

UFO: Alien attack!

Introduction

Some two decades ago the club that I'm involved with ran a show game called UFO. It used home-grown rules to represent the action that took place in the classic late sixties Gerry Anderson TV series of the same name.

In the series – the first live action show by the Anderson studios - the earth was being visited by aliens in their (eponymous) UFOs who were seeking humans to utilise for their own ends (an unpleasant sub text of mind control and spare parts surgery was the underlying motive of the extra terrestrials). Coincidentally, the show featured a combination of mini-skirted ladies in purple wigs and space ships (which certainly goes some way to explaining it's continued popularity: a remake movie is – allegedly - in the pipeline).

UFO the TV Series

The TV show – though made at the end of the sixties was set in the *then* far future – 1980 (and – as the series progressed – its timeline stretched to around 1984). In that 80's world, awash with Carnaby Street fashions and mini-mokes, a secret organisation called SHADO – Supreme Headquarters Alien Defence Organisation – had been set up to fight the alien menace. They had a secret underground HQ near London, a fleet of four small nuclear powered subs called Skydivers (each capable of sea-launching a fighter aircraft) deployed strategically to the oceans of the world, a network of other earthbound assets including a supply of 'Mobiles' – tank like vehicles which could be delivered pretty much anywhere by rapid response aircraft or low loaders - but SHADO's Lunar base formed the first line of defence against the body snatching menace that threatened civilisation.

Coordinated by a large satellite in earth orbit called SID (Space Intruder Detector) this Moon-base had defences for it's own needs but its primary function was to function as a launch base for a squadron of space Interceptors. These interceptors would be launched - always in threes - from disguised craters on the surface and had only a short time to accelerate rapidly to meet the fast decelerating UFO (or – later on, as the threat increased – multiple UFOs), their aim, as the name implied, being to intercept the UFOs before they reached earth orbit. The interceptor's primary weapon was a single, large missile although the ships were shown with additional close range guns (although they are never used in the show, they are patently obvious on the models and other diagrams and support material available).

The interceptor crews were vectored on to their targets by the staff at Moon-base using information from their own sensors and those of SID to triangulate and determine firing data – all performed in a very 'Soviet 1960's' aircraft command and control kind of way.

Moon-base itself is kept supplied with personnel and stores using a Two-Stage-to-Orbit vehicle called the Lunar Transporter (a lifting body aircraft - the Lunar Carrier - flies to the upper part of the atmosphere and then launches it's rocket powered component - The Lunar Module - which flies to the moon and back, meeting and re-docking with the lifting-body in the stratosphere to complete its mission.

Any UFOs that got past the interceptors and made it to the earth's atmosphere then ran a gauntlet of air attacks from the small fighters (called Sky 1, Sky 2 and so forth, depending whether they launched from Skydiver 1 or Skydiver 2 submarines) armed with small rocket pods. If the Alien hordes get past the fighters they face either underwater attack from the submerged Skydivers if they land in the sea (the subs carry torpedoes) or land attack from the Mobiles and their crews.

The game

In the 90's the Warlords ran a version of the game as a participation at Salute and Colours. Gamed in 25mm, the game had a space interceptor stage and a ground attack stage. The models used were Japanese kits by Imai for the space Interceptors, Sky1 and Mobiles, resin models for the UFOs.

We relaunched the game in the mid noughties after the DVD boxed was released rekindling our interests. Although we could have used the old models we had (assuming we could still locate them) or rebuild new ones – or even locate old Dinky toy die-casts and refurbish them - or we could have used the beautiful Product Enterprise 25mm scale Space Interceptor and UFO set which was pre-painted, they were all either prohibitively expensive at the time (we thought) or a lot of work, so we went for a cheaper and easier option: a Japanese company called Konami make UFO Trading Figures. They have released models in about 15mm scale or so of UFO's, Interceptors and Mobiles (and a Sky1) and Product Enterprises released a Skydiver in about the same scale. These were all pre-painted and – at the time – quite cheap.

So we did the game as a party game with new rules designed to enable solo play. The rules covered just the UFOs swinging into attack the earth and travelling from one end of the table (deep space, beyond the lunar orbit) to earth orbit (at the other end of the table) with only the three space born interceptors to stop them.

Movement and attacks for the UFO (or multiple UFOs) was via a deck of cards and could be run by an umpire or just the player(s) themselves for solo play. Interceptors used another deck of cards each to make planned moves and attacks, chasing down the UFOs as they moved towards earth.

The UFOs got victory points for making it through to earth orbit or destroying SID hovering at one end of the table (another Konami pre-paint). They also got additional points for taking out interceptors. The good guys just have to stop them.

Latest modifications

The latest version adds two new features to the game with very little extra complexity.

An alternate mission now involves protecting a Lunar Module. This starts out returning from the moon and is effectively being chased by the UFOs and desperately wants to get back to earth orbit.

In this scenario the UFO's primary objective is now destruction of the Lunar Module with everything else being extra gravy! The players' job is to protect the Lunar Module and destroy UFOs before they make it to earth orbit.

But - if the pesky aliens do make it past the Interceptors, there's always Skydiver! This new game element is represented by a 'zoned' layer of defence: Skydiver can launch its Sky1 and try to take out UFOs as they exit the end of the space hex cloth.

Materials

The Space Combat section of the game using the Konami models utilises a black, commercially available "space" hex cloth (two of them, in fact, to cover an area around 8ft by 6ft) with a 40mm or so hex printed. The Konami UFOs come supplied with small bases which have a directional element (they are wedge shaped and pointed from one direction) which helps – as the ships themselves are circular (as befits a flying saucer) - when one is trying to determine which way they are facing for movement purposes. The Interceptors are stuck on to clear 'flight bases' (available from many wargaming sources). The SID comes on its own black, cradle style base which we have retained.

In addition, we have added a diecast Product Enterprises) Skydiver with detachable Sky1, a Lunar Module and a blue cloth which enables us to leave around a foot exposed at the end of the table (to make it look attractively like the atmosphere!).

What does one need to play the game?

The models we used can still be sourced from eBay. Currently these are now up to about £35 - £50 each for the Interceptors and UFOs and less than that for the SID. The Skydiver and Moon Bus are also available – the latter Konami one is the wrong scale, mind you, so I've sourced a 'right scale' garage kit in resin. For those who don't want to spend that kind of money, proxies can be used or you can download the counters I have created (simply by photographing the models), stick them to card and then use those.

The game also needs the cards downloading and printing off. They have a front and back, printed separately. They are then stuck together and we ran them through a lamination machine to ensure a long life and make them easier to shuffle.

Rules for UFO: Alien Attack!

Premise

To replicate the space borne interceptor versus UFO clashes in the TV series (with the upper atmosphere Sky 1 attack).

Players

Three interceptors with three players versus a number of UFO's (up to nine) driven by cards via the umpire. If the Lunar Module is used it is driven by the same (umpire driven) cards as the UFOs. If Skydiver is used, a special set of three 'one use' Skydiver cards is issued to each Interceptor player (although they could be given to a fourth player or perhaps the first Interceptor player to be killed - if such an event happens - to keep the player in the game).

System pointers

Card based movement for the interceptors. SID on the table marks the edge of the earth's atmosphere and the target for the UFOs: if they can get past SID (and Sky 1 if you use that option) it will give victory points to the UFOs. Interceptors have close range guns and long-range single missiles. See cards for examples of movement and firing. UFOs have a beam weapon. Sky 1 has short-range rocket pods.

Craft placement

Markers set on the hex cloth: On the deep space end of the table (one of the narrow ends of the cloth), three counters are placed. Blue 1 five hexes in from one corner, Blue 3 five hexes in from the opposite corner and Blue 2 equidistant between the two. At the other narrow end, five more counters are placed – Red 1, Red 2, Red 3, Red 4 and Red 5. They are placed at 5 equidistant points.

SID: SID sets up at the narrow end of the cloth play area on point Red 3 which should be right in the middle of the cloth.

UFOs: Two different coloured d3's are bowled for position and numbers (say a yellow and a blue dice). The number bowled on the yellow dice is the number of UFOs that come in at Blue 1 (one comes in on the marker, additional UFOs come in 2 hexes to either side). The blue dice is the number of UFOs that come in at marker Blue 2. If there are any doubles (double 1, 2 or 3) then that is the number that come in at marker Blue 3.

These are the UFOs for use in the game. All are aimed at the far side of the table.

After numbers of UFOs are bowled, if Skydiver is used, increase the number of UFOs by 1. If the Lunar Module scenario is used, increase the number of UFOs by another 1. Nine UFOs should still be the maximum number.

Skydiver: set on a strip of blue cloth 1 ft wide at the earth orbit end of the table. This is placed on a point adjacent to Red 3 and may use cards to move between the points adjacent to the 5 red points as the game progresses.

Interceptors: The interceptor players bowl one d6 dice, consult the table below and place their ships on the table.

Die	Result	
1	“Vector in, tight formation!”	All Interceptors are at the mid point on a long side with three clear hexes between them
2	“Vector in!”	All Interceptors are at the mid point on a long side with six clear hexes between them
3	“Vector in, loose formation!”	All Interceptors are at the mid point on a long side with nine clear hexes between them
4	“Sweep and clear!”	All Interceptors are at the mid point on a long side with twelve clear hexes between them
5	“Envelop and destroy!”	Two Interceptors are at the mid point on a long side with six clear hexes between them. One Interceptor is mid way on the opposite long side
6	“Over shoot/Lunar Module escort”	Two Interceptors are on the short side along side the UFOs, each at the mid point between two blue markers. One Interceptor is mid way on one of the opposite long sides. OR Lunar Module Escort: Same disposition of interceptors but the Lunar Module is midway between the two interceptors but 5 hexes closer to Earth Orbit.

Objectives & Victory conditions

The UFOs objective is to get from one side of the table to the other – destroying interceptors is handy but not their main mission. Destroying SID – and therefore blinding Earth’s defences – is an additional, valuable bonus. Destroying the Lunar Module is just as damaging to the Interceptor players (it has a valuable cargo!).

The SHADO Interceptors (and Sky 1 if you use it) just want to stop the aliens getting to Earth – the UFOs must not leave the far end of the table so they must be destroyed or scared off.

Victory Points

- UFO’s: each UFO to get off the far side of the table (including getting past Skydiver, if in play) counts as 2 victory points for the Aliens
- Each Interceptor destroyed counts as 1 victory point for the Aliens
- Destroying Sky 1 counts as 2 victory points for the Aliens
- Destroying SID or the Lunar Module counts as 8 victory points for the Aliens
- Destroying each UFO counts as 2 victory points for the SHADO team
- Escorting the Lunar Module to the Earth atmosphere counts as 5 victory points for the SHADO team
- The Lunar Module turning (simply due to the turn of cards) and leaving the table by the same end it entered from (and therefore going back to the moon) counts as 5 victory points for the Aliens
- UFOs that turn and go home count as no points for anyone!

Most points wins!

Play

Each player takes an interceptor and a stack of Interceptor cards (plus 3 Skydiver cards if you play those rules). UFO’s are run via a stack of cards on an automatic system: their cards being shuffled each turn and then drawn at random (usually by an umpire). Interceptor players get to select which cards from their deck they wish to play, within certain constraints.

These constraints are that, each turn, they may only select as many cards as are allocated via a dice role – normally 1d3 plus one (ie 2 – 4). The pilots must lay *exactly* as many cards as the number they achieved via the dice roll. Most cards can be reused in the next turn except for expendable ones – like firing the (one) big missile, firing their cannons (three ammo cards) and Rotate Manoeuvre (one card) - and these limitations are indicated on the cards. Skydiver cards (**Move, Move or**

Launch, Fire) are also expendable and can only be used *once* each, meaning - between three players - there is a supply of 9, one-use Skydiver/Sky 1 cards.

With the Interceptors, the cannons are 'opportunity' cards: the cards are played but they are only used (and expended) if the UFO is *actually* fired upon, which happens automatically if they come into range. If a UFO doesn't cross their line of fire or stays *out* of range then – even though the card has been played - it is returned to the Interceptor Players' pack.

The UFO's are easy to run and random (which is why the game is suitable for solo play). Each turn, each UFO takes one card from a shuffled deck. After each turn the UFO cards are returned to the UFO deck and they are reshuffled. Movement starts with the UFO closest to SID. If the Lunar Module is used, the same deck of cards is used for its movement and it moves first.

Other than movement, the UFO random cards also indicate direction in case they drift (some cards say reorientate towards SID which will get them back on course), and firing: UFOs only fire when that order comes up on the cards. The Lunar Module – using the same deck of cards - will also reorientate if appropriate but it has no weapons so doesn't fire at anyone!

Turns

There are 3 phases to each turn (4 if the Skydiver option is used). These are repeated until either all of the UFO's have been destroyed; all of the Interceptors have been destroyed or all of the UFO's have left the table (or got past Sky 1 if you are using it). If the Lunar Module - if in play - leaves the table, that event does not end the game if there are still UFO's to shoot!

Phase 1	Interceptors Move and Declare Fire	<p>A D6 is bowled to see which interceptor moves first (highest first). Each interceptor then carries out the following procedure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1d3+1 Interceptor Cards are selected. These may be used to move, fire its only missile or fire guns. Each movement card may be re-used but missiles are one use only (as are gunnery cards - <i>if they are fired</i>). Movement cards are returned to the players hand after use. The exception on movement cards is the "ROTATE" card. This can only be used once and is an emergency manoeuvre to turn to any hex face. Unfortunately it blows most of the ships manoeuvre fuel. ALL SUBSEQUENT CARD SELECTIONS ARE AT MINUS ONE CARD (ie not 1d3+1, just 1d3) • Missiles are detached and placed next to the relevant Interceptor ready to chase the nominated target in Phase 3 • This procedure is repeated for all (remaining) interceptors. • If SID is destroyed during the course of the game, all subsequent Interceptor moves must be 'blind': played as hands of cards face down before any moving of any of the interceptors (increasing the chance of collision and duplicate targets, interceptors crashing into each other etc)
Phase 2	UFOs Move and Fire	<p>The UFO card deck is dealt face up, one random card for each UFO. If the Lunar Module is in play, it moves first using the first card drawn. The UFO closest to SID is dealt to first (dice if equal). The UFO's then follow the directions on the cards and – if the card dictates – fire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UFOs follow direction on the cards. If the movement says "Towards SID" then the first part of the move must be orientated to reduce the distance as much as possible. If the Lunar Module is in play, the UFOs will 'home in on the LM as their primary target, only switching to SID if the LM is destroyed. If two directions are possible, bowl a dice to decide. • If the UFO moves from the end of the table at earth orbit it has succeeded in its mission. If Skydiver is in play, it leaves via the nearest Red marker and may engage/be engaged by/with Sky 1. If a UFO enters the atmosphere and gets past Sky 1, the next card it receives in the next turn's Phase 2 gets it to Earth itself and it's mission is complete! • If a FIRE is indicated by the card, then the UFO must fire at the closest target, SID or Interceptor (or LM if in play) as primary targets. If no primary targets are within range but a missile is, then the UFO will fire at the missile. Remember, the Lunar Module cannot fire. • Range. To hit a target with beam fire a UFO must achieve the range to the target in hexes or more on the sum of 2d10. Range is therefore 20 hexes. When hit, roll on the relevant damage chart with a D6. • After all moving and firing, all UFO cards are returned to the pack which is shuffled. • If Skydiver is in play and Sky 1 has been launched and a UFO has entered the atmosphere at a Red marker occupied by an airborne Sky 1, it may automatically fire at Sky 1. Roll two D10. a '10' result on either of them is a hit. Two '10' results is two hits.
Phase 3	Interceptor's Fire results	<p>Missiles launched in Phase 1 travel 1d6+15 hexes in a straight line towards their nominated target with only a single, one hex-face turn capable per turn for the first two movement turns. The only three restrictions being that :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They cannot perform a one hex-face turn within the first 5 hexes of being launched • They cannot one hex-face turn after the first two turns of movement • For the third turn of movement and all subsequent turns of movement, their speed is a constant 15 hexes per turn with no variation <p>To hit. A missile explodes and damages in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a missile hits a any UFO (not just its nominated target) it explodes and bowls three times on the Damage chart, taking the highest number as the effect. • If a missile passes ANY UFO in an adjacent hex (and doesn't get any closer) a player may detonate it if he chooses. It explodes and bowls twice on the Damage chart, taking the highest number as the effect. • If a missile passes within two hexes of a UFO (and doesn't get any closer) a player may detonate it if he chooses. It explodes and bowls once on the Damage chart , taking the highest number as the effect. • Other UFOs, missiles and Interceptors caught in the blast of a missile take a bowl, as detailed above, commensurate with their distance from the target <p>Guns</p> <p>If a gun card has been laid then the ammunition is only expended if the UFO enters the firing arc and the card is used up. If not the card is returned to the deck. More than one card can be laid in one turn. Firing arc is line ahead only, range 2 hexes. If a UFO passes the firing arc of the weapon the weapon is fired automatically.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At range 2 hexes, one bowl is made (irrespective of how many cards are laid) on the Damage chart against the UFO. • At range 1 hex, two bowls are made (irrespective of how many cards are laid) on the Damage chart against the UFO. <p>Exploding UFO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If A UFO explodes via gun fire, treat as a missile explosion: any UFOs, missiles and Interceptors caught in the blast of a UFO or missile take a bowl commensurate with their distance from the target
Phase 4	Skydiver/Sky 1 Move and Fire	<p>All interceptor players may play as many of their three expendable Skydiver/Sky 1 cards as they choose in any turn. These are in addition to the number of Interceptor cards bowled for at the start of Phase 1. 'Move' means a move for either Skydiver or Sky 1 to an adjacent Red marker from its current position. 'Move/Launch' means a launch of Sky 1 and subsequent move to an adjacent Red marker for the airborne Sky 1 or just a move an adjacent Red marker for either Skydiver or Sky 1. 'Fire' means an <i>airborne</i> Sky 1 may fire a burst of rockets at a UFO at the same Red marker it is currently at. This achieves an identical result to a 1 hex cannon fire from an Interceptor: two bowls are made on the Damage chart against the UFO. If the UFO then explodes, Sky 1 and Skydiver are out of the blast radius and will not be damaged. In this Phase and UFO in a position to be fired at by Sky 1 may also fire back at Sky 1 simultaneously. This is in addition to any firing from a UFO in Phase 3.</p>

Vessels (ie not missiles) that pass through the same hex collide are both destroyed. Missiles that pass through a vessel hex that may not be their intended target detonate and do the appropriate damage.

Note – we’ve played it that missiles can hit an Interceptor by mistake if it passes through the Interceptor’s hex and we’ve played it that the missiles obey standard IFF style recognition of ‘friendlies’ and don’t detonate. It depends how nasty you want to be to the players really!

Damage Charts

Interceptors (or Sky 1) shooting at UFOs - Bowl d6 (3 for a <i>direct</i> hit, 2 for <i>adjacent</i>, 1 for 2 hexes away, from missiles or explosions, 2 for range one hit with guns or Sky 1 firing rockets, 1 for range 2 hit with guns – see above)	
1	No Effect
2	No Effect
3	No Effect
4	UFO heads back – all cards point home (away from SID as first component of move – redirected if UFO gets a ‘Head towards SID card). If attacked by Sky 1 when already in the atmosphere it leaves earth orbit via the hex adjacent to the nearest Red marker. If the UFO is already in the atmosphere and is being fired at by Sky 1 when it gets this result, the UFO is assumed to leave the table and simply make it back out past Lunar orbit – do not play the UFO’s movement with the card deck.
5	UFO Destroyed
6	UFO Destroyed - Explodes

UFOs shooting at Interceptors or Sky 1 - Bowl 1d6	
1	No Effect
2	No Effect
3	Blown off course – bowl 1D6 and count clockwise from current direction. Turn to face that hex (a bowl of a 6 therefore spins right round 6 faces to current orientation so: no effect!). Sky 1 moves to adjacent Red marker
4	Interceptor loses manoeuvre card (with the attendant one card lost from all remaining card selection dice rolls). Sky 1 loses 1 card: shuffle all remaining cards, remove one and re-deal to players (bowl a D3 to determine which player loses the card)
5	Interceptor/Sky 1 loses one remaining gunnery card (bowl a D3 to determine which one if more than one Sky 1 card remains available)
6	Interceptor or Sky 1 Destroyed

UFOs shooting at SID or Lunar Module - Bowl 1d6	
1	SID/Lunar Module Damaged – Minor
2	SID/Lunar Module Damaged – Minor
3	SID/Lunar Module Damaged – Major
4	SID/Lunar Module Damaged – Major
5	SID/Lunar Module Destroyed
6	SID/Lunar Module Destroyed

Damage on SID/Lunar Module:

3 Minor damages results and SID/Lunar Module destroyed

1 Major damage and any other (minor or major) damage and SID/Lunar Module destroyed

UFOs shooting at Missiles - Bowl 1d6	
1	No Effect
2	No Effect
3	No Effect
4	No Effect
5	Missile retargets (next closest UFO)
6	Missile Destroyed

Conclusions

And that's all there is to it. The only question you have to ask yourself is this: are you up to stopping the Aliens coming to Earth to harvest the organs of your loved ones? If the answer to that is "yes" then you're just the sort of people that SHADO need so buckle up:

"Nine UFO's in sector blue two: Interceptors - *immediate launch!*"

Rules, design and photography - John Treadaway

Lunar Module painted by Kevin Dallimore

Purchasing and e-bay trawling - Ivan Congreve

Links:

<http://www.werelords/ufo/index.htm> - page for this game – download the rules and play cards!

<http://www.ufoseries.com/> - great site telling you all the background detail you need

<http://www.hlj.com/product/KNM13057> - Konami UFO range

www.cometminiatures.co.uk - a good sources of models but not cheap: you're usually better trying eBay first