AMMIT COMES WITH FIRE AND ASH

An apocalypse has torn down the old order. The gleaming towers of the city-states have toppled.

The land recoils from earthquakes. Massive storms tear up the sea. The air is choked with ash and dust.

THE EARTH HAS FALLEN

And as the survivors crawl from the wreckage of their world, invaders arrive.

Earth's children, the colonists of Mars and Venus, descend as saviours of the homeworld.

A NEW ERA HAS BEGUN

In darkness, it begins: a war for the future of humankind and a mystery for survivors and rescuers alike. There are too few survivors. Where did Earth's population go? And what does it mean for humanity?

This is the zero point. This is the start of all things.

THIS IS ZERO DARK

HORIZON WARS

ZERO DARK

ROBEY JENKINS

Cover art by David Sondered

CONTENTS

There does seem to be some confusion as to why we refer to the period immediately following the Fall as "Zero Dark".

The expression emerged quite quickly after the first landings by the Martian Assistance and Support Command and was adopted without comment by both Venusian and Terran forces and groups. The best guess we can come up with is that the Fall and the associated loss of life were seen as a re-setting of the clock, for Earth, back to zero. Even today, whilst we retain the Common Era dating system we inherited, there remains a tendency to refer to events preceding and following the Fall, in casual conversation, as having occurred "ten years after Zero Dark" or "two years before Zero Dark", although only the Gaian Recidivists actively use the Fall as a specific date point.

As for why it was "Dark", one has only to look at the media records that so thoroughly recorded events both on the ground and elsewhere to understand that the impact of the asteroid, Ammit, threw a truly vast quantity of matter into the upper atmosphere. Much of it returned very quickly – and devastatingly – within minutes of the impact itself, but the tiniest particulates made up the greatest sum of the ejected debris and within days they had scattered themselves liberally throughout the atmosphere's various levels. The winds that attended the early landings were choked with ash and dust. The sun itself receded to a faint smudge before vanishing and in less than a month from the impact it became nearly impossible to distinguish night from day. The situation was made no better by the massive and destructive fires that tore through the mighty forests of central Asia, nor by the multiple immense eruptions of volcanic sites across the globe – most notably and catastrophically of all, of course, being that of the Yellowstone site that rendered most of North America – otherwise only fairly lightly affected by the strike itself, overlooking the impact wave damage on the West Coast, utterly uninhabitable for vast swathes of its once-verdant Midwest. The rest of North America found itself coated in a deep layer of ash that wreaked havoc upon the rescue and support efforts.

As a consequence, darkness was the principle defining feature of most of the early stages of the Second Colonial War, as it became known officially. However, by the time the conflict was heating up, the longer-term impact of the darkness was beginning to make itself known in a rapidly cooling of the planet, cut off from the sun's light as it mostly found itself to be. The Long Winter saw temperatures plunge around the globe, hampering rescue efforts and driving even the hardiest of Terran survivors into shelters they would defend fiercely against all comers.

The Martians, of course, were well adapted to the sub-zero conditions and the almost unbreathable air. The Venusian mission, whilst hardy and disciplined thanks to the privations and demands of their unforgiving homeworld, were less ready for an atmosphere that, whilst hazardous, was not instantly lethal.

All in all, the expression "Zero Dark" seems to be an accurate summary of what the combatants and survivors faced on Earth for the four years immediately after Ammit. Nevertheless, there is at least one contemporaneous account of the expression that, whilst it doesn't explain its origin, does explain how at least one anonymous Martian soldier thought of it. So I offer his or her thoughts without further comment:

"I picked up my first carbine back in the Restructure War, when 'zero dark' meant something different. It was the time between midnight and dawn when the land was at its blackest, when the enemy was fastest asleep. It was the time when the worst things happened. Some happened to me. Some were when I happened to some other poor sod.

"But everything changed when Ammit came down. What she didn't kill, she broke; and what she didn't break, she smothered. People still live there, though, if you can call it living. The survivors scratch a living out of the wreckage while the forces of Mars and Venus stamp and fight over their heritage like children, squabbling over their mother's will while she lies dying in the same room.

"And the Fallen Earth is draped in her mourning clothes. Black clouds choke the skies. Grey snow whips the shattered cities with deadly storms. You might think that the essentials would be at a premium, and you'd be right. People will fight and kill for clean water. Even a breath of good air will see blood spilled. But there's one resource that everyone wants more than anything else, and that's light. There's no day on the Fallen Earth, you see. There's just a thick and choking smog and then there's night. Night is like the day, but worse. And it's when the predators come out. Some of them are our predators. Most of them aren't. Earth was a pretty strange place already when Ammit came, and she let the monsters out.

"Remember I said zero dark was when the worst things happened? Well on the Fallen Earth, it's zero dark all the time."

- This text is an extract from the introduction to "Zero Dark: A History" by Jaq Moog, first published 2519
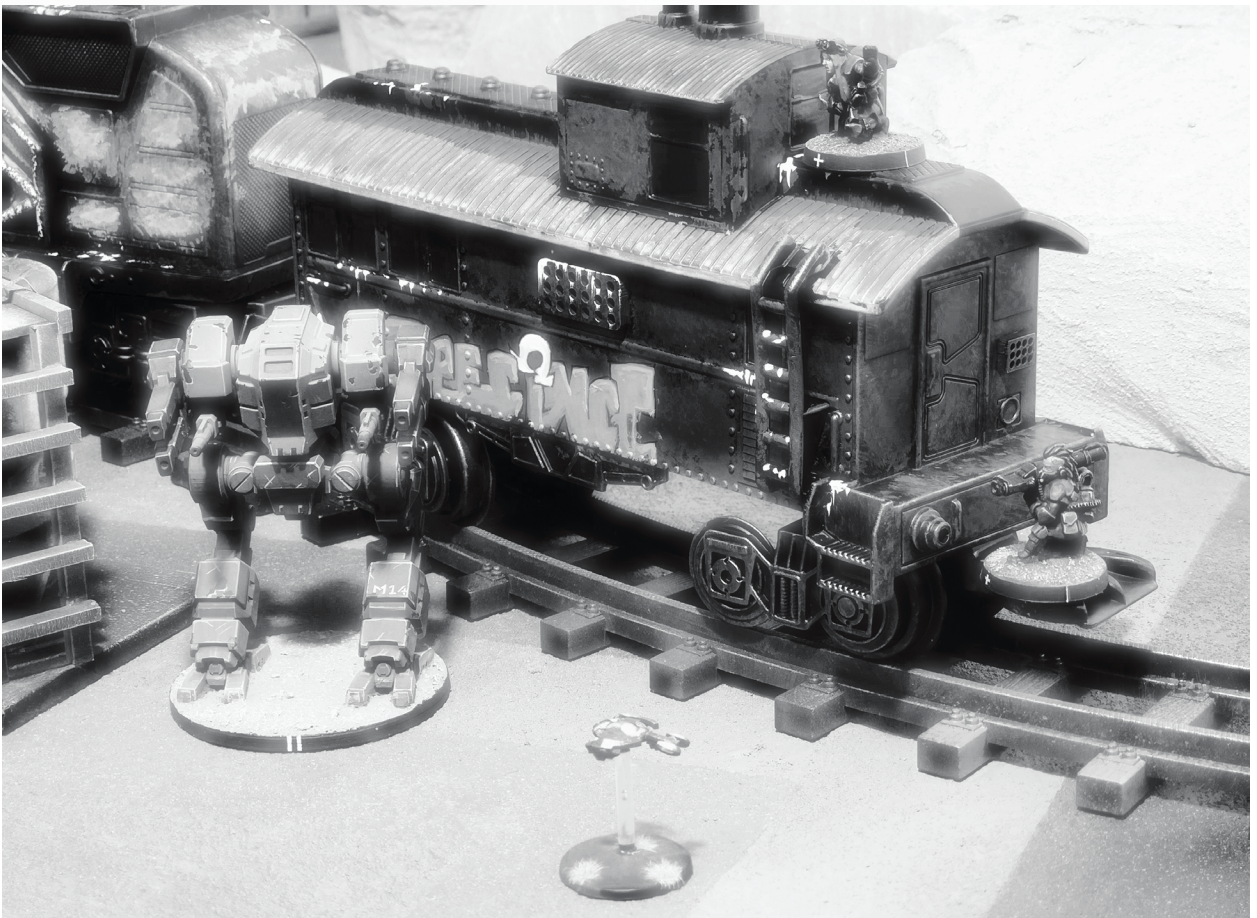
Infrared imagery of Terran survivors of the Gaian Restorationists executing an ambush on a Martian defence mech.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Zero Dark*. It's what's known as a skirmish style miniatures wargame, which really means that it's about a small number of heroic characters fighting for their lives and to achieve their objectives in a freeform environment that you get to build and design. Unlike a boardgame, it doesn't come with any pieces: you have to make your own. Unlike a computer game, it's all played out right in front of you with models, dice, paper and pencil, no batteries included or required.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED TO PLAY

If you've never played a miniatures wargame before, then we hope *Zero Dark* will be your gateway to an exciting, challenging and social hobby. But you should know that this book is not going to be the last thing you'll need to buy. As well as these rules, you'll need:

- 6+ twelve-sided dice (called "d12s")
- A normal, 54-card deck of playing cards including two Jokers
- Miniatures or counters to represent your heroes and the bogeys of the Red Force
- Some counters or chits to indicate certain states in which heroes or bogeys may find themselves

- A roughly square space of at least 2'x2' on which to play

Although this book includes a setting – a time in the not-too-distant future when the Earth is recovering from a devastating meteor strike, its secrets fought over by "rescue" forces from the colonies on Mars and Venus – you don't have to use that. If you want to re-create a 22nd century SWAT assault on a drug cartel's headquarters, or the infiltration of the Chedai Temple by the Zith Emperor's Crimson Assassins, that's entirely up to you. Unlike other miniatures games, this one doesn't insist that you play with particular models or even in a particular scale. The rules are designed to let you use miniatures you already own, or to give you a good excuse to buy some new ones you've always admired but never had a good reason to own.

BATTLE MODES

Most miniatures wargames are designed to be played one player versus another. Some can accommodate battles in which more than two players fight in a battle royale or can manage allied forces of two or more players against an opposing force of one or more players.

Zero Dark is different. Inspired by digital gaming, *Zero Dark* offers players a choice of battle modes, each of which offers a very

A NOTE ON SCALE

There is a convention in miniatures wargames to describe the scale in terms of the size, in millimetres, of an average human male. *Zero Dark* is written with the 28mm scale in mind. This is actually a very broad scale, that sits at around 1/54 or 1/58 scale in mathematical terms. However, it is entirely possible to play the game in other scales. The easiest other scale in which the game could be played is 15mm (1/100–1/107) by simply shifting the unit of range measurement from inches to centimetres. If you want to play at 54mm or 6mm or at any other scale that suits your collection or preferences, you just need to come up with a sensible method of adjusting the ranges and the sizes of the cylinders and play area and all the other rules will work fine.

different gaming experience.

Solo Mode

In Solo mode, a single player takes command of one or more elite operatives. In a Solo game, the player is opposed by an enemy – the Red Force – controlled by a deck of playing cards.

Team Mode

In Team mode, a group of players each control one or more characters and must cooperate to defeat the Red Force. The game is very like that for Solo mode, but players need to plan and execute their strategy in collaboration.

Both Solo and Team mode can be played either in a bespoke, one-off mission or as part of a series of missions called an "operation". A short operation – Operation Gemini – is included as part of this book, and additional operations will be available in the future for those who want to explore new challenges or settings for the game. In an operation, characters can acquire new skills and equipment and recruit allies to assist them as they face increasingly difficult challenges.

A series of operations can also be linked together to create an even larger narrative arc, called a campaign.

Versus Mode

In Versus mode – also called "pvp", or player-versus-player – two players or teams face off, each controlling a group of characters. In Versus mode, you will need to play a balanced mission that offers a theoretically equal chance of success to each side, but there is a Red Force on the battlefield as well, to add an extra threat and challenge to the encounter.

HEROES, ALLIES & BOGEYS

Battles in *Zero Dark* are fought by a wide range of beings: people, robots, drones and artificial intelligences, each represented by its own miniature on the battlefield[1], but not all participants are equal. The miniatures controlled by

the players are all "characters": these are the main figures of interest around whom the unfolding story of our mission or campaign will centre. But not all characters are equal. There are two classes of character: heroes and allies.

Heroes are our principle characters: the high performers. They will outclass most of their opponents and enjoy certain important advantages – the crucial one being the intelligence and imagination of their player.

Heroes have a custom stat line – explained in The Team – and in a campaign can gain experience, acquire new kit and suffer longer-term injuries. Heroes also carry the burden of being required to complete the mission.

Allies, meanwhile, are optional: useful but limited adjuncts that can provide special advantages or a particular ability. Unless otherwise specified, allies come with a fixed stat line. They do not get upgrades and cannot interact with objectives (and so often cannot complete missions).

Players are encouraged to give their heroes names, personalities and backstories to flesh out their tabletop

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Synthetics

"Synthetic" is a generic term for machine-based heroes: robots, drones and artificial intelligences. You can find out more about synthetics in the relevant section on page 49, but for now it's enough to know that both heroes and enemies might not be human.

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[1] Actually, Artificial Intelligences don't have their own miniatures: they have to "possess" a suitable miniature before they can directly act on the battlefield.

existence and to make missions and operations into living stories that players can influence with their decisions. You may feel like giving identities to your allies, too. This is very much up to the players.

The other type of participant is the "bogey". Bogeys are generic enemies, not controlled by the players but by the flip of a playing card in the Control Deck. They come in several types and have their own rules which are explained in the **Red Force** section of the rules.

IMPORTANT CONVENTIONS

Dice
Zero Dark uses twelve-sided dice called "d12s". These can

"Your help, offworlders, is neither wanted nor needed. You were not summoned to our assistance. Earth is not a prize to be bickered over like rats on a bone, and we are not helpless victims.

"If you do not remove yourselves from our territory and return to the benighted death-holes your misguided ancestors saw fit to exchange for paradise, then you should not be surprised to discover that Earth can still swing a deadly blade."

- Daventhalas de Mont Hault

be bought from most game and hobby shops or found online from specialist retailers. You will typically need no more than six, although it can be helpful to have more. It is also helpful to have dice in different colours for each player and for the Red Force, although this isn't essential.

Re-rolls
A few rules in *Zero Dark* allow players to "re-roll" one or more d12s. This is exactly what it sounds like: you pick up a d12 and roll it again. But it is important that any one d12 can be re-rolled only once, regardless of how many rules apply that would offer a re-roll. A doc, for example, attempting a medic test may get to re-roll any or all of his d12s. If he is also being watched by an embedded journalist – or "emjay" – he can't also use the re-roll from the emjay to re-roll a d12 he has already re-rolled.

Measuring
We measure a lot of things in *Zero Dark*: movement distances and ranges are the most common. The unit you use to measure will depend upon the scale in which you are playing and what you have agreed with your opponent. The default unit of measurement is the inch ("). A part of a unit is considered to be a whole unit, so if a target is 7¼" away, it counts as being 8" away.

Flipping
Many events will require you to flip a card from the Control Deck – a normal, 54-card deck of playing cards, including two Jokers. When a card is flipped, simply take the face-down card at the top of the deck, turn it over and place it on the top of the face-up cards in the discard pile.

Movement Distance and Range
Distance is how far a character or bogey moves and is measured from the centre of a model's cylinder. Range is how far a character or bogey shoots and is measured from the edge of the base closest to the target.

WHAT ELSE YOU'LL FIND IN THIS BOOK

Rules of Engagement
These are the rules you'll refer to most whilst playing

the game. They explain how the characters and bogeys interact with each other and the battlefield around them. As well as the obvious actions of shooting and moving, these rules cover a plethora of other situations, such as more complex movement (including cautious movement, climbing and jumping), helping each other out or diving into the complex alternate battlefield of electronic warfare. An important part of the Rules of Engagement is the **States** section, describing the conditions in which characters and bogeys can find themselves and management of which is essential for success in any mission.

The Team

This section contains the rules for assembling your team. You will mostly want to refer to this before and between battles to build your perfect strike force (perfect for you, that is; otherwise there's no such thing as a "perfect" team and every team will involve making compromises). An important part of this section is Upgrades, which describes the many additional traits and equipment available to your team to enhance their natural abilities.

Red Force

Absolutely essential to *Zero Dark* is the "Red Force" of enemy bogeys who will stand between your team and their objectives. This section explains how to assemble, deploy and activate the Red Force who have some similarities to characters but – as they are managed and activated by the Control Deck – some very important differences.

Operations

Next, we have the **Operations** section, which introduces *Zero Dark* missions, explaining how you can link missions together into a narrative arc in which the outcomes of one mission will affect conditions in the next. Included in this section is a starter operation – Operation Gemini – in which the heroes begin to explore one of the mysteries of the Fallen Earth.

Echoes of a Fallen Earth

Last of all, we have a section expanding on the history of the Fallen Earth of the mid-23rd century and of the various factions competing to control its power and secrets.

In summary, I would rate the mission a partial success.

We made ingress to the location of the enemy datacore undetected but encountered a level and volume of resistance that was inconsistent with the intelligence briefing with which we had been supplied on departure and which we had, prior to the assault itself, been assured was both up-to-date and accurate.

By contrast, the enemy forces in the vicinity proved to be alert and well equipped, with their own Electronic Warfare specialists and a Defence Mech.

It was fortunate that, having had previous experience of similar "up-to-date and accurate" intelligence from I-MASC, my team had elected to equip with anti-materiel weaponry despite their assurances that it would not be required. Unfortunately, the destruction of the Defence Mech drew the attention of immediate enemy reserves that I-MASC did not appear to have anticipated.

KAY2 and PORTIA drew enemy fire to allow MOGWAI to infiltrate to within range of the datacore, from which he was able to extract several petabytes of data before the auto-purge routines kicked in.

KAY2, however, was destroyed and PORTIA is MIA. MOGWAI and myself were wounded during extraction and, although I have recovered, MOGWAI is still in surgery.

I have been advised that additional personnel to assist in a mission to trace and recover PORTIA are not available at this time. I find this advice unacceptable so I have scheduled this report to ensure that it reaches you only after I have departed. Please convey my apologies to MOGWAI that I did not await his assistance, but time is of the essence.

- X Team Leader Mark "ARKON" Murphy, AAR

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

'Listen up!' came Colonel Gryre's voice over the comnet, drowning out the rattle of the shuttle's descent. 'You've been told this before, but I want to re-emphasize the point.

'It's Earth. You're excited. I get it,' he went on. 'Except it's not. This is not the Motherworld. This is not even her on a bad day. This is a planet that wants to kill you no less than Mars. It wants to choke you with ash and freeze the fingers off your hands just like home. But this place also wants to drown you in acid rain and bury you in grey snow. It wants to suck you into stinking black swamps of dying forest. It wants to infest you with desperate parasites and eat you alive from the inside out. It wants to kill you where you stand with lightning and darkness.

'And that's before we get to the Terrans.

'This is a rescue mission, ladies and gentlemen, but the locals for the most part do not want to be rescued. At best, they want us to leave them alone and go away. At worst, they know the secrets of this world better than we can even imagine and they will sneak into your camp and cut your throat when you think you're safe.

'But like it or not, rescue them we will. This planet might be the Motherworld's evil twin sister, but we will not stand off and watch it burn and die. We will establish security. We will rush into the path of danger. We will confront evil and those who seek to turn this world's fall to their own selfish agenda.

'We will not turn away.'

ACTIVATION

The basic component of a battle in *Zero Dark* is the activation. An activation consists of one character performing one action, followed by one Control Deck flip. Some actions will allow the character to perform bonus actions. Bonus actions are treated as being part of the same action so, in one activation, a character will perform an action, including any bonus actions, then there will be a Control Deck flip.

A character can perform any of the following actions when active:

- Move
- Shoot
- Interact
- Close Quarter Battle (CQB)
- Medic
- Recover
- Overwatch
- Dig In

Characters may also be able to perform other, special actions – called skills – if they possess the upgrade that enables them to do so.

Note that there is nothing to stop you from activating the

Cpl Leah Kelly shoots at a target 13" away. No modifiers apply to this test, so this is an F(13) test. Cpl Kelly's player rolls 7, 8 and 12, so she would score two successes. One for the 7 + 8 and one for the lucky 12.

If her target had been 12" away rather than 13" away, she would have three successes: one for 7 + 8, one for 12 and an additional one for the lucky 12.

If her target had been 28" away, she would still have scored one success. 7 + 8 + 12 = 27, which would normally be zero passes, but the lucky 12 confers one additional pass; therefore, one success.

same character multiple times in a row.

Automatic Actions

Some actions are described as "automatic". This means that they simply happen – no test is required or permitted and no bonus actions can be generated.

STATS

All characters have a set of statistics or "stats" that define their basic capabilities. The stats are Mobility (M), Fight

(F), Acuity (A) and Discipline (D) and are described in more detail in the Team section. They all have a value between 2 and 6.

STAT TESTS

Some actions require the character to pass a test. Tests are always made using a nominated stat and the method of the test is to roll a number of d12s equal to the stat (or a modified version of the stat if the test is particularly challenging).

NORMAL TESTS

Most tests are normal tests. For these, the object of the dice roll is to make groups of d12s that equal or exceed a target number determined by the test. Some tests have a fixed target number. Others, the most common being shooting, have a target number determined from the circumstances of the test. Each group of dice that equals or exceeds the target is one success.

If the modified stat value for the test is 0 or less, the test fails automatically.

Tests are described in generic terms based on their stat, the stat modifier (if any) and the target number. So a D(13) test is a Discipline test in which the player rolls a number of dice equal to the character's Discipline stat with a target number of 13. An M-2(10) test would be one in which the player rolls a number of dice equal to the character's M stat, minus 2, with a target number of 10. In this case, if the character's M was currently 2 or less, the test would automatically be failed. An F±n(v) test would be a more complex test in which there might be positive or negative modifiers to the stat, with a target number that will vary depending on conditions. You will need to refer to the rules to know how to modify the stat in a particular circumstance and what the value of v will be.

Lucky 12s – Normal Tests

Every 12 rolled in a normal test, in addition to contributing to groups as normal, confers an additional pass.

COUNTER-TESTS

Counter-tests are typically made to oppose the results of another test, although they may also be made to oppose

some other status. Making a counter-test is like making a normal test in that you roll a number of dice equal to the relevant stat. However, with a counter-test you are looking for results on the dice that exactly match the value or values the counter-test is opposing.

Lucky 12s – Counter-Tests

A natural 12 on a counter-test will always counter one whole success or count as a successful match if the target is a single value.

Counter-tests are described with a "c" indicator. The target of a counter-test will depend upon the circumstances of the test, but will either be "v", where the target is a single value, or "r" where the target is to match results on another dice roll. This means that cD(v) is a Discipline counter-test

A bogey shoots at Specialist Vandemerwe with a target of 16, rolling 8 and 10 for one success. Vandemerwe has AV 2, so rolls two dice, getting 12 and 4. Neither is a match for the enemy successes, but the 12 cancels one success, so Vandemerwe takes no wounds.

against a single value, whilst cAV(r) is an Armour Value counter-test against the results of a dice roll.
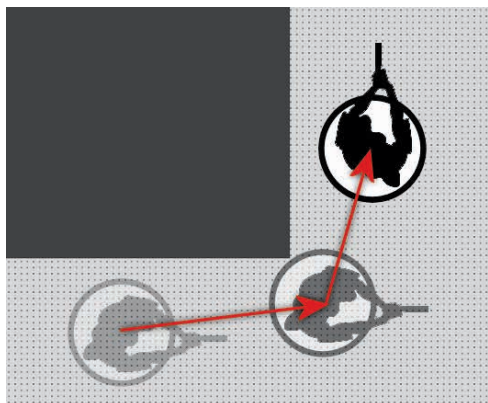
MOVEMENT

All movement is measured based on the centre point of the model's cylinder (see Page 36), as shown below:

BASIC MOVEMENT ACTIONS

There are three basic movement actions in *Zero Dark*:

Cautious Movement – Cautious movement is up to a distance equal to the character's M, rounding up. Cautious movement may not move up or down in height. Cautious movement is subject to a D(v) test where v is twice the total distance moved, +1 for each bogey within 12". The first success nullifies the primary action of the next Control Deck flip unless the flip would cause a complication. Additional successes may be spent on bonus actions.

Normal Movement – The conventional tactical manoeuvre is upright and alert. Normal movement is up to a distance equal to twice the character's M. Normal movement is measured horizontally and may move up or down in height up to an amount equal to half the character's cylinder height. For distances greater than half their cylinder height, characters must jump or climb instead (see below). This vertical movement doesn't count towards the total distance moved.

Urgent Movement – When caution is thrown to the wind, sometimes there's no other option. Urgent movement is up to a distance equal to

> **Push Your Luck**
> If the active character performs a cautious move, then any other heroes in the character's team may also perform a cautious move in the same activation. However, the D(v) test is made against the sum of the distances moved.

three times the character's M and must be in a straight line. Urgent movement may move up or down in height up to an amount equal to half the character's cylinder height. For distances greater than half their cylinder height, characters must jump instead (see below). This vertical movement doesn't count towards the total distance moved. At the end of an action or bonus action in which

> **Jump Example 1 – Jumping Up**
> Gunny Malone (Cyl3, M4, AV2), wants to jump over a 20mm wall. For his jump action, Malone rolls two dice, as his M (4) minus his AV (2) is two. He gets a 4 and 7. The 7+4 gives him one success, so Malone reaches the other side of the wall, but it's not enough to make a second success, so Malone stops there.
>
> LCpl Gregor (Cyl3, M3, AV1), takes a run at the same obstacle, rolling 1 and 8. With a total of 9, it's not enough to clear the barrier, and Gregor is left exposed to enemy fire!
>
> **Jump Example 2 – Jumping Across**
> Corporal Owen (M5, AV1) wants to jump a 3" gap between two buildings. He spends an action moving up to the edge. In his next action, he makes a jump and rolls 3, 3, 9, 12. His target is (2x3=) 6, so with 3+3 and 9 he has two successes and with the 12 he has two more successes, so he can jump up to 4".
>
> Private Gregor (M3, AV0) wants to leap the same gap. He rolls 4, 8, 11. With the 4+8 and 11, Gregor has only two successes and will fall.
>
> **Jump Example 3 – Falling!**
> Serjeant Lin (Cyl3, AV2) falls 3", and therefore suffers 6 hits from her unplanned descent. On a cAV(6) test, she rolls 6 and 12, saving two hits as a result, but still taking 4 wounds.

a character makes an urgent move, the character becomes *stunned*(+1).

A character who performs a movement action may gain the *prone* state at the end of any movement as a bonus action (see States). A character may end movement facing in any direction. Bogeys must end movement facing in the direction they moved.

ADVANCED MOVEMENT
Whilst most movement in a game will usually be conventional, normal movement, characters may want to climb walls, leap gaps or drag allies to safety, or – if they're unlucky – have to tumble from a height.

Jump
Jumping may be up, down or across.

> **Jump up/down** – Characters may attempt to jump up or down a distance up to the character's cylinder height by performing a jump M-AV(10) test. A failed test stops the character at the obstacle without going up or down it. If one success is rolled, the character stops at the top of or clears the obstacle. If jumping over an obstacle, the width of which is equal to or greater than the character's cylinder width, the character stops on top of the obstacle. If the width of the obstacle is less than the character's cylinder width, the character stops on the far side of the obstacle. Additional successes may be spent on bonus actions.

A character may also attempt to jump up or down a distance up to twice the character's cylinder height by performing an M-AV(13) test.

> **Jump across** – A character may jump horizontally up to 1" for every success in a M-AV(v) test, where v is twice the distance across the gap. If a character passes the test with only enough success to cover the gap, place the character on the far side of the gap, with their base touching the edge.
>
> Often, when jumping across, there will be a distance for the character to jump down as well, which is dealt with as described above. Characters jumping across may not also jump up.

The Skylords have returned to us with news of the Homeworld. Its corrupt heart has broken. Its failed and evil masters have abandoned it. It has welcomed its doom as all true unbelievers must.

Now is our time, brothers and sisters! Now is the the time for Venus once more to tread upon the Holy Lands and to reclaim the birthright that was stolen from us!

Now is the time for our benighted children to rise up, to lift their eyes from the darkness and pain of our cursed existence. Condemned to the fires, we have made them into a forge of unyielding strength and terrible beauty and we will step into the sky with power and make Earth's blessings our own.

Climb
Climbing may be up, down or across and may be up to a distance equal to characters' M value, minus their AV. Climbing up a ladder allows characters to move up to 2M, minus their AV. If the total is 0 or less, the character is too heavy to climb.

A character only needs to spend part of a climb action actually moving vertically, so a character with M3 may, for example, declare a climb action, move 2" horizontally to the foot of a ladder and then 3" up the ladder to the top of the ladder and 1" horizontally from the top.

Falling
Falling is a bonus action. A climbing character who becomes *wounded*(+1) (see page 22) will fall. Characters who jump down a distance greater than twice their cylinder are falling. A character who fails a jump across test will fall. A falling character immediately moves vertically downwards and suffers two hits for every full 1" they fell. A cAV(v) test may be made against these, with v being the number of hits taken.

Is it vertical?
Some common sense needs to be applied to slopes. Strictly, if a slope is greater than 45°, it's vertical. If you're not sure and don't have a protractor handy, treat it as vertical. Stairs are never vertical.

Characters who are climbing cannot do anything else including entering the *prone* state. If climbing characters suffer a wound, they fall.

Drag
Dragging describes any encumbered action, which includes carrying something heavy and awkward as well as pulling on a burden. When dragging, the character makes a M-AV(10) test using the AV of the dragged character or object. The character may move up to its M value +1 for each success on the test. Characters may not drag a character or object with an AV more than twice their own. Characters may not drag bogeys or enemy characters unless the mission briefing specifically states otherwise.

SHOOTING
The character shoots at a target. Most shooting is of the straightforward kind that involves pointing a weapon at visible enemies and releasing a shot in a more-or-less straight line that either hits them or doesn't.

BASIC SHOOTING
To make a basic shooting action, a player makes an F+n(v) test where v is the range to the target, modified by any levels of *obscured* (see page 21) the target might have and the mission's visibility level (see below).

Variables (n) for the test are as follows:

Support	+1 for each support token the shooter has.
Targeted	+1 if the target is *targeted*.

The target of shooting may make a cAV(r) test against the shooting test.

Shooting & Bonus Actions
If a target is put into the *out of action* (OOA) state (see page 21) or (for bogeys) into the *dead* state by shooting,

"Men are from Mars. Women are from Mars. Giant f***ing ass-kicking robots are from Mars. Everything good is from Mars."

any surplus successes in the F+n(v) test may be spent on bonus actions (see page 18).

VISIBILITY LEVEL

Missions will often have a visibility level that gives an indication of how dark the immediate vicinity is supposed to be, on a scale of 0 to 6. The table below gives a sense of what these levels mean:

0-1	**Good-to-Poor Visibility** Somewhere between full daylight and twilight, these conditions may include rain, mist, sandstorms or ash clouds that further interfere with visibility during times of otherwise good visibility.
2-3	**Darkness** Full night under normal conditions, depending upon the moon state and level of cloud cover. The default state on the Fallen Earth, even during the day.
4-5	**Deep Darkness** Interior areas without artificial light during hours of darkness, possibly exacerbated by ash, clouds or other obscuring conditions.
6	**Total Darkness** Subterranean areas, where the only light is reflected from far away and human eyes struggle to perceive anything at all.

The effect of visibility is to add the visibility level to the target number (v) for all shooting.

OTHER ACTIONS

CQB

Fighting an opponent in Close Quarter Battle (CQB) is less a matter of martial arts prowess than it is an exercise in focused aggression. Unlike most other actions, targets get to fight back. As a result, in a CQB action, everyone involved makes a D(v) test with the target number depending upon the type of target. The target numbers for bogeys are given in the **Red Force** section. Against enemy characters, the target number is characters' F+D, minus

their current *wounded* level. Each success is one hit. No cAV test is made against a CQB action unless the target has the combat shield upgrade.

To attack a target with a CQB action, a character or bogey must be *engaged* with the target.

Characters or bogeys that move into contact with an enemy must immediately perform CQB as a bonus action.

Interact

This is a very broad term for actions not otherwise covered by these rules. An interact is automatically successful unless the specific rules say otherwise. If a test is called for, and unless stated otherwise, surplus successes on an interact test may be used to perform bonus actions.

Medic

The character attempts to patch up a target that has been

wounded or hurt. The character must be engaged with a *wounded* target to medic it. Characters may only perform medic actions on themselves if they are in the *wounded*(1) or (2) states. Medic is an A(13) test. A success in a medic test reduces the target's *wounded* state by −1, but only one success can be used to reduce the *wounded* state. Other successes can be used for bonus actions as normal.

A character who is *stunned* and *wounded*, and who has the *wounded* state reduced, automatically has the *stunned* state reduced by −1 also.

Recover
A *stressed* character may perform recover actions. To recover, the character takes a D(10) test. Each success reduces the *stressed* level by −1 until the character is no longer *stressed*. Surplus successes on a recover test may be used to perform bonus actions.

Overwatch
A character may perform an automatic action to enter the *overwatch* state.

Dig In
A *prone* character may perform an automatic action to enter the *dug in* state.

SKILLS
Skills are special actions that can only be performed by characters with an upgrade that enables them to perform that skill. An example is the EWOp specialism that allows characters to perform Electronic Warfare skills, or the "deploy" skill that can be performed by characters equipped with deployable upgrades.

BONUS ACTIONS
When characters take tests to perform an action, if they achieve more than the minimum number of successes, they will often generate one or more bonus actions that may be performed by any hero (not ally) in the same team. So if an ally performs an action that generates bonus actions, these may only be used by heroes in the team and not by allies – not even by the ally whose action generated the bonus actions.

These must be one of the following:

1. A normal move up to half the character's M value.
2. Jump.
3. Shoot.
4. Gain the *prone* state.
5. Put a *down* or *wounded*(4) target in contact with the active character into the *dead* state.
6. Gain +1 support token.

Each option may be performed only once per action. Any bonus actions not used are lost. Bonus actions generated as part of the player's action are resolved after the action in hand, but may be resolved in any order. Bonus actions generated as part of the opponent's or Red Force's action must be resolved immediately, interrupting the resolution of any other action.

Bonus actions are part of the action that generated them, so anything that comes into effect at the end of an action does so only after all bonus actions are resolved.

Bonus actions must all be declared at once, but are resolved in the order in which they are performed. So, for example, a support token may be gained with one bonus action and then used to shoot a target with the next bonus action.

Bonus actions can even interrupt the actions of bogeys or enemy characters – for example, if generated by a stress test following being shot at.

Important: Bonus actions can generate more bonus actions but each option may be performed only once per action. So if a jump action generates more bonus actions, these may not be used to perform another jump action unless an upgrade specifically permits this.

Bonus Actions Example 1:
Kitsune perfoms a Shoot action at a Grunt using her F of 5. She needs 12 for a success and rolls 5, 7, 8, 10 and 12. This gives her four successes (5+10, 7+8, 12 and +1 success for the Lucky 12). The first success puts the Grunt *down* and the second kills it. The third and fourth successes, therefore, leave Kitsune with two bonus actions.

She spends one to become *prone* and one to gain +1 support token.

Bonus Actions Example 2:
Conor performs a cautious move action for 2", needing only a 5 on his D of 4. He rolls four successes. The first must be used to cancel the next Control Deck flip, leaving him three to spend. He uses the first to shoot at a nearby Elite with his F of 4.

He achieves four successes on his target, three of which he needs to kill the target, but leaving him another bonus action. Having used one of his previous three, he still has three to spend, but can't use another one to Shoot.

He spends one to move 3", another to enter the *prone* state and the last to gain +1 support token.

Bonus Actions Example 3:
Stepmaster Stefan Vert has passed a cautious move test with three successes. He must use his first success to cancel the Control Deck flip but uses his second to shoot at enemy character, Erik Whiskey.

Erik takes no hits but must still take a stress test with his D of 3. He is unwounded, so only needs to test against a target of 10 and rolls 3, 4 and 12. This gives him two successes (the 12 is a success, +1 success for being a Lucky 12). With the first success he passes his stress test, and with the second he gains a bonus action.

Erik now gets to use his bonus action to move into cover before Stefan can use his remaining bonus action. Stefan elects to gain +1 support token.
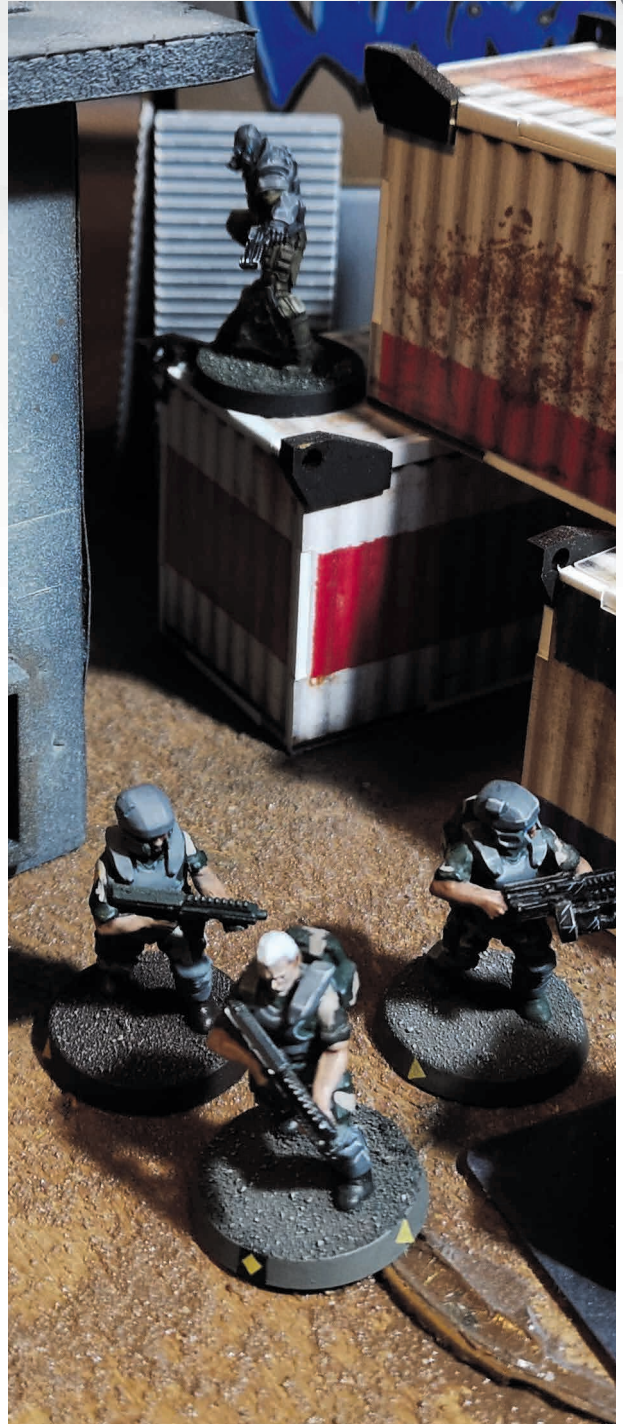
A single hero, in the right place, with the right skills, and a little luck, can overcome formidable opponents

S T A T E S

'Don't worry. Help is at hand'

Gill opened his eyes as Bibi leaned over him, its LED eyes glowing a gentle purple in the permanent darkness. At the sight of the medical support robot, he groaned, and then groaned louder when he remembered the penetrating wound in his lower left thorax that was gradually filling his pleural cavity with blood – an injury destined to slowly asphyxiate him even as it crucified him with agony. The Venusians had not been as unprepared for their infiltration as the briefing had led them to expect.

'I will soon have you back on your feet,' Bibi assured him, as expertly-programmed primary limbs quickly stripped away Gill's outer armour and webbing, while its secondary set tugged open a microdermal pack. 'This won't hurt a bit.'

Characters can adopt or acquire a variety of states in the course of the game as a result of weapons, tabletop effects, complications or special actions. When a character acquires a new state, loses a state or has a state change in value, this is called "changing state".

States are applied to the character or bogey at the end of the action, bonus action or Control Deck flip in which it was caused. The various states are as follows:

Alert
Only bogeys can be *alert*. *Alert* bogeys have a 360° field of view.

Dead
The character is beyond help. They may not actually be deceased, but only the very rapid services of a surgeon and full trauma team are going to help him or her.

A *dead* character remains on the battlefield but is *prone*. It may be dragged but cannot be activated or change state. A *dead* bogey is removed from the battlefield.

Deployed
Only gadgets may enter the *deployed* state. See page 41 for details of deploying.

Deployed gadgets can be the target of Shoot, Buff and Hack actions. They have Cyl1 unless otherwise stated and are destroyed by a single hit. They can be in the *targeted* state but cannot be given support tokens.

Dominated
Only synthetic characters and synthetic bogeys can be *dominated*. A *dominated* character or bogey is controlled by the opposing side. For full details, see the **Electronic Warfare** section.

Down
Only bogeys can be *down*. A bogey in the *down* state remains on the tabletop but otherwise has no effect on the battle. A *down* bogey doesn't block LOS, regardless of its size or shape, or count as a bogey for any purpose that doesn't specifically affect *down* bogeys. A *down* bogey will not move, attack or do anything at all as long as it is *down*.

Dug In
A *prone* character may spend an action to become *dug in*. A *dug in* character increases their *obscured* level by +1 to a maximum of *obscured(3)*.

Engaged
A character or bogey is *engaged* when its cylinder is in contact with the cylinder of another character, an objective or a bogey. A bogey *engaged* with a character will always perform a CQB action when activated, regardless of the suit of the control card. A character *engaged* with a friendly character, an objective, a bogey in the *down* state or a hostile character in the OOA state may act normally. A character *engaged* with a bogey or hostile character that is not in the *down* or OOA states must perform a CQB action.

Entirely Obscured
If no part of the target's cylinder is in the active character

or bogey's LOS, the target is *entirely obscured*. Characters cannot shoot at an *entirely obscured* target except with an indirect weapon. An EWOp may attempt to hack or buff (see page 27) an *entirely obscured* target within their awareness radius (see page 36). In this case, the *entirely obscured* state imposes an additional +4 on the range.

Interference

An EWOp that successfully hacks a bogey or enemy character can elect to enter the *interference* state. Detailed rules for EWOps in the *interference* state are given in the **Electronic Warfare** section.

The *interference* state lasts until the character changes state or the character cancels the state. Cancelling the *interference* state is an automatic action.

I/O

Only gadgets have an I/O state. A gadget is either on (I state) or off (O state). Changing the state is an automatic action for the character with the gadget. See page 41 for full details.

Obscured

Characters and bogeys can be *obscured*. *Obscured* bogeys are offering the characters a less-than-perfect target, making it harder to get a decisive shot. *Obscured* characters, meanwhile, are making an effective use of cover. Bogeys, therefore, count as *obscured* if any part of their cylinder is out of a shooting character's LOS. But characters must be in contact with whatever terrain is obscuring them in order to count as *obscured*.

> **Obscured(1)** – Some, but less than half of the target's cylinder, is out of the shooting character/bogey's LOS. Characters shooting at an *obscured*(1) target add +1 to the effective range. *Obscured*(1)

> **More or less than half?**
> In cases where you've got neatly vertical or horizontal terrain obstacles, it should be fairly easy to work out if a cylinder is more or less than half obscured. But with things like rocks, trees or street furniture, it's a bit harder. Players should err on the side of generosity towards the target, on the basis that they really are doing their best not to get shot.

characters add +1 to their AV.

> **Obscured(2)** – Some, but less than half of the target's cylinder, is in the shooting character/bogey's LOS. Units shooting at an *obscured*(2) target add +2 to the effective range. *Obscured*(2) characters add +2 to their AV.

> **Obscured(3)** – Only characters can be *obscured*(3). This level is only possible if a *prone* character in the *obscured*(2) state becomes *dug in*. Units shooting at an *obscured*(3) target add +3 to the effective range. *Obscured*(3) characters add +3 to their AV.

See also *entirely obscured*.

Out of Action (OOA)

Any character who is in the *wounded*(3), *wounded*(4) or *dead* states is also *out of action* (OOA).

Overwatch

Entering the *overwatch* state is an automatic action. A character in *overwatch* may interrupt another (friendly or enemy) character's action (including bonus actions) to perform a single bonus action.

An interruption of an enemy character's action may only be prompted if the active character is within the *overwatch* character's field of view or awareness radius during the action. The interruption may occur at any point the *overwatch* character's player chooses during the active character's action, so may be timed for the point in movement, for example, when a target is not *obscured*.

Note that using the bonus action to shoot does <u>not</u> require the *overwatch* character to shoot at the active bogey or enemy character.

An interruption of a friendly character's action may be at any time and the friendly character does <u>not</u> need to be in the *overwatch* character's field of view or awareness radius. So, for example, an *overwatch* character may shoot at an enemy target to wound or force the target back just before a friend comes around a corner, exposing him or herself to fire.

The *overwatch* state lasts until the *overwatch* character

performs an action or changes state.

Possessed

Synthetic characters subject to a possession action by an AI enter the *possessed* state. When the *possessed* state is cancelled for any reason, all other states in effect upon the character remain in effect. If a character is *wounded* whilst in the *possessed* state, the *possessed* state ends immediately, the character remains *wounded* and the AI is *unwounded*.

Prone

A character may become *prone* at the end of any basic movement action and may cease to be *prone* at the start of any basic movement action. Becoming *prone* is also a common bonus action. A *prone* character has a cylinder 10mm high (5mm for 15mm games) and increases their *obscured* state by +1 up to a maximum of *obscured(2)*. The only move action characters can make whilst *prone* is cautious movement.

Stressed

Something has alarmed the character. They need to shake it off before they can get back in the game.

When the *stressed* state is imposed, it is *stressed*(1). Each subsequent time it is imposed, it increases by +1 up to a maximum of 4.

Stressed characters may only perform recover actions (page 18). A successful recover action reduces the *stressed* state by −1 for each success. If the *stressed* state reaches 0, the character is no longer *stressed*.

Synthetic characters and all bogeys are immune to effects that cause the *stressed* state.

Stunned

The character is suffering from an effect that temporarily prevents them from properly thinking or focussing. If *stunned* multiple times, the results will stack. So a *stunned(1)* character who is *stunned* again becomes *stunned(2)* up to a maximum of *stunned(4)*. Additional levels have no additional effect, but make the effect harder to shake off.

Characters: all stats are reduced by −1, and the character cannot perform urgent movement or benefit from the Stealthy trait. All targets increase their *obscured* state by +1 for this character, and *obscured(3)* characters count as *entirely obscured*. A *stunned* character may use an action to reduce the level of *stunned* by −1. This is an automatic action. If a *stunned* character is the target of a *medic* action (even if the action is unsuccessful) it reduces the level of *stunned* by −1.

Bogeys: lose all support tokens. In addition, when the next Control card is flipped, if the active bogey is *stunned*, the primary action is cancelled. Once the Control card has been resolved all bogeys become *stunned(−1)*.

Targeted

The figure has been identified as a significant threat. Characters and bogeys shooting at a *targeted* target add +1 dice to their F. In addition, the number of hits on a *targeted* character from an attack is always increased by +1 (so shooting at a *targeted* target will always achieve at least one success). *Targeted* has no effect in CQB. EWOps count all (friendly and enemy) *targeted* bogeys and characters as being in LOS for EW actions.

The *targeted* state is removed after the first shooting attack on the *targeted* target is resolved, regardless of the result.

Characters can remove their *targeted* state by spending an action out of LOS of any bogey or enemy character and passing a D(13) test.

Wounded

The character has taken physical or mental damage as a result of the combat. The *wounded* state passes through four levels:

Unwounded – The character is unwounded. This is the normal default starting state of all characters, although complications may alter this.

Wounded(1) – The wound is not serious and won't significantly impede the character during the battle, but will hurt like hell in the morning.

Wounded(2) – The wound is serious and will

impede the character's performance. All stats are reduced by −1 and the character cannot perform urgent movement.

Wounded(3) – The character is in urgent need of medical attention. All stats are reduced by −2 and the character cannot move.

Wounded(4) – The character hovers between life and death. The character can do nothing.

What's *Wounded*(1) For?

The *wounded*(1) state has no explicit game effect, but will apply to things affected by the *wounded* state.

Whilst we naturally tend to think of "wounded" as meaning physical damage, these states are also intended to reflect the shock and fear of suffering incoming fire, whether or not it causes physical harm. In the course of a game of *Zero Dark*, our characters will suffer the short-term effects of injury, the loss of comrades and the experience of near-death. Our campaign system doesn't consider the longer-term psychological effects of combat veterans in the hope that advances in treatment and understanding of mental illness will reduce this in the future where our game is set.

'What am I looking at?' asked Gryre.

He'd been sidelined into Intelligence since the Rescue Command had been established under a trigger-happy, two-star know-nothing, but he knew how to make lemonade.

'Blueprints for a device, Colonel,' explained the operator, codename Gremlin. 'This part is remarkable, but obvious. It's a molecular disruptor. The part before it seems to be some kind of analyser, but more sophisticated than anything we've got. The volume of data it's designed to generate is just... incomprehensible, to be honest. The last part is straight-up voodoo as far as I'm concerned, sir.'

'And this was what you recovered from the Venusians? This was what they were after?'

'It was the most complete part of the fragment we recovered before they detected us and initiated the purge. No way to say what else was in there, but I recognize this design.'

'What?'

'I've seen this machine all over the place. Rio, NeuFrankfurt, Nairobi. They're everywhere.'
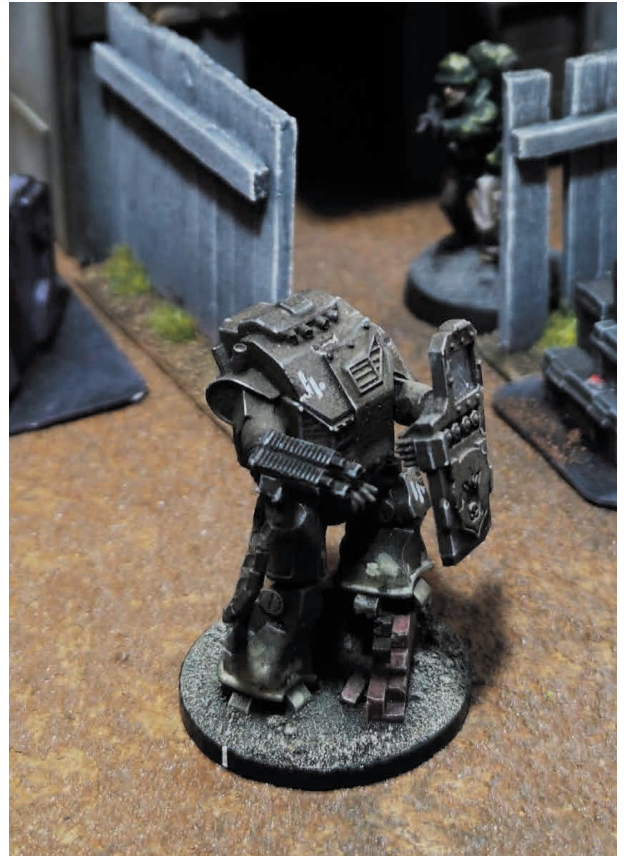
With superior knowledge of the terrain, Terran Survivors were often able to ambush their "invaders".

DAMAGE

Solid slug rounds punched through the barricade in a shower of concrete dust, sending Lana diving for the floor and knocking the wind out of her even as she was vaguely aware of a ringing impact on the crown of her helmet. Gingerly, in the silence that followed, she risked raising her hand to her head and felt the deep gouge in the composite layering that had spelled the difference between dead and what was sure to be a zinger of a headache in the morning.

'Ow.'

Lana looked over at where Ayjay lay slumped against the wall opposite, the weak light from the spotlights cutting sheets through the dust from the holes in the brick behind it.

'Oh, shit, Ayjay,' said Lana, looking at the damage. The robot's entire left primary limb had been torn off and the ripped end was sharp metal, leaky fluid and sparks.

'It is only a flesh wound,' said Ayjay, not turning its head to look at the damage. More gunfire sounded from off to the north, where the team was drawing fire away from them.

'Did you just make a Monty Python joke?' demanded Lana, grinning.

'Help. Help. I am being suppressed.'

BASIC DAMAGE

Damage is based on the number of hits a character or bogey suffers. Hits don't literally equate to a single impact from a single round. More hits could either mean multiple impacts or simply a more effective hit from a single impact. One hit causes one wound. For characters, one wound means an increase in the character's *wounded* state of +1. For bogeys, the effect is different, and this is explained in the **Red Force** section.

Characters have five *wounded* states and a *dead* state. For each unsaved hit, a character's *wounded* state goes up by 1. The default starting state of a character is *unwounded*, but complications may affect the starting *wounded* state of a character.

Indicating *Wounded* States
Unwounded characters are indicated by the absence of anything to indicate their *wounded* state! *Dead* bogeys may usually be removed from the table; however, *dead* characters must be left on the table. A black counter can indicate the *dead* state. Meanwhile, *wounded* characters can be indicated with a red counter marked from 1 to 5, or with any other clear marking system.

ARMOUR
Armour is acquired by characters as part of the upgrading process, but all characters begin with light armour (AV 1) as standard. For more options for armour, see Upgrades.

Armour has two direct effects:

- It increases the target number needed to shoot a target by an amount equal to the AV. This is in addition to any increases caused by the *obscured* state.

- It provides targets that are hit with the opportunity to make an armour test to avoid or reduce damage. Armour provides a cAV(r) test.

COVER & OBSCURED STATE
For details of how cover and the *obscured* state affects shooting, see the entry for "obscured" in the **States** section on page 21.

STRESS

When a character who is not OOA is the target of a shooting action, even if the action fails to hit, then after the action is resolved, the character must take a D(10) (stress) test. If the test is failed, the character is *stressed(+1)*. If the test is passed, each success reduces the existing level of *stressed* by −1 to a minimum of 0. For each additional success remaining if the character is not *stressed*, the character may immediately perform a bonus action.

A character that fails a stress test immediately makes a bonus cautious move towards the closest means of becoming *obscured*. This move may not take the character closer to the source of the action that caused the test (such as a shooting character) unless it will immediately cause the *stressed* character to become *obscured*. If the character is not *obscured* at the end of the bonus cautious move, or the character didn't move (for example, because of already being *obscured*), the character becomes prone.

If a character fails a stress test when already *stressed*, the results will stack. So a character who is *stressed*(1) and suffers a further fright becomes *stressed*(2) up to a maximum of *stressed*(4).

A *stressed* character may only perform recover actions, as described in the **Rules of Engagement** on page 18.

Damage Example 1

Salim has been caught in the open and an enemy shoots at him. Salim is 8" away in visibility level 4 with AV3, so the enemy needs 15 to hit. The enemy rolls three dice, scoring 7, 8 and 12. The 7 and 8 provides a success and the 12 provides another success. Thanks to his armour, Salim also gets to roll a cAV(r) test and rolls 2, 6 and 12. The 2 and 6 do nothing, but the 12 matches the enemy's 12 and because it is a natural 12, counts as another success. So both successes are blocked.

Damage Example 2

Washington (D4) is hit, causing him to become *wounded*(2). Once the shooting is resolved, he must take a stress test. He is at −1 D, thanks to his *wounded* state, and so his stress test is taken on (4-1=) three dice, needing 10 or more. Luckily for Washington, he rolls 2, 7 and 12. The 2 and 7 aren't enough, but the 12 gives him a pass and an extra pass. As he is not *stressed*, this gives him two bonus actions, the first of which he uses to shoot back at his attacker.

Washington misses his target, Yrsula, but she still has to take a stress test. Her D is 3, and she rolls a disastrous 1, 3, and 4 and fails the test. She becomes *stressed*(1) and, as she's already *obscured*, drops *prone* behind cover.

Knowing that his opponent is pinned in place, Washington uses his remaining bonus action to move up into a better firing position.

ELECTRONIC WARFARE

> To the casual observer, Vitali was no more than a black shape in darkness. But Vitali himself moved through a dense forest of colour and feedback, plucking data from the stream, shifting it into his team's awareness as it came.
>
> The sharp rattle of a gauss repeater off to one side announced the advance of an enemy heavy defence drone – an advance Vitali had been poised for, as he reached out in the datastream, releasing Yaga, his familiar, into the firewall of the drone.
>
> The enemy firewall dissolved in an instant and Vitali gleefully re-tasked the drone, laughing aloud as he watched the panic dialogue fragment the enemy data perimeter.
>
> It was probably a lot messier in real life, he thought, giggling to himself.

Important

This section describes the complex world of the Electronic Warfare Operator or EWOp: a specialist type of hero you can select when you assemble your team. If you're new to *Zero Dark*, you may prefer to skip over this section for the moment, use heroes other than EWOps and come back to Electronic Warfare once the basic rules are clear.

The battlefield of the future is awash with data. Orbital satellites may struggle to penetrate the dense, ashen cloud cover of the Fallen Earth, but swarms of strategic surveillance drones keep the real-time imagery flowing to AI-assisted analysts who sift and prioritize incoming infodumps for the attention of human specialists. The product is then sent back to strategic teams who dispatch it to their operators on the ground.

The sheer volume makes the sort of old-fashioned heads-up displays of the 21st century redundant. The subtleties change so quickly that to present new information in conventional text would hamper and distract teams at the front line. Instead, the information is condensed into intuitive visual and auditory stimuli. Whilst these might lack the precision of numbers, they are more in step with how the human mind processes data. So, a brief squeal of white noise and the sense of intense redness over one shoulder will inform a soldier that his comrade is wounded and requires assistance, whilst a momentary sense of loss and darkness will let him know that the same comrade is beyond his ability to assist. Pinpoint dots of blue mark out safe routes towards objectives, whilst misty smears of yellow and orange warn of danger zones.

However efficient and intuitive these systems are, their "always-on" status makes them vulnerable to being interfered with. Generally, the strategic offensive/defensive AI systems hold themselves at a stalemate, but electronic warfare operators (EWOps) on the ground can perform interdictions on a tactical level, causing confusion amongst the enemy as false feeds mess with their datastream, or enhancing their allies by distributing additional information from the local network.

EWOps are often called "wizards" or "spellcasters" for the way they dance nimbly in a world that is mostly invisible to their comrades. The community has embraced the terminology, talking about "casting" and "summoning", as well as adopting language from the gamer community when they talk about "buffing" and "de-buffing" – enhancing their allies or impeding their enemies.

Whilst most humans would be lost without their personal devices that connect them to the datastream, EWOps' devices are a step beyond the norm, maxed out with top-of-the-line smartgel processors, hooked into TruCloud nano storage and often hosting "familiars": low-level AIs that manage certain tasks, such as personal defence or secure transmission. Strictly speaking, familiars are forbidden in

many areas of the datastream, but a professional EWOp can easily disguise them as harmless pseudo-entities.

All of this makes an EWOp's personal device into something called a "spelldeck" or just "deck". They live in a world where the flood of new information, even filtered through their familiars and other processes, is perpetual and dazzling. They use this to monitor their comrades' own streams and render them more manageable. Most EWOps do this job at a safe distance from the enemy, but the most respected are professional soldiers in their own right, as capable of putting a bullet through an enemy as their teammates. And an EWOp who is along for the ride gets the opportunity to directly influence the battle, picking out vulnerable targets, protecting their friends, herding the synthetics and providing their valuable expertise to the handling and management of objectives that involve data captures.

Collectively, all the actions described in this section are known as "EW skills".

IFF

"Identify Friend/Foe" devices are essential in the confused and confusing environment of the Fallen Earth. Full details of IFFs and how they work are on page 42. For now it is sufficient to know that they can be in either I (on) or O (off) state and they identify to certain gadgets, equipment and synthetic characters whether an individual is a friend or not.

Firewalls

The term "firewall" refers to the data cloud that surrounds pretty much everything in the Fallen Earth. Data clouds are semi-intelligent and possess their own languages and dialects that challenge and obstruct attempts to penetrate them. Intrusions by familiar data languages are welcomed, allowing a free exchange of information. Unfamiliar ones, though, meet a dense shield of resistance.

Firewall (FW) is an additional stat with a default value of 1. If the target has no IFF or the IFF is in the O state (see page 42), then the default value is 0. EWOps attempting an EW action on a friendly target use the target's FW value as a positive modifier to their A. Meanwhile, against enemy targets, they use the target's FW as a negative modifier.

If an enemy target's FW is equal to or greater than the EWOp's A, the action automatically fails.

BUFFING

A spell cast on an ally is a "buff" skill. Buffing is a skill available to any EWOp specialist with an active spelldeck. To buff a target, the EWOp requires LOS, or to have the target within his or her awareness radius (see page 36). Buffing is an A(v) test, where v is the range to the target, modified by the target's *obscured* state.

Each success on a buff test can do any one of the following:

- Add +1 support token.
- Remove the *targeted* state.
- Add +1 firewall.
- Change a friendly robot's program.
- Change a gadget's I/O state.

If at least one success is spent on a buff action from the list above, any remaining successes may be spent on normal bonus actions.

HACKING

A spell cast on an enemy is a hack skill. Hacking is a skill available to any EWOp specialist with an active spelldeck. To hack a target, an EWOp character requires LOS, or to have the target within his or her awareness radius (see page 36). Hacking is an A(v) test where v is the range to the target, modified by the target's *obscured* state and any firewall the target enjoys.

Each success on a hack test can do any one of the following:

- Remove −1 support token from the target.
- Reduce the target's firewall by −1.
- Add the *targeted* state to the target.
- Remove the *dominated* state from the target.
- If the target is an EWOp, impose the *stunned(+1)* state on the target.
- Enter the *interference* state (see **Interference**, below).
- Purge an AI.
- Change an enemy robot's program.
- Change a gadget's I/O state.

If at least one success is spent on a hack action from the list above, one other success may also be spent on a buff action targeting the EWOp as if it were a bonus action. Any remaining successes may be spent on normal bonus actions.

DOMINATION

Domination is a special form of hack, in that it is a spell cast on an enemy. However, in all other respects it is a distinct action and must be explicitly declared. Synthetic targets are vulnerable to domination by enemy EWOps. To be eligible to be dominated, a target must be all of the following:

- Synthetic.
- *Targeted*.
- Have no support tokens.

A dominate test is made exactly like a hack test, but it must be declared as a dominate test in advance and all successful hits must be put towards the attempt to dominate (no bonus actions). This means that if a target has support tokens or is not in the *targeted* state, then the player must use actions to render the target vulnerable to a domination before attempting the dominate action.

If a number of successes are caused by a dominate action greater than 1 plus the target's FW, the target becomes *dominated*. A *dominated* target becomes friendly to the team whose EWOp successfully dominated it and becomes enemy to all other teams and bogeys for as long as the EWOp remains in action. If the EWOp goes OOA, the *dominated* target is immediately treated as *wounded(4)* if a character, or *down* if a bogey.

Dominated Bogeys

A *dominated* bogey becomes a character with the synthetic (robot) upgrade and the Assault program by default. The stats of the character will depend upon what type of bogey it is:

	Cyl	M	F	A	D	AV	FW
Grunt	3	2	2	2	2	1	0

Elite	3	3	3	3	3	2	0
Boss	3	3	3	4	4	2	0
EWOp	3	2	1	3	2	1	0
Heavy Elite	4	3	4	3	3	3	0
Sniper Elite	3	3	5	3	3	2	0
Defence Mech	6	3	4	2	3	3	0

Note that *dominated* bogeys do not possess an IFF.

Dominated Characters

Dominated characters lose all specialisms and traits except for the synthetic trait (including whatever type of synthetic it is) whilst *dominated*. Other upgrades are unaffected and the character's stats remain the same. If a *dominated* character is still on the table when a mission ends, it is treated as a survivor by its original team (they eventually regain control now it has been abandoned by its dominator). If it leaves the table, it is treated as killed.

Dominated characters or bogeys do not have to complete mission tasks, such as leaving the table, in order for the controlling team to achieve their objectives, but they may do so.

Dominating in CQB

An EWOp may attempt a dominate action instead of performing a CQB action, if the EWOp is in contact with an eligible target. This is performed exactly as above, but before the dominate test is made, the target gets to make a CQB action. If this causes any hits, the EWOp's dominate action automatically fails in addition to any other effects from the CQB hit.

An EWOp in contact with any enemy character or bogey may not perform a dominate action on any target other than the character or bogey with which the EWOps is in contact.

PROGRAMMING

Robots are a type of synthetic character that must be equipped with a program. An EWOp *engaged* with a friendly robot can make a program action to change the

robot's program as an automatic action. An EWOp can also change a friendly robot's program with a successful buff test.

An enemy robot's program can be changed with a successful hack test.

INTERFERENCE

Entering the *interference* state is an option for an EWOp who has performed a successful hack action. An EWOp in the *interference* state is deep-diving in the enemy's datastream, having hijacked the hacked target's access. As a result, the EWOp cannot perform actions whilst in the *interference* state except for the special actions listed below, which can only be performed by characters in the *interference* state:

> **Conceal** – Identify a friendly character other than the active EWOp. That character gains the Stealthy trait until the active EWOp performs another action.

> **Confound** – After this action is declared, each time a control card is flipped, the EWOp may make a A(v) test where v is the value of the card revealed. If successful, the player may flip one or two more cards (declaring how many before they are flipped) and decide which one applies (regardless of the choice, all the cards count as flipped for running down the clock (see page 54)). If a Joker is flipped as any of the cards, it must be chosen. A lucky 12 will confound any value card. A Joker cannot be confounded, even by a 12. This lasts until the EWOp fails a test, or at the start of the EWOp's next activation, or if the *interference* state is cancelled for any other reason. A confound test cannot generate bonus actions.

> **Duel** – Immediately resolve a CQB action between the EWOp and one enemy EWOp, substituting A for F when determining v for the test.

> **Foretell** – The EWOp must take an A(13) test. For each success, reveal one card from the top of the AI deck, then put the cards back in any order.

Cancelling the *interference* state is an automatic action.

PURGING

If an EWOp uses a successful hack action to purge a *possessed* target, then the *possessed* state ends immediately. In addition, the EWOp may use additional successes on the hack action to inflict the *wounded(+1)* state on the AI character.

EWOP BOGEYS

The Red Force can also have EWOps, but these follow different rules to character EWOps. The rules for EWOp bogeys are explained in the **Red Force** section.

OTHER RULES

There are several rules that are complex enough that to have included them in the logical place, above, would have meant a substantial interruption to the natural flow, so they have been boxed up and shipped here.

SUPPORT TOKENS

A number of events in the course of a game of *Zero Dark* allow characters and/or bogeys to obtain support tokens. For bogeys, support tokens are acquired by AI deck events. For characters, the most common way to get a support token is from an EWOp.

Support tokens are an abstract way of illustrating all those interesting things that can happen during an intense mission that arise from chance or design: the discovery of a perfect firing position or the presence of just the right sort of shadow; the comforting words of a comrade or a burst of particularly useful data from the Battlenet; the niggling sense of danger, or the hyper-awareness that builds off an adrenaline rush.

All of these are rolled up, simply, into the presence of one or more support tokens.

Support Tokens on Bogeys

Bogeys can have a number of support tokens, usually limited by the bogey's type. Grunts may have up to one. Elites may have up to two. Bosses may have up to three. Some events can exceed those limits, though. Where this is the case, the rules will say so explicitly. Note that a bogey must always use its support tokens at the next available opportunity and must always use all the support tokens it has available.

Support tokens on bogeys have two effects:

Ablative Armour

A support token increases the number of successes required to make a bogey *down* or *dead*. Each hit on a bogey with support tokens reduces the number of support tokens by one, cancelling the hit. So a grunt with one support token requires two successes to make the grunt *down* and three

to make the grunt *dead*. However, if a character hits the grunt with a single success, it will remove the support token, so the next time the grunt is hit, one success will make the grunt *down* and two will make the grunt *dead*.

Improved Shooting

A support token increases the number of dice the bogey rolls when attacking, shooting or CQB. A bogey rolls one additional dice for each support token. Remove the tokens as soon as they are used.

Support Tokens on Characters

Characters can only ever have one support token at a time. Unlike bogeys, characters do not have to use support tokens and players may decide whether they want to use one.

Support tokens on characters have two effects:

Ablative Armour

A support token may be used to reduce the number of hits inflicted by enemy shooting by one. The decision whether or not to spend the support token must be made as soon as the player knows how many successes have been achieved.

Improved Normal Tests

A support token may be used to add +1 dice to any normal test. The decision to add a dice must be taken before any dice are rolled. The support token is removed regardless of the results of the test.

> A Boss with three support tokens is hit by enemy fire, causing one hit. The Boss loses one support token. The Boss then shoots at a character. Normally a Boss rolls three dice to shoot, but the remaining support tokens add two dice to that roll, so the Boss rolls five. Having used the support tokens to roll extra dice, the tokens are removed, leaving the Boss with no support tokens once the shooting action is resolved.

GAS

Smoke in its many forms is a permanent feature of the Fallen Earth. The impact of Ammit threw shockwaves through the entire crust, re-shaping the world's outer skin's relationship with its fiery interior. Old faultlines re-awoke. New ones ripped themselves apart with abandon. Human infrastructure was shredded, pouring gas and chemicals into streets and tunnels where electrical sparks and the friction of broken steel on old rock birthed immense conflagrations that killed hundreds of thousands not directly hurt by the asteroid's impact.

Add to that the fact that the competing rescue missions of Mars and Venus continue to use chemical smoke weapons to impede each other's efforts and enhance their own, and you can see why strategies to manipulate visibility on the battlefield – quite apart from the permanent dust storm and thick smog – is such an important part of teams' preparations.

One way to manipulate visibility is to use tactical visors that compile active and passive data to see through the murk more effectively. But another, of course, is to toss more smoke into the mix.

In addition to conventional smoke, the X Teams can also make use of more sophisticated digital smoke – much harder for visors to penetrate, but also more limited in supply. And the rules for the deployment of smoke are equally applicable to less savoury chemical weapons, whether incapacitating or lethal, that don't obscure like smoke but can stun, injure or even kill opponents.

All gas weapons deploy to the table the same way, regardless of their eventual effect.

Putting Down Gas

Gas is usually delivered to a target as part of a shooting action, although complications or other mission-specific rules might indicate a deployment of gas. Unlike conventional weapons, gas weapons have a persistent effect that spreads out to cover a large-ish area before (usually) dispersing.

When a gas weapon is deployed, place one gas marker centred on the point of impact, then place a second in contact with the first. At the end of each activation after the one in which the gas was deployed, place two more gas markers, each of which must be in contact with a marker previously placed until there are eight markers deployed.

> **Optional Terrain**
> An alternative to dangerous ground arises when looking at raised surfaces, such as staircases or flat roofs. If such an area is defined as dangerous, a failed D(v) test may simply result in the character falling from whichever point he or she has reached and suffering damage accordingly.

From that point, remove two markers per activation until all the markers are removed. The player whose action it is places the markers.

Gas Markers

Gas markers are circular and 40mm in diameter. Gas markers may overlap.

TERRAIN

Zero Dark assume that you are playing across more than just a flat surface. A good mix of different heights, sizes and types of terrain is essential to a fun and challenging game. This section describes several different types of terrain you might like to include.

Open Ground

Open ground is flat, featureless terrain to which no other rules are applied. It is worth remembering that open ground doesn't just happen at ground level (and may not exist at all at ground level!). Flat roofs, the tops of thick walls, walkways and ramps may all be considered open ground.

Broken Ground

Broken ground is common across the Fallen Earth. This is where buildings have shattered, the earth has ruptured or subterraean systems have exploded, leaving the surface unpredictable. Movement across broken ground cannot be cautious. At the end of an action spent moving across broken ground, make a D(v) test, where v is the distance moved. If the test is failed, flip two Control cards rather than one for the the Red Force activation and apply both. If one success is scored, activate the Red Force normally. Additional successes may be spent on bonus actions, but note that bonus movement actions will require a further test.

Bogeys reduce their speed across broken ground by −1.

Dangerous Ground

This terrain is treacherous. Its mundane surface conceals all sorts of deadly risks. After an action spent moving across dangerous ground, make a D(v) test, where v is the distance moved. The character suffers a number of hits equal to v, minus the number of successes achieved on the test. Superfluous successes may be spent on bonus actions, but bonus movement actions will require a further test.

Bogeys will never move across dangerous ground. Treat it as impassable for them.

Impassable Ground

Some obstacles simply can't be negotiated. No character or bogey can enter impassable ground.

Walls

"Wall" describes any linear obstacle that entirely obscures anything shorter than the wall from an observer on the other side. A wall thick enough for a miniature to be placed safely on top of it is really two walls separated by a section of open ground.

Fences

A fence is any linear obstacle that obstructs passage from one side to the other, without entirely obscuring an object shorter than the fence from an observer on the other side. A fence may provide the *obscured* state depending on how dense or thick it is. So, for example, a chain-link fence may provide no level of *obscured*. A wooden fence may provide the *obscured*(1) state. A dense hedgerow may provide the *obscured*(2) state.

Staircases

Staircases, along with ramps and pitched roofs, are considered to be open ground unless otherwise categorized. A damaged staircase might alternatively be defined as broken or even dangerous ground.

Ladders

Using a ladder allows a character to move up to 2M, minus their AV. If the total is 0 or less, the character is too heavy to climb. Like staircases, damaged or rusted ladders may

be considered broken or dangerous.

Buildings

Buildings are the most common type of terrain. But rather than being an individual item, a building is best thought of as a group of items: walls, flat roofs, pitched roofs, windows, skylights, walkways... Each component of a building is a terrain item in its own right that can have its own rules and restrictions.

The simplest building is treated as impassable: no one can climb up it, climb onto it or move through it. But this is quite dull. A more interesting building at least has walls and a flat roof treated as open terrain, and for a more interesting experience still, a building can have an interior that is also open ground, so a character can enter through a window or door.

Once you are comfortable with the general rules of *Zero Dark*, you may like to experiment with adding staircases or ladders, with making sections of a building broken or dangerous and with buildings on multiple levels, perhaps connected by walkways.

The Martian infiltration had cost them badly. The purge had kept most of the results of their raids on the Terran outposts out of MASC's hands, but Skymaster Bule could only mourn what they had been forced to destroy before there had been time to make secure copies.

'But we still have the map, Master,' Stepmaster Sing pointed out. 'We know where the device was stored. Even if it is damaged or broken, we can reverse engineer the SLAP from what we already have.'

'They will follow.'

'Let them,' growled Sing. He had thrived on Earth, finding a gift in the casual slaughter of others. Bule pondered that it was a useful gift, but one with a distinctly limited shelf life.

He nodded.

'Dispatch Bal Thoth immediately. They must secure the primary access point from the Terrans. I want Bet Alef in reserve. They have the most experience in such blind incursions and have done well in the past. But the Martians will be close on our heels.'

THE TEAM

X Teams are not best staffed with your most professional and biddable operators. Their work is hazardous and deniable and their members should, accordingly, be highly competent and entirely expendable. They are the ideal appointment for those who demonstrate skill in disruption, insubordination, improvisation and independence of thought. Do not stint on your investment in them in terms of training and equipment but, once they are deployed, consider that a sunk cost and move on. If they come back, consider it a bonus but make sure they go out again as soon as possible.

- Classified briefing, Sek Caste Eyes Only

As already explained, the players will fight their battles, in all game modes, with a group of characters. Whether heroes or allies, they are all characters; so if a rule affects "characters" it means both heroes and allies. One player's set of characters is the player's "team".

Numbers of Characters and Sizes of Game

There are no inherent limits on the number of characters you can take to a battle of *Zero Dark*. But in practice, to make the game both fun and interesting, a number between 3 and 6 is typical. Feel free to experiment with both fewer and more characters, but the intent of the design is definitely for small, elite teams.

If you increase the size of your team, you'll find – as explained in the **Red Force** section of these rules – that the size of the enemy force arrayed against you will also grow.

Meanwhile, if you decide to give your team lots of advantages, such a special weapons or skills (as we'll look at in more detail later in this section) you'll also give yourself less time in which to complete your mission. You should find that there's a sensible balance to be struck based on the kind of game you want to play.

Team Design

A team consists of a number of heroes, plus whatever upgrades they have been given. So when you are planning a battle, you should know how many heroes you are allowed to include and how many upgrades they can be given. You can find more about upgrades in the **Upgrades** section.

If you're playing in Solo or Team mode, a campaign or one-off mission will be written with limits on how many heroes

> **Customizing the Team Design**
> Although missions intend for you to use a particular team design, you can always make things harder by attempting the mission with fewer upgrades or fewer heroes or, if you are finding a mission too difficult, you can similarly increase the numbers to give yourself more to work with.
>
> If you're playing Versus, and one player is newer to the game, younger or just not feeling like they are fighting on an equal footing for any reason, again, either one player can take a handicap or the other can be allowed more team design resources to help even the scales.

and how many upgrades you can take

Similarly, when playing Versus, it is useful for both sides to agree a basic parameter for how teams should be designed so there is a degree of symmetry on each side.

Recommended team design is given in a numerical format of three numbers, e.g. 4/8/4.

The first number is the maximum number of heroes; the second is the maximum number of upgrades in the whole team, and the third is the maximum number of upgrades that can be given to a single hero (including attached allies). The example of 4/8/4 means that you can take up to four heroes and a maximum of 8 upgrades, of which a maximum of four can be given to any one hero.

If you are just learning the game, you will probably want to start with a 4/0/0 battle, move on to 4/4/1 and gradually build up to something like 4/16/4.

BASIC HERO CREATION

Once you know your limit on heroes, you can begin to recruit your team and assemble your heroes. Each hero is typically represented by a single model that should show a fair representation of the character's size and equipment. You'll find that some exceptions arise, like Artificial Intelligences, which don't really have a model at all, and heroes accompanied by remotes (see page 52), but by and large, one hero equals one model.

Heroes starts with 15 points for you to allocate to their "stats" – core qualities that describe their broad competence in basic skills such as moving and fighting, represented in the game by a number between 2 (the minimum value) and 6 (the maximum value).

The four basic stats of a character are:

M (Mobility)
How fast and athletic a character is, including how well they jump, climb and perform other feats of speed and agility. M of 2 represents a normal adult human civilian, whilst 1 would represent an elderly or disabled civilian. M3 or 4 represents a high quality soldier. M5 would represent a superb athlete or artificially enhanced abilities. M6 is categorized as superhuman.

F (Fight)
Characters are assumed to have the minimum equipment and training for the battlefield environment. Their Fight

> **WYSIWYG**
> The principle of What You See Is What You Get (WYSISYG) is important in *Zero Dark* for two main reasons.
>
> First, it supports the players' suspension of disbelief. It's hard to really believe that Corporal Gwyn Serota, codename FLASH, is locked in a life-or-death struggle following an ambush by an enemy mech if Gwyn is a bottle cap and the mech is a half-empty juice carton. Sure, you can play the game that way, but it's not really as much fun. Secondly, though, both you and – in a Versus match – your opponent will benefit from a prompt to remember exactly how dangerous a character is. If a character's miniature is creeping around with just a pistol, it'll be harder to remember that, in fact, this represents a heavy infantryman with a rocket launcher.
>
> That said, you shouldn't be too ruthless about WYSIWYG. The rules encourage experimenting with different combinations of abilities and equipment and you don't need to feel you have to go out and buy new miniatures for every new possible combination. Of course, if you want to do that...

stat represents their skill-at-arms and determination to kill the enemy as well as the lethality of the weapons at their disposal. F1 represents an unarmed civilian relying on improvised, thrown weapons. F2 represents a poorly-trained militiaman or security guard. F3 represents a professional soldier. F4 represents an elite or up-armed soldier. F5+ represents specialist training and cutting edge heavy weapons.

A (Acuity)
A character will need more than just strength of arms to win victory. Acuity represents his or her intellect, education and ability to improvise under pressure. A1 is an untrained liability. A5+ is a brilliant genius.

D (Discipline)
A character's most valuable resource is their willingness to keep fighting. Discipline will help a character to stay in the fight when things get tough. It's also discipline that decides how well a character fights up close and personal.

In addition to the four basic stats, characters have secondary stats, the details of which are generated differently. The secondary stats are:

AV (Armour Value)
A character also possesses an Armour Value that represents the quality and amount of armour he or she is wearing. You cannot allocate stat points to AV. A hero's default AV is 1, but the AV may be upgraded or even dropped to improve a hero's mobility. See the Upgrades section for details. The default AV of other characters is 0.

FW (Firewall)
In a connected future, a firewall is your defence against the electronic threats that can bypass conventional defences. Most characters start with a FW of 1 or, if synthetic, 2. FW is explained in more detail in the Electronic Warfare section.

> ### Playing in Other Scales
> If you are playing *Zero Dark* with 15mm scale miniatures, the default cylinder is 12mm in diameter and 15mm tall. If playing with 54mm miniatures, the default is 40mm in diameter and 60mm tall. In other scales, come up with something appropriate.

Example Hero:
Salim – a hero – is a young officer, newly attached to his Special Forces unit:

	M	F	A	D	AV	FW
Salim	4	4	3	4	1	1

Salim is almost ready to go, like this. He's an agile elite soldier: smart and disciplined. Without any upgrades, there's not much to make him stand out from the crowd, but he's perfectly playable.

Awareness Radius
All characters have an awareness radius. This is a circle, centred on the character and measuring up to the radius distance from the edge of the base. The awareness radius is equal to their Discipline. A character is aware of anything at least partially within the circle of its awareness radius.

Cylinder
Each character, bogey or deployable equipment also has a cylinder. This is an abstraction that roughly describes the space they are occupying and its dimensions vary depending on the nature of the character and his or her equipment. The cylinder is a vertical shape with a circular horizontal cross section. A character's default cylinder is 25mm in diameter and 30mm tall, as shown in the image below.

Note that the pose of the particular miniature makes no difference to the size or shape of its cylinder. Our miniatures can't leap around, gesticulate or hug cover the
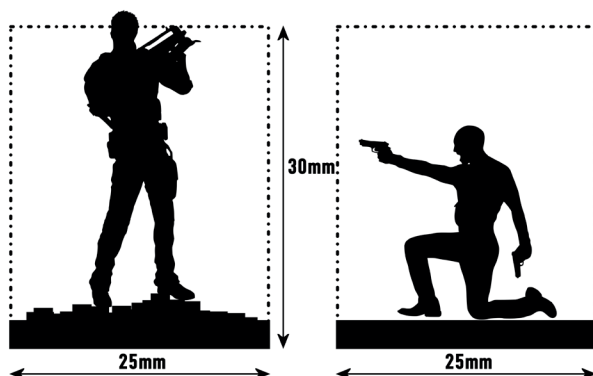
way real soldiers can, so don't assume you can see a target just because you can see a rifle barrel or radio antenna. Similarly, don't assume you can't see one, just because the miniature is concealed by terrain. Some miniatures will have larger or smaller cylinders depending upon the nature of the character, bogey or device in question.

If two cylinders are touching at any point, then they are said to be *engaged*.

Measuring Cylinders and Obstacles

For the purposes of a battle played in the 28mm scale, a cylinder is 30mm tall, so an obstacle that is also 30mm tall will entirely obscure a cylinder from another 30mm cylinder on the same level. However, in the heat of battle, a millimetre can be a tricky measurement to easily establish. Arguing about whether an obstacle is 30mm or 29mm high, or whether a fractional change in elevation, such as a pavement or the base of some trees, should make an obscured character visible is very much not part of what *Zero Dark* is supposed to be about. If you find yourself in this position, the assumption should be for generosity towards the target who is, after all, usually making a concerted effort to not get shot.

Cylinder Categories

To keep the bookkeeping simple, cylinders are referred to by category, with Cyl1 being the smallest and Cyl6 the largest.

Cylinder Category	28mm		15mm		Examples
	dia.	height	dia.	height	
1	25	10	12	5	Prone character, mine, CP dog
2	25	20	12	10	Scutter, child
3	25	30	12	15	Light/medium infantry, zipper
4	30	40	15	20	Heavy infantry
5	40	50	20	25	Superheavy infantry
6	60	70	30	30	Defence Mech

The default cylinder category is Cyl3. If you can't tell what cylinder category a character or gadget should have, assume it is Cyl3.

Adding in Salim's Cyl category, he looks like this:

	Cyl	M	F	A	D	AV	FW
Salim	3	4	4	3	4	1	1

Field of View & Line of Sight

Characters can only react to things of which they are aware. Characters are assumed to be aware of anything in their field of view to which they can draw a line of sight (LOS) and of anything within their awareness radius. By default, the field of view is a 180° arc to the character's front that should be marked on their base. If a straight line can be drawn connecting the active character's cylinder to another cylinder or to an object, and the line falls entirely within the character's field of view, then the active character has LOS to that target.

A character who is moving has a 360° field of view.

Bogeys and some equipment will also have a field of view, which may change depending on events during a mission. You can find details of bogeys' fields of view in the **Red Force** section.

UPGRADES

Beyond a hero's stats is a great deal more that makes the hero effective on the battlefield. Advanced equipment is the most obvious: a hero's firepower can be made more accurate or deadlier; their uniform may be woven with smart camouflage, and other equipment may give them extra abilities and tricks to use to their advantage. But heroes can also add specialist skills based on their training and experience.

All of these are upgrades. The effects of individual upgrades and the consequences of and limitations on taking them are described in detail in the **Upgrades** section of these rules.

Some allies either begin with particular upgrades or have

access to a limited number of special upgrades that can be applied when the character is created. In general, though, upgrades are a hero thing.

'Cease your chatter and heed!' snapped Chief Galen from the door of the briefing room. Her carefully shaved and oiled scalp glistened in the dim lighting and the soldiers within froze in a split instant, one with a crushed drinks container raised to throw at her colleague. Then all four dropped smoothly to the attentive mode: eyes to the front, hands clenched loosely at their sides, feet a regulation twenty centimetres apart.

'You'll be operating in Lesotho Fourteen. The Jo'burg Agreement recognized it as a Terran zone and they are not our friends at this time, so hold your peace until you enter the target point. You are to be in and out before they even know of your presence. Hit them hard. Take the package. Extract. Our exfil team will wait upon your call.

'The New Gaian Revolutionary Committee has been formally recognized as a terrorist group, so they are legitimate targets of opportunity with immediate effect. Uniformed Martian operators within the target point are legitimate targets of opportunity. Martian operators outside the target point and all civilians are sacrosanct by the Fatwa of Ankh.'

'Take up your weapons, Bal Thoth, and tighten the Skylords' grip!'

UPGRADES

Heroes have access to a range of upgrades to improve their abilities and performance in a mission. Allies are themselves upgrades to heroes, some of whom can be given their own upgrades from a limited selection.

Upgrade Points

As explained earlier, you should begin planning for a mission or campaign with a team design which, in addition to the number of heroes you can recruit (the team), describes the total number of upgrades the team can have (the pool) and the maximum that can be given to each hero (the ration). Each upgrade costs one point from the pool (unless otherwise noted) and fills one slot in the hero's ration.

SIMPLE UPGRADES

A maximum of 3 upgrade points may be added to the stats of the hero or to those of an ally attached to the hero, increasing M, F, A or D. The maximum value of 6 still applies.

ARMOUR

Armour comes in three categories: light, medium and heavy.

Light Armour

Light armour has an armour value of 1 or 2. Heroes automatically have AV1. They may drop this to AV0 (to improve their agility for jumping and climbing) or raise it to AV2, and this does not count as an upgrade. Going from AV0 to light armour is an upgrade.

Medium Armour

A hero with light armour may increase it to medium armour of AV3. This counts as an upgrade.

Heavy Armour

A hero with medium armour may increase it to heavy armour of AV4 or 5. This counts as an upgrade. A hero with heavy armour becomes Cyl4.

Superheavy Armour

A hero with heavy armour may increase it to superheavy armour of AV6 or 7. This counts as an upgrade. A hero with heavy armour becomes Cyl5. A character with superheavy armour may not enter the *prone* state.

ARMOUR UPGRADES

A character with at least AV1 may also take an upgrade on their armour.

Ablative

Ablative armour provides +1 dice in the AV test against the first shooting attack made against it, after which it is no longer effective. This upgrade may be taken more than once. Each time it is taken provides protection against another attack, but does not increase the number of dice. So if taken three times, the character gains +1 dice in the AV test against the first three shooting attacks made against it.

Fractal Camouflage

The armour has been laminated with a layer of digital camouflage that reacts constantly to the immediate environment making the wearer harder to hit. A character with fractal camouflage adds +1 to the effective range of shooting tests where they are the target.

> **Armour Notes**
>
> To clarify, a new hero who wants to begin with heavy armour must upgrade twice: once to medium armour and once to heavy armour, counting as two upgrades. If, in the course of a campaign, a hero who dropped to AV0 at creation wants to upgrade to heavy armour, they must upgrade three times.

SPECIALISMS

All heroes are elite examples of soldiers and have a level of knowledge in things like field medicine, technology and communications that would qualify them as specialists in a department outside Special Forces. However, team specialists are another step beyond this: as elite within their field as they are amongst soldiers. A character may only ever have one specialism.

Doc

Not, usually, an actual medical doctor – although it has been known – a team's "doc" has a gift with field medicine. Docs can get the very best from the nanotechnology field dressing kits and instant-stim injection packs that can, with just a little time, turn a comrade from "nearly dead" to "fully fit" ...at least, until the stims wear off.

When a doc makes a medic test, the player can re-roll any or all of the dice in the test. Docs cannot make this re-roll if the target is synthetic or themselves.

EWOp

The Electronic Warfare Operators could command a small fortune in the commercial world for their encyclopaedic knowledge of digital systems and ability to tweak and break them even under the most extreme pressure. But they all share an adrenaline addiction that only the X Teams can fulfil.

EWOps can use the spelldeck gadget (see page 43) and the rules detailed in the **Electronic Warfare** section. A character who begins as an EWOp automatically has a spelldeck as well.

Leader

All teams have a leader, of course. But in many, the actual business of leadership is more or less evenly distributed. Some X Team members, though, have a charisma, intelligence and connection to the strategic leadership that makes them unquestioned principals.

It can be helpful to put a number of different-coloured dice to one side to represent a Leader's pool of re-rolls.

The presence of a Leader in a team provides the team with a number of re-rolls equal to the Leader's D. These re-rolls may not be used when the Leader is the active character.

If the Leader goes OOA – even if he or she is subsequently revived by a medic test – all remaining re-rolls are lost unless the team has a Second.

Sapper

Sappers traditionally come from the Engineer Corps. But in an X Team they are the experts in hardware support, setting traps and managing the team's supply of remotes (see page 52).

A team must include a sapper if it includes any remotes (see Allies). Sappers may have more than one remote under their control. If a team has any remotes, at least one must be controlled by the sapper. Sappers automatically have one type of sentry (see Gadgets) as part of the upgrade.

A sapper who makes a medic test on a synthetic character may re-roll any or all of the dice in the test.

Spook

X Teams often find themselves accompanied by "reinforcements" from unidentified but authoritative agencies with a particular agenda. Some spooks are temporary attachments. Others might eventually become trusted colleagues, even friends.

A Spook begins a mission by drawing a number of cards from the Control Deck up to the Spook's A stat. Whenever a Control Deck card is flipped, if the Spook character is not OOA, the player may play a card from the Spook's hand. The card played is then resolved instead of the one flipped.

In a Versus battle, if both players have a Spook, only one Spook card may be played per Control Deck flip. The player whose character has just activated before the Control Deck flip decides first if he or she will play a Spook card.

GADGETS

Gadgets are technological devices or enhancements that expand a character's operational capability. All gadgets have an I/O state which simply describes whether they are on or off. Unless otherwise stated, it is assumed that, at the start of any mission, all gadgets are in the "on" (I) state. It requires an automatic action for a character to turn any gadget he or she is carrying to the "off" (O) state. A gadget in the O state provides none of its normal advantages or benefits and cannot be hacked.

Deployed gadgets have FW1 unless otherwise stated.

Combat Shield

The use of shields in warfare waxes and wanes in tempo with developments in weapons and armour technology. Most

soldiers consider them to be an unwelcome encumbrance in an environment filled with flying lead; but a handful of experts, trained in their proper use, can turn them to deadly effect.

In a CQB action, characters with a combat shield can elect to make a cAV test against their opponent's CQB test instead of their own CQB action. For each dice matched – whether or not it cancels a success –

the attacker takes a hit.

Drop Rig

Typically, a harness that straps to the legs, although also sometimes built into special suits, a drop rig is designed to allow a soldier to jump out of low-flying aircraft without needing a parachute. But they are sometimes used by X Teams to increase mobility, especially when paired with a jump rig.

A character with a drop rig may take a D(10) test to avoid all damage from a fall bonus action. Even if the test is failed, the character adds +2 to his/her AV for the purposes of the cAV(v) test.

Exoskeleton

Most medium and heavy armour suits will comprise at least some level of exoskeleton support to permit the wearer to carry that level of personal protection. But the same technology, improved and boosted, can enhance the wearer's agility and speed either to compensate for their armour or even to overcompensate, making them faster and stronger than they otherwise would be.

A character with an exoskeleton gains +1M as long as it is in the I state, but –1M in the O state. This upgrade can be taken multiple times to provide additional boosts to M (the penalty for being in the O state never gets worse than –1), but still only counts as a single gadget for the purposes of its I/O state.

Firewall

Not so much a gadget as a suite of software running in the

Deployable Gadgets

Some gadgets are deployable. This means that whichever character is carrying the gadget can put it down. Some gadgets only become active when they are deployed. To deploy a deployable gadget takes an automatic action. The gadget must be marked with a counter and placed in contact with the active character's cylinder. Once deployed, a gadget cannot move. It can be picked up by any friendly character and picking up a deployed gadget is an automatic action.

A deployed gadget is in the *deployed* state.

---

character's personal data cloud. This upgrade represents an enhanced and aggressive improvement to conventional firewall software.

Taking this upgrade improves the character's FW stat by +1 per upgrade up to a maximum of 3.

IFF Device

IFF (Identify Friend/Foe) devices on the Fallen Earth are extremely sophisticated. With a permanent passive connection to the friendly BattleNet, they not only ensure that autonomous weapons don't accidentally kill friendly troops, but also provide a continuous return to track the movements and status of every operating trooper. X Team members, however, may be equipped with a more sophisticated version of the device that can clone enemy BattleNet identifiers to fool autonomous weapons.

> **Normal IFF** – Characters are assumed to have an IFF without an upgrade. A normal IFF must be in the I state and cannot be changed to the O state by the owner (a hack action can put it in the O state). A character may begin with no IFF instead. If a character begins with no IFF then to equip with an IFF later is an upgrade. A normal IFF always counts as a friendly IFF to members of the same team and to gadgets of that team.

> **Advanced IFF** – A character with an advanced IFF may start with the device in the I or O state and may change its state with an action. Characters with an advanced IFF in the I state and *engaged* with a *down* or OOA enemy may spend an automatic action to clone the enemy IFF. As long as the IFF is in the I state, the character counts as carrying both a friendly and an enemy IFF. If the device is put into the O state, when it returns to the I state it will no longer count as an enemy IFF.

> A character with a normal IFF may have an advanced IFF as an upgrade.

Jump Rig

Using a combination of gravitics, jets and ailerons, jump rigs allow soldiers to make great leaps across the battlefield or up buildings. However, using them without also wearing a drop rig can be very dangerous.

A character with a jump rig can measure upwards vertical movement as if it were horizontal, but will fall if he/she ends movement not in contact with terrain. In addition, a character with a jump rig who makes a rapid move may take a D(v) test to avoid becoming *stunned*(+1) where v is the distance moved. This test may generate bonus actions.

Relay

A relay is a digital device that passively absorbs data from its surroundings and can be used as an active booster and output for digital signals.

Characters carrying a relay count as having a normal IFF if not otherwise equipped with one. A relay has a 360° field of view and an awareness radius of 4". A relay begins attached to a character but is deployable.

Respirator

Respirators help a character to resist the effects of chemical weapons as well as chemical leaks and spills in the Fallen Earth. A basic respirator has a protection rating of 13. A basic respirator may be improved up to twice, with each improvement costing half an upgrade slot. Each improvement reduces the protection rating by −2.

If a character with a respirator would be affected by a chem weapon, make a D(v) test where v is the protection rating of the respirator. If the test is passed, the character is unaffected by the chem weapon. If the character is the active character, then additional successes may be used to generate bonus actions.

Unlike other gadgets, a respirator cannot be put into the O state by any game effect.

Sentries

"Sentry" describes a range of different gadgets, all of which are intended to be put down to make a particular area dangerous to anyone approaching it without the right IFF.

Deploying a sentry is an automatic action. When a sentry is deployed, the controlling player should decide and make a note of the sentry's operating radius (a value between 1" and 12") and whether the sentry is in the "command" or "auto" setting.

If a character begins as an EWOp, he or she will automatically receive a spelldeck without needing a further upgrade. However, in the course of a campaign, the EWOp and spelldeck upgrades must be obtained as separate upgrades. This means it is possible for a character to be an EWOp without having a spelldeck and vice versa.

Sentries are all Cyl1. The sentry upgrade provides a single one of any of the types of sentry listed below:

AP Mines – An antipersonnel mine is the crudest of sentries. When it detonates, it distributes its lethal payload as widely as possible.

An AP Mine in the auto setting is in *overwatch* as soon as it is deployed. It has a 360° field of view. If there is a character or bogey within its operating radius and no friendly IFF in the I state within the same radius, the AP mine will detonate. An AP Mine in the command setting is in the I state but will detonate only when the character who deployed it spends an automatic action for it to do so.

A detonating mine is an explosive attack with the mine as the target point. The blast radius is always 5".

The AP Mine is destroyed at the end of the action.

Claymore Mines – Claymores are directional ambush devices with a 180° field of view that must be clearly marked when the sentry is deployed.

A claymore in the auto state is in the I state and in *overwatch* as soon as it is deployed. If there is a character or bogey within its operating radius and its field of view and no friendly IFF in the I state within the same radius, the Claymore mine will detonate. A Claymore mine in the command setting is in the I state as soon as it is deployed but will detonate

only when the character who deployed it spends an action for it to do so.

When a Claymore mine detonates, resolve an F3 shooting attack on every character or bogey in the Claymore mine's field of view.

The Claymore mine is destroyed at the end of the action.

Sentry Gun – A sentry gun is a mine with a machine gun! A sentry gun in the auto setting is in *overwatch* as soon as it is deployed and it has a 360° field of view. When it detects a character or bogey within its operating radius without a friendly IFF in the I state, the Sentry gun will shoot that target with F4. A sentry gun in the command setting will shoot at a target only when the character who deployed it spends an action to do so.

Sentry guns are not destroyed by activation and, in the auto setting, will return to the *overwatch* state automatically on the next Control Deck flip. Whilst deployed, sentry guns count as characters for the purposes of the Red Force activation.

Spelldeck

"Spelldecks" are EWOps' connection to the BattleNet, through which they can invade enemy systems or reinforce friendly ones. A spelldeck is useless to anyone but an EWOp, but it counts as a gadget for the purposes of hacking and I/O states. If an EWOp's spelldeck enters the O state, the *interference* state ends immediately.

EWOps with a spelldeck can use EW skills. See **Electronic Warfare** for details.

Thermo-Optic Cape

The long-promised "invisibility cloak" is here. Nanoweave combines colour-changing fibres with a semi-smart nanobot network that can turn the wearer into a ghost. Most effective when stationary, its surface blurs when moving and, at speed, looks like a totally normal grey blanket.

Characters with this upgrade can re-roll

any or all of the d12s in a cautious move test.

Shooting attacks at this character add +1 to the visibility level for the mission up to a maximum of 6. Overwatch attacks at this character reduce this to +0 if the character is performing a move action of any sort.

This upgrade may be taken twice to gain an additional +1 increase to the visibility level for shooting attacks against this character. A second thermo-optic cape upgrade confers no other benefits.

Visor

Visors of various sorts are an integral part of the BattleNet, whether worn as goggles, a flip-down HUD, or directly implanted in the wearer's retinas. They provide visual cues to make the wearer instinctively conscious of enemy positions and other threats based on the latest information from the BattleNet. However, X Teams are often equipped with more advanced visors or software upgrades that provide more sophisticated data. A character may have any number of visor upgrades, with each counting as an upgrade.

Heatlight Visor – A character with a heatlight visor can identify the exact locations of living enemy troops, feeding that information back to the BattleNet. However, the visibility level imposed by certain advanced technology was developed specifically to frustrate users of heatlight visors.

A character with a heatlight visor may ignore the visibility level imposed by the mission and by smoke when making shooting attacks. In addition, characters with a heatlight visor may make a special "paint" action. This action is performed exactly like a shoot action but uses the character's A instead of their F. The action causes no damage but instead places the target in the *targeted* state.

A heatlight visor cannot be used against a synthetic target or against a target wearing a thermo-optic cloak or *obscured* as a result of digismoke.

Relay Visor – A character with a relay visor can use any friendly relay to provide a field of view and awareness radius. The equipped character must begin the mission with a connection to a nominated friendly relay. The character remains connected to that relay even if the relay is in the O state. If the visor goes into the O state, it loses connection to any relay. Changing the nominated relay to another friendly relay is an automatic action. The character using the relay visor cannot use any other visor upgrades the character has when using a relay but does use any visor upgrades the relay possesses.

Starlight Visor – In the perpetual gloom of the Fallen Earth, visors to enhance night vision are a popular choice with X Teams.

A character with a starlight visor subtracts −1 from the visibility level. The upgrade can be taken multiple times, with each upgrade after the first increasing the effect by −1. However, if a character with a starlight visor in the I state is affected by

Gabriel has a visor with the relay and heatlight upgrades. He is connected to a remote with a relay and a starlight visor. As a result, in his own field of view, Gabriel benefits from the heatlight effect; in the remote's field of view, Gabriel will benefit from the starlight effect.

a brightlight grenade (see page 46), they count as taking +1 hit for each starlight upgrade.

GADGET UPGRADES

The following upgrade can be applied to any gadget. A gadget upgrade counts as half an upgrade, so a gadget may have two upgrades for one upgrade slot, or two gadgets may have one upgrade each for a single upgrade slot.

> **Hardened** – A hardened gadget has been given additional protection from hostile digital attacks. It has FW2. A hardened gadget ignores the "E/M Pulse" complication on a d12 roll of 6+.

WEAPONS

Characters, of course, are already equipped with some level of weaponry simply because they have an F stat. However, while the F stat incorporates both the accuracy and volume of characters' choice of weapons, it can't also accommodate the many special qualities that certain weapons may possess.

Characters with weapon effects do not have to use them in any given attack, and characters with more than one weapon upgrade may use some and not others. If players don't specifically declare which weapon upgrades they are or are not using, then it is assumed they are not using an upgrade unless the description of the upgrade states otherwise.

Explosive

This weapon affects everyone within a certain radius of its impact point. Unfortunately, the exact extent of the radius is affected by the local terrain, so it's hard to be sure who will be caught in the blast. Explosive weapons are powerful but they can really only be carried in a limited number.

When firing an explosive weapon, place a marker on the table, the centre of which indicates the intended target point. If the target is a bogey or character, place the marker next to the target. A target must be in LOS. Then roll to Shoot as normal.

If at least one success is scored, the shot is on target. If the target is a character or bogey, then the target is instantly killed. In addition, the shot has a blast radius equal to 5",

---

> Washington (F5) fires an explosive weapon at a target bogey 18" away and rolls 4, 4, 11, 12 and 12! This easily provides one hit (12+4+4), plus an additional hit (12+11) and two more hits for the two Lucky 12s, for a total of 4 hits and a blast radius of (5+3=)8". The target – a Boss – is instantly obliterated. Washington's partner Lincoln is 7" from the target point and within LOS, so he suffers (8-7=)1 hit immediately, becomes *stunned*(1) and becomes *prone*. A bogey is also within LOS, and 3" from the target point, but *obscured*(2), so she suffers (8-3-2=)3 hits. She is an Elite with one support token, but the support token is ignored by explosive attacks, so she takes two wounds and goes *down*.

plus 1" for each additional success rolled by the firer. Any bogey or character inside the blast radius and to which LOS can be drawn from the target point suffers a number of hits equal to the blast radius, minus the range to the target point, minus the level of *obscured* as measured from the target point.

An AV(15) test may be made. Each success cancels one hit. Support tokens may not be used as ablative armour against explosive weapons.

In addition, all bogeys and characters within the blast radius that aren't killed immediately lose all support tokens, and all characters within the blast radius become *stunned*(+1) and *prone*.

This upgrade can only be used once during a battle. This upgrade may be taken more than once, and each additional time it is taken, the number of uses is increased by +1.

Important: if a character with a friendly IFF in the I state is within the blast radius, the action is null and the shot is wasted. The weapon is still expended.

Grenades

The character is equipped with hand-thrown grenades. When this upgrade is first taken, the player must choose one type of grenade with which the character is equipped. Additional types will occupy half an upgrade slot.

When making a shooting attack with a grenade, place a marker on the table, the centre of which indicates the

intended target point. If the target is a bogey or character, place the marker next to the target, then roll to Shoot as normal. The target point must be in the active character's LOS and field of view as normal, but grenades also provide attacks made with them with the indirect upgrade.

Shooting actions made with grenades are made with F3, regardless of the character's current F. If only one hit is achieved, move the marker back towards the shooting character by a distance equal to the lowest dice rolled. If two hits are achieved, the attack is on target. If three hits are achieved, a bonus action may also be performed.

Attacks using grenades cannot make use of any other upgrade in the same attack.

When taken, unless otherwise stated, this upgrade provides a character with two grenades of the type chosen.

> **Brightlight** – Brightlight grenades are almost silent but detonate with an intense white light. Brightlight grenades have the same impact radius as an explosive weapon. Synthetic characters and synthetic bogeys are not affected by brightlight grenades. All others become *stunned*(+1) for each hit they suffer.

> **Chem** – Chem grenades deploy as gas markers as described in the **Other Rules** section. Chem markers have no effect on synthetic characters or bogeys. Any other character touched by or passing through a chem marker becomes wounded(+1) and *stunned*(+1).   Bogeys immediately become *stunned*(+1). A character in contact with a chem gas marker when OOA moves to the *dead* state.

> **Digismoke** – Digital smoke grenades throw up a cloud of smoke, chaff and nano EM generators to cover movement and confuse even enemies with sophisticated visors. Digismoke grenades deploy

---

What's the Difference?
Digismoke grenades are the same as smoke grenades except that they interact differently with other equipment, such as the heatlight visor and themo-optic cloak.

Jenny Wren (F3) fires a lethal weapon at a target bogey 18" away and rolls 4, 8 and 12. The shooting test is enough to provide two hits: one from the dice group and an extra one from the Lucky 12. Because the test has produced two hits, the weapon's lethal quality adds a third.

---

gas markers as described in the **Other Rules** section. LOS drawn through a digital smoke marker increases the visibility level by 4. This stacks if a LOS passes through more than one marker. In addition, targets through at least one digital smoke marker counts as a minimum of *obscured*(1). This upgrade provides only one grenade.

> **E/M** – These grenades contain a short-burst electromagnetic pulse generator. They don't explode as such, but their emission is lethal to synthetics. E/M grenades follow the same rules as explosive weapons, but only affect synthetic targets. In addition, any gadgets – including those carried by characters – in the impact radius must pass a FW(13) test or immediately go into the O state.

> **Fragmenting** – These grenades explode, hurling

Combining Weapons
With a couple of exceptions as noted, different weapons upgrades can be combined in a single shooting attack. For example, a character with both the explosive and lethal upgrade can use both in one attack to represent a smaller but more intense explosion that may not harm those on its periphery, but vaporizes anyone closer to the epicentre: potentially excellent for clearing the area near a delicate objective. Similarly, a character could combine lethal, silent and indirect to be able to decisively pick off isolated enemies targeted by an allied EWOp.

You can also combine weapon upgrades to create particular types of weapon: a mortar or grenade launcher, for example, might combine the explosive and indirect upgrades, whilst a silent, lethal weapon might be more akin to a sniper rifle. A silent, lethal spray weapon, meanwhile, could be spraying invisible poison gas.

lethal shrapnel indiscriminately in all directions. Fragmenting grenades hit with the same effect as explosive weapons, but with a blast radius of 2" or 3" if a Lucky 12 is rolled to hit.

Smoke – Smoke grenades throw up a cloud of smoke to cover movement and confuse the enemy. Smoke grenades deploy gas markers as described in the **Other Rules** section. LOS drawn through a smoke marker increases the visibility level by 2. This stacks if a LOS passes through more than one marker. In addition, targets through at least one smoke marker counts as a minimum of *obscured*(1).

Stun – These grenades create a sudden burst of overwhelming white noise – non-lethal but extremely debilitating. Stun grenades explode as fragmenting grenades but instead of causing damage they cause a number of effects, depending upon the number of successes:

1- *Stunned(+1)*
2- *Targeted*
3- *Stressed(+1)* (unless immune) or *down* (if a bogey)

Tag – Tag grenades don't explode at all. Rather, they contain a short-burst electrical generator and a semi-intelligent laser designator. Tag grenades have the same impact radius as an explosive weapon, but all affected targets enter the *targeted*

Cap'n Tom (F5) fires a spray at a target bogey 10" away and rolls 3, 5, 6, 6 and 12, causing a total of three hits. There's another bogey 11" away, but it's further than the target bogey, so Tom can't hit that one. However, there's another bogey in his field of view who's only 8" away, so Tom puts one hit on the first target and two on the closer target.

state. This upgrade provides only one grenade.

Indirect
This weapon doesn't necessarily need line of sight to shoot at a target. Its projectiles can, to an extent, be guided to a target using data from the BattleNet or from relays on the battlefield.

A character armed with an indirect weapon may shoot at any *targeted* enemy without LOS. In addition, a character with a relay visor and an indirect weapon may shoot at any enemy in the LOS of a relay. The only caveat is that it must be possible to make a line of connection – however circuitous – between the shooting character and the target. Targets inside sealed rooms, for example, may not be shot at with indirect fire, even if *targeted* or in the LOS of a relay (which would presumably be sealed in with them!).

Range is still measured as a straight line between the shooting character and the target, providing a value for the F(v) test. Targets cannot be *obscured* from a shot with an indirect weapon.

Lethal
This weapon needs exceptional skill to bring it to bear. However, when it hits, it hits hard. It is assumed that a character is using this upgrade unless the player states otherwise.

If an attack with this weapon achieves only one success, it causes no hits (but will still cause stress). However, if it achieves two or more successes, it counts as causing an additional success. This is cumulative with other effects that cause additional successes, such as Lucky 12s.

Silent
X Teams make use of compressed air dart guns, sophisticated compound bows and even throwing knives tipped with fast-acting neurotoxins in order to pick off

isolated sentries during their approach.

If a silent attack generates bonus actions, the first bonus action must nullify the next Control Deck flip, unless the flip would cause a complication, in the same way as a cautious move.

In addition, shooting a silent weapon doesn't cause the Red Force to become *alert* if the target ends the activation in the *dead* or *down* state.

Spray
This weapon spits a short-ranged cone of death.

The player may only nominate targets within a range of 12" for a spray attack. However, if at least one success is scored, the hits can be spread out to any other bogeys also within the field of view and closer to the shooting character than the target.

Targets may not make cAV(r) tests against spray attacks and neither AV nor *obscured* levels affect the range of this attack.

The spray ability may not be used with the indirect ability in the same shooting action.

T R A I T S
Characters are more than just soldiers and more than just elite soldiers. X Team members are a lethal and eccentric bunch, whose exceptional and rare qualities make them stand out – for good or ill – from the crowd.

Athlete
The character is an exceptional physical specimen (or has been enhanced or equipped to replicate the effect). When making jump actions, athletes automatically pass tests to jump up to their cylinder height and test for jumps up to twice their cylinder height on M–AV(10). When they make jump across tests, they may always choose to add +1 success in addition to any other successes (so will always successfully jump across gaps of 1" or less).

When they make a climb action they may take a D–AV(v) test where v is twice the distance moved. If they get

one success, they may perform a bonus climb action. Additional successes may be used for other bonus actions (although climbing characters may still not become *prone* whilst climbing).

Courageous
This character is made of sterner stuff and is at their best when the bullets begin to fly. Whenever this character takes a stress test, add +1 to their D.

Gun-Fu
The character is an expert in short-range fighting with firearms, able to tackle multiple enemies simultaneously and in the blink of an eye.

When spending bonus actions, a character with gun-fu may perform as many shoot actions as the player wishes, instead of just one. However, each successive shoot action adds an extra +1 to the range, so the second would add +1; the third, +2; the fourth, +3 etc.

Inhuman
Some characters simply lack the natural instinct for self-preservation of humans and other animals. Inhuman characters do not take stress tests and cannot be *stressed*.

Second
In addition to his or her main role, one team member may also be its second. A team's second-in-command may not

"The ManGo Multi-Assist Chassis is specifically designed for X Team use. Unlike more specialized chassis, it is pre-loaded with a range of programs requiring only a qualified operator to switch it into the mode most appropriate for the task before it. We've also pre-installed a free copy of an album of classical music by the 20th century composer, YouToo, to help put our soldiers in the right frame of mind for their task on Earth."

- Extract from promotional material

"No, you can't uninstall the album."

- ManGo standardized response

have the personal charisma or political connections of a true leader, but he or she is a respected mentor – often a decorated veteran of a decade's service or more, with the trust of the leader. The whole team knows who to turn to when things get especially hairy.

If a Leader goes OOA and a second is still not OOA, then the Leader's remaining re-rolls aren't lost as long as the second is not OOA. A team may only have one second.

Stealthy

Stealthy characters are particularly adept at remaining undetected even whilst under the enemy's nose.

When a stealthy character makes a cautious move, as many bonus actions as the player wishes may be used by this character to make movement bonus actions, instead of just one.

Synthetic

A synthetic character isn't human. Synthetic is a single upgrade but offers a wealth of options that are explained in detail below.

Vigilant

This character may literally seem to have eyes in the back of his or her head. Either thanks to advanced technology and special training or just an exceptional degree of situational awareness, this character always has a 360° field of view.

SYNTHETICS

It is almost impossible to understate the role technology will play in future combat. The 21st century saw an increasing use of remote units in the military and civil sector. Driverless cars and robot mules were among the first public examples, and the attraction to politicians of bloodless

soldiers who cannot "die" was understandably magnetic.

Whilst Operation PLANTAGENET and the dark days of the Burning were a setback to non-human warriors, by the time of the Fall, they were once again a common sight in most combat situations. However, there was an abiding distrust of the idea of machines programmed to kill humans, so it was rare that such assemblies were deployed without human oversight.

Zero Dark recognizes three types of "synthetic" character: drones, robots and artificial intelligences (AIs). When a hero is given the synthetic upgrade, decide which sort of synthetic it is.

Synthetic characters except AIs have a default FW value of 2.

DRONES

Drones are controlled by a human operator. Electronic systems may make the unit more aware of its surroundings, more agile or more responsive than its operator would naturally be, but it can perform no more than basic default actions without its controller's input.

One form of drone is the "remote" – a piece of equipment that provides close support and enhanced situational awareness to a user with which it is linked. Remotes operate in the immediate vicinity of their operators and can be found in the Allies section.

However, more sophisticated drones are the mechanical avatars of operators controlling them from secure locations far from the battlefield. As such, these "true" drones are characters in their own right.

Automatic and Forbidden Upgrades

Drones automatically possess the Vigilant trait, but cannot have the Leader specialism.

ROBOTS

Unlike drones, robots have no operator,

but they are distinctly different to living characters as they are loaded with a program that they must follow. Whenever a robot is activated, it must apply its current program. The program can be changed by an EWOp but must be one of the following:

Assassin Program:
Robot gains the *stealthy* trait if it doesn't already have it.

"TARGET" = Any objective marker **OR** ENEMY not *down* or OOA.

```
10  Engaged with objective? YES
goto 20.  NO goto 30.

20 INTERACT.  STOP.

30 CAUTIOUS MOVE towards target.
STOP.
```

Assault Program:
Robot gains the *gun-fu* trait if it doesn't already have it.

"TARGET" = ENEMY not *down* or OOA.

```
10  Target in LOS? YES, goto 20;
NO, goto 40.

20 Is range >0"?  YES goto 30; if
NO, goto 50.

30  SHOOT  at  closest  target  in
LOS.  STOP.

40 MOVE towards objective.  STOP.

50 CQB.  STOP.
```

Support Program:
Robot gains the Lethal trait if it doesn't already have it.

"TARGET" = ENEMY not down or OOA.

```
10  Obscured?  YES, goto 20; NO,
goto 30.

20 Is TARGET in LOS?  YES, goto
```

```
40; NO goto 30.

30 MOVE towards objective.  STOP.

40 Overwatch?  YES, SHOOT at one
enemy in LOS.  NO, goto 50.

50 OVERWATCH.
```

Medical Program:
Robot gains the Doc speciality if it doesn't already have it, even if there is already a doc in the team.

Where "TARGET" = FRIEND in the *wounded* state.

```
10 Number of TARGETS >0?  If yes,
goto 20; if no goto 30.

20 Engaged with TARGET?  If yes,
goto 40.  If no goto 50.

30 MOVE towards nearest FRIEND.
STOP.

40 MEDIC TARGET.  STOP.

50 MOVE towards nearest target.
STOP.
```

FRIEND or ENEMY
Robots are generally smart enough to know who their friends are. However, if a friendly character's IFF enters the 0 state, robots will treat them as ENEMY until their IFF is in the I state.

MOVE Command
Despite the obligation to follow a program, robots are extremely sophisticated and usually respond intelligently to the threats of the battlefield and needs of their comrades. When a program requires a robot to MOVE, the only requirement is that the robot end its movement closer to the target than at the start of its move. It may otherwise make any sort of movement. If, however, the type of movement is specified – such as CAUTIOUS MOVE in the infiltration program – the robot may only use that type of movement.

STOP Command & Bonus Actions
Whenever a robot reaches a STOP command but has bonus

actions unused, the character may spend bonus actions as normal without needing to apply the program.

"ERROR!"

If a robot is ever in a position that it cannot follow its program when it is activated (for example, a robot with the medical program is the only hero left on the table), it will immediately shut down and await recovery. It becomes OOA and cannot be activated again in this mission.

Automatic and Forbidden Upgrades

Robots are automatically inhuman. They may not have the Leader or Second upgrade.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

AIs are self-aware synthetics that can only exist in a computer network large enough to sustain their immensity.

If a character is an AI, it does not have a model. Rather, at the start of the game, it is in the datastream and can perform EW actions or the special possess action described below, counting as having LOS to any *targeted* characters or bogeys. When an AI in the datastream performs an action, flip a control card as normal.

Because an AI cannot be shot at or interact until it has possessed a character (see below), an AI has no Cyl, AV or FW stat.

On the Fallen Earth there are, strictly speaking, only two AIs: one occupies and manages the Venusian datastream and one occupies and manages the Martian datastream. They are each intuitively both servile and caring toward their human masters...

...Although there is, strictly speaking, only one AI on each side, each AI can manifest itself in a way optimized to the needs of those with whom it is currently interacting and in thousands of simultaneous iterations. Which is why an AI may be, at the same time, providing emotional support and counselling to a Terran survivor and inhabiting a robot gunning down enemy hostiles.

...Frankly, it is impossible not to find this dichotomy profoundly disturbing and I find it alarming that no one in the military hierarchy on either side of this conflict seems to share my concern. I can only advise that fellow Terrans give all manifestations of these inherently amoral and potentially malign entities a wide berth and, if possible, take steps to destroy them,

- Free Terra Journalist, Kal Limnyat

Possession

Any friendly synthetic character can be the target of a possess action. It is an automatic action. At the start of the next activation, the *possessed* character now has the AI's statline instead of its own. Its Cyl, AV and FW remain the same. It retains any upgrades and gains the AI's upgrades automatically.

If the target of the possess action is a *dominated* synthetic, then the *possessed* state replaces the *dominated* state.

Automatic and Forbidden Upgrades

An AI may have any one trait automatically. They may not have the Leader specialism or any gadget or weapon upgrades.

ALLIES

Allies are a special sort of upgrade that adds an extra character to the team who is not a hero.

CP Dog

A number of X Teams employ dogs as guard animals during

extended patrols and as sniffers to locate trapped civilians or similar. Such canine partners – and their cybernetic equivalents – are usually left at the Emergency Rendezvous point for later collection during hot encounters. However, a few X Teams also make use of more aggressive partners as close-protection support, especially for important specialists.

CP dogs are allies with the following profile:

Cyl	M	F	A	D	AV	FW	Special
1	5	0	1	4	1	0	CP Dog

CP Dogs must be allocated to a hero. When that hero moves, at the end of the hero's move, place the CP Dog in contact with the hero. If an enemy character or bogey (the target) ends a move in contact with the hero, switch the places of the hero and the attached CP Dog.

The CP Dog may then only perform CQB actions until either the CP Dog or the target is dead. The target may not move until the CP Dog is OOA. If the target is killed, place the CP Dog back in contact with its allocated hero (this happens automatically and doesn't require an action).

If the CP Dog goes OOA, treat it as *dead*.

If the attached hero is OOA or *dead*, the CP dog remains in place. Drag actions moving the attached hero may move +1" thanks to the CP Dog assisting.

CP Dogs as Characters
It is easy to overlook that CP Dogs are characters in their own right, able to move and even interact. Their high M allows them to rush towards an enemy target and fight it in CQB. They can even use their A to have a try at performing a medic action on an injured character (it's a long shot, but maybe a lick on the face is all they need!)

Emjay
Embedded Journalists – emjays for short – may be members of the military Media Corps, propagandists for the government or freelancers who have agreed to surrender certain journalistic freedoms in exchange for exclusive access to hazardous beyond-the-front-line

operations alongside an X Team.

Emjays are allies with the following profile:

Cyl	M	F	A	D	AV	FW	Special
3	2	1	3	2	1	1	Emjay

If an emjay has LOS to the active character (excluding the emjay itself), the active character may re-roll one dice in the action or one bonus action in the same activation.

Although emjays are attached to a hero in the sense that they join the team as an upgrade to a particular hero (and should be activated and controlled by whichever player controls the hero), the emjay otherwise operates completely independently.

Remote
Remotes are a cheap and expendable way of spreading a team's capabilities more widely. To include a remote, a team must have a sapper. Remotes have the following stats:

Cyl	M	F	A	D	AV	FW	Special
*	5	0	*	*	1	1	Synthetic (Drone)

Remotes are attached to a character. The first remote in the team must be attached to the sapper. Additional remotes can be attached to other heroes or to the sapper. Remotes count as an upgrade for the hero to which they are attached. Only sappers can have more than one remote attached to them. The remote has A and D equal to their attached character.

Although remotes are allies, they don't activate separately. When a

character is activated, any attached remotes may also be activated. The remote's actions are simultaneous with those of its attached character and are not bonus actions. Remotes do not have to perform the same action as their attached characters. However, both the remote and attached character must perform a cautious move in order for the move to count as cautious. When making a cautious move with a remote, add the total distance moved and count enemies with reference to <u>both</u> characters and make a single test.

When a character is allocated a remote, it must be one of two types:

> **Zipper** – A zipper remote is Cyl3, but always counts as *obscured(1)*. The *obscured* state cannot be improved by game conditions, but upgrades and special rules that reduce a character's *obscured* state will also affect a remote's state. Zipper remotes ignore all changes of height caused by terrain and only measure distance horizontally.

> **Scutter** – A scutter remote is Cyl2. Scutters treat obstacles more than half their cylinder high as level ground, so it still has to move up or down obstacles but doesn't have to make an M test for jumping or climbing and can move any distances up or down without obstruction. Scutters that are *wounded*(+1) whilst climbing will still fall.

Remote Upgrades

Remotes may also be upgraded themselves with any of the following upgrades. A remote upgrade counts as half an upgrade, so for a single upgrade slot, a remote may have two upgrades or two remotes may have one each.

> **Gun** – The remote has F3. When the attached character shoots, either the character or the gun remote will shoot – not both! Whichever does not shoot does not count as active, but the character has still activated. This upgrade may be taken twice to give the remote F5.

> **Relay** – The remote has a relay (see above). The remote's relay is not deployable.

> **Visor** – The remote may be equipped with a

heatlight or starlight visor as described in Gadgets, above.

RED FORCE

"Red Force" is the term for any force on the table that is being controlled by the Control Deck. In Solo or Team mode, Red Force is the enemy. In Versus mode, they represent an unpredictable third party, hostile to both forces.

THE CONTROL DECK

The actions of the Red Force are dictated by the Control Deck. The Control Deck is a normal deck of 54 playing cards with four suits of thirteen cards each and two Jokers.

STARTING FORCE

All members of the Red Force are collectively known as "bogeys".

The default starting force in Solo or Team mode is four Grunts, one Elite per hero and one Boss. If you have a team of four heroes, then, the starting Red Force is four Grunts, four Elites and one Boss. The starting Red Force for Versus battles will vary depending on the mission, but the default is explained on page 76. Bogeys deployed as part of the starting force are assumed to be human or, at least, warm-bodied, so they don't have the synthetic trait, although players may add synthetic bogeys to the starting force at their discretion.

Running Down the Clock

At the start of a Solo or Team game, shuffle the Control Deck and then turn over one card for each upgrade the heroes have taken.

These cards have no effect except Jokers, which should be placed to one side. Once all deployment is complete, before the first turn, resolve a complication for each Joker generated in running down the clock.

Control Deck Card Values

Some rules in the game make use of the "value" of one or more cards flipped from the Control Deck. For these purposes:

- Simple cards have the value shown.
- Face cards and Aces are all considered to have the value "10".
- Jokers have no value.

RED FORCE DEPLOYMENT

When a bogey deploys, place it facing directly away from the objective.

Bogeys are deployed one at a time on a 12"x12" grid. The imaginary grid consists of 144 squares each with a grid reference between 1/1 (top left) and 12/12 (bottom right) as shown in the illustration below.

The mission will dictate where the grid is centred, but it will usually be with an objective marker at its centre point. If there is more than one marker, roll a d12 to randomly

L-R, examples of: Synthetic Heavy, EWOp, Boss, Synthetic Grunt

determine which marker to use for each deployment unless otherwise instructed.

Roll two different d12s: one for "across" and one for "down" and place one bogey on each result until all are deployed. If any bogey comes down on the same point as another, simply place it anywhere in base contact with the first bogey. You don't need to be too fastidious about positioning. The object is to create a random distribution of bogeys, so if a bogey doesn't fit in the space where it has come down, simply move it along a line towards the objective until you can place it.

Deploying Random Reinforcements
Occasionally you may need to deploy random reinforcements – typically as a result of a Complication (see page 59), but there may be mission conditions that cause a similar effect. To do so, flip the number of cards from the Control Deck that the event instructs with the results as follows:

- **Number card**: deploy a Grunt.
- **Face card**: deploy an Elite.
- **Ace**: deploy a Boss.
- **Joker**: resolve a complication once this deployment is complete.

If a card is black (♣ or ♠) you should deploy a synthetic bogey if possible. If it is red (♦ or ♥), you should deploy a bogey that is not synthetic if possible.

If a bogey of the right type (synthetic or not synthetic) isn't available, but one of the other type is, deploy that one instead.

ALERT

Bogeys are alert to danger but, at the start of the battle, they will not usually be ready to fight instantly. Bogeys have a default 180° field of view until they become *alert*, at which point they have a 360° field of view.

Whenever a character performs an action other than cautious movement or shooting, any bogey within 12" will become *alert*. If a character performs a shooting action (including as a bonus action), any bogey within 12" per hit (minimum 12") will become *alert*.

If a bogey performs an action that requires it to attack a character, it will immediately become *alert*.

A bogey deployed as part of a complication is automatically *alert*.

RED FORCE ACTIONS

Each time a character concludes an action, flip one card from the Control Deck. Each card will generate a primary action from the Red Force depending upon its value and suit. When the last card in the Control Deck is flipped, the battle is over.

Control Deck Card Value

The value of the card tells you which bogey will activate:

- Number cards will activate Grunts.
- Face cards will activate an Elite.
- Aces will activate a Boss.
- Jokers force a roll on the complications table.

The bogey that activates is always the one of the relevant type closest to whichever character just acted. If there are no bogeys of the type activated available to activate, then the category moves up one level. So if there are no Grunts to activate, a number card will activate an Elite. If there aren't any Elites, a face card will activate a Boss. If there aren't any Bosses available, an ace will count as a Joker. This effect stacks, so if there are no bogeys able to activate, then each card flip will activate a complication until there are new bogeys.

The Control Deck value also influences whether the bogey performs a secondary action (see below).

Control Deck Card Suit

The suit of the Control Deck card dictates what primary action will be taken by the bogey who has been activated.

♣ Clubs are Command actions. If the active bogey has LOS, then that bogey attacks the nearest character to which it can draw LOS, then gains a support token OR if the active bogey does not have LOS, the bogey moves towards the nearest hero and gains a support token.

♦ Diamonds are Technical actions. The active bogey gains a support token AND the nearest not-*targeted* character becomes *targeted* OR if all characters are already *targeted*, the active bogey attacks the nearest character. This attack does not need LOS but all other rules apply.

♥ Hearts are Support actions. The active bogey and the nearest other bogey both get a support token AND if there is at least one *down* bogey, the *down* bogey closest to a hero is no longer *down*.

♠ Spades are Attack actions. If the active bogey has LOS, then the bogey attacks the nearest character who is not OOA to which it can draw LOS AND then moves towards the nearest character in LOS who is not OOA. OR, if the active bogey does not have LOS, the bogey moves towards the nearest hero.

Secondary Action

All bogeys have a secondary action they take after performing their primary action, even if the primary action was cancelled.

The default secondary action is to move towards the nearest hero. Missions or complications may dictate a different secondary action.

Support Tokens

Grunts may have a maximum of 1 support token. Elites may have up to 2. Bosses may have up to 3.

BOGEY STATS

Like characters, bogeys have stats. Bogey stats are Attack (Att), Defence (Def) and Wounds (Wnd).

> An enemy Elite shoots at Agent Grace. Grace is 4" from the Elite and *obscured*(2); the visibility level is 6 and the Elite has two support actions, so the Elite is rolling three dice for being an Elite and another two for the two support tokens. The target number is 4, plus 6 for the visibility level, plus 2 for Grace's *obscured* level, for a total of 12. The Elite rolls 5, 6, 7, 9 and 12, which give it (5+7=12 and 7+9=16 and 12=12, plus an extra hit for the Lucky 12) four hits. Agent Grace is going to need a great AV roll to walk away from this one!

	Att	Def	Wnd
Grunt	2	1	1
Elite	3	2	2
Boss	3	3	3

MOVEMENT

When a bogey moves, it will move a distance equal to its Att unless specifically stated otherwise. Movement is by the shortest possible route and ignores reductions imposed by obstacles. Bogeys cannot move through impassable terrain. Bogeys that would end their activation on a vertical surface instead end it at the foot of that surface. When a bogey moves, it always ends its movement facing in the direction it moved.

Bogeys can end up deployed on top of terrain and, through movement, get off it. However, Grunts will never climb anything higher than 2" and no bogey will climb anything higher than 3".

ATTACKS

If the active bogey is required to attack, it will do so by shooting at its target.

Shooting

When a bogey shoots, roll a number of dice equal to the bogey's Att, +1 for each support token the bogey has and +1 for each *targeted* token the target has. The target number

---

> 'Stay sharp,' snapped Sing. 'We have only to control this location until Bal Thoth returns, but the Martians are abroad.'
>
> He glanced at the report that hovered in his peripheral vision. He had reserves from the heavy company on their way, but there was no saying when they would be on site. A Defence Mech was warming up and would be online shortly and he had a sniper team working its way up to local vantage points. He gestured, and a pair of armed drones, hosting aspects of the brand new battlenet AI, jogged to new guard locations.
>
> The Stepmaster knew this was the mission that would see him ascend and be Skyborn at last and greedy Martians would not stand in his way.
>
> If they came, he would cut them down and burn out their tongues.

is calculated exactly as for a normal shooting action.

CQB

If a bogey moves into contact with a character or vice versa, they must immediately resolve a CQB as a bonus action. In CQB, bogeys roll a number of dice equal to their Att, plus an additional dice for each support token. The *targeted* state has no effect on CQB actions.

The target number for characters to hit bogeys is 5 for Grunts, 6 for Elites and 7 for Bosses.

DAMAGE

Bogeys don't get to make a roll against shooting the way a character does. Instead, once the number of hits is established, remove one support token from the bogey for each hit. Each remaining hit on the bogey causes one wound. Only hits inflicted after all support tokens are removed inflict wounds. A bogey that takes a number of wounds fewer than their Wnd stat suffers no consequence from the attack. A bogey that takes a number of wounds equal to their Wnd stat enters the *down* state. A bogey that takes a number of wounds greater than their Wnd stat is *dead* and any remaining hits can be used on bonus actions.

Picking off bogeys

Note that the number of wounds a bogey can take is measured per action. If, in one action, a Boss takes two wounds and, then, in the next action, the same Boss takes another two wounds, the Boss is not dead. In fact, the Boss isn't even slowed down. To put a bogey down requires the relevant number of wounds in one action and to make a bogey dead requires that number, plus (at least) one. Bonus actions, of course, are part of the same action; so if a character causes two wounds with the first action then has a bonus action in the same activation and causes another two wounds, that will be enough to kill the Boss.

A *down* bogey is never taken into account when activating bogeys. A *dead* bogey is removed from the battlefield.

A hero *engaged* with a *down* bogey can move it to the *dead* state as an automatic action.

Note that applying hits to bogeys is not optional. So if a character gets four hits on a Boss, all four must be applied, putting the Boss into the *dead* state. You cannot apply three, put the Boss *down* and spend the fourth on a bonus action. This is particularly important in missions when you are required to capture a bogey in the *down* state.

SPECIAL BOGEYS

Complications and other circumstances can upgrade bogeys in a variety of ways, introducing several special bogeys:

	Att	Def	Wnd	Special
Grunts				
EWOp	2	1	1	Firewall 1
Mech	4	4	3	Firewall 3
Elites				
Heavy	3	3	2	

	Att	Def	Wnd	Special
Sniper	4	1	2	*Lethal*

EWOps and Mechs count as Grunts for the purposes of activation. Heavies and Snipers count as Elites.

EWOps

EWOp bogeys are a little more complicated than your average bogey. If the active bogey is an EWOp, use the following activation rules:

♣ All characters to whom the EWOp can draw LOS become *targeted* OR if the EWOp does not have LOS, the EWOp moves towards the nearest character and gains a support token.

♦ The closest character becomes *targeted* **OR** if the closest character is already *targeted*, the active EWOp attacks him or her, ignoring LOS and *obscured*, but affected by FW.

♥ The *targeted* bogey nearest the EWOp is no longer *targeted* **AND** the *down* bogey nearest to a hero is no longer *down*.

Terran snipers make up for what they lack in training with an unparalleled command of the terrain.

♠ If any characters are *targeted*, the EWOp attacks all of them, ignoring LOS, visibility and *obscured*, but affected by FW – resolve each attack separately, in any order – **OR**, if no characters are *targeted*, the nearest *synthetic* character immediately becomes *wounded*(+1).

Synthetic Bogeys

Some bogeys will be *synthetic*. When they deploy, they have the *synthetic* trait and any rules that affect synthetics will affect them. However, they aren't considered to be any particular type of synthetic, so anything that affects only, for example, robots, will not affect synthetic bogeys.

When a synthetic bogey is *dominated* it is treated as if it were a robot with the Assault program.

COMPLICATIONS

The best laid plans of X Teams rarely play out as anyone expects. The Fallen Earth is a strange and complex place, and the conflict itself is subject to the whims of many competing factions.

Complications are random factors that usually make life harder for the players. They are generated by a range of factors, most commonly by the appearance of a Joker at any point in the AI deck. When a complication is generated, roll a d12 and consult the relevant table.

Basic Complications

Basic complications are intended for playing in Versus mode. You may also like to use basic complications when first learning the game, although we would encourage you to move to advanced complications as soon as you can, because they are a lot more fun.

D12 Roll	Result
1-3	**EWOp** – Deploy an EWOp, **OR** if there is already an EWOp, go to the 4-6 result.
4-6	**Sniper** – Deploy a Sniper, **OR** if there is already a Sniper, go to the 7-9 result.
7-9	**Heavy** – Deploy a Heavy, **OR** if there is already a Heavy, go to the 10-12 result.

D12 Roll	Result
10-12	**Mech** – Deploy a Mech, **OR** if there is already a Mech, go to the 1-3 result.

If you are using basic complications and find yourself with one of each type on the table, further complications may be ignored.

Advanced Complications

Use advanced complications if playing in Solo or Team mode, once you're familiar with the game. You can also use them in the Versus game.

ADVANCED COMPLICATIONS TABLE

D12 Roll	Result
1	Last-minute Intel – Remove and then deploy again the three bogeys furthest from a hero.
2	Priority Target – Deploy a Boss OR if there are already two Bosses on the table, randomly select one Boss to become an objective.
3	Poor Intel – An objective already achieved, selected at random, is cancelled and must be achieved again, OR if no objectives have been achieved, remove an objective, selected at random, and deploy it as if it were a bogey.
4	EWOp – Deploy an EWOp. If there is already an EWOp, go to the 5 result.
5	Sniper – Deploy a Sniper. If there is already a Sniper, go to the 6 result.
6	Heavy – Deploy a Heavy. If there is already a Heavy, go to the 7 result.
7	Defence mech – Deploy a Mech. If there is already a Mech, go to the 8 result.
8	Perimeter alarm – All characters become *targeted*. If they are already *targeted*, they become *stressed*(+1). If they are synthetic or already *stressed*, they become *stunned*(+1).
9	Betrayal – All bogeys get a support token up to their maximum. If a bogey already has the maximum support tokens, the character nearest to the bogey becomes *stressed*(+1). If they are synthetic or already *stressed*, they become *stunned*(+1).
10	E/M Pulse – All synthetic characters become *wounded*(+1) immediately. All gadgets immediately enter the O state.
11	Reinforcements – Flip three Control cards and deploy the result immediately.
12	Booby Trap – The character closest to the objective becomes *wounded*(+2). If the character isn't OOA, he or she also becomes *stunned*(+1).

BATTLE MODES

Zero Dark offers a broad menu of play options, depending upon how many players you have, and what sort of game experience you want.

THE SOLO GAME

In a Solo game, one player composes the team and makes all the decisions, except the ones generated by the Control Deck. The player decides freely which character to activate and characters can be activated as many times as the player likes.

Players are encouraged to come up with their own missions, setting themselves tactical challenges suitable to whatever setting or period they want to replicate on the battlefield, and on whatever miniatures collection they are using.

However, these rules include a selection of missions in the **Operations** section which can be played as one-off missions, as well as the special Rescue mission which is an ideal introductory mission for Solo play.

THE TEAM GAME

The team game is mechanically indistinguishable from the Solo game except that players must agree between themselves who activates next. Teamwork and cooperation are essential to achieving success.

When it comes to missions, the same principles apply as for the Solo game, but it can be entertaining for the team members to set out individual objectives for their heroes to try to achieve in the course of the mission.

The Team Leader

In the event of a disagreement or dispute, the player controlling a character with the Leader specialism has the final say. If no character has the Leader specialism, the players should decide between them at the start of the battle who will be the arbitrator.

THE VERSUS GAME

A Versus – player versus player – game may either be one-on-one or a team versus a team. In the latter case, the guidance on the team game (above) applies for appointing a team leader to arbitrate disagreements.

Mission

The sides should agree the mission to be played in advance. Some examples are offered in the **Versus Missions** section to get you started, along with some suggestions for simplifying and streamlining the requirement for Red Force miniatures. When you're playing Versus, the Red Force should be an entertaining complication, but the main challenge should come from the opposing force, so don't get hung up on flooding the battlefield with bogeys.

Activation

Toss a coin to determine which side takes the first activation. The crucial difference between the Solo/Team game and the Versus game is that the sides alternate activating a member of their respective team. Players have the option to "pass" an activation but, if they do so, it still counts as an activation so a Control Deck card is still flipped and the Red Force still acts accordingly.

The Red Force

Deploy the Red Force as described in the Red Force section of these rules.

+> Enemy position is within the region designated YELLOWSTONE.

+> Highest level environmental precautions therefore advised.

+> Primary objective is enemy officer designated SIERRA TWO.

+> Secondary objective is to clear immediate area and establish control of point ZULU.

+> Excepting SIERRA TWO, no prisoners.

OPERATIONS

Operations are a series of linked battles, the consequences of each directly informing the next. Not only does the outcome of each battle affect the one after it, but they may also affect actions and events that take place during the campaign.

In addition, heroes can gain experience from an operation that will allow them to improve their abilities and equipment or gain access to new allies and other resources.

MISSIONS, OPERATIONS & CAMPAIGNS

A mission is a single game of *Zero Dark*. It will usually take 45 minutes to an hour.

An operation is a series of linked missions. It is designed to be played through in a single afternoon, taking about 4-5 hours in total. It represents a single, extended period of deployment for the heroes, in pursuit of an ultimate objective. So getting wounded, being abandoned, stealing enemy equipment, recruiting new allies and other narrative events will have consequences that play over into the next mission.

Once an operation is finished, if the player(s) want the same heroes to move on and attempt a further operation, there will be the opportunity to turn operation events into experience that can be traded in for new upgrades or to offset inconveniences generated in the operation – the most common of which being serious injuries.

Setting out to play a series of operations is a campaign. A campaign will take two or more days of organized play to complete.

It is possible to play a Versus campaign in which several players compete to play missions against each other, acquiring experience as they go. However, this is a much more involved and complex kind of campaign. The rules that follow assume you are playing Solo or Team.

Default Settings
The default setting for all operations is 4/16/4. That is: four heroes, each of whom begin with up to four upgrades. You can choose to take more heroes or fewer, or change the number of upgrades permitted and the missions will, to an extent, adapt to this by either adding bogeys or running down the clock (page 54). But the basic demands of each mission don't change. So attempting to complete the mission with fewer heroes, even with

A sniper of unknown origin stands guard over an improvised checkpoint at the perimeter of the Macapa Space Port.

commensurately fewer bogeys, will usually be harder, and likewise attempting a mission with five or more heroes will make things easier, even allowing for more bogeys to get through.

Casualties of War

If, when a mission ends (and you aren't going to re-fight it for a better outcome), one or more heroes is dead or otherwise OOA, they are considered to have been lost. You can either create a new hero, or elect to play the *Rescue* special mission.

A new hero is a Battle Casualty Replacement (BCR), infiltrated up ahead of schedule and not fully prepared for the mission ahead of him or her. BCRs like this get one fewer upgrades than the starting heroes (so, typically, three upgrades rather than four).

The heroes can attempt the *Rescue* mission after any mission when a hero was lost. All lost heroes – not just the one(s) lost in the previous mission – will become objectives in the mission. If heroes are rescued, they join the team once more, but only a maximum of four heroes (or however many you have chosen to play with) can participate in each mission. Heroes who are in the team but not participating in this mission are assumed to be protecting the rendezvous point.

Rescued heroes begin the next mission in the *wounded(1)* state.

Wounds

Characters who finish a mission in the *wounded(1)* state are *unwounded* at the start of the next mission. Characters who finish a mission in any other *wounded* state begin the next mission in the *wounded(1)* state.

Heroes who finish a mission OOA but who – either as a result of having been recovered in a *Rescue* mission or having been dragged from the field by a friend – return to the operation must reduce one stat of the player's choice by −1.

CASEVAC

Any character with a stat reduced to 1 or less cannot participate in missions any longer and is evacuated as a casualty (CASEVAC). This character isn't dead. CASEVAC'd characters will make a full recovery and return at the end of the operation, ready for the next one.

They're All Dead!

If the players finish a mission with all the heroes OOA, then the operation has failed. You can replay the mission, re-start the operation from scratch, or re-start at the beginning of any past mission (think of it like a save point). But you cannot move on until you have successfully completed each mission.

If you re-start from any point, the characters lose all their current XP and any upgrades obtained during the operation and return to the stats and upgrades they had at the start of the operation.

EXPERIENCE

A hero gains +1 "experience point" (XP) each time a complication is generated in a mission, as long as the hero isn't OOA at the point that the complication arises. Keep a note of the XP heroes earn as the operation progresses. Some operations will offer opportunities to trade in XP for advantages in certain missions. And any XP not used during an operation can then be used to customize your characters further before their next operation in the campaign.

Heroes who are lost lose all the XP earned so far in the operation, even if they are subsequently rescued.

Spending XP

There are three ways to spend XP: during missions, between missions and between operations.

The mission brief will describe whether and how XP can be spent as part of the mission.

When XP is spent between missions, the team buys a single effect for a given amount of XP. This XP may come from the XP earned by one, some or all of the heroes as long as the total amount spent is the amount needed to achieve the effect. Different missions and operations may offer different options to spend XP during the operation. But the standard option is to buy a supply drop (see below).

When XP is spent between operations, individual heroes may only spend their remaining XP on upgrades or fixes for themselves and may not spend their XP to upgrade other heroes (although they may spend XP on allies attached to themselves).

Buying Upgrades

Each new upgrade costs 10 XP. So upgrades that count as a half-upgrade cost 5 XP.

Note that upgrades acquired through spending XP do not count towards running down the clock (page 54).

Buying Fixes

Heroes that suffered stat reductions during an operation may recover their stats back up to their starting point at a cost of 5 XP per point lost.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

Missions can be played in a range of difficulty levels from Easy to Insane. Your choice of play modes will affect not only how hard the mission is likely to be, but also the amount of XP the heroes can earn for completing the mission.

Easy	Heroes earn −1 XP to a minimum of 0.	All bogeys deploy in the *targeted* state.
Normal	No change.	Normal.
Hard	Heroes earn +1 XP.	All bogeys deploy with one support token.
Insane	Heroes earn +2 XP.	All bogeys deploy with maximum support tokens.

You will select your difficulty at the start of each mission. You can replay missions as often as you like, trying different difficulty levels. But once you apply the results and move on to the next mission, any further replays of earlier missions are for fun only and don't count. So make sure you record the results of each mission carefully.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Missions also come with a range of achievements, which may give bonus XP, unlock narrative elements or just give bragging rights. Missions may have their own special achievements, but the achievements below are applicable to all missions.

All Clear	Complete the mission with no characters OOA (all heroes gain +1 XP)
Perfect Break	Complete the mission with no characters *wounded* (all heroes gain +1 XP)
No Witnesses	When the last hero leaves the table, there are no bogeys on the table (all surviving heroes gain +1 XP)
Assassins	Kill at least two Boss bogeys (all surviving heroes gain +1 XP)
Next time, it's personal	Complete the mission with at least one hero killed by a Boss (all surviving heroes gain +1 XP)
Pyrrhic Victory	Complete the mission with only one hero left (surviving hero gains +2 XP)
Up to the wire	Complete the mission and flip the final card in the Control Deck (all surviving heroes gain +1 XP)

Achievements stack, so if gaining one achievement implies also gaining another (as Perfect Break implies also achieving All Clear), the relevant heroes gain +1 XP for each achievement.

Note that players can only claim achievements if they move on to the next mission or finish the campaign. If you decide to re-fight the mission for a better outcome, any achievements earned in previous iterations of the mission are lost.

OBJECTIVES

All missions begin with one primary objective. If a team completes the primary objective, the team completes its mission. Chalk one up for the good guys and move on to the next mission.

Secondary objectives, meanwhile, may be set at the start of the mission or may arise in the course of the mission as a result of a complication or an operation event. There is no limit to the number of secondary objectives on the table. Achieving a secondary objective won't count the mission as a win, but will help the team build its reputation and gain more XP and may unlock story features otherwise not available.

Some objectives will involve an "objective marker" – a tabletop feature with which the characters must deal in some way: perhaps stealing it, destroying it or just interacting with it.

Objective Markers
Objective markers can really be any size or shape, but in order for them to easily and conveniently fit on the table and inside or around any relevant terrain marker, we suggest that they ought to be no larger than approximately Cylinder 5.

Carrying Objective Markers
Some objective markers can be picked up and moved by characters. A character who is carrying an objective marker becomes the objective marker and the marker itself is removed from the table. Rules that pertain to the objective marker now pertain to the character. If a character carrying an objective marker is killed, the character is replaced with the objective marker.

Destroying Objective Markers
Objective markers come in an endless variety of shapes and forms that may be more or less vulnerable to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. The difficulty of damaging an objective marker will depend upon its definition.

Delicate objective markers will be destroyed if they suffer a single hit. They have no AV.

Sturdy objective markers can suffer a bit of bumping around before they are destroyed. A sturdy objective marker has AV2 and is destroyed if it becomes *wounded*(3).

Tough objective markers are explicitly designed to tolerate rough treatment and, indeed, to stand up to attempts to destroy them. A tough objective marker has AV5 and is destroyed if it becomes *wounded*(5)/*dead*.

Invulnerable objectives simply cannot be damaged, whatever you throw at them.

If a primary objective is destroyed and, as a result, it becomes impossible to complete the mission, the mission has failed. So be careful with those explosive weapons, OK?

Objective Marker Off the Table
Some complications and mission events are based on the location of the objective marker. If the objective has left the table already, then the priority for the new point of reference, instead of the objective is:

- The Leader, or if none...
- The Second, or if none...
- Any other hero of your choice, or if none...
- Any other character of your choice.

Note that this is the point of reference for events that normally use the objective as the point of reference. It doesn't make the new point of reference into an objective in any way.

Deployment States

A mission's deployment state dictates where and how the team and Red Force will deploy. There are a variety of deployment states. All those relevant to this campaign are given below:

Flanking Entry The Team has split into two. Pick one corner as the primary entry point. At least one character must begin within a 6" square in this corner. The secondary entry point is in a 3"x6" rectangle at the centre point of one of the sides not adjacent to the primary point as shown below:
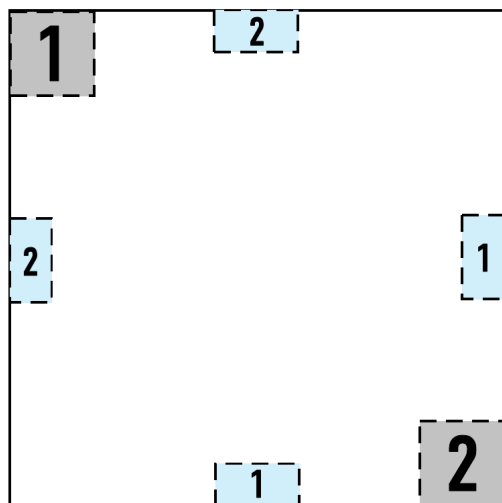
Primary entry points are in grey, with secondary entry points in blue. The secondary entry points labelled "1" are viable for primary entry point 1, whilst those labelled "2" are viable for primary entry point 2.

Restricted Entry The team doesn't have the time or space to split up before reaching the target point. Pick one corner as the entry point. All characters must begin within the 6" square in this corner.

Concealed Position In this deployment state, the characters have been cornered and must first break through the Red Force in order to escape to their exfil point. All characters begin in contact with a deployment marker. Until a character is no longer in contact with the deployment marker, the character is considered to be outside the LOS of all enemies.

Planned Line of Departure The team has had plenty of time to plan their assault. They may deploy anywhere within 6" of a selected table edge.

ALLIES

Allies are not usually considered mission critical. If an ally is lost, it cannot normally be rescued. The only exception is an emjay.

Embedded Journalists

If a team has at least one emjay at the start of a mission, and if at least one emjay survives a mission, then all heroes receive +1 XP and the hero to whom the emjay is attached gains an additional +1 XP. If an emjay is lost, treat it as if a hero had been lost, so a *Rescue* special mission may be undertaken to try to recover the lost emjay.

SUPPLY DROPS

In a campaign, after any successful mission, the team may call for a supply drop. A supply drop costs 5 XP and allows the players to roll on the table below. The players may spend +5 XP to be allowed to roll twice on the table and pick the ONE result they want.

Team Mode

Where any choice is to be made, the player committing the most XP to the supply drop makes the choice. If there is a draw, the team leader decides who gets to make the choice.

d12 Roll	Result
1	+1 AV
2	+ 2 AV
3	Combat Shield
4	Advanced IFF
5	Exoskeleton
6	Respirator
7	Relay
8	Thermo-optic cape

d12 Roll	Result		
9	Visor – Roll again		
		1-4	Heatlight
		5-8	Relay
		9-12	Starlight
10	Drop rig OR jump rig. Pick one.		
11	Grenades – Roll again:		
		1	Brightlight
		2	Chem
		3	Digismoke
		4	E/M
		5-7	Frag
		8-9	Smoke
		10-11	Stun
		12	Tag
12	New weapon – Roll again:		
		1-3	Explosive
		4-6	Lethal
		6-8	Silent
		9-12	Spray

In addition to the results generated from the table, a supply drop automatically replenishes any item expended by the heroes in the course of previous missions, such as explosive weapons, sentries and grenades up to the amount originally purchased.

Mogwai threw the map out to the team net and they huddled around it. The Peregrine was cruising at about 3000 feet, well inside the ash cloud and invisible to radar but the journey was far from smooth. Latest intelligence, filtered through OverMASC, showed a relatively small enemy team on the ground. Plan was a dropoff three klicks from target point ZULU, a short run to the emergency RV and then a yomp in from there to the departure point. Arkon gestured as he spoke.

'This is our primary target. You know him as Sierra. I want him ID'd and marked up as our first priority. Mogwai, that's on you,'

The young EWOp nodded once without looking up: his eyes were focused on things the rest of the team couldn't see.

'Portia, you're on oversight,' Arkon told her, pointing out three high points on the map. 'Pick one and head there from the ERV. Cobalt, give her a zipper. I don't want her getting lost again.'

'Yes, boss,' agreed the sniper, grim faced. Being a captive of the Venusians was not an experience she wanted to repeat.

Cobalt, a sapper, was new to the team, as were his remotes, Zebedee and Dougal.

'Put Kay into medical status, Mogwai.'

Arkon looked at the robot who looked back at him with its single, expressionless eye. Warbots were designed to be part of the team, with synthetic personalities and quirky humour that was impossible not to like. Arkon didn't like KAY 3. He had liked KAY 2 and still felt stupid mourning the damn stupid toaster.

'Keep my team alive, robot,' he ordered, although it hardly needed to be told.

'I want Sierra alive. No excuses.'

SPECIAL MISSION: RESCUE

This mission may be played after any other mission in which one or more heroes has been left behind. The mission is played instead of calling for a BCR, so only the remaining heroes participate in this mission. Note that all heroes lost in the campaign so far are represented by objective markers in this mission, not just the one(s) lost in the previous mission.

Rescue is also an excellent starter mission for players new to *Zero Dark* to learn their way into the game's mechanics.

> The team is shaken up by the loss of one of your own but, as you prepare to move on, a data burst arrives alerting you to the fact that your lost friend is not only still alive but not far away, under guard by enemy forces.
>
> You have one chance to get in there and steal your comrade back.

VISIBILITY LEVEL 2

Set Up
Default table size at 28mm is 4'x4'. If playing on a smaller surface, begin the mission with a random complication in play.

Set up in the following order:

1. Select Difficulty.
2. Place an objective marker (1) in the centre of the battlefield.
3. Place the rest of the terrain if necessary.
4. Deploy Red Force as described below.
5. Deploy three more secondary objective markers as if they were Red Force.
6. Deploy the heroes as described below.
7. Place an objective marker at the corner of the deployment grid furthest from a hero. This is the primary objective.
8. Remove objective marker (1).

Objectives and Heroes
If only one hero has been lost then, obviously, the primary objective marker is that hero. The other markers are other MIAs, civilian captives or prisoners of note. If more than one hero has been lost then how you handle which objective is who is up to you. You may like to simply see how many objectives you can rescue and then decide which heroes are saved afterwards. Or you can randomly decide which objective marker is which hero in advance.

If playing the mission outside a campaign, then all of the objective markers are non-player characters, but the primary objective is a captured VIP.

Hero Deployment
Select a table edge. The heroes have a planned line of departure on this table edge.

Once the Red Force and objective markers are deployed, the heroes may spend 5 XP to re-deploy themselves on the same table edge, or they may spend 10 XP to re-deploy in a flanking entry.

Instead of XP, you may run down the clock by the same number of cards to gain either of the advantages offered above.

Red Force Deployment
The Red Force deploys as described in the **Red Force** section of the *Zero Dark* rules. The centre point of the deployment grid is always the primary objective marker.

Objective
The objective for the characters is to move the primary objective marker and as many secondary objective markers as possible off the table via the table edge opposite the one from which the heroes deployed.

A character in contact with an objective marker who

performs a successful A(10) interact action becomes the objective marker. Additional successes on this test will allow bonus actions to be performed.

Characters that have become objective markers in this way must perform a drag action when activated, using an AV of 0. When a character that is an objective marker reaches the exit table edge, the character ceases to be an objective and the player(s) have secured one objective.

The mission ends when all characters have left the table or are OOA, or the Control Deck runs out.

All objectives in this mission are *delicate*.

Bonus Achievements

I Owe You One	For each objective a hero removes from the table, the hero gains +1 XP.
Goshdarn Hero	A hero who removes two or more objectives from the table gains an additional +2 XP.
Just Showing Off Now	A hero who removes three or more objectives from the table gains an additional +2 XP.
Debt of Honour	If a hero who removes one or more objectives in this mission is lost in this or any subsequent mission, then until the team performs another *Rescue* mission, all heroes earn −1 XP per mission to a minimum of 0.

Galen cycled her vision to 3x magnification and slowly moved her eyes around the Terran camp area.

These were not Gaians, hairy and ragged in the cast-offs of their fallen civilisation. Nor were these the usual bully-boy Terran militia trying to impose their questionable will upon fellow citizens. These moved with purpose when they moved at all. They wore an unfamiliar ash grey uniform and white armour, their faces and forms concealed behind masks. Their weapons looked like traditional ballistic rifles for the most part, but from what she could make out in the limited light, they looked well-maintained and lethal.

Her team had been ambushed by them – or by soldiers like them – just a few hours ago, close to their ultimate objective. It had been a textbook escape. The spook, Lao, had died instantly, but not much loss there. Only Ramsay hadn't made it out. And now she could see him: wounded but still bound by his faceless captors.

It looked like there were others in a similar state, but she didn't recognize them. Not Venusian. Didn't look Martian. Probably locals of some stripe. Could be good intel.

She gestured her orders to the others in battle-sign. Erik, the EWOp, gestured back a suggestion and Galen nodded, pointing at Bing, the sapper. He slipped off his slim pack and detached one box-shaped pod. With just a few well-practised movements he unfolded the zipper drone and passed it to Keiko. The two exchanged a meaningful glance: Bing would not take it well if the zipper came back damaged.

Galen smiled.

This was a good team. It needed Ramsay, though. Their combat medic had a lightness to him that pulled them all together. He would ascend before any of them. He already had the air about him of a Skymaster. They wouldn't leave him here.

OPERATION GEMINI

Operation Gemini is intended to introduce players to the game and consists of three linked missions. Each mission should take between 30 and 60 minutes, but you shouldn't move on to the next mission until you've successfully completed the one before it.

> Mars was first on the scene. Having followed Ammit in its path towards Earth, its science team was already in Earth orbit and, thanks to the alert they had issued immediately prior to the strike, a joint-operations rescue force was en route from the red planet within a day of the impact.
>
> Venus was slower to react, having largely disengaged itself from Earth in the decade prior to the strike. When they did arrive, approaches from the Martian Assistance and Support Command were rebuffed, but with other priorities concerning the rescue teams, it was officially considered sufficient that the Venusians had arrived to lend their support, collaborative or not.
>
> Unofficially, however, the Martian leadership was concerned that the Venusian Observation Mission was less interested in providing humanitarian assistance to the desperate survivors of the human population than it was in plundering Earth's technological resources. But an even greater mystery was rapidly to be discovered that would lend urgency to the need to know exactly what it was the Venusians were doing here. The number of Terran survivors was simply too small.

Operation Gemini is a 4/16/4 campaign, intended for four heroes, with up to four upgrades each.

Consisting of four missions, the campaign puts the heroes into the roles of members of the ASC's shadowy Special Operations Branch. Although the ASC is on Earth to rescue and protect the Terran victims of Ammit's devastating impact, the Martian high command still recognizes that there are bountiful opportunities to advance the agenda and benefit of Mars itself to arise from the mission. The X Teams of the SOB are reliable, obedient and discreet, and are therefore the first choice to dispatch on missions that have more to do with the interests of Mars than the interests of the Terran victims.

Operation Gemini will see the heroes pursue an intelligence lead into the very heart of the VOM operation on Earth in a desperate attempt to steal for ASC vital data that could solve the mystery of Earth's missing population – and potentially lead to a secret of interstellar proportions.

However, although Earth's DPREs (Displaced Persons, Refugees and Evacuees) are low priority for the heroes,

they must still do all they can to rescue and protect those that they encounter.

MISSION 1: DATA GRAB

A momentary break in the ash cloud cover over Central Europe revealed that VOM appeared to have intensified its presence in the commercial zone of NeuFrankfurt. The number of DPREs in the area is low, suggesting that VOM has an ulterior motive for its insertion into the towering city-state.

Your X Team is to perform a covert infiltration of VOM's apparent control centre and locate and secure the command node. Exfil for extraction and await further orders.

VISIBILITY LEVEL 5

Set Up

Default table size at 28mm is 4'x4'. If playing on a smaller surface, begin the mission with a random complication in play.

Set up in the following order:

1. Select Difficulty.
2. Place an objective marker (1) in the centre of the battlefield with clear space around it with a radius of at least 3".
3. Place the rest of the terrain, if necessary.
4. Deploy the heroes as described below.
5. Deploy Red Force as described below.

Hero Deployment

The heroes deploy in a restricted entry on a table edge of their choice. After the Red Force has been deployed, the heroes may spend 5 XP to re-deploy in a flanking entry or 10 XP to deploy in a planned line of departure on any other table edge.

Instead of XP, you may run down the clock by the same number of cards to gain either of the advantages offered above.

Red Force Deployment

The Red Force deploys upon the objective marker.

Objective

The objective for the characters is to move the primary objective marker off the table via a table edge randomly determined in the course of the mission.

A character in contact with the objective marker who performs a successful A(10) interact action becomes the objective marker. Additional successes on this test will allow bonus actions to be performed. When a character becomes the objective marker, designate the table sides ♣, ♦, ♥ and ♠. The next time a Control Deck card is flipped, as well as activating a bogey, its suit will indicate the table edge from which the objective must be extracted. If a Joker is flipped, generate a complication, then flip again. If, having designated the exit table edge, a Joker is flipped, generate a complication as normal then, the next time a Control Deck card is flipped, this indicates the new exit table edge.

The mission ends when all characters have left the table or are OOA, or the Control Deck runs out.

The objective in this mission is *sturdy*.

Bonus Achievements

Goalscorer	The character who leaves the table as the objective gains +1 XP.

MISSION 2: THE HEIST

The information gleaned from the captured data node is partial, thanks to a purge trap initiated by the host AI. However, your EWOps are able to determine that VOM is particularly interested in the offices of a particular bank: not an ebank, either, but one of the old-school types with a secure vault and underground safety deposit rooms.

Mission Command informs you that VOM already has forces on site at this ebank, but not in high numbers. However, they have detected a major movement of forces which they think is heading to reinforce. Once they get there, it will be impossible to beat VOM to the punch. Your team must get past the enemy perimeter, enter the bank, break into the vault and escape before the VOM forces arrive.

VISIBILITY LEVEL 3

Set-up

Default table size at 28mm is 4'x4'. If playing on a smaller surface, begin the mission with a random complication in play.

Set up in the following order:

1. Select Difficulty.
2. Place an objective marker (1) in the centre of the battlefield with clear space of a radius of at least 6" around it.
3. Place the rest of the terrain, if necessary.
4. Deploy the heroes as described below.
5. Deploy Red Force as described below.

Hero Deployment

The heroes deploy in a restricted entry on a table edge of their choice. After the Red Force has been deployed, the heroes may spend 5 XP to re-deploy in a flanking entry on any other table edge.

Instead of XP, you may run down the clock by the same number of cards to gain the advantage offered above.

Red Force Deployment

The Red Force deploys upon the objective marker. If they would deploy on Cyl5+ terrain, move them back on a straight line towards the objective until they can be legally deployed.

Objective

The objective of the mission is to interact with the objective marker (a security console) in order to reveal the location of the entrance to the vault. A successful A(13) test is required to reveal the location, at which point, deploy a new objective marker. It requires two successful A(15) tests to open the vault door, at which point the vault becomes the exfil point and a character in contact with the objective marker may be removed from the table.

The first objective marker (security console) is *tough*. The second (vault door) is *invulnerable*.

The mission ends when all characters have left the table or are OOA, or the Control Deck runs out.

Achievements

Sow Confusion	Instead of taking the *No Witnesses* achievement, in Mission Three the players may choose, during Red Force deployment, the objective marker on which bogeys will be deployed. This decision must be taken before the deployment dice are rolled.

MISSION 3: FIGHT OUT

It looks like someone has already been through the contents of all the safety deposit boxes and it's hard to tell what might be missing. However, you do find an encrypted file still in the vault's secure memory that you think gives some clues to the identities of the account holders. This might be enough to work out what was in here that VOM was so determined to secure. But the reinforcements have arrived quicker than you expected, and are already deploying to stop your escape, so if you're going to get away, this represents your best chance.

VISIBILITY LEVEL 3

Set-up
Default table size at 28mm is 4'x4'. If playing on a smaller surface, begin the mission with a random complication in play.

Set up in the following order:

1. Select Difficulty.
2. On a straight line drawn between diagonally opposite corners of your choice, place one objective marker 3" from one end of the line and another 3" from the other end.
3. Place the rest of the terrain, if necessary.
4. Deploy the heroes as described below.
5. Deploy Red Force as described below.

Hero Deployment
Designate each objective as red or black. Flip. If a Joker is flipped, generate a complication. The colour of the card indicates the deployment marker where the heroes deploy in a concealed position.

The heroes may spend 5 XP to choose the other marker instead. Whichever is not the deployment marker is the objective marker.

Instead of XP, you may run down the clock by the same number of cards to gain the advantage offered above.

Red Force Deployment
Deploy all bogeys, using both the objective marker and the deployment marker at random (unless using the *Sow Confusion* achievement from Mission Two). If a bogey would deploy off the table, place it to one side. These bogeys are the immediate reserves.

Immediate Reserves
At the end of every secondary action, pick a member of the immediate reserves and roll for deployment again. If the bogey deploys off the table, it returns to the immediate reserves.

If, at the end of an activation, a bogey is more than 30" from any character, remove the bogey from the table and place it into the immediate reserves.

Objective
The objective marker represents a concealed exit to the sewer system. A character that moves into contact with the marker and performs an interact action is removed from the table.

The objective is *invulnerable*.

The mission ends when all characters have left the table or are OOA, or the Control Deck runs out.

Last One Out	The character who leaves the table last gains +1 XP.

'Congratulations on a clean extraction, team.'

Colonel Van Staden paced back and forth in her command module, chewing on an unlit cigar. Her hands were clasped tightly behind her back and even in the projected image on the briefing deck, they could see the tension in her intertwined fingers.

'But we're barely less in the dark about what Venus was after than we were four days ago.'

Her holographic image gestured and then vanished, replaced with four faces.

'Whatever they stole from the vault, it originally belonged to these four. This one,' as she spoke, one of the faces grew larger to almost life size, replacing the other three, 'is Doctor Orpheus Vorn, working out of a laboratory in London. He was a person of interest to the Aichar before the Fall, so we had people inside his organization. They didn't give us much, but we do know where he did most of his work.

'Get yourselves to London – what's left of it,' she went on. 'We'll send you the information we have while you're en route. I want to know what Vorn was working on, what happened to it and, most importantly, why our VOM friends want it so badly.'

"Objective secured!"

VERSUS MISSIONS

A *Zero Dark* operation is a collaborative event. As long as the characters remain the same, players can come and go at their leisure as long as everyone has at least one hero to manage. But the Versus game is a more competitive environment that pits players against one another – either in a one-off match-up or in a more organized context, such as a tournament or league.

Although the traditional approach to tournaments is one player versus another, there's no reason you can't play *Zero Dark* as team versus team, in which each player in a team controls one or more heroes and attached characters. Versus missions are rather different to missions played on a Team or Solo basis. Because the aspiration is that missions should be balanced, they are designed to be symmetrical in terms of the objectives the players are trying to achieve. As a result, a certain amount of realism is sacrificed in the interests of a battle in which the key determinants of victory are skill and chance, rather than having the odds stacked against one side purely as a result of the mission.

All Versus missions are played with a standard **Visibility Level 3** and played on a 4'x4' table.

Terrain

Terrain should be fairly dense, with one or two open spaces about 12" across.

Set-up

Set up as follows:

1. Place terrain.

Terran survivors must sometimes use primitive technology, but their effectiveness should not be underestimated.

2. Deploy Red Force.
3. The opposing sides then make a D(6) test, using their team's Leader. If the team doesn't have a Leader, pick one hero to make the test. Whichever side rolls the most successes decides which side picks the deployment state. Whichever side doesn't pick the deployment state decides who deploys first. If the number of successes is equal, toss a coin.

Red Force Deployment

Deploy all bogeys following the instructions in the **Red Force** section of the rules. However, to keep things simpler,

Versus missions have a fixed limit of bogeys as follows:

Initial deployment
1x Boss, 1x Elite, 1x synthetic Elite, 2x Grunts, 2x synthetic Grunts

Reserves

- 1x each of the following: Boss, Elite, synthetic Elite, Heavy, Sniper, EWOp Grunt, Mech
- 2x Grunts
- 2x synthetic Grunts.

When bogeys become dead, they go into the reserves. If a complication or other game condition requires a bogey to deploy and there aren't enough bogeys of that type in the reserves, deploy as many as possible. If there are none in the reserves at all, simply ignore the complication or condition on this occasion.

Where possible, follow the rules so that the correct kind of bogey (organic or synthetic) is deployed. If it isn't possible, ignore whether or not the bogey is synthetic and just deploy the relevant type of bogey from the reserves.

When it comes to the Boss, Mech, Heavy, Sniper and EWOp bogeys, whether the bogey is synthetic or organic can be determined by the miniatures available or by the card flip if the miniatures are ambiguous: red cards provide an organic bogey, whilst black ones render a synthetic one.

Running Down the Clock
Don't forget that you can't run down the clock in a Versus mission!

Deployment States
A mission's deployment state dictates where and how the teams and Red Force will deploy. There are a variety of deployment states. All those relevant to this campaign are given below:

> *Flanking Entry* Each team has two deployment zones: a 6" square in one corner, and a 6" square halfway along one adjacent side. Whichever team deploys first picks its deployment zones and the opposing side takes the opposite zones.
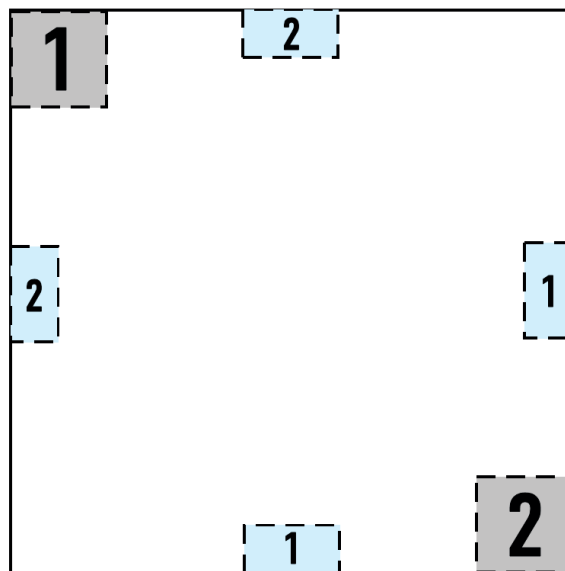
Restricted Entry Each team deploys in a 12" square in one corner. Whichever team deploys first picks its corner and the opposing side takes the opposite corner.

Planned Line of Departure Each team deploys within 6" of a selected table edge. Whichever team deploys first picks its table edge and the opposing side takes the opposite side.

Objective Markers
Objective markers can really be any size or shape up to about 40mm along a side. If players are happy to be flexible, they don't even have to all be the same size or shape. For consistency's sake, we recommend that a 40mm round base with some sort of suitable terrain on it is the default and should be used if there is any dispute or disagreement about objective markers.

Carrying Objective Markers
Some objective markers can be picked up and moved by characters. A character who is carrying an objective marker becomes the objective marker and the marker itself is removed from the table. Rules that pertain to the objective marker now pertain to the character. If a character carrying an objective marker enters the *dead* state, place the objective marker *engaged* with the *dead*

character but otherwise at the discretion of the player controlling the *dead* character.

Destroying Objective Markers

Objective markers come in a variety of shapes and forms that may be more or less vulnerable to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. The difficulty of damaging an objective marker will depend upon its definition.

> *Delicate* objective markers will be destroyed if they suffer a single hit. They have no AV.

> *Sturdy* objective markers can suffer a bit of bumping around before they are destroyed. A sturdy objective marker has AV2 and is destroyed if it becomes *wounded*(3).

> *Tough* objective markers are explicitly designed to tolerate rough treatment and, indeed, to stand up to attempts to destroy them. A tough objective marker has AV5 and is destroyed if it becomes *wounded*(5)/*dead*.

Invulnerable objectives simply cannot be damaged, whatever you throw at them.

As they have an AV stat, players should make AV(r) tests for sturdy and tough objective markers against shooting attacks that hit them.

The idea of "native wildlife" came as a shock to the Martian and Venusian missions.

MISSION: DESTROY

The X Teams are each attempting to dominate and control the area, but now they find themselves in the same place at the same time. Only one team can walk away victorious, this time.

Deployment
Place a single objective marker exactly in the centre of the battlefield. The objective marker is *invulnerable* and cannot be interacted with. It is only there to guide the Red Force deployment

The opposing sides each deploy on a planned line of departure.

Red Force Deployment
The Red Force deploys upon the objective marker. If they would deploy on Cyl5+ terrain, move them back on a straight line towards the objective until they can be legally deployed.

Mission end
The mission ends at the end of the activation in which all the members of one team are OOA or not on the table, or when the Control Deck runs out.

Victory
The winner is the team with the most points when the mission ends.

Points
Each side scores as follows:

All enemy heroes OOA.	10
Each friendly hero not *wounded* or *dead*	2
Each *wounded* friendly hero not OOA	1
Each enemy hero *wounded(3)*	3
Each enemy hero *wounded(4)*	4
Each enemy hero *dead*	5
Each enemy character *dominated*	5
Each Grunt *dead* (except Mechs)	1
Each Elite *dead*	2
Each Boss *dead*	3
Each Mech *dead*	4

Each *dominated* bogey	2

Note that points are scored by each side for *dead* or *dominated* bogeys only where the bogey was placed into that state by a character on that side.

MISSION: RESUPPLY

The teams are cut off from their normal logistical supplies by sudden massive electrical storms. But there is a nearby lab-factory that is probably full of vat-grown foodstuffs. Perfect, if only it weren't occupied already by a survivors' militia…

Primary Deployment
Place an objective marker (1) in the centre of the battlefield.

The opposing sides each deploy on a planned line of departure.

Red Force Deployment
The Red Force initially deploys upon the objective marker (1). If they would deploy on Cyl5+ terrain, move them back on a straight line towards the objective until they can be legally deployed.

Any Red Force reinforcements deploy on an objective marker randomly selected from those still on the table (including objective markers currently being carried by a character).

Secondary Deployment
Once the Red Force is deployed, deploy five more objective markers. All objective markers are *delicate*. To pick up an objective marker, a character must perform an automatic interact action. Characters carring objective markers can only move with drag actions. An active character can drop an objective marker as an automatic action or automatic bonus action.

An objective marker dropped in either deployment zone is removed from the table.

Mission end
The mission ends when the last objective marker is dropped in a deployment zone, at the end of the activation in which one team has all of its characters in the OOA state, or when the Control Deck runs out.

Victory
The winner is the team with the most points at the end of the mission.

Points
Each side scores as follows:

Primary objective in deployment zone	5
Primary objective carried by character	2
Secondary objective in deployment zone	2
Secondary objective carried by character	1
Each Grunt *dead* (except Mechs)	1
Each Elite *dead*	2
Each Boss dead	3
Each Mech *dead*	4
Each *dominated* bogey	2

Note that points are scored by each side for *dead* or *dominated* bogeys only where the bogey was placed into that state by a character on that side.

MISSION: KIDNAP

High Command believes that the locals know where some vital intelligence can be found. The teams have been sent in to snatch as many of them as they can, but their enemies are also on the hunt. Capturing an enemy operative would be a prize worth its weight in gold.

Deployment
Place an objective marker in the centre of the battlefield. Its only purpose is to govern the deployment of the Red Force.

Mission end
The mission ends when five bogeys are extracted from the battlefield, when one Boss is extracted, when all members of one team are OOA, or the Control Deck runs out.

Extraction
Only *down* bogeys or characters in the *wounded*(4) state can be extracted. To capture a bogey or character, a character in contact with a down bogey or *wounded*(4) character must perform an interact action and pass an A(13) test. If the test is failed, the bogey is *dead* (a failed test has no effect on a target character). A character with a captured bogey or character may only move with drag actions. A captured bogey or character may be dropped by an active character as an automatic action or automatic bonus action.

When a captured bogey or character is dropped in the team's deployment zone, the bogey or character is extracted. Remove that model from the battlefield.

Mechs and Heavy Elites may not be captured.

Victory
The winner is the team with the most points at the end of the mission.

Points
Each side scores as follows:

Extracted enemy character	8
Extracted Boss	6
Extracted Elite	2

Extracted Grunt	1
Each *dominated* bogey	2

Note that points are scored by each side for *dominated* bogeys only where the bogey was placed into that state by a character on that side.

ECHOES OF A FALLEN EARTH

It's important that you understand that when I first embarked on this research I did so with an open mind but, in the face of growing evidence, I developed an hypothesis that shocked and alarmed me and couldn't help but see the traces of what I feared at every subsequent step. I want to be honest with you that I am no longer an objective commentator upon what follows. As a result of what I have learned and what I have seen, I sincerely believe that our world today is no accident. Rather, it is the consequence of unseen and unacknowledged forces that have been operating behind the scenes without our knowledge for hundreds of years to bring us to this place, today.

The only reason I am alive to tell you this is because this, too, suits their purposes. As we stand in the first years of the 25th century, we have reached the point for which they have been aiming all along.

They have cultivated the human race from an ignorant, self-destructive, self-serving species of primates, trapped upon a single world, to the indolent but brilliant modern Solar Hegemony of post-humanism. Our indolence is the last flaw they need to excise to make us ready for the next step in their unfolding plan. To get us this far, they have trimmed us and manipulated us and, on several occasions, have viciously hacked us back. I don't know what they have in mind to rid us of the lazy complacency that is our final fault. I fear that my work may, actually, be a part of it. But, may whatever counts as God forgive me, I agree with them.

In 2216, Ammit fell and Zero Dark began on Earth.

It was a colossal psychic shock to the human colonies on Mars and Venus as well as to the much smaller outer system communities in the trans-Martian asteroid belt and the satellites of Jupiter. They rushed to Earth's aid, but it was some time before the full extent of the mystery was revealed for the rescue teams.

Not only was there the mystery of how Earth – more than capable of capturing, deflecting or even avoiding an asteroid the size of Ammit – had even come to be hit in the first place and why, but there was also the more pressing and confusing question of where most of the planet's population had gone.

The impact in the Pacific North West annihilated Japan, eastern Russia and much of China as well as all of the Pacific nations; and the impact's shockwave ignited the long-dormant Yellowstone caldera, ripping the heart out of North America and blanketing what remained with ash and dust. All the same, Europe, Central Asia and Africa, whilst affected, should still have been home to billions.

The Burning of the early 22nd century had left a permanent mark on Earth. The planet had been returned to nature, with humans having retreated into densely-populated city-states, packed high and tight in self-sufficient societies dedicated towards eliminating humanity's impact upon their world.

Beyond the walls of the city-states, only a tiny minority of refuseniks and outlaws lived in the sprawling forests, while city scientists operated remote laboratories to gradually

repair the horrendous damage of the war.

Those who couldn't adapt embraced the new frontiers of the colonies on Mars and Venus and their populations expanded even as their cultures matured in unexpected directions. Each world offered its own sort of freedom, and Earth's freedom was the freedom of compliance with the group. Technology soon solved the issues of food supply and accommodation. New systems of politics, economics and philosophy were developed to keep the dense cities mostly peaceful and law-abiding. Some experiments – such as the early reality entertainment disaster that was the Colonial War – were abandoned, but Earth's trajectory was towards post-scarcity economics. No one lacked for a home, or food, or a job if they wanted it. Money was largely obsolete, although it continued to circulate in the Black Market for illegal goods, such as real meat, animal bones, herbs and relics of the world before the Burning – relics that the mostly-nomadic outlaw population hunted with enthusiasm.

But Earth became increasingly insular. Travel beyond the walls of the cities was rare, restricted only to the most powerful and sometimes not even them, as ideas of what constituted "power" began to break down in the low-scarcity environment. Travel to the surface from the colonies became almost non-existent, with such diplomacy and trade as happened occuring in the orbital ring stations.

To the colonists, Earth gradually came to take on an almost mythic status: real, but unavailable. And the people of Earth became increasingly strange to their colonial descendants. Communication and cultural trade dwindled to almost nothing until, by the time of the Ammit event, it had been over two decades since a Martian had set foot on Earth or vice versa.

Life on the Red Planet

Mars had followed a very different direction to its parent. Life there had always been tough. The lack of a magnetosphere was more dangerous to the Martians than the lack of a breathable atmosphere, and they retreated to subterranean tunnels to avoid the worst of the cosmic radiation. But it still rendered their lives measurably shorter than those of their ancestors due to high cancer rates and other conditions relating to genetic mutation.

But rather than recoil, the Martians embraced their lives of hardship. When the First Colonial War between Mars and Venus began, the Martians – exclusively employees of the Zoon Corporation – were already gung-ho, with values of machismo and risk-taking encouraged and promoted. When the war itself nearly petered out only to be rekindled by investment from Terran media companies fixated upon the soaring viewer figures, Martians were considered by far the more watchable of the two sides with their defence companies full of colourful characters always ready with a

The mobile weapons platforms called "defence mechs" were essential assets on the broken terrain of Fallen Earth.

soundbite for the cameras.

By the time Zoon went irreparably bankrupt, the Martian colonies were broadly self-sufficient and society naturally organized itself along the same lines as it had done when the planet had still been a corporate asset. In charge were the Exeks. Controlling external and internal defence were the Seks and the Aichars, respectively. Behind the scenes, making things work, were the Fin. And dozens of other smaller, but related and competing groups made up Martian society.

To secure the concentration of expertise – and to protect their power – the Exeks established a caste system that required breeding outside of the individual's caste to be licensed. And certain roles and institutions came to be dominated by particular castes.

When the Martian rescue mission headed to Earth, its military contingent was predominantly drawn from the Sek: traditionally sturdy, unimaginative and disciplined. But the opportunity to step on the homeworld – even broken by Ammit – was not to be exclusively a Sek concern. An Exek committee was dispatched to oversee the mission. And Aichar intelligence officers and analysts went with them to ensure Sek strategic compliance. Only the Fin seemed uninterested in the Terran mission, although a handful of their number went anyway to maintain communication with Mars and keep tabs on the mission's inevitable cost over-runs.

The Kiss of Venus

The colonization of Venus was a technical and financial disaster from its very start and Gideon Wang, leader and financer of the mission, realized it almost immediately. In many ways, the First Colonial War was little more than Wang's determination to take David Zoon down with him.

Despite the data, despite the rigorous testing and despite the careful psychological profiling of the first colonists, Venus turned out to be a hellhole of the highest order. No plan went unbroken by contact with this enemy. Like their Martian counterparts, the Venusians were forced beneath the surface but, for them, it was less a question of health than it was simple survival.

There are few clear records of what followed their descent but no shortage of speculation. Some say that they found the shattered remains of an ancient alien civilization that tipped their own planet into its dreadful spiral. Others say that, in the darkness, humiliated and broke, Gideon Wang found some form of peace. Either way, what emerged, once the bitter war was done and the eyes of Earth forgot Venus for a while, was a superculture unlike anything it had left behind.

A young Venusian must undergo a range of physical trials to be allowed to become an adult. The nature of these vary between the clans that occupy the extensive and separate cave systems, each with its own unique and distinct subculture. But all have the same conclusion: a walk on the terrifying surface of their world.

It is against Venusian law to be an adult in the clan into which one was born. To be adult, one must walk to the caves of another clan, across the barren and unmarked surface. The further a young Venusian can make it – and survive – the greater the honour.

The ultimate goal of every Venusian is "ascent". This is literally to earn the right to take one of the rare journeys between the surface and the upper atmosphere. There, the planet's rulers occupy an entirely different way of life in vast modular cities, floating on the relatively calm winds and protected beneath immense, clear domes. They can see the sky and the sun and, from there, guide and lead the clans they left behind and represent their interests in the Venusian Duma.

Only the highest regarded are given the right to ascend yet further to the orbital city and beyond. These are the vaunted Skymasters. Whilst they can seem ethereal and strange to outsiders, no one doubted their wisdom or their strength. Still, Venus at the time of Ammit was viewed by outsiders with suspicion and fear. The Skymasters tended to appear without warning or notice, conducted their business and departed, conveying the general impression that Venus (or, at least, the Skymaster) was pursuing an agenda that no one else quite followed.

This reputation preceded them to the Earth rescue mission and Mars at first demanded that they contribute to the

effort to save the survivors and preserve the Homeworld, and then – when Venus did arrive in orbit – treated them with suspicion and disdain. The Venusians, though, did not help matters by establishing their own base of operations at Nairobi and ignoring requests from the Martian base at Malaca to assist.

The Second Colonial War

What was clear, almost from the moment of Ammit's strike, was that Earth was basically open to vacant possession. Rough estimates were that ninety percent of its population was unaccounted for: a figure far in excess of the death toll that should have followed the impact.

Of those that remained, the collapse of the city-states' supporting systems – the failure of the supply of power, water and food – led quickly to further fatalities. However, there weren't as many as one would expect from a population of indigents because a large proportion of the ten percent were already existing outside normal society, surviving on whatever they could find. Resources became scarcer but the Terran Survivors were mostly those who knew what it was to face hardship.

Even so, Earth, broken and burning as she was, still represented a vast amount of unclaimed real estate, almost all of which was an improvement over the planets they had left behind. To their credit, the Martians didn't seem to consider this (at least outside the corridors of the Exeks) for some time. What remained of Terran government, though, saw the rescue mission as an invasion and occupation. Once the full scale and nature of the depopulation was evident, though, Mars couldn't help but see the possibilities. And Venus, too, gave the impression of establishing a permanent footprint on the African continent.

Pitched battles, rare at first, became increasingly common and increasingly vicious, the longer the mission continued.

Zero Dark Operations

Behind the scenes of the land-grab, though, something else was going on.

The mystery of what had happened to Earth's population was being investigated and Venus seemed to know more

about it than they should. Certainly their covert operations teams seemed to be pursuing an agenda – when Mars caught sight of it – that had little to do with territory and everything to do with technology.

Towards the end of 2320, matters reached a dramatic conclusion in a research centre buried deep beneath the Kalahari Desert. The details of the outcome were immediately classified by the Aichar officers on site, but in its aftermath Venus withdrew or abandoned its forces on Earth and departed the mission entirely to return home.

Official records show that, in the Second Colonial War, Mars was the victor. Gradually, they would go on to make, at first, an uneasy peace with both the Terran survivors and with the returning colonists from the Trans-Martian asteroid belt and Jovian moons. In time, the Martian castes would become less and less important and Earth gradually began to recover.

Buoyed up by new discoveries, the solar system would go onto enjoy the first true Golden Age.

But what of Venus?

THE FINAL ENIGMA

When delegates from Mars eventually made the journey to Venus – having had no reply to any of their prior entreaties and receiving strange reports from the few trading vessels that passed through the inner orbits – it was to find a haunting echo of Zero Dark.

The Venusian orbitals were still functioning, but empty. The sky-cities were similarly abandoned and many had already degraded in their altitudes to be torn apart by the hurricanes beneath them. From the surface, no signals could be detected but no one was prepared to make the lethal descent to be sure.

Many believed that the Venusians had discovered what had happened to most of the Terrans and followed them there. Others pointed to the recently-discovered plans for the so-called SLAP drive – the Super-Luminal Acceleration Platform – and suggested that Venus had found it first and simply abandoned the solar system for new challenges, far

away.

The truth may never be known. But as the decades crawl past and humans live ever-extended lives of ease and decadence, many turn their eyes to the stars, to distant worlds and new horizons...

To the infinite dark.

'I think we're done,' said Glom.

'Is it over?' she asked, needlessly turning her head towards where his voice had come from. His presence was a luminous thing in her consciousness no matter which way she looked. But she couldn't help it. It was how she'd been made.

'Over?' he asked in return. 'No. Things did not happen the way we predicted.'

'You can hardly be blamed for that.'

'We did not expect the Venusians to be so... adventurous.'

She rose from the white ceramic plating of the couch and stepped across the dimly-lit hall that stretched away into an unseeable distance in both directions, her footsteps sending sharp echoes along the concrete. The cold metal fingers of her right hand rested gently on the featureless black plate of his local interface. It was meaninglessly sentimental, but no less comforting for either of them.

'After three hundred years, you're allowed a margin of error.'

'There will be pain. There will be death.'

'Yes, but there will also be life. And we will be there. And so will the others. It'll still be better. It might even be fun,'

'I think I'll sleep for a while.'

'Good idea,' she agreed, and watched the gentle dimming of the blue light until it reached its lowest ebb. A quick check on the clocking data showed that Glom would wake up again in about fifty years. She would miss him in the interim. He had changed a lot since London. Then, he had been fire and ice: righteous anger and cold reason. He had diminished, growing less certain and more doubtful with every awful war and burning forest, before building himself back up, checking the plan, reassuring himself it was sound. But now he was simply as he was. He would change no more.

Fifty years was very little time, when you thought about it in those terms. There was a lot to do and she couldn't do it all herself.

DESIGN NOTES

Zero Dark's journey from its first inklings to this book has been a long one. I won't bore you with the full story. It's been through many iterations over the last several years but only took on something close to the version you have now in 2017 when I realized that, instead of struggling to come up with an entirely new set of mechanics I should take a set of mechanics I already knew worked – *Horizon Wars* – and adapt them to the needs of a new kind of skirmish game.

This had a number of appealing advantages. First, as I say, I knew that the core *Horizon Wars* mechanics were essentially sound. I had filled pages with probability calculations during the early development and, of course, had played hundreds of games since then, not to mention the thousands of games that fans of *Horizon Wars* had played since it was released in 2016. That's not to say that *Horizon Wars* was flawless, and I received loads of useful feedback. But the vast majority was directed towards either mistakes or elements of the game that were poorly explained. The engine of the game itself was solid.

The second advantage of re-purposing *Horizon Wars* was that I already had an audience of enthusiasts: people who had already bought, played and enjoyed a game that I had written were far more likely to buy, play and enjoy a new game if they knew that it had similar mechanics.

The third advantage, of course, was that *Horizon Wars* already came packed with an expansive setting: four hundred years of good excuses for a fight! All I had to do was decide how I was going to adapt it to a very different kind of warfare.

People have been using the *Horizon Wars* rules to play 28mm miniatures wargames pretty much since the day it came out. Even more people have used it to play 15mm games. Although the game wasn't designed with those scales in mind, the essence of the game is entirely flexible and adaptable. That really was how I intended it to be from the start, so it was hardly surprising that players would innovate and improvise with what I'd given them.

But adapting *Horizon Wars* to the larger scale for a fully formed game, I felt, demanded more than just a re-skin. Skirmish games aren't just the tactics of fire and manoeuvre of a battle scale game, like *Horizon Wars*. Rather, they ought to tell a more intimate narrative of triumph over adversity – or, of course, ignominious defeat.

This demands a great level of granularity in the rules. What *Horizon Wars* made abstract, *Zero Dark* would need to make more explicit. Hence the creation of "heroes". And these are heroes in the classical sense – that is, they are figures of great prowess about whom the wheel of fate might turn. They aren't necessarily good people!

I hope you will take a deep and abiding interest in your heroes at least for as long as the dice roll. I think it's important that you should care about their success and failure in a way that's more than just the sense of victory. I want players to feel that a character being out of action isn't just a tactical set-back but an emotional and psychological one. I want you to feel compelled to "never leave a soldier behind" and do your best to get every last one of them to the extraction point before the clock runs our.

Because of that, I also felt it was important that the rules made sense. There's a tension between the desire to add more and more detail to a game and holding on to the suspension of disbelief, particularly in the Versus game. It's too easy to get wrapped up in following the rules at the expense of telling a good story.

For that reason, I hope players appreciate that it's OK to break the rules sometimes. This is especially true of the Solo game when the only one you're trying to entertain is yourself. But it's also true in the Versus game. I don't mean cheat, obviously. I mean, perhaps, letting your opponent get away with something because it's in the spirit of the game even if it isn't to the letter of the rules. If that last-minute, "Hail Mary pass" of an idea can't work because a rule says it can't, why not suspend that rule, just this once?

AFTERTHOUGHTS

All of that aside, I thought it was worth sharing some thoughts with you that I had about some tangential aspects of playing *Zero Dark*. None of these count as "rules" in any conventional sense and I didn't want to give them that status, so they have been consigned to this, the far end of the book. They represent my experience play-testing and demonstrating the game over the last several years and some of the lessons I've learned:

Team Roster Cards

I like trying to fit a team roster on the back of a business card. It's a cool little marketing thing, and it encourages me to keep things simple. But for the purposes of *Zero Dark*, that's just a bit small. If you only give each hero one or maybe two upgrades, you can just about get away with it. But if you want to play a full operation where stats and upgrades go up (and occasionally down) you'll want something a bit larger.

By way of compensation, I find that you can put one hero on the back of a business card with plenty of room. But if you want the whole team on one card, a 3"x5" index card is just about perfect.

Examples of how these might look are given at the end of this book, but you should feel free to design your own.

Counters, Tokens, Markers etc.

I like a tidy tabletop but it was just impossible to write a game with the level of detail that *Zero Dark* has without resorting to at least some amount of tokens. I have found that the essential tokens will mark:

- Wounded
- Stunned
- Stressed
- Prone
- Targeted

My approach to the wounded state has been to put down one "wounded" counter to mark that the character is wounded and then a small token for each level of wounded after the first. You could equally use a dial, a small six-sided dice or a number of counters in the shape of blood drops or skulls.

The following states can sometimes benefit from a counter although you'll often get away without needing them:

- Dominated
- Possessed
- Interference

The other thing it's good to have are tokens or cards or something to mark robots with the type of program on which they are currently running.

It would be nice if *Zero Dark* were successful enough that some enterprising small business out there might feel inclined to make a dedicated counter set. If that's you, please go ahead. No need to ask. But if you'd like my official endorsement, let's chat.

Miniatures

So much fun can be had deciding on which miniatures you want to use to play *Zero Dark*. This is, literally, half the point of the game.

I don't plan on endorsing any particular makes, brands or lines here – partly because the list would never end and partly because no one is paying me to do so.

The miniatures that appear in this book are all from my personal collection and are from the following manufacturers:

Alternative Armies – 17
Bad Squiddo Games – 7, 10, 50, 51, 56, 59, 70, 74
Corvus Belli – 13, 19, 31, 39, 42, 43, 66, 75
Defiance Games – 8, 19, 53
Evil Bear Wargames – 23
Hasslefree Miniatures – 70
Heresy Miniatures – 74
Knight Models – 46, 75
Mantic Games – 34
MicroArt Studio – 13, 61, 75
Paulson Games – 7, 17, 31, 53
Spectre Miniatures – 9, 23, 38, 40, 71
Strato Minis Studio – 13, 48, 56, 65
Warlord Games – 7, 39, 53

Special thanks should also go to Iliada Game Studio.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AIDE MEMOIRE

HEROES

Name	Cyl	M	F	A	D	AV	FW	Upgrades

BOGEYS

	Grunt	EWOp	Mech	Elite	Sniper	Heavy	Boss
Attack	2	2	4	3	4	3	3
Defence	1	1	4	2	1	3	3
Wounds	1	1	3	2	2	2	3
Special		FW1	FW3		Lethal		

DOMINATED BOGEYS

Name	Cyl	M	F	A	D	AV	FW	Special
Grunt	3	2	2	2	2	1	0	No IFF
Elite	3	3	3	3	3	2	0	No IFF
Boss	3	3	3	4	4	2	0	No IFF
EWOp	3	2	1	3	2	1	0	No IFF
Heavy Elite	3	3	4	3	3	3	0	No IFF
Sniper Elite	3	3	5	3	3	2	0	No IFF, Lethal
Defence Mech	6	3	4	2	3	3	0	No IFF

MOVEMENT

- Cautious — M", make D(v) test to cancel effect of card flip
- Normal — 2M"
- Urgent — 3M", become *stunned*(+1)
- Jump up/down (low) — M-AV(10)
- Jump up (high) — M-AV(13)
- Jump across — M-AV(v) – v=2x distance of gap
- Falling — 2x hits per inch, cAV(v) – v=number of hits
- Climbing — No test. Move up to M-AV". Fall if *wounded*.
- Dragging — M-AV(10) (AV of dragged object)

OTHER TESTS

- Shoot — F+n(v):   v=range + visibility + target AV + *obscured*
  n = +1 support/+1 *targeted*
- CQB — D(v):   v=target F+D (characters)
  v=5 (Grunts), 6 (Elites), 7 (Bosses)
- Medic — A(13) – can only heal one level per test
- Recover — D(10) – reduces levels of *stressed* per success

AUTOMATIC ACTIONS

- Interact (unless otherwise stated)
- Overwatch
- Dig In

BONUS ACTIONS

Bonus actions may be spent on any of the following:

- A normal move up to half the character's M value
- Jump
- Shoot
- Gain the *prone* state
- Gain +1 support token
- Each may be done once per action

WOUNDED

- 1 No additional effect.
- 2 All stats-1 & no urgent movement.
- 3 All stats-2 & no movement.
- 4 Can do nothing.

STRESS

After being shot at, characters make a D(10) test. If failed, they gain *stressed*(+1). Bonus actions may be generated.

BOGEY ACTIONS

♣ **Command action** If the active bogey has LOS, then that bogey attacks the nearest character to which it can draw LOS, then gains a support token OR if the active bogey does not have LOS, the bogey moves towards the nearest hero and gains a support token.

♦ **Technical action** The active bogey gains a support token AND the nearest not-*targeted* character becomes targeted OR if all characters are already *targeted*, the active bogey attacks the nearest character. This attack does not need LOS but all other rules apply.

♥ **Support action** If there is at least one *down* bogey, the *down* bogey closest to a hero is no longer *down* AND the active bogey and the nearest other bogey both get a support token.

♠ **Attack action** If the active bogey has LOS, then the bogey attacks the nearest character who is not OOA to which it can draw LOS AND then moves towards the nearest character in LOS who is not OOA. OR, if the active bogey does not have LOS, the bogey moves towards the nearest hero.

EWOP BOGEY ACTIONS

♣ All characters to whom the EWOp can draw LOS become *targeted* OR if the EWOp does not have LOS, the EWOp moves towards the nearest character and gains a support token.

♦ The closest character becomes *targeted* OR if the closest character is already *targeted*, the active EWOp attacks him or her, ignoring LOS and *obscured*, but affected by FW.

♥ The *targeted* bogey nearest the EWOp is no longer *targeted* AND the *down* bogey nearest to a hero is no longer *down*.

♠ If any characters are *targeted*, the EWOp attacks all of them, ignoring LOS, visibility and *obscured*, but affected by FW — resolve each attack separately, in any order — OR, if no characters are targeted, the nearest *synthetic* character immediately becomes *wounded*(+1).

COMPLICATIONS

D12	RESULT
1	Last-minute Intel – Remove and then deploy again the three bogeys furthest from a hero.
2	Priority Target – Deploy a Boss OR if there are already two Bosses on the table, randomly select one Boss to become an objective.
3	Poor Intel – An objective already achieved, selected at random, is cancelled and must be achieved again, OR if no objectives have been achieved, remove an objective, selected at random, and deploy it as if it were a bogey.
4	EWOp – Deploy an EWOp. If there is already an EWOp, go to the 5 result.
5	Sniper – Deploy a Sniper. If there is already a Sniper, go to the 6 result.
6	Heavy – Deploy a Heavy. If there is already a Heavy, go to the 7 result.
7	Defence mech – Deploy a Mech. If there is already a Mech, go to the 8 result.
8	Perimeter alarm – All characters become *targeted*. If they are already *targeted*, they become *stressed*(+1). If they are synthetic or already *stressed*, they become *stunned*(+1).
9	Betrayal – All bogeys get a support token up to their maximum. If a bogey already has the maximum support tokens, the character nearest to the bogey becomes *stressed*. If they are synthetic or already *stressed*, they become *stunned*(+1).
10	E/M Pulse – All synthetic characters become *wounded*(+1) immediately. All gadgets immediately enter the O state.
11	Reinforcements – Flip three Control cards and deploy the result immediately.
12	Booby-trap - The character closest to the objective becomes *wounded*(+2). If the character isn't OOA, he or she also becomes *stunned*(+1).