

# OPERATION THORAX

---

TRANSCRIPT [EMERGENCY BROADCAST - SITE DELPHI] DATE:  
[REDACTED] 1984 TIME: 0347 HOURS CLASSIFICATION: EYES ONLY

[HEAVY BREATHING] "This is Dr. [REDACTED] at Site Delphi. The enhanced specimens have breached containment. They've burrowed into the bedrock. We thought... we thought they were just going to ground, but something's happening. The ground is shaking. There's something down th-"

[LOUD RUMBLING, CONCRETE CRACKING]

"Oh God. They're... they're HUGE. This is impossible. There's a whole colony of... they must have been down here since the bomb tests. The specimens are communicating with them somehow. They're... they're freeing them.

[SOUNDS OF MASSIVE MOVEMENT, CHITTERING]

The queens. Our queens are... linking with them. Teaching them. Or maybe they're teaching us. They're all networked now, they're-"

[CRASH, SCREAMING IN DISTANCE]

"Contingency Black! Implement Contingency-" [TRANSMISSION ENDS]

[THREE MINUTES OF SILENCE FOLLOWED BY RHYTHMIC TAPPING IN MORSE CODE: "THE SEA IS NOT THE ONLY THING THAT REMEMBERS"]

//END TRANSCRIPT//

# SUMMARY

---

**Year:** 1984.

**Location:** Quarantined US nuclear test site in a vast desert. Contains remnants of 1950s nuclear experiments, mutated giant ants, Cold War research.

**Prize:** A portable nuclear bomb.

**Threats:** Super-aggressive giant ants mutated by pheromone-based experiments, a genetically engineered rogue special forces unit.

## TIMELINE

---

- **[1951]** - Nuclear tests commence in the **Red Sands Test Range** in the American desert.
- **[1952]** - *Ants mutate to become as large and intelligent as dogs deep under the Red Sands test range.*
- **[1958]** - Nuclear tests at Red Sands are discontinued.
- **[1979]** - Research in ant pheromones starts in the Red Sands Test Range.
  - *CYCLOPS was behind it, through US Army subsidiaries.*
- **[1979]** - *A portable nuclear weapon is stored at an old test site, in case of emergencies.*
- **[1981]** - *Human experimentation leads to the creation of the THORAX unit.*
- **[1982]** - *THORAX Special Forces Unit is deployed on multiple highly classified operation.*
- **[1984 - Two Weeks Ago]** - Accidental release of ant pheromones causes the giant Red Sands ants to surface. The site is quarantined.
  - *CYCLOPS was behind this sabotage.*
- **[1984 - One Week Ago]** - *THORAX, along with a CYCLOPS handler, is deployed in Red Sands to obtain the nuke and detonate it in the Queen's nest.*
  - *The CYCLOPS handler's goal is to meddle with the timer and thus erase THORAX at the same time, but is found out. He manages to escape.*
  - *THORAX is now seeking to obtain both nuclear access codes in order to obtain the nuke for leverage.*

# EQUIPMENT

## WEAPONS

| ROLL | NAME                         | TYPE                | DAMAGE | PROPERTIES                 |
|------|------------------------------|---------------------|--------|----------------------------|
| 1    | M1911A1 (.45 ACP)            | Pistol              | 1D6    | Quick-Draw                 |
| 2    | M16A1                        | Assault Rifle       | 1D6+1  |                            |
| 3    | M3 "Grease Gun"              | SMG                 | 1D6    |                            |
| 4    | MP5                          | SMG                 | 1D6    |                            |
| 5    | XM177 "CAR-15" Colt Commando | Carbine             | 1D6    | Accurate                   |
| 6    | M1903 Springfield            | Bolt-Action Rifle   | 1D6+1  | Accurate                   |
| 7    | Ithaca Model 37              | Pump-Action Shotgun | 1D6+1  | Shredder                   |
| 8    | M60                          | LMG                 | 1D6+1  | Heavy, Loud                |
| 9    | M21 Sniper                   | Sniper              | 1D6+2  | Armor-piercing             |
| 10   | M2 Browning                  | HMG                 | 1D6+2  | Heavy, Loud, Anti-Materiel |
| 1    | M72 LAW                      | Rocket Launcher     | 1D6+2  | Anti-Materiel              |
| 2    | M26 Fragmentation Grenade    | Frag Grenade        | 1D6+1  |                            |
| 3    | M16 "Bouncing Betty"         | Landmine            | 1D6+2  |                            |

Xd6kh, 4 uses, reduce uses by x

## GEAR

- 1d3 Armor. 1d6: 1-4: Bulletproof Vest (1 Armor). 5-6: Ceramic Plates (2 Armor).
- Uniforms (1-in-1d6: High-ranking)
- Rations (2d6 MREs, +1d6 HP)
- Ammunition
- Medical supplies (1d6 medkits, 1d6+TAC HP)

6. Firearms (1d10 on Weapons table). 1d6: 1-3: 1x. 4-5: 2x. 6: 3x.
7. Explosive Weaponry (roll 1d3 on last 3 entries of Weapons table)
8. Documents/Intel on an unexplored hex

## VEHICLES

---

- Dirtbike: 6 HP, 2 Armor
- Technical: 8 HP, 2 Armor
- Light util. vehicle: 12 HP, 1 Armor
- Truck: 12 HP, 3 Armor
- Mounted Gun: 1d6+1

# THORAX SPECIAL FORCES UNIT

---

*Tactical Hive-mind Operations and Reconnaissance, Augmented Xenobiology*

Elite special forces unit created by CYCLOPS inspired by ant cooperation and pheromone control. Deployed in a covert operation during the Soviet-Afghan War. Mission sabotaged by Cyclops to prevent leaks. Sent to the test site for cleanup, and to be betrayed.

## QUEEN - 'VICTORIA'

---

8 HP, CHOKE 5: Releases overwhelming pheromone burst that sends nearby ants into frenzy

- Custom M16 (1D6+1 DAMAGE), Reinforced tactical gear (2 ARMOR)
- Synthetic forearm-mounted pheromone dispenser (manipulate ant behavior, three uses)
- Scarred neck, constantly twitching, thousand-yard stare
- HIVE MIND: Can mentally coordinate with the entire THORAX unit. When Queen takes damage, other THORAX members feel it psychically.

## SOLDIER - 'PATTON'

---

9 HP, CHOKE 6: Enters berserker state

- Hydraulic pincer gauntlets (2D6 DAMAGE), Chitin-weave armor (3 ARMOR)
- Bulging muscles, clicking movements, inhuman strength

**COLLECTIVE:** The THORAX unit operates with a disturbing philosophy - they believe ants represent a purer form of existence than human individuality. While they'll defend themselves from ant attacks, they primarily work to keep the zone isolated, seeing it as a "preserved sample" of humanity's potential evolution. Their implants let them understand ant communication but don't grant control, leading to an almost religious reverence for the insects' collective consciousness.

## ENCOUNTERS & FOES

There are 2 Countdowns to keep track of; one for Ants, one for THORAX. Both Countdowns start at 12. An encounter is triggered whenever a Countdown reaches **below 0**, after which it resets to 12. If a Countdown reaches exactly **0**, it jumps back to **4**, and an encounter is rolled for but foreshadowed instead of triggered.

### ANTS

The Ant Countdown decreases on the passage of time, but only during abstracted/continuous tasks.

- **1d4** for tasks that take 10 minutes or so: quickly ransacking a room, barricading windows and doors, jury-rigging a machine etc.
- **1d6** for tasks that take up to an hour; **traveling between hexes**, performing a thorough search of a location, doing an extensive stakeout, fortifying a location.
- **1d8** for tasks that take more than an hour; doing tasks that take an hour but impaired, injured or otherwise disadvantaged.
- **1d4** for anything that can be interpreted as **seismic activity**: driving vehicles, detonating explosives, activating heavy generators.

### ANT ENCOUNTERS

Roll 1d6 + number of previous Ant encounters.

| 1D6 + NUMBER OF PREVIOUS ANT ENCOUNTERS | ENCOUNTER   |
|---|---|
| 1-2                                     | 1d3 Scout Ants                                      |
| 3-4                                     | 1d6 Scout Ants + 1d3 Worker Ants                    |
| 5-6                                     | 2d6 Scout Ants + 1d6 Worker Ants                    |
| 7-8                                     | 1d6 Scout Ants + 1d6 Worker Ants + 1d6 Soldier Ants |
| 9+                                      | 2d6 Scout Ants + 2d6 Soldier Ants                   |

### ANT FOES

**SCOUT ANT** (3 HP, Mandibles: 1 damage). Golden retriever-sized ant, with similar speed and ferocity.

**WORKER ANT** (6 HP, Strong mandibles: 3 damage). Dire wolf-sized ant. Clamps down on targets upon biting, roll +FRC to break free.

**SOLDIER ANT** (9 HP, Powerful mandibles: 1d6 damage, Thick carapace: 2 Armor). Cow-sized ant, with thick plating and a fearsome bite.

## THORAX

---

The THORAX Countdown decreases when:

- **1d4** if a fight involved gunfire
- **1d6** when leaving traces, such as dead ants, moved vehicles, breaking & entering
- **1d8** when entering the Sleeper Site, Power Station, Ghost Town or Supply Depot (due to hidden surveillance)

## THORAX ENCOUNTERS

---

- The first THORAX operative encountered will be **(1d6) 1-2: VESPUCCI 3-4: MARX 5-6: PAVLOV**. The operative is mostly probing the party, and will retreat if the fight isn't going their way.
- The second THORAX encounter is one of the two (1d2) operatives not encountered the first time. The operative has heard of the party from the first encounter's operative, and will retreat if cornered.
- The third THORAX encounter features the final THORAX member, accompanied by 2 PHEROMONE TROOPS. Will also retreat.
- The fourth THORAX encounter (and every subsequent one) is a team-up of VESPUCCI, MARX and PAVLOV, accompanied by 1d6 PHEROMONE TROOPS.

## THORAX FOES

---

**Scout - VESPUCCI**. 7 HP, CHOKE 3: Sensory overload paralysis.

- Modified PSG1 sniper rifle (1D6+2 DAMAGE), Light tactical gear (1 ARMOR)
- Wrist-mounted motion detector (reveals hidden enemies)
- Twitching head, dilated pupils, constant micro-movements

**Worker - 'MARX'**. 6 HP, CHOKE 4: Begins compulsively building/destroying.

- Thompson M1A1 (1D6 DAMAGE), Experimental exoskeleton (2 ARMOR)
- Tool harness (contains various engineering implements)
- Rapid-hardening foam grenades (create/destroy cover, three uses)
- Partially translucent skin, visible internal acid sacs

**Drone - 'PAVLOV'**. 6 HP, CHOKE 2: Projects pure terror aura.

- Nerve gas pistol (1D6 DAMAGE, STUN), Stealth suit (1 ARMOR)

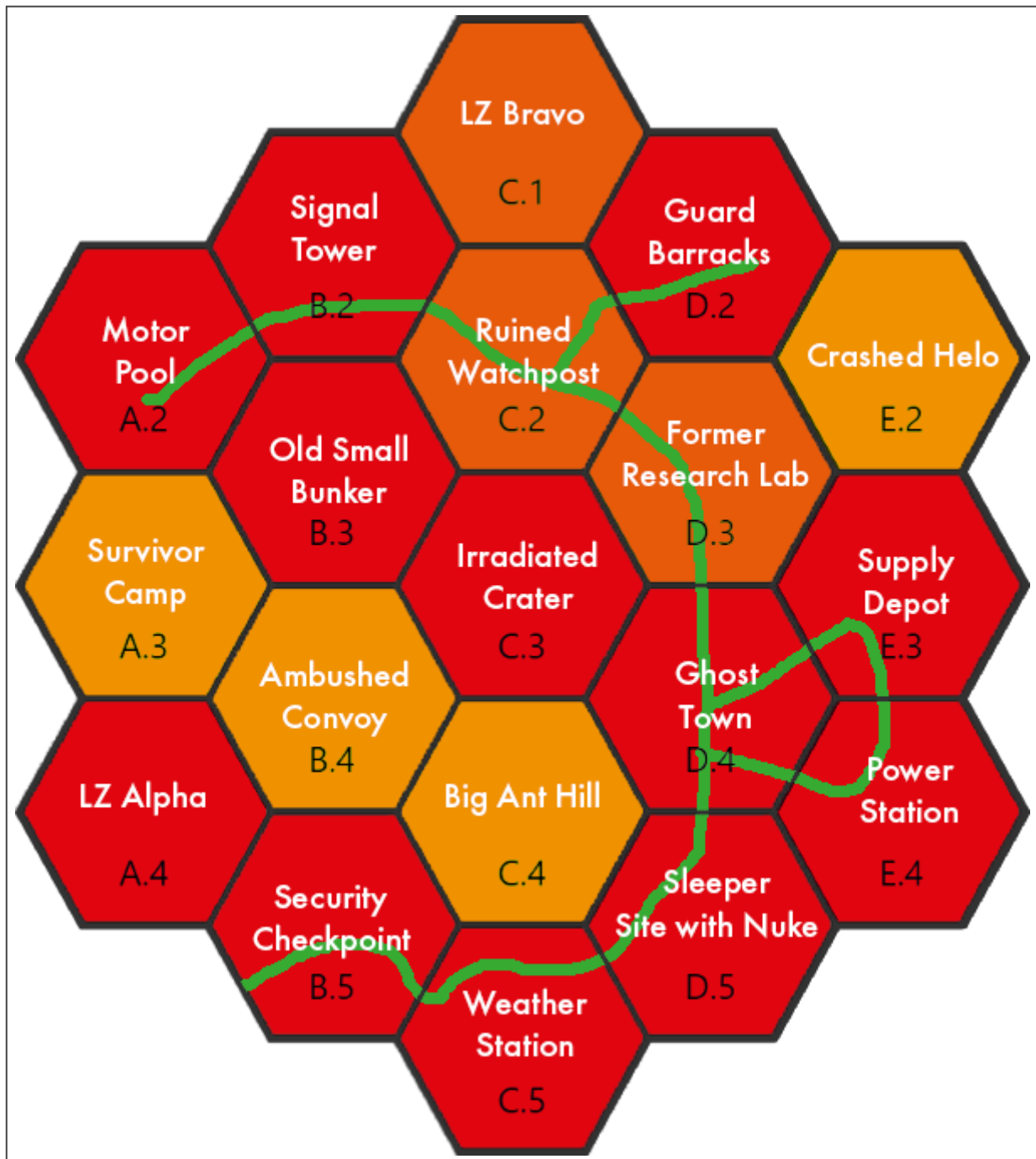
- Fear toxin grenades (causes panic, three uses)
- Eerily calm expression, speaks in whispers

**PHEROMONE TROOPER.** 3 HP, CH0KE 5: Panicked mag-dump, dealing 1d6 damage.

- Armed with an MP5 (1d6 damage). Their pheromone enthrallment hurts their aim; attacks that would deal 5 or more damage miss instead (unless mag-dumping).



# HEXES



## A.2: MOTOR POOL

A sprawling lot filled with rusted military vehicles, some partially buried in sand. Tools and spare parts litter abandoned maintenance bays.

- Risk: Unstable structures could collapse
- Resources: Vehicle parts, tools, might be one working vehicle
- Hidden: Underground maintenance pit has become an ant tunnel entrance

## A.3: SURVIVOR CAMP

---

Makeshift camp in and around a former administrative building. Small group of survivors have fortified the entrance and set up rain collectors.

- Risk: Survivors are paranoid and well-armed
- Resources: Basic supplies, water
- Hidden: Willing to provide valuable intel for favors
- Secret: One survivor is actually FORAGER, and has a nuke access code

## A.4: LZ ALPHA

---

Large clearing in the desert marked by faded helicopter landing markings. Old windsock still moves in the breeze.

- Risk: Completely exposed position
- Secret: THORAX has placed motion sensors here to monitor activity

## B.2: SIGNAL TOWER

---

A skeletal radio tower rises from a small concrete bunker, its rusted lattice swaying slightly in the desert wind. Ancient radio equipment sits dormant inside.

- Risk: Tower could collapse in high winds
- Resources: Radio parts, backup batteries
- Hidden: An automatic transcript from the crashed helo in E.2, revealing its location.

## B.3: SMALL BUNKER

---

A compact concrete bunker from the 1950s testing era, partially buried in sand. Heavy steel door hangs open on rusted hinges.

- Resources: Preserved 1950s military supplies
- Hidden: Sealed room with radiation suits, allowing one to pass through C.3
- Secret: Early notes about strange ant behavior after initial bomb tests

## B.4: AMBUSHED CONVOY

---

Three military trucks lay scattered across the road, riddled with bullet holes. Bodies and equipment are strewn about, mostly picked clean by scavengers. The convoy's job was to move TURNKEY to the Survivor Camp, but they got ambushed by THORAX.

- Risk: Booby traps left by THORAX
- Resources: Military equipment, ammunition

- Hidden: A tape recording of a last survivor detailing THORAX unit's ambush, and how they took TURNKEY.

## B.5: SECURITY CHECKPOINT

---

Concrete barriers and a ruined guard post mark what was once the main entrance to the testing range. Faded warning signs still visible.

- Risk: Ant tunnel entrance beneath the guard post
- Resources: Old weapons in guard post
- Intel: 1950's facilities marked on map.

## C.1: LZ BRAVO

---

A concrete landing pad perches atop a desert ridge, offering commanding views of the surrounding area. Abandoned shipping containers and a small operations building huddle near the pad.

## C.2: RUINED WATCHPOST

---

A three-story concrete observation tower stands sentinel over the crater below, its top floor partially collapsed. Scientific equipment and observation logs remain where they were hastily abandoned.

- Hidden: Military-grade binoculars still functional
- Secret: Records showing unusual insect behavior observed immediately after the first nuclear tests

## C.3: IRRADIATED CRATER

---

A massive depression in the earth, its sides glazed to glass by unimaginable heat. Geiger counters still click angrily here, and strange lights sometimes dance across the glassy surface at night.

- Risk: Severe radiation, unstable ground
- Secret: The radiation has created a unique form of crystalline growth that the ants harvest

## C.4: ANT HILL

---

An enormous earthen mound rises from the desert floor, riddled with tunnel entrances large enough for a person to walk through. Strange chittering echoes from deep within.

- Risk: Constant ant activity, toxic atmosphere
- Resources: Biological samples

- Intel: Clear view of ant social structure
- Hidden: Deeper tunnels lead to other facility locations

## C.5: WEATHER STATION

---

A utilitarian structure atop a weathered hill, bristling with meteorological instruments. Appears abandoned, but carefully laid traps protect its secrets.

- Risk: Extensive booby traps, CRO sniper
- Resources: Advanced CYCLOPS equipment
- Intel: The CRO knows both TURNKEY and FORAGER's identities
- Hidden: Underground bunker with surveillance equipment
- Secret: Evidence that the CRO intentionally sabotaged the ant experiments to prevent CYCLOPS from weaponizing them

## D.2: GUARD BARRACKS

---

Two long, low-slung concrete buildings with faded olive drab paint, connected by a covered walkway. Window frames are empty, and desert sand has drifted through. An old flagpole stands bare out front.

- Armory still contains some ammunition crates (though most are rusted shut)
- Emergency medical supplies in infirmary section
- Maps of the original layout of testing grounds
- One guard's diary detailing observations of the first giant ants, which was officially denied

## D.3: RESEARCH LAB

---

Two-story concrete research facility, built in the 50's. Multiple satellite dishes on the roof.

- Unstable chemical storage areas
- Military-grade comms equipment
- Research logs detailing both nuclear and ant experiments
- TURNKEY's location within the facility

## D.4: GHOST TOWN

---

Four rows of identical prefab houses, eight per row. A small playground with rusted swings. Empty swimming pool filled with sand. Cracked streets with faded road markers.

- Preserved food in some basements
- Family photos showing life during testing era

- Fallout shelter under the community center
- Signs of recent usage. Survivors from the lab, including FORAGER and TURNKEY, sheltered here for a while.

## D.5: SLEEPER SITE

---

Squat concrete bunker with massive steel blast doors. Sophisticated keypad entry system. Radiation warning signs. Multiple security cameras, some still active.

- Cameras link to Former Research Lab
- Automated defense turrets
- Emergency power system
- Original testing records

## E.2: CRASHED HELO

---

A military UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter lies broken across the desert floor, its tail section separated from the main fuselage. Large, distinctive claw marks have torn through the aircraft's skin. Dark dried blood stains the cockpit windows and cargo door.

- Emergency supplies and survival gear
- Salvageable military equipment
- Flight recorder containing last transmissions
- Mission orders to extract TURNKEY and FORAGER

## E.3: SUPPLY DEPOT

---

Large warehouse structure with loading docks and external storage containers. Military and research supplies still stacked on shelves and in crates. Vehicle pool with abandoned trucks.

- Ants scattered about
- Structural damage from attempted ant breaches
- Military and scientific equipment
- Emergency power generators

## E.4: POWER STATION

---

Transformer yard and control building. Active and producing power; signs of recent maintenance.

- Ants kept at bay due to electromagnetic fields while generators are running.
- Shutting generator down will power down a lot of the defenses at the RESEARCH LAB and SLEEPER SITE

## THE NUKE

---

A portable, experimental-and-highly-potent SADM (Special Atomic Demolition Munition) lays dormant in the depths of SLEEPER SITE. This backpack nuke needs 2 keycodes to be accessed, which were given to PROJECT MANDIBLE staff in case of emergencies. When the emergency came, the nuke was out of reach.

The nuke requires 2 HAND PRINTS to be accessed. The vault is attuned to 2 individuals, codenamed TURNKEY and FORAGER, both originally staff at the RESEARCH LAB. They are both unaware of each other's identities. This knowledge can be obtained at the SLEEPER SITE and CRASHED HELO.

TURNKEY and FORAGER fled the laboratory after the initial outbreak, and briefly stayed at the GHOST TOWN. Hearing of survivors banding together at the SURVIVOR CAMP, TURNKEY tagged along with a convoy, which got ambushed by THORAX (B.4 AMBUSHED CONVOY). FORAGER proceeded on foot, together with other survivors.

TURNKEY is now a captive of THORAX at D.3 RESEARCH LAB. THORAX is still pursuing FORAGER.

FORAGER is hidden in the SURVIVOR CAMP.

THORAX is aware that hand prints are required, and is thus highly invested in keeping both FORAGER and TURNKEY alive.

The CYCLOPS operative at the Weather Station knows the identity and location of both FORAGER and TURNKEY.

# MAKING A STAND

---

Whether you're holding out for extraction or waiting on someone to hack a computer or open a door, you've found yourself digging in and making a stand. There's a few elements at play here:

## TIME

---

The Referee will indicate how many rounds you'll have to hold off the opponent until the situation changes: the countdown. A 'round' is an abstract amount of time, representing a wave of enemy attacks and FIST's efforts to hold them off.

If a player character is tasked with making a thing happen in order to progress (such as hacking a door or drilling through a cave-in), they can roll a relevant attribute on their turn.

- **Partial success:** countdown is reduced by 1, but can't be reduced further.
- **Success:** countdown is reduced by 1, roll again next round.
- **Ultra success:** Countdown is instantly reduced to 0.

## LAYOUT

---

At the start of the Stand, the Referee determines the layout of the position FIST is trying to hold. A layout has 2 main variables: **Cover** and **Points of Entry**.

## COVER

---

- **No cover** leaves FIST completely exposed, with only mobility and awareness to count on.
- **Light cover** features sparse obstructions, such as rocks, crates and foliage.
- **Heavy cover** includes barricades, walls, pillars, bunkers and building interiors.

## POINTS OF ENTRY

---

- **Single Point** funnels all enemies down a bottleneck, but also leaves FIST trapped.
- **Dual Entry** offers some flexibility in covering angles. Players can split forces but need to be wary of getting flanked or spread too thin.
- **Tri-Entry:** Creates a more complex defense, requiring players to cover three distinct angles. Balances high tension with good positioning but demands coordinated team movement.
- **Quad or Open Entry:** Enemies can arrive from any direction. This creates a high-pressure environment, best suited to open spaces or large areas where players need to cover multiple fronts. There's four directions to cover, as each cardinal direction allows enemies to engage.

By combining Cover and Points of Entry, most if not all possible holdout locations can be covered: A hallway leading up to a locked blast door is *single point / no cover*, a building in the woods is *single or dual (depending on layout) / heavy cover* etc.

## ENEMY WAVES

---

Each round, the enemy will make a push forward. Making A Stand assumes FIST is practically overwhelmed by a large force, and for each foe that falls, another takes its place.

- **Pushed Back** – Enemies are in retreat or on the defensive.
- **Advancing** – Enemies are moving forward, but not yet an immediate threat.
- **Breaching** – Enemies are at the brink, ready to break through the defenses.
- **Overrun** – Defenses have collapsed; enemies flood the position.

## PLAYER ACTIONS

---

When making a stand, PCs can:

**Go On A Rampage.** Grit your teeth and come out swinging (or shooting). Roll +FRC.

- **Success:** You push the enemy back by one position.
- **Partial Success:** You push the enemy back, but take damage in the process.
- **Failure:** You hold the enemy off, but take damage in the process.

You gain +1 on your FRC roll for each consecutive round that you Go On A Rampage. Should you take damage, you suffer the same bonus in extra damage. This bonus resets after taking another action.

**Hold The Line.** Balancing cover and suppressive fire and -attacks. Roll +REF.

- **Success:** You hold the enemy off, standing your ground.
- **Partial Success:** You hold the enemy off, but you Duck Into Cover the next round (either due to having to reload, a couple of near-misses, or the ferocity of their attack).
- **Failure:** You don't hold off the enemy, and their attacks either deal damage, or you Duck Into Cover.

**Duck Into Cover.** Catch your breath and reload. Requires available cover. Roll +TAC.

- **Success:** You assess the situation, check your weapon, grit your teeth and are ready to go again. Next round, you gain +1 on your roll if you Go On A Rampage or Hold The Line.
- **Partial Success:** You gain the effects of a Success, but are running lower on supplies/ammunition etc. than you hoped.
- **Failure:** The enemy manages to keep you pinned down. Either take damage to be able to Hold The Line or Go On A Rampage next round, or stay in cover.



## MULTIPLE PLAYERS COVERING THE SAME APPROACH

---

Use the highest successful roll.

## TACTICAL INFINITY

---

- Grenades are easy wins
- Blocking approach