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It's Da Bomb!

by Dana Jorgensen

Background:

Neo-City has long had a problem with crime and terrorism, thanks to its large and angry population of blanks. The crime portion is relatively easy to deal with; fight it in the civilized portions of the city and mostly ignore it in the Free Zone, leaving that area to the bounty hunters. Terrorism too is relatively easy to fight, as much of the acts are vandalism rather than murderous acts or hostage taking as one might expect.

However, in recent months, the terrorism has changed, moving away from vandalous acts of political rebellion and into more destructive acts. The city's water system was half contaminated with the difficult to eradicate Legionnaires' Disease. Acts of sabotage have crippled a number of nun crucial city systems, including transportation, communications and power. And bombing have killed several dozen people.

The groups have finally moved on to the final act of terrorism that will obliterate Neo-City from the face of the earth. A small nuclear bomb has been obtained and smuggled into the city. The bomb wasn't difficult to obtain. The nuclear standoff between the USA and USSR depended upon the ability to strike one another with nuclear weapons. First was the nuclear bomber, rendered obsolete by surface-to-air missiles and interceptor fighters. This lead to the many classes of ballistic missile, launched by land, air or sea, none of which could really be countered, until the Star Wars program was introduced in the 1980's by President Reagan. With the missiles made obsolete, the next step in the nuclear deterrent was the development of prepositionable nuclear weapons, better known as the mythical 'suitcase bomb'. These bombs would be smuggled into the country by submarine and turned over to a deep mole or sleeper to babysit the weapon until it was needed. Such weapons were buried all across the United States and Soviet Union.

Now one of the devices has been recovered. The weapon was dug up from its hiding place as a corporation bought up and razed old residential properties to build a new corporate production facility. The weapon was sold to OTEC and eventually found its way into the hand of The Red, a group of extremist eco-terrorists based in Neo-City. Fortunately for the city, word leaked from within OTEC about the bomb. Now the mad rush is on. Find the bomb before it is too late.

Setup:

Chasing a stolen nuclear weapon is a nerve-wracking experience. Everything should be put in place in order to convey that experience to the players.

First off, who has the bomb now? The terrorists? An OTEC agent? A courier, fixer, smuggler or other middleman? Have the players figured it out? Pass it off to the next man in line when they're closing in!

Second, who wants it? Obviously, the Neo-City government will want it; their first nuclear weapon in an ever-increasing arsenal. The Neo-Sovs want the embarrassment back. The US wants to keep it under wraps after the bombing of NYC and obliteration of the Middle East. Terrorists want it for an NYC encore. Hundreds of governments want it so they too can join the nuclear club. And thousands of arms dealers want it since it represents tens of millions in profits.

Third, who is competing to make the grab? Law enforcement, obviously. Along with every bounty hunter working on retainer, every intelligence agent, and every solo with that bug up his ass that makes him want to own the biggest boom in the world.

So, what does all of this combine to create? A phrenetic, insane, endless, running battle that ends when everyone is out of ammo. A complete nightmare that pushes the characters to their limits and beyond until the weapon is secured by a government agency or at least smuggled back out of the city. A thoughtless, low-pay run that the referee doesn't need to work too hard on as long as he simply has the sense to keep the chase on until about 45 minutes before the gaming session ends when he can set up the climax and put the puppy to rest.

Running:

Running an adventure like this is extremely easy. create a couple dozen stereotypical grunts, goons, etc that you can reuse in battle. Set up a few NPC:s with critical knowledge to help the players along (and tap their bank accounts from the payoffs). Keep the gunfights fast and brutal as they chase down the bomb. And at least once, when they chase down the guy known to have it last,

they missed nabbing the bomb by minutes, since he passed it on to the next fish to be fried. Keep the chase going until everyone is tired of it, then set up the big climax.

Endgame:

Concluding the game goes one of a few ways. First, you need to choose an appropriate locale; desolate seaside cliff, crowded subway, skyscraper observation deck, parking lot or garage, etc. You as the referee need to decide if a lot of death will be a potential of screwing up. Obviously, in Neo-City, the best place would be in either one of the parks or the mall on the aerospace module.

Next, decide on the conclusion you'd like to see. But remember what you want isn't necessarily going to happen. Decide if the bomb goes off (great way to end your tenure as GM when you've announced it will be the last session you run), gets captured by a third party, or gets captured by the players. Set up a nice, dramatic, suspenseful course of events that is supposed to lead to your planned conclusion. The details are up to you.

Ideas to help you put things together:

The Gunrunner Sting - PCs pose as an arms dealer looking to buy the bomb.

The Mole - The PCs get a reliable source of info that railroads them along each step of the way leading to the bomb.

The Chain - The PCs get one name. That name is the name of someone who had physical possession of the bomb. They then have to find that person and get the info leading to the next bagman. Rinse and repeat until they catch up to the guy who currently has possession of the bomb.

Where can this lead:

Smuggling - Now that the players have the bomb, what do they do with it? Being the greedy bastards they all are, most will try to get it out of the city.

There Can't Be Only One - Obviously, there are more suitcase bombs out there. How do they go about finding them? The secret is the money trail. Figure out what residential property the bomb was recovered from. Find out who owned it during the 1980's. Compare those purchase dates with nearby soviet submarine traffic within two months of the date and 500 miles of the residence site. Check the finances of all the owners and see if anything can be traced back to the USSR on a regular basis. Then raid the records of involved banks to track down similar banking traffic, which would reasonably lead to more sleepers babysitting radioactive suitcases.

How I Ran This Scenario:

By the time the bombing plot was discovered, the bomb was just entering the Neo-City. The ports of entry were sealed off less than five minutes after the bomb passed through customs and all ships and flights were diverted from landing. The city's military was mobilized to search the entire structure.

Meanwhile, the bomb passed from the smuggler to a courier and the PCs got involved as news spread through the corporations in Neo-City. They began backtracking the shipments until they found the smuggler and beat the courier's name out of him. While doing this, the bomb made its way to a small office owned by OTEC, where maintenance was done on the device. The PCs were then tracking down the courier and beating information out of him as well.

Several hours later, the maintenance was finished and an OTEC agent took the bomb for delivery to the next person to hold it. Five minutes after she left, the PCs raided the OTEC office, destroyed it, and tracked down every OTEC employee on the visitor and attendance logs. They tracked down the agent who moved the bomb and learned it was delivered to an arms dealer who was to then deliver it to The Red.

The PCs then decided to finish things. They decided to track down both the arms dealer and the terrorists, splitting the party in two. They fully expected to end up catching the deal in progress. After beating and killing several more people for information, those after the terrorists figured out that the trade off was supposed to occur in the storage locker area of the aerospace module. They found the terrorists there waiting, and ambushed them, hoping to eliminate the terrorists and impersonate them for the trade.

However, the arms dealer had more lucrative plans to sell the weapon to the highest bidder. He was on his way to deliver the bomb to the Neo-Sovs in exchange for 25 million EB. The other half of the PC team tracked him down to his meeting place, and thinking the Neo-Sov agents were the terrorists, went in with all guns blazing. Everyone, the Neo-Sovs, the arms dealer and his bodyguards, and the PCs died. Everyone died, leaving a bomb in a suitcase sitting in the middle of the park. The rest of the PCs who went after the terrorists heard about the shootout on the nightly news, but not a word was mentioned about the bomb....

Was it recovered by the authorities, or was it still in the hands of someone willing to use it?