

SKELETON BASE

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In the distant northeast reaches of the Far Desert, legends among the shattered tribes of natives speak of a mythical place, "Skeleton Base", somewhere among the tangerine sands, perhaps still naked to the burning crimson sky after all these years. Once a storage place of magical weapons for the armies of the Ancients, it is said that in their final years they conjured a great metal-skinned "demon" to guard the base for all eternity, only to surrender its vigil should they ever return. Persistent tales over the generations have spoken of the base, of chance discoveries, and unerringly similar descriptions of the great centauroid demon that still guards the gates to this base – a base surrounded by the picked-clean bones of those who have fallen to the entity that watches over this sacred place of the Ancients.

- From "Bixby's World Almanac", a post-Fall survival guide published in the Free City of Styx

This short adventure for Darwin's World is meant as a brief interlude to any ongoing campaign in the Twisted Earth setting of mankind's radiated aftermath. Skeleton Base is a mini-scenario involving an attempt to break into an installation erected by the Ancients, a National Guard base (now known as the "Skeleton Base" due to the rumored skeletal dead seen near the outskirts of the place). The scenario is set in the desert (in specific, in the Far Desert region near the edge of the radiated Burning Lands), but could conceivably be put anywhere in the campaign setting where dry country is prevalent - old river areas, the beaches of an inland sea, etc.

Skeleton Base is designed as a short but exciting adventure suitable for characters of levels 4-6. A frontal assault on the old base (which would certainly involve a confrontation with the ancient guardian of the compound) might prove impossible even to the groups on the higher end of this range; hopefully would-be scavengers of the old base will come up with other means of bypassing its formidable defenses...

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Skeleton Base, it should be noted, is a rather difficult adventure, because it pits the party against a powerful foe (a military security robot). If the characters do, however, manage to defeat the defenses of Skeleton Base, they're in for a pleasant surprise - the base, despite being abandoned long ago, is still loaded with weapons and ammunition that should provide an excellent base for further adventures in Darwin's World. It should also be noted that there is a way to avoid the most formidable of dangers (the robot), but this way is not immediately evident to those who uncover the Skeleton Base...

INTRODUCTION

It is to you, just another day in the radiated wastes. The sea of dunes stretches for miles around, as far as the distant reddish horizon. The sun, white and brilliant in all its deadly glory, beats relentlessly down on your sun hats and protective gear. Burning sand crunches and sinks beneath your feet, yet you and your few companions march on.

Up ahead, one of your number (the man in the lead) notices a glimmer in the sweltering sun. Instinctively you stand your ground, preparing your weapons for combat, but within moments it's obvious that whatever is up there isn't moving. Cautiously, you begin to approach quietly and stealthily across the searing sand.

Scattered around a sandy crest, you spot what looks like the remains of a small party, not much larger than your own - there are five figures, all badly decomposed and scavenged due to the degree of exposure to the elements. A few thick-shelled beetles crawl around in the open chest cavity of one; large buzzing flies pick at the dried and leathery eyeballs of another. The smell is overpowering, but to your seasoned senses, it is nothing new.

Let the players declare if they wish to search the bodies; if they do not, the adventure ends here! This is not a likely circumstance, however, since players are unlikely to miss the chance at free loot.

Searching the smelly sun-blackened bodies seems to be a waste of time, though you do find some clue as to how they died - several holes riddle their corpses, suggesting they were ambushed and slaughtered. Most of what they carried is gone; clothes have been stripped, weapons taken, canteens and food supplies along with them. Even the wounds have been cut open and the injuring agent salvaged for re-use.

You do notice, however, a small pack located just a few paces away from the lead corpse, who apparently threw the item down the dune during the ambush to avoid its discovery. The fickle winds, however, have left it half-exposed.

The small pack opens to reveal a few items inside - a large plastic bottle filled with an odorless liquid, a cache of small dirty papers, a small plastic device, a tinderbox, and a bundle of slivers of dried meat.

Treasure: The pack was the survival kit of the leader of the group; it contains a plastic bottle filled with fresh water (about a single day's worth). The small "plastic device" is a working pocket compass (the kind found as a *Cracker Jack* prize; it works well enough but it isn't very remarkable), and the bundle of meat is a ration of beef jerky strips, a dozen in number. The pack itself is also usable. The party may divide up these items as the wish.

The bundle of papers, however, is a makeshift set of orders from a now-destroyed community just a few days travel away in the deserts - the group, although it will likely never be known, was sent out to dare the legendary "Skeleton Base" in search of weapons with which to fight a marauding army of desert raiders. The party, however, was ambushed and slaughtered by these raiders, and the doom of the community was sealed.

The papers can be read by any character with the Speak Language (Unislang). The notations on the paper read as follows:

The cryptic message may or may not be understood by the group, but it does give them an obvious direction - continue heading northeast (any character using the compass, observing the position of the bodies, and making an Intelligence check, DC 15, can determine that the party was heading in a northeasterly direction).

Alternatively, any character from this region (this should

Time is short. The raiders are coming for their tribute. You and your men are our last and only hope. Skeleton Base is six days northeast from the Lost River. You know what you have to do.

be determined prior to play) may make a Knowledge (twisted earth) check (DC 18) to realize the same as above, and that a dry river bed exists only three days to the southwest. It doesn't take much brains to figure, then, that the party was halfway to their destination.

What the destination "Skeleton Base", is, however, remains a mystery. That is, until the party heads that way...

THE BASE

"Skeleton Base" was originally a National Guard armory and base that was abandoned during the first wars of the Ancients. The guarding force of soldiers left in a hurry after a desperate battle against invading forces (taking most of

their heavy equipment and leaving the interior with some damage), but since the base still contained some munitions and weaponry, left a powerful military security robot to guard it against all intruders not possessing the right access code.

During the wars that ruined communications and civilization, the base was forgotten. The robot remained, however, loyally guarding the facility against "all intruders" - which has come to mean mutant animals, desert creatures, and even the odd desperate humanoid in search of shelter. Those few that knew of the base could never break in (because of the robot), and merely bypassed it as a "site of great evil", where "no man or creature ever returned from".

The base was once a lot larger than that shown on the map, covering several square miles of terrain, but centuries of climactic change have turned the region into a desert. Many of the old buildings have long disappeared, but the main bunker still stands, its electric fence silent testament to the value of the things once kept within.

ABOUT THE BASE

There are a few things of importance that the referee should remember when playing the assault and exploration of Skeleton Base:

- ✖ First and foremost, the base is guarded by a *heavy military security robot*, which has been relying on the same nuclear fuel cell for two centuries. The robot was given a command to guard the premises against intrusion, and it has followed these same orders for centuries. As a result, the base is about as secure as it was when the Ancients left.
- ✖ The robot is linked to all the security monitoring cameras (shown on the map as small dots surrounded by a circle) in the base, and will thus be alerted to the presence of intruders should they pass in the lone of sight of these cameras (it should at least happen once during the incursion). Once it is alerted, the robot heads directly towards the location the intruder was sighted, waiting outside of buildings if necessary until they emerge.

✖ Though there is nominal power (giving electricity to the automated lights in many buildings), all of the interior doors in the base have long been out of order (except as noted); as a result, each must be forced open manually (1 in. Thick; Hardness 15; hp 30; Break DC 28; Disable Device DC 25).

✖ Special **security doors** are located throughout the base, and locations with limited access are specifically indicated (e.g. *J. Garage Building (Gold Card)*). If the needed card is not possessed, access is impossible unless the door is forced open (as above). Some doors will have Thickness or Hardness above normal, indicating special reinforcement.

✖ Tampering with door locks will require a normal Disable Devices check, but these should be made at a high DC (25). No matter the result of the attempt, however, the doors are

set to discharge a *shock* to anyone attempting such an invalid entry - this inflicts damage 1d8 electricity damage unless a Reflex save (DC 20) is made, for half damage.

OUTDOOR ENCOUNTERS (AREAS A-I)

The following lists the various locations outside the base proper.

A. DUNES.

The entirety of the old base is surrounded by low sandy dunes that conceal the outline and features of the compound, including the various buildings, bunkers, and even the security robot at **area R**, from long-range surveillance. These dunes are no different than the sandy crests elsewhere in the Sea of Dunes, constantly altering their shape slowly and slightly with each gust of wind.

B. RING OF SKELETONS.

The dry, dust-like puffs of sand underfoot, which were unbroken for miles around, now begin to reveal the tell-tale signs of a great slaughter, long ago. Scores of bones, bleached white by the sun and picked clean long ago by the elements, peek from under only a thin layer of sand and soil, extending from this area all the way up to the fence of the compound beyond in an unbroken ring.

During the Fall (and for several chaotic weeks afterward), many who had survived the nuclear strikes came to the gates of Skeleton Base seeking emergency food, water, medical supplies, and word of what was happening with the war effort. They were unanimously horrified when, on arrival, they found only an abandoned base. Though many were turned back by the electrified fencing, others (in their desperation) attempted to bypass the gates and loot whatever remained on base - only to be destroyed by the military security robot ordered to stave off all intrusion.

The skeletal remains of nearly two hundred Ancient-era civilians, as well as countless other wasteland scavs and wanderers from a more recent time, make up this grisly scene of carnage.

Any party wishing to spend time here searching for usable junk may do so, with a Search check (DC 18). With each success, roll on the table below to determine what is found among the ring of bones:

| D6 | Find |
|----|--|
| 1 | Child's doll (or teddy bear), paint faded, button eye missing, and generally worthless |
| 2 | 1d2 blankets made from tough waterproof felt, marked "FEMA" |

| | |
|---|--|
| 3 | Set of binoculars in dirt-caked carrying case (10% chance the lenses have cracked and are useless) |
| 4 | 1d3 empty plastic jugs (1 gallon capacity each) with easy carrying handle, marked "FEMA" |
| 5 | 1d3 <i>molotov cocktails</i> (25% chance the alcohol within won't ignite) |
| 6 | 1 <i>M16A2 assault rifle</i> (full magazine) |

Allow the military security robot at **area R** to make a Spot check (opposed by the characters' Hide checks) to notice anyone wandering through this area. If it does, the robot will not directly pursue, but will begin to keep an eye on their movements (although still pretending to be shut down), only coming online if they actually violate the base's fence (see **areas D and R**).

C. RAVENING HOUNDS.

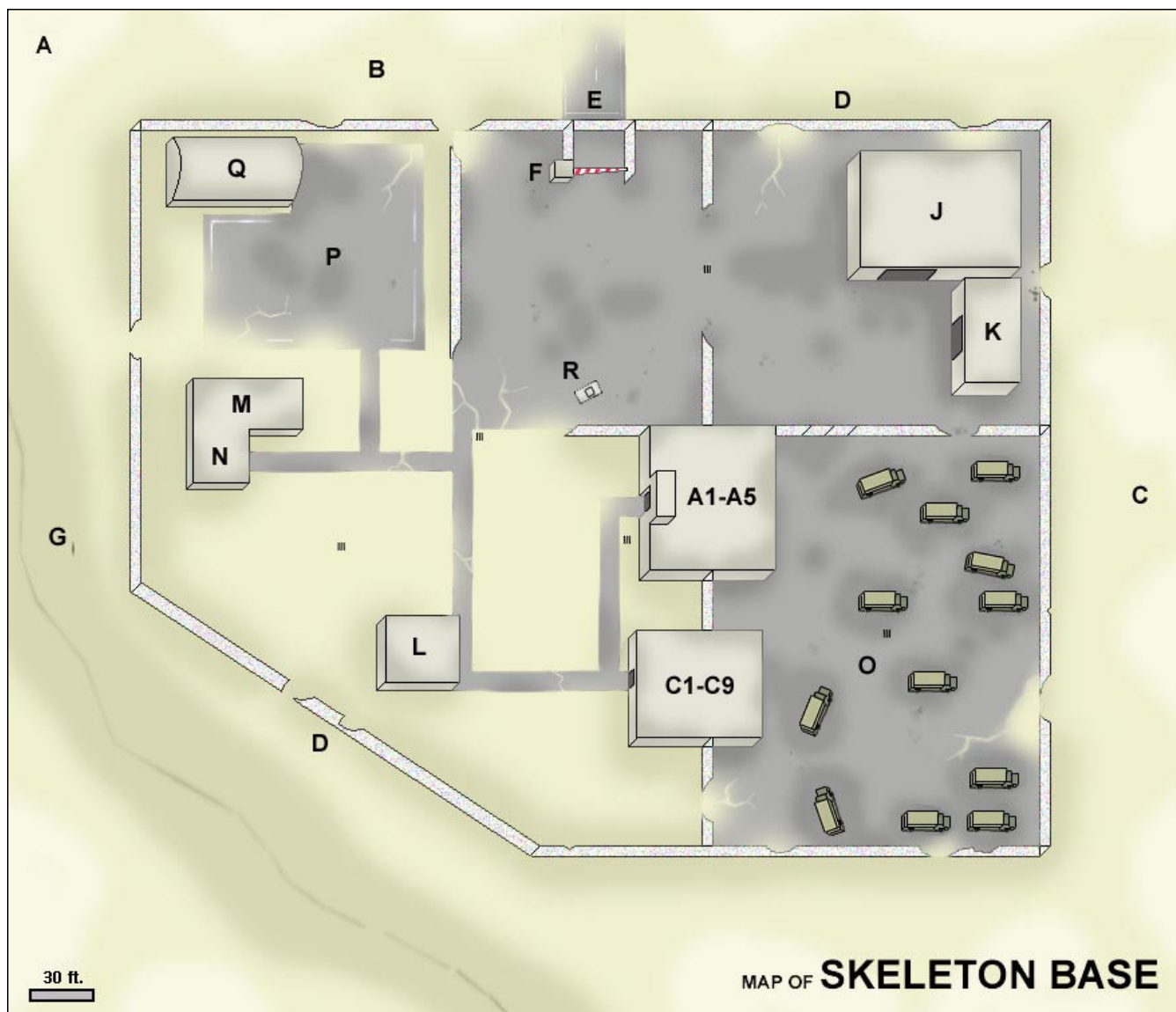
As the party nears this region, allow each member of the group to make a Listen check (DC 14). If successful, read the following:

Walking along the perimeter of the eerie complex of buildings, staying away from the foreboding wall of meshed steel, the howling wind is abruptly broken by the unmistakable sound of padded feet. In the distance, a single creature emerges atop a nearby dune. Some kind of wild dog, its skin sloughing off in places due to disease, its head a miserable thing more closely resembling a grotesque bear-trap than a coyote...within moments another, then another come scampering up the hill, their eyes suddenly gleaming with a greenish light as they sense your presence.

A pack of ravening hounds have temporarily taken up residence near the ruins of the ancient base, dwelling among the dunes for a time before moving on to more promising hunting grounds. Driven almost to the edge of madness by radiation and starvation, these cruel animals seek any kind of weakened prey to savage.

The pack of ravening hounds will not generally attack a party at full strength, though if deliberately approached they will swarm to defend their "territory" (because in the wasteland, even pathetic mongrels like these must defend their hunting grounds or else risk further starvation). They will instead circle, watch, and shadow the party during their exploration of the base's exterior, waiting for an opportunity to "snatch and grab" - ambush any stragglers or anyone left behind.

Alternatively (if you as GM are feeling really cruel), the ravening hounds may instead remain patient for now, and wait until the PCs come back from their first foray into the base - to regroup and/or heal. Aware that those who enter often escape in bad shape (thanks to the base's



many dangers), the ravening hounds have grown used to ambushing such unsuspecting groups when they are at their weakest...

♥ **Ravening Hound:** CR 1; Medium-Size Animal; HD 2d8+4; HP 13; Mas 15; Init +1; Spd 35 ft; Defense 14, touch 11, flatfooted 13 (+1 Dex, +3 natural); BAB +1; Grap +3; Atk +3 melee (1d6+3, bite); Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+3, bite); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ pack boldness, pack mentality, scent; AL none; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +1; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Spot +5, Survival +5 (+9 tracking).

Feats: None.

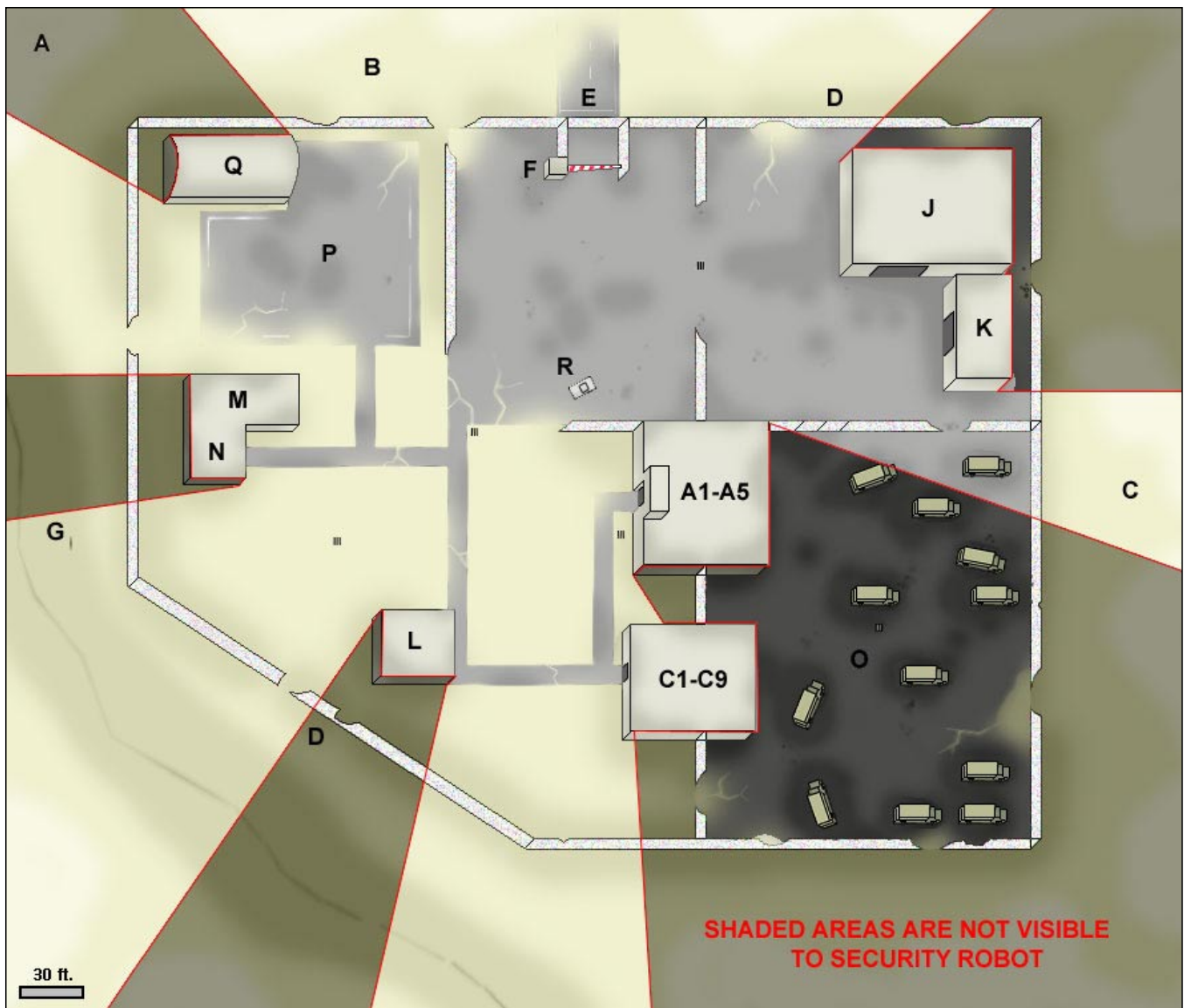
GM's Note: The pack will not pursue anyone who makes it over the electric fence, as they have learned the consequences of doing so. Should someone make it to the fence, the pack will yelp, panic, and scurry off at top speed to avoid stray fire!

D. ELECTRIC FENCE.

As you approach this area, you see a long line of poles, upright or bent, leading off into the distance, swallowed up at some point by rising sand dunes. The poles are connected by walls of chain links; collapsed sections and gaping holes are evident here and there.

The old electric fence that once guarded the base against intrusion has long deteriorated over the centuries, leaving only a few scant sections between infrequently placed upright poles. Due to its tremendous age, this defensive line no longer has any power, but it does mark the boundary of the military security robot's "protective perimeter".

Characters can easily cross the fence line at any opening (see map), or may attempt to scale the fence at any part along its length (DC 15). However, by doing so they risk detection by the military security robot at **area R**, which may make a Spot check to notice their intrusion.



Note that the military security robot remains “shut down” (or so it seems) until at least one character crosses the boundary into the base proper. Once this happens the robot will instantly spring to life and move to mow down the intruder(s) with full force.

E. GATE (SILVER CARD).

This appears to be an old gate of some sort, but it is firmly shut against the fenced area, and a corroded metal box sits at elbow-level against the handle itself.

This location is an old gate (some 12’ high), connecting the interior of the base compound to the outside. The gate was once electrified (along with the fence), and a silver *stage IVM access card* was required to open it (thus the box, a small access computer). Since the fence has long fallen away in this area, the presence of the gate as a barrier is effectively pointless, since anyone wanting to can just walk past.

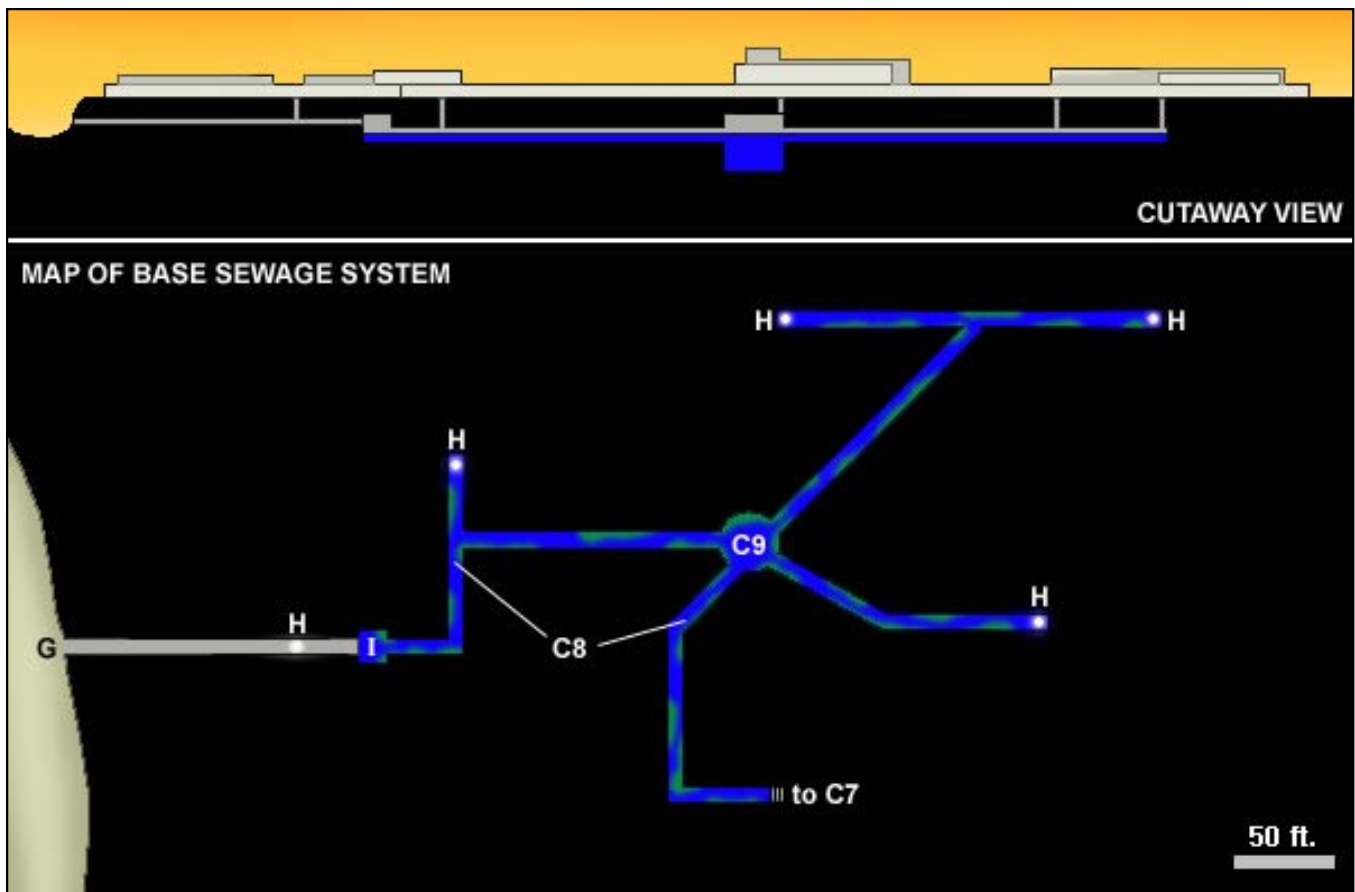
F. GUARDPOST.

What appears to have once been a sturdy wooden building now stands in disrepair, its white painted surface stripped by the winds and biting sand. A colored, movable roadblock stands closed, a sign in faded colors hanging from it at the midpoint.

This was a forward guardpost for the front gate of the base, abandoned long ago. The building itself is little more than a 15 ft. by 15 ft. shack, with safety glass windows along the entire structure to provide a 360 degree view. It is otherwise empty.

Any character that can read Ancient can read the sign on the roadblock, which reads:

**APPROACHING A
RESTRICTED FACILITY
PRESENT IDENTIFICATION
TO GUARD**



G. SEWAGE DUCT.

Any character passing by this spot may make a Search check, DC 12, to notice the following

The dune here slopes somewhat, giving the indication that long ago this was part of some kind of ditch or natural gully extending north and south. As the wind picks up, a sizable portion of the gully wall slides away in a vortex of sand to reveal a gaping, circular hole leading into pitch darkness.

The “hole” is the far end of what was once a sewage duct that ran underneath the base, emptying sewage water and refuse from the base’s various buildings into a nearby waste canal (the gully mentioned above).

The tunnel is blocked by an aging, rusted grating of mesh steel, through which water and small debris can pass, but narrow enough to prevent unwanted intrusion. This grating must be worked free or clipped to allow passage beyond.

Once the grating is removed, the tunnel proves to be made of corrugated iron, and is only 28” wide. Medium-size or smaller characters will have to remove all weapons and equipment (and any armor with a natural penalty to movement) before even attempting to crawl into the duct (though such gear may be dragged behind in a bundle attached to a rope...but let the players think of this, if at all).

Movement through the tunnel is at a crawling rate, and it is far too tight for an individual to turn around once he

has entered. After about 30 feet, all light from outside diminishes and the tunnel becomes pitch black (except for areas along the tunnel, as noted).

♥ **Steel Grate:** 1/3 in. Thick; Hardness 0; hp 30; Break DC 16; Disable Device NA.

GM’s Note: The fact that the sewer duct passes *beneath* the fence perimeter and much of the base makes it an ideal method of entering the compound without alerting the military security robot. However, since the PCs don’t know where they might end up (or even if the passage is intact), feel free to play up the claustrophobia, the weird sounds (rats, insects, etc.), and the uneasiness of navigating such a tight space.

H. VENTILATION.

At this point along the sewer duct’s length, the darkness is broken by a few narrow beams of light, which add a welcome glow to the otherwise lightless length of the sewer tunnel.

A few ventilation shafts were sunk to the sewer duct to prevent the buildup of poisonous or expanding gases that might damage the sewer system. These shafts are topped by a grating (not unlike the one at **area G**), though these are flush with the ground and thus go largely unnoticed – even by the military security robot.

A character could potentially crawl up one of these shafts

(a mere 4' to 6' long), exiting at any point marked on the map if the grating can be forced open, with a Climb check (DC 20).

♥ **Steel Grates:** 1/3 in. Thick; Hardness 0; hp 30; Break DC 16; Disable Device NA.

I. ENTRANCE TO MAINTENANCE AREAS.

At long last the tunnel seems to end, though the darkness is unbroken. Investigation reveals a badly corroded grating covering this end of the tunnel, but beyond this obstacle the air is much cooler. The sound of dripping water splashing on deep water echoes in the vicinity.

The shaft ends here at a weakened grate, which must be forced open as normal. However, once the grate is opened, there proves to be a drop of three feet to the calm surface of a well-flooded chamber beyond.

The purpose of this room has been lost to antiquity, but it was no doubt part of a series of underground chambers used to support the facility above ground. Ancient machinery, caked in rust and submerged just inches beneath the surface of the water, look like bony islands reclaimed by a sea of brackish waves.

Though extremely cold, the water in these tunnels is four feet deep, permitting a character to wade at torso depth (or swim, if he chooses) with little difficulty.

The soldiers who abandoned the base were aware that this entrance might be used by looters, and so set up a *weapon animatron* to guard the sewer grate. It will open fire as soon as the grating falls away.

Armed with a *submachine gun* and two full clips of ammunition (60 rounds total), the weapon animatron also has a *motion detector* that permits it to detect and track all targets larger than a dog. It will immediately open fire on any and all targets, regardless of identification, that enters line of sight (it has a 360 degree rotation as well, and so can fire at targets in all directions).

♥ **Weapon Animatron (1):** CR 4; Hardness 12; hp 40; Init +4, *rigor MP-9 SMG* +10/+5 ranged for 2d6.

GM's Note: Unless the character(s) enter the water with the forethought of a Move Silently check, the blindworm living in the maintenance areas will be aware of their intrusion into the flooded warrens when they come within 60 feet of **area C9**.

♥ **Weakened Steel Grate:** 1/3 in. Thick; Hardness 0; hp 10; Break DC 12; Disable Device NA.

ENCOUNTERS ON THE BASE (AREAS J-R)

The following lists the various above-ground locations concealed behind the fence.

J. GARAGE BUILDING (GOLD CARD).

A *gold stage VM access card* is required to enter this building.

Beyond the heavy metal doors leading into this building, the vault-like interior is absolutely pitch black, cold, and huge. Footfalls echo softly in the room, and lights barely illuminate a pair of heavy metal machines sitting silently in the darkness.

This building was set aside as a repair area for the Ancients' vehicles, though now it is mostly empty. The remaining vehicles found here were too damaged to salvage, and so they were left behind when the base was stripped. In addition to these, a few bits of rubbish and metal scraps lie about here and there, along with coils of worthless frayed wiring, but little else of use.

A Search check (DC 20) uncovers a shaft leading from this maintenance area to the ventilation system (easternmost **area H**).

Treasure: The two vehicles on the main floor of the building are an M113 armored personnel carrier, but as it is missing its entire engine and drive train, it is effectively worthless. The other vehicle in the hollow repair bay is a *military hummer* with 20 hit points remaining.

In addition, a few usable items may also be found in this room if a Search check (DC 10) is made. These include a man-portable metal box inside the engine compartment of the M113 (inside of which is a complete set of *mastercraft mechanic's tools*; these give a +2 bonus to Craft checks, and a *flashlight* (full *power cell*).

GM's Note: The doors to this building are large enough to permit the military security robot (see **area R**) to follow intruders inside if need be.

K. SHOP.

The door here opens to reveal a dark cold chamber inside. All but a few broken lights automatically come on to illuminate a small room, the walls of which are filled with shelves, cabinets and a locker or two. A metal table dominates the center of the room, covered in various old and musty metal pieces.

This was formerly the maintenance shop of the base, but was long ago looted of its more important resources.

Treasure: The cabinets are mainly empty, as are the shelves, but a thorough search (requiring 20 minutes and a Search check, DC 15) uncovers 3d10 straight nails, 2d12 screws, and 2d12 bolts. In addition, a hammer, screwdriver, and an intact industrial electric drill still remain. A *power pack* sits on the table (used to power any power tools), with a random amount of power remaining.

L. STORAGE BUILDING (LEAD CARD).

A *stage IM access card* is required to gain entry to this small building.

The interior of this small building is pitch dark, but exploration and illumination reveals rows of cardboard boxes and crates lining the undecorated walls. The building is obviously devoid of life.

This was the primary storage area on the base, but only contains items of a mundane nature. When the PCs enter, there is a chance they set off a tripwire trap set up by the original garrison as they abandoned the base. The trap is hooked up to a powerful satchel charge.

⊙ **Explosive Trap (Satchel Charge B):** CR 3; no attack roll necessary (8d6 in a 20 foot radius); Reflex save (DC 20) to take half damage; Search (DC 16); Disable Device (DC 16).

Treasure: The storage bunker contains 2d3 plastic or metal buckets of varying sizes, 2d3 mops and brooms, 4d6 spare military uniforms (camo shirts and pants - no boots), 4d10 meters of insulated copper wiring, a single *gas mask* in its shipping carton, a box of six *gas mask filters*, 2d4 *light rods*, 4d4 sealed and sterile bandages (these grant a +2 circumstance bonus to Treat Injury checks for first aid and long term care), and two *power packs* (each with a full charge).

There is a 50% chance that each item found is destroyed if the trap is detonated.

M. REC BUILDING.

Once inside, this building proves to be dimly-lit by a dull glow from the entire ceiling, illuminating a few low tables and chairs here and there, and a few plastic-screened consoles. The purpose of the building is not immediately certain.

This was the recreation center for the base's on-duty personnel, and it shows. A pool table and ping-pong table sit idly in the front room (rotted and covered with cobwebs), as do several pivoting chairs set in front of one or two long-decayed television sets. A heavy dartboard (which can be taken and used as a small wooden shield, with a lifespan of about one adventure) also sits against one wall, but unfortunately no darts remain.

N. KITCHEN (LEAD CARD).

A *lead stage IM access card* is required to gain entry to the kitchens.

This room smells of ancient rot and decay, and the lights barely flutter enough to provide a steady - if somewhat dim - illumination. The room is dominated by several plain plastic-coated tables, overturned cardboard boxes and wild fungal growths, and a line of cupboards, cabinets, and boxes.

This area was once the kitchen of the base, where meals were prepared (the low card access was only meant to keep out civilian looters). The kitchen still holds some goodies that were not taken during the flight of the Ancients.

Treasure: The main cabinet (a refrigerator) contains four 1-liter plastic bottles of water (the water has turned bad over the years, and is not drinkable), a single six-pack of soft drink cans (usable), and several rotten cardboard trays (perishable TV dinners). The counters hold a total of 4d4 plastic and metal eating utensils, 3d4 hard plastic cups, 6d4 hard plastic trays, and a *water purifier* (no power, however).

In addition to these mundane items, there are several cupboards worth noting for their valuable (or interesting contents). Each requires a *lead stage IM keycard* to open (or they can be forced open, as a regular door):

#1 10d6 *Ready-Meals* (assorted flavors).

#2 *Empty*.

#3 The curled-up skeleton of an Ancient trooper, who apparently hid in the cabinet or some unknown reason, with an *automatic pistol* in one hand (the clip within is empty, but the gun still works), a *frag grenade* in the other. His uniform consists of rotted camo pants and shirt, army boots, and nothing else.

#4 Empty, except for a small metallic card (found only if a Search check, DC 20, is passed), somehow misplaced towards the back of the cabinet. The card is, in fact, a *lead stage IM keycard*.

#5 3d6 cans of various soups, still edible. A few cans have split open and have become home to a colony of shaggy purplish fungus, however, from the center of which protrudes a flowering violet cap - a colony of *violet fungus*.

⚡ **Violet Fungus (1):** CR 3; Medium-size Plant; HD 2d8+6; hp 15; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 10 ft; Defense 13 (-1 Dex, +4 natural); Atk 4 tentacles +3 melee 1d6+2 and poison; SQ Plant; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref -1, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 8, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 11, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: None.

O. VEHICLE LOT.

An extension of the main fencing around the base keeps this large overgrown lot contained. Beyond the tall fence can be seen an assortment of decayed and rusted old machines, parked in neat rows as if awaiting the command of a long-lost commander to come to life.

This area was the main vehicle lot where guard vehicles were stored until needed. Most of the vehicles that were kept here (mostly transport and ammunition carrying trucks,

but also a small number of M113s) were taken by the garrison when they deserted, and only a few rusting hulks remain.

Treasure: While most of the remaining vehicles are worthless, there are three salvageable *moving trucks* (30 hit points, 20 hit points, and 15 hit points respectively). None of the vehicles has any fuel. In the bed of the first truck, a Search check (DC 18) will uncover a single *negation grenade*.

GM's Note: Once the military security robot at **area R** has been alerted, leading it here for a game of cat and mouse might just give the PCs the edge they need. Maneuvering between the old wrecks of trucks and jeeps, they may find sufficient cover to even the odds somewhat.

P. HELIPAD.

Approaching this area, one can see a scattering of broken metal bits, twisted and deformed from what might once have been an explosion. Sitting in the middle of an artificial "field" of cracked and weathered concrete are what appears to be the remains of some unknown machine, charred black and totally destroyed.

This was the base's helipad, used to ferry material or personnel in by air. The "machine" on the helipad is, of course, a helicopter (Huey *Iroquois* model), which was deliberately sabotaged when the garrison decided to abandon the base. The pilot, and the few officers who disagreed with the mutiny, were killed when they tried to take off and escape.

The bodies of four men and a pilot can still be found huddled within, their bones badly burned and blackened from intense heat. Nothing of interest remains.

Q. HANGAR.

A *gold stage VM access card* is required to enter this building.

The interior of this huge rectangular building appears hollow and empty, and echoes with each footstep on the hard concrete floor. Large drums of oil, lined up against the wall, and various crates with unknown contents, are all that remain inside.

This was the helicopter hangar, used to service the chopper and protect it during inclement weather. Though a large number of oil drums and crates remain scattered near the walls, none of these contain anything of value.

GM's Note: The doors to this building are large enough to permit the military security robot (see **area R**) to follow intruders inside if need be.

R. SECURITY ROBOT.

The robot at **area R** can be seen from nearly all parts of the base – and likewise, its position allows it to see almost every

corner of the same facility. Should players ask what the symbol at **area R** represents, read them the following:

Standing there, in front of the imposing main entrance of the silvery fortress, is a metallic "creature". It appears similar to a legendary centaur, though heavy metal plating covers its entire body, and instead of four legs it is supported by a massive metal base with two enormous sets of treads. The eyes of the creature, set on a angular head, are the part that scares you the most - they are large, wrap-around things, totally black and featureless, and devoid of any emotion. You cannot tell if it is awake or asleep, for the entire construct is absolutely still despite the biting sands and howling winds.

The "creature" is, of course, a military security robot, left here to guard the base after it was abandoned during the chaos of the Fall. The robot has continued its unflinching vigil for the countless decades since the Collapse, following its simple orders to the letter: "kill all intruders". To this end it has remained alert for any and all creatures that come near the perimeter of the base (the fence, **area D** being its boundary), but only revealing itself as being active by firing upon those who actually *violate* the perimeter.

Though the security robot will pursue any intruders throughout the above-ground region of the compound, it will not pursue into any buildings, nor will it go beyond the perimeter fence – though it will fire into buildings or through the fence to get fleeing intruders if possible.

In addition to its integral *stun gun* and *rocket launcher* (with a full load of missiles), the robot holds a *laser rifle* in one hand. It prefers to fire the *laser rifle* first, reserving the *Hydra 70 rocket launcher* for targets that "refuse to die". Because of its orders, the *stun gun* has not been used in centuries...

Obviously anyone approaching within visual range of this area, or setting off the alarm within the base itself (by being spotted on any of the remote cameras) will cause the main security "enforcer" of the base to activate.

👤 **Military Security Robot:** CR 9; Large Robotic Construct; HD 10d10+20; HP 75; Mas -; Init -1; Spd fly 30 ft; Defense 23, touch 8, flatfooted 23 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +15 natural); BAB +7; Grap +16; Atk +11 melee (1d8+5, slam), or +9 ranged (1d6 plus paralysis, stun pistol), or +9 ranged (4d10, hydra 70), or +7 ranged (3d10 laser rifle); Full Atk +11/+5 melee (1d8+5, slam), or +9/+4 ranged (1d6 plus paralysis, stun pistol), or +9 ranged (4d10, hydra 70), or +7/+2 ranged (3d10 laser rifle); FS 10 ft by 10 ft; Reach 10 ft; SQ robotic construct, command level (IVM), DR 10/-, energy resistance 10, computer link, internal power source, infrared photo receptors, targeting computer, auto reloading; AL none; SV Fort -, Ref +2, Will -2; AP 5; Rep +0; Str 20, Dex 9, Con -, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Skills: Computer Use +10.

Feats: Advanced Technology, Point Blank Shot, Remote Computer Link, Room-Broom.

COMMAND CENTER ENCOUNTERS (AREAS C1-C9)

The following lists the various locations concealed inside the command center.

C1. FRONT ENTRANCE (GOLD CARD).

A *gold stage VM access card* is required to enter this building.

This area is depressed into the side of the fortress, and appears to be some kind of magnificent armored gateway. The doors are perfectly formed, suggesting at ancient and flawless construction. A small armored box sits to the left of the doorway, in the depression, and a spherical black “eye” watches from above.

These are the main entrance doorways to the old command center. The whole scene is overlooked by a security monitor (the black “eye”); a keycard access box is located on the door itself.

The outside doors to the facility require a *gold stage VM keycard* to enter, and thus it is unlikely the group will enter by this way any time soon. The doors themselves are heavily armored.

♥ **Steel Security Doors:** 5 in. Thick; Hardness 25; hp 90; Break DC 40; Disable Device DC 30.

C2. DUTY OFFICER'S STATION.

This room is well lit by overhead lights that continue to flicker despite the advanced age of the facility. The room itself is cluttered with junk and discarded cartons on the floor; brass casings also litter its metallic surface. A futuristic desk (with pivoting chair behind it) sits against the south wall, where a metal “console” of sorts seems to have been smashed to pieces.

The western wall section has a slip of clear bulletproof glass (as indicated on the map), allowing those in this area to see into the hallway beyond.

This was a guard station for the officer on duty to monitor

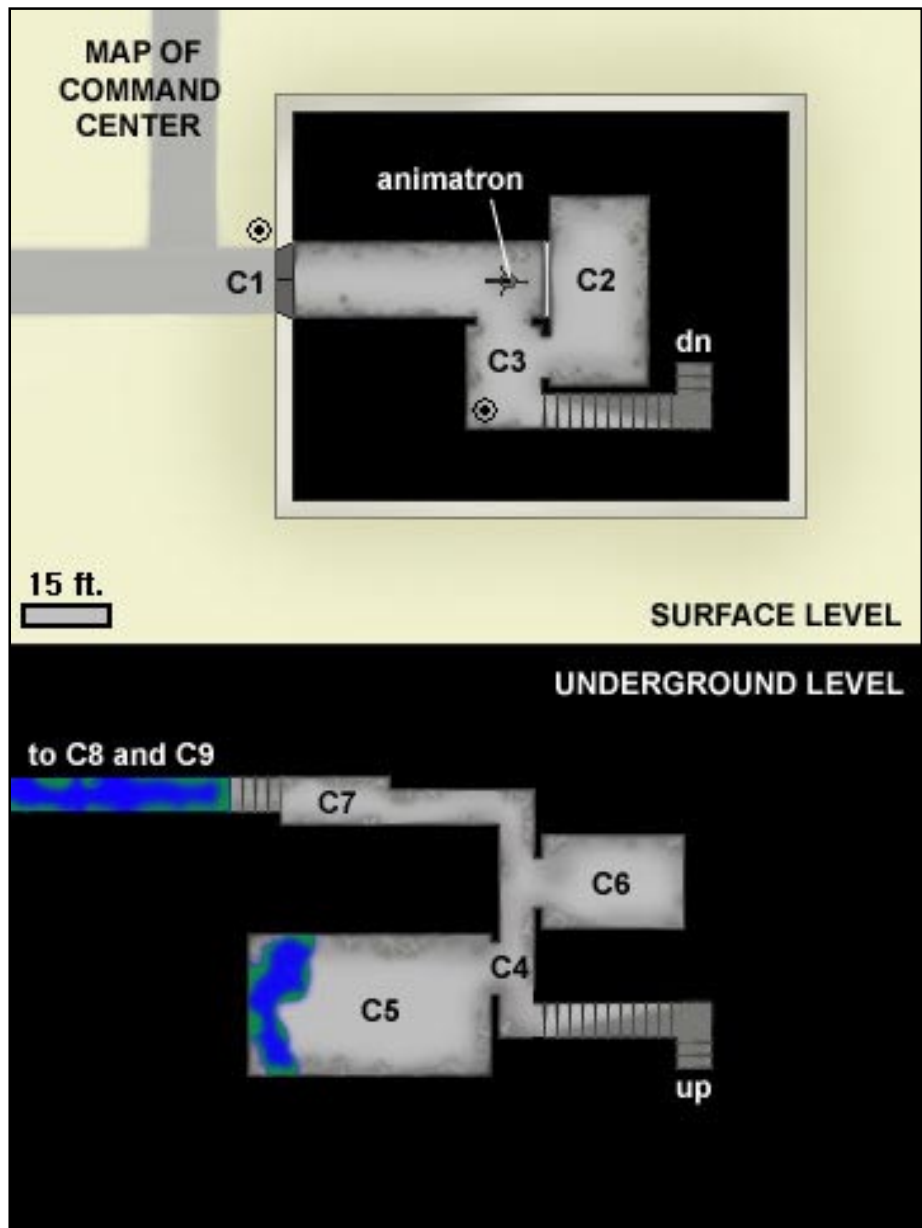
personnel going in and out of the armory facility, checking identification as necessary. It was abandoned long ago, but to make sure no one violated the armory in the officer's absence, a *weapon animatron* was set up to guard the entrance.

This animatron has five full clips of ammunition (150 rounds total).

♥ **Weapon Animatron (1):** CR 4; Hardness 12; hp 40; Init +4, *M16A2 assault rifle* +10/+5 ranged for 2d8.

Treasure: This area is a mess. The computer console is completely broken (destroyed by a deliberate explosive charge), and any firearms kept in the duty officer's locker were looted long ago. Despite this, a careful search (taking a 20 minutes or so to sift through the junk, and a DC 15 Search check) turns up 1d100 loose rounds of *5.56mm ammunition*.

♥ **Bulletproof Glass Partition:** 1 in. Thick; Hardness 8; hp 30; Break DC 20.



C3. HALLWAY.

This area is totally pitch dark, except for a flickering glow coming from down a flight of nearby stairs.

This passage's "illumination rods" (fluorescent lights) have long burned out, and will not come on. As a result, characters coming into this area will be unaware of the *security monitor* tracking them by infra-red. If they have not yet tripped the silent alarm (alerting the military security robot), they now will.

C4. UNDERGROUND HALLWAY.

A clinically cold and metallic hallway illuminated by flickering dull lights running along the ceiling in long "tubes" stands ahead. Junk, cobwebs, and other discarded debris fill the passage.

This hallway is also empty.

C5. UNDERGROUND COMMAND CENTER (BRONZE CARD).

A *bronze stage IIIM access card* is required to enter this room.

This dark, wet room is littered with consoles of unknown purpose here and there, and toppled chairs are thrown about with a collection of trash and debris. Apparently some kind of power still runs through the conduits here, providing intermittent illumination from the flashing and sputtering fluorescent bulbs set in rows along the ceiling.

The room itself is cluttered with old metal consoles and chairs, and the many glass screens throughout have either been shattered to reveal tangled wire beneath, or are simply dull and lifeless, starved of electricity. Bits of concrete debris from the damaged roof lie littered about, and the whole southern part of the room is flooded with dark water.

This was once the Com Center of the base. The darkness in the room is broken every now and then by a pulse of light coming from fluorescent bulbs in the ceiling, blinking on and off at random.

Many of the computer consoles in the room are totally worthless; most were destroyed during the initial evacuation, others deteriorated over time (direct moisture, humidity, etc). None of the original command disks or codebooks remain - they were taken too. Despite this, one computer (in the center of the room) is still operable - the **main security computer** - which coordinates the security monitoring system and broadcasts it to the military security robot at **area R**.

The computer, if struck heavily, will break (terminating the *link* between computer and robot), but the military security robot will of course be *alerted*.

C6. BACKUP TRANSMITTER (SILVER CARD).

A *silver stage IIIM access card* is required to enter this room.

This subterranean room, when opened, appears to be pitch black. What little light present illuminates a small pivoting chair in the center of the room, a large metal "console", and walls covered in buttons, knobs, dials, and plastic screens. The place seems utterly empty otherwise.

This location is still sealed, as it was never used. When the characters enter, the room seems stale but very sterile. Upon close examination, there doesn't seem to be anything of interest here.

The room was once the backup transmitter for the Command Center, and is equipped with powerful radio and microwave communications equipment (thus the various consoles and screens in the room). The equipment is all still in workable order, but centuries having passed since the holocaust, no one is likely to have any knowledge of how to operate this equipment (at the very least, it should be noted that the equipment is beyond the mere use of Technology).

C7. MAINTENANCE ROOM.

A short flight of stairs, slick from moisture, lead into this narrow concrete-walled room. Old lights on the ceiling burned out long ago, while a web of water pipes, power conduits, and other connections clutter both the ceiling and walls. A number of rusted and paint-stripped lockers line the western side of the room.

This room was once used by maintenance workers to store equipment before going down into the tunnels. The lockers are all badly corroded but can be effortlessly opened.

Treasure: The lockers contain three full maintenance overalls (heavy water resistant fabric, off-white in color), four plastic safety helmets (bright orange), two *flashlights* (each with a *power cell* at half charge), and a pair of hand-held *communicators* (walkie-talkie style; *power cells* are empty).

C8. PASSAGES.

All of these passages are flooded (like **area C9**), and filled with all manner of submerged machinery, piping, ventilation ducts, etc. For every 50 feet a character wades through this water, he must make a Dex check (DC 14) or stumble into a jagged piece of metal or potentially-dangerous part of the machinery, inflicting 1d4 points of damage.

C9. MAINTENANCE HUB.

The watery passages, cold, tepid, and rank, all lead to this central, circular chamber from which other tunnels radiate like spokes on a hub. Machinery of all kinds appear close to the surface of the water, while heavy metal ductwork, pipes, and various other constructions of a long-gone era spiral up towards the cluttered ceiling.

The true dimensions of this room are concealed by the level of water in the flooded underground spaces. The whole room is 40 feet in diameter, but it is also 30 feet high – with the last 20 feet underwater (see map).

Unless the characters entering this room have taken deliberate steps to feel around beneath the water, they will walk off the edge of the passageway (which used to be reached by ladder from the bottom of the maintenance hub) and sink straight into the deep!

Needless to say, any such disturbing of the water will alert the blindworm dwelling in the maintenance hub (if it hasn't been alerted to their presence already).

The blindworm will always choose to remain beneath the water, attempting to make as little disruption of the water as possible before striking the intruders by ambush (using its +10 Hide against the party's Spot) from beneath the black surface of the flooded chamber. Because it essentially uses "hit and run" tactics (biting, then swimming deep before coming back up from another direction to confuse its prey), attackers who cannot see through the water suffer a 50% miss chance while fighting the creature.

● **Blind Worm:** CR 2; Large Mutant Beast; HD 4d10+16; HP 38; Mas 18; Init +1; Spd 10 ft, swim 15 ft, burrow 5 ft; Defense 19, touch 10, flatfooted 18 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +9 natural); BAB +4; Grap +13; Atk +9 melee (2d6+7, bite); Full Atk +9 melee (2d6+7, bite); FS 10 ft by 10 ft; Reach 10 ft; SQ blindsight; AL none; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +0; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 20, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 3, Wis 8, Cha 3.

Skills: Hide +1 (+9 in water of junk), Listen +3, Spot +3.

Feats: Alertness.

ARMORY ENCOUNTERS (AREAS A1-A5)

The following lists the various locations concealed inside the armory building.

A1. HALLWAY (SILVER CARD).

A *silver stage IVM access card* is required for entry into this building.

This hallway leads off into the darkness, but only after a second, lights along the ceiling blink to life, illuminating the passage rather well. The walls seem burned here and there, a few dents can be seen, along with a few piles of long-rotted debris.

This hallway is protected by twin blast doors, which also require a *silver stage IVM card* to penetrate. The passage ultimately leads back to the armory.

♥ **Blast Doors:** 5 in. Thick; Hardness 10; hp 80; Break DC 45; Disable Device DC 35.

A2. DUTY OFFICER.

This room is in a serious state of disrepair, as is evident in the light bullet-deflection marks on the metal walls. A broken chair lies amidst a pile of empty and discarded boxes piled haphazardly in the room, and an old skeleton or two are apparently lying about in the center of the place.

Whatever happened here long ago is now a forgotten mystery, but it is obvious this was once a guard station of sorts, located just on the other side of the secure door in **area A1**. The officers assigned this post were charged with preventing intrusion into the armory and munitions stores...apparently they did not succeed, as the bloody mutiny among their comrades obviously led to a battle here.

Treasure: This post was looted long ago, but despite this, 2d4 loose *5.56mm ammunition* may be found with a Search check (DC 20), scattered throughout the garbage and decaying refuse.

A3. KITCHENETTE.

The room inside appears to be a small clean white area, but the smell here is almost overpowering with the scent of rot and ancient decay.

This place was a kitchen providing for the duty officers in **area A2**, and still contains some items of interest.

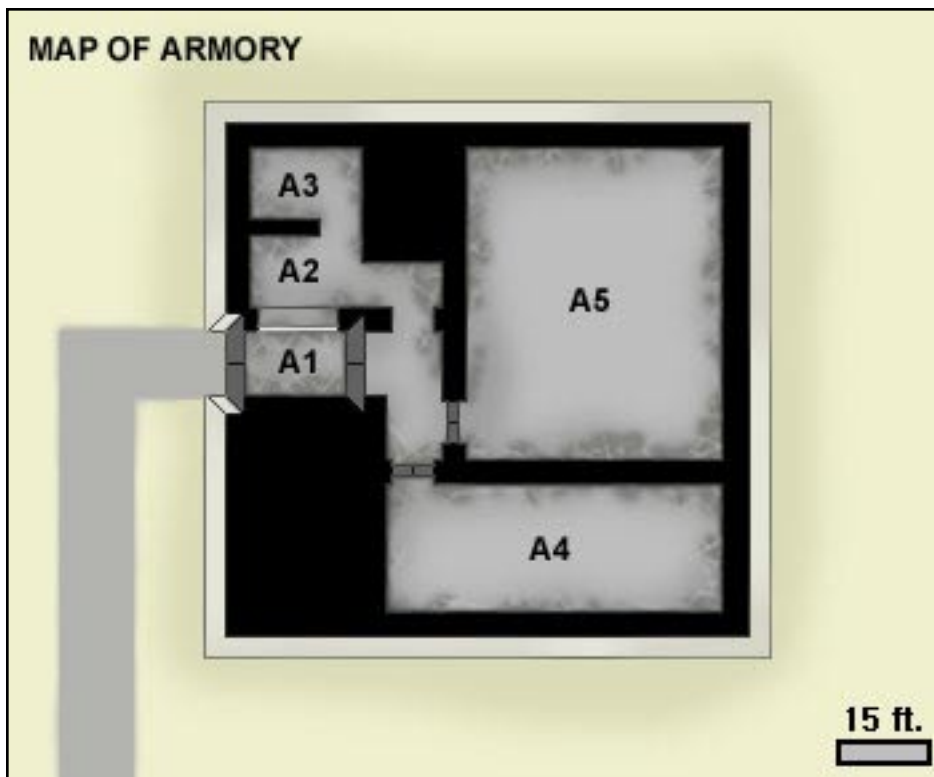
Treasure: An old electric range (no longer usable due to damage), cupboards, and sterile white "cabinets" line the walls. The main "cabinet" (an old refrigerator) contains two six-packs of soft drink cans and a few rotted items on plastic trays (the fridge no longer works, of course). Another cabinet contains 3d4 *Readi-Meals* and an additional six-pack of beer cans. One cupboard contains 2d4 plastic and metal eating utensils.

A4. WEAPONS LOCKER (SILVER CARD).

The doors to this room require a *silver stage IVM access card* to bypass. Lettering along its surface reads (to anyone who can comprehend Ancient):

WEAPONS LOCKER AUTHORIZED ACCESS ONLY

This room opens to show spartan surroundings - a few empty racks here and there, and wall-to-wall sealed metal lockers. The floor is cold and metallic, but scuff marks and dirt suggest this place was looted in a hurry many decades in the past.



♥ **Blast Doors:** 5 in. Thick; Hardness 10; hp 80; Break DC 45; Disable Device DC 35.

A5. AMMUNITION STORAGE (SILVER CARD).

The doors to this room require a *silver stage IVM access card* to bypass. Lettering along its surface reads (to anyone who can comprehend Ancient):

**AMMUNITION STORAGE
AUTHORIZED ACCESS
ONLY
NO SMOKING**

This room illuminates itself instantly as one enters, and it is obvious this place has been secure for centuries. A thin layer of dust covers every metallic surface in the room, and several sturdy olive drab cases sit about in stacks against the far wall.

This was formerly the armory of the base, and though much of the essential equipment was removed, a few items of interest may still be found within.

As with the storage bunker (area L), the garrison booby trapped the weapons locker to prevent the remaining items from falling into enemy hands.

⊙ **Explosive Trap (Satchel Charge B):** CR 3; no attack roll necessary (8d6); Reflex save (DC 20) to take half damage; Search (DC 16); Disable Device (DC 16).

Treasure: Each and every strongbox in the room is locked with an electronic lock, requiring a *silver stage IVM card* to open. There is, however, a 2 in 6 chance that these electronic locks have long shorted-out, allowing the characters to get at their contents (alternatively, each can be forced open). The contents of the cases are as follows:

| | |
|-----|------------------------------|
| #1 | 2d4 M16A2 assault rifles. |
| #2 | 2d3 M16A2 assault rifles. |
| #3 | Empty. |
| #4 | 1d4 Beretta 92F pistols. |
| #5 | 1d3 military security suits. |
| #6 | Empty. |
| #7 | Empty. |
| #8 | Empty. |
| #9 | 1d2 laser rifles. |
| #10 | Empty. |
| #11 | 1 shock-field glove. |
| #12 | Empty. |

This room is sealed

with a protective layer of armored ferro-crete, to prevent damage to the rest of the base in the event of an ammunition explosion or in the event of fire. The room itself is, obviously, the main munitions storage area of the base.

Treasure: The strongboxes in the room are of the same kind found in area A4 (with the same chance of malfunction). The contents of the cases in this area, however, are as follows:

| | |
|-----|---|
| #1 | 10d6 boxes 5.56mm ammunition |
| #2 | Empty. |
| #3 | Empty |
| #4 | Empty. |
| #5 | 5d6 boxes 9mm ammunition |
| #6 | 1d4 power beltpacks. |
| #7 | 3d8 power clips. |
| #8 | 1d4-1 (minimum 1) power backpacks. |
| #9 | Empty. |
| #10 | Empty. |
| #11 | 1d6 fragmentation grenades, 1d4 anti-tank grenades. |
| #12 | 2d3 satchel charge As, 1d4 satchel charge Bs. |
| #13 | Empty. |
| #14 | 2d6 fragmentation grenades. |
| #15 | Empty. |
| #16 | Empty. |

| | |
|-----|---|
| #17 | 3d4 <i>Hyrda 70 M247 Rockets</i> (for the military security robot). |
| #18 | 3d6 boxes 5.56mm ammunition |
| #19 | 1d4 <i>power packs</i> . |
| #20 | Empty. |

♥ **Blast Doors:** 5 in. Thick; Hardness 10; hp 80; Break DC 45; Disable Device DC 35.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure ends when the few creatures and defenses of Skeleton Base are defeated or bypassed. The characters are then free to pillage and loot the base as they wish (alternatively, the PCs may simply do “hit and run” on the compound, taking what they can before fleeing in the face of the military security robot)!

The written adventure ends here, but you may wish to add on to it. Perhaps the PCs now head in the direction the ambushed party (in the intro) came from - maybe a few members of their community survived, and are willing to pay for their services to help re-take their home from the powerful raider gang? The PCs are now well equipped (at least well enough to handle a small army of spear and crossbow-armed desert bandits), and the task should be a challenging - and rewarding - one.

The Com Center (**area C6**) could also prove to be a springboard for other adventures. What if the PCs are able to revive the electronics equipment? What would they would pick up on the air? It is possible the communications equipment might still be able to make contact with other military bases all across the wasteland; whatever guards those distant places might still be listening for orders. Or perhaps the PCs accidentally make contact with a lost Vault of human holdouts, otherwise forgotten, whose inhabitants have been eagerly awaiting for word that the surface is safe - and can now emerge to retake the world...

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