

Goliath

"How do you shoot the devil in the back? What if you miss?" – Verbal Kint, 'The Usual Suspects'

Introduction

This adventure is designed for powerful high-level characters. It is a throw-in type scenario that could fit into many campaigns. It would probably work extremely well if the GM needs to knock the players down a peg or two, as Goliath is no pushover. Only parties equipped with military technology like anti-tank rockets or energy weapons should even approach Goliath's domain unless they are suicidal.

Synopsis

During the last days of the ancients many terrible and wondrous war machines were created. One of the most potent was the M3A2 Powell Hovercraft Battle Tank. This devastating war machine incorporated many of the military technologies available to the ancients including artificial intelligence processors, reactive armor, adaptive camouflage, hovercraft lift systems, micro-fusion reactors, magnetic shielding, and pulse laser cannons. The last known existing prototype of this weapons system sat dormant in the Nevada desert of the former United States until about ten years ago. A luckless desert scav who found the control trailer for the tank inadvertently switched the system on, and quickly became the tanks first victim. Popularly known as Goliath, and often described as a "desert demon", the tank has aggressively defended the locale around its control trailer against all comers for the last decade. Many have gone out into the wasteland to confront the demon, but few have returned.

Hooks

Goliath is somewhat of a legend in the Deadlands / Las Vegas area. Depending on your campaign and the makeup of your party, several methods can be used to bring the group into contact with Goliath.

- Foreshadowed event – the players have heard the rumors of the mighty Goliath lurking out in the desert from a trader, their favorite bar, a local NPC, etc. Finally they have been put in position (one of the other hooks may suffice) to meet the legend.
- Quest – the party's tribe, organization, or sponsor has need of something that Goliath is inadvertently guarding or blocking access to. The party has been assigned to remove the demon at all costs.
- Bad Luck – the group is just passing through and stumbles across the tanks designated patrol area, to their distress. Afterwards, should they survive, they should find out what the heck that thing was by reading technical documents from the control trailer.
- Rite of Passage – the party's tribe, organization, or sponsor has a tradition that says one must confront the demon as a rite of passage into manhood, priesthood, chief hood, or full membership. It is not required to defeat the demon, only to confront it and return alive.
- Seek and Destroy – the party has been hired or will be rewarded to rid the area of this troublesome beast.
- Betrayal – the group was given directions or a map that leads them right into Goliath's path by someone who desired to eliminate them.

Adventure Background

This adventure is pretty simple: if anyone enters Goliath's domain, they will be attacked. Most of the GM's time will be spent to set up the adventure, per the rumors section below and the hooks section above.

The increasing hostility of the rest of the world towards the United States led to enormous increases in military budgets and R&D spending. The new breed of American armed forces was more and more

automated, rapidly transportable, and deadly. Widespread success of drone surveillance aircraft quickly lead to remotely piloted fighters for the Navy and Air Force. Soon these breakthroughs were coupled with artificial intelligences that could function without constant human monitoring. These AI systems became more and more sophisticated and saw widespread use in the ancient's more advanced militaries.

One such system was setup for a demo for some top Pentagon brass in the remote desert north of the town of Prospect, Nevada. The tank was packaged in the rear of a semi trailer, the back dedicated to transporting one Powell-model tank, and the front of the trailer set up as a control room for the system. The local roads were blocked off by military police for the duration of the demonstration.

On the morning of the Day, this particular model was to show off some new capabilities in a simulated battle environment. A grandstand was setup 50 yards from a mock combat zone consisting of a Soviet BMP armored personnel carrier, a T-90 tank, and several foxholes with dummy soldiers firing small arms and RPG rounds. The demo was a complete success, and all targets were destroyed in a spectacular light show. During the "meet and greet" time afterwards where contractors from the defense firms met with the Army officers selected to view the demonstration, notification was received of an imminent enemy attack. The technicians were ordered to button up the system, placing the tank in the trailer and shutting it down. Military personnel would come by to transport the tank back to base ASAP. This never happened.

Quietly the system sat on standby, the non-descript unmarked white semi-trailer slowly being buried in the blowing desert sands. One day a scav walked out of the desert and noticed the half-buried bleachers and the semi-trailer. Looking for loot, the scav climbed up a small set of stairs to a door in the side of the trailer. The computers and electronics within lay dormant, awaiting commands. This scav had some knowledge of ancient technology, and in a fit of curiosity began throwing switches, turning knobs, and attempting to reactivate the computers. Much to his dismay, he succeeded. The powered ramp at the back of the trailer lowered, the tank activated with a loud whine and a whoosh of air. The tank rolled down the ramp to the ground. The scav stood petrified in horror, staring at a shining metal contraption floating above the ground. It spoke to him, but the man did not understand the ancient commands. When the vehicle disappeared, leaving only a slight shimmer to the air where it once stood, the scav's will had been broken. He began to run, but was cut down by a burst of laser fire. Thus a demon was born.

The last commands given to the weapon were to patrol the area and defend its control station. Deadly force was authorized. The patrol zone of the tank covered the mouth of a mountain pass somewhat well traveled by trade caravans. The disappearance of these caravans and the warriors sent to find them caused confusion and fear. Rumors began to filter through this area of the wasteland, becoming well known even to those in the City of Lights. A shining metal demon would appear, speak in a loud voice, and disappear. Those who fled sometimes lived to tell their terrifying tale. Many others did not. Anyone who stood his or her ground or attempted a hostile act was never heard from again. Many rumors and superstitions sprang up almost overnight. Some even believe this apparition is the devil himself. The rumors began calling the demon by name, attaching a personal face to an evil used to scare small children much like the bogeymen of old: Goliath.

M3A2 Powell Unmanned Hovercraft Battle Tank

The M3A2 Powell tank is an AI controlled entity with limited autonomy. The system can be programmed to accomplish certain missions based on directives and rules. Once programmed, the tank can perform its tasks with no further human intervention, although a manual override is possible at any time. An evolution of the American battle tank legacy embodied by the Patton, Abrams, and Schwartzkopf main battle tanks, the Powell was designed to be the best battle tank in the world at the time of its conception. It married powerful network aware AI systems for command and control with the best military hardware available.

The core of the system was a micro-fusion reactor, improved from the original Schwartzkopf units, and capable of powering all of the vehicles systems. The extra power was needed because the Powell abandoned the traditional tracked vehicle design armed with projectile weapons in favor of a hovercraft suspension and laser cannon weapons platform. The skin of the tank is a layer of reactive armor designed to stop all but the strongest anti-tank weapons coated with a highly reflective layer designed to reduce

damage from energy weapons. Additional damage resistance is obtained via a force field emitter that protects the vehicle against all known forms of attack. The micro-fusion reactor runs cool, and all waste heat from the tank is passed through a series of baffles that mask its infrared signature to near background levels. Perhaps the most striking new feature of this powerful combat vehicle, however, was the Adaptive Camouflage System (ACS) that when activated rendered the tank nearly invisible to visual detection methods.

Having no need to accommodate crew comfort, ammunition storage, or spare fuel capacity allowed the designers of the Powell to design a vehicle having a low targeting profile, high maneuverability, extreme survivability, and maximum firepower that was still transportable by small cargo plane to any combat hotspot on the globe.

The tank's mode of operation as currently programmed is to endlessly patrol a half-mile radius around the control station. Any threat encountered by the vehicle will be warned in a loud voice projected from the vehicle in ancient "HALT! THE UNITED STATES ARMY RESTRICTS THIS AREA TO OFFICIAL USE ONLY. IMMEDIATELY VACATE THIS AREA OR YOU WILL BE FIRED UPON. ANY HOSTILE ACTS WILL TRIGGER AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE. DEADLY FORCE HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED. YOU HAVE FIFTEEN SECONDS TO COMPLY." After giving this warning, the target will be given about 15 seconds (3 combat rounds) to head directly away from the tank, avoiding conflict. Any threatening move or a movement towards the tank will immediately initiate combat. The tank will activate its ACS system and attack until the target is destroyed or manages to escape past the half-mile patrol limit. No other discussion, queries, or commands will have any effect on the weapon.

GM's Notes: One way to defeat this formidable weapon would be to evade detection, enter the control trailer, and shutdown the tank with a manual override (Knowledge (computers) DC25). Other promising tactics include luring the tank over a large explosive, damaging the fragile hovercraft system from underneath and immobilizing the tank, or luring the tank into a deep enough hole (at least 10' X 10' and 5' deep) covered so as not to be obvious to visual inspection. Direct attack is always an option, but the tanks force field and armor require high-powered weapons be used to penetrate its defenses.

Rumor and legend have named the tank "Goliath" despite the fact it is not physically all that big. While large, the Powell tank was designed to be easily transportable and fit into a C-17 cargo aircraft. Therefore the tanks physical dimensions are approximately 2.78 meters wide x 6 meters long x 2 meters high. Goliath's reputation outweighs his physical size.

Rumors and Superstition

Here are some things that NPC's may tell the group about Goliath. Some are partially true, most are false, but they all make up the legend of the desert demon.

- The demon once descended upon a small town in the night and slaughtered everyone, leaving one terrified half-mad survivor to proclaim him throughout the wasteland.
- A group of well-armed Rangers set out to destroy Goliath and re-open the trade routes, but were never heard from again. Another party met the same fate, and now the Rangers refuse to send anyone out in the direction of Goliath's lair or to even talk about it.
- Goliath's heart is a piece of corium twice the size of a man's head. It is worth an unimaginable amount of riches, enough to make a man a king.
- When the gods cast Goliath out of Heaven, he crashed down to Earth with a fiery trail of smoke and ash. Some claim to have seen first or second or third hand this event.
- The demon Goliath guards the entrance to a lost paradise where the world exists as it did for the ancients. Or alternatively, some post-apocalypse Christian sects believe that Goliath is the Angel of God who guards the original Garden of Eden with his flaming sword.
- Goliath was created by the last of the ancients in spite, simply to punish or destroy those who managed to survive the apocalypse.

- Goliath IS the last of the ancients, who of course were a race of advanced machines that held mankind as slaves. When men revolted and threatened to escape, the ancients destroyed the world rather than allow man his freedom.
- Goliath was a king of the ancients, who endlessly searches for his lost love. Now completely mad, he kills any he meets.
- Anyone who can approach the demon and actually touch it gains mysterious psychic powers. As a matter of fact, my friends cousin knew a man who approached the demon while it was sleeping and...
- Goliath is a wondrous machine created by the ancients to guard their storehouse of knowledge. Devised as a test to evaluate mankind's strength and cunning, when Goliath is finally defeated, the secrets of the ancients will be available to everyone, ushering in a new Age of the Ancients.

Running the Adventure

Read this text to the party when they first enter Goliath's area:

A mountain pass looms ahead in the distance, the jumbled brown rocks piled against each other so high they seem to touch the sky. You pass the charred skeletons of what appears to be several humans. It is hard to tell due to the blasted and blackened condition of the remains. What appear to be the remnants of a weapon in one burned hand is little more than a slagged lump of metal. Small spatters of metal nearby reflect sunlight. Another pile of sun-bleached white bones sits nearby. Nothing moves in this area except scrub brush and tumbleweeds blown by the dry desert wind.

Read this text to the party when they first encounter Goliath:

A high-pitched whine, almost out of your hearing range, begins to increase in pitch over the whistling of the desert wind. Something is definitely approaching you, coming closer.

At last you see a glint of reflected light off a shiny surface. It seems to be some kind of vehicle, most likely military in nature. A small dust cloud surrounds the vehicle as it approaches you. About one hundred yards away the vehicle stops, bright sunlight sparkling off its faceted exterior. A turret on the top rotates to point right at you. The vehicle seems to float slightly above the ground – not touching the surface at all! Somewhat mesmerized by the sight, you nearly jump when a loud voice booms out in the ancient tongue:

"HALT! THE UNITED STATES ARMY RESTRICTS THIS AREA TO OFFICIAL USE ONLY. IMMEDIATELY VACATE THIS AREA OR YOU WILL BE FIRED UPON. ANY HOSTILE ACTS WILL TRIGGER AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE. DEADLY FORCE HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED. YOU HAVE FIFTEEN SECONDS TO COMPLY."

Unless the party turns tail pretty much immediately, Goliath will activate his camouflage and move in for the kill. Only weaponry and skill will determine whether the desert demon will claim another set of victims or finally be vanquished. Surely any group that could kill a demon would earn renown throughout the wastelands.

New Creatures

Goliath (M3A2 Powell UHBT) CR 15; Huge-size construct; HD 15d10 +50; hp 125; Mas -; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +20 natural); BAB +10; Grap -; Atk +10 ranged (12d12, laser cannon) or +10 ranged (3d10, pulse laser); Full Atk +10 ranged (12d12, laser cannon) or +10 ranged (3d10, pulse laser); FS 20 ft. by 20 ft.; Reach -; SQ construct traits, reactive/ablative armor DR 10/-, force field DR 10/-, invisibility, dark vision, low light vision; AL neutral; SV Fort -, Ref +0, Will -; AP 5; Rep +5; Str 25, Dex 9, Con -, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 5.
Skills: Knowledge (tactics) + 10, Listen +10, Navigate +10, Spot +10.
Feats: Futuristic Weapons Proficiency, Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Burst Fire