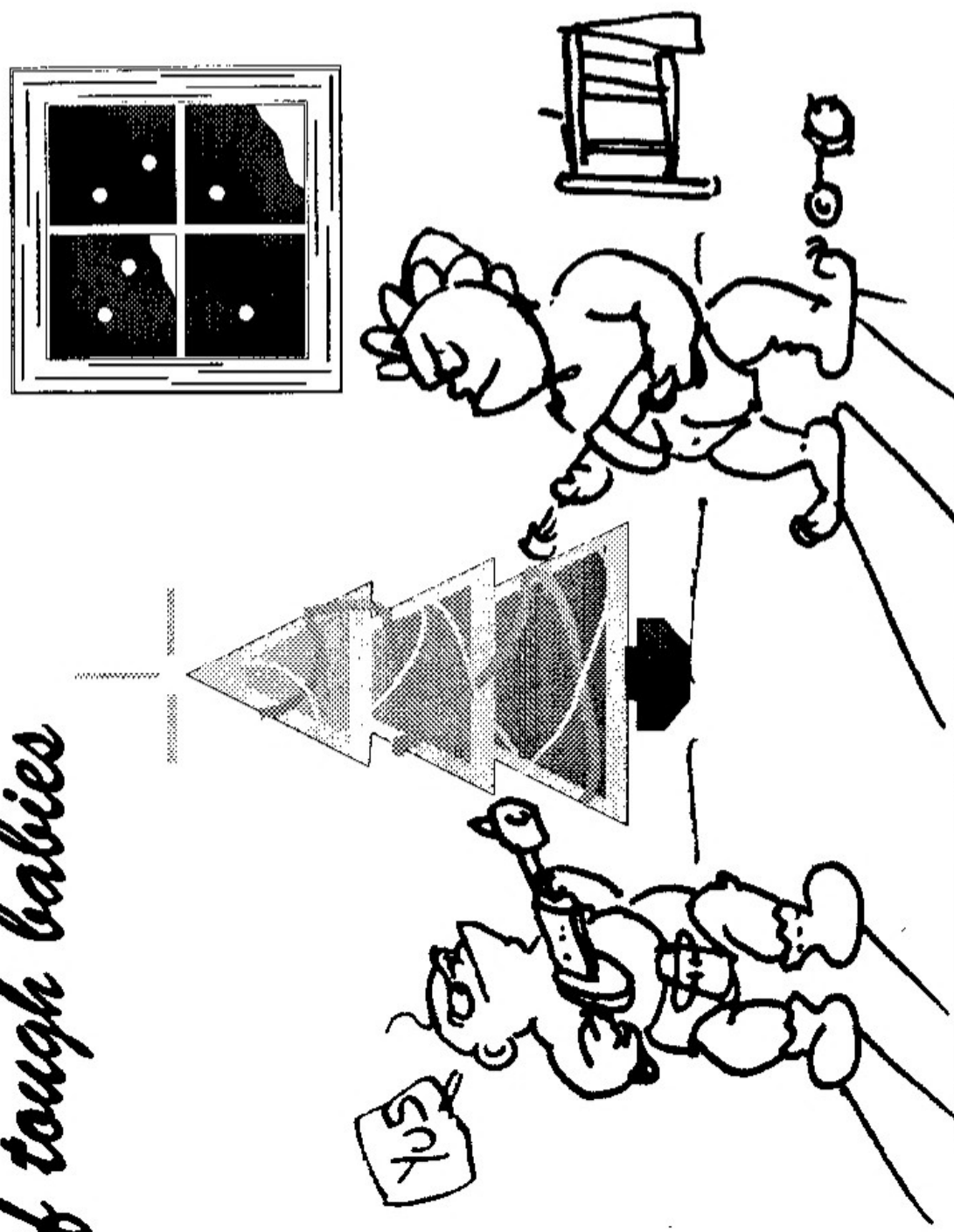


*This year Santa knew he was up
against a couple
of tough babies*



This image is not intended to represent any taggers,
living or dead. Any similarity therefore is purely coincidental

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TAGGING DIARY 1998

FEBRUARY

28th **TAGCON 8** - Nuneaton Arts Centre, Warwickshire.

Contact : Dai Rees 122, Hartland Avenue, Wyken, Coventry. CV2 3ES
☎ (01203) 453673

MARCH

13th-15th **'Sic Semper Tyrannus' Space Above and Beyond** organised by Black Watch at Overstone Northampton.

Contact : Mr Katt 18, Althorp Rd. St James, Northampton NN5 5EF
☎ (0802) 698802 anytime or (01604) 750329 until 9pm

MAY

22nd-25th **DROPZONE '98** **THE National Tag Event**

Thorsby Park, Nottinghamshire.

Contact : Graham Parton, 5 Hawthorn Close, Charfield, Gloucs.. GL12 8TX
☎ (01454) 260983 email://100602.2714@compuserve.com
or website <http://www.soton.ac.uk/~ajc4/lasertag/dropzone/dz1998.html>

SEPTEMBER

Exact date unknown organised by Fiat Lux at Merdon.

Contact : Alex & Sarah Clark, 74 Bluebell Rd, Bassett, Southampton, SO16 3LQ ☎ (01703) 679758 or (0385) 790673 (mobile)
ajc4@soton.ac.uk <http://www.soton.ac.uk/~ajc4/index.htm>

OTHER Tags

The lapse of TAGRAG this year will leave a hole in the middle of the season a bit like last year.

The **Light Brigade** and **Virtual Eclipse** will however be running games from February onward about once a month each. For further details use the contacts in the Club directory or search Sarah's website :- ajc4@soton.ac.uk <http://www.soton.ac.uk/~ajc4/index.htm>

If you are planning any tags please get in contact. Remember adverts are free in **FIREFIGHT**

Good Luck to all game organisers.

Editor's Bit

It appears, as always, the first thing I must do is apologise. Although I felt I would not be able to get 'this thing' (as I affectionately term this publication) sent out before Xmas, a lot of others thought I could. I am sorry! I hope you had a very Merry Xmas and at the least I hope this is setting you up for a Happy New Year.

The rumours of Lazer Tag death still abound, but as this edition shows, there is life in the old girl/boy yet (terribly PC don't you think). The reviews are thick and fast. Everyone seems to be, for the most part, enjoying themselves. "Quelle horreur!"

There is still the discussion of the federation/confederation/alliance/triumvirate or whatever. This is inevitably going to raise its head, as a discussion at some point. I seriously think that there are some considerable volumes of flesh, and in particular muscle, going to have to be put on some of the discursive frames before a sensible debate can begin. Mind you, that hasn't stopped us before, has it?

In keeping with the festive spirit, a few more light hearted articles are included, along with a crossword for your bemusement. I hope you like the cover as a joint effort from myself and Mr P Smart. Who has promised me some more of the same, as soon as he gets a spare moment.

The Dropzone flyer summarized within these pages gives pause for thought. I have people begging to find out more. This is of course how things should be. The first big genreless or rather genre blended themed scenarios are awaited with bated breath. Especially as they come from the warped minds that gave you such gems as Awakenings, First and Second Contact. Although these games have blended genres themselves, this departure from heavily manned NPC teams and relatively small PC teams is a bold step. "Bon chance mes braves!"

On a more unfortunate note, Mr Jon Blau has asked me to convey his thanks to all who have attended TAGRAG in the past, but he feels he cannot run another for a variety of reasons. He is still attempting to improve the site further and to supply liquid annihilation in the form of cider, so if you wish to hire the Downgate - Kingdom of Mud, get in touch with him at Light Years Ahead.

It now only remains for me to urge you to have a fantastic New Year. I will, I hope, see most of you at the annual jaw wagging contest ie TAGCON-8 in February. If not perhaps at DROPZONE'98.

Keep the articles and subscriptions pouring (well, OK, trickling) in, and I'll see you soon, thro' a 'scope.



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A WEEKEND IN THE COUNTRY

AN ORGANISERS REPORT

BY DAVID A HARVEY

Held on the 14th and 15th June 1997 "A Weekend in the Country" was something which I had been thinking about for the last couple of years but various things had stopped me from taking it any further. Late last year I finally decided that it was time to ignore the negative comments of others, put down my can of Duff™ and get on with it.

The format of the weekend was simple with a game Saturday afternoon followed by a barbecue another game Saturday evening and the final game of the weekend on Sunday morning.

Although the first game wasn't until Saturday afternoon I had been asked whether it was possible to arrive on Friday night to avoid a long journey on Saturday morning and since this meant there would be a group of potential volunteers to get things ready on Saturday morning I thought what a good idea. Especially since it saved me from travelling up early on Saturday morning too.

So, thanks to a lift from Dave Bodger I arrived on Friday night and due to circumstances beyond his control Dave headed back to London to get some things sorted out whilst I stayed on site to make sure everything was ready for Saturday lunchtime and into the bargain spent a very pleasant evening socialising around the camp fire with the Fiat Lux! advanced party.

Ros Day gave us the Saturday afternoon game a tale of 1920's American mobsters and illicit hillbilly hooch called Where there's a Still... which, as "Big Dave" Bodger's turncoat bodyguard I enjoyed considerably. Especially because we found so much to do that hardly a shot was fired.

After a break for a barbecue organised by Sarah Clark we got ready for Peter Merrit's Just Desserts. This splendidly atmospheric science fiction horror game gave us all plenty to do. As part of a StarForce escort of a scientific survey of the relatively unexplored highlands of a colony

planet we started the game on our way to base camp to compare notes with the other two survey teams. Naturally enough things were not that simple.

Sunday morning was a more light hearted affair with Alex Clark giving us a game based on the tabletop RPG Paranoia. As part of a yellow clearance team of troubleshooters we were given the dubious honour of going outside Alpha complex to retrieve a container of radio-pharmaceuticals cunningly disguised, by the evil communist scum who had stolen it, as a computer core.

This game was enormous fun and everyone got into the somewhat anarchic spirit of things. Please Alex can we have another one, after all I've still got four spare clones left and that will never do.



Caution mutant warbot at play

All in all a great little weekend with three interesting and amusing games. I had a great time which made all the hard work worthwhile. Thanks to the support I received, the step up from running just a single game to organising a weekend turned out to be much less of a jump than I had feared.

The biggest challenge I had was getting people to confirm that they were coming. Bookings were very thin on the ground even as late as DropZone which was only three weeks before the event. This meant that the organisers had very little notice of who was playing their game which made it difficult for them to assign roles and send out briefings. This reluctance to book early meant that I ended up spending time and money which would have been more productively used on the event itself on the telephone chasing up potential players. Still at the end of the day nineteen people came along, some only able to make one of the days but most for both.

Thanks to everyone who came and special thanks to: Ros Day, Peter Merritt and Alex Clark for running the games, Sarah Clark for the barbecue, Simon Russell, Steve Trent and Gary Swanston for their help setting up and for staying behind to put things away again afterwards, and to Tim Atkinson and Mike Reed for the highly professional set of emergency protocols which we will hopefully never have to use in anger.

I'm planning to run "Another Weekend in the Country" at the same sort of time (3rd or 4th weekend in June) next year so I'm looking for game organisers and players. You have been warned. That is all.



*

"A Weekend in the Country"

(Downgate Woods, 14th/15th June - for those who missed it!)

In the weeks leading up to this event it was doubtful whether it would happen, given the lack of response from the tagging fraternity - a common problem this year, it seems. I was particularly worried since I was running one of the games (my first attempt at game organising) and had worked out that the script needed a minimum of 14 players. As it turned out, as the weekend approached it looked as though sufficient would turn out to make it worthwhile (~17 attended, in the end).

Reassured that it would go ahead with sufficient numbers I set out for the site on Friday night. Although the first game (the one I was running) wasn't due to start until Saturday afternoon I wanted to have plenty of time to set up, as well as enjoying the chance to socialise on the Friday night. After the usual crawl round the M25 I finally arrived, exhausted and stressed out, at about 10.30 p.m. Some welcome help from Gary in carrying things down to the campsite (I didn't want to risk driving down that track in the dark), then, having put up the tent, a pleasant few hours spent frothing and toasting marshmallows over the camp fire before retiring for the night.

Next day started badly. As usual I woke earlier than everyone else. Deciding to make coffee (there's nothing like the sound of a whistling kettle for getting people up), I could find everything I needed except matches. Decided that these must be in the car. Walked up to the car park. Matches were not in the car, therefore they must be back at the tent since I clearly remembered packing them. While at the car it started to rain. Of course my waterproof poncho was at the camp-site! Arriving back at the tent somewhat damp finally found the matches and consoled myself with a cup of coffee while listening to the sound of rain beating on the tent. Eventually it stopped and I was able to persuade the others to get up. During the rest of the morning the other players started to arrive, the weather improved and things started to look better. I took the opportunity to set out the few props my game needed. I thought I had everything prepared but still managed to end up cutting up slips of paper just before the game was due to start!

Only about half an hour behind schedule, the first game got under way. This was entitled "A load of moonshine - or where there's a still" and was set in a remote area of America during the 1920s - the era of gangsters and Prohibition. This area was famous for its moonshine, particularly that made by a well-known local character, Alex Clark, helped by his family (Jasper Hedger and Denzil Brown). Also in the area was another moonshiner, Gary Swanson (whose product was not as good, in fact, rot-gut). He was also aided by his family (Sue Vought and Pat Gardner). Other local characters included the Sheriff (Simon Russell), the Doc (Simon Barker) and the local midwife/herb-woman (myself). Into this situation came a small-time gangster, Dave Bodger, with his wife, a hard-headed business-woman hiding behind the facade of a brainless bimbo (Sarah Clark) and chauffeur/bodyguard (Dave Harvey). He was hoping to move to the country and/or make a business deal with Alex to supply his moonshine to the city. Following him were three representatives of the Capone gang, led by Steve Trent. They also hoped to make a business deal, and also to eliminate Dave Bodger from the scene. In pursuit of everyone came two representatives from the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Agency (Tim Atkinson and P  te Merritt), out to destroy illicit stills and arrest moonshiners and gangsters. With this mix of conflicting interests, I felt sure that some kind of conflict would inevitably ensue. As it turned out everyone was too busy making deals and keeping an eye on their own followers to fight. Perhaps I had

written in too many hidden agendas! Sarah was busy keeping an eye on their bodyguard who seemed to be acting strangely (as a matter of fact he was a cocaine addict who had sold out to the Capones). Steve had been told to beware of one of his followers and realised that he probably couldn't trust the other one either after he had been arrested and released suspiciously easily (this follower was in fact an ATF agent).

At the end of the day only the sheriff had been shot (wounded when the Capone gang broke out of jail) but otherwise he had done very well, accumulating a lot of money for bail and granting hunting licences and gun permits to the visitors. He had also taken charge of confiscated stocks of moonshine, thus ensuring his own supply for some time to come. After an early setback when the ATF found and destroyed his still, Alex and family had come to an agreement with Dave Bodger for future supplies. Gary had done even better, conning the Capones into agreeing to purchase his rot-gut by letting them sample a bottle of Alex's good stuff and passing it off as his own! Steve and the Capone gang had a bad day of it, making the deal with Gary and failing entirely to deal with Bodger (I suspect their day was going to get even worse when the Boss found out!). Apart from their early success in finding Alex's still, the ATF agents likewise failed to either find any more stills or moonshine, or to arrest anyone (or at least to persuade the sheriff to keep them in jail). Result - hillbillies 1, city slickers 0.

Despite the lack of action, people said they enjoyed the game and there was lots of good roleplaying - I would like to thank everyone for the effort they put into their costumes and characters. Obviously there were minor glitches - one or two people didn't have enough to do, particularly the Doc (how was I to know there wouldn't be any fighting?), and one or to other ideas I had introduced didn't happen (which means they can be used again some other time). For those who like historical settings for games, the Prohibition/gangster era is a rich source of scripts and I am surprised that no-one (as far as I know) has used it before. I may write other games in this genre, and would be happy to play one if some-one else would write it!

Before the evening game we were treated to the usual excellent barbecue provided by Sarah. Then it was time for Pete Merritt's game, "Just Deserts". I have two reasons for not saying too much about this. Firstly, I understand he intends to redo this game at some point in the future, perhaps at Dropzone, therefore I don't want to give away the plot! Secondly I missed a lot of the twists and complications of the plot by leaving the reading of information notes to others. My excuses for this were two-fold. Firstly I genuinely find reading anything in poor light difficult - involving the juggling of sources of light and magnification as well as whatever I am trying to read! Secondly my role was officer in charge of the security team. As such I felt justified in leaving information gathering to the scientists, while my job was protecting them while they did so. I can say that the game was highly atmospheric, making everyone suitably jumpy and paranoid, even after one had worked out that Pete was doing all the NPC'ing by himself. High spots included Jasper examining some animal tracks and misreading metres instead of centimetres, making us wonder whether we had landed in Jurassic Park! Also Denzil and myself hiding behind a tree while the scientists tried to solve the final riddle, having decided that if the scientists wished to blow themselves up while examining alien technology that was their problem - our job was solely to protect them from being attacked by hostile humans or eaten by monsters while they did so! However, we agreed that the tree was unlikely to provide sufficient protection from what seemed likely to happen - just enough for an "I told you so!" before we were blown away. As it turned out they solved the puzzle and saved the universe - just. Since writing this, I note that Pete

has done a detailed write up of this game for Command Post so full details are available.

The post-game frothing round the campfire went on into the early hours and I staggered to bed just at it was starting to get light.

The next morning everyone staggered out of bed eventually and we were joined by Mick and Mel Reed who had come for the morning's game. This was "Paranoia" based on the RPG of that name, and run by Alex Clark. It also deserves a re-run, although I don't know of any plans to do so. The plot saw two teams of Troubleshooters, sent Outside independently to recover a supposedly stolen computer core. Surprisingly, we were able to reach the briefing room, receive our briefing and set out on the mission without losing a clone. It couldn't last. I was the first casualty, scattered over the landscape by a faulty grav-shute. Bring on clone no. 2. We wandered through this strange, untidy green environment. I aroused some suspicion in my fellow clones by excessive interest in the greenery (I was a member of the Sierra Club Secret Society). We encountered some of the Outsiders - a post-holocaust biker gang (with no bikes), and eventually found the other party of Troubleshooters. Each believed the other party to be traitors and some bloodshed and the destruction of a couple of clones ensued until suspicions were allayed. They had found a rather cranky war-bot, set to guard something, possibly what we were looking for. One of them seemed able to control it (highly suspicious!). It turned out that whatever it was guarding was not the missing core although possibly connected with it and we would have to look elsewhere. Accompanied by the war-bot and guided by the locals we eventually found the missing core only to find it surrounded by some kind of force field, for which we didn't have the key. Unknown to us one member of the party had purloined the key for reasons of her own and as we had no reason to suspect this and search her, this left us somewhat stuck. Although we were able to retrieve the core, time had run out on us and we would not have been able to get back into Alpha Complex - something which didn't bother my character in the slightest since she had decided to stay Outside and proceeded to make sure she could by testing her gun's wide-spread, short-range capacity on the rest of the party and making a hasty exit. While not quite as chaotic as the RPG usually is this game was fun to play - lots of opportunity for over-the-top role-playing and not to be taken too seriously.

After this there was nothing left but to clear up and go home. I would like to thank Dave Harvey for his hard work in organising this weekend. I found it enjoyable, high on good role-playing even if low on firefights. It was nice to see several new faces, people who had only been once before if at all. They all seemed to enjoy themselves and I hope we see more of them. While on the subject of newcomers it is time for the political whinge - I am fed up with hearing people, in the pages of Firefight and elsewhere, complaining that the hobby is doomed. All their gloomy prognostications are doing is helping to kill it. No-one is going to want to join us after hearing their complaints. The way to encourage people is to tell everyone how great tagging is, what a good time you had at the last event and how great the next one is going to be. So - "A Weekend in the Country" was great, and you should be sorry you missed it. I understand that Dave Harvey might be persuaded to organise another one next year. If you enjoy role-play and intriguing scripts rather than just shooting things - be there!

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FIGHT

The Independent Science Fiction Live Roleplaying Fanzine

The 1997 Fiat Lux! MERDON WEEKEND as seen by David A Harvey

Merdon that unsung jewel of the tag calendar took place over the weekend of the 19th to 21st September 1997. This year Simon Russell and Steve Trent took over the organisational mantle from Sarah Clark who has been running the Merdon weekend for as long as I can remember.

The weekend opened with the first of a pair of Star Wars games organised by Steve and Simon. Donning my blacks I was one of a group of five Imperial Navy guards assigned to patrol the eastern sector of the defence grid established on the planet Merdonia and any interlopers we came across were to be detained and returned to HQ for questioning.

Just to make us feel better rumour had it that whole squads out on patrol never came back and vast numbers of those that did came back declaring that they would soldier no more.

Heading out together with Alex Clark, Pete Bone, Jasper Hedger and Gary Swanston we decided that safety in numbers realising that the darkness would split us up quite easily enough

without us giving it any assistance. After a turn around one side of the site we became aware of an unauthorised presence and checked it out. Jasper made the initial contact with what turned out to be a colonist out for a wander. When Jasper came back and started talking some seditious nonsense about the defence grid being a violation of the colonists rights I attempted to check his breath to ascertain if he'd been drinking. After all if he had some he was going to share it out. In the process we bumped heads and he started to talk sense again. Realising that the civilian had ignored Jasper's warning to get out of a restricted area and was still wandering around Gary, Jasper and I told Alex and Pete that we would escort the individual in question back to the guardhouse and come right back. Everything went just as planned until Jasper tried to put the cuffs on her and we suddenly realised that violence was no way to solve problems. After a brief discussion we sent the stranger on her way and called back to a bemused Alex and Pete that we were heading back to the barracks to drop off a few bits of unnecessary kit (guns, body armour etc.) so we wouldn't frighten anyone

else we met on patrol, but when we got back to the guardhouse the duty sergeant just didn't understand... and merely shook his head and ushered us into the cells.

Rather than leave us in cells all night Simon Russell sent us back out as a new trio of somewhat more aggressive troopers SCUMBAG (Jasper), MEGADEATH (Gary) and NIGEL - THE DESTROYER (me). As befits such heavy metal heroes we headed out anti-clockwise around the outer edge of the site and soon spotted a huge number of rebel scum who we insulted and rained down hot infrared death upon them, much to our amusement. Regrettably Scumbag and Megadeath were killed during the melee and having been reduced down to one hit I gave the rebels the benefit of another clip out of my SmartRanger and withdrew to get reinforcements from the base and as we were assembling the game over whistle was blown.

As we sat around and frothed afterwards it transpired that the rebels had been sent to pick up a pair of hackers, Ros Day and Dave Bodger, who had been working on the Imperial datanet but had had to make a run for it when their false IDs had become compromised.

Rising late on Saturday morning I hurriedly got ready for the second Star Wars game. Although the games were set in the same place and

followed on from each other Simon and Steve had sensibly arranged things so that you didn't have to be on the same team on Saturday as you had on Friday. With this in mind I signed up with the Alliance team.

Following on from the events of the Friday evening the Rebel Alliance had sent in a team to modify a small section of the Imperial Defence Grid on Merdonia. Since the function of the grid was to monitor and track all vessels passing through the system and alert the Empire to any unauthorised traffic we had to get our technical expert Tim Atkinson to six of the pods and then to the grids main control box so that he could cut a back door in the grid so that our ships could pass unrecognised through this area of space.



Having been unceremoniously dumped with the job of commanding the Rebel Assault team (complete with vote of confidence from Tim "Oh hell, we really are all going to die now!") I gave my usual wooden spoon winning performance as commander. I can only say that thankfully the opposition were even less organised than I was, apparently the pacifist natives gave them a hell of a time. Still, we managed to complete our mission and thanks to some mystical intervention on the healing front from Sarah Clark as one of the natives we all got out alive too.



I was particularly impressed by the Defence Grid prop which Steve and Simon had put together. Not only did it look good, putting many low budget SF films to shame, but it also did something. Made up of a series of electrically connected boxes spread out over about 150 hundred meters and linked to a central control panel Tim had actual real world tasks to perform on each box and as we discovered there were triggers which set off an alarm if you weren't careful. Star of the show - wow factor nine!

Saturday afternoon was a somewhat less prop intensive offering from yours truly set in the Space Above and Beyond universe. The game revolved around a routine supply drop to a group of planetary surveyors working for the Aerotech Corporation. To complicate matters the drop was being made by a squadron of marines out on their first solo mission and the surveyors were being shadowed by half a dozen silicates who had been stranded on planet for the last fifteen years and as such were waiting for someone to arrive to pick up the surveyors so they could seize the shuttle. However before they would be in a fit state to escape they needed to get their hands on spare-parts, power cells and some

repair equipment all their own being somewhat worn out after fifteen years on planet.

To keep people on their toes and give them a reason to split up and talk to each other everyone had a their own private agenda to pursue ranging from claustrophobic, drug dealing and gung-ho marines to argumentative union safety reps, conspiracy theorists and geologists with a need to pop out and check on their dope garden.

Things didn't start well for the 141st marine squadron who arrived to find nobody home at the survey team base and soon bumped straight into two of the silicates... bang bang bang... and didn't gain the surveyors trust straight away when they introduced themselves as the 1141st marine squadron, pity the surveyors were expecting the 141st and had just had another group of soldiers introduce themselves as a group of Marine Pathfinders who had crashed on planet.

Much chaos and misunderstanding followed, mildly appreciated by the Aerotech team who needed as much time as they could get to conclude a geological survey which they were supposed to have had ready to send back with the marines. Things went more or less as I expected them to with confusion eventually solidifying into conflict as the silicates powercells began to run down. Their batteries were sufficiently worn out



seriously good barbecue and the highlight of it was some particularly good marinated steak.

Saturday evening was another game put together by Simon and Steve called "Little Fleas" and was set in the Aliens universe.

that they had to recharge every hour and the surveyors were between them and their charger. The highlight of this conflict was hearing that Simon Davies, one of the geologists, had delightedly discovered that a Starbase, the survey scanner, makes an excellent weapon to cover your retreat. Realising he was about to be grabbed by the silicates he set it going and escaped while his would-be captors dived for cover.

Things ended in a marginal victory for the marines with the by now seriously injured marines successfully evacuating all but one member of the survey team (Shame it was the Doc they missed since they didn't have a medic of their own) leaving the remaining few functional silicates heavily damaged but with all the survey teams equipment to make repairs with.

With game over blown we had a couple of hours to relax, froth and enjoy the unseasonably good weather whilst we waited for the barbecue. Merdon weekend are known for the excellent quality, and quantity, of food at the barbecue and even compared to previous years this was a

I was part of a group of Pathfinder colonists who were establishing the basis of a colony for the Weyland-Yutani corporation but part of our team had split off and we discovered that the breakaways had an insect attached to their neck and our one attempt to remove it proved fatal to the host. To say we were a little nervous put it mildly. Armed with semi-auto hunting rifles (in my case a SmartRanger in tag pistol mode) We decided that our best course of action was to find where the breakaways, Ros Day and Sarah Clark, were based and see what we could learn about these parasitic insects and how to fight them. With this in mind we took up position on one of the ridges and kept our eyes open.

Eventually we were rewarded by the sight of a small group coming down from the gatehouse. From what was said it became obvious that a group of Colonial Marines had arrived in answer to our distress call. Unfortunately the marine I could hear was in the company of Ros and Sarah. So rather than intervene directly we used our radios to contact the Marines and warn them of the threat.

Unfortunately since it was a particularly quiet night, so quiet that I could hear the board on my gun humming to itself, messages over the headset radios people were using were audible and intelligible over a notable distance. So, Sarah and Ros nobbled two marines, Dave Bodger and Tim Atkinson, and disappeared back into the woods. Bodger was recaptured very quickly whilst Tim escaped and we were warned that there was a heavily armed and dangerous marine on the loose.

Not long after, Tim found us and we pulled back to put a bit more distance between us and that grenade launcher. Thankfully Tim decided to follow and we caught him in a crossfire at the bottom of the slope. Not knowing how far one of these bugs could jump I suggested that we kept the unmoving Tim covered from a safe distance and called in the Marines to check him out. Obliging they arrived quickly and Jasper Hedger, their Lieutenant, went in to check out the unconscious Tim who in classic horror movie fashion was lying doggo and at the appropriate moment came back to life and grabbed Jasper. A struggle ensued and Tim was eventually secured.

As this finished we were introduced to a Weyland-Yutani rep who was accompanying the marines. It turned out that we had been dropped off on the wrong planet and our current location had not been cleared

as safe for colonisation. So if we could just make our way to the shuttle and there would be generous pay-off for our inconvenience and we would be whisked off to the next door planet in the system where we were really supposed to be. How we ended up on the wrong planet he had no explanation for. Well life is hard in a risky profession like Pathfinding and complaining about it won't bring back six months of wasted time and work but we certainly weren't going anywhere without our errant colleagues. Especially since the marines had had some success in removing the parasites from their own men, it seemed that length of infection could be a significant factor but offworld medical facilities would have a far better chance than the hand and eye scalpel work that we could offer.



This irritated Lt. Hedger who just wanted to leave but by refusing to abandon our people we ended up leading a search around an area of the site we hadn't been through yet. We found Sarah and Ros who did not want to leave, apparently they had developed some telepathic connection via the bugs and now had a dependency upon them. Eventually they were cornered and grabbed, and a cargo pod containing a large glowing

hive was found in the undergrowth nearby. I never inspected the pod as I was keeping an eye on marine Atkinson who was guarding Sarah but I heard rumours that it had Weyland-Yutani markings upon it. This cannot however be confirmed as the hive and pod where destroyed by the marines, and our two colleagues can tell nothing because they died within minutes of the destruction of the hive screaming in agony.

I enjoyed this game but I always enjoy having to think my way out of a problem and the occasional self-induced radical defeat puts things in perspective well. We jumped at an easy solution when with thought it was obvious that violence wasn't going to solve all our problems. There was no easy way out and we should have realised that.

So with game over it was back to camp to dump kit, grab beer and head up to the singing pit where a fire was blazing and frothing continued until the early hours.

Sunday morning was another Aliens inspired game with several pairs of would be Weyland-Yutani troubleshooters taking their final

practical exam by having to find and defeat a number of combat enable artificial people. Since it was just a test the weapons were on a stun setting and the number of hits you had depended on the capabilities of your gun. Once shot down to zero you were out for five minutes before resetting on full hits. To keep the seven APs from going around mob handed they had colour coded IDs and were unable to team up with an AP of an adjacent rainbow colour. To show that they had been caught each AP had a number of coded stickers which were collected by a victorious troubleshooter.

An interesting excuse for a round robin firefight and that's what we had. A fun way to finish the weekend and a well presented skirmish game from first time organiser Gary Swanston. Cheers Gary, when's the next one?

Well that was that and all that was left was to do was pack, say our goodbyes and go. As always I'm looking forward to Merdon next year. It is after all my favourite event of the year, maybe next year we'll see a few more of you there and you might like it as much as I do. Thanks to all the organisers for a really good weekend.



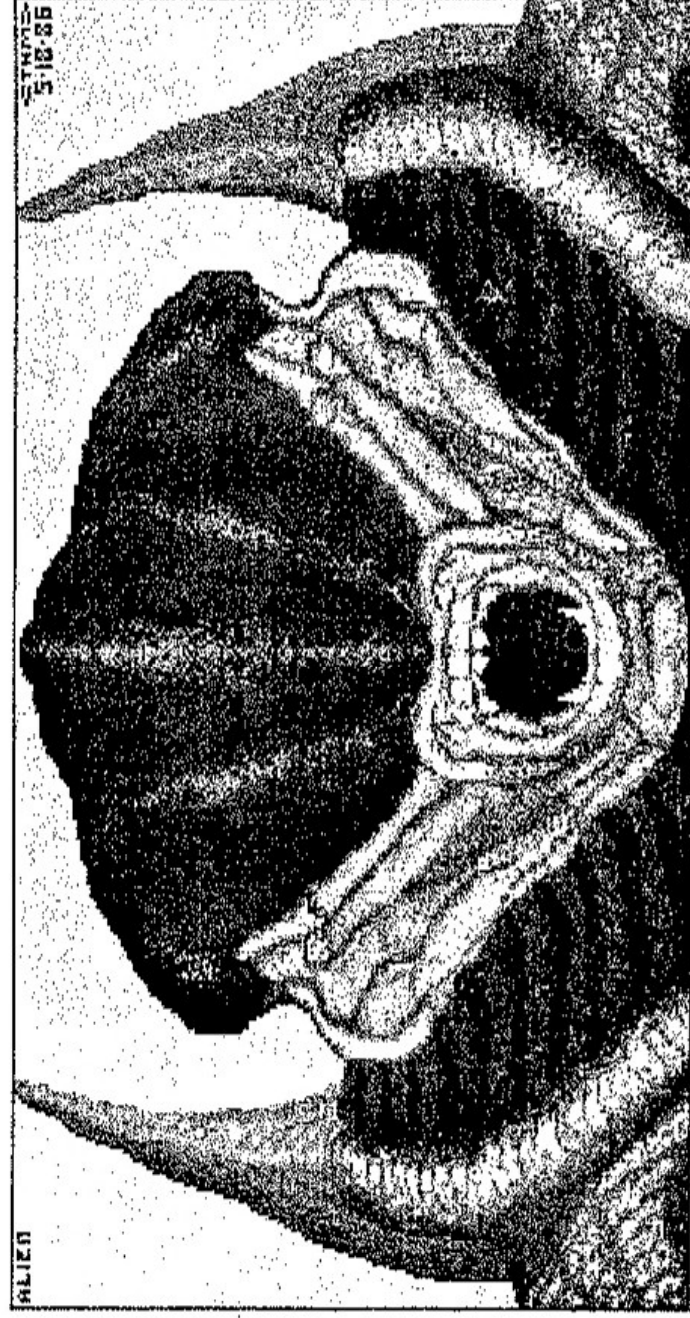
Second Contact

review by Graham Parton

held at Overstone Scout Camp, Northampton, September 26th-28th. by **WILD CARDS**.

So, I booked in to being an NPC with a few of my mates from the Light Brigade. Only I found that I was "volunteered" to take over the PC role of the marine "lot" from Dave Harvey who had decidedly nobbled his back and was mainly prostrate during the weekend (no comment!). Maybe it was the way I had polished the replica USMC armour I had obtained, to a dull glow or perhaps.....

Any way my small team, Chris, Dave, Euan (?spelling) and Richard were briefed by an impressively uniformed Paul escorted by 2 MP's. We were then shuttled down to Lament 262 with Dr Bodger of Con-Am with whom the USMC has a R&D "arrangement" on a rescue mission to pick up survivors of the first mission ("First Contact"). Incidentally also to retrieve evidence of illegal Biochemical/Viral warfare experiments off planet. Oh yes, and retrieve examples of alien technology. Oh yes, the survivors were Section 8 psychotics and Weyland Yutani also had a ship in orbit on a rescue mission..... oh, and did I mention getting off-planet?



Shuttled in we found a barricaded blockhouse that had seen some use and sporadic firing and commotion off in the nearby xenoflora. Cautiously approached the area by the numbers and on the bounce. Survivors were holding off well-known black, hissy xenomorphs with torches and the odd well placed round. Confusion as 3 groups (did I mention the Weyland Yutani team?) met in the night around the generator (but they are only animals) which had failed. Introductions, screams and mayhem later we withdrew to the block house. I noted a certain lack of respect for authority amongst the survivors.

The Weyland Yutani team were a mixed bag. Several mercenaries, a professor of xenobiology plus bodyguard, a Federal Marshall and a starship captain (Captain Sanger) and

crew. My marine team were the most heavily armed BUT there were these point blank rules..... and a medical system based on lots of sweetsies.

There were then some mutterings about Dr Bodger being on the last mission a year ago and abandoning the mainly USMC survivors to their fate. Time out was then called and most players and NPC's enjoyed a good froth around the camp fire. The following morning we were learning more about the history of the place and started to (cautiously) look around. We were also looking for the biochem dump on-planet with a hand held "hide and sneak" that we passed off as a most realistic looking motion tracker. The plot continually thickened with both ships' shuttles being destroyed, more aliens and a nest being found. Another alien race on good terms with the survivors decloaking in front of us, almost getting into a knife fight with one of my marines (Richard?) before peace was made. Searching for fuel for the one remaining shuttle, rebel marines turned up and engaged us in a firefight that I should have backed away from.

Instead I relied on the good 'ol section 8's ably played psychotically (not sure whether Cat had the nuke strapped to his back by then or not....) To hit them from behind and the Federal Marshall to guard our flank. Some hope. One serious chest wound later I was unconscious and being given a no-bleed by a rebel marine. They were quite hopeful of using me as a bargaining piece until I pointed out the large (14) number of sweetsies and 30 minutes of unconsciousness needed. Eventually after some inspired tactical errors by the rebel marines both sides extricated themselves from the situation.

Professor and Weyland Yutani was wandering around and it did not take much encouragement from me for all my marine team to get decidedly paranoid about everyone else. And everyone else to get.... you see the picture. Negotiation with Simon who seemed to know a lot about Predator technology. By this time we had rescued the professor from a nasty death in an alien nest then he went sample hunting again. The only thing that saved him was the synthetic with him who insisted his programming would not let him leave the idiot half in and half out of the nest. "Shame" said the rest of us. A ludicrous plan was evolved, involving much dragging, demolition charges and running. Hissy things learn fast. Demolition charge thrown back at us and marines scattered, chased by hissy things. Much mayhem later we were back at blockhouse having rations when the second Predator Tribe had turned up having massacred the first and wanting to trash the "honorary" members of the first tribe..... ie some of the survivors. Beginning when a Death Cult predator de-cloaked and decapitated the synthetic who spewed white goo over many people. Much disgust later we found them around the blockhouse, invulnerable to our weapons and generally being obnoxious before kidnapping several and vanishing.

Things went downhill as twilight gave in to night and we were still searching for fuel. As we contacted Predators we were indiscriminately hosed down with fire then left to medic, then hosed down again and..... we lost several PC's permanently in the dark just by being unable to move with so many casualties being medicated at once. Our weapons fire failed to make any impression on them even at odds of 10 to one at close range in hose mode. Hand to hand we would have stood a better chance. We almost gave in to despair and contemplated vanishing into the gloaming and having a kip for a few hours. Thanks, NPC's. **[Was that sarcasm? I'm sure that was sarcasm. ED]**

Eventually some of us managed to break out of the xenoflora and formed a "death or glory" team led by the redoubtable (manic) Liam and a couple of other Section 8 survivors. Discovering that the Predators did have a weak spot heartened us and most of the PC's eventually made it back to the blockhouse. Without any fuel for the shuttle. Then late returners reported seeing rebel marines in the area with jerry cans. Fuel!!

A fierce fire fight later we had our first fuel and a means to transport it. That night Marine scheming went into high gear and plans were formulated to off the annoying professor, put a radio detonated charge aboard the shuttle in case we were not aboard, pump 10mm HI-EX caseless into any alien (hissy thing) samples, blow up the biowarfare dump and co-operate with Simon to obtain Predator technology.

Following morning we were harassed by the odd rebel marine who seemed more interested in getting away from Predators and surrendering to us, even to Dr Bodger who executed one in the fuel dump with his pistol!!! I fulminated gently at him as we used the Weyland Yutani team to transport fuel with an escort of marines and the Section 8s' guarded the dump. Meanwhile our demolitions expert got into a cumbersome NBC suit and prepared the charge to destroy the chemicals. (Sorry Paul, I know you dug the containers in deep, but, hey, plots never survive contact with players.)

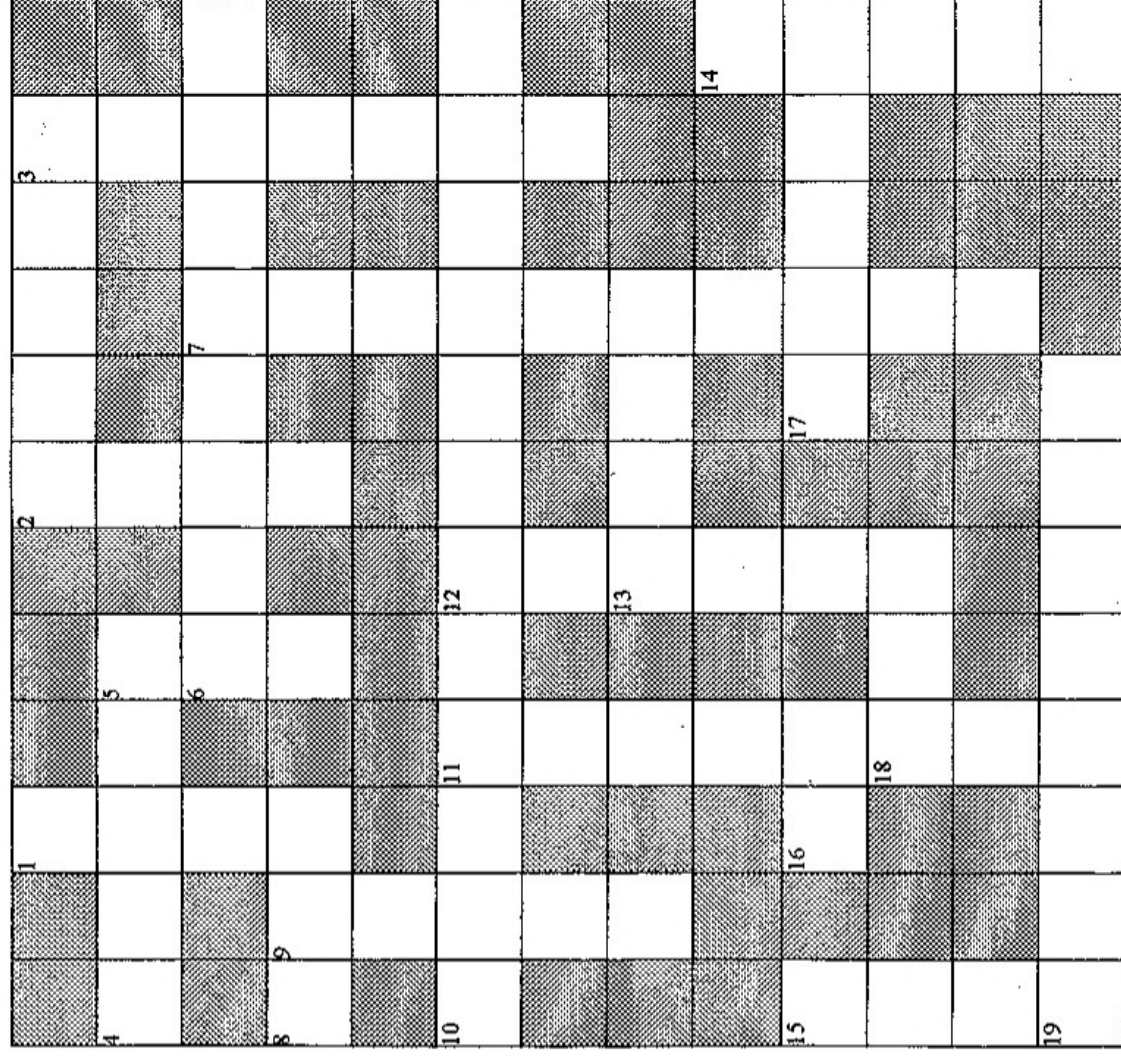
All the while we heard screams from the kidnapped men. The professor and his bodyguard (Andy and Martin) gained a little bit of extra time by transporting the jerry cans full of fuel to the shuttle. We then went on a rescue mission to the Predators camp... and the screams. Closing in we were subject to a deus ex machina as Predators de-cloaked and pulled us, disarmed, to watch a ritual sacrifice as entrails were ripped (literally) from some poor souls chest. Yuk. Liam and I did a 3..2..1 count then shouted GO GO GO as everyone piled onto the guns and started in on the Predators, exiting from the camp a few minutes later, on the bounce for the shuttle. Must apologise to Cap'n Sanger who seemed nice enough, at least for a civvi, as faced with several human casualties I evacuated a marine instead of him.

Liam and a couple of other survivors mounted a rearguard action that cost them their escape off-world. About 50% of the PC's survived and surprisingly did not try and assassinate each other on the way to the shuttle although suspicion was high. Except for the professor. But Nigel mediced him back. Damn.

I enjoyed the weekend. It had a lot of ups, a couple of downs - especially Saturday night - and a great deal of fun. The NPC crew worked hard and in the main, sensibly and much credit and thanks go to them. The plot was convoluted and engaging and I felt that most players did get involved. Differing objectives for the player groups created interesting tensions and role-play opportunity. Costume and props were, as usual for the Wild Cards, superb. What more can I say?

Good Game! Good Game!

CROSSWORD



DOWN

1. and 17 across Secret US research zone-one (4,5)
2. They always come the deep, outer space, beyond etc. (4)
3. See 9 down
5. Marines shore leave award abbr.. (3)
7. and 12 down defensive loud noise (10,6)
9. and 3 down Film & point of no return (5,7)
11. and 6 across Heinlein's epic (8,8)
12. See 7 down
14. The new Weaver perhaps? (5)
15. and 4 across 2nd contact with organisation (4,5)

ACROSS

2. A very shapely element (5)
4. See 15 down
6. See 11 down
8. US Department ensuring addiction? abbr.. (3)
10. What is an alien back for? (12)
13. Boss in charge abbr.. of sorts (4)
16. Solid, liquid and gas together in a country abbr.. (2)
17. See 1 down
18. A landing area you will Not be picked up from. (3)
19. Annual bun fight for modified torch enthusiasts (8)

Stealing the show

A garbled report on "Operation

Semper Fidelis" by Mr Katt

Liam looked across at me from the pile of idea papers we have collected and sneered "A bloody pint of Irish cream liqueur and you will agree to anything".

Although he feigns stress I could tell he was really enjoying himself, as we hacked through Semper Fidelis the plot. The first problem was we needed a new premise. We

could not simply copy First Contact. This in mind, I developed "Operation Rimfire". This was rejected for more than simply the name. 'Rimfire' is not, as Liam thinks, the result of a very hot curry. It is actually the superheated gasses that escape at the edge of a volcanic crater, creating a colour filled shimmering curtain of flame. Enough of the geology lesson.

I had not actually seen a single episode of "Space Above and Beyond" (SAAB), and wrote this plot as to what I thought the game should be like. Although the plot was full of adventure and action, it had no place in the SAAB universe.

Liam immediately set about correcting my SAAB ineptitude. Each and every time I alighted at his humble abode, I was greeted with smiles plied with coffee and sat in front of the video for 2 hours. Eventually the first edition of the "Semper Fidelis" plot was born.

.....

Chigg construction was in full swing, and we were working on the first flyer. Liam spent an inordinate amount of time on the information slow boat (Internet), searching the sites for SAAB goodies. Unfortunately the CBS Fox site was already closed. A large number of privately run sites however, supplied us with pictures, plot synopses and eventually links to the design studio for more piccies and plots. The second flyer was due out, spelling mistakes and all. A brief discussion with Dai produced the idea of a mixed team with "Spetnatz".

The first three Chiggs were finished, we watched more SAAB, reshaped the plot a little and twisted the role of the "Spetnatz" and built more props. We spent evenings like this :- As characters arrived we worked to integrate all the character histories, Then James's character arrived and this instigated a complete plot review and the building of more Chiggs.

.....

As the date approached, we spent increasingly more time in each others company. Liam finally handed me the absolutely final plot rewrite. One week before the game, we had had little or no contact from Dai and his "Spetnatz" and we were not sure how many players would be attending. Time to 'phone as many people as possible.

Finally the evening before the game arrived. It was the strangest of my entire life. Everything was done. Liam continually had panic attacks, I also if truth be told. The whole house appeared to have a pensive atmosphere, waiting for something to happen. It never did.

.....

Friday morning the world looked bright and fine. The sky was such a deep blue, it seemed I could look into space itself. This was a good sign, little chance of rain. As the day progressed, I scarcely noticed the sky. Players arrived, I signed them in. Liam and I gave the



NPC's their final brief, Dai arrived with his "Spetnatz" causing a bit of a stir. Time in arrived. Half my NPC's had not arrived. So I hurriedly gave each player their brief, then it was time to let our terror free. The players started interacting immediately. I muffed my lines, but so did Liam. By the end of Friday night part one of the plot was complete and the players already hated the Comms Tech 'tank'. I adjourned home, to create some more plot.

Saturday morning; retrieve my two NPC's and off to play. The players did not assassinate the Comms Tech, and followed the plot fairly closely after a few heavy hints. First FUBAR (F**ed Up Beyond All Repair); two teams leave to search for a replacement generator. My silicates are still out slowing down the players. Night falls and the Chiggs are now blind. Time for a firefight. At this point I truly panicked. Had I killed all the players? The temperature was dropping and people were lying in ditches. I hastily called time out. After slowly retrieving all the casualties and telling them they are now prisoners of the Chigg, I later learnt that only one player had actually managed to get back to the base. They had still not retrieved the valuable data. later that night Dai comes up with a plot saving plan. The "Spetnatz" team would take the prisoners, leaving the Chigg free for a running gun battle. Happy that the plot is saved, I am off home to get covered in Prittstick and paper.

[Commemorative alarm clocks with character names were issued to all players on the games completion. A nice touch I thought. ED]

Sunday; town centre still closed after last night fireworks. Half way to the site I suddenly remember the clocks are in a bag by the front door. I rush home, receive two phone calls and arrive late. Plot remains saved and the as the players mill around I wait at the ISSCV for my big part... and wait... and wait. Finally they arrive and try to shoot me. I give them lip and they stop shooting. Last and final bit of plot, find the Satlink, and the game is over. Hurrah the plot is dead long live the king!

All the players seemed happy. I have now been coerced into probably doing it again in March.

Mr Katt

[The use of the "Spetnatz" was an effort to help diversify the combat units found in tag games. After Chris Hannafords mammoth article on the Colonial Marines, he stated that many other units could be hypothesised and I remember coming up against the valiant Royal Marines in Second Contact earlier in the year. I would like the "Spetnatz" to come back, but as true players, rather than NPC plot devices. Unfortunately the Light Brigade are a fickle lot and already they want someone else in charge and to create a new unit possibly "Legion d'Estranger" or even an Arab unit. On a purely research based note; the red berets and Alpenflage outfits were a compromise on the gear that the lads could get together. On investigation I found that only in the last few years, a unit within the "Spetnatz" called "Oznaz", specialising in hostage rescue etc. has been set up. They operate in small groups with various uniforms and red rather than the "Spetnatz" blue berets. Truth IS stranger than fiction. ED]

by Mr G. "Banshee" Parton

This was a first for me. I have never played with the VE people and I gathered that many, if not all, were originally involved in "Dark Horizons". Their game systems reflect their experience and this game was set in "universe" more straight SF than dark future. VE are still working on a character system and envisage many players being part of mercenary groups. In game terms sensors act as shields and hits eventually implode a shield causing unconsciousness and generally minor wounds to those equipped with shields and armoured clothing/heavier armour. Shields degrade with battle damage until eventually becoming less effective at stopping serious injury.

The venue for the game was wildly different. An underground quarry near Bath. Safe, **[? ED]** fairly dry conditions with a couple of miles of galleries, cut-outs and connects. I was reliably informed that desert camo would be best, as my black "imperial navy" look would stand out. Can't say it made much difference, but if you want to find a use for the desert or arctic camo then this place has it! About 90' underground, players only had red filtered lights and it takes about 10-15 minutes for your eyes to dark adapt. By this time even a candle sheds a lot of light, although monochrome.

It is about 11 degrees C down there so warmish clothing is a good idea and you are in no position to start running anywhere. Most movement was slow and careful, sometimes in total (and I mean total) darkness. A slow jog was fast. Players and NPC's can vanish into the dark or even into the walls. You imagine movement or noise as echoes carry. Weapons fire can ricochet alarmingly and moving out of sight of anyone became an instant blue on blue.. Amazing.

The game involved a small group of mercenaries who had been hired to find some gear that had been left over from a military training area. Why mercenaries? Well there were some refugees from recent interstellar conflicts and squatters who would easily be cowed by a show of force. Using the ubiquitous "hide and sneak" to detect the gear we moseyed on into the quarry searching. I was carrying the "sneak" detector and rapidly became known as the Meter Maid (Thanks, guys). Having found some gear we found that topside a coup was in process, an ambassador had been kidnapped and taken.... into the quarry. The rest of the game involved the PC's doing our anarchic best to run into, and sort out what the hell is going on, with the local military, a "peace keeping (invasion) force", the ambassador, his bodyguards, a newsman, traps and the neatest and most effective sentry gun it has ever been my misfortune to be on the wrong end of. We failed and the planet has been absorbed into the Centauri Empire (?). Which will have consequences for the next game.....

Although accomodation was provided I went home each night and missed out on some of the superb grub which accounted for the high(ish) price charged for non-VE members. We swapped some tales and I was surprised to find the reputation of the Light Brigade preceded me. Hope I allayed the nastier rumours. **[Spoilsport. ED]** VE are an enthusiastic bunch with good ideas and I hope they continue to run games open to all players.

PS The site will not be available from March '98 but I understand Virtual Eclipse are planning to run another weekend in early 1998. It's worth going along, if only for the amazing venue.. venue... venue...!

REMINISCENCES, RAMBLINGS AND A THANK YOU

from Mr Katt

As I gain notoriety and fame amongst the tagging community, I still cannot forget my fantasy role play roots, no matter how much I drink and run into trees.... Perhaps I had better start at the beginning. I was born in the heart of Paris.... is that a little to far back? Yes, I do think so.

I started role playing with the late Advanced Dungeons and Dragons™, and a small group of college friends. We met faithfully each and every lunchtime and slogged our way through several hundred miles of dungeons. By the end of my 3 year course, I had shown my uncanny ability to organise the world about me. The college ended up with a healthy Table top club and an unhealthy live action club. I say unhealthy because we used lengths of copper conduit with a little pipe lagging and gaffer tape to represent swords and 8mm plywood covered in tinfoil for shields. (There is a great non shall pass story about this but it is too long to relate here). Needless to say many a Sunday afternoon was spent waiting in casualty.

Soon it was of to another university, this time for a vague medical background. I no longer wanted to be an aircraft mechanic. Here I found the delights of latex and foam and the oddest group of friends, a semi french bloke could have. They were a student nurse, a classical ballet dancer, a trainee theatre manager, an official crusty before it became trendy and a budding computer programmer ... oh and a public events organiser, mainly of the illegal type, held in warehouses. With this band of trusty allies, I attended a plethora of fantasy events; where I learnt how to handle a sword, horror events; where I learnt to run and hide, and finally cyber punk where I learnt about simulated fighting. Then as it dawned on me that perhaps I was not cut out to be a genetic scientist, I discovered re-enactment. Now not only was I role playing but people came to see me do it, and I learnt how to make authentic costume.

I took on a volunteer job writing and eventually running a small youth events fanzine. Here I indulged my love of role play and creative writing, or utter pap as one editor put it. Then I was introduced to the wonderful world of Lazer Tag. I was first introduced to everyone at TAGRAG 95. I approached this hobby as I do any other, take notes and keep my mouth shut.....FAT CHANCE. Anyone who saw me at TAGCON 7, will know, me keeping my mouth shut is as likely as Sigourney Weaver passing up another Alien™ film.

Well as everyone is so obviously pointing out Lazer Tag is a dying sport. I disagree, paintball went through the same kind of lull in attendance once the newness had worn off. So I prefer to think of Lazer Tag as simply regaining its strength. But as with a pet who is in less than good health, it needs looking after and helping along, in its hour of need. **[Whatever you are on Katt, I want some. ED]**

My present situation allows me to see several aspects of the same situation. I have been noticing some similarities. Most clubs are frequented by the same kind of people. that is why dating agencies are so popular. So to bring in new blood, you need to bring in like minded friends. Not necessarily easy. I am presently in the process of

mailshotting almost everybody I've ever met, simply to see if any of them would find Lazer Tag appealing.

Now for a little hypothetical statistics. Each year approximately 3200 new role players join role playing clubs up and down the country. Since Lazer Tag could be viewed as only a 0.5% market, that means you will see about 20 new faces per year. That is according to the maths. What affects the outcome is people and what they like. I we concentrate on one area it cuts our appeal.

I kind of saw TAG RAG as the Lazer Tag equivalent of a games fair, with everyone showing what they had to offer. Personally I prefer a more unreal setting, such as the Dooley brothers western we ran recently, or perhaps the Action Man™ based game that so many people have expressed an interest in. This is all my personal quirk and as in business, advertising works. You will not get new players by simply waiting for them to come to you. People love mail **[? ED]** so even if you simply send out 10 second class letters all with the same photo copied letter in it. That is 10 people you got in touch with for only £2:50. But where do we get these people from I hear you cry? Most of the specialist role play and SF stores have a pin board on which you can advertise. Usually for a nominal fee per week, you can always tell them of all the extra custom and profit to be made. Soon you will have new friends and allies to bring to the wild and adventurous games.

In the end it is the friends that count. What I am finally trying to say is..... Thank-you to everyone who helped, aided and assisted in Black Watch's first live action event. Thank-you also to the players who attended. I must admit none of this could have taken place without; Liam with his wild ideas and constant worrying; Phil for his uncanny gun building abilities; and Ady for his wild sense of humour. In fact none of this could have taken place without friends and I am proud to call you all, my friends. **[Group hug everybody. ED]**

[A couple of points both for and against some of the arguments here, I can illustrate. As a number of you know, I am a member of a re-enactment group and have successfully introduced a number of the group to Lazer Tag. Fiat Lux also have a number of re-enactors in their ranks. On the other side of the coin; just because people do Lazer Tag does not mean they will join the mainstream national hobby. How much have we heard from Laserquake? Just recently the Light Brigade had an evening skirmishing with a bunch from Birmingham who we have seen on and off over several years. They have no intention of joining in with the other groups, they have their own way of playing. That is not to say I'm not going to try to get them interested. There are at least 12-15 of them. ED]

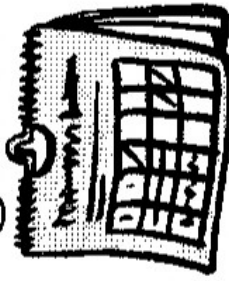
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Making the M16 Water Gun into a Laser Tag gun

By Nigel Carr

This article is a discussion of the things that were done to convert a particular water gun to a laser tag gun. Some things went well and others went badly. You might find some of the ideas helpful for making your own gun or to avoid some of the problems that could lead to damage. The M16 is available from good toy shops and large outlets like Toys R Us, for about 15 pounds (July 97); it is called 'The Totally Excellent M16' and is distributed by Blue Box Toys, Oldham, Manchester, England. The price may seem more than reasonable for what will just be a gun case, but it looks good and has excellent construction for adapting to laser tag. It is called an M16 but is actually a copy of the Colt Commando, the short version of the Armalite M16.

Disassembling the case

The gun parts are an ammo magazine, a trigger, a battery cover at the butt end, and six panels held together by screws.

The ammo mag clips into the barrel, held by its own spring, and is removed by holding in the button. The top of the mag has a hole for the water tube and a refill plug. If you plan to put the gun batteries in the mag, melt around the tube hole on top of the mag ensuring you allow for the thickness of the mag sides. After taking out the melted cut-out you can finish the job with emery boards (from chemists).

Remove the battery cover that is taped in place at the end of the butt.

Take the 'cap' off the end of the muzzle. The best way is to run a hot blade around the slit on the side and this should work off the cap. Attempting to get it off quickly will damage the muzzle. The cap is not useful unless you have a toy tea set then you could use it as a bowl. **[How did he find out about my toy tea set? ED]**

The six panels are two halves of the butt, two halves of the stock/barrel (referred to as the barrel) and two halves of the muzzle. Remove the thirteen visible screws holding the panels together. Be careful how you store these screws as the correct size of self tapping screws is not easily available. Additional screws can be found if you dismantle the pump. After you remove the screws, carefully take out the butt panels and trigger, cutting two wires and the water pipe in the process. Remove and discard the spring part at the end of the butt.

The muzzle needs special attention. The barrel has two screws through its right panel into its left panel which you should have removed by now. The muzzle has two screws through its right panel into its left panel: you must remove the right barrel panel to get to the hidden muzzle screws. The barrel panel ends are glued to the muzzle. The end of each barrel panel has a cut-out in a rectangle shape 13.5 mm x 15 mm; so the two barrel panels together make a 27 mm x 15 mm rectangular hole which fits over the muzzle end. The muzzle has flanges which cover the hole.

when the gun is assembled: the flanges are both sides of the fit. This is where the glue is: in other words, you can't see it. Approaching the join from the outside of the gun, you can melt the join with any THIN non-wedge section metal plate. Any metal heated for this will discolour and be retempered (or is that distempered?) so don't use the kitchen knife. Remember the size of the rectangular hole and use best judgement as to how far into the case you need to go. The plastic will melt together again if you remove the knife too soon or melt too much if the knife is too hot or held in place too long. If melting makes you nervous, you can saw the join with a junior hacksaw blade if you are careful. The operation can take an afternoon. BE PATIENT. Occasionally I tried to lever the panels where they seemed stubborn but I was also cautious. This was done with a very long bladed screwdriver, carefully put in from the barrel end in between the two 'tubes' for the barrel screws and twisting. If something breaks then hope it is part of the muzzle as the barrel is the outside of the gun. One piece of the muzzle might break if it is bonded to the muzzle, but the fit still will be good.

Painting

The gun panels come in HELLO! yellow, OY! pink, GET BACK! purple and STITCH THAT! orange; and one or two others.

The next thing I did was paint each panel separately with the idea that there would be no gaps in the paint work when the gun was reassembled. This was to be a problem later as the thickness of the paint prevented the case fitting together properly where panels overlapped, so time had to be spent scraping off paint. The paint used was Games Workshop's, finished with GW's lacquer. As the panels were untouched before painting the paint went on well. The laying onto plastic of this water based paint cannot be faulted. The brushes used were a multi-pack for a pound from one of the 'pound stretcher' shops. After a good drying period the panels were lacquered. Now a year after painting the painting seems hard and is unscathed. However, close inspection reveals a crazy paving effect. Does anyone know why?

I painted the inside of the case black simply to make it easier to look at while fitting the components. This caused the same problem as before (panels fitting together) with the addition of the ammo mag not fitting in. While scraping the inside of the barrel panel where the mag is housed to get paint off I cracked the panel. I was not happy about this and shouted, 'Oh dear'. This was later to be repaired with fibreglass strengthening on the outside of the case around the crack: the result affects the shape and finish of the gun. Ho hum.

Strengthening

The next thing I did was to strengthen the case, which can only be done on the inside without affecting the appearance of the gun. I initially used dope, the stuff that used to be used on model aeroplanes. With hindsight it was not a good choice. The effect of the dried dope was to curve the panels; fortunately the curve is longitudinal with the ends curving in so assembly of the gun closes the gaps, but there is strain on the screw holes. A later, far better choice was resin with fibre glass tissue. The advantage of fibre glass tissue is the flexibility it adds to resin

which might be brittle. The resin keys very well to the gun case and should do the job permanently. You need to plan ahead because once a brush has resin in the bristles it cannot be washed out, and do as much as possible with one mix. And do it in cold conditions.

Before brushing the case with resin then stippling on the fibreglass, mask off the join edges, seams and outside of the panels, and screw holes. It is too easy to get resin in the wrong place and not see it until it is hard. Trying to take resin off paint work is difficult as resin has a higher melting point than the gun case (get it?). If you are careful you can apply a hot utensil to the resin until it spits and fractures then allow the area to cool before persuading the resin off the plastic. In this case you have to watch for the gun case losing shape as it softens from the heat. Any attempt to abrade the resin off the plastic risks cracking the panel from the pressure.

Fitting Components

The next thing is to mark on the case where you plan to put the components. It is best to temporarily put the components in place to check that they will fit. Really, fitting the components is a matter of your best judgement, so I'll just discuss some of the things that seem important.

Rigidity.

I put an 6mm gauge threaded rod through the gun. It is held centrally in the end of the battery holder in the butt, goes through the interior panel at the end of the stock and up to the centre screw in the muzzle. My thanks to Lee (NOAG) for this idea.

Circuit board.

All the components were wired to the circuit board and tested before putting the circuit board in the case. The board fits neatly in the square section at the top of the gun (thanks to Derrick of NOAG). I used two small neat drops of resin to hold the board in place. Sealing the board against water is not always a good idea, as there is an amount of heat produced by the board and this must radiate away.

Switches.

Cutting a hole in the case to mount a switch should be done by melting most of the hole, from the middle out. You will need to trim away the bur with something like a modelling blade or scalpel. Form the straight edges to the hole with an emery board and repeated trying of the switch to see where it fits. A splash-proof switch cover is a good thing because this can be painted to match the gun. My switches are fixed on the inside with resin and fibreglass.

My reload switch is at the top of the mag, inside the gun, so the mag (containing the battery) has to be taken out for the switch to be pressed. This has the terminals through a rigidity panel in the gun and was fixed with resin and fibreglass.

The power switch is at the end of the butt, in the small circular battery cover, held in place by a screw and wire (as the other screw could not fit). My first choice was to put a switch in the place of the 'safety catch' modelled in the case but there was not room inside.

Muzzle flash.

The muzzle flash LED is a 3mm from Maplins who will also sell you an LED holder for a small amount. The holder (with the LED) fits exactly into the end of the muzzle where the water tube would be. Totally excellent.

Ammo status.

The mag counter (traffic light) LED's fit neatly into a bulge on the right side of the stock. On the real gun this is where a plunger would be, and on the laser tag gun is ideally placed for the mag status LED's. I melted three holes through the gun case so that the LED's would show through, then put a single layer of fibreglass tissue and resin over the holes. The consideration for night games is the brightness of the LED's because the mag status display is constant. I haven't come across the perfect solution.

Speaker.

The speaker is a 49mm mylar waterproof one from Maplins. It can fit in the right side of the barrel. Part of the rim must be pushed into a cut slot in the flange. Held in place with a small amount of resin.

Rifle lens unit.

The lens unit has to be built with a length of pipe which holds the right lens. The distance from the lens to the IR emitter (frequency 880 nm) at the other end of the pipe is decided by the focal length of the lens, generally 150mm. On my gun, the emitter is fitted into an acrylic disc. The disc and lens are held onto the pipe with (straight) pipe joins from Homebase, which are expensive but fine quality. You get what you pay for.

The first guns built by NOAG (Lee, Derick, et al), held the lens unit onto the barrel with a plate screwed into the lens unit and the gun case. I avoided this so I didn't have to screw through the gun case. Obviously, the NOAG bunch have a lot more experience and their methods are better if more brutal (and not so attractive).

Mine is held on with acrylic brackets at the trigger end, and an exhaust bracket with an acrylic bracket at the muzzle end. I fabricated the acrylic brackets myself: templates were made from paper for the acrylic brackets then the acrylic cut before heating to mould on the gun. Screws were used to fit everything securely, so look for the thinnest of the right length: something like switch box screws and other brass nuts and bolts. Painting them will stop them rusting. The difficult part is aligning the unit with the sight and moulding the brackets to hold the unit accurately. My lens unit is rigid, but relies on tight bolting which stresses the gun case.

Grenade lens unit.

The grenade launcher is a plain 3mm IR emitter (frequency 880 nm) held in a 3mm LED holder, held in a 5mm LED holder then put on top of the muzzle. The back of the holder, where the wires are, is protected by a tube of plastic which I fabricated, and the wires go into the top of the muzzle where the sight bar was cut off. NOTE: my sight bar was cut off for a telescopic sight.

The grenade launcher switch can be on the side of the rifle lens unit, if you don't want to fix it to the gun case.

Trigger

Lever trigger.

This paragraph is useful if you are going to use a lever switch with the trigger, so if you are going to replace the trigger with a push switch go to the next paragraph. Melt off the part of the trigger at the end that goes at a right angle. You will be left with a 'T' shape. The trigger can now be used to operate a lever switch inside the gun. You will need to mount the lever trigger on something like blue-tac and adjust its position while you test it with the trigger in place, in one half of the stock. The final position needs something strong like fibre glass with resin. Ensure you mask off the moving parts of the switch. I have to say that my trigger is a dream.

Push Switch Trigger.

This means the trigger supplied with the gun is put away (just in case) and a hole cut in the case, actually at the back of the trigger guard where the push switch goes. If you have the right kind of switch it will hold itself in place when the case is closed or you can fix it with something permanent.

Telescopic sight site

This is necessary if your lens unit has a range of over 300 metres. The sight consists of a mounting rail, which screws into the gun; the clamp, which fits onto the rail and holds the sight; and the sight. The power of the telescopic sight is a personal choice according to the range of your gun: get advice from a gun shop. Don't worry about telling them it's for a laser tag gun - they tend to be impressed if you tell them that the range is half a mile (even if it isn't). Cost is typically £80.

You need to remove the handle on top of the stock and sight bar on top of the muzzle. Burn them off at a safe distance from the gun then use emery boards to finish the barrel and muzzle flat. The muzzle is a very straight forward matter as the removal of the bar from there is to clear the line of sight. The attention to detail and strength must be given to the preparation for mounting the sight on the barrel.

The removal of the handle shall leave a gap at each end which can be filled with resin and finished with emery board, but leave this until the strengthening for the rail is in place. Strengthening, inside the case, can be any material that is not brittle and can be shaped in the case. I worked with plastic anchored in one panel and finally held with resin and fibreglass tissue. To locate the rail bolt holes, the mounting rail was taped into position on the closed case and two identical spare bolts heated to drop into the rail and melt through the case and strengthening. Last, nuts for the rail bolts were fixed on the strengthening. The bolts supplied with the rail will not be long enough so you will need to get some longer of the same diameter. The whole sight thing is very time consuming.

Fixing the sight to the gun has to be the last part of construction.

**[There you have it a relatively cheap yet fairly robust peice of kit.
Anyone else with any horror tales of con/de struction? Guns,
sensors or props? ED]**

*Something evil this way comes !
Pray it comes no further.....*



Thorsby Park Nr Mansfield 22-25 May 1998

For Details please contact Graham Parton, 5 Hawthorn Close, Charfield,
Gloucs.. GL12 8TX 'phone: 01454 260983
email://100602.271@compuserve.com or check out the website 
<http://www.soton.ac.uk/~ajc4/lasertag/dropzone/dz1998.html>

Where do I start, the beginning, I hear you cry, ok at first there was nothing, which is true all we had was an idea what they looked like, so Research is the first order of the day, since we were writing the game, doing the tickets, printing the fliers and drinking a box of wine all at the same time, we had plenty of S.A.A.B Video's to watch.

Pausing video for large amounts of time damages it, that is why most V.C.R's stop the tape after 45 seconds or so, to get round this we made a stills video, easily done, with the right equipment.

You will need two video machines, one with perfect pause would be ideal, a source tape with the image you wish to view and a blank tape to store the image on, place the source tape in the V.C.R with perfect pause, Pause it and use another to record the image, alternately, take a photo of the TV it sounds stupid but it actually works, since both of these produce only film shots and you always want that shot of the back of the head, we suggest you improvise or research, we used the information highway, which always appears to be like the M25 when I log on, to access the original design studio's shots, also seemed a good reason to go to the Internet cafe for a few bebies.

Then there was Everything all contained in a point smaller than a pin head, What medium were we going to use, my personal favourite is corrugated card it sticks easily, can be cut with scissors and detail can be added with layers of paper, unfortunately things made in this material tend to be heavy, and are a pig to water proof, after a lengthy discussion involving a bottle of vodka and a deck of playing cards we decided on Plastazote Foam And either Glassfibre Resin Or Latex (Ugh yuck, gets in your pint), Luckily Trylon, the worlds best supplier of polyurethane products is in the next town, and they know me really well, so my parts list read like this, 6 sheets of Plastazote foam (6mm) and a can of Evostick, and a quick pint on the way home.

Then the universe was born, our first Chigg head was in card, to get the right shapes and size, vision in masks has been a problem in the past, drinky poos aside, indeed even the ones in the show only had a aperture 2cm wide and 4 cm long, and all other vision was of the actors feet so when you see, a Chigg moving slowly its not trying to be ominous it just can't see.

Here we had a hell of a time, several card Chigg's and a bottle of white wine later, Liam so kindly reminds me that "the predators had visors".

"eureka" I cried, "I have the ideal solution to solve my vision problem."

"less go go juice!" Liam suggests, I sneer, and off we trundled to the pond centre, and purchase some pond baskets for pond plants, well the front of Chigg heads actually.

Ok so i looked stupid with a pond basket on my head, trying them out for vision but personally I would prefer to look stupid in a pond centre I am never going to go back to, than looking stupid on the floor in a forest with a broken leg because I didn't see the log, I got a discount because all the baskets chose were split, (That's my story and 'm sticking to it) after a quick stop off at the local, then back to the

workshop, (my House).

We took the mock Chigg head apart (again) and made templates, we marked the templates onto the Plastazote, cut out pieces, trimmed and glued them, a quick vodkaini while waiting for the Evostick to dry slightly, its quite remarkable how fifteen pieces marked from the same template can be so different when it comes to glue them. feel the effects of vodkaini and Evostick fumes and giggle madly for ten minutes.

The face pieces needed a 45 angle cutting on the forward gluing surfaces to produce a 90 angle, to give the Chigg's that distinctive angular look, sounds easy but check out the Chigg we affectionately named Moe, even we mess it up sometimes, we added the pond baskets, swore lot because they would not stick to the Plastazote, so it was off to the pub, we would deal with the rest tomorrow.

Liam shows me our first booking, there was much rejoicing.

The morning after, celebrated our first booking a bit hard last night all play stopped due to stinking hangover, the morning after that Chigg parts everywhere open all hatches and crack open the Evostick.

Our production line hit a small problem, in our rush to escape to the pub I had simply put one of the completed heads down an it stuck in a fat wide position, we decided this would not cause to much problem when it came to Finnish them we were wrong, we finished ours in polyurethane cold pour resin, with silver paint and ink for colour, this simple procedure caused us vast quantities of trouble a little less G and T next time think, but there a vast variety of safer ways to finish the head including paint and varnish.

Cost		
Plastazote foam 6mm 1m X 750	£4:00 per sheet	
Glass fibre resin 500 ml	£4:99	
Glass fibre resin hardener	£1:02	
Evostick 500 ml	£8:60	
2 Pond Basket	£0:50 each	
Box of Liberfraumilch	£12:50	
Martini Bianco	£2:56	
Virgin Vodka	£13:50	
3 Budvarski	£1:30 each	
total	£:48:37	

U.S. INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES, THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL AND THE HIGH FRONTIER

Who controls the 'High Frontier'? Who decides where the Colonial Marines are sent to die? Did they know the truth behind LV-426 before they sent Gorman's platoon out? And who else is skulking around in the background influencing Interstellar policy? Actually, far too many people. The U.S. government in 2179 is a collection of greedy, two faced, scheming scumbags. (Unlike today obviously!)

Players sometimes meet low level people working behind the scenes in the government, be they ICC reps, Federal District Marshalls, or CIA officers. This article is supposed to give players a basic run down of how these organisations fit together.

Does it make sense? No. This is the U.S. government here. Anyway, here is a brief overview of how important American space and military policy is formulated and the organisations involved.

CONGRESS AND THE SENATE

The elected representatives of the American people have selective power, usually meaning that they can kick a President out after they've screwed up, but won't know what the fool is up to before he presses the button. (Note that the civil servants, the faceless people in power who aren't elected, rarely get the boot!). Senators and Congressmen/women primarily deal with trivial and domestic matters. Occasionally some representatives are allowed to sit on an oversight committee to try and regulate the activities of the CIA or the military. They usually get told the bare minimum.

Most congressmen and women's election campaigns are sponsored very heavily by the Corporations active in their state, and to an extent, the corporations own them. The elected representatives are expected to lobby heavily to ensure juicy government contracts go to their factories, (and to the Congressman's voters in terms of jobs). Because of the rise in power of the corporations, Congressmen and women tend to be somewhat mistrusted by the Government because of their affiliations, (unless one company is in particular favour with the government at that time).

THE PRESIDENT

This is supposed to be the guy in charge. Don't believe a word of it. The President can only make decisions based on the information he is given by his advisors, and it isn't unknown for these advisors to ensure the President is only presented with certain options. Basically, the President can be controlled. (In a way this is quite good - because his/her Presidential election campaign may have been bankrolled partially by some corporationat). The person that controls the President on major policy is the NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR, and through him or her, the NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL.

THE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR

The power behind the throne, and possible the man or woman who really runs America. He or she is probably the most trusted and powerful civil servant in the U.S.A. The National Security Advisor is a high ranking Whitehouse staffer and expert in National Security history and policy. As liason between the National Security Council and the 'Chief Executive' It is his job to brief the President of situations arising and pass him or her the deliberations and recommendations of the NSC. As the senior official, he or she usually chairs NSC meetings, although in times of major crisis, the Vice President may take that job.

THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

A body made up of the most powerful men and women in the U.S.A., the NSC is the body that makes the real decisions about both Earth-bound and Interstellar policy. Held in a situation room two floors underground the Whitehouse, NSC meetings are made up of representatives from powerful agencies, who discuss matters and come to a recommendation which the National Security Advisor or the Vice President can present to the President.

Usually, routine meetings are attended by deputies sent by the directors and secretaries of the relevant agencies. However, when prominent crisis are in progress, such as with the Sanders mutiny and the Eeton system rebellion, (both in the colonies), the heads of department themselves attend

A typical meeting at the moment might consist of:

Government:

Vice President of the United States (Chair)

The National Security Advisor - Senior Presidential advisor

Secretary of the Exterior - 'High Frontier' equivalent of the State Department.

Secretary of Commerce (& possibly the chairman of the ICC).

Government Law Enforcement:

Director of the FBI (& possibly the Director of the FSA)

Director of the DEA

Intelligence Community:

Director of the CIA

Director of the NSA

The Pentagon:

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Earth Forces)

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Space Command)

Director of the DIA

Most of these agencies are constantly jockeying for position amongst themselves and trying to score points from the others. All the departments are trying to scrounge extra funding and deny other departments their knowledge and contacts. Discussions in the NSC have been known to disintegrate in to open argument.

SELECTED NSC MEMBERS:

GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

American society and government is about money. U.S. commercial interest in the world and on the high frontier is paramount, so the Secretary of Commerce or his deputy always attend meetings to factor in economic ramifications of any policy or event. At the moment, the big issue is the economic damage caused by the Eeton system rebellion to petro-chemical production in space. This means that also attending will be the Chairman of the ICC.

INTERSTELLAR COMMERCE COMMISSION

Although the ICC is officially part of the Department of Commerce, its specialist knowledge is needed regarding issues involving commerce and business law on the high frontier. Usually the Chairman or a deputy attend.

DEPARTMENT OF THE EXTERIOR

Deals with the mundane governing and maintenance of the Colonies and off-world civilian facilities. All planets still have to be claimed in the name of an Earth nation as its territory. After that, the U.S. government is free to lease it to a Corporation, but as U.S. territory, they can still stick their nose in every now and then. In addition to this, because many Corporate employees on a world may be U.S. citizens, the Government has a responsibility to protect them (hence the Colonial Marines) and maintain law and order using U.S. Federal Marshalls. The department of the Exterior deals with planet leasing, tax collecting, welfare systems, Union relationships and general local government on U.S. backed colonies. It doesn't have an awful lot of political clout, and is mainly a beaurocratic agency.

GOVERNMENT LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

FEDERAL SECURITY AGENCY

Responsible for Earth bound police investigations, the FBI has remained virtually unchanged since the 1990's, except that a new branch, the Federal Security Agency has been raised to deal with Policing duties on the High Frontier. The FSA's responsibility of maintaining Law and Order in the colonies means its Director often attends NSC meetings. The big issue for the FSA at present is the armed insurrection in the Eeton system, and the panic being spread amongst civilians due to the Col. Sanders mutiny.

INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

THE CIA

Far from being the intelligence agency it purports to be, the Central Intelligence Agency is primarily a covert action agency, set up to conduct undercover offensive operations against 'enemies of the state'. While it has a formidable intelligence gathering and analysis capability, the CIA's forte is assassination, election rigging, blackmail, torture, murder and so forth. They also specialise in equipping and training insurgency/counter insurgency forces and guerrilla armies to fight their wars in foreign climes. CIA field officers are often ex-military types, and 'the company' maintains a large force of 'deniable mercenaries' to perform black operations for them. US military personnel seconded or transferred to CIA duties are often treated with suspicion by their regular colleagues and by the Military community in general.

THE NSA

The National Security Agency safeguards the U.S.A.s communications. In NSC meetings, this agency provides up to the minute satellite photos and data. The organisation specialises in communications intercepts, code and cipher breaking, spy satellites and all manner of electronic eavesdropping. As a result, they have a close, (though not necessarily trusting) relationship with Space Command's 73rd Space Surveillance Squadron.

However, the remit of the NSA goes further than this, and they are involved in operations which are much more tangible, secret and unpleasant. However, no-one seems to know exactly what they are up to. It seems that as long as a situation presents a threat to the National Security of the U.S.A., then they are within their rights to meddle with it.

If transmissions from Alien life forms reached Earth, you can bet the NSA would pick them up before anyone else.

THE PENTAGON

JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF: SPACE COMMAND

A military all arms forum. Like the earth based armed forces JCS, the Pentagon also has a Joint Chiefs of Staff committee for Space Command. This consists of the Commandant of the Colonial Marine Corps, the Admiral commanding U.S. Navy Space Command, The commanding Generals of Air Force and Army Space Command, and the Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, (officially part of the Armed forces), an organisation which now also oversees Starship safety, rescue and recovery in near Earth orbit and runs Antarctica Traffic Control.

The Joint Chiefs (plus their various aides, briefers, intelligence officers) hold their own internal meetings and situation briefings, in order to formulate new Space military tactics and policies. This is presided over by a chairman selected from one of the arms, (traditionally the Navy), and the group takes advice from their own military intelligence organisations, like the DIA. Once a decision or recommendation has been made, the Chairman of the Joint chiefs reports to the National Security Council. From there it is down to the council to decide if the plan or concept is a workable one, and pass it up to the President for a final yes or no.

DIA (Defence Intelligence Agency)

The Defence Intelligence Agency is the military version of the CIA, run entirely by military personnel. It concerns itself mainly with documenting and analysing developments in military hardware and tactics. The DIA funds and sponsors U.S. experimental weapons development, as well as sending its field agents to spy on enemy programs. Its analysts are tasked with predicting possible world and Interstellar trouble spots, enemy tactics and the way in which weapons systems may be employed or modified by an enemy. Unlike the CIA there are very few civilian staffers, and a certain amount of suspicion and cold-shouldering goes on between the DIA and the CIA, who view each other as competitors. The DIA has a close relationship with the various Military Intelligence unit operating in Space Command.

CORPORATE INFLUENCE

The corporations are constantly trying to increase their power, and this includes their influence with the US Government. As has been mentioned above, Corporations often fund the election campaigns of Senators and Congressmen, and so are able to influence some government policies on a 'you scratch my back' system. The US Military relies on Corporations for its weapons and equipment: The Colt Corporation builds the M41A, and McDonnell Douglas corporation produces the UD-4L Dropship for the Marines. Competition for contracts is cut throat, and bribes (known as 'gratuities', 'expenses' and 'gifts'), corruption and double dealing is common in their dealings. The government however is in little danger, as so many corporations have their fingers in the pie no one company has any major control.

UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES

It is not unknown for government agencies to undertake programs and operations without Presidential permission. But that's a story for another time.....

Sarah Clark's Events Diary and Mailing Service

How often have you heard or taken part in a conversation that included lines to this effect:

“Going to be at *(insert name of event)* this weekend?”

“First I’ve heard of it! Sorry I’m already booked for something else, wish I’d known”

How many games have been under subscribed because communications went astray or the event wasn’t widely enough publicised?

Well I for one have fallen foul of both on more than one occasion and each time found myself wishing there was a fixed point of contact for events in the hobby.

Most taggers belong to a club of some sort but many do not. Some who used to belong to clubs have fallen out of touch and don’t know what is in the offing. For those of you who move around a lot: Do you want to have to update a dozen or more clubs on your change of details? For all of you out there who want to stay informed of events without having to pay a full club subscription or subscribe to a magazine **[What’s one of them then? ED]** there is an alternative:

In the new year I will be launching a new mailing service to the hobby in general. This will be a one-page diary of events with a regular posting date of (approx.) the first of each month regardless of whether any new events are in the pipeline. My aim is to keep Taggers in touch with what is going on, giving games organisers a means of making sure that as many people as possible hear about events and avoiding diary clashes.

Subscription to this service will be a paltry £3.60 per year, payable at 1st January and will start in January 1998.

Games organisers, this service is for you too.

You want to let as many as possible know about your event but don’t have a full list of addresses. You have three options:

- Let me know it is happening and it will be included **FREE OF CHARGE** in the events diary.
- For the cost of photocopying (5p per sheet) your flier (single A4) will be included in the next posting to subscribers, saving you postage and time stuffing envelopes.
- Deluxe service: at 30p (35p 1st class) per envelope I will undertake an extra-schedule mail shot to everyone on my list plus whatever other names you want included and can provide addresses for. The price includes copying up to 2 A4 pages, with additional pages at 5p per sheet. If you prefer to provide the copies yourself the cost is 25p+ per envelope depending on weight of material.

Sarah Clark's Events Diary and Mailing Service

This may seem like just another way to make some money out of you but let me assure you that 30p a month is cost price. I am offering to do all this as a service to the hobby which should help to save organisers time, costs and trouble and streamline the way the calendar works.

Another thing: I am not going to sideline those who do not or are unable to pay the subscription. For reasons of expense I cannot include non-payers in the regular mail shots, but if anyone wants to be included in the one-off specials paid for by games organisers they are welcome to send me their details for just this part of the service at no charge to themselves. Later this year I hope to go online with my own web site which will include the calendar information for free - watch this space.

Finally, a word of reassurance on privacy: I value mine and will afford subscribers the same courtesy. I will *not* give details out without permission and the information will not be held in an electronically accessible database. If you don't mind me passing your details on, say so otherwise I will assume you prefer me to keep them private.

Looking forward to hearing from you

Sarah Clark, Fiat Lux!

If you want to subscribe, fill in the form with your details and make your cheque payable to:

Mrs S.J. Clark

then send it to:

**Sarah Clark, 74 Bluebell Rd, Bassett, Southampton, SO16 3LQ
☎ 01703-679758 or 0385-790673 (mobile)**

ajc4@soton.ac.uk <http://www.soton.ac.uk/~ajc4/index.htm>

The Laser-Tag Confederation

by James B

I don't think I've made much secret of the fact that I think this hobby is already overloaded with rules, committee, constitution, etc. Hell enough people in this hobby consider me to be the anti-christ as it is. So when I read David Harvey and Andy Smith's article in the last issue about resurrecting the Laser-Tag Confederation (**LTC**) as a national body, I immediately put it down as a bad idea. Then I started thinking (contrary to popular myth!). The one thing this hobby has been lacking recently, has been a united front to present to new players, the public and the LRP world in general. In times gone by, it was simple enough, there were enough big clubs with enough members and resources to keep the image afloat. With their passing however, nothing has come forward to take their place.

One organization that could be an example to us all and possibly lead the way ahead is the Adventurers Guild. The Adventurers Guild has seemingly been much maligned by certain members of this hobby for no other reason other than their members seem to prefer role-play to gunplay. When I first joined the Guild back in 1991 I received bundles of information such as local clubs (how I found Starlore), how to build latex weapons, useful phone numbers, details of events, etc. As an information resource it was invaluable. It's bimonthly magazine, "The Adventurer" really was the national voice of LRP after "GMI" and "Gamesman" bit the dust. It also setup a national LRP insurance policy which a lot of clubs subscribe to each year and to which the then Lazer Adventure Federation subscribed to for Dropzone 93. The Guild may have retired from view for a little while, (as to why has been well documented elsewhere) but it still can teach us valuable lessons about what the **LTC** needs to accomplish.

If the **LTC** is to become a reality then in my opinion it would need to provide/run the following services:-

A Monthly Events Flyer

This is absolutely crucial as too many people have complained that they are not kept informed about games, for a small subscription charge (12 stamps a year?) send them up to the minute info. I realize this information is in Firefight! but (No disrespect here Dail!) it has sometimes come out late and rendered the event information null and void. Also, with the games calendar changing as radically as it has done, particularly during the latter half of 1997 it needs to be at least monthly. Also, it is not enough for the editor of any such publication to say "Everybody call me with details of events!" As other people in similar roles have found out recently, you have to go and phone round the event

organizers. The majority will not beat a path to your door information in hand. Whoever runs this part would have to be proactive in their approach. It is also not good enough to rely on another medium solely, like some clubs currently are doing. They only mail out to you, if have an E-Mail address and then ask you to pass the stuff onto someone who hasn't got Internet access. I'm sorry, this is impractical and unreliable. Perhaps there could be some unification between the **LTC** and Firefight?

Contact Database

A Source of reliable information that has been checked and verified. I don't just mean clubs. What about individuals who can be called and asked for advice about building guns, tuning sensors, running games, finding sites, etc.

Predefined Information

What I mean by this is info. you can handout to people. An example of this is Dave "The Saint" Bodger's guide to building guns. I think this is excellent and people I have sent it to have also talked highly of it. The work and research Dave put into it is evident throughout the whole document.

Like everything else, if the **LTC** is to become a reality it needs people to come forward and volunteer. I don't just mean the same old faces again (No disrespect meant!). How about some of you that have lurked for the last couple of years? People may also comment on the last time this was attempted with the Lazer Adventure Federation and how that experiment died a death. Well that happened through a lack of support and commitment from people who promised it but never delivered. That is how the **LTC** will fold before it has even got off the ground.

PS. *I just wanted to pass my congratulations onto Black Watch for accomplishing their first weekend event (Semper Fidelis). It was a lot of fun and showed promise for the future. Well done!*

[This article fits in nicely to the mailing idea and a few points raised by Nigel Carr. But I can't help feeling that the more effort put into inter club organization. The less will be available for events themselves. Peoples time, enthusiasm as well as money are finite. Witness the pained look on those who have the onerous role of sorting out Dropzone. ED]

A suggestion for the International Laser Tag

Federation

By Mr N. Carr
In response to the letter from
Messrs Harvey & Smith

I would like to suggest the following ideas for anyone to criticise or comment on.

The governing body to be created would be called the 'International Laser Tag Federation' (ILTF). Whilst the so-called International Laser Tag Association ⁽¹⁾ has a self-appointed role and name, it would seem to the uninformed to represent the hobby completely, but in fact only represents one commercial group in America. **[A bit like the baseball's World Series. ED]** Therefore a name for a group to represent laser tag in Britain ought to be seen to be influential. We should not adopt a name that makes the organisation seem to represent an esoteric or minority hobby; and of course it should have the aim to represent different clubs with different standards.

The ILTF would have a committee that is voted in each year. At the inauguration of the committee, and the ILTF, a constitution would be devised and would then be reviewed each year.

Each laser tag club in Britain could be affiliated to the ILTF and within any club its members would have an ILTF representative. Around Britain the various representatives of the clubs could arrange to vote for ILTF committee members. The benefit of having the 'grass roots' recruitment would be a good way of ensuring that the committee is in touch with events, represents the clubs in practice, has a worthwhile purpose and can be reliable. It would be possible to extend the membership of the ILTF to commercial organisations if appropriate.

Why have a governing body?

First, there is the promotion of the hobby which requires funding. Fees from the club membership would be arranged. Promotion would then be for several individuals and clubs. Clubs that are members of the ILTF would benefit from being associated with the ILTF name. The content and style of the ILTF promotion can be agreed by the membership, and certain publications would be carry some weight. We could look at the success of Paintball for examples. A web page would have its contents added to by individual clubs.

Second, the ILTF would have a mandate from the clubs around the country which at the moment are doing their own thing. This breadth of input has its own limited worth.

Third, while the Quasar type of commercial centres are successful **[?ED]** the 'tag' hobby is difficult to keep going. This may be linked to the centralisation of the franchise operation.

The committee would have a responsibility to run DROPZONE. There could be a problem here in that clubs using different equipment would not be compatible. A solution would need to be found, such as more than one DZ or equipment hire.

It would be possible to develop the use of the Wonder™ equipment standard; including the dissemination of technical information so people can build their own equipment if they want to. This would serve to reduce the cost, make equipment more available, spread the use of the WoW™ standards, increase the frequency of events and standardise such things as gun range and sensor sensitivity.

The recruitment would increase from greater publicity. Important issues here that need to be addressed are: Where do they fit in? Where can they play? Where are they recruited from?

Events

The increase in membership depends on the accessibility of equipment. The development of both, means the cost to play decreases, the frequency of events increases. Equipment building would be more varied, the hobby would be better known and travel to such events would not be such a problem as in the present.

The starting point would be a survey, which could in itself raise interest. The questions on the questionnaire would include questions about what clubs/societies are attended, what events are known about, what equipment is used, where new people can be recruited, and how to market the hobby. It would be necessary to draw in the support of the various clubs and organisations which at the moment are doing their own style of laser games.

On the matter of minor politics. In some cases we have to ask why on earth are some people so quick to look for problems? What are they trying to achieve? The solution is out there. ¹³

Finally, to those who wish to criticise this article. Please make positive comments or offer alternatives or solutions if possible.

Footnotes

⁽¹⁾ see Yahoo search engine on the web.

[Although this point is only simmering in the wings at the moment, if sufficient people wish to discuss the issues of a single representative body, time will be allocated in the afternoon of TagCon - 8. That is before the Sci-fi quiz where everyone who wasn't talking to each other because of the discussion can get back together to have some fun before deeper divisions form. Mildly annoying information blip over. Please read on. ED]

“How Much?!?”

The Cost of LRP in Today's World

by Mr J Bloodworth

Like everything else in the world, prices are going up. LRP has not escaped from this either, I can remember getting into Summerfest for £15 and thinking it was expensive and now having to almost remortgage the house to get into The Gathering.

Events have also come a long way, from hauling one bin bag of Orc Masks and another bin bag of Tabards into the local woods for a treasure hunt with your friends, some events have a very high level of props, costume, make-up, etc. There is also now a tendency for “historical accuracy” or “authenticity” with some games looking like Medieval Renaissance fairs. These events can cost anywhere from £70-£120 for a weekend. As ever we Taggers have not escaped this, as we search for and arrange our combat gear, into ever more authentic kit.

I started writing this article after a meeting some months ago. There I was told quite categorically that you cannot charge more than £25 for a Laser-Tag weekend as 90% of players are students, on low wage or unemployed. Thus Second Contact players were only charged £25 (plus £5 for kit hire if needed) and boy did we have fun balancing the books! Had Menace Unseen gone ahead we were already looking for ways to make drastic savings. As costs of things go up and up we (The Wild Cards) were still expected to deliver the goods for the same price. Second Contact had bunks for the players, it was fully catered and had one of the highest levels of props that I had ever seen on a Laser-Tag (or any other for that matter) event (did you count how many Predators you saw in one place at one time?). Afterwards some people who had not been on one of our games before, came up to us and said that they would have expected to have paid up to £50 for a weekend featuring the things that we had done.

I admit we were lucky, we used a lot of existing props and the component costs of some things (Latex, Plaster, etc.) were not as high as we had first budgeted for. Even so, we filled a Transit Van from top to bottom with various bits of kit that was needed for the event.

As game costs rise, so do player expectations. As an event organiser you feel obligated to meet the challenge. People expect more and more for that experience that you are trying to give them, and when you have delivered in one game, they expect more from the next one.

The main thrust of this is; to all you game organisers (current and prospective), don't sell yourselves out cheaply and make a loss. Charge what you need to, to make the game run. If your game is good, then that will be enough. Look carefully at what you want to do. Do you want it fully catered? What props do you need to buy/make/borrow? Do you need a Transit van to get it all to the game site? How much is the site costing you? There are a lot of factors to consider when doing your initial costings for a game.

Take a minute to stand back and have another think before you commit yourself.

[One way of reducing costs for games from new organisers might be to run a game at Dropzone or similar magazine format weekends to get a feel for the job without worrying to much about the housekeeping side. ED]

Short scenarios or ongoing campaigns - or the one-night stand versus the regular relationship?

In a previous edition of Firefight it was claimed that "people want ongoing campaigns". Do they? Has anyone done a survey? And whether they do or not, what are the advantages and disadvantages of the various lengths of scenario on offer at Tag events.

Table-top role-playing campaigns are almost always long ongoing campaigns lasting months or even years. Since these games are usually played by a small group of friends who meet regularly, they are well suited to this. For Tag they have both advantages and disadvantages and in my view the disadvantages outweigh the benefits.

The advantages are that once you have your character, costume and weapons you need not do any more although your character can become better dressed, better armed etc. as time passes. You always know roughly where you are in time and space and who you will be meeting (both in and out of game), and it gives the script writer a clear background on which to base his adventure.

The disadvantages are: Firstly, this type of game tends to become inward-looking and cliquy and can be hard for a newcomer to break into. Also, organisers can find themselves in serious difficulties with scripts based on a particular group of characters if one or more of them fails to turn up at an event (especially if they drop out at very short notice, giving no time for a rewrite). Players can become very attached to their characters and become very awkward if required to do something they don't think they should do or if they are killed (however stupid they've been in bringing this about). For players, playing the same person all the time has a number of disadvantages (if not downright dangers). You may find your character doesn't fit well into a particular campaign or group of other players (for instance a person who prefers to role-play and negotiate may find themselves stuck with a bunch of companions who simply want to shoot everything in sight, or *vice versa*), leaving you spending most of your weekend bored and frustrated. Simply changing to another character is not that easy. Once you have become established as a particular character it is difficult to reappear as someone else unless you are a very good role-player (look how hard it is for many TV actors to get away from a role that they've played for a long time). And last, but not least, is the rare but very real danger (also known to actors) that if you play the same person too often that *alter ego* can start to take over your everyday life. The results of this are at best sad, at worst horrific (there is some evidence that this sort of thing played a part in what happened to Michael Ryan - need I say more?).

Probably the best compromise for those who like weekend-long and ongoing scenarios is the 2-3 episode story such as we have been having with "Awakenings" and "First Contact". This has the advantage of an ongoing story-line and characters and sufficient flexibility to accommodate different styles of play and different mixes of players at each event. The short scenario also has its place. Some plot lines simply couldn't stretch to a weekend or longer. Also it gives script writers a chance to try out ideas that might be expanded into longer events at a later date. Some of us simply like dressing up in different outfits and being different people (we are the ones who usually volunteer to NPC at one-script weekends). Of course if you find yourself playing a character you particularly like in a short scenario there's nothing to prevent you bringing him out again in a future event.

There is a place for all these types of game in Tag and we shouldn't get fixated on one to the exclusion of all others. I am not making any dogmatic pronouncements on "what people want", but I suggest that the best way to keep people interested is to provide as great a variety of scenarios as possible in terms of length, genre, ratio of role-playing to combat etc. You can't please everybody all the time but that way everyone is likely to find something they enjoy.

Ros Day

JUST WHAT KIND OF MONSTER ARE YOU?

by Dai Rees

Now I know what your saying; what a corny way of titling an article. Sorry but now I have your attention it is as well you listen. You never know I might just learn something.

Have we not heard the chimes at midnight? The death knell for tag looms close yet again. Some of the reasons given, are that new comers don't hang about long and even hardened veterans are falling by the wayside. Why? I will attempt to shift some of the blame away from any close proximity to myself or club politics in general, by looking at the way in which we play.

The way in which I've noted a shift in the games, is more towards themes, costume and role play (*no matter how limited*). I personally see no dichotomy of play, between combat and deep and meaningful character interaction (*oohhh err*). What is far more important, is the balance within the game and the continuity.

As more and more of us are biting the bullet, to organise games for ourselves, instead of letting the brave few, shoulder the burden; we find out some painful truths of tagging. I'm not referring to lack of batteries, the props falling apart, key characters not turning up. What I'm concerned and occasionally bloody furious about, is the inconsistency in tag games brought about by a few thoughtless individuals as Monsters.

Now! Before all manner of aliens, predators, and cybermen start knocking on my door, please note, I said a few. Sometimes very few. BUT it is the nature of the tags that, these individuals as a monster often have great sway over how the game unfolds.

Before hypothetical examples are given, I would like to explore from where some of this phenomenon arises. A main reason for referring to the monsters as such, is to remove the association that links Non-Player Characters (NPCs) and these individuals. NPCs are coined from the dice, paper and pencil based Role playing games. Unfortunately in those games the NPCs were alter egos (boy were there some egos?) of the Games Master (GM) running the gaming session. They inadvertently knew everything the GM knew and as such could steer a "player group" to rack & ruin or fame & fortune. There was only the GM and the players to blame. Fair enough in the living room, but in the woods unless extremely clever plotting and costume is arranged, more than one physical representation of an NPC is going to be difficult for the Games Organiser Dude (GOD).

As a result we are confronted with a dilution of several magnitudes of GOD's ego and simultaneously knowledge. Now many games are spoilt by the lack of knowledge of the monsters of their exact role or function at a given time. That said, the continuous briefing and rebriefing (as the game goes wildly off course half way through the weekend) takes enormous amounts of time andwait for itpreparation. Preparation that can be torn apart in an instant if certain monsters do not arrive or fail to agree to certain roles.

It is the roles, egos and agreement, overt or covert that leads to the majority of the problems. It really ought to be realised by the monster crew that, that is exactly what they are.

1. They are NOT players, no matter how human. At best they are monsters in human form.
2. They are crew, NOT the poor sods who have almost no control over what GOD or GODs are doing to them. Instead they have the great fortune of being GOD's right hand. Therefore temptation will be at hand.

Monsters despite this, so often pursue their own agenda. This is fine if GOD knows and agrees their ideas. So often however, despite the abbreviation, GOD hasn't actually got a f**king clue what the monster crew are up to. GOD ironically has to rely on trust and faith.

Now even in the closest knit clubs, or loosest associations, there are going to be some people who are going to get fun out of tagging whatever happens. These are good monsters. (*Have a biscuit and lie down in your box*). There are at the same time some who, unless they have single handedly slaughtered 58 of the enemy, with one eye closed, and both hands tied behind their back, are a tad unhappy with the weekend. These are NOT good monsters. (*Take 23,000 years in purgatory*). Equally, there are others who are 'fresh from the closet' thespians (*not necessarily a bad trait*) but who are also control freaks. Not a word of real aid passes their lips, unless a players says exactly the right words, standing on one leg and with the sun in line with the third fallen oak on the right. These too are NOT good monsters (*See above*).

Taking an intuitive leap; the Disney company has taken a lot of flack for its Americanisation of children and entertainment. But I would argue there is one area in which they excel. Curiously it coincides with what we misguided bunch do with our weekends. Having been recently to Disneyland Paris (*My daughter made me go! Honest!*) I noted that almost every single member of staff was keen to ensure I, and the rest of the guest population enjoyed ourselves. Now again, before too many people start quoting salaries and benefits at me, I appreciate the gulf between the excellent and the possible. I have met these people however outside the area and they complain bitterly of poor pay, long hours, no promotion etc. i.e. exactly the same as everyone else who works for a living. They are however convinced by Disney that whilst "on stage" they are the "cast" of a show that is there to entertain others. This means that they have to accept that they are not going to necessarily enjoy the show themselves, but only the reaction of the audience.

Dragging this back to tag; the audience of players are going to be seriously p***ed off if monsters shoot them up with out respite or withhold information. (*I believe there are examples in a couple of the write ups in this edition*) Any monster who 'gets off' on that reaction, needs to be removed immediately (*if not quicker*). The cast (monsters) have to get used to the fact that their enjoyment is going to be of a vastly different nature to that of the players. This does not mean, that after time out they cannot complain to GOD or each other. We are all human **[Not me. ED]**. It is human nature to be frustrated by lack of activity or excitement. Players have however placed themselves voluntarily in a very vulnerable position. It is up to the cast (monster) to make them feel more like heroes or villains, to enhance, not dictate their experiences.

To finalise a wandering argument; if you feel that to not 'kill' a player all weekend is too much to ask, then reconsider your NPC / monster status. Equally, as organisers; if you know someone is a 'gun' wielding maniac then consider closely the role you have assigned them. Organisers have a hard enough job scripting for players and a majority of blank faced monsters. Please do not make their job more difficult and spoil others pleasure, both NPC/monsters and players alike by pursuing only your version of the game.

"This article, is in part an explanation and an apology to the "Spetatz" team from Semper Fidelis. They recently endured a tour of duty as NPC/monsters under my lead. We spent a lot of time wandering in the dark, NOT attacking players as we could hear frantic calls for "Medic" all around. This session was coined immediately as our 'Danby' phase. Equally, the group spent ages shooting tall trees and grass in an effort to get shot at and thus redirect wayward players.

I'm proud of you lads. For a bunch of so called gung-ho shoot 'em up combat freaks, you done good! Nuff said!"

DOES SIZE MATTER? THE BIG-GUNS AND BEGINNERS DEBATE!

Some while ago there was a debate concerning the spread of big guns in the hobby and the problems experienced by beginners. One of the points made during the debate about keeping recruits and losing members was that people soon became discouraged and left when they were only able to borrow low-powered weapons and found themselves being killed all the time. I tried to make the point that it is possible to enjoy a tag game with a small gun and would now like to enlarge on this.

Leaving aside the Freudian implications of the "big-gun syndrome", I suspect that many of these people have had a deprived upbringing. They went to school during the period when games and competition of all kinds were discouraged on the grounds that losing was bad for a child's fragile ego! Hence they have never learned how to compete or how to lose and are still stuck at the stage of "If I can't win all the time I won't play", demanding instant success without any particular effort on their part. They also find it hard to accept rules and regard cheating as normal and acceptable. If they can't do some quick growing-up and learn how to play games (something most of us [particularly us real oldsters] learned at junior school), do we really want them in tag? Aren't they likely to be more trouble than they're worth?

Tag is like a lot of other games in demanding both equipment and personal skill. A novice usually borrows or hires equipment to start with and such equipment is invariably not top class, nor would anyone expect it to be. A sensible player puts up with this until they know more about the game; then, if they wish to continue with it, they purchase their own equipment, having by this time gained sufficient experience to know what is available, and what will suit them best.

It also appears to be forgotten (often by experienced players who should know better), that there are skills to be learned in tag. No-one in any sport expects to beat seasoned players straight away. They expect to have to do a lot of losing at first. As to what skills, see current and past editions of Firefight for hints on team-work, manoeuvring, using cover etc. Someone with good field-craft can run rings around better armed but less skilled players provided the game briefing and his team leader allow him to do so (e.g. by not ordering him to launch a suicide attack across 100 metres of open ground against a well defended position). Game organisers can also help to cushion potential problems of inequality of weapon-power by allowing the less well-armed side more players, or more hits, or a quicker and simpler medical system. There should be no need for anyone to feel that he is purely there as cannon-fodder.

I used only a Starlyte for my first two years' tagging and was more than happy with it. I also managed to survive a lot of games and score my share of hits in the process. I have now acquired a full armoury, ranging from the short range "hold-out" to the ultra-long range "mega splat". As someone who is as much (or more) a role player than a gun-fighter this reflects not so much a wish to score more kills as the desire to have an appropriate weapon to match whatever character I happen to be playing. Even a pure "combatant" player is likely to need different weapons to suit different games and playing environments (for instance, a very powerful gun is worse than useless indoors).

In any game, if it came to a choice between a trained (or at least willing and able to learn!) person with a Starlyte and a "won't listen, won't take orders, kill-everything-in-sight" idiot with a Pulse-Ranger I would prefer to have the former in my team any time - the entire team would have a more enjoyable game and would be more likely to stay alive!

In conclusion - it's not so much what you've got but what you can do with it that really matters!

Ros Day

Hong Kong Phooey

For the next John Woo game, you might like to consider introducing a little verisimilitude by using one or more of the following phrases. Believe it or not they have all appeared as subtitles in Hong Kong films.

- Fatty, you with your thick face have hurt my instep.
- Gun wounds again?
- Same old rules: no eyes, no groin.
- A normal person wouldn't steal pituitaries.
- Damn, I'll burn you into a BarBQ chicken!
- Take my advice, or I'll spank you without pants.
- Who gave you the nerve to get killed here?
- Quiet or I'll blow your throat up.
- You always use violence. I should've ordered glutinous rice chicken.
- I'll fire aimlessly if you don't come out!
- You daring lousy guy.
- Beat him out of recognisable shape!
- I have been scared sh*tless too much lately.
- I got knife scars more than the number of your leg's hair!
- Beware! Your bones are going to be disconnected.
- The bullets inside are very hot. Why do I feel so cold?
- How can you use my intestines as a gift?
- This will be of fine service for you, you bag of the scum. I am sure you will not mind that I remove your manhoods and leave them out on the dessert flour for your aunts to eat.
- Yah-hah, evil spider woman! I have captured you by the short rabbits and can now deliver you violently to your gynaecologist for a thorough extermination.
- Greetings, large black person. Let us not forget to form a team up together and go into the country to inflict the pain of our karate feets on some ass of the giant lizard person.
- and my personal favourite:
- I am damn unsatisfied to be killed in this way.

CLUB DIRECTORY

BAD COMPANY



Contact: Ian Palmer,
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BARKING (MAD) WARDOGS



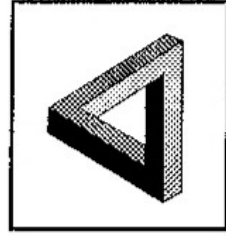
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FIAT LUX !

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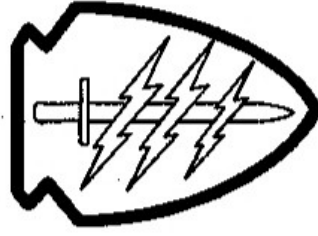
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LAZERQUAKE

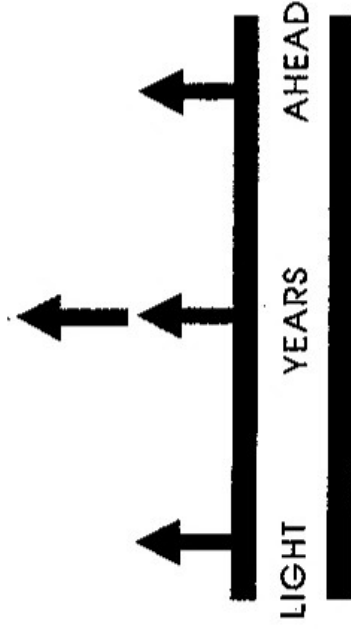
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STARLORE ADVENTURES



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Nottingham,
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SWANT

S. pecial
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A. nd
N. o
T. acties

**STILL SOON TO BE
RENTAL WATTS
BLACKWATER
OFFICIALS to follow**
Contact details to follow

THIRD AGE ADVENTURES



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VIRTUAL ECLIPSE

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CLASSIFIED ADS:-

FOR SALE :- A complete set of the Star Trek - Next Generation Videos. 89 videos in total. Good Condition. £350.00 o.n.o.
Contact : Chas Rust (01933) 386888

**Wishing you all a very Happy New Year
from the **FIREFIGHT** staff !**

///FIREFIGHT///

Wishes to apologise for the 5 day delay to this edition due to circumstances beyond control.



Sarah Clark's Events Diary and Mailing Service

(Tick one box)

• Please put my name on the Tag diary mailing list for 1998. I enclose a cheque or PO for £3.60 for which I will receive 12 monthly updates of the events diary on or around the first of each month from January 1998.

• I don't want to subscribe to the diary updates but please include me in any events mail-shots this year

Name:	
Address:	
Telephone:	
E-mail:	
Club:	

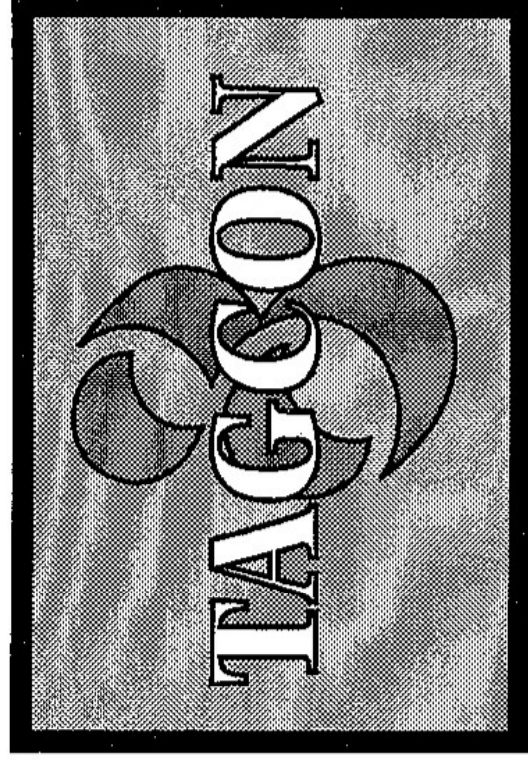
I am happy for my details to be passed on to organisers of events for mailing purposes only. I accept the list administrator's assurance that no details will be given out for non-gaming purposes under any circumstances without my prior permission.	
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send to: Sarah Clark, 74 Bluebell Rd, Bassett, Southampton, SO16 3LQ
☎ 01703-679758 or 0385-790673 (mobile)
ajc4@soton.ac.uk <http://www.soton.ac.uk/~ajc4/index.htm>

Please photocopy and pass this form on to anyone you think may be interested.

BOOKING FORM :-

FEBRUARY 28th NUNEATON ARTS CENTRE



8th Annual Science Fiction Live Roleplaying Convention

(Mr.Mrs.Miss.Ms.)* Forename _____

Surname _____

CLUB _____

Address for Correspondence _____

Telephone _____

Do you have any special requirements ie. dietary or other _____

COST PER DELEGATE :-
ONLY £5:00 until February 27th
£7:00 on the day.
Price includes buffet lunch.

£2=00
reduction
on
last years
price

Make all cheques payable to :- **FIREFIGHT FANZINE**
and send to D. Rees, 122, Hartland Avenue, Wyken,
Coventry, West Midlands. CV2 3ES (01203) 453673

PROPZONE 98

BOOKING FORM

NAME

DATE OF BIRTH

TAG CLUB/GRUP/ALLIANCE/COMMUNE/FLANGE/WHATEVER

STREET ADDRESS

TOWN

COUNTY

POST CODE

PHONE

EMAIL

THERE WILL BE A FREE BARBEQUE ON SUNDAY NIGHT. PLEASE STATE ANY SPECIAL DIETRY REQUIREMENTS YOU MAY HAVE.

NAME

IN THE EVENT OF EMERGENCY PLEASE CONTACT

PHONE

PLEASE INDICATE ANY SPECIAL MEDICAL CONDITIONS YOU MAY SUFFER FROM, FOR EXAMPLE AN ALLERGIC REACTION TO PENICILLIN.

PLEASE INDICATE IF YOU HAVE ANY RELEVANT MEDICAL TRAINING THAT MAY BE OF USE IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION

I WOULD LIKE TO HIRE A SENSOR IF ONE IS AVAILABLE
(THERE IS A CHARGE OF £10 AND A DEPOSIT OF £50. SEND NO MONEY NOW)

YES PLEASE
NO THANKYOU

PLEASE CIRCLE ONE

I WOULD LIKE TO HIRE A GUN IF ONE IS AVAILABLE
(THERE IS A CHARGE OF £10 AND A DEPOSIT OF £50. SEND NO MONEY NOW)

YES PLEASE
NO THANKYOU

PLEASE CIRCLE ONE

THE FULL COST OF THE EVENT IS £50
IF A BOOKING FORM IS RECEIVED BEFORE 15TH MAY 1998 THE COST IS REDUCED TO £30
IF A BOOKING FORM IS RECEIVED BEFORE 1ST APRIL 1998 THE COST IS REDUCED TO £20
(ATTENDANCE ON A DAILY BASIS WILL BE CHARGED AT £10 PER DAY. ATTENDANCE IS
DEFINED AS PHYSICALLY BEING PRESENT ON EITHER THE GAME OR CAMPING SITE.)
PLEASE DO NOT SEND ANY MONEY FOR HIRING EQUIPMENT IN ADVANCE. DEPOSITS AND HIRE
CHARGES WILL BE COLLECTED ON THE DAY.
I ENCLOSE A CHEQUE OR POSTAL ORDER (NO CASH SHOULD BE SENT THROUGH THE POST) FOR
THE AMOUNT OF:
CHEQUES SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO PROPZONE £10 MINIMUM NON-REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT

I AGREE TO BE BOUND BY THE PROPZONE CODE OF CONDUCT WHILST ATTENDING THE
EVENT. A FULL COPY WILL BE SUPPLIED IN THE EVENT BOOKLET, ONE MONTH BEFORE THE
EVENT.

I UNDERSTAND THAT LIVE-ROLEPLAYING CAN BE PHYSICALLY DEMANDING AND I AM
RESPONSIBLE FOR MY OWN LEVEL OF FITNESS.

I UNDERSTAND THAT LIVE-ROLEPLAYING CAN BE DANGEROUS. I UNDERSTAND THAT THE
PROPZONE COMMITTEE OR ANYONE ELSE CONCERNED WITH ORGANISING THE EVENT ACCEPT
NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY ACCIDENTAL INJURY THAT I MAY INCUR.

I UNDERSTAND THAT ADMITTANCE TO THE EVENT IS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE COMMITTEE,
AND THAT A BREACH OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT WILL RESULT IN IMMEDIATE EXPULSION
FROM THE EVENT.

I WILL BE OVER SIXTEEN (16) YEARS OF AGE ON FRIDAY 22ND MAY 1998

SIGNED

DATE

SIGNED

DATE

(BY PARENT OR GUARDIAN IF APPLICANT IS UNDER 16 YEARS OF AGE ON 22ND MAY 1998)

In previous Dropzone's we have tried to set a theme to some of the games, well this year we're going a little further. Please read on and you will have a chance to plan your participation in more detail.

THERE ARE THINGS IN THE UNIVERSE, FAR OLDER THAN MAN'S IMAGINATION CAN COMPREHEND. STRANGE FORCES PUSH AND PULL US IN DIRECTIONS WE CANNOT COMPREHEND OR CONTROL. THAT IS UNTIL NOW. COSMIC FORCES ARE MOVING INTO ALIGNMENT, OBJECTS OF POWER THOUGHT LOST FOR MILLENNIA ARE RESURFACING AROUND THE WORLD.

RUMOURS ABOUND IN THE DARK PLACES WHERE SECRETS ARE SWAPPED IN WHISPERS.... "THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD PROFIT FROM SUCH EVENTS".

THESE THINGS NEVER HAPPEN QUICKLY, IT WILL TAKE GENERATIONS FOR ALL THE PIECES TO FALL INTO PLACE, BUT THE END IS IN SIGHT, THE DAWNING OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM WILL MARK THE BIRTH OF A NEW WORLD ORDER.

GAME 1

THE STORY OPENS IN OCCUPIED FRANCE 1940. ART TREASURES ARE BEING LOOTED FROM THEIR RIGHTFUL OWNERS MOST OF WHOM HAVE FLED TO AVOID THE FIGHTING. OF COURSE SOME WORKS OF ART MAY BE OLDER THAN THEY LOOK.....

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR TEAM PREFERENCE....

ARCHAEOLOGISTS-CIVILIAN CLOTHING (6)

FRENCH RESISTANCE-CIVILIAN CLOTHING (15-20)

GERMAN TROOPS-BLACK COMBATS (15-20)

BRITISH COMMANDOS-OLIVE DRAB GREEN COMBATS (15-20)

GAME 2

THE ACTION NOW MOVES TO VIETNAM IN 1970. AFTER A MASSIVE SERIES OF ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATIONS, NIXON HAS FINALLY STARTED WITHDRAWING TROOPS. EVEN SO THERE ARE STILL THE BETTER PART OF 400,000 AMERICANS "IN COUNTRY". ON THE GROUND, SO ONE GIVES A DAMN ABOUT THE WAR ANY MORE, EVERYONE IS COUNTING THE DAYS UNTIL THEY GET "ROTATED BACK TO THE WORLD". WHO GIVES A DAMN IF SOME PEOPLE ARE BEHAVING STRANGELY.

STILL IN THE WORDS OF THE SONG "WE GOTTA GET OUT OF THIS PLACE, IF IT'S THE LAST THING WE EVER DO....."

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR TEAM PREFERENCE....

VIETNAMESE CIVILIANS-CIVILIAN CLOTHING (10-15)

SOVIET ADVISORS-BLACK COMBATS (6)

AMERICANS-GREEN COMBATS (15-20)

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY-SMART CIVILIAN CLOTHING (6)

VIET CONG-BLACKS (15-20)

GAME 3

IT'S NOW 1990. IF YOU'RE A SECRET POWER BENT ON WORLD DOMINATION, THE DRUG TRADE IS A GOOD PLACE TO START, VAST PROFITS AND LITTLE PERSONAL RISK IF YOU'RE RUTHLESS ENOUGH. OF COURSE THE US GOVERNMENT HAS RECENTLY STARTED BURNING THE DRUG FIELDS (AND A FEW BUILDINGS AS WELL), SO MAYBE IT'S TIME TO QUIT WHILE YOU'RE AHEAD. STILL TIME FOR JUST ONE MORE LITTLE JOB BEFOREHAND.....

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR TEAM PREFERENCE....

DRUG DEALERS-CIVILIAN CLOTHING (15-20)

COLOMBIAN TROOPS-OLIVE COMBATS (10)

DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY-BLACK COMBATS (15-20)

FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION (FEDS)-SMART CIVILIAN CLOTHING (6)

US NATIONAL GUARD-WOODLAND CAMO (10)

GAME 4

DECEMBER THE 31ST 1999. YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO THE MILLENNIUM EVENT OF ERR THE MILLENNIUM, THE GREAT MILLENNIUM BARBECUE. FREE FOOD, FREE AIR, FREE MUSIC (EXTORTIONATELY PRICED DRINKS). SCIENTISTS ARE WARNING THAT GLOBAL WARMING WILL CAUSE TEMPERATURES TO RISE AND ICE CAPS TO MELT, BUT TONIGHT THE ONLY ICE YOU'RE INTERESTED IN IS IN YOUR DRINK. IT'S REALLY WARM OUTSIDE SO SOMEONE HIT OF THE IDEA OF A MILLENNIUM BARBECUE, IF THIS IS GLOBAL WARMING IT'S OK REALLY. IN FACT, COME TO THINK OF IT, IT REALLY IS QUITE WARM OUTSIDE.

CUZ IT'S 2000 ZERO ZERO PARTY OVER, OOPS, OUT OF TIME!
SO TONIGHT I'M GONNA PARTY LIKE IT'S 1999.

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR TEAM PREFERENCE....

INDUSTRIAL EXECUTIVES-CIVILIAN CLOTHING, SUIT OR BAD TASTE CASUAL (10)

POLICE-BLACK COMBATS (15-20)

US ARMY-WOODLAND CAMO (15-20)

FBI-SUITS (10)

UFOLOGISTS (HIPPIES)-CIVILIAN (6)

UNLESS YOU HAVE GENUINE PERIOD COSTUME THERE WILL BE NO DPM ON THESE GAMES. INSTEAD THE VARIOUS TEAMS ON EACH GAME WILL BE WEARING EITHER GREENS (OLIVE DRAB), BLACKS OR CIVILIAN CLOTHING. ANY INSIGNIA WILL BE PROVIDED.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES ABOUT THE GAMES, PLEASE CONTACT PAUL AND JENNY WATSON ON 0114 244 0365