

Dealing With DMSO

Branson Hagerty (Blackjack's Shadowrun Page <http://shadowrun.html.com/users/blackjack/>) Posted August 11, 1997

People seem to have a love/hate relationship with DMSO and squirt weaponry. Generally, they love it when they use it, and hate it when it's used against them. Despite which position people take, there seems to be a general consensus that squirt weaponry combined with DMSO is a game unbalancing conjunction. While I think it's great that people seems to knock people out with Squirt weapons more often than they kill, the power of squirt weaponry seems to have caused more than one gamemaster headache.

Below are a few rule ideas and optional equipment designed to deal with the DMSO problem. Some are fairly decent; some suck. Pick and choose as you wish. (Most of the equipment/chemical examples have rules with relate to my Flesh Contact rule variation. GMs are welcome to design rules around the substance or object that are more suitable to the general Shadowrun rules, or their own house rule variations.)

Optional Rules

Flesh Contact

Since Shadowrun does not generally work off a hit location damage system, it can be difficult to tell whether or not DMSO managed to work its way to the skin. Vests with plates, hardened armor, and perhaps even raincoats have the potential to stop the liquid before it damages anybody. If a target is wearing a security armor suit without a helmet the only places the chemical could come in contact with skin would be the seams of the armor (if the suit is not sealed) and the head (if they're not wearing a helmet). If the target is fully armored and sealed, the odds of the DMSO hitting anything are about nil.

My DMSO/Squirt rules are a variation of my Called Shot Rules, Variation 2. (The article is on my page under the 'old stuff'). To review: My called shot rules get rid of the flat +8 modifier for hitting a specific section of a target, and instead modifies the to-hit target number by +1 for every point of armor the attacker wishes to disregard on his target. Basically, an attacker firing at somebody wearing heavy military armor could take a +14 modifier to his to-hit target number and, if by some miracle he actually succeeds, the target doesn't get any armor benefits at all (just for this shot, of course). The attacker could also take a +5 and, if he hits, the defender will have an armor rating of 9 for defense. Rather than aiming for 'the head' the attacker aims 'better' than he normally would, perhaps looking for seams in the target's armor, lightly armored patches, etc. The actual hit location is still left up to the GM. If the attacker did hit in the +14 example above, the GM may very well declare that the attacker managed to hit a weak spot in the target's face plate and blow off his head.

The DMSO/Squirt variation of this rule takes a lot of the kick out of a weapon that, in its current state, is way too powerful. One rule I've gotten rid of is the combat pool negation rule (or the Dodge pool, as it's stated in Shadowtech which came out before SRII.) Everybody else may wish to keep it; I simply got rid of it because, generally, I don't use the combat pool in my games. Essentially, the pool rule stated that "if combat successes exceed attack successes then DMSO doesn't take effect.". I think it's a pain in the ass.

My rules are a bit simpler, although they may go to far in reducing the effectiveness of squirt weaponry. Basically, if you're firing against somebody with porous armor (kevlar, armor clothing, etc.) add 1/2 of this armor's rating to the target number of the attacker. Only one success is needed, and the DMSO makes 'flesh contact'. I'd probably allow the target to use their bio or cyber based armor as well, just to keep things simple.

If the target is wearing hardened armor (security suits, military armor, etc) it's a lot more difficult to get a good flesh hit. For hardened armored targets, add the full rating of their armor to the target number of the attacker. Again, only one success is needed for the DMSO to make 'flesh contact'.

Perhaps you can see how this system follows my basic Called Shots philosophy. By adding 1/2 armor to the attacker's to-hit roll, the attacker is, essentially, looking for a decent place on the body to hit. I believe, despite the porous nature of most armor, that a Squirt shot hitting somebody in his chest if he's wearing a jacket over clothing over form fitting would still have some difficulty making legitimate flesh contact. And even if this belief is false, something has to be done to keep people from squirting everybody to hell and back.

The hardened armor aspect of these rules may seem harsh by, again, they follow my basic armor philosophy. Since you HAVE to hit exposed flesh if the target's wearing hardened armor, the task is much more difficult. If you have somebody dressed in a suit of heavy military armor (minus the helmet), you'd have to hit him in the head (or get lucky enough to tag a seam in the armor.) If you hit them anywhere else, the Squirt shot simply splashes.

DMSO Breakdown

GMs may wish to declare that DMSO loses its effectiveness after being exposed to air for more than a few minutes. This rule may solve a few problems, such as 'how do you get out of a suit of hardened armor if it's covered with DMSO/Cyanide?'

Optional Equipment/Chemicals

Silicon Urethane

A combination of two popular sealants, Silicon Urethane can be applied to most armor, rendering it impervious to most liquids and providing a reasonable amount of defense against DMSO. Silicon Urethane comes in a spray applicator and must be reapplied on a weakly basis.

SU covered armor provides an additional +1 worth of protection against DMSO (i.e. an armor jacket would have a rating of 6/2 against DMSO instead of 5/2.)

Cost: 500 per square meter.

Availability: 5/12 hrs

Absorption Inhibitive Atropine

When inhaled, AIA causes a reaction similar to that of conventional Atropine poisoning, but with greatly lessened strength and effects. Instantly upon inhaling AIA, the skin closes all pores thus rendering it temporarily impervious to DMSO or other liquid compounds. Packaged in a 20 dose inhaler, each dose of AIA lasts for 30 seconds and the inhaler may be adjusted to introduce anywhere between one and five doses simultaneously, thus permitting an effect lasting a maximum of 2.5 minutes. Any simultaneous dosage over 3 inflicts a stun wound for each level over 3 the dosage was (i.e. 4 doses inflicts a light wound, 5 doses inflict two light wounds).

If an individual receives more than 5 doses within a 24 hour period they may suffer Atropine poisoning,

receiving damage and side effects as they would from a full scale dose of the chemical (Shadowtech p96). Roll the user's unmodified body against a target of 4. If they succeed, no adverse effects are felt. If they fail, they're extremely screwed. The target number raises by 2 each time another 5 doses are inhaled (i.e. the inhalation of 20 doses within a 24 hour period would require the user to roll a target number of 8 in order to keep from becoming poisoned.)

Add provides an additional +3 protection against DMSO. Do not divide by 2. (Example: An armor jacket would provide 2 points of protection against DMSO (i.e. it would raise the to-hit target of the attacker by 2.) Inhaling a dose of AIA would raise that protection to 5.)

Cost: 300 for 20 dose inhailer

Availability: 4/4 Days