

The Long Patrol



A Game of Life During Wartime
By Kingston Cassidy

The Long Patrol is a role playing game. In a role playing game, a group of players work together to create a story, using rules to focus the kinds of decisions characters in the story will have to make, and to resolve the stories conflicts. In this role playing game, like many others, most **players** will take the roles of the stories main characters. Another player, the **game moderator**, describes the world the characters live in, plays the roles of the minor characters, and creates exiting conflicts for those characters.

In The Long Patrol, you play members of a platoon of solders from a western nation occupying a foreign country during the 20th century. You could use this system to tell stories about America in World War II, or Vietnam, or France's occupation of Algeria. In the course of a routine patrol, the players will face challenges to their lives, their sanity, and their very humanity. Will the stress and horror of war bring your platoon together or tear it apart? Who will live and die on the long patrol?

Character Creation

The first step in playing the game is to create a character. Your character is the role you play and your tool to shape the story you and your fellow players create. To create a character you need to follow these steps.

First, get an idea of who your character is. What is his name? Where is he from? Is he black or white? Tall or short? What is your characters personality? Write your characters name and personal information on your character sheet.

Next, determine your characters ability scores. Your ability scores determine your characters basic aptitudes and determines what sorts of actions your character is likely to succeed or fail at. Distribute nine points among these three ability scores:

- **Physical.** Your physical score represents your characters ability to solve problems using their body. Characters with a high physical score would be good at running, shooting, and

fighting hand to hand.

- **Mental.** Your mental score represents your characters ability to solve problems using their mind. Characters with a high mind score would be good at finding and setting traps, making long term plans, speaking foreign languages, and finding stuff on the black market.
- **Social.** Your social score represents your characters ability to solve problems using their social skills. Characters with a high social score would be good at convincing other people to do things they otherwise wouldn't, lead others into battle, and raise morale.

The next step is to determine your characters **training**. Training represents a special area of skill that your character has. Some training gives a bonus to related actions. Other training allows characters to do things they wouldn't be able to do without training. If a character attempts perform an action without the necessary training, it is as though their ability score in the relevant trait is zero. All character are automatically trained in the sorts of things every soldier does, and the sorts of things anybody can do. Choose one of the following:

- Scout. +1 Bonus to finding paths and hiding. Only a scout can disarm traps.
- Sniper. +1 Bonus to killing from a long distance. Only a sniper can attack without being detected.
- Lieutenant. +1 bonus to either making tactical plans or rallying troops. Only a lieutenant can communicate with central command and expect to be listened to.
- Fixer. Only fixer can find things on the black market, and manipulate the army procurement system.
- Medic. +1 to healing physical damage. Only a medic can help dying characters.
- Nurturer. +1 to healing trauma. Only a nurturer can help traumatized characters.
- Mechanic. +1 to building or repair. Only a mechanic can repair damaged vehicles.
- Bravo. +1 to hand to hand fighting and gun combat.
- Translator. +1 to working with locals. Only translators can speak the local language.

All characters have a **will** score, which measures your characters ability to endure and to push themselves beyond their normal limits. Will can be spent to give a temporary boost to an

action. It is also used to stay in a conflict a character is losing. All characters begin with seven points of will.

Finally, all characters have three **values**. Values represent what your character values. If a character acts in accordance with his values, he will gain points to his will score. If a character acts contrary to his values in order to further another goal, he will gain a significant, one time bonus to his will score, but can never gain will from that value again. Will gained from using your values is given before the conflict starts, and can be used in the conflict that activates the value. One can only use one value per action. The values are:

- **Survival.** Survival represents the value a person places on their own skin. Gain one will for every conflict where one fights to survive. Gain three will for fighting to survive against great odds. Gain five will for acting without concern whether you live or die.
- **Loyalty.** Loyalty represents the value a person places on their country and comrades. Gain one will for following orders or protecting your fellows under difficult circumstances. Gain three will for following orders or protecting your fellows at great personal pain or risk. Gain five will for abandoning your orders or your comrades.
- **Humanity.** Humanity represents the value a person places on morality, particularly on the way you treat people different from you. Gain one will for showing humanity in difficult circumstances. Gain three will for acting according to your moral code at great personal pain or risk. Gain five points for abandoning your moral code.

Conflict resolution

Conflict occurs when a character wants to achieve a goal, and something stands in his way. Conflict resolution determines whether or not the goal is achieved. This is the general procedure for resolving conflict. There are special rules about resolving violent conflicts, or traumatic conflicts (conflicts involving your characters reaction to traumatic events).

1. All characters in the conflict state their goals. Then, all players state what actions

the character will perform to achieve their goals, and what other characters are the targets of their action.

2. Each player determines which ability score their character will use to perform their stated action, and if the character receives any bonus for training. The player, if they wish, can spend a point of will to give +1 bonus in the conflict.
3. Each player adds their character's ability score, plus any training bonuses or spent will to the sum of a single six-sided die. This is the power score.
4. Compare each character's power score with the power score of their target. Find the difference between the two power scores, this is the damage.
5. In most cases, the character with the lower power score can either spend will equal to the damage taken to stay in the fight (in which case a new round begins), or they can drop out of the conflict. If a character does not have enough will to cover the damage, they drop out of the conflict automatically. Play continues until only one side of the conflict remains. Each character regains all of their will lost to damage at the end of the conflict, unless the conflict was violent or traumatic.

Violent conflict

A violent conflict is any conflict in which a person uses violence to achieve their end. In a violent conflict, the player with the lower power score loses will equal to the damage whether or not they wish to stay in the conflict or not. The damage from a violent conflict is recorded on your character sheet as a wound. Will lost from a violent conflict is not regained at the end of a conflict; instead, it can only be regained by healing the wound. In a violent conflict, a character can lose more will than they have, and develop a will deficit, expressed as a negative number. If a character has zero will or less, they are dying. Dying characters cannot act, and must be brought back to a positive will score by the end of the scene, or they will die.

The amount of will lost in a violent conflict also depends on the kinds of weapons used; if a character is shot with a gun, they lose an amount of will equal to twice the damage of the attack. However, a gun wound is recorded as the amount of damage like any other wound. Thus,

if a character received two points of damage from a gun shot, they would lose four points of will, but would record the wound as a two point wound.

Traumatic conflict

A traumatic conflict is a conflict in which represents your characters attempt to stay sane in the face of traumatic events. When a character experiences a traumatic event, such as witnessing the death of a close friend, they must make a conflict resolution roll, using their mental attribute, opposed by the value of the trauma. If the character loses the conflict, they take a wound equal to the damage of the conflict. If a character loses all of their will from trauma, they are in shock. Characters in shock cannot act until they are healed and regain a positive will score.

Miscellaneous conflict rules

If a character attempts to perform two actions in one round, including defending themselves against more than one target, Each action receives a penalty equal to the amount of extra actions. Thus, if a character attempts to shoot two people in a round, they would receive a one point penalty to each action.

If a character does not defend themselves against an attack, then the defender still rolls a six sided die opposed to the attacking character.

Healing

To heal another character, make a conflict resolution check opposed by the damage of the wound. If the healing character is successful, the healed character gains a number of will points equal to the damage done to the wound. Any given wound can only be healed once. Once a healing check has been made against a wound, successful or not, cross the wound off.

Patrol Points and Ending the Game

Every conflict in The Long Patrol is worth a number of patrol points. The more difficult a challenge is, the more patrol points it is worth. Patrol points are collected as a group. Once the party collects a number of patrol points equal to ten times the number of players, the patrol is over.

Once the patrol is over, each character gives their character a short epilogue. What happened to the character after the patrol? How did the experiences of the patrol effect the character in life?

Creating Threats

Every thing that threatens the characters safety, sanity, or values in the game is a threat. All threats, whether it is an enemy soldier, a river to cross, a horror to witness, or a civilian in need is represented in the same way. Every threat has at least one of ability scores the characters do, although they might mean different things in context. A rushing river has a physical score, but not a mental or social score. A scene of war atrocities has a mental score, but no physical or social score. Every opposition also has a resistance score. Resistance scores are functionally identical to a characters will score, except it can only be used to absorb damage. Many oppositions (locked doors, weak fighters) have a resistance score of zero.

An opposition is worth a number of patrol points equal to the average of their ability scores and resistance. For example, an enemy soldier with two in their physical, mental, social, and resistance scores would be worth two patrol points. A rushing river with four in it's physical score and zero resistance would be worth two patrol points. Threats must pose the same challenge for multiple characters, such as the rushing river, gives patrol points for each character who faces it. Thus, if two characters cross the river, they would receive four patrol points in total.

Post Script

This game is heavily influenced by Clinton R. Nixon's The Shadow of Yesterday, from values, which are keys in Shadow, to the conflict resolution system.

This game's themes are heavily influenced by Tim O'Brien's The Things They Carried, especially the idea of having sanity checks in a war game.

This game is an entrant for the November 2005 Ronnies, using the key words gun and mud. The mud in this game is represented by the moral murk and quagmire the characters face.