
The Cabinet by Craig Russell

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Introduction and Rules

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(This game was developed by one of my friends Craig Russell and is immense fun to play).

The Cabinet is a game of political intrigue and deal making.

The characters are the President of the United States and important members of his Cabinet.

A game session of 4 to 6 hours may cover a political crisis over the course of several game days.

Three 6-sided dice are used to resolve skill rolls and opposed rolls. Play largely revolves around the exchange of information (and mis-information) between the player-characters during Cabinet meetings.

One very important aspect of The Cabinet for the GM (Game Master or Referee) to note is that the President has NO information sources other than his Cabinet. This makes the President's job extremely tense and difficult.

It is often useful for the GM to act as the President's secretary, both to take notes of the President's meetings (for later reference) and to schedule appointments.

Each game day usually consists of:

A) One general cabinet meeting for those cabinet members available. The President chairs this meeting.

The President receives reports from his cabinet and issues orders to them.

Some Cabinet members may be sent on missions by the President or they may choose to take junkets out of Washington. Whether they can be reached by telephone or not depends on the circumstances.

B) No more than two private meetings between the President and one or more Cabinet members can take place each game day. During these private meetings the President can receive secret reports and give secret orders. (This allows for plausible deniability for BOTH the President and the cabinet member.)

The President has many duties (i.e. photo ops with boy scouts from Texas, meetings with foreign heads of state, etc.), which limit the time he can spend with his Cabinet members.

As the President's secretary the GM can cut short these private meetings by reminding the President that he has another appointment scheduled. This again is useful in keeping the game moving.

The President can choose to schedule either or both of his private meetings before or after the general Cabinet meeting.

C) GM meetings with Cabinet Members.

Before and/or after Cabinet meetings the individual cabinet members may meet privately with the GM to describe what actions they are taking to fulfill the President's orders (and their own agenda).

The GM must use his judgement to determine:

- i) the likely outcome of such actions (the GM may require the Cabinet Members to make skill rolls),
- ii) the amount of time the Cabinet member has to devote to any course of action.

As a rule of thumb, the GM may wish to limit his interactions with each Cabinet member to about 5 minutes. This keeps the game moving along.

D) News Media announcements. Whenever the GM feels it is appropriate he can introduce "newspaper headlines", TV special reports, etc. The morning Washington Post or CNN are always a great way to bring important stories into the game.

-----SKILLS-----

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There are several skills that are used by the players in The Cabinet. To determine if a skill is used successfully roll three 6-sided dice. If you roll under the skill level your character succeeds. If not, you fail.

Spin Doctor

This is your skill at redirecting public attention from embarrassing scandals.

Leaks

Use this skill any time you want to plant news stories without being identified as the source.

Dirty Tricks

Your ability to fake evidence, direct break-ins, plant bugs, etc. For most PCs this is limited to the Washington D.C. area only.

Political Influence

Use this skill if you must insist on a meeting with cabinet members who do not wish to meet with you. This skill also comes into play when you wish to affect the behavior of NPC political individuals such as senators, congressmen, etc.

As usual, the GM may ascribe + or - modifiers to these skill rolls, depending on what the character is trying to do, and what the "political climate" is like at the time.

-----SPECIAL POWERS-----

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Each Player's Character also has one or more "Special Power". These powers may or may not be known by the other Player Characters.

For example:

The President's special power is:

"As President you can give orders to your Cabinet members to do specific things."

One of the FBI Director's special powers is:

You can have people anywhere in the USA arrested and charged with criminal offences. (But you better be sure the evidence is convincing.) The GM will act as judge in any

such case.

One of the CIA Director's special powers is:
Global Covert Ops (Your kung-fu is the best!) You can conduct dirty tricks anywhere in the world, not just in D.C.

-----POLITICAL DEAL MAKING -----

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To simulate political deal making within The Cabinet the GM can use the following rules.

Sometimes the whole cabinet will back a particular policy. If a PC can get all of the cabinet members to support their initiative the President must approve the proposal unless he beats that PC at an opposed Political Influence roll (the Cabinet member gets a +3 to his roll).

If a Cabinet member doesn't have unanimous support he gets a -2 to his roll for every other Cabinet member who is neutral and -3 for every one actively opposed.

If the Cabinet member wins the President must support this proposal. Naturally Presidents don't take kindly to this kind of manipulation.

----- Sample Scenario ----- ----- X-Files in the Oval Office -----

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The Cast of Characters

- The President and Cabinet Members -

[Raymond Ramsay - President](#)

[Frank Post - Vice-President](#)

[Nelson Lord - Secretary of Defense](#)

[Ross Parks - Director Of The CIA](#)

[Jack Snow - Director Of The FBI](#)

[Thomas Water - Secretary Of State](#)

[Don Silver - Presidential Adviser On Science](#)

Plus

[Cameron Eros - Special Prosecutor](#)

The PCs are listed in decreasing importance to the scenario. A fun game can be run with just the first 4 PCs but a full slate of PCs will make the game even more fun.

Take special note that the Special Prosecutor is NOT allowed to attend the Cabinet meetings. He may however meet privately with any of the PCs who wish to do so. He

may of course meet with the GM and can subpoena people if necessary.

Astute political observers will note that not all of the PCs listed for this game are actual members of a President's usual Cabinet. Some liberty has been taken to make for a more interesting mix of Cabinet members.

-----Scenario Background-----

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It is recommended that the GM read all of the PC's Character sheets as this will give you a clear idea of the competing factions.

The situation is that the President suspects that there are government conspiracies afoot that may lead to the downfall of America. His goal is to uncover these conspiracies and expose the criminals without destroying the country in the process. Therefore he must act cautiously and in secret. One or possibly more of his Cabinet may be involved. But he must have solid proof.

As in any government, there are secrets, scandals, interconnecting loyalties, fears and rivalries. The President must separate these from the real conspiracy problems. He must beware of false information, innuendo and mysterious phone calls.

The President must work through his staff (played by the GM) and the members of the Cabinet to obtain information and take action. The GM acts as the President's personal secretary, physician, Secret Service men, White House staff, family, press secretary, etc.

Even while working on this vital project the President must continue the day-to-day business of governing the country. There are programs that he should choose to support, and there may be others he has to support just to keep his party in power.

The game begins with the usual Monday morning Cabinet meeting. There is tension in the Middle East, a trade dispute with Canada, concerns over the Russian economy, etc. and you are in the hottest seat in Washington.

- Character Sheets -

[Raymond Ramsay - President of the USA](#)

Goals

You want the truth.

You suspect that there are government conspiracies afoot that may lead to the downfall of America.

Your goal is to uncover these conspiracies and expose the criminals without destroying the country in the process. Therefore you must act cautiously and in secret.

You suspect that one or possibly more of your Cabinet may be involved.

But you must have solid proof.

As in any government, there are secrets, scandals, interconnecting loyalties, fears and rivalries. You must separate these from the real conspiracy problems. Beware of false information, innuendo and mysterious phone calls.

As President you must work through your staff and the members of the Cabinet to obtain information and take action. The GM acts as your personal secretary, physician, Secret Service men, White House staff, family, press secretary, etc.

Please note, the President only has time for two private meetings per day outside of his regular Cabinet meeting.

Even while working on this vital project you must continue the day-to-day business of governing the country. There are programs that you should choose to support, and there may be others you have to support just to keep your party in power.

Skills

Spin Doctor	15
Leaks	15
Dirty Tricks	12
Political Influence	15

Special Powers

As President you can give orders to your Cabinet members to do specific things.

Frank Post - Vice-President

Goals:

1. First and foremost, the endorsement of the current president for the nomination as candidate for the party in the next presidential election. Naturally, if the current president were to do anything that would jeopardize your candidacy, you might have to distance yourself from him.
2. Secondly, to have a good relationship with all of the other members of the Cabinet so that they will support his candidacy for president in the next election.
3. It is important for the vice-president to keep his past indiscretions a secret. If they become public, he must downplay the issue: redirect the public's attention, etc. You have three secrets you must keep hidden:
 - A. An affair with one of your female assistants.
 - B. A campaign contribution which you received from an organized crime figure.
 - C. A contact you had with a Russian spy several years ago.
4. Although not essential, the vice-president would like to get rid of the Special Prosecutor.

Skills

Spin Doctor	15
Leaks	15
Dirty Tricks	12
Political Influence	15

Special powers

You have connections with the cyberspace community. There are computer hackers who will help you. However you must never let this become known to the public.

You have connections with important members of the Senate and Congress. They will often do you favors, but there is always a price (now or later).

Nelson Lord - Secretary of Defense

Goals

1. You want government funding for germ warfare experiments.
2. You support increased funding for the space program, provided that it is connected to military applications.
3. You are opposed to aid for foreign powers.
4. You want to be able to bring military personnel into the domestic "War on Drugs."

(Secret Motivation: You are acting in partnership with tall grey alien beings from another world. Your interest in the germ warfare, bringing your people in on the War on Drugs and the space program work are connected to this. The grey aliens warn you of an invasion of Earth that is threatened by small green aliens. You must be ready to fight back against the Greens.)

Skills

Spin Doctor	12
Leaks	13
Dirty Tricks	13
Political Influence	14

Special Powers

Due to your connections with the aliens you have access to a limited amount of alien high tech that can make "strange things" happen to people (i.e. they will see ghosts, hear voices, etc.) Naturally, any one reporting such things may be labeled as unstable by the press.

Ross Parks - Director Of The CIA

Goals

1. The CIA is in favor of government regulation of the Internet.
2. You want to re-start the smallpox immunization program.

(Secret Motivation: You are acting in partnership with small green alien beings from another world. The green aliens warn you of an invasion of Earth that is threatened by tall gray aliens. You must be ready to fight back against the Grays. You want to re-start the small pox immunization program because you can use it to test the population to discover who has been changed by the Grays.)

4. The CIA is opposed to aid for foreign powers. (This might help the Grays).

Skills

Spin Doctor	13
Leaks	15
Dirty Tricks	15
Political Influence	12

Special Powers

Due to your connections with the aliens you can arrange for people to be temporarily abducted! They are usually returned within 1 -2 days. Any one reporting such things may be labeled as crazy by the press. People who are protected, (i.e. the President, other Cabinet members, etc.) are very unlikely to be alone and cannot be abducted.

Covert Ops - your kung fu is the best! You can conduct dirty tricks anywhere in the world, not just in D.C.

Jack Snow - Director Of The FBI

Goals

1. Government regulation of the Internet. The government [meaning the FBI] should have all of the encryption key codes in order to fight crime.
2. You oppose military involvement in the "war on drugs".
3. You support gun control.
4. You wish to keep the CIA out of domestic issues. (As it is supposed to be!)

Skills

Spin Doctor	13
Leaks	13
Dirty Tricks	12
Political Influence	15

Special Powers

Secret connections with the criminal element allow you to learn about anyone who does anything connected with the Mob. Talk to the GM.

You can have people arrested and charged with criminal offences. But you better be sure the evidence is convincing. The GM will act as judge in any such case.

Thomas Water - Secretary Of State

Goals

1. To prevent anyone from discovering your secret, which is that you are actually a secret member of an international organization that aims to unite the peoples of the world under one single world government. Anything that will weaken the government of the USA, and strengthens smaller countries is of interest to you. Therefore you support:

A) Foreign Aid to small countries.

B) a balanced budget bill, since that will reduce US government spending on the military.

C) gun control.

Skills

Spin Doctor	13
Leaks	15
Dirty Tricks	11
Political Influence	14

Special Powers

The governments of many small countries (i.e. Canada, Mexico, etc.) will support your work. If you ask them, their leaders will talk to the President to try to persuade him.

You have a direct pipeline to the President. You can insist that one of the President's two daily private meetings is with you.

Don Silver - Presidential Adviser on Science

Goals

1. Re-immunization of the American public for small pox. Although scientists believed that they had wiped out small pox in the 1970's you fear that the virus could resurface either naturally, or as a result of germ warfare.
2. You are strongly opposed to germ warfare research.
3. You are opposed to government regulation of the Internet.
4. You want government support for genetic research.
5. You want government support for the Search For Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence.
6. You want the government to double its spending on the space program.
7. You would like to see a nation wide system for the fluoridization of drinking water. It cuts down on tooth decay.

Skills

Spin Doctor	10
Leaks	10
Dirty Tricks	10
Political Influence	10

Special Powers

You control the national science labs and many scientists who work for other agencies. You can decide if important scientific information is true or false and if certain new discoveries are released or buried (i.e. global warming, cancer cure, face on Mars, etc.) Talk to the GM.

Cameron Eros - Special Prosecutor

Goals

1. To root out the corruption that exists in this administration by whatever means necessary.
2. To get criminal convictions against the guilty.

Skills

Spin Doctor	12
Leaks	12
Dirty Tricks	15
Political Influence	13

Special Powers

You have the power to subpoena people to appear at your hearings and they must testify. Whether you can get anything out of them is up to you. (Other witnesses will often come forward to help you if they think its worthwhile.)

Secret Media Connections - You can have films like Primary Colors, Wag the Dog, etc. made and released to embarrass the administration. Your press conferences are always well covered. You are normally beyond the President's direct power. Note however that the President and/or Cabinet members may take covert action against you!

-----Game Conclusion-----

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When the game has run its course the GM may wish to ask the President the following questions: (Make sure he answers each question clearly! No waffling!)

1. Who was out to get you?
2. Was anyone working for a foreign power?
3. Was anyone working for the other political party?
4. Was anyone working for "Big Business"?
5. Was anyone working for space aliens?
6. Was anyone working for demonic forces?
7. Were you paranoid?
8. Were you paranoid enough?
9. What is your stand on;

Re-immunization for Small Pox?
Gun control?
Internet regulation?
Genetic research?
Funding for the space program?
Funding for germ warfare research?
Foreign aid?
The "war on drugs

10. What initiatives did you approve?
11. What initiatives did you approve that were covers for illegal and/or treasonous operations?
11. What will history record as your greatest achievement? Your worst failure?
13. Do you endorse your Vice-President for the party nomination to run as President after you retire?

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