

# New units for Starship Troopers

By Craig A. Johnson

In addition to the original variant counters that Avalon Hill introduced in The General Magazine v13n6 back in March 1977 (40+ years ago), we've come up with a few new units you can add to your own custom scenarios and campaign game:



## Flying Bugs

They are not real strong units, but they have a distinct advantage over the other Bugs: They are fast. They can be a needed distraction when you want to get a slow, heavy unit in place for an attack. Each hive segment gets three of them, so you have a lot of these disposable cannon fodder units.



## Bug Tankers

Heavy and slow, but they have a good defense and good firepower. You only get one of these per hive segment, so you will have to use them from several segments in coordinated attacks. They can also be a diversion, allowing lighter units to reach their objectives, or be withdrawn safely.



## Heavy Tankers

Heavier and slow, but lots of firepower. These Bugs can shoot a flamethrower up to two hexes. (Treated as an HE attack). They are definitely a unit the Terrans won't like, and will have to gang up on to eliminate. Too bad you only get one per hive segment. You can use other units to protect or distract the enemy to make these count to maximum effect.



## Medium Weapon

We're assuming the bug heavy weapon is an organic, grown unit. That makes these the juvenile version of the heavies. They get the same stats and features of the Heavy Weapon, just a step down in strength and defense. Still, the beam weapon is effective against all the units in the hex - just not a killer, like the adult version.



## Captured Ordnance

When the Skinnies or Bugs capture a Terran trooper, the ordnance they carry becomes available to reuse. They have no use for the Heavy Nerve Gas, and can't use the Nukes without the detonation codes, so those get discarded or stored – but the other items, they've figured out. Deadly when used by Flying Bugs, or Skinny Storm Troopers. Too bad the Skinny air force hasn't adapted them yet.



### **Skinny Storm Troopers**

Skinny's been putting on weight. Maybe these are Fatty units. When the Bugs capture Terran troopers, they donate the suits to the Skinnies. They have adapted, and reverse engineered them to their own use, and the result is a beefed up Skinny Storm Trooper. They are capable of carrying captured ordnance as well.



### **Light Tanks**

The Skinnies have some old tech, light tanks available – with shorter range, and weaker armor, but they are faster. Which may be useful in some situations, so they've been brought back from the scrap yards to serve as scouts, or for a last-ditch defense. Turns out they have a lot of them available.



### **Skinny Forts**

The Bugs gave the Skinnies the blueprints for their Bug Forts, and the Skinnies adapted them to use their HE missile systems. A further modification was to make the forts stronger because the Skinnies don't need to disassemble and transport them in tunnels. They have better range and defense than the Bug Forts, but not the firepower. Still, they have a better defense and can house as many units as the strong points do.



### **Single Missile**

This battery can be towed into place by any Skinny vehicle unit, and left in any hex traversed by the unit without penalty. Some more old tech saved from the scrap yard again. These can be used most effectively within strong points or other installations. Transporting them using the light tanks is a great combination. On their own, they are pretty weak, and lack the kill shot needed to keep their adversaries at bay.



### **Skinny Bomber**

The Skinny air force is finally ready for the fight, almost too late though. They can be launched from hidden hangers, or right off the factory assembly line. They can also be sent to combat areas from off board locations, either solo, in pairs, or squadrons of 5. They can carry up to 3 HE bombs, but are rarely fully armed due to theatre shortages and supply interdiction problems. They can drop a bomb, or bombs over any hex they traverse during movement (possibly all in one hex). When their bombs are gone, they have no other weapon to use, and must return to base.

## SST + 40: Hollywood Meets Heinlein

By Joe Osentoski

It's hard to believe that the *STARSHIP TROOPERS* board game is over 40 years old. Volume 13, Number 6 of *The General* "Saga of the Bug War" added variant units to the game along with the outline of a campaign game to use them. These included a Terran Heavy Weapons Brigade of Heavy Tank, Artillery, Borer, and Breacher units, Neodogs, and Terran Spaceship passes. The Arachnid (Bug) player only got a lousy Bug Spaceship pass in three scenarios. Use of these original variant units unbalanced the game that was already tilted towards the Terran player. The new units on this counter sheet give a chance to even up the First Interstellar War and arms race.

The inspiration for the additional Bug units comes in part from the movies, although anyone who has read the book knows the films have little in common with Heinlein's work. These new units give many more options for play, and expand upon the *STARSHIP TROOPERS* universe. Suggested variant rules for their application follow in both the original game and using the excellent "Mission Scenarios" article in *The General*, Volume 15, Number 1.

Flying Bugs, Bug Tankers, Heavy Tankers, and Medium Weapon units can simply be added to the Bug Hives to present a much tougher opponent. These also balance the Terran Heavy Weapons Brigade in Scenarios 5A, 6, and 7. The rationale for being available in later scenarios is that it takes the Bugs some time to develop new types of units to counter the improvements in Terran capability.

Adding these additional Arachnid units in Scenarios 2 and 4 can unbalance those scenarios but if you want a lot of casualties then opt to use them. Scenario 4 can present a fascinating clash of Super Bugs and Fat Skinnies.

Arachnid Point Values: in addition to those stated in "Mission Scenarios" article:

1. Applicable to Late War Scenarios only.
2. 50 each Medium Beam Weapon, maximum one per combat brain
3. 50 each Heavy Tanker, maximum one per combat brain
4. 30 each Bug Tanker, maximum one per combat brain
5. 20 each Flying Bug, maximum 3 per combat brain

Army Choice Limits: Each combat brain must have at least one Heavy Weapon, Engineer, Warrior or Worker. It need not have the maximum allowance.

Victory Points for elimination (additional to "Mission Scenarios" article):

- 50 each Medium Beam Weapon destroyed
- 40 each Heavy Tanker destroyed
- 30 each Tanker destroyed
- 10 each Flying Bug destroyed

Humanoid (Skinny) units:

1. Storm Troopers, Light Tanks, Forts, Single Missile, Skinny Bomber can be added to Scenarios 3 and 4.

2. Suggested application is trade 2 Skinny Warriors for 1 Skinny Storm Trooper; 2 Skinny Strongpoints for 1 Skinny Fort.
3. Scenario 3: add 1-6 Light Tanks, Single Missile, Skinny Bomber (roll one die for each type before start of game).
4. Skinny Bombers have up to 3 HE bombs, each of attack strength 18. They cannot be reloaded in the time of a scenario.
5. In Scenario 4, the Arachnid player receives points for each Humanoid unit destroyed: 2 points each Storm Trooper, 2 points each Light Tank, 1 point each Single Missile, 1 point each Skinny Bomber.

Victory Points for elimination (addition to “Mission Scenarios” article):

7 each Storm Trooper destroyed  
 10 each Light Tank destroyed  
 25 each Fort destroyed  
 8 each Single Missile destroyed  
 12 each Skinny Bomber destroyed

“Mission Scenarios” Terran Point Values (for Initial Army Value):

7 each Neodog  
 200 each Heavy Weapons Brigade, half-brigade  
 300 each Spaceship pass

Victory Points subtracted from Terran final victory value due to elimination (addition to “Mission Scenarios” article) prior to determining Victory Level:

3 each Neodog destroyed  
 48 each Heavy Tank destroyed  
 36 each Artillery destroyed  
 26 each Borer destroyed  
 18 each Breacher destroyed  
 30 each Heavy Tank not retrieved or within perimeter  
 25 each Artillery not retrieved or within perimeter  
 20 each Borer not retrieved or within perimeter  
 15 each Breacher not retrieved or within perimeter

Army Choice Limits and Notes:

1. Each Heavy Weapons half-brigade contains a Heavy Tank, Artillery, Borer, Breacher, Retrieval Boat.
2. Maximum of one full brigade may be purchased.
3. Heavy Weapons and Spaceship passes with Nukes are available in Late War Scenarios only.
4. Maximum one spaceship pass may be purchased.
5. Heavy Weapons Brigade units do not need to be retrieved at end of game.

If you do not have this reference material, you can purchase the *STARSHIP TROOPERS* reference CD from [www.ahgeneral.org](http://www.ahgeneral.org) which includes a high resolution image of the original game components, map, and rules as well as every Avalon Hill General magazine article, Q & A, and official errata item for this sci-fi jewel.

## The Workers Strike

By Joe Osentoski

“Bugs, Mr. Rico! Zillions of ‘em! I’m a-burnin’ ‘em down!”

“Hughes, take a close look at those Bugs. Any of them fighting back? Aren’t they all workers?”

“Uh—“ I hit the ground and bounced again. He went on, “Hey! You’re right sir! How did you know?”

“Rejoin your squad, Hughes.” I clicked over. “Captain, several thousand Bugs have exited near here from an undetermined number of holes. I have not been attacked. If there are any warriors among them they must be holding their fire and using workers as camouflage.”

*Starship Troopers*, p.196

The first Avalon Hill version of *Starship Troopers* remains my favorite science fiction game. The combination of personal investment in the well-being of each Mobile Infantry trooper, balanced by the asymmetric warfare needs of the Arachnid or the seemingly pathetic Skinnies makes for a great game. Designer Richard Hamblen made the most of the limited information found in the novel on the organizations and actions of “The First Interstellar War.” In one area, however, the game seems lacking, and for this I offer a variant.

Several times in the book the organization of the Arachnids is given, and one salient point is present: most if not nearly all Arachnids are workers, not warriors. Yet in the game each hive cell is given an equal number of five workers and warriors. For several reasons I find this less than satisfying.

Due to their minimal surface movement factors of “1,” any venturing onto the surface is dicey for the Arachnids. To address this problem my personal strategy has been to form a breach, make my attacks, and then leave the breach with multiple units to provide a decoy to the inevitable M.I. ranged fire, DAPs and DARs. Moving one or two warriors to the surface with several workers allows for at least some chance for survival if the M.I. picks the wrong unit to flame. This tactic was used several times in the book, especially during Operation Royalty where both Trooper Hughes and Johnny Rico are caught up in feints.

Then a surge of living monsters carried me back up into the light—and training paid off; I landed on my feet, talking and fighting: “Breakthrough at Easter Ten—no, Easter Eleven, where I am now. Big hole and they’re pouring up. Hundreds. More than that.” I had a hand flamer in each hand and was burning them down as I reported.

“Get out of there, Johnnie!”

“Wilco!”—and I started to jump.

And stopped. Checked the jump in time, stopped flaming, and really looked—for I suddenly realized that I ought to be dead. “Correction,” I said, looking and hardly believing.

“Breakthrough at Easter Eleven is a feint. No warriors.”

*Starship Troopers*, p.195

The same tactic applies when a beam weapon is brought up into a breach and fires. Having several workers to screen the location of the beam after movement allows for a more realistic

modeling of Arachnid tactics. But alas, when I implement this in game terms I am often running short of workers long before my pool of warriors is exhausted.

Presently I got so I could kill a Bug without wasting ammo or juice, although I did not learn to distinguish between those that were harmless and those that were not. Only about one in fifty is a warrior—but he makes up for the other forty-nine. Their personal weapons aren't as heavy as ours but they are lethal just the same—they've got a beam that will penetrate armor and slice flesh like cutting a hard boiled egg, and they cooperate even better than we do...because the brain that is doing the heavy thinking for a "squad" isn't where you can reach it; it's down one of those holes.

*Starship Troopers*, p.109

So the answer is simple: double the number of workers assigned to each cell. The counter backs must be the same as the original units to allow for some form of fog of war, but it gives the Arachnid the same ability to launch feints, exhaust M.I. ammo, test the Terran deployment, and keep the spirit of the book and Arachnid organization. My personal preference would be to triple the amount of workers in each hive, but for playability purposes doubling is the best compromise.

This should not have a huge effect on play balance: I find that the game is tilted in the direction of the Arachnid player already but don't see this as making Terran objectives insurmountable. Many games I have succeeded in destroying the entire M.I. platoon with concentrated beam fire, having kept them in reserve by use of worker feints, then popping multiple breaches on the last turn as the Terran scurries to his retrieval boat.

No rule changes are necessary: simply add the additional Arachnid workers to each scenario with Arachnids--five extra worker units per hive. Then see what it's like to deal with those "zillions" of bugs.