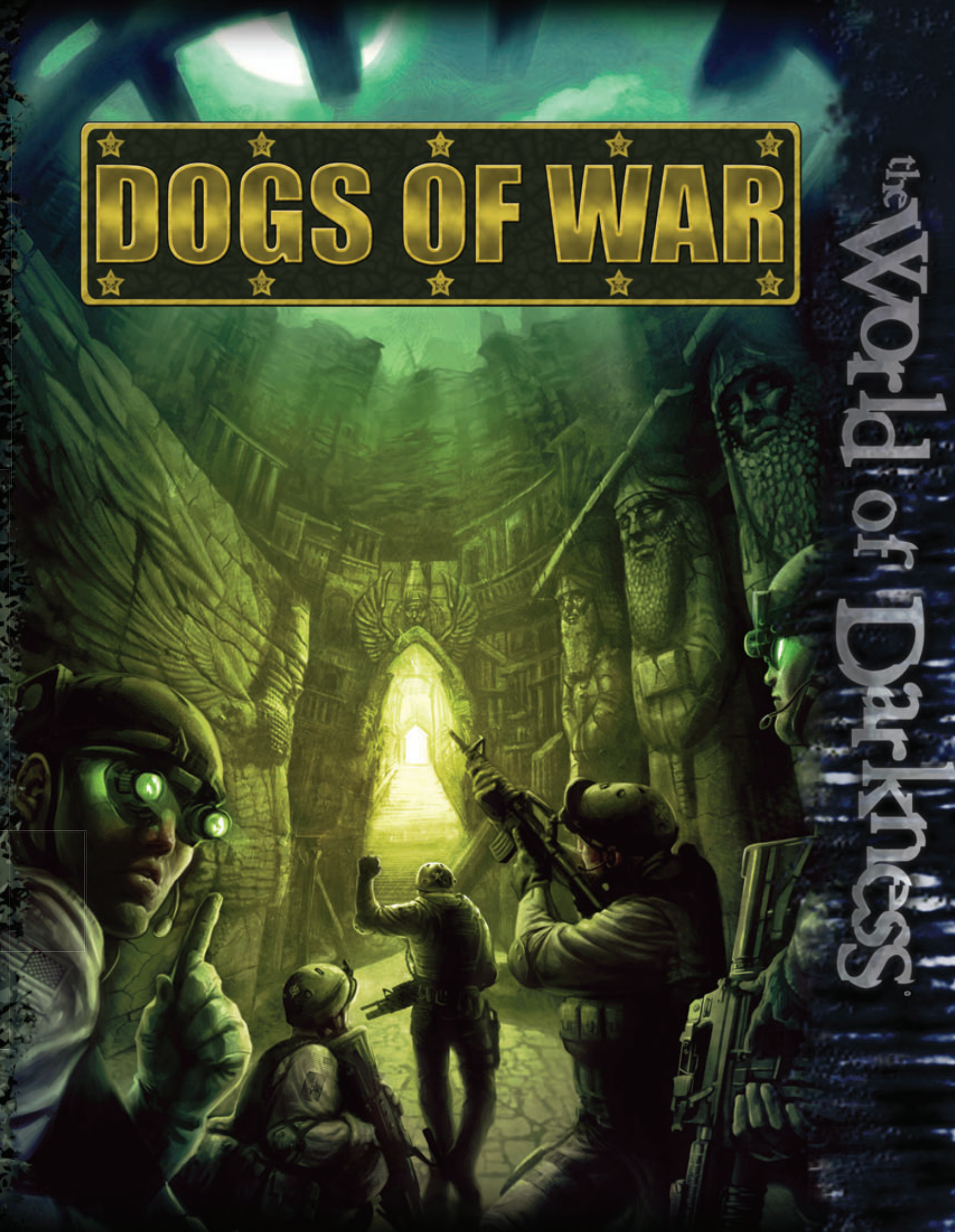
DOGS OF WAR

the World of Darkness®



THE SERVICE

TRAINS YOU

TO BE STRONG.

IT TEACHES YOU TEAMWORK, HOW

TO RELY ON OTHERS

AND HOW TO RELY ON YOURSELF.

WHICH IS A DAMN GOOD THING.

YOU NEED EVERY EDGE YOU CAN GET.

YOU'LL SEE FOR YOURSELF

WHEN YOU DISCOVER

WHAT ELSE IS OUT THERE

IN THE NIGHT...

This book includes:

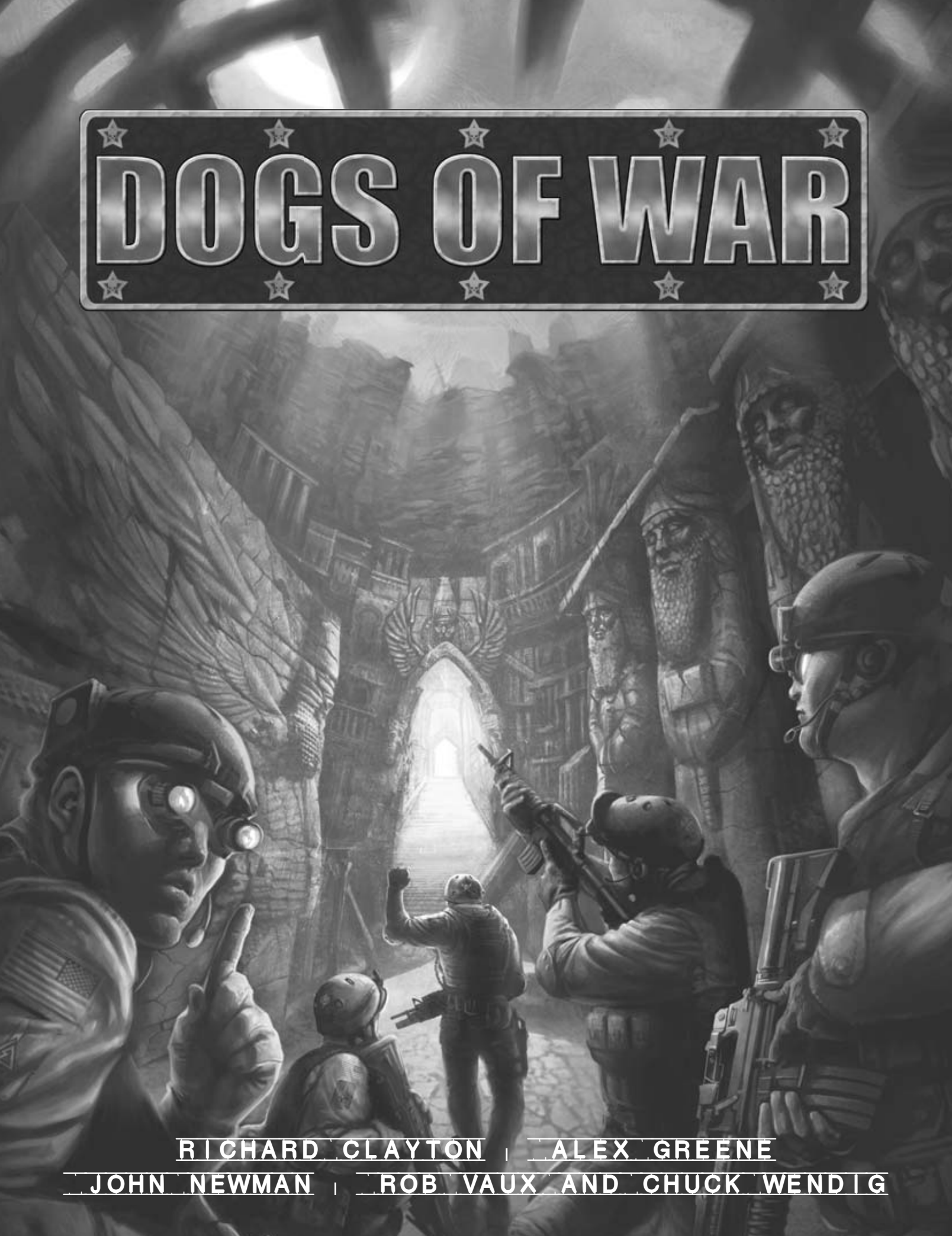
- *An overview of military life and guidelines for military characters in the World of Darkness.*
- *Guidelines for unconventional units and those units touched by the supernatural, such as Company Zero.*
- *Storytelling advice for stories and chronicles revolving around military conflict and the supernatural.*
- *Variant rules, such as increasing lethality of firearms and governing mass combat.*

For use with the
World of Darkness Rulebook

52499
9 781588 467140
978-1-58846-714-0 WW55206 $24.99US

White Wolf Publishing
www.worldofdarkness.com

the World of Darkness®


DOGS OF WAR
RICHARD CLAYTON | ALEX GREENE
JOHN NEWMAN | ROB VAUX AND CHUCK WENDIG

M.R.E.

Been bad since I been back. Nothing's right anymore. It's like I went over, did my time, got stuck in three consecutive tours of duty, and while I was festering in some desert crap-nest everything went off the rails. I like to think that maybe somewhere the Real Me is living the life he was meant to live. Wife didn't cheat on him; didn't default on the mortgage. Maybe the Real Me has good dreams instead of bad ones, the dreams of the just instead of the nightmares of the guilty.

REALITY, THOUGH; IT JUST DON'T WORK LIKE THAT.

I go to sleep every night, and just as I'm falling asleep I see the faces at my window: the Iraqi boy with the paper hat; the old woman, all her teeth gone to rot; Sergeant Adams; Jake Kowalski. Sometimes they come in my room, sit on my chest, and steal my breath.

I wake up every morning remembering bad dreams. But it's not the war dreams that bother me. It's the dreams of the big red barn. Tall under the full moon. Windows like eyes. Big door like a big mouth.

I know where that barn is.

Meals-Ready-to-Eat: MREs. Different shit in different rations, and "shit" is the operative word. Sloppy Joes look like runny diarrhea. The vegetable lasagna looks like runny diarrhea. The chili macaroni stuff, well, that looks like runny diarrhea given over to grubs and maggots.

I do like the Cajun rice and sausage, though. Thank God for small favors.

They say it's probably PTSD: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Not that I get much help for it. For all the rah-rah-go-troops fanfare, the VA says they just don't have the money. Plus, it's not like I got a leg blown off at the knee or anything. Not like Gomez.

Today I decided I'm going to tell somebody else besides the shrink.

Fuck it. I'll tell Gomez. Yeah, he'll laugh at me. Probably punch me in the shoulder, call me a pussy or something, and I'll ask him what the word for "pussy" is in Mexican, and he'll tell me to shut the fuck up because he grew up in Wichita and not Tijuana.

I'll tell Gomez.

The FRH's, Flameless Ration Heater, heats up the MREs. Fill it with water, and the shit heats up. Sometimes you put the FRH into a sleeve and stick the MRE over top it. I've seen some where you just hold the heater underneath it, and I've heard tell of others where you just drop the whole MRE into the bag. I guess it's got magnesium or something in it that makes the heat. Bastards get pretty hot. They gotta be to cook through all that runny diarrhea.

I thought it was off the rails before but that wasn't true. No, now it's really, definitely, undeniably off the rails. Gone south. Off the reservation. AWOL, FUBAR, SNAFU.

Tried calling Gomez, but he wasn't picking up. It was late, figured he could be asleep. So I went to his house, this little ramshackle roach motel just outside town. See, we're brothers, in the way that we both got shot at together and shot the enemy together, and so that means he trusts me enough for me to have a key. So I went in.

Jesus Christ, Lord Almighty, it isn't a dream. It isn't a dream. There they were. Sitting on Gomez' chest: Kowalski; the Iraqi boy; some goddamn pirate CD and DVD merchant out of Baghdad who I hadn't even remembered until now. They were sitting on his chest, had his mouth open, and were pulling the breath out of his throat in threaded tufts like it was yarn or fog or something, working it with their dead fingers. Gomez' eyes were open, pupils gone to tiny pinholes. I made a sound and banged my knee on a side-table. A lamp crashed to the ground. The things, whatever they were, hissed at me and fled through the window. The closed window. Clean through the glass.

Gomez woke up. And we talked into morning.

He's been seeing them since he came back, too. And he's been dreaming of the big red barn. The barn down off Mill Street.

I told him we better call the other boys. Been too long, I said. You come back from a bad place and a bad situation, and sometimes you push everything about that awfulness to the margins, even the few things that were good. Like your brothers.

Shouldn't have let it go that long. Gomez agreed.

Before we called Danny Boy and Maynard, Gomez said something, something that still gives me chills.

He said, "I guess demons follow you home."

MREs, we call them all kinds of other things: MRE Antoinette; MRE Osmond (or "Donnie and MRE"); Meal, Ready to Excrete; or Morsels, Regurgitated and Eviscerated. Some say they're "three lies for the price of one"-it ain't a meal, it ain't ready, and you damn sure can't eat it. I knew a guy who called the package of hot dogs the "fingers of death," since they looked like… well, gross gray fingers, like the fingers that tried to pull the living breath or soul or whatever out of Gomez' open mouth.

A lot of MREs come with these too-sweet candies. Call 'em "charms," in the way that they're bad luck charms, not good luck charms. You don't eat them because they're bad luck. Story says you eat them, and you're not coming back unless it's on a stretcher or carried on a blood-slick tarp.

I always ate them, though. Like I was spitting in fate's eye.

The barn looked hungry. Like a tall red giant, or the face of one at least, all hollow-eyed and open-mouthed. Nobody lived here anymore, and the farmhouse just up the driveway looks like it's about to fold in on itself, deflating like a blown tire. But the barn? The barn seems like it has a new coat of paint. Wood doesn't have a bit of rot. In the moonlight, you can see the windows are clean and clear.

And as Maynard points out, you can see faces through the glass, watching us come. Their faces. The dead faces.

I have to tell Danny Boy to relax, to wait, or he's going to just start shooting up the place with that AR-15 of his. Maynard echoes the sentiment, and actually puts his hand on the weapon and has Danny Boy calm down a bit. That was always their deal; Danny on the cusp of crazy, crazier than a shit-house spider, and Maynard with the calm voice, the crass joke, the softening presence behind those wire-rim spectacles.

Gomez says he's going in. He's got his old M1 Garand-his grandfather's weapon, he says-and he marches right up to that barn. Well, I don't know that he marches, exactly: that fake leg of his is rough stuff, barely fits his stump thanks to the efficiency of the good ol' VA. But he limps with purpose and throws open the door.

And it's dark inside.

Even
with the flash-
lights on, it seems like the barn
swallows the light. I see movement up in the hay raf-
ters, but pointing the light up there earns me a glimpse of
nothing. Maynard calls out, says he sees something down here,
something "lookin' at him," but when we all throw our beams in that
direction, we see it's just a deer skull and antler rack hanging on
the wall. We laugh. It feels good to laugh. It doesn't last long.
'Cause that's when they swoop down, hungry.
At first I think it's just a few of them. The little Iraqi boy
darts in front of me but I can't get a shot because Danny Boy
is backing up and he's in my FOF, my field of fire. I see the old
woman toward the door with a wooden cart, and with powerful arms
she closes the door.
The flashlights start to flicker, wink out. One by one. Mine goes first.
I feel feet kick me in the chest. Hands pull my wrists taut,
leaving me spread on the floor like Jesus on the cross. My
revolver's gone, and I don't even know where.
Before his light goes out, I see Maynard's down, too. I see
Kowalski perched on his chest like a big vulture, drawing out
his breath. Behind them I see a bunch of shapes getting
closer. I see Private Keens. I see that merc motherfucker,
Bobby Utrecht. I see two little girls. They're not dead like
they were in Baghdad. Not blown to pieces. Not shot. Not bloody.
But they're dead, all right. Dead hands reaching.
Then his light goes out.
I feel my breath leaving me, tugged away in great vomited ropes.
My cheeks go cold.
My hands are numb.

PEANUT BUTTER
(FORTIFIED)
Vit min B6, Vitamin B1
NET WT. 1.5 OZ. (42.5g)

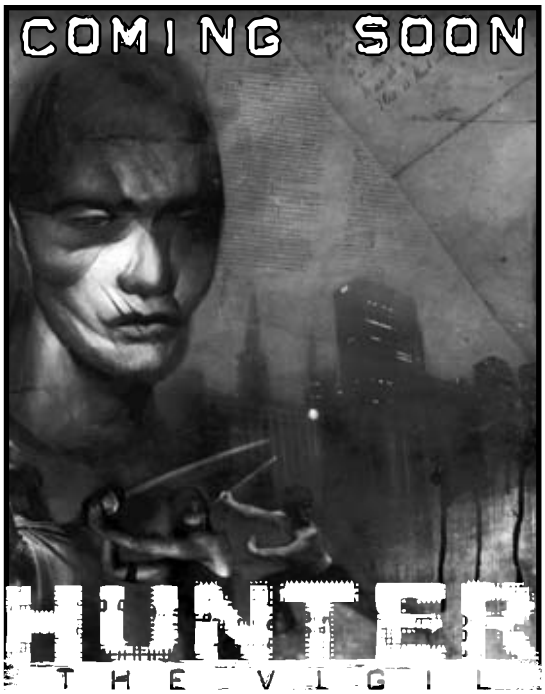
Every sound is a bad echo, incomplete and distant.
But I hear one thing.
I hear Gomez yell out: "MREs!"
And there's a little thought in me that wants to laugh and say, yep, shit, we are Meals, Ready to Eat, aren't we? Morsels soon Regurgitated and damn sure Eviscerated.
Then, though, I realize: Gomez means something else entirely.

You can make a bomb out of an MRE, you know that? Not a big bomb. Not like the bombs you find strapped to lunatics or underneath the Humvees.
But it's a bomb nevertheless.
The FRH, the heater, gives off hydrogen.
You can capture that. Blow it to hell. Make a bang. Make some shrapnel.
Gomez was always good with the MRE, the Meals Ready to Explode.

Don't know how many he made.
Lots of white flashes and hot shrapnel stinging my cheek.
Lots of dead faces illuminated in flash-bangs.
My revolver is back in my hand, and the blood
is coming back to my fingers, toes and lips.
The demons follow us home. The AR-15 barked fire.
The Redhawk in my hand spit bullets.
It was war, all over again. The dead, dying once more.

Credits

Written by: Richard Clayton, Alex Greene, John Newman, Rob Vaux and Chuck Wendig
Developer: Stephen Lea Sheppard
Creative Director: Rich Thomas
Production Manager: matt milberger
Editor: Scribendi.com
Art Direction & Design: Mike Chaney
Interior Art: Erica Danell, Nik Stakal, Justin Norman, James Stowe, Brian Leblanc, Jeremy McHugh, Juan Antonio Serrano Garcia, Efrem Palacios
Front Cover Art: Efrem Palacios



WHITE WOLF PUBLISHING
2075 WEST PARK PLACE BOULEVARD
SUITE G
STONE MOUNTAIN, GA 30087

© 2008 CCP North America, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction without the written permission of the publisher is expressly forbidden, except for the purposes of reviews, and for blank character sheets, which may be reproduced for personal use only. White Wolf, Vampire, World of Darkness and Mage the Ascension are registered trademarks of CCP North America, Inc. All rights reserved. Vampire the Requiem, Werewolf the Forsaken, Mage the Awakening, Promethean the Created, Changeling the Lost, Storytelling System, World of Darkness Dogs of War, War Against the Pure, World of Darkness Armory, World of Darkness Asylum, World of Darkness Reliquaries, Tales from the 13th Precinct, and World of Darkness Antagonists are trademarks of CCP North America, Inc.

All rights reserved. All characters, names, places and text herein are copyrighted by CCP North America, Inc.

Check out White Wolf online at http://www.white-wolf.com
PRINTED IN CHINA

DOGS OF WAR

Prologue 2

Introduction 6

Chapter One: The Conventional Military 12

Chapter Two: Irregular Units 52

Chapter Three: A World in Conflict 82

Chapter Four: Storytelling 100

Epilogue 126

The goal is to break you down and build you up. That's why some of them call Phase One of this whole process "forming." Because they take the shape right out of you and reform you into the shape they need. The shape of a soldier, the shape of a moral killer. The shape of someone who doesn't think too hard about what he's doing, but when he does think about it he's able to recognize that sometimes evil things are necessary to accomplish good things.

They run you. They work you. You climb over things, dead-hang from bars, sit-ups, push-ups, jump over this, and run some more. All the while, you got people yelling at you from all corners. Telling you you're weak. Stressing how worthless you are. You can feel your shape start to crumble, the bits of your old self start to tumble away, like thumbs breaking bits off the edge of a cookie.

They don't let you sleep much for about four days. See what happens to you.

Break you down more. Crumble, crumble.

If you're too weak, you go join the Pork Chop Platoon—where they decide that the hands-on approach is just too soft, and they start hammering you into the shape they need. Oh, and they'll hammer you. They'll get the job done.

Then comes the end of Phase One, which is about three weeks after you got there, after you got your head shorn, and a hard cot, and a bowl of chow in the morning.

When you're destroyed, that's when they come to you.

Three other soldiers and the drill sergeant. They show you a book, and in this book are military logs and Polaroids, and these logs and snapshots show how you're going to die. Me, I was going to die at a checkpoint in Najaf, some woman with a baby that wasn't a baby but was actually a bomb was going to blow the unmerciful hell out of us.

But the sergeant said I can change all of that. I just have to dip this fountain pen in blood drawn from my left index finger, and sign the back of the book. I ask what I am signing, but he tells me the Corps isn't about asking questions, it's about doing what you're told. And those pictures are mighty convincing.

I did what I was told. And I'm still alive long after I left Najaf. Others, though, they laughed it off. They didn't sign. Thought it was some kind of hazing prank.

They didn't make it out of Najaf.

Introduction

War is a terrible thing, and human beings love to wage it. War shapes society more obviously than any other phenomenon; looking at certain accounts of history, one could be forgiven for thinking of human civilization's span as little more than a series of wars. No surprise that war stories are popular.

Yet, at the same time, Westerners' public perception isolates war. It's a special circumstance. War is something unique classes of individuals engage in, on battlefields far away from normal, peaceful life. And battlefields may have been other things before the fighting started—homes for civilians, urban sprawl, wilderness—but once a battlefield, it's a location for violence and little more.

As with all simple views of the world, this view of war and military conflict is, well, wrong. The truth is complex—just because fighting erupts in a civilian locale doesn't mean the civilians have time to evacuate. In places where conflict is common, innocents keep their heads down and live their lives, hoping to evade the notice of stray bullets while bombs fall or firefights erupt near their homes. Many can't evacuate, or will not abandon what's theirs. War isn't something that only happens to the other sort of people—the sort who live so far away from you they might as well not exist. And a war story need not only be about war.

"War never changes."
– Fallout

Theme and Mood

Theme: War is Everywhere. Or, more accurately, military activity is everywhere. In most of the world, it's not strictly cloistered away from civilian activity as many North Americans are trained to believe. The divide between civilian and military life is thin, and everywhere, the latter impinges upon the former.

Mood: Just the Facts, Ma'am. Military activity is sufficiently horrific as to need no enhancement. Dressing it up in gaudy horror tropes, at least in this book, would obscure the underlying information. This book doesn't try to play up the more terrible aspects of military conflict, nor does it play them down. It provides a foundation of information upon which Storytellers can create military chronicles and tools by which they can add military elements to chronicles otherwise unconcerned with such matters.

How To Use This Book

This book serves two purposes.

First, it provides material with which Storytellers can run campaigns in the World of Darkness centered on military player characters. A military campaign provides structure and ease of play that the more open-ended conventional World of Darkness campaign style often lacks.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, it provides information for Storytellers who wish to incorporate military elements into ongoing non-military campaigns, either for a single session or in a lasting manner. Not all chronicles where police officers make an appearance need be police procedural games—why should soldiers and the military appear only in military-centered chronicles? Players and Storytellers who read this book will, hopefully, walk away with a greater understanding of how militaries work, and thereafter find less intimidating the prospect of bringing armed forces into games otherwise unconcerned with such things.

Chapter 1: The Conventional Military describes the United States Armed Forces in a format suited for near-immediate play. It contains a description of the training and operating practices of the US military, followed by a description of Fort Harmon and Zero Company, a military installation and unit well-suited to supernatural military characters, as well as ready-to-play scenarios. It then examines private military contractors

in the same format and presents a set of new Merits and Storyteller characters.

Chapter 2: Irregular Units departs from the format laid out in Chapter 1 for a somewhat more detailed analysis of unconventional military forces, examining the structure of third world militaries, guerilla forces, terrorists and freedom fighters, and arms dealers. It also re-examines private military contractors from a different perspective than Chapter 1, and closes with a set of sample military forces taken from real life, which serve to illustrate how theories of unconventional warfare are put into practice.

Chapter 3: Sites of Conflict examines ongoing military conflicts throughout the world, any one of which might serve as the focus of a military campaign—or background material in non-military campaigns. Though supernatural beings are the cause of none of the conflicts examined here, mortal disputes serve as excellent cover behind which vampires, werewolves, and other inhuman creatures might hide their activities.

Chapter 4: Storytelling presents an addition to the Morality system to make running military campaigns easier, mechanics for increasing the lethality of firearms in the Storytelling System, methods for resolving mass combat scenarios, and a look at some of the difficulties supernatural characters might face serving in the military.

The Disclaimer

Though many of the topics discussed in this book are real, the book itself is a work of fiction. The information presented herein is for use in role-playing games, on the assumption that adding verisimilitude and "realism" will enhance the play experience. As much as possible, when discussing real world issues, it strives to be accurate and well-researched, but we, the book's design team, do not and cannot provide any ultimate guarantees as to the veracity of the material herein. Much of the geopolitics discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, for example, are simplified, as analyzing them in proper depth would take whole encyclopedias of space. Readers who wish to use the information provided by this book in any context other than at the game table should research the issues themselves, as this book does not present itself as an authority on such matters.

This book doesn't attempt to proselytize when discussing horrible, inhuman subjects, including terrible violent conflicts that have cost hundreds of thousands of innocent lives. Please, just because this book doesn't condemn terrorist activity, illegal arms dealing, and military corruptions whenever it discusses them, don't assume White Wolf endorses these activities.

Recommended Media

War stories are popular. They've been popular for longer than the existence of written history. Uncountable movies and books about war, factual, fictional, and every degree in between, told from every perspective and written with any agenda flood libraries, book stores, and film rental outlets across the world. Here we list only the material that was particularly useful during the preparation of this book, or material especially appropriate to the subject matter of the World of Darkness.

Books

The World's Most Dangerous Places, Robert Young Pelton et al.

This series of books describes some of the most war-torn places on Earth from the perspective of those who travel there, and incidentally includes examination of terrorism, military tactics, and the complex politics underlying them, all in a conversational and easy to read tone. Not to be missed.

On Killing, Lt. Col. Dave Grossman.

Somewhat less impartial than *The World's Most Dangerous Places*, backed by studies that have since been called into serious question, and harboring an agenda opposed to violent video games, this book nevertheless seems to accurately reflect the opinions many soldiers carry about violence and the act of committing it upon enemies.

Film

Full Metal Jacket (1987)

This is one of the most well-known war movies of its era, and with good reason. Notable especially for the way it seemed to serve as a recruitment tool for the Marines, even though director Stanley Kubrick intended it as anything but. Examining one's own reactions to this film can provide powerful insights into the potential allure of military service as it illustrates the horrors of war.

Blackhawk Down (2001)

Another obvious choice, with beautiful music and cinematography, but pay attention to the way it blurs the line between civilians and combatants.

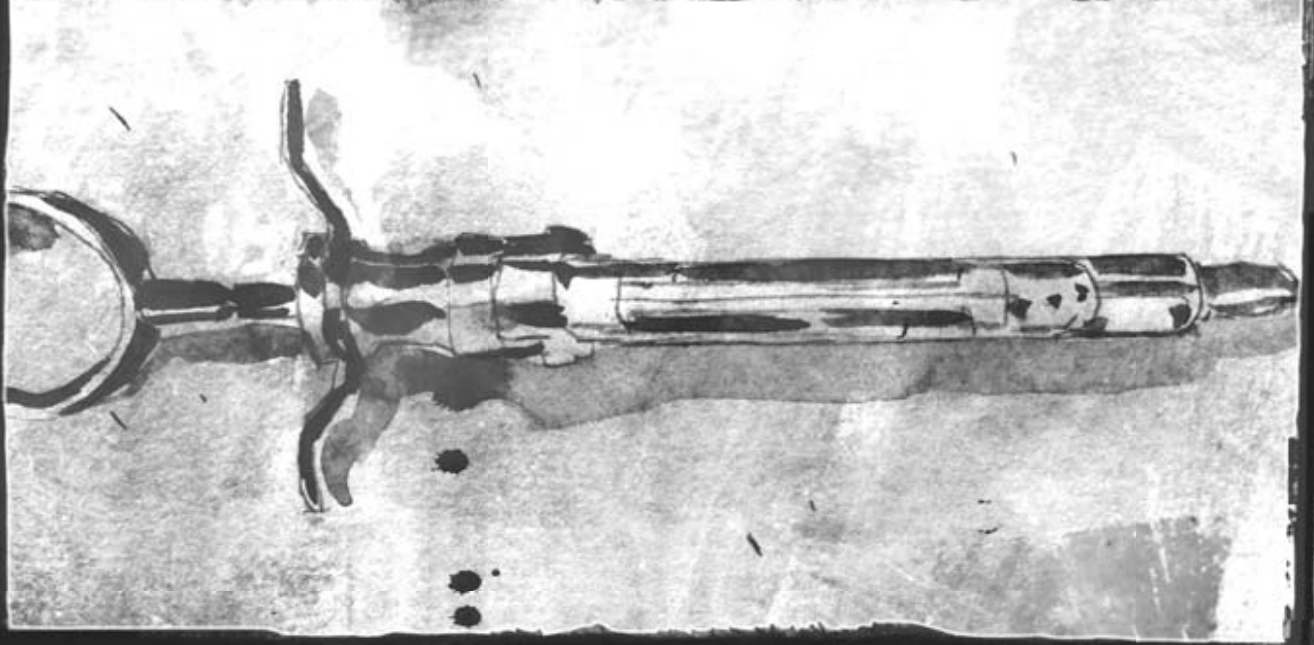
Dog Soldiers (2002)

Almost as soon as it was released, horror fans acknowledged this movie as a classic of the werewolf genre. A group of British Army soldiers on a training exercise run afoul of a pack of werewolves, and carnage results.

Websites

www.military.com

A fine resource for all things US Army.



Outside, the goats bleated.

It was colder up here than Abrams had expected.

Inside, the herder sat trembling on a rickety thatch-back chair, talking to Charlie Troxel while Charlie's twin sister, Charlene, translated. All of it got written down and put on digital recorder. All of it emblazoned with the Valkyrie logo.

When the two soldiers were finished, Charlene slid the paper across to Abrams while Charlie vigorously shook the hand of the goat herder, which was probably a gross contravention of custom around these parts, but who could keep track?

"Thank you for your help," Abrams said to the goat herder. "The Task Force appreciates your efforts. The United States Government owes you a great debt."

Charlene translated as Abrams looked at the paper.

"This is where the Beast is holed up?" he asked the twins.

"Another damn cave," Charlie muttered through teeth clenched in a dangerous smile.

Abrams gave the faintest nod to the twin soldiers. The two Troxels moved fast. Charlie had the goat herder's head in his hands, and he pulled the man's terrified face back, exposing the neck.

Charlene clambered atop the herder, syringe in hand. Bam. She plunged the needle deep into the herder's neck, between two corded tendons. Damn needle looked as big as a drinking straw.

It didn't take long. The man's eyes spun wildly in his head, and an expectorated froth swiftly formed, cascading down into his black beard. Charlie gently set him down on the ground, where the herder vomited and, blessedly, fell asleep.

"Done and done," Charlie barked, wiping hands on his fatigues. "Nicely handled."

"Not done yet," Abrams said. He gestured toward the only other room in this ramshackle house: the bedroom. "The herder has a son. Or a boyish daughter. Maybe six, seven years old. Hiding under the bed in there. You've got another dose in that needle, yes?"

Charlene paled, and nodded. "But, we're not supposed to use it on-"

"Just do the work and earn your paycheck. Estimate a lesser dose. The child needs to forget, same as the father. The alternative is less appealing, I assure you."

The two soldiers disappeared into the bedroom. Abrams turned away, and as he heard a child squall, he wondered just how long he could handle this way-off-the-books stuff.

Chapter One: The Conventional Military

War Stories

You hear stories of life in the services, and they go like this.

• *You're a Corporal, on foot patrol with your unit. Some kid on the other side of a chain link fence asks you very kindly to kick his soccer ball back over the fence for him. PFC Lawson takes a step forward to comply, but your instinct's screaming Ambush! A moment later you hear the sound of an AK-47 racking round to your left.*

• *Your unit is out in the field. You're having fun with the MRE heater packs until Private Watson just gets too close to the fire with one and loses his eyebrows.*

Soldiers love stories. When out on deployment in the field, with television a distant memory, soldiers gossip in the quiet moments about the things that happen to other soldiers, or that happened to them.

Most of their stories are like the above. But in the World of Darkness, a few go something like this:

• *Your application for shore leave comes through. You come home, after a six month stint out in the Atlantic. Your wife meets you at the door. She's five months pregnant. She insists,* swears, *it's yours. Funny thing is, you can't remember exactly what you were doing five months ago, not after that night with the fog and the lights in the sky...*

Pack your trash and move out. It only gets weirder from here.

War would end if the dead could return.

–Stanley Baldwin

Official Denial

The Government of the United States doesn't recognize or acknowledge the existence of the supernatural. They have real concerns like terrorism, the War on Drugs and other issues.

It's saber-rattling rogue states, not wild stories of encounters with monsters, that the Government considers to be threats to society; and reports of supernatural activity are summarily dismissed as deluded rantings.

Yet in the World of Darkness, those monsters exist.

Reality

For all that, there are people who do extraordinary things; soldiers are still just people. They watch the football on TV, help their kids with their science projects, and run to the commissary for groceries. They argue with their wives about the time they spend training, and worry about dying or being left behind.

Soldiers aren't like Rambo in the movies. They're just guys with a job to do, who all too often have a *really* bad day at the office.

Darkness Within

This chapter presents a description of how the armed forces strive to be: well organized, drilled, trained and efficient. That's not always the case; corruption and inefficiency can infiltrate the most well-maintained bureaucracy, even without occult elements intruding.

Throughout this chapter, you'll see recommendations for Skill choices and other Traits that reflect the appropriate military background. These aren't "bonuses," of course; you don't get a free dot of Academics for going through ROTC training. Rather, they're expected Traits, things a character is likely to possess. As such, they make a military character more realistic.

Though this chapter focuses on the United States Armed Forces, much of the material here can be extrapolated to present characters and procedures from the military forces of other nations. You can often find military Web sites that discuss expectations, doctrines and other key elements openly — it's one more avenue to recruitment, after all.

US Regular Armed Forces

The United States has seven uniformed services, of which four are the main focus of this chapter, coming under the umbrella of the Department of Defense (DoD).

The four branches of the United States military are:

- The Army (USA)
- The Navy (USN)
- The Air Force (USAF)
- The Marine Corps (USMC)

The National Guard Bureau (NGB) is attached to the US Army and the Air National Guard (ANG) to the Air Force, while the US Marine Corps is under the jurisdiction of the US Navy.

A fifth force, the US Coast Guard, operates under the Department of Homeland Security. However, the Coast Guard also has a traditional military role, defending American waters and providing disaster relief.

Recruitment

Armed forces careers all begin with a visit to a local Recruitment Office and an interview with a recruiter. Candidates fill out forms, take the ASVAB test and formally sign up.

The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) is a test given to recruits to determine the right Military Operational Specialty (MOS) for them. This is offered during the recruitment interview. The function of the ASVAB is to determine what sort of job would best suit the applicant.

In game terms, a recruiter has a minimum Manipulation of 2, Persuasion 2 and Subterfuge 2, and is likely to be at least a "Seasoned" character (the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, see p. 35).

Cadet Training

Players may have their characters go through the various forms of military academy training during their prelude, giving their characters more options and flexibility in their military careers. Military academy is a four-year course.

Graduates of military academy and ROTC may claim Academics 1, Politics 1 and Socialize 1. They also begin their careers at the lowest officer pay grade.

MEPS

Recruits are shipped out by bus to the nearest Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) where, on the first day of orientation, they are given a physical, select their MOS, and are formally sworn in.

The Air Force has only one location for its basic training: Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio. Basic Training lasts six weeks (plus an additional half-week for in-processing actions). Similarly, the Navy has one location for boot camp: the Great Lakes Naval Training Center, located on the shores of Lake Michigan. Training lasts eight weeks (plus one for processing), and is conducted largely indoors. The Marine Corps has two Recruit Training Depots, one at Parris Island, South Carolina, and one at San Diego, California; recruits are generally split between the two depending on which side of the Mississippi they enlisted. Boot camp lasts for twelve weeks, and is generally seen as more demanding than the basic training of other branches.

The US Army has the largest number of training camps. The model of US Army Basic Training is provided hereafter as a starting point; while other branches may vary in specifics and expectations, this may serve as a general look of what basic training is like for most formal military forces.

Basic Training

The Army makes sure every recruit is physically and mentally prepared for nine weeks of Basic Training. Recruits receive a haircut and a set of standard issue Army uniforms. During the initial indoctrination process, recruits learn about Army heritage and the seven core values of the Army. Other branches of the military do likewise, of course.

Recruits must routinely undergo the Army Physical Fitness Test throughout their enlistment periods to ensure their top physical condition.

Passing the APFT

All candidates need to fulfill clearly marked standards to pass the Army Physical Fitness Test. These involve a minimum number of push-ups, sit-ups and a two-mile run. Characters must be able to pass this grueling assessment to proceed any further.

Passing the APFT requires an extended roll of Stamina + Athletics, with a target number of five successes. Dramatic Failure results in the character sustaining a bashing health wound from overexertion, a fail grade, and a rapid exit to the civvies.

Red, White and Blue

Basic Training takes nine weeks in the Army. Training comprises three phases: Red Phase, White Phase, and Blue Phase.

Character Option: Raw Recruit

American-born characters must have valid Social Service ID, a driver's license, and a high school diploma or GED. Foreign-born US citizens must have a valid Green Card. Applicants must be between 17 and 45; must speak, read and write in English fluently; and must pass the stringent physical, moral and mental standards required at minimum to join.

Characters with felony convictions, misdemeanors, DUIs or illegal drug use, or any record more serious than a couple of speeding tickets, must be cleared of these charges before qualifying—recruiters work with judges to get the recruits cleared, and often military service is given as an alternative to jail time, fines, or other penalties.

Recruiters also weed out any character who has been employed in law enforcement and has been fired in the last year or at any time. They also disqualify candidates on the grounds of legal prohibitions on possession, ownership or sale of firearms, questionable driving records, or any previous failed attempts to sign up on record. Brands and ritual scarring also disqualifies candidates; tattoos and body piercings do not, though MEPS medical teams clear such adornments to ensure they don't indicate unwanted political affiliations. Tobacco products are forbidden at all boot camps, so you're unlikely to find a chain-smoker in the recruit stage.

A character must have at least 2 in every Attribute except Manipulation, which can be 1; a minimum Willpower of 5, a minimum Morality of 6 and no derangements. All of the other requirements above fall under a character's history and Flaws.

Basic training also provides the following Skills to recruits:-

Mental Skills: Academics 1 and either Computer 1, Crafts 1, Investigation 1, Medicine 1 or Politics 1.

Physical Skills: Brawl 1, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Weaponry 1, and a total of five points between Athletics, Stealth and Survival, with at least one point in each.

Social Skills: Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1 and either Empathy 1 or Subterfuge 1.

Note that these points are gained through the experiences and training acquired during Basic, and are not "free" points.

Red Phase

After the APFT, successful recruits are given a chance to meet their fellow recruits. Laid-back Californians, fast-talking city boys from New Jersey, old money Bostonians or Virginians; recruits can come from anywhere.

The training regime during Red Phase comprises a course in basic tactical training, along with training in NBC (Nuclear, Biological and Chemical) Defense, Landmine Defense and rappelling at a structure on base known as the *confidence tower*. Recruits may purchase Rappelling as a Specialty for Athletics Skill.

White Phase

White Phase involves more rigorous training, including Combat Rifle Marksmanship, field training skills, tactical foot marches, situational training exercises, engagement skills, and a confidence obstacle course.

Characters without Survival Skill now gain a dot in Survival. Characters may purchase the Fighting Style: Combat Marksmanship and Fighting Style: Modern Army Combatives Merits (see p. 38), as well as the M16 A2 Specialty for Firearms, Specialties in Rappelling, Foot March for Athletics, and Fieldcraft for Survival.

Blue Phase

The recruits are trained in *very* heavy weapons: the .50 caliber M2, hand grenades, the M136 AT-4, the M240 Bravo and M249 machine guns. They go through further field training exercises and 10- to 15-mile long range tactical foot marches.

During the field training exercise, soldiers learn about Night Fighting and infiltration under cover of night. Soldiers may purchase the Small Unit Tactics Merit (see page 39) and gain Specialties of Night Fighting for Brawl and Weaponry, and Night Maneuvers for Survival and Stealth.

Final Week

The highlight of the nine-week training is, of course, a major exercise. The situation could be an ambush, a siege, a hostage rescue mission or reconnaissance of an enemy position that conveniently goes belly-up halfway through, turning into a major conflagration through which the unit has to fight to get back to base.

The Storyteller is encouraged to come up with a situation and run it through for the characters, allocating extra experience point awards to them if they demonstrate their force's core values and display particular ingenuity, bravery and heroism.

The Seven Core Values

The seven core values of the Army are drummed into the heads of every soldier from the day they begin Basic Training. They form the philosophical core of soldiering, which is to put the needs of the team, the service, and the nation before one's own personal needs, and to recognize that there is no such thing as "a" soldier in the Army.

The seven core Army values are:

Loyalty: Bear true faith and allegiance to the US Constitution, the Army, the unit and other soldiers.

Duty: Fulfill your obligations.

Respect: Treat people as they should be treated.

Selfless Service: Put the welfare of the nation, the Army, and your subordinates before your own.

Honor: Live up to Army values.

Integrity: Do what's right, legally and morally.

Personal Courage: Face fear, danger or adversity (physical or moral).

The Naval and Marine Corp core values are: *Honor; Courage; Commitment*; and those of the Air Force are: *Integrity First; Service Before Self; Excellence in All We Do*.

AIT — The Professional Emerges

After Basic and Graduation, a character has the chance to develop further along the job for which he is most qualified. This is AIT, or Advanced Individual Training, an ongoing process of personal vocational development which takes place at a number of specialized schools, each focusing on a specialist subject.

Some example of AIT schools and Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) are:

Infantry school: Characters in this school are trained to become Infantrymen (MOS 11B) and Indirect Fire Infantrymen (11C). Characters can learn Brawl, Weaponry, Firearms, Stealth and Survival.

Air Defense Artillery School, Field Artillery Center: Artillery schools give training in artillery, as well as high-tech missile systems such as the PATRIOT. Specialty training includes manning radar, providing fire support and monitoring weather conditions for artillery units. Characters gain Crafts Specialties in Electronics, develop Science Specialty of Meteorology and, of course, the Artillery Specialty of Firearms.

Note: Without this Specialty, consider any attempt to use Artillery equipment to carry an untrained dice pool penalty.

U.S. Army Armor Center: Tank school. Characters training here develop Drive Skill, with the Armor Specialty,

Story Hooks: Ill-Fitting Fatigues

What marks an experience as memorable is when things *don't* go as planned.

Perhaps an accident occurs during a simple training exercise, and a soldier is injured by shrapnel or sustains injuries from a fall. Perhaps an important piece of equipment malfunctions — a gun jams, a radio transmitter fails to transmit due to a loose wire — and the characters are hastily forced to improvise.

These short scenarios are typical examples of events in Basic Training. You're encouraged to think more and come up with solutions. Opportunities also exist to encourage your players to bond together.

• **Forced March:** The characters are off to the Field. Twenty miles out of base and the bus breaks down. Standing orders are that they must return to base, at double time. Make extended rolls of Stamina + Athletics.

On their way back, it starts to rain; another separate roll of Stamina + Athletics to get through it. During the worst of it, the bus sails past them on the way back to base; the driver smiles and waves at the unit as he passes.

• **The Gas Chamber:** As part of basic training, all recruits have to face the gas chamber, where they're ordered into a room filled with tear gas wearing rebreathers, and then ordered to remove their masks. (Effects of exposure to tear gas are detailed in **World of Darkness: Armory**, p. 128. The short version: Tear gas is Toxicity 3, and induces a -5 penalty to all dice pools and Resistance traits such as Defense.)

In the middle of the test, one of the other (Storyteller-controlled) recruits gasps for breath and passes out. Characters who roll Intelligence + Medicine realize that the patient has asthma. Remember to apply penalties to their dice pools from exposure to tear gas. Success means that they act in time to save the recruit's life, and the characters' superiors will note their diligence.

• **Combat Training:** Combat training gives your characters the chance to practice their fighting Skills and Merits. They can get used to filling in Health boxes, too.

• **Staredown:** There's always some bully in any group of recruits, and now he's picking on one of the characters and throwing his weight around. The character can stare him down, a contested roll of Presence + Intimidation against the bully's own dice pool for Presence + Intimidation of 4. The loser slouches, turns, and walks away. If the bully wins, he'll make the character's life a misery.

and are rated in operation of the M1A2 tank, one of the most advanced tanks in the world. This school turns out Cavalry Scouts (MOS 19D) and M1 Armor Crewmen (MOS 19K). High levels of Drive Skill are a given.

Military Intelligence School: Spy school. The MI school trains Human Intelligence Collectors (MOS 35M) and Counterintelligence Agents (MOS 35L) to gather information about enemy activity whilst preventing enemy spies from doing the same. Statisticians, translators and interrogators learn their trade here. HUMINT collectors work closely with military police teams during investigations, translate documents, and interpret foreign conversations. Academics, Intimidation and Empathy are valued, and characters can gain the Trained Observer Merit: see Merits, p. 38.

Military Police School: The military police (MOS 31B) provide law enforcement activities. Any activities that break the law gain their attention, from drug dealing to tracking down deserters.

Graduates of USAMPS (the US Army Military Police School) gain dots in Academics, Investigation and Intimidation. They may also purchase Specialties in Military Law and Civil Law for Academics, Forensic Examination for Investigation and Police Interview Techniques for Intimidation. K-9 unit handlers gain Animal Ken, with the K-9 Unit Specialty. Characters can gain the Trained Observer Merit: see Merits, p. 38.

Aviation Logistics School: The US Army Armor Center trains tank drivers and gunners. The Aviation Logistics school trains soldiers to pilot and maintain the Army's fleet of helicopters.

Flight School: Recruits who seek careers in flight, whether piloting helicopters or flying the most advanced Air Force jets, *must* pass flight school. Until that time, any attempt to fly an airborne vehicle carries the untrained penalty. Graduates purchase the appropriate vehicular Specialty for the Drive Skill. Note: Flight School is offered only to officers in the USAF; enlistees can become flight crew (navigator, payload operator, etc) on cargo planes, but only officers may pilot fighters).

Cavalry Scouts

Cavalry Scouts are the backbone of reconnaissance missions. They are highly mobile and trained on more weapons systems than any other soldier. Assume that no untrained penalty applies when a Cavalry Scout uses a weapon he has not driven or used before, including mines and explosives.

Good Drive Skills and Direction Sense, the Well Traveled Merit from *World of Darkness: Reliquaries* and the EOD Merit from *World of Darkness: Armory* are appropriate, as are Strong Back and the Emotional Detachment Merit from *World of Darkness: Asylum*.

Engineer School: The Corps of Engineers comprises more than 34,000 civilians and only 650 military staff at most. The USACE boasts a wide range of Academics and Science Specialists, such as biologists, hydrologists, natural resource managers, qualified engineers and other professionals. Their missions include management of water resources and environmental management, and building and maintenance of the global military infrastructure—such as power generation and ensuring that soldiers get clean water when they turn on the faucet.

Signal Corps School: The Signal Corps, based at the US Army Signal Center at Fort Gordon, GA, is key to the maintenance of the military's communication networks across the globe, from streaming video over the Internet to simple landline telephone conversations. Characters may graduate from Signal Corps school with high Academics, Computer and Science Skills.

Transportation School: As the Signal Corps is to the movement of signals, so the Transportation Corps is to the mass movement of troops, equipment and supplies to where they're needed. Characters graduate from this school with high Drive Skill and a Specialty in Logistics, which can be applied to Academics Skill.

Adjutant General Corps School: This school trains soldiers to become Human Resource Specialists (MOS 42A), Paralegal Specialists (MOS 27D) and Chaplain Assistants (MOS 56M). Characters gain dots in Academics and Politics.

Other schools include the Civil Affairs school, Finance school and the Quartermaster school, based at Fort Lee.

OSUT (One Station Unit Training)

Some schools, such as the US Army Armor Center and USAMPS, combine Basic Training and AIT. Characters wishing to join these schools go straight through from Basic to AIT on site.

Unit Organization

The characters will be assigned to a unit. Here's how units are organized structurally from individual soldiers up to entire armies. In the US Army, the unit organization is as follows:

Team or Fireteam

The smallest unit. Consists of a team leader who is usually an E-3 or E-4, but sometimes a Sergeant. A sniper team consists of a sniper who takes the shot and a spotter who assists in targeting. 2-4 soldiers.

Squad

Composed of two teams. Typically led by a senior E-4 or E-5 9-10 soldiers.

Section

Usually directed by a Staff Sergeant who supplies guidance for junior NCO Squad leaders. Often used in conjunction with platoons at the company level.

Platoon

Two or more squads led by a Platoon Leader, usually a Second Lieutenant supported by a platoon sergeant (Sergeant or Staff Sergeant). 32 soldiers.

Holy Orders: The Base Chaplain

The Base Chaplain is a man of the cloth appointed to the base, where he is assisted by Chaplain Assistants. The Chaplain serves a number of functions on site: conducting services, in particular funeral and memorial services, providing counseling to grieving families and stressed-out soldiers, and blessing new units and equipment.

The role of the Chaplain in a World of Darkness game becomes far more interesting when faced with the supernatural. Perhaps a threat arises that only someone trained in holy orders can dispel; illicit black magic rites on base that went too far and summoned up something that must be banished, or a serviceman's daughter has wound up possessed by some malicious ghost or spirit.

The Chaplain can be a story hook in his own right. He might have a past outside of the military, which catches up with him during the Chronicle.

The Storyteller is encouraged to find a role for the base Chaplain and Chaplain's Assistants, but remember: the Army doesn't have mobile exorcism squads patrolling the front lines armed with bells, books and candles alongside guns and boxes of munitions.

Company

Three to four platoons led by a Company Commander, usually a Captain supported by a First Sergeant. 62-190 soldiers.

Artillery Battery

A company-sized artillery unit.

Cavalry Troop

Also a company-sized unit of Cavalry, and an Armored unit.

Flight

In Air Force terminology, a flight is the equivalent of a company in size of personnel. It comprises three to six aircraft and crew, with 20-100 personnel, commanded by a Captain (RAF: Flight Lieutenant).

Squadron

In Naval terminology, a squadron is a battle formation of Naval warships, usually of the same type, e.g. submarine squadron, carrier squadron etc. Sometimes it's an ad hoc grouping of warships split off from the Fleet for a mission.

In Air Force terminology, a squadron is a group of three to four individual flights, 12 to 24 aircraft, depending on the mission, some 300-400 personnel, commanded by a Lt Colonel (RAF: Major) designated Squadron Leader.

Battalion

Two to five companies led by a battalion Commander, usually a Lieutenant Colonel supported by a staff in a Headquarters and Headquarters Company. 300-1000 soldiers. The Cavalry equivalent is the squadron, whether Armored Cavalry or Air Cavalry (AirCav).

Wing

The Air Force equivalent of a battalion, comprising roughly the same number of personnel, organized in 3-4 squadrons. Commanded by a Colonel (RAF: Group Captain), designated Wing Commander.

Brigade or Group

Two or more battalions, usually commanded by a Colonel, supported by a staff in a Headquarters and Headquarters Company. Since the Brigade Unit of Action program was initiated, maneuver brigades have transformed into brigade combat teams, generally consisting of two maneuver battalions, a cavalry squadron, a fires battalion, a special troops battalion with engineers, signals, and military intelligence and a support battalion. 3,000-5,000 soldiers.

Group or Station

Two or more wings, roughly 5,000 personnel, commanded by an Air Commodore.

Division

Until the Brigade Combat Team program was developed, the division was the smallest self-sufficient level of organization in the US Army. Current divisions are now called "tactical units of employment," and they may command a flexible number of modular units, but generally include four brigade combat teams and a combat aviation brigade. Divisions are usually commanded by a Major General and have around 10,000-15,000 soldiers.

Command

Regional organizations of Air Force groups, commanded by Lieutenant Generals and (at the level of Major Command and Air Force) Generals (RAF: Air Marshal and Air Chief Marshal).

Corps

Now termed an "operational unit of employment," it may command a variable and flexible number of modular units at up to division size. It is usually commanded by a Lieutenant General with up to 20,000-45,000 soldiers.

The largest unit structure is an entire Army, Navy, Corps or Air Force. These immense units are commanded by the highest military ranks, and typically have hundreds of thousands of personnel.

Careers and Advancement—Promotion and Rank

The armed forces recognize three tiers of advancement; enlisted personnel, non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and commissioned officers. The pay grade codes for the various Forces are listed in the tables below.

Note that it is considered poor form to address a serviceman by the wrong service's title. Calling a Seaman a Private First Class or just Private is bad enough; calling a Marine Lance Corporal "Private First Class" is downright insulting, as you will have just called him by both a lower rank and, more importantly, by a rank used by another branch of the military.

The Resources column roughly indicates how much monthly disposable income a soldier typically gets per month, with the higher grade being reached only after long service at that rank. The number of Resources dots is only a very rough guide and should not be taken as gospel because length of service must also be taken into account.

Soldiers have to fill out a promotion packet to get promoted; the packet is submitted to a board after reviewing the soldier's "promotion points." If the soldier is found to have enough promotion points, schools, and good standing, the board will then promote the soldier.

More Schools

Characters wishing to seek promotion to leadership roles face a progression of schools in the NCOES (NCO Education System). Candidates looking to get promotion to Sergeant must pass the Warrior Leadership Course (WLC).

Staff Sergeant candidates must pass BNCOC (Basic NCO College, or "Bee-knock"); further advancement to Sergeant First Class, Master Sergeant and Sergeant Major requires passing the First Sergeant Academy, Army Sergeants Major Academy and Command Sergeants Major Academy.

Navy and Marines: Rates and Ratings

The Navy does not have enlisted ranks. It operates under a system of "rates" (the pay grade) and "ratings" (the job they are assigned, equivalent to MOS). The Marines do have ranks, but use ranks and pay grades interchangeably.

It is common to confuse *rating* (occupational specialty) with *rate*. In order for sailors to increase their rate, they must take an exam in their rating. The scoring depends on how many billets there are to fill, the term "billet" being taken to mean either "bunk" or "assigned duty station" in this case.

Sailors obtain a rating either through attending naval A school or "striking" — on-the-job training.

Each naval rating has its own specialty badge typically worn on the left sleeve of the uniform by all enlisted personnel in that field. Working uniforms such as BDUs (Battle Dress Uniforms), coveralls and Naval Work Uniforms wear generic rate designators that exclude the rating symbol.

Enlisted sailors are referred to by their rating and rate combined; for example a Boatswain's ("Bosun's") Mate Second Class (BM2) is a Petty Officer Second Class (rate) assigned the rating of Boatswain's Mate.

Naval Schools

The Navy, too, has its schools: the US Naval Academy, or USNA or simply "Annapolis". Officers refer to it as "The Academy", "Boat School" or "Canoe U". Students are referred to as "Midshipmen".

Naval ROTC graduates train here, along with Marines seeking an officer grade. The career path for characters is otherwise the same: graduates pass with a commission of Second Lieutenant (Marines) or Ensign (Navy).

NCOs

Non-commissioned officers or NCOs - Corporals and Sergeants - rank between enlisted personnel and officers.

Rank Comparator: Enlisted Personnel

Pay Grade	Army	Air Force	Marines	Navy	Resources
E-4	Specialist /Corporal	Senior Airman	N/A	N/A	••-•••
E-3	Private First Class	Airman First Class	Lance Corporal	Seaman	••-•••
E-2	Private	Airman	Private First Class	Seaman Apprentice	••-•••
E-1	Private	Airman Basic	Private	Seaman Recruit	••

Rank Comparator: Non-Commissioned Officers

Pay Grade	Army	Air Force	Marines	Navy	Resources
Special	Sergeant Major of the Army	Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force	Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps	Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy	•••
E-9	Command Sergeant Major/Sergeant Major	First Sergeant (Chief Master Sergeant)/Chief Master Sergeant	Sergeant Major/ Master Gunnery Sergeant	Master Chief Petty Officer	•••
E-8	First Sergeant/ Master Sergeant	First Sergeant (Senior/Senior Master Sergeant) Master Sergeant	First Sergeant /Master Sergeant	Senior Chief Petty Officer	••-•••
E-7	Sergeant First Class	First Sergeant (Master Sergeant) /Master Sergeant	Gunnery Sergeant	Chief Petty Officer	••-•••
E-6	Staff Sergeant	Technical Sergeant	Staff Sergeant	Petty Officer First Class	••-•••
E-5	Sergeant	Staff Sergeant	Sergeant	Petty Officer Second Class	••-•••
E-4	Corporal /specialist	N/A	Corporal	Petty Officer Third Class	••-•••

NCOs are rightly described as the backbone of the military, because they fill many important roles.

NCOs' Leadership Role

NCOs command small units, and support officers in command of larger units. Their roles include leadership, providing motivation to all the troops under their command. The technical role of NCOs involves ensuring the proper supply and maintenance of equipment, and making sure that opportunities for training are made available to all subordinate personnel.

Character Option: NCO

Characters taking on the role of an NCO, regardless of rank, should likely have a minimum of 3 in Resolve, Stamina and Composure, a minimum of 3 Wits, a minimum Willpower of 6 and 3 in the following Skills: Expression, Persuasion, Intimidation. The Specialty of Leadership can be bought for the above Social Skills.

Warrant Officers

Warrant officers are specialist professionals ranked between NCOs and commissioned officers. They are ranked as officers above the senior-most enlisted ranks, including officer cadets and candidates, but below the grade of O-1, the lowest commissioned officer rank. Warrant officers are highly skilled, single-track specialty officers.

Upon appointment to Warrant Officer 1, the secretary of the service issues the warrant. On promotion to Chief Warrant Officer 2, the President of the United States commissions the appointment. The WO2 takes the same oath and receives the same commission and charges as commissioned officers, deriving their authority from the same source.

Warrant officers often command detachments, units, activities, vessels, aircraft, and armored vehicles as well as lead, coach, train, and counsel subordinates.

However, the warrant officer's main task is as technical expert, offering valuable guidance and expertise to commanders and organizations in their particular field.

Army: Army warrant officers gain both leadership and technical support expertise.

Navy: Candidate warrant officers have the option of joining the diver, Master-at-Arms (Naval military police, or MAAs), or Naval or SWCC ("Swick") Special Forces communities.

They can also join the Flying Chief Warrant Officer Program for pilots and flight officers, with graduates receiving placements in four types of squadrons: anti-submarine, combat support, patrol or reconnaissance, operating P-3s, and H-60s.

Marines: Enlisted Marines apply for the warrant officer program after serving at least eight years of enlisted service, and reaching the grade of E-5 (Sergeant) for the administrative warrant officer program and E-7 (Gunnery Sergeant) for the weapons warrant officer program. If the Marine NCO is selected, she is given additional training in leadership and management.

While Marine warrant officers are informally called "Gunner" or "Gunny", this title is formally reserved for the "Marine Gunner" or "Infantry Weapons Officer." The title "Gunner" is almost always used in lieu of a rank (i.e., "Gunner Smith" as opposed to "Chief Warrant Officer Smith").

Air Force: The Air Force has no warrant officer equivalent.

Character Option: Warrant Officer

Characters must have been a senior NCO (E-7 to E-9 grade) to be promoted to warrant officer. Being as much a technical expert as a leader, both Crafts 3 and at least one technical Specialty are a must, as well as Persuasion 3 with a Leadership Specialty.

Officers

Officers receive commissions, typically from the highest echelons of the Force, but also from the President of the United States. Typically an officer is someone who has a university degree of some sort, or someone who has graduated from the various academies. Civilian professionals with credentials, such as doctors, nurses and lawyers, may also receive direct commissions.

Navy and Marine Officers

Naval and Marine officers do not have ratings; their occupations are classified by designators and professional

Rank Comparator: Warrant Officers

Pay Scale	Army	Air Force	Marines	Navy	Resources
W-5	Master Chief Warrant Officer 5	N/A	Chief Warrant Officer 5	Master Warrant Officer 5	••-•••
W-4	Chief Warrant Officer 4	N/A	Chief Warrant Officer 4	Warrant Officer 4	ïïï
W-3	Chief Warrant Officer 3	N/A	Chief Warrant Officer 3	Warrant Officer 3	ïïï
W-2	Chief Warrant Officer 2	N/A	Chief Warrant Officer 2	Warrant Officer 2	ïïï
W-1	Chief Warrant Officer 1	N/A	Chief Warrant Officer 1	Warrant Officer 1	ïïï

The Pentagon and the 9/11 Attack

On September 11, 2001, al-Qaeda attacked the United States by hijacking commercial air flights and flying them into several buildings. The Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York were the most obvious target, but the Pentagon also bore the brunt of an attack.

People have speculated about the particular significance of that date, and whether it had any numerological or magical meaning. The truth of the matter, at least as regards the Pentagon attack, is simple. The ground was broken for the Pentagon on September 11, 1941, making September 11, 2001 its sixtieth anniversary. The hijacked American Airlines Flight 77 was likely intended as a direct gesture of contempt to the US armed forces.

staff corps. Marine and Naval officers do refer to their ranks as ranks.

Officer Ranks and Accommodation

Officers are segregated from enlisted soldiers in military life. Officers enjoy facilities separated from enlisted personnel, from the mess hall, bunks and domiciles, and general recreational facilities, to ensure professional and ethical relations between personnel.

All The Way To The Top

At the highest rungs are the Generals and Admirals in the Pentagon, headquarters of the Department of Defense in Arlington, Virginia. It's the highest-capacity office building in the world and the fourth largest building in the world by floor area.

The central plaza in the Pentagon is the world's largest "no-salute, no-cover" area, an area exempt from the normal rule that, when out of doors, US military personnel must wear headgear and salute superior officers. In case you were wondering what's in the middle, the center of this plaza is a restaurant, formerly a snack bar.

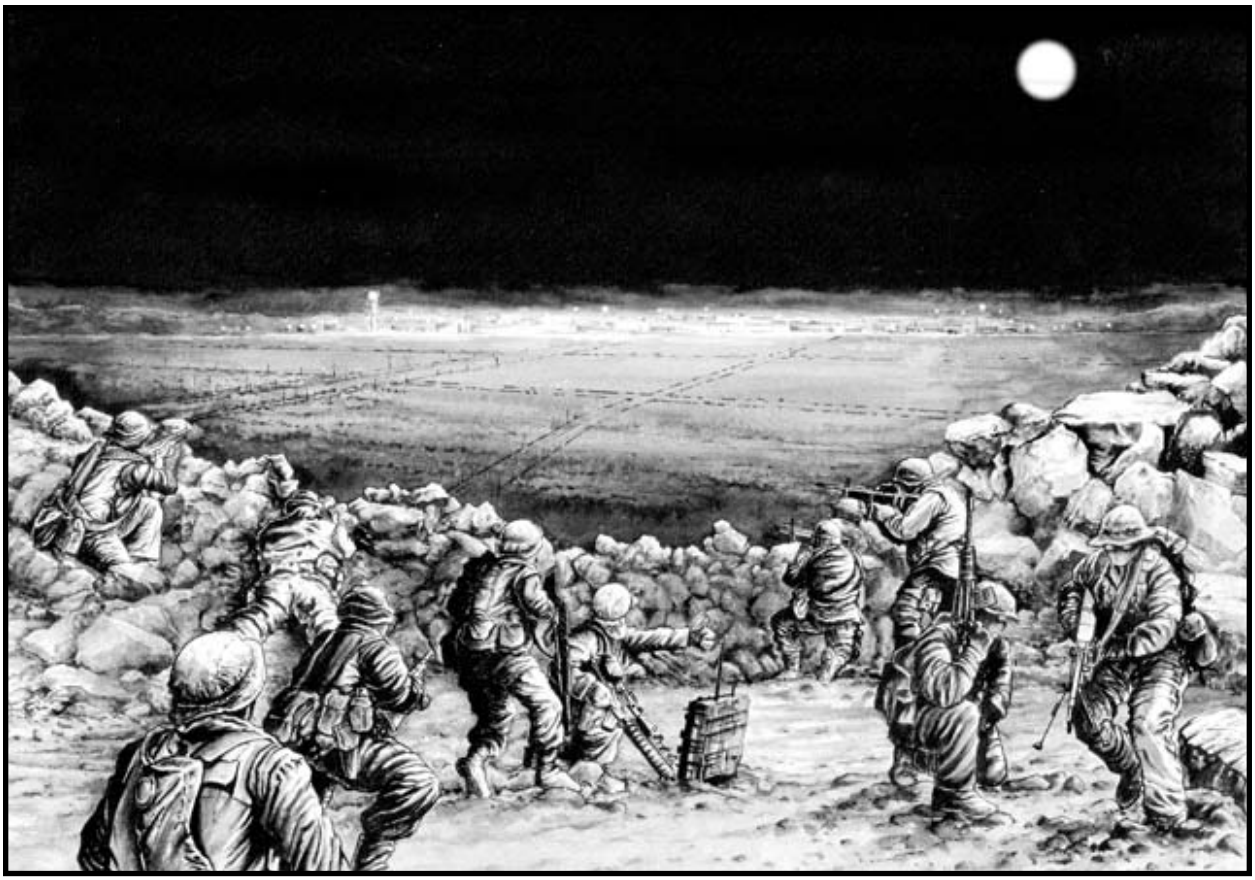
Character Option: Commissioned Officer

Characters must have at least 3 in Academics Skill, reflecting their education. Officers retain the focus of their training throughout their careers. Their military careers also start later, at ages 21-23.

Characters will be assumed to be fluent in the ways of military politics. A minimum of Politics 3 is required for success, along with commensurate levels of Persuasion and Expression.

Rank Comparator: Officers

Pay Scale	Army	Air Force	Marines	Navy	Resources
**	General of the Army	General of the Air Force	no equivalent	Fleet Admiral	••••-•••••
O-10	Army Chief of Staff (General)	Air Force Chief of Staff (General)	Commandant of the Marine Corps (General)(	Chief of Naval) Operations Admiral)	••••-•••••
O-9	Lieutenant General	Lieutenant General	Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral	••••
O-8	Major General	Major General	Major General	Rear Admiral (Upper Half)	••••
O-7	Brigadier General	Brigadier General	Brigadier General	Rear Admiral (Commodore)	••••
O-6	Colonel	Colonel	Colonel	Captain	••••
O-5	Lieutenant Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel	Commander	••••
O-4	Major	Major	Major	Lieutenant Commander	•••-••••
O-3	Captain	Captain	Captain	Lieutenant	•••
O-2	First Lieutenant	First Lieutenant	First Lieutenant	Lieutenant Junior Grade	•••
O-1	Second Lieutenant	Second Lieutenant	Second Lieutenant	Ensign	•••



Character Option: Medical Staff

Characters wishing to take up a role as a military surgeon should have at least Medicine 3 Skill. It is possible for a character to have graduated from medical school directly into the service, giving her a completely different Skill set to that of other military characters.

Players and Storytellers interested in stories based on medical staff serving in the military are advised to look at the character generation options presented in *World of Darkness: Asylum*.

Special Operations

Military service isn't just about showing up at the battlefield and going directly to battle. The armed forces devote themselves to many disciplines of conflict, from simple reconnaissance to psychological warfare to working with local civilians and authorities. These activities are particularly appropriate for role-playing, as they can bring a group of characters into a wide variety of situations and challenges, even before the supernatural rears its ugly head.

Special Operations Command (SOCOM)

Special Operations are run by a joint command, SOCOM, based in McDill Air Force base near Tampa, Florida, which manages and co-ordinates the operation of the Special Operations branches of the Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force.

Special Forces Command controls five active component groups and two Army National Guard groups. Each Special Forces Group is responsible for its own part of the world.

Army: The US Army Special Forces Command (Airborne) was once designated the US Army 1st Special Operations Command. USASFC's mission is to train and prepare SF units deployed under the US military's regional commands.

US Army SF Commands include the USASFC (Airborne), the 75th Rangers and the 160th Special Operations Airborne Regiment or SOAR, the Night Stalkers.

Navy: The US Navy's main SF units are the legendary Navy SEALs (Sea, Air, Land), SWCCs ("Swick") paratroopers, and Special Boat Units.

Formed from units originally designed for disposal and clearance of underwater mines, the SEALs were commissioned in their present form in 1962 by former President John F Kennedy to act as the maritime and riverine counterparts of the US Army's Special Forces. Special Boat Units are organized, trained, and equipped to conduct or support naval special warfare, riverine warfare, coastal patrol and interdiction, and joint special operations with patrol boats or other combatant craft designed for special operations support.

Marines: The Marine Special Force is USMC Force Recon. Force Recon conducts pre-assault and distant post-assault reconnaissance in support of a landing force.

The kinds of recon they provide include zone reconnaissance, obtaining information on nearby routes, obstacles, terrain and enemy forces; surveillance of areas of interest in real time; and providing photographs and sketches, in addition to being able to engage the enemy, implant sensors, capture enemy prisoners, and conduct specialized terrain reconnaissance.

Air Force: Air Force SF units are employed for all the missions in which other SF forces are deployed. The Air Force's special ground forces, called Combat Controllers, are trained in parachuting techniques, including SCUBA and HALO (High Altitude, Low Opening), as well as mountaineering and other means of tactical insertion.

Combat Controller missions include securing areas within enemy territory to provide air traffic control, and disrupting the enemy's ability to respond to the Air Force when it arrives in force.

Para-rescue missions involve personnel recovery with emergency medical capabilities in combat and non-hostile environments. Insertion is by land, sea or air, and SF are deployed to provide medical aid as well as serve as aircrew.

In the US Army, these specialized doctrines fall under the general umbrella of Special Operations (also Special Operations Forces, or SOF). This model can be used as a basis for extrapolating how other military forces approach similar tasks.

Special Operations Forces

In the US Army, SOF troops are taught that they don't always need to use military force to accomplish a mission. If they can accomplish the mission through infiltration and influencing situations favorably toward US national interests, so much the better.

Armed with a broad range of skills, they can work just as effectively with civilian personnel as they do with other military factions.

Special Operations Forces has nine primary missions, shared among five components. These missions require that Special Operations, including Special Forces, must remain active during peacetime, conflict, and war.

Foreign Internal Defense (FID): This is Special Forces' main peacetime mission; helping friendly developing nations, military and police forces improve their technical skills and human rights issues, assisting with humanitarian and civic action projects.

Unconventional Warfare (UW): These are military and paramilitary operations carried out in enemy held and controlled areas, including intelligence collection, guerrilla warfare, evasion and escape, sabotage, subversion, and other clandestine operations.

Special Reconnaissance (SR): Special Forces on an SR operation move deep behind hostile borders to provide theater commanders with vital intelligence regarding the enemy's capabilities and actions, local populace and terrain, enabling the National Command Authorities to make better tactical and strategic decisions.

Psychological Operations (PSYOP): Inducing and reinforcing attitudes favorable to US affairs. This may range from building support for American activities to protecting civilian populations via such campaigns as increasing mine awareness.

Direct Action (DA): These are the missions everyone hears about: the public face of Special Forces, where a helicopter sweeps down to a building carrying a squad of Special Forces men hanging from cables like spiders on webbing. Direct action missions are short and brutal, whether they have the objective of breaking a siege or rescuing hostages.

Combating Terrorism (CBT): These are offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, or respond to terrorism. Special Forces are often employed to pre-empt or resolve terrorist incidents.

Information Operations (IO): Utilizing various forms of information media, such as electronic communication, to best effect.

Counterproliferation (CP) of weapons of mass destruction (WMD): Measures to locate, recognize, and neutralize WMDs.

Civil Affairs (CA): Working with civil authorities and civilian populations to lessen the impact of military operations on said authorities and populations.

The five components of SOF are Special Forces (SF), Rangers, US Army Special Operations Aviation (ARSOA), Psychological Operations (PSYOP) and Civil Affairs (CA).

Special Forces

The term "special forces" can refer to two things. If in lower case, it's a blanket term used to refer to highly-trained military units who perform specialized operations, applicable to many units around the world.

When capitalized, Special Forces refers to the US Army Special Forces, also known as "the Green Berets." Commissioned in 1961 by President Kennedy, Special Forces was created as a solution to a mounting problem of warfare, namely that conventional mobilization, strategies, and tactics were of limited use against certain kinds of enemy, i.e. guerrillas conducting what became known as unconventional warfare. To fight an unconventional war, President Kennedy reasoned, one had to have unconventional warriors. Their motto, "De Oppresso Liber", means "To Free the Oppressed."

Special Forces Organization

Special Operational Detachment A (SFOD A) or "A Team" is the basic Special Forces unit; a four to six man team designed to equip, train, advise, organize, and support indigenous military or paramilitary forces in unconventional warfare and internal defense. The detachment comprises a commander, executive officer, team sergeant and specialists in operations (18F), weapons (18B), medical

(18D), engineers (18C) and communications (18E). Every SF company has one A Team trained in free-fall parachuting and one trained in combat diving.

SFOD B or "B" Detachment is company headquarters; a multi-purpose command and control that can deploy SF teams by itself without the need for augmentation.

SFOD C or "C" Detachment is the battalion command and control authority, providing staff planning, supervision, and administration to A and B Detachments and also giving advice and staff assistance on Special Forces units to the Joint Special Operations Task Force and other major military headquarters.

Civil Affairs and PSYOP

Psychological Operations (PSYOP) and Civil Affairs are forms of warfare designed to win wars through non-violent means, employing persuasion techniques and, where enemies seem intractable, fostering dissension among their ranks while convincing the local population to help US forces.

SF are often deployed on such missions due to their broad range of experience with foreign cultures. The 193rd SOW (Special Operations Wing) of the USAF, for instance, is just such a specialized unit. In fact, they are uniquely geared towards PSYOPS, using electromagnetic transmissions covering commercial AM and FM radio bands, VHF and UHF television bands, and military VHF, HF, and FM frequencies. The 193rd control the horizontal, and the 193rd control the vertical.

Character Option: Special Forces

With the guidelines found here, you can create characters who are Green Berets or Navy SEALs, or model training in the SAS (Britain) or Spetsnaz (Russia), or even the People's Liberation Army 15th Airborne (China). The following describes the demands of special forces in general, not just the US Army Special Forces.

Characters must possess at least 3, ideally 4, in Resolve, Stamina and Composure. Special forces soldiers enjoy high Willpower and Initiative and are born optimists, seeing opportunities where others see defeat looming. A high Wits score is essential (preferably 4), and Dexterity and Manipulation of at least 3. All other Attributes must be at least 2.

Special forces training emphasizes breadth of training, not specialization. Special forces troops have the broadest spread of Skills of any type of World of Darkness character, reflecting their training in even unconventional Skills you wouldn't expect to find in a soldier, such as Crafts or Animal Ken. Even a single dot in a Skill means no untrained penalty to dice pools involving that Skill.

Special forces Specialties also include Athletics Specialties such as Parachuting and Diving, as well as the Escape & Evasion Stealth Specialty and Resistance to Interrogation.

Special forces are likely to cross-train with units, not only of their own forces, but with militaries outside their field (e.g. USAF SF training with Army, Marine and Navy units to qualify to become Combat Weathermen).

Characters who join special forces are usually not, contrary to myth, required to undergo an initiation where they have to go into a barn and shoot their dog or murder their own families. In fact, special forces prize their families back home, since the thought of keeping them safe is sometimes the only thing that gives them a reason to keep fighting at all. That isn't to say their initiation isn't difficult.

Special forces Merits frequently stress quickness of mind and body. Language Merits are particularly appropriate, even necessary, as these soldiers are expected to be able to become fluent in another culture's language, customs, and traditions.

The most important aspect of Special Forces units is that they only pick from the most seasoned warriors, those with the flexibility of mindset to be able to conduct unconventional warfare yet also possessed with the requisite breadth of Skills and abilities.

If modeling an all-special forces game, the Storyteller is encouraged to give players the experience point bonus at character generation for being "seasoned" or even "expert" characters to reflect their status as veterans (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 35.

Fort Harmon

Fort Harmon is a relatively small military installation appropriate for placing into almost any campaign's location. Like all military posts, Fort Harmon is virtually a community unto itself, providing every facility a soldier needs for all his needs, from training to housing.

Fort Harmon is a typical military post, populated by the same facilities found in all military installations, such as motor pools and vehicular garage facilities, warehouses and supply depots, and miles of exposed piping, all in drab military colors.

To the north, left of the main entrance down Weatherley Drive, is the parade ground; to the north east is the combat training area. South of the gate are the barracks, rows of housing units for enlisted and commissioned officers, and a family housing unit.

The BX/PX (Base Exchange /post exchange), the commissary and Burger King occupy a cluster of units near the main gate, with a combined NCO/officer club called the Zero Club. The BX serves as a kind of department store for soldiers, and the commissary is where one goes to buy groceries.

To the east, at the end of the main central boulevard, lies the sprawling site of the Harrison Arsenal, the facility which the rest of the base supports. The mission statement of the Arsenal reads "Harrison Arsenal: Home of Advanced Ballistic Plastics for Tomorrow's Warfighter!" Some of the advances in ballistic plastics and body armor being developed by the Harrison Arsenal show promising results.

Sample Customs and Courtesies (Military Bearing)

The list of do's and don'ts regarding soldiers' required behavior, such as when to stand to attention, when to salute, when to wear covers (headgear) is exhaustive and detailed. Only a few examples of such courtesies are included here; the studious reader is encouraged to go online for further information.

When in formation, at Reveille, when "To The Color", the official song of the force such as the Army Song ("The Army Goes Rolling Along") or the national anthem are played, or when uncased Colors approach within 6 paces of the flank of the unit, soldiers must execute "Present Arms" at the command of the officer or NCO in charge, and "Order Arms" on command. In uniform but not in formation, soldiers must face the flag or the music and render a hand salute whilst standing at attention until the last note is sounded. Soldiers sing the Army Song when it is played, and salute the anthem.

A cased Color is a US Flag which has been folded into a triangle (cocked hat) shape. A cased Color is not saluted.

When talking to an officer, a soldier stands at attention unless given the order "At Ease." When dismissed or the officer departs, the soldier comes to attention and salutes. A soldier accompanies the salute with an appropriate greeting ("good morning/afternoon, sir/ma'am"), and must not render a salute with a noticeable object in the mouth or right hand.

When walking with a senior person, junior personnel must walk on the senior person's left. The senior person exits a vehicle first, including elevator cars.

Finally, the only time a soldier is not allowed to remove his headgear when reporting to an officer indoors is when that soldier is considered to be under arms, i.e. he is carrying a weapon in their hand, by sling or in a holster.

Fort Harmon: The Real Story

Fort Harmon was built to support the Harrison Arsenal. However, for a small post with such a minor mission, Fort Harmon is surprisingly well equipped, staffed and maintained, with a large contingent of military police on base.

And then there's the feature of the base nobody discusses: Zero Company.

It's not that they're classified or Top Secret, it's just that there's just something *not quite right* about them. They follow proper customs and they've got an impressive success record. But they're just … *strange*.

Zero Company

Occasionally a serving soldier Awakens, or undergoes the First Change. Sometimes, they're just supernaturally blessed (or cursed) somehow, whether with more than human intelligence or an ability to resist flames.

Most leave the service by necessity. It's possible that characters may continue with their unit, serving for years and be none the wiser. Occasionally, though, supernatural characters find themselves drawn towards Zero Company.

Perhaps they encounter, or are spotted by, Zero Company on the battlefield. Perhaps they receive a transfer elsewhere, but at the last minute the orders are inexplicably altered; the character is still transferred, but is sent to Fort Harmon instead.

A character might possess a trainable Merit such as Modern Army Combatives, and may be assigned to train soldiers at Fort Harmon; once there, his supernatural abilities are recognized and exposed, and his transfer becomes permanent.

Regardless of how it happens, supernatural characters just keep ending up at Fort Harmon, where they are always greeted by General Strand, the base CO. Transfers receive the Zero Company shoulder flash and cap insignia — two sinister question marks joined in the center by an exclamation point and surmounted by an eye.

Zero Company is officially designated Company "Alpha" of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 231st Infantry Reconnaissance Section. It's under the command of SOCOM, which has placed it under Army jurisdiction.

Zero Company's motto, *Tamaso Ma Jyotir Gamaya*, comes from a Sanskrit prayer. It means "From darkness, lead me to light." The only other units in the world that use Sanskrit in their mottoes are units of the Indian armed forces.

Zero Company comprises eight platoons. Each platoon has at least one squad with a supernatural component of some sort. Players may refer to the various World of Darkness game lines and sourcebooks for ideas.

Zero Company is accompanied by two conventional units, at least one of which is always a Special Forces unit assigned on an *ad hoc* basis. The nature of the third unit also varies on an *ad hoc* basis: ground, boat or air units for assaults, military police or military intelligence for investigations or SF support for special reconnaissance.

All other support companies — logistics, armor, communications, medical support—are as standard for a traditional battalion.

Character Option: Zero Company

Zero Company is not a mandatory career choice for supernatural player characters. The Army is not looking for supernaturals, because the brass don't believe they exist. Nor is a supernatural character from a US Army background expected to remain in the service. Fort Harmon is just an option for Storytellers: a base shrouded in mystery, where some of the soldiers are not what they seem to be.

Storyteller Notes—Zero Company

The Storyteller is free to choose a reason why so many supernaturally-inclined characters end up on base: perhaps they're there because they're drawn by the base's strange Resonance, or there's a hidden locus or verge in caverns below ground.

Zero Company might be some sort of supernatural group entity, a gestalt subconscious comprising a marked supernatural element, doing what it can to survive, including arranging transfers of suitable candidates to replace losses through attrition.

Perhaps the DoD is waiting for a chance to eradicate the most dangerous elements with a well-placed "chemical warfare accident".

Mortal characters mixing with the supernatural element should possess the "Unseen Sense" Merit.

Emphasize the fact that the supernatural elements are called Zero Company for a reason: when they return to their havens and Demesnes, the mortal soldiers go bowling together, or go home to their wives and children. In the midst of all these people, the supernaturals are alone. They've got zero company.

Story Seeds

Armory and Reliquary

Zero Company does not exist. Harrison Arsenal *really is* the *raison d'être* of Fort Harmon. The Arsenal houses and tests the largest collection of civilian and military Relics ever assembled, from combat knives that sing to the owner to haunted attack helicopters. These items are stored in warehouses throughout the base and available on loan to other units. The more dangerous Relics and devices are housed in a bunker deep beneath Warehouse 5. Occasionally a Relic escapes from there, and characters have to find it and bring it back before civilians die.

Big Fish, Little Fish

The other battalion is the one to which everyone pays attention. They have some unusually skilled, even powerful soldiers and they get the interesting assignments. The players' battalion is all mortals, with the characters admittedly sensitive to and aware of the supernatural. The main battalion gets credit, kudos and funding. The players' unit doesn't even rate access to the Zero Club. The Alpha Company has it all, until it goes missing and the player characters are assigned to locate and rescue them.

Conspiracy: Harrison Arsenal is again the key to the setting, and the characters are mortals. The characters discover horrifying experiments in a bunker below the Facility; experiments involving vivisection of various types of supernaturals and experiments on strange creatures assembled out of human body parts and a process that involves extracting a fluid from their bodies which is used to manufacture clones.

Broken Taboo

On patrol, one character stops to drink from a well. The water is clean, but the well turns out to be a local

Alternative Unit: Company VII

Zero Company has a scary reputation: its soldiers only come out at night, and they drink blood. That reputation is entirely deserved: Zero Company is made up of units of Kindred vampires. Technically, they are "Unbound", and they live a nomadic existence, fighting off Kindred corruption whenever it seeks to insert its dark tentacles into the military. They are kept under control through a combination of brainwashing, Conditioning, the Vinculum, and explosive collars attached to their throats. What the Kindred do not know is that these guys aren't writing a "VII", or a Roman numeral seven, at the site of their kills. They're writing an acronym, "V.I.I." "Vampiric Infestation Inoculated."

Storytellers, this can be yet another possible origin for the vampire-hunting covenant known as VII. For further information regarding the Kindred and their political machinations, Storytellers are advised to check out Vampire: the Requiem and the *VII* sourcebook. A further source of inspiration comes from a British comic strip, *Fiends of the Eastern Front*, set in World War II but featuring a special forces-style army of the undead and the havoc they wreak upon the living.

taboo. On return to Fort Harmon, the character suffers nightmarish waking hallucinations. Medical examination shows nothing wrong with him; he just keeps seeing dead people. As time passes, the visions get worse. After the first month, those around him also start seeing the same things if they're standing within ten yards of him.

War Missions

Any Force: Haunted Barracks

Mission Profile: Garrison.

Unit Size: N/A.

Strange things are happening in the barracks. Private Masterson thought he saw a shadow standing in the bathroom shower, but it was empty. Private Perrette swears he saw a chair move across a room. The fire alarms activate with no discernible cause, and computers and lights flicker on and off randomly.

Base security may be drawn to the phenomena. Characters may roll Manipulation + Persuasion against an MP's Resolve + Composure to convince the MP to monitor the barracks on CCTV.

The result is inconclusive: a grey blur visible in one screen, touching a fire alarm break box. The fire alarm break box is outside Private Darren James' quarters.

Storyteller: Private Darren James is a proud serviceman. He joined to serve the cause of American Freedom, and he is taking to the life with enthusiasm.

This does not sit well with his late grandfather, Tom James, who was shot by a uniformed hired thug during a peace rally in the 1960s. Darren inherited his Grandpa's pocket watch before signing up, and it sits in his locker, forgotten. That pocket watch is his Grandfather's anchor, from where Tom James now haunts the barracks, outraged that Darren has joined the hated enemy.

The characters must determine that a ghost is to blame; identify the ghost and its connection with Private James; identify the watch as being somehow important to the host; and finally either exorcise the ghost, or obtain the watch and remove it from the Barracks.

Army: Compassionate Leave

You're on compassionate leave. Your brother's being brought home from Iraq in a box, and you're home for a week with your folks. You've managed to swing some personal leave as well, and so have your buddies from your squad, so you can all stay for up to a fortnight, unless you get called back. The old family home has plenty of spare rooms because most of your siblings have grown up and moved out.

The first time you get the feeling there's trouble is at the wake. Your sister Mary's not at the party. Nor was she at the funeral, which is a shame, because she and your brother Tony were inseparable.

A reflexive Wits + Empathy roll will show that your Mom's unhappiness stems from more than having to grieve

over Tony. One success on a Manipulation + Persuasion roll quickly offers up an explanation from Cousin Don: Mary's gone AWOL.

Mary is fifteen years old.

Tracking Down Mary: Your characters can track down the girl. This requires an extended Manipulation + Streetwise roll with a target number of 5, and a dice pool penalty of –3; Missing Persons are never anyone's top priority because, usually, they've run away from home for a reason.

A single success turns up a bum who, for a couple of dollars, remembers seeing her at the abandoned Regal Hotel downtown, across the tracks at the end of Clarence Street. A reflexive Intelligence + Streetwise roll reveals that Clarence Street used to be a wealthy part of town, but has now fallen on hard times.

The Rescue

The Regal is a large, square hotel with four stories set at the end of Clarence Street. It has been abandoned for many years, and all its lower windows have been boarded up. The hotel's East and West Wings surround a large central plaza, with the main entrance at the far end.

A frontal approach is impossible: any approach down Clarence Street would be noticed, and a frontal assault in the plaza would be suicidal.

Furthermore, the team is armed only with what natural resources they can find from the local hardware store: handguns, a shotgun, and some civilian walkie-talkies.

Gaining Entry

The one blind spot lies behind the hotel, a boarded-up door that was formerly the service entrance. It can be broken through with little effort (Strength + Stealth, 1 success), and it leads to filthy roach-infested service corridors lined with cobwebs.

Inside, a few street kids are visible; they are congregated at one central location, near the once-opulent Main Lobby. Everywhere else is deserted. There is no internal power; internal phone lines and elevators are dead.

Complications

Storytellers, choose from one of the following options or make up your own.

• *Blood Farm:* Mary is part of a herd of humans kept by some creature to be fed upon occasionally. She and her gang of eight street kids are kept docile and chained up in the old parking structure below the hotel. The solitary creature, possibly a vampire but potentially even a Fae entity feeding off their fear and confusion, is powerful enough to challenge the team by itself. The story is resolved by the creature's destruction and the rescue of Mary and the other kids. Of course, the creature may have had allies who will come looking for their dead friend.

• *Minor Cult:* The kids have latched onto someone, or some Thing, that promises them the earth. At present twenty street kids, some armed with knives and one with a loaded Glock, comprise the entire cult. Mary is one of them, armed with a stolen kitchen knife. In one variation, she is their leader. In another, she is no longer herself, but is a host for some Thing. The characters rescue her, but find not long afterwards that she is pregnant.

• *Guardians:* The kids are protecting *something* in the hotel; something that forced its rapid abandonment and closure. It might be a beneficent creature recovering from an injury; an eight-foot shard of unidentifiable glowing translucent material embedded in the floorboards, or a Verge into a veritable Hellhole, which they are defending against incursions from Elsewhere. Mary discovered the thing, and has sworn her life to protect it, or to defend her neighborhood from it.

Mary

"I can take care of myself, yeah?"

Background: She's always been independent: getting into fights in school, hanging with the wrong crowd. Her Mom wished that Mary would take some responsibility in her life. Well, now she has.

Dice Pools

Persuasion (6 dice): Mary was always good with words, and always knew how to sweet talk her brothers into having her own way.

Navy/Marines: The Jonah

Mission: Counter-terrorism

Location: US waters.

On patrol in the North Atlantic, orders come in — an urgent air/sea rescue mission. A plane just went down nearby. Your ship's been dispatched to recover bodies and rescue survivors.

As it turns out, they only find one survivor, a lone civilian on a life raft. Her name is Susan Walsh, a householder from Nebraska on her way to her vacation in Europe. And she is a Jonah.

The Jonah Effect

Each full day with Susan Walsh on board makes things harder and harder for the crew. All Computer, Crafts and Survival dice pools accrue a cumulative -1 penalty per day she remains, which is only lifted when she leaves. Equipment begins failing, the food goes bad, toilet facilities back up, the ship loses headway for some reason and nothing works properly. Attempts to investigate the cause are at a cumulative +1 bonus, and point clearly to Ms Walsh as being a Jonah.

The characters have but one civilized option: to take her to shore somewhere and leave her there to be somebody else's problem. But can they make it to shore on time before some Engineer is reduced to a chance die while fiddling with a stubborn fuel line ... or one of the nuclear warheads?

Storyteller Options

• Susan Walsh is an infiltrator and skilled saboteur with anti-American leanings. She possesses a mystical ability to sneak about the ship invisibly, tampering with its systems. Characters must discover how she is sabotaging their ship, and then find a way of neutralizing her before she destroys them.

• Susan Walsh is innocent. She has a tiny, barely noticeable pin of two dice rolling snake eyes on her jacket. It gives her uncommon luck (a +d10 dice pool bonus once per scene for one Reflexive or Instant task) at the cost of siphoning all the luck from those around her (everyone around accumulates a –1 dice pool penalty).

An Exceptional Success on a Wits + Investigation roll will uncover the pin, but it takes a Wits + Socialize roll with a Gambling Specialty to recall that snake eyes means bad luck. Tossing the pin overboard might finally relieve the curse ... or it might just doom everyone on the ship forever.

Susan Walsh (as infiltrator)

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4, Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Skills: Crafts (Sabotage) 3, Computer (Hacking) 3, Occult 1, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 3, Stealth 3, Weaponry 2, Subterfuge 3.

Willpower: 8

Morality: 4

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Envy

Initiative: 7

Defense: 2

Speed: 11

Health: 7

Supernatural Power: Invisibility: By spending 1 Willpower and making an Instant Wits + Occult roll, Susan Walsh becomes invisible. She must be unobserved when she casts the spell. If she attacks someone, or draws attention to herself, the spell ends: otherwise, it persists for an entire scene.

Her invisibility is otherwise near perfect: Alarms don't trip; she leaves behind no physical evidence. Not even CCTVs show her presence. The spell has one flaw: the words are written on a slip of parchment the saboteur leaves behind. If this paper is burned while the spell is in effect, the spell ends and the saboteur is revealed, sustaining 1 point of lethal damage.

Navy: The Heirloom

Mission: Anti-Sub

Location: US Waters

One of the characters is serving aboard a Navy vessel on anti-sub duties, chasing down Colombians who are renting private ex-military submarines to smuggle tons of cocaine into the United States.

Before setting off on the mission, the character is informed that some of his personal effects just got transferred to the vessel from his family home. Examination of the care package reveals personal letters, an MP3 player containing voice recordings from his folks ... and a model of a Naval vessel: to be specific, the very one on which the character is serving.

Contacting home proves fruitless: they swear the toy is something the character has had since childhood, and that it inspired him to serve in the Navy. And this is odd, because the class of vessel the character's serving on was only built four years ago.

Visions and Pain

The ship model has one interesting power. If he spends 1 Willpower, he hears voices coming from the ship, granting the character foreknowledge of one critical action within the current scene that hasn't played out yet. But it drains the character of health: he sustains 1 bashing wound. The foreknowledge enables him to avert one decision made by him in that scene that results in Dramatic Failure or Failure: it becomes an ordinary Success, instead. This power can prove critical in the current mission, chasing that Colombian drug submarine. Provided the item doesn't kill him.

The origin of this bizarre heirloom, and how it fell into the character's hands, is left to the Storyteller.

Air Force: Unidentified (1)

Mission: Reconnaissance

Unit: Squadron

The squadron is on a routine reconnaissance of Afghan airspace. Something shining brightly suddenly falls from the sky and passes by them at close range.

Encounter

You're almost at the end of your reconnaissance flight over Afghan airspace, and running low on fuel. There's a storm coming in over the mountains, so you radio to tell Base you're RTB (returning to base).

You're given the all clear to return: but just as you're turning your jets about to go home, your radar pings. Something large just appeared at high altitude: very large, moving very fast towards you.

Characters have one chance to roll Dexterity + Drive as an Instant action, before the object is on top of them, flashing through their formation at a speed in excess of Mach 5. Characters who failed the first roll now get to roll Dexterity + Drive with a –4 penalty due to turbulence to keep their jets on the level. A Dramatic Failure means their jet loses altitude, forcing them to eject and stranding them in insurgent-held territory, which means the rest of this mission is as much about those characters' survival and rescue as it is about retrieving the object.

Characters who make either of the Drive rolls get to make one pass over the area where the object fell, and take

some clear photos of it before returning to Base. There, they receive new orders.

They are to rendezvous sixty klicks from the object's landing site with a special unit, proceed to the touchdown zone, and retrieve the object. The unit's name is Zero Company.

Storyteller: What is the object, anyway? Is it a downed spy satellite that fell to Earth? Is it a *qashmal* — an angelic being? Is it something from beyond the terrestrial sphere, or something that fell out of a hole in the sky? Sample statistics for the object as "apparently living supernatural entity" are provided below, though this interpretation is not essential.

Whatever it is, your characters get much closer to it when they go out with Zero Company to retrieve it, and optionally their stranded compatriot.

Mission: Retrieval

Unit: Zero Company

You arrive at camp, and finally get to meet the "Zero Company" you've heard rumors about. What a sorry-looking lot of maggots they are, too.

Your players can split up at this point. Some can play Zero Company characters, others can play Air Force characters. Both teams need each other, because only the Air Force guys know where the object fell, and only Zero Company can get them there and bring it back. And here's the catch. That storm just made an aerial approach impossible; you're all going to have to get there overland.

Moving Out

Sixty klicks doesn't sound like much. It does when most of it's vertical. The area where the object fell is a mountainous hell that only insurgents, wolves, and marmots feel comfortable living in.

Much of the journey involves mountaineering and adaptation to high altitudes. Storytellers are advised to study the **World of Darkness Rulebook** sections dealing with Fatigue, falling damage, Athletics Skill and Survival Skill. Scree slopes make climbing rolls hazardous: -1 to –3 on Athletics rolls.

At least once, characters must face a treacherous mountain ravine, with certain death in the roaring white water rapids forty feet below. This is atmosphere more than anything: the Storyteller could easily expand the crossing of this ravine to a full scene and have all the characters make copious Dexterity + Athletics rolls.

They aren't alone, either. Wolf howls punctuate the silence at night. However, these are just wolves, indigenous to the region. They're warning the rest of the pack that there are humans in the area.

Because of the treacherous, mountainous terrain, travel is slow. Regardless of how experienced the characters are, this journey will take them two days.

The Storyteller can abstract this process by allowing players to roll Stamina + Survival. This is an Extended action, each roll representing several hours of navigation and climbing. The target number is 15.

The Amateurs

The characters get to the site where the object crashed, only to discover that they're not alone. Someone beat them to it.

The unit belongs to the British Army's crack SAS unit, their answer to Special Forces. Armed with SA-80s to the player characters' M16A2s, and with all the skills and expertise of seasoned Special Forces troops, they are a formidable opponent.

It seems that Her Majesty's government was also keeping an eye out on the object, and would like to recover it for its own purposes.

Ending the Argument

Here are two suggestions for an endgame scenario.

The Taliban: While the leaders of both teams argue over who gets to take the object home, the Taliban arrive, drawn to the activity in the area. They aren't interested in the object, only in driving off the US and SAS forces. They are armed with AK-47s and RPGs. The teams put aside their aggression towards one another and must defend their exposed position, and the exposed object, which is lying in a shallow impact crater at the foot of a steep cliff.

After beating off the Taliban forces, both teams bring the object down to the characters' Pickup Zone together and leave together, giving the SAS a courtesy ride home in a USAF Galaxy C-17 the characters' unit has laid on. Who gets the object after this is the purview of the diplomats.

The Creature Awakes: In the midst of the troubles, the creature wakes up and looks around. Dazed and confused, it sees hostile forces fighting, using powerful weapons of fire. In a maddened state, it will attack anything in its path. Characters may make Dodge rolls just to get out of its way, or attack it; not a wise choice, as the creature is almost godlike in its power.

The Taliban, realizing this creature is a threat, turn its firepower on it instead. If the characters do nothing, the creature will turn and attack the Taliban forces.

The Creature

Quote: *faint half-musical chorus in background*

Background: Some inexplicable event forced this creature to fall to Earth. Now it's here, it must rest a while before recovering enough strength to return home. The creature has no Earthly agenda: it just wants to go home, but it will destroy whoever looks like they are attempting to prevent it from achieving its goal.

Description: It's a vaguely humanoid shape of solid light. Its eyes dazzle like the sun, blinding everyone who looks at it.

Power: 10, Finesse: 10, Resistance: 15
Willpower: 25

Size: 7
Corpus: 22
Essence: 50
Initiative: 25
Defense: 10
Speed: 30 (flight)

Numina

Blast (dice pool 20): The creature spends 2 Essence and launches white fire at an opponent. Range is 100 yards, and the attack suffers no range penalties. Damage is lethal.

Lament (dice pool 20): The creature spends 1 Essence and howls a lament which causes everyone within earshot (100 yards) to drop their weapons and cover their ears. Victims roll Resolve + Composure to stop fleeing the area in fear. The effect lasts for one minute.

Immunity (firearms): Firearms are ineffective against it. Even a direct hit from an RPG will only stop its advance for one turn.

Unapproachable: Characters face dice pool penalties on all actions of –1 at thirty yards, -2 at twenty yards and –3 at ten yards due to its blinding radiance.

Ban: The creature cannot harm someone of high moral standards. Any character of Morality 7 or higher is immune from the creature's attacks.

The creature will attack until all opposition ends. It takes a turn to orient itself, and then launches itself into the sky in an explosion of crackling energy which inflicts 10 points of lethal damage in a 25-yard blast radius around it.

Air Force: Unidentified (2)

Mission: Domestic Investigation
Unit: The player characters

This story also involves an unidentified object, but it has two differences.

Firstly, it takes place over American soil, with the object landing somewhere on the North American continent, not far from the town chosen for your setting. Secondly, it brings the characters into contact with civilians.

The characters are given their orders. An object has landed somewhere near a civilian trailer park on the outskirts of town. Satellite surveillance is inconclusive, because the thick overgrowth of the backwoods has interfered with satellite radar imaging.

Trailer Park

The smell is what you sense first. It's the characteristic aroma of a trailer park: burning rubber, rotting food, untreated sewage from a busted pipe, and diesel from the construction site next door. There isn't a patch of ground that's not been churned up by the deep ruts of backhoe and truck tires, and the brown puddles are a mile deep.

The Storyteller can produce a number of individuals to give the characters the runaround. People who live in trailer parks tend to be resentful of authority types turning up in black vehicles, dressed in shiny uniforms, and asking too many questions.

Clueless Trailer Park Resident

Quote: "*Uh, I dunno, I was watchin' the TV.*"

Background: He appears in the doorway wearing a string vest and grubby underwear. He sees nothing, hears nothing, and therefore has nothing to say. As long as the Government keeps the benefit checks flowing, he prefers it that way.

Dice Pool

Misdirect (6 dice): He'll send the characters anywhere, as long as it's away from him. He knows nothing about the object.

Trailer Park Tramp

Quote: "I ain't interested, so take a hike."

Description: Bottle blonde bouffant hair, frilly pink floor-length nightgown, floral blouse, tight pink calf-length leggings and carpet slippers. Her TV set is permanently tuned in to some televangelist channel.

Dice Pool

Gossip (6 dice): She doesn't know much about UFOs, but she knows when something's afoot — the dogs go crazy and the kids start sneaking around. She'll point the characters in the direction of the children, if they give her $50.

Strung-out Paranoid

*Quote: "I knew it! You've come for me! *yelling* NOW WILL YA FUCKERS BELIEVE ME?"*

Background: He's lived in fear of the Men in Black all his life. The characters' arrival on the scene is enough to have him reaching for his firearms and calling his dog. Isolation, and the crank he makes in his meth lab around the back, have made him more than a little twitchy.

Storyteller: Use the "Gangbanger" combatant character from the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 205, and the "Dog" template from p. 203. Alternately, use the SWAT Officer template from p. 207, give him a pump-action shotgun and an Army surplus flak jacket, and you have a paranoid Army deserter instead, who's been living for ten years looking over his shoulder for the MPs and who won't be taken back.

Backwoods

The characters' persistence pays off. Some children were playing with the object in the woods, and when the characters approach, they take the characters to see it.

If it's an object: what is it? Is it a piece of some sort of weird celestial machinery? A satellite knocked down to Earth by a passing Thing that left claw marks on its hull? A rock that radiates an eerie color not known to man , that sickens everything which comes too near? The choice of what it is has been left up to you.

One thing: the object, whatever it is, is not small. The thing is at least the size of a Volkswagen, and it is embedded in a good-sized crater in a clearing in the forest. The characters see where dirt was flung outward in all directions by the impact, knocking down surrounding trees; the tops of several trees have been charred and sheared off along the object's descent path.

Suggested Effect: The object is a strange filigree of an unknown metal filled with moving parts, half buried in the dirt but still working. As the characters approach, it emits a rising unearthly hum, which penetrates deep into their psyches.

Characters, along with everyone within a hundred yard range, must roll Resolve + Composure every minute they remain in the area of effect, or face madness as the sound suppresses their inhibitions. Characters who fail the roll freely indulge in their Vices, rushing back into the trailer park to sate their appetites upon the people there.

Fights break out; men and women shed their clothes and, gibbering and screaming, lurch drunk, stoned and naked around the filthy encampment. Windows are smashed, trailers torched, and hapless trailer park residents wallow in a drug and booze-fuelled frenzy of carnage and sexual abandon. Characters who commit sins against their Morality during this time only face degeneration rolls and derangements when the effect subsides.

Oddly enough, only the children remain unaffected, albeit traumatized by what they witness — the noise only seems to affect humans over the age of eighteen.

Somehow, the noise does not affect one character. Perhaps the noise only affects mortals, and the character, being supernatural and hiding in plain sight, is immune. Perhaps she is immune because she made a Deal with some mysterious supernatural patron back home, and the Deal grants her protection. Or maybe she simply doesn't have a soul for the noise to affect. Or all of the above.

Shooting at the object won't stop it. Destroying the object requires access to heavy machinery, such as the equipment found at the construction site. Damaging the item with a backhoe requires a roll of Dexterity + Crafts; each success that overcomes the item's 7 Durability inflicts 1 Structure damage on the object. It has Structure 15.

If it's a Being: When the characters realize they really were *playing*, and that the Being had been playing with them, what they do next depends on the players. Do they attempt to reason with it, or try and take the Being back by force? As for what the Being is, that has been left up to you also. The Storyteller may also use the creature described in the above scenario, only in this story it has amnesia and its mind has been addled by the fall; it has the personality of a child.

A child that can level a city.

Special Forces: That's A Neat Trick

Location: Iraq.

Mission Profile: Special reconnaissance (SR).

Unit Size: Platoon.

Specialist Skills: Infiltration, HUMINT collection

Iraqi insurgents are turning up in America, *minutes* after being spotted on the streets of an insurgent-held town in Iraq. Something's happening and the brass are sending

your unit in to investigate how they're doing this. And then stop them.

The mission has three primary phases: insertion (being dropped into the zone under cover of night, probably via a HALO drop), infiltration, and investigation.

Insertion: This phase involves a HALO parachute drop. High Altitude, Low Opening. Characters need to roll Dexterity + Athletics as an Instant action. Storytellers: remind players they can spend Willpower in a turn to boost their chances of success.

Infiltration: This requires an extended roll of Manipulation + Subterfuge with an equipment bonus of +3; they look like locals. The target number is the result of the dice pool of the most perceptive guard they encounter, based on Wits + Composure.

Investigation: The soldiers have to make an extended Wits + Investigation roll with a target number of 10, each roll requiring one day's searching. Eventually the unit discovers several young insurgents, apparently exhausted (they have been drained of Willpower activating the device; see below). These insurgents are easily rounded up and taken in for questioning. A disturbingly quick and easy interrogation reveals that the trail leads to a furniture warehouse. Insurgents go in, and somehow they end up in America.

The team has no choice but to penetrate the compound, not knowing what to expect. A loud action is contraindicated: the characters must sneak in and out undetected.

They discover the insurgents in the store to be unarmed, quiet, and complacent. Some are even physically and mentally drained, hardly able to motivate themselves to resist at all.

Otherwise, there is no resistance. Apart from the area of the main workshop, the place has been cleared of antiquities. Boxes of ammunition, automatic weapons and what look like bomb-making materials line benches, and insurgents are chanting around something large.

It's a free-standing armoire, of late Victorian design, made of polished hardwood. As the characters watch, two armed insurgents go in, but they don't come out.

On returning to base, the characters receive new orders: to retrieve the armoire, intact. Investigations show that the armoire has a twin; a duplicate stowed in the trailer of a semi truck, which the terrorists drive near US military bases. The semi drops insurgents off, picks them up again, and drives off while the terrorists return home through the armoire, leaving behind no traces of their presence or anything to tie the driver to their activities.

Storyteller: This just became a rescue mission—to retrieve this valuable armoire intact before the insurgents can destroy it, and deploy it on SF insertion missions for Uncle Sam instead (possibly tying it all in with Harrison Arsenal and Fort Harmon, below).

For details of Relics with the "Unnatural Travel" power, check out *World of Darkness: Reliquaries*. This one costs 2 Willpower points to use for each one-way trip.

The Unit As Character

War stories aren't about the war: it's a mere backdrop of interesting times. The drama in war stories, as in all stories, centers on people, usually organized into small units: fireteams, squads, and platoons.

Even if the individual character is the focus of a war story, he is never alone: the character always has his buddies with him. When the central character faces death, the death he faces is always one of his buddies, not some soldier from another unit.

In a story, a small unit is a collection of the most important people in the character's lives. The unit reflects aspects of a single character. To set an example, in the original TV series *Star Trek* Spock arguably represents Captain Kirk's common sense, perhaps his Virtue of Prudence made manifest; whereas Dr "Bones" McCoy represents Kirk's emotional core — perhaps even Kirk's Vice incarnate.

To use a more modern example, the crew of Captain Malcolm Reynolds' ship *Serenity* from the TV series *Firefly* could arguably represent aspects of the captain's personality: Zoe could be his professionalism; Wash his wit; Kaylee his optimism; Book his conscience; and so on.

In the story, when a character speaks with members of his unit, it is a narrative device to externalize what would have been an internal, and therefore, unwritten, dialogue. Thus, when the reader sees Private Charley Bourne discussing trench life with his unit buddy, the readers are effectively being allowed to see what he is, in fact, thinking.

This section presents an optional new way of playing World of Darkness games, emphasizing the ensemble rather than the individual, and allowing for increased player involvement and dramatic potential.

Game Mechanics

This game mechanic serves the Storyteller as much as the players. In addition to generating individual characters, the players must also generate details of the unit they form together.

Step One: Unit Traits

The unit must be small; no smaller than a single squad, no larger than a platoon. It isn't important that there aren't enough players to be able to fill out an entire platoon, though: the Storyteller can generate characters to fill the vacant positions.

One character is designated the unit's core character; the personality around whom the rest of the characters fit. He's the final arbiter on what the unit does.

Prioritize either Power, Finesse or Resistance as the primary trait, based on how the unit approaches problems and obstacles.

A Power unit is straightforward in its approach to problem solving. If there's a wall, knock it down; if the enemy's in the way, knock the enemy down, browbeat it or talk it

This Looks Familiar...

Some of the mechanics are similar to those presented in **War Against The Pure**, a sourcebook for **Werewolf: the Forsaken**: players pick their unit's traits, and select a Virtue and a Vice.

Differences do exist, however; and the added mechanics reflect this. For one thing, military units don't have pack totems. Also, soldiers may attack at range as well as hand to hand, relying on the ability to stop an enemy with rapid fire before he can close to Brawl and Weaponry range.

The Morality of a unit also has an important role to play, as it determines what it is willing to do to achieve its goals. A unit with High Morality, for example, would balk at the idea of using a hidden insurgent's own children as bait to lure him out of hiding. A unit with low Morality, on the other hand, wouldn't think twice about such a stratagem.

into surrendering. A Finesse unit solves its problems with a flexible approach, preferring to outflank an enemy, get the jump on it, or convince the enemy to lay down arms.

A Resistance unit endures all obstacles, preferring to outlive the worst the enemy can throw at them, relying on the enemy to wear itself out long before the unit does.

Now prioritize either Mental, Physical or Social as the secondary trait. A Mental unit might out-think its enemy, a Physical unit may outflank it or attack with superior strength, and a Social unit could read the enemy's face, or intimidate it into submission.

These traits determine how the unit as a whole will respond to a given situation. They also determine how the unit encourages its individual soldiers to act.

A Finesse/Mental platoon, for instance, will pick individuals with high Wits who can think on their feet and are likely to be highly perceptive; whereas a Finesse/Physical platoon looks for soldiers who move with fluid grace, possibly with high Dexterity and good Stealth and Athletics Skills. A Social/Resistance unit might, for instance, have a strong sense of self, and have a reputation for resisting interrogation, and a Finesse/Social unit might be particularly adept at adopting disguises and infiltrating the enemy's strongholds.

Traits have a mechanical benefit. When a unit takes an action that aligns with one of its traits, it gains +1 to the dice pool. If the action follows both traits, the unit gains +2 to the dice pool.

Step Two: Virtue and Vice

The group now determines its nature, represented by a group Virtue and Vice. These color the way other units see the characters' unit, and so like the traits above, the players must pick the Virtue and Vice of the unit by consensus and vote as above. What matters is that the group thinks and acts according to its Virtue and Vice when its guard is down and it thinks nobody's watching. If the majority of characters in a unit have Justice and Wrath as their Virtue and Vice, it makes sense for the unit to have the same makeup.

When a soldier follows the unit's Virtue rather than his own for a full chapter, he receives the validation and praise of his unit for his nobility and sacrifice. This praise allows the character to regain three Willpower points. If the soldier's Virtue is the same as his unit's, he regains all spent Willpower and a +3 bonus on his next dice pool, as if he'd spent 1 Willpower, as he basks in the high of a job well done.

If a soldier falls to the team's Vice, his team buddies commiserate with him and reassure him that everyone has weaknesses, and everybody's human. The character gains 1 Willpower point; 2 Willpower points if his Vice is the same as the unit's Vice.

These points are gained immediately, as the group's stance on its Virtue and Vice are intrinsic to it and acting on either is seen by the group as an act that bonds them together.

For Storytellers

Your players must determine the unit's traits. This is, after all, their collective character, and how it functions will be an expression of *their* gestalt psyche. When members of the unit change, the players will also change the unit's priorities in time. The best mechanism for this is to allow the players to vote on the traits they want for their unit, each time the lineup changes.

This only applies to units the characters form. If characters join an established unit, there is resistance to change until the characters eventually make the unit their own. Characters joining Squad 3 of the 1st Platoon of Zulu Company, a unit renowned for diplomacy (Finesse/Social), will find it hard to do things their way for a time; the traits will remain Finesse/Social until they make Squad 3 their own.

Supernaturals and Morality

If a unit comprises all of one kind of supernatural, its Morality trait will be whatever the individual Morality traits are: Humanity for vampires and Prometheans, Wisdom for mages, Harmony for werewolves and Clarity for changelings. If the unit is a mixture of supernaturals and humans, the Morality trait dominates the unit, instead.

As for traits above, the Virtue and Vice may change as team members enter and leave or die. Players may vote each time the lineup changes, or only when a sufficiently powerful event shakes up the unit, threatening its identity.

Step Three: Mission

This is the team's long term goal; the reason it has to keep going. The goal could be something like "just get through this war and get home to our families" or something more focused, such as an MP unit's vow to "catch deserters and bring them in to face justice".

This mission must be drafted out by the players. If they can't think of one, the Storyteller is free to remind them of their force's core values, and impose them as a default mission. As before, the goals and values of the team may change, depending on when the players believe it appropriate to do so.

When a soldier performs an action that affirms this mission, any Willpower he spends gains *four* bonus dice rather than three, as he feels the encouragement of the pack exhorting him to get it right. In resisting an attempt to deviate from that mission, spending one Willpower gains *three* dice, not two, to a Resistance Attribute dice pool as he struggles to stay on target.

Step Four: Morality

The Morality trait of the unit also colors how other units see the players' team, but in a different way. Morality, for the group, represents how far they are willing to go to accomplish a given goal, and also what they're prepared to do to further their mission. The Morality of the unit leader becomes the Morality of the unit.

The Morality scale shows what the group, as a whole, *won't* do to fulfill its goals. A Morality 7 group won't steal from its own, for instance, or set fire to a house to flush out an insurgent. A Morality 3 group wouldn't think twice about blowing up a bridge full of early morning commuters just to ensure an enemy target's death.

A soldier who commits an act that is beneath the unit's Morality score, e.g. setting an enemy's home alight to flush him out, isolates him from his buddies in the unit, and prevents him from gaining any of the above bonuses the unit acquires.

The soldier must reunite himself with his unit through an act of confession, possibly an act of penance of some sort ("Consider yourself on report, soldier!") in order to regain the unit's trust. Some acts are unforgivable, for example leaving a man behind to save one's own skin, or incompetence resulting in a buddy's death.

Assuming the action is forgivable, the character pays the agreed-upon penance and may rejoin the unit, gaining its full benefits. They may no longer trust him completely, but they accept him again.

Character Options

Here are some more options for military characters.

Skills and Specialties

A soldier's Skills don't just start and end with Brawl, Firearms and Weaponry.

Armed forces personnel study and train as much as they fight; when not deployed somewhere, a soldier is likely to be spending time training in any one of a number of schools, transferred from base to base during the course of his career.

Storytellers should play upon this angle; disaffected Army brat children, wives fretting that their husbands are spending too much time in training and not enough time with the children, and so on.

In game terms, the military strives to generate as broad a range of Skills as possible, not only to serve the character during his time of service to Uncle Sam, but also in civilian life.

Even a single dot in a Skill is better than an untrained penalty, particularly with Mental Skills such as Crafts, Investigation and Politics. Occult is probably the least likely Skill to appear, assuming a fairly standard military background and not something more unusual like Zero Company.

Essential Specialties

Some military equipment, such as field artillery, helicopters and C-17s, can't be used at all without training. Aviation requires 18-30 weeks at flight school, and artillery requires artillery training.

Some Specialties, such as Commercial Airliner, Neurosurgery, Artillery and Fighter Jet, are essential Specialties, and represent the intensive training given to characters, allowing and authorizing them to operate the machinery. Without that training, a character attempting to fire an artillery barrage or perform brain surgery, regardless of Firearms or Medicine, is considered untrained and suffers the untrained penalty accordingly.

Essential Specialties include: EOD (Crafts, Science); Neurosurgery, Oncology and Cardiac Surgery (Medicine); Parachuting (Athletics); Commercial Aviation, Military Aviation, Armor and Submarine Operation (Drive); and Artillery and Heavy Weapons (Firearms).

Merits Listed Elsewhere

Some Merits from previous sourcebooks are worth noting here. **World of Darkness: Armory** has the EOD (p. 208, actually a •• Merit), Fighting Style: Combat Marksmanship (p. 210), Fighting Style: Sniping (p. 212) and Fighting Style: Spetsnaz Knife Fighting (p. 213) Merits. **World of Darkness: Asylum** lists A Little Knowledge (p. 50), Emotional Detachment (p. 50) and Tolerance for Biology (p. 51). **World of Darkness: Reliquaries** lists: Multi-Lingual (p. 85) and Well-Traveled (p. 85), as well as A Little Knowledge (p. 84) if you missed it in **World of Darkness: Asylum.**

Players may further be interested in supernatural options and Merits presented in **Second Sight, Reliquary** and **Skinchangers.**

Military training also offers soldiers ordinary Specialties in the following: Diving (Athletics); Escape and Evasion (Stealth); Fieldcraft (Survival); K-9 Unit Handling (Animal Ken); and Leadership (Persuasion). These are available to civilian characters, particularly in law enforcement and private security.

Other World of Darkness Books

Several World of Darkness books might prove particularly useful for building characters with a specific military focus. **World of Darkness: Armory** and **Tales from the 13th Precinct** are highly recommended. **Armory** provides a roster of heavy equipment and machinery but, more importantly, useful Merits.

The sourcebook **War Against The Pure for Werewolf: the Forsaken** is useful because of its emphasis on warfare; it is the inspiration for the section "The Unit As Character" above.

New Merits

The following new Merits are available to any character. They are not the exclusive province of the military; characters can learn the Small Unit Tactics and Modern Army Combatives Merits from an ex-military instructor, and law enforcement authorities include the Trained Observer Merit in police training.

Mental Merit: Trained Observer (• or •••)

Prerequisites: Wits ••• or Composure •••

Effect: A Trained Observer can spot the smallest anomaly. No detail escapes his notice. With the one-dot version, the TO ignores penalties of up to -3 on Perception rolls. The three dot version gives Perception rolls the Rote Action quality (see "Rote Actions", the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 134).

Physical Merit: Athletics Dodge (•)

Prerequisites: Dexterity •• and Athletics •

Effect: Whenever your character performs a dodge (see "Dodge", the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, page 156) you can add his Athletics Skill dots to his Defense instead of doubling his Defense. He essentially draws on his knowledge of how his body moves to parry and evade attacks rather than rely on his raw ability alone.

Athletics Dodge applies against incoming Brawl- and Weaponry-based attacks, against thrown-weapon attacks, and against firearms attacks made within close-combat range. Your character can move up to his Speed and perform an Athletics Dodge maneuver in a turn.

A character can possess this Merit and also the Brawling Dodge and Weaponry Dodge Merits, but only one can be used per turn.

Physical Merit: Fighting Style: MAC (• to •••••)

Prerequisites: Strength ••, Dexterity ••, Stamina •• and Brawl ••.

Effect: The character is trained in Modern Army Combatives, the modern military style of hand-to-hand combat that blends a number of fighting styles such as Muay Thai to provide a soldier with an all-round means of unarmed self-defense and defense with short weapons (Brawl and Weaponry Skills).

Each dot of this Fighting Style is the prerequisite for the next higher dot; one cannot purchase "Atemi Attack" until one has purchased "Tactician's Sense", for example.

• **Tactician's Sense**: The character gauges the body language of combatants in his proximity. In game terms, he can make a Reflexive Wits + Composure perception roll and gauge the Initiative modes of all combatants before a fight starts.

•• **Atemi Attack:** The human body has a variety of pressure points, any of which can cause an opponent great pain. The trained fighter knows where to strike for maximum effect. When striking with a Brawl or Weaponry attack, the character may ignore up to 1 point of the enemy's Armor protection per dot in this Fighting Style.

••• **Forearm Choke:** The character applies pressure to an enemy's carotid artery in an attempt to knock him out. The character must successfully achieve a Grapple attack (see "Grapple", the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 157). The character may apply the choke hold from the following turn. The hostile may attempt to free himself on his next action with Strength + Brawl, his dice pool penalized by the character's Strength + 1.

This maneuver is designed to render the foe unconscious. The foe may resist each turn at a cumulative –1 dice pool penalty. When your character has sustained the choke hold for a number of turns equal to the hostile's Stamina, the hostile is rendered unconscious, and sustains a single

point of bashing damage. The Forearm Choke is useless against creatures that do not need to breathe.

•••• **Bullring:** The character is trained in fighting off multiple opponents simultaneously. His Defense is applied in full to each and every simultaneous hand-to-hand attack in a single turn.

••••• **Lethal Strike:** The soldier's hands become deadly weapons when the character spends a Willpower point. A successful Brawl strike delivered in a turn in which he spends Willpower delivers lethal, rather than bashing, damage.

Drawback: Because the lethal attack takes place in that turn, the character cannot spend Willpower to boost his attack dice pool.

Social Merit: Decorated (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has received an award for meritorious conduct of some sort. Characters gain a bonus on all Social rolls relating to one's Allies, Contacts or Status in the military, regardless of whether the character is currently serving or not.

The three-dot, four-dot and five-dot Merits indicate an exceptional award: the Silver Star for the three-dot Merit; the Distinguished Service Medal or Distinguished Service Cross for the four-dot Merit; and the Medal of Honor for the five-dot Merit.

Those who have earned the Medal of Honor are entitled to a salute regardless of rank or whether they are now civilians.

Servicemen and servicewomen who have received lethal injuries as a result of combat during a military action are automatically awarded the Purple Heart, a two-dot Merit.

Drawback: This Merit rides on the world's perception of the character's honor and Morality. The character must be seen to retain honor and dignity in his actions. Should the character commit sins rated 5 or lower on the Morality chart, and should those sins become public knowledge, the Merit may be revoked, earning him the Notoriety Flaw (see "Character Flaws", the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 217).

Social Merit: Small Unit Tactics (•••)

Prerequisites: Manipulation ••• and Persuasion ••• with a Leadership Specialty

Effect: The character is familiar with the tactical application of force by a small unit: no unit larger than a platoon. The character must be in charge of the unit in question for it to benefit from his tactical leadership.

When conducting a tactical maneuver such as a flanking attack, covering fire or when in a CQB (Close Quarters battle) or FIBUA (Fighting In Built Up Areas, aka Urban Warfare) situation, in any turn, the leader may spend 1 Willpower and roll Manipulation + Persuasion reflexively to issue a command to his unit. The Willpower bonus of +3, or +2 to a defensive dice pool, applies to all the men in the unit in that turn, including the leader. Any individual member may also stack

New Social Flaw: Dishonorably Discharged

Effect: This Social Flaw indicates that your character has performed far from honorably while serving. A former serviceman, his conduct has left much to be desired and he has received a dishonorable discharge from the service.

The character retains his training, but may not purchase Allies, Contacts or Status in the military, and effectively gains the effects of the Notoriety Flaw among the ex-service community.

Dishonorable Conduct and Courts Martial

The unfortunate flip side of meritorious conduct in the armed services is, of course, dishonorable conduct. This is something the military is reluctant to discuss in front of the media these days.

Shoddy equipment and uniform maintenance, disobedience, insubordination and desertion are a problem in the most well-disciplined force; and the military police always round up deserters, eventually. A counseling statement is issued if "corrective training" does not work first, then after several counseling statements are issued, an Article 15 is issued. Those caught are given a choice: take an Article 15, administrative punishment, or claim the right to a Court Martial. The one exception to this rule is for a suspect on a Naval vessel under sail: the suspect has no right to call for a Court Martial.

There are three kinds of Court Martial: Summary, Special and General, with punishments ranging from simple restriction or confinement, to reduction in rank (enlisted) to discharge, honorable or dishonorable (enlisted) or dismissal (officer) through to the death penalty, in the case of general courts martial.

their own Willpower expenditure and bonus on top of the leadership bonus conferred by the leader.

Drawback: The Willpower bonus only applies in a situation in which the leader and his men are already well trained, using tactics familiar to all men in the unit. In game terms, all members of the team, including the leader, must have gained 1 experience point at some prior stage whilst under the guidance of the leader. If a situation arises for which there is no SOP (Standard Operating Procedure), the leadership bonus does not apply unless it is applied to a defensive dice pool.

Worried Spouse

Background: The Worried Spouse knows the score. At any time, she is likely to receive a house call from two clean-cut officers with grim faces bearing the worst news in the world. Until that time, she has to get on with her life. She's been helpful to the community, though. Perhaps some of her officer husband's leadership has rubbed off on her, because she has organized the base's spouses into a support group to help them all when their partners are away.

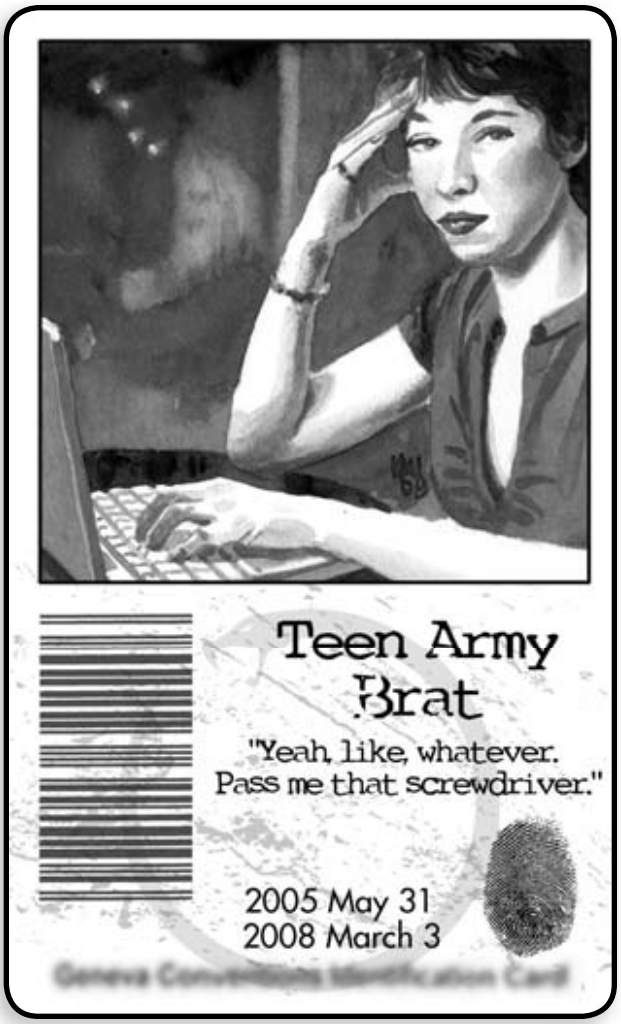
Dice Pools

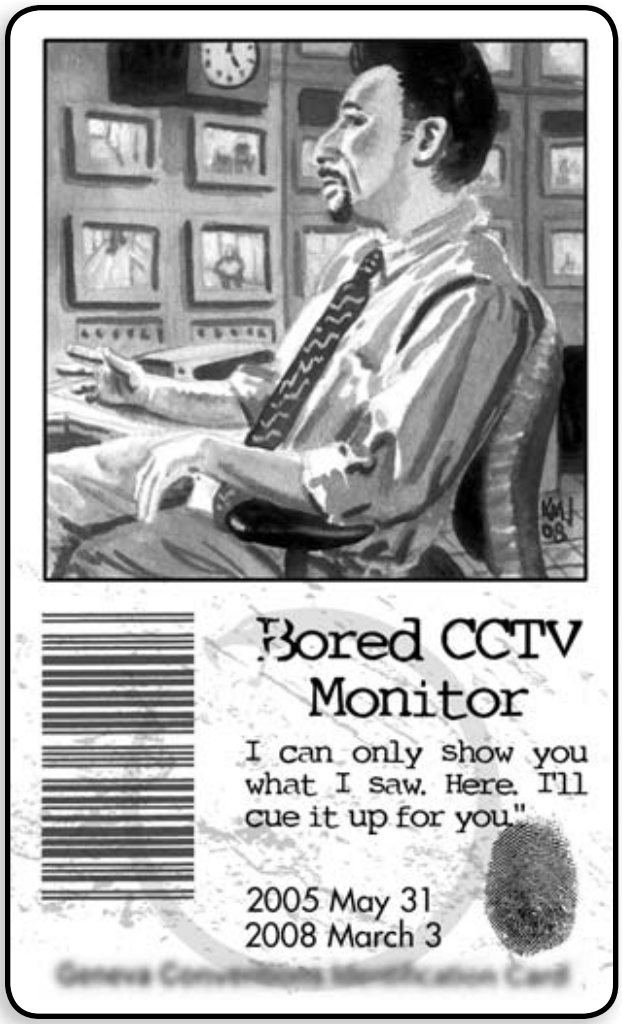
Leadership (5 dice): The Worried Spouse can persuade a group of spouses to work together.

Counseling (8 dice): The Worried Spouse is a good listener, and she readily listens to everyone's concerns and worries whilst keeping her own woes bottled up.

Teen Army Brat

Background: The Teen Army Brat is seen in virtually every part of the world. She's gone from posting to posting with her parents, and never stayed around long enough to





make any real friends before her folks from the Corps of Engineers had to be transferred somewhere else.

About the only real friends she's ever had in the world are machines and computers, and she knows them inside and out.

Dice Pools

Repair (8 dice): Having seen her Mom working on equipment and vehicles, the Teen Army Brat can fix almost anything mechanical.

Hacking (8 dice): The Teen Army Brat is just as good at getting into computer systems as she is good at taking them apart and fixing them.

Bored CCTV Monitor

Background: The CCTV Monitor's job is just to watch a whole lot of empty rooms and corridors. Anyone comes in who isn't supposed to be there, and he picks up the phone. That's his entire job. He has a nice sideline in female down-the-top close-up shots, though, and he's always been a bit of a voyeur so he's in his element.

Dice Pools

Computer (6 dice): Seeing the world through CCTV isn't enough for this man. He likes to hack pay webcam sites to catch candid shots of the stars when they think nobody's watching.

Combatants

The Sergeant below can be used interchangeably with the Police Officer and SWAT Officer characters from the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Sergeant

Background: A long time ago, his mother used to say that little Tommy McCririck had the loudest voice in the street. When he signed up, his mother was so proud. Now First Sergeant McCririck has the loudest voice on base, and he's never been afraid to use it.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Politics 3
Physical Skills: Brawl 3, Drive 3, Firearms 3
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize 4, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Trained Observer, Small Unit Tactics, MAC 3, Decorated 2
Willpower: 7
Morality: 7
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Pride
Size: 5
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 12
Health: 8
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Shots	Dice Pool
Pistol	2 (L)	20/40/80	17+1	6
Large SMG	3 (L)	50/100/200	30+1	6

Sample Unit: Bad Company

Quote: "Geneva Convention? You're on the wrong damn battlefield, son."

Background: They were soldiers once ... and young. The first six months in Afghanistan were a breeze. But then the enemy got their act together, and the attacks got organized. Kane's platoon fought hard; but one night, after having lost two men to IEDs, Kane suddenly realized his side could well be losing this war.

And the reason was that the other side didn't give a damn about proper conduct in warfare. They weren't playing by the rules.

That morning, Kane tore up the rulebook. He's not looked back since.

Bad Company is notorious, not least through the rumors of the exploits of its leader, Colonel Kane. It's said that he was captured by a Taliban sorcerer, and his heart removed from his body. Colonel Kane now carries around with him a small locked metal box. He's shot soldiers for even looking at it.

Unit Traits: Resistance/Mental. The soldiers of Bad Company are struggling to retain their sanity in the face of the horrors of a war that's looking less and less like "just war" every day.

Unit Virtue and Vice: Justice and Wrath. Colonel Kane is looking for the Taliban sorcerer who cut his heart out, so he can ram the barrel of an M16A2 down the bastard's throat and pull the trigger on full auto. He might never get his heart back where it belongs, but he can at least make sure the monster pays for what he did.

Unit Mission: Bad Company is on a teaching mission. They aim to teach the Taliban that those who fight dirty against Coalition Forces personnel will suffer greatly.

Unit Morality: 4. Very little these days will shock Bad Company; not least, the things they have to do to put down the enemy. Deep down, each and every soldier in Bad Company knows that he will not be going home, except in chains or in a box.

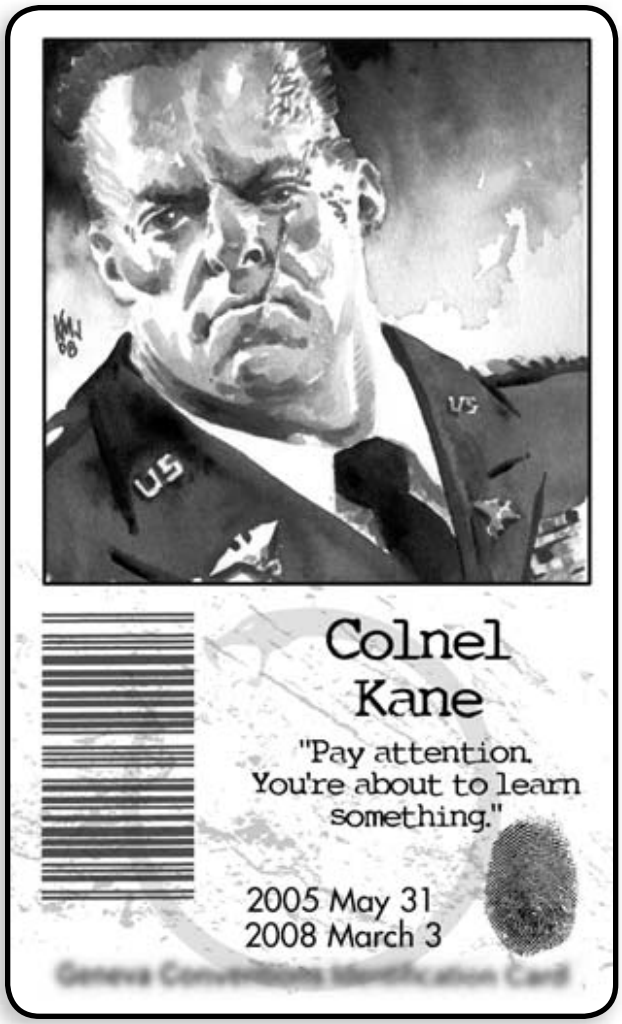
Colonel Kane

Background: As described above. Colonel Kane is a hulking brute, his face and body a roadmap of scars. He never lets anyone see his bare chest. Those who have seen it swear that there's just a gaping hole where his heart should be.

Storytelling Hints: Colonel Kane is driven by vengeance. He doesn't have derangements, because he's one big walking derangement.

Weakness: The curse that removed his heart makes it very hard for Colonel Kane to regain his compassion. He *must* spend experience points to regain lost Morality if he suffers a degeneration roll. He cannot regain Morality through acts of contrition alone. Colonel Kane is aware that redemption is possible. He chooses not to exercise the option, however, because his inhumanity, the things he has had to do, is sometimes the only thing that has ensured the survival of his men.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5
Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Crafts 3, Investigation 3, Medicine 2
Physical Skills: Brawl 5, Drive 3, Firearms 5, Survival 4, Weaponry 5
Social Skills: Intimidation 4, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 3



Merits: Trained Observer, Giant, Strong Back, Iron Stomach, Small Unit Tactics, MAC 5
Willpower: 8
Morality: 4
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Wrath
Size: 6
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 13
Health: 10
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Shots	Dice Pool
Pistol	2 (L)	20/40/80	17+1	8
Large SMG	3 (L)	50/100/200	30+1	8

Private Military Consultants

Lured by the promise of easy money, ex-soldiers and civilian wannabe soldiers are lured back into fatigues and brought back into the dusty streets of towns they once wished they'd never see again.

What are PMCs?

Private Military Consultants, or PMCs, are private militias set up as independent businesses to perform security tasks for profit, in areas overlooked by the mainstream armed services.

Corporate military consultant firms now provide military assistance for profit around the world, providing training to entire foreign armies and security to wealthy individuals. With apparent initial encouragement by the executive branch of the Government, the phenomenon of PMCs has developed slowly, without traditional congressional oversight or public knowledge.

The net effect of the rise of PMCs is that war is becoming a commercial, rather than a governmental, venture.

(Note that there's a difference between PMCs and PMCS: Personal Maintenance Counseling Statement; as usual, there's plenty of alternate alphabet soup in the military.)

About thirty-five PMCs have been set up in the US. The big guns include MPRI (Military Professional Resources Inc.), Kellogg Brown Root (Halliburton), Dyncorp, BDM International, Armor Holdings and International Charter Inc. Between them, PMCs have trained armies in forty-two countries. Dyncorp protects the entire Afghan government as well as training its nascent army.

Although virtually all of the "hands on" work is done by former soldiers, the key to their success is that they are owned by former high-ranking officers with close ties to the administrations of former Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H Bush, and George W Bush and, of course, the

Show Me The Money

How do characters join PMCs, then? The same way they join the regular armed forces: they go to a recruiter and sign up.

PMCs recruit in a number of places: on the Internet; through word of mouth (here's where characters' Contacts Merits and Streetwise Skill come into play); in trade magazines; and, most of all, at arms fairs.

Recruitment into a PMC only requires that your character has no current outstanding warrants for arrest, and that he served at least two tours of active duty somewhere. If your character served in Special Forces or served in a particular country, one in which they have an interest, he gains +2 on a Manipulation + Persuasion roll.

DoD. It's a kind of "revolving door" operation; out of the military, into business, and back again.

And these are big companies. Dyncorp employs 23,000 people. All can call on thousands of former members of the military should the need arise. The cost is difficult to ascertain but in 1990 it was $55.6 billion, a figure that it is estimated to rise to $202 billion by 2010. A reasonable guess puts current costs in excess of $100 billion a year.

Functions

A PMC is hired by some agency, typically a faction of a foreign nation but sometimes a wealthy individual. The PMC can offer security services, bodyguarding private facilities and homes; or it can offer military training to indigenous troops.

Security: PMCs hire out private bodyguards to VIPs. Sometimes the US Government supplies the PMC with a contract to guard one of its more valuable local supporters, thus taking the burden of protecting those assets off its hands.

Training and Recruitment: PMCs also train indigenous forces, helping them to develop their tactics and strategies, handle and maintain weapons and vehicles. They also recruit civilians into local militias and run rural recruitment drives.

Base Construction

Camp Bondsteel in the Balkans was built by Kellogg Brown Root (KBR) at a cost of $36.6 million and costs $180 million a year to run. It's also the largest and most expensive base built by the US since the Vietnam War. KBR also built and runs bases in Kuwait, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

PMCs service over 700 US military bases around the world. The total cost of Camp Doha in Kuwait for example, now managed by ITT, is over half a billion dollars.

The Other Players

With the sudden rise in public awareness of the existence of PMCs, a new player has entered the field. Corporate concerns and other private commercial enterprises, with far more money to burn than governments, are now turning to PMCs for security to protect their foreign holdings, such as the forces of Sandline International and Executive Outcomes protecting the interests of the Shell Oil Company in Sierra Leone, Africa.

In the World of Darkness, sufficiently wealthy supernatural individuals, with Resources 5 and fingers in every pie, can easily afford to keep PMCs to guard their interests. Some wealthy monsters might even be able to *run* such concerns.

Sample PMC: Blackfire

Blackfire is relatively small for a PMC: about 10,000 men, with top-of-the-range military equipment and an efficient communications network, the best that money can buy.

Fast and Loose

PMCs play fast and loose with the law. As hired civilians, mercenaries are not considered to be military combatants in any open war between nations, and are therefore beyond the reach of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Theoretically, that means PMCs should be treated as civilians and tried as such in civilian court if caught by hostile foreign forces, rather than as enemy combatants. In practice, if caught in a given nation, the PMCs' lawyers fight for the right of their clients to be tried in whichever court offers the softest penalties.

Until recently, an Iraqi law enacted in 2004 rendered members of PMCs immune from prosecution for crimes they committed on Iraqi soil. This came under scrutiny in 2007 as a result of the Blackwater Incident.

Blackfire recruits from among the fittest ex-military personnel from three nations; the United States, Great Britain and France.

The three men behind Blackfire came up with the idea in 1998, when they found themselves fighting together in a nameless mountain village in Kosovo as part of a joint UN Peacekeeping Force mission to that troubled hotspot.

The three men are: former Brigadier General of the US Third Army John Michaels; former Général de Corps D'Armée Henri Bey; and former Lt Gen, Sir Charles Grey of the Queen's Own Regiment. They form the Triumvirate, the three-man committee that determines the corporation's policies and deployments around the world.

Kosovo, 1998

Their mission to a now extinct Kosovan village was meant to be easy. They were to send in their forces, ascertain why contact had been lost with the villagers, and pull out to report to HQ.

They found an atrocity beyond belief. Bodies lay everywhere, all exsanguinated. Men, woman, children, the old, the young, had been drained dry and their bodies lay about all over; on the street, in ditches on the side of the road, hanging out of smashed windows.

The church held the largest concentration of dead villagers. It looked as though they'd attempted to barricade themselves inside, but the barricades had been as effective as toilet paper. Curiously, the remnants of wood strewn about the exterior of the church had what looked like claw marks gouged deep into them.

That night, as the sun set quickly in the mountains, the owners of those claws came out to play. They faced a well-trained militia armed with flamethrowers. Despite casualties taken by the men, they managed to beat the night stalkers back. Then they burned their men where they lay, just in case, and did the same to the villagers.

From that point on, the idea of Blackfire was born.

The Remit

Blackfire is fully aware of the existence of the supernatural. It exists to combat those elements that threaten Uncle Sam's interests, and where possible to acquire supernatural resources with which to further that mission.

Seeing an opportunity to corner the market in a military policy blind spot, Blackfire uses its political lobbyists, contacts, and Allies in Washington and the Pentagon to secure money for them to perform a function they know is vital to the security of the nation.

Joining Blackfire

As a character option, Blackfire employees can purchase the Unseen Sense and A Little Knowledge Merits upon joining, and Occult Skill among the first set of new Skills they can purchase. The Well-Traveled and Multi-Lingual Merits from *World of Darkness: Reliquaries* are extremely valuable assets for Blackfire, as are high levels of Willpower, Persuasion and Empathy.

At minimum, characters must have the Attribute and Skills spreads of the lower NCO pay scales for Corporals and Sergeants. Their Resources Merit is also increased, by up to +3 depending on length of service, the first +1 of which happens when they join.

Current Deployments

Blackfire currently has over 15,000 men, vehicles and equipment, and its deployments include hotspots in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Belize and, of course, Iraq, where they provide vital engineering efforts in building bases and fortifications, as well as providing private security for important Iraqi government officials.

In Sierra Leone, Blackfire trains small villages in defense against attacks from Naglopers and other vampiric creatures of the night. In other parts of the world, Blackfire gathers intelligence on local supernatural activities—not only vampires, but reports of werewolves, witches, and even weirder creatures.

Blackfire is aware of the supernatural, but will not knowingly employ them. Blackfire is a strictly humans-only club, and they employ enough soldiers with Unseen Sense to sniff out what Blackfire calls the "Pretenders" in their midst.

Soldiers of Fortune

The following are a small selection of scenarios for characters who join PMCs.

Recruitment and Training

The characters' mission has got to be the sweetest they ever had; five hundred grand to spend a week out in some African tribal village recruiting and training locals.

On the day they get there, it's a real downpour with lightning and thunder. In fact, the natives say, the Thunder Gods are angry.

The characters' mission is deceptively simple. They must go to a local mountain and pay respects to the local gods there. On the way, they must contend with regions of the forest where none of their equipment functions any more, and people fear the disease-bearing bugs far more than they fear the big cats.

And when they *do* get there, there's the simple matter of having to take care of a little gun-running operation that's been set up right on top of the gods' shrine. Quickly, your characters realize they haven't got the manpower to take on these gun-runners. They need someone who knows the area like the back of their hand and are willing to fight to protect their homes and way of life. They need the locals.

Private Security

The characters' unit is bodyguarding a local potentate's cavalcade. It's an important ceremonial mission, and one lucky character gets to wear a formal dress uniform of some sort and sit inside the car with the potentate's daughter while the rest run alongside the potentate's car in fatigues.

Only thing is, there are three complications.

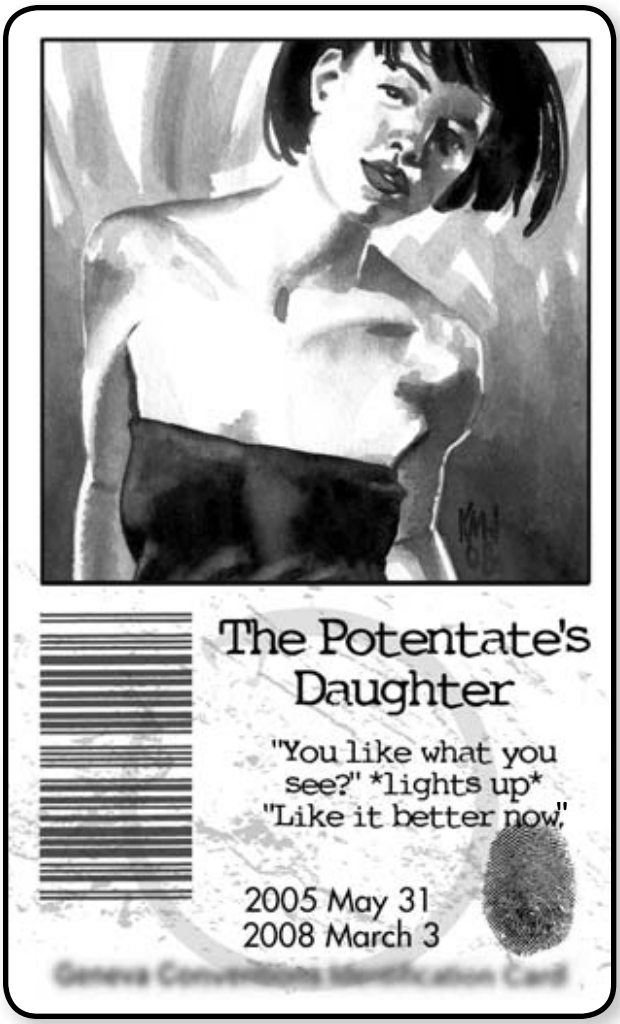
In the limousine, the girl tells the character that she is a witch, and that she has the "hots" for the bodyguard.

The second complication is the cigarettes she is smoking. The character doesn't recognize the brand name, Gulikan, but they are Turkish; and the heavily scented smoke is acting like a superpowered aphrodisiac on the character. Apply a penalty of –1 to *all* dice rolls based on Composure in the girl's presence, increasing by a cumulative –1 per added hour, the effect fading only slowly, over 24 hours providing there is no further exposure to the smoke.

And third, just as things are getting interesting, the local insurgents make things even more difficult by ambushing the cavalcade with mortars and sprays of AK-47 fire.

The Potentate's Daughter

Background: She's never really wanted for anything. Money, clothes, drugs, lovers – she's had it all, and her rich daddy's always been able to buy off the men and women she gets tired of. In a way, studying the supernatural is the one thing in her life that she feels she really has to work at. Plus, it gives her a power that her daddy can't give her, because it isn't his to give. It's hers.



Description: The Potentate's daughter is a hot young woman, with a slight build, short brunette hair and dusky skin. She chooses to wear loose clothing which emphasizes her curves, and always wears a small brown leather pouch around her neck, which she calls a "lucky amulet".

Dice Pools

Occult (8 dice): Savvy and mystically minded, she knows many secrets that she shouldn't know.

Seduction (8 dice): With those scented Turkish cigarettes to help sway her paramours' emotions, she could seduce a cloister full of devout celibate monks.

The Mountain

The unit, comprising the best fighters Blackfire can hire, is given a new assignment. They are to immediately report to Blackfire's headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. When they arrive, they are ushered into an office where Sir Charles Grayson, one of the Triumvirate, greets them and bids them sit down.

Their new assignment is to proceed into a region of Somalia torn apart by intense fighting, and to secure a black basalt mountain in that region. Sir Charles explains that the mountain, geologically, should not be there. And yet it is, and according to intelligence reports from the region, diamonds are being mined from its heart. The diamonds are being used by Blackfire's enemies to buy weapons to be used against them and the regular Coalition forces.

The characters' mission is to secure the mountain and the mine, and to hold it until Sir Charles arrives with a contingent of Blackfire troops to seal off the mine for good, stalling any further trade in blood diamonds.

Characters are allowed to put in a request for whatever weapons, equipment and vehicles they want, barring nuclear weapons and WMDs. Money and Resources dots are no object.

Hot Zone

Somalia is ruled by gun law, with warlords fighting one another over resources and for power while civilians huddle in refugee camps. The characters' arrival brings massive crowds—foreigners of any sort are rarely seen.

Basalt Mountain

The mountain lies 35 miles outside of Mogadishu. Sir Charles is correct when he says the mountain is a geological anomaly. It does not belong to this Earth, but is rather something from some forsaken ancient corner of the Shadow, brought to Earth away from interfering spirits. Whatever language the locals speak, the adjective they use to describe the nameless, hideous black lump of rock is the same: *cursed*.

Securing this mountain is ridiculously easy. There's nobody there to dispute the claim. Nobody at all. If this doesn't give the characters pause, the Storyteller may remind any character with the Common Sense Merit that locations labeled as "cursed" are named so for a reason. The characters may even need a gentle nudge from the Storyteller to question Sir Charles' motives for sending a heavily armed contingent to defend a cursed mountain from *no one*.

The Seal

The characters may investigate the site. A detailed search, requiring an extended Intelligence + Investigation roll with a target number of 20 successes and each roll representing an hour's driving around the mountain, reveals a further anomaly: a sheer vertical cliff face set in the side of the mountain, smooth and glassy as if someone had cut off a 350 foot high slice off the side of the mountain.

The characters uncover evidence of geological activity in the past couple of years. Research (requiring Intelligence + Science and Internet access through an uplink) reveals that a major earthquake struck this region early in 2003. An Exceptional Success on this roll reveals that Sir Charles visited Somalia as a guest of one of its warlords at that time. Further investigation of the base of the cliff reveals a hairline crack in the rock.

Questioning Locals

There are no refugee camps near this mountain. However, the characters do have a few days to themselves. Some of them might take it upon themselves to drive out to the nearest refugee camps and ask people about the mountain. Sir Charles won't be able to arrive for one week. The characters have a maximum of six days to question the refugees about the mountain.

Storytellers can intersperse scenes in the refugee camps, helping people and questioning them, with scenes where they have to fight off Somalian troops driving Technicals (pickup trucks with .50 caliber machine guns mounted on the back).

The questioning process requires an extended Presence + Persuasion roll against a target number of 20. Each roll represents half a day's questioning.

Success unveils legends about how the mountain bears the curse because it's a cage for demons, and it protects itself lest the demons be freed. Success also reveals a Muslim prayer to ward off evils that occasionally seep out from beneath that vile place to infect the world.

Sir Charles Arrives

After a week, Sir Charles arrives at the camp at the head of another contingent of Blackfire troops whom the character will recognize as being demolitions experts. His first act on arrival is to dismiss the characters' unit. However heavily armed they are, the replacement unit outnumbers them three to one.

Sir Charles begins laying charges at the base of the mountain, right on top of the hairline crack. The characters should have worked out by now that this is not good.

The characters must now stop Sir Charles, at any cost. His men will fight, and so will he, using his supernatural Wrack power if necessary, his eyes flaring a poisonous green each time he uses it. If the characters fail, the cliff is blasted apart. A torrent of green light fills the region as a flood of entities takes to the sky, scattering everywhere. That night, the first screams shatter the silence across the face of Somalia and beyond. The Storyteller is free to impose derangements on characters, such as Phobias and Depression, if they fail.

The characters can defeat Sir Charles by reciting the Muslim prayer they learned. Treat it as an exorcism (the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 214). Successes rolled inflict lethal wounds on Sir Charles. If the entity is exorcised, Sir Charles will collapse lifeless to the floor and decay to nothing within an hour.

Sealing the cave requires that the characters carve that prayer (Dexterity + Crafts, characters must have the Language (Arabic) Merit) on the rock face chanting the prayer the whole time. Success seals off the cave for one human generation.

Brigadier-General Sir Charles Grayson

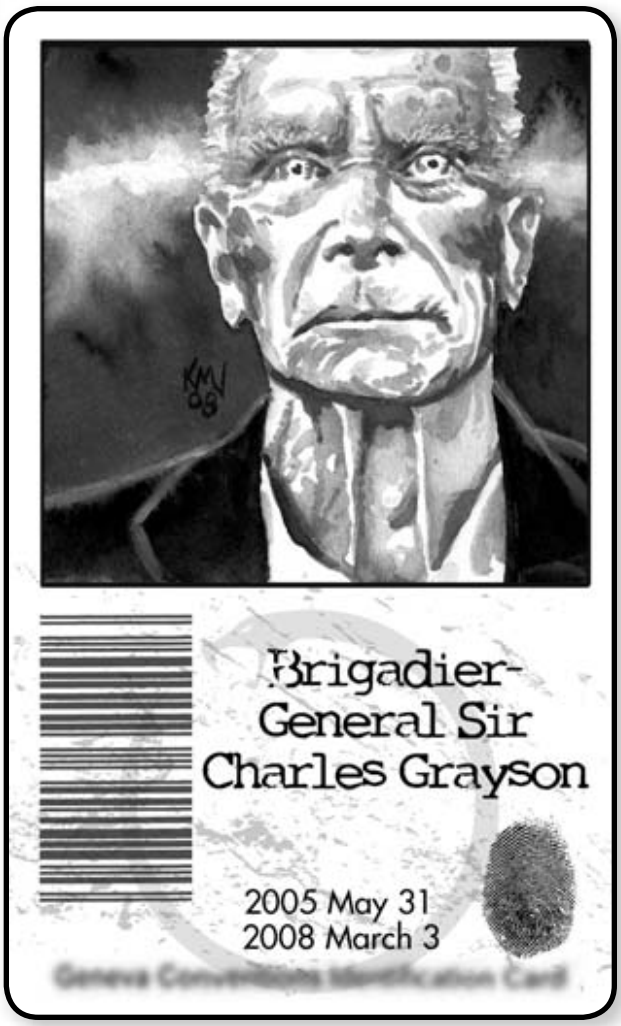
Background: Brigadier-General Sir Charles Grayson is one of the three founding members of Blackfire, Inc. Sir Charles served twenty years in the British Army with distinction, including a tour of duty in the SAS. He was knighted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in the 2002 New Years' Honours and has several awards for outstanding valor. A voter for the UKIP political party, he is a fellow in good standing of a number of exclusive gentlemen's clubs in London.

In the summer of 2003, Sir Charles was roused from sleep by a bizarre sight: a ball of green light, hovering over his bed. Unable to move or alert his wife, he watched helplessly as the pulsing ball of green light entered his chest. The agony that followed was mercifully brief, for Sir Charles died that night.

What opened his body's eyes in the morning was no longer Sir Charles Grayson.

Description: Sir Charles is an imposing, ramrod-stiff British upper class gentleman, his military cut hair now silver. He is clean shaven, and always dresses immaculately.

The Entity possessing Sir Charles has full access to his host's memories and knowledge. In all essential respects, this being is Sir Charles Grayson.



However since 2003, he has become obsessed with obtaining information about one thing: a basalt mountain, situated in an African state that is falling apart with civil war. Sir Charles has committed a large contingent of Blackfire's forces to that region, to the dismay of his colleagues in the Triumvirate.

Storyteller Hints: Sir Charles, or whatever is now using Sir Charles' body, is looking for this black basalt mountain. He will commit all of Blackfire's resources, if necessary, to securing it. The characters discover that the mountain is a prison, housing hundreds of entities like the one possessing Sir Charles, in a deep subterranean cave that was sealed off from the outside world centuries ago.

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Strength 7, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Skills: Academics 3, Crafts 2, Investigation 2, Occult 3, Politics 3, Science 1, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Drive 2, Firearms 3, Larceny 2, Stealth 4, Survival 3, Weaponry 3, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Fighting Style: Boxing 4, Fighting Style: MAC 4, Iron Stamina, Decorated 4, Resources 5, Retainer 3, Status (Politics, Services, Royalty) 3

Willpower: 7

Essence: 15

Morality: None, though he publicly acts as if he had Morality 7

Virtue: None

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Speed: 15

Health: 10

Note: Sir Charles will use Blackfire to destroy the seal, unleashing hundreds of entities upon the world. The havoc these inhuman, cruel entities will wreak is unimaginable.

Supernatural Power

Wrack: By spending 1 Essence, Sir Charles can cause everyone within a forty yard radius to convulse in agony, inflicting –3 on all actions. This power lasts for as long as he concentrates.

Ban: The entity is susceptible to abjurations and exorcism (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 213). It cannot use its supernatural powers against someone chanting the Koranic prayer used to exorcise it.

Armies of the World

About 179 nations across the world, from Afghanistan and Albania through Zambia and Zimbabwe, have armed forces. It's impossible to list them all in detail in the space available: the following is only a taste of what's out there.

Leading Nations

Other than the United States, the main armed forces of the world belong to Russia, Great Britain and China.

China

The Chinese military's doctrines and structures are changing as they update for the new millennium. With national conscription, they can mobilize upward of 300 million people. As is, they have 1.6 million soldiers organized into 7 military districts, each with 3 armies, 44 infantry, 9 tank and 6 artillery divisions, and one mountainous brigade; 420,000 troops serving in its Air Force and 250,000 troops serving in its Navy, organized into Northern, Southern and Eastern Fleets.

Traditional Chinese warfare has always followed the teachings of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*.

Russia and the CIS

Russia boasts 1.7 million people in its armed forces. Recruitment is universal service, with a 2-year hitch. 850,000 serve in the land forces, which are organized into 8 districts: Moscow, Ural, Siberian, Transbaikalian, Volga, Leningrad, North Caucasian and Far East districts. Its extensive Navy has 420,000 personnel, with vessels such as fast hydrofoils, Neustrashimy and Krivak class frigates, Dergach class patrol ships, aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines.

Great Britain

Britain's forces are, for their size, highly effective and efficient. Many British military traditions and customs were transferred as legacies to the US forces. Britain's leadership, equipment, training, support, mobility and traditions are very strong.

Britain commands a land force of over 110,000 soldiers organized in 3 division headquarters, 53,000 Air Force personnel and 43,000 Naval personnel. Recruitment is voluntary. Britain boasts 636 tanks, 427 war planes and a fleet of ships from light aircraft carriers to hovercraft, including Vanguard, Swiftsure and Trafalgar nuclear submarines.

Its most famous units include the Special Air Service, the SAS ("Who Dares Wins"), 3 Para (the Third Paratroop Regiment), the Household Cavalry, Royal Welch Fusiliers, the Gurkhas of Nepal and the Black Watch.

Eurocorps

The Eurocorps was created in 1992. It comprises military contributions from Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and Spain. The Headquarters, in which soldiers from the member states and also from Austria, Greece, Poland and Turkey participate, is located in Strasbourg, France.

France

France has 150,000 people in their land forces, 1 armored brigade, 1 armored cavalry and 1 motorized infantry assigned to the Eurocorps, 63,000 Air Force staff, 470 planes, 43,000 Naval staff serving in commands of submarines, anti-submarine ships, and minesweepers . The Foreign Legion comprises 8,000 men, and France has 1,700 Marines. France has a National Service program, with a 10-month hitch.

Principles of War

The US armed forces operate according to nine *Principles of War*; doctrines which outline its philosophy and the way the armed forces conduct warfare.

The nine Principles, based on Carl von Clausewitz' book *On War*, are:-

Mass at the Point of Decision (concentrating forces at critical points at critical times);

Objective (make sure everyone knows what they're doing);

Offensive (seize, retain, and exploit the initiative);

Surprise (strike the enemy when he is unprepared);

Economy of Force (only apply enough force to do the job, and commanders should never leave a unit without a job);

Maneuver (outflank and out-think the enemy);

Unity of Command (all units present a united front and one leader is responsible for all command decisions);

Security (don't let the enemy get an advantage),

and *Simplicity* (prepare clear, uncomplicated plans and clear, concise orders).

Other nations have differing principles, and therefore fight in different ways, with differing doctrines.

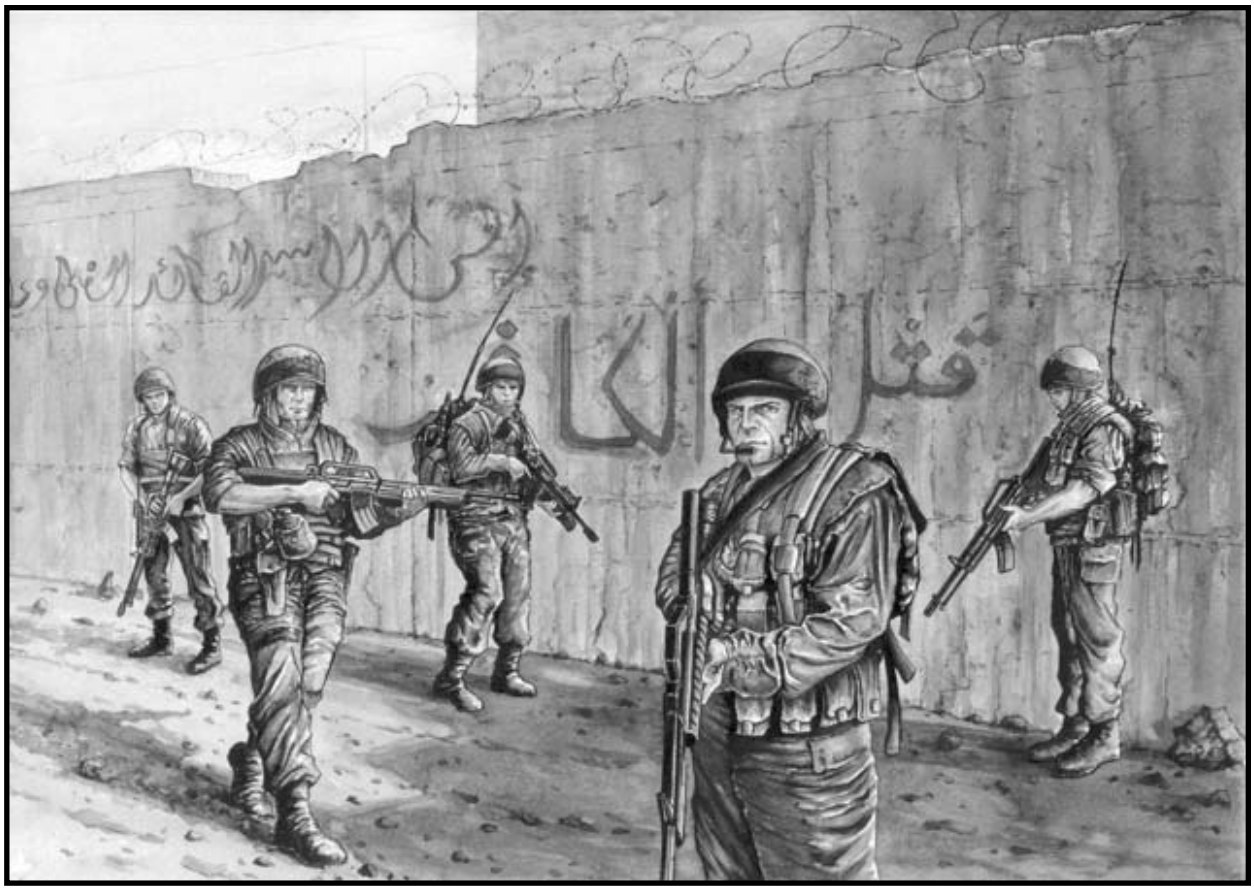
Germany

Germany has 211,000 soldiers in six brigades, 2 airborne, 1 commando, 1 army-co-operation aviation (5 regiments) and logistic support. It has 1 Medical brigade, 70,000 Air Force and 26000 Naval staff.

Commonwealth Nations

Canada

Recruitment is voluntary. Canada's force is small, but well trained in wilderness survival. Canada's Army comprises 18,000 soldiers, 13,000 serve in the Air Force.



Australia

Recruitment is voluntary. The Australian force is also small: 24,000 men in their land forces, 14,000 Air Force staff and 12,000 Naval personnel.

Israel

The Israelis have 120,000 land troops organized into 3 territorial commands and the frontier troops command. Recruitment is by draft; men serve 3 years, women 2. Israel can mobilize up to 1.2 million able bodied men. Israel has 3 corps headquarters, 3 armored divisions, 3 infantry frontier divisions, 2 headquarters of divisions, 4 motorized infantry brigades, 3 artillery rocket battalions. The reserve: 8 armored and lift-off divisions, 10 infantry brigades. Its Air Force has 36,000 personnel: the Navy has about 6,500, including 300 commandos.

Troubled Nations

The countries below aren't the only hotspots for trouble in the world. The nations listed below all have a particular angle which Storytellers may exploit.

Greece

There has long been conflict here between Greece and Cyprus. But Greece is more recently famous for an interesting incident not long after 9/11, when a group of amateur civilian plane spotters were arrested on espionage charges near a commercial airport. These charges were later dropped; however not long afterwards, press reports introduced a new phrase into the English vocabulary: "rendition flight".

Iraq

Iraq has a total armed force of 420,000 men and a reserve of more then 650,000. Since 2003, the Coalition has been attempting to train this force to fight and defend itself against insurgents. As of the end of 2007, they were still there at Square One, with no apparent exit strategy agreed.

The original goal was purportedly to find Saddam Hussein's Weapons of Mass Destruction: despite exhaustive searching before the war, no WMDs turned up. The governments of the United States and Great Britain moved in anyway.

Afghanistan

This landlocked Islamic country borders Pakistan in the south and east, Iran in the west, Turkmenistan,

Doctor David Kelly

Chief among the experts called in to testify about Saddam Hussein's supposed stocks of WMDs in 2002 was Dr David Kelly.

David Christopher Kelly (May 17, 1944-July 17, 2003) worked for Britain's Ministry of Defence (MoD), an expert in biological warfare and a former United Nations weapons inspector in Iraq. Kelly's discussion with *Today Programme* journalist Andrew Gilligan about the British government's dossier on WMDs in Iraq inadvertently caused a major political scandal.

He was found dead days after appearing before the Parliamentary committee charged with investigating the scandal.

The Hutton Inquiry, a public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding his death, ruled that he had committed suicide and that Kelly had not in fact said some of the things attributed to him by Gilligan.

Kelly's work for UNSCOM team led him to visit Iraq 37 times and earned him a Nobel Peace Prize. He was made a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George in 1996. Although never a member of the intelligence services, the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) regularly sought his opinion on Iraq and other issues.

David Kelly became a member of the Bahá'í Faith in about 1999. Bahá'í teachings condemn suicide and discourage a close involvement with party politics.

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the north, and China in the far northeast.

In December 2001, the UN Security Council created the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), composed of NATO troops, to assist the government of President Hamid Karzai. In 2005, the US and Afghanistan signed a strategic partnership agreement committing both nations to a long-term relationship, and the international community gave it $40 billion for reconstruction. Despite this, as of November 2007, the British government advised against travel to most of Afghanistan due to "ongoing military activity and lawlessness".

Iran

This nation has become a major trouble spot in the Middle East with the appointment of hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whose stated aim is to wipe the State of Israel off the map. Its uranium enrichment program gives the Pentagon and the UN Security Council much cause for concern, even after the State Department cleared it in 2007 of pursuing the goal of making nuclear bombs.

North Korea

In 2007, North Korea began to capitulate to Western pressure and began dismantling its nuclear production facility at Pyongyang. However, the nation is still a dictatorship ruled by Kim Jong-Il with an iron fist. Its population reveres the "Dear Leader" with an almost cult-like zeal.

North Korea's land forces comprise almost a million conscripts in 20 corps, and 96,000 Air Force and 46,000 Naval staff. Conscripts can expect to serve between 5-8 years a hitch.

Sudan

The key word here is "Darfur", a region in the west of Sudan. The primary conflict is ethnic, involving the Janjaweed Arab tribes and the Sudanese military, fighting against a variety of rebel groups, notably the Sudanese Liberation Army. The United Nations (UN) estimates that the conflict has left as many as 450,000 dead from violence and disease. What makes this war particularly reviled in the West is the open use of rape as a weapon.

Sudan is a strict Islamic nation, highly intolerant of any activity that lampoons or disrespects Islam. Like Afghanistan, Sudan is a hotbed of extremism.

Sudanese rebels in 2007 declared war on the Chinese Army contingent, which had been brought in to quell the fighting, before the Chinese had even arrived.

Myanmar (Burma)

An oppressive military junta has ruled Burma for more than 40 years. In 2007, a massive protest led by Buddhist monks was crushed by the Burmese forces. Thousands of arrested monks were "sent away to the North". It is doubtful they will be seen alive again. Recruitment is by draft, with an 18-month hitch. Total land forces: 325,000, with 9,000 in their Air Force and 10,000 Naval personnel, including 800 Marines.

Colombia

In 1999 the State Department said Colombia was one of four nations (along with Greece, Nigeria, and Yemen) seeing a sizeable increase in terrorist attacks against Americans. FARC finances its operations partly through ransoms paid to kidnappers. More than 3,000 kidnappings were reported in Colombia in 2000. Since 1990, 35,000 people have died in Colombia's civil war.

They met on the fourth floor in the crumbling back corner of the bombed-out building. Dusk settled on the horizon of Kabul. The city lay mostly in ruins, the city center left in shattered pieces, any hope for infrastructure left as little more than a dream. But Yunus hoped to change that. And with the man standing in front of him, he might really have a shot with the other freedom fighters of the United Liberation of Islamic Afghanistan.

The man was out of place, to say the least: pink skin, unsullied white suit, and blond hair slicked back. He popped the buttons on his jacket with lean fingers, revealing a shirt as plainly white as the jacket.

All of that paled in light of his smile: broad, ceaseless, sharp-cornered, like a knife. And the teeth – perfect, not a fleck of yellow, nary a thread of food caught between them. The smile of a djinn: a devil.

The building groaned and shifted as the man lifted several cases up onto the table.

"This is not a safe place," Yunus said. Outside, the sun drifted downward, appearing to melt into a pool of searing magma as it crested the horizon. "The building. It may fall beneath our feet."

"Nonsense," the man said, still grinning. As if he enjoyed tempting fate.

"Those are the weapons?" Yunus asked, pointing to the three cases.

"Tsk-tsk, don't eat your cake before it's your birthday," the man chided. "First, payment. Daddy needs to pay the rent, after all."

Yunus swallowed hard. How this man could pay the rent with this, he would never know. He felt mad, doing business this way. Most people just wanted money. Or favors. Or guns in exchange for guns.

"C'mon, c'mon," the man urged. "Put up or shut up, Yanus."

"Yunus."

"Just pay the fucking piper and don't correct me."

Drawing a deep breath, Yunus paid the man.

The tally was this: one paw from a Saluki hound, a dozen shell casings from bullets that killed a widow, a lock of said dead widow's hair (flecked with dust and bits of brain), chips of stone from the Column of Knowledge and Ignorance, and a tooth from the mouth of each of Yunus' seven children.

The man slid two of the three cases toward Yunus, but placed his palm flat atop the third. Again, the building groaned and shuddered.

Still smiling, he said: "I don't see anything from Warlord Rahshid, here. No spit. No nail clippings, no tuft of that beard. You holding out?"

"It is impossible to get close to him, I cannot"

"Cannot isn't in my vocabulary, Yanus. Fine. I keep the third case. And it's a good case, too. These first two? Some experimental stuff in there, granted. Want to kill the Taliban? Do the job the American lackwits aren't doing? You'll kill a few. But it's a shame. This third case, here? Could've given you the edge. A permanent edge. Your loss. I'm sure the ichiban Taliban will be glad to buy it."

"But –"

"No buts. This was time sensitive! Deal's over, chief."

Yunus knew what he must do. This man came alone. He was unarmed. Yunus swung the AK off his back and fired three shots—

—into open air. The man was gone. Two cases remained. The third had disappeared, as well. Yunus blinked. Felt woozy.

Then he saw the sun coming up outside. Morning? Impossible.

The building shuddered again. Sick, dizzy, Yunus grabbed the two cases and fled.

Chapter Two: Irregular Units

Though national military forces comprise a considerable percentage of the world's armies, they are hardly the only ones to take the field of battle. Political movements don't always require government support, and one needs no uniform to participate in armed combat. From giant mercenary corporations to local gangs of bandits, from century-old insurrections to causes born mere weeks ago, non-traditional irregular military forces have always helped to define our world.

For the purposes of our discussion, "irregular units" refers to any combat fighting force not designated as the official military for the government of their respective country. The list of such organizations is almost beyond counting: they operate out of every nation in the world, and range from less than a dozen members to tens of thousands of well-trained troops. Their only binding links are their lack of national authority (though some may work with government approval) and the unorthodox means with which they engage the enemy.

For the sake of clarity, we have broken their ranks into three generalized categories:

Terrorists, or freedom fighters (depending on who you ask), who engage in combat activities that do not differentiate between military and civilian targets.

Guerilla units, who target only military units, but must use unorthodox tactics due to a comparative lack of numbers and equipment.

Mercenary units and private armies which refers both to corporate entities selling military services for a price, and formal military forces—often with uniforms, medals, and traditional combat tactics—who do not belong to a recognized national government.

Specifics within these groups vary widely. The second portion of this chapter depicts a sample of groups and individuals who fit the definition of irregular combatants. For factual purposes, we have refrained from reflecting such organizations in World of Darkness terms, presenting only the contemporary reality of their condition and trusting the Storyteller to alter those details according to the needs of his or her campaign. Suggestions on involving various supernatural groups within these irregular units and those like them form the crux of the chapter's final section.

Regardless of specifics, the strategies and methods of these units fit well into the hidden corners of the World of Darkness. Irregular fighters must often operate in secrecy, hiding their true nature and revealing themselves only at opportune times. They adopt flexible tactics to adjust to a changing world, a world with which many supernatural beings themselves struggle to keep up. Irregular units often strike at old, established institutions with new ideals and ways of thinking, a conflict mirrored in every subsection of the World of Darkness. And all too often, the actions of irregular fighters result not in the utopian visions they dreamed of, but in horror and bloodshed reverberating beyond their control. The struggle of ideologies, cultures, and the empowered against the powerless has its fiercest participants in these kinds of organizations… reflecting the struggles of those supernatural entities whose universe they unknowingly share.

"There are over 550 million firearms in worldwide circulation. That's one firearm for every twelve people on the planet. The only question is: how do we arm the other eleven?"

–Yuri Orlov (Nicolas Cage), *Lord of War*

Terrorists

A quick note before we begin: "terrorist" is an extremely subjective word. Those they target view them as fanatic animals, willing to do whatever it takes

to achieve their goals. To those on the other side, however, they appear as stalwart heroes, defying incredible odds to overthrow a brutal oppressor. The US once considered Osama bin Laden and his men as freedom fighters, battling to liberate Afghanistan from the invading Soviets. The Russian soldiers he fought, however, used a different word to describe him… a word which the West, to its unending sorrow, now ascribes as well.

This is not an effort to excuse the acts of men like bin Laden, or to engage in an exercise of moral relativism. But any discussion of terrorism must acknowledge the term's intense politica1 charge, and that it is not now nor has it ever been applied universally to any given group. When we refer to "terrorists" here, we speak only of their overall organization and methodology… methodology often shared by groups that we may look upon in a considerably more favorable light.

Terrorism is generally defined as violence committed for political or ideological goals which makes no distinction between civilian and military targets. National militaries often adhere by the rules of warfare (set forth in the Geneva Code and other documents), which defines what is and is not an acceptable military target. Terrorist organizations disregard those definitions. They engage in overt and often shocking acts of violence, with the intention of sowing fear and discontent among a much larger populace. Civilian targets make an ideal fulcrum for this sort of fear, both because civilians often lack the capacity to defend themselves, and because the engendered shock and outrage serve to further the terrorists' chosen goals (see the "Tactics and Strategies" section, below, for more). Though they often appear to engage in random acts of violence, terrorists always act in pursuit of a larger social or ideological goal, which they do not feel they can meet through traditional military means.

Numerous attempts have been made to define terrorists by type, though the list can prove inexhaustible. The broadest distinction comes between *revolutionary terrorists*, who seek to overthrow an existing government or power structure and replace it with a new one (often of their own devising), and *state-sponsored terrorists*, who are employed by established governments against that government's enemies (either foreign or domestic). Other typologies define terrorists by the methods they use (*nuclear terrorists*, who use nuclear weapons or radioactive material in attacks; *eco-terrorists*, who target institutions they view as harmful to the environment, etc.) , the philosophies they embody (*religious terrorism*, which advocates the achievement of specific religious goals; *nationalist terrorism*, which seeks the creation of a new nation or government for a traditionally excluded demographic), or the people who employ them (*narcoterroism*, which attacks established government organs at the behest of criminal drug cartels). Whatever the term, however, all terrorist organizations work outside the traditional bounds of military engagement, and embrace extreme tactics in order to meet their goals.

Organization

Individual terrorist groups vary widely in organization and methodology, but most organizations fall into two general categories: *hierarchical* and *networked*. Hierarchical models center on a pyramid of command and control, in which higher ranking members exercise more power and carry more responsibility. Networked models, on the other hand, consist of multiple semi-autonomous units, interlinked through a command structure but basically capable of acting on their own. Groups with more overt political goals prefer to use hierarchical models, since it allows those in charge to quickly implement new policies in the event of a large-scale change. Certain ideologies, like communism, naturally gravitate towards hierarchical models, as do older groups with a more established power structure. Networked models, on the other hand, appeal to groups with more anarchistic goals, as well as those who limit their activities to a specific region or territory.

The basic unit of a terrorist organization is the "cell", which consists of a small group of individuals (usually three to six) capable of carrying out specific acts. Cells remain isolated from each other, and the members of one cell often know very little about the existence of any others. If one cell should be compromised, the others can thus continue to function without fear of capture. A cell usually receives orders from a single superior, who contacts the cell's leader (often anonymously) to convey orders and does not communicate with any other cell members. Each given cell, however, weaves extremely tight-knit bonds among its members, using family members or life-long friends, or else bound by the same town or geographic region.

More established terrorist organizations often employ *front groups*, which help raise money, cover up activities, and issue public statements. Many front groups participate in traditional criminal enterprises, such as drug smuggling or money laundering, in an effort to drum up support for the rest of their organization. Others simply act as spokespersons, issuing press releases and waging propaganda campaigns without engaging in illegal activities.

State-sponsored terrorists exist as a wing of the established government, often folded into covert espionage or intelligence-gathering institutions. Their organization varies much more widely, and can include both official organs of government and "off the books" employees whose connections can be denied if they are ever captured. More about state-sponsored terror appears in the following section.

Tactics and Strategies

Terrorist methods depend on their overall goal and the type of enemy they face. In some cases, their goals are very straightforward—expelling a foreign nation from sovereign territory, for instance, or forcing the resignation of a particular government official. In other cases, they adopt a more ideologically broad purpose, which may take decades to achieve, if ever. The overthrow of an established religion

is a good example of such a goal, as is the eradication of an entire race or cultural demographic. Apocalyptic groups often have little more than anarchy as a goal, and gauge their attacks for the sole purpose of killing as many people as possible. Whatever their purpose is, it has a direct effect on the types of targets they choose and the methods with which they go about their business.

Almost all terrorist groups share a common inability to conduct war in traditional terms, either because they lack the resources and manpower to confront their enemies directly, of because their ideology is not shared by a sufficient percentage of the populace. In each case, they resort to extreme tactics to make up the difference—hoping to rally others to their cause, demoralize the enemy such that he can no longer fight back, or render opposition so costly as to engender a tangential collapse. They use several specific means to achieve this end:

Bombings. The terrorists attack a given location with explosives, hoping to destroy it and inflict numerous casualties in the process. The location could hold symbolic value (a statue or national monument), or it could serve as specific logistical purpose (a bridge or a military base). Types of bombings vary from simply planting explosives at the site to *car bombings*, in which a vehicle is laden with explosives and driven into the site or simply parked nearby, to *suicide bombings*, in which an individual straps explosives to his own body and then triggers them at the precise moment. The terrifying spectacle of the explosion, coupled with the often horrific casualties inflicted, invariably aids in the terrorists' goals of spreading fear and insecurity.

Kidnappings. A kidnapping is one of the most frightening crimes in existence. Terrorists kidnap government officials, judges, lawyers, members of the press, or those belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural demographic which they despise. In the most direct sense, a kidnapped individual becomes a direct asset to the terrorists. They can use him as a bargaining chip for political leverage, a propaganda tool to inflame emotions, or a shield to protect particular places to attack. If the target holds a position of authority, the kidnapping may prevent certain activities from taking place: a kidnapped judge cannot sentence prisoners, for example, or a journalist cannot report on certain terrorist activities. More importantly, kidnappings sow fear and doubt among the populace, both with the victims' family and friends, and in fellow members of whatever class or cultural demographic to which the victim belongs. Members of a racial minority grow too scared to walk the streets in the open, while legislators refrain from passing certain laws for fear of the reprisals. Execution of kidnap victims becomes a necessity in many cases, since it demonstrates the terrorists' power over them and also exacerbates the sense of fear in the general populace.

Political Assassinations. While kidnappings allow the terrorists more options in the disposal of their victims, assassinations are much easier and can achieve the same results. Like the locations they target for bombings, terrorists select victims of political assassinations for their power, their

prominence, or what they represent to a given citizen or minority group. The simple pull of a trigger silences a judge or influential legislator for all time, while charismatic political leaders will be unable to rally their people in times of trouble. Though most assassinations serve a direct political purpose, some terrorists engage in indiscriminate assassination—targeting soldiers, police officers, or members of a particular minority solely because of who they are. The random nature of such killings provokes fear and insecurity the same way that kidnappings do, preventing members of the victims' subgroup from feeling safe or acting with impunity.

Hijackings and skyjackings. Seizing a vehicle, along with its cargo and occupants, holds a great deal of appeal for terrorists. Cargo means equipment, which they can disperse to their entire organization as they see fit. Drivers and passengers serve as hostages, while the vehicle itself makes an excellent fulcrum for a suicide bombing or more mundane purposes. Ground vehicles and boats can be seized with relative ease, depending on the particulars, and the resulting media attention allows the terrorists to voice their views before the entire world. In the past, hijacking a commercial airline held even more appeal. The supreme vulnerability of a 747 or DC-10—the delicacy of flight and the ease with which a malfunction can send it plummeting to the ground—makes for an extremely tempting target. Lax security measures allowed terrorist to get on board with ease, a passenger plane offers hundreds of potential hostages, and as the world saw on September 11, 2001, few explosives hold more horrific potential than jet fuel. But just as 9/11 proved how terrifyingly effective skyjackings could be, it also reduced the chances of similar incidents taking place in the future. Hostages who once might have once sat quietly and waited for the situation to resolve are now more prone to resist: they often outnumber the terrorists onboard, and if they believe that they are going to die regardless, they might turn on their captors long before the terrorists complete their mission. While airlines remain an enticing target in many ways, terrorists must now approach them with much more caution and foresight.

Nuclear terrorism, biological terrorism, and the like are variations of the above tactics. In this case, the terrorists employ particular methods to cause widespread havoc on a very large scale. Nuclear terrorism entails the detonation of a nuclear explosion, or simply the use of radioactive materials to cause sickness and death. Bio-terrorism involves releasing a virulent disease in a given population, or spreading toxins in places such as communal water supplies. They serve the same overall purpose as any other terrorist tactic—to sow panic and confusion in the populace—but their terrible destructive power allows them to affect far more people than ever before. The thought of a mushroom cloud over a major population center, or an epidemic of anthrax crippling an entire nation, drives most anti-terror efforts in the 21st century, in an effort to ensure such terrifying possibilities never come to pass.

Terrorists plan these activities and others like them down to the last detail, and the participants train for them far in advance. Those required to kill themselves in the process are chosen for their devotion to the cause, and indoctrinated with propaganda so that they do not falter when the time comes. Leaders strive to account for any possible variable and ask participants to think on their feet if something unexpected comes up. More than the attack itself, terrorist groups also plan for the aftermath—what reaction it will provoke, how they will present it to the world, and by what means it may further their cause.

The purpose of terrorist activities is multifold. In the most immediate terms , it serves to spread fear and confusion among their enemies, to remove their will to fight, and to make the cost of opposition too great to sustain (this is one of the biggest reasons why terrorists target civilians). In more subtle terms, they hope to draw attention to their cause, rally like-minded people to their side, or simply state their objectives in a forum made large by unspeakable acts. Many of their actions are designed to perpetrate the movement: by procuring more resources, inspiring other agencies to assist them, recruiting members from the populace, or some combination of all three. And of course, in some cases, they have no motivation beyond simple vengeance or bloodletting—trying to drown their anger by shedding the blood of others.

Most established organizations refuse to cower before terrorist behavior. If a government or similar institution bows to a terrorist demand, then it encourages further acts of terrorism, and emboldens other groups to engage in similar tactics. Striking back at terrorists, however, can often be just as destructive as acquiescing. Indeed many terrorists specifically design their actions to trigger a violent response from their foes, especially when they face a very large and well-funded army. Large responses tend to be indiscriminate responses, which often create more terrorists than they destroy. A large military force which kicks down doors, imposes curfews, and arrests large numbers of suspects in the search for the perpetrators invariably engenders resentment in members of the populace who would not normally be inclined towards extreme violence. The more horrific the act, the more frenzied the response, and the more innocent parties get caught in the crackdown. If judiciously applied, such acts can turn the organization from a marginalized fringe group into a popular front, enjoying support from all manner of ordinary citizen. Foreign occupiers (or those perceived as foreign) make particularly susceptible targets for this tactic, and canny terrorists will happily engage in any number of atrocities in order to induce their foes to lash out without thinking. Proper response to a terrorist attack involves measured and patient steps, with special attention paid to how the general populace—both those involved and one's own—will perceive it after the fact.

State-sponsored terrorism

State-sponsored terrorism employs many of the tactics discussed above, but for much different purposes. Governments use it to ensure the safety and security of their ruling system. It might target an ethnic or cultural minority which the govern-

ment considers "undesirable," or dissident factions who speak out against official policies. But its goal is always to protect the state itself and those organs of government which help maintain it. It has three basic means of achieving those goals.

The first is *direct* terrorism, which means the use of terrorism against the government's own citizens as a means of controlling them or silencing dissent. The government can carry it out directly through police action, mass arrests, and attacks on dissident individuals; or more covertly through secret raids and the like. In all cases, however, direct terrorism makes use of official government organizations, such as the army, an intelligence agency, or the police. The state drafts or alters specific laws to facilitate such action, often declaring their targets "official enemies" or simply criminals. They may arrange for "kangaroo" courts to try those they arrest, or simply let them disappear without a trace. Regardless of their methods, they conduct direct terrorism to frighten or coerce the remaining populace and prevent them from even constituting a threat.

The second method is *state involvement* in terror, meaning terrorism which has no official connection to the government, but which the government encourages and supports nonetheless. It includes terrorists conducted in other countries by government personnel, as well as acts of domestic terrorism by "unofficial" groups who nonetheless have the tacit support of those in charge. This type of terrorism allows the sponsoring government to deny involvement in all activities, without forcing a change in law or legal precedent which might ferment further dissent. Foreign operations might include bombings to destabilize rival regimes, assassination attempts on dissidents in exile, and/or kidnapping key personnel (such as nuclear physicists) in order to gain some tangible benefit. Domestic operations often involve "death squads" or other paramilitary groups, who conduct terrorist operations with the unspoken approval of the authorities—and may in some cases *be* members of the authorities themselves—but possess no official powers.

Finally, there is *state-sponsored* terror, in which the government conducts no terrorist activities, but funds, supplies, and in some cases trains outside groups which do. Governments often engage in this activity if they believe their goals match those of the group they wish to support, or if that group possesses certain attributes (such as foreign citizenship or knowledge of a given terrain) which the government itself may not. In addition to providing training and equipment, states offer more intangible benefits to the groups they sponsor, such as safe haven within their borders, or false passports and other forms of identification. Sponsorship frees the state from the direct "dirty work" of terrorism, while still reaping the rewards if the terrorists in question succeed at their goals.

Regardless of the exact nature of the involvement, all forms of state terrorism rely on secrecy. Awareness of such acts can fuel resentment among the populace and prove a political liability in diplomatic relations. Like all other terrorist acts, state terror needs the element of surprise to function correctly and instill the intended amount of fear and uncertainty. The more public attention it receives, the less effective it becomes, and as a form of covert warfare, it only works if its members and activities operate deeply within the shadows.

Guerilla Units

Guerilla warfare is a unique type of unconventional fighting, which usually takes place when a given cause or organization faces a foe they cannot hope to defeat through conventional combat. They fight using specific tactics, designed to harass and demoralize the enemy to the point where they cannot continue fighting. Guerilla units differ from terrorist units in that they do not typically target civilians, and they differ from mercenary companies in that they often have a specific political or ideological agenda. Their methods borrow heavily from both terrorists and more conventional military units, but the specifics don't precisely match either. Guerilla forces have conducted successful campaigns against some of the most powerful militaries in the history of the world , and every soldier worth his dog tags understands how they operate.

Organization

Classical guerilla units tend to be organized in the same general manner as conventional military units—grouped into squads, companies, and battalions, and obeying a centralized chain of command. Many guerillas in the post-Cold War era adopt a much looser structure, however, utilizing autonomous cells with little centralized control. The first method allows for greater effectiveness and coordination, while the second permits units to continue functioning while out of contact with the leadership structure for long periods. The advent of improved technology and globalization of communications make such units more viable than they were twenty or thirty years ago.

Regardless of which model they follow (and variants can run anywhere along the scale between them), individual guerilla units adopt a fairly loose command structure: about ten to fifteen men per squad, depending on the size of the force and the number of people involved, and larger units groups in irregular numbers based on size or geographic location. Guerilla forces are usually lightly armed. They prize speed and maneuverability, which necessitates nothing larger than hand-held firearms and grenades. Furthermore, many of them work with limited financial resources, especially in the early stages of a guerilla campaign, and must rely on simple weapons for fighting. As the campaign continues and they capture more weapons (or receive support from external forces), their equipment improves, allowing them to launch better and more sophisticated attacks.

Like all soldiers, guerilla troops must possess a considerable amount of loyalty to the cause for which they fight. Their dedication may extend to things like suicide bombings, but it needn't always be so extreme. More important is the willingness to fight in adverse conditions, and to

keep it up regardless of the circumstances. They must also be tough, able to endure harsh weather and poor living conditions while retaining the strength to launch attacks against the enemy. They need to know the local terrain like the back of their hands, allowing them to vanish into the nearby surroundings at a moment's notice. Because of this, guerilla campaigns tend to work best with a large indigenous populations fighting in native territory, rather than interlopers or outsiders.

Civilian sympathizers play a large part in guerilla operations, though they rarely serve in combat operations. Rather, civilians provide support and cover for guerilla fighters. They hide caches of food, weapons, and medical supplies on their property, and can provide safe havens for guerilla soldiers, keeping them in secret places or passing them off as members of the family. Civilians also serve as spies and intelligence gatherers, either through low-paying jobs in key positions, or just by observing the enemy's comings and goings. Doctors and similar personnel provide surreptitious care, while vehicle drives can secretly transport men and equipment disguised as innocuous goods. Such support allows the guerilla movement to maintain a very decentralized structure. There is no single headquarters to attack, nor any central supply depot for the enemy to destroy. They can come together on very short notice, strike without warning, and fade away again before the enemy can focus on them. Without civilian support, guerilla fighters have a very difficult time operating.

Accordingly, most guerilla units present themselves as defenders of the people. Regardless of their actual political motives, they require the cooperation of those not directly involved in their fight (this is often what military commanders mean when they refer to "winning hearts and minds"). Methods and tactics are outlined below.

Besides the locals, guerilla movements receive support from outside networks as well. Foreign nations aligned with their cause (either through political ideology or a dispute with a mutual enemy) provide them with weapons, training, and even a safe haven within their borders if it is geographically feasible. This last element can be crucial to the survival of a guerilla movement. International borders prevent their enemy from following them without broadening the conflict, and provide safety and security to plan their activities with care. This kind of support plays a huge role in the early stages of a guerilla war, when resources are scarcer and local civilians are less willing to lend aid.

Like terrorist networks, many guerilla movements have political or propaganda elements, which provide for vital interaction with the rest of the world. Members of such branches do not fight, but rather issue statements, produce videos or argumentative manifestos, and engage in diplomatic negotiations on behalf of their organization. This allows the guerillas to speak to the enemy without risking arrest or attack, while still permitting the sort of political interaction necessary to achieve their goals. Most members of a political arm remain judiciously free of criminal behavior, permitting them to do their jobs with relatively little fear of reprisal. If their group operates on land controlled by an overtly hostile regime, they may relocate to somewhere friendlier to their needs. This

sometimes causes logistical problems, but with the advent of 21st century communications technology, it has become much more feasible in recent years.

As with any other irregular military units, the organization of guerilla fighters varies from group to group. Political goals and the exact conditions of conflict remain unique to circumstance, and successful guerillas will organize in whichever way suits them best. Their structure may also depend on the stage of fighting they have reached (see Tactics and Strategies, below), and how much success they enjoy against their enemy.

Tactics and Strategies

The purpose of a guerilla war is to fulfill a specific political and ideological goal. It may be the usurpation of a ruler or regime, the expulsion of a foreign occupier, or the creation of a new nation for an ethnic or cultural minority which has yet lacked one. Some guerillas follow strict religious doctrines, and hope to spread their faith by driving out or destroying rival doctrines. Others simply want new leadership in their nation, and are prepared to take arms to get it. Whatever the reason, everything they do works solely towards achieving those goals.

They need not always be especially organized, and may take decades to come to fruition. Communist guerillas, for example, may fight to engender a total worldwide proletariat revolution—something which seems extremely unlikely in our lifetime. Other groups may espouse the overthrow of a major religion, or something equally implausible. Particularly loose-knit guerilla bands may have no agenda beyond relief from political persecution, and some resemble little more than civilian criminals. Guerillas are unified primarily by their methods, not the clarity of their goals.

Successful and focused guerilla units, however, usually adopt a classic "three-tier" approach to strategy. Mao Tse Tung most succinctly defined it in his book *On Guerilla Warfare*, which he published during his fight against the occupying Japanese in the 1930s. It relies upon strong leadership, flexible tactics, and the overall goal of bringing a large percentage of the populace onto the guerillas' side.

The first phase of the strategy involves establishing an underground movement, intended to elicit local support. Members distribute propaganda, engage in sabotage, and launch small-scale attacks against targets of opportunity. The goal is not direct military confrontation, but rather to broaden their popular base and increase their capacity to conduct war. In some ways, they can goad the enemy into assisting them in much the same way as terrorists do. A suitably enraging attack may prompt a colossal backlash: soldiers on the streets, mass arrests of suspected sympathizers, even attacks on civic institutions. Such responses agitate the rank-and-file populace, who will then be more inclined to assist the guerillas in their campaign.

The second phase entails increased combat operations targeting key installations and military personnel. Attacks remain small in scale (individual units striking targets within their means) but become much more widespread, and the cost of containing them grows heavier. Unlike traditional military units, guerillas rarely concern themselves with seizing and controlling territory. They emphasize a strike-and-retreat method, destroying a given target and taking what supplies they can, then falling back into the surrounding territory . They focus on preserving their resources, which means discontinuing combat when outnumbered. Their knowledge of the terrain plays a huge role in these operations, allowing them to melt away while a frustrated enemy searches vainly for some sign of their passing. Supply lines make a favorite target: they launch attacks along roads or rivers, seize what they can, and destroy the rest so that the enemy cannot use it. Sabotage and espionage efforts increase during this phase too, as new recruits in key positions presumably flock to the guerillas' side.

The final phase of the strategy comes when the guerillas have attained some measure of military superiority over their enemy. At this point, they shift tactics to match those of conventional military forces, giving them the capacity to defeat their foe for good (more on conventional military tactics can be found elsewhere in this book).

This strategy depends on a number of factors, which most guerilla units weigh carefully before planning their operations. Logistics tend to be decentralized and finite in number, at least early on. The guerillas must establish permanent bases somewhere beyond the enemy's reach, or else depend on extreme mobility, capable of being broken down very quickly and reestablished somewhere else. Intelligence operations remain important as well: the guerillas need to know where the enemy will be and what points leave him most vulnerable. Political and propaganda efforts can prompt financial backing as well as engendering local support. Attacks or atrocities from the foe often translate into substantial increases in equipment and supplies. Finally, guerilla organizations must carefully evaluate use of the terrain, for there if nowhere else, their detail knowledge will even the odds against the foe. Though guerilla units historically favor rural terrain as the point of engagement, urban jungles make for an equally confounding battlefield… especially in Third World cities with maze-like layouts and few signposts.

Like terrorists, guerilla fighters train intensively, and prepare for their operations long beforehand. Though they need to adapt to changing circumstances if things go wrong, their success relies upon inflicting the maximum amount of damage while suffering minimal casualties in return. Living off the land becomes second nature to guerilla fighters, as does moving quickly from one place to another .

Indoctrination into their political ideals helps this situation immeasurably. The more they believe in their cause, the more hardships they are willing to suffer for it, and the more they will be able to endure in the field. Because propaganda makes such a huge difference in guerilla warfare, it tends to focus on issues most conducive to strong emotions. Patriotism, religious fervor, the sense of defending one's home and people from foreign invaders… most forms

of guerilla rhetoric stress these points over and over in their messages. As a result, few soldiers fight harder or sacrifice more for their cause than do guerillas.

This three-part strategy is not omni-directional. It can often shift back and forth as the movement suffers setbacks, or be discarded entirely when it reaches a certain critical mass (i.e., can now engage the enemy in conventional terms). Guerilla fighters, too, may shift back and forth in terms of categorization. Many of them may have fought with a conventional military before suffering defeat, while others adopt the tactics and methods of terrorists by striking at targets indiscriminately. Guerilla warfare is defined most solely by the methods it uses, making it a temporary phenomenon at best. It endures because it works. Many a guerilla fighter has gone on to lead more conventional military forces once he attains his final goal… and may eventually find his time-honored tactics now used against him by the very enemy he once helped to bring down.

Mercenaries

Mercenaries and soldiers of fortune are as old as civilization itself , having flourished since the days of the earliest Greek city-states. While nations may rise and fall and politics shift incessantly with the times, money remains a human constant. If a soldier doesn't fight out of national loyalty or ideological belief, then a little cold hard cash placed under his nose can easily do the trick. And in a world wracked with violence and bloodshed, the skills required to triumph on the battlefield will always be in high demand.

For the purposes of this discussion, the term "mercenaries" mainly refers to organizations working solely for profit. In a few cases, the term also refers to military units working out of loyalty to a single individual whose actions do not reflect official policy of his nation's government. Mainly, however, mercenaries act out of financial concerns. While individual soldiers in national armies may also serve for the sake of a pay check, the organizations to which they belong operate according to very different ideological principles. Not so private armies. They function as a business first and foremost, and they conduct their operations with profit as the underlying motives.

In many cases they're simply bands of thugs: poorly organized, undisciplined, and motivated solely by whatever money their employer shoves into their hands. As one moves further up the food chain, however, one finds larger and more elaborate units, topped by a series of highly organized

Mercenaries and the United Nations

In 1989, the United Nations passed resolution 44/34, commonly referred to as the UN Mercenary Convention. It sought to curtail the employment of mercenaries throughout the world—in Africa specifically, but with broad applications elsewhere as well. The Convention laid down a strict definition for what constitutes a mercenary, specifically:

1. A mercenary is any person who:

(a) Is specially recruited locally or abroad in order to fight in an armed conflict;

(b) Is motivated to take part in the hostilities essentially by the desire for private gain and, in fact, is promised, by or on behalf of a party to the conflict, material compensation substantially in excess of that promised or paid to combatants of similar rank and functions in the armed forces of that party;

(c) Is neither a national of a party to the conflict nor a resident of territory controlled by a party to the conflict;

(d) Is not a member of the armed forces of a party to the conflict; and

(e) Has not been sent by a State which is not a party to the conflict on official duty as a member of its armed forces.

2. A mercenary is also any person who, in any other situation:

(a) Is specially recruited locally or abroad for the purpose of participating in a concerted act of violence aimed at:

(i) Overthrowing a Government or otherwise undermining the constitutional order of a State; or

(ii) Undermining the territorial integrity of a State;

(b) Is motivated to take part therein essentially by the desire for significant private gain and is prompted by the promise or payment of material compensation;

(c) Is neither a national nor a resident of the State against which such an act is directed;

(d) Has not been sent by a State on official duty; and

(e) Is not a member of the armed forces of the State on whose territory the act is undertaken.

It is worth noting that this definition does not address PMCs (which are mercenaries in all but name), and with other vagaries of the world military scene which fall under the collective understanding of "mercenary." The resolution went into effect on October 20, 2001.

companies dedicated to military service. Such companies (often referred to as *private military companies* or "PMCs") have flourished since the end of the Cold War. Emerging nations often lack the resources to fund and motivate armies of their own, and so must often turn to mercenaries to provide for their security. Other areas of the world can no longer depend on aid from the former superpowers, who may have once participated in small regional conflicts , but now see no strategic need to do so. Military downsizing on both sides of the former Iron Curtain left a lot of highly trained ex-soldiers looking for work, and happily filling the vacuum left by these changes. As strong, powerful governments reconfigure their armed forces to meet new challenges, and weak or unstable regimes struggle to meet their security needs, PMCs rise up to meet the demand.

Organization

Strictly speaking, no two bands of mercenaries are organized exactly the same way. The smaller and more informal the group, the less organization. At the top of the pyramid stand the most successful PMCs, who run themselves like any other business. They have corporate offices, accept bids for work, and deploy their resources to meet the tasks assigned to them. They serve any number of employers conducting all manner of tasks. Some train local forces, either as part of an ongoing military conflict or as part of the creation of a new nation army. Others act as security forces in an unstable region, protecting important figures from harm. PMCs often accept bids to escort supply convoys through dangerous territory, provide air support and rapid transportation, man roadside checkpoints, guard prisons and detention centers, and participate in propaganda efforts, in addition to direct military conflicts with specified enemies. Many also engage in less field-intensive activities, such as risk assessment and advisory positions. It all depends on the job and on the particular PMC in question.

PMCs often recruit from standing army forces, hiring recently discharged soldiers or those looking for a different organization than that provided by formal militaries. They often prefer Special Forces operatives—those with experience in covert missions, guerilla warfare, or other irregular operations—though most welcome anyone with military experience. Some companies demand further training, putting recruits through boot camp-style exercises in an effort to prepare them for their new duties (the corporate end of their operations uses more traditional white-collar employees: accountants, public relations officers, secretaries, and managerial executives of one type or another, who rarely go into the field).

PMCs typically organize themselves in much the same way as any other large business. An owner or CEO stands at the top, aided by a hierarchy of lower ranking managers and associates who in turn lead a set number of employees in various tasks and activities. Command structure remains loose, but fairly binding, and just like the regular military, PMC units perform better with firm leadership and strict rules of acceptable behavior. Management assigns a given number of employees to a particular assignment, based on what the client asks for and/or what the company feels is adequate to do the job. Employees do their best to complete their assigned tasks, file regular updates and remain in contact with their superiors during their missions, report any problems they encounter, and ask for assistance if the situation demands it. Some PMCs prefer to structure their units along more overt military lines, with formal ranks and insignia to designated officers and NCOs, but at some point, that gives way to a civilian-style hierarchy.

Obviously, the smaller the mercenary company, the rougher and less organized they become. Smaller units may cleave more tightly to a paramilitary organization , while the smallest are often little more than gangs, commanded by a single strongman and following no organization save the bare minimum required to perform their duties. The most successful, however, take steps to ensure a functioning chain of command , and use disciplinary measures to maintain order. Such measures vary from group to group, ranging from fiscal penalties such as docking pay or terminating contracts, to simply marching offenders into the jungle to be shot.

Accordingly, a number of mercenary companies adopt a specific code of ethics, to which they expect all employees to adhere and which forms the core of their purpose as an organization. They needn't necessarily follow a particular political or religious ideology, but rather represent the sort of self-imposed ethics that many other large corporations ostensibly set for themselves. For example, a PMC might refuse to do business with drug cartels, or align themselves with a faction engaged in ethnic cleansing. Like their civilian counterparts, however, they might conveniently ignore their stated code of conduct when and where it suits them. This is even more true in the World of Darkness than in our own world.

Military units loyal to one particular individual differ slightly in their organization than PMCs or overt mercenaries. They tend to adhere to a specific ideology espoused by their leader, and believe that following him is the best way to attain those goals. Whatever code they espouse reflects on their overall ideological purpose, and invariably involves an oath of loyalty to whoever commands them. In some cases (such as the underlings of a particular drug cartel), they act as criminal muscle, and their organization mirrors that of the Mafia or other criminal syndicates. In other cases, they adopt a formal military structure, with ranks, uniforms, and insignia intended to grant them the legitimacy of national militaries. One sees these most often in civil conflicts, and if the unit in question takes control of the country, they become the nation's formal military.

Such groups often foster a cult of personality around their given leader, ranging from simple appreciation at his command skills to deification on a truly disturbing scale. Loyalty often matters more than other qualities, and senior command consists of those who demonstrate unflinching support for their leader. The organization uses such loyalty to enforce

discipline, ensuring that the rank-and-file do as they're told with no questions asked. It can be extremely effective if the leader possesses good military and/or leadership skills. At the same time, however, it can easy lead to destabilization . If the rank-and-file begin to question their commander for whatever reason, then discipline quickly breaks down, and the unit suffers in the field. Corporate structures, with less emphasis on individual leadership, tend to avoid such problems (though a mercenary unit in thrall to a Kindred or Awakened may be different; see the last section of this chapter for more).

Tactics and Strategies

Mercenary companies use a wide variety of tactics in the field, based on their specific goals and the parameters of a given mission. Smaller units might adopt techniques akin to guerilla warfare, while larger companies may be folded into a large operation as part of a traditional military campaign. Some serve as the *de facto* national army of whatever region they occupy—performing the same duties while the central government organizes or strengthens its resources. Others act in a much less formal capacity, advising their clients on risk management or acting as bodyguards or security forces for key personnel. No single contract is exactly the same, and no two mercenary groups use the same methods to achieve their goals. Generally speaking, however, a few broad strategies set them apart from other kinds of military forces.

The duties of a mercenary company generally fall into one of three broad categories:

Military assistance includes front-line combat missions involving direct engagement with an enemy. It also includes support missions such as guarding prisons and acting as police forces in areas which lacks centralized authority.

Military consultation includes advisory and training activities which serve to improve the military capabilities of others. This involves anything from helping to organize emerging armies to conducting risk assessment evaluations to determining the possible dangers to their clients' operations.

Military support focuses on logistical services, maintenance services, and certain covert operations such as intelligence gathering. It rarely entails any actual combat, but usually involves duties essential to combat success, such as maintaining a motor pool or guarding supply lines to the front.

PMCs are often large enough to have separate branches dedicated to each kind of service, while highly organized smaller companies focus on one particular field of expertise. The less organized the company, the more informal their duties, and the more easily they can slip from one particular kind of assignment to another (though how effective they are at it is another question entirely).

Ideally, regardless of their specific duties, a mercenary company maintains the best aspects of both large and small units. Many pride themselves on their speed and flexibility, able to move quickly and accomplish their goals without the bureaucratic inefficiencies of national militaries. Yet at the same time, they possess a level of organization that allows for more discipline than guerilla or terrorist units, allowing them to take on complex tasks that would confound a smaller group. The combination of flexibility and sophistication makes mercenary companies appealing to the right sort, and in the best cases permits their clients to truly enjoy the best of both worlds.

Strategic goals depend largely on the mercenaries' employer, stated in their mission briefing and agreed to under terms of the contract, ("Destroy the 5th Battalion," for example, or "provide security for the nation's three most important highways.") With that strategy in mind, the company commander develops specific tactics to reach that goal, using whatever resources he has at his disposal. As

stated earlier, a private army could be employed to do just about anything, and the specific means it uses to achieve it varies as well. In general, however, it usually adheres more closely to regular army tactics, rather than those of guerilla warriors or terrorist groups. Because mercenary work is essentially a profit-making endeavor, PMCs and similar outfits place a high priority on proper allocation of resources. They design their contracts with open-ended stipulations, which provides for some flexibility in how and where they spend their money, and in what constitutes successful completion of their objectives.

Regardless of how they structure their operations or what missions they undertake, private armies constitute an increasingly large part of the 21st century military world. The increased number of low-level conflicts and the tumultuous change of the last few decades often leaves larger and more established militaries struggling to catch up. Until they do, PMCs and similar units will continue to see action in combat zones all over the globe.

Arms Dealers

Soldiers can't fight without weapons, and while conventional militaries receive plenty of arms from their governments, irregular units aren't always so lucky. Enter the arms dealer. For a reasonable price, he can provide you with everything from a battery of assault rifles to a surplus battleship. His tendrils stretch from quartermasters' barracks to hidden caches in the jungle , and his clients are anyone with the need to put a lot of people in the ground. If the money is there, he will sell to just about anyone.

A few arms dealers get their weapons directly from the source, buying from arms manufacturers like Remington, Heckler or Koch. Governments, too, often sell guns to groups with mutual goals, allowing their hardware to proliferate down the food chain to smaller organizations. Ostensibly, such deals involve specific rules; the United States has no wish to sell guns to al-Qaeda, for example, and private manufacturers rarely wish to jeopardize lucrative government contracts by selling weapons to those of whom their clients disapprove. Unfortunately, plenty of other entrepreneurs cheerfully deal with whoever pays them, and as weapons circulate and re-circulate across the globe, a huge number of middlemen ensures that anyone with the resources can get their hands on all manner of weaponry.

Like so many other parts of 21st century warfare, arms dealing underwent a sea change following the end of the Cold War. New nations in Eastern Europe suddenly had huge stockpiles of firearms, and the remaining superpowers found themselves with weapons they simply didn't need . The opening of borders and reduction of trade restrictions helped encourage the flow of arms, and with many former Soviet states struggling to maintain law and order, entire caches of guns vanished. Assault rifles, grenades, rocket launchers, mortars, even helicopter gunships disappeared from poorly-guarded ex-Red Army depots to be sold to the highest bidder. Criminal empires, such as the Colombian drug cartels and organized crime syndicates throughout the world, now use the gun trade alongside other operations both to make money and to provide top-notch equipment for use by their minions.

Nor does it require an act of graft to get into the gun trading business. Emerging nations, especially ex-Soviet states like Belarus and the Ukraine, often find themselves with no money, but vast supplies of weapons for which they have no practical need. More prosperous nations openly engage in arms dealing too: the United States and Britain—with their enormous defense budgets—have a long history of selling arms to smaller countries who they wish to support, and as outmoded weaponry is upgraded with newer models, the surplus can be traded out like so many hand-me-downs. Some governments even give their surplus weapons away for free, as part of encouraging an insurgency, or supplying a rebel faction whose goals presumably match those of the donators.

Weapons traded or sold in such a manner sometimes come back to bite the seller. It's no secret that the US once sold weapons to the Taliban as part of that group's insurgent battle against Soviet occupation, only to see those same weapons turned against America following the events of September 11. The path of reversal need not be so direct either. A large nation may trade arms to a smaller, friendly nation, only to see that nation fall on hard times and sell part of its arsenal to raise some money. The weapons might filter through any number of hands before ending up in some insurgency group targeting the very nation who first sold them off.

Furthermore, though often amoral, the arms trade itself is rarely illegal. While some dealers violate UN sanctions, depending on the buyer, and import-export laws often limit the transport of weapons across specific borders, few laws outright forbid the sale of weapons on a large scale. The need for a well-equipped army and the easy money which arms dealers make through sales means that most nations on Earth permit (and often approve of) weapons trade; with demand so constant and supplies so copious, few parties truly wish to see the flow of arms stop.

While arms traders sell their wares anywhere in the world, much of it gets funneled into sub-Saharan Africa. Numerous civil wars, brushfire conflicts, and military oppression have raged over the past ten years, and with little incentive for major powers to interfere, may continue to do so for quite some time. That makes the area a gold mine for arms dealers. Every side in any conflict eagerly seeks out newer, better, and more sophisticated guns; each sale only increases the bloodshed, which increases the desire for reprisals, which increases the demand for more weapons. Until and unless the region stabilizes, arms dealers will continue to ferry their goods to the Dark Continent and make huge profits in the process.

Other areas of the world see the flow of arms increase and decrease according to need. The Middle East, constantly teetering on the verge of chaos, witnesses a considerable influx of weaponry each year. With the bulk of the world's oil lying beneath the sand, the proliferation of arms there won't stop any time soon. Asia sees a number of low-level conflicts as well, with communist rebels in Nepal and the Philippines, ongoing activity from the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, and the never-ending unrest on the border between India and Pakistan. Drug lords and rebel forces in South America need weapons too, and even comparatively stable nations house dissident factions willing to take up arms against whoever calls the shots in the capital. All of them need weapons, and with business to be done, someone somewhere will step up to answer that need.

Arms dealing can be a dangerous business, but many dealers operate as a typical businessman would. They have offices where they conduct their work, accountants to balance the books, and contacts to help guide them to cushy sales. Their operations only differ in the type of product they trade… which admittedly makes things a little dicey from time to time. Ordinary business meetings take place in truly extraordinary circumstances, with armed thugs ready to kill at a moment's notice and surroundings ranging from airport tarmacs to steaming jungles. Most arms dealers maintain at least a modicum of private security, in case their more surly customers cause trouble. Some dealers refuse to sell to particular factions, either because of personal conflicts or (more infrequently) they have ethical misgivings about how a prospective buyer uses his purchase. In this sense, larger organizations and formal governments develop preferred clients, because they do business professionally. Meetings are cordial, deals are generally honored, and the swaggering bravado exhibited by smaller groups rarely appears with an official government.

The other key differentiation between an arms dealer and a more straightforward businessman involves the need for secrecy. Dealers often sell to both sides of a conflict, and violate tacit agreements with clients who don't want the same weapons they're buying to end up being pointed at them. Though few legal restrictions impede an arms' dealers' business, it may skirt the bounds of what a given area considers tolerable, and certain factions may target them simply to prevent a sale to a hated rival. For these reasons, arms dealers tend to work below the radar: keeping their home and private lives secret, utilizing untraceable means of communication, and conducting sales in varying locations to prevent "the wrong people" from getting a lock on them.

Regardless of their methods, products, or clientele, arms dealers are here to stay. Human nature is on their side, for as long as people choose to slaughter each other, they will demand more effective tools to do so. Large armies or rag-tag guerillas, inhuman terrorists or noble freedom fighters, all of them require weapons to succeed… weapons which someone, somewhere can sell them.

Sample Organizations

The irregular units stretched across the globe number in the thousands, from large-scale corporations, to rag-tag gangs of yo-yos with guns. New irregular units are being created every day, while existing units are destroyed, disbanded, or folded into other organizations. A comprehensive attempt to catalogue them all would take up a huge volume… far more than the intended scope of this book. Instead, we present an overview of about a dozen different groups, ranging from terrorist organizations, to guerilla fighters, to private military contractors. Some of them are well known, others more obscure. But they should give you a general idea of the different types of groups which fall under the definition of "irregular," and serve as a basic template should you wish to create any of your own for your campaign. We organize them alphabetically by continent.

Africa

Charles G Taylor and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, Liberia

The honorable Charles G. Taylor served as the 22nd president of Liberia from 1997 to 2003. Before that time, he virtually defined the term "African warlord." He fled into exile at the end of his reign, and was arrested on behalf of the Sierra Leone High Court in 2006. As of this writing, he is currently being tried at the Hague for crimes against humanity.

Taylor's early years included stints in the United States, where he studied at Bentley College in Massachusetts and involved himself in a number of dodgy activities. He eventually made his way to Libya, where he underwent military training with a number of fellow Liberians. They eventually formed a group called the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, and in late 1989 launched a coup attempt against the reigning Liberian government. They enjoyed a large measure of popular support in the early years, as well as backing from Libya and the Ivory Coast. In turn, they sponsored rebel movements in nearby Sierra Leone in exchange for diamonds from that country. Taylor had deep connections with Sierra Leone's rebel leader Foday Sankoh, who engaged in many of the same inhuman practices as Taylor. In 1990, the NPFL seized control of the capital city of Monrovia—toppling the government—but eventually retreated under counter-attacks from loyalist forces and other rebel groups, which had split off from them for ideological reasons. In the ensuing five years, under Taylor's direction, they engaged in numerous human rights abuses, including the ethnic cleansing of Mandingo and Krahn minorities and the forced recruitment of children into their army. At their peak, they numbered approximately 25,000 members, broken into a loose quasi-military organization of armed marauders.

The Blood Diamonds of Campo Verde

With all the millions of hospital records filed every day, you would be hard-pressed to make a connection between 24 of them scattered across England, Canada, and the United States. The subjects have no connection to each other, coming from different backgrounds and living in different parts of their respective countries. Their only link is the similarity of their injuries… and the fact that they were recently engaged to be married. Sarah Wingate from Evanston, Illinois; Regina MacPherson from Halifax, NS; Alice Heathstone from Edinburgh, UK; and over twenty others. All young women on the way to the altar—and all of them wearing a Campo Verde blood diamond on their finger.

Campo Verde was a small village in the heart of Angola. Its citizens were slaughtered to a man by elements of the National Union for the Independence of Angola, who felt the village was hoarding diamonds. They forced mothers to watch while they hacked off every child's left arm, then shot the adults and left the children to bleed to death. The diamonds—five of them, carefully hidden over the years and intended to buy passage to the West for the village's youth—were seized and sold on the black market. Each of them found their way into legitimate jewelers, who crafted them into high-quality engagement rings.

Anyone unfortunate enough to put on one of the rings invariably suffers a horrendous accident: ranging from auto wrecks and household tragedies to bizarre coincidences of Rube Goldberg complexity. But in every case, the victim suffers the loss of her left arm—sheared from the socket as if hacked by a machete. Doctors who examine the wounds often comment on how unusual they are, how much they resemble hand-to-hand combat wounds rather than the sorts of trauma one might associate with the accident in question. The women who survive their wounds claim to have seen little African children—hollow-eyed and spattered with blood—shortly before the accident. But in every case, the engagement ring somehow slips off of the severed arm, never to be recovered by its owner. It falls into sewer systems or is plucked up by rubberneckers at the accident: sold to fences and pawnshops before finding their way back to jewelry stores. Each stone has claimed at least four victims, with the next one just a proposal on bended knee away.

The war officially ended in 1996 with the promise of civil elections, though bloodshed continued for some time afterwards. Taylor ran for president and was elected by a landslide in 1997, garnering 75% of the vote. Observers believe that many people voted for him out of fear that he would resume hostilities if he were not elected (his campaign included perhaps the most chilling slogan in the history of democracy: "he killed my ma, he killed my pa, but I will vote for him"). The NPFL merged with the official military, and many of Taylor's underlings gained key cabinet positions in the new government.

His ascent to power did not stop the bloodshed for long. He continued to support the rebel forces in Sierra Leone during their civil war against the government there, and conflict with neighboring Guinea remained troubling as well. In 1999, a new rebel group—Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)—launched attacks from Guinea against Taylor's regime. They succeeded in slowly winnowing down his sphere of control, aided by a second rebel group, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia, which emerged from the country's southern area in early 2003. Though fiercely opposed to Taylor, LURD engaged in many atrocities similar to those which marked his reign.

A ceasefire was declared in late 2003, which involved Taylor agreeing to relinquish power and go into exile in Nigeria. His resignation came in part from pressure from the United States, who opposed his sponsorship of the rebels in Sierra Leone. Though he departed for Nigeria peacefully, critics claim that Taylor continued to influence politics in Liberia. In 2006, a new, democratically elected Liberian government formally requested Taylor's extradition in order to stand trial for his crimes. Nigeria agreed to release him to face trial in Sierra Leone, but he vanished before he could be arrested. The authorities caught him trying to sneak across the border into Cameroon, and United Nations troops escorted him to the Hague for trial. Official proceedings opened on June 4, 2007, but Taylor's defense attorneys gained a postponement until January 2008.

Taylor has been credited for recognizing a shift in African politics away from unifying strongmen and towards a more ethnic or tribal sensibility. The NPFL violated some of Africa's most deeply held taboos, such as forcing their child soldiers to return to the villages of their birth and assist in wholesale slaughter of friends and family. He remained in power, as so many do, because of an intense personal charisma and a knack for shifting his tone to make those around him believe he represented their point of view. The civil wars which he helped foster cost Liberia over 200,000 lives, and led to the displacement of more than two million citizens—one Liberian out of every three.

Executive Outcomes, South Africa

Executive Outcomes is a paramilitary corporation based in the Republic of South Africa. It began in 1989 following the end of the Border War with Namibia and Angola, and ended in 1999 with the passage of the Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act. Like many irregular army units, it can trace its beginnings to the slow disbanding of a larger military force. South Africa released elements of its army as a part of the treaty to end the war, leaving a number of highly trained soldiers looking for work. One of them, Eeben Barlow, founded Executive Outcomes along with British executives Tony Buckingham and Simon Mann as a means of employing many of his fellow ex-soldiers. His goal was to provide a "highly professional and confidential military service to legitimate governments," helping to support their activities against rebels and insurrectionists.

The track record is a little muddier. Executive Outcomes participated in operations during the Angolan civil war (aiding the government against communist insurgents) and Sierra Leone (battling the rebel forces backed by Charles Taylor, among others). But it also maintained relationships with a number of larger corporations: oil companies, mineral consortiums, and diamond companies like De Beers. Its connection to such companies remained shadowy and less than scrupulous. Critics often accused it of helping to plunder natural resources from failed states where it operated. It also kept nebulous connections to the South African government, sometimes blurring the distinction between an officially sanctioned military force and a privately owned corporation.

This last element proved its undoing, when South Africa enacted the Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act in 1998. It forbade the recruitment of mercenaries into private organizations and required all such organizations to gain the approval of the government before providing foreign military assistance. Executive Outcomes shut its doors, though thanks to its British connections, many operatives found new work in similar organizations elsewhere.

At its peak, Executive Outcomes employed about 4,000 trained soldiers, with perhaps another 500 employees serving in an advisory capacity. In addition to the brushfire operations outlined above, it engaged in training programs for various African military groups, bodyguard services for executives working in dangerous areas, and protection of "key assets" such as oil refineries and mining operations. It had access to a great deal of military equipment, including small arms, support vehicles, and high explosives. Members work in all parts of the world, though most operations took place on the African continent.

Asia

Tamil Tigers (LTTE), Sri Lanka

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam has fought a secessionist campaign against the Sri Lankan government for over thirty years. It began in 1975 in response to perceived government indifference to the concerns of the Tamil minority. The group's purpose, according to founder Velupillai Prabhakaran, is the establishment of an independent state in the island's northern area, and over the years it has done much to attain that goal. As of late 2007, it controls a significant portion of northern Sri Lanka, to the point of establishing a comprehensive administrative structure to run basic services.

The LTTE retains a central organizing structure, with Prabhakaran at its head and a number of subdivisions controlled by senior leadership. Though it emphasizes speed over size, and conducts a number of activities synonymous with terrorism, it follows many of the definitions of a more formal military. Its soldiers number nearly 10,000, it maintains amphibious units which can attack from the sea, and remains one of the few terrorist organizations in the world with its own air force. A political wing of the organization controls courts, banks, and on-air broadcasting (the Voice of the Tigers) , with overtures of becoming a recognized political party.

Despite that, the LTTE strategy continues to embrace terrorist tactics. From the northern countryside and urban areas like the city of Colombo, it launches attacks against government officials, civic institutions, temples and mosques, and commuter services like buses and trains. Its activities have resulted in a number of civilian deaths—with some incidents producing hundreds of casualties—which it refers to as unfortunate collateral damage. Its infamous suicide squad, the Black Tigers, conducts bombings and political assassinations with an effectiveness that few other organizations can rival. All LTTE members carry cyanide capsules with them, prepared to die rather than be taken alive.

They do not limit themselves to targets in Sri Lanka, either. India, Pakistan, and other mainland nations have suffered attacks from the Tigers, most notably in the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. The Indian government works closely with the Sri Lankan government in an attempt to root out the Tigers, and Indian courts have standing warrants for Prabhakaran's arrest. The LTTE declared a ceasefire following the 9/11 attacks on the United States, but with the 2005 election of Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa—whose platform included a tougher stance on Tamil rebels—a new wave of violence began, which continues at the time of this writing.

The group funds its operations through appeals to foreign governments and Tamil minorities living in India and elsewhere. It has also funneled funds for legitimate causes into its organization, most notably with money raised to help victims of the 2004 Asian Tsunami. More traditional criminal activities include arms smuggling, credit card fraud, extortion, and drug trafficking. Many LTTE members practice piracy as well, seizing ships in the Indian Ocean and kidnapping or killing their passengers and crew. Though it remains a largely secular organization, it has participated in ethnic cleansings of Muslim and Sinhalese minorities within its jurisdiction. With control over significant parts of the countryside and a ruthlessly efficient organizational

structure, it looks to cause quite a bit of trouble for the Sri Lankan authorities for some time to come.

Abu Sayyaf (the Philippines)

Abu Sayyaf (also known as Al Harakat al Islamiyya) ranks as the most prominent of a number of Islamic separatist groups operating in the southern Philippines. It seeks an independent state, free of the remainder of the Philippines (which is largely Christian), and follow an ethos of radical Islamic teaching similar to those of many Middle Eastern terrorist groups.

It began as a splinter group, breaking off from the larger Moro National Liberation Front (which has since ceased its activities following a negotiated treaty with the Filipino government) in the early 1990s. Under the leadership of Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani, it launched a recurring campaign of bombings, kidnappings, political assassinations, and extortion. Its first large-scale operation involved an amphibious assault on the town of Ipil, followed by a string of widely publicized kidnappings and bombings. Janjalani died in a battle with Filipino police in 1998, and was replaced by his younger brother Khadaffy.

Under the young Janjalani, Abu Sayyaf began to move away from its religious motivations, acting more out of profit and adopting tactics closer to those of traditional criminals. In May of 2000, it seized a diving resort on Sipadan in Malaysia, claiming multiple hostages before fleeing to a stronghold on another island. Similar incidents continued throughout the early years of the 21st century, including the abduction of American tourists from a Philippine resort in 2001 and the destruction of *Superferry 14* in 2004, which killed 116 people. Khadaffy Janjalani died during a gun battle in 2006, and Filipino authorities exhumed his body buried in the jungle a few months later. No one is entirely certain who controls the group now, though the State Department considers Radullan Sahiron (known as Commander Putol) and his son, Ismin Sahiron (known as IS) the likely candidates.

The State Department estimates that about 400 people belong to Abu Sayyaf, mostly scattered among the southern islands of the Philippines. Its internal structure remains a mystery, though it emphasizes semi-autonomous factions who can act more or less independently of each other. Under the Janjalanis, Abu Sayyaf enjoyed close ties with other Islamic militants , notably Ramzi Yousef and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed who belong to al-Qaeda. It receives funding from a variety of radical Islamic groups—most prominently Jemaah Islamiya in nearby Indonesia, but also from Middle Eastern groups as well. Its movement towards overt criminal activity under Khadaffy Janjalani may have stemmed from a need for more financial resources.

Europe

Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA), Spain

The ETA (Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna) is an organization of Basque nationalists—a cultural minority living in the

mountainous region between Spain and France. Its goals are the creation of an independent Basque nation, a goal vehemently opposed by the Spanish government. The ETA began in 1959, spurred by Spanish dictator Francisco Franco's suppression of Basque language and traditions, and weary of the patience preached by more moderate nationalist groups. It has since engaged in a lengthy campaign of bombings and assassinations, targeting members of the Spanish government who oppose its goals. Its early years were marked by fierce opposition from the Franco regime, which struck hard against the Basques as a group. It initially received support from Spanish oppositionists in exile, who hoped its activities would destabilize Franco's rule. It also had the tacit support of the French government, which quietly allowed ETA a safe haven in French territory without interference. Its actions culminated in the assassination of Admiral Carrero Blanco—Franco's chosen successor—in 1973. Some contend that Blanco's death permitted the Spanish transition to democracy following Franco's death.

The 1970s and '80s saw a continuation of ETA activities, now split into two groups: the ETA political military (pm) and the ETA military (m). With Franco gone, its traditional means of support were less eager to back it, but its activities did not cease. In September, 1985, it detonated a car bomb which killed American Eugene Kent Brown, and in 1995 it tried to kill the leader of Spain's Popular Party, Jose Maria Aznar. Several ceasefires have been declared over the years, but none of them has yet led to a lasting peace.

The 9/11 attacks on the US caused a great deal of hardship for the ETA. Emboldened by new anti-terrorist measures, the Spanish and French governments cracked down hard on ETA activities. Train bombings in Madrid in 2004 were initially blamed on the ETA, but later turned out to be the work of Islamic militants. Even so, the public outcry following the bombings limited the group's ability to operate unmolested. Perhaps sensing the negative ramifications of excessive casualties, its attacks softened to a certain extent, and the leadership often gives deliberate warnings before a bombing or attack in order to prevent innocent deaths. Nevertheless, an assault on Madrid's airport in late 2006 indicates that it has no intention of ceasing operations.

The ETA bases its structure around a "military cupola," which organizes and coordinates its activities. Beneath them stand a series of groups called *talde commandos*, operating out of a designated geographic area. Safe houses and secreted caches provide safety and security, and individual *commandos* have been known to move around quite frequently, making arrest difficult in the extreme. Most estimates put the ETA at several hundred members, with a number of other unspecified sympathizers. Financial support comes in the form of more overt criminal enterprises, including smuggling and extortion. The ETA espouses a socialist philosophy, which has garnered sympathy from the likes of Cuba and Nicaragua, and members have been known to train in areas such as the Lebanon and Libya, which have a history of supporting terrorist organizations.

In addition to more violent acts against the Spanish government, ETA encourages smaller acts of rebellion, such as street demonstrations, graffiti, and petty acts of vandalism. It organizes a number of youth groups in the Basque regions of Spain, hoping to tap in on young anger and resentment against the powers that be. It also engages in anonymous threats against chosen individuals, and has been known to kidnap people who don't pay its extortionist "revolutionary tax." The ETA doesn't generally conduct operations in France, though that hasn't prevented the French government working more closely with the Spaniards to root it out in recent years. In addition to official police forces, the ETA has historically grappled with the government-sponsored Antiterrorist Liberation Group (*Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación*, or GAL), which conducted attacks and punitive raids against suspected ETA sympathizers. The group disbanded in 1987, but the ETA claims the Spanish government continues its tactics through surreptitious kidnappings, torture, and similar crimes.

Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA), Ireland

The RIRA is a splinter group formed after a split with the larger Provisional Irish Republican Army. Both groups have their origins in the 1916 Irish revolt against British rule, and are dedicated to a unified and self-governing Irish island. The IRA's main focus has been the six counties of Northern Island, which formally belong to Great Britain, and which it feels should be part of a united Ireland. The "Troubles," as its activities are referred to, have continued for most of the latter part of the 20th century, consisting of bombings, assassinations, paramilitary operations, and more peaceful activities such as hunger strikes and propaganda campaigns.

The Real IRA formed in 1997, following the Provisional IRA's 1994 ceasefire and subsequent political developments. The larger group's participation in the peace process culminated in 2005, when it agreed to lay down its arms and resort to nonviolent means to achieve its goals. The Real IRA rejected those terms—comparing them to the 1921 partition of Ireland which it viewed as an unacceptable compromise—and continued to wage a terrorist campaign in the intervening years. Its stated goal is the complete withdrawal of the British government from Ireland, and it claims it will never agree to a ceasefire until that goal is reached. Early incidents included a mortar attack on a police station in the town of Beleek, and a pair of high-profile car bombings in Banbridge and Omagh. A brief ceasefire curtailed its activities for a time, but the new century saw renewed activity: focusing both on attacks in Northern Ireland, and across the sea in Great Britain.

Informants and declining membership has cost the organization of late. Its leader, Michael McKevitt, was arrested in 2001, and sentenced to twenty years in prison. Other key members have been imprisoned as well, and both the British and Irish governments consider the Real IRA a terrorist or-

ganization. But it continues to conduct operations, including fire bombing campaigns in the town of Newry and a failed mortar attack in Craigavon, both in August, 2006.

The Provisional IRA organizes itself along the lines of a classic guerilla organization, with a centralized command controlling the actions of a number of autonomous cells. Its Army Council consists of seven members, who coordinate various branches of the operation (training, finances, etc.). Individual cells retain absolute secrecy, so that the loss of one does not compromise the remainder of the operation. Scotland Yard estimates the Real IRA is fairly small, with about 150 members to its name. It sometimes conducts operations with sister organizations—fellow splitters from the Provisional IRA such as the Continuity IRA—though it remains its own entity, distinct from such groups.

In addition to prosecution from the British and Irish governments, the Real IRA suffers the unwanted attentions of its former colleagues in the Provisional IRA. Real IRA members claim to have been threatened and attacked by the Provisional IRA, and the assassination of Real IRA member Joe O'Connor in October, 2000, purportedly came at the hands of the Provisional IRA. Support comes primarily from the United States, where sympathetic Irish Americans make financial contributions to its cause. It has attempted to purchase weapons from US gun dealers, and purportedly seeks more sophisticated technology in the Balkans. In 2006, three members were arrested in Spain for smuggling cigarettes; their activities may have expanded into similarly conventional criminal enterprises. Its tactics include hit-and-run raids, covert assassinations, and targeted bombings. Mortar attacks are a preferred method of assault, especially against police stations and other symbols of authority. Its arsenal consists mainly of small arms, assault rifles, military-grade explosives, anti-tank weapons, and rocket launchers.

Viktor Bout (Arms Dealer), Russia

Viktor Bout is a former Soviet army officer whose name has become synonymous with arms dealing in the years since the end of the Cold War. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, he made hundreds of millions of dollars trading arms (mostly to war-ton areas in sub-Saharan Africa) under the guise of various legitimate enterprises. Years of tacit indulgence from Western governments allowed him to amass a huge empire of contacts and resources, and when those same governments eventually declared him a fugitive, he used his empire to remain safe from capture. He remains at large to this day.

Bout was born to Russian parents in what is now Tajikistan, though official accounts vary on the exact place. His early years are shrouded in mystery, but he joined the Soviet military shortly before the end of the Cold War. He trained in foreign languages (picking up half a dozen over the years), and likely became involved with the GRU (the military wing of the KGB) during his service. When the Soviet Union collapsed, he found himself highly skilled, but without a job… and with ready access to stockpiles of surplus military hardware. His contacts helped him acquire not just guns and other weapons, but the cargo planes to fly them—often left abandoned on the airfields for anyone to walk up and take. With those resources, he started the "Transavia Export Cargo" company. He initially flew guns into the worn-torn areas of Somalia, but soon expanded operations to include such African hotspots as Liberia and Sierra Leone. The weapons he sold helped escalate those conflicts into unspeakable bloodbaths.

Bout prospered in large part because of his ex-Soviet connections, which allowed him to obtain better and more numerous weapons than his competitors. Besides small arms, he could supply rocket launchers, high explosives, tanks, attack helicopters, and anti-aircraft systems. His fleet included numerous Antonov heavy cargo planes, which could ferry large amounts of equipment and land in places his competitors couldn't. In a few short years, he had diversified his empire into a number of shell companies—mostly aviation-based—which allowed him to ship arms to anywhere in the world. He operated out of Bulgaria, Guinea, and the United Arab Emirates, focusing the bulk of his operation in Africa, but displaying a willingness to sell to anyone… even opposing sides of the same conflict. His list of clients included the Taliban (both before and during its rule of Afghanistan), Hezbollah, the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group in the Philippines, and a number of prominent African warlords.

He also worked for Western powers on occasion. During the war in Iraq, his companies reportedly flew into dangerous areas at the behest of the US and Britain. Doing so kept American and British servicemen out of harm's way, while delivering weapons both governments considered vital to their cause. The United Nations, too, made use of Bout on occasion, though his activities flagrantly violated its arms embargoes in a number of global hotspots.

Interpol, the international law enforcement agency, formally indicted him for arms smuggling and money laundering in 2002, as did the nation of Belgium, which served as a nexus for his operations. In response, he fled back to Russia, whose Constitution protects its citizens from extradition. His operations have continued, however, and as recently as 2004, the US Government tried to keep him off of a UN sanctions list because of the work he did for US causes. To put it bluntly, Bout is a useful man. His services are in demand, he'll work for whoever will pay him, and he's very good at what he does. He remains in Moscow, living openly with his family, and purportedly continues to travel abroad using a number of carefully crafted aliases.

The Middle East

Al-Qaeda: Pakistan, Afghanistan, and points throughout the world

Since the attacks of 9/11, no terrorist group in the world has attained as much infamy as al-Qaeda: the militant Islamic fundamentalist group led by Osama bin Laden. Its name (also spelled "al-Qaida" in the West) translates as "the Base," and it acts as an umbrella organization for a number of radical Islamic groups. According to the State Department,

Der Säbel; Frankfurt, Germany

The PMC known as Der Säbel (The Saber) claims nearly 500 soldiers in its employ. Its reputation (among those few who recognize the name) is truly vile. Der Säbel has been purportedly involved in all manner of ghastly atrocities: the massacre of a Bosnian village in 1996, the execution of Filipino prisoners in 1999, and multiple cases of ethnic cleansing in all parts of war-torn Africa. No one can identify its members because no one survived the attacks, and all traces of the soldiers behind them have vanished as well. Law enforcement agencies can't get a lead on its members because they can't find anyone belonging to the group. Only one man—founder Ernst von Kassel—has ever been identified and he moves too carefully to make any charges stick.

In actuality, the 500 soldiers claimed by Der Säbel don't exist… at least not in any mortal form. They once belonged to von Kassel's military regiment—a Hessian company in British employ during the late 18th century. They served under General John Brugoyne during the first part of the American Revolution, butchering colonists in New York and Vermont. During his stay in the Americas, von Kassel became fascinated with native superstitions and the magic that lay beneath them. He studied them intensively, convinced that he could use them to become immortal. He put that belief to the test during the march to Saratoga in 1777. The American militia cornered his forces somewhere west of Lake Champlain and slaughtered them to a man. Von Kassel allowed it to happen: the souls of his troops were vital to his plans, as were their violent deaths at the hands of colonists eager for revenge. He stole away from the battlefield shortly before they engaged the enemy and waited until that evening to return. The ground was soaked with the blood of his men, their bodies left for the ravens to devour. Drawing his saber, he planted it to the hilt in the center of the unhallowed ground and began his invocations.

It worked, though not entirely the way he thought. The souls of his men were drawn into the blade, filling him with unnatural life. So long as he kept the weapon on his person, he would not age: the power within it would sustain his youth and vitality. However, the weapon could not leave his side for more than a few hours, or the spell's strength would weaken. Moreover, the Hessian souls within needed feeding of their own: the blood of innocents that had fueled their rage in life now became their sole source of sustenance in death.

Von Kassel was more than happy to pay the price and Der Säbel now exists as a means of keeping his weapon primed. He accepts contracts from those looking to spill indiscriminate blood, then travels to the desired location and invokes the blade. The souls of his men spring forth, rotted and blood-spattered, to butcher all in their sight. They then return to the weapon to give their master the immortality he so craves. None have yet seen them and lived, and von Kassel keeps up the pretense that his troops are "normal" soldiers to keep investigators off the track. He keeps the saber in a modified briefcase, handcuffed to his wrist at all times. When working it in the field, he straps the weapon to his waist, along with the scabbard that held it those long centuries ago. The work keeps him eternally young and the pay provides the leverage to enjoy it. He doesn't belong to any given faction in the World of Darkness. Beyond eternal youth and an inability to be harmed, he has no other powers or abilities. He fears only the loss of his saber… and what the ghosts of his men might do to him if they ever broke free of its yoke.

al-Qaeda seeks a return to ancient Sharia law throughout the Muslim world, an expulsion of Western forces from the Persian Gulf region, the overthrow of Israel (specifically the return of Jerusalem to Muslim hands), and the creation of a "pen-Islamic state" which will presumably engage in an apocalyptic final struggle with the forces of the West.

It began life during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, dedicated to removing the communist occupiers and enjoying the support of the United States towards that end. As the occupation drew to a close, some members wanted to continue the fight in other parts of the world, and spread their message of militant Islam to places locked in conflict with other ideologies. Bin Laden, then one of the organization's key leaders, returned to his native Saudi Arabia, only to see it fall under threat from Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Following the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, bin Laden offered his services as a protector to the Saudi king, lest Iraq continue its advance further south. King Fahd declined the offer, and instead allowed the US Army to establish bases on Saudi soil. The thought of foreign soldiers on holy land (Saudi Arabia is home to Mecca and Medina, the two most sacred sites in all of Islam) angered bin Laden, and he began publicly criticizing the Saudi government before eventually fleeing into exile in the Sudan.

From there, he slowly built up his organization, opening training camps and marshalling financial resources to his cause. An ill-conceived alliance with the group Egyptian Islamic Jihad came to a head with the attempted assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. When it failed, the Sudan expelled both EIJ and bin Laden's organization

from its soil. Bin Laden returned to Afghanistan, where the well-organized Taliban was cementing its power in the chaos following the departure of the Soviets. It offered him safe haven where he could train and develop his organization further. Al-Qaeda training camps soon sprung up throughout the country.

From there, it began an extended *jihad,* or holy war, against the Western powers (specifically the United States). Its first noted attack came in 1993, when Ramzi Yousef conducted a bombing of the Word Trade Center in New York. Though only partially successful (the towers did not collapse), he succeeded in killing six people and causing millions of dollars worth of property damage. Similar attacks followed in the ensuing years: a car bombing in Saudi Arabia in 1995, attacks on US embassies in Africa in 1998, and the bombing of the *USS Cole* in 2000.

It came to a head on the morning of September 11, 2001. Al-Qaeda operatives hijacked four passenger planes on the US East Coast. They flew two of them into the World Trade Center—causing the collapse of both towers—and a third into the Pentagon building in Washington DC (which suffered damage but remained intact). The fourth plane, likely intended for the US Capitol building, crashed in a field outside of Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after passengers onboard turned against their captors.

In response, the United States and its allies launched an attack to overthrow the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. With the help of the Afghan Northern Alliance, they enjoyed considerable early success, removing the Taliban from power and inflicting considerable damage on al-Qaeda facilities. Bin Laden and other key operatives managed to evade capture, however, retreating to the rugged terrain of eastern Afghanistan. The US has claimed subsequent gains against al-Qaeda in the ensuing years, including the capture of many members in important leadership positions. Bin Laden himself remains at large, however, and the invasion of Iraq in 2003 drew numerous al-Qaeda operatives into that country. The organization continues to present a substantial threat, and new cells and members continue to emerge all over the world.

Al-Qaeda retains an extremely loose, almost nebulous structure that defies any one definition. By some accounts, it consists only of bin Laden and his inner circle, numbering perhaps twenty-five people. They serve as the "emir" and command structure for the organization: planning operations, raising funds, and issuing edicts. A law committee studies Islamic text to ensure that their activities are in keeping with their extremist interpretation of the faith, while a business committee works to ensure funding, and issue documentation such as phony passports and the like.

Beyond that, little is known about the precise structure of al-Qaeda operations. Anti-terrorist campaigns in the West successfully disrupted a number of its activities—including capturing or killing many mid-level and senior level leaders. In addition, many Islamic extremist groups who identify themselves with al-Qaeda's goals operate without communication from senior leadership, transforming the group into an amorphous blob of independent organizations with similar methods and direction. In this sense, al-Qaeda remains more of a spiritual inspiration than a formal orga-

nization, and with the War on Terror continually in flux, its status literally changes from day to day.

Al-Qaeda maintains a significant presence in Iraq, currently organized under an umbrella institution called the Mujahidin Shura Council (MSC). Leadership of al-Qaeda in Iraq currently falls to Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, who replaced Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi after Zarqawi was killed in a US air strike. It targets both Coalition Forces led by the United States, and Shiite civilians (al-Qaeda is a Sunni Muslim organization) in an attempt to foster sectarian strife. It also targets Shiite leaders for assassination, launches roadside attacks on US convoys and checkpoints, and targets hotels and public gathering points for suicide bombings.

Similar tactics mark its activities in the rest of the world, too. Organizations claiming affiliation or inspiration from al-Qaeda instigated bombings in the city of Istanbul in 2003; the 2004 train bombings in Madrid, Spain, which killed almost two hundred people; and attacks on the London Underground in the summer of 2005. In all cases, the perpetrators displayed a willingness to inflict civilian casualties in hopes of sowing fear and insecurity among cultures they viewed as barbaric. This stems from bin Laden's stated belief that the death of civilians is necessary during *jihad*.

It raises money through donations from like-minded individuals, and by re-routing funds initially gathered for Muslim charitable causes. It also kidnaps hostages for ransom and operatives in Europe engage in credit card fraud as well. US anti-terror efforts routinely target such operations as a way of hampering the group's financial assets. Despite that, its recent operations—and in particular the horrifying success of the 9/11 attacks—made its name a rallying cry for radical Muslims everywhere, and terrorist attacks claimed by al-Qaeda operatives will likely continue well into the foreseeable future.

Hezbollah: The Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories

Hezbollah is a band of militant Islamic extremists with close ties to Iran. It emerged in the Lebanon following the Israeli invasion of 1982, and operates more or less exclusively in that country and its neighbors. Its political wing currently holds fourteen seats in the Lebanese Parliament, granting it political legitimacy even though many nations still consider it a terrorist organization.

It initially focused on driving the Israelis from Lebanese territory, and by extension, other Western forces as well. It received considerable support from Ayatollah Khomeni's government in Iran, which provided training, funding, and military equipment . Hezbollah's espousal of radical Islamic teachings matches Iran's official policy very closely, and it takes inspiration from the Iranian revolution which swept Khomeni into power at the end of the 1970s.

It was among the first groups in the world to make use of suicide bombers, most spectacularly in the 1983 attack on the US Marine barracks in Beirut, which killed 241 servicemen and a number of civilians as well. Similar activities occurred throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including rocket attacks, kidnappings, assassinations , and an extended guerilla war against Israeli forces in southern Lebanon. Western governments generally hold Hezbollah responsible for the 1985 hijacking of TWA flight 847, though the organization repeatedly denied participation in the event.

A watershed moment for it came in 2000, when Israel withdrew its forces from southern Lebanon under pressure from Hezbollah attacks. The victory, though contested (Israel planned the withdrawal long in advance and merely accelerated the timetable under the wave of attacks), greatly increased its popularity in the Lebanon, which it translated into seats in the Lebanese Parliament. Conflict with Israel has continued, however, marked most dramatically by a month-long conflict with Israel in the summer of 2006. It continues to call for the destruction of the Jewish state and lend covert support to a number of Palestinian extremist groups, as well as the expulsion of American and other Western forces from the region.

Its membership numbers in the thousands (exact numbers are unknown), and it enjoys considerable support from the Lebanon's Shiite population. Though it bases the bulk of its operations in southern Lebanon and northern Israel, the State Department believes the group has cells all over the world. Hezbollah possesses one of the most sophisticated organizations for a group of its type anywhere. Leadership centers on the Shura Council, consisting of seven members which divides activities into two basic branches. The military branch includes security forces, training facilities, and guerilla fighting units throughout southern Lebanon/northern Israel. Its political branch includes a Parliamentary council, social services such as hospitals, and its own television station, Al-Manar.

Though the Western world considers it a terrorist organization, many Middle Easterners grant it legitimacy, viewing its members as resistance fighters against Israeli aggression. It receives support both from Iran and from the government of Syria, both of whom maintain close ties to the organization. As part of its shift from a guerilla organization to a more legitimate socio-political organization, it has modified some of its original philosophy. It acknowledges the multi-cultural make-up of the Lebanon and accepts democratic notions in principle. It remains fiercely opposed to Israel, however (though it claims to have nothing against Judaism as a culture), and continues to espouse the sort of radical Muslim doctrine advocated by its allies in Iran.

Activities often straddle the line between guerilla fighting and terrorist activities. It shows no compunctions about attacking civilian targets and conducting secretive bombing campaigns, but its actions against the Israeli army display the hallmarks of guerilla fighting against a superior enemy. Its equipment ranks among the most advanced for a group of its type, including rocket launches and anti-aircraft missiles. It has no specific ties to al-Qaeda and condemned the attacks of 9/11, but remains opposed to US interference in the Middle

East and continues to target US personnel as supporters of Israel. Its designation as a terrorist organization remains tied to other political activities, and may shift depending on how it—and the Lebanon—evolves in the years to come.

North America

MPRI: United States

Military Professional Resources Incorporated is one of the largest and most successful private military companies in the world. With headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, it maintains offices in some of the world's most notorious hotspots, including Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Balkans. Its services include military stabilization (combat duties), training and development programs, threat assessment, and logistical operations in support of national military forces.

MPRI began operations in 1987 with a group of eight former officers of the United States military. In 2000, it was purchased by L-3 Communications, a massive defense corporation which helped it to diversify into a number of complimentary fields. It employs over 10,000 people, including those in subsidiary groups, and has extensive operations (largely in a support or training capacity) in current US combat zones.

It maintains a strong commitment to a set series of ethics, though like all large companies, such noble sentiments don't always hold up in the details. Nonetheless, with the difficulties experienced by competitors such as Blackwater, its espousal of firm rules of conduct is markedly preferable to the alternative. It does business with established "friendly" governments (i.e., those allied with the United States), advocates strict adherence to national and international law, and maintains a system of "quality control" whereby incidents are catalogued and recorded.

Much of its work comes through contracts with the US Government, and some has fallen under serious criticism. In 1995, it worked to train units in the Croatian army, which later launched Operation Storm that drove the Serbs from their Bosnian strongholds and created nearly 300,000 new refugees. MPRI denied many allegations of its involvement in the operation, but many suspect it of facilitating a number of unseemly particulars. Less controversial operations include the training of friendly military units in Africa under the African Crisis Response Initiative (a program initiated by the administration of former US President Bill Clinton to help upgrade the forces of stable African nations) and the administration of various ROTC programs in American universities.

South America

FARC: Colombia

Fuerzas Armada Revolucionariras de Colombia, or FARC, translates as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. It is a heavily armed organization of communist insurgents in the southeastern region of the country. It ranks among the oldest and best-organized guerilla insurgencies in the world, with members numbering close to 20,000. FARC evolved from peasant self-defense leagues organized by Colombia's Liberal party during a period known as "La Violencia:" a low-level civil war which took place from 1948 to 1958. Its members participated in La Violencia as one of the largest left-wing guerilla units, fighting forces of Colombia's Conservative party.

In 1958, a coalition of moderates on both sides formed the National Front to restore civilian rule, though communist units retained control of certain areas of the countryside. FARC reformed in 1964, following attacks from the Colombian army on these autonomous enclaves. Its early days consisted of re-establishing similar enclaves, as well as engaging in kidnappings and bombing campaigns against the newly established government. In 1982, it convened the "Seventh Guerilla Conference," during which it spelled out its specific goals and plans to achieve them. Its stated purpose was the overthrow of the Colombian government and the establishment of a Marxist regime, which it would attain through armed insurrection and criminal activities designed to undermine those in power. For the next two decades, it engaged in an ongoing guerilla war, including vehicle bombings, kidnappings, extortions, and murder. The most noted incident took place in 1999, when it killed three US activists whom it claimed were CIA operatives. A 1998 ceasefire ended in late winter 2002, when Colombian President Andrés Pastrana Arango ordered the army to retake FARC-controlled areas. Military conflict against the Colombian government continues to the present day.

FARC organizes itself along strict military lines, with squads of twelve forming into companies, "columns," and "fronts." A high command issues orders to lower-ranking units in a highly centralized structure, complete with ranks, uniforms, and even an "academy" for formal military training. It is currently led by Manuel "Tirofijo" Marulanda, along with six others who represent its high command. Its tactics involve traditional terrorist methods of spreading fear and dissent, along with periodic engagements with the Colombian National army. It shows few compunctions about attacking civilians: sometimes murdering local peasants whom it claims display government loyalties, and launching frequent mortar attacks using crude and indiscriminate equipment.

Though espousing a strict Marxist philosophy, its activities more closely match those of criminal profiteers. It involves itself in copious cocaine production—usually by providing protection in exchange for a "tax" on the drug—and retains ties to various Colombian drug cartels. It uses safe havens in the Andes and elsewhere to rest and recuperate, and its members will cross the border into Venezuela and Ecuador to avoid Colombian army patrols. The State Department suspects government complicity in these retreats, but no concrete evidence has yet been shown. Washington also suspects Cuba of providing financial aid, based on similarities in espoused philosophy.

At the time of this writing, FARC holds some 46 hostages, mostly for political reasons, though some as simple ransom de-

Andean temple, somewhere north of Chivay

If one were to travel the treacherous paths through the peaks of this district, one may come across a building, carved out of the face of a sheer cliff, accessible only through a winding mountain trail that doesn't even pause to acknowledge it. It apparently once served as a temple, though to who or what no one can say. Its pictoglyphs conform to no known South American culture and the bat-wing creatures carved into its walls bear no resemblance to any living thing. It has stood here for longer than anyone can remember, and the harsh Andean climate has done little to damage its ancient textured surface.

A few archaeological expeditions sent to the site in the early 20th century never returned. Their deaths were blamed on the treacherous conditions of the surrounding landscape and further expeditions were curtailed. Other interlopers have passed it from time to time, and a fair number have even made use of it: a gang of bank robbers took shelter from the police there in the winter of 1935, a splinter cell of Shining Path hid arms and supplies within its depth, and wanderers and vagrants of all varieties stopped to spend the night there in their wanderings.

In some cases, nothing happened. The temple protected them from the elements and the visitors went on their way without further incident. In others, however, the interlopers disappeared… or worse, were butchered horribly with no sign of their attackers. The police found money from the 1935 robbery on snowy slopes nearly 2,000 feet down and locales spotted bills floating on the wind for months afterwards—still smeared with the robbers' blood. Shining Path has had the most success with it, and continues to stash supplies in its hidden recesses. But none of them linger after dark, and they have never found the walled-up passages leading deeper into the temple's interior—passages which still echo with the gurgling sighs of the temple's original occupant.

mands. Military strikes against the Colombian Army continue and drug trafficking operations show no signs of slowing.

Shining Path: Peru

The name "Shining Path" refers to the Communist Party of Peru, which has conducted a guerilla warfare campaign against the Peruvian government since 1980. It seeks an overthrow of the power apparatus in Peru through a massive popular uprising, aiming to create a communist state patterned on Maoist principles. Unlike FARC, it underwent a considerable decline after years of successful terrorist attacks, and its membership currently numbers only a few hundred members.

It was founded in the late 1960s by university professor Abimael Guzman, who taught at San Cristóbal of Huamanga University, in Ayacucho. In its early days, it remained little more than a radical student union, gaining control of several university councils before suffering a series of setbacks and reorganizing along more militant lines. Under Guzman's tutelage, it began training members in military tactics, and launched a guerilla war in 1980 on the eve of Peru's first elections in over a decade. Based in the Peruvian Andes, it sought to win the hearts of the populace by punishing criminals, assassinating members of the upper class , and conducting "popular trials" against disliked local figures. Government indifference allowed it to take root and spread, and a heavy-handed military assault in 1981—in which the Peruvian military detained, tortured, and killed a number of innocent peasants—gave it considerable credibility in the areas where it operated.

It escalated its activities throughout the 1980s, targeting key pieces of infrastructure such as bridges and radio towers. It also conducted retaliatory raids against supposed government sympathizers, executing a number of local peasants including women and children. While it generally stayed focused on the countryside, it launched attacks on the capital city of Lima as well, bombing shopping malls and detonating explosives outside important government facilities. By the early 1990s, it had seized control of vast areas of the countryside, marked by brutal executions and the forced closure of local businesses as "tools of imperialist exploitation."

Its tactics did not endear it to the populace, however, and the 1990s marked a decline in its fortunes. Roaming bands of anti-Shining Path peasants, called *rondas* had operated in the group's territory since its inception, and in 1991, Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori made the *rondas* official representatives of law enforcement. He sent the Peruvian military into Shining Path-controlled areas as well, hoping to root out the terrorists and restore government control to the countryside (they proved as dismissive of human rights as Shining Path did, however, engaging in torture and other atrocities in an attempt to locate the rebels). The harshest blow fell in 1992, when Guzman himself was captured by Peruvian police. A cult of personality had sprung up around the charismatic leader over the years, and his followers spoke of him alongside the likes of Marx, Lenin, and Mao. Losing him shook many of his followers to their core. Leadership fell to a lieutenant, Oscar Ramirez, who controlled the group until his own arrest in 1999. By that time, Shining Path activity had fallen to but a shell of its former self. A resurgence began several years

later, with attacks on law enforcement officials and other instruments of the government. Renewed activity prompted the government to send troops back into the countryside, and though decimated, Shining Path retains some 300 members capable of launching terrorist operations.

It remains limited to the countryside, refocusing its efforts on protecting Peru's coca farmers from government interference. Increased ties to drug smugglers give it a financial base with which to operate, while its members continue to act under a highly decentralized command. The harsh geography of the Andes demands that members retain a great deal of autonomy, allowing them to act without communication from superiors. While decimated by government gains and the loss of their philosophical leaders, rooting the last of the members out of such rugged terrain will take some doing.

Irregular Armies in the World of Darkness

For the hidden denizens of the World of Darkness, irregular units make a far better fit for their goals than those of more formal militaries. The strength they provide often rivals national armed forces (save in the largest cases, such as the United States), while flexibility and loose organization more readily allows supernatural incidents to be covered up and forgotten. A vampire, for example, can disguise himself much more easily in a guerilla unit, where comings and goings are not uncommon, than in an organized military where they check your bunk each night and expect you in formation at the crack of dawn.

Furthermore, irregular units can be more readily dispatched in the service of shadowy goals—seeking arcane tomes or hunting a hated rival—without arousing suspicion from the media or other snoops. Members of various supernatural sub-sects can thus use them for their own purposes, either by moving among their ranks or controlling them from afar. On the other side of the equation, supernaturals are more likely to encounter irregular forces—private armies, mercenaries, or just common thugs—as minions of a given foe. The chaos and mystery of the World of Darkness fits very easily into irregular (read: messy) tactics and political goals.

The supernatural being in a given movement depends on his specific philosophy, of course. Some may gravitate towards an existing organization, agreeing with its political or ideological goals, or perhaps sharing a common culture with its members. Others may seek to form their own political movement, drawing like-minded mortals to their cause and gaining strength through the dedication of their minions (obviously, they must hide their true nature in such cases, though certain key mortals may know the truth). Their powers and abilities help them evade capture, while giving guerilla raids in which they participate an unexpected advantage (few soldiers expect their targets to shoot lightning out of its hands, or turn into a wolf the size of a Volkswagen). On a more mercenary level, those committed to warrior traditions may choose to join (or control) a PMC, allowing them to practice their skills as much as they like without having to suffer the whims of national politics. And in cases where their goals lead them to dangerous areas or against entrenched foes, the well-oiled leverage of military force becomes much easier when you can simply pay the combatants or extol them to some greater purpose without having to go through official channels.

The following pages contain a quick breakdown of Kindred, Forsaken, and Awakened participation in irregular forms of warfare. It discusses the involvement of various factions in a generalized way, intended to convey the reasons for joining and/or the methods of controlling such units, rather than specific details about individual groups.

The Kindred

As the eldest supernatural beings in the World of Darkness, the Kindred often have the longest memories… and still hold ancient grudges and atrocities deep within their hearts. Civil wars and guerilla movements feed on such memories: ancient pieces of ethnic strife begun centuries before any of the current participants were ever born. The need to claim a homeland for a dispossessed minority, to drive an "invader" from lands they occupied hundred of years ago, or to gain revenge from some long-forgotten slight now living only in the vampire's memory: all of these could compel the Kindred to join or control irregular units. On the flipside of the equation, elder Kindred often amass great wealth and power over the course of their long lives. Their enemies likely lack the strength to confront them directly, but through guerilla actions and terrorist attacks—explained away by plausible reports to the human world—they can inflict an incalculable amount of damage. Entrenched vampires may see irregular units as foes to be destroyed: anarchic enemies threatening all they have built rather than heroic resistance fighters fighting the entrenched status quo.

Of the five covenants, the Carthian Movement is most likely to fight alongside an irregular unit. Carthians embrace a variety of causes, which may lead them to join a number of different organizations: some may even oppose each other on the same field of battle. Because of their youth and fervor, they succeed more by guiding existing movements towards targets of their choosing, rather than founding and building up their own. Well-established guerilla movements such as FARC or the ETA offer them the most structure, while newer organizations may allow them a greater sense of control. Whatever the cause, Carthians find themselves well-suited to guerilla fighters: indeed, the very structure of their organization matches that of underground resistance groups. Decentralized cells allow them to act with autonomy, while unorthodox tactics help them to counter those

of their chosen foes. Carthians prove more open to modern revolutionary philosophies, too. Marxism, environmental extremism, and the like find fertile ground in their ranks, and they can easily shift such beliefs towards supernatural targets without arousing undue suspicion.

The Circle of the Crone has little use for large-scale social movements, and thus tends to avoid participation in irregular combat. On the other hand, the world's hotspots provide ideal locations for strengthening and testing their abilities—allowing them to pursue their agendas in an environment awash in considerable violence. Many guerilla units act according to viable principles, despite using brutal means to pursue them. That paradox speaks deeply to Acolytes' beliefs, and the chaotic realities of guerilla fighting lets them come and go at will. Terrorist activities and those of PMCs hold less interest for them, though they may lend their abilities to such groups if their meeting places or sacred relics are threatened.

As the embodiment of the status quo, the Invictus look down on irregular fighting, at least in principle. However, many of them have a keen grasp of history, and retain enough insight to know when irregular militaries may come in handy. While they rarely associate formally with guerilla causes, they will often fund them surreptitiously and even plant minions within their ranks. Thus, they may secretly guide the direction of their struggles—either using them to strike against inconvenient enemies or ensuring that their interests will be looked after should the movement ever attain political legitimacy. All of it takes place under the board, of course. The Invictus thrive on power and the image they seek to project would suffer by association from some rag-tag group of under-funded misfits. Guerillas are useful tools, to be sure, but they are to be kept at arms' length. PMCs, on the other hand, make an excellent resource for Invictus use. Many of them view private soldiers as a birthright left over from their feudal past, and the modern trappings of corporate structure allow them to enjoy such privileges without drawing attention to themselves. PMCs also make excellent covers for lower-ranking members of the Covenant—allowing them to serve their masters in plain sight as bodyguards, advisors, and intelligence operatives.

The Lancea Sanctum makes use of terrorists and guerilla fighters in their eternal struggle to bring the rest of the Kindred "in line." Their quasi-religious dogma fits in quite nicely with those of most terrorist organizations, and many of their actions parallel those of groups such as al-Qaeda. The mortal

world often overlooks such acts because they view them as the behavior of mortal terrorist organizations. Terrorist strikes also serve as convenient cover stories for assaults against rival Kindred organizations, particularly the Ordo Dracul. Guerilla movements and private mercenaries earn considerably less attention from the Lanceans, though their open reveling in their vampiric nature may attract cults of personality, who resemble such organizations in many ways.

The Ordo Dracul values the secrecy of underground organizations, and will make use of them on occasion to further their own ends. The rigid code they adhere to usually prohibits embracing the alternate doctrines of mortal terrorist and guerilla groups, though they may occasionally join such groups, either in pursuit of a mutual goal or as a way of further understanding their vampiric nature beneath the trials of combat. They keep a wary eye on irregular units operating close to their interests, in anticipation of a potential strike against them, but otherwise hold such activities at arms' length.

Unaligned Kindred may join or control irregular units for any number of reasons. Guerilla units provide safety and camaraderie in ways which the Unaligned lack, while providing decent cover for their sleeping and feeding habits. Other Unaligned may view such activity as a means to power—aiding some group or another in seizing control of a given area—while still others may believe fervently in the organization's cause, using their undead powers to fight alongside them in pursuit of their goals.

The Forsaken

Werewolves make natural combatants, and the blood-soaked chaos of the battlefield becomes a way of life for many of them. Their natural territoriality compels them to defend ancestral lands, which may entail fostering or joining a guerilla movement to protect it from foreign occupiers. In addition, the more problematic varieties of spirit are often drawn to suffering and bloodshed of the sort found in combat zones, and the ethnic strife so common in irregular warfare creates the kind of savagery that enemies of the Uratha delight in. Traveling as part of a guerilla unit or mercenary company allows werewolves the cover to strike at such monstrosities, while simultaneously honing their combat skills in an organization that asks far fewer questions than those of the normal military. Furthermore, many Uratha sacred sites lie on ancient lands, whose occupants may be members of an ethnic minority. Participation in a guerilla or terrorist movement may be the best way to keep such sites free of outside influence.

As far as individual tribes go, Blood Talons seek out combat as a matter of course; many may join guerillas or irregular fighters in defense of a specific cause, and many other prefer the constant lifestyle of a mercenary. PMCs allow them to practice their fighting skills anytime, anywhere, while allowing them to earn money for whatever causes they see fit. A few mercenary companies consist exclusively of Blood Talons, while others unknowingly hide members of the tribe within their midst.

Bone Shadows participate in irregular combat as a means of seeking out representatives of the spirit courts. Guerilla units and mercenary companies grant them the flexibility to explore war-ravaged territories inconspicuously, and to disappear after their particular quests are completed. Few seek to control such organizations; rather the tribe uses them as tools of convenience, joining them only when it suits their particular needs. When they fight, they do so for only brief periods of time—a few weeks or months at the most—before moving on in pursuit of whatever drove them to the organization in the first place. A precious few commit to a given cause for the long term, but only in cases where the Bone Shadow's goals match the organization's quite closely, and then only until those goals are met.

Hunters in Darkness seek to defend areas of great spiritual importance, and as such form bonds with many of the mortals near such sites. When outside forces conspire to threaten those mortals or target sacred sites with armies too great to face individually, they may turn to guerilla or terrorist tactics in order to defend them. Organizations which seek autonomy for a given ethnic minority, or the creation of a new nation state in an area held by a larger collective, tend to attract the aid of Hunters in Darkness.

Iron Masters exhibit a similar dedication to territory, but their modern proclivities allow them to embrace technological advances more readily. PMCs and mercenary companies make an excellent fit for them, providing the advantages of financing and advanced weaponry in support of causes whose true purpose can be easily hidden. Some Iron Masters also serve as arms dealers, helping causes they believe are just by providing modern equipment at a discounted price. Finally, their links to humanity may drive some of them to join specific political causes, and they adapt to the strike-and-retreat tactics utilized by guerilla units more readily than some of their more tradition-bound brethren.

Storm Lords seek glory through example and rarely do more chances for that show themselves than on the battlefield. While some serve duty in their respective national militaries, mercenary companies and guerilla units permit them to act more freely, and the long-term nature of their struggles allow the Storm Lords constant exposure to heroic opportunities. The harsh lifestyle and enduring tenacity of guerilla fighters serve as further inspiration for this tribe. They tend to shun terrorist organizations, disapproving of such "cowardly" methods, but the more altruistic among them commit to charitable groups working in combat zones, helping to protect or defend innocents during extended conflicts.

Ghost Wolves, like other "outsider" groups in the World of Darkness, become involved in military units either as a form of protection, or out of belief in the par-

ticular group's cause. When they do so, they tend to treat the guerilla unit, terrorist group, or PMC as their "tribe," and modify their behavior to fit the group's overall goals. They will alter Uratha cosmology to reflect that of their organization, and claim that it acts to uphold the Oath of the Moon in some particular way. This becomes easier if the unit is tied in to a particular geographical area, which becomes "territory" protected by the Ghost Wolf. Many Ghost Wolves attached to irregular units rise to leadership positions; their combat prowess and instinctive insight on "the hunt" make admirable qualities in this kind of military activity.

The Pure find natural outlets in wars of genocide and ethnic cleansing. It allows them to exercise their contempt for humanity while hiding behind the very hatreds that drive men to kill each other, and they relish the irony of that fact. The Pure have joined countless extreme political movements aimed at destroying a given ethnic minority. Not only do such groups permit them to slaughter humans with impunity, but they mask direct assaults on members of the Forsaken, and allow the Pure to more readily perform favors for certain powerful spirits. Mercenary companies make excellent cat's-paws as well, though the intense hatred of terrorist groups fits in most readily with the Pure ethos.

The Awakened

Mages tend to have mixed reactions about combat. On the one hand, it provides unparalleled opportunity to test their abilities. Spectacular magic effects are more easily dismissed on the battlefield, where surreal imagery and thunderous chaos feel right at home. Those on the Path of Moros find themselves drawn to conflict as a matter of course: where the living, the dead, and the dying merge together in unparalleled intricacy. Mages who follow the Path of Acanthus may be drawn to conflict too, reveling in the whims of chance and destiny which kill one soldier but spare another. On the other hand, the spiritual quests that fill so many mages' time rarely focuses on secular matters, and lengthy campaigns for worldly goals often appear as a distraction in their journeys. The horrors of combat may prove to be a crucible, but they can also disrupt the mental and emotional strength needed to bond with the Supernal. And like other supernatural creatures, mage pursue their own agendas unconnected to more nationalistic goals.

When mages require military ties, guerilla fighters, terrorist units, and mercenary companies serve their needs much better then established national armed forces for the same reasons they do for werewolves and vampires. Not only can the mage more readily manipulate them to suit his needs, but their flexible approach to combat permits individuals to act with more freedom, sparing the mage uncomfortable questions during after-action reports. Individual mages may join the cause of a particular group, of course, but overall, their involvement in terrorist of guerilla movements depends upon the Order to which they belong.

The Adamantine Arrow obviously places a great emphasis on combat, and guerillas or mercenary companies provide them ample opportunities to test their skills. Combat also allows them to temper new styles of destructive magic, explained away as "new technology" or the like. Members with no especial agenda save battle abilities prefer joining PMCs, which provide a wide array of challenges and allow them to engage in a number of different styles of warfare. Those adopting specific warriors' codes may find themselves joining groups which reflect their ideals, fighting both to embody their ethos and to help create the kind of world that honors such values. Adamantine Arrow members generally eschew terrorist tactics, viewing them as wasteful, but more formal guerilla-style attacks allow them to repeatedly challenge themselves against superior military foes. They also join PMCs in notable numbers, with special emphasis on combat operations.

Guardians of the Veil rely on guerilla and terrorist units in their endless quest to protect humankind from its own curiosity. A well-timed car bomb may be the perfect means of sealing off a forbidden portal, and human scholars can be dissuaded from exploring ancient temples if rebel insurgents hold the surrounding territory. The Order relies on misdirection as a key tool in their arsenal, and you simply can't beat a surprise attack from hidden insurgents for drawing attention away from the *real* goal. Furthermore, the intricate deceptions instigated by the Guardians move side-by-side with those of guerilla and terrorist units, who must often operate in secrecy and allow no one to discover their true intentions. The Labyrinth involves a large number of irregular military forces—some knowing participants, some unwitting pawns—which individual Guardians join, develop, or even lead depending upon their specific needs. The more byzantine an organization, the better as far as the Guardians are concerned, and groups with intricate or convoluted methodologies provide the Order with exactly the resources they need to keep their deepest secrets hidden indefinitely.

Conversely, the Mysterium involve themselves in irregular combat units infrequently at best. Their pursuit of knowledge and exploration into forgotten lore serves little purpose on the battlefield, and destructive attacks from fanatic insurgents can inadvertently destroy the tomes and relics they so keenly seek. When they do join a guerilla or terrorist unit, they usually see them as a means of defense—protecting an Athenea in a remote territory, for example, or securing specific geographical areas which may hold untold secrets (allowing the Mysterium to look for them in peace). Irregular units with religious backgrounds may covet certain ancient texts or artifacts—as symbols to rally their people or perhaps as ends unto themselves—and the Mysterium may aid

them in such endeavors for entirely different reasons. When the Order joins in guerilla or terrorist combat, it invariably has goals such as these at its heart.

The Silver Ladder, with its emphasis on power and structure, almost never involves itself in guerilla activities. Indeed, it normally stands on the opposite side of that divide: as the figures of power and control, which guerilla forces fight to usurp. They view terrorist activities as distractions in their quest for control over reality, and consider the chaos sown by underground movements as a part of the very destruction they wish to end. On the other hand, their goals may not always converge with the dominant forces in a given region. Corrupt governments might encourage suffering and unrest, and the means to overthrow them may reside in rebel of guerilla movements. Though rare, such movements have been known to garner support from the Silver Ladder. They usually exhibit strong philosophies, a centralized command structure, and the potential to serve as an effective governing body when and if they seize power. The Silver Ladder also employs a number of PMCs, both as a means of protecting their assets, and as a form of control divorced from the political compromises of larger national militaries. Like the guerilla units espoused by the Order, PMCs in their employ tend to exhibit a high level of organization and an emphasis on top-level personnel and equipment.

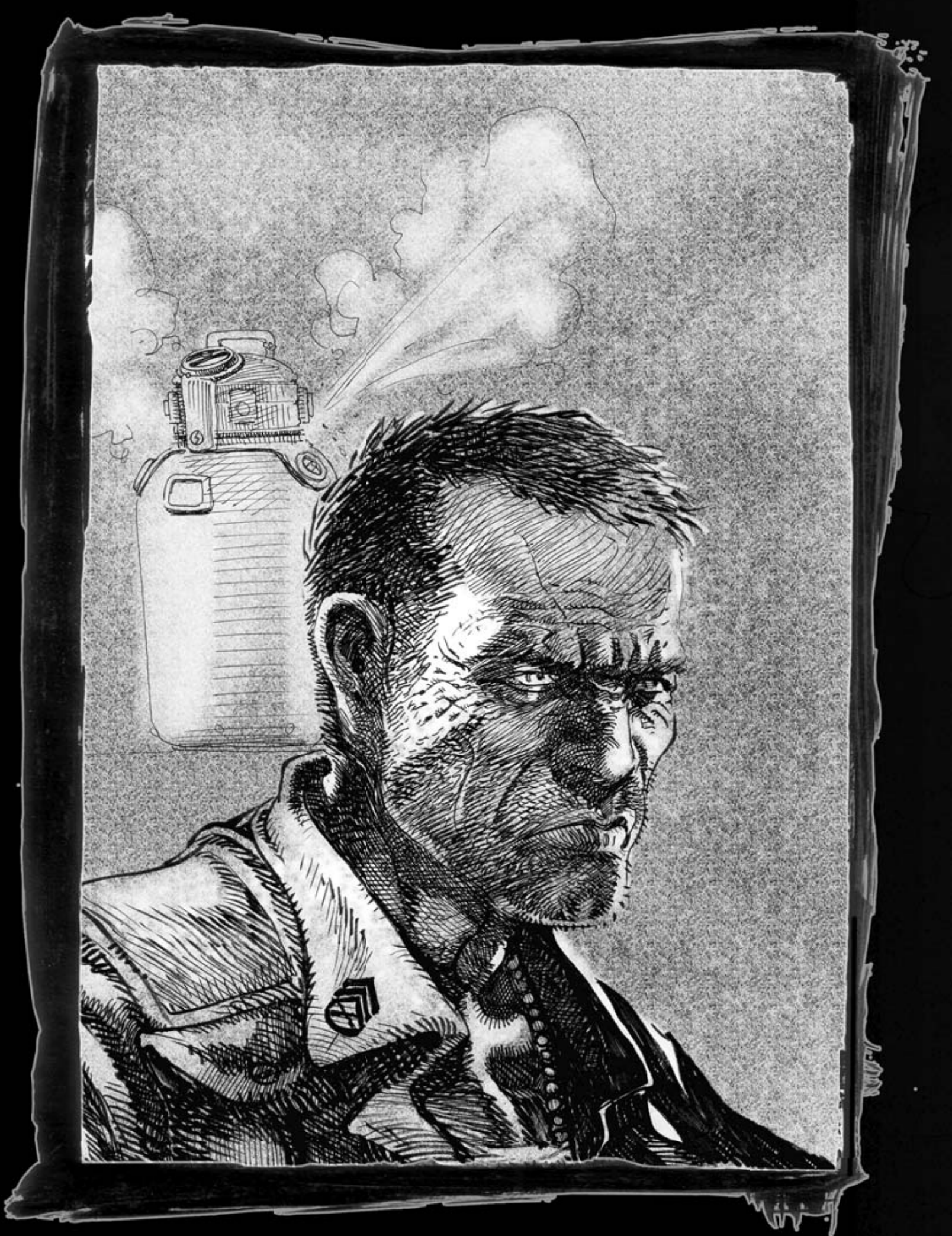
Strictly speaking, the Free Council might be considered a guerilla movement itself. It defies the Atlantean traditions, seeking its own path based on modern principles of enlightenment. It possesses a strong anti-authoritarian streak, leading it to challenge those in power. And it espouses belief in every human being's potential, which may lead individual members towards socialist or Marxist-style movements. Of all the five Orders (save perhaps the Adamantine Arrow), the Free Legion most eagerly embraces the cause of irregular fighting units, seeing in them the ideals and potential that they themselves strive so fervently to attain. More fanatical individuals may adopt terrorist causes, turning their magic against civilian targets in an effort to bring about change, but the majority of Legionnaires who participate in this kind of activity do so under more principled banners. Movements which support oppressed minorities, who seek the establishment of democratic principles, and who defy the clear oppression of a dictatorial system attract members of this Order, who steer their comrades against targets in the mystical world as well as the mundane.

The Seers of the Throne have a natural affinity for military orders. The soldier's emphasis on personal and technological might, the stress of the practical over the unseen, all of it speaks to the power of the Exarchs. When properly wielded, it makes an excellent tool to use against the Awakened as well. Seers often prefer traditional military service, seeking to place members with the higher ranks of the officer class of any number of national armies. But guerilla movements and mercenary companies have their place as well, especially

when arrayed against dominant political forces whom the Seers would rather see deposed. The organization truly thrives in the realm of arms dealers and defense contractors: developing new weapons and technology, then selling them to the highest bidder.

Others

Fae and Prometheans may have reasons of their own for joining irregular fighting units, though they usually do so for individual beliefs, not as part of a greater racial philosophy. Prometheans may view the success of a particular group as vital to their quest to become human, using the hidden underground nature of such organizations to hide their true identity. The Fae follow their own unique paths and trouble themselves in the affairs of mortals intermittently at best. Certain more violent strains, such as types of Ogres or members of the Summer Court, may gravitate towards guerilla or terrorist organizations as a means of expressing their violent nature. Others may adhere to specific nationalist agendas conforming to their place of birth (an Irish Red-Cap soldier fighting with the IRA, for example.) But in almost all cases, they are the actions of individuals, serving their own motivations, not those of their kind as a whole.



Let's be clear. I've seen some shit.

But I ain't never seen shit like this.

In Burma (fuck calling it Myanmar, it's Burma), I saw a Buddhist monk go after a heroin kingpin with a goddamn machete. Didn't get one drop of blood on that orange sash of his.

In East Timor, I found a mass grave of two dozen mostly-decomposed bodies hidden in a giant trough of coffee beans - beans that'd go on and get sold in Europe and the States.

In Moscow, a giddy Bratva boy showed me his uncle's "collection." In a moldy steamer trunk sat a collection of severed left hands, each with a pinky nail painted black.

But this shit here...

They stormed the clinic, two dozen of them, all with assault rifles about as illegal as it gets. Call themselves the Army of the Loving God. Call themselves law-abiders, call themselves Christians. Irony is as thick as the blood on the floor, which is to say up over the top of my boot.

Killed the nurses and doctors first. The administrators next. All in a grisly fashion: no bullets for them, only for the police outside. No, the "sinners" got chopped to bits while still alive, little crosses burned into their foreheads with I don't know what.

The women there, all of them either for consultation or the operation itself, they didn't die. At least, far as we know. But the blood in the operating rooms, the stirrups just sticky with the stuff...

The cameras show that the "soldiers" did some, well, I guess you'd call it harvesting. Took the fetuses right out of the women. Put them in these sealed containers that hissed when they opened and hissed when they closed. Said prayers over the whole proceedings like it was holy work. The women, the mothers, well, they kept them. Took the women when they fled. Didn't burn the place up like some of the clinic bombers.

I feel like I'm gonna throw up. Fuck me sideways with this here camera.

Yeah, I've seen some shit. Been around the world, taken pictures on some of the worst battlefields. But anybody tells you that this country, our own damn country, isn't the scariest battleground of them all... you best educate them quick. Just show them one of these pictures. Just one.

Then they'll know.

We're at war with ourselves.

Chapter Three: A World in Conflict

This chapter discusses warfare and warriors, and how they affect the modern world. Below are some notable conflicts of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, detailed without apology for the grim subject matter and without comment on the morality of the victors or the victims.

North America

The North American continent has been largely free of warfare for most of the 20th century. Enemy troops have not marched openly within the borders of the United States since the 19th century; Canada likewise has not faced a threat of military invasion in well over one hundred years. While both the US and Canada have participated in several wars over the last century, and both have fallen victim to terror attacks, neither has seen real warfare on its own turf in a long time.

War has become something most North Americans see only on the evening news, in between stories on the latest corrupt politician and the latest attractive young woman to go missing. It becomes easy to imagine war as a distant event that could never possibly threaten safe, comfortable North American homes.

Don't buy it.

"What makes the green grass grow?"

"BLOOD! BLOOD! Bright red BLOOD!"

–US Army call-and-response

The Militia Movement: Armed, Angry, and Invisible

In the heartland of the United States, bands of men prepare to wage war on their own country. Often referring to themselves as "free" or "constitutional" militia, the present organizations grew out of the survivalist movements of the 1970s and 1980s, fed by an aggressive Federal gun control campaign and catastrophic mismanagement of situations like those in Waco and Ruby Ridge. Many people became convinced that the Federal Government was the enemy, and that it would come to get them any day now.

Militia organizations are a diverse lot. They include religious extremists, White supremacists, tax protesters, and radical isolationists, but their common traits include xenophobia, an institutionalized sense of persecution, and refusal to recognize the authority of the United States Government. They can be found in all fifty states (and in parts of Canada), though their numbers tend to be largest in areas with disproportionate amounts of crime and poverty.

Militia membership is predominantly White, and particularly appeals to disenfranchised young men looking for a way to belong and feel important; militias commonly scout potential recruits at parades and gun shows, as well as over the Internet. Areas with a recent influx of non-White or non-Christian immigrants make for especially good recruiting, as militias promise angry and alienated locals a return to an idealized vision of the past. Militias also recruit aggressively among service members leaving the US Armed Forces, particularly those who feel they were treated unfairly or passed over for promotion.

Houses, Divided

Militiamen aren't all wild-eyed, gun-stroking madmen, meeting at midnight in trailer parks and fondly wishing for Armageddon. Militias generally have

excellent internal organization, possess good equipment, and command great loyalty from their members. Many also run part- or full-time "survival camps," not unlike basic training, in which recruits practice combat skills and receive indoctrination. They're also very, very good at covering their tracks; most people remain unaware of the local militia presence.

Some receive quiet support from other extremist right wing or reactionary groups, such as the Christian Identity movement or the Ku Klux Klan. Most can count on at least passive support from many of the locals, and many have sympathizers, collaborators, or sleepers in the US military or in local Government.

Fortunately for the general populace, militias rarely cooperate well with each other. Paranoia is part of their way of life, and their specific goals beyond "overthrow the Federal government" tend to be incompatible. Still, a militia could provide valuable contacts, allies, and material for characters with similar religious or social goals (or at least willing to pay lip-service to their doctrines). If you want to obtain black market weapons within the United States, or need to know the security flaws of the local Federal building, there's nobody better.

Gang Warfare

Imagine a group of two dozen young men from a subculture that prizes absolute loyalty, martial prowess, and indifference to hardship. They have a strong camaraderie based on

David and Goliath

A big standing military can breed a false sense of invincibility, but in war, victory doesn't always go to the side with the most troops or the best technology. "Asymmetrical warfare" is a concept in modern military theory through which a smaller or technologically inferior force can exhaust and eventually overcome a larger and better-equipped force, by causing the larger force to endure disproportional losses that sap morale and funds. Asymmetrical warfare drove the British Empire to relinquish control of the United States and forced the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan.

A related idea is "fourth-generation warfare," describing a highly-decentralized fighting force, emphasizing cultural identity over national unity, and often employing tactics censured by the "civilized" world—such as terror attacks or deliberate targeting of noncombatants. US militia movements, and other similar paramilitaries around the world, are well versed in fourth-generation and asymmetrical warfare.

Chapter 2 covers these methods of warfare in greater detail.

shared suffering and a violent indoctrination process. They use specific words and gestures that identify themselves as part of the group. They dress distinctively to show others who they are. And they're armed and willing to kill.

Sounds like a military platoon, doesn't it? Well-equipped and well-organized gangs resemble paramilitary groups—or militias—to no small extent, and in some cases it's hard to know where to draw the line. For example, the Aryan Brotherhood maintains strong connections with several White supremacist militias in the Midwest.

Coup in Haiti

In 2000, Jean-Bertrand Aristide won a second term as the President of Haiti. Multiple opposition parties contested the election, claiming that Aristide loyalists controlled the polling places and had stuffed the ballot boxes with thousands of fraudulent ballots. They also cited a surprisingly high number of ballot returns (nearly 100% of the registered voters, up from a mere 10% at the previous election) and several incidences of pre-election violence directed at opposition party members and holdings. Europe and the United States reacted by suspending aid to the Haitian government and publicly condemning the election as fraudulent.

Aristide had been a popular ruler, but domestic and international concerns about his legitimacy grew for the next few years. On February 4, 2004, the "National Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of Haiti" seized control of the city of Gonaïves in an act of open rebellion; three weeks later, they laid siege to Port-au-Prince, the Haitian capital. By the end of February, President Aristide had resigned his position and fled the country.

Neither Aristide's questionable victory in 2000 nor the 2004 revolt was a bloodless palace coup. Before the 2000 election, several waves of violence burned homes and businesses, and killed nearly a dozen opposing politicians. The 2004 rebellion was no gentler, causing widespread riots and looting; the situation continued to deteriorate for months, even after the United Nations sent thousands of peacekeeping troops to the country.

The Haitian election fraud and subsequent revolution are an excellent example of the dangerous, mercurial politics common in some areas of the world. An apparently stable situation can turn to chaos and riots nearly overnight, and swearing allegiance to the current ruler may mean a death sentence when he is replaced. On the other hand, brave (or reckless) characters may be able to change the course of a country's history if they happen to be in the wrong place at the right time.

Central and South America

Unlike the United States and Canada, many of the countries of Central and South America found the 20th century to be a time of warfare and revolution. Poverty also reigns in most of these countries, driving men and women to acts of desperation... or simple nihilism. Kidnappings and gang violence abound in Brazil's largest cities. Bolivia recently fought a small war over its natural gas resources. A threat of violence often lurks even in countries that have long been outwardly peaceful: *where one finds hungry men with guns, war is never far away*.

The Mexican Drug War

The United States' Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970 ushered in the modern "War on Drugs." Mexico then found itself caught in the crossfire between the United States and Colombia. The US tried to prevent the entry of foreign drugs through its borders, while Colombia wanted to sell drugs to the large and wealthy US market. The situation in Mexico is beginning to resemble a civil war.

The amount of cash involved in the drug trade is staggering, with some cartels generating tens of billions of dollars every year on cocaine sales. And that much money draws rough men willing to do violence over it. After a lull in violence in the 1990s, the last few years have seen an enormous surge in drug-related violence in Mexico.

Hundreds die every month as rival gangs fight for control of the shipment lines and *la plaza,* the drug turf. Areas bordering on Texas and California are especially contested. In some towns, kidnappings and revenge killings are commonplace, and rival gangs openly fight with military-grade weapons. The conflict is still escalating.

Still, narcotics gangsters aren't merely one-dimensional figures of death and destruction. They are also known for lavishly rewarding loyalists and for spontaneous acts of large-scale generosity. In 2005, one of Mexico's most notorious drug lords led a group of 30 into an upscale restaurant for a meal, and they confiscated the cellular phones from all present to prevent anyone from calling the police. But his party also ate their food in peace, and left without further incident—after he paid for the meals of every other diner in the restaurant.

Successful cartel leaders establish cults of personality, establishing themselves as startlingly generous to their allies and shockingly cruel to their enemies. In many places, the drug runners are more popular with the locals than the law enforcement authorities... and they're almost always better armed and better financed. Meanwhile, Mexico's government is turning to increasingly heavy-handed methods to sniff out drug traffickers, sending thousands of troops to hotspots and sometimes cordoning off entire towns; this isn't winning them any popular points with their own people.

Characters in Mexico, whether visitors or residents, might draw the attention of law enforcement officials; they might be detained and interrogated about their unusual habits, or asked to assist the local authorities in some unique manner in exchange for a certain amount of discretion. On the other hand, ruthless characters may be able to sell their

services to local drug runners, particularly if they have a supernatural edge. But drug runners are not forgiving people, and the punish failure or betrayal swiftly and violently.

Los Zetas

Zeta is Spanish for the last letter of the English and Greek alphabet. The criminal organization known as *los Zetas* takes its name from a code for high-ranking military officers. The Keyser Söze of the Mexican drug trade, los Zetas are said to be about fifty of Mexico's most elite military men, trained in special operations by the US Army, and then sent to exterminate the leader of the Gulf cartel. But as the story goes, the commandos instead defected and offered to work as enforcers for the same cartel they'd been assigned to destroy.

Led by a man known *el Verdugo* ("the Executioner") *los Zetas* have recently branched out into armed robbery and freelance assassination. Rumor has it they're growing too powerful for the Gulf cartel to control. People say the head of the Gulf cartel refuses to meet with *el Verdugo* in person, communicating with him only by telephone or through representatives.

The Evil A-Team

Los Zetas didnít execute their meteoric rise to power by turning aside potential advantages. While *los Zetas* exists in real life, in the World of Darkness, itís possible many or most of the ranking membersóor the membership of a similar group, for those uncomfortable with fictionalizing a real-world drug cartelópossess supernatural powers or allies; and those who donít would be eager to acquire them. Meanwhile, the United States DEA or military might be willing to hire a few non-conventional warfare experts to provide an edge against the renegade commandos.

For characters willing to play in their cutthroat world, *los Zetas* could be invaluable allies—or implacable enemies.

Colombian Drug Trafficking

Cocaine consumption in the US spiked in the late 1970s, and stayed up through the 1980s. Previously, the United States DEA saw cocaine as less dangerous and less problematic than heroin and marijuana, but suddenly coke was a cool and trendy drug; and its increased use and visibility caused the DEA to re-evaluate its stance on cocaine. US law enforcement grew more aggressive in its pursuit and prosecution of cocaine use and possession, causing the street price of the drug to rise.

Coca suddenly became a far more profitable cash crop. Most coca growth had been left to small combines of local farmers, but Colombia's criminal and paramilitary organizations swiftly conquered the cocaine trade. By the middle of the 1980s, a few massive criminal conglomerates wrestled for control of territory and shipping lines, and most coca growers had become tenant farmers on their own land. In the last decade of the 20th century, most of the cartels collapsed or splintered under heavy pressure from US and Colombian military and law enforcement.

The *Norte del Valle* Cartel

For the first few years of the 2000s, the *Norte del Valle* cartel seemed to resist the balkanization and infighting that had destroyed its rivals. The cartel maintained close connections to terrorist paramilitary groups, giving it an edge in the fire- and manpower needed to suppress potential competitors, and the cartel's leadership ruthlessly policed its ranks, gruesomely executing suspected informants and traitors.

In 2003, however, things went south for *Norte del Valle*. The cartel suffered a disastrous series of busts, and some of its leaders apparently made quiet overtures to the DEA, seeking either amnesty or plea-bargains. This did not please the rest of the cartel's rulers, and a multi-faction war erupted.

Hundreds died in the carnage, prompting still more pressure from US and Colombian authorities. Highly publicized busts continued over the next few years, and several members of its leadership quietly surrendered to US or Colombian authorities, offering intelligence on their former comrades in exchange for reduced sentences. By late 2007, the group's activities had been sharply curtailed. Although a few of the cartel's rulers remained at large, most of them had been arrested or murdered.

Much of the infrastructure established by the *Norte del Valle* and other cartels remains, however. The drug trade in Colombia is currently a hydra without a head: every would-be drug lord strives to cultivate allies and eliminate enemies. Growers continue to cultivate coca as they have for decades, while small crime syndicates butcher each other for the right to collect the processed cocaine and ship it out of the country. It's only a matter of time before a new cartel takes root and seizes control of the cocaine trade.

Civil War in Colombia

Civil war has gnawed at Colombia for six decades. In 1948, the assassination of the head of the Colombian Liberal Party set off a decade of low-level armed conflict against the Colombian Conservative Party; a treaty between the two parties in 1957 ended *la Violencia*, but not before it had claimed over 200,000 lives. This, in turn, led to a string of other conflicts.

Since then, Colombia has never been entirely free of civil war. In 1964, emboldened by Castro's success in Cuba, the communist Revolutionary Armed Forces of

Unseen Wars

The wars fought over drugs and ideology in Central and South America are rarely visible to the casual observer. These are wars of terror attacks and vengeance killings, not tanks and aircraft. Running gunfights in the streets or sieges on government buildings do sometimes occur, but kidnappings, execution squads, arson, and propaganda are more common tactics.

Likewise, not all battles involve guns, bullets, and overt violence. An event that appears insignificant to an uninformed outsider may be critically important to the unfolding war: cartels may wage hidden campaigns of disinformation, intimidation, and bribery over the ownership of a building complex or the driver of a specific bus route.

Colombia began a struggle for control of the country, and has continued ever since. Several government parties have come and gone since then—some every bit as bad as the guerrillas they fought—and rebel groups have splintered, changed identities, and recombined. The names have changed, but the game is the same: men in the jungle want to kill the government, and government troops hunt the men in the jungle.

Meanwhile, the drug cartels have been a not-quite-neutral third party; FARC is largely funded by the drug trade, but the cartels do not wish to allow the revolutionaries to gain control of the cocaine distribution lines, and have no apparent interest in seeing a real victory for either side; after all, without the ongoing civil war, the Colombian government could pay more attention to the drug trade. Likewise, both the official government and the rebels occasionally kidnap and ransom drug traffickers, and the cartels occasionally carry out terror strikes to curb the growth of the FARC's narcotics assets, or punish the government for extraditing captured criminals to the United States.

The result is a three-way war, always bubbling just beneath the surface, ready to break through at any moment. Civilians keep their heads down and hope the civil war doesn't wander into their neighborhoods.

Europe

Most of what we consider to be "modern warfare" descends from Europeans and their inheritors. Historically, the small continent has been home to numerous distinct states, religions, languages, and cultures, often ready to make war on one another for land, food, and resources. Today, the rise of the European Union and a shared sense of community and cultural identity have curbed the ceaseless wars and genocides of previous centuries, but not every European nation favors integration into the EU; and not all members have entirely given up dreams of increased size, wealth, and power.

Balkanization

During and after World War II, the Soviet Union established several satellite states along its border with the rest of Europe. The obvious purpose of these nations was to serve as a shield against possible military incursion from the rest of Europe, which was heavily pro-American after the war. They also served a subtler role in limiting cultural and ideological exchange with the rest of the continent.

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was an archetypal example. It encompassed an area containing several culturally and ethnically diverse peoples; the new government, reconstituted from the pre-war Kingdom of Yugoslavia, sought to unite all of southeastern Europe's Slavs under one banner ("Yugoslavia" means "Southern Slav Land"). The worker's paradise promised by the Soviet Union never materialized, however, and the USSR had to spend considerable effort to keep the heterogeneous population at peace. As the Soviet Union slowly collapsed, the fragmentation of Yugoslavia seemed inevitable.

In December, 1990, a referendum in Slovenia indicated the populace overwhelmingly favored independence from Yugoslavia. Alarmed, the Yugoslavian government reacted with a new policy of mothballing the decentralized military reserve forces of its territories and integrating their men and equipment into the Yugoslavian People's Army, which was loyal exclusively to Yugoslavia and not its principalities.

The Ten Day War

Aware that the Yugoslavian central government was trying to de-fang its constituents with a quiet pre-emptive strike, Slovenians resisted this campaign of regional disarmament. Slovenia had always maintained a distinct regional identity, and it quickly put in place an alternate command structure to subvert the authority of those loyal to the central government and ensure that only the least valuable materiel was turned over to the People's Army. Slovenians knew that they could not defeat the Yugoslavian People's Army in a prolonged struggle. For six months, they planned an unconventional rebellion.

Even the first military action of the war was calculated to capture and hold the initiative. After an announcement that it would formally declare independence on June 26, 1991, Slovenia instead did so on June 25—pre-empting People's Army troops preparing for a counter-offensive the next day. Caught before it had finalized its strategies for the looming rebellion, the Yugoslavian People's Army vacillated between pleas for unity and cooperation, and shows of force to intimidate Slovenians into obedience.

Out of the Public Eye

Serbian officials have recently accused Slovenian troops of indulging in war crimes during the conflict, such as the execution of surrendering Yugoslavian People's Army troops or threatening civilian journalists who did not speak favorably of Slovenian succession. There is relatively little evidence to support these claims; if Slovenian troops regularly executed prisoners or bullied Yugoslavian loyalists, they must have been very careful about who was watching.

Before open warfare began, the Slovenians established contact with the world news services and successfully portrayed themselves as freedom-loving, pro-democracy underdogs; despite the traditional hostility between news agencies and soldiers, Slovenian troops were generally polite and solicitous, offering protection to reporters interested in observing the war at close quarters. Soon the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia found itself facing considerable pressure from the international community. This was one of the first wars in which a faction used the media as leverage on the battlefield, leading to what later pundits dubbed "the CNN effect." The US would duplicate many of these tactics later with the "embedded journalists" of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Yugoslavian People's Army found itself at a considerable disadvantage on the battlefield, as Slovenians used prepared ambush points, superior knowledge of the terrain, and shorter supply lines to execute rapid offensives. Worse, many military objectives were guarded by Slovenian loyalists, who could "seize" territory for Slovenia, quickly and bloodlessly, just by changing uniforms. The bewildered Yugoslavian People's Army suffered relatively few

casualties and few decisive losses, but they faced a high rate of surrender and desertion. Many were ethnic Slovenians themselves, or sympathetic to the cause; fewer had any real devotion to the Republic of Yugoslavia.

On July 2, after a day of several significant military successes, the Slovenian leaders declared a unilateral ceasefire. A day later, Yugoslavian troops accepted the ceasefire and began a withdrawal. Over the next few days, the Yugoslavian National Army abandoned its positions on Slovenian soil, leaving behind most of its material for the Slovenians. The war came to an official end on July 7, 1991, with a treaty heavily slanted in favor of Slovenia.

The show of weakness was ultimately fatal for Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Croatia rebelled at the same time as Slovenia, though their war for independence lasted years, not days. In 1992, Bosnia and Herzegovina also seceded from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. That left only a tiny fraction of the former nation still calling itself the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (no longer socialist), and that too fractured in 2006.

After three generations, the old Yugoslavian government had fallen. Now almost a dozen bickering nations stand in its place; and they don't get along well.

Ethnic Warfare and Genocide in Eastern Europe

Many of the emerging states in and around the area formerly known as Yugoslavia are based on specific ethnic identities. While the Soviet Union ruled Eastern Europe, it enforced an uneasy peace between the different ethnic groups and religions native to eastern Europe; in the two decades since the USSR's collapse, numerous ethnic groups have warred for survival and dominance. Modern Pakistan, and its mutual hostility with India, was born of a similar phenomenon, as Britain ended its colonial rule and no longer enforced peaceful coexistence between Hindus and Muslims.

The communist rulers of Eastern Europe played a delicate balancing game between the many cultures and religions found in Soviet satellite nations; one unspoken rule of *realpolitik* was "don't let any single ethnic group grow too powerful." Religious and racial conflicts were incompatible with the New Soviet Man—or at least with the goals of his leaders.

But the Wall fell, the Central Committee abdicated, the Soviet Union dissolved, and the enforced unity of Eastern Europe went with it. Suddenly there were a lot of scared, hungry people with very old grudges to settle.

Kosovo

Modern Kosovo is a province of Serbia, which in turn is a former part of Yugoslavia. The conflict in the region is driven by tensions between the predominantly Eastern Orthodox Serb minority, and the Albanian majority, largely Muslim. Albanians in Kosovo have pushed for union with neighboring Albania since the middle of the 20th century; the Yugoslavian government harshly suppressed demonstrations or speech in favor of Albanian secession from Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

As the Soviet Union and its subject nations spiraled downward through the late 1980s, tensions worsened between Albanians and Serbs. Whispers of economic and political pressures applied against the minority Serbs grew to rumors of overt violence and hatred; since the state-controlled media alternately ignored the issue or dispatched vague and contradictory statements, nobody was quite certain what to believe.

The avalanche started in earnest in 1986, when a memorandum drafted by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts was leaked to the public. The "SANU Memorandum" described the situation as a "genocide" against Serbs; it declared that Albanians were forcing Serbs to migrate out of Kosovo, and that soon no Serbs would remain in the province; it urged the creation of an independent Serbian state.

Slobodan Miloševic—then a high-ranking Communist Party functionary—originally denounced the memo, and expressed support for Albanian Kosovars. He changed his tune when he became President of the Republic of Serbia in 1989. He disbanded the regional government of Kosovo and replaced its Albanian leaders with politicians loyal to Serbia. Eventually, Miloševic's supporters banned Albanian-

Who Shot First?

The side suffering the most casualties is not necessarily the morally superior side. Nor is the faction who inflicted the first deaths necessarily the "aggressor" in any conventional sense. Many wars are brought on by a reversal of fortune, causing the oppressors to suddenly become the oppressed. Sometimes a persecuted minority arms itself and seizes control, as with the founding of Israel. Other times, the ruling class loses power and finds itself targeted by those it once dominated, as in the Rwandan civil war.

These shifts in power are often driven by larger global forces, such as the end of apartheid and colonialism in Africa, or growing sympathy for the Zionist movement after the exposure of the Nazi genocide campaigns. In the World of Darkness, they can also be driven by supernatural forces or events. If nothing else, a shakeup in a mortal society creates chaos and uncertainty for its supernatural residents; particularly those with something to hide.

language newspapers and broadcasts, and began a campaign of barring ethnic Albanians from positions in education, politics, and industry.

Albanian resistance grew. Violence motivated by racial and religious tensions increased. By 1995, the situation was a barely-contained civil war, and a guerrilla organization calling itself the Kosovo Liberation Army appeared. Money and weapons flowed into Kosovo from Albania, particularly when Albania suffered a surge of riots and civil disorder in 1997—by which time the United States was quietly supporting the Kosovo Liberation Army; several other Western nations may have been providing the KLA with weapons, intelligence, and training as well.

By late 1998, border skirmishes between Albania and Serbia were common. NATO peacekeeping forces deployed to the area, and forcibly pacified the region with thousands of bombing sorties between March and June of the next year.

Since then, Kosovo has been governed by a temporary body, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, and the region is technically at peace. The UN administration plans an eventual handover of power to the European Union, but hostilities persist between Albanians and Serbs, and violence has flared up several times since then. Once peace is no longer enforced at gunpoint, it seems quite possible that religious and racial war will again ravage Kosovo.

Switzerland: Armed and Neutral

Maintaining a tradition of neutrality that goes back five centuries, this small country even managed to remain aloof from World War II, while it was entirely surrounded by Axis powers. However, Switzerland also maintains a tradition of military readiness and discipline; if you're Swiss, male, and an adult, you're conscripted into the army or air force.

At age 19, every able-bodied Swiss man must join the military. Training generally lasts between 4 and 6 months, though Swiss Special Forces train for 18; afterward, most are released to reserve duty. Men must remain in the Swiss military until at least age 30, and higher ranks are required to serve longer—leading some soldiers and airmen to deliberately avoid promotion.

Switzerland does permit conscientious objectors to serve in a civilian support corps instead, but they must serve longer than their counterparts in the armed forces. Those unfit to serve due to physical disability must instead pay a significantly higher income tax each year. Service is not mandatory for women, but women may choose to join, and they fill all the same roles as men.

Switzerland's standing army is vanishingly small; instead, it relies mostly on a militia reserve: reservists serve three or four weeks annually, and are otherwise free to pursue their own lives. Every Swiss militiaman (that is to say, nearly every Swiss male between teenager and middle-aged) keeps in his home a Swiss Arms SG 550 (an assault rifle comparable to the M16 series used by the US) and a box of 5.6mm ammunition. In the event of an emergency, the soldier loads a magazine with the ammunition and moves to his unit's designated rally-point. Unsealing the ammunition is otherwise strictly forbidden (the country does suffer a high suicide rate, apparently due partly to easy access to firearms).

Over the past 20 years, Switzerland has repeatedly cut the size of its standing military; it's possible that in the near future, the active military may disband almost entirely. The country has now been at peace for nearly 200 years; but Switzerland nestles at the junction of several European cultures, languages, and religions, and modern warfare is notorious for ignoring national borders. In the event of a conflagration in a neighboring region, the Swiss may find it difficult to continue their streak of non-involvement.

"They Took Away My Old Blue Jeans..."

Conscription, once prevalent among major military powers, has become a subject of some controversy in recent years. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights implicitly condemns it. Human rights advocates often state that compulsory martial service is a form of institutionalized slavery. Some military theorists maintain that conscription is simply not a viable long-term strategy, as an all-volunteer force is implicitly superior in skills and morale.

Nations that practice conscription cannot be easily categorized along geographic or ideological lines; most see it as an essential fact of self-defense—a regrettable necessity, but a necessity nonetheless. Though relatively few nations forcibly enlist *all* men of military age, half the countries of the world still demand compulsory military service of at least some citizens; most of the remainder reserve the right to levy additional troops in wartime.

None of the major English-speaking military powers currently conscript its citizens; the United States was the last to discontinue the practice in 1973. However, upon turning 18 all US males must register for "the draft" (under the euphemism "Selective Service") and the US Congress periodically considers legislation to reinstate the draft.

Africa

Mankind's ancestral homeland, Africa, spent most of the 19th and 20th centuries under colonial rule. Prodigal children from distant lands carved the continent like a roast, squabbling over its vast resources and drawing national and political boundaries with little relationship to the territories established by Africa's existing clans and cultures. Today, colonialism is gone, but its effects remain. Civil wars and ethnic cleansing sweep through Africa as its inhabitants struggle to forge some kind of equilibrium amidst the chaos and despair left by two hundred years under the yoke of colonialism.

Death and Dissension in Sudan

Long ago, this area was known as Kush, and it was a powerful and persistent enemy of ancient Egypt. In recent centuries, the country was ruled first by modern Egypt, and then by the British Empire. The peoples of the area did not easily submit to foreign rule; both Egypt and Great Britain regarded it as almost not worth the considerable effort required to rule it. On the first day of 1956, Sudan received its independence, but that's done little to stop the conflict in the area.

Rebellion and Civil War in the South

On paper, Sudan's second civil war ended in 2005; but people are still dying.

Sudan has always had a wide gulf between its northern and southern regions. The north's population is ethnically Arab and religiously Muslim, while the south's population is mostly non-Arab, largely practicing animism or Coptic Orthodox Christianity. War between the north and south began even before Britain officially granted the country independence; despite a lull in hostilities from 1972 to 1983, the battle continues today.

Britain found the divide so large that it ruled the country as semi-independent colonial districts, banning movement and trade between the two provinces. The departure of British rule left the southern territories mostly controlled by English-speaking northerners; the northern government promised to decentralize power, but that never occurred. Instead, for decades north Sudan has controlled the natural resources and wealth of the south—including some of Africa's most fertile cropland and richest oil fields—while pushing the southern tribes toward religious and cultural conformity with the Muslim north.

The primary resistance to the Sudanese government comes from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, nominally a secular, democratic organization. Since the January 2005 peace treaty, the SPLM has become a recognized government party, and southern Sudan was granted semi-autonomous rule and limited exemptions from Muslim Shari'a laws. According to the treaty, southern Sudan will vote in 2011 on continued integration or peaceful secession and self-rule; whether the northern government will honor the treaty long enough for that to happen remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, scattered fighting continues throughout the south. Starvation and disease follows in the wake of fields burned and corpses left unburied. Several humanitarian organizations, including Human Rights Watch, maintain that slavery (never entirely abolished in Sudan) has risen sharply. Partisans backed by the northern government are said to be taking thousands of slaves from among non-Muslim southern tribes. The Sudanese government has repeatedly dismissed these reports as propaganda.

By the Pricking of My Thumbs...

A few miles from the Chadian border, there's a tiny settlement dating back to the era of Belgian colonization. It's a hamlet of barely a hundred souls, with only half a dozen disused rifles between them; but they're safe from the wars and violence. It's an island of eerie calm amid the waves of chaos and destruction sweeping through Sudan.

Superficially, Oudeslaap resembles any other farming village in the region. Most of the Massaleit villagers are subsistence farmers, and those who aren't mostly work in a nearby copper mine. A casual visitor might not notice that the townspeople raise no animals. They might note the unusual care the residents take with sharp objects, or the way the children always go far from the village before they play any rough and tumble games. Even if a visitor did notice these things, they would find the locals strangely reluctant to comment on them.

But if while moving through underbrush, the visitor cut their skin on thorns, then they would understand: whenever blood touches the earth within a mile or two of the village center, the ground moans and grumbles. Though the tongue is unfamiliar to the residents who have heard it, one cannot escape a feeling that one is hearing a strange mixture of angry blasphemies and cries of despair. This is why the villagers raise no animals, only rarely eat meat, and ply their floors with thick carpets.

Every native for a hundred miles knows that something unclean lurks beneath the soil of Oudeslaap. Even the *janjaweed* will commit no violence in or near the village; in fact, most stay far away from it and try to pretend it doesn't exist.

Genocide in the West

Meanwhile, on the western borders of the country, a second conflict continues. Though the war between north and south focuses largely on religious and economic divisions, the conflict in the Darfur region stems from tribal hatred. On one side are the Baqqarah, an Arabic tribe of nomadic cattle herdsmen; on the other side are several settled agrarian peoples of African stock, including the Fur, for whom the region is named. ("Darfur" is Arabic for "Abode of the Fur.")

Conflict between Arabs and Africans in the region goes back for centuries, but ecological damage over the past few decades has created increased friction between the herdsmen and the farmers. As the Sahara desert spread rapidly from the north edge of the country, the Baqqarah have driven their grazing animals further into the rainier croplands of the south, creating competition for water and fertile soil. In 2002, a rebel group calling itself the Darfur Liberation Front (later the Sudan Liberation Movement) began a series of terror attacks, claiming the Sudanese government was waging undeclared war against non-Arabs.

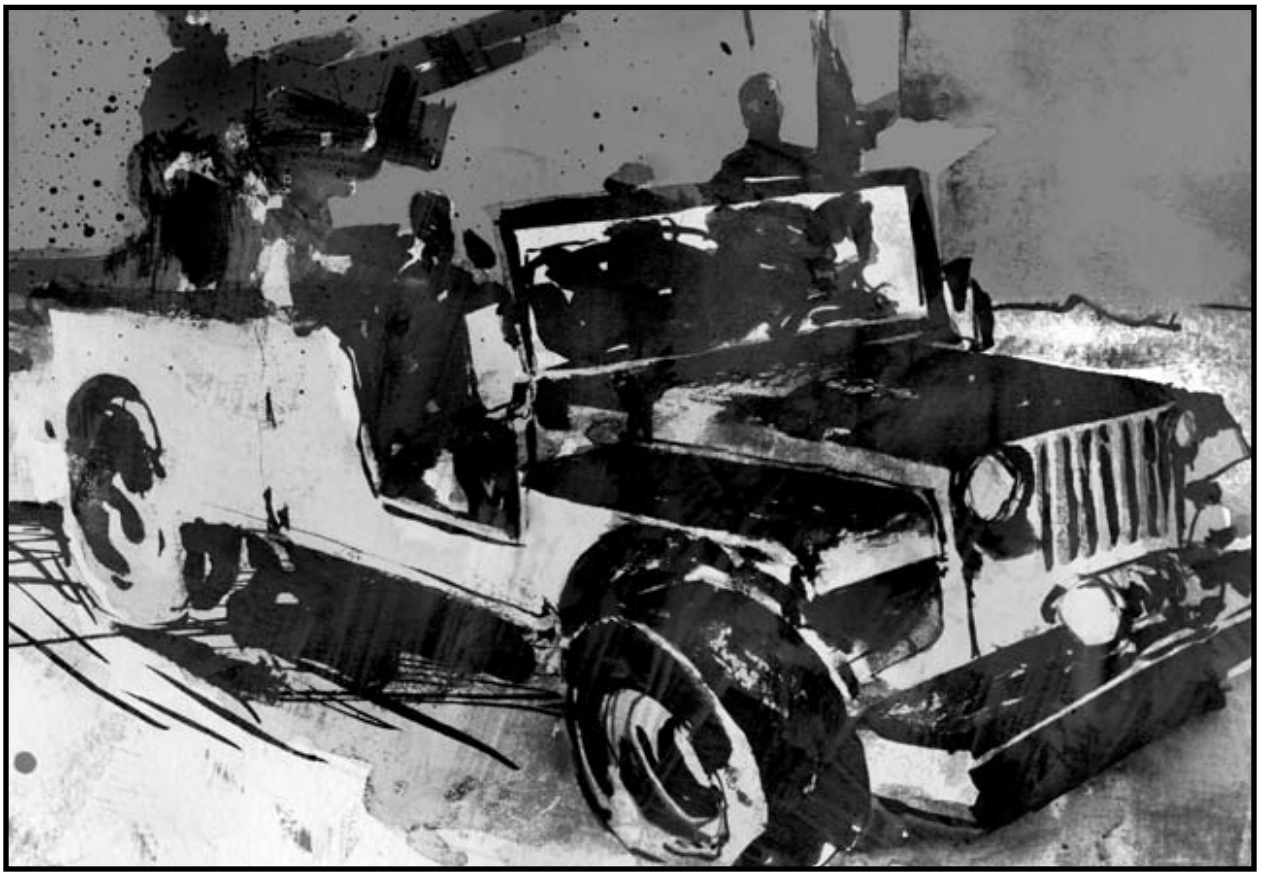
The Sudanese military suffered a series of embarrassing defeats in battles against the Darfur Liberation Front. Already embroiled in a lengthy conflict against non-Arabs in southern Sudan, the northern government turned to a cat's-paw: the *janjaweed*, a paramilitary organization recruited from the Arabic herdsmen of the region. With the Sudanese government providing money and military-grade weapons and equipment, the *janjaweed* began a brutal and effective campaign against the non-Arab farmers.

Since then, reports have constantly surfaced of rape, torture, and mass executions; stories tell of non-Arab vil-

Technicals

A common sight in any war in Africa or the Middle East, a technical is simply a light truck, often a civilian pick-up, with a heavy weapon mounted on the back. The result is an inexpensive and surprisingly flexible war machine. They make excellent patrol, skirmish, and infantry support platforms, as well as decent rapid-deployment platforms (you can fit a lot of men in one truck, provided they're willing to go without seat belts). Even the United States uses technicals, as well as similarly equipped HMMWVs.

Technicals are signs of power and status. As a feudal lord's prestige was measured in the horsemen he could bring to a conflict, a modern bush warlord can count his strength in the number of technicals he can supply with crew, fuel, and ammo.



lages razed to the ground while bordering Arab settlements were untouched. Journalists and human rights advocates investigating the death toll have a tendency to die or disappear, but conservative estimates suggest a quarter of a million deaths, and over two million forcibly displaced. The true numbers may be much higher.

The Darfur conflict continues today, even spilling over into the neighboring countries of Chad and the Central African Republic—each already embroiled in a civil war of its own. The *janjaweed* have failed to adhere to the terms of several ceasefire talks and peace agreements, while the Sudanese government disclaims responsibility for its actions. A UN Security Council resolution promised a peacekeeping force for the region, but the United Nations has so far failed to deliver on its promise. How long the butchery will continue—and how history will judge it—remains to be seen.

Insurgency in Chad

War doesn't always obey established national boundaries, and rival nations often use rebellions or insurgencies to settle old scores or grab more territory. France supplied military assistance to the nascent United States as a way to pursue its ancient vendetta with England; England would later support the Confederate rebellion in its erstwhile colonies. The proud military tradition of kicking your enemies while they're down continues today, and one example can be found in the Republic of Chad.

Half a dozen rebel groups—many consisting of mutineers and deserters from the national army—have waged a guerrilla war against the government of Chad since 2005. Meanwhile, nearly a quarter of a million civilians have fled westward out of Darfur, across the border into Chad. According Chad's government, the *janjaweed* habitually sortie into the country, killing refugees and attacking Chadian civilians and infrastructure. From a certain point of view, it makes sense: the *janjaweed* continue to slaughter their ancestral enemies while harassing the rival nation, and the Sudanese government maintains plausible deniability while killing two birds with one stone.

The neighboring Central African Republic sees a similar conflict, also allegedly fueled by *janjaweed* involvement. In recent months, the situation seems to have grown still more complex; now Chad may be arming Sudanese resistance fighters, to better fight the *janjaweed*—and, of course, stir up more trouble in Sudan. The Central African Republic may follow suit. If the strain between Sudan and its western neighbors continues to increase, a full-scale border war may result.

Côte d'Ivoire: Foreigners, out!

For over three decades, the Republic of the Ivory Coast survived and occasionally thrived under the control of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny (pronounced "Ooh-foowh Bwanyih"). Though nominally an elected ruler, Houphouët-Boigny was closer to a military dictator; opposition parties were illegal for six of the seven elections he won. Still, his leadership was reasonably popular and reasonably even-handed—by the standards of Third-World autocrats, anyway.

Houphouët-Boigny died in 1993, presenting the Ivory Coast with its first crisis of succession since it achieved its independence in 1960. Though the National Assembly leader took Houphouët-Boigny's place as President according to the deceased ruler's wishes, the next election was slated for 1995; and for the first time, elections might be held without one obvious preordained winner.

The issue of *who could vote* became critically important, as the Ivory Coast's stable conditions and reliable economy had attracted a sizable population of immigrants. A quarter of the country's population consisted of foreigners and their descendants, though some had dwelt in the Ivory Coast for generations. Most were from neighboring west African countries, but in the time leading up to the election the new President emphasized the concept of *ivoirité*, or "ivory-ness," emphasizing the shared heritage of Ivory Coast natives—and subtly encouraging discrimination against outsiders.

Hostility between immigrants and natives increased, with sporadic riots and military suppression; in 2002, full-scale war broke out in a failed coup attempt against President Laurent Gbagbo. The next few years saw a multi-faction struggle between ethnic nationalist troops and the *Forces Nouvelles*, representing disenfranchised immigrants (particularly the rural northern populace). Thousands of Europeans left the country as anti-foreigner sentiment increased.

Since then, peacekeeping forces from the United Nations and France have arrived to mitigate the conflict and establish a buffer zone between the loyalist south and the rebel north. At present, the conflict seems to be winding down; a 2004 declaration of peace was largely ignored, but a new agreement signed in 2007 has had a greater effect. Violence has slowed to a trickle of isolated incidents, and new elections are scheduled for the near future. Assuming nothing upsets the delicate balance, the Ivory Coast could once again be one of the most stable and prosperous countries on the continent.

The Middle East

If Africa was the birthplace of Man, then the Middle East is his cradle. But like Africa, the Middle East is a region destabilized by feckless foreign rule and bitter cultural conflicts. The three great "Religions of the Book"—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—have all laid claim to the Holy Land at one point or another; though each religion admonishes its followers not to commit murder, men have slain one another for control of this territory since before the invention of the written word.

The Iraq War: Baghdad or Bust

In March, 2003, the United States invaded Iraq, citing noncompliance with United Nations Security Council inspections and a possible threat of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. The initial invasion was wildly successful, and US troops seized control of Baghdad in fewer than three weeks. Six months later Saddam Hussein, the former President of Iraq, was dragged from hiding, dirty and broken. Optimistic voices predicted a swift end to the occupation; unfortunately, over the next few years, the situation is nowhere near its end.

Now Iraq borders on civil war, held back only by a large US troop presence. Violence against the Multi-National Force continues to increase, and insurgents and rebels use fourth-generation warfare (see p. 85) to their advantage. The country has held a spotlight on the world stage for years, and it seems every nation, religion, ethnic group, and paramilitary organization in the region has a distinct agenda. Many Iraqis resent the presence of armed foreigners, even if they are glad to be rid of Saddam Hussein; religious fundamentalists want to use the war-torn country as a recruitment and training ground for armed partisans; some want merely to see the US fail in the eyes of the world; and the US troops mostly want to finish the job and go home.

Mission Accomplished?

Today, Iraq is a hodgepodge of warring factions, a malign melting pot in which any random stranger might have a reason to kill you. Like many other countries in this part of the world, "Iraq" did not exist as a national entity until the 20th century; the British and French drew arbitrary lines and forced mutually hostile tribes and religious sects to coexist. Iraqi attacks on other Iraqis claim more lives than Iraqi attacks on Coalition forces; perceiving the central government to be unwilling or unable to prevent the internecine fighting, the various Iraqi tribes and sects are now forming militias to defend themselves and murder each other. And with weapons flowing in across the borders—probably from political enemies of the US—the situation looks grim.

Worse, the new government has failed to establish the necessary infrastructure and strength to maintain control of the nation. Potable water is scarce. Electricity is unreliable. Regional tribes refuse to submit to the Iraqi National Assembly, and the Assembly lacks the power to compel them. Education is an impossible luxury. Health care is nonexistent. A dozen fractious parties wrestle for control of the Council of Representatives, and it seems unlikely the Republic of Iraq would stand for a single year without MNF troops to enforce peace and unity.

The only apparent options for the US and the Multi-National Force are to "stay the course" (bad), or to withdraw and leave the country to collapse into a bloody civil war (ditto). Without a miracle, life will be very hard in Iraq for a very long time.

Soldiers of Fortune

The US-directed security firms in Iraq are mercenaries, by any reasonable definition of the term. Though these private security contractors are paid considerably more than government soldiers, the US has found several practical advantages to employing them. Perhaps most importantly, private security personnel occupy a unique legal niche; they are civilians and therefore not subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. US policy suggests that most Iraqi laws do not apply to them; and since most crimes would take place off US soil, against people who are not US citizens, United States laws do not generally apply either.

In short, they're accountable to no one for any possible misdeeds, and the US can cover up any scandal by simply firing all security contractors and hiring a new firm.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

This phrase is one of the most overused and least understood clichés of our time. Broadly speaking, "weapons of mass destruction" refers to what the US military terms "NBC warfare": Nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons, which by nature are capable of killing or incapacitating large numbers of people, with little or no warning, and often with a lingering effect in the target area.

These are not rare and or semi-mythical artifacts possessed only by evil nations and wicked men. Nearly a dozen nations are known to possess fission or fusion bombs, and a dozen more are technologically capable. Most industrialized nations have agreed to destroy their stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons, but some have also been slow to comply with these agreements—including the US. There are also numerous methods of inflicting large-scale destruction and death that are not generally considered "WMDs"—such as fuel-air explosives or flying aircraft into buildings.

Outside the Limit of Our Sight

Staff Sergeant John Toombs, First Battalion, Twelfth Infantry Regiment, is having a hard fucking time of it.

He's been in the Army for a couple of years now and he's seen some shit, first in Afghanistan and now in Iraq. People die, and Toombs can deal with that. But lately he's seeing something else; something different. One moment he's shooting insurgents, and that he can deal with. But then the world throbs for a moment and the *haji* he was shooting at is suddenly some weird thing with five eyes and stars for hair, and Toombs's buddies look like lions with wings. He's seeing some fucking *Biblical* stuff, no bullshit.

He was almost ready to talk to the Chaplain, even though he knew it would mean his buddies would think he was either a faker or a genuine psycho; but one night, after Toombs gunned down a bunch of al-Qaeda (or whatever) that looked like little bull's heads with four wings each, his buddy Mack said to him, "Man, did you... see what I saw?"

Turns out SSG Toombs's visions have grown contagious. When the shit goes down, anybody within ten feet of him starts seeing the same crazy stuff he does, and the range seems to be increasing. And once in a while it hits his buddies even if he isn't around. This hasn't exactly made Toombs a popular guy. He's way beyond having a clue what to do about all this; he just wishes like Hell it would go away.

Persecution of Kurds

Kurds are a people native to the area around the confluence of Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. Though most are nominally Muslim, Kurds speak their own language and possess culture and traditions distinct from the Arabs of the Middle East. Their visible differences from other Middle Eastern peoples often make them a target of ethnic hatred and racially motivated violence.

Iraqi Kurds fared poorly under Saddam Hussein's regime. They often suffered persecution and forced relocation earlier in the 20th century, and their situation did not improve when Saddam took power in 1979. Kurds sided with Iran in its war against Iraq in the 1980s, and Saddam's Defense Minister became notorious as "Chemical Ali" for his use of nerve and blister agents against the Kurdish population.

The Iraq-Iran truce in 1988 did not apply to attacks on Kurdish settlements, and Iraq's military continued to campaign against the Kurds for the next few years. After the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the United Nations established a "no-fly zone" over northern Iraq, establishing a *de facto* Kurdish state. Since the US invasion of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government has become a recognized province of northern Iraq, with limited autonomy.

Kurdish settlements often support a militia known as the *peshmerga* (loosely translated: "Death is before us"). Unlike most Middle Eastern armed forces, the Kurds allow women to join and serve in the military. The *peshmerga* has particularly thrived in the last few years; many of the stockpiles of the defeated Iraqi military have found their way into Kurdish hands, including tens of thousands of AK-74s assault rifles and MP5 submachine guns, and even a handful of T-55 tanks.

The *peshmerga* is also divided into several different regional and political factions. In the late 1990s, a minor war began between the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan—both nominally socialist democracy parties. The 2003 invasion of Iraq prompted the two factions to unite and join the US against the Iraqi government, but the alliance may not continue forever in the absence of a common enemy.

Kurds also continue to struggle to establish their own nations in neighboring Iran, Turkey, and Syria. All three countries have ongoing efforts to disarm and forcibly assimilate Kurds; in turn, supporting Kurdish independence, local *peshmerga* carry out terror attacks—often with weapons smuggled in from Iraqi Kurdistan. Historically, Turkey has been particularly vigorous in attempting to resolve the "Kurdish problem," and several times has launched cross-border strikes against Kurds in northern Iraq.

Israel

World War II included the largest, most organized campaign of genocide in human history. The Shoah was the crescendo of thousands of years of persecution, pogroms, and inquisitions; the Jewish people decided they would endure it no longer. The modern nation of Israel was formed in 1948, with the approval of the United Nations—and despite the protests of the surrounding Arab countries. War immediately broke out between the newborn country and its neighbors. Over the next few decades, Israel demonstrated battlefield cunning and an unflinching resolve. Today, Israel is smaller than New Jersey and has fewer residents than London; but it is a military giant in the Middle East.

Israel practices universal conscription: all Jewish men and women over the age of 18 must enlist in the Israeli Defense Forces. Most non-Jewish minorities, notably Israeli Arabs, are not required to serve, but may enlist, and serve side by side with Jewish recruits. After initial entry training, men and women serve two or three years on active duty (men serve longer, as do women in certain jobs); after this period of regular service, Israelis become reservists and can be called up for a month of active duty each year until their mid-forties.

Limited deferments are available for those deemed physically or psychologically unfit for military service. However, a

lack of military service carries several subtle disadvantages, ranging from exclusion from certain government positions to ineligibility for a commercial driver's license. Employers typically examine an applicant's service record for indicators of character (though this practice is technically illegal), so lack of military service often limits job opportunities. An employer *can* specify that they will only hire candidates with military experience—this is sometimes perceived as a statement that "non-Jews and draft dodgers need not apply."

The Israeli Defense Forces are well equipped and well trained; they have the latest weapons and they know how to use them. They use many of the same weapons systems and fighting vehicles as the United States, including the M16 assault rifle, M4 carbine, and the F-16 fighter aircraft. Other equipment is homegrown, like the venerable Uzi. Israel is known to have nuclear capabilities, though the government neither confirms nor denies this; the size and extent of its nuclear warhead stockpiles are unknown to the general public, and quite possibly to most intelligence agencies as well.

Israel has waged war often in its short history, usually in response to border pressures or terror attacks from neighboring nations. But its most persistent enemy lies within...

Palestine

When Israel was founded, the Jews didn't simply pick an empty span of desert and place a flag. The area known as Palestine was nominally under United Kingdom control, and contained nearly two million permanent residents; most inhabitants of the territory were Muslim, though widespread anti-Semitism throughout the first half of the 20th century had led to a large population of Jewish immigrants and the establishment of several Jewish communities.

The United Nations was sympathetic to the Jews' desire for a homeland, but sought to minimize disruption to the Arabs of Palestine. The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine outlined a jigsaw puzzle of Arab and Jewish national territories, and left Jerusalem as a non-aligned city under UN control. Most Jews were reasonably content with the plan, which granted to the Jewish state most areas with large Jewish settlements; but Arabs resented it—they saw it as heavy-handed interference by foreign powers, which ceded several Muslim-majority areas to the nascent Israel.

War broke out, and Israel simply seized much of the land that would have been Palestine. Since then, though the country has seen periods of relative peace, the area has been home to a large population of Arabs with no government, no home country, and no national identity. Today, well over ten million Palestinians hope and pray for a country of their own, and some are willing to fight for it.

The Gaza Strip and the West Bank

The West Bank (of the Jordan River) lies east of Jerusalem, and includes several holy sites such as the Wailing Wall, the Hill of Calvary, and the al-Aqsa Mosque. The Gaza Strip lies to the west of Israel, bordering on Egypt (although Israel agreed to relinquish control in 2005, it still maintains significant military presence). The population of each area is overwhelmingly Palestinian.

Israeli control of these territories is controversial because the country seized control of them in the Six-Day War of 1967. According to the original Partition Plan, both of these territories were designated for the Palestinian Arab state; some see Israel's presence in these areas as an indicator of expansionism and a gesture of bad faith with the Arab world, so these areas have been focal points for violence between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Current peace plans involve the possibility of using both to form an independent Palestinian state; but peace may be a long way off.

The Palestinian Civil War

The closest thing to a Palestinian government is the Palestinian Liberation Organization, which is actually a family of Palestinian nationalist groups. Of course, like all families, the members don't always agree; sometimes they bicker, and sometimes they won't speak to each other. In recent years, a dispute between two branches has turned to civil war.

The schism began in 2004, with the death of magnetic Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. For a generation, Arafat had been the voice and face of the PLO. After his passing, many Palestinians slowly polarized between two factions: Hamas, a terrorist sect, advocates the creation of a Palestinian state through bombings and violence; and Fatah, a more moderate group founded by Arafat, which seeks to forge a new state through a diplomatic process.

Open fighting started in 2006, when Fatah lost power in an election, but refused to cede control to Hamas; since then, several waves of warfare have washed across Palestine, killing hundreds of Palestinians and wounding thousands more. Though the European Union and the United States supply funds, weapons, and training for Fatah and have suspended aid to the now Hamas-controlled Palestinian National Authority, the fighting drags on; it may continue until one or both factions simply lack the manpower to continue.

Asia

Asia is a continent of contradictions; yin and yang often coexist in close proximity. Though it possesses some of the world's oldest cultures, it also has peoples who have only recently achieved their own national and cultural identity. Information Age mingles uneasily with Iron Age; in some places you can look out the door of an Internet café and watch farmers tilling a field with oxen as their ancestors did a thousand years ago.

North and South Korea

After decades of domination by Japan, World War II left the Korean peninsula split between US and Soviet Union protectorates, divided at the legendary 38th paral-

lel of latitude. Though these administrations were meant to be temporary, complications arose: a pro-capitalism government grew in the US-controlled south, while the Soviet-dominated northern half of the country instituted a communist society.

Neither regime achieved widespread popularity; most native Koreans regarded both as puppet governments established to promote foreign ideologies. Eventually, Korea agreed to determine its ruling party by public election—a deal that heavily favored the capitalist south, which had twice the population of the north. The Soviet-influenced northern bloc boycotted the elections, and the deadlock dragged on.

By late 1949, the capitalist government in the south was gaining enormous strength; the north turned to the Soviet Union for military intervention, but Stalin did not wish to provoke a war against the United States. But in early January, the US Secretary of State made a telling public statement, implying the US did not consider Korea a defensive priority.

Two and a half weeks later, the Soviet Union promised to assist in reunifying the peninsula and began arming the north with guns, aircraft, and tanks. In June, 1950, North Korea marched on South Korea. Soon the Soviet Union and China had openly sided with North Korea, and the US and United Nations sided with South Korea; though the zones of control oscillated wildly, neither side seemed able to maintain an advantage for long: a ceasefire in 1953 ended major hostilities after just over three years, establishing a demilitarized zone closely resembling the original borderland at 38 degrees north.

Today, three generations have lived and died under a perpetual, if largely unfought, war. North Korea, officially the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, is a nuclear-armed nation with the largest per-capita military in the world. The southern Republic of Korea practices universal conscription among males and is regarded as having some of the best (and most brutal) military discipline in the world. Both the ROK and the DPRK have engaged in peace talks twice in the last decade, but each side accuses the other of dealing in poor faith and catering to foreign pressures; with North Korean resources growing scarce and South Korea's allies committed elsewhere, the war may heat up again.

The People's Republic of China

Size *does* matter, and the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) is the largest in the world. China's active military and paramilitary forces number over three million, and can call on *ten million more* militiamen and reservists if necessary. Theoretically, all healthy young men must join at age 18 (though this is not always enforced) and women are encouraged to enlist in service and support corps.

The Chinese military lags in budget and technology; however, until recently, the Chinese armed forces was marked by inadequate infrastructure and obsolete equipment, largely inherited from the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, China launched a massive campaign to upgrade its military technology, but progress has been slow; with its military budget stretched across such a large standing force, China has had to focus on spending its money where it will make the most difference. Though their aging AK-47 variants are gradually being replaced with modern rifles, the biggest bang for the buck is found elsewhere.

The real advances in China's war technology have come under the heading of research and development, which are not technically part of the defense budget. By some estimates, China expends more than twice as much annually on military research as on the official military budget. Much of this budget goes into development of the space program, headed by the Central Military Commission: the planned space station and Lunar landing have obvious military value. China is also investing heavily in fusion research, despite already possessing an undisclosed number of nuclear weapons. Some countries, particularly the US, have accused China of hiding an advanced weapons program behind a veil of pure science.

The PLA maintains an excellent intelligence program, countering what it sees as ubiquitous subversion and infiltration by the Western nations of the world; technological and industrial advances are favorite targets. The PLA also pays close attention to new developments in asymmetrical warfare, just in case it needs to fight a large, well-equipped, and well-financed enemy while minimizing expenditures of material and infrastructure.

Taiwan (officially titled the Republic of China) is located on a large island off the east coast of China—and it is the last stronghold of the government that existed on the mainland before the Chinese Communist Party seized control in 1949. It has long been a thorn in China's side. Though most United Nations member states initially recognized Taiwan as the "real" China, most sovereign nations now regard the People's Republic of China as the rightful Chinese government. Many do not recognize the existence of Taiwan at all, as China pressures its allies and trade partners not to recognize Taiwan as an independent country. China considers Taiwan to be a wayward province of the People's Republic, against which forcible reunification would be justified. A political and military reclamation campaign may not be far off.

China remains a nation in flux, and has undergone considerable liberalization since the 1980s. Today, it's slowly becoming less a communist country and more... something else. The 1990s brought the downfall of sometime ally and sometime enemy Soviet Union, as well as a surge of increased cultural and economic contact with Western nations. With the spread of the Internet, Beijing is finding it impossible to control completely the spread of news and ideas. If China finds itself unable to change with the times, it may bring on a war that would rock all of Asia, and perhaps the world.

Civil War in Southern Thailand

The Pattani Raya region at the southern tip of Thailand has long maintained an identity distinct from the rest of the country. Most inhabitants of Pattani are Malay, an ethnicity and culture historically separate from the Thai people, who comprise three quarters of Thailand's population. Most of Thailand is Buddhist, while the Malay are almost all Muslim; the Malay have also been targets of racially and religiously motivated violence since the annexation of Pattani in 1902.

Thailand (previously Siam) has gained and lost control of the Pattani region several times over the last few centuries. The most recent seizure of control came in 1902, but the residents of Pattani Raya have not taken it lying down; the century since has been punctuated by Pattani separatist violence, and retributive strikes carried out by the Thai government.

The latest wave of violence started in 2001, and redoubled in 2004. The exact perpetrators are unknown, though the most likely candidate is the Pattani United Liberation Army—a terrorist organization seeking to establish an independent Muslim state in southern Thailand. The attacks have largely been directed against military targets and government infrastructure, but several bombings have been aimed at civilian populations as well.

In 2006, the Thai military ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and established a junta committee to direct the government. The junta, calling itself the Council for Democratic Reform, promised to restore democratic rule within a year. It failed to do so; instead, it aborted elections, suspended the national constitution, seized control of the media, and declared martial law.

Unlike the Thaksin administration, which reacted to attacks with vicious reprisals against Muslims, the junta has employed a lighter touch when dealing with the unknown rebels. The Council for Democratic Reform has also met with several known Pattani nationalist groups to assuage the violence with peace talks; but since the attacks continue unabated, there appears to be more than one organization behind them.

The Saffron Revolution

In August, 2007, spurred by widespread poverty, rising prices, and profligate military spending, citizens began a series of mostly peaceful demonstrations in the Union of Myanmar (Burma). Led by Buddhist monks, these demonstrations called for democratic rule in Burma, asked the government to restore recently-suspended fuel subsidies, and chanted Gautama Buddha's words on universal love and compassion.

The junta currently in control of Burma, the State Peace and Development Council, responded swiftly and decisively: protesters were declared threats to the security of the state, beaten, and arrested.

The Burmese government's actions did not have the intended effect. Hundreds and then thousands more Buddhist clergy joined the demonstrations, and though they urged laypeople not to risk themselves by joining the protests, tens of thousands of civilians joined them anyway. Within a week, thousands of monks were marching in synchronized peaceful demonstrations throughout the country. With half a million Buddhist monks and nuns in Burma, the ruling junta apparently began to suspect it couldn't just throw all of them in prison.

The government imposed a curfew, banned public gatherings, and began a systematic campaign of arresting prominent pro-democracy figures. Violence against protesters increased; riot police occasionally opened fire on protesters, leading to deaths. Desperate to keep news of the abuses from spreading, the junta began shutting down Internet access and beating or executing journalists. And people have begun... disappearing.

World opinion has increasingly turned against Burma's government; several nations have urged the United Nations to send a peacekeeping force, while the UN Security Council condemns the ongoing violence. Nobody is yet sure how this will end—but the Buddhist clergy has sworn to continue the protests as long as necessary.

Aluminum Foil Beanie Time

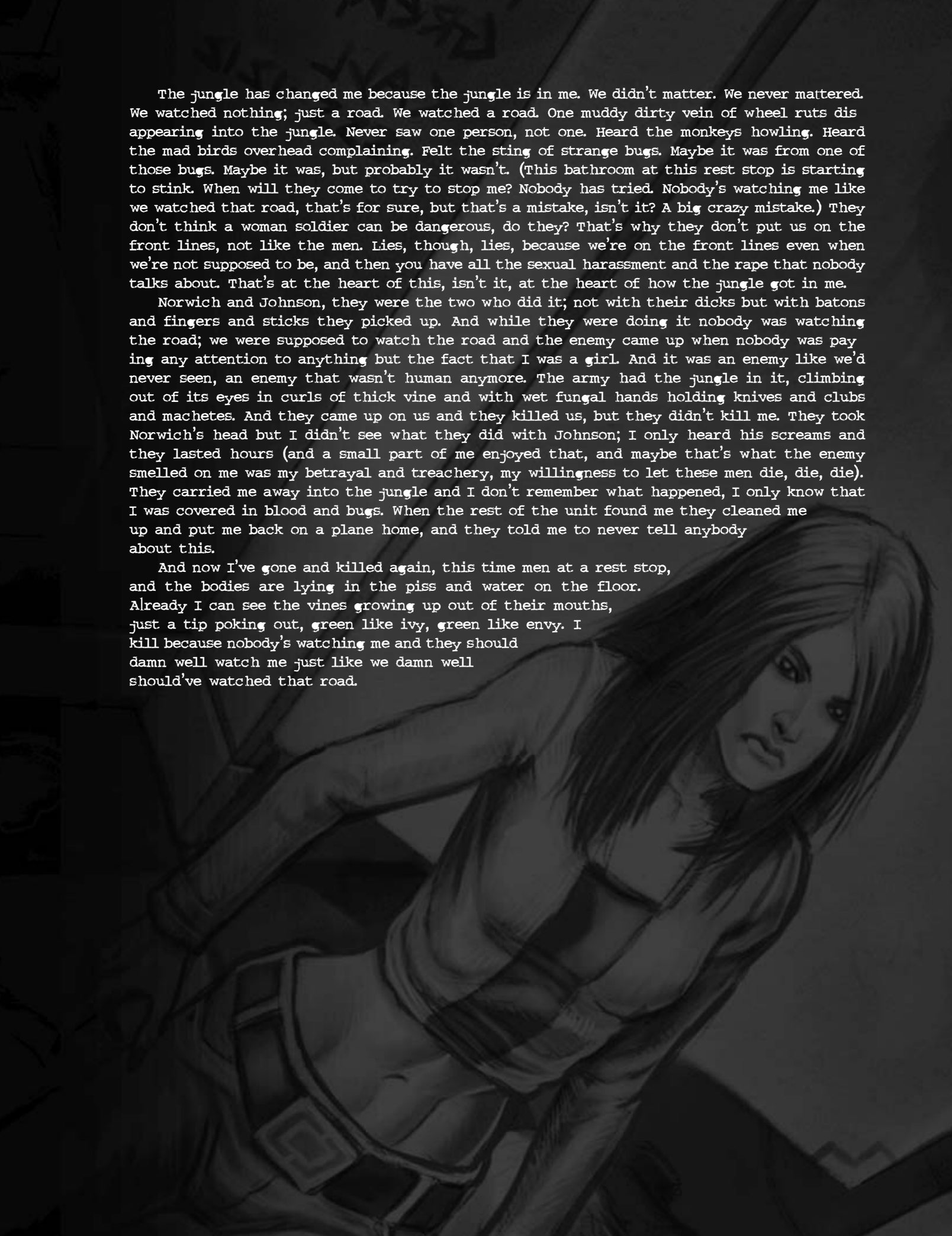
Some have alleged that the United States is secretly behind the recent terrorist attacks in Thailand. There's no persuasive public evidence of this, of course; but then again, you could once have said that about the MKULTRA mind control experiments conducted on unwitting citizens, or the Operation Mongoose plans to put bombs in Castro's cigars. In a setting full of paranoia and tyrannical governments, it's up to the Storyteller to determine where the conspiracies are, and how deep they run.

FOR A
GREAT TIME
CALL
555-1212
PUSH

The jungle has changed me because the jungle is in me. We didn't matter. We never mattered. We watched nothing; just a road. We watched a road. One muddy dirty vein of wheel ruts disappearing into the jungle. Never saw one person, not one. Heard the monkeys howling. Heard the mad birds overhead complaining. Felt the sting of strange bugs. Maybe it was from one of those bugs. Maybe it was, but probably it wasn't. (This bathroom at this rest stop is starting to stink. When will they come to try to stop me? Nobody has tried. Nobody's watching me like we watched that road, that's for sure, but that's a mistake, isn't it? A big crazy mistake.) They don't think a woman soldier can be dangerous, do they? That's why they don't put us on the front lines, not like the men. Lies, though, lies, because we're on the front lines even when we're not supposed to be, and then you have all the sexual harassment and the rape that nobody talks about. That's at the heart of this, isn't it, at the heart of how the jungle got in me.

Norwich and Johnson, they were the two who did it; not with their dicks but with batons and fingers and sticks they picked up. And while they were doing it nobody was watching the road; we were supposed to watch the road and the enemy came up when nobody was paying any attention to anything but the fact that I was a girl. And it was an enemy like we'd never seen, an enemy that wasn't human anymore. The army had the jungle in it, climbing out of its eyes in curls of thick vine and with wet fungal hands holding knives and clubs and machetes. And they came up on us and they killed us, but they didn't kill me. They took Norwich's head but I didn't see what they did with Johnson; I only heard his screams and they lasted hours (and a small part of me enjoyed that, and maybe that's what the enemy smelled on me was my betrayal and treachery, my willingness to let these men die, die, die). They carried me away into the jungle and I don't remember what happened, I only know that I was covered in blood and bugs. When the rest of the unit found me they cleaned me up and put me back on a plane home, and they told me to never tell anybody about this.

And now I've gone and killed again, this time men at a rest stop, and the bodies are lying in the piss and water on the floor. Already I can see the vines growing up out of their mouths, just a tip poking out, green like ivy, green like envy. I kill because nobody's watching me and they should damn well watch me just like we damn well should've watched that road.



Chapter Four: Storytelling

War is not a glorious enterprise: it is dirty, nasty and squalid. Combat heroics lead more often than not to posthumous awards and a folded flag handed over to a grieving family. Add to this vision of apocalypse the nature of the World of Darkness and you get a whole new level of ugly. The monsters of the hidden world don't sit idly by and watch conflicts on TV. They get involved. Their involvement may consist of a subtle nudge, here and there, from the sidelines or it may consist of a pack of werewolves howling for blood on the edges of a battle. The common soldier has more to fear than death and disease; sometimes the lucky ones die first and sometimes death isn't final.

There are stories about war in every culture and in every strata of society. Not all the stories are told by soldiers, either. The Soviet Union suffered approximately 30 million civilian casualties (which is equal to nearly the entire population of California) in World War II. They died from starvation, disease and exposure nearly as often as they succumbed to intentional or accidental violence. The peasants in Vietnam watched as their villages were burned and their crops destroyed by soldiers on both sides. The ethnic purges of the Bosnian War saw a death toll of nearly 200,000 civilians, whose only crime was that of their race. The survivors of all these events have stories about war, as do the photographers, journalists and relief workers who were on the scene.

Soldiers have their own stories about war, sometimes embellished, but not always. They talk about their missing friends, the incompetence of their leadership, the horrid conditions they endured, and the people they encountered, just as often as they talk about the fighting itself. Tales told of accidental deaths or unusual wounds are followed by laughter, which isn't ghoulish, but accepting of the hand dealt by fate. Listen close and amongst the tales you will hear the subtext of fear and loneliness suffered by every one of them. Fear is the constant companion of the soldier. Fear of death, of injury, of losing friends and even of succumbing to fear itself, leading to humiliation.

"These are great days we're living, bros! We are jolly green giants, walking the earth with guns. These people we wasted here today are the finest human beings we will ever know."

– Full Metal Jacket

Then there are the scars. The most obvious scars like missing limbs, blindness or disfigurement aren't always the worst. Physical pain will eventually diminish, but nothing can make people forget what they see. The memories of violence inflicted on them or by them leads to psychological conditions that affect soldiers and non-combatants alike for the rest of their lives. For the people who suffer from these ailments, the war is never really over, and each day is a different kind of battle to regain a semblance of normality in their lives.

This chapter discusses several aspects of life in combat zones, the Morality of warfare and the effect the World of Darkness has on conflict. Also included are optional rules for deadlier modern weaponry, large-scale combat and some military character templates for use by Storytellers or as inspiration for players. Scattered throughout the chapter are sidebars titled "War Stories." These are meant to act as story hooks and to provide further insight on how the supernatural can be combined with conflict to create true tales of horror.

A Soldier's Conscience

This section deals with the problems of Morality that crop up in games with military characters as well as the general psychological well being of characters in a military setting. The solution offered for these problems is the trigger system, which operates in harmony with the regular Morality rules and

is based on the problems suffered by individuals with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

It is the duty of a soldier to commit horrific acts of violence in the service of his country. These acts can't be properly classified as murder or torture from a legal standpoint, but from the standpoint of Morality, of conscience, the acts contain the same elements of anger, fear and horror that contribute to mental decline. Most soldiers report that they feel next to nothing when they kill an enemy combatant. Their training has told them that killing in the defense their fellows or their country is acceptable and expected. These same soldiers also report that the atrocities of war suddenly come to bear when they stumble across something unexpected or that reminds them of home. The sight of a dead child, victim of an errant bomb, cradled in the arms of a bloodied and weeping mother is the stuff of nightmares. A radio playing a favorite song from home reminds them just how far from their loved ones they are. Because of the culture of machismo cultivated by the military, soldiers often fear sharing these uncomfortable feelings and try to repress them, which leads to more serious and long term mental conditions later in life. In the past, many soldiers attempted to relieve these feelings through communication to their friends and family at home. At first this was in the form of letter or telegraphs, and then it was phone calls or email. Now a large number of soldiers post their feelings about war on Internet web logs, known as milblogs.

The most frequent mental condition suffered by soldiers (and other victims or witnesses of violence) is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This disorder covers a broad range of conditions, from the complex known as Survivor's Guilt, to combat fatigue, to flashbacks of violent situations or events. There is no universal symptom associated with PTSD, but common symptoms include severe anxiety, depression, insomnia, irrationality, avoidance, and outbursts of violence directed at oneself or others. Victims of PTSD find it difficult to connect with other people and often suffer from a feeling of unreality about their daily lives. Early cases of PTSD were first diagnosed in veterans of World War I by Sigmund Freud, but Civil War era records speak of soldiers suffering from a condition doctors called "irritable heart" that included symptoms that would probably be classified as PTSD today. In the aftermath of Vietnam and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, doctors began to attribute the mental illnesses of surviving troops as the direct result of combat action, but it was only in 2005 that the US Department of Veterans Affairs began to provide serious compensation for soldiers suffering from PTSD.

Questionable Morality

The Morality system found in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** (see p. 91) is ill-suited for use by military characters. Though it does a fine job of representing the mental balance of civilians in peacetime conditions, Morality is a strict interpretation of societal expectations and conditioned responses. Nevertheless, mortals default to Morality as presented and most soldiers are all too mortal.

Following the guidelines set out in the Morality section, a soldier who regularly patrols a hostile area and frequently engages in combat will quickly begin to degenerate. Even killing an enemy soldier in self-defense is manslaughter, a Morality 4 sin. Ground forces aren't the only soldiers at risk either. Pilots that purposefully destroy military buildings and personnel are committing the Morality 5 sin of intentional mass property damage and an argument could be made that they are purposefully planning murder, which is a Morality 3 sin. Given that the most points soldier characters can expect per game is in the 3 to 5 range, even if a player spent their experience only on regaining Morality (setting aside arguments about changes in behavior), most active military characters have little chance of sustaining a Morality rating of 3 or higher. Unless the troupe desires to play a chronicle which highlights the degeneration of Morality as the result of conflict, standard use of Morality is unsustainable for long term military chronicles.

Trigger Rolls

Triggers represent the effects of PTSD on military characters without the loss of Morality or by at least slowing the degeneration of a character. Trigger rolls are used alongside the standard rules for degeneration, not in place of them, to help illustrate the duality of conscience that allows soldiers to lead part-time lives of violence without becoming sociopaths. Whenever a character, in the course of pursuing legitimate military action, commits an act that would normally trigger a degeneration roll, the character's player instead immediately rolls his Morality rating as a dice pool called a trigger roll. If the roll succeeds, he manages to rationalize his actions as a side-effect of war. This shouldn't be taken to mean that he feels no regret or remorse for his actions; rather that he is able to place the consequences of his actions into the larger view of military perspective. If, however, the roll fails, the character has failed to fully come to terms with the new situation. He develops a mental or emotional ailment or condition which is caused by the stress, grief or remorse of having committed the "sin" or even guilt because he isn't suffering the stress or grief he feels he should. This ailment is called a trigger and it manifests itself in certain specific circumstances related to the event that caused it to come into being. Gaining a trigger does not cause a character to lose Morality and characters may develop multiple triggers.

Trauma-Spawned Triggers

Triggers do not always have their roots in the character taking an action that violates his Morality. Sometimes a character encounters a situation or event that is so horrific that it actually has an effect on his psyche, warping him in the same way that taking actions that violate his Morality might, even though he had nothing directly to do with the act. Trauma-spawned triggers of this kind are at the sole discretion of the Storyteller, although it is recommended that players are given the opportunity to make a roll (using their Morality as a dice pool) to resist developing a trigger in these cases. Two characters may react to the similar horrific situation in very different manners, one developing mental problems from it, and the other somehow managing to cope with the situation without severe or lasting emotional harm.

Other than their method of coming into being, trauma-spawned triggers are exactly like those created through failed degeneration rolls. The mechanics are the same, and they can be treated in the same manner.

Triggers

Triggers are physical, mental, or emotional switches caused by extreme stress or trauma. They lie in wait in the character's subconscious, dormant until the right circumstance activates them, at which point they "trigger" an unusual reaction to the given situation. Once activated, a trigger strongly influences the behavior of the character affected for a time period that differs from trigger to trigger.

The trigger is always related, at least in the subconscious of the character, to the act that spawned it, although that connection may not always be understandable to outsiders—or to the character himself. For example, if a character developed a trigger of Aversion because he killed a dog, he might avoid interacting with dogs (or wolves, or coyotes, or anything dog-like). A different example might involve a character who got the Psychosomatic trigger from a car crash. His trigger might be connected to automobiles in general or the specific make of car involved in the accident. Driving or riding in automobiles of any kind could prompt a reaction in the form of a stomach ache, headache or other physical pain. Essentially, triggers act like derangements that only become active in response to preset stimuli.

Degeneration

Making the decision to include the trigger mechanic in chronicles with a military setting doesn't mean the characters will never suffer from degeneration or derangements. A soldier who commits acts of violence while fulfilling his duty is very different from a soldier who willfully commits random acts of cruelty or terror. Shooting a non-combatant accidentally during a firefight with enemy troops will result in a trigger. Shooting non-combatants for amusement will result in Morality loss and the possibility of derangements. Even war has its rules, though. Torture and abuse of prisoners is dishonorable and unwarranted, and carries with it the associated Morality sin. Use of unnecessary force, such as firing a HE round at a single human target is also outside the rules of war and should call for a Morality check. It is also possible for military soldiers to become hardened and callous to war, which can affect their Morality. If a character begins to behave in a manner sympathetic to one or more of his triggers while not actively suffering from the trigger, the character should begin to make Morality checks to avoid degeneration. War brings out the best in some and the worst in others.

Other Places, Other Battles

The trigger system as shown is intended for use in chronicles that deal heavily in the life or death struggles of people living in battle zones. The same system could be easily modified to deal with the type of Morality that allows hardened criminals to pursue a life of crime without becoming a raving lunatic. Both the military and the criminal mentality require an individual to separate their "normal" lives from the atrocities they commit as part of their job. In either case, the normal bounds of societal conditioning have little or no effect on the individual that commits violence. A gang member that has been conditioned to believe a rival gang is the enemy is unlikely to feel more than a second of regret when he guns down a member of that rival gang. Troupes that feel the trigger system is applicable to their chronicle are encouraged to discuss whether to include the system or not.

Example Triggers

Aversion—Characters with the Aversion trigger will intentionally avoid a particular item, person, situation or location that they associate (consciously or subconsciously) with the event that caused this trigger. Aversion triggers differ from Phobia triggers in that the character does not exhibit fear symptoms, but will nonetheless do anything in their power to avoid interacting with the object of their trigger. Players must spend a point of Willpower per turn in order for their characters to voluntarily interact with the object of their trigger. The Aversion trigger is mild in reaction compared to some other triggers, but is constantly active.

Berserk—Characters with the Berserk trigger react violently when their trigger is activated and go into an all-out blind rage. They physically attack people and objects around them, most often beginning with the person or thing that triggered their fit.

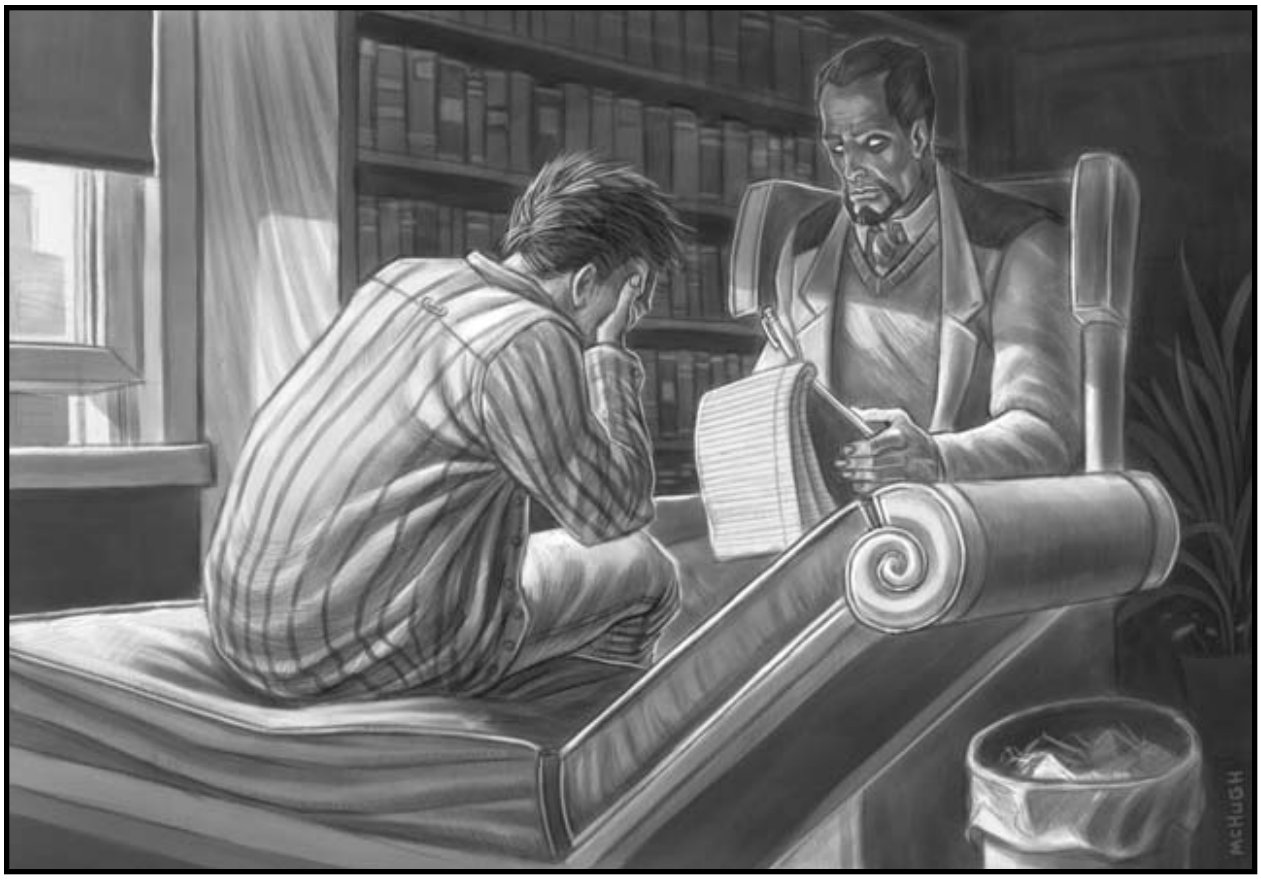
The Berserk trigger is most often activated by sensory input related to the event that spawned the trigger (gunfire, explosions/loud noises, or the keening wail of a newly widowed wife), or to surprise. At any point in which the character is taken by surprise, his trigger becomes active. Characters in the middle of a Berserk trigger are impossible to reason with, and have no control over their fury. They continue to fight with all their might (and using whatever resources are available) until no targets remain, friend or foe. Because they do not spare any thought for protecting themselves, they forgo all Defense while this trigger is active, although they still gain the benefits of any armor they might be wearing. They continue their rage for a number of turns equal to (10 – Morality), unless knocked unconscious. So a Morality 7 character rages for 3 turns, whereas a Morality 4 character causes whatever destruction he can for 6 turns.

Compulsion—The Compulsion trigger becomes active when the character is exposed to an object, location, or situation that reminds him of the event that caused the trigger. When the Compulsive trigger is activated, the player rolls Resolve + Composure. If the roll fails, the character engages in a particular compulsive behavior for a scene. Behaviors might include repetitive hand-washing or cleaning, counting objects around himself, repeatedly checking to make sure his gun is loaded, or straightening or arranging items incessantly.

Insomnia—Not all triggers manifest immediately when activated. When the Insomnia trigger activates, the afflicted character's only immediate reaction is a slight anxiousness and hyperawareness. This offers a +1 bonus to Perception rolls while the trigger is active. The full burden of the trigger becomes evident when the character next attempts to sleep. The same state of heightened sensitivity which fuels the Perception bonus also makes it impossible for the character to slip into a restful sleep. Regardless of how many hours he lies in bed or what types of medication he takes, restful sleep eludes him. Treat this as if he was going without sleep altogether; even if he manages to catch an hour or two, it does not recharge him the way restful sleep does. For most characters, this is inconvenient and slowly begins to take its toll (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 179 for information on how fatigue works). The Insomnia trigger remains active for a week minus one day per dot of the character's Resolve + Composure, with a minimum of two night's lost sleep.

Obsession—Characters with the Obsession trigger become unavoidably fascinated with or attracted to a particular thing, person, or location related in some way to the event that caused this trigger. This could manifest as an undeniable desire to possess the item if it is not in their keeping or a need to keep it on their person while the trigger is active. If neither is possible, the character's thoughts, words, and actions still remain focused on the object for the duration of the trigger. With a successful Resolve + Composure roll, the character can take actions unrelated to the focus of his trigger for one scene, but it is never far from his thoughts. Obsession triggers manifest for one scene, once activated. For example, PFC McPhee gained the Obsession trigger when he accidentally killed a child riding a bicycle with a poorly aimed burst from his machine gun. Every time McPhee sees a bicycle his trigger activates. For the rest of the scene, he remains fixated on the bicycle, not necessarily needing to possess it, but unable to take his eyes off of it. If someone removes the bicycle from the area, he asks about it. If he's asked to do anything unrelated to the bicycle, his player must succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll to do so.

Phobia—Characters with the Phobia trigger become irrationally afraid of a particular thing that poses little or no



realistic danger to them (that is, the object of the phobia might actually be dangerous, but the character doesn't have to be in danger from the item in order to panic). Phobia trigger focuses might include animals (rats, spiders, snakes, dogs), objects (needles, blood, guns), locations (elevators, tunnels, heights, underground), situations (flying, driving, being hospitalized) or people (nurses, doctors, military police, priests). Each Phobia trigger has a specific focus related in some way to the event that caused the trigger. It is possible for a character to develop multiple related or unrelated Phobia triggers through different events or degenerations. When a person with the Phobia trigger encounters the target of his phobia, the player must make a successful Resolve + Composure roll to avoid activating the trigger. Success means the character has managed to avoid the trigger's effect for the scene. Failure means the trigger activates. While active, the character suffers a -5 penalty to perform any activity that is not directly related to removing himself from the presence of the phobia-target. Once activated, Phobia triggers remain active until the object or situation is no longer in the character's presence (or visa versa).

Self Destruction–Characters with the Self Destruction trigger find themselves overwhelmed with the desire to cause harm to themselves whenever their trigger is activated. This can manifest as cutting, punching or hitting, burning, picking at wounds or sutures, self-biting, poking or stabbing, or ingesting of harmful items or substances. It should be noted that this trigger is not suicidal in nature, although if not stopped it can accidentally cause severe injury or death.

Self Destruction triggers are often situational. A character with the Self Destruction trigger often becomes overwhelmed with the need to self-harm when put into a situation that in some way resembles the one that caused the trigger. Exposure to a particular item (such as a knife, if the event that caused the trigger revolved around one) can also cause the trigger to come active. Once activated, the Self Destruction trigger remains active for a scene. If the character is not in a position to self-harm, he might delay the impetus for a few hours. Every scene, the player can roll Resolve + Composure to forestall the desire to self-harm. The maximum amount of delay, though, is eight hours. At this point, the character harms himself with whatever he has handy. He might not even notice he's doing it.

NOTE: This is a particularly touchy subject for a lot of people. Some people do cut, or burn, or bite or otherwise harm themselves, and it's not funny in the slightest. The trigger is included because it's a common response to trauma, but if it's too uncomfortable a topic for anyone in your troupe, that should be respected.

Additional triggers can be created from the derangements listed in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, starting on p. 96.

Treatment

After PTSD came to be recognized as a legitimate complaint; doctors began to devise a number of treatment options for those afflicted by the condition. The first line of

treatment for PTSD is a peer based system of therapy called Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM). This form of treatment is the preferred form of therapy for soldiers since it can be administered on the front lines and without needing a specialist. CISM attempts to focus on the root cause of the psychological issue and help the sufferer cope with that problem in order to return them to a vestige of normal daily life as quickly as possible. Although the victims of PTSD report progress after receiving treatment via CISM, recent studies have suggested the treatment may cause more harm than good. These studies claim CISM simply masks the symptoms of PTSD for a short duration without addressing the root of the problem.

A more intensive form of therapy to combat PTSD is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). CBT is a type of psychotherapy that attempts to alter the behavioral patterns of the patient (including erroneous thoughts, beliefs and assumptions) to allow them to recognize "wrong thoughts" that lead to episodes of irrationality. Doctors also encourage patients to keep a daily diary which can help identify patterns of problem thoughts and behaviors to assist doctors in offering suggestions of new approaches to old problems. CBT is usually combined with other kinds of treatments such as group and drug therapy.

Drug therapy is also a useful weapon in the battle against PTSD. Common prescriptions issued by doctors include anti-depressants like Zoloft, Paxil, Prozac and Wellbutrin. Beta blockers have also been found to be effective in treating PTSD using drugs like Propranolol to lower heart rate and blood pressure, both of which are common symptoms associated with severe anxiety

A character who has developed one or more triggers can seek (or might be ordered to seek) medical assistance in dealing with his condition. Therapy can involve one or more of the above practices, as well as other common forms of psychotherapy. Regardless of the specific type employed, game systems for psychotherapy work the same way. The therapist needs to gain the patient's trust; this can be accomplished with a contested roll (therapist's Manipulation + Empathy vs. subject's Composure + Subterfuge). This roll is made once every session, as long as the subject wishes to keep resisting the therapy. If the therapist wins, the patient participates in the therapy, perhaps grudgingly, perhaps only temporarily, but enough for the therapist to make some headway. If the patient wins, he can participate if he so chooses, but might lie or remain silent through the session.

The next step is the actual therapy. The therapist presents the patient with the therapy tools, be they conversation, art, play therapy, primal scream or whatever the therapist thinks will work. The therapist's player rolls Manipulation + Medicine. If this roll succeeds, the character has explained himself well enough that the patient can grasp the concepts and employ them. The patient's player might then be required to make rolls such as Wits + Expression (writing a diary), Intelligence + Composure (examining and discussing his own feelings and thoughts) or Resolve + Composure (reliving a traumatic event). If these rolls succeed, the therapy progresses.

At the end of every successful therapy session, the patient's player makes an extended Resolve + Composure roll. When the player reaches the target number of successes, the character stops suffering the effects of a given trigger. Note that the trigger does not disappear; the character simply stops suffering the negative effects. A traumatic event, a long period of time spent off medication, or supernatural intervention can cause a relapse.

Remember that therapy frequently takes years to have a meaningful effect on a patient, though the short term benefits can be substantial enough to allow the patient to return to active duty.

The Scale of War

Conflict can set a mighty stage to play on, but it also requires some additional thinking to represent faithfully. No one wanders through a battle zone without leaving with wounds. The wounds can be literal or psychological and the severity depends on how aware you are, how tough you are, and sometimes just how plain lucky you are. Conflict hot zones aren't neat packages that allow for easy detours around the sites of battle. In a conflict everyone nearby is a possible casualty. Stray rounds, poorly targeted bombs, intentional attacks against the civilian populace and other dangers force combatants and non-combatants alike to walk a narrow line between caution and paranoia.

Some ideas are provided below for how to adjudicate conflict on a larger scale without spending hours rolling dice. Each section identifies a possible problem and offers either narrative or more substantive rule-based suggestions on how to resolve that problem. The default assumption is that the characters are active participants in the conflict, but even non-combatants aren't immune to the random dangers of war.

Life in the Hot Zone

Living in or traveling through an area with active conflict is a distinct experience. Reminders of war can be found in small details, like the way people instinctively duck when a car backfires, and in larger details such as burning wrecks and buildings pocked with bullet holes. Despite efforts to recover corpses to prevent disease, the smell of rotting flesh can appear without warning, indicating the bloated remains of a body buried in rubble. During the day, people scurry from building to building going about their daily tasks, never staying too long in the open for fear of snipers. Crowds drawn to open air markets are wary, throwing frequent looks over their shoulders, looking for signs of a suicide bomber intent on mayhem. At night, ordinary citizens hide in their houses, listening to the sounds of gunfire and explosions, praying that no battle visits their neighborhood. Everywhere are soldiers. Soldiers from both

sides, kicking in doors to seek cover from incoming fire, looting abandoned shops and committing rape and murder on the unfortunates that cross their path. Living under such conditions is wearying to both the body and mind.

Whether a chronicle starts out as a war story or becomes one as the troupe moves through a battlefield, Storytellers are faced with the task of describing the conditions. Most of this work is narrative. As the characters go about their business, the Storyteller should throw in reminders now and then of the greater struggle going on in the background. These reminders can be as subtle or blatant as the Storyteller feel necessary to keep the tension of living in a battlefield fresh in the minds of the characters. A tattered doll, missing one arm, lies forlorn and forgotten at the edge of a bloodstain. Explosions and gunfire wake the characters from sleep at all hours of the day and night, denying them the rest they need. They may find that a favored shop or restaurant has burned to the ground, the owner a charred corpse grinning at them from the ruins.

Though cities usually see the worst of a conflict, not all battles take place in an urban environment. Roving bands of armed men crossing the countryside commit atrocities for which they are seldom held responsible. Crops, houses, and small villages may be put to the torch to deny them to the enemy, with no regard for the inhabitants. Resistance from civilians is met with the butt of a gun or summary execution. Troops that take up positions in civilian homes mark that home as a military target and can bring about its destruction just as a result of their presence. Refugees seeking to escape the violence clog the roads and make travel difficult, moving out of the way only after threats of force and then slowly, with a marked resentment. These columns of refugees are frequently targets for violence themselves. It has been long understood that the bodies and vehicles of fleeing civilians slow enemy travel, and they are often slaughtered in the hundreds for just this purpose.

In the World of Darkness, monsters are often drawn to locations of conflict. Vampires stalk the night, seeking the wounded as easy prey. The spirits of war, violence and death are over-stimulated by the carnage and try to slip through the Gauntlet, seeking human hosts to experience war in the flesh. Creatures even further removed from humanity lair in ruined houses, gnawing on severed limbs and looking hungrily on the living.

The bloodshed, violence, and uncertainty of living under such conditions will eventually wear down even the bravest of souls. For each month spent in an area with active conflict, a character should roll their Morality rating in dice. With success on the roll, the character manages to keep their wits about them and doesn't allow the carnage to influence them on a personal level. If the roll fails, the character gains a trigger (see p. 104) that should be associated with the most recent reminder of war they've experienced. Storytellers may vary the frequency of this roll to mirror the level of violence surrounding the character. Active participation in daily battles might require a roll every week, while characters that spend most of their time on the fringes of a battle may only need to roll once every other month.

Situational Awareness

Refraining from an active role in warfare is no surety of safety. Battles are rarely planned, instead they form organically as more and more troops build up in an area that holds strategic or economic value. What starts out as a simple raid can quickly escalate into a full-blown confrontation with masses of deployed troops, armor, and air support. Whether you are forced into the struggle as a soldier or non-combatant matters very little, the dangers of being stuck in the middle of a battle are the same.

The Storyteller can increase tension by describing the fury of battle. The ground shakes and dust sifts down from ceilings as the result of artillery explosions or dropped bombs. Tracers light up the night in a macabre fireworks display of red and green death. The sounds of bullet ricochets and near-misses force people to cower behind negligible cover. Mortar rounds make a dull ripping noise as they hurtle through the air, rattling teeth and glass when they touch down.

Military training helps to avoid the worst dangers of a conflict by instructing soldiers on how to move, the importance of cover and movement, and the necessity of working as a team. Those without military training, or scant training, have to make do the best they can. War is the harshest Darwinian test and quickly weeds out the weak and unlucky. Combat statistics suggest that if a new recruit or replacement can survive his first week of combat, he is less likely to suffer serious injury for the duration of the conflict. Unfortunately, the casualty rates for individuals newly introduced to combat are high enough that no combat squad is likely to be composed solely of veterans. New recruits make mistakes that not only get them killed, but also put the rest of their squad at risk. That isn't to say that only newbies get killed in battle; a stray round doesn't care how much experience you have and high explosives are a great equalizer.

The following system is completely optional and is presented for troupes that wish to simulate the randomness of battle. If rolling extra dice will break up the mood, don't bother—just continue with narrative effects. A soldier ducking for cover near the characters that suddenly has his head explode is just as dramatic as mechanical damage done to the characters.

Battles consist of smaller firefights that combine to form the combat action as a whole. To simulate the feel of being part of a larger battle, rather than rolling buckets of dice to determine the outcome, the characters make situational awareness rolls and affect the outcome of the battle through their decisions. During combat, player characters engage a set number of opponents, just like normal combat, with the situational awareness roll emphasizing the larger scale of the battle. At the end of each round of combat, each

character involved in battle or nearby should roll Wits + Composure. This is the basic situational awareness roll and represents how well the character has kept their head and used their surroundings to their advantage. With a success, the character has managed to avoid painting himself as a target for incoming fire. If the roll fails, the Storyteller rolls an attack against that character with a pool of 4 dice. This roll is made in addition to any directed attacks against a character and isn't modified by armor or defense. Possible modifiers for the situational awareness roll include: characters are greatly outnumbered −4; under fire from artillery or heavy bombing −3; mounting an assault −2; defending a prepared position +3; actively hugging cover +2; prior military experience +1.

New Mental Merit: Combat Awareness (●●)

Prerequisite: Military training or combat background.

Effect: Your character understands how to survive on a battlefield as a result of either intense military training or personal experience. This includes knowledge of how to use terrain to your advantage and a general state of mental alertness sustainable even under heavy enemy fire. As a result of this aptitude, your character gains a +2 dice bonus to any situational awareness roll.

War Games

Presented below is a system that uses the ideas of extras and of combat waves to simulate warfare on a grander scale, beyond the situational awareness check, which is mostly a narrative effect. The following ideas for playing out battles in a game are more dice-intensive and entirely optional.

Half seen figures crept through the predawn light, moving into positions for the forthcoming attack. The rumble of vehicles bringing more enemy troops to the front line echoed through the valley, frightening the cheerful songs of birds into silence. From a distance came the sound of rolling thunder, followed by the noise of a hundred linen sheets being ripped in half.

"Incoming!"

The artillery barrage was terrifying, though perfunctory, and after no more than a minute the last shell exploded into the defensive lines. With a roar the enemy charged, firing wildly from the hip and the defenders engaged them. Again and again they came, crashing like waves against the defenses. Dozens were killed every minute, slaughtered by the withering fire of the defenders.

In the above scenario, the characters would be part of the defending force, trying desperately to stop their attackers before being overwhelmed. In this type of combat situation individual actions count less than the total weight of fire brought to bear on the attackers. The feel of this battle is tense. Rather than creating stats for each enemy soldier, Storytellers can more easily portray the faceless masses of attackers by using the rules for extras found in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 174. The characters are still responsible for the defense of their position and the modified Health tracks of extras do a fair job of representing the damage caused by other defenders. To speed up combat, Storytellers are encouraged to allocate all damage done to a single extra until it has been defeated, rather than spreading the damage out over multiple extras.

Another method for creating tension and the feeling of being overwhelmed is the use of waves. A wave consists of 5-10 enemy troops, represented by extras, that the player characters must deal with in a set amount of time before the next wave hits. Generally, a wave shouldn't contain more extras than the number of characters present on defense, though the number of extras can be increased to counter particularly powerful characters or to emphasize overwhelming enemy numbers. The delay between waves should be no more than two or three turns, depending on the scenario and the capabilities of the defending characters. Any extras from a wave that survive long enough for the next wave to arrive have reached the defenses and the characters must deal with them in bloody close quarters combat before returning their attention to the incoming wave. The combat should continue until either a set number of waves have been successfully repulsed or the characters have been pushed back from their defensive position.

Any time extras are used for large-scale battles the usual mechanics of rolling an attack against each character in turn has the potential to bog down the game. This is antithetical to creating drama and can negatively impact the focus of the game by boring the players. Instead of rolling individual attacks, the Storyteller simply rolls one attack and applies the result to a single character. The character who receives the damage from a mass attack can be determined randomly (quicker) or by calling for a situational awareness roll (slower), with the character gaining the least number of successes suffering the damage. For the purposes of this mass attack, subtract the highest armor rating (or defense if applicable) in the group from the attack roll. Any relevant cover modifiers are subtracted from the dice pool as usual. Other possible modifiers for the roll include: extras outnumber the characters +2; characters outnumber the extras −2; extras are attacking with surprise +3; extras are ambushed −3.

Mass combat also requires that initiative be handled differently. Rather than rolling individually for initiative, each side chooses one character to direct their efforts. The selected character rolls for initiative as usual and adds the number of characters under his command to the total. The side with the highest total acts first. When it is their turn to act, every combatant on the active side rolls at one time. Combat continues with the two sides exchanging attacks until one side is defeated or withdraws.

This system works best when the characters are defending against an attack, rather than when they take

the offensive. Offensive actions by characters should be resolved using regular combat rules and situational awareness rolls, putting the characters (and their opponents) in the spotlight.

Example: *After agreeing to assist in the defense of a town, Donny, Marshall, Brenda and Mike are holed up in a ruined house. During the night, rebel forces attack the town in greater numbers than expected. Brenda is selected to roll initiative for the group. She rolls a 7 then adds +9 (her personal initiative modifier) and +3 (the number of characters under her command) for a total of 19. The Storyteller rolls a 5 for the rebels attacking the town then adds +8 (the commander's personal modifier) and +5 (the number of extras under his command in the first wave) for a total of 18. Brenda and her group will act first. The first wave approaches their position and the characters manage to cause 10 wounds, which is enough to kill two extras. The remaining extras return fire. The rebels have a Firearms dice pool of 10 which is modified by -2 dice (Mike's bullet proof vest), -3 dice (the cover modifier for the characters) and -2 dice (characters outnumber the extras) leaving them with a dice pool of 3. The extras manage to gain a single success. The Storyteller rolls a dice and randomly selects Marshall as the target of the attacks this round, so Marshall suffers 1 Health level of lethal damage.*

More often than not, the final results of a battle should be determined by the actions of the characters. The daring (or deplorable) deeds performed by the characters swing the course of the battle in favor of their side, bringing them the sort of attention player characters should expect. There are times, though, when the actions of the characters may have little to do with the battle. The characters might be non-combatants, like embedded journalists or refugees scrambling to escape to safety, or the battle itself might have been staged to provide a distraction for the character's mission. In cases like these, the outcome of the battle can usually just be decided and described in narrative fashion by the Storyteller, allowing the story to proceed. For troupes that desire a more tactical approach to the resolution of battles or in stories where the uncertainty of war is played up, the following system is provided.

Each army involved in the conflict is created similarly to how you would create a character. The first thing to determine is the name, composition, and mission of the forces involved. Next determine the Strength, Firepower, Defense, Reserves, and Strategic Assets of each force.

Strength measures the total value of troop strength possessed by a force, the commitment of that force's parent army to the battle and the morale of the troops. The gear used by the force has nothing to do with the Strength of the force, equipment and weaponry are measured by Firepower, though significant lack of Strength can lead to lower Firepower. Strength basically serves as the Health of the force and is rated from 1 to 10.

Strength	Assessment
10	Full commitment of troops, high morale
9	Full commitment of troops, positive morale
8	Major commitment of troops, neutral morale
7	Major commitment of troops, low morale
6	Serious commitment of troops
5	Recon group in force
4	Recon group
3	Low commitment of troops, neutral morale (-1 Firepower)
2	Understrength operational group, low morale (-2 Firepower)
1	Depleted operational group, negative morale (-3 Firepower)

Firepower measures the overall combat effectiveness, quality of gear, and military training of the force. Troop numbers is better characterized by Strength. A thousand men armed with sticks are still unlikely to defeat one hundred men armed with assault rifles. Firepower acts as the attack value for a force and is rated from 1 to 10.

Firepower	Assessment
10	High tech military, highly mobile, well equipped and trained
9	Medium tech military, highly mobile, well equipped and trained
8	Low tech military, highly mobile, well equipped and trained
7	Highly mobile, well equipped and trained
6	Medium mobility, well equipped and trained
5	Low mobility, well equipped and trained
4	Well equipped and trained
3	Moderately equipped, well trained
2	Poorly equipped, moderately trained
1	Poorly equipped and trained

Defense measures how well the force is dug in to diminish the effectiveness of firepower brought against them.

Unlike the other ratings, defense is more about location and prepared position than it is a reflection of the number or quality of troops. Defense acts, appropriately, as the defense of the force and is rated from 1 to 5.

Defense	Assessment
5	Heavily fortified positions, hardened structures
4	Urban environment
3	Woodlands, suburbs
2	Hastily prepared positions, scrub or marshlands
1	Open ground

Reserves measures the number of reinforcements available to the force. The Reserves rating is subtracted from the overall Strength rating of the force and may not be higher than 50% of the total Strength of the force. At the beginning of each conflict round, Reserves may be brought in to increase the Strength of a force, similar to how a character might heal. No more than half the total amount of Reserves may be brought in any one round. Reinforcements brought in as Reserves may increase the total Strength rating of a force.

Strategic Assets measures the support available to the force from the parent army. Support is called in at the beginning of a conflict round and affects that round only. The main value of Strategic Assets is to offset the value of defensive positions and hasten the end of a battle. The rating of each Strategic Asset acts as a positive dice modifier to the attack roll of the force that called in support. A force that called for Gunship support, for example, would gain a +3 dice bonus on their attack roll for one conflict round. The exception to the rule is the Ambush Strategic Asset, which may only be used at the beginning of a battle and represents the force attacking with surprise. If both forces have Ambush, neither side benefits from the Strategic Asset.

Rating	Strategic Asset
5	Airstrikes, Bomber Missions
4	Artillery, Naval Bombardment
3	Helicopters, Gunships
2	Armor, Ambush
1	Psychological Operations

The total of the Strength, Firepower and Strategic Assets ratings is described as the Strike Power of the force. An easy way to balance the sides of a conflict is to cap the Strike Power of both sides at a set value. When a stronger force attacks a weaker force, this is also simple to show as a difference in Strike Power. As an example, a NATO task force (Strike Power 20) has a fairly significant military advantage when set against an Al-Qaeda stronghold (Strike Power 8).

Example: *Jordan wants to create a force with the characteristics of a British SAS unit. The SAS unit isn't composed of a large number of troops, so Jordan gives it Strength of 5, representative of a Recon in Force. On the other hand, British Special Forces units are amongst the most highly trained troops in the world, so Jordan rates their Firepower at 9. Since the SAS troops will be fighting on an urban battlefield, he sets their Defense at 4. Special Forces do their best work at night and frequently with little support. As a result, Jordan decides to give the SAS unit the Ambush Strategic Asset and sets their Reserves at 0. Totaling up the Strength, Firepower and Strategic Asset ratings of the force, the SAS unit has a Strike Power of 16.*

Sample Forces

E Company, 67th Infantry, US (Strike Power 29)
Strength 6 (8), Firepower 10, Defense: varies, Reserves 2, Strategic Assets: Airstrikes, Artillery, Armor

200th Motor Rifle Brigade, Russia (Strike Power 28)
Strength 8 (10), Firepower 9, Defense: varies, Reserves 2, Strategic Assets: Artillery, Helicopters, Armor

Sikh Light Infantry, India (Strike Power 20)
Strength 6 (8), Firepower 7, Defense: varies, Reserves 2, Strategic Assets: Helicopters, Ambush

108 Mechanized Corp, North Korea (Strike Power 19)
Strength 6 (7), Firepower 6, Defense: varies, Reserves 1, Strategic Assets: Artillery, Armor

Insurgent/Irregular Forces (Strike Power 12)
Strength 6, Firepower 3, Defense: varies, Reserves 0, Strategic Assets: Ambush, Psychological Operations

Conflict Rounds

When one force is set against another in battle, the combat is resolved in a series of conflict rounds. A conflict round simulates a two-hour slice of combat in which both sides may attack, draw on Reserves and call in Strategic Assets. Conflict rounds require no initiative roll, but for ease of play pick one force to act first. Each conflict round is comprised of three steps and the combat continues until the Strength of one force is reduced to zero.

Step 1: Call in Reserves, Strategic Assets

At the beginning of each conflict round, each side calls in Reserves to bolster their Strength and/or uses Strategic Assets to increase their Firepower.

Step 2: Attack Rolls

The active force rolls a number of dice equal to their Firepower (adding in any bonuses from Strategic Assets)

minus the Defense of the opposing force. Make a note of the number of successes rolled to apply in Step 3. Remember to modify the Firepower of forces with Strength of 3 or less as indicated on the Strength chart.

Step 3: Modify Strength, Check for Victory

For each success gained on the attack roll, reduce the Strength of the opposing force by 1. Forces that have their Strength reduced to zero or less are defeated. If both sides remain at Strength 1 or higher, begin a new conflict round and start over with Step 1.

Characters and Conflict

The battle between forces determined by conflict is the backdrop against which the characters play. Since each conflict round amounts to two hours of time, the characters can go about their business between rounds with the Storyteller providing narrative effects based on the conclusion of each round. It is possible for characters to find themselves behind enemy lines if a conflict is resolved more quickly than expected and they are part of the losing side. Characters can also influence the outcome of a battle by playing out vital strategic missions. They might be tasked to destroy an ammo dump, assassinate an important commander, or breach an enemy defensive position. The characters could also act as scouts or a search-and-rescue team, bringing in valuable information or reinforcements. Storytellers should modify the Strength or Firepower of one force based on the actions of the characters. Destroying an ammo dump might reduce the Firepower of an enemy force or an assassination could negatively impact the morale of the enemy, thus reducing its Strength. Reporting vital information could lead to an unplanned Airstrike for friendly forces, while rescuing a unit lost in enemy territory could increase the same force's number of Reserves. Unless the characters are true non-combatants, any actions they take should affect the battle in some way.

Upping the Ante

The rules for firearms and explosives as seen in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** or **Armory** present cinematic opportunities for taking fire or running from an explosion. Using those rules, a character might suffer from multiple, point-blank, shotgun attacks and still live to crawl away from the experience. This is rarely the case in real life. Below are some options intended to more realistically represent damage caused from being shot or caught in the radius of an explosion. Storytellers and players who desire a grittier feel to their games can include any or all of these options and troupes that have no interest in them can continue to play with the normal rules. Be warned, though, use of these rules will result in higher than normal numbers of character fatalities.

War Stories

Piracy is a daily occurrence in the Gulf of Aden, the body of water that separates Somalia and Yemen. After receiving a distress call from an international aid ship transporting food and medical supplies to the beleaguered nation, naval forces based in Yemen converged on a spot just off the coast of Africa. There they found the ship that had radioed for aid floating abandoned, without the usual signs of violence associated with pirate attacks. The mystery deepened when boarding parties discovered the hold was still filled with the supplies bound for Somalia. Personal items of value, like MP3 players and laptop computers, were found in crew quarters and the ship's safe was undisturbed. The only unusual item found on board the ship were half chewed leaves, found near a railing and scattered here and there around the ship. Investigators tentatively identified the leaves as *khat*; an amphetamine-like drug commonly used in Somalia that gives users feelings of excitement and euphoria. Although *khat* is usually bright green in color, these leaves were much darker, almost black, with odd veins of purple.

The boarding party was preparing to return to their own ship when a cry went up from a sailor that had been tasked with guard duty at the portside rail. The cry was followed in quick succession by a burst of gunfire and the boarding party hastened to the deck to defend against, they assumed, the pirates that had returned to claim their booty. They found the guard surrounded by black skinned figures dripping with seawater. One had grabbed the guard's gun and the others were methodically beating the man to death with hands and feet, all acting in eerie silence. The commander of the boarding party gave a shout and opened fire with his pistol. After that shot, reports from survivors become confused. Some claim that the pirates took bullet after bullet and continued to slowly advance on the raiding party, while others claim shots to the head brought down their attackers instantly. What is known is that, of the twenty men that boarded the ship, only five survived the attack. The rest of the boarding party were literally beaten to death or torn apart. During cleanup it was noted that each pirate had a mouthful of the strangely colored *khat* large enough to choke them. No sign of the original crew of the aid vessel was ever found.

Guns

Getting shot is not pleasant. Bullets enter the body and ricochet off bones or take unexpected turns to the left or right for no apparent reason. Bullets that pass directly through the body pull blood and soft tissue with them through the exit wound and distort the inner workings of the body in ways that might not be readily apparent. In short, if a character gets shot he should expect it to hurt. The following rule is suggested as a way of increasing the lethality of firearms in the World of Darkness.

Firearms inflict automatic damage on a successful roll equal to half that weapon's Damage (round down). As an example, a shotgun listed as Damage 4 (9-again), would become Damage 4+2 (9-again). The +2 indicates that any shot fired that successfully hits the target will automatically cause 2 lethal wounds, plus the number of successes rolled for the shot.

Explosives

Explosives cause the majority of their damage at the point of origin, with shrapnel and the force of the explosion causing secondary damage by degree the further from the explosion a character is located. The rules for explosives found in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 179 do a fair job of simulating the effects of an explosion but the following rules may be used in addition. Rules for mitigating the damage caused by explosions remain unchanged.

- All explosives gain the 9-again quality.
- Characters at point-blank range suffer half again (round down) the flat Damage of the explosive plus damage rolled. So, a character standing at the point of origin for an explosive with Damage 4 suffers 6 automatic wounds plus any number of successes rolled on 4 dice.
- Characters outside the Blast Area of the explosion still suffer the possibility of being hit by flying shrapnel and debris. Roll the Damage rating of the explosive against any character outside the primary radius of the explosion but still within half the Blast Area in yards (round down). So, an explosion with Blast Area and Damage of 4 rolls 4 dice of damage against characters within a 5-6 yard radius of the explosion.

Bleeding

Wounds caused by gunfire or shrapnel have a tendency to bleed copiously. In the history of modern warfare, more deaths have resulted from the victim bleeding out than just the raw trauma of the wound itself. For this very reason, most militaries teach their soldiers basic first-aid techniques and embed squad-level combat medics with more advanced training.

Any wound inflicted by a firearm or shrapnel that causes 2 or more Health levels of lethal damage begins to bleed and the victim suffers 1 bashing damage each turn the wound is untended. Bashing wounds caused by bleeding wrap in the usual manner and a victim that fills their Health track with lethal damage as the result of bleeding is

Incapacitated and in danger of dying, subject to the normal rules. Bleeding victims can be stabilized with a successful Intelligence + Medicine roll, with a -1 dice penalty for each level of lethal damage caused by the initial wound.

Characters that either don't bleed (vampires, Prometheans) or that regenerate quickly enough to negate damage from blood loss (werewolves) aren't affected by these rules.

Shock

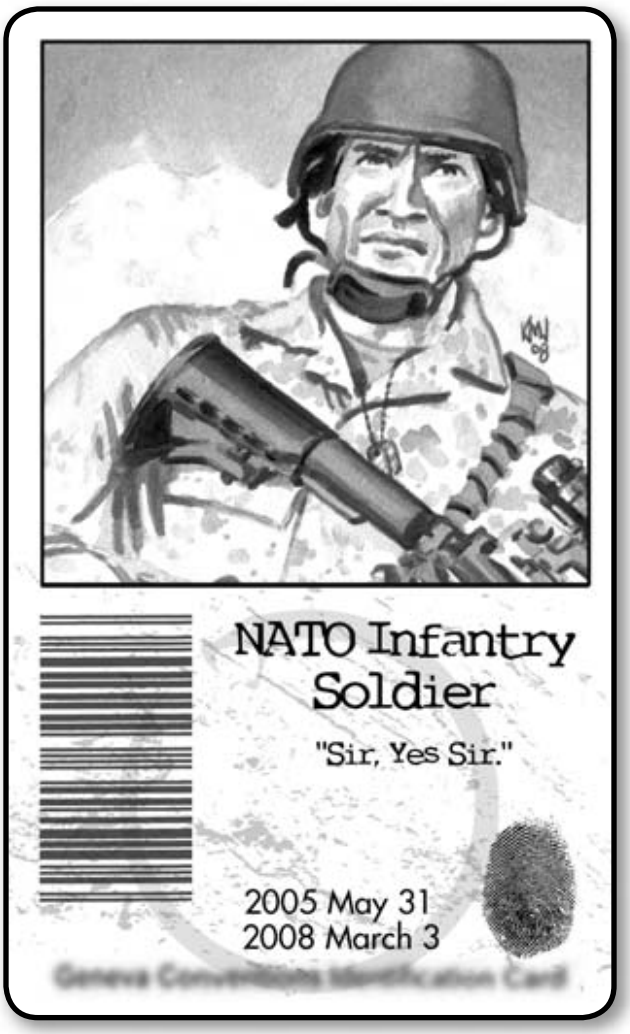
Victims that suffer massive wounds have to deal not only with pain and blood loss, but also the emotional shock of being wounded. Doctors refer this condition as Acute Stress Reaction and it is characterized by paralyzing fear and hopelessness. Individuals that suffer from shock typically exhibit an absence of rational behavior and may either attempt to flee or simply become non-responsive.

Whenever a character suffers a wound from a single attack that deals more damage than their Size, that character may go into shock. The victim rolls Resolve + Composure, requiring only a single success to stay active and alert. Characters that fail the roll slide into shock and either try to run or curl into a fetal position wailing in pain and terror. Each turn the character suffers from shock he may attempt to recover with a successful Resolve + Composure roll at a cumulative -1 dice penalty. Other characters may attempt to assist the victim in recovery by rolling Presence + Expression or Intimidation; or Wits + Medicine. Each success on the roll adds a +1 dice bonus to the victim's attempts to overcome their shock.

Antagonists

The following section contains profiles for a number of Storyteller characters that may be used over the course of a chronicle or as inspiration for player characters. The characters themselves may be modified in any way required for the needs of a story, ramping up or decreasing the power level of the character to that appropriate for a chronicle. Storytellers may also mix and match the characters to create military units or leader types. The Special Forces Trooper can be used as is or as the chief of a dangerous guerilla group, the NATO Infantry Soldier could double as a private security force mercenary or the Third World Militiaman could be used to represent insurgents.

NATO Infantry Soldier



Background: The men and women that make up the bulk of infantry and support troops for NATO ground forces come from middle- to low-income families and likely voluntarily enlisted in the armed forces. Although volunteers, these individuals are still considered professional soldiers and receive a large amount of training, are well equipped and enjoy the benefits of a combined arms style of combat.

Description: All NATO countries with a professional, standing army encourage their soldiers to be physically fit and neat in appearance. Muscular builds aren't uncommon, haircuts for men are of the traditional military style and haircuts for women allow for femininity combined with practicality. While on combat duty, soldiers are required by the Geneva Convention to wear battle dress uniforms (BDUs). BDUs are made from durable materials, imprinted with some kind of camouflage pattern and include identifying insignia such as name, rank, and country of origin. Additionally, no on-duty soldier is ever without a set of dog tags.

Storytelling Hints: Soldiers are instructed to be firm, yet courteous, to civilians. They address civilians as sir and ma'am (or the local equivalent) and will only fire on non-combatants if fired upon first. Even when acting in self-defense or under combat circumstances, soldiers are expected to minimize loss of life and act as representatives of their country. Off-duty soldiers have a reputation for being rambunctious that is only partially deserved, but soldiers are trained to deal with threats in a forceful manner.

If outflanked or outgunned, NATO soldiers are trained and equipped to call for backup in the form of mobile response teams, air strikes, or artillery.

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Skills:* Academics 2, Computer 2, Crafts 2, Medicine (First Aid) 1, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Firearms (Rifle) 3, Survival 1, Weaponry 2, Intimidation 2, Socialize 2

*Most soldiers receive additional training in fields of specialization. A single skill specialization has been left free for Storytellers to add to represent this training.

Merits: Allies (NATO Forces) 3, Combat Awareness, Contacts (Military Network) 1, Fast Reflexes 1

Willpower: 6

Morality: 7

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Armor: 2/3 (Kevlar body armor)

Speed: 11

Health: 8

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Capacity	Dice Pool
Assault Rifle	4	2	30+1	11
Pistol	2	1	12+1	9

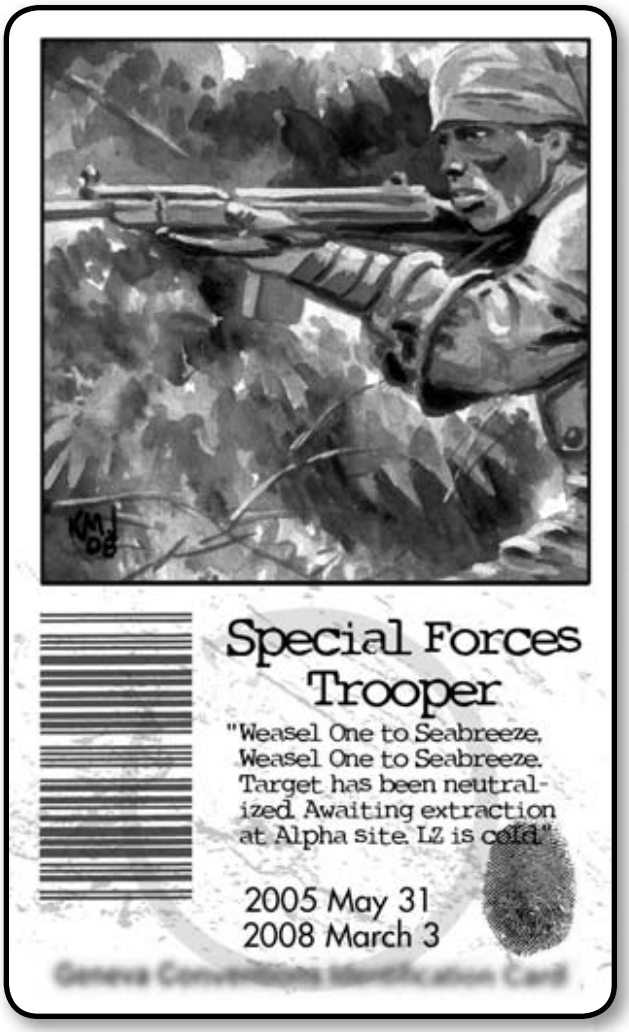
Special Forces Trooper

Background: Every year thousands of hopeful soldiers apply for reassignment to the Special Forces. The applicants are thoroughly screened by background checks, military record, and psychological evaluation before being tested both mentally and physically. Out of these thousands, maybe a hundred soldiers are selected as worthwhile candidates for Special Forces duty. Candidates then proceed through nearly a year-long training regiment under constant oversight and evaluation. When the final tally is taken, the Special Forces select perhaps thirty or so outstanding individuals to join their ranks. Special Forces troops are the cream of the crop and some of the best trained, motivated and equipped soldiers known to military history.

Description: Special Forces soldiers are uniformly muscular and look put-together, in uniform and out. There is a steely pride in their stride that comes from the knowledge they are among the best warriors in the world. These soldiers will greet you with a firm handshake and look you in the eyes.

The uniform and equipment of the Special Forces soldier will be tailored to their specialties and environment. During Black Ops missions, soldiers will remove all identifying material from their persons in full awareness that being captured during a Black Op will result in torture and death as spies.

Storytelling Hints: Actions speak louder than words. These soldiers are dedicated to their mission, their team, and their country, and are willing to prove their dedication by death or injury. Although most Special Forces teams are seen by civilians as commando type forces, this is only part of their job. During deep infiltration missions the soldiers must



frequently gain the help and trust of the native populace. This means showing the natives the soldiers are there to help them. Special Forces troops will dig wells, build homes, provide military instruction, and offer medical assistance, all to win the hearts and minds of the natives. The ability to function and thrive in uncertain political situations and under their own recognizance, well away from any chain of command, is imperative for any Special Forces trooper.

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4, Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Skills: Academics 3, Computer 2, Crafts (Explosives) 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 2 (First Aid), Politics 2, Science 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Drive 2, Firearms 4 (Submachine Guns), Larceny 1, Stealth 3, Survival 4, Weaponry 3 (Combat Knife), Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Combat Awareness, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Fighting Style: Kung Fu 3, Language 1, Allies 1 (Native Populace)

Willpower: 8

Morality: 7

Virtue: Charity
Vice: Pride
Initiative: 10
Defense: 4
Armor: 2/3 (Kevlar body armor)
Speed: 13
Health: 9
Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Cap	Special	Dice Pool
Combat Knife	2(L)	1	—	—	10
SMG	3(L)	2	30+1	Autofire	12

Indig Scout

Background: Whenever two military forces clash in a land that is alien to one side or the other, you will find indigenous scouts. Little more than highly paid mercenaries, indig scouts are sent forward of the main body of troops to gather intelligence, act as guides and trackers, and serve as translators. The indig scout might have started life as a peasant or farmer that was displaced by conflict and turned to military life as a means of supporting his family or he could have even been part of the very army he now leads military forces against. Regardless of how he became a scout, the indig has a deep knowledge of the environment, the land, and its people that he sells as a commodity.

Description: Invariably, indig scouts are dirty, smelly, and uncouth. Their weapons are often scavenged from battlefields (or stolen), and appear rusty and uncared for. Their loyalty extends as far as the wallet of their employer and they refuse to engage in open battles with the enemy. Indigs are always careful not to show outright contempt for their employers, but will frequently make snide comments or hint that those who employ them are no better than the enemy they fight against. Although they make good money they never appear to own more than the clothes on their back. Whether this is due to spending their cash on whores and drugs or because they send it to their families, is difficult to determine.

Storytelling Hints: The scouts usually speak other languages better than they let on, claiming not to understand orders when it doesn't suit them to follow said orders. Greedy and grasping, the indig will usually keep his word; either as a point of honor or to maintain his reputation. So long as he's paid, that is. Because they think of themselves as professionals, their knowledge of locations and terrain is unparalleled and their aptitude for survival is second to none. Indigs also know all the local legends and myths about the terrors of the night and they may even believe some of them.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Skills: Crafts 2, Investigation (Spying) 3, Occult 1, Politics 1, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 3, Stealth (Local Terrain) 4, Survival (Local Terrain) 4, Weaponry 1, Animal Ken 3, Empathy 1, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4

Indig Scout

"And I assure you, senor, the cartel putos did come this way. Their tracks are everywhere."

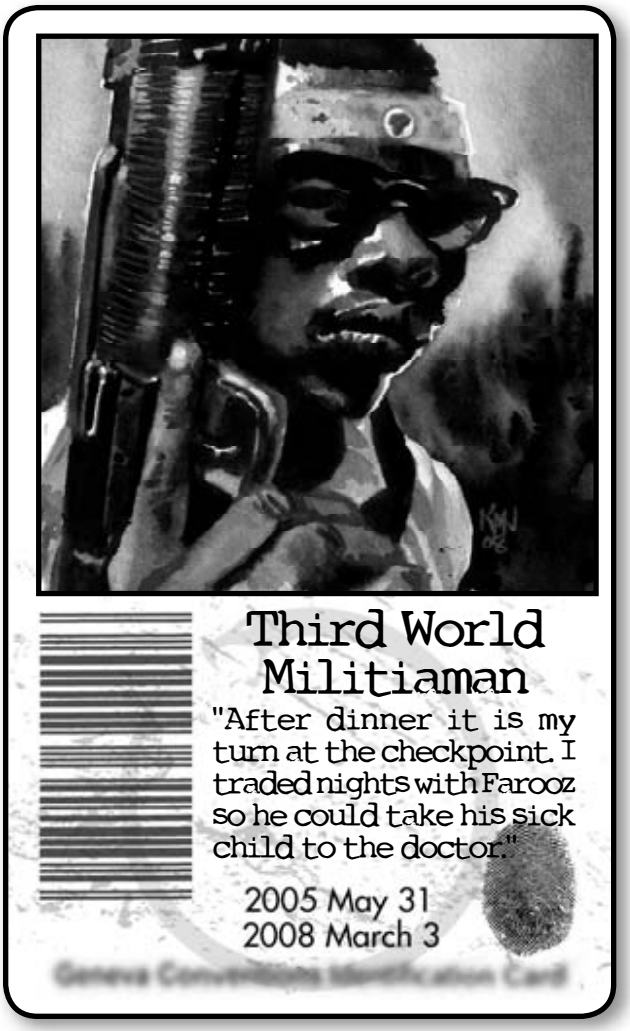
2005 May 31
2008 March 3

Merits: Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Language 3, Contacts (Natives) 2
Willpower: 4
Morality: 6
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Greed
Initiative: 4
Defense: 2
Speed: 10
Health: 8
Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Cap	Special	Dice Pool
Assault Rifle	4	2	30	Unreliable (may not re-roll 10s)	8

Third World Militiaman

Background: In the majority of Third World countries, men between the ages of 14-60 are expected to assist whatever passes as a standing military by providing citizen militias to man checkpoints or patrol the area around their towns and villages. Unlike Western reservist forces, these civilian soldiers are given little to no training and are likely only equipped with their



personal firearms (usually AK-47 clones). Militia checkpoints and patrols possess enough firepower to discourage bandits and the like, but stand a very small chance of survival when faced with a serious military threat. It requires a particular kind of bravery for farmers, shopkeepers and other average working types to step into the night armed only with the family rifle to defend their loved ones from attack.

Description: Militias generally wear some kind of identifying clothing (matching hats, armbands or poorly tailored uniforms), but this varies from area to area and hardly constitutes a proper uniform. Most militiamen neither know, nor care that, technically, this informality of dress violates the Rules of War. Certainly their enemies don't abide by any civilized conventions. Other than their uniform, the soldiers dress in native style and could easily be mistaken for a moderately well armed criminal gang.

Storytelling Hints: On-duty soldiers are tense and likely to overreact to a hostile situation by shooting first and asking questions later. Very few know any language other than their native tongue and will be suspicious of strangers in their town. Most militias in areas of active conflicts or with a large number of bandits have lost members to enemy fire. Morale among these troops is quite low and the militia will most likely attempt to retreat when faced with serious opposition and stage hit-and-run attacks against the enemy, using the soldier's intimate knowledge of the area to their advantage. In countries where the drinking of alcohol isn't taboo, drunken militiamen are a common sight. In the World of Darkness, militias have even more to fear from nighttime encounters.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Skills: Crafts (Profession) 3, Investigation 1, Occult (Local Legends) 1, Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Firearms (Automatic Rifle) 2, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Weaponry 1, Animal Ken 2, Empathy 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies (Militia) 1, Combat Awareness, Contacts (Locals) 2, Strong Back

Willpower: 5

Morality: 7

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Health: 8

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Dam	Size	Cap	Special	Dice Pool
Assault Rifle	4	2	30	Unreliable (may not re-roll 10s)	9

Border Guard

Background: In many countries, the services of border guards are provided by troops outside the framework of national standing armies. The border guards recruit, train and supply their men with budgets barely adequate for the job. A large number of the soldiers have prior military or police experience and look to the border guards as a kind of paid retirement, with fringe benefits. The remainder of the troops that make up a border guard generally come from backgrounds of low income and low education. Although these men might appear stupid, it is dangerous to confuse intellect with ignorance.

Description: Border guards usually wear a uniform similar in design to that of the army of their native country, though of more shoddy make and material. Standard army uniform personal appearance codes rarely apply to the border guards and such troops look scruffy and unkempt. Submachine guns are the favored weapons of border guards, followed by sidearms and shotguns. Heavier weaponry, such as machine guns and even light armored vehicles, can be found at borders between hostile nations. Like their uniforms and appearance, there is nothing professional about the maintenance of their equipment. Guns, checkpoint buildings, and vehicles are irregularly maintained and are

17 JUNE 05
US ARMY INTEL
DEBREIFING TRANSCRIPT
RE: NIGHT ACTION 12 JUNE 05
98TH INFTANTRY, THIRD PLATOON, F COMPANY, ALPHA SQUAD
SFC. FLOYD BURNES

BURNES: Yeah, so we hiked out to the coordinates as ordered and set up camp. The LT [Lt. John Hudak] set up sentries. We had chow and snoozed. Around 0300 screams came from the direction of the sentry post so I took my flashlight and [PFC] Hendricks with me to check the sentry. We found... [hesitates]

INTEL: Go on.

BURNES: [takes a deep breath] We found [SPC] Martinez dead at his post. His... his fucking throat had been ripped out and there was this goddamn Thing pulling out his insides and fucking eating them.

INTEL: What did the Thing look like?

BURNES: I dunno. Humanoid? Except I ain't never seen no human that looked like that. It was about 5 feet tall and completely hairless. It looked up at us and hissed. Fucking hissed like a cat. It only had one eye and some kinda yellow puss was seeping from where the other eye should've been [visibly shudders].

INTEL: What did you do then?

BURNES: We fucking shot it is what we did. Hendricks must have unloaded a full clip into the damn thing. It fell down, then we heard screams and gunfire from the camp [begins to breathe rapidly].

INTEL: Go on.

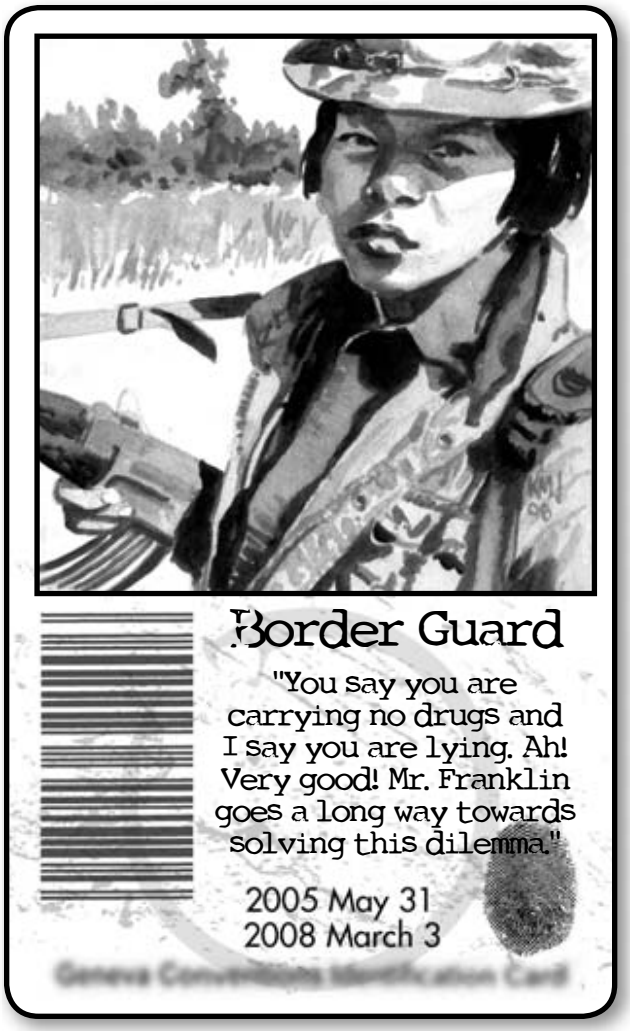
BURNES: We ran back to the camp [eyes dilate, rapid breathing intensifies] and found more of the Things attacking the squad. Musta been 30 of the motherfuckers. The LT [Lt. Hudak] shot one in the face with his nine [M9 Beretta 92F/FS; Pistol] and it dropped, but three more got him from behind. They were eating the men alive! Fucking eating them [begins to sob]!

INTEL: What did you do then?

BURNES: Hendricks... and I... bugged the fuck out [sobbing intensifies]. We... we made it back to the LZ and called... for extraction. By the time the... chopper got there the things were attacking us. Hendricks got taken... I... I... [breaks down completely] shot... him.

INTEL: Thank you Sergeant Burnes. I'll call for the nurse to take you back to your room.

ASSESSMENT: REPORTS OF CANNABALISTIC FORCES CONFIRMED. SUGGEST QUARANTINE AREA FOR FUTURE VALKYRIE OPERATION.



frequently of outdated design and manufacture.

Storytelling Hints: The most likely attitude one will encounter in dealing with border guards is that of arrogance. Used to easy lives of lazing around their base, drinking heavily, and extorting bribes or sexual favors from travelers, border guards behave like armed and sanctioned thugs. Arguments that escalate into violence generally end in the physical beating of the offender and rarely result in shootings that might bring the wrath of inspectors. Despite all evidence to the contrary, the soldiers of the border guard think of themselves as professional military troops and the easiest way to arouse their anger is to imply otherwise. Perhaps as a result of their background, many border guards are highly superstitious and are easily frightened by any encounter that hints at the supernatural. Standard procedure for these types of cases is to simply identify unusual occurrences, people or objects, and kick full descriptions of their experiences up the ladder for someone else to deal with.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Skills: Crafts 1, Investigation 3, Occult 1, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Firearms (Submachine Guns) 2, Larceny (Smug-

gling) 3, Weaponry 1, Empathy 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise (Drugs) 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Allies (Military) 1, Contacts (Smugglers) 1, Iron Stomach, Language 1

Willpower: 4

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Greed

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Health: 7

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Capacity	Special	Dice Pool
SMG	3	2	30 + 1	Autofire	8

Sniper

Background: Snipers have alternately been romanticized and vilified in popular media. The good guy sniper hesitates before a kill and debates the morality of their job with their friends, while the bad guy sniper smiles malevolently after a headshot or is depicted as an emotionless drone. The truth is both and neither. Snipers are selected for their deadly work as a result of phenomenal shooting ability and mental toughness. Especially in non-conventional militaries, snipers are respected for the devastating psychological impact of their work. Both men and women from every walk of life have demonstrated the qualities necessary to make a successful sniper, though individuals with a background in hunting comprise the majority.

Description: Male or female, combat-active snipers often have a steely glint in their eyes that comes from watching people die. The weapon of a sniper is his pride and joy and no two snipers ever agree on the best weapon for the job. Even when two snipers use the same weapon, the modifications, ammunition, and style choices of each sniper make them unique. Regular soldiers take some precautions to protect their weapons from the elements, but snipers take the protection to extremes. The sniper himself might be wet and filthy but his gun will always been clean and ready for action.

The uniform of a sniper is designed to blend in with his surroundings and, again, most snipers modify their gear for maximum advantage. NATO-style snipers wear ghillie suits and use soft, rubber mats to relieve the stress of kneeling or lying for prolonged periods of time in one position. Snipers without access to a ghillie suit can make one fairly easily by cutting up pieces of brown or green cloth and sewing them to their standard military uniform. An often overlooked, but essential, part of a professional sniper's equipment is a sturdy calculator to accurately determine how wind and elevation will affect a shot.

Storytelling Hints: Unless they are working with a sniper or trip over one, characters should never have any idea one is nearby until the first round is fired. Clumsy snipers don't last long enough to practice their trade. Good snipers will fire a round or two from one spot then reposition to make locating them more difficult for counter-snipers or artillery spotters (yes, people do call in artillery to deal with snipers). Snipers are frequently issued or acquire a sidearm to deal with opponents too near for their rifle and also as a final act of defiance. Suicide is preferable to the treatment most snipers receive at the hands of their enemies.

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Skills: Academics 2, Crafts (Rifle Repair) 3, Investigation2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Firearms (Sniper Rifle) 4, Stealth (Reposition) 3, Survival 2, Weaponry 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Combat Awareness, Direction Sense, Fighting Style: Sniping 3, Meditative Mind

Willpower: 7

Morality: 6

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 8

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Health: 8

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Dam	Size	Capacity	Special	Dice Pool
Sniper Rifle	4	3	10+1	9-again	13
9mm Sidearm	2	2	15+1		10

Bravo Squad, First Platoon, E Company, 67th Infantry

Bravo Squad is an example of a US Army unit made up from the templates shown above. By altering the composition of the group, such as replacing NATO Infantry Soldiers with Third World Militiaman, the unit could just as easily be used to represent a well-led militant Islamic group, border patrol, or poorly equipped conscript unit. Slight alterations to the templates themselves can lead to individualized characters with minimum effort.

Second Lieutenant Robert Atkins

Lt Atkins (Bob to his friends) qualified for and served briefly in the Green Berets before an injury forced him out of the Special Forces. Still fit enough for regular Army duties, Atkins was promoted and reassigned to the 67th Infantry. Lt Atkins uses the Special Forces Trooper template with Strength, Dexterity, Stamina and all Physical skills reduced by 1 dot (to a minimum of 1 dot) to represent his injury. Because officers are entitled to a greater selection of weaponry than standard infantry, Atkins can retain the weaponry listed in the template, but he replaces the Allies (Natives) 1 Merit with Allies (Special Forces) 1 Merit and, as a result of his injury, reduces his Kung Fu Merit to 2. The extra dot lost from Kung Fu is switched to Status (US Army) 1 to reflect his promotion to Second Lieutenant.

Sergeant First Class Lucho Ybarra

SFC Ybarra was promoted up through the ranks to his current position and uses the NATO Infantry Soldier template with some minor adjustments. Ybarra was promoted during active conflict as a result of his outstanding leadership skills. To represent this, his Presence is increased to 4 dots, he gains 3 dots in Expression and Inspiring Merit.

Specialist Delon Carter

SPC Carter is the combat medic for Bravo Squad and uses the NATO Infantry Soldier template with a few tweaks. His Medicine (First Aid) 1 Skill is raised to 2 dots to represent his additional training and he receives a medical kit that gives him a +2 tool bonus to conduct Medicine checks.

Fighting Style: Sniping

For convenience, the first 3 dots of the Sniping Merit are reproduced here. See Armory for more information.

Prerequisites: Dexterity •••, Resolve •••, Firearms •••, and Stealth ••

Effect: A sniper is the antithesis of a gunfighter, patient and serene rather than swift and ruthless. Your character, through life-long experience or intensive military training, is patient and skilled enough to spend hours staring through a rifle scope before taking one perfect shot that decides the fate of a hostage or a nation.

Dots purchased in this Merit allow access to special combat maneuvers. Each maneuver is a prerequisite for the next. So, your character can't have "Battlesight Zero" until he has "On Scope." The maneuvers and their effects are described below, most of which are based on the Firearms Skill. All of the following maneuvers work only with rifles (including assault rifles).

On Scope (•): Your character has an intuitive understanding of long-range ballistics and has spent countless hours straining to pick out tiny details through a telescopic sight. The maximum bonus he may receive from aiming (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 162) is increased to his Composure +1 for semi-automatic and automatic rifles and his Composure +2 for break-action, bolt-action and lever-action rifles. In addition, when using a scope or other long-range optic device (e.g. Binoculars), he receives a +2 bonus to all perception rolls (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 45).

Battlesight Zero (••): Once your character is familiar with the capabilities of a rifle, he can wring unparalleled performance from it. Whenever your character sights in a rifle (see "Sighting Tools," p. 164), he doubles the number of attacks that receive the bonus from this process. In addition, whenever he makes an attack with a rifle that receives this bonus, the weapon's short range is increased by five yards times his Wits, medium range by twice this amount and long range by three times this amount.

Focused Shot (•••): Your character can lurk motionless in ambush for days, ignoring sleep deprivations, temperature extremes, and even life-threatening injuries in the name of putting lead on target. When making an aimed shot, he may ignore an amount of penalties for wounds, drugs, disease, pain, fatigue, environmental conditions, and similar factors equal to his Resolve.

Private First Class Jacob Feinstein

PFC Feinstein is the most accurate shot in the squad and uses the Sniper template. Because he lacks formal training in sniping, Feinstein only gains access to the first dot of the Sniping Merit (along with any necessary alterations to the template to meet the requirements for the Merit) and he replaces the template sniper rifle with an assault rifle.

Private First Class Daniel Trabolik

PFC Trabolik is responsible for communications and uses the NATO Infantry Soldier template with the following changes. Add the Repair Comms specialty to Crafts, Call Incoming specialty to Academics (for spotting air strikes and artillery) and Comms Gear to his equipment.

Private First Class Andrew McPhee

PFC McPhee is the squad-level heavy gunner for Bravo Squad and uses the NATO Infantry Soldier template exchanging only the assault rifle for a light machine gun and adding the Machine Gun specialty to his Firearms Skill. Other members of the squad carry additional ammunition for the LMG to allow for up to four reloads.

Type	Damage	Size	Capacity	Special	Dice Pool
LMG	4	3	200	Autofire	11

PFC Charlie Kooser, PFC Lance Gadow, PFC Dennis Swain and PFC Mariano Ratcliff

The remainder of Bravo Squad is composed of infantrymen using the NATO Infantry Soldier template with no revisions except for adding a Survival specialty appropriate to local terrain. One of these soldiers will act as a loader for PFC McPhee and the rest will fill the standard rifleman role.

Special Forces

Military units in the World of Darkness aren't solely the province of mortals. Other denizens also hear the call to battle or find that a battle has come to them. Of course, non-human characters like vampires and Prometheans can hardly sign up at the local recruiting office and fight side by side with standard troops. Use of such non-standard units is uncommon and the activities of "monster" units follow the pattern of Black Ops work established by such elite units as the legendary Delta Force or the more modern Grey Fox. Further, because only a very limited number of people are likely to have any knowledge about such unusual units, questions will invariably arise among the troops themselves about exactly *who* is giving them their orders and why. It certainly isn't the President or even upper-echelon military officials and no mention of any operation carried out ever causes so much as a ripple in media circles. That level of operational security is extremely difficult to achieve and may lead to discussion amongst the troops as to whether they are really serving their country or a smaller shadow group with an agenda of its own.

This section discusses potential difficulties and benefits for militaries that include supernatural forces in their ranks. Creation of werewolves, changelings, mages and the like with military training is as simple as taking one of the above templates and applying the appropriate supernatural template on top of it. Note that this material is appropriate for more over-the-top "action horror" games, and largely does not represent the normal World of Darkness's relatively low-key mood.

Vampires

The most basic question to be answered about vampire troops is the obvious one: where does the Army get blood for vampires? One possibility is wounded or captured enemy soldiers, but putting aside the issue of Geneva Convention violations for acts of cruelty (if word gets out that a unit is feeding its prisoners to vampires, war crimes trials are the least of the military's problems), maintaining prisoners in large enough numbers close enough to the front to keep vampire soldiers fed is problematic. Another possibility is blood from medical supplies, but in crisis situations (like battles), plasma and blood are already valuable and limited commodities—and packaged blood barely feeds vampires anyway. Vampire combatants are most likely to parasitize their own units, feeding on fellow soldiers (covertly or not, voluntarily or not). Higher-ups knowledgeable and cold-hearted enough to field elite vampire units might ship them out with an accompanying force of rookies, who believe themselves combatants but who really serve no greater purpose than food.

Daylight is another problem. Obviously vampires can't commit to battle during the daylight hours and though it is possible to construct light-tight shelter for vampires on fairly short notice (the back of a truck will do in a pinch) the lines of battle can shift rapidly. Moving vampires so they will be in a useful position come nightfall requires human handlers and humans, as a rule, aren't excited by the prospect of close proximity contact with creatures that look at them as potential meals.

Properly fed and handled, vampires can provide a boost to military efforts. The majority of weapons used on a battlefield (guns) cause minimal damage to vampires and their inherent abilities make them an obvious choice for commando-style raids. No group of mortal guards exists that could stop a squad of obfuscated vampires from infiltrating their positions. Even if vampires are discovered in their work, their superlative speed and strength make vampires more than a match for the average grunt.

Off the battlefield, vampires could prove even more deadly. The true strength of vampires is found in the social arena, with their broad base of contacts and influence over mortal businesses. Their powers to muddle minds and addict humans to the taste of their blood make them excellent spies. Intelligence is probably the best use of vampires as the problems of blood supply and sleeping arrangements can be handled by the vampires themselves.

Werewolves

At first glance, werewolves appear to be the perfect candidates for military service. Every werewolf is a warrior with fearsome natural weaponry, is inclined to operate in groups, and is conditioned to accept orders. Werewolves heal rapidly and are able to forage for themselves more effectively than average troops.

The problem with werewolves in uniform comes into play with the command structure and inflexibility of military discipline.

Order in the ranks requires that soldiers respect the rank of an officer, not necessarily the officer himself. A werewolf is unlikely to recognize the authority of an incompetent or non-combat officer. Strength is what werewolves respect, whether it is strength of arms or of character. Officers that possess neither will have their authority challenged by a werewolf that thinks he can do a better job. Challenges will lead to confrontations, which will eventually lead to a werewolf losing his temper and slugging (at best) the target of his wrath. Werewolves can't control this behavior anymore than a dog can resist scratching at fleas. This, of course, is unacceptable in any professional military.

So, here you have the possibility of super soldiers in the form of werewolves, yet the very nature of the beast (so to speak) is what makes werewolves such a poor fit for structured military service. The most likely solution to this problem is to insert werewolf packs (you can call them squads all you like, they will still think of themselves as packs) deep into enemy territory for extended Special Forces missions. This is a role in which werewolves could thrive. Their ability to change form into wolves gives the shape-shifters a large range in which to operate, without the need for transport. Operating semi-autonomously from the rest of the army, werewolves could cause havoc in the enemy rear by attacking supply lines, disrupting communications, and conducting long-range recon, with the occasional assassination attempt tossed in for fun.

Mages

Of all the denizens of the World of Darkness, mages stand the best chance at success in a rigid military structure. Unlike more monstrous characters, mages are still essentially human. They don't sprout claws or fangs when they get angry, they aren't made from corpses and they haven't been driven to the edge of sanity by capricious masters. Unless they reveal their hidden powers, it is nearly impossible to spot a mage for anything unusual. So what keeps mages from enlisting? There are two possible causes.

Pride, the Achilles' heel of mages, is the first possibility. The ancient history of mages is replete with examples of mages leading less advanced humans into war. Whether these were wars of necessity or arrogance is difficult to determine, but the attitude that led to mages seizing control of an army to lead it can still be found aplenty in modern mages. With the insights and abilities granted to them by their magic, mages naturally feel they are the best qualified individuals for most jobs. It is very difficult for a mage to admit that a normal human might be better qualified for a position of leadership, even when that human has the weight of training and experience on their side. Not all mages are like this, of course, but the type of mage that would be interested in military adventures probably is.

The other possibility would delight paranoid conspiracy theorists across the globe. The governments that back and supply military might know mages exist and have signed super secret agreements that bar mages from military service. In this scenario, mages can be thought of like nuclear weapons. Everybody wants to have a nuke, but no one wants their enemy to have one. Even a small group of master mages could have a tremendous impact on a battlefield. Using their magic to alter the rules of reality, mages could transmute air into deadly toxins, drop enemy tanks onto massed enemy infantry, or ground planes and helicopters with their control of gravity. Not only could mages perform all these feats, and more, it would be nearly impossible to determine exactly where the mage was located to counter the threat he poses, without having mages on both sides. The end result of mages on the battlefield would be chaos.

So-called rogue nations might be willing to take the risk of adding mages to their arsenal, either out of ignorance or apathy of the ban. The question then becomes what do these nations have to offer a mage? Money? Most mages can raise enough cash to live comfortably as a by-product of their powers and are unimpressed by bribes. Power? A mage that seeks power can find it just as easily through magical might. A very few mages might be talked into joining up out of patriotism to their country, but these mages must then contend with their local Consilium, which is apt to take a dim view of their new employment.

After all is said, mages, like vampires, could better serve an army through their actions off the battlefield. Activities such as intelligence gathering, medical assistance or emergency transportation of equipment better compliment the power of a mage (and are less obvious) than front-line duty.

Prometheans

If mages have the best chance to pass as just plain folks, Prometheans have the worst. Never mind the relatively small numbers of Prometheans or that they are made from dead bodies. The fact is that everyone, even the land they stand on, hates them for what they are. Training a throng of Prometheans for military service would require new instructors to be brought in every day to avoid disquiet. Training locations would have to be changed on a monthly basis and the areas left behind would be largely uninhabitable for the near future. It has been said that amateurs study the tactics of war, professionals study logistics. The logistics of training Prometheans would be formidable.

If an army could successfully negotiate the logistics of training, Prometheans would be fairly easy to handle afterwards. Given a base in a desolate area where a wasteland wouldn't be noticed, dropping in food and other supplies to keep human interaction at a minimum would be pretty simple. Transporting Prometheans to areas of conflict could also be accomplished without the pilots of said transport ever gaining so much as a glimpse of their passengers. So what keeps the Created out of military service? The answer lies with the Prometheans themselves.

The life of every Promethean is a journey, whether they choose to believe it or not. During that journey, a Promethean learns important lessons about himself and the world in which he lives. The ultimate destination of this journey is the new dawn: humanity. Allowing themselves to be sequestered for months at a time and only experiencing humanity at its worst is a static existence for these creatures. The practical requirements of military service would lead to stagnation and no hope to reach the new dawn. Even Prometheans that believe they have given up on any chance of redemption will begin to chafe at the restrictions imposed on them. It is the nature of the Created to wander, to learn, to evolve.

Changelings

The poor souls that comprise the majority of the Lost make very poor candidates for soldiers. Already half-mad as a result of their imprisonment in Arcadia, changelings have, at best, a tentative grasp on what is real. The stark realities of combat would reduce most changelings to babbling madmen in the span of a month. The few changelings that could manage to adapt to the lifestyle can offer little to prospective military employers. A battle is a brutal test of strength against strength, where finesse plays a limited role. The magic of changelings is subtle and ill-suited to such contests.

Used in a tactical role off the battlefield, changelings could give a better account of themselves. Used to lives of constant paranoia and expectations of betrayal, changelings could serve in the capacity of deep cover intelligence agents with aplomb. Organizing an intelligence network in enemy territory would be child's play for creatures accustomed to navigating labyrinthine court politics and their power to create binding oaths could nearly guarantee the loyalty of their contacts. By delving into the dreaming minds of enemy soldiers, changelings could uncover secrets that no human operative would have a prayer of discovering. The biggest danger to changelings leading the double life of a spy would be themselves. Existing only in layer after layer of deceit and intrigue, a changeling could easily lose track of what is real and what they have fabricated. In time, a changing might begin to believe their own lies and begin a downward spiral towards insanity.

Another possible way for changelings to make a difference during a military campaign would be to use the hedge to smuggle goods and even vital personnel to the front lines or behind enemy lines. This is an unappealing option to most changelings as travel through the hedge is never safe, especially into unfamiliar areas. The fact remains, however, that it would be nearly impossible to stop changelings from transporting goods in this manner. Enemy forces that even understood the possibility of how their opponents were moving material would have to employ their own changeling counter forces to stop the flow. The possibility of two groups of changelings battling in the hedge as a result of such actions is chilling to contemplate. Blood, pain, and noise draw unwelcome attention in the hedge, which is exactly what most changelings attempt to avoid.

Blacker Ops

Despite the complications of military service, interested individuals with a supernatural background still find ways to participate in hot conflicts. Not all of these individuals serve an army directly, working from the shadows or indirectly, but some do. Below are some examples of groups and individuals that have decided to try their hand at service to king and country.

Das Verdammte

In the latter stages of World War II, the Germans were desperate to find some way of slowing the advance of their enemies into the Fatherland. A young assistant of Dr. Josef Mangele named Ancel Eisenbach was tasked with determining whether modern science could revive the dead to fight for the Reich. Eschewing the bodies of dead Jews as unworthy of resurrection, Eisenbach instead raided funeral trains carrying the corpses of dead Germans back from the front for his research. After months of unsuccessful trials using chemical compounds, reactive embalming agents, and even mystical attempts at automating the corpses, Eisenbach decided on a new approach.

Taking the best body parts from a battalion's worth of corpses, Eisenbach cobbled together five test subjects using iron clamps and surgical stitching to hold the bodies together. He then proceeded to run copper wire through the extremities of each body, braiding the wires into one large strand. Determined that only an extremely large surge of electrical power might excite the bodies enough to reanimate, Eisenbach appropriated a truck and drove his creations to the nearest power station. As he dragged an inert electrical line to the truck to power up the bodies, klaxons began to wail, warning of an incoming Allied bombing raid.

Eisenbach hurriedly connected the line to the corpses and threw the switch just as bombs began to rain down around him. For an instant the power surged and, as Eisenbach hurried forward to see if his experiment was successful, he was annihilated by an explosion. The Prometheans awoke in the darkness to the sounds of war.

The Exception to the Rule

Just because we say it's unlikely for the various denizens of the World of Darkness to find success in a military occupation doesn't mean your troupe can't play a pack of werewolf infantryman. If that kind of story appeals to you, by all means run with it! The suggestions offered here are meant to highlight the difficulties encountered by non-human characters in a military role, not to serve as an impediment to stories.

The Prometheans made their way out of Germany and holed up in the French Alps for the duration of the war. After the war, they formed a throng and wandered Europe, horrified by the memories held in their minds and by the devastation caused by the war. Perhaps unknown to Eisenbach, the majority of the parts he used to create the Prometheans came from an SS unit tasked with the Final Solution. Over 60 years has passed since that first terror-filled night and not one member of the throng has found the new dawn. The throng has come to believe that the psychic rot in their bodies, remnants of the evils perpetuated by the SS troops from which they were made, is the cause of their failings.

Determined to atone for crimes they never committed, the Prometheans decided to use the military talents possessed by their bodies and formed a mercenary fighting unit. Hiring themselves out only for causes they deem to be noble and giving the majority of their earnings to charity, Das Verdammte has come to be recognized as a potent force, even though the majority of their clientele have never seen them. Recently, the throng has seen action in Afghanistan and Iraq, performing security missions for the British, but unable to stomach the infighting and general incompetence in those theaters, they are now seeking new employment.

Modesty Inc

The private security firm named Modesty Incorporated is just one of dozens operating out of the US. These firms function in a variety of capacities, from providing security to US officials visiting theaters of conflict, to guarding US bases, to freeing up regular military for other duties. Modesty Inc is a medium-sized firm that began to expand its operations beyond guard duty after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. At present, Modesty Inc has forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, Southern France, several stateside US military bases as well as providing troops for a few Black Ops-type missions. The standard Modesty Inc soldier is well equipped with NATO forces equivalent gear and has access to armored vehicles, like the HMMWV or armor reinforced civilian automobiles. This is all standard fare for most security firms; what sets the company apart from its competition is its Rapid Response Team (RRT).

Led by a Sleepwalker named Lou Brueggar (ex-Navy SEAL), the RRT consists entirely of mages, personally recruited by the company president. Rapid Response Team Headquarters (RRTHQ) is located on the eastern coast of the United States and is manned 24/7 by Modesty Inc personnel. When a call for support comes in from company forces in the field, RRTHQ alerts Brueggar and the five to ten mages (numbers vary due to turnover) that make up the RRT. Once assembled, the RRT scryes the location, thanks to images taken by on-site company forces, and opens a portal that will take them to the battle. Total response time is under an hour. RRT mages are trained in military procedure by Brueggar and follow his commands. Modesty Inc has developed special protocols for the RTT with specific rules of engagement.

War Stories

Not every battle fought makes sense to either observers of the battle or even the soldiers committed to the battle. One such battle took place in Bosnia during the spring of 1993. The Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) led an attack on a remote village based on sketchy intelligence that the village contained WMDs intended for future use by their enemy, the Army of Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBH). The villagers stood peaceably by and allowed the soldiers to ransack their village looking for the supposed WMDs. After a few days of fruitless searching and questioning of the villagers, the YPA was preparing to move out, having found no evidence of WMDs. The night before the YPA was to pull out, a single radio transmission was intercepted, originating in the village. The transmission said, "Item now in hand. Proceed to clear the area."

Shortly after the transmission, explosions rocked the village as several buildings occupied by YPA forces were blown up. Showing determination and weaponry unaccounted for in their searches, the villagers attacked the YPA and the region collapsed into general warfare. During the second week of fighting, a strange green fog swept over the battlefield, cutting it off from radio traffic and obscuring sight of the village. When the fog cleared not a soul could be found in the village, either YPA or civilian. Troops sent into the village to investigate found dinners sitting on tables, waiting to be eaten, and gun emplacements surrounded by ammo casings as though the soldiers had fired randomly into the fog. YPA command hurriedly issued an order to demolish the village and cover up the incident, but soldiers will talk and the strange battle in 1993 still raises questions with no answers.

Rapid Response Team Rules of Engagement (RRTROE)

• Unless approved by the Team Leader, mages may only cast covert spells, with the exception of healing spells.

Bringing mages to the field of battle is a risky proposal. This portion of the ROE attempts to minimize political (mortal and Awakened) backlash by leaving as small a footprint as possible.

• No member is ever left behind, dead or alive.

This is standard operating procedure for Modesty Inc and is especially important for the RRT. No one wants to try

to explain exactly how someone that was spotted at a bar in North Carolina turned up dead in Baghdad an hour later.

• Members remain in the field only long enough to extract Modesty Inc personnel or to complete their mission within the defined parameters.

The RRT is sent into the field with specific assignments. They may be responding to calls for emergency back-up, told to recover missing or kidnapped company employees, or they could be called in to deal with a supernatural threat that can't be handled by mundane forces. Regardless of why they are there, after the mission is over, this Rule removes any temptation mages might have to stick around and poke their noses in places they don't belong.

• Unless approved by the Team Leader, members may only carry conventional weaponry and equipment.

Most of the threats dealt with by the RRT can be handled with standard military equipment. In the event that a mage team member is killed or wounded, the company doesn't want to deal with any missing Artifacts or Imbued Items that have found their way into the wrong hands. Only when the RRT is called in specifically to deal with a paranormal menace are mages permitted to bring along extraordinary equipment.

• Members will attempt to minimize civilian casualties by any means necessary (within the ROE).

This is another Rule that mirrors standard company policy. Even before the Blackwater debacle, Modesty Inc realized that serious repercussions could result from civilian deaths. Because of their magical abilities, the RRT has the potential to wreck far greater havoc than any other company team and this Rule is reinforced to remind them to take extra precautions.

For obvious reasons, Modesty Inc can't advertise its use of mages. Still, the record for success established by the company, partly as a result of the RRT, speaks for itself.

Damka

Damka is a mainly female cell of Chechen freedom fighters that splintered from the Brides of Allah faction of women suicide bombers. Brides of Allah are women that have been raped by Russian troops or had husbands killed in the war for freedom. Such women are considered impure and poor candidates for marriage, so they are recruited to redeem their virtue by martyring themselves for Allah. The word "damka" itself is a bastardization of Russian and Arabic words that means "little blood." The cell formed after Chechnyan rebels captured a vampire that had been terrorizing a small town. During the battle with the vampire, the rebels noticed that its mortal pawns were much stronger and tougher than they appeared and when the fight was over they interrogated the peasants to find out why. After "persuading" the peasants to cooperate, the rebels discovered that the vampire had been feeding them its blood. The blood seemed to make the peasants stronger and also gave them unusual powers. The rebels tested this out for themselves, forcing a wounded peasant to drink. When the man suddenly healed his wounds and could only be restrained by four strong men. The rebel leader, a man named Kasayev, began to have ideas.

Knowing that his men would never debase themselves by drinking the blood, Kasayev decided on a course of action. First he brought in a doctor to perform a lobotomy on the vampire and set up a life-support system for it. Kasayev then collected some of the blood and took it with him to the cell house where he had been training the widow of a rebel for a suicide mission in Russia. Kasayev asked the woman to drink the blood, telling her it was a gift from Allah that would make her stronger. Rather than waste such a valuable resource on a relatively simple bombing mission, Kasayev retrained the woman with a single target in mind: a Russian general named Boris Demidenko. Demidenko was a known womanizer and Kasayev believed that the widow could easily seduce him and, with the strength granted to her by the blood, assassinate him. The mission succeeded beyond his wildest expectations. Not only did the widow manage to kill Demidenko, she slaughtered three of his bodyguards and the general's son before she was killed herself.

After his initial success, Kasayev brought the vampire to his cell house and began to train more would-be female suicide bombers, until he had around a dozen blood-strengthened assassins. Problems with his scheme began to arise when Kasayev noticed the women seemed to become easily addicted to the blood and began to demand more of it, offering him sexual favors in return for blood. Even worse, the women who used the blood most frequently began to show signs of mental confusion, some of them even collapsed into comas from which they could not be awakened. Realizing that time wasn't on his side, Kasayev turned the women loose on their targets and, even though not every attack succeeded, he was pleased with the terror and carnage they produced. Even the unconscious women were rigged with bombs and left to detonate on crowded subway platforms or on buses. Kasayev continues with his Damka work and is also constantly on the lookout for more vampires to subdue and add to his stable.

EPILOGUE

Things are different.

Don't know that they're better.

But they're different.

The man sitting in front of us is wearing a very nice suit. He has a ream of papers, and he wants us to sign every last one of them. Gomez isn't hot on the idea, even though this deal would benefit him most of all; what with his leg and everything. But they want to pay us, too. And pay us well.

Danny Boy, he's ready to go. Batshit as ever; made crazier because Maynard's still in the hospital, still in the coma. They say he might never come out. They took his breath, and I guess they took too much. More than we lost, anyway. He was always a little guy, maybe that's what it was. Poor bastard. We visit him every Tuesday.

Me, I just want to sign off because it gives credence to everything. You go to war and you see things with your brothers, and at first it's good because you saw that shit together. It's hard to deny when your brothers have been there, too. But over time, you wonder. Mass hysteria and shared delusions make quick work of your unity of vision. You all think you saw one thing, but you wonder if maybe that doesn't matter. Could be that it wasn't real no matter how many eyes laid sight on the bloodshed or the horror or those calm weird moments out in the desert where you see a wind kick up some sand and maybe, just maybe you see a face in that sand.

Could be that you all go to a red barn and blow the unmerciful shit out of it, thinking you're killing some demons that are real, but maybe you're just killing demons out of your own head; your own shared, crazy head.

But then a man in a nice suit comes along and he says he's with a company called Barthes Prosthetics, and that he knows what we did. He knows what we killed. Of course, he says we can't talk about it with anyone but him and his "people",î but that means our shared delusion is either not a delusion at all, or is at least big enough so that we don't feel so alone in our madness. Either way's fine.

Then he goes on to tell us he's willing to pay us handsomely to do more of what we just did. And that he can patch up the new scars on my face, and that he can give Gomez a better fake legóone that fits, this time, one with some high-end technology stored away in the joint.

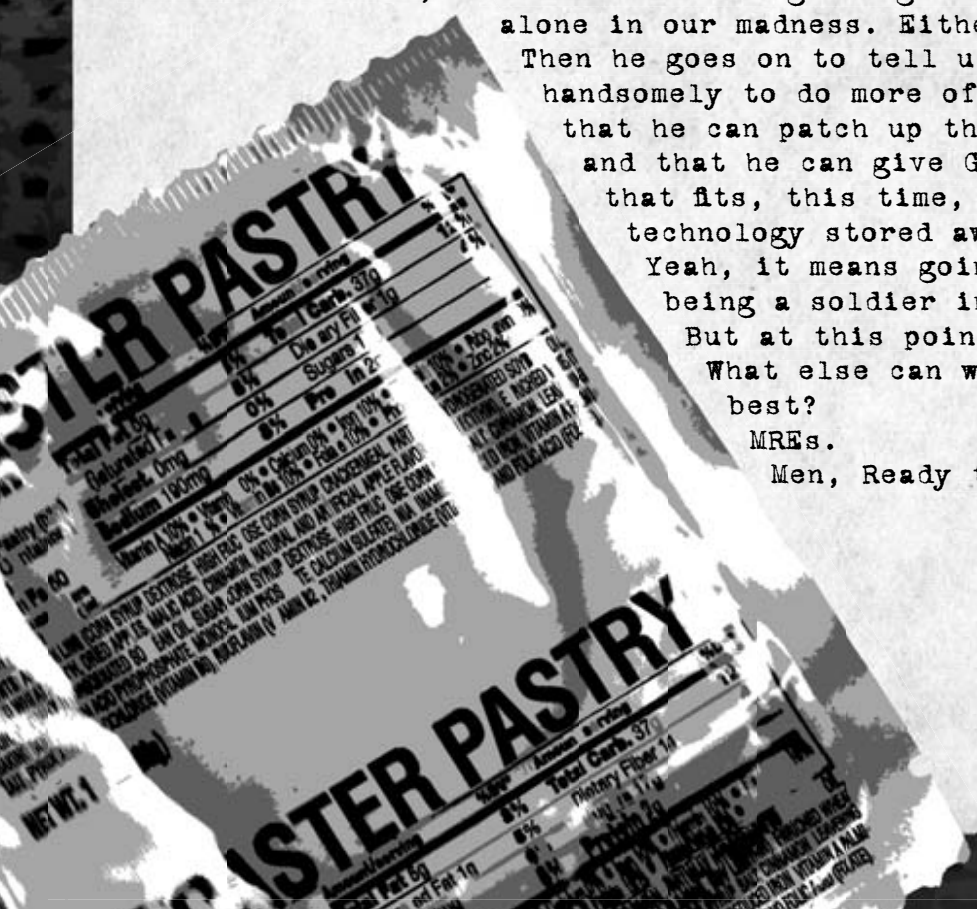
Yeah, it means going back to war. It means being a soldier in another man's army.

But at this point, what else do I have?

What else can we do but do what we do best?

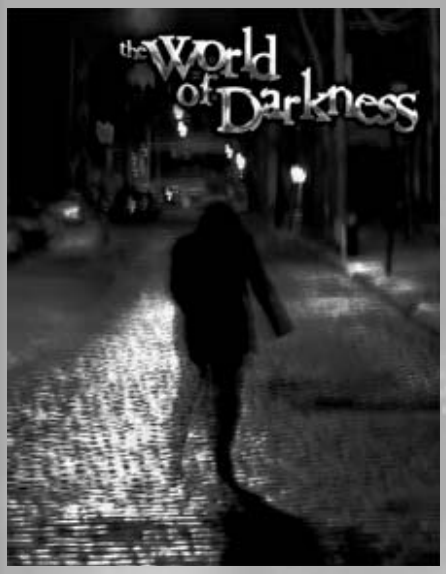
MREs.

Men, Ready to Enlist.



A World of Darkness Awaits

Discover the hidden depths of the shadows with the complete series of universal World of Darkness products. All these products are designed for use with any WoD chronicle, from mortals facing hidden terrors, to Vampire: The Requiem, Werewolf: The Forsaken, Mage: The Awakening and more.



World of Darkness Rulebook

(WWP55000; ISBN 1-58846-476-8; $24.99 US)

The central product for all World of Darkness games, this book presents the complete Storytelling System. All World of Darkness, Vampire, Werewolf and Mage titles require use of this rulebook.

Live-Action Rules

Mind's Eye Theatre Rulebook
(WWP50000;
ISBN 1-58846-522-5; $22.99)

Play Aids

World of Darkness Storyteller's Screen
(WWP55701;
ISBN 1-58846-551-9; $14.99)

World of Darkness Character Sheet Pad
(WWP55703;
ISBN 1-58846-546-2; $9.99)

World of Darkness Dice
(WWP55700;
ISBN 1-58846-552-7; $6.99)

To find a local retailer or order online:

www.worldofdarkness.com

Antagonists
(WWP55301; ISBN 1-58846-478-4; $24.99)
Zombies, monster hunters, cultists and stranger things await your players

Armory
(WWP55102; ISBN 1-58846-486-5; $29.99)
A broad and detailed listing of weapons, vehicles and hardware

Asylum
(WWP55204; ISBN978-1-58846-491-0; TBD)
A setting book for use in any World of Darkness story

Book of Spirits
(WWP55202; ISBN 978-1-58846-490-3; $29.99)
A look at the spirit reflection of the World of Darkness, for mortals and supernaturals alike

Changing Breeds
(WWP55103; ISBN 978-1-58846-493-4; $31.99)
Complete rules for creating a myriad of shapechanging werebeasts

Chicago
(WWP55200; ISBN 1-58846-479-2; $39.99 US)
The Signature city setting for the WoD, with examples of how to run an integrated world of mages, vampires and werewolves

Ghost Stories
(WWP55400; ISBN 1-58846-483-0; $24.99 US)
Five different adventures exploring the hidden world

Innocents
(WWP55004; ISBN 978-158846-713-3; $34.99)
TEXT GOES HERE
Stand alone rules for playing children in the World of Darkness

Midnight Roads
(WWP55205; ISBN 978-158846-712-6; $24.99)
A setting book for chronicles on the move

Mysterious Places
(WWP55302; ISBN 1-58846-485-7; $24.99 US)
Nine eldritch and bizarre settings for your chronicle

Reliquary
(WWP55203; ISBN978-1-58846-492-7; $24.99)
Ready-t-use relics as well as a toolkit for creating unique items of power

Second Sight
(WWP5510; ISBN 1-58846-487-3; $26.99)
Psychics, mystics and otherworldly powers on the edge of darkness

Shadows of Mexico
(WWP25103; ISBN 1-58846-264-1; $29.99)
Explore this exotic land of Aztec temples, cults and danger that lurks around every corner

Shadows of the UK
(WWP30202; ISBN 1-58846-334-6; $29.99)
Revealing history and secrets, with plothooks from London to the moors and beyond

Skinchangers
(WWP30305; ISBN 1-58846-335-4; $24.99)
Cursed by witches and spirits, mortals ridden by animal spirits and much more

Tales from the 13th Precinct
(WWP55001; ISBN 1-58846-480-6; $26.99)
Guidelines for adding a fully-developed police force to your game

Urban Legends
(WWP55303; ISBN 978-1-58846-489-7; $24.99)
Rumored myths revealed as true stories in the World of Darkness

Copyright CCP hf. All rights reserved.

RUINS OF UR

A unit of soldiers is sent under cover of night to protect an archeologist as she returns to a dig that she started in the ancient city of Ur. The dig is in a hotly contested area, and the unit is sent under cover of night to find out why her last team disappeared. The military hopes that she can uncover something that will help them understand the long-standing feuds in the Middle East. She hopes to find out what happened to her last team, as well as promoting her own motives.

Nobody is prepared for the horrors that are actually lurking in the ruins of Ur.

($6.99)

AVAILABLE NOW

www.white-wolf.com/sas

Copyright CCP hf.
All rights reserved.

STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM®

Criminal Intent

Stuck between an Elder and a court Officer... How far will you go to protect the Masquerade?
(39 pages, $6.99)

The Fear-maker's Promise

A child is going to be sacrificed ... or rescued. You decide.
(57 pages, $7.99)

Chicago Workings

You are caught in the middle of a 50 yr old mystery, and problems are escalating!!
(40 pages, $7.99)

The Resurrectionists

Suspense, mystery and treachery surround your search for an infamous Ancient.
(45 pages, $7.99)

Blood Red + Ash Gray

Is it a new sin to deny a victim her vengeance, when you know you're guilty of the same crime?
(64 pages, $8.99)

Scenes of Frenzy

Ready-to-play scenes for characters wrestling with their own Beasts, for good or ill.
(16 pages, $2.99)

White Wolf Introduces the Storyteller Adventure System (SAS)
A New Line of Web-Exclusive Adventures!