

Version 1.3

BALANCING A DESERT TOO(TWO?)

Unofficial patch suggestions for version DoK 1.4

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Abstract:

The following proposed game-play and balance changes center around bringing more life into some of the units that are either over-costed or too difficult to achieve in most games. At the moment the game is very heavily focused around railgun units and scouting units. The proposed changes will encourage a wider variation in games and it will hopefully bring more replayability of the game and extend its longevity, while also deepening the game.

Specific Aims

1. To widen the narrow strategical use for many units, and open viable build paths.
 - (a) The over effectiveness of surface to air vs tac-bombers and gunships.
 - (b) Coalition/Soban reliance on the railgun and late-game fall-off of AAVs due to armour upgrades.
 - (c) Narrow window / map dependent use of Assault Ships.
2. Artillery, while being so long to get that they are almost never used, are too death-ball-ey when they are obtained.
3. Soban Carrier unit design.
4. Assault Cruiser unit design.
5. Make Gaalsien more fun to play
6. Generic Game Balance

Designer Note: If balance change is presented to a shared Coalition/Soban or Gaalsien/Khaaneph unit, they will only appear once.

BUGLIST

1. Remove highground bonus from carrier super weapons, indirect fire ability's (Khaaneph siege cruiser barrage ability, siege cruiser emp ability, coalition and Soban artillery precision barrage ability), all ground-based machinegun style AA (production cruiser, LAV, base runner, etc.)
2. Weird pathing with battlecruisers and Coalition/Soban carriers causing them to spin around instead of going in reverse while engaging the enemy and ordered to pull back
3. One of the players in Taiidan passage 2v2 always has his carrier spawn on top of the blue resource, so he cannot start mining it until he moves his carrier off it. And everyone's carrier spawns backwards.
4. A standardization of carrier power titlecard text. Example the Soban range system text is simply less informative than the Coalitions card.
5. Carrier pintle mounted weapons more often than not do not fire in the direction they are facing.
6. For some reason the Assault railgun and Heavy railgun built icons are swapped between Khaaneph and Gaalsien. This should really be fixed.
7. Bugged Khaaneph Lv5 weapons (they have shorter range)
8. Shooting through hills. This is really a problem on most of the hills Taiidan Passage. I dont know how difficult this would be to fix, but it would really benefit the game for it to be.
9. The Game and Global chat buttons seem to be broken or miss-aligned sometimes, I need to investigate further.
10. The soban targeting jammer, despite saying it takes 0 population, actually takes 1.
11. The artifact slider bar has two positions for 5.
12. The khaaneph base runner, production cruiser, and seige cruiser build icons (as well as unit selection icons) do not match their silhouette, they are using the gaalcien ones despite these three units having a distinct look.
13. Precision bomber tech refers to capital ships as if this were a space game. This should be changed to say something like "cruiser class targets"

COALITION

ARMOURED ASSAULT: New Upgrade, armour rebalance

The AAV needed an armour reduction was not a good idea, now it just gets beaten up by skimmers and LAV blobs to much. The 1.3 change increased LAV damage by 40% early game, and by 66% late game.

- armour increased to 9 from 8

In order to deal with the AAV late game fall-off I propose a single damage upgrade that costs a hefty amount of Blue resource units. This should make it difficult to achieve if one wishes to invest heavily in rail guns, and should open up an opportunity for new play styles.

- Armour Piercing Rounds 250/200, 55 second research time
- requires heavy armour level 2 to unlocked
- increases weapon damage by 3

GUNSHIP: survivability, damage, and ammo increase

It is always more valuable to make 3 strike fighters than a gunship. Now that the build time is so long (55 second, 45 seconds for 3 strike craft) it is just not worth it. The biggest challenge for the gunship is to survive. It takes a very long time to unleash its entire payload, and because of its strafing behavior it almost always dies before being capable of unleashing it all. In addition, an ammo increase would allow it to provide more support if no AA is present with which to chase down strike craft. With strike fighters it is trivial to micro them in and out of range to fire their missiles. These changes should help them see more use.

- HP increased to 1700 from 1050 (3 additional surface to air missiles needed for kill)
- packet damage increased to 16 from 15 (this should alleviate late game falloff vs non-cruiser class ships)
- cost increased to 450/250 from 380/250
- build time reduced to 38 seconds from 55
- ammo capacity increased to 70 from 40)
- gunship auto recall when idle time doubled
- population cost increased to 3 from 2

TACTICAL BOMBER: survivability and reliability.

Despite the previous buff to the tactical bomber, unless your target has only a single surface to air missile platform, you will not survive the engagement. This proposed HP buff will help to fix this, while an armour reduction will help mitigate impact on their relations to other forms of AA such as production cruisers and LAVs. To ensure the tactical bomber can kill a missile ship/battery even if it is moving, its damage has been increased. It also makes them kill artillery cruisers in 1 shot, instead of leaving them with 5 hp.

- HP increased to 1650 from 1050
- armour reduced to 10 from 15
- damage increased by 400 across the entire blast radius
- bomber auto recall when idle time doubled
- population cost increased to 3 from 2

STRIKE FIGHTER:

- population cost increased to 3 from 2

COALITION TACTICAL NUKE:

Long discussed over is the problem from a game ending tactical nuke against the main economy. Simply put, it is not fun, it ruins games, and it works roughly 85% of the time. It is unfortunately also very effective, if you nuke the enemies main you have basically won the game. By adding a more noticeable, higher level auditory and visual cue (sometimes the auditory cue doesn't seem to play when other sounds are issued) along with removing the highground damage from nuke, the success rate of an economy snipe will decrease drastically without large impact when using it in a combat situation.

- Remove high ground damage from nuke
- The auditory missile launch cue and visual missile indicator needs to appear earlier, by about 2-3 seconds. This would be as the missile is just rising, rather than peaking.
- It needs to be louder and have higher priority
- add a pop-up warning on the left, similar to when a carrier is destroyed.

BASERUNNER CANNON TURRET:

Simply due to the nature of some maps, there are not good places to put a turret on high ground. This change would simultaneously lesson the egregiousness of the high ground turret. Any static emplacement should not get high ground damage. You are gonna put it up there for best vision and FoV anyways. Gaining bonus damage (from the games micro mechanic) in a circumstance which needs no microing is silly.

- high ground damage removed
- damage increased to 34 from 30
- Railgun accuracy increased by 20% This should reduce the mid-game map presence of the turret, and allow for a rebuttal to an early map-control dominated opener. Right now there simply isn't a cost effective way to handle a turret.

LIGHT ATTACK VEHICLE:

This is a long thought over aspect, but the LAV is simply too good at early pressure against sand skimmers. In an even fight the LAVs win (even with zero micro) more than 80% of the time. When using their longer range and boost, they are simply too effective. This is a 6.6% reduction in damage vs skimmers and other LAVs.

- Damaged reduced to 14 from 15

SUPPORT CRUISER: Armour and Self Repair Systems

Pretty self explanatory, needing 2 support cruisers to keep them alive in an army is simply not a viable option until late-late game. This should open the door if you want to use a support cruiser sooner. That's the blue resource from 2 railguns.

- cost 150/150, 35 second research time, unlocked at start of game
- increase armour by 3
- if not healing other units it will heal itself

BATTLE CRUISER: movement improvements

The coalition battlecruiser could use a little love.

- smoke ability no longer locks movement, like the Khaaneph base runner.
- cost reduced to 750/225 from 800/225
- speed increased to 55 from 50

MISSILE BATTERY:

In order to make missile batteries more valuable in the midst of support cruisers and anti-air turrets, increasing their move speed will both help them keep up with a moving army and make them more appealing in general.

-movement speed increased to 60 from 50

This change will help to soften slightly the relation between surface to air missile platforms and bombers, it is to compliment the decreased anti-ground capabilities of the interceptor. This change is most significant with the precision bomber, which now will kill the missile ship in 2 bombs despite max health and armour upgrades.

-health reduced to 1650 from 1800

ASSAULT CRUISER:

-removed, see Khaaneph section for details

ARTILLERY CRUISER: cost increase and damage nerfs

-research now stems from missile battery

-research time increased to 120 from 100 *(to accommodate removal of assault cruiser tech)*

-cost increased to 550/300 from 450/250

-cost for precision barrage removed, cooldown increased to 45 from 30 seconds

-missile damage reduced to 90 from 100

SOBAN

CARRIER: massive rebalancing effort

A huge part of the Soban play-style was its powerful map presence and vision capabilities; it is (was) one of their core defining attribute. The ALM deployment range is so short now its frustrating, and the point defense railgun buff was not enough to compensate, the Soban carrier still loses to all the other carriers in direct combat.

This change is all about getting the feel right. I want the carrier armed with railguns to feel good and not clunky like it does currently. Intuition is a heavy aspect of my proposal, so the weapons will have a fixed range of 2100m as a defining element of railguns.

This would go hand in hand with my desire to use the regular railgun upgrade for damage increase (which I like because it adds uniqueness to the faction, but it also goes a long way to reducing early-midgame power spiking).

Armed Logistics Modules-

The main problem is that for the ALM is that the last patch cut from the the bottom rather than the top. In order to get anything relatively useful out of the ALM systems you now need to achieve Lv4 instead of Lv3, which is significantly harder to obtain (Lv3 can be gotten with 2 artifacts and power lv1 research, or 1 artifact and power lv2 research). Another issue is that nothing was done to remedy the original problem; once you get to Lv4 and Lv5 problems of frustrating game mechanics re-emerge. The problem prior to patch 1.3.0 ALM spam with Lv4 and Lv5 were obscene, now levels less than Lv4 are very underwhelming.

These changes will tighten the dynamic range, making lower levels better and higher levels worse. Most notably is a huge reduction in stun-lock potential in exchange for an increase in damage capability.

Lvl 0 Deploy range = 1650m Weapons Disabled Armour = 5
 Lvl 1 Deploy range = 2150m (+500) Period = 4s Damage = 60
 Lvl 2 Deploy range = 2650m (+1000) Period = 3s
 Lvl 3 Deploy range = 3150m (+1500) Armour = 10
 Lvl 4 Deploy range = 3650m (+2000) Period = 2s Damage = 80
 Lvl 5 Deploy range = 4150m (+2500) Damage = 160

- ALMs will have high ground damage removed as they are a static emplacement.
- Vision radius nerf, level 5 now to be equal to level 4, with the other levels rescaled to accomodate the tighter spread.

Railgun Batteries

The Soban carrier has railguns that do not behave like railguns. This is both saddening and un-intuitive to use. The proposed changes will drastically alter the behavior of the Soban carrier. The point defense railguns will be real Soban railguns and will behave as expected.

- The railgun batteries will not have scaling range, but will always be that of normal railguns, being 2100m. They are still limited by vision, with the intent of combined use with their ALM modules to provide vision.
- Leveling up increases rate of fire, and lvl the railguns (in the typical Soban fashion) are salvo 1,1 weapons. Lvl 5 will increase damage by 95.
- Railguns damage will be 165
- carrier railguns will benefit for the mag accelerator upgrade.

- Lvl 0 Railguns off
- Lvl 1 Railguns enabled, Salvo Period = 5,10 seconds
- Lvl 2 Salvo Period = 4,8 seconds
- Lvl 3 Salvo Period = 3,6 seconds
- Lvl 4 Salvo Period = 2,4 seconds
- Lvl 5 Railgun damage increased by 95

-Lastly, the missile system will shoot 2 per volley, but their damage will still be 125, half that of other carriers. Range to be fixed at 800m.

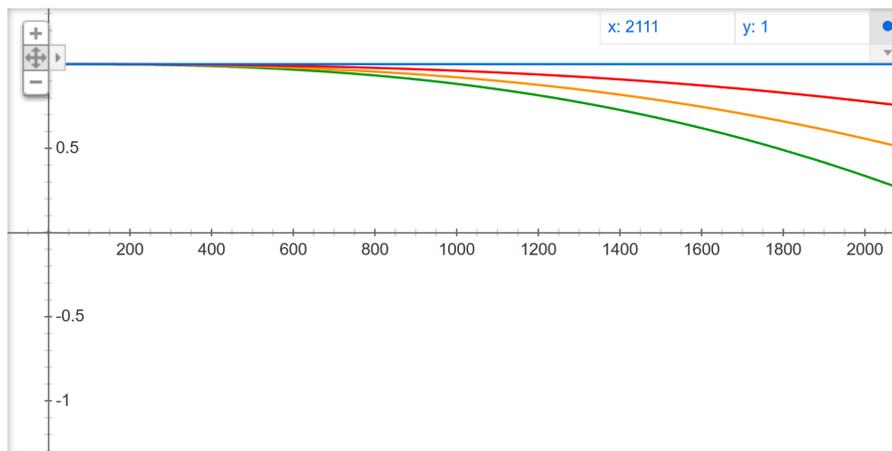
Targeting Matrix:

Adding accuracy to the final system means players have to decide where to put their power.

-Combines carrier vision with weapon accuracy. By "optimal" I mean in correspondence to whatever the current Soban railgun is. The Railgun Batteries accuracy is to follow this function. $RelativeAccuracy = 1 - [(1 - A) * (distance/2100)^{2.5}]$ where $A = accuracy$. This makes a curve where the rate of decay increases, meaning it has a larger impact at longer ranges.

- Lvl 0 Sensor Range = 500m. Accuracy 25% optimal
- Lvl 1 Sensor Range = 800m. Accuracy 50% optimal
- Lvl 2 Sensor Range = 1100m. Accuracy 75% optimal
- Lvl 3 Sensor Range = 1400m. Accuracy 100% optimal
- Lvl 4 Sensor Range = 1700m
- Lvl 5 Sensor Range = 2000m

Graph for $1 - (1 - 1) * (x/2100)^{2.5}$, $1 - (1 - 0.75) * (x/2100)^{2.5}$,
 $1 - (1 - 0.5) * (x/2100)^{2.5}$, $1 - (1 - 0.25) * (x/2100)^{2.5}$



Lastly, the missile system will shoot 2 per volley, but their damage will still be 125, half that of other carriers. Range to be fixed at 800m.

Microwave Emitter:

The microwave emitter is by far the worst carrier super weapon. It also suffered a immense indirect nerf in 1.3.0. Previously, the way to use the MWE was to also launch 3-4 ALM cross map to the spot to ensnare enemies inside the MWE. Now with the ALM launch cooldown and the range slash, this is not possible. As such, these changes should help to bring it in line with others.

-Now unlocked at Power Level 4, no upgrade needed (maybe power level 5, unsure, probably 4)

- Diameter increased by 20%
- Damage and duration increased by 30%, with no increase in DOT.
- The auditory missile launch cue and visual missile indicator needs to appear earlier, by about 2-3 seconds. This would be as the missile is just rising, rather than peaking.
- It needs to be louder and have higher priority
- add a pop-up warning on the left, similar to when a carrier is destroyed.

SOBAN BASERUNNER TARGETING JAMMER: buffs

Part of my driving factor behind buffing the targeting jammer is that it sees hardly any use outside of the initial baserunner tuft over the first artifact. This is because 1, the deploy range is short. 2, the ability is very telegraphed and the projectile is slow such that it is almost always dodged. 3, given that the only units available at the time when the targeting jammer is used are LAV and sandskimmers, they are so quick moving they immediately leave the bubble. 4, it dies to fast. For reference about cost, blast drones costs 150, targeting jammers should cost less.

- launch velocity of targeting jammer increased to match gaal sensor array
- range increased to 1300 from 1100
- cost reduced to 100 from 150
- slow effect increased to 35% from 10%
- cooldown reduced to 30 from 60 seconds
- armour increased to 6 from 0 -health increased to 600 from 500

BASERUNNER INVENTORY UPGRADE:

- Added to Soban faction

SOBAN BATTLECRUISER: consistency

- population increased to 6 from 5

GAALSIIEN

One of my main goals is to try to broaden the window in which the assault ship has any value. To quickly does it becomes out-purposed in almost every manner by the assault railgun. I think the assault ship needs some form of gap closing ability without increasing (dramatically) their ability to give chase. An important thing to maintain is that AS must be slower than AAV; it is a critical balance point. My fix to this will be to change the dart maneuver to be a shared research between both the assault ship and the assault railgun. This will allow for a more rebuttal towards strikecraft, and help with gap closing abilities while giving very little bonus to chasing.

The other is to make Gaalsien more fun to play. See the base runner changes.

ASSAULT SHIP: cost and tech buffs

The assault ship is in a tricky situation where most of its stats are not easy to change without critically breaking its relationship with one unit or another. For example, it must be slower than the AAV. Yet it is bad. So it either needs a complete role rework, or dart maneuver which fixes most of its problems.

- research cost reduced to 500:100 from 600:100
- cost reduced to 200:35 from 220:40
- Dart maneuver move added

ASSAULT RAILGUN: quality of life improvements

It will make them slightly more resilient to rail guns, while it should go to make it a little more susceptible to the AAV in late game, this should help balance out the possibility of using the AR as a CC machine on enemy rail lines. A slightly largest HP pool will make poking with ARs safer.

- increase HP to 680
- armour reduced to 5 from 6
- cost changed to 220/40 from 200/35
- new unit indicator, upside down of that of a missile ship. So you can tell them apart from heavy rails.

Its not unknown that the assault railgun is in a bad spot. One aspect in particular that I am focusing on here is their performance vs mingling strike craft. Assault railguns have very slow rotation speeds. Of the three main armoured craft, assault ships, heavy railguns, and assault railguns, AS are the fastest, HR are the middle, and AR are slowest by a large margin. Increasing their rotation speed will help AS feel less clunkily.

- increase rotation speed to match heavy railgun.

DART MANEUVER: quality of life changes

- accessible after sand skimmer fabrication -research time increased to 75 seconds from 60

60 seconds is just to long. For perspective sakes, LAV boost is 30 seconds.

- cooldown reduced to 30 from 60

One of the strange nuances of dart maneuver is that it is clearly a hack-job of an ability that piggybacks off existing game mechanics. It is just a speed boost ability that increases movement to 160 for 2 seconds with high acceleration and it issues a move command, rather than an actual shunt maneuver. Its really hard to say, but I have a feeling it might feel better if the move speed was increased and the duration shortened

-increase bonus speed to 100 from 60. This will make AS move at 170 and AR move at 200. Decrease duration to 1.5 from 2

MISSILE SHIP: slight decrease in health

This change will help to soften slightly the relation between surface to air missile platforms and bombers, it is to compliment the decreased anti-ground capabilities of the interceptor. This change is most significant with the precision bomber, which now will kill the missile ship in 2 bombs despite max health and armour upgrades.

-health reduced to 1650 from 1800

INTERCEPTOR: Damage reduction

I have long since thought that interceptors are to capable vs ground targets while also being an air superiority fighter. Also ints are too good vs air units to the point where you might as well not make any air vs gaal or khaaneph. This recommendation comes late into my list simply because it took me a long time to come up with an idea which was appropriate but also feasible.

-Reduce missile per volley to 2 from 3, attack volleys reduced to 3 from 4

-Increase missile damage to 180 from 150.

This results in a 20% damage reduction per attack, and a 40% reduction in attack run potential. This should make them feel more like an actual interceptor, rather than an OP flying death machines.

With these changes, 3 interceptors will now take 2 volleys to kill tactical bombers, gunships, and precision bombers instead of only 1. Volleys-to-kill vs other ints and strike fighters remains at 2. But now strike craft carry more maximum damage per re-arm. Old ints = 1800, new ints = 1080, strike craft = 1200

-moved 100 orange from AS to Int tech.

-research cost increased to 350/250 from 250/250

-population increased to 3 from 2

PRECISION BOMBER

- population cost increased to 3 from 2

HEAVY RAILGUN:

-EMP rounds removed

GAALSIEBASERUNNER: balance and new ability

This is actually one of the decisions that took me the longest. The Gaalsien late game utter dominance can be attributed to their scanners. They are the best rail-gun-probing tool because they cannot be shot down by missile ships, and are hard to hit by rails. This change makes them still cheaper than a logistic module, but they are no longer free to throw out willy-nilly. The gaalsien sensor array is the the best probing tool in the game, but it has two problem. Ones, its free, and two, its on an insanely long cooldown. This combination makes using it relies on having an egregiously large number of base runners. In order to bring it more in line with other scouting tools and deployables, I recommend a large cooldown reduction and a small price tag associated to launching scanners. More significantly however is the addition of EMP to the gaalsien base runner. At the moment gaalsien suffer from one large problem. They are just not very much fun to play, especially in early/mid game. On the other hand their late game (because of the free scanners) is very very strong. Khaaneph is basically just gaalsien with more fun toys, most of these being attributed to the baserunner and blast drones. In order to balance the gaalsien out, giving them EMP in addition to making the scanner cost money will result in a far more flexible and interesting game for gaalsien.

- scanner cooldown reduced to 90 from 200 seconds
- cost increased to 50/0 from 0/0
- sensor deployment moved to build bar (like soban targeting jammer)
- healing ability no longer locks movement
- heavy railgun EMP ability added

GAALSIEN SIEGE CRUISER: cost increase and damage nerf

- To be renamed "Artillery Cruiser" to distinguish from the totally different Khaan seige cruiser
- Cost increased to 600/300 from 600/200
- weapon damage and barrage damage reduced to 90 from 100
- research time increased to 100 from 90 (to accommodate price reduction on the assault ship)

GAALSIEN CARRIER:

Carrier Engines:

- Lvl 0 speed increased to 20 from 10

Super Sonic Missile Barrage: Cost and time nerfs

The gaalsien super sonic missile barrage is dramatically better than the microwave emitter, yet it costs less and has the same short cooldown.

- cooldown increased to 110 from 90
- cost increased to 500 from 450
- The audio warning needs to be louder and have higher priority
- add a pop-up warning on the left, similar to when a carrier is destroyed.

PRODUCTION CRUISER: AA changes

To compensate the removal of high ground from these weapons

- damage Increased to 25 from 20
- accruacy increased by 25%

KHAANEPH

HONOR GUARD CRUISER: removed

I just think this will be thematically appropriate for the Khaaneph. I would suggest the model be a "khaaneph-ified" that they are derivatives of one another.

-Removed, replaced with assault cruiser.

ASSAULT CRUISER: general quality of life improvements

The assault cruiser at its core has never been a super well performing unit, and it not hard to see why. It is truly quite similar to the khaaneph siege cruiser, just worse in most manners. Bringing the unit to the khaaneph faction puts it in direct competition to the siege cruiser, so it must be brought on par if we want to see its use. My aim is for the assault cruiser to be the complementary to the khaaneph siege cruiser. In order to make the assault cruiser a more useful unit it needs some tweaks. A duration increase (and also more mobility) of the overcharge should make it a more appealing option. And the increased range of the missile barrage should help cover for the lack of HGC. This will make the cruiser a "real" cruiser rather than a budget version.

- cost increased to 600/250 from 550/250
- Movement speed increased to 70 from 65
- build time reduced to 60 from 65
- armour decreased to 14 from 15
- health increased from 2700 to 3100
- Passive health regen added (matching siege cruiser)
- Research stems from assault ship
- resource cost removed from missile barrage
- missile barrage cool down reduced to 45 from 60 seconds
- missile barrage range increased to 1600m from 1200m
- overcharge speed now 105 from 93
- overcharge duration increased to 15 from 10 seconds

KHAANEPH SEIGE CRUISER: cost increase and range nerf

- reduced bonus barrage range to 500m from 700m
- Speed reduced to 65 from 70
- Cost increased to 650/300 from 650/200
- missile damage reduced to 115 from 125
- siege cruiser research now stems from missile ship
- population cost increased to 6 from 5

CARRIER:

While I dont necessarily think the khaaneph carrier strictly needs this, I think it would be well suited given that their faction mostly gets by using the two OP units in the game (seige cruisers and interceptors) and I proposed to nerf both of those.

-armour increased to 30 from 20

Mobility support: rename it fleet support

One of the biggest difficulties for the khaaneph is their poor carrier vision, and for good reason. Having high vision would be simply to strong with the Khaaneph missile system. But I think they could use a little

help. Adding a vision mechanic to the mobility system will prevent them from going full offense with low levels of power. I also think the mobility part needed a small buff.

-grants +150m sensors range per level and +5 speed per level

Lv1 = +5 speed + 150 view range

Lv2 = +10 speed + 300 view range

Lv3 = +15 speed + 450 view range

Lv4 = +20 speed + 600 view range

Lv5 = +25 speed + 750 view range

Khaaneph Cruise Missiles:

This is to compensate for the removal of high ground damage, which significantly impacts the khaaneph carrier in a more practical and real manner than the coalition nuke. Considering the high ground missile would do 600 damage. This is a real weapon the khaaneph use all the time.

-damage increased to 480 from 400

-damage vs carriers to remain fixed at 600 (the missile always does 600 vs a carrier regardless of high ground)