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WRAITHS

ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS
DEEP INSERTION FORCE
(S.O.D.I.F.)

A COLLABORATIVE ROLEPLAYING GAME
BY **IAN MILLINGTON**

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Preface

This is a Collaborative Roleplaying game. If you have played a normal RPG before you will be disoriented by the fact that there isn't a games-master controlling the action and setting the scene. The game contains its own mechanics to make sure play is fun and smooth.

The game text is written as a training manual for the elite force whose game this is. Sections of the text that contain game mechanics are indicated by a vertical line in the left margin. Expect to have to suspend your belief in the prose at this point! When there is just no way to stay in style a box-out is used.

The game can be played with most game mechanics, or using no mechanics at all. Some primitive mechanics are used in the text to control movement, equipment and so on. You can easily replace these with another rule-set. The appendices to this manual provide game mechanics data.

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You don't change anything;

You don't charge for it.

You may also want to visit my collaborative roleplaying site at www.collaborativeroleplay.org.

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Introduction

You are about to join the world's elite covert insertion force. The Army Special Operations Deep Insertion Force has a global operational reach and specialises in reconnaissance, anti-personnel, sabotage and retrieval missions of great difficulty. Because of its ultimate commitment to stealth, security and secrecy, the force is called the "**Wraiths**".

The Wraiths take on missions that are considered too sensitive, dangerous, or isolated for other special forces. There is no such thing as an average mission characteristic. For example:

1. A mission may consist of a wilderness air-drop, significant radio-isolated time in enemy territory, planning and executing of enemy base infiltration in order to eliminate a significant enemy leader, evacuation and extraction without detection.
2. A mission may be based in our own country, involving a night-time insertion into a commercial facility, avoidance of security and detection facilities and recovery of politically or security sensitive documents, all without detection.

The common theme is stealth. You will be a small force, with modest levels of munitions; your survival depends on your ability to remain unnoticed by enemy units who will undoubtedly have superior firepower or backup. Planning, tactical presence and teamwork will be your most prized resources.

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Missions

Each mission you take part in has two distinct parts:

1. **Planning.** This should take place before the mission is due to begin.
2. **Execution.** This stage is where the team carries out the mission strategy to meet its objectives.

Planning

Planning a mission is as important as executing it, you will need to make sure that you have secure and regular communication leading up to the mission date. Your planning process should involve:

1. **Threat Assessment.** Making accurate estimations of the resistance you will face during the mission;
2. **Execution Strategy.** Planning a set of actions and timings to complete the mission objectives;
3. **Team Composition.** Deciding which members of your team are to carry out the insertion, and which are to act as tactical directors;
4. **Resource Management.** Equipping your team with the technology and equipment necessary to carry out their mission, and any other likely contingencies.

Execution

With proper planning mission execution will typically be a short, intense period of action and tactical response.

During a mission agents in your team will take on two roles:

1. **Insertion agents.** These agents will carry out the operation on the ground. Due to the nature of the missions to be carried out, this force will typically be two agents with possibly one or two additional agents providing sniper coverage at a distance.
2. **Tactical directors.** These agents have two responsibilities: they advise on courses of action, and

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they monitor surveillance technologies to anticipate unexpected threats and opportunities.

All team members are in constant secure radio contact using V.P.R. Radio¹. Insertion agents constant report on their situation, environment and other important events. Tactical directors advise accordingly.

Specialisms

Each member of your team should have their own unique military specialism. You should take steps to ensure that you represent all required specialisms in a mission team before planning begins.

In cases where your team is small, you may select individuals with more than one specialism. During planning and execution phases, individuals are responsible for bringing their specialisms to bear on the success of a mission. A booby-trap specialist, for example, will be able to instruct any agent to diffuse an anti-personnel device if one is found.

A sample set of mission specialisms that you could expect to draw from is given in an appendix to this manual.

¹ This sound-free throat microphone and advanced dissipative aerial technology allows operatives to communicate without radio or aural detection even in close proximity to enemy positions.

Mission Planning

Mission planning should typically being weeks before the execution is to take place.

Before planning, all agents should receive a mission briefing, outline threat assessment and suitable maps or reconnaissance data for the target. Collectively this is called the **mission data**.

The mission data will usually provide an indication of the military specialities that may be useful. As a team you are free to disregard all or part of this list as you put together your team composition.

All team members should ensure that they are able to maintain regular contact with all other team members. Group email is an ideal medium, provided that suitable mechanisms are put in place to enforce security.

Threat Assessment

The first task in mission planning is to identify the likely threats that the team will face during execution.

Each specialist will use their mission data to identify key elements of the mission affected by their area of expertise.

The mission briefing will include an executive threat estimate (**E.T.E.**), an indication of the number of critical danger points that the mission may provide.

Communication will cycle around specialists, each in turn locating a source of threat on the map so all team members can correctly mark it (grid reference should suffice, although some threats, such as patrol routes, may apply to areas). This process should stop when there are as many anticipated threats as the executive threat estimate indicates.

At this point all team members should have a numbered list of threats and mission documents showing the nature and locations of these threats.

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The E.T.E. is deliberately overestimated. In actual fact many of these perceived threats may not surface in the mission.

Mission Strategy

The second stage of planning is to use the threat assessment to calculate a suitable strategy for achieving the mission objective.

The strategy should contain steps taken to avoid or deal with each of the threats on the threat assessment.

Depending on your team, you may decide to plan in detail exit and extraction from the mission. In many cases, however, back-tracking an entry route is sufficient. If you intend to execute the exit strategy as a full team, then it should be planned. It can, however, be left to individual operatives.

Team Composition

Team selection is where you work out which team members carry out the mission and which act as tactical directors.

Not all the team should execute the mission. During operations, the tactical situation can change rapidly, and experienced backup is required to adapt and survive.

You should aim to have an operation team of between two and four operatives, possibly with two sniper positions for outdoor missions. Snipers are usually isolated enough to also function as tactical directors.

Take suitable specialists into the field. Bear in mind that their risk of elimination is higher than those at base. It is advisable not to insert specialists who are needed towards the end of the mission - guaranteeing their ability to provide advice.

The tactical director team have an important role to play in the mission. If your team is very small by necessity, the tactical director role can be taken on by agents in the field at the same time as mission execution. This invariably leads to longer mission times and increased exposure to danger, however.

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In general you should aim to have no more than half your team in the field.

Equipment Selection

The final planning stage is to equip your team with the resources they need.

This is a complex process, but necessary. You need to make sure they have the equipment they need to carry out your strategic plan, maintain personal safety, and react to a wide range of unexpected circumstances.

For each individual in the field you will need to provide a list of resources, equipment and personal gear to the quartermaster before the mission starts. Once in the field, they will have only these resources, and items they can find.

It is impossible for a field agent to rapidly acquire high technology or sophisticated military devices in the field. In many cases small arms, electrical equipment or combustibles are readily available, however.

Take care to make sure that field operatives can move quietly and effectively. You and each of your team members will have been assessed for physical capabilities, specifically your **equipment limit**. This data is available on your military record (see the appendix on mission mechanics, later in this manual). In addition the quartermaster will be able to advise you on the physical difficulty of operating with each piece of equipment. You must make sure that none of your execution team exceeds their equipment limit.

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Mission Execution

Insertion Agents

Insertion agents carry out the mission on the ground, under the direction of the other team members via radio communication. In order for the tactical team to be able to advise correctly and anticipate problems, the insertion agents are responsible for continually reporting their position, surroundings and perceptions.

Insertion agents must communicate at all times in a whisper. Vocalising sounds may cause damage to the V.P.R. microphone. Whispering should only be loud enough so that other team members can accurately hear you. You will come to rely on the V.P.R. Radio to protect your concealment while communicating with your team.

All communication during a mission must be mission specific. No additional discussion is permitted.

Because a field soldier will not have the complete picture of the mission that the tactical team possess, they should carry out the actions recommended to them. The only exceptions are cases where there is clear mission jeopardy in doing so. It is acceptable, however, for the insertion team to discuss the decisions as they are being made, and bring their experience to bear.

It is unacceptable for a member of the team to be captured. If the team member is wounded, they should take steps to remove themselves from the mission, in whatever way is necessary. A team member who is fatally injured will be left in the field. They can obviously take no further part in the mission.

You will wear no uniform or insignia during missions, save what is necessary for disguise. It is our experience that when one agent is discovered, security in the mission zone is often heightened. We also observe, however, that operating without obvious military insignia

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provides a suitable level of confusion to allow other team members a degree of freedom to continue the operation or organise their escape.

Tactical Directors

Tactical directors are responsible for making sure the mission is a success, using their team on the ground to carry out the strategic plan, or react to unexpected situations.

They have two responsibilities within this framework:

1. They should guide the ground team to get the job done.
2. They should monitor surveillance equipment to discover unexpected threats or opportunities as they arise.

Operations Guide

When operating as a tactical director you will be in constant communication with your insertion force. They will report back to you everything they see or hear, and the results of their actions. In turn you will advise them on the best course of action, based on all the information available to you. You should expect your insertion team to follow your recommendations, unless it obviously endangers the mission.

As the tactical team makes decisions, the insertion agents will be involved in the process; bringing their experience and specialisms to bear.

Unlike the planning you carried out, decisions made during a mission take real time. Make sure you have access to accurate time-keeping, and be aware that ten minutes spent discussing options is ten minutes more that your team are spending in enemy territory. You can't stop time once a mission is in progress, so planning is of utmost importance.

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Tactical Surveillance

Each tactical director has access to surveillance technologies based on their specialism. An explosives expert, for example, will be able to monitor traces of explosives found in the mission environment.

From time to time during the mission, tactical directors may report new information from their surveillance. This will take the form of either a threat or an opportunity. The whole team will need to react accordingly.

The exact timing for new information is critical. Technology is available for making sure the right information is acquired at the right time. See the box-out below for information on operating this technology.

To make sure that there is ongoing challenge throughout the mission, each player representing a tactical director introduces new information at semi-random intervals.

For each piece of information you need to work out when it occurs and what it is.

When

At the start of the mission, each tactical director calculates the time of their next information report like this:

1. Roll 1d6, multiply the result by 10.
2. Add 1d6, and subtract another 1d6.
3. The result is in minutes: add it to the current time and write down the result. You must introduce you information at this exact time.

Remember that the game is played in real time, so whatever the state of the mission at this time, this is when you report.

You should not let any other player know when you will next report.

If there are one or two tactical directors in the game; you should reduce the number you multiply by in step 1. A

value of 5 is very small, and gives you an action packed game.

What

To decide what has happened, you need to decide the level of threat or opportunity for this report. Roll 1d6, and subtract another 1d6. The level of threat is given by this table:

- +5 A mission beating opportunity may be available.
- +4 An excellent opportunity presents.
- +3 A good opportunity manifests.
- +2 A moderate opportunity can be taken.
- +1 A minor opportunity is available
- 0 A neutral event occurs.
- 1 A minor threat becomes apparent.
- 2 A moderate threat is detected.
- 3 A seriously threatening development occurs.
- 4 A very serious threat is discovered.
- 5 An extreme threat is immediately apparent.

When you have a threat/opportunity level, write it down and do not let any other player know the result.

Making Your Report

Immediately before it is time to make your report, devise a situation that **fits in with your character's specialisms** and meets the appropriate threat level. The report should affect the game immediately, without delay. This means that you can't work out what the report will be in advance.

For opportunities there should always be some steps required before it can be taken: the better the opportunity, the more difficult the steps should be. Having all the guards suddenly run away is not good, but having the assassination target suddenly walk past the team with two big body guards in tow is much better.

Similarly threats should not be final. Having one of the team suddenly get shot is unfair, having an armed patrol emerge from a nearby hut is much better.

Next

As soon as you have made one report, roll to work out your next report. You should repeat this process as long as the mission continues. If the mission ends before you have made your report (even your first), then it never gets used.

The Reality behind the Threat Assessment

The threat assessment is an excellent preparation for the mission. Its contents should be as accurate as possible and a correct response to it will save lives and win missions.

It is clear, however, that it cannot be perfect. Even with the best intelligence, the situation in the theatre of operations changes rapidly and is unpredictable.

As your forward team executes your strategy, it will reach regions marked as threats in your plan. The insertion team must always take steps to ascertain whether the threat assessment was correct. The box-out below gives indications of how this assessment should be performed.

With an accurate picture on the ground the whole team can then decide if changes to the plan need to be made, or if they can continue as expected.

The insertion agent who first reaches an assessed threat should determine if it is accurate. To do this, roll 1d6 and subtract another 1d6. The degree of accuracy is given by this table:

+3, +4, +5:	The threat does not exist.
+1, +2:	The threat is milder than expected.
0:	The threat is exactly as expected.
+1, +2:	The threat is more severe than expected.
+3, +4, +5:	The threat is much more severe.

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The insertion agent is then responsible for telling the team exactly what they see or detect. They are responsible for interpreting the result.

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Appendix: Mechanics

The game can be played with any mechanics to decide the outcomes of events. In most cases no mechanics are actually needed, although some people prefer them. The mechanics should be as realistic as possible: gun fire is deadly, moving is noisy, one in a million chances never happen.

I recommend the FUDGE system if you are looking for a mechanic to use.

You can get the complete FUDGE rules from the Grey Ghost website at www.fudgerpg.com. Go to the free section for a free copy of the rules, or buy the expanded commercial version (the free version is more than adequate).

FUDGE Customisation

Fudge is not a system in its own right. It needs to be customised to each genre of game.

There are FUDGE customisations available for modern settings, and adding features is not difficult. Depending on interest, I may add a set of customisations here as a handy reference.

Executive Threat Estimate

The rules dictate that each mission should have an executive threat estimate, which is the number of threats assigned to the mission before the mission begins.

This will depend on the desired difficulty, and the time your group has to play.

A simple mission should have an ETE of around 5, and average mission should be 10 or so. A very complex mission for a big team might have 20.

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Appendix: Specialisms

There are no limits to the specialisms that players can choose for their characters. Specialisms can be narrow, such as "bomb timing devices", or broad, such as "small arms".

The narrower the category, the more likely the character is to be able to overcome a threat in their domain (or advise the insertion force how to overcome it). You can represent this in game mechanics, or use it as a general trend.

In general it is advisable to include specialists in enemy procedures (who can add threats such as patrols, guard routines, and the like) and security systems (adding booby traps, motion detectors, and so on). If you have enough players, these can be split into much smaller categories. Try to be motivated by the kinds of challenge you would like to face in the mission.

The following list gives some general specialities, useful for many missions; some are more applicable to the insertion team, others for the tactical directors:

- **Enemy procedures:** Motions of the enemy, how they patrol, their guard routines, where they are likely to sleep and when).
- **Small Arms:** Weapons used by the enemy, their likely arms dumps, and who might use what.
- **Security Systems:** Motion detectors, heat sensors, possibly booby traps, if that isn't separate.
- **Booby Traps:** Anti-personnel mines, trip-wires, pits and car-bombs.
- **Advanced Technology:** Computer programming, code-breaking, electronic doors, hacking and finding out information.

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- Engineering: Layout of heating systems, lighting circuits, mechanics of vehicles.
- Marksmanship: Accurate sniper coverage, detecting exposed areas.
- Explosives: Defusing and planting explosives, identifying and detecting enemy bombs.
- Camouflage: Hiding and remaining undetected, detecting hidden enemies.
- Mountaincraft: Mountain skills for high altitude missions, also climbing buildings, setting up tree positions, and abseiling.

Appendix: Equipment

Wraiths was designed to be country-neutral. I didn't want to laden the game with references to the technology and weaponry of any particular armed forces. In addition the technology that your team uses on a mission may be a mix of reality and fiction. It doesn't matter as long as everyone is happy. You can even move the setting into the future or to an alternate reality.

If you are a military buff, then you probably know much more than I do about the weapons and equipment available to Special Forces. You can replace my generic entries with specific arms and resources.

Equipment Level

The only mechanic expressly referred to in the rules is the **equipment level**. This dictates the amount of equipment a character can carry and still be useful in the field.

As a general rule each character should have an equipment level of around 20. You can add and subtract 1d6 to this to get a random value for a specific character.

The equipment level of each piece of equipment is a combination of its size, weight, inconvenience, and so on. A helmet, for example is light and not bulky to wear, but is distracting to situational awareness: many Special Forces do not wear helmets during operations.

If the total equipment carried by a character is less than their equipment level then they are better able to work and act. Similarly if they exceed their level actions get harder.

For FUDGE based games, a good rule of thumb is to apply a modifier of 1 difficulty level for each 2 equipment points (or part of) above the characters base level, and for each 4 points (but not part of) below. So a character

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with an equipment level of 20, carrying 18 points of equipment has a bonus of +0. The same character carrying 22 points has a -1 bonus.

Equipment List

This is a generic and incomplete list of equipment that may be useful during a mission, along with the equipment points for each. You should add your own entries as the mission requires it.

Arms

Pistol (Sidearm)	1eqp
Assault Rifle	4eqp
Sniper Rifle	6eqp
Machine Gun	12eqp
Stun Grenade	1eqp
Anti-Personnel Grenade	1eqp
Smoke Grenade	1eqp
High Explosives	2eqp

All arms, except the machine gun, are considered to have 'enough' ammunition, since the aim is not to have to use much. The machine gun needs 1eqp for every box of 100 rounds.

Armour

Kevlar Body Armour	3eqp
Helmet	2eqp

Equipment

Night Vision Goggles	3eqp
Electrical Tool Kit	2eqp
Proximity Detector	3eqp
Telescopic Camera	3eqp
Code-breaking Computer	2eqp
Lock-breaking Kit	1eqp
Abseiling / Climbing Gear	5eqp
Radio Detector / Jammer	3eqp

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Appendix: Summary

The game is played in two stages: planning and execution. Planning phase is played by any means (email is useful - but it could be played face to face), execution is done in real time (face to face, conference call, IRC).

During planning a set of threats are created by each player in turn. These are marked on a map. Equipment is assigned to each character and an overall strategy is outlined.

During execution the players are either insertion agents or tactical directors. Insertion agents describe the scene; say what happens, and so on. They also decide whether the threats created during planning are as they were expected to be. Tactical directors decide what to do next. Tactical directors also introduce new problems or opportunities at intervals through the game.

When carrying out the mission, the game takes place in absolute real time, and all conversation in the group is in character.

Inter-personal Issues

If disagreements occur, then the whole group needs to decide which option to follow. In general actions recommended by tactical directors take precedence.

If your group has difficulty working together, the following 'buying' mechanism improves fairness. At the start of play each player is given a stack of tokens. When a disagreement occurs, players vote on the result. Each player pays a token to get a vote. They can get as many votes as they have tokens, but if they do not have any tokens, they have no say in the result. Spent tokens are removed from the game.

This mechanism allows players with very strong views to get their way, but makes sure that one player doesn't hog the whole game.

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