



area, in case the enemy should try to cut through trees on the right. Bergens are ditched and we settle into firing positions, each covering our own arc. Chris decides to send half the section around to find another way to pick up our route, and eventually the enemy breaks contact. The other sections follow after our pathfinders and I'm moved to cover the direction the attack came from. Through my scope I can see two men in the bushes, well out of range, talking and pointing in our direction, but we're rucking up and pulling out.

As part of the game's plot, we're looking to rendezvous with a CIA Special Activities Division team, so the platoon pushes on to its objective area. This brings Swynnerton's terrain into its own, as fire teams take position behind the crests of berms to cover their comrades' advance, who in turn drop into covering positions to continue the leap-frog advance. Large building walls create narrow gaps to secure before the section can safely be brought through. There's a brief firefight in some woods, but by the time I get nearby the enemy seem to

have broken contact. Eventually we reach the rendezvous point and create a perimeter while the higher-ups meet the CIA agents.

Part of the nature of this game is the heavy use of non-player characters, as they're known in role-playing games. Not only is Zero providing the plot and making the world dance to his tune to ensure the maximum enjoyment for his players, but the entire opposing force - from Piabodorian insurgents to Talaran gunrunners - are NPCs too, as are the CIA agents. Their role is not to play to win at all costs (although they certainly never make it easy for us) but to provide a realistic opposition to lock horns with, or a character with their own motivations and agendas. In game terminology, it's player versus game as opposed to player versus player, and it lends itself very well to the military simulation format - indeed, it's how the very earliest table-top wargames, used to train Prussian officers, began.

Our next task is to establish our patrol harbour, which despite my understanding from the game rules that it would be

in comfy buildings like wussies, is in a wooded area with trees in neat rows. 2 Section has first stag duty, so we gratefully drop our bergens and are in the process of establishing a defensive perimeter to allow the rest of the platoon to set up their sleeping gear and have some water and a sit-down when we get a contact. Chris calls our forward elements back and we form a line through the trees. The enemy are pushing in from one side of the woods and trying to work around our flanks. My sights are off but I manage to tag one at long range and he collapses, screaming theatrically. We're holding our own, but a call of "medic!" from my right reveals than Alan, one of a trio of Irish players who think that in a proper milsim you shouldn't be given access to food but have to hijack it off lorries, has been hit.

I alert Chris, who instructs J.C. and myself to get to him and administer first aid. Taking turns to dash a few metres before covering the other, we get to Alan and I land next to him. He shows me the casualty card around his neck, which says that with first aid he'll last another three