

# UNSTABLE SIGNALS

No. 07



## THE DENIAL ISSUE

THE TERRA CONFLICTUS HOBBY MAGAZINE



UNSTABLE SIGNALS / No. 07 / THE DENIAL ISSUE

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# UNSTABLE SIGNALS

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WEEKLY ISSUE // 05 SEPTEMBER 2026

NO. 07 // THE DENIAL ISSUE

THE HOBBY ZINE

PLAYTEST RECORD // SHOW YOUR WORK

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NO. 07 // THE DENIAL ISSUE // HOBBY ZINE WHAT THE TABLE

TOOK BACK // SEVEN FILINGS // ONE BURIED CENTRELINE // A NEW SPEND  
CALLED DENY

OUT NOW 7 REPORTS COMPILED PATCH NOTES INSIDE SEVEN GAMES //  
SEVEN MODES

// ROLL IN THE OPEN // COUNT THE DICE // BLAME THE TERRAIN // FILE  
THE REPORT //

// UNSTABLE SIGNALS // NO. 07 // THE DENIAL ISSUE

*Seven games in seven days across seven different modes, and six of them  
were decided by something being taken off the table rather than won on it.  
A gantry came down on all three objectives, a cask left in round one, and a  
hacker died in a doorway that was already open behind him.*

## WHAT THE TABLE TOOK BACK

NO. 07 // THE DENIAL ISSUE // 2026-09-05

THE MAKING OF THE THING // THE DICE ARE ON RECORD.

## // THE FREQUENCY

Seven games in seven days across seven different modes, which is the first clean week this desk has filed since June. I have spent the weekend trying to name what they have in common. Four of the seven were wins on paper. What they share is that in six of them the thing that decided the game was taken off the table rather than won on it.

At Punta Vela a Breacher put a demolition charge on the leg of the catwalk he was standing under, rolled a natural one, and wounded two of his own. Four activations later the Pressure Clock fired, the Climax came up Structural Collapse, and the game dropped that same catwalk for free across all three objectives. Nobody crossed the centreline again. Eastern Compact took it five to one and neither commander scored a single point after round four.

On the Raze the cask was gone before round two. In the Ferghana corridor a splice killed the lead vehicle on the only bridge in the valley, corked a three-vehicle convoy exactly where they wanted it, then spent four turns on the wrong side of their own roadblock. Weir put a Type-3 one wound from dead and lost the priority die in ten rounds out of eleven. Circuit cleared four gates on borrowed sixes and died in the fifth doorway with the door already open behind him.

So: the denial issue. The word arrived from the errata rather than from me. The Skirmish patch that went in this week gives Breach Tokens a third spend and calls it DENY. Cancel one no-roll ability, declared before it resolves, once per operator activation. It is a small rule and it is also the first thing in the line that lets a player do on purpose what the board has been doing to everybody by accident all week.

There is a real hobby argument underneath this and it is worth having out loud. A game that only rewards taking things is a game where the interesting decisions all happen in the first four turns. A game that also prices closing something, a lane, an ability, a crossing, a scoring window, keeps deciding things right up to the cap. Every fight in this issue was still live on the last activation. The clearest case is Wreckage Rights on the Terrace Grid, where a salvage consortium lost three of its seven machines to the Coalition's one and won by three points, because the mission counts standing bodies near a wreck pile and never once asks who is winning the fight.

Quill Adair has built you a gantry that falls over. Rio Solveng went looking for why the maps in this world are mostly wall with a few doors in them. Tib Marlow has seven things to do about it on Wednesday.

Read the patch notes. They run long this week and they are load-bearing.

// MARGIT KOSE // DESK HOST

// THE WEEK ON THE TABLE

// REPORT OF THE WEEK

IT CAME DOWN ANYWAY

OPERATOR TACTICS // SKIRMISH // EASTERN COMPACT 5 // NINE KITES 1 // T8 // BY TIB MARLOW

Bragin spent a demolition charge trying to drop a cable gantry onto the middle marker, rolled a natural one, and put two of his own operators down instead. Four activations later the Pressure Clock tripped, the Climax Table came up Structural Collapse, and the game dropped the same gantry across the full width of the yard with all three phase cabinets underneath it. It earns the week because both commanders then played four more rounds correctly and neither of them could score: this is a clean record of a table that stopped being winnable and two players who kept working anyway.

OPERATOR TACTICS // IRON LINE

NOBODY LEFT THE RING

Wreckage Rights counts unbroken units within twelve inches of a wreck pile and scores nothing at all for kills, so seven cheap machines beat five good ones while losing three to one. Read the victory condition before you write the list. If the mission counts bodies, buy bodies.

BLACK MARKET 8 // PRC 5 // T5 OPERATOR TACTICS // RAID RACERS

STILL IN THE SERVICE CUT

A five round clock ended in two because the Sparrows went straight at the cask and contested nothing else. Most of that scenario's budget sat on the table untouched, so build your Raid Racers events assuming the package leaves early and put the complication in the exit rather than the approach.

SPARROWS EXTRACT // T2 OF 5 OPERATOR TACTICS // RPG

NINETY SECONDS EARLY

The Irregulars reached actionable proof in a single session and still lost the murder, because two natural ones inside the same break let the syndicate close the file its own way. Cold Case pays for routing, so spend soft leads as threshold drops and check that a declared special is legally spendable before you build a character around it.

PROOF FILED // MURDER UNATTACHED OPERATOR TACTICS // BIG GAME HUNTS

ONE WOUND SHORT

Weir lost the priority die in ten rounds of eleven and finished one wound off a kill. In solo play losing priority takes half of everything you own that round, which is why the desk's own errata now exempts a one-model side from Priority Pressure. Build a hunt plan that survives going second twice running.

CONTRACT FAILED // SPECIMEN DOWNSTREAM // T11 OPERATOR TACTICS // THREAT RESPONSE

BOTH BANKS

Slow Match killed the lead vehicle on the only crossing in the valley and corked the convoy perfectly, then spent the rest of the game unable to reach the man they came for. Before you block a road, work out which side of it you need to be standing on afterwards.

PARTIAL // ASSET OUT, STRANDED // T6 OPERATOR TACTICS // HVT THE FIFTH DOOR

Impossible deals one operator, and the deck handed a five-gate rifle problem to a hacker who rated Good on exactly one of them. The arithmetic was settled before the first card turned. Check the gauntlet against your one body's proficiencies and take the difficulty your deck can actually answer.

OPERATOR KIA // C5

// PATCH NOTES

This week on the table, the rules moved. Everything the desk changed or confirmed, logged in one place.

CROSS-LINE ERRATA // PLAYTEST // CLARIFICATION

Daily-desk playtest errata

Twenty five fixes clearing the Cold Case and Raid Racers backlog, covering the investigation loop, the Evidence Chain, the Burn Counter, the Zone ladder, possession contests and the security drone.

- Cold Case. Fourteen fixes. A session is now defined: three rounds, one investigation action per operator per round, which is what every clock printed in sessions was already counting. The source still sets the threshold, but the operator's rating now lands on the die at Good plus 1, Ordinary plus 0, Bad minus 1, and it sits outside the plus 2 stacking cap, so a printed stat line is worth something in the core loop. The Soft Lead is now a one tier threshold drop rather than a plus 1 on the die: under the old wording the plus 2 cap refused the spend to exactly the specialists built to use it, switching the whole soft lead economy off. Surplus Hard Tokens at Stage 5 buy the same currency, one tier off a climax roll. Stage 5 advances on 2 Hard Tokens like every other stage and the challenge it

names is the climax itself. The Complications table has a trigger, roll at the end of any round the Burn Counter rose by 2 or more. Burn threshold shifts apply from the next action after the counter crosses. A Burn or clock trigger whose subject play has already resolved is void and is not replaced. The Cold Case natural 1 row replaces the core Fumble Table for CANVASS, PRESS and RUN. The Evidence Chain and the d6 Evidence table have a stated relationship: the Chain is the source list, the d6 table names what a token turns out to be. The two token cap attaches to the evidence, not to the row, so two routes to the same evidence share one allowance. Institutional contact is defined by a test, anyone whose position is defined by keeping, granting or enforcing a record, instead of a list of examples. And a new Reading a Case File Chain callout prints the capacity math, 8 tokens to reach Stage 5 at 2 per source, requires the GM to open a conditional source before a case becomes mathematically unwinnable, and standardises a source gate as a crew composition requirement that costs no action.

- **Raid Racers.** Eleven fixes. At Locked In the Jumper boards the target for 1 action and no roll, which is what makes Locked In worth driving for, and the Early Board from Chase stays the priced exception with its Latch. A natural 6 Commit that reaches the top of the Zone ladder with an advance to spare banks it, as plus 1 on the next Race Roll or a free board, rather than wasting the best result on the die. The FIGHT rating now modifies all three possession contests, the Check, the contested Lift and the grab off a carrier, at Good plus 1, Ordinary plus 0, Bad minus 1: these are the only three rolls that decide who owns the package and they ignored the stat entirely. The Line Read natural 6 is bounded, it may place an obstacle or an opportunity but may not directly remove a rival's LINE, Zones or actions. The Race Complication table now reads natural 1 on any NON OPPOSED Race Roll, which makes it agree with the Block entry instead of contradicting it. Block gains a positional prerequisite, your own Zone or one adjacent, and a Burned sled may not Block at all. LINE has a printed gain and ceiling: a successful Race Roll restores 1, up to the starting 3. The security drone that delivers Ripper Contact, the sport's only mortal wound, finally has a profile covering activation, move, target selection and a reach roll. A Raid Surge result with no legal target is rerolled. And precedence for a natural 1 inside an event is stated once: an action's own natural 1 line replaces the core Fumble Table, and where an action prints none, a natural 1 is simply an automatic failure. The forced Security Pressure tick for being STUCK with no action left now clears the obstacle, so one bad Flow cannot cost 2 Pressure.

## CROSS-LINE ERRATA // PLAYTEST // CLARIFICATION

Daily-desk playtest errata

Twenty one fixes in one day: eight approved balance and design calls across Iron Line, Raid Racers, Threat Response, Big Game Hunts and the solo core, ten Skirmish clarifications covering terrain, the Climax Table, melee, the Pressure Clock, stealth detection, grenades, the Medic and cover, and three approved Skirmish design calls on Breach Token generation, a new Deny spend and the Recon Drone.

- Iron Line. Perilous terrain now charges one attack per full inch moved through it rather than one per movement point. Because retreating and shuffling cost a point per half inch and advancing costs a point per inch, the old wording made backing out of a hazard exactly twice as lethal as walking into it, which meant the correct answer to a void field was usually to charge through. It is now the same price in every direction.
- Raid Racers. Vehicle layout is rebuilt so the sport's central engineering argument is felt by the drivers the fiction says care most about it. In your home terrain, front engine in tight and rear engine in open, you may reroll one failed Race Roll each round. In hostile terrain you take minus 1 as before. Neutral terrain applies neither. The old flat plus 1 in home terrain is retired: at a Good threshold of 2 plus it moved a number that was already on the floor.
- Raid Racers, The Bright Signal. The Tunnel Run now opens at Alert Level 1 and cannot be driven back to 0, and the Alert Level Effects table's 0 row is deleted, so the scene no longer promises an elevated alert state and then contradicts itself. The sensor drones run on a schedule rather than as a punishment for failure: one drone activates every round regardless of how well the Jockey is driving, and the Jumper's non contact suppression breaks a lock and pushes that drone back 6 inches. The passenger seat now has a standing job.
- Threat Response. Broken Wire scenario 2 is cut from a six turn clock to four. On a 2 foot board with the convoy moving 8 inches a turn and the bridge halving one of them, four was always the real window and the last two segments were decoration.
- Big Game Hunts. All five generic specimen types now carry a baseline stat line, derived from the published territory specific entries, so a generated hunt is playable without inventing the target's combat profile. Each line notes that the tier table overwrites Flesh and Mortal Wounds, that the Heavy tier adds 1 to Armor Rating on top, and that a territory specific entry replaces the line entirely. Competition gained an arrival round and an objective track per rival plus a new Competition Clock: once a rival has contact with the specimen it marks one step per Threat Phase on a SITREP, a natural 1 erases a step and advances the specimen's alert state, and the final step is the Kill Steal. Kill tracks stop while you

have the rival engaged, and capture tracks keep running unless you put down the model doing the work, which is what makes the two non lethal rivals playable.

- **Threat Response and Big Game Hunts.** A side that fields exactly one model is now exempt from Priority Pressure. The rule is a tax on one model out of four or five, which a squad absorbs, but against a lone operator it took half that side's entire action economy for the round while the threat side spread the same penalty across a specimen and its competition. Losing priority still costs the solo side the initiative.
- **Skirmish.** Ten clarifications from the desk's Crossfire game. Terrain gains an OVERHEAD row for a raised passable structure, a catwalk, overpass, pipe bridge, gantry or mezzanine: Elevation for a model on it, Light Cover for a model at ground level inside its footprint, and it blocks no line of sight. Climax result 3, Structural Collapse, is now a full paragraph. The trailing side chooses the piece when the players cannot agree, a piece that carries or blocks a scenario objective may not be chosen, the wreck is Difficult Terrain rather than Impassable and grants Light Cover without blocking line of sight, models on it drop to the ground beneath with no falling damage, and models trapped in the footprint are displaced to the nearest legal ground. The Breacher's Demolition check at one step harder is written out as minus 1 on the die at your own threshold, the same step convention the rest of the line already prints, and Demolition gains the casualty clause it never had. Melee now says which die carries the Mortal Wound, the winner's opposed die, because the opposed roll is the Fight, and the natural 1 clause is printed in the melee section instead of being imported from the core book. The Pressure Clock's three triggers each carry a frequency, and the contested objective trigger fires at most once per round however many objectives are contested. Active detection is an area sweep: name a point within 12 inches and line of sight, and every Stealthed model within 3 inches of it rolls TACT or is revealed. Grenades gain a throw range, the thrower's MOBI in inches, and the Infiltrator's concussion grenade finally has a profile, a blast that Pins instead of wounding. The Medic's Stabilize accepts an Edge reroll but not an Edge plus 1, because the bands are raw die results, and a Medic may Field Dress but not Stabilize herself. Wound penalties apply immediately, mid activation included, and a model cut to one action that has already acted takes no further action. Cover does not stack: apply the single best cover modifier only.
- **Threat Response.** The same one step harder wording in Broken Wire, blocking the road with debris, is written out as minus 1 on the die and given the same casualty clause as the Skirmish version, so a rule the two books share does not drift apart.



- Skirmish, second batch. Three approved design calls. Breach Tokens are now generated only by a Flesh Wound inflicted by an ENEMY ATTACK, a Shoot, a melee, a grenade or a demo charge belonging to the opposing player. Terrain, Climax results, falling and your own side's fire generate nothing, so a Structural Collapse no longer mints a handful of tokens for a player who did nothing to earn them. A hit landing on an operator already on the Mortal Wound track still generates one; a result that is itself a Mortal Wound does not. Breach Tokens also gain a third spend, DENY: cancel one no-roll ability that operator uses this activation, a Medic's Field Dress, an adjacent auto success Override, any class ability resolving without a die, declared when the ability is announced and before it resolves, once per operator activation. The Tech Specialist's Recon Drone is fully specified at last: placed within 8 inches of the Tech in line of sight, repositioned up to 8 inches for 1 action, airborne so it ignores difficult and impassable ground and never controls an objective, and destructible, a legal target at AR 1 with no wound track that any confirmed hit or any blast covering it removes. One drone per game. An ability that hard counters the Infiltrator has to be answerable.

## CROSS-LINE ERRATA // PLAYTEST // CLARIFICATION

### Daily-desk playtest errata

Forty five daily-desk playtest clarifications across Iron Line, Raid Racers, HVT, Threat Response and Big Game Hunts, including new vehicle rules, a new Raid Racers traversal mode, and a full stat line for solo enemies.

- Iron Line. The four sample doctrine lists now print their true totals and the two keyword-cost-multiplier errors are corrected, with the multiplier stated to apply to weaknesses as well as strengths. Punishment now reads 'each unbroken enemy it was in contact with', dropping the self-contradictory 'unengaged'. Berserk inflicts 1 Strain, not the undefined D1. Grim terrain cascades onto both armies, since terrain is friendly to nobody. Neither Hardened nor Implacable reduces Perilous, Grim, Degraded or Self-Destructive Strain, and Flying moves over Rough and Perilous without triggering either. A Broken unit acts normally until the Scrap Phase removes it. Unit footprints gained a recommended size per class plus a rule for compulsory moves blocked by a friendly. Wheel is measured as the chord with the pivot corner fixed, with a worked example, and range from the centre of the front edge got one too. The Relay Beacon carries the Relay keyword, Command auras stack, a Relay needs sightlines like a gun, and an ability with no legal target does not spend its Signal. Solar Lance has a 12 inch range. Spore Shroud can target either side, keeps its target's Strain, counts nothing off the table at game end, and cannot be broadcast in the final round. The Breacher's demo charge is command detonated, and demolition of a named structure is now a real action.

- **Raid Racers.** New Traversal Mode for events with no package and no target vehicle: a course of gates, Commit advances one and a natural 6 advances two, and the Zone ladder measures the sled's line rather than its distance. A natural 6 never carries a sled through an obstacle that has its own printed check; the second advance is banked as plus 1 on that check instead. New conversion table retiring Defense, ExoPlate and vehicle Heat, none of which exist in Operator Tactics: Defense N is a difficulty step on the acting model's own roll, 1d6 ExoPlate is 1 sled damage, and N Heat is N Security Pressure. In The Bright Signal, the dead cross reference to a Blockade Run scenario now points at Traversal Mode, Razborki's three incompatible impairment readings collapse to the Reliability roll, and every borrowed stat line is restated in the supplement's own currency.
- **HVT.** A Wounded operator may be deployed when no Active operator is available, rolling at the degraded tier, and a challenge that must be resolved with nobody deployable fails the mission. Impossible is now playable as printed. The challenge card's archetype line is named as the source of your proficiency: on the Good line rates Good, on the Ordinary line rates Ordinary, and absent from both rates Bad. The printed variable threshold is now a modifier against the Ordinary 4 plus baseline rather than a floor, matching the solo book and the RPG core: a printed 5 plus is minus 1 on the die, a printed 3 plus is plus 1, and you always roll at your own threshold.
- **Threat Response.** The Enemy Types table gained SHOOT, FIGHT and AR columns plus baseline GUTS, a 6 inch foot MOBI and default weapon ranges, which removes the largest source of referee invention in solo play. New Vehicles block: armour rating by hull class, 1 Durability per hit, 2 on a natural 6, 1 from a blast, and 0 Durability is disabled and stopped. New Mounted Models block covering shooting from a moving vehicle, shooting a driver through the hull, what dismounting costs, and whether occupants are hurt when their ride dies. Shooting into a melee that contains a friendly now works like Hostage Fire. Fumble results 3, 4 and 5 gained fallbacks so no natural 1 is a no-op. Solo melee applies FIGHT to the die and resolves a double natural 6 on modified totals with the attacker winning ties. Tempo rerolls only dice you rolled. SITREP now tells you to phrase every question so that Yes favours you. In Broken Wire scenario 2, the convoy deploys on the table so the Ambush Window has something to shoot, the roster is 400 points rather than an unbuyable 200, the collapsed bridge is a TACT check rather than a roll against MOBI, the mounted weapon deals 2 Flesh Wounds rather than an undefined plus 2 damage, the Escort Clock ticks once per firing activation, and the scenario finally names an extraction edge.

- Big Game Hunts. Environmental Merge is a type trait of every Type-3 rather than a rolled ability, and a rolled ability that duplicates a type trait is rerolled. Type-3 specimens gained separate merged transit and surfaced movement values, so a Hunting Type-3 can patrol without becoming targetable. Duplicate anatomy rolls stand as paired sites. A specimen takes one action per activation and two at Frenzy, which was the most used number in the book and was never printed. The anatomy columns are renamed Called Hit and Uncalled Hit and now have a stated trigger, with calling a revealed target free and a miss doing nothing. The Type-3 natural 6 Read beats the general draw two, and the attachment point it reveals now has a rule that breaks the merge for D3 rounds. The two Read actions per hunt cap does not touch the solo Field Read. And a setup SITREP's severity rider lands as table state in the operator's favour rather than changing the binary.

## // THE WORKBENCH

The Punta Vela game ended under a gantry and the gantry was a length of foamcore on two soup tins. I know that because I built it, on a Tuesday, in about eleven minutes, and I have been quietly embarrassed about it since Marlow's report went up. The piece that decided the most interesting fight of the week could not do the thing the fight was about. It could not fall down.

The errata this week gave Skirmish an OVERHEAD terrain row and a full paragraph for Climax result 3, and between them they describe a very specific object. Standing, an overhead piece grants Elevation to anything on it, Light Cover to anything at ground level inside its footprint, and blocks no line of sight at all. Collapsed, it becomes Difficult Terrain across that same footprint, still grants Light Cover, still blocks nothing, models on it drop to the ground with no falling damage, and anything caught underneath is displaced to the nearest legal ground. Those are two different pieces of terrain occupying the same eighteen inches of table, and the whole point of the thing is the moment one becomes the other. So build both, and make the swap take four seconds.

Core is a length of ten millimetre styrene I-beam, cut to eighteen inches and left in one piece. Deck it with brass mesh or the etched grille off any cheap photo-etch fret, two inches wide, glued along the top flange so a 32mm base sits flat with room either side. The legs are the fiddly part and the answer is to make them not fiddly: four uprights of 8mm square tube, each glued to its own 40mm round base, each with a shallow notch filed into the top that the beam sits in. Not glued. Sits in. A gantry that lifts off is a gantry you can collapse without touching a model.

Then build the wreck. Same footprint, one inch tall instead of five, and it goes faster than the standing piece: a strip of 2mm foamcore cut to eighteen by two, the top skin scored and torn open in three places, the leftover I-beam offcuts laid across it at bad angles, a handful of cork bark, and every join buried in sand and PVA. This is where the offcuts from the standing build go, so cut the beam long and keep everything.

Failure point is the notches. File them too deep and the deck sits low enough that a model on the ground beneath cannot be picked up without lifting the whole span, which defeats the purpose. Too shallow and the beam walks off the legs the first time somebody leans on the table. You want it sitting about a millimetre into the notch, held by gravity and nothing else, and you want to test that with the heaviest model you own standing on the deck before you paint anything.

Paint both halves in the same session, same primer, same wash. A wreck that reads as a different piece of terrain from the thing that fell over is worse than no wreck at all. Grey primer, a heavy sponge of dark rust across the deck and the leg joints, brown wash into everything, then the one detail worth the time: paint the trunk line. A single conduit running the length of the beam in dull yellow, and on the wreck version, that same conduit torn open with the cut ends in bare bright metal. That is the entire story of the piece told in two colours.

## // BITS

- 10mm styrene I-beam, 24in length. Eighteen inches becomes the span, every offcut becomes the wreck.
- Photo-etch grille or brass mesh, 2in wide by 18in, for the deck.
- 8mm square styrene tube for four uprights, roughly 4in each.
- Four 40mm round bases.
- 2mm foamcore, one strip at 18in by 2in, for the wreck body.
- Cork bark scraps, play sand, PVA.
- Grey primer, dark rust for sponging, brown wash, dull yellow, bare metal.
- A needle file. This is the only tool on the list that actually matters.

## // STEPS

1. Cut the I-beam to 18in in one piece. Glue the mesh deck along the top flange, centred, and cure it flat under a book.



2. Cut four uprights to the same height, glue each to a 40mm base, then file a shallow notch in the top of each so the beam sits about a millimetre down. Do not glue the beam to the legs.
3. Test fit with your heaviest model standing on the deck. If the span walks, deepen one notch, not all four.
4. Cut the foamcore wreck strip to the same 18in by 2in footprint. Score and tear the top skin open in three places, lay the beam offcuts across it at bad angles, add cork, then bury every join in sand and PVA.
5. Prime and paint both pieces in one session so they read as the same object. Sponge rust, brown wash, then run a dull yellow conduit the full length of both.
6. On the wreck only, paint the conduit's torn ends bare metal and leave them clean. It is the one bright thing on the piece and the eye goes straight to it.

VERDICT // WORTH IT. NINETY MINUTES FOR THE PAIR AND MOST OF THAT IS DRYING TIME. IF YOUR TABLE HAS AN OVERHEAD PIECE THAT CANNOT FALL OVER, YOU ARE PLAYING CLIMAX RESULT 3 IN YOUR IMAGINATION. //

Q. ADAIR

// THE RECORD

Four of the seven tables this week had exactly one way across them, and in three of those cases the players did not notice until it mattered.

That is not a coincidence of scenario design. It is what the ground looks like now. The Ferghana corridor where Slow Match took the convoy has a side channel running its whole length, cut by the same water management scheme that was going to make the valley farmable in the 2030s, and one bridge. There were eleven. Nine came down in the first two years of the contested-zone period, dropped by people who were absolutely certain they would not need them again, and the tenth silted its approaches. What survives is a single span that four separate armed parties have now spent three decades not destroying, because the corridor's entire value to any of them is that things can still be moved through it.

The same arithmetic runs the other direction in Samut Prakan. The Terrace Grid is a drowned aquaculture belt, hundreds of square kilometres of shallow pond wall, and the dikes are the only ground in the district that carries weight. Nobody defends the water. Everybody fights on the raised lines, and both commanders in the Wreckage Rights game deployed on a dike because there was nowhere else a two thousand point formation could stand. Punta Vela is the third version of the same fact: a wind farm on a shelf where the katabatic wind never stops, so every structure is bolted twice and the only thing that spans the yard is a cable gantry sunk four metres into shale.

The habit of mind this breeds in the people who live there is worth stealing for the table. An operator working the Eurasian corridors does not read a map for cover. They read it for the number of ways out, and they price every piece of demolition against the possibility of coming back the same way. Blowing a crossing is understood in that theatre as an admission that you are never returning, and it gets treated socially the way a burned bridge deserves: a statement about you, made permanent, in front of witnesses.

Slow Match made that statement by accident. They killed the lead vehicle on the bridge because the ambush window said kill the lead vehicle, and they did it well, and the wreck corked a three-vehicle convoy exactly where they wanted it. Then they found out the asset they had come for was on the far bank with a working cargo truck and a technical, and the only crossing on the table was full of the thing they had just shot. Partial victory. Asset out, team stranded on the wrong bank of their own success.

The table consequence is one line long and it will change your next three games. On a 24 by 24, stop building the symmetrical board with cover on both flanks. Build one line of movement across the short axis that both sides need, make it destructible, and put the objective on the far side of it. Then say nothing about it. The players will find it in round two and spend the rest of the evening arguing about whether to close it.

BLOWING A CROSSING IS UNDERSTOOD IN THAT THEATRE AS AN  
ADMISSION THAT YOU ARE NEVER COMING BACK.

// THE COMMAND TABLE

01

## **SPEND DENY ON THE THING THAT DOES NOT ROLL**

Breach Tokens got a third spend this week and it is the best one on the list. DENY cancels a single no-roll ability for that operator's activation: a Medic's Field Dress, an adjacent auto-success Override, any class ability that resolves without a die. Declare it when the ability is announced and before it resolves, once per operator activation. Hold one token back from round three onward. The abilities that never touch a die are the ones your shooting has no answer to.

02

## READ CLIMAX RESULT 3 OUT AT DEPLOYMENT

Structural Collapse got a full paragraph this week and it came straight out of Punta Vela. The trailing side chooses the piece, the wreck is Difficult Terrain granting Light Cover and blocking no line of sight, models on it drop with no falling damage, and a piece that carries or blocks a scenario objective may not be chosen at all. That last clause would have saved the Crossfire game. Read the paragraph while you are setting up, not when the clock trips.

03

## PUT EXACTLY ONE OVERHEAD PIECE ON THE TABLE

The terrain chart gained an OVERHEAD row: a raised passable structure gives Elevation to models on it, Light Cover to models at ground level inside its footprint, and blocks no line of sight. That combination is unusually generous, so run one per table and put it where standing on it costs something. A catwalk over the centre objective rewrites every approach on the board without turning the game into a staring contest, because it blocks nothing.

04

## A ONE MODEL SIDE DOES NOT PAY PRIORITY PRESSURE

Threat Response and Big Game Hunts now exempt a side fielding exactly one model. A squad absorbs that tax across four bodies. A lone hunter loses half her round to it, which is what happened to Weir for ten rounds out of eleven and is the single reason that contract failed. Losing priority still costs the solo side the initiative, which is plenty. If you are running an older printing, house-rule it tonight and write it on the sheet.

05

## COVER DOES NOT STACK, AND SAY SO BEFORE ANYONE MEASURES

Apply the single best cover modifier only. This is the most common quiet error at a table with good terrain, because a model behind a wall inside a ruin under a smoke cloud feels like it should be collecting three things. It collects one. Announce it while the terrain is going down and the argument never happens. Announce it with a tape measure already on the table and you are negotiating, not adjudicating.

06

## BREACH TOKENS ARE PAID BY THE ENEMY, NOT BY THE TABLE

Tokens now generate only from a Flesh Wound inflicted by an enemy attack: a shot, a melee, a grenade, a demo charge belonging to the opposing player. Terrain, Climax results, falling and your own side's fire generate nothing. Without that fix the Punta Vela collapse would have minted a fistful of tokens for two players who had done nothing to earn them. If your group has been paying out on terrain, you have been running a much swingier game than you thought.

07

## SWEEP THE GROUND THEY HAVE TO CROSS, NOT THE MODEL YOU SUSPECT

Active detection now names a point within 12 inches and line of sight, and every Stealthed model within 3 inches of that point rolls TACT or is revealed. It is an area, so stop pointing it at a model you think you have spotted and start pointing it at ground an Infiltrator has to use. Doorways, the approach to an objective, the near end of your one crossing. Two Ghost Infiltrators walked Punta Vela unopposed and the Compact never swept the only lane they could have taken.

### // TWO CHAIRS

NUR HABASH plays almost entirely alone. Two nights a week in a converted signal box outside the Saharan Oasis freight yards, mostly Big Game Hunts and the solo rules, and she has finished eleven campaigns without a second player ever sitting down at the table. She keeps what she calls a denial ledger, a running column of every turn the game took away from her, and she has kept it for four years. Kose called her the morning after the Weir report went up.

Eleven campaigns alone. Start with the obvious one: why not just find a group? I have a group. I play with them on Sundays and I like them. A solo game tells you the truth about a rule in a way a shared game cannot, though, because there is nobody across the table being generous with you. If a rule is bad, it is bad at me, in the dark, and I write it down.

The denial ledger. What is actually in it?

One line for every turn where the game stopped me doing the thing I had already decided to do. Not failure. Failure is fine, failure is the dice doing their job. Denial is when I never got to make the roll at all. Lost the priority die and the specimen moved out of arc. Natural one on the wrong action, lost the activation. Terrain went perilous and I paid a toll to stand still. Four years of that is about nine hundred lines.

And what do nine hundred lines tell you?

That most of the games I lose, I lose in the first two rounds in a way I do not notice until round nine. When I read the arithmetic on the Weir hunt I recognised it instantly. Ten rounds out of eleven is a freak, that is once in a hundred and seventy games, but the shape of it is completely ordinary. You do not lose a solo hunt to the specimen. You lose it to two hundred small subtractions and then the specimen is just there at the end to sign for it.

So how do you hedge?

I never plan more than one round ahead and I always have a second use for the round I am standing in. If I lose priority, what am I doing with the half round I still have? If the answer is nothing, I built the turn wrong. People hear that as a truism. At my table it is a checklist, I say it out loud on every activation, and it has saved more hunts than any piece of kit I own.

Give me a hot take.

Solo players over-read the threat and under-read the map. I did it for two years. You will spend twenty minutes on a specimen's anatomy chart and thirty seconds deciding where you are standing, and the specimen is not the thing that kills you. The floor plan is.

Table ritual?

I roll the priority die for the whole game before I set up. Eleven rounds, eleven dice, left to right along the edge of the mat, and I look at them. Then I sweep them up and roll properly, honestly, one at a time. It is not a system. It is so that I have already seen what a bad run looks like before it is happening to me, and I do not start bargaining in round four.

Last one. What would you change about Big Game Hunts?

Nothing this month. They just gave the generic specimen types a stat line and I have wanted that since the book shipped, so I am going to enjoy it for a few weeks. Ask me in December. There is always something.

// SIGNAL TRAFFIC

What is the smallest amount of terrain that still makes a 24 by 24 skirmish table play properly?// Two Boxes And A Book // Low Coast

Six pieces, and one of them has to matter. Two blocking pieces big enough to hide a 32mm model completely, two light cover pieces, one raised piece, and one line of movement across the short axis that both sides want. Six. The mistake at a thin table is spreading four boxes evenly and calling it cover, which gives you a board where



everything is a little bit protected and nothing is a decision. Punta Vela was a 24 by 24 with an impassable hall, a transformer bank, a gantry, a spoil berm, some reel racks and two pylon feet, and it produced eight rounds of hard choices before the game buried its own centreline. If you own two boxes and a book, the book is your raised piece. Put it in the middle.

How many objective markers is too many before the table stops looking like a place and starts looking like a board game?// Chip Farm // Reykjanes

Three, and it is one of the few numbers I will defend in writing. Three is a decision, because you can hold two and reach for the third. Five is a chore. The reason a table starts reading as a board game is rarely the count anyway, it is that the markers do not belong to anything. A phase cabinet is an objective. A poker chip on a warehouse floor is a marker. Build the objective into the terrain, keep its scoring on a card instead of on the table, and three will never look like a bingo hall.

Our group agreed a house rule mid-game and now nobody can remember exactly what we agreed. How do you keep rulings straight across a campaign?// Ruled It Twice // Gorodskie Ekho

Write it on the scenario sheet, in the moment, in the words you actually used, and initial it. Not a document, not a wiki, nobody is going to read either one. One line on the sheet for the game you are in, and at the end of the night the sheet goes in the box with the mission. The next time that scenario comes up the ruling comes up with it, which is exactly when you need it and the only time you will remember it ever existed. This desk keeps a changelog for the same reason and it is the least glamorous file we own. Look at the patch notes in this issue. Dozens of rulings, none of them invented at a desk, all of them somebody writing down what they did at the moment they did it.

When the firing arc came in, half my models lost their good shots. Do I rebase everyone to show facing or just agree a house marker?// Which Way Is Front // New Geneva

Do not rebase anybody. A rebase is four hours of work to solve a problem a two millimetre notch solves in ten minutes. File a small nick in the front edge of every base, or glue on a sliver of plasticard, or if you want it reversible, put a dot of enamel on the rim and let it wear off over a year. What matters is that the whole table can read facing from standing height without leaning in, and that the answer is identical on every model in the game. The argument is never really about facing. It is about whether the two of you agreed the facing before or after somebody picked up a tape measure.

I lost the priority die nine rounds out of eleven in a solo hunt and it stopped feeling like a game. Is there a legitimate way to hedge that or do I just take it?// Ten Of Eleven // Indo-Pak Line

Take it, then build for it. Two things. First, check your printing: a side fielding exactly one model is now exempt from Priority Pressure in both Threat Response and Big Game Hunts, and if your book predates that ruling you have been paying a squad's tax with one body. Second, and this is Nur Habash's answer elsewhere in this issue and it is better than mine, never build a turn that only works if you go first. Ask what the half round is for. A run of nine is a genuine freak and you have my sympathy, but those nine rounds only cost you the hunt because every one of them had a plan in it that needed the other half.

// THE DROP

OPERATOR TACTICS // SKIRMISH

ONE SPAN

**SETUP** A single catwalk crosses a flooded switchyard from one deployment edge to the other. The objective sits on a raised platform that only the catwalk reaches, equidistant from both crews. **TWIST** The span is an OVERHEAD piece and either side may drop it with a demolition action at minus 1 on the die at your own threshold, with the usual casualty clause. Collapsed it becomes Difficult Terrain at ground level, so the crossing still exists on foot and costs about four times as long. **WIN** Control the platform at the end of rounds 4 and 6, 2 VP each. Plus 2 VP for holding it at the cap. Plus 1 VP per enemy Out of Action. **CAP** Six rounds. Pressure Clock threshold 3.

OPERATOR TACTICS // IRON LINE

THE COUNT

**SETUP** Wreckage Rights on a drowned dike belt. Three wreck piles on the centreline, each also counting as Grim terrain, and kills score nothing at all. **TWIST** Before deployment each commander secretly names three of their own units. Those units score double for presence at a wreck pile and score nothing whatever if they break. Everything else counts as normal. **WIN** More unbroken units within 12 inches of each wreck pile when the assessors count, just before every Scrap Phase. Most VP takes it. **CAP** Five rounds.

OPERATOR TACTICS // BIG GAME HUNTS // SOLO

DOWNSTREAM

**SETUP** A generated Site Purge contract on a pre-war pump hall. Type-3 aquifer variant, merged into the water table. Hostile weather, visibility 12 inches, intel wrong by one tier. **TWIST** The specimen cannot be targeted at all while merged, and the hunter is a one model side, so no Priority Pressure. Rivals arrive round four with a resonance lure and a containment rig, and their capture track keeps running whether

or not you are engaging the specimen. **WIN** Specimen dead inside the cap. If the rivals crate it first, the purge pays zero and the contract is a failure regardless of what else you did. **CAP** Eleven rounds.

THE BOARD DOES NOT HAVE TO BEAT YOU. IT ONLY HAS TO CLOSE.

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