

ture, and so NPCs who are full-fledged characters with personalities and motives can act in unexpected ways that enrich the story for everyone. Also, keep in mind that NPCs represent only one kind of *Shadowrun* opponent. Anything that acts as an obstacle to the player characters or threatens them can serve as opposition—critters, highly sophisticated security systems, a hostile Awakened wilderness, and so on. Using such non-traditional opponents offers players and gamemasters a chance to stretch their skills, abilities and imaginations.

The following entries offer a few suggestions for potential opposition.

Corporations: The corporations of the 2070s—from giants like Ares Macrotechnology to mom-and-pop shops looking to move up the corporate food chain—offer plenty of niches for ruthless individuals willing to use any means necessary to advance their plans, whether helping the corporate bottom line or feathering their own nests. With the recent shift in the status quo following the Crash of '64, business has become more cutthroat than ever. Consequently, corporations are less willing than they might have been in the past to let shadowrunners screw with them and walk away.

Corps are nominally sensitive to public opinion and government oversight; after all, boycotts, lawsuits, and investigations are bad for business. If the characters run up against a corporate executive and trash her illegal scheme, the parent company is likely to piously disclaim any knowledge of the criminal's actions.

Organized Crime: Crime is a growth industry in the 2070s, and the underworld is a rich source of enemies: the Yakuza, the Mafia, the Vory, the Triads, smugglers and pirates. All of these organized crime groups prey on innocent people, not-so-innocent people, and on one another. Shadowrunners affiliated with any of these groups, whether formally or not, may find themselves doing Mob business or getting caught in the middle of a large-scale turf war.

Tackling any criminal organization can be deadly because such groups can move quickly and decisively. On the other hand, characters can exploit the underworld's frequent power struggles, and the samurai-like code of so many Mobs can also work to the shadowrunners' advantage. If they play by the rules and their opponent does not, their foe's own fellow criminals may help the characters triumph over their enemy.

Government/Military Organizations: In the chaotic politics of the Sixth World, government can be an enemy or an ally. Governments are big and powerful, but clumsy when trying to swat a mosquito-sized enemy. A typical government enemy is an intelligence organization or a bureaucratic office. If such an enemy is operating covertly or illegally, then the characters can defeat it through exposure; the government will disclaim all knowledge of its minions' activities and leave them to twist slowly in the wind.

Most governments can also call on military resources that almost no one else can match, including entire divisions of soldiers, novahot tech toys and major mojo. On a smaller scale, almost every modern military contains Special Forces: Tir Tairngire's Ghosts, the Sioux Nation's Wildcats, Navy

SEALs and so on. Such forces are usually called in to handle seriously weird magical phenomena or other problems too major and too sensitive to be entrusted to anyone else. They tend to be extremely well-equipped and armed with the very latest in personal weapons, and they are very good at what they do.

Police: The cops can be with you or against you—more often the latter. The typical law enforcement contractors in *Shadowrun* are stretched thin trying to keep the people they're paid to protect from going under in a wave of crime. Widespread corruption often leaves the clean cops powerless; a crooked officer whose schemes cross the team's trail makes an extremely plausible opponent. Straight or crooked, most law-enforcement types share a natural, mutual hostility with shadowrunners, who by definition break the law on every run they pull.

Politicians and Rads: Politics is a dirty business, and shadowruns can get messy when they are politically motivated. To offer just one possibility, a would-be governor who is the target of a dirty-tricks campaign conducted by the player characters may well hire shadowrunners of her own to oppose them. And if she wins the election, such an opponent might easily turn her personal security against the runners who crossed her.

Radical activist groups ("rads")—along with their front groups or their hidden masters—also make good opponents. Most of them are riddled with internal politics and extremely sensitive to bad publicity. They rarely have crack mercenaries on call, but their members are often fanatics and thugs, and depending on their individual backgrounds, may have excellent combat training. Typical rad opposition includes local chapters or splinter groups with agendas that include blackmail, assassination, terrorism, and the like.

Gangs: *Shadowrun* gangs run the gamut from mutual-protection groups of friends to street punks who prostitute for money to RV-equipped go-gangs that terrorize the highways to syndicates of hardened criminals with drugs, guns, and connections. If the player characters are members of an opposing gang, or even if they just stumble onto a gang's turf, they are likely to become targets. The level of opposition depends on the gang's size and the individual abilities of its members, offering the gamemaster considerable freedom to adjust it to suit the storyline.

International Opponents: Megacorporations may have usurped much of the power once wielded by national governments, but that hasn't lowered the stakes of geopolitics or reduced the number of spies, wheeler-dealers, and terrorists running around. The CIA, Interpol, the successors of the KGB, international fixers, arms dealers, and general troublemakers are just a few of the international opponents that can turn up in an adventure.

Complications

If all shadowruns were as simple as gathering allies and blasting the opposition, they wouldn't be very exciting for long. Complications are the unexpected twists and turns that help keep things interesting and keep the players