

Short-Range Spacecraft Rules

I've been thinking about SRS a lot lately, especially after watching several Homeworld Remastered videos. Basically, I don't like any of the mechanics for SRS, as they do not match my vision for how strike craft operate in any setting. So, thematically, what do SRS do?

- 1. Range far ahead of the fleet.** Typically, the first thing you should be damaged by is SRS (Right now, it is the last thing)
- 2. Always be a threat.** One bomber should be a threat to anything in the game. For example, one fighter in modern times is capable of destroying any large ship, if it can deliver it's payload.
- 3. Encounter effective counter-measures.** Everyone knows SRS are a threat, so many resources are expended to protect ships. Ships have effective point defense, and the most important thing a modern carrier does is create a Combat Air Patrol (CAP).
- 4. Swarms.** Whether insects or SRS, swarms are dangerous because they sting you several times over a long period of time. In other words, SRS should have the ability to loiter on target.

As far as I'm concerned, there is only one design limitation for SRS: Tokens. Any SRS-carrier Model comes with either two or four Tokens. While the Tokens also have a dice dock, this should not be a constraint.

Tokens have two interesting properties:

1. Each race has two distinct types (small and large); therefore each race should only have two types of SRS available.

Spoiler: This is very important when someone fields 12+ tokens at 800 points.

2. Tokens are stackable, due to their hexagonal shape; why not take advantage of this?

Finally, MARs. There are two distinct token MAR: Deck Crews and Quick Launch. Both sets of rules will likely be rewritten.

Getting started

First, let's start on the high-end, with a Carrier sporting 12 Wing Capacity and using all four Tokens it came with. Specifically, two Large (bomber) Tokens and two Small (interceptor) Tokens. Carrier starts on the table.

First, all four Tokens start on the table. There is no reason a Carrier wouldn't already have everything launched when ships are already shooting at each other. I'm being aggressive, so I'll put one Interceptor token on CAP, and Cluster the remaining three tokens together. For now, let's assume each Token has three Wings, as designated with the micro die, assigning the entire 12 Wing Capacity.

When the Tokens activate, all three in the Cluster should move a considerable distance. For now, let's say Bombers can move 24 inches a turn. This is slightly more than double the average speed of a Frigate, which seems appropriate.

Next turn, the Tokens move 24 inches again, and make an Attack Run. Let's assume the target has no CAP. There is, however, point defense. For now, let's just say the PD blocks one Bomber Token.

This leaves the second Bomber Token free to make an attack. This attack should be strong enough to hurt anything in the game. Even a one Wing Bomber Token should be dangerous. 8AD seems like a good starting point. For now, let's say Tokens cannot link or combine their fire, giving us 3x 8AD attacks.

Next turn, the Tokens are already in contact with their target, Swarming it. This is very dangerous for the target, as the swarm can effectively coordinate, and take advantage of any gap in the PD bubble. However, Bombers are not very good at swarming. For simplicity, let's say these cancel each other out, and the next Bomber attack is the same as last turn.

Right now, my question is: should the Bombers need to rearm and relaunch? On one hand, I feel like the abstract timeframe within the game is fairly short, and everything should have enough fuel and ordinance for the entire engagement. Current military aircraft typically fight for an hour or two, and FSA engagements don't seem to last longer. However, a Carrier feels more like a carrier if it has a recovery & relaunch capability.

I prefer simple though, so for now, let's say the only time a Token launches from the carrier is when it arrives from fold space. There is no rearm and relaunch procedure.

Combat Air Patrol

Point defense is clearly optimized for shooting down torpedoes, as it hits on a 4+, so that leaves SRS to shoot down other SRS. Interceptors are designed to intercept; that is, prevent Bombers from even making an attack run.

However, they can't be everywhere at once, and space is a very big place. Thus, I think there should be two ways for an interceptor Token to defend:

1. They essentially create a defensive perimeter, which ensures any SRS attack run can be blunted, but not all Interceptors can participate.
2. They fly as one cohesive unit, which generally means they can completely stop a specific Token, but leave ships vulnerable to an attack from a different direction.

So, let's say a Carrier uses its two Interceptor Tokens defensively. One Token is placed in base contact with the Carrier to signify it's performing #1 (CAP), and the other is not in base contact for

#2.

A 6-Wing Bomber Token makes an Attack Run on the Carrier. The unattached Interceptor is allowed to defend any Model within X", which includes the Carrier.

I don't know what makes sense balance-wise, but I feel like there should never be a reliable outcome. Further, 1 interceptor Wing should generally be able to stop 1 bomber Wing, so for now, let's say on average half the Bombers are killed, leaving 3.

These 3 Bombers now hit the defensive zone of the attached 3 Interceptor Token. Only a small portion can react, though, so let's say on average three Interceptors blocks one Bomber in this mode, so two Bombers get through, launching 2x 8AD shots on target.

So why even have this defensive perimeter? Because another bomber Token makes an Attack Run on the Model, and the free Token can't do anything about it. (It committed to stopping the first wave of Bombers) However the attached Token on CAP is still there, so can still intercept. It may not be able to do much, but it can always do it... And a one Wing Bomber Token needs to be stopped.

Also, Interceptors attached to a Squadron can try to shoot down Torpedoes, but they aren't very good at it, as they're so spread out. Maybe 2 Interceptors add 1 PD to the Squadron they're defending?

Escorting Bombers

As I mentioned before, Interceptors can escort Bombers by Attaching to them. Again, this should be variable, but Interceptors should generally counter each other. So in the last example, if 3 Interceptors were guarding the 6-Wing Bomber Token (two Token Cluster), the intercepting Interceptors could either:

1. Target the Interceptors, likely wiping each other out
2. Target the Bombers, having the same effect as before, and getting wiped out.

Both seem poor, but there's still the Interceptors on CAP. With Option 1, it's the same as before... With Option 2, the Bombers will essentially be neutralized, but most of the defending Interceptors will be wiped out as well. Both options are situational.

Point Defense

I feel like Point Defense in this new system should use a different mechanic. My first thought is PD, which is designed for shooting down Torpedoes, should be fairly useless against SRS, which makes Interceptors important defensively. However, PD should still have an impact, and be able to do

something. My thought it to have PD work like Shields. Models can roll PD dice when being attacked by Tokens, and each success blocks success. However, PD only hits on a 5+, and explodes on a 6+. If the PD roll exceeds the SRS Attack Roll, one Wing is destroyed...

Except for Escorts. With more SRS in the game, these should have a boost. Say they defend on a 4+, and they now produce the familiar PD Bubble, providing this boost to anything within Command Distance, even outside of their Squadron... and they ALWAYS Combine.

Finally, with this system, there are no Drive Off rules; you don't need them. If your SRS are in a bad spot, with Interceptors and Escorts ruining their day, use that 24" move to fly somewhere else! Being "driven off" becomes a player decision, which is a good thing.

Concluding Thoughts

This is a completely different system which would definitely alter gameplay. The only thing I didn't address is when Tokens can do all this stuff. I purposely avoided this, but at this point, I can't see this system working with the current system, for the following reason: there's no need to 'tether' SRS to a specific Model or Squadron Activation. In fact, it doesn't really make sense to keep them with Squadron Activations when they can move so far. Either Tokens should have their own Activations, or move all SRS mechanics into their own phase. I'm not sure right now which is better, but my instinct is to create an SRS phase. I don't see a real downside to doing so, at least without play-testing.

Finally, these are just ideas. I hope whoever is creating FSA 3.0 will read this and consider these concepts in their design and development. No one really likes the current system, and this is my attempt to address the flaws of the current system, and to improve upon them.