

Nightmare in Detroit

Conflict in a city in flames
Race, deprivation and crisis 1967



MAIN THEMES : Critical Thinking, Crisis Response, Responsible Communication

Alternative Themes: Education, Team Building

Outline

This is a crisis game about the huge riots in the US city of Detroit in 1967. One of the most serious outbreaks of civil disorder in American history, the Detroit riots form the background for a fast-moving and tense situation for players to attempt to resolve. The crisis grows rapidly and particularly tests players' ability to assimilate large quantities of incomplete information, and communicate to others, taking account of not just operational but also political and economic factors.

Gameplay

Players form teams representing the city police, state police, National Guard, emergency services, city government and state government.

Some of the teams need to work through problems associated with operational deployment questions – deciding how to police the streets that are increasingly becoming un-policeable or deciding how best to utilise medical teams and hospitals.

Key timing questions arise – how soon to



call on the state police, or even the National Guard, or even, in the last resort, Federal forces.

Other teams manage the political crisis – communicating with civic leaders and the other teams to attempt to manage both the information and the political fallout of events.

At the end of the game there is a debrief of the process and how negotiation and communications worked both within and between the teams. Teams have the opportunity to reflect on how their decision making was affected by the high-information environment and the time pressure and how this might inform their practice and planning in future.

Ideal Audiences

- Organisations wishing to practice critical thinking, crisis response and organisational communication skills.
- Organisations seeking a team building challenge.
- Students looking at crisis studies or US history of the 1960s

Example game structures

Nightmare In Detroit : For 12 players	
Team	Number in team
City Police	4
City Government	4
State Government	4
Total	12

Nightmare in Detroit : for 30 players	
Team	Number in team
City Police	4
City Medical Services	4
City Government	4
State Police	4
State Government	4
National Guard	4
Federal Forces	4
National Media	2
Total	30