

DE'AYNES FIGHTING SHIPS OF THE GOTHIC SECTOR

A brief treatise on Ork Vessels known to have participated in the conflict. By Andy Chambers.

Ork 'Kill' class Kroozers - Butcher (Cf. Butcha?), Krimrak's Killa, Boomboss, Slaughta King, Gork's Grin.

Breaking from a constant pattern of raiding and sneak attacks, the Ork Kill kroozer identified as the *Slaughta King* led an invasion force of Ork ships from the Cyclops cluster against the Moab system late in the Gothic war. Doubtless the Orks hoped to seize the rich civilised worlds of Moab before the Imperial fleet completed its operations against the Chaos marauders plaguing the sector. Fortunately the fourth cruiser battlegroup led by the Mars class battlecruiser *Imperious* had completed a recent cleansing operation at Mezoa and was on hand to move into the system. After a three week hunt the battlegroup successfully engaged the Ork fleet around the seventh planet following a sighting by the group's Cobra squadron. The fourth cruiser group included no less than four capital ships armed with Nova cannon - *Hammer of Justice*, *Minotaur*, *Lord Daros* and the *Imperious*. It was anticipated that the combined fire of these awesome weapons would be as useful in shattering Ork attacks as they had been against Chaos and pirate vessels. However Admiral Haines discovered to his great dismay that the Ork ships were made of sterner stuff and the *Slaughta King* led an outright charge against his battleline without a moment's hesitation. *Lord Daros* was boarded and destroyed, the other cruisers all damaged and the *Imperious* almost overrun by Orks. It was only the lucky destruction of most of the Ork escort vessels due to a plasma drive overload on an Ork kroozer that enabled the Imperial fleet to fight its way clear.

Gothic war training dogma

Ork Kill kroozers are built for a direct, head-on attack and will seek to close the range rapidly. At close ranges the heavy guns which festoon the Kill kroozer's prow and flanks can cause dreadful destruction, beware the Kill kroozer which Locks On! Poor leadership makes the manoeuvring of Kill kroozers fairly predictable, but the Ork's penchant for using All Ahead Full orders makes ramming attempts a virtually certainty. Orks are naturally ferocious boarders and the huge crew of a Kill kroozer poses a serious threat to any cruiser-sized vessel, those bearing Ork warlords are doubly dangerous due to the higher proportion of heavily equipped and experienced Ork warriors aboard. Incautious Ork captains will often leave their stern unprotected in their headlong scramble to inflict harm, hence well-placed frigates or destroyers can do a great deal of damage to the lightly armoured rear of an Ork vessel. More experienced Orks will tend to attack in several echelons or waves so that each ship or squadron covers the preceding ships' weak spot.

Ork 'Terror Ship' class Kroozers - 'Ammer, Klaw, Deep Wound, Mork's Blade.

The Terror Ship *Mork's Blade* was indentified in an appallingly bloody fight in the Quinox Sound mid-way through the Gothic War. A Convoy under escort from Eziam to Corilia encountered wrecks and debris at the edge of the Corilia system. Proceeding cautiously, the convoy succeeded in evading several salvoes of deadfall torpedoes before two squadrons of Ork attack ships pounced on the scattered vessels from the cover of asteroid fields. Once the Imperial ships were fully engaged with the attack ships *Morks Blade* emerged from behind a nearby moon on the unprotected flank of the convoy. The transports in the convoy scattered but as it closed the Terror ship launched successive waves of assault boats. These easily overhauled the fleeing merchantmen and ravaged five before the convoy escorts could return and intervene. The one cargo ship which escaped the assault boats, *Oleg's Triumph*, was blown apart minutes later by salvoes from the prow gun batteries of *Morks Blade*.

The convoy's escort leader, Captain Jeril, ordered an immediate attack on the pirate cruiser but discovered to his cost that Terror ships mount a prow armament every bit as fearsome as those of Kill kroozers. At close range the heavy guns and prow batteries of *Morks blade* blew apart three Sword class frigates in moments, including that of Captain Jeril. Bereft of their charges and with the prospect of a further beating as *Morks Blade* came about, the surviving escorting vessels disengaged, leaving the Orks to their spoils. Captain Jeril was posthumously court martialled for the loss of the convoy.

Gothic war training dogma

Unlike most ships with launch bays Terror ships do not tend to loiter at long range and send waves of attack craft against their targets. More commonly the Ork assault boats and fighter bombers attack in close support to the ship itself, either assailing its victims or covering the rear of the Terror ship against roving enemy ships. A large proportion of Terror ships mount a prow torpedo battery in place of their heavy guns, giving some relief from close quarter pounding but at the cost of encountering potentially battleship-sized torpedo salvoes. The poor crew quality of Ork ships means they are slow and unreliable at reloading their launch bays (and torpedo batteries). This may be why attacks are made as opportunities present themselves rather than as part of an organised stratagem. However, given the pronounced Orkish taste for ramming and boarding it may be a simple eagerness to close with the enemy which draws Terror ships into close proximity with their enemies. Ork warlords often use Terror ships as their command vessels, their intimidating presence ensuring that the launch bays are run with a modicum of efficiency.

Onslaught Attack Ship

Onslaught pattern attack ships form the mainstay of Ork escort squadrons, being a solid and heavily armed vessel for its size. The Onslaught's gun batteries are exceedingly powerful (if unreliable) but have a limited fire arc which reduces them to making strafing passes and attack runs on targets to their front. Onslaughts are vulnerable to attacks from their sides and rear, their crude armour and shielding being little better than those of a Cobra class destroyer. The prow of an Onslaught is heavily armoured however, making it well capable of surviving a head-on encounter with even cruiser level weaponry. In combat Onslaught squadrons are frequently the first wave of an Ork attack. They rush forward heedless of risk to rake enemy ships with fire. Escort squadrons can be blown apart in an instant in a head to head attack like this. In the Gothic war commanders soon learned to keep Onslaughts at arms-length and destroy them with attack craft, torpedoes or long ranged fire.

Savage Gunship

“Like wrestling a warthog that's been crossed with a plasma charge” Admiral Gorvan on fighting Orks

Subtlety is never a strong point in Orkish ship design, but it reaches an all-time low in the Savage gunship. Savages mount an array of the notorious Ork 'heavy guns' on their bows - enough firepower to blow an escort ship to pieces with a single hit or knock down a cruiser's shields and tear a substantial hole in the hull. A squadron of these gunships can rip apart a capital ship in a few salvos of fire. The crippling short range of heavy gunz means that the crews of Savage gunships get few firing opportunities, forcing them into using a head-on rush or ambush to close enough to get into the fighting. Most of the tactics employed by and against Onslaughts apply to Savages, but doubly so. Admiral Gorvan created special escort squadrons to seek out and destroy Savages in all of his engagements with Orks after the loss of his flagship, *Repudiator*, at Moab in the Cyclops cluster. Well-handled escort squadrons can ably destroy the lumbering, short ranged savage, but woe betide any captain incautious enough to be caught out by them. To let these ships get their shot is to invite destruction.

Ravager Attack Ship

Ravager attack ships add a dangerous new dimension to Ork fleets - the ability to launch powerful salvos of torpedoes against the enemy from long range. The necessity of dodging or intercepting torpedo attacks while the Ork fleet is bearing down on them is an extra distraction most captains could do without, as it is in the confused, close fighting which will follow that Orks excel at. As with Kroozers mounting torpedo tubes, Ravagers often suffer problems when reloading due to their ill-disciplined crews. This makes the first launch of a Ravager squadron by far the most dangerous, after that it is unlikely that a Ravager squadron will have the luxury of being able to manoeuvre into an ideal launch position before letting fly again. Ravagers also mount some weapon batteries firing forward and a common tactic is for them to launch torpedoes and then follow them up through the enemy battleline before turning and reloading for another salvo.

Mixing Ravagers into squadrons of other ships also appeared as a tactic favoured by certain warlords, although command difficulties mean that such mixed squadrons are often indecisive in their attacks. As a final note it is worth pointing out that the poor manoeuvrability of Ork vessels can cause them severe difficulties in coordinating torpedo attacks. During a raid at Tarantis several Ork ships were damaged or destroyed by torpedoes launched by their own fleet as they were unable get out of the way in time. It appears that Ork commanders will not miss out on an opportunity to launch their torpedoes even when other Ork ships are at risk!

Brute Ram Ship

“Escorts ramming capital ships? But that’s insane!” Captain Sinclair at Verstap.

First sighted in the Cyclops cluster early in the Gothic War, Brute ram ships soon became a familiar sight to the hard pressed crews of Battlefleet Gothic. Being as fast and manoeuvrable as frigate class ships, the Brute appeared to be an Orkish attempt at a more conventional escort vessel. However this illusion was shattered when a squadron of Brutes made an attack on the *Lord Daros* during a raid at Verstap. Instead of pulling away at the end of their attack run, the stubby new Ork ships suddenly blasted forward on a collision course. Two of the vessels struck the *Lord Daros* amidships, one tearing away its forward sensor mast and starboard opticon gallery, the other crashing into the starboard weapons battery and wrecking three decks and seven guns before exploding. Crippled, the *Lord Daros* was forced to disengage.

Subsequent examination of the wreckage showed that the vessels which attacked the *Lord Daros* were incredibly heavily built, with an estimated 80% of the ship being a virtually solid mass. A section of the prow of the vessel was also recovered from the third deck which mounted a ramming ‘beak’ of solid adamantium. Unbelievable as it appeared, the Orks had built ships intended specifically for ramming and were aggressive enough to use them.