
Operation Orders

notes on Contract Props for Merc:2000 by Roger Stenning

A few notes for GDW's MERC:2000 Role Playing Game:

Some basic guidelines for referees. For those of you reading this who have never played a Role-Playing Game before, here's the low-down on MERC:2000...

ADVENTURE PROPS:

The Mercenary's Mission Contract

MERC:2000 is a role playing game where the players run fictional characters (Player Characters), whose attributes, their strengths and weaknesses, personality, quirks, and so on, are generated by rolling dice and consulting pre-generated charts and tables, then running the resulting Player Characters through mercenary adventures conducted by a referee who 'controls' what the characters see. In effect, the referee writes a script (or Adventure), and the characters fill in the actions and words...

One of the most useful prop (a word pinched from the acting profession, which in this case means a hand-out that players receive, in order to add a little bit of realism to the game they're playing) a referee can have is the contract that the players have their characters sign. This includes a wealth of information that a referee would only have to repeat verbatim to the players, so it saves a lot of wasted breath to provide it in written form, much like a precis of a story.

These prop contracts also note what the adventure is about, what they'll need to achieve to complete the adventure, and what might or might not be available as extra equipment (or "kit").

The aim of this article is to give you an idea of what is required in a mercenary mission contract, and to help you make your own prop contracts in the future.

I hope this article achieves its aim, and I wish you many happy hours of refereeing to come.....

Mercenary contracts are much like military mission orders, in that they state the objective of the job, what'll be paid, and what's required of both the mercenaries and their client(s).

CLIENT:

This states the FULL name of the person or organisation hiring the characters.

CONTRACTORS:

Not surprisingly, this states the FULL names of all the characters in the team, and/or on the mission.

LEGAL NOTE:

For example,

This copy is written in the English language. The definitive copy is in the [STATE LANGUAGE] language. This contract is governed by the laws of [STATE COUNTRY].

The 'LEGAL NOTE' is a way of ensuring that a particular country's legal system governs a contract. By stating that the 'definitive' copy is in such-and-such a language, the contract avoids pitfalls such as the 'I thought it meant such-and-such, not that!' trap. Of course, it always helps to ensure that the team speaks the definitive version's language, before signing, but that's life...!

GROUND:

Gives a brief explanation of the geographical area(s) that the mission will cover.

SITUATION:

Gives a complete run-down on the lead up circumstances to the mission, including the local political situation if applicable and relevant to the mission.

MISSION:

The mission must be stated in clear unambiguous language, and should be in one short sentence, such as, The contractors are to infiltrate the ACME CHEMICAL CORPORATION site at Boston, Mass., USA, where they will recover and return to the client the formula mentioned in situation above.

Where specific tasks are required as a part of the mission, these must be stated as well, in the same manner.

EXECUTION OF MISSION:

This is normally left to the team to plan, arrange, and execute. They are, after all, supposed to be the experts that the client has hired to do the job. You wouldn't hire a brain surgeon, and then tell him how to do his job, now, would you?!. A suggestion of typical wording for this section is shown below:

By any means that the team believes has the best chance of success in the time available, within all financial constraints (to be explained at briefing). The Team Commander must submit a copy of his operational plan to the client PRIOR to departure to the mission phase of this contract for Legal reasons.

SERVICE SUPPORT:

Generally speaking, a mercenary unit will be self-sufficient. Suggested wording is below:

There will be no external support for this operation once initiated. All required matériel must be acquired during the preparation phase, which should be as short as possible. This includes arms, ammunition, and rations, as well as clothing and other equipment.

COMMAND AND SIGNALS:

Generally speaking, a mercenary unit will be self-sufficient. Should extraction from the mission area be arranged with the Client, signalling will be important, however should the team be self-sufficient, suggested wording is below:

The Client is the overall Commander. The Team Leader, and so on through designated ranks/appointments, is the field commander. See Service Support above for signalling equipment. The Team Leader is to arrange any signalling needs with the Client PRIOR to departure.

RIGHT TO EXTEND:

This clause is normally for the protection of BOTH parties, financially and physically. Financially, to protect the client if the team are liable to exceed the client's budget, and physically, to protect the team after a long and arduous mission. Suggested wording is noted below;

There will be NO right to extend the scope or duration of this mission on behalf of, for, or by, either party from this mission, whether the mission succeeds or fails. Any further missions MUST be the subject of further written contracts, as this mission has been.

PAYMENT:

This is the normal payment that mercenaries get for run-of-the-mill missions (the 'Going Rate'). Costs will rise or fall depending on mission and danger levels. Suggested wording is noted below;

Payment will be in Pounds Sterling, to the sum of £500 per team member in advance of the mission, a further £500 per surviving team member on completion of the mission, and a further £150 per day whilst undertaking the mission. A further sum may be paid, to be determined on completion of the mission, should exception success in the mission be achieved.

MEDICAL (AFTER MISSION) PROVISIONS:

Military operations are inherently dangerous, and many is the time where a mercenary has needed specialist and/or life-saving medical support. Suggested wording is below;

Should any team member befall injury DURING the mission, free medical treatment and hospitalisation (if required) will be extended him/her until COMPLETELY fit. Choice of facility is reserved by the Client.

ESCAPE/SURRENDER CLAUSE:

There are times in any military operation where troops will be captured rather than killed. This clause will be a normal aspect of mercenary contracts, and allows mercenaries the legal right to surrender should circumstances arise where escape is either unfeasible or impossible. Suggested wording is below;

Should the team become embroiled in a 'no escape' situation whilst undertaking the mission, with no way out save only suicidal options, the team may, at its convenience, surrender. In this circumstance, there must be NO comebacks to the client, and the contract deemed to be completed. The Client will make all reasonable attempts to extract the team without further injury to the team; Note that the clause on Medical (After Mission) Provisions will still apply for all surviving team members.

CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSE:

This is normal; clients don't normally want to be splashed across the newspapers as "BLOODTHIRSTY MAGNATE HIRES MERCS TO DESTROY COMPETITOR'S CAR PLANT", or some such. It also protects the mercenary soldiers involved from having their oh-so-secret operational plans blabbed to the other side before they even get to the operational area. Suggested wording is noted below;

At all stages of the mission, client confidentiality is required of the team, and vice-versa. Should the team disclose, at ANY time, that it is contracted to the client, the contract will be void, and no further payment will be made whatsoever, for breach of contract. Dependent upon the damage this causes the client, any payments made to the contractors may also become forfeit, and have to be refunded in full to the client (this includes any equipment bought). No attempt will be made by the client to free the team as outlined in the Escape/Surrender Clause should client confidentiality be breached, and the client will be entitled to exercise complete deniability of the team of contractors. No further services will be required of the team by the client. This contract, in addition, will remain confidential between both parties, and may NOT be shown or its existence disclosed to any third party.

The reverse applies, as the client is expected to keep the mission confidential to the circle of the team and the Client ONLY. NOTE that the clause on Medical (After Mission) Provisions DOES NOT apply as a part of the mission to this clause, and no medical benefits will result from any part of the former contract with the team, unless the breach of contract was by the Client, in which case Medical (After Mission) Provisions MUST be met to the full cost by the client. This clause does NOT exclude the possibility of civil actions by either party against the other, and does NOT absolve either party of liability to the other party.

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING:

Only in missions where time is not of the essence will mercenaries be required to perform their own intelligence collection operations as a part of the mission. Normally, the client will have a pretty clear-cut idea of the intelligence picture surrounding the operation, and he or she will be asked for this: This clause formalises that requirement. Suggested wording is below;

At least one intelligence briefing will be submitted to the team prior to its departure on the mission phase. This brief will be given in either written or oral form. If by oral form, a representative of the client will perform the briefing.

LEGAL BINDING TO CONTRACT:

This clause makes the contract a contract. By signing it, both the mercenaries and the client become legally bound to live up to the very letter - if not the spirit - of the contract. Suggested wording is noted below - NOTE: The ONLY country where this can't be upheld, surprisingly enough, is in the UK, which has laws forbidding the hiring of mercenaries!

Both parties have signed this contract to show that they agree to be bound by it, except where it contravenes STATE COUNTRY Law.

(ORIGINAL COPIES SIGNED AND NAMED)

IN CONCLUSION

The PCs mercenary orders (the CONTRACT) is a vital element in the merc:2000 game. It can even, should a contract be broken, be the source of follow-up games designed to allow the players (or the referee!) to 're-dress' any wrongs done to them by unscrupulous clients (or mercenaries...?!).

As a small side note to finish off this booklet, if you're still short of ideas for adventures, a couple of good film (movie, to you Americans!) sources for ideas on scenarios are:

The Wild Geese (film)

The Dogs Of War (film)

Without doubt, they've been the inspiration for at least four good adventures, by themselves (who said plagiarism's dead?)....