outcomes.

3. Special Actions Value

This is the total number of symbols of the indicated type among all units in the TF, plus Enhancers (see below). If a unit has more than one of the same symbol then count up the total.

Player's note: In some cases, units will lose their special ability when flipped.

4. Enhancers

If you control any Intercept markers with the symbol for the Special Action, add them to the Value. In the Campaign Game, control of Mission cards can provide Enhancers.

5. Combined Actions

Some Special Actions may require more than one capability. You must roll successfully for each one. If you fail for any one capability, the entire Special Action fails.

For example: A Combined Action requires a Cyber and Nano-Morph capability. You could use one ship with a Cyber and one Pod with a Nano-Morph, or a Pod that had both Cyber and Nano-morph abilities.

6. Burnout

A result of Burnout flips one ship or eliminates one Pod with the symbol. This is one unit max regardless of the number of Burnouts rolled. This is applied after completion of the die rolls.

Note: a Burnout result is applied when rolling for a Special Action or Mission Objective attempt, but not for Event Card Challenges (apply the Succeed or Failure result on the card).

18.0 ASSEMBLY

1. Start Force

The scenario will state your starting AP. Build ships and pods using them. Place the units on the Launch Point. Spaceship units are always initially deployed on their Combat Effective side.

2. In Space Assembly

If one of your spaceships has Assembly ability, then you can use it to build additional Pods or an Orbital Base (but not spaceships) by expending AP. This is done during the Special Actions phase. Place the Pods with any spaceships in the same space as the Assembler ship. The ships must have sufficient transport capacity.

3. Repair a Spaceship

A spaceship in the same space as an Assembler ship can be flipped to its combat effective side by conducting a successful Assembly action.

19.0 PODS

1. Pods are back-printed. When you assemble them, place them face up on the side you want.

2. Transport

Each friendly spaceship can carry a number of Pods up to its transport capacity (printed on the display for the spaceship). Pods are placed on the spaceship during initial Assembly. Transported pods move with the spaceship carrying them. If that Spaceship is eliminated the pods are also eliminated. If their Spaceship is flipped the pods may not be utilized until the ship is repaired.

3. You may transfer Pods within an Operating TF during the movement phase.

4. Eliminated pods are always available for rebuild via AP (unless otherwise specified).

5. Pod Utilization

1) Fuel Cells. A ship with a fuel cell adds plus one (+1) to its Energy.

2) Swarms: You launch these during the combat phase. They add to Weapons Systems fire and they can also take hits (one hit eliminates a Swarm). At the end of combat you place them back on friendly spaceships in the same point (this does not have to be the launching unit). If there is not sufficient transport capacity, then excess Pods are eliminated.

3) Cyberwar. These each provide the spaceship with a Cyber value of "one" (or plus one).

4) Troopers. Troopers can conduct a Spaceborne Assault action. This can be done only if in the Close Orbit node around a planet or if called for by a card or scenario rule. Spaceborne Assaults take place during the Special Actions phase.

6. Trooper Assault Procedure

1) If in Close Orbit, move the Trooper unit from the Spaceship to the planet. Otherwise, place it in the TF's space.

2) Roll a number of dice for each Trooper unit equal to its combat value and consult the Action Table. Any "Positive" result causes the Mission to succeed. If no "Positive" results, the surviving troopers return to a Spaceship in the same TF.

20.0 CAMPAIGN GAME

1. You can play **Free Mars Space Combat** as a series of missions.

2. At the conclusion of each Mission

1) You keep any Spaceships and Pods. Any disrupted spaceships are flipped to their Effective side. Eliminated units must be assembled again normally.

2) All units eliminated for any reason are returned to the Recruit Pool.

3) For every two Op cards remaining, gain 1 AP.

3. If you win the Mission

1) Place the Mission card above the map sheet. You can use its Enhancement (these are cumulative for each card).

2) Keep any unexpended AP. Also, you gain one AP for each Intercept marker you captured (this is in addition to the AP gained when a revealed IP is placed on a ship.

3) The NET Alert level stays at the level it was at the end of the Mission.

4) In the next scenario, when OPFOR units are called for, pick one additional OPFOR unit per event card combat (to the counter limit). This is one extra unit per Mission you have won (i.e. +3 OPFOR units after winning 3 Missions).

4. If you did not win the Mission

1) The mission card is reshuffled into the deck and you can potentially pick it again.

2) The NET Alert level is reduced by "one."

3) Keep any unused AP.

5. You win the Campaign

When you win all Missions.

6. You lose the Campaign: if you lose two Missions in a row.