

Syndicate Fleet Guide



What do you do if you're Tauris Vylia'sal, and have more money than several systems put together? One option is to build your own space fleet with all the creature-comforts you can think of, including big turrets for the occasional Reformer Battlestation drive-by, or just take some Aquan cargo ship hostage for ransom. You can't let those free Traders or squid-heads get out of line; that's bad for business! We're running a totally legitimate business enterprise here. The Terran Alliance had better keep playing nice and taking our 'donations', or we might have to matters into our own hands instead of controlling things from the shadows.

You know, to hell with that. Let's see what these babies can do!

(Also, if anyone would give me instructions on how to emulate that paint scheme... There's not enough chrome, though!)

Overview

Battleship: 8/10
Battlecruiser: 5/10
Gunships: 6/10
Frigates: 6/10

When people think about the Syndicate, they probably think about the sweet Battleship, because for the longest time, that's all they had! Now that they've been fully released, it's time to really look at their stats and see how you could use this fleet by itself.

TACs

Any discussion about the fleets from Marauders and Mercenaries should start with their TACs, because they have some pretty sweet ones, and some head-scratching ones.

Bug Out: One of the best TACs in the game, this essentially lets you pull a surprise Shunt Escape on your Tier 1... ok, maybe not, because everyone expects you to have this card in your back pocket. A savvy opponent will keep this in mind, and not really threaten your Tier 1s until they can really do some damage, so this TAC will be a waste of time... but things don't always go according to plan.

Virus Strike: Normally, this card is fantastic, because you can selectively turn off PD and make Directorate players jealous... But Syndicate don't have any Torpedoes, and their AP is low, so unless you bring Torp-heavy Allies *cough any other Mercenaries cough* leave this at home.

Inducement: If ever there was a thematic card for the Syndicate, this is it! Sadly, it seems pretty lack-luster when you read it, as you're just forcing your opponent to take a Command Check, and you need to spend a Battlelog to make it worthwhile. However, it is subtly powerful. First and foremost, your primary target is any dedicated Boarding Squadron, as this will ruin their plans to steal your sweet ride. Next is any Carrier, as this will make any Wings land. Finally, any squadron that's about to punch you straight in the face, even if it's a Tier 3. As a side note, you could potentially attempt your own Boarding Assault with a properly timed Inducement.

Target their Engines: This lets you get a guaranteed Main Drive Failure, if you can get a roll on the Propulsion Systems... which requires Cyberwarfare (Omnidyne), a Targeted Strike (huge AD Pool), or a successful Boarding Assault (Corsairs). Since Syndicate don't really do Boarding Assaults, have short-ranged Primary Weapons, and selectively making someone drift forward at ½ Mv is very situational, leave this at home.

Weapons and MARs:

Primary Turrets: Every Syndicate ship has Primary Turrets, with good AD from 0"-16", so here are some basic tactics. First, you can fairly easily maintain your optimum range band (RB2) by turning a broadside and slowly circling your target. The problem is a lot of your opponents can play the broadside game, and probably better than you. Potentially better is closing to knife-fighting range, then simply drive right past your enemy. This gets you away from their guns, and puts your Turret in their Rear Arc... and you're generally maneuverable enough to stay there. However, this also puts you in Boarding range, which you never want to happen (thugs with guns can't stand up to highly trained Marines). Thus, everything in this fleet wants to Shunt Entry into that Rear Arc in the first place.

Elite Crew: Elite Crew means two things for Syndicate: reliable Flank Entry, and general immunity to Gas Cloud Disorder. I think we just figured out what Terrain you want to Shunt Entry into...

Decimator Beams and Countermeasures: This sounds like a winning combination, but sadly, it isn't most of the time. Countermeasures has an 8" range, which is RB 1 for your Beams, where the highest you can get is 9 AD on the Battlecruiser, which can reliably Crit Mediums and Smalls, but you'll likely only have one opportunity to do so. This is much easier from the Rear Arc, so I think we just found a job for those Gunships, if you pay for Decimator Beams, and work with a Tier 1 taking Countermeasures, which would be very difficult to coordinate.

If you have left over points, consider these Upgrades.

Countermeasures and Inducement: Where Countermeasures could really earn its keep is when you combine it with the Inducement TAC. Have you ever tried to get 3 success on 3 dice? How about 4 successes? 4 success on 3 dice has about an 85% chance for failure; this is the perfect countermeasure for someone looking to board your ships. Also, once they're disordered, you can stay with 8" and hopefully keep them disordered. Sadly, your intended target has to start the turn within 8" of your Tier 1 for this to work... So I guess not, as anything wanting to board you probably just captured you.

Tier 1 – Phantom Battleship



This is a pretty good Battleship, with a 7 DR, 2 Shields, and 4 Wing Capacity for 180 points base... but it's really 250 base, because you're going to take it with 4 Wings (+20) and 2 Frigates (+25 each). The Frigates gives it a maximum AD of, well, LOTS:

Fore Beams 11AD + (Turret 8 + Frigate 6 + Frigate 6)/2 = 11+20/2 = 11+10= **21AD**

That said, there are a lot of problems with this. First, you can only get this in your Fore Arc from 10"-16" away, and your Battleship is fairly slow (6" Mv). Second, you're opponent knows this, and will either try to kill your Frigates ASAP, try to hurt your Battleship first (which degraded the Beams and the Turret) or try to stay away from you. Finally, while rolling 21 dice sounds awesome, it's really a trap. You're generally better off firing a two or three shots, such as:

Beams plus Frigate: 12 AD
Gunrack plus Frigate: 12 AD
Turret: 11AD

Against anything that isn't a Tier 1, that's a far superior damage output potential. That's three dead Smalls, or three Crits on most Cruiser Squadrons. And against a Tier 1 with Escorts or Accompaniments... what Accompaniments? But if you're facing a Dreadnought, and can line up that 21 AD shot, you should probably take it.

Further, double degradation on those weapons really sucks, doubly so when one weapon starts with an odd number of AD, and the other has an even number:

8HP: $11 + 8/2 = 15$

7HP: $10 + 7/2 = 13$

6HP: $9 + 6/2 = 12$

5HP: $8 + 5/2 = 10$

4HP: $7 + 4/2 = 9$

That's where we stop, because at this point, it's time to Bug Out! The big boss won't be happy if you lose his favorite armed space yacht, and you won't like the 8-9 point total Battlelog swing when it's destroyed. And your CR is strictly average for a Battleship, which is why the +1 Shield is almost mandatory, at least for your Admiral. I see two viable builds here:

Tank: +1 Shields, 6 Interceptors, 2x Frigates (275)

Battlecarrier: 6 Bombers or Assault Craft, Quick Launch or +1" Move, 2x Frigates (265)

Put your Admiral on the Tank, and start it on the board. Try to dominate the center, and keep your Frigates alive for as long as possible. Since you can't do much beyond 16", use Terrain to mask your approach. You can probably fly through Asteroids and be ok, but the Frigates will need to go around; don't take a 33% chance to damage or destroy your Frigates.

For the Battlecarrier, Quick Launch and 1" Move are both useful weather you're shunting in or starting on the table; Quick Launch probably has a bit more utility. Like most Tier 1s arriving from Reserve, this will ruin anyone's day, particularly when they have Bombers or Assault Craft attacking them repeatedly. However, don't throw your Token into a PD nest; try to wait until you have them crippled and only 1-2 PD to counter you. This is a finishing move, not an opener.

Dirty Secrets: One of the Best MARs in the game, this lets you spend 1 Battlelog to throw away the TAC your opponent just played. Usage depends on your opponent; I'd generally wait for Power to Shields to come out when facing an Alliance Fleet; otherwise Perfect Timing or Drives to Max are pretty good to cancel. If Aquans or Relthoza have lots of Wings, wait for their Wing TAC, and ruin their day. Canceling Sorylian Thermal Controls is lots of fun too. And if you're facing other Mercs, wait to cancel Bug Out, or maybe Virus Strike.

Tier 1 – Spur Battlecruiser



Ah, the Battlecruiser. This ship would be amazing if you could field it as a squadron of two, but sadly, you may only ever take one. In all ways, this is simply a smaller version of the Battleship: 40 less points, -1 to almost all stats (-2 to HP and PD) and no Dirty Secrets, but +1 to Mv and AP. It also has the exact same weapon configuration, with the Primary Weapons being slightly weaker, and the Fore Beams being slightly stronger... but not as strong a full-strength Gunship Squadron. It can self-link to a Max of 15AD, just like the Battleship... in fact, it has almost the exact same AD potential as the Battleship at all Range Band Combos. The below table includes Frigates, which can add 5/6/2 AD at 0-8, 8-16, and 16-24 ranges:

	0-8	8-10	10-16	16-20	20-24	24-30	30-32	32-40
BB	12/17	14/20	15/21	13/15	11/13	10	9	5
BC	12/17	13/19	15/21	13/15	9/11	10	8	6
GN	17	19	21	18	14	13	11	7

Importantly, all three Squadrons have functionally the same damage potential in the 0"-20" range. The Battleship pays ~250, the Battlecruiser ~200, and the Gunships are also ~200. So if you're looking for offensive first, and points second, the Battlecruiser makes the most sense.

That said, let's look at the Options:

Hardpoints: You can only choose one, which is really unfortunate, because you really want them all. I thought the Syndicate was all about getting the fully loaded package...

+1 Shield: Going from 1 Shield to 2 Shields is huge, because your opponent MUST assume you'll get at least one block, if not more, which messes with how they shoot at you... basically forces them to swing for the fence,

as if this were a Battleship.

+2" Mv: If you're driving across the table, this gives you a Mv of 9", which is Cruiser speed; not bad

+4 Wings: This is probably the best option, because it turns your Battlecruiser into a Carrier. Granted, you only have 6 Wings, and don't have access to Quick Launch or Deck Crews, but you have better overall defenses and firepower than any other Carrier in the game. When you look at the Battlecruiser this way, it actually looks like a pretty good option. The best configuration is probably defensive with either 6 Interceptors, or 3 Interceptors and 3 Support Shuttles. This lets you escort something in your fleet while firing your guns; the Battleship, for example, which just launched 6 Bombers at something, but would really like the PD coverage for its Frigates. If you don't think you need that much PD coverage, just roll with the standard 2 Interceptors, and take another Hardpoint.

If you want, you could max out on Battlecruiser-Carriers, and take the Battleship to get several Tokens on the Table... but if you really want lots of Tokens, the Trader Carrier Squadrons will give you 10 Wing Capacity with Split Berth pseudo-Quick Launch for the same cost as this Battlecruiser-Carrier, but nowhere near the offense.

Upgrades:

Countermeasures and Decimator Beams: These have the same limitations as on the Battleship; the Battlecruiser's Beams have slightly more AD, so this costs 5 more points. Again, if you have 10 points you're not sure what to do with, neither is terrible.

Tier 2 – Wraith Gunships



Gunships provide Syndicate with the most firepower of all the Syndicate options, and actually have good potential from 20"-40". From 0"-20", they have the same or better firepower than both Tier 1s. So, these are good starting on the table landing some early damage, or using Reserves to get in something's Rear Arc at close range.

I've already shown what their max AD dice pools, but it's important to understand that's not your only option. At point blank, they can unleash 4x 7AD shots, or 2x 10AD shots; at their best range band, they could fire 2x 9AD and 2x 8AD, or 13AD and 12AD. All of these are pretty amazing. Their defenses are pretty good too, with the exact same DR/CR/HP and Shields as Aquan Heavy Cruisers. Their downfall is low PD and AP, and only squadron size 2, so they're pretty vulnerable to Torpedoes. At full HP, their defensive pool is 6 dice, and 2 points of damage drops that to 4 dice. If you're really worried about Torpedoes, your best option is to find an Interceptor Escort.

Hardpoints

Shields +1: For me, this is an auto-include. Going from 1 to 2 Shields is a big deal, and feels like a steal at 20 points for the Squadron. Really helps your PD deficiency.

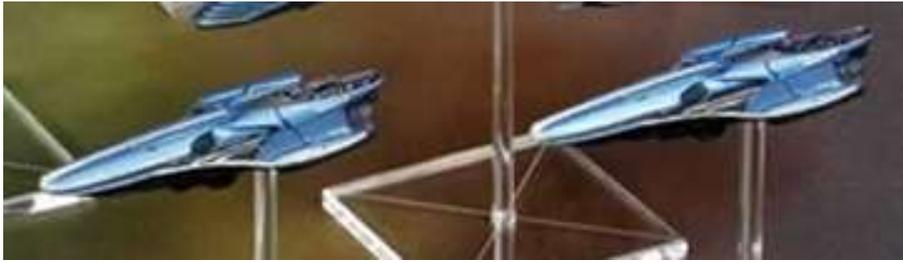
+2" Mv: I guess if you wanted to close faster, you could use this instead, but wouldn't you rather either:

A: Stay at long-range and plink or

B: Shunt Entry to close range to begin with?

Optional Decimator Beams: For 10 points, this is extremely tempting. The Gunships throw enough dice to reliably land a Crit on a lot of targets, which will occasionally make your day. If you have spare points left over, this is the first place I'd look to spend them.

Tier 3 – Shadow Frigates



The previous squadrons have a hard time dealing with enemy small ships, because they don't have that many shots. Well, the Gunships can toss 4 Frigate destroying shots, but that seems like a waste of their potential. This is where the Frigate Squadrons (and Accompaniments) step in and whack the little guys, so your capital ships can concentrate on killing other capital ships.

With a DR/CR of 4/5, +1 Shield, and 2 PD, these Frigates are pretty tough; if they had 3HP, you'd probably call them Light Cruisers. They each throw a lot of dice in the 0"-16" range, and that's where the problems start. They only have that one Primary Turret, and while 11" Mv is fast for a Frigate, it can be difficult to close the distance so you can actually perform your Small-killing role. That's why I'd generally start these guys in Reserve, and probably use Shunt Entry. This gets them point-blank, ideally in the Rear Arc. 6 AD into the Rear Arc of any Small ship generally equals a dead small ship.

That 11" move is really useful for getting into your enemy's rear arc too. These Frigates love to do drive-bys, getting into the Rear Arc of their target and lighting them up with their Primary Turrets. Even Tier 1 ships can't let these Frigates roll 12AD against their rear arc; that will reliably plink a point off the toughest ship, and occasionally land a Crit. Omnidyne Dreadnoughts really hate it when Syndicate Frigates get behind them... you know, in their shadow.

TACs:

In addition to your faction-specific TACs, you also have the 6 Standard TACs. Regroup and Burn Thrusters are basically useless for Syndicate, the other 4 are pretty good, and will depend on your fleet composition and how much you place in Reserve. I do want to point out Intel Gathered will give you a +4 FTB for Initiative, which will almost guarantee first turn against almost anyone.

Conclusion

Confession time; this is all theory from my own gameplay experience and knowledge of the game. I have only seen one Syndicate ship in person, and that was at Adepticon. I have yet to see them perform on the table. That said, I plan to purchase both Syndicate boxed sets, and look forward to playing the following 590 point list at our next Tournament:

230 Battlecruiser, +1 Shield, 2x Interceptors, Countermeasures, Decimator Beams, 2x Frigates
210 2x Gunships, +1 Shield, Decimator Beams
75 3x Frigates
75 3x Frigates

Something that's really important to remember is you can easily ally in other Marauders and Mercenaries, in fact, you should probably aim to do so. Each has its own focus, and does something Syndicate doesn't do... like Torpedoes, Mines, and Boarding. In particular, each Tier 1 is very specialized, and can add an interesting dynamic to your fleet. Syndicate is actually the simplest of all these factions, but don't tell the big boss man I said that. I like my kneecaps right where they are, thank you.

Good luck and good hunting, Admiral!