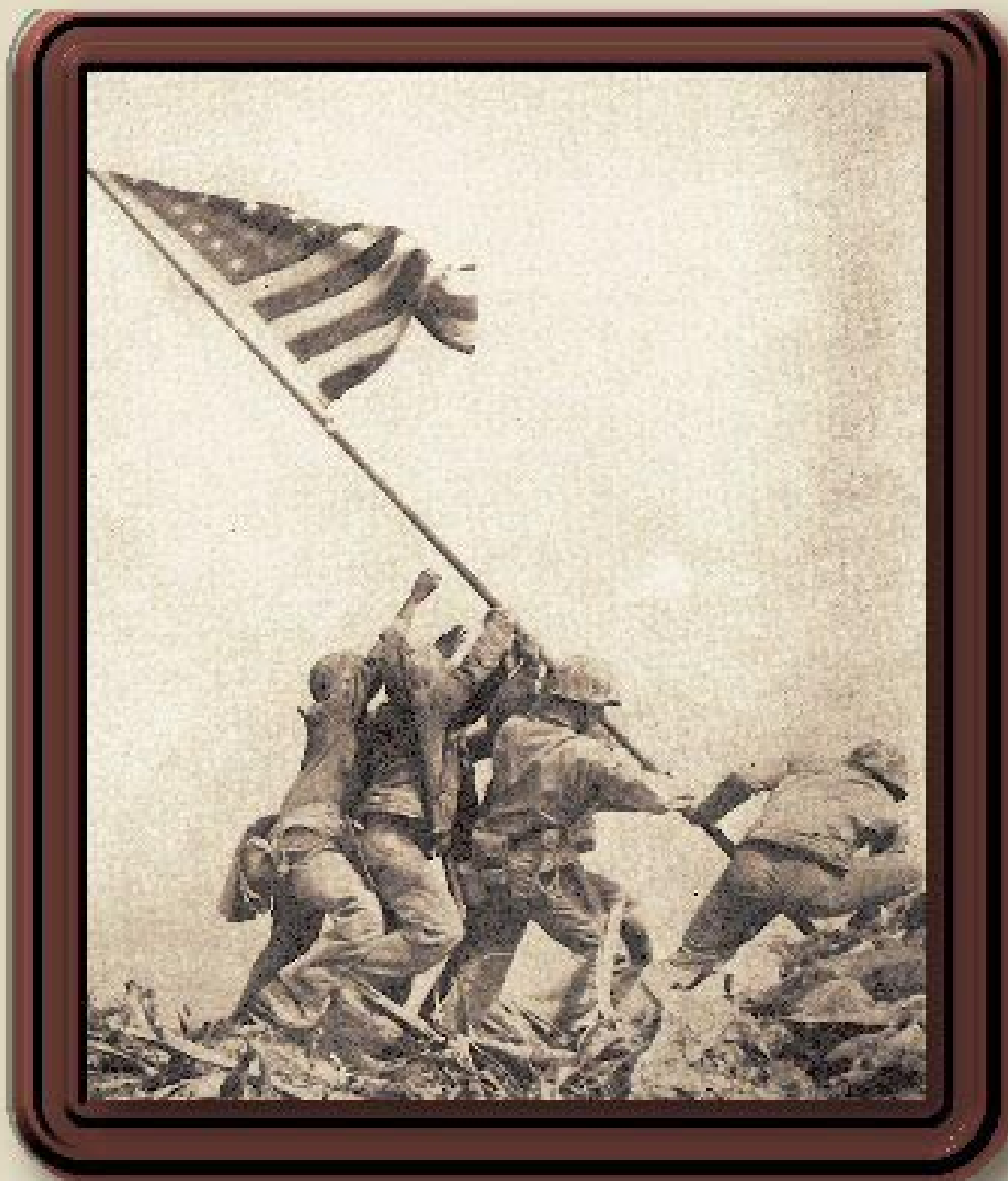


COMBAT!

A MILITARY ACTION GAME



WILLIAM ANDERSEN

COMBAT!: A MILITARY ACTION GAME

BY WILLIAM ANDERSEN

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COMBAT!

DEDICATION

“This book is dedicated to my granfather, Ruben James Bass, who served aboard the USS Mississippi during the Second World War. I also dedicate this book to his entire generation. Whether they served in the armed forces of the US or any allied nation, or made sacrifices at home, they truly saved the world. God Bless them All!”

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COMBAT!

A MILITARY ACTION GAME

CHAPTER ONE: ACTION! SYSTEM CORE RULES

THE BASICS

In this section we present a quick overview of the most basic rules of the game.

DICE

The game rules use three six-sided dice. It's traditional to abbreviate "three six-sided dice" by writing "3d6." In this custom, the first number is the number of dice being used (in this case 3) and the second number represents the type of dice being used (specifically, number of sides they possess), so "d6" means "six-sided dice."

Six-sided dice are the common, square-shaped dice that can be found in many board games. They can also be purchased in many general department stores, but chances are you have at least three of these dice somewhere in your house, in other games.

There are options to use other numbers and kinds of dice, which are discussed later and in other optional rules. For now all you need to play the game using the core rules are 3d6—three six-sided dice.

THE GM

One member of the group assumes the role of moderator and controls the Non-Player Characters ("NPCs" for short). This player is known as the Game Master, or GM.

In situations when the rules are unclear or need to be applied in a new or unique way, the GM uses his or her best judgment. The GM also constructs the basics of the game. Basics include the setting, theme, NPCs and some goals for the players' group, normally called a Team, but also referred to as a Unit, Troupe, or Group. We'll talk more about what makes a good Game Master later in this book.

PLAYERS AND CHARACTERS

Each player has a fictional character, called a Player Character (or "PC"), a made-up person that the player will use during the game. The player chooses what his character does and says during the game.

Think of the player as an actor, and the PC as a role that the actor is playing in a movie or play.

ATTRIBUTES & SKILLS

Each character has attributes and skills that represent the character's personal ability or aptitude in various areas or for performing certain tasks.

Each attribute and skill has a numerical score. This score tells you how strong or proficient the character is in that area. Most characters will have scores from 1 to 10, which represents the normal human range of ability. While some military games will include specially augmented characters or aliens that could go higher than 10, the GM should consider 10 to the maximum for a normal human character (even with superior training from their military service).

ATTRIBUTES

There are six attributes, which are arranged in two groups: Body and Mind.

Each group contains a Power Attribute, an Aptitude Attribute and a Resistance Attribute.

SKILLS

Each character also has skills, which represent the character's general ability or aptitude in various tasks. There are skills for arts and crafts, using weapons, and even diplomacy. Skills reflect how good your character is at what he knows.

Skills are also arranged into groups.

Each skill is associated with a specific Attribute Group. Persuasion, for example, is associated with the Mind Group, whereas the Swords skill is associated with the Body Group.

When a character attempts a simple task, such as walking or opening an unlocked door, the player doesn't need to roll dice. When a character attempts an action that has a chance of failure, however, such as attacking an opponent or maneuvering a vehicle through an obstacle course, the player must make a skill roll.

SKILL ROLLS

Skill rolls are used to determine if a character is successful at some attempted action or task.

Players decide if they want their character to perform an action. An action can be as simple as walking through a door, which would not require a skill roll. Sometimes there is a level of skill involved in performing the action, however, so the player may need to make a skill roll for his character. The GM decides whether or not an action requires a skill roll.

ATTRIBUTE + SKILL

If the GM determines that a player's chosen action requires a skill roll, the GM determines which Skill and which Attribute (from the Attribute Group associated with the skill) apply to the task.

If a character attempts to shoot an opponent with a handgun, the player must make a Pistols skill roll. Because the Pistols skill is associated with the Body Group, the GM must choose Strength, Reflexes, or Health as the attribute that the player uses with the Pistols skill. The logical choice is Reflexes, the Aptitude Attribute for the Body Group.

DIFFICULTY LEVELS AND TARGET NUMBERS

The GM then determines the Difficulty Level (or "DL") of the action being attempted. Each Difficulty Level has an associated Target Number (abbreviated as "TN"; see the *Difficulty and Target Number Chart*). The more difficult the action being attempted is, the greater the Difficulty Level and the higher the Target Number.

The Target Number is the number that the player must meet or beat when making a dice roll in order for the task to be successful. A Target Number of 18 would be shown as "(TN 18)."

MAKING THE ROLL

To make a skill roll, a player rolls 3d6 and adds his character's attribute and skill scores to the number rolled on the dice. If this new total is equal to or more than the Target Number, the attempted action is successful. If the total is lower than the Target Number, the attempt fails.

ATTRIBUTE ROLLS

Attribute rolls are made much the same as skill rolls, with

the GM determining a Difficulty Level and assigning a Target Number. The difference is that instead of adding an attribute score to a skill score, the player simply doubles the character's attribute score and then adds that number to the dice roll.

John's character has a Reflexes score of 4. The GM tells John to make a Difficult attribute roll (TN 21) using his character's Reflexes. John doubles his character's Reflexes score (4) for a total of 8. He then rolls 3d6, and gets 13. Because 13 plus 8 equals 21, John's character's attribute roll is successful.

DAMAGE

If a character suffers injury, such as from being hit by a weapon or falling into a pit, *damage points* represent the injury. Damage points are subtracted from the character's Life Points. When a character's Life Points are reduced to 0, the character is dying.

CAMPAIGN LEVEL

This game is based upon the portrayal of military characters; the two levels of a campaign for this genre are "Realistic" and "Cinematic".

REALISTIC

Realistic games are those in which the player characters are life-like, everyday heroes. For example, the characters may be street cops, investigators of the occult or otherworldly horrors, or soldiers in World War II.

Realistic games typically involve real-world situations (and their aftereffects) faced by everyday heroes. Because characters are not as capable of physically handling devastating encounters and traumatic events as cinematic or heroic characters, *Realistic* games tend to involve more roleplaying than combat and action, though this needn't be the case for all games. If elements of the fantastic are present in the game setting, they are usually obscure and mysterious and beyond the grasp of the PCs. For example, while many people may believe that magic and miracles are real, there is generally no way to scientifically prove so.

CINEMATIC

Cinematic games are those in which the player characters are larger-than-life action heroes such as those found in fantasy, science fiction and action stories. The characters may be maverick cops (such as the characters portrayed in many police-oriented dramatic and action films and television programs), unlikely but capable heroes, avenging do-gooders and battlers of evil, Japanese chanbara (sword fight film) heroes, or heroes in a science fiction setting or fantasy setting.

Cinematic games typically involve lots of high-action and plausible, albeit unlikely, situations. The heroes tend to be highly capable, as do the major antagonists. Minor enemies (henchmen, flunkies, goons, mooks, etc.) are dangerous and numerous, but not as skilled as the heroes. *Cinematic* games tend to involve as much role-playing as they do combat and action.



CHAPTER TWO: CHARACTERS

Character creation consists of spending Character Points (CP) amongst Attributes, Traits and Skills, and selecting what (if any) allegiances your character holds. All of these aspects together will greatly determine the character's abilities and how others will interact with the character in the game world.

ATTRIBUTES

Attributes are scores that reflect the character's basic physical and mental abilities. In short, the core attributes define the character's "body and mind."

BODY GROUP

The three attributes that define a character's "body" or physical being are Health, Strength, and Reflexes.

STRENGTH (STR)

Strength (abbreviated STR) is the "Power" attribute for the Body Group. STR represents raw physical prowess, including the ability to lift, push and otherwise exert force.

The total weight that a character can lift to waist level without moving (i.e., dead lift) is shown on the *Basic STR Table*. A character is able to carry (lift and move) weight equal to half his lift capacity. A character can drag or pull twice his lift capacity.

Tom's character has a STR of 7 (he is very strong). He can dead lift 250 kilograms (about 550 pounds), he can carry 125 kilograms (275 pounds), and he can drag or pull up to 500 kilograms (1,100 pounds)!

REFLEXES (REF)

Reflexes (abbreviated REF) is the "Aptitude" attribute for the Body Group. REF covers the character's agility, coordination, reaction, and overall speed. The higher a character's REF, the more dexterous and agile he is, and the better his sense of balance is. A REF of 0 represents total lack of control over one's muscles and movement (e.g., severe palsy or total paralysis).

HEALTH (HLT)

Health (abbreviated HLT) is the "Resistance" attribute for the Body Group. HLT reflects the character's overall constitution, general health, resistance to disease, and overall fitness. The higher a character's health, the more resistant he is to illness and physiological degradation and injury. A HLT of 0 represents an absence of life (i.e., death).

MIND GROUP

The three attributes that define the character's "mind" or mental and emotional being are Presence, Intellect, and Will.

PRESENCE (PRE)

Presence (abbreviated PRE) is the "Power" attribute for the Mind Group. PRE represents the character's general personality, charm, charisma, and innate persuasiveness. The higher a character's PRE, the more influential he can be. A PRE of 0 represents a total lack of personality, charisma, and emotion (e.g., a brick or a wall). This attribute is important to a character's ability to instill confidence in others (very important while in command of troops).

INTELLECT (INT)

Intellect (abbreviated INT) is the "Aptitude" attribute for the Mind Group. INT represents the sharpness of the character's mind, clarity of thought and overall alertness. The higher a

character's INT, the brighter and more perceptive he is. An INT of 0 represents a complete lack of intelligence and thought (e.g., brain death or an inanimate object).

WILL (WIL)

Will (abbreviated WIL) is the "Resistance" attribute for the Mind Group. WIL reflects the character's mental strength, ego, and force of conviction. The higher a character's Will, the greater his resolve, focus, and level of concentration. A WIL of 0 represents no resistance to emotional influence and/or a complete lack of self-awareness (e.g., an automaton, robot or zombie).

ATTRIBUTE SCORES

All attributes are based on a scale of one to ten (1-10), denoting the normal human levels of possibility.

The higher an attribute score the better the character is in that area. For example, a character with a Strength of 3 is average, whereas a character with a Strength of 1 is roughly equivalent to an infant or small animal.

A score of 9 or 10 represents the pinnacle of human achievement. It should be rare to encounter someone with an attribute or skill at this level (at least among NPCs), and such a person may be well-known for his ability.

For example, a strength score of 9 could represent the strength of an Olympic weight-lifter and an Intellect of 10 could represent Hawking-like genius.

It is assumed that in a military campaign, that no human character will have any attribute scores above 10 (it is rare to even have a single score of 10).

A score of 0 means the character has absolutely no capability in that area. Generally, if a character's attribute drops to 0 for any reason, the character is completely impotent in that area.

BUYING ATTRIBUTES

Each player gets Character Points to build his character. While each GM can determine the amount of Character Points is appropriate for a specific campaign, the recommended starting Character Points are as follows:

REALISTIC CAMPAIGN: 230**CINEMATIC CAMPAIGN: 315**

Players spend these points on the attributes, traits, benefits and skills.

Characters have numerical scores that define their basic capabilities, called Attributes. Each character can also have traits, benefits, and skills. These are described in detail later in their own sections.

Attributes cost 10 Character Points for each level in an attribute. Buying a STR of 5 for a starting character, for instance, has a cost of 50 Character Points.

Attributes can be improved after character creation by spending Experience Points (see the section on *Experience*). To increase an attribute by one level costs 5 times the new level in experience points.

Tom wants to increase his character's current STR from 3 to 4. It will cost $4 \times 5 = 20$ experience points to increase Tom's character's STR to 4.

MAXIMUM ATTRIBUTE SCORES

The recommended maximum score for any attribute depends on the campaign level of the game (See the *Maximum Attribute*

Score Table). Players may purchase up to the maximum score for any primary attribute.

Jim is creating a character for a Realistic level game, with a maximum characteristic score of 76. Jim buys a REF score of 5 for his character and also buys the Physical Advantage trait and defines it as providing a +2 REF bonus to his character. This makes the character's effective REF score a 7 (the maximum for the campaign). See Table 1

Campaign Level	Suggested Attribute Maximum
Realistic	7
Cinematic	10

DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

There are also a few special attributes. They are not assigned points during character creation like the Mind and Body attributes. Instead, the following attributes are derived from attributes in the Body or Mind Group.

Derived attributes are Defensive Target Number, Initiative, Toughness, Life, and Move.

Some special attributes can have scores higher than 10; derived attributes are not necessarily scaled the same as a character's attributes, such as STR, INT or REF.

Derived attributes can be increased using Character Points. The cost for increasing each Derived Attribute above its base score is given in the description.

DEFENSIVE TARGET NUMBER (DEF)

A character's Defensive Target Number (abbreviated DEF) represents how difficult it is to successfully hit the character in combat. DEF becomes the base Target Number (TN) needed for any skill rolls made to hit the character in combat, for hand-to-hand, melee and ranged attacks. A character's DEF score may be modified up or down for variables such as distance, armor (heavy armor lowers a character's effective REF) and so on.

A character's DEF equals his **REF + 10**.

For example, Mike's character, Arelius, has a REF of 7. His REF+10 gives him a DEF of 17, so any characters that attempt to attack Arelius must roll against a Target Number of 17.

The Defensive Target Number may be increased at a cost of 5 Character Points for each additional point of DEF. A character's DEF score may not exceed 20 in Realistic-level games, though it may be as high as 30 in Cinematic level games.

If a character is caught off guard (by surprise), then that character's DEF is 10 (they lose their REF) for the surprise attack.

INITIATIVE (INI)

Initiative (abbreviated INI) represents how quickly a character can act in a turn.

A character's Initiative equals his **(REF + INT)/2**, rounding up. At the beginning of each turn of combat (or any other time the GM calls for the players to determine initiative), each player rolls 1d6 and adds the number rolled to his character's INI score.

The character with the highest INI total acts first in a turn.

In cases of a tie, the character with the higher INT goes first. If both characters have the same INT, then the characters act simultaneously.

For more information about how Initiative works, see the section on *Combat*.

Initiative may be increased at a cost of 3 Character Points for each additional point of Initiative. A character's Initiative score may not exceed 10 in Realistic-level games, though it may be as high as 15 in Cinematic level games.

TOUGHNESS (TGH)

Toughness (abbreviated as TGH) represents a character's resistance to blunt force damage, such as from a punch, a baseball bat, or auto collision.

A character's starting TGH equals **(STR + WIL)/2**, rounding up.

When a character suffers damage from a pummeling, bashing, or blunt attack, subtract the character's TGH score from the damage, and then subtract the remaining damage (if any) from the character's Life points (see *Life*, below). If a character suffers an amount of damage that does not exceed his TGH score, he suffers no loss of Life; he has completely shrugged off the attack.

For example, Sergeant Nelson has a Health of 4 and a Toughness of 8. In a fist-fight with a bad guy, Sgt. Nelson is hit by his opponent, and the GM rolls 19 points of damage. Player Albert subtracts Sgt. Nelson's Toughness of 8 from the damage, leaving 11 points of damage.

Toughness may also be used to decrease the damage suffered from some forms of *Special Damage* at the GM's discretion (see *Damage*).

Toughness may be increased at a cost of 5 *Character Points* for each additional point of Toughness. A character's Toughness score may not exceed 10 in Realistic level games, though it may reach 15 in Cinematic level games.

LIFE (LIF)

Life (abbreviated as LIF) points are used to keep track of damage a character suffers during an adventure. Any time a character suffers damage, he temporarily loses a number of Life points equal to the points of damage inflicted.

A character's LIF points equal **(HLT x 3) + (WIL x 2)**.

Continuing from the example above, Sgt. Nelson has a Health of 3 and a Willpower of 5, so he has 9 + 10 = 19 Life points. Albert subtracts the 11 points of damage from his character's Life points. After getting punched, Sgt. Nelson has 8 Life points left.

Stunning and deadly damage are both subtracted from a character's LIF (see *Damage*). When a character reaches 0 LIF from lethal damage, they are dying. If a character suffers combined stunning and deadly damage that exceeds the character's LIF, the character is unconscious but not dying.

Sgt. Nelson has 19 LIF points. He has suffered 11 points of stunning damage from a punch and then a short time later he is shot (Sam's had a hard day) and suffers 8 points of deadly damage. Nelson has suffered 11 points of stunning damage and 8 points of deadly damage, for a total of 19 points of damage, bringing his current LIF points to 0. He is unconscious. Until he regains some of his LIF points back (either from healing, medical aid or other means) he will remain unconscious.

A character may also be stunned or knocked unconscious by one mighty blow. Any time characters suffer an amount of damage from a single event or attack that exceeds half their LIF score (round up), after subtracting TGH (if applicable), they are stunned. A stunned character's STR, REF, PRE, and INT all drop to 0 for as long as the character is stunned. In addition, stunned characters lose their next action, which is spent "recovering from being stunned." On the subsequent turn, the character has recovered and may act normally.

If a character has not yet acted in the turn in which he is stunned, he loses his action for that turn but may act normally on the next (second) turn. If a character has acted in the turn in which he is stunned, he loses his action for the next (second) turn and may act normally on the following (third) turn.

Kyle's character has 20 LIF points and a TGH of 5. He is hit by a punch for 17 points of blunt damage. Kyle subtracts his character's TGH from the damage, leaving 12 points of damage. Because 12 is more than half his character's LIF, Kyle's character is stunned for one turn.

At the GM's discretion, a stunned character may go completely limp, fall down, or otherwise lose the ability to maintain his current action (for example, hold a rope, stay in the saddle, etc). A stunned character has a base DEF of 10, with no bonus for REF.

Life may be increased at a cost of 2 *Character Points* for each additional point of Life. A character's Life score may not exceed 50 in Realistic-level games, though it may be as high as 75 Cinematic level games.

MOVE (MOV)

Move (abbreviated as MOV) represents the distance a character can move in a single action. A character may move up to his MOV in meters each turn, as a normal Move action or, if running, up to 2x his MOV in meters per turn. A character may also sprint, moving up to 3x his MOV in meters per turn, but a character can only sprint for a maximum number of turns equal to his HLT, after which time he must rest for one minute for each turn spent sprinting (see *Taking Actions*).

A character's MOV is **REF + (STR+HLT)/2**, rounding up.

Albert is playing in a Special Tactical Assault Team (STAT) game. His character, Sgt. Nelson, a tough-guy NCO with a propensity to get into fights while in town, has a REF of 6, a HLT of 5 and a STR of 4. Albert averages his character's STR + HLT and gets 5. Then he adds his REF of 6, for a total MOV of 11. Sgt. Nelson can move up to 11 meters each turn normally (the equivalent of 13.2 kph or 7.8 mph) or 22 meters per turn when running (26.4 kph or 15.5 mph), and he can sprint for up to 6 turns at a speed of 33 meters per turn (about 40 kph or 23 mph)!

Move may be increased at a cost of 5 Character Points for each additional point of MOV. A character's MOV score may not exceed 10 in Realistic-level games, though it may reach 15 Cinematic level games. See Table 2

ALLEGIANCES

A character may have up to three allegiances, listed in order from most important to least important. These allegiances are indications of what the character values in life, and may encompass people, organizations, or ideals (for example, the Security Clearance advantages require an allegiance to one's country). A

character may have no allegiances (being either a free spirit or a lone wolf) or may change allegiances as he or she goes through life. Also, just because the character fits into a certain category of people doesn't mean the character has to have that category as an allegiance.

If the character acts in a way that is detrimental to his or her allegiance, the GM may choose to strip the character of that allegiance (and all its benefits) and assign an allegiance more suitable to those actions.

PLEDGING ALLEGIANCE

A hero's allegiance can take the form of loyalty to a person, to an organization, to a belief system, to a nation, or to an ethical or moral philosophy. In general, a character can discard an allegiance at any time, but may only gain a new allegiance with GM approval. Taking a new allegiance should not be trivial and should be roleplayed out in the choices a character makes.

Allegiances include, but are not limited to, the following examples.

Person or Group: This includes a leader or superior, a family, a group of linked individuals (such as a cell of secret agents), or a discrete unit within a larger organization (such as members of the character's squad or platoon, or individuals whose safety the character is responsible for).

Organization: This may be a company or corporation, a gathering of like-minded individuals, a fraternal brotherhood, a secret society, a branch of the armed forces, a local, state, or national government, a university, an employer, or an otherwise established authority.

Nation: This may or may not be the nation that the hero currently resides in. It may be where the individual was born, or where the hero resides after emigrating to a new home.

Belief System: This is usually a particular faith or religion, but can also be a specific philosophy or school of thought. Belief systems could also include political beliefs or philosophical outlooks.

Ethical Philosophy: This describes how one feels about order, as represented by law and chaos. An individual with a lawful outlook tends to tell the truth, keep his or her word, respect authority, and honor tradition, and he or she expects others to do likewise. An individual with a chaotic outlook tends to follow his or her instincts and whims, favor new ideas and experiences, and behave in a subjective and open manner in dealings with others.

Moral Philosophy: This describes one's attitude toward others, as represented by good and evil. An individual with a good allegiance tends to protect innocent life. This belief implies altruism, respect for life, and a concern for the dignity of other creatures. An evil allegiance shows a willingness to hurt, oppress, and kill others, and to debase or destroy innocent life.

ALLEGIANCES AND INFLUENCE

An allegiance can create an empathic bond with others of the same allegiance. With the GM's permission, the character gains a +2 bonus on Presence-based skill rolls when dealing with someone of the same allegiance—as long as the character has had some interaction with the other character to discover the connections that would bring the bonus into play.

The GM may also restrict some advantages or professions/MOSs to people of certain allegiances (such as the requirement

of allegiance to one's nation for a security clearance).

TRAITS

Any time a situation occurs in a game that is covered by a character's trait, it automatically comes into play and will affect the character, influencing his behavior or actions, or otherwise limiting or expanding that character's choice of actions.

There are two basic types of traits: *Advantages* and *Disadvantages*.

ADVANTAGES

Advantages provide some benefit to the character in the game and thus cost points to "purchase" when the character is created.

Most Advantages have a related and opposite Disadvantage. A player may not buy an Advantage that is the opposite of a Disadvantage that his character already possesses without special permission from the GM.

Many Advantages have a mixture of positive and negative effects on the character, and this should be reflected in game play. For example, a character that is well connected can enjoy those benefits easily enough, but he is likely to raise suspicion if he advances in rank "too quickly" or seems to get "preferential treatment". It is up to the GM to weigh the pros and cons of each benefit and, in the appropriate game circumstances, introduce them to the game.



TABLE 2

Mov	KPH	MPH	Example
1	1.2	0.7	
2	2.4	1.4	Leisurely walk
3	3.6	2.1	
4	4.8	2.8	Average Walk
5	6.0	3.5	M113 Water Speed
6	7.2	4.2	Brisk Walk
7	8.4	4.9	Power Walk
8	9.6	5.6	Jog
9	10.8	6.3	Run 9 minute mile
10	12.0	7.0	
11	13.2	7.7	
12	14.4	8.4	
13	15.6	9.1	
14	16.8	9.8	Run 6 minute mile
15	18.0	10.5	
16	19.2	11.2	
17	20.4	11.9	Run 5 minute mile
18	21.6	12.6	
19	22.8	13.3	
20	24.0	14.0	
21	25.2	14.7	
22	26.4	15.4	Run 4 minute mile
23	27.6	16.1	
24	28.8	16.8	
25	30.0	17.5	
26	31.2	18.2	
27	32.4	18.9	
28	33.6	19.6	
29	34.8	20.3	
30	36.0	21.0	
31	37.2	21.7	
32	38.4	22.4	
33	39.6	23.1	
34	40.8	23.8	Attack Submarine
35	42.0	24.5	
36	43.2	25.2	

An important consideration to remember is that normally skills have a maximum level of 10. This does not include the bonus from Advantages. So, if a character has a skill of 7 and purchases an Advantage that grants a +5 to it, then their effective skill level is 12 when the Advantage is in effect.

Advantages cost 2, 5, or 10 points. These are bought during character creation when an Advantage is selected, using Character Points. The point cost of an Advantage is determined by its usefulness or level of benefit to the character in the game. A convenience, impacting or benefiting the character slightly or providing a bonus of +3 to one or more skill rolls (see *Using Skills*), costs 2 points. An edge, having a moderate to strong impact on a character or providing a bonus of +6 to one or more skill rolls, costs 5 points. A gift, which has a significant positive