



More Starship Sensor Contacts

by Phil Reed

In going over feedback and sales I found that last year's *Starship Sensor Contacts* issue of the *Modern Dispatch* has proven quite popular, out-selling most other Ronin Arts releases in the *Dispatch* series. Not wanting to ignore the evidence, I've put together a new selection of sensor contacts. First introduced in the *Future: Datastream*, and then refined in *Future: 6 Free Sensor Contacts* (a free PDF available at RPGNow), starship sensor contacts are a special type of adventure seed designed specifically for use when the players' characters are onboard their starship and exploring the galaxy.

I hope that you can find a way to use some (or all!) of these sensor contacts in your campaign. As with the other starship-related releases that Ronin Arts has published this PDF makes some assumptions about your campaign; the sensor contacts in this PDF will be most useful in campaigns in which the following statements are true:

The campaign is not a "hard" science setting. Campaigns that are more space opera/adventure movie are the intended target for this PDF.

Starships are not rare or unusual. Everything that I've written in this PDF assumes that space travel is a standard and common occurrence – individuals either fly their own ships or ride on passenger ships. Starships and space travel are as common for characters as a plane ride is for people of our reality.

Space combat is not uncommon. It's just another exciting adventure when the players' characters have to engage the enemy while fleeing from some world or other.

The campaign is packed with action. If things aren't exploding, how much fun can the game really be?

What's Required to Use this PDF?

In order to use this *Modern Dispatch* issue you will need the *d20 Modern* roleplaying game, published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc., and the official future supplement, also published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.. You can find both at your favorite local game store or online at any number of roleplaying game vendors. Though some products are suggested in the text, no other products are required to use this PDF.

Future: Datastream

During 2005 Ronin Arts ran the *Future: Datastream*, a subscription service for players using the future SRD. That material has been recently collected into a 170+ page PDF packed with new starships, mecha, optional rules, and also some sensor contacts. You can find this collection for only \$20 at www.rpgnow.com.

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About the Author

Philip Reed has been working professionally in the roleplaying game industry since 1995. In that time he has worked for such companies as West End Games, Privateer Press, and Steve Jackson Games. Today Philip spends his days at home running Ronin Arts, writing and designing new games, and reading whatever books interest him at the time. To learn more about Philip Reed – and Ronin Arts – please visit www.philipreed.com/php and www.roninarts.com.

The Sensor Contacts Gas Collector (PL 7)

As the player characters' ship drops out of lightspeed (or whatever form of FTL travel is appropriate to your campaign) on the edge of a star system with at least a single gas giant, their sensors sound multiple contacts. A small station is in orbit around a gas giant while on the other side of the world, out of the station's sensor range but clearly visible to the player characters' starship, are a trio of ultralight craft moving at high speed. A single Computer Use check reveals the following (give the players all of the information up to and including the highest result of the check):

10: The station is skimming the planet's surface and most likely completely blinded by the intense radiation being released by the world. The exact type of the small craft cannot be identified.

15: The computer identifies the smaller craft as escorts (see the future SRD) but their identification transponders are switched off.

20: The station is a gas collection platform, a specialized device that gathers valuable gasses from gas giants. The computer calculates a 75% chance that the escorts are pirate vessels on an intercept course.

25: The computer zooms in on and identifies a symbol painted on the escorts – they're flying the colors of the *Arc Ring*, a pirate vessel rumored to have been responsible for the destruction of over one hundred starships in the last decade.

How the player characters deal with this situation will say a lot about their personalities. If they hang back and do nothing then the pirate vessels close in and dock with the station within 2d6+10 rounds. Two minutes after they dock the pirates will have overrun the station, killing all crew and assuming control of the gas collector. Unfortunately for the player characters, that's also about the time that the *Arc Ring* (a stock destroyer, see the future SRD) drops out of lightspeed. The *Arc Ring* and two of the escorts will pursue the player characters' starship and attempt to capture or destroy it – they don't want any witnesses talking about this event.

If the players act as heroes and move in to intercept the escorts then the pirates immediately break-off and jump to lightspeed – they didn't plan on any resistance and they can't afford to waste time in a space battle at this time. The escorts contact the *Arc Ring* and notify the destroyer of the chance; the destroyer turns back and will not arrive in-system.

The station will thank the heroes and reward them as best they can, most likely with an offer to refuel the characters' starship and perform any minor repairs. The crew onboard the station will be very thankful and will attempt to assist the heroes in any small way that they can, such as sharing rumors or pointing the heroes toward possible jobs on nearby worlds.

Graveyard (PL 7)

After the player characters' starship is damaged and jumps to lightspeed (or whatever form of FTL travel is appropriate to your campaign) they're

forced to drop into an unknown system when their FTL travel device fails. Their sensors immediately sound multiple contacts and for as far as their visual recorders can register the characters see a mass of battered starships. A single Computer Use check reveals the following (give the players all of the information up to and including the highest result of the check):

10: There are 1,245 individual starships floating before them, each one exhibiting no energy or life signs.

15: The computer does a quick star scan and cannot identify the player characters' current position.

20: Most of the ships are horribly disfigured and open to the vacuum of space but a few, less than a dozen, appear to be intact.

25: The ships are floating aimlessly and, at times, ramming into each other. There is *just* enough room for the player characters' starship to maneuver between the wrecks, though.

A successful Knowledge (History) check (DC 25) is required to identify the area as the Hadrian's Cloud, a massive starship graveyard – all that remains of an ancient galactic war. While the wrecks have been gone over by pirates, scavengers, scoundrels, and other spacers, there are enough starships here that the player characters should be able to find something of value. Maneuvering between the wrecks requires a successful Pilot check (DC 25) each round – for each point by which a Pilot check fails the player characters' starship suffers 1d10 points of damage as it scrapes against a wreck.

It takes the ship's computers over a week to properly determine their current position (maneuvering out

Futuristic Timeship (PL 9)

Type: Ultralight

Subtype: Escort

Defense: 7

Flat-footed Defense: 5

Autopilot Defense: 5

Hardness: 50

Hit Dice: 30d20 (600 hp)

Initiative Modifier: +6

Pilot's Class Bonus: +3

Pilot's Dex Modifier: +2

Gunner's Attack Bonus: +2

Size: Colossal (–8 size)

Tactical Speed: 3,500 ft. (7 sq.)

Length: 180 feet

Weight: 900 tons

Targeting System Bonus: +3

Crew: 8 (trained +4)

Passenger Capacity: 24

Cargo Capacity: 30 tons

Grapple Modifier: +16

Base Purchase DC: 52

Restriction: Military (+3)

Attack: 2 fire-linked heavy neutron guns –3 ranged (15d8), 2 fire-linked rail cannons –8 ranged (9d12), 2 fire-linked quantum cannons +1 ranged (24d8/20), and CHE missile –8 ranged (6d12/19–20)

Attack of Opportunity: Point-defense system +3 ranged (1d12 x10)

Standard PL 9 Design Specs

Engines: Spatial compressor, temporal drive generator.

Armor: Nanofludic.

Defense Systems: Damage control system (1d10), magnetic field, point-defense system, radiation shielding, sensor jammer.

Sensors: Class V sensor array, targeting system.

Communications: Drive transceiver, ansible.

of the debris field drops that time to 5 minutes – the computer is having a hard time getting a clear star scan with all of the wreckage nearby).

The GM can use this opportunity to strand the player characters in a desolate graveyard where they have to deal with scavengers and pirates that look on the player characters' starship as just another item to strip parts from.

Temporal Storm (PL 7)

As the player characters' ship drops out of lightspeed (or whatever form of FTL travel is appropriate to your campaign) on the edge of any star system their sensors pick up an unusual energy cloud directly in their path. The cloud shimmers a bright, glowing green and constantly twists and turns. Flashes of brilliant light illuminate the cloud, revealing dark shapes every few seconds. A single Computer Use check reveals the following (give the players all of the information up to and including the highest result of the check):

10: The cloud is electrical in nature and covers a total area of 50 tactical squares. Every round the cloud moves one square toward the player characters' starship.

15: The shapes within the cloud register as starships, but the computer is having an extremely difficult time identifying the ships' exact types.

20: The cloud is growing larger, increasing by 10% each round.

25: The cloud is a temporal storm and anyone within the cloud will be thrust violently through time, possibly traveling to a random point in time.

30: A central ship within the storm appears to be the center of the disturbance. Sensor scans of the ship are unable to identify its exact type but the timestream disturbance definitely emanates from the ship.

A timeship from the future (see box) is having severe difficulty with their temporal drive generator (see the future SRD). The device has been infected by a temporal virus and is now breaking apart, releasing uncontrolled temporal waves that are capturing any ships that enter the affected area.

If the player characters' starship enters a tactical square covered by the cloud they must make a successful Pilot check (DC 30) in order to escape to a clear square. If this check fails the starship is trapped in the temporal event – roll on the following table:

D6	Result
1	The starship is instantly thrown back in time 1d4+1 progress levels. It remains in the exact same location in space but is in the past. There is a 20% chance that they still cannot escape the cloud when they arrive at the new time and that the ship will be further affected by the temporal storm (roll on Table: No Escape!). If they manage to escape the temporal cloud they'll have to find their own way home.
2	As above, but the starship is thrown back 1d4-1 (minimum of 1) progress levels and the chance that they will be unable to escape the cloud's effects is increased to 35%.
3	The ship does not move through time but is stuck in the cloud (roll on Table: No Escape!). The starship is instantly thrown forward in time 1d3 progress levels. It remains in the exact same location in space but is in the future. There is a 20% chance that they still cannot escape the cloud when they arrive at the new time and that the ship will be further affected by the temporal storm (roll on Table: No Escape!). If they manage to escape the temporal cloud they'll have to find their own way home.
4	

5 As above, but the starship is thrown forward only 1 progress level and the chance that they will be unable to escape the cloud's effects is increased to 35%.

The temporal event has no effect on the player characters' starship (from their point of view). Unfortunately, the storm taps into an alternate universe and draws an opposing (most likely evil) version of the ship and the player characters into their own world. If the player characters' starship remains in the cloud roll again on this table.

NOTE: If GMs wish, any result that would leave the player characters' starship in a progress level before the Stone Age (PL 0) actually takes them to an advanced civilization that existed *before* time as they know it. This can prove difficult for GMs to properly execute but if done right it can make for a very fun

Table: No Escape!

D6	Result
1	10 minutes after arriving in the new time the ship is thrown through time again, arriving at a point in time 2 progress levels before their current time. There is a 10% chance that they still cannot escape the cloud when they arrive at the new time and that the ship will be further affected by the temporal storm (roll again on this table). If they manage to escape the temporal cloud they'll have to find their own way home.
2	As above, except that they move forward in time two progress levels.
3	The starship suffers 4d10 points of damage and is immediately affected by the storm again (roll again on this table).
4	As above but the starship suffers 8d10 points of damage.
5	The ship shudders and shakes as the temporal forces tear at it. The starship immediately suffers 10d8 points of damage and is shaken for 3d4 rounds. Each round that the ship is shaken it suffers another 2d6 points of damage. There is a 10% chance that they still cannot escape the cloud and that 30 rounds after the shaken effect ends the ship is further affected by the temporal storm (roll again on this table). If they manage to escape the temporal cloud they'll have to find their own way home.
6	The ship is battered so violently by the storm that it is breaking apart – reduce the ship's hit points to -1.

distraction from the current campaign events. How will the heroes react to this unusual, new universe? What will they do when an unstoppable cataclysmic event threatens to destroy this new universe (so that their own can be born)? This can also be an excellent way to introduce new aliens, equipment, and organizations to the regular campaign. (After all, if the heroes manage to return to their own universe why can't some elements of the pre-time universe follow them?)

Unidentified Military Prototype (PL 7)

As the player characters' ship drops out of lightspeed (or whatever form of FTL travel is appropriate to your campaign) on the edge of any star system their sensors sound contact. A starship just above the elliptic plane vanishes almost as quickly as their

sensors detect it. A single Computer Use check reveals the following (give the players all of the information up to and including the highest result of the check):

10: There was no contact, the system suffered a temporary electronic glitch.

15: The computer indicates that there is a 50% chance an ultralight starship was jumping out of system at the exact second that the player characters' starship was arriving in-system.

20: The contact was real and seems to still be in the immediate area of the player characters' starship.

25: The contact is still there. The sensors detected it again and continue to pick up faint sensor shadow every few seconds.

30: The contact is a fighter equipped with some sort of cloaking device.

An assault fighter equipped with an experimental cloaking device (see box) was in the midst of a test flight when the arrival of the player characters' starship interrupted the test. If the characters' ship is legal and transmitting the proper identification signals then the fighter will do a single fly-by and then jump out of system so that it may continue its test run elsewhere. If anything at all strikes the pilot as questionable, though, the pilot will hang back and trail the characters' starship as it calls in a patrol craft to deal with the situation. A successful Computer Use check (DC 30) is required to detect the pilot's transmission. Once the pilot has called in support it will take 4d6 rounds for the patrol craft to reach the maximum sensor effectiveness of the characters' starship.

Experimental Cloaking Screen (PL 7)

This Gravity Age starship device is near-identical to the PL 8 Cloaking Screen (see the future SRD) except that the device has a limited effective duration and cannot be used for more than 15 rounds at a time. At the end of 15 rounds the system automatically shuts down and cannot be reactivated for 5 rounds (during which time the device is recharging – if the starship has no operational engines then the system cannot recharge).

Purchase DC: 15 + one-half the base purchase DC of the starship.

Restriction: Military (+3).

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