

Redefining the Morrow Project Recon Team by Doyle Hunt

In the game manual, the most common team type is Recon. The game manual briefly (a paragraph or two) addresses team member assignments, in terms of driver, gunner, mechanic, whatever. I have an entirely different concept of the Recon team, based upon the anticipated postwar assignments and completely ignoring who fires the guns and who drives the truck. The player characters can sort scut-work assignments out among themselves after they awaken. After all, if gunner or driver were critical skills, the Project wouldn't have recruited so many college graduates, would they? It would have been truckers and gangsters instead. So, why do they need all of those highly-educated fellows, anyway? Because the skills they bring into the Project from their former lives are *important*.

Obviously, Morrow Project Recon teams have to be redefined in terms of the skills brought into the project. Below I describe what I see as the stereotypical team. A smaller team would be missing a few specialists, and collateral duties would abound. Large teams could double up with more than one specialist in some positions (two natural resources specialists, say perhaps a geologist and a forester?), or have separate positions for commander, contact specialist, communications specialist, and security specialist.

The team described below is considered a Recon team, but the exact same organization works well for a Science team. The primary difference between the two would be that the Recon team is intended to identify problems using minimal equipment and report back to Prime Base. The science team receives a report from Prime Base, and then uses superior equipment to find solutions. The science team would likely have separate specialists for each type of natural resource, too, which would inflate the crew roster somewhat, and they'd be the older, less fit types.

But even if everything went according to plan, the team woke up three-to-five years after the war, Prime Base was still operational, and Science teams were available to do the serious number crunching, then the Recon team still shouldn't sit on its hands waiting to be told how to fix a problem. Anything that can be solved by the people on the spot should be. It's called "empowerment" and it's one of the keystone principles of the project. Given the 150-year Rip Van Winkle gig and the inability to contact other teams, the Recon team is all that's left, and they damned well better get to work fixing whatever problems they find.

The make-up of the stereotypical Recon team in my campaign is...

Y Team Commander— Usually a collateral duty for one of the other specialists rather than a separate position. Probably best for the political specialist, but anyone in the team except the contact specialist could fill this position. No special equipment is required for this position. Responsible not only for his own specialty, whatever that is, but also for making sure everyone else gets their jobs done. Assigns priorities and makes sure each team member has the necessary resources and manpower to do their jobs. Works best as an advisor rather than an administrator. After all, everyone on the team already knows how to do their jobs. If they weren't self-starters, they wouldn't be there, right?

ÿ *Contact Specialist*— Also usually a collateral position held by one of the other specialists. The only real restriction is that the contact specialist *cannot* be the team commander. Should have good interpersonal skills, and a cover story that accounts for the “you’re not from around here, are you?” reaction that’s inevitable when meeting locals for the first time. In addition to the contact pack described in *Operation Lucifer*, the contact specialist would probably have custody of the trade pack(s) as well, which he could use piecemeal to expand the contents of the contact pack and reinforce a cover story of being a wandering trader. In parts of the country where the populace is known to be multilingual (border with Mexico or Quebec, south Florida, Chinatowns, etc.) then this would be a good crew position for a linguist.

ÿ *Communications Specialist*— Almost certainly a collateral duty, since there wouldn’t often be enough work for this person to do, at least not much exciting work. He’s the one who makes sure that the team members can communicate with each other and with Prime Base. When dealing with the locals, he’s the one who would recruit CB radio or Ham radio operators to form the core of a civil communications net. He’s also the guy who would set up a new Pony Express to get the mail through, or get the phones working again.

ÿ *Computer Specialist*— This is the team member tasked with collating the data gathered by the other team members and putting it in a form that can be transmitted to Prime Base. Also includes rapping any existing computers found by the team of their accumulated data. In terms of degree fields, good for computer science or electrical engineering types. Should have a Morrow-issue laptop (or even palmtop, for nineties-era teams) computer to interface with whatever surviving computers might be found, together with the equipment necessary to kit-bash the hardware. Good hacking skills are a must.

ÿ *Engineer*— Evaluates bridges, buildings, etc. for structural integrity, and can recommend both field-expedient and long-term repairs. Should also have a working knowledge of combat engineering, such as the construction of field fortifications. Not only knows how to blow up buildings, but how to tear an unsafe one down with just a crowbar and hand tools so as to recover the most salvageable materials to build its replacement. This is the guy who knows how to get a wastewater treatment plant working, build a grain silo, use salvaged automotive tires to build a revetment for preventing streambank erosion, or turn pieces of a salvaged jet turbofan engine into a hydropower turbine.

ÿ *Natural Resources*— Depending on where the team is based, could be one of several disciplines... Geology for desert terrain or areas known for mining or oil drilling; agriculture, animal husbandry, or veterinary medicine for farmland; forestry for wooded terrain; biology, botany, chemistry, ecology, or zoology if none of the other specialties are available. The purpose of this specialist is to evaluate the natural resources of the team’s area to see what is available as raw materials, what it would take to extract them, what can be made from them, and the most efficient ways to preserve them in the case of renewable or degradable resources. Should have equipment appropriate to their particular specialty.

ÿ *Economic*— The purpose of this team assignment is to evaluate the manmade resources of the team’s area, with a specific view toward establishing trade between communities. Finds out who can make what, especially if they can make a surplus of a commodity that isn’t available elsewhere, and what it’s all worth in a barter economy. This is the one who knows how to get the farmer’s food to

the town down the road where the plows are made, and get the plows back to the farmer. Also the one who negotiates for the team when the ration packs run out and they need to buy food. This is a very good position for the team's contact specialist, since he can most easily play an itinerant trader.

ÿ *Political*— Either a political science major, sociologist, or in a pinch a psychologist. Looks at the political system that remains, if any, to see if it provides for the basic rights of its citizens and the basic services that a civilized community requires. Should be free of political bias toward any one political system, and willing to support any system that works, regardless of ideology. The political specialist is not only the person who helps organize free elections, but also the one who helps develop the volunteer fire department and the constabulary, and serves as a mediator in disputes between adjacent governments.

ÿ *Medical*— This specialist should have a fair amount of skill in treating injuries, wounds, and diseases, but in a Recon team he also has the responsibility for determining the medical requirements of a community, with regard to nutrition, hygiene, sanitation, control of disease-carrying pests, hazardous materials, trauma response, etc. This is the team member responsible for getting the local hospitals up and running, and for keeping the rest of the team healthy. At the same time, he would probably be working on setting up an incinerator for the town's trash and testing the local water wells for contaminants. Not necessarily a doctor. Could also be a former paramedic or EMT, a nurse or dentist, or even an industrial hygienist or pharmacist. In a small team, could be a nonmedical type who just received basic Morrow Project first-aid training. In fact, this would be good collateral duty for a biologist, who could be expected to know something about medicinal plants.

ÿ *Security*— The military or police expert of the team, not only responsible for the team's own safety, but evaluating communities in terms of the threat of civil unrest and outside enemies. Works with any surviving military or police assets. This is the team member who helps set up a militia, arranges convoy security for trading missions to neighboring towns. Could possibly be a collateral position for just about anyone in a small team, but particularly appropriate to the team's engineer (field fortifications do require some knowledge of both military tactics and engineering, after all). If the character's background includes military police, the team could include a K-9 dog under this character's control.

With this organization, a six-to-ten man Recon team has all of the basic specialists needed to perform an in-depth, comprehensive evaluation of their operational area for the rebuilding effort and report back to Prime Base. Each team member has specific duties, but at the same time each **MUST** work as a part of the team due to overlapping responsibilities. Identifying the team assignments in this way rather than by paramilitary specialty also helps de-emphasize combat until it actually happens. Even in the one-fifty rather than the three-to-five, this team concept works well. Everyone, players and characters alike, knows what needs to be done from the moment they first wake up in the bolt-hole, not only having a reason but also a method for interacting with the locals.

Given a choice, I'd go with a smaller group, by making the Commander, Contact Specialist, Security Specialist, and Communications Specialist all collateral positions for other team members. Add in the duties described in the game manual, and then you've got a team that's scurrying around like ants trying to get everything done, even before you add in combat.

Once the team realizes it's on its own, instead of just evaluating and reporting back for further orders to do what they already know what needs to be done, now they have to evaluate the situation and then make things happen themselves, and that makes them even busier.