

EPIC Tau Colony, Drone Heavy, List Ideas

Andrew Taylor, 2012 November 30

A lack of personnel and industrial infrastructure mean that armour is in short supply and that manpower (Tau-power?) are relatively scarce.

Manufacturing drones and programing the AI is much quicker than raising and teaching children. Early military production focuses on drone production.

Tau command are not prepared to employ Kroot or other mercenaries on the Colony because of concerns that they might take over the world for themselves. Also fiscal constraints mean that the Colony cannot afford the cost of employing them.

Drone units are generally integrated into the basic formations rather than available as upgrades (people seem reluctant to include Drone upgrades). However to keep flavour and perhaps reduce abuse the aim is to include specialist drones in formations with appropriate integral specialist units.

Most standard Tau units will still have their integrated drones so they will retain the standard unit statistics.

Fewer armoured elements and no tanks (perhaps 0-1?). It is too difficult to keep them going at the end of a long interstellar supply line. And there is not yet the manufacturing capability to support these elements locally.

No big spacecraft but a strong space and air-caste based force to provide AA and anti war-engine capabilities. Probably not much call for sophisticated heavy hitting bombers on a colony world so no AX-1-0s. This list would be a good place for an AX-2-2 with its Remora Drone control systems.

Would need to have heavier, probably air mobile, crisis response teams available to deal with incursions that might occur anywhere on the planet.

Drone Rule

Attached Drones are not counted when deciding whether a formation can garrison.

Drones possess Tau Jet Packs.

One Drone unit per two Devilfish or Piranha transporting vehicles (rounding up) may use ranged fire or Fire Fight in an assault, while being carried by the transport.

Ignore the first drone unit killed in an assault when working out who has inflicted more casualties.

Each Drone unit requires two extra hits to be killed if the formation loses an assault.

It takes two blast makers to kill a Drone unit in a broken formation.

Notes:

(1) The drones would be allocated the (double) hits during assault resolution (or for a broken formation) in the normal order. This would encourage drone units to be at the front in an engagement to benefit from this.

(2) I'd hope that rule (1) is would not be unbalancing if applied to all Drone units, eg., the air dropped formation from Tiger Sharks.

- (3) Drones mounted in combat berths on their transports will be suppressed along with the vehicle they are in and will need to dice to escape if the vehicle is destroyed.
- (4) I'd assume that a Devilfish was carrying two drones in combat mounts and the rest of a drone unit in the troop compartments. The standard vehicle can carry 12 troop whose own integrated drones must be somewhere. Details for the Devilfish and for Piranhas are below.
- (5) There will need to be some procedure for deciding which Piranha lost to enemy fire necessitates the loss of the full drone unit where the vehicle is transporting a ½ gun drone unit. Dice as appropriate to see whether an odd number of vehicle losses causes the loss of a full embarked gun drone unit, assuming the passengers are spread evenly across all Piranhas.
- (6) Current Hammerhead and Skyray profiles appear to be carrying smart missile systems rather than gun drones. The Drone Harbringer appears to be able to carry 2 units of drones. To quote the Lexicon "A pair of **Gun Drones** are often fitted to some Tau vehicles (most notably the [Devilfish](#) and [Piranha](#)). These drones, when not using their firepower in support of their parent vehicle, will often detach themselves to support the embarked Fire Warrior squad in combat, as well as scout and protect exposed flanks from enemy actions."
- (7) The assault resolution option I originally had as "Count the Drones destroyed (when defending?) in an assault as half units (rounding fractions down) when working out who has inflicted more casualties." Perhaps that is better?
- (8) The standard Expendable rule does not apply to formations entirely of expendable units and the loss of Expendable units does count towards the casualty count in assault resolution.
- (9) Perhaps the Garrison rule needs to exclude all drone formations. I think it unlikely that a tournament army would have already deployed drones as a garrison. There are already some "out there" as part of the Sentry Drone units (but these "teleport"); similarly for Sniper Drone formations and any in a Stealth Battlesuit formation. The only other all Drone formations are those air dropped by Tiger Sharks.
- (10) The ignore the first Drone casualty for assault resolution would also apply for all Drone units. The idea perhaps being that Drones can download their awareness into a major network but cannot do this when the extended network is more seriously degraded. It would allow the Tau to push a drone out into an exposed position but give them some protection from a clipping assault targeted on the screening drone unit.

Different Flavours of Drones

Gun Drone Unit (basic unit)

Inf	20 cm	Arm 5+	CC 6+	FF 5+	Drone
Twin Pulse Carbines		15 cm	AP 4+	Disrupt	

Markerlight Drones (to accompany Pathfinders and perhaps Stealth Battlesuits)

Inf	20 cm	Arm 4+	CC 6+	FF 5+	Drone, Markerlight, Scout
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- (1) The escorting gun drones still provide the necessary firefight attacks.
- (2) Increased sensor and stealth equipment give the higher armour value.
- (3) These drones would be added to formations that already have a markerlight ability.

Sniper Drones (for a small stand alone formation)

Inf 20 cm Arm 4+ CC 6+ FF 6+ Drone, Markerlight, Scout, Teleport
Rail Rifles 30 cm AP 5+, Sniper

(1) Team is assumed to include a controller. "2 or 3 teams operate together for maximum effect." So I'd think a 0-1 sniper drone stealth formation with three units. Could perhaps add a unit or two to a Stealth Battlesuit formation.

(2) Increased sensor and stealth equipment give the higher armour value.

Stealth Drones

Same as marker drones but with teleport to join Stealth Suit teams. Could alternatively be a basic Gun Drone (with teleport); perhaps with 1 better armour but less firefight.

Actually I'm not really certain what to do about Drones accompanying Stealth Battlesuit formations.

Remora Drones

Aircraft Fighter Arm 4+ Markerlight
Twin Burst Cannons 15 cm AA 6+

(1) Is something like Scout necessary to allow Remora Drones to deploy further from the mother-ship (up to 20 cm?) to simulate the remote control, long reach operations and extend the AA envelope. Or perhaps just rely on stringing the Drones out to get that reach.

(2) In part this is to compensate for the lack of Skyray upgrades on the core units.

(3) A pair of Remora Drones to operate with a regular lone Tiger Shark. The ground attack weapons would benefit from the Drones. AX-2-2 could have a different weapon loadout with more missiles (Aircraft Seekers or Tracers). Perhaps also an alternative anti-Air missile load out for the AX-2-2? Farsight list has 2 Tiger Sharks with Aircraft Seekers @ 225 pts total

(4) Realise that there is a danger that aircraft markerlights might be unbalancing. But there is not much in the way of heavy hitting in this list. Perhaps could switch to Aircraft Seeker missiles (or ordinary missiles assuming that on-board markerlights link with missiles).

I like the idea of making the Remora aircraft. They are fairly heavy Drones.

So perhaps as an escort for a single Tiger Shark on a bombing run. Compensation for a lack of ground based AA umbrella. An alternative would be as 2 stand alone fighters operating at a greater distance from their mothership.

Sentry Drones Turrets

Inf Immobile Arm 5+ CC 6+ FF 5+ Markerlights, Teleport
Either Twin Burst Cannons 15 cm AP 4+ Disrupt
Or Twin Fusion Blasters 15 cm MW 4+
Or Twin Missile Pods 45 cm AP 5+/AT 6+
Or Twin Plasma Rifles 30 cm AP 3+

Heavy Gun Drone Unit

Inf 20 cm Arm 5+ CC 6+ FF 5+ Tau Jet Packs
2 x Heavy Burst Cannons 15 cm AP 4+ Disrupt

Do not have the Drone special rule.

Cannot be transported in a ground transport fighting slot on a Devilfish.

Cannot be transported by a Piranha.

I have not given these units markerlights.

But the fluff says replace a burst cannon with a markerlight.

They are noted as more modern tech but do fit the Drone heavy [sic] theme.

Note really sure where to fit them in on the army list. Perhaps include them as an upgrade replacement option for foot Fire Warrior and Air Dropped Drone formations.

Shield Drones

Shield Drones should probably remain integrated with units to allow current Tau units to keep their current armour values (including the Drone units themselves). If they were to be a separate unit then a higher armour value, lower shooting (and FF) values would be good. Other options like adding an extra shield drone to a stand as a character upgrade, (an invulnerable save added to a unit that has extra shield drone(s) present) or acting like an Ork void shield. A possible option for a stand alone shield drone could be as below.

Shield Drone Unit (perhaps)

Inf 20 cm Arm 3+ CC 6+ FF 6+ Drone

No ranged weaponry. Accompanying gun drone(s) escorts give CC/FF values.

This would make a unit that more closely matches the armour values of Crisis Suits so would be address complaints about Drones being BM magnets.

Variant vehicles

Colonial Devilfish

AV 30 cm Arm 5+ CC 6+ FF 6+ Skimmer,

Transport (2 Fire Warrior or Pathfinder or Heavy Drone units.

In addition may carry 1 extra standard size Drone unit)

One Drone unit per 2 transporting vehicles (rounding up) may use their ranged fire or FF value while being carried by the transport.

Burst Cannon 15 cm AP 5+

Seeker Missiles 90 cm AT 6+, Guided Missiles

Colonial Piranha

LV 35 cm Arm 5+ CC 6+ FF 6+ Skimmer,

Transport ($\frac{1}{2}$ Drone unit rounding up within the formation)

One Drone unit per 2 transporting vehicles (rounding up) may use their ranged fire or FF value while being carried by the transport.

Burst Cannon 15 cm AP 5+

Seeker Missiles 90 cm AT 6+, Guided Missiles

AX-2-2 Tiger Shark

Aircraft Bomber Arm 5+ Transport (may control 2 Remora Drone units)

Twin Ion Cannons 30 cm AP 3+/AT 4+/AA 4+, FxF

Twin Burst Cannons 15 cm AA 6+

Either Twin Missile Pods 45 cm AP 5+/AT 6+, FxF

Or Tracer Missiles 45 cm MW 5+, Guided Missiles

Or Aircraft Hunter Missiles 45 cm AA 5+

Weapon must
be selected
on activation

Army List

Strategy Rating 3+, Initiative 2+

(Units with a Crisis Battlesuit Commander upgrade would have Initiative 1+)

Core Formations

Fire Warrior Cadre: 6 Tau Fire Warrior units, 3 Gun Drone units for 225 points

Upgrades: Bonded Team, Broadsides, Crisis Suits, Commander,
Ethereal, Pathfinders, Piranhas, Heavy Drone Squadron.

Support Formations (3 per 1 Core Formation)

Mechanized Fire Warrior Group,

3 Tau Fire Warrior units, 3 Gun Drones and 3 Devilfish, 225 points

Upgrades: Bonded Team, Ethereal, Piranhas, Skyray.

Pathfinder Group, 4 Pathfinder units, 2 Gun Drones and 2 Devilfish, 250 points

Upgrades: Piranhas, Markerlight Drones

Recon Skimmer Group, 6 Tetras, 150 points,

may replace pairs of Tetras with 2 Piranhas and 1 Gun Drone unit, +25 points each

Upgrades: Piranhas

Stealth Group, 4 XV15 Stealth Battlesuits and 2 Stealth Gun Drones units, 250 points

Upgrade: Sniper Drones, Stealth Markerlight Drones

0-1 Sentry Drone Group, 4 Sentry Drone Turrets, 150 points

0-1 Sniper Drone Group, 3 Sniper Drone Units, 150 points

Tau Upgrades (up to 3 per formation, no upgrade to be taken more than once)

Bonded Team, add the Leader ability to one Fire Warrior unit, +25 points

Broadsides, add 3 XV88 Broadside Battlesuits, +150 points

Commander, add 1 Shas'el Commander to a Crisis Battlesuit unit, +25 points

Or, add 1 Shas'o Commander to a Crisis Battle suit unit (max 1 per army), +100 pts

Crisis Suits, replace 3 units (Fire Warrior or Gun Drone) with 3 Crisis Battlesuit units,
+100 points

Ethereal, add 1 Ethereal to a Fire Warrior unit (max 1 per army), +75 points

Heavy Drone Squadron, add 3 Heavy Drone units, +75 points

Pathfinders, add 2 Pathfinder units and 1 Marklight Drone unit, +75 points

Markerlight Drones, replace any Gun Drone unit with a Markerlight Drone unit, free

Piranhas, add 2 Piranhas and 1 Gun Drone unit, +75 points

Skyray, add 1 Skyray Air Defence Gunship, +100 points

Sniper Drones, replace 2 Stealth Gun Drones with Sniper Drones, free

Stealth Markerlight Drones, replace any Gun Drones with Stealth Markerlight Drones, free

Air Caste Formations (up to 1/3 of army's points)

Barracuda Squadron, 2 Barracuda Fighters, 150 points

Orca Dropship, 1 Orca, 150 points

0-1 (or 2) Spacecraft, 1 Hero Class Cruiser, 200 points

Tiger Shark Squadron, 2 Tiger Sharks, 175 points

Start game transporting a formation of 6 gun Drones, +100 points

Tiger Shark AX-2-2 Squadron, 1 Tiger Shark AX-2-2 and 2 Remora Gun Drones, 225 points

- (1) Perhaps a second spacecraft to help provide some extra MW TK firepower. Would this be subject to too much abuse, eg push space drop list out of game?
- (2) Offering a Bonded Team and a Crisis Suit Commander would give two leaders to a Fire Warrior unit. Might this be too much?
- (3) Could not really decide on a weapons load for the AX-2-2. Idea was it could be configured for ground attack, anti-war-engine operations, or as an air superiority platform. Simpler would probably be better.
- (4) Not sure about the costing of the Crisis Suit upgrades. Minus 75 points for the 3 units being replaced, plus 150 points for the Suits, . . . ? Plus more if going to Initiative 1+.
- (5) Perhaps the Heavy Dron

Heavy Drone upgrades for foot Fire Warrior formation – instead of more FWs?