

Converting "The Morrow Project" 1st Edition RPG for a Living Dead Roleplaying Scenario

First are military dispatches from a Living Dead campaign I ran many years ago in graduate school using an old roleplaying game called "The Morrow Project" (1st edition). This have been updated to some degree, as they became part of "The Ordog Effect" Deadworld for my current AFMBE campaign.

After the dispatches is a description of several variant "Morrow Project" game systems I've tried, along with brief descriptions of three campaigns, and some other rambling notes.

No copyright infringement or any other infringement is intended. "The Morrow Project" was one of the best roleplaying games/systems of its time in my never humble opinion, and my gaming group and I have used it in a variety of settings.

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The Morrow Project is (c) by someone (I don't know what the status of this game or it's originating company is).

Gaming information begins here:

00 1500 ZULU/8 OCTOBER 2010

**FROM: CG US ARMY EMERGENCY COMMAND, FORT MCPHERSON, GEORGIA
TO: 1st ARMY COMMAND, XII US CORPS, NEWPORT NEWS, CAMP PERRY, VIRGINIA
USAMEC 091010B4 DOCREP REF DIRP RBT 2515484 RCV RPT 10002428431-A
CIRC ALL COMMANDS - OPEN DISTRIBUTION**

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY, YOU ARE HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO DEPLOY 1st ARMY PERSONNEL IN BRIGADE STRENGTH FOR CIVILIAN MIGRATION CONTROL IN CONJUNCTION OF UNITS OF THE NORTH CAROLINA NATION GUARD ALREADY UNDER FEMA JURISDICTION.

THIS BRIGADE WILL ASSIST FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS IN THE CONTROL OF CIVILIAN MOVEMENT IN MARYLAND, NORTH CAROLINA, SOUTH CAROLINA, VIRGINIA, WEST VIRGINIA, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

THIS BRIGADE WILL BE UNDER MILITARY COMMAND BUT UNDER THE GENERAL JURISDICTION OF FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE MIGRATION CONTROL COMMAND UNDER THE CURRENT AMENDED EMERGENCY WAR POWERS ACT. YOU ARE TO ESTABLISH APPROPRIATE COMMAND AND CONTROL STRUCTURES TO COORDINATE WITH FEMA FIELD COMMAND UNITS.

YOU ARE REMINDED THAT THE PURPOSE OF THIS COMMAND IS TO ASSIST STATE GOVERNMENTS IN MAINTAINING ORDER AND PROVIDING ASSISTANCE IN DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD AND OTHER RESOURCES AND TO EFFECT DESTRUCTION OF REANIMATED CORPSES INHIBITED SAID DISTRIBUTION. YOU ARE FURTHER REMINDED OF THE TEMPORARY MARTIAL LAW POWERS GRANTED TO THE MILITARY UNDER THE CURRENT AMENDED EMERGENCY WAR POWERS ACT.

TASK FORCE PERSONNEL ARE TO BE DEPLOYED AT CRITICAL POINTS AT YOUR DISCRETION, INCLUDING HIGHWAY AND RAILWAY TRAFFIC POINTS WHERE PERSONNEL AND VEHICULAR TRAFFIC REQUIRE MILITARY CONTROL. PRIMARY TRAFFIC CENTERS ARE TO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

MARYLAND

- 1.1. BALTIMORE, IH 83 CORRIDOR
- 1.2. FREDERICK, JUNCTION IH 70/270
- 1.3. CUMBERLAND, HWYS 40, 46, 48
- 1.4. HAVRE DE GRACE, HWYS 95, 40

NORTH CAROLINA

- 2.1. ASHVILLE, JUNCTION IH 40/28
- 2.2. INTERSTATE 77 AT THE VIRGINIA BORDER
- 2.3. INTERSTATE 85 AT THE VIRGINIA BORDER
- 2.4. INTERSTATE 95 AT THE VIRGINIA BORDER

SOUTH CAROLINA

- 3.1. JUNCTION, IH 85/ HWY 28
- 3.2. SPARTANBURG, IH 85
- 3.3. DILLON, IH 95
- 3.4. ORANGEBURG URBAN AREA

VIRGINIA

- 4.1. IH 77 AT WEST VIRGINIA BORDER
- 4.2. STAUNTON, JUNCTION IH 64, 64/81, HWY 250
- 4.3. ARLINGTON, ANNANDALE, ALEXANDRIA URBAN AREAS
- 4.4. CHESAPEAKE BAY BRIDGE AND TUNNEL

WEST VIRGINIA

- 5.1. JUNCTION, IH 79/48
- 5.2. PARKERBURG URBAN AREA
- 5.3. HUNTINGTON URBAN AREA
- 5.4. MARTINSBURG URBAN AREA

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

- 6.1. WALTER REED MEDICAL CENTER

PERSONNEL UNDER YOUR COMMAND SHOULD BE INSTRUCTED AS TO THE NATURE AND PROVISIONS OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY. AT ALL TIMES, CURRENT PROCEDURES FOR SAFE DISPOSAL OF BODIES WILL BE FOLLOWED.

FURTHER CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS

1. CONCURRENT MILITARY OPERATIONS - USAMEC 0546454 DOCREP
2. CONCURRENT FEMA OPERATIONS - USAMEC 897845 DOCREP
3. OTHER US GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS - USAMEC 13132547 DOCREP
4. MOVEMENT OF FOREIGN NATIONALS- USAMEC AD0SDF3352 DOCREP

CONTINUING REPORTS OF DESERTION AND INSUBORDINATION AMONG MILITARY PERSONNEL NECESSITATE THAT EXTREME MEASURES ARE TO BE TAKEN TO MAINTAIN COHESION, COMMAND, AND GOOD ORDER AMONG ALL FIELD UNITS. ALL OFFICERS ARE TO REITERATE TO THEIR COMMANDS THOSE PARAGRAPHS OF THE UNIFORM CODE OF MILITARY JUSTICE PERTAINING TO THE PENALTIES FOR DESERTION, COWARDICE, AND ANY CRIMINAL ACTIONS AS DEFINED BY MILITARY AND CIVILIAN COURTS.

THIS ORDER IS IN EFFECT UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, HALLAND ROLANDS, PRESIDENT, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

END MESSAGE ///USAMEC 091010B4 DOCREP REF DIRP RBT 2515484 RCV RPT 10002428431-A///

---DECRYPTION START--
///BEGIN MESSAGE///
USAMEC 13132548 DOCREP
SECURITY: EYES-ONLY

YOU ARE ORDERED TO DEPLOY TO THE PLUM ISLAND, CONNECTICUT, BIOWARFARE RESEARCH FACILITY.

INSERTION AND EXTRACTION WILL BE VIA M77A OSPREY CONFIGURED FOR GROUND SUPPORT OPERATIONS. YOUR CALL SIGN FOR SUCCESSFUL INSERTION IS "**BARRIER**." YOUR CALL SIGN FOR SUCCESSFUL EXTRACTION IS "**BREACH**."

UTILIZATION OF SMALL ARMS WILL BE PER STANDARD OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE "DEADHOUSE" (CURRENT VERSION).

UPON ARRIVAL, YOU WILL SECURE THE FACILITIES AND LOCATE ALL PERSONNEL. US GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL WILL BE REMOVED VIA M77G OSPREY CONFIGURED FOR PERSONNEL TRANSPORT. YOUR CALL SIGN FOR PICK UP OF USG PERSONNEL IS "**WARM SUN**."

UPON SUCCESSFUL PICK UP OF USG PERSONNEL, YOU WILL RETURN TO YOUR STARTING POINT, DISEMBARK THE M77A OSPREY, AND AWAIT FURTHER ORDERS TO BE ASSIGNED UPON REVIEW OF THE MISSION.

ANY AND ALL OTHER PERSONS AND ANY REANIMATED CORPSES LOCATED ON PLUM ISLAND ARE TO RECEIVE APPROPRIATE DISPOSITION WITH PROPER DISPOAL OF BODIES ACCORDING TO STANDARD OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE "DEADHOUSE" (CURRENT VERSION).

IF THE FACILITY CANNOT BE SECURED DUE TO LOCAL TRANSIENT CONDITIONS, YOU ARE HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO DEPLOY THE BAP358V GRAVITY BOMB CARRIED ABOARD THE M77A TO DESTROY THE FACILITY. YOUR CALL SIGN FOR DEPLOYING THE BAP358V IS "**HOT LIGHT**."

IF YOU CALL "**HOT LIGHT**", NO OTHER AIR- OR SEACRAFT WILL BE DEPLOYED TO THE PLUM ISLAND VICINITY.

///END MESSAGE///
USAMEC 13132548 DOCREP
SECURITY: EYES-ONLY
--ENCRYPTION START--
FILE DELETE:::
-DELETE...

Converting "The Morrow Project" 1st Edition RPG for a Living Dead Roleplaying Scenario

There's really no conversion required. The rule system was designed to allow gaming with a paramilitary organization whose function was to assist in the recovery of the United States following a predicted nuclear war.

The 1st edition of the "Morrow Project" roleplaying game was reflective of many of the gaming systems of the time (circa 1984). In modern terms, they would all be considered "rules-lite" (i.e. minimal game mechanics, limited skill systems - if any, etc.)

For additional skills, I've used two options:

1. The official "Morrow Project" roleplaying expansion portfolio included in the module "Liberation at Riverton" (if I remember correctly). The expansion system allowed the inclusion of percentile-rated skilled based on the Chaosium system used in the "Call of Cthulu" and "Rune Quest" roleplaying games.
2. The other option is to generate "Morrow Project" characters normally and then include MOS-type skill sets as found in the various Palladium roleplaying games.
3. My personal preference is to use the original "Morrow Project" character generation and combat rules unaltered. Accuracy is determined by a score called, amazingly enough, Accuracy. Other skills are determined by the use of the "roll D20 vs. your attribute" idea. In most cases, I assumed that based on the character's background, they were proficient in their career skills (i.e. soldiers knew how to use, maintain, and to some degree repair, their equipment, and had access to "related" skills (like stealth, observation, hand-to-hand combat, etc.). This is a rules-lite approach in keeping with the original "Morrow Project" concept.

If you are able to find a copy of "The Morrow Project" (1st edition), I'd recommend it to anyone looking for a rule-lite military-style roleplaying game. Combat is fast and lethal enough to encourage players to consider all other options before engaging armed opponents. The "After the Bomb" concept isn't bad either (in a nutshell, the characters are placed in suspended animation with their equipment in place in nearby caches, and are to be awakened at some predetermined point up to five years after a nuclear exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union; the "glitch" is that the war damages the character's bunker and their wakeup call comes 150 years too late...).

For zombies (not counting the infamous "Blue Undead" radiation-emitting zombies from the original "Morrow Project" rules), I determined the "hit points" for an average person, and assigned average scores for Strength and minimal scores for Dexterity. Attributes like Endurance and Accuracy don't really apply to dead folks, so those were considered to be 0. Luck? I used to give zombies a Luck attribute of 1D10 on the odd occasion just to throw a curveball to the players.

The original "Living Dead" scenario I ran back in graduate school using the "Morrow Project" rules was based on the "military" transmissions from the beginning of this document. The characters were a Special Operations unit deployed from the US Marine Corps assault ship "USS Tarawa" (at anchor off the Virginia coast) to the (officially decommissioned) Plum Island Biowarfare laboratories off the coast of Connecticut. Their mission was to determine the status of the operation and withdraw all personnel and pertinent information back to Parris Island.

The curveball in this scenario was, if I recall correctly, militant separatists from Quebec (no offense intended to anyone from Quebec - it could just as easily have been militant separatists from Texas or Antarctica or Mars or anywhere else) who had determined that secret research into the zombie plague was being conducted on Plum Island and had decided that it would be useful to obtain any information they could from the research.

A couple of days before the characters arrived on site, the terrorists had taken a barge to the island and unloaded a couple hundred zombies to cover their trail after kidnapping the scientific staff. The characters blundered into the zombies and took a couple of casualties before finding a surviving scientist who was hiding in one of the laboratory building maintenance spaces.

Based on information provided by the survivor, the characters were able to track the terrorists to the mainland for a light-hearted running gun battle among the living dead hordes. They eventually ran the terrorists to ground and recovered a couple of the kidnapped scientists, but due to inter-party conflict that had been brewing for a while, the characters ended up in a shoot-out on board their Osprey (maybe it was a Sea King transport helicopter back then). Oh, there was also the unauthorized use of the BAP358V Gravity Bomb (which is a nice way of saying, "Someone nuked Plum Island just to see what would happen."), but that hardly mattered a few minutes later.

When the copilot was shot and forgotten while the pilot struggled to maintain control of the aircraft, it was all over. The dead copilot reanimated and attacked the pilot, and the aircraft did a no-gainer into the sea off the coast of Delaware. It was annoying to some of the players, but it was also true Romero-esque survivor vs. survivor horror.

It seems like the shootout on board the helicopter happened when a squad member, who had been mauled by a group of zombies, died. Another member of the group (the squad's officer and the sniper's buddy) shot the body in the head with his service pistol and rolled it out of a hatch to fall into the ocean. For some reason (I can't recall what, exactly) this greatly angered the squad's support gunner.

At any rate, it would have been a great movie scene: *a screaming madman firing wildly with an M60 machine gun at the squad sniper who fired back with an M21 .308 caliber rifle (both were hit and killed almost instantly, as was the Lieutenant in command of the group). The stray shots from the M60 hit and killed the copilot, wounded the pilot and the three surviving squad members, and damaged the helicopter in various bad ways.*

Needless to say, the scientists were also killed in the crash and the zombies went on to overrun North America. I think there was a dose of Biblical Armageddon looming on the horizon too, so maybe there wasn't anything that could have been done to stop the living dead. I guess we'll never know.

The "Morrow Project"-Living Dead campaign was obviously set well after the dead began to rise, and the living population was in desperate straights as can be seen from the deployment orders at the beginning of this document. A brigade to cover multiple states? The hope was to quarantine part of the Virginia coastline to provide a haven for the surviving population. A similar effort was being made in the Seattle area, but never made it into play.

A second campaign was planned but never got off the ground. In it, the characters were civilian militia investigating a series of murders in the Virginia Secured Region involving nasty and disturbing ideas like snuff films and zombies. No one, including myself, could really get interested in it, so I put it aside (which is probably a good thing).

The third campaign did a little better. The characters were hard-core survivalists in the deserts of Trans-Pecos Texas just trying to hold on against other survivors as well as hordes of undead. Some of the ideas developed in this third game eventually led to the "Ordog Effect" Deadworld for the AFMBE RPG.

A desire expressed by several players to have viable and detailed non-military characters also led to the development of the "Zombie Apocalypse Cinematic Roleplaying Game" posted elsewhere on this website.

The "Cinematic Roleplaying" system has also been used for an "Empire of the Petal Throne" campaign (a VERY abbreviated versio is posted elsewhere on this website), but that's entirely off the subject. Another attempt using a modified game system involved the 1st Edition of the old "Twilight: 2000" roleplaying game (recently reprinted by Far Future Enterprises). Couldn't find any players that were interested in zombie games, however, so that idea was shelved.

Then "All Flesh Must Be Eaten" popped up and gave us all a common ground. Now if I could just find another couple of players...

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