
THE GOVERNOR'S REPORT CONCERNING THE DOOMED ASSAULT ON THE FIRE MOON

DESIGNER'S STATEMENT

Thank you for reading my game. It was designed for the 2005 Game Chef contest. It is a tiny game and I hope you enjoy it. In compliance with the established rules...

1. I have included thematic elements from a broad swathe of history – the finger-pointing and recrimination that follows a disastrously failed military operation. Principal influences were the board of inquiry into the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941, the Mayaguez incident in 1975, Operation Spring in 1944, and the Wilmanscrust scandal during the Boer War.

2. I have incorporated three of the five ingredients – Companion, Accuser, and Invincible. If the Fire Moon is a fortress of incomprehensible alien insectoid warriors, add Entomology to the mix!

3. For rules limitations, I have chosen not to use a character sheet, and the game uses custom cards.

I look forward to your comments - **Jason Morningstar**

PREMISE

In some vaguely-defined science-fiction future, a military operation has gone very, very wrong. Someone - perhaps many people - will answer for it and, fair or not, be ruined.

Play takes the form of a board of inquiry. Each participant assumes two roles - that of member of the Board, and of a Witness. These roles shift, with each participant serving as Witness and Board member during each of three sections.

As a member of the Board of Inquiry, the participant poses questions about the sequence of events to the current Witness. These can, of course, be leading questions that move the story forward or open-ended questions placing the burden of invention on the Witness. One participant must assume the role of Convener of the Board, who is primarily responsible for maintaining momentum, calling for breaks between sections, and setting the stage with opening remarks.

As a Witness, the participant is a representative of one of the military units involved in the disaster - a former companion-in-arms to the brave men and women who perished. Each player has the goal of covering his unit and its assault commander with glory in the final report, maximizing his contribution and valor while minimizing the efforts of the others whenever possible. No one survived the ill-fated attack, so all description will be in the third person - perhaps clinical, maybe unclear, but definitely detached from the horror of the moment.

After hearing the testimony of the Witnesses, the Board offers an opinion and assigns both blame and praise. The goal of the game is, as far as decorum allows, to minimize the blame attached to your Witnesses unit, and maximize that of the other Witnesses units.

PREPARATION

You will need some sort of cup or container for each Witness, ideally one you can't see into. Write the name of each Witness on a placard, and use this during testimony to identify him or her, and to identify the cups when assigning blame. You'll also need a six-sided die and an uncomfortable chair or stool for the Witness.

Some beads or tokens are necessary - each Board Member needs a number of blame tokens equal to the number of people playing, minus one, for each of the three rounds. Thus, if four people are playing, you need nine tokens per player (three per round for three rounds). You don't want more than six players.

CHARACTERS

Each player should determine the military outfit he represents - *Imperial Hot Marines Bravo White platoon, Surface Force Application 1 Commando, Survey Branch of the Exigency Analysis Group*, that sort of thing. These should be forces that directly engaged in whatever operation failed so miserably. He should have names for his Witness, as well as the commander of the assault force and a few subordinates, or be prepared to make them up on the fly.

As a member of the Board of Inquiry, no preparation is needed - this role is essentially anonymous, although players may cultivate personalities - gruff, demanding, inquisitive, foolish, sympathetic, etc.

SEQUENCE OF PLAY

The Convener of the Board sets the stage with some opening remarks, and introduces the Witnesses. He may then open the Inquiry with section one. During each section, each player, in turn, takes the stand as Witness, then rotates out to resume his duties as a member of the Board.

After each section, each Board Member must decide where to place blame. The Board Member has tokens to assign to the Witnesses he has heard to represent this - he may give them all to one Witness, or spread them out as appropriate. Acquiring blame is bad.

The Convener of the Board of Inquiry declares each section finished after all Witnesses (including himself) have taken the stand, and calls for a brief recess before continuing.

Section One: Insertion. Any damage to the various units is simply color - scrapes and bruises, near misses, and the like.

Section Two: Engagement. The assault force members can be seriously injured, but death is optional and at the player's discretion.

Section Three: Disaster. Any hint of violence will inevitably lead to spectacular and certain destruction. The enemy is effectively invincible and cannot be defeated. Everyone dies.

Conclusion: The entire Board, at the prompting of the Convener, reviews the Witness' cups to see who has the most blame tokens and who has the least. Scorn and praise are awarded accordingly.

DUTIES OF A BOARD MEMBER

Your job is to get to the bottom of the matter at hand. For each Witness, ask a single probing question, either pointed or open-ended. Feel free to advance the narrative by providing new information in your questions, and accuse the Witnesses of wrong-doing directly if necessary.

At the Board of Inquiry's conclusion, you'll be called upon by the Convener to make a statement about culpability. Speak plainly and don't neglect assigning blame or praise to the Witness you portrayed. If necessary, the Convener can call for further discussion. You must decide where the truth lies.

OBLIGATIONS OF A WITNESS

In each section you must draw a card, roll a six-sided die to determine if it is positive or negative, and incorporate the result into your testimony. Failing to do this will result in the displeasure and censure of the Board. You must work within the framework of the questions the Board poses, but may present your testimony in any way you find appropriate. Feel free to build on the testimony of others, but you need not worry about directly contradicting other statements - the fog of war makes all accounts suspect. Accusing them of incompetence or malfeasance is entirely appropriate - you must do everything you can to avoid any stain on the record of your former companions, to whose memories you are fiercely loyal.

CARDS

Each card has a positive and a negative version. Each player draws one card at the beginning of each section, and rolls a die to determine whether to use the positive or negative version in his recounting. The negative version becomes progressively more likely in each section of the inquiry.

- In part one, the negative version is used on a roll of 1.
- In part two, the negative version is used on a roll of 1,2, or 3.
- In part three, the negative version is used on a roll of 1 through 5.

The Witness can incorporate the card into his testimony as he sees fit, provided it directly effects the unit he represents. Thus, attributing an "irritating delay" card to some other unit would not be appropriate, although another Witness could use your delay to further his own narrative, heaping scorn on yours.

NOTES

The cards are designed to be printed out on Avery business card sheets.

The progression of violence between acts was inspired by the Hamlet LARP of Martin Ericsson, Anna Ericson, Christopher Sandberg, Martin Brodén et al, first run in 2002.

Reversal / Breakthrough	Weak command / Strong leadership
Tragic mistake / Lucky break	Poor training / Excellent readiness
Bad intel / Solid recon	Garbled comm / Tight coordination
Equipment failure / Outstanding gear	Irritating delay / Rapid advance
Poor planning / Careful preparation	Impaired judgment / Good decision

Outflanked / Set an ambush	Contradictory orders / Clear objective
Collateral damage / Precision fires	Tactical failure / Tactical success
Friendly fire / Combined arms	Vehicle crash / Close support
Fortified enemy / Scattered opposition	Costly failure / Unexpected success
Heavy opposition / Light resistance	Mistaken identity / Valuable target