modern dispatch #35

LEADS AND COMPLEXITIES
BY CHARLES RICE

Leads and Complexities is an adventure for Blood and Guts 2. While the adventure can be played without access to that book, the game master and players will benefit most if they have that book in addition to the modern d20 core rules.

The adventure takes place in Iraq and casts the PCs as members (or military advisors) of the Coalition forces, attempting to quash the terrorist-led insurgency that threatens the attempts of the native Iraqi government to achieve self-sufficiency. This adventure could be run as a sequel to the previous dispatch adventure *Operation: Dry County,* which also took place in Iraq and cast the PCs as members of the mysterious Task Force 121.

GETTING THE PCS INVOLVED

At the beginning of Leads and Complexities the PCs are called in to help defuse an Improvised Explosive Device or IED. These devices, which are commonly referred to in the media as *roadside bombs*, are one of the major weapons of the insurgency. These devices can take almost any form and are designed to make moving around the country difficult and dangerous, while posing much less threat to the insurgents than a conventional attack.

Assuming the PCs are in Iraq, getting them involved in the adventure should prove relatively simple. Experts will be needed to defuse the IED. Soldiers will be needed to set up a perimeter so that no one will be harmed should the device go off.

EPISODE 1: ROADSIDE

The PCs have been called in to assist in the defusing of an IED. The device was noticed by an alert patrol of U.S. Marines and is placed in an abandoned car left on the side of the road.

A character with binoculars or a rifle scope can spot the IED on the front seat of the car with a Spot check (DC 15). A character with no aid to his vision still has a chance to spot the device with a Spot check but the DC is 10 higher.

The device is composed of a cell phone, which acts as the detonator and is connected to a satchel filled with explosives. The back seat of the car is filled with metal gas cans and bags of nails to increase the force and lethality of the explosion.

DEFUSING THE IED

The simplest way to defuse the IED is to remove the detonator from the picture. The device is not sophisticated enough to detonate when the cell phone is removed, so this will render the device harmless. While a character could approach the vehicle and cut the cord connecting the cell phone to the IED (with a Disable Device skill check DC of 15), a simpler method will occur to the PCs if they make a Demolitions skill check (DC 15) or a Knowledge (technology) skill check (DC 20): a well-placed rifle shot could take out the cell phone with no danger to the characters.

This method of disarming the explosive requires two rifle shots. The first need only hit a Defense of 10 and will take out the car window, clearing the way for the shot at the cell phone, which must hit a Defense of 18. Under normal circumstances the shooter could take as many shots at the detonator as he needed to, but in this case they will be pressed for time by…

IRAQ PRIMER

HISTORY

Iraq was originally a part of the Ottoman Empire and was occupied by Britain during the course of WWI. In 1920 the League of Nations ratified Britain's administration of Iraq and the country did not regain its independence until 1932, when it emerged as an independent monarchy.

In 1958 Iraq emerged from monarchy as a republic. In reality, however, the Republic of Iraq was ruled by a series of dictators, the last and most infamous being Saddam Hussein. Hussein's regime was marked with both internal bloodshed (including persecutions of the majority Shiite religious faction and the minority Kurds to the north) and external conflict, including a costly 8-year war with Iran (1980-1988).

In 1990 Iraq seized Kuwait, sparking the nation's first conflict with the United States, which led an international coalition to drive Iraq out of the tiny, oil-rich nation. As result of this first Gulf War, the United Nations imposed several sanctions on Iraq, including the forced abolition of all programs seeking to produce a Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD), an inspection regime to assure compliance with this directive and the imposition of "no fly" zones.

After continuing violations of these U.N. resolutions over a period of 12 years, the United States again led an international coalition into Iraq and removed Saddam Hussein from power. Coalition forces remain in Iraq to help the nation rebuild its infrastructure, combat a terrorist insurgency and facilitate the formation of a stable, democratic government.

In June, 2004 the Coalition Provisional Authority transferred power to the Iraqi Interim Government and in January, 2005 the Iraqi people successfully held free elections, selecting Ghazi al-Ujayl al-Yawr as their President.

GEOGRAPHY

Iraq is a country of 437,000 sq. km in area or about twice the size of Idaho. It shares borders with Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey. The nation is largely composed of desert terrain with only 13% of the land being arable. The country's borders with Iran and Turkey are mountainous and these areas sometimes experience heavy snowfall during the winter. When these snows melt areas of Central and Southern Iraq experience seasonal flooding.

ETHNICITY AND RELIGION

The population of Iraq is 75-80% Arab, 15-20% Kurd, 5% Turkoman, Assyrian and other. 97% of the population is Muslim with the remaining 3% composed of all other religious orientations. Of the Muslim population, 60-65% are of the Shi'a sect and 30-35% are of the Sunni sect. The major languages are Arab, Kurdish, Assyrian and Armenian.

EPISODE 2: SUICIDE BOMBER

While the devices used by the insurgents are simpler, their tactics grow more sophisticated by the day. After the PCs decide on how they will disable the device (either by disarming the IED manually or simply destroying the detonator with a well-placed rifle shot) a car will appear in the distance, careening down the road at high speed toward the roadblock and the first IED.

The car is moving at 200 feet per round (the vehicle's maximum speed). If the PCs guarding the perimeter make a Spot check (DC 15) they will see the car when it tops the distant rise and is 1,200 feet away, which will give them 6 rounds to decide how to deal with it. If they fail this Spot check they will not notice the vehicle until it is 600 feet (three rounds) away.

This suicide bomber holds a kill switch in his hand that will detonate both the IED in the roadside car but also a much larger one in the trunk of his own vehicle. The roadside bomb was merely a diversion to draw more soldiers into the area, with the goal of trapping them in a lethal kill zone between the two explosives.

The suicide bomb vehicle has a Defense of 13 (9 base + 4 for all-out movement), a Hardness of 5, and 30 hit points. When the vehicle's hit points are reduced to 0 its engine will sputter and die. If the driver is still alive he will detonate both explosives at this time.

If the perimeter defenders concentrate on the driver rather than the car they must inflict 20 points of damage to kill him. After his death the vehicle will swerve to the side and barrel roll 100 feet closer to the PCs at which time the driver's grip on the detonation trigger will slip and both IEDs will detonate.

Anyone with 200 feet of the roadside bomb when it is detonated will suffer 10d6 fire damage. Anyone with 400 feet of the suicide bomb when it is detonated will suffer 10d6 fire damage, while those within 200 feet of the suicide bomb will suffer 15d6 and those within 100 feet will suffer 20d6 damage.

The suicide bomb will ignore up to 5 vehicle hardness because of the intensity of the explosive materials used in its construction.

Determine PC casualties normally. If either blast inflicts more than 20 points of damage half of the ordinary soldiers present will die from failing Massive Damage saves. If the damage exceeds 30 points every ordinary soldier present will be killed.

EPISODE 3: TRACING THE BOMB

The key to tracing the source of this sophisticated roadside attack is the car driven by the suicide bomber. This will require some detective work, which the PCs will be asked to assist in if they have the appropriate skills. Either way the PCs will get 10 days of down time to rest and heal while the investigation takes place. If the PCs were seriously injured (or need to recruit replacements for fallen comrades) the game master could have the DNA identification of the suspect take as long as necessary to allow the PCs to be ready for the next stage of the adventure.

An examination of the driver's remains (of which there will be little) will reveal his identity as an unemployed dockworker from the port city of Umm Qasr. During the reign of Saddam Hussein he was the dock foreman but lost his job after the old regime's fall for attempting to smuggle explosives into the country. Tipped off by friends, he was able to escape apprehension and has not been seen since.

The PCs are asked to go Umm Qasr and investigate the dock areas. They believe that the suicide bomber's friends are still helping him funnel weapons through the busy port and into Iraq.

EPISODE 4: UMM QASR CROSSFIRE

As the PCs enter the port city they find that the term "under control" is sometimes used loosely by their superiors. While en route from Baghdad a massive insurgency uprising has put Coalition forces on the defensive. On their way into the city, the PCs will feel the full brunt of that offensive as the lead and trailing vehicles in their convoy are seriously damaged by fire from enemy rocket launchers, trapping them in a crossfire set up by the insurgents.

The PCs will not have much help from the other two vehicles in their convoy, as these vehicles were severely damaged by the initial rocket attacks and the soldiers inside suffered heavy casualties.

While the PCs will be better equipped than the insurgents they will be seriously outnumbered. If the PCs are a typical 7th level party the insurgents should outnumber them by two to one. If the PCs are 10th level the insurgents should outnumber them three to one. A 5th level party should be outnumbered by 50%.

Umm Qasr Insurgents (Strong Hero 3/Assault Training 2) CR 5; Medium-size humanoid; HD 3d8+3 plus 2d10+2 plus 2; HP 32; Mas 12; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; Defense 17, touch 15, flatfooted 15 (+0 size, +2 Dex, +3 class, +2 equipment); BAB +5; Grap +6; Atk +6 melee (1d4+3/19-20, knife), or +7 ranged (2d8+0, AK-47); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ ; AL Insha Allah; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +0; AP 2; Rep +0; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Occupation: Military (Demolitions, Hide)

Skills: Climb +3, Craft (structural) +3, Demolitions +6, Hide +8, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (Tactics) +6

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Armor Proficiency (light), Exotic Firearms Proficiency (rocket launchers), Personal Firearms Proficiency, Urban Warfare

Talents (Strong Hero): Melee Smash, Improved Melee Smash

Talents (Assault Training): Tough as Nails, Shock Assault 1

Talents (Insha Allah): +4 competence bonus to Demolition and Craft (chemical) skill checks for improvised explosives; +2 morale bonus to attack and damage vs. infidels.

Possessions: Pull-up pouch vest, knife, AK-47

Warehouse   5 ft

EPISODE 5: WAREHOUSE ASSAULT

As the PCs gain the edge on the insurgents, back up arrives in the form of a friendly helicopter. This craft begins to shower the insurgents with fire from above and forces them back. The insurgents retreat to a warehouse on the docks, setting the stage for the final episode of the adventure.

Inside the warehouse the PCs will face another five insurgents and Hoshyaar Rahim, the leader of the Umm Qasr insurgency.

COMBAT IN THE WAREHOUSE

Combat in the warehouse is a very tricky affair and could have an explosive end. The warehouse is filled with crates of explosive ordnance. Every round of combat there is a cumulative 1 in 20 chance of weapons fire setting off one of the crates. This creates an explosion that inflicts 5d6 on anyone within 10 feet of the crate in question. An explosion has a 50% chance of setting the warehouse on fire, which will cause *all* the explosives to go up in 2-12 rounds, inflicting 20d6 damage on anyone remaining in the warehouse.

Hoshyaar Rahim (Charismatic Hero 5) CR 5; Medium-size humanoid; HD 5d6+10; HP 28; Mas 14; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; Defense 13, touch 13, flatfooted 12 (+0 size, +1 Dex, +2 class); BAB +2; Grap +1; Atk +1 melee (1d6+-1, weapon), or +3 ranged (1d6+0, weapon); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ ; AL Insha Allah; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +1; AP 2; Rep +6; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Occupation: Religious (Knowledge [Behavioral Sciences], Knowledge [Theology and Philosophy], Sense Motive)

Skills: Bluff +10, Craft (writing) +10, Diplomacy +12, Gather Information +12, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (Behavioral Sciences) +10, Knowledge (Civics) +6, Knowledge (Current Events) +6, Knowledge (Streetwise) +10, Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) +10, Sense Motive +8

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Henchmen, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Renown, Trustworthy

Talents (Charismatic Hero): Charm, Favor, Captivate

Possessions: Pull-up pouch vest, knife, AK-47
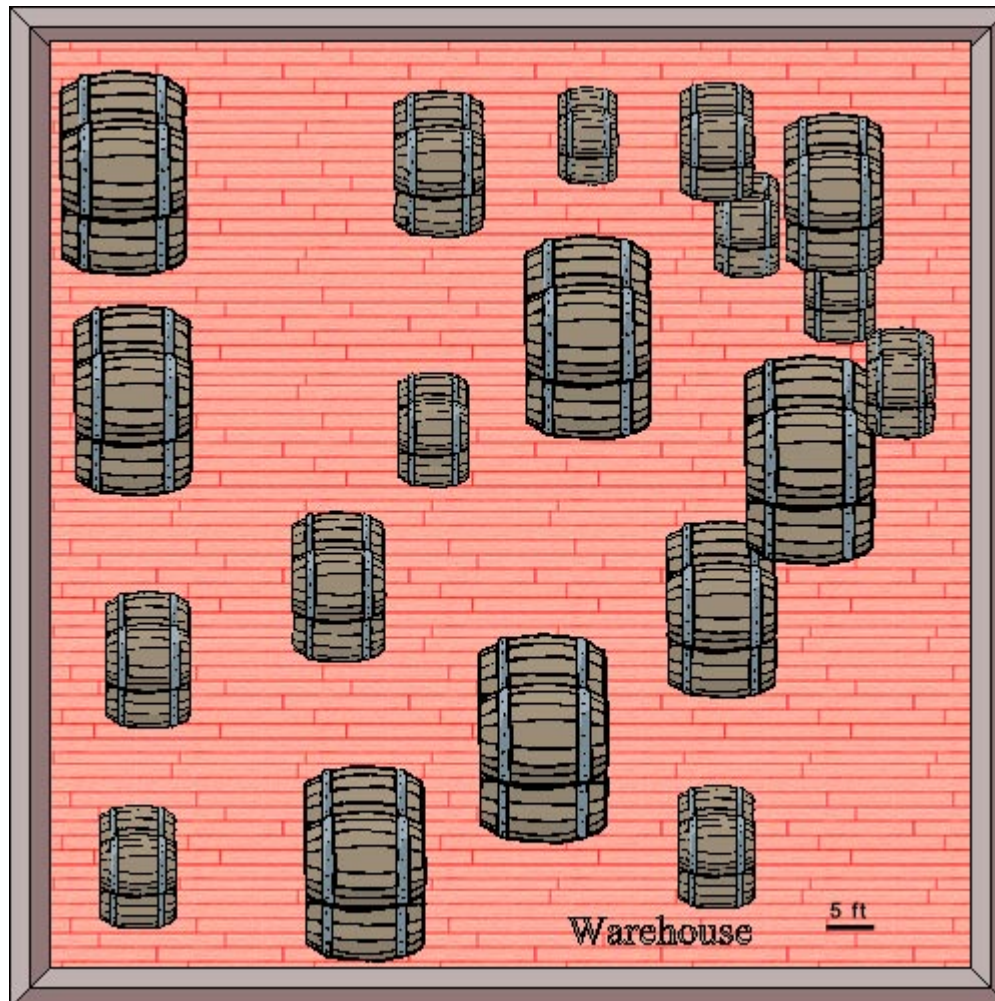
ORGANIZATIONS

TASK FORCE 121

The unofficial name (this group has also been referred to as Task Force 5 in Afghanistan and Task Force 20 in Iraq) for an elite group comprised of Special Forces, Delta Force, SEALs and agents of Central Intelligence, Task Force 121 takes on missions even more challenging (and dirty) than those given to other special operations units. Arab-speaking soldiers and intelligence agents, Task Force 121 is notorious for entering countries in civilian dress (often without the knowledge or consent of the government of that country) and moving on intelligence without contacting superiors when speed is of the essence.

Units like Task Force 121 have existed for longer than there has been a Central Intelligence Agency. The precursor to the agency, the Office of Strategic Services frequently found itself operating behind enemy lines with special operations groups including the British Commandos, the French Maquis and the American Rangers. In the conflicts after World War II the newly formed Central Intelligence Agency frequently worked with special operations forces, particularly in the Vietnam conflict when participation in so-called "paramilitary" operations was considered a badge of honor by the Agency (in the words of an agent of this period "Until you've eaten with a Montagnard you are not a real agent").

Today as the War on Terror becomes a paramount concern special operations forces and intelligence agents seem to be working hand in hand once again. This group is largely responsible for the capture of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and is heavily involved in the hunt for Ossama bin Laden in Afghanistan. Agents of Task Force 121 have also been operating in the Horn of Africa (including Somalia) for well over a year and have conducted official and "unofficial" missions in Somalia on numerous occasions.

If possible information on these missions are kept from media attention as they could harm the reputation of both Central Intelligence and Special Operations Command or (perhaps worse) cause Congress to add restrictions to these agencies ability to work together or even reduce their budgets. Missions include, but are by no means limited to: assassination, reconnaissance and "snatch" mission (the kidnapping of an individual either for arrest or interrogation).

During the hunt for Saddam Hussein, members of Task Force 121 used cash, green cards and threats of physical violence to "convince" former members of Hussein's regime into divulging information about his hiding places and potential whereabouts.

Following the capture of Hussein this group turned their attention to capturing terrorist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a leading al Qaeda operative whose capture or elimination has been placed on a par with Osama bin Laden's. The closest the unit has come to capturing Zarqawi was in Falluja. However by the time they arrived at the city he had disappeared.

The willingness (and indeed necessity) of this group to act autonomously, with little or no contact with superiors was described by author James Dunnigan as "playing speed chess in the dark- when an opportunity appears you determine where the enemy is and go for the throat".

UNIT REQUIREMENTS

To qualify for Task Force 121 a character must meet the following criteria.

BAB: 5+
Skills: Knowledge (tactics) 5 ranks
Feats: Urban Warfare, Desert Warfare
Special: Counter Terrorist class ability

UNIT FEATURES

All of the following are features of Task Force 121.

These specialties and abilities take effect 30 days after you join the unit and last until 30 days after he leaves the unit. Any additions to your bonus feat list, as well as the ability to take levels in the Special Operations Prestige Class are lost immediately upon leaving the unit, unless you transfer to another special operations unit.

For units working together the ability to function as if possessing the Teamwork feat lasts until 30 days after you stop working with the units in question.

Unit Specialties: +4 bonus to Reputation when dealing with terrorists (including the Reputation modifier's effect on skills granted by the Counter Terrorist class ability).

Unit Abilities: You gain access to the Semper Fi class ability when working with other members of Task Force 121 only (normally Semper Fi affects any Teamwork feats the character possesses).

You also gain a +2 morale bonus to attack and damage when combating terrorists.

INSHA ALLAH

The central antagonists in the adventure will be members of this new, radical extremist group. Insha Allah means "the will of God" and is a very common Arabic phrase usually used to denote the future (in other words everything to come is the will of God). The name thus serves three purposes for the organization: it is common and attracts little attention even when used in open conversation, it links the organization to God and shows that the organization will write the future (of Iraq as a Muslim theocracy like Iran).

Holy Wars: United States Military (especially Iraqi presence), moderate Iraqis, Israel.

Operatives: Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria (despite a widespread presence in the Middle East there are many areas even there where this group has

no presence- it is particularly disliked in Egypt and will have a hard time gaining any ground there).

Size: Small

Home Base: Baghdad, Syria (the organization's main training base is located here)

Cells: Saudi Arabia, Jordan

Financial Resources: +25 (backed by a Jordanian billionaire, with equipment and training provided by the government of Syria)

UNIT REQUIREMENTS

To qualify for Insha Allah a character must meet the following criteria.

BAB: 5+

Skills: Demolitions 5 ranks, Knowledge (tactics) 5 ranks

Feats: Urban Warfare or Desert Warfare

UNIT FEATURES

All of the following are features of Insha Allah.

These specialties and abilities take effect 30 days after you join the organization and last until 30 days after you leave the organization. Any additions to your bonus feat list are lost immediately upon leaving the organization.

Unit Specialties: +4 competence bonus to Demolition and Craft (chemical) skill checks for creating improvised explosives

Unit Abilities: You also gain a +2 morale bonus to attack and damage rolls when combating infidels (anyone listed in the Holy Wars entry for Insha Allah).

OPEN GAME LICENSE

OPEN GAMING CONTENT