

# DRAGON'S FURY



**WORLD WAR**  
**Against America and the West**



**JEFF HEAD**

With Forwards by Larry Schweikart and Matthew Bracken

## *What if...*

*What if a future presidential election in the United States goes entirely and unexpectedly awry?*

*What if the fundamental Islamic nations unite to wage all-out holy war in the mid-East...and then ally themselves with Red China?*

*What if, during all of this, the North Koreans become emboldened to make a massive invasion of South Korea?*

*“Dragon's Fury –World War against America and the West”, is that story...*

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This is a work of fiction. The events and characters described herein are imaginary. Any similarities to actual persons or events are purely a result of the author's imagination.

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**WORLD WAR  
AGAINST AMERICA  
AND THE WEST**



**J E F F  
H E A D**

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# FOREWORDS

## Larry Schweikart

Co-Author of, *A Patriot's History of the United States*

Author of, *America's Victories: Why the U.S. Wins Wars and Will Win the War on Terror*

From the moment an unholy alliance of Asian and Islamic powers forms to make war on the United States, the future of liberty in this thriller is in doubt. Using secretly developed, high speed, super-cavitating torpedoes and mines, the Red Chinese and their allies threaten to do what no power has done in the 20th century-dominate the United States at sea. Jeff Head weaves a story of what World War - perhaps the beginning of which is our war on terror - would be like, and it isn't pretty. It is, however, entirely plausible.

For 20 years, the United States has watched the Chinese communist governments conceal their socialist character and pretend to be free market capitalists, often at our expense. They have acquired high-level technology, especially during the Clinton administration, without any concessions to internal freedom, and have flagrantly constructed a blue-water navy with one sole purpose: to challenge American dominance in the Pacific. Sadly, even in the otherwise erstwhile Bush administration, such advances have not been tempered, let alone reversed, with the likely result being that, barring a remarkable weakening of China from the inside (as occurred with Soviet Russia), a conflict with the Red Chinese is nearly inescapable.

The good news is that, presently, the United States retains a quality edge over our potential enemies, and our submarines are superior by several orders of magnitude. But the Chinese see this as an incentive to improve their own programs. While an alliance such as Jeff describes is unlikely in the short term, the world has witnessed much stranger bedfellows at the drop of a hat.

Jeff's is a story of heroism, sacrifice, pain, and redemption. His analysis and descriptions are so prescient that we must hope it remains a work of fiction and not history before-the-fact.

## Matthew Bracken

Author of, *Enemies Foreign and Domestic*, and, *Domestic Enemies, The Reconquista*

If you enjoy reading big—and I mean big—techno-thrillers, then *Dragon's Fury* by Jeff Head is for you. Imagine a history of World War Two, from the invasion of Poland until Hiroshima: that will give you an idea of the sweeping narrative in this “future history” of the next world war. In Jeff's scenario, communist China forges an alliance with a unified Islamic world, and brings a reluctant India aboard. China leads the way, determined to drive the U.S. out of the Mid-East, the Indian Ocean, Asia, and the Western Pacific.

The war begins with a series of surprise attacks on American naval forces. The Chinese have secretly developed and deployed new classes of weapons the US Navy cannot counter, including hyper-speed super-cavitating torpedoes. With their breakthrough weapons and millions of expendable soldiers, victory after victory goes to the Chinese-led axis, until much of the free world is crushed and subjugated.

The defeat of the United States seems certain, but America and her remaining allies rise to the challenge. The United States deploys its own breakthrough weapons and, without giving away too much of the plot, Jeff's techno-thriller shows that space will be the ultimate “high ground,” to determine the outcome of the next world war.

In such a scenario could today's bitterly divided America unify and rally behind a strong wartime President, and endure the hardships of years of defeat? Could such a war be fought, and not go nuclear in the opening battles? I wondered about these questions, but in *Dragon's Fury*, Jeff Head weaves a complete story line that plausibly suspends the readers' disbelief, and takes him or her along for a wild ride that is the next world war.

## DEDICATION

I must dedicate *Dragon's Fury – World War Against America and the West*, to my World War II combat veteran father. He passed away on January 25, 2004. He was a hard working, all-American, faithful Christian man...husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather, and my dear friend. In his youth, he volunteered to defend his nation, his liberty, and his way of life, against the Empire of Japan, serving in combat in the U.S. Navy in the Pacific.

His teachings and upbringing, next to that of my Savior, Jesus Christ, have influenced my moral, political, spiritual and career thinking like no other. He was a great fan and supporter of this work and his insights and support made a great difference to it. I only wish he could have lived to read it in its entirety. Dad, I miss you, and am holding a copy in trust for you when we meet again.

I also dedicate this to my older brother, Greg, who died of cancer on July 3, 2004, at the age of forty-nine. He and I were only 15 months apart. We went to the same High School, played on the same football teams, hauled hay in the hot Texas summers together, served missions for our church at the same time, roomed at college together and were close. We both had a great passion for the outdoors, particularly the American intermountain west. In the end, he fought valiantly for life over a two and a half year period when he was expected to only live six months. I respected his stamina, his zest for life, his caring spirit, and his ultimate desire to emulate his Savior, irrespective of any difficulty or shortcoming. He also was a great fan of this work, and I look forward to handing it to him in its entirety over there, across Jordan, when we meet again.

Finally, this novel is dedicated to lovers of liberty everywhere, and to the principles upon which true liberty rests: faith, morality, virtue, honor, free will, commitment, and eternal vigilance. It is especially dedicated to all of those Americans and their families who have served in defense of liberty and sacrificed their time, their efforts, their very lives and the lives of their loved ones for that cause, at home or abroad.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks go to my family for their patience while I produced this work. In particular to my wife of over 28 years for her love and forbearance, and to my two sons, Jeff and Jared for their proofs and input. Also, to my oldest daughter, Katie, who has been one of the biggest fans of this work and who has read all of it as it was written, giving her input and suggestions.

Also to my mother, Georgia, whose Christian love, and dedication to her family have always inspired me. Mom, may we hold firm and true in the faith until we are gathered back together with all of our loved ones in Christ.

Thanks to Chris Durkin of Pennsylvania for his reviews, contributions, edits, and his unwavering support and encouragement.

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Thanks to Bruce Elmore of Illinois, for his contribution regarding the Arab terrorist, Ahmed Haddad, and for his service as a U.S. Marine.

Thanks to Luis Gonzalez of Florida, for his ideas on a more personal writing style, and his draft sample introducing the Chinese President.

Thanks to Cory Emberson of California for her reviews and edits.

To each of these and all others, who have encouraged me and put up with my ramblings, I say again, a heartfelt thanks.

## WHY DRAGON'S FURY?

I have been the recipient of the very best the United States has to offer. I have lived in prosperous times brought on by the strength and vitality of free enterprise in a free market that is based on liberty and broad-based faith and morality. I have also had the opportunity of world travel in my career and observed many other cultures and people.

Over the last thirty or more years, I have watched, with growing discomfort, as our traditional American society and system of government, and everything it is based upon, has been attacked, compromised, watered down, and corrupted by individuals, institutions, and governments, both foreign and domestic. It's happened gradually, as most Americans have been too busy with professional and material pursuits to notice it.

In the mean time, our most sophisticated technologies have been given away, sold, and stolen, and potential enemies are building up while we "staff down". The wealth of our markets has been ill used by manipulators, politicians, and regimes who are not our friends...who represent the antithesis of our way of life, our system of government, and the values that it is all based upon. In addition, our entire society has been watered down by a form of political correctness and immoral socialization that I believe the founders of this nation would have fought to prevent.

The result is that we have become vulnerable. On September 11, 2001, we were shown how vulnerable in a horrific way. In order to avoid much worse, we must be vigilant and grasp tightly to the heritage and moral values that have made this nation strong, and re-institute them into our lives and society. If we do not do this, then events could lead to a scenario where we risk losing our liberty, our way of life, and our very lives...all of which have been purchased in blood by those who have gone before.

This novel has been produced with the hope, that while reading it, individuals will be inspired to look to the foundations of their liberty, and have a desire to restore the strength and vitality that has kept that liberty alive and shining in America as a beacon to the world for so long. This is the underlying reason for "Dragon's Fury", along with a simple desire to produce a compelling, exciting story that is simply a "good read".

Jeff Head  
Emmett, Idaho  
September 2006



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**J E F F  
H E A D**

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## Prologue

**November 28, 1970, 20:35 local**  
**Naval Headquarters, Research Center**  
**Hanoi, North Vietnam**

Lu Pham rolled back from his workbench, set his slide rule down, and swiveled his stool around. Placing his elbow on the desk and his hand under his chin, he sat, reflecting.

"So", he thought, "it can be done! ... the secret is simply maintaining the wave form that keeps the cavity stable once that cavity has been achieved".

Lu had been working on this problem for over a year, spending uncounted off-duty hours creating the mathematical models, which would prove or disprove his theories. In his capacity as a naval research officer, Lu was working to reduce the noise signature of North Vietnam's coastal craft by studying the cavitation the propellers created and finding ways to reduce it.

He was being funded in the endeavor by monies from the Soviet Union, the USSR having earlier become aware of Lu's remarkable mathematical abilities. In the process, Lu had become obsessed by the cavitation itself. In the environment of his official research, cavitation was a bad, dangerous thing. Cavitation of that sort meant sound, sound that the detection devices of the imperialist U.S. Navy could detect and use to either destroy the craft of his nation, or to avoid them.

But the cavitation that Lu was predicting was a far different matter. Such stable cavitation could only be created at extremely high speeds, and only by a proper, sleek body moving at those speeds...towards the ships of the U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> fleet. Lu only had to document these findings and present them to his superiors. He was sure they would jump at any chance to deliver a decisive blow to their enemies...to his enemies.

In his mind's eye, as so often occurred when he contemplated delivering a blow to the Americans, he once again saw the fertile undergrowth, the moist, dense forest. Yes, there! he could just see the huts of the village...and as soon he saw them, he always caught the same faint, sickly, coppery odors on the wind. In his mind, as he proceeded towards the village, he came into the clearing where he could see more clearly the bodies of his father and his mother. They were in the center of the village, lying on the ground where the US Special Forces "Phoenix" Team had left them after disposing of this particular Vietcong coordinator whom their intelligence had correctly identified as an instrument sent there by the North.

**December 9, 1970 15:30 local**  
**Commandant's Office, Naval Research Center**  
**Hanoi, North Vietnam**

"Comrade Lu, let me understand, you have developed a mathematical model which leads you to believe that a weapon can be developed to attack the US 7<sup>th</sup> fleet off our shores and inflict severe damage on them, potentially even damaging or destroying their aircraft carriers?"

"That is correct", replied Lu Pham to Captain Ho Chien Thom, who was the Commandant of North Vietnam's fledgling Naval Research effort.

"The device I contemplate would travel at 300-400 kilometers per hour and could reach the imperialist's ships before they could respond to it. One of the key difficulties will be designing the shape of the weapon. The leading edge must be precise in order to create and maintain the cavity through which the weapon moves. Another difficulty will be the propulsion system, which must be adequate to achieve and maintain the speed to create this cavity. Finally, we must find a way to deploy the device..."

The Captain cut him off.

"Lt. Lu, did you contemplate that these difficulties make it impossible for us to produce your weapon? Have you forgotten that we rely on our comrade socialist nations for all of our modern devices and conveniences?"

Now raising his voice, Captain Ho continued, "Have you forgotten that the very slide rule you use to make these pipedream calculations was not created here?"

Seeking to quickly respond and to abate the unforeseen anger of his commander, Lu responded...and succeeded in only increasing that anger.

"No, comrade Captain, I have not forgotten these things; but, respectfully, I believe that such a weapon can be developed. I also believe that those nations assisting us in this struggle would be more than willing to provide the resources once they see the potential of what this slide rule has produced."

Unfortunately, at 23 years of age, the young lieutenant was very naïve and not savvy, or experienced in the politics of the so-called "People's struggle" in which he was involved. Capt. Ho, far more experienced in such realities, understood that to propose such a use of resources in the current circumstances would be damaging to his own standing, not to mention the barely adequate funding they were currently receiving.

“Lt. Lu, I need not remind you that most of your associates are involved in this struggle in a far different manner than you. The party leadership and our friends in the Soviet Union have recognized your capabilities and have employed you in important research. The effort to which you must employ *all* of your time and intellect is to reduce the sound signature of the propellers of our existing vessels, while allowing them to operate more efficiently. Such an improvement will help our small navy, and please our socialist brothers who will use it on their ships and send more funding, and more weapons to our navy.

“Instead of considering these facts, you have spent considerable amounts of the People’s valuable time in researching an effort not related to your primary assignment. Comrade, despite your considerable talents, and despite the noble sacrifice of your parents, you are failing the people.

“So, let me make it very clear to you ... if you do not want to be transferred to the forests and mountains of Cambodia, or to the rebel provinces to the south, I suggest you immediately redirect your efforts to your primary assignment. Is this understood? In the mean time, leave the results of your research here and I will find a way to mention it to the party leadership.”

“Yes, comrade, I understand.” Lt. Lu Pham somberly replied as he stood, saluted, handed over his documents and then retired from his commander’s office.

After Lu Pham walked out the door, the Captain momentarily considered the calculations and documentation he now held in his hand. Shaking his head in disgust, he quietly folded them up, and then threw them into his bamboo waste basket and gave them no further thought.

**December 9, 1970, 3 hours later**

**Commandant’s Office, Naval Research Center**

**Hanoi, North Vietnam**

The old man carried out his janitorial duties as he did every evening in the Naval Research Center. Stooped and moving slowly due to the inevitable arthritis of old age, he cleaned the floor and then emptied the garbage from each of the small bamboo wastebaskets into the trash bag on the cart which he pulled. He had been doing this - day in and day out - for years.

... and, as he had also done for years, he ensured that the waste, which tonight included the Lt. Lu Pham’s discarded computations, was placed in a separate, cleverly concealed bag on his cart.

Later that night, the contents of the bag were en route to the old man’s true employer...the intelligence services of the People’s Republic of China.

**Twenty-six Years Later**

**March 23, 1996, 19:00 local**

**Corporate Headquarters COSCO**

**Beijing, China**

Chin Zhongbaio, President of one of the largest shipping companies in the world, and a member of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party, watched as the General entered his office.

“General Hunbaio, please sit down. Is it true? Have your people in COSTIND located Lu Pham and brought him here to Beijing?”

The General, who commanded his nation’s weapons research and development efforts, knew that Chin was aware not only that Pham had been found, but that he was here waiting to meet the President of COSCO as they spoke. As the General took a seat in front of Chin, he replied,

“Comrade Chin, as you know, we found him teaching in Hanoi two years ago and approached him. After developing a friendly relationship, our operative showed him a copy of his long lost research documentation on cavitation. From there it was a simple matter to recruit him into our services as he has a long-standing desire to work against the Americans.

“All arrangements were made for him and his family. The importance and secrecy has been explained to him along with the consequences of betrayal. He has accepted and he is waiting outside in your reception area as we speak.”

Chin pondered the General’s words, then without further conversation, he simply said,

“Please, General, have your people bring him in”

The General motioned to his aide standing at attention by the door, and the aide immediately left the room. Presently he returned with a spectacled man in his late-40’s and whose face and build showed his Vietnamese heritage.

“Mr. Lu, or should I say, Captain Lu? How nice to meet you. I hope that your family is well”

Lu Pham, recently given a commission and a Captain’s rank in the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), entered the room and walked resolutely to Chin and bowed slightly,

“Thank you, sir, my family is still adjusting to being here, but we have been warmly received. I must say, I am honored to meet the man who has helped make the Chinese shipbuilding industry the third largest on the planet and the fastest growing. As you are well aware, maritime applications, particularly naval applications, have always been my singular interest.”

Chin had been engineering this moment for two full years. Ever since the first meeting with General Hunbaio concerning super-cavitation, its possibilities and Lu’s amazing computations from

over two decades ago, he had dreamed of developing and deploying such a weapon, with all of its capabilities, for the People's Republic of China. Since that initial meeting, Chin had made it his personal business to be aware of every like and dislike of Lu Pham. He walked around his desk and surprised Lu with a warm embrace; and then guided him and the General over to a warm grouping of plush chairs in a corner of his office, with a magnificent view of the city. While motioning for the others to sit with him, Chin continued,

"Well, Captain, we have a clear mutual interest, although your words regarding my personal contributions are too kind. More to the point, I believe we are in a position to supply the manpower and overall funding to a project you first contemplated many years ago...almost 25 years ago in fact.

"Simply put, we would like you to begin work immediately with General Hunbaio's agency and a staff of the best researchers, designers and manufacturers available, developing and producing these super-cavitating weapons for the PLAN. How does that sound?"

Lu was as absolutely thrilled at the prospect, and he wanted to let Chin know. But there was an issue nagging him he felt he had to get in the open,

"It sounds almost too good to be true sir, and something I have dreamed about for many years; but, one question if I may?"

"By all means", Chin replied.

"You have had this information for years. Why do you require me?"

Chin thought for a moment, then motioned to General Hunbaio,

"Well, General, why don't you let Lu know why, after all of these years, we require the assistance of the man who came up with these remarkable mathematical models?"

General Hunbaio spoke without hesitation,

"Lu Pham, sometimes there are individuals who are given great insights. All of our researchers, those who have had the clearance to look at your work...and there have been quite a few...agree that the principles are accurate, but they have not been able to bring the work forward into reality.

"Quite frankly, all of their efforts failed. It became apparent that we needed to find the man who developed the models themselves, and now here you are. It is as straightforward as that.

"Of course, I want to stress again that once this work begins, you and your family will live in a secure environment. You will be working in a facility that is very self-contained, in a town specifically built to house that facility. No breach of security can be allowed. Any deviation from areas of research or lines of work specifically associated with your task will be viewed most severely. I know we have covered this with you and your family, but I wanted to re-emphasize it to you."

Hearing this again did not faze Lu Pham. He expected as much, and expected he would hear it over and over again in the future.

"General, I do understand. I understood 25 years ago. I kept quiet regarding this for all of those years. I can do so as I work on it now."

### **Seven Years Later**

**May 13, 2003, 18:30 local**

**Tianammen Square**

**Beijing, China**

As they walked out of earshot of staff, away from the press, and surrounded by a "wall" of electronic security, The Chinese President accompanying the President of India said,

"These talks have been gratifying. I am pleased we have been able to come to an understanding between the two of us, which will ultimately allow our peoples to embrace the "Three Wisdoms" we have discussed, and which will set a pattern for the peace-loving, socially-minded people of world".

Reflectively, the Indian President paused and turned towards the President of the People's Republic of China and replied,

"Ah, it is just so Mr. President. Our understanding, rooted in the fundamental principles of the Three Wisdoms, will move our nations towards the realization of goals which will improve the lives of our people and catapult them to their rightful place on the stage of world affairs. Our current discretion and the arduous road ahead will ultimately lead to the emergence of an economic and social order that will sweep the earth."

After a moment of thoughtful consideration, the Chinese President answered,

"As the leaders of the two most populous nations on earth, it is past time that our people began influencing affairs rather than being influenced by them. We shall employ the same methods that have worked to our benefit with the most recent undisciplined and decadent American national leadership.

"Who would have thought that we could make so many gains in such a short period of time? They have literally given us the keys to produce this vision, and at such low cost. By starting early with decadent leaders in other areas, we will guide them in like manner over the next five or six years.

"In the meantime, China will patiently delay plans for reunifying our nation with our rebellious island province. We will also wait to excise, the corrupting influence of the Americans; not only from the South China Sea, but from all of eastern Asia. While we do this, we will continue to encourage them to pour resources into the "economic development" of our own nations."

The Indian knew that America had been penetrated to the highest levels throughout the 1990's. He had his own operatives working to affect similar outcomes in other regions. He was also tired of the American juggling and posturing in his own region. He had witnessed it for decades, playing off the fundamentalist, terror-supporting Pakistani government against the Iranians...and against his own India. He knew the Chinese, who had historically been one of his own nations largest concerns, had been working to penetrate and turn many within the American government and industry. He had recently decided that it was time to open confidential dialog with the Chinese over these very issues.

Just the same, to hear it put so bluntly...

"You are to be commended, Mr. President, for both your vision and your forbearance. Now, after further reflection, I believe I will enjoy some of that Earl Gray tea you offered."

The Chinese President laughed and patted the Indian on the back while directing him back towards their "official" discussions on "improving relations" and "border disputes".

### **Five Years Later**

**August 6, 2008, 15:30 local**

**Tianjin Olympic Centre Stadium**

**Tianjin, China**

The WNN camera panned across the magnificent stadium during a break in the action on the field. The 2008 Olympic football preliminaries were under way and although the truly massive audiences would not begin tuning in until Friday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, nonetheless, a large audience was watching the live broadcast of these preliminaries.

Amidst much talk and praise of the stadium here in Tianjin, and even more talk as the sports casters compared this stadium to the National Olympic Stadium in Beijing where the opening ceremonies would occur, unheralded in the distance, during one of the camera shots, a large, sleek, and imposing naval vessel could be seen making her way in Tianjin harbor.

The ship was the PLAN aircraft carrier, 83 Shi Lang, and this was the second time she had been underway since her surprise launch four weeks earlier. Originally the Russian Varyag, the vessel had been purchased in 1998 from the Ukraine after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. She was purchased under the auspice of a Chinese holding company turning her into a floating casino. At the time of her purchase, the Varyag had been approximately 70% complete. The Ukraine simply had not had the funds to finish her, and her condition was slowly deteriorating.

Sister ship to the Russian, Kuznetsov, which the Russians had completed and made operational, the Varyag was designed to displace 67,500 tons and carry in excess of 40 combat aircraft, making the two sister ships the second largest aircraft carriers in the world, next to the American super carriers.

Ultimately the Ukrainians had removed all propulsion, weapons, communications, and detection systems and the empty carrier was towed to China in 2001 and 2002 where it was taken immediately to the Dalian Naval shipyards and kept under tight security. The holding company had gone out of business by that time and the ship came under direct control of the Chinese Navy, the PLAN, who began working on her. In 2005, after several months in dry dock, she emerged at dock side painted in the standard PLAN colors. Great speculation followed the ship during this entire episode of several years, trying to deduce what the PLAN would do with her. Some felt she was just being studied to prepare for the building of indigenous Chinese carriers, others felt she would be given minimal operational status and serve as a training vessel until China could build her own carriers, and still others believed she would be made fully operational. In a sense, all of these thoughts were right.

The Chinese themselves removed all doubt in July of 2008 when the Shi Lang was launched and sailed away from Dalian shipyards under her own power. This move caught several western military analysts and intelligence agencies by surprise, thinking that the Varyag was at least some months away from any operational capability. What surprised them even more was when, two days into her voyage, a squadron of twelve, advanced SU-33 aircraft landed flawlessly on her decks and began practicing with the large carrier in take-off and landing operations.

As it turned out, the Chinese had secretly purchased the aircraft from Russia in late 2006 and sent twenty-four of their best pilots there to train with the Russians in operating the fighters...first off of training installations on land, and then off of the Kuznetsov.

Now, here the Shi Lang was again, underway in Tianjin harbor, and although she went unnoticed by the sports casters on WNN, military analysts throughout the west saw her, and took note.

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**YEAR ONE**



**J E F F  
H E A D**

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## Chapter 1

*"All warfare is based on deception."—Sun Tsu*

**November 3, 10:00 local**

**Politburo**

**Beijing, China**

The figure seated at the head of the table had not moved for the better part of an hour. The only detectable motion came from the flickering lights cast by the two-dozen television monitors on the wall on the opposite side of the room as they danced across his features. President Jien Zenim still personified the "new" China of his creation. Having risen through the ranks, having been the "mayor" of the Capital, having beguiled and wooed the West with the promise of wealth and influence, it was as if he had been born to rule. As a result, Jien Zenim was long used to wealth and power, and he was in possession of both right now.

He whispered a few words into the microphone attached to the tiny headset he wore, and there was discernible motion in the darkness along the side of the great conference room. A few seconds later, a navy-blue suited aide appeared by the Chairman's side.

"Tea."—Said Jien Zenim.

The aide rushed away and moments later the rustle of curtains was heard as the aide returned with a cup of tea. President Jien's preference was Earl Grey tea over the local fare; a taste acquired while attending Oxford years ago. Only his most trusted advisors knew of the secret "passions" the President had for things from the West. Earl Grey tea was not the only one.

On the screens, all of the major U.S. networks were covering the same story. It was always like that on Presidential election night. But this time, the East Coast voting booths would close in an hour, and results would not start coming in until four hours later. The timeworn tradition of exit polling had been one of the casualties of the 2000 Presidential election. As a result, the media was directed by law to only report the official State Board of Elections results. Those results would not be released until after the last precinct shut down in the West. The pundits on the screens sat and made empty talk while doing a re-hash of the two major contender's campaigns.

A soft, electronic chime drew the President's attention to the arm of the soft, custom-made Natuzzi chair. He pressed a button and spoke into the microphone with flawless English.

"Good evening, David - how are Jennie and the kids?"

"Fine, Jien! Everyone's great. And your family?"—the voice on the other end of the line was perhaps one of the best known and trusted voices in America. It was a voice millions heard nightly coming from their televisions, a face they associated with every major news story reported for the last two decades. Some called him "The Conscience of America" for his rousing and thought provoking commentaries.

"Fine, David, thanks for asking. So, do you have money on the Packers again this year, or are you finally getting smart?"

The two men laughed.

"No, Mr. President. As you know, I've decided to back a winner for a change."

Jien Zenim's face registered a hint of repugnance. There were few things he detested quite as much as a traitor; but, they certainly had their uses. And the higher placed the better for Jien's needs. If you promised them money, they take it in the belief that it will make them more powerful in the "new" world they are helping to bring about, and help them maintain a certain lifestyle in that new world. But individuals like David Krenshaw never realize that money will mean very little in the wake of "The Time of the Three Wisdoms", at least not for them. They could not fathom that in the one world to come, only power mattered; and that the power of the largest army in the history of the world was Jien's to command, and all of their money and influence would be forced to bow to that power.

"The Time of the Three Wisdoms" was the campaign Jien had designed many years ago to prepare the Chinese people for the coming conflict. It consisted of:

1. "All men and women are equal."
2. "All share equally in the bounty of a working and industrious society."
3. "One goal, one thought, one people for World peace."

He couldn't believe that these methods still worked. Even after all these years, the "Chairman Mao" method of propaganda was still the best way to manipulate the "people" into action, even if the message had changed somewhat.

That Mao's propaganda had been so effective in manipulating the masses to the near bankruptcy that the People's Republic had experienced was a testament to the success of those methods ... but not as great a testament as the near bankruptcy had been to the failed Maoist economic policies themselves. That's why the message had to change, and that's where Jien had been able to change things ... and he wasn't finished yet, not nearly so. As the Americans might say, "he was only just beginning."

He spoke again.

“So, David, what do you hear?”

“Jien, it looks like our projections were right on the money, so to speak. In a few hours we are going to be calling it for the old man, and by a wide margin. Unlike the last election, this one left no doubt about the winner. The General got almost three votes to every one of hers ... it’s a landslide. The Right is in ecstasy over the victory. After the surprising announcement by President Bush that he would not seek re-election, they are calling General Weisskopf’s entire campaign a “Phoenix-like” come back from the brink of disaster.”

Jien mused on this. After that Presidential announcement by Bush late last spring, the television pundits played nightly dirges for the GOP, and the written media hinted at scandals and vices as possible reasons for the decision. In fact, Jien was certain that his deepest moles had played a part in the misinformation and subterfuge that contributed to the sitting American President not running for a second term. But one of the givens in that business was that in circles of intrigue that ran as deeply as this, one could never know for sure.

On the heels of this coup, however it had come about, they had all quietly laughed at the old General of Desert Storm fame when he announced he would be coming out of retirement to run for the Presidency so late in the race. They were not laughing now.

It was an unexpected complication for Jien, and he was not pleased. He never was when things didn’t go as planned. It had reminded him of his displeasure and unease when bin Laden had prematurely attacked America in 2001. Or of the unexpected ease with which America had defeated Saddam Hussein in early 2003 with their “Operation Iraqi Freedom”. That victory had come in spite of fairly significant clandestine help that the Chinese had given to the Iraqis at the time. As with those instances, through this last summer, Jien had experienced growing concern and anxiety as the General gained support, and as the Right rallied around him like moths to a flame.

In the past, it had never really made any difference to him who actually won the American election because, as far as he was concerned, all of them were weak... though Bush had surprised him with his successful prosecution of the “War on Terror” and his steadfast insistence in defying the U.N. security council and invading Iraq and toppling the Hussein regime. But, in actuality, those events had ultimately served to relieve him, because it had allowed the PRC more time to further develop and prepare the greater plan. Through it all, had not the Americans, even Bush, continued to cow-tow to Chinese economic influence and continued to funnel billions of dollars worth of high tech, manufacturing and trade into the PRC, thereby continuing to fund China’s growth towards complete self-sufficiency and the realization of goals long planned?

But this man, Weisskopf, he was something else again. He was very direct and forthright in his message that such funding, such trade practice must change. He also commanded the greatest respect of the American troops seen in a life time. And so now there was going to be a real Warrior in the White House when the plan which had been set in motion so many years ago, entered into its final stages.

As he thought this, the continuing words of David Krenshaw broke through his thoughts and registered on his consciousness.

“Mr. President, we believe that the incident with his opponent’s husband won the election for the General. I know that the Senator probably wished her husband had been struck dumb when he made that insulting remark about the General’s age. We really believe that the General’s response to that was the key. The last thing any one of us expected was for old Weisskopf to challenge the former President, over an open microphone to a wrestling match, “I’ll take your sorry butt on anytime you’re game” will go down in history as the most effective campaign challenge of all times. When you add to this his selection of the first African-American as a VP candidate, Alan Reeves ... well it turned into quite the coup.”

Jien could not stomach any more of this at the moment, so he politely ended the conversation by saying,

“Well, David, I have a meeting to prepare for. Thank you for the call. As always, your views, advice and information are most helpful. Say hello to Jennie for me. And happy Thanksgiving if we don’t get to talk before then. Tell her I miss her oysters and wild rice stuffing.”

Jien Zenim had visited the United States on many occasions after the 1978 recognition of the PRC by the Carter administration. Some of those visits had helped set the stage for the unbelievable influence the People’s Republic had developed in Washington, D.C. during the 1990’s.

During one of those trips, he had been a Thanksgiving Day guest of David Krenshaw’s. It was then that Jien acquired another of his western “passions”: American cooking. Since that time, on Thanksgiving day, the Chairman would have his chefs prepare a turkey dinner with full trimmings, including Jennie’s famed oysters and wild rice stuffing.

“I will pass the compliment on Mr. President. Thank you again, and goodbye.” —the line went dead.

Jien stared at the television screens for a few more seconds and then spoke to those sitting in the darkness.



“Gentlemen, what are your impressions about the new President?”

The room lights came on behind the President, and illuminated twenty men seated around the great conference table. Some were wearing western-style suits, the rest wore military uniforms. A surprising number were relatively young and in their early to mid-fifties. One by one, they spoke into their headset microphones or read from prepared reports.

One said, “His experience in foreign affairs appears relatively light. He handled strictly the military operations of Desert Storm while the head of their Joint Chiefs and the President at the time handled the foreign affairs and cemented their coalition. We believe his statements regarding his intentions with their relationship with us are principally geared at solidifying his conservative base.”

Another added, “It is unlikely that the American congress and business community will allow him to go too far at this time anyway. Remember, in 2001 with the EP-3 incident, the efforts to develop and maintain any kind of boycott or more severe trade policies against us were just so much chaff in the wind. They have no stomach for it.

“As to his health, for a man of 70 years he is in remarkably good health. He still carries out an exercise regimen each day and appears very alert...”

Chairman Jien stood up abruptly and turned to face the members of the politburo over whom he presided, many handpicked from among his most trusted and committed allies. His face remained impassive, but there was a deadly look in his eyes.

Some members of the politburo shrank back into their seats preparing themselves for one of the Chairman’s infrequent flares of temper.

“You tell me no more than what I can see for myself on WNN!! I want more! Find leverage, find influence which we can use on this American General. He is potentially an adversary of great virtue and strength, but we must still find a way to “convince” him to recognize the inevitability of what is coming.”

“Our plans will go forward. Our official economic alliance with India will be announced in April, and this will certainly give his new administration something to think about. In the meantime, please arrange an official conversation between myself and the new American president as soon after his inauguration as possible.”

**December 16, 19:30 local**

**Jiangnan Shipyards**

**Shanghai, China**

Sung Hsu had worked for the COSCO commercial shipbuilding operation his entire adult life. Although he was mildly envious of the sleek and elegant lines of the two aircraft carriers that his sister Chinese company was building in the yards adjoining those in which he worked, he still took great pride in the commercial shipping he helped his own company produce. He was very proud of the fact that his company had grown to be the world’s dominant commercial shipping company over the last 3 or 4 years.

The completion of these shipyards in Shanghai, and many others like them around the nation, had allowed China to out-produce the Koreans and the Japanese both quantitatively and qualitatively. Originally these yards were meant to produce up to six of those sleek carriers at a time by the Jiangnan Shipbuilding Company, but a decision had been made to build only two such vessels. This meant that COSCO Container Shipping had been able to “lease” the additional capacity from their socialist brothers in 2002 and thus Sung had relocated here with his family.

Sung’s responsibilities as a production crew chief in the modular design bay area, meant he had been instrumental in getting a prominent feature to market for these fine container ships for which COSCO was becoming known. COSCO was touting the robust nature of the modular design of its Container vessels all over the world; a robustness that was focused on multiple uses, either as standard container ships, or, depending on the modularity ordered, as any variety of “RORO” (Roll On – Roll Off) carriers.

Sung was one of several such crew chiefs employed in each yard producing these ships. He was amazed at the various designs. The new modular design bays were set into three separate areas along the almost 300 meter length of the hulls of these great ships. In the normal container ship mode, these bays were filled with the standard container ship ballast and equipment that would allow the containers to be stowed securely on the ship and be handled in loading and unloading. In the various bulk modes, the modules consisted of special “holds” where various commodities like grain could be carried and economically loaded and unloaded from the ship. In the “RORO” mode, the modules represented areas where various types of mechanized equipment, from automobiles to tractors, could be stored with the special ramps that allowed them to be driven directly onto and off the ship. With all of this modularity and ingenuity, the ships’ structure, electronics and propulsion had been significantly upgraded over normal container ships. This made the ships very valuable to both Chinese and foreign shipping concerns.

Sung had spoken often of his love for this work to his family. His wife, and the pride of his life, his 12-year-old son (Yan), along with his parents and grandparents, knew how much he enjoyed his work, and the pride it gave him in his own contribution, and in his nation as a whole.

But there was one thing Sung had not talked about with his family, or with anyone else until today. It had started off as a nagging suspicion through his involvement with the construction of the first ship from these yards. Since then, with the completion of the next two vessels, it had grown into something Sung was fairly certain about. Clearly, the modular designs he had been told of, and for which his crews prepared these ships were not the only modular designs available. It was something he planned at long last to speak of with his superior this evening.

So, as he entered the office of Xien Lin, the foreman for all of the shipbuilding activities for the ship line upon which he was working, Sung said,

"Thank you Xien for taking a few moments to see me this evening before I go home. May I sit down?"

Xien had been a faithful employee of COSCO for over 25 years. He had grown with the company and was in an enviable position, one of great trust. He viewed his subordinates as critical cogs in the machinery of COSCO and in particular, was very impressed with Sung Hsu.

"Certainly Sung, please be seated, how can I help you?"

Now that he was actually in Xien's office to discuss his intuitions, he suddenly wished he'd just ignored the feelings. Nonetheless, he continued,

"Really, it is only a matter of interest I suppose. I have been involved, as you know, with the shipbuilding efforts of our mother company, COSCO, for well over 15 years. I have been involved from the beginning with the manufacturing portion of the new modular design for our container ships ..."

At Sung's hesitation, Xien tried to encourage his subordinate by interjecting,

"Yes, Sung, I am well aware of all of this, and am well aware of the fine job you have done in getting your crew not only up to speed on the manufacturing aspects required to produce the designs, but also in their proficiency under your management. What is it you need to bring to my attention?"

Having unconsciously sought, and now obtained, reassurance, Sung continued,

"Sir, I have always thought I was one of those most familiar with the modular aspect of our designs. However I have begun to realize, as we produce this fourth ship from this line, that there are many aspects of the modular design with which I am not familiar.

"It seems to me, from observing, and then investigating with some of the adjacent work crews, that there must be modular designs which we are not implementing here. If this is so, then I would like to learn about those modules and perhaps train crews in their implementation."

This statement got Xien's attention and caught him off guard. His surprise must have been evident as Sung again paused, this time with an apprehensive look on his face, hoping he had not overstepped his bounds. These very areas of discussion were what Xien had been told by *his* superiors to be on guard for. Having regained his composure, Xien asked,

"What aspects of the design, or what criteria have you seen that has led you to believe this, Sung?"

Now, completely unsure of the terrain upon which he had embarked, Sung could see no other course but to let his concerns spill out in full.

"Well, uh, sir, at first it just seemed that some of the adjoining structure was perhaps over-designed for the modules we employ here. Then, I took a more detailed look at the wiring harnesses and cables, as well as the structure and realized that there were provisions for corridors and electrical and mechanical functions which are not at all necessary to the modules we are building."

Xien sensed that this talented crew chief was professionally interested in the things he had clearly gone out of his way to look into. He hoped for Sung's sake that "professional" interest was all that it was. In that hope, he sought to diffuse the tension that had developed in the room and again reassure Sung.

"Well, Sung, you must keep these thoughts and speculations to yourself. I will raise your questions with upper management and see if there is anything to this, and if so, whether there is any role in it for you. In the meantime, I again caution you to keep these thoughts to yourself. We are not the only shipyard building these ships or adding the modules. Critical state economic secrets, or even national security interests could be involved.

"Your current position carries a lot of responsibility and you are well aware of the security concerns, so I am sure that I can count on you to be completely confidential regarding this. I will let you know at a later date what, if anything, I find out"

Sung knew the discussion was over and that he would have to rely on Xien to "get back" with him. Still, he felt better for having relieved himself of the concern and genuinely hoped his interest would ultimately be satisfied. Therefore, he made every effort to relay his appreciation and sincerity to Xien,

"Sir, confidentiality will not be an issue. I will gladly comply and await your word on this issue."

Relieved at Sung's demeanor and tone, Xien now dismissed his inquisitive subordinate,

“Fine, Sung, fine. You may excuse yourself and go home to your family”.

As Sung left the office, Xien immediately picked up his phone and dialed the number he had been instructed to dial if anyone ever raised such questions. Questions regarding the modular designs were outside the considerations of an individual’s job function, and were beyond that which the company and the state felt were appropriate. As such, they were a matter of national security.

**December 16, later that evening**

**COSTIND Headquarters**

**Beijing, China**

General Hunbaio reviewed the records of Sung Hsu, which had been placed before him. His subordinate had taken the call from the supervising foreman on the shipbuilding line in Shanghai earlier in the evening and the General had immediately been called. Although he rarely became personally involved in the review of potential security breaches, the importance of this project and its ties to other military projects under his organization’s development made this particular issue of utmost concern.

The General had also never been a man to let even a single blade of grass grow under his feet or to hesitate for the slightest instant. Turning to the head of security, the General said,

“I see nothing here that would indicate that this Sung Hsu is anything more than a loyal worker for the people. Yet we cannot risk the slightest exposure regarding the line of questioning he has raised. It is apparent that we have many fine crew leaders performing the standard modularity on our container ships. Therefore have Mr. Sung contacted tomorrow during work and interviewed in depth.

“If it is apparent that he is desirous and capable, we will transfer him to one of the shipyards preparing for the special modules. He and his family will of course have to be made aware of and committed to the security measures necessary for such work.

“If any information is discovered that would indicate that Sung Hsu is disloyal to the people, then handle the situation accordingly and dispose of his remains in such a way as to implicate the gangs which are known to frequent the areas surrounding the shipyards.

“In any case, any necessary measures which would fully contain the information are authorized. Just ensure that they serve to contain the situation, not draw attention to it.”

**January 12, 21:45**

**National Reconnaissance Office headquarters**

**IMINT Directorate**

**Chantilly, VA**

Tom Lawton squeezed his eyes shut and opened and closed them a couple of times. He was trying to keep from developing eye fatigue as he looked at the images on his screen. He cross checked and compared his figures again and continued to come up with the same conclusions.

“Bill, would you come over here and take a look at this? I have six separate airfields here in Southern China, all within 100 miles of the coast, where the PLA has installed what appears to be some kind of new carrier take off and landing facility. Take a look.”

Bill Hendrickson, Tom’s superior at the Imagery Intelligence Office (IMINT) got up from his desk and walked over to Tom’s terminal. “Ok, Tom, show me what you’ve got.”

As Bill pulled a chair behind Tom’s and sat down looking at Tom’s 27” color monitor, Tom started in. “What I have is dual runways installed at these airfields where the Chinese are practicing takeoffs and landings. This is a configuration I have never seen before, and the “landing decks” are set into the ground so SU-30’s make their approach and landing just as if they were approaching a carrier deck. If you look here,” and Tom pointed to an area on the screen with the cursor from his computer, “you can see what can be nothing other than arresting wires.”

Bill held Tom’s capabilities in high regard. Over the last several years, dating back to the EP-3 incident off Hainan Island in 2001, Bill had found he could best stimulate Tom’s critical thinking by playing the “devil’s advocate.” On that occasion, Tom had been the first to observe that the Red Chinese were carefully taking apart and then reassembling the various electronic components of the US naval surveillance aircraft.

“So, it’s no secret that the PLAN is building two large deck carriers in Shanghai. We are watching that closely. Of course they would be training.”

Tom, anticipating Bill’s “devil’s advocate” posture, responded “Yes, but the configuration of these decks doesn’t match what’s taking shape there in Shanghai. In addition, look at the close-ups and markings on all these aircraft (which Tom proceeded to show him through various images he called up on the screen). They appear to be training six to eight new carrier wings here—not just the two new ones needed for those new carriers—and it’s more than the “Flankers.” They are using some of those new navalized J-10 aircraft as well.”

Although reflecting on the potential enormity of this data, Bill continued his role of critic and countered, “Those “landing decks” look for all the world like an “X”; maybe they have them crossing like that to maximize the landings and takeoffs for wind conditions. I have to admit, though, I am

concerned about what certainly appears to be the training of additional squadrons. Still, I do not believe it is any secret that the Chinese are intent on building several carriers. By the way, what's the latest projection on the completion of those two in Shanghai, and when are they expected to be commissioned?"

Tom appreciated his superior's knack of getting him to think on his feet by challenging him; nonetheless he knew he had Bill hooked.

"They say they will launch those two sometime early next year and then will spend a full year getting them qualified and into the fleet, so we are talking about two years. But, come on Bill, they are gearing up for something here. Why train quadruple the air wings needed, when they haven't even announced, let alone laid down, any additional carriers yet? What do you think? Should we go ahead and forward this to the Navy's analysts with our comments and see what their read on it is?"

Bill had been hooked from the moment he saw that there were six airfields involved.

"I'll do more than that, my friend. I want us to meet in person with them. In addition, I am going to pass a note over to that NSA Weisskopf is bringing on. The new administration is going to be anxious to analyze this info as they face off the ChiComms. Prepare a presentation of your findings, analysis and concerns, along with the data, and be prepared to comment on them when we meet. Before I forget to say so—*outstanding* job digging this up, Tom!"

### **February through March**

It was two weeks before Bill Hendrickson and Tom Lawton were able to hold their meetings with the Navy and the new administration's National Security Advisor, John Bowers. The result was a flurry of activity as the new administration and the Navy began to make further requests of the NRO for more satellite photography, and for over-flights by the NRO's most highly classified surveillance aircraft. The satellite imagery began pouring in and the first over-flight was scheduled for late March, to be followed up by a joint NRO, NSA and Navy meeting in early April, which the President himself indicated he would attend.

As the new American administration pointedly indicated its desires to further bolster the US military, it was viewed as extremely hawkish, not only by potential adversaries, but by many of its allies as well. Some of those allies, particularly in Europe, were concerned about the potential for confrontation. In stark contrast, America's allies in Asia, particularly Taiwan and South Korea, viewed such straightforward defense posturing with relief, and a sense of bridled optimism.

In Red China, President Jien Zenim prepared for his meeting with the new US President which was scheduled for late April, after his joint announcement with India on their economic alliance. He intended, in no uncertain terms, to leverage that announcement to let the American President know that the era of US hegemony in the Western Pacific was drawing to a close. He hoped that the two nations could work together to ensure that the transition to the new "reality" in the region was conducted in as smooth and non-belligerent a way as possible.

During this same period, the Chinese shipyard production crew chief, Sung Hsu, having successfully answered all of General Humbaio's security personnel's questions, was transferred to the COSCO shipyards where the military modifications for the Container and RORO ships were taking place under the tightest of security. Sung was introduced to these three "new" modules and immediately assigned to be a production crew chief. His specific responsibilities became the installation of new LRASD (Long Range Anti-Shipping Device) systems on the decks of the Tactical Attack ships and the Amphibious Assault ships. As these systems were newly tested and now deemed production worthy, Sung Hsu was required to work very closely with those who designed the systems to develop comprehensive manufacturing training materiel. This would allow the conversion process to be implemented in a "mass production" environment at several Chinese shipyards simultaneously. In order to accomplish this, Sung attended meetings to develop the strategies and materiel necessary to implement the training. The LRASD planning session was led by Lu Pham, the Vietnamese scientist, who would later be credited with the most revolutionary development in naval warfare in more than a century.

### **March 25, 19:35 local time**

#### **Over the South China Sea**

Colonel "Mac" Mendenhall studied the multifunction display (MFD) immediately in front of him. He was approaching the coast of Red China from the northeast of Taiwan. His navigation or "way " points were all programmed for a run down the Chinese coast, passing just to the east of Hainan Island. From there, he would turn away from the coast towards the interior of the South China Sea where his aircraft would begin the long journey back to Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada. As the airspeed indicator passed into the Mach 4 range, and his altitude cleared 100,000 feet, he addressed his electronics defense and surveillance officer (EDSO).

"Ok, Larry, we're cleared for the ingress. We'll be hugging the coast and getting our "view" of those installations. On my mark, we'll be positioned and you can commence your run...three, two, one...MARK!"

With that, Captain Larry Jenkins activated his surveillance package, which would be looking directly into Red Chinese territory at several of their air bases using light, radio and other electronic wavelengths and bands.

The SR-77 "Pervador" (or "Aurora" as it was mislabeled by many in the public) was a flying wonder. It was the replacement for the aging, but by most nations' standards, still very "space age" SR-71 "Blackbird" that the United States National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) had retired nine years earlier. This aircraft could cruise at Mach 4 at very high altitude and was designed with the radar cross-section of a sparrow, employing radar-absorbing material directly into its surfaces.

The aircraft employed every sensor imaginable, from devices which would pick up any telltale signs of radioactivity, to devices which would detect and categorize any radar emissions, or any conceivable light wave length, and all VHF and UHF communications, whether clear air broadcasts or simple "leakage" into the atmosphere. It also had the most sensitive encryption software and hardware available on the planet, and could communicate real time with satellite relay stations and devices on the ground, or in space. At full speed, it could outrun almost any anti-aircraft guided missile, though in its eight years of active service, none had ever been fired at it.

For potential use against those nations developing detection and missiles defense capabilities which could reach the SR-77 (and Red China was one such nation), the aircraft could also be coupled with the HR-7 "Thunder Dart" hypersonic reconnaissance aircraft.

The HR-7 could be carried "piggy back" by the SR-77 and then launched at a standoff distance. It could also launch on its own from a suitable airfield. The single seat HR-7 carried a similar surveillance package, but would use its turbojet engines to achieve a speed at which its new technology Pulse Detonation Wave Engines (PDWE) could be activated.

Those engines would then boost the aircraft to Mach 7+ and an altitude approaching 200,000 ft. Its endurance was more limited, but the HR-7 could, by virtue of its speed and operating altitude, circumvent even the most heavily and technologically advanced defenses, allowing those installations that they defended to be analyzed.

On this mission, the additional defensive capability was not deemed necessary to take a good look at all six airfields. As a result, this SR-77 had been sent aloft, without its HR-7 companion craft to conduct this mission. Captain Jenkins had just activated a special package of sensors to complete that mission at the first of the suspected airfields Tom Lawton had discovered from the satellite images a couple of months earlier.

Nine minutes later, and 450 miles down the coast, Larry noticed a red indicator on his defense MFD, just as he heard the warning tone in his headset.

"Mac, I've got an "S" band air search radar painting us from 45 degrees off our nose. Range about 80 miles. It's coming from the target airfield just to the north and east of Hong Kong. They haven't made us...but once that operator notices that those intermittent "sparrow" size images are moving across his scope at about mach 4, I bet he sits up and takes notice."

"Do you think there's any chance they'll get a lock on us?" Mac asked.

"Very doubtful. Although latest intelligence reports indicate that with new software upgrades, and other refinements they developed over the last couple of years, they'll be close soon. Still, I don't know what they have that can shoot at us even if they do get a lock," Larry replied.

After thinking this over for a minute, and checking his course relative to the people he now knew were looking for him, Mac said, "Well, you can bet they are working on it. They won't improve their acquisition and targeting without also improving their weapons. Just keep me informed. We'll be past those folks in a minute, and we need another eight minutes to get that last airfield on Hainan Island covered."

Five minutes later, and still some 150 miles from Hainan Island, Larry said, "Okay, someone's been talking. We are now getting multiple radar, multiple bands all down the coast. There's a "Top Plate" signature 30 miles off the coast of Hainan Island too. Looks like one of their new Hangzhou class destroyers out there."

Hurriedly checking their course relative to these new threats, Colonel Mendenhall quickly saw what he needed to do to complete his mission, while protecting his ultra secret and sophisticated national asset.

"Damn! It looks like he's sitting within about eight miles of our flight path, and we'll be there in about two-and-a-half minutes. No way we can fly that close. That KS-2 derivative AAW system they installed on their DDG's has a 42 km range with a ceiling of 25,000 meters and that's just too close."

"I'm adjusting our approach and putting us about 30 miles off that ship. You'll still get a good look at Hainan, but not as good as we planned. If you need to make adjustments, do it now. I'm plugging the new course in on my mark...mark."

With that, Larry quickly studied the information on his MFD, made some quick calculations to determine the optimum settings for his equipment, given the new parameters. Then, as he was keying it in, he replied to his flight commander,

"Wilco Mac. I'll just crank up the "gain" on a couple of these packages and we'll be ready to go. About ten seconds, no biggie."

**March 25, same time****48 kilometers off Hainan Island****On Board PLAN 136 Hangzhou**

Captain Xinhua Zukang, the commanding officer (CO) of the PLAN 136 Hangzhou, one of his nation's most sophisticated warships, watched his defense operations officer retrieve the latest information on the fast approaching, unidentified aircraft.

"Lieutenant, there is no doubt, what we have approaching is an American surveillance aircraft, and not the slow, lumbering EP-3 aircraft which we have seen so often in the past. No, this is not like the one our national hero, Wang Wei, forced to land five years ago. This is their best. We can tell more about this aircraft by what we cannot find out about it, than if the Americans had contacted us and told us it was coming. It is clearly one of their high-speed, high-altitude, stealthy, "NRO" surveillance aircraft. Be sure to record everything you can about it, and attempt to lock onto it with every piece of acquisition and targeting equipment we have on this ship."

The Lieutenant, who had been in contact with other radar sites along the coast, including the airfield outside of Hong Kong which had initially discovered the target, understood the gravity of his Captain's words. The "Top Plate" radar was of the latest Russian design. Although the "target" had not come within its range, it was capable of taking feeds from other systems and selecting targets and firing at them, as if its own radar had acquired them.

All of the information feeding into his computer system was now indicating that the "Unknown" was approaching at something just in excess of Mach 4 and was flying at about 30,000 meters and was still some 160 km distant. Clearly, what the Captain said was true...irrespective of the intermittent nature of the contact...the Americans had significantly raised the stakes by employing their best surveillance aircraft on a mission over his homeland.

"Captain, the approaching target has just entered our acquisition range at 100 km, but has adjusted its course and will pass some 45 kilometers to the east and south of us at an altitude of 30,000 meters."

"Very well," Captain Xinhua said. "Keep trying to acquire the target as it passes. The only thing that I would like more than acquiring that American aircraft with our radar and locking on to him, would be to have a weapon that could reach him and bring him down."

"What I wouldn't give for a battery of those new KS-2+ land based anti-air missiles that I have heard rumors of! Just the same, we are going to be privileged to gather a wealth of information on one of our principal adversary's most sophisticated aircraft. Information our researchers and developers will put to good use."

**March 25, 19:50 local time****80 kilometers south and east of Hainan Island, PRC**

"Alright! We are now egressing the area. What kind of look did you get, Larry?" Mac asked as he completed the turn that would take them away from the coast of Red China and out to sea.

After directing his system to encrypt and send, Larry responded, "Looked good. Would have been nice to be closer, but I am afraid that Hangzhou got about as good a "look" at us as anyone ever has. I tell you, every piece of equipment they had was trained on us trying to get a lock-on...but, they got a definite "no joy" on that. Just the same, I don't relish getting that close to another belligerent if we can avoid it. By the way, the entire "package" has already been encrypted and sent on its way."

**March 27, 17:00 local time****Tianjin Shipyards, Secure Training Facility**

"Therefore, comrades, these conversions must be completed in a minimum of time once the modular components are manufactured, and once the processes are defined and in place."

Turning to the presentation screen, where the slides for the presentation were being presented, General Hunbaio continued.

"Just to reiterate, please direct your attention to the next slide on the screen which summarizes the conversion schedule goals for each conversion type."

PLAN Training		Status: Top Secret
GOALS FOR TIMELY MODULAR CONVERSION		
SHIP TYPE	FROM STD VESSEL	TIME
Tactical Attack	Container Ship	6 weeks
Amphibious Assault	RORO Ship	8 weeks
Sea Control Carrier	Container Ship	10 weeks

"I cannot emphasize enough how critical these goals are for your successful fulfillment of the high responsibility your nation has placed upon each of you as foreman and crew leaders. In addition, our motherland and our ability to secure our national security will depend on your success."

“Remember, you will be spread out over 12 different shipyard facilities. Confidentiality will be an absolute requirement. Our most vital and most advanced national security assets will help maintain security. We will commence within the next three to four months. At that time, we will begin work on three Sea Control Carriers, five Amphibious Assault Ships and four Tactical Attack ships. It is our intent to commission the Sea Control Carriers in the late September time frame, and discreetly deploy the others into their intended area of operations.”

General Hunbaio, about to complete his introductory presentation, paused as he looked across the audience. It was made up of over 120 crew chiefs and foreman, numerous COSCO and COSTIND executives and many military.

“We will now have the lead weapons engineers from each system present to you the basic requirements and specifications for installing and supporting their various systems. These presentations are expected to require the next four full days, during which you will need to direct your utmost attention to them. We will cover everything from the Vertical Launch Systems (VLS), to the Close in Weapons Systems (CIWS), to aircraft, guns, and, most importantly, the LRASD and Ballistic Missile requirements. The basic location of each weapons system is provided in the plan and profile view of each ship which accompany your handouts. For convenience, I will now display them on the screen.”

“Please review these layouts and familiarize yourselves with them and the location of the various components relative to your own areas of responsibility. You will be referring to them often over the next four days, and then for the following ten days, as you develop operational plans and procedures.”

“Unless there are questions, we will take a fifteen minute break before starting the presentations on the LRASD by Commodore Lu Pham.”

Before the General could leave the podium, he noticed a hand raised in the audience. Apparently there was at least one question. Thinking that this individual was a hardy and brave soul, the General recognized him and said “Yes, Comrade. Please stand up. Utilize the microphone at the end of your aisle. State your name and function, and ask your question.”

With that, a relatively young man stood up, picked up the microphone and spoke.

“General Hunbaio, thank you very kindly for recognizing me. My name is Sung Hsu, I am a modularity crew chief for COSCO from our Shanghai facilities. Here is my question.”

“Clearly these modules are for warships for our Navy. I am concerned regarding the overall hull integrity for combat operations, and the decidedly smaller number of watertight bulkheads and compartment hatches as compared to military specifications. Is there a retrofit planned in that regard?”

As Sung sat down, the General thought, Here is a young man unafraid to ask the difficult questions which most of the crew chiefs avoided. The General responded. “An excellent observation and question. The answer is no. We will be able to produce these vessels, and modernize them, well within the cycle time of any adversary’s response, and quickly enough to make up for any shortfalls.”

“Are there other questions? If not, we will reconvene in fifteen minutes.”

### **March 28, 19:00 local time**

#### **Tianjin Shipyards, Secure Training Facility**

“Concluding, we have reviewed the structural requirements based on both the static and dynamic loading for this system. We have reviewed the rotation requirements for bringing the weapons to bear, and we have reviewed the access requirements for reloading and maintaining all components of the systems.”

“Again, I cannot impress on you enough the need for absolute secrecy regarding this. You will all be living, from this moment on, in the most strict of security environments. The very success of our efforts to secure vital national interests will depend on your ability to ensure that this security is maintained both collectively and individually. Failure in this regard will not be tolerated. Success will establish you all as heroes for our cause.”

Recently promoted Commodore Lu Pham looked out over his audience. He would never have imagined the realization of his dreams, or the magnitude to which it was being employed...yet here was living proof before his eyes. He found it difficult to believe that he was managing over 150 scientists, engineers and military planners in the design, test and deployment of these weapons. But he took great contentment in the realization that soon, as a result of his doing, America would reap the gruesome harvest of what they had sown. As he contemplated this, he committed it to the memory of his long-dead father and mother. With hundreds of very qualified manufacturing personnel, like the young Sung Hsu whom he had just met, he could now ensure the deployment of these revolutionary devices on the necessary vessels, thereby satisfying the needs of the People’s Republic of China—and his own.

Having reflected on all of this, he concluded. “This ends our presentation and discussion of requirements for these systems. In a few days, we will begin the ten days of detailed planning and procedure development, which will produce the final manufacturing plans for the modular conversions requiring this system. Thank you. You have been a most attentive and respectful audience.”

**April 4, 13:00**  
**Classified Briefing Room, The Pentagon**

John Bowers looked around the room and mentally surveyed the participants in this meeting. As the newly appointed National Security Advisor to President Norm Weisskopf, Bowers would be chairing this meeting. He thought briefly of the family farm back in Kansas and the cornfields his father and brothers were tending as he sat here. It was to protect those cornfields and the many people like his parents and brothers and their families that meetings like this were necessary.

John Bowers had elected to leave the family farm. He had answered an internal call to serve his country, and for the last twenty-three years he had been doing so in roles of increasing responsibility. He had served well as a Captain in the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the US Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division during Desert Storm, commanding a platoon of Abrams tanks. His command had been one of the principal units to take on, and literally slaughter, an Iraqi armored division on February 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, 1991 in the Iraqi desert near Kuwait.

The resulting medals, and the ceremonies associated with them, had led to his first direct contact with the "General." A close relationship had developed, and now spanned the fifteen intervening years. After retiring as a full colonel five years later, John had been called back to "duty" twice.

The first time was to serve during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, where he had served as an advisor to the commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. That division had planned to assault Iraq from the North, while the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary and U.S. Army 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division invaded from the south. Due to the inability to secure entry and staging rights in Turkey, the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division had ultimately transited the Mediterranean Sea, through the Suez Canal and entered Iraq by way of the Persian Gulf and Kuwait, several weeks behind the Marines and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. They had come along just in time to relieve the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division and in time to essentially mop-up after the quick and decisive victory of their comrades. A few fire fights and a lot of patrolling and maintaining of order had ensued, but ultimately, after a few months, John was released and returned home to his family.

He once again went into retirement from military service, but John Bowers service to his nation was not over. General Weisskopf himself, now President Weisskopf, had made the next call. He simply and directly asked John Bowers to serve as his National Security Advisor and to help him ensure that American interests were not only protected, but clearly articulated throughout an increasingly threatening world, particularly in the Western Pacific.

So, here he was, surveying the attendees of a meeting, which would prepare a presentation to the President of the United States and the Joint Chiefs the following day. The assembled group included Tom Lawton and Bill Hendrickson from the NRO, Captain Toby "Skip" Pendleton from US Navy Intelligence, Major Tim Lawrence from the US Air Force, and Susan Theigold from the US State Department.

"Okay, let's get this show on the road, shall we? It is my understanding that the photographs and data from the over-flight have been analyzed by everyone here and that preliminary notes, concerns and projections from that analysis by the NRO, the Navy and the Air Force have been copied to and reviewed by you all. Is that correct?"

John looked around the room, receiving either a nod or a simple "Yes" or "That's correct" from everyone there.

"Alright then, that's excellent. Let's go ahead and start with the NRO and proceed from there right around the table, having the Navy, the Air Force and the State Department make their statements in turn. Please try to keep each of your opening comments to 3-5 minutes. We'll have plenty of time for detailed interaction after we hear from each of you. We'll wrap up the meeting with an hour-long session of developing final thoughts as to the meaning and ramifications of this info and what we believe we should do about it, beginning at 3:30 p.m. Bill, will you or Tom please begin?"

Bill nodded to Tom and indicated, according to their prior decision, for Tom to "take point" in this discussion.

"Okay, Mr. Bowers, I will be presenting our thoughts on the over-flight. As you all know, on March 25<sup>th</sup> local time, March 24<sup>th</sup> here, we conducted an over-flight in international airspace off the coast of Southern China. Our aim was to take a hard look at six airfields where our satellite assets had shown us pictures of what appeared to be the PLAN training large numbers of naval aircraft.

"Two things were intriguing: first, the number of apparent airfields being used for this activity, and second, the configuration of the airfield facilities so employed.

"Simply stated, in terms of SIGINT and visible data, our over-flight absolutely confirmed the existence of these facilities and the way in which they are being employed. The data also indicates that the Red Chinese are indeed training between six and eight mixed carrier wings consisting of fighter, strike and even what appears to be a new "Airborne Early Warning" (AEW) aircraft in addition to the two wings they are training near Shanghai. Also, it is clear that they are training these air wings with a



deck configuration that is not similar to the layout of the two carriers they are building in Shanghai. We will save our thoughts on ramifications and on reasoning for later in the meeting.”

As he sat down, Bill Hendrickson quickly interjected, “I would like to add here what Tom is too modest to let you know: that is, that it was his own analysis that led to the discovery of the installations which led to the over-flight itself. Our analysis, particularly after the mission, indicates many more air wings being trained than conceivably necessary for the carriers the Chinese are building.”

As Bill sat down, John looked directly at Tom while stating, “Okay, okay. Thanks very much to our friends from the NRO. Tom, you did a fine job in ferreting this out. Oh, by the way, I would like the two of you, Bill and Tom, to be in attendance at the meeting tomorrow for backup when we discuss all of this.”

Then, looking over to Toby Pendleton, John continued. “So, without further pause, let’s continue. Please Toby, what are the US Navy’s thoughts on the data?”

For the next three hours, the Navy, the Air Force and the State Department first made their initial statements, which to one degree or another basically concurred with the NRO, and then discussed the issues in detail. The fallout of the entire discussion was simply that:

The Red Chinese were training a lot more Naval Air capability than would be indicated by the capacity of the carriers they were building.

The configuration of the training facilities targeted by this surveillance was strange, and not understood, as it represented a somewhat shorter deck in an “X” configuration, as opposed to the longer and more traditional angled configuration building on the new carriers in Shanghai.

The only possible conclusions, given the investment in the unexplained efforts, were that the Chinese were planning on building additional carriers, without divulging any indication to that effect.

The recommendation was to conduct further surveillance, to consider bringing up the question through diplomatic channels and to consider using human intelligence (HUMINT) assets within Red China to determine what was “afoot,” though Ms. Theigold from State strongly disagreed with actively employing HUMINT on the ground in Red China.

“I believe this is a good summary, and I concur with both the conclusions and recommendations. Folks, we are playing a cat and mouse game that is every bit as critical as any of those played during the “cold war” with the Soviet Union—perhaps more so. I believe it critical that we understand what is going on with these developments. Given what we know of the Red Chinese ambitions in Asia, I will not be surprised if your involvement with this, and the ramifications that evolve from it, do not eventually come to require prolonged, full-time commitment.

“Bill and Tom, the meeting is scheduled for 3 p.m. tomorrow afternoon in the situation room at the White House. Let’s meet at my offices at 2:30 and go over together.”

With these comments by John Bowers, the preparation meeting for the next day’s briefing was concluded.

## **April 5, 15:35**

### **Situation Room, The White House**

President Norm Weisskopf had “that” feeling. He had experienced similar feelings from time to time throughout his life and military career. One had occurred several days before the Iraqis had attacked and taken the small Saudi town of Khafji during Operation Desert Storm in 1991. Because he trusted such feelings, and had issued practical general orders accordingly, the US Marine and Saudi forces in the area, although initially surprised, had quickly taken the town back and driven the Iraqis off. The result had been, as he stated at the time, “about as significant as a flea on an elephant’s butt.”

A more recent occurrence had been just a few months earlier, when an almost overpowering feeling had caused him to come out of retirement and unexpectedly run for the Presidency.

Norm the “Storm” Weisskopf had learned to trust such feelings over the years, and he was having an unusually uneasy one now concerning the information regarding the Chinese naval air training.

“Okay gentlemen, from your presentation and our discussions, it is clear to me that the Red Chinese are significantly building up their naval air in a way we do not understand. I want to understand it.”

“So, I would like to ask the following four questions. Mitch, what does the CIA have in terms of options on the ground in China? General Stone, what more can we find out through the use of our strategic surveillance assets? Admiral Crowler, what is the Navy’s assessment of the possibility of the Red Chinese deploying more carriers than we are aware of? And finally, number four, Fred, what can we do diplomatically? Should I raise this issue with Jien Zenim in my meetings with him later this month?”

“We have less than an hour gentlemen. Let’s hear your responses.”

With that, the President sat back and let the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Chief of Naval Operations and his Secretary of State take the floor in turn.

“Mr. President,” began Mitch Foley, the Director of Central Intelligence, “ever since the intelligence fiascoes of the late eighties, and additionally those of the nineties, particularly as regards the Red Chinese, we have been building our assets in this regard. We have highly-placed operatives in their industry and within the PLA. Our penetration of their Navy and strategic missile forces is somewhat less impressive, as is our penetration of their Political Apparatus, although we do have a couple of people close to two of their junior politburo members.

“I believe we can set up an operation to delve into these matters, but it will be risky for those involved.”

In response, President Weisskopf simply stated, “Comes with the territory Mitch, as with any job associated with facing down your enemies, whether overtly or covertly. Make it happen, and be prepared to discuss the details with myself and with John Bowers ASAP. I’ll sign off on any directive that makes sense, and that is compartmentalized to the point of protecting our involvement.”

“Mr. President, I must object!” interjected Fred Reissinger, the Secretary of State. “Please do not sign off on any such directive without allowing us in State, at least at the highest levels, to review and respond to possible implications.”

The President responded immediately.

“Fred, your turn in this is coming. Rest assured, if I believe there are any possible holes or ramifications, I will get your read. In the end, I have to make the call, however, and my threat gauge is pegged over on this. Okay, Jeremy, your turn. Shoot.”

Jeremy Stone, a thirty-five year professional soldier and four star General in the United States Army was the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. He was committed to strengthening the military technologically, and was also committed to insuring that the Army’s heavy armor remained an integral part of the fighting force in the foreseeable future. This stance, with respect to armor, ran counter to the efforts of the last two CJCS and to the former Secretary of Defense. Nonetheless, President Weisskopf agreed, and he had selected both Jeremy Stone, and his Secretary of Defense, Timothy Hattering, who was present in this meeting, for their agreement with his positions on armor, among other reasons.

“Mr. President, the Chinese reacted quickly to our latest SR-77 over-flight. No weapons were fired and they did not lock on, but our crew was uncomfortable with their ability to track and communicate the whereabouts of their aircraft so quickly.

“I would recommend that we pick our targets carefully and employ the HR-7 on the next mission. If we can get HUMINT or SIGINT from satellites to point us in a direction regarding potential new naval construction, or any other relevant facility or region, we can quickly employ an HR-7 in a surprise over-flight to acquire more information.

“Bill Hendrickson and Tom Lawton are sitting in with us today from the IMINT Directorate at NRO. Tom is the analyst who discovered this activity from some routine satellite photographs. Do either of you have any comments regarding the best use of NRO surveillance assets in this regard?”

Bill stood up somewhat nervously to address the room full of the most powerful people in his government.

“Gentlemen, we have analyzed the data extensively. As has been stated here already, it is painfully clear that the Chinese are planning something, of which we have no knowledge or intelligence, with respect to their naval air capabilities. Our estimates indicate that they would have to be building four to five more carriers to handle the aircraft they are training. Our thought is to focus our attention on all of their military shipyards and see if we can find any indication of activities in this regard. Tom, have you got anything to add?”

Tom Lawton was even more nervous than his boss. While used to making presentations on sensitive and classified material to important audiences, he never quite imagined he would be in a position to stand before the President of the United States and make such a presentation. Nonetheless, Tom had nagging suspicions, so he dove right in.

“Just this: It is clear that the Chinese have announced what they want us to hear: the building of large deck aircraft carriers and training of air wings sufficient for them. The fact that they are training many more air wings at these other facilities without divulging such information, clearly indicates their intention to build more carriers. I would set up a schedule with our satellites and examine every shipyard that the Chinese have, military or otherwise, and then use the HR-7 for detailed looks at wherever that leads.”

As Tom and Bill sat down, Jeremy Stone began wrapping up his comments.

By the end of the meeting, it was agreed that John Bowers would coordinate efforts to utilize three national defense resources to aggressively delve into the mystery of the Red Chinese naval air training efforts. These included a covert CIA mission, more NRO satellite and over-flight assets, and, based upon Admiral Crowler’s (the CNO) recommendation, to use the latest Sea Wolf class SSN for a covert mission near the shipyards. Any actual mission had to be signed off by the President, but the okay to plan such missions and present them to him for a decision was approved.

In addition, Secretary of State Fred Reissinger got a commitment from the President to hold off on any actual CIA or Naval missions until the President met with his Chinese counterpart later in the month and raised the issue as judiciously as possible, and then reviewed and analyzed the results.

After closing the meeting, while everyone was filing out, the President motioned for his long time friend John Bowers to join him for a moment.

“John, find out if Tom Lawton can accompany you and join the first lady and me for dinner next week. I am interested in an “unofficial,” after-dinner discussion with that gentleman on his feelings regarding these moves by the Chinese. Let’s tentatively say next Wednesday, the 13<sup>th</sup>. If it’s going to work, I’ll have the Chief of Staff arrange it and pick you both up.”

John was never surprised at the President’s ability and willingness to “get right down in the trenches” when he felt it necessary. After all, this was how he had come to know the General himself. After he indicated his intention to contact Tom Lawton, John smiled, shook his head and exited the room.

**April 11, 08:00**

### **WNN Broadcasting Studios, New York**

David Krenshaw was not an early riser; he never had been. But the early morning (4 am) call—and, even more so, its content—from China had got him out of bed and over to the broadcasting studios. Several calls en route had gotten the major editors, production crews and general management apprised of the story on which WNN (World News Network) would be getting an exclusive.

Calls had also gone out to their local camera teams in Beijing, New Delhi and Moscow, and they were all standing by now for simulcasts.

“It’s good to know, and it’s even better to be known,” thought David as he sat down for his final makeup as the production crew was hurriedly making final preparations. His ability to find out about and even (at least in his own mind) influence events to the benefit of his network, and more importantly to the benefit of himself, was moving him straight towards the top of his field. In fact, he was convinced he would pull in some type of serious award for this very story and his involvement in it.

Now the production people were queuing him up. 3, 2, 1...*on air!*

“Good Morning. This is David Krenshaw in the WNN newsroom, interrupting with a Special Report. We have camera crews standing by in Beijing, New Delhi and Moscow for exclusive coverage of an unexpected announcement by all three governments. Our sources indicate that an historic economic pact between the People’s Republic of China and India is going to be announced momentarily by the Presidents of those two nations. It is also expected that the President of the Russian Federation will announce an involvement with these two Asian giants in projects associated with the Sino-Indian announcement. Okay, I am told that we are ready in Beijing and New Delhi. We take you now to Beijing for a Special Announcement by President Jien Zenim of the People’s Republic of China.”

On his monitor, David saw the picture of the Red Chinese flag, screened over an evening shot of Tiananmen Square, which was now appearing on tens of millions of TV sets around the world. The block writing across the screen in both Chinese and English stated:

### **Special Announcement**

#### **President Jien Zenim**

#### **People’s Republic of China**

Momentarily, the picture faded to a press conference room where the WNN camera crew was showing a podium in front of a picture of Mao. Standing at the podium was President Jien Zenim. In the lower right hand corner of the screen, another, smaller shot was superimposed, picturing a similar scene in New Delhi, where the Indian president, President KP Narayannen, stood at a similar podium. Although both men began speaking, the words of the Chinese President were carried by WNN.

“Good evening. We are very happy and gratified to announce today the creation of a new economic pact between the nations of India and the People’s Republic of China. This pact has been more than five years in the making and will establish open and free trade between our two countries. It also establishes many agreements on the utilization of our mutual work forces, which, as most people know, are producing a large majority of the products for the various peoples of the world.”

“We are calling this pact the “Coalition of Asian States,” or CAS for short, and we invite all Asian countries to review the basis for the agreements and how they apply to our mutual benefit. It is our sincere hope that more nations will join with us as we proceed with our future hope and prosperity, based on what we call the “Time of the Three Wisdoms.” They are:

1. *“All men and women are equal.”*
2. *“All share equally in the bounty of a working and industrious society.”*
3. *“One goal, one thought, one people for World is peace.”*

We hope to set an example for the rest of the world with these high ideals, showing by example how they can serve as the basis for peace and mutual prosperity between nations. A press and

diplomatic package has been prepared for any network or nation wishing them. Thank you, good night.”

The picture faded back to David Krenshaw in WNN’s New York studios.

“We have just witnessed an historic announcement by the People’s Republic of China and India, announcing a new “Coalition of Asian States” based upon an economic foundation with strong ideological overtones. The governments of the two largest work forces and populations on earth have apparently worked out what were perceived, until today, as considerable differences. I am now told that an announcement from The Russian Federation is ready. We take you now to Moscow.”

Again, the picture faded, and David saw President Vladimir Putin sitting behind his desk in his presidential office, facing the camera. After no more than a second had elapsed, he began to speak.

“This evening we have witnessed an extraordinary economic agreement between two great nations for peace and prosperity. Their ability to rise above their differences and unite in friendship and prosperity has energized our own Russian government, and will do the same for our people.”

“It is therefore with great enthusiasm that I announce today the Siberian Economic Development Treaty. This treaty is made exclusively with the Coalition of Asian States for the economic development of our vast Siberian resources. We look forward to its impact on the people of our mutual regions as we build our economies and our prosperity upon the principles of equality and social justice outlined in the CAS ‘Time of the Three Wisdoms’ which we in the Russian Federation endorse completely.”

“This ends the announcement. There will be no press questions at this time. A full Press Conference will be held tomorrow in the Kremlin at 10 am. Thank you, and good night.”

As David Krenshaw appeared on the screen, his enthusiasm was self evident.

“That was President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation announcing a Siberian Economic Development Treaty between his nation and the just-announced Coalition of Asian States, made up of The People’s Republic of China and India. For those of you watching on TV, or listening via the WNN radio network, let me say these are historic and momentous times. What we have witnessed this morning is nothing short of the largest potential economic development in the history of the world. As our correspondents gather more information, and as our analysts review that information with the documentation provided, we’ll broadcast updates. Please stay tuned to WNN for more developments throughout the day, and on your nightly news. This is David Krenshaw reporting, and this has been a WNN Special Report.”

**April 12, 10:00**

**The Oval Office, Washington, D.C.**

“Okay, you’ve each had time to review these announcements and the diplomatic information handed out with them. Let’s start with State and proceed to National Security, Defense and CIA. What are we seeing here folks? What’s the impact to us, economically and diplomatically? What does it mean to our allies, and to other nations in the region?”

As the President finished, he turned to Fred Reissinger and waited.

“Mr. President, this announcement caught us completely by surprise. The Chinese and Indians began having more serious talks, which were geared towards settling border disputes, back in 2000. It was generally agreed at the time that they were making good progress. But an economic agreement of this nature and magnitude did not appear to be on the table, particularly after the closer ties we developed with India during the entire campaign to defeat bin Laden and Al Qaeda. Clearly China and India have been working behind the scenes and very confidentially to put this together. The announcement by the Russians was clearly coordinated and also indicates considerable prolonged behind the scenes activity.”

“As to what it means to us diplomatically, a lot depends upon how serious they are about these agreements, particularly regarding their workforce. Basically, they are going to be charging huge tariffs to utilize their workers in factories within their borders, for corporations that are not part of the CAS. If they implement this as written, it will have the ultimate effect of nationalizing the assets of foreign corporations, without overtly doing so. Basically, those businesses will no longer be able to profitably operate their own facilities and will be forced to look elsewhere. In the meantime, the idled factories, if not paid for, will revert to the nations wherein they exist.”

“Normally, this would be economically devastating to those countries, as they lost the contracts with those companies. But apparently both Red China and India feel that they will be able to continue producing product under a different name, and offer them even less expensively to the western markets. The pricing structures and trade formulas in the CAS agreements accomplish this. In addition, with the opening of unprecedented exploration and exploitation of the Siberian oil, gold, timber and other resources, they apparently feel they can live with whatever sanctions we care to place on them—and they may be right. If so, this is going to put enormous pressure on our friends and allies in the region: most notably Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and the ROC.”

As the Secretary of State finished, the President experienced that same unsettling feeling he'd had almost a week earlier when talking about the Chinese issues. Turning to John Bowers and Timothy Hattering, he asked "Okay, John and Tim, what are we getting ourselves into here? I have to believe that the naval air issues and these announcements are related. What other surprise announcements can we expect from the Red Chinese?"

John spoke right up.

"Well Mr. President, although we haven't determined exactly what the Red Chinese are up to in that regard, we do have the three operations we discussed last week ready for you to review."

Before the Secretary of State could interrupt, John continued. "Don't worry Fred, we aren't going to be stepping on your toes. Based on last week's meeting, none of these require any kind of approval before the President meets with President Zenim in Beijing later this month. However, Tim and I both agree that you should at least review them, Mr. President, and be prepared to act based on the outcomes of those meetings."

"My personal feeling is that either the Chinese are developing something on their own which they will announce in due course, or they are working with someone else, maybe the Indians—although I find that difficult to believe—to do the same. The intent would be to establish more military force projection in the South China Sea and surrounding areas."

At this, the Secretary of Defense spoke up. "Mr. President, I believe we would be smart to increase our military presence in the Western Pacific at this time. These developments are disturbing as the Red Chinese continue to build up their forces across the strait from Taiwan, and in general throughout the South China Sea. Their bases in the Spratleys have been well established and garrisoned for some years now, and they still have that satellite monitoring station on Tarawa Island that was handed over to them under Clinton. They have beefed up their electronics there, as well as the dock facilities and airfield."

"In light of what State just said, I believe it prudent to get another carrier in the area, and perhaps a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), and have them temporarily stationed out of Guam, while we monitor developments."

The Secretary of State interrupted. "Oh come on Tim, that will be viewed by everyone in the region as provocative and an overreaction. I do not deny that the developments are disturbing and that there may be a military overtone to them. For that reason we should be prepared to deploy. But I believe deploying prematurely would be playing into their hands, and may even force the issue. I would recommend holding off, Mr. President."

President Weisskopf listened to all of this, and made up his mind quickly.

"Alright Fred, we'll hold off on any deployment; but, Tim, get the orders issued that will ensure that we are logistically ready to deploy from a provisioning, fuel and armament standpoint. We'll set it up to base them out of Guam in support of the Kitty Hawk group out of Japan."

"In addition, John and Mitch, I will review those three operations. The NRO and the Navy operations are probably going to be a 'go' as is, but Mitch, I want to scale back the HUMINT operation and not risk any of our highly-placed assets at this point. What are your thoughts?"

Mitch Foley was actually very relieved. First, the operatives he had placed in the Chinese industrial sector and at the foreign ministry were not something he was anxious to risk. Second, he had expected much more heat to be directed at CIA in this meeting regarding this matter since his Chinese operatives and his other intelligence officers had been taken by surprise.

"Mr. President, I understand and concur regarding those assets. They may be much more valuable to us later. This announcement by China and India was not discussed at their level, but implementing it certainly will be. Regarding finding out more about their naval shipbuilding, I have some ideas and will have our Director of Operations work out the details."

"Great, Mitch, I look forward to the updated plan. The fact that the Chinese surprised both State and yourself is very disconcerting. Something major is going on over there and we need to know what it is. John, we can start on the final review of the other two operations after dinner tomorrow night."

"Finally, Fred, let's finalize the team that will be going with me to Beijing for the summit with Zenim. I want to talk to him directly about these "labor" arrangements and about the Naval Air facilities we have been monitoring. In the meantime, I'd like you to get a read from our allies before the trip so we can factor all of that into the discussions."

**April 13, 22:00**

### **Along the Potomac, Washington, D.C.**

It was beautiful clear night along the Potomac. Even though the Secret Service was arrayed as inconspicuously as possible around them, and even though the two younger men who had dined with them were clearly there in some official capacity, Linda Weisskopf was glad to be out with Norm. Leaving the stuffy and very official Limousine behind and using the black Suburban for this "outing" had been a nice touch, she thought. As she watched Norm walking and talking casually with John and Tom, the young analyst from Virginia, she reflected on Norm's disposition the last few days.

Linda had been with Norm far too many years to not recognize the hints and telltale signs of apprehension and concern. She had seen them when he left for a tour in Vietnam and had then lived with the apprehension that accompanied his return home. She had seen them when he was the deputy task force commander for the invasion operation in the Caribbean. That had been a success, but there had been a cost; as there always was, for any honest and virtuous officer making life and death decisions for his soldiers.

And among his many attributes, Norm was honest and virtuous. He was perhaps a little gruff on the outside, but as she had said so many times, despite that gruff exterior so necessary in his profession, he was a true “burnt marshmallow.” Rough and crusty on the outside, but soft and caring underneath it. Caring for his soldiers, caring for his country, caring for her.

She had seen the same signs of apprehension before Desert Storm and on the TV screens, she had felt it over telephone lines during that epic conflict which had thrust him upon the national stage. She had seen it during his candidacy for the Presidency and she saw it now.

Norm was troubled. He was probably having another of “those” feelings. And though he hadn’t shared it with her yet, he didn’t need to. She knew it instinctively...and he would know she knew it, and take comfort in the thought that she shared it with him.

As if though sensing her thought, he turned away from the young men and came and took her by the hand.

“It is a beautiful night, sweetheart, and I apologize for not being able to spend more of it with you. What I would give to be able to just hold your hand and walk along the river here and properly enjoy this evening. Look at those stars! Even around all these lights they’re so bright this evening.”

Linda knew he could not stay much longer and did not want to make him be the one to break it off. She knew he truly wanted to stay with her and that was enough. She was content with that knowledge.

“You better go on now, Norm. These young men have important business with you, and there is little time left this evening to accomplish it. Let’s go back to the “house” and I’ll wait up for you.”

**April 13, 23:00**

### **The Oval Office, Washington, D.C.**

They had talked for almost an hour about specific technical details of the surveillance regarding the six airfields and the makeup and capabilities of the aircraft that were training there. Finally, the President felt the time was right to ask the pertinent question.

“Tom, I brought you here tonight because you were the one to notice these airfields and were perceptive enough to recognize their potential significance. In addition, John here has recommended you highly. I hope you will speak freely. As an old war-horse, I know that sometimes it’s critical—even essential—to hear the unvarnished truth from the ranks. It’s a lesson I learned and took to heart long ago. What do you feel is going on there with the Chinese and these naval airfields and training?”

Tom was amazed at the President’s disarming, open nature. It begged one’s trust and confidence to a degree Tom had seldom felt. Instinctively, he knew that this President was one of the rare ones who put duty, honor, and country above his own personal feelings and aspirations, and who would lead you right into the jaws of hell if necessary, with himself on point. Knowing this was the case, Tom did not hesitate to tell him, “Mr. President, I cannot prove this at the moment, but I believe the Chinese are putting something together somewhere that will carry those air wings they are working so feverishly to train. I don’t know where. I don’t know when...but I believe it will be soon, though we have no evidence of it outside of those curious training facilities and the aircraft themselves. They are building carriers, lots of them.”

The President glanced at John, who nodded his agreement and approval.

“I tend to agree with you Tom. I want you and your people to work closely with John. You can trust him implicitly. At the same time, always ensure that your superiors at NRO are kept completely within the loop. I am afraid that, if the Chinese have been able to keep this from us, there are any number of other things they are bringing together to move their plans forward. We have to find a way to get out in front of it or I am afraid the surprises will not bode well for us. I hope I can make progress in that regard when I visit and speak directly to President Jien Zenim.”

“Now, if you two gentlemen will excuse me, it’s past my bedtime, and I am going to rectify that.”

**April 26, 21:00 local time**

### **Government Conference Center**

### **Beijing, The People’s Republic of China**

The décor had been tremendous and exquisite. The food and entertainment had been marvelous. The pleasantries had been genuinely respectful. Many of the peripheral issues had been discussed and plans had been set in motion for hopefully amiable solutions. But now, the time had come for the two leaders to speak man-to-man, and place upon the table the true issues between them. President Jien Zenim was prepared, even eager, to do so.

He sensed he had the upper hand in these issues, and although he had personally researched the General's exploits and character, and been briefed by experts psychologically on him, still the feeling persisted to be wary.

"Mr. President, let us, as you Americans say, "Cut to the chase." The announcements we have made with India and the Russians must be uppermost in your mind. I am sure you desire to know our intentions."

President Weisskopf was relieved to hear his Chinese counterpart speak directly, and was anxious himself to address this central issue.

"Yes, President Jien, you have, as we say, "hit the nail on the head." This is a principal concern; particularly the details of the labor arrangements and the new tariffs. To be blunt, we believe this is a move by your government to force our companies out of the factories they have built in your nation."

"It is good to hear an American who will speak directly to principal issues. I respect you for that and hope our conversations can always be so sincere and understood. In fact, we are looking for a significant return on investment. Our workforce has been used by the West to reap unimaginable wealth for the capitalists in your society who own those businesses. We are serious about the ideals and tenets expressed in our 'Three Wisdoms,' Mr. President, and we mean to put them into effect throughout our society."

President Weisskopf could scarcely believe that President Zenim was so bold and direct. His intuition told him that the Chinese President meant every word he was saying, but he also felt he had to be extremely wary; there was much more to this somehow; much more.

"President Jien, while I respect your forthrightness, I must tell you that the United States would view any attempt, even a veiled one like this, to unilaterally foreclose on American interests within your country gravely. It would lead to severe trade restrictions and perhaps even a trade war. Surely there is some way we can accommodate the interests of your people, and your agreements with our business community."

President Jien Zenim did not hesitate. Though other Americans may have been wholly unlikely to speak so directly and to risk so much, from Jien Zenim's perspective, the Americans were caught in a trap of their own making, despite their newly-elected leader.

"We have accommodated those business interests for many years, Mr. President, at extremely low wages for our workers. We want them to now enjoy a higher standard and believe there are those, even in your own business community, who will pay it."

Again, somewhat taken aback by Zenim's direct and challenging speech, and all the more wary, President Weisskopf proceeded.

"This is a troubling attitude, Mr. President; one that will unavoidably lead to severe economic strain between us, and potential damage to our diplomatic relationship. When we couple this with your extraordinary Naval Air buildup, we are extremely concerned."

This train of thought and dialog was unexpected by Jien Zenim. As such, it upset him and he allowed a little of that emotion to creep ever so slightly into his tone, as a warning to the American head of state.

"Of what Naval Air buildup do you speak, Mr. President? We have made no secret of our efforts to build two aircraft carriers, and are openly training them. Why is this such a threat to you? Do you honestly believe that the US Navy is the only Navy entitled to such equipment?"

Norm Weisskopf detected the challenge in Jien Zenim's tone and sought to diffuse it in some way without giving up any initiative.

"No, Mr. President, I do not believe this. However, it is clear that you are training many more air wings than are necessary for the number of carriers you claim to be building. We therefore naturally believe that somewhere, unannounced and unnoticed, you are building more. Such secretive plans concern us. We would like to know your intentions."

Now it was clear to Zenim that the Americans had detected the significance of the training going on at the other airfields. His intelligence people had warned of this possibility and it would be good to confirm it.

"Mr. President, our only intention is to protect our interests. We intend to build a force, whether ground air or naval forces, adequate to that task."

"With our new Asian coalition and with the interest many other nations are showing in it, I believe it is clear that those national interests of ours are growing. We sincerely hope and are in fact confident that the United States and its navy will respect those interests rather than violating them."

Well, there it was, thought President Weisskopf. He might as well have warned us to back off of the Western Rim altogether.

"We will respect any legitimate interests of your nation, Mr. President. But we expect our interests to also be respected, along with those of our allies. In that regard, we maintain a right of free passage on the open seas; whether in the open Pacific Ocean, the Philippine Sea, or the China Sea. We hope that your intentions do include a plan to restrict that passage."

“I trust on these issues, as well as the others we discussed earlier today and yesterday, that our respective trade and diplomatic missions in July will be able to make progress and resolve these differences between us.”

So, the American is done talking, thought Jien Zenim. It’s just as well. Clearly Weisskopf has no intention of yielding. Well, this will produce more strain and will eventually lead to conflict. Although unfortunate, it is acceptable. The preparations are almost complete and, unlike the Americans, the Chinese people are ready for it physically and mentally.

“I sincerely hope for that progress as well, Mr. President. I sincerely do.”



## Chapter 2

*“Few men have virtue to withstand the highest bidder” –George Washington*

**May 5, 10:00 local time**

**Center of Theological Studies**

**Qom, Iran**

Hojjatolesla Hasan al-Askari Sayeed sat quietly, humbly, as the aging Ayatollah Ol Osam (or Grand Ayatollah) Khamenei approached. The other Grand Ayatollahs sat facing him, and behind them were the many other Mujtahids and senior Mullahs and clerics of the Shia Muslim faith. Hasan knew what was about to happen. The event unfolding today had been ordained several years before. There would be no surprises here.

Putting both of his aged hands on Hasan shoulders, and staring intently into his eyes, Ayatollah Ol Osam Khamenei said, “My son, it is time.”

As Hasan reflected on what was about to happen, he looked into the clear eyes of Ayatollah Ol Osam Khamenei and replied, “Allah Ahkbar, I am ready”

What was happening was unprecedented in the history of Shia Islam. Hasan was about to receive his authorization as an Ayatollah Ol Osam from the Ayatollah Ol Osam Khamenei, and be tacitly and explicitly recognized by the assembled clerics as Imam Hasan Sayeed, the grand spiritual, political and military leader of the Islamic Republic. He would be the youngest to have attained the position of Ayatollah Ol Osam in many decades. He would be the first true Imam in centuries.

His entire thirty-nine years of life had led him to this tremendous achievement. But Hasan was far from finished ‘achieving.’

Hasan was born in the city of Arak, Iran in 1965 on the 15th of Shaban, the same day as the mystical 12th Imam, Imam-e Asr. Hasan’s father, himself a senior Mullah in the faith and an ardent follower of the Ayatollah Ol Osam Khomeini, began his son’s teachings early, when Hasan was but five years of age. So effective and strict a course of study had he outlined, and so bright a student had Hasan proved himself to be, that at the unprecedented age of twelve he had been chosen for enrollment in a madrasah for Theological Studies in Arak. There he began his study of Islamic Law in the very place where the revered Ruhullah Khomeini had received similar teachings. His acceptance of, and strict, pious adherence to, the pillars of the Shia faith at such an early age had been a marvel to the older clerics and Ayatollahs who had spent decades obtaining the same levels of single-mindedness and dedication. That such a young pupil could so quickly master shaheda (confession of the faith), namaz (the Shia ritual prayers), zakat (the giving of alms), saum (fasting and contemplation) and Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina) was not only unprecedented; it was miraculous. More and more of the clerics and Ayatollahs were speaking of it in those terms as Hasan completed his second year of study in 1979. Many began wondering whether Hasan might represent an actual re-appearance of the mystical 12th Imam, Imam-e Asr (the Imam of the Age) or Sahib az Zaman (the Lord of Time), whom the Shia believe never died, but would one day return as the great Mahdi, or Messiah.

But, the events surrounding the 1979 Islamic Revolution had interrupted all of that speculation, along with Hasan’s studies. The conflict with the Shah forced his family into hiding until the Islamic Republic and its Revolutionary Council could establish order. In 1980, the invasion of Iran by Iraq and the resulting war also interceded upon Hasan’s education. At the age of fifteen, Hasan had joined the Pasdaran, or people’s militia, and marched off to answer what he believed was no less of a ‘calling,’ joining his fellow Shias in defense of their earthly homeland and heritage.

During that war, Hasan had been introduced to another of the seven pillars of Shia Islam: the Jihad, or Holy War, to protect Islam. Even though young, Hasan viewed Iraq’s attack as an extension of the infidel Western cultures, and The Great Satan in particular. As such, it was an attack on the pillars of Islam held sacred by his own Shia faith. He therefore practiced and learned war as he had those other pillars. His unwavering trust in Allah and his absolute dedication to the preservation and defense of the Islamic Republic, even in the face of Iraq’s military superiority, moved his soul and motivated his compatriots. This uniquely unwavering resolve became glaringly apparent at the besieged city of Abadan, where he and his platoon destroyed six fortified enemy positions by direct assault, bringing honor to his nation and much acclaim among the Pasdaran. By mid-1982, the seventeen-year-old Hasan was commanding an entire company of the Pasdaran.

“Allah Mak! Allah Mak!”

As Khamenei began to officially recognize him before the assembled clerics as the Imam Sayeed, Hasan bowed his head soberly and continued his reflections.

He remembered well the day in late 1982, after capturing an entire Iraqi division intact, when the audible words had made their way, unbidden, into his mind. “These are your brothers. Why do you fight them?” From that time forward, though he was as committed as ever to defending the Islamic

Republic and the faith, he vowed to find a way to spiritually, politically and militarily unite his Islamic brothers and break the manipulations of a greater foe.

After the war, Hasan had been given progressive positions of responsibility in the Pasdaran, ultimately being appointed as a commander over a significant portion of that force in 1988. During that entire time, his influence as a spiritual leader had also continued to grow. His strict adherence to the seventh pillar of the Shia faith, to do good and think no evil, was universally recognized by his troops and his superiors alike. Such a commander, they said, could lead them to the gates of Hades and back, returning victorious. No one doubted that with Hasan's influence the Pasdaran would unfailingly fulfill its mission to safeguard the Islamic Republic against any force that would threaten it.

In 1989, when Ruhullah Khomeini died, Hasan, at the age of twenty-four, resigned from his military duties to return to his theological studies. He chose the madrasah at the city of Qom to re-enter the Center for Theological studies, continuing to follow in the footsteps of Khomeini, who had also studied there.

In 1996, he took a three-year pilgrimage and visited many holy sites in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, impressing many there with his religious knowledge, piety, military expertise and youth. It was during this pilgrimage, while on the southern borders of Kyrgyzstan, that he first heard of the Chinese secular teachings of the "Time of the Three Wisdoms."

Hasan was indeed a pious and a faithful man. He was also a realist. He knew of the rumors concerning his own identity. He recognized, and was wary of, the ambitions of the Chinese. He could neither affirm nor deny the rumors about himself. The One God, Allah, would reveal all in His time. But, that the Chinese were growing in power, wealth and influence was self-evident.

Hasan also knew that it would take a combination of more numbers, wealth and weapons than the entire "faithful" Islamic world possessed to rid Islam of the Great Satan, and his spawns—and succeed in purging the unfaithful from among Islam's ranks as well. Such numbers, such monies and such weapons were available in China. If he could find a way to make some type of an accommodation with these principles of the "Three Wisdoms," then he could possibly form some sort of temporary, mutually-beneficial alliance of sorts with the godless Maoists, and thereby use them to help him accomplish the greater good.

To that end, in late 1999, near the end of his pilgrimage, Hasan spent three very productive weeks on the outskirts of Beijing in confidential preparations and planning, including several very productive sessions with President Jien Zenim of the People's Republic of China. Hasan had no illusions regarding the magnitude of their differences, but there was no denying that the Red Chinese knew how to manipulate people and systems. It was precisely his desire to benefit from their adroitness at manipulation that had brought Hasan to the table with the sitting Chinese President. The godless manipulations of the Chinese had served to bring about Allah's will with respect to Hasan himself. Those same manipulations would also reveal to him who was corrupted by influence and wealth over faith, and who would ultimately find that such corruption bought them nothing in this world—or the one to come.

Then in September of 2001, Usama bin Laden had surprised everyone with the effectiveness of his terror attack on America. Oh, they had all known something was going to be attempted; still the enormity of it and the successful nature of it had shocked the religious and political leaders throughout Islam.

"And that was just the problem," thought Hasan. That fool bin Laden had been too much the maverick. Committed, dedicated to removing western influence, completely faithful...yes. But a maverick just the same, with no close ties to the clerics (outside of the fringe Taliban) and no real connections to Islamic political power. As such, the very surprise of his effectiveness was its undoing. No one was positioned or prepared to take advantage of it. Instead, many had to distance themselves from the very success bin Laden had achieved. Hasan himself had counseled the Iranian leadership at the time to distance themselves from him, to walk a tight rope between how they were viewed by the masses, versus how they were viewed by an American and coalition military machine they were not yet ready or able to face.

And it had worked. When the Taliban was overthrown, when bin Laden's terror network was rooted out and destroyed, when bin Laden ultimately met his fate, and when fools like Hussein had been defeated, it had left leaders like himself in the perfect position to pick up the reins.

"Imam Sayeed! Imam Sayeed!" chanted the Ayatollah Ol Osams, Mujtahids, Mullahs and other clerics of the Shia Muslim faith, in near unison, as the official clerical recognition was made.

Upon hearing it, Hasan al-Askari Sayeed opened his eyes, nodded humbly and looked heavenward, as if seeking guidance, and his followers led him out of the recognition hall and toward their destiny.

**May 6, 08:00 local time**

**Politburo**

**Beijing, China**

Li Peng, the leader of the Chinese parliament and a handpicked supporter of the president, served Jien Zenim well; not only at home in the “parliament,” but as a “quasi” unofficial diplomat. This morning, Li watched as his President absorbed the morning’s report regarding progress in Iraq.

“So,” President Jien mused, “Hasan has already been named Imam...as of yesterday? This is wonderful! We are ahead of schedule. Li, are our “friends” in place, and prepared, in the four former Soviet Republics—particularly Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan? And is there any chance that we can capitalize on this situation in order to obtain an earlier solution in Pakistan?”

Li had worked hard over the last several years nurturing the relationship his nation now enjoyed with India. It had taken a mixture of patience, prodding, compromise and hard negotiating, but he believed that the sterling achievement of his life had been the recent announcement of the formation of the Coalition of Asian States between The People’s Republic of China and India. Now his other major area of focus for the past 10 years was also bearing fruit. A great Islamic coalition, which would find itself very indebted to The People’s Republic, now seemed possible. Amazing that it would be so after the campaign by the Americans. But, the fact that it was so in spite of that campaign, was a testament to the effectiveness of their planning.

“President, I believe that we must be patient with Pakistan. The relationship with India is still young, and India’s distrust of her neighbor to the west is long standing. Although we have made much progress, we need several more months before the Indian leaders will accept a unified Islamic Republic along their borders. I would suggest we proceed as your original plan indicated and ensure that the Pakistani agreement occurs after Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan come on board.”

“Then, if all goes as we hope with the Sunnis, it will either serve as the impetus for General Musharraf to see the wisdom of unification with the GIR, or it will serve as the spark for an “uprising” in Pakistan leading to the same, as you have envisioned.”

Jien knew that Li was right, and agreed with his reasoning. He had chosen well in Li, and was certain of his loyalty and his capabilities. He trusted him, without reservation. Jien took great personal pride and satisfaction in his own ability to judge the character and capabilities of those with whom he came into contact. As a result, he allowed only those into his inner circle whom he knew to be loyal and committed to him, and to China, in that order.

**May 15, 17:10**

**Lazy H Ranch**

**Outside Montague, Texas**

Jess Simmons climbed down off his old Case tractor that he’d been using to cut hay all afternoon. He was tired and sweaty, but glad he had finished this field before supper. He thought about the fact that the bank had not approved the loan for the new air-conditioned John Deere. At 102 degrees in the shade, the straw hat and south wind just couldn’t manage to fend off the heat; and if it was this hot in mid-May, it was going to be a real sweltering summer.

Now that it was cut, he’d let this hay sit a few days and dry out before he baled it. Later this evening, he’d start cutting that field south of the house. He’d rather work in the evening anyhow, after the heat had let up a little. If he kept after it, he could be finished putting up this cut of hay by “Saturday week”—Texan for “a week from Saturday,” which would allow him to finish well before the upcoming training exercises. If the Mendoza brothers came through with their “extra” help from south of the border, he shouldn’t have any trouble...that is, if the weather also cooperated, which was always an “iffy” thing this time of year in north-central Texas. As he wiped his brow and climbed into his ten-year-old F250 4X4 pickup to drive to the house, he thought about how good some cold iced tea would feel on his parched lips right about now.

As Cindy heard the back screen door close, she called, “Is that you, Jess?”

“Sure is, hon,” Jess answered. “I’m going to have to go back out this evening for two or three hours after supper and start on that field south of the house. Whew! It was hot out there for a day in mid-May...what’s for supper?”

“Well, I’ve got fried chicken, mashed potatoes and green beans, darlin.’ Come on in and get some of this iced tea I made for you and cool yourself off before we eat. It’ll be another five minutes or so,” Cindy said as she began to lay out the silverware and place settings. As she thought about Jess going back out after supper, she continued, “You must have finished cutting the field over by Clear Creek then. Did you see Billy? He was over that way with the dog, hunting. He was going to try and get a ride back to the house with you.”

“Well,” Jess said as he thought back on his cutting, “I did see the dog an hour or so ago. Looked like he was after something. Didn’t see Billy, though. I imagine he’ll be along in a little while. He isn’t

going to stay away from the dinner table for too long if he can help it. Doesn't he have any homework?"

With a little exasperated sigh, Cindy chided, "You know I have him finish up his schoolwork as soon as he gets home, along with the watering. He's a good boy and you know it...takes after his pa. He'd do it anyway without me reminding him. So he was okay. But I do wish you would talk to him about being on time for supper. It's best if we eat as a family, and it makes it a whole lot easier to keep this kitchen clean. Now come on in here and sit down to eat. Food's on."

Jess, who had picked up his glass of iced tea and quickly dispensed of it, walked back into the kitchen from the bathroom where he had washed his hands. As he sat down, he watched his wife of 18 years as she finished putting the food on the table. At 39, he thought she was still the best looking woman he'd ever set eyes on. He couldn't help but marvel at how she kept up with everything while riding herd on a seventeen-year-old boy, not to mention a forty-year-old boy, and tending a large vegetable garden for the family.

As she sat down, he took her hand. Without a word passing between them, they both bowed their heads and Jess said, "Father, we thank Thee for this food and the hands that prepared it. We thank Thee for our freedoms, this home and the land we live on. Help us always be good stewards of the land so it can provide us a good harvest. Please bless the food to nourish us, and bless Billy to come back in safe. In Jesus name, Amen."

As they ate, they discussed the ranch and the prospects that year for their crops and livestock. They discussed Billy, his upcoming graduation, his college plans this fall and his ultimate aspirations of following in his father's footsteps. When the time was right, Cindy asked, "So, you have everything lined up to get this cut in before those training exercises?"

Jess, sensing her apprehension, replied, "Sure do, and since Billy will be out of school, I have no doubt we can get it in. The Mendoza brothers are going to be helping as well. Besides, those exercises are only scheduled for ten days, and I'll be back before you know it. But enough about that. How was your day? When we finish eating, what do you say I help you with the dishes? Then when Billy gets in and finishes eating, I can have him start that field south of the house, while you and I drive over to Bowie and take in a movie or something."

Cindy, moved to tears by her man's understanding and intuition, could only look into his eyes between bites of potatoes and say, "Jess, I love you!" Then she got up from the table and moved into the loving arms of her man, Jess Simmons, full-time rancher and part-time Major, U.S. Army National Guard—a well-trained pilot of his nation's newest and most sophisticated attack helicopter, an RAH-66 Comanche.

As they hugged, they heard the back screen door open and close, quickly followed by, "Mom and Dad, I'm home. What's to eat?"

**May 19, 15:00**

**NSA Office**

**Washington, D.C.**

John Bowers quickly reviewed the two documents he had put together for the signature of the President. Both of the documents were Presidential findings and would be used to "unofficially" authorize the covert missions being planned over the next several weeks to gather more information about the Naval Air exercises in Red China.

The first mission would be an over-flight of the Tanjin commercial shipyards by the ultra-sophisticated and top secret HR-7 (Hypersonic Reconnaissance) surveillance aircraft. These were supposedly commercial shipyards, but CIA HUMINT assets had tied an internal rumor about military applications to them. That over-flight was scheduled to take place on the 25th of May.

The second mission would take place in late June, when the US Navy was scheduled to send the SSN23 Jimmy Carter into the waters near the Shanghai shipyards and, depending on the outcome of the HR-7 mission, to those near Tanjin to conduct a covert mission. The Jimmy Carter had undergone significant modifications during its construction—modifications which included the addition of a wasp waist, which housed sophisticated underwater launch and recovery technology, suitable for use in SEAL and other classified missions. This launch and recovery technology was made to order for just the type of mission that John and the naval planners had in mind.

Having reviewed the documents and the careful construction of the wording, John was satisfied that "plausible deniability" for the President regarding the specifics of each mission was maintained. Getting up from his desk, which was somewhat cluttered due to the abnormally large number of commitments in which he was currently involved, John put the folder containing the proposed findings in his briefcase and left for his 3:30 p.m. meeting in the oval office.

**May 21, early evening****Near the Harold Washington Memorial Library****Chicago, IL**

Alan Campbell could hardly believe his eyes, but it was true: there went his brother, Leon, into—of all places—the downtown Public Library!

“I wonda what he goin t’ do in there,” thought Alan. “It jus’ don’t make no sense! It jus’ don’t make no sense at all!”

Alan had been worried about his brother for some time now. Ever since Leon lost the vote to lead the “Heat” back in the hood about a year-and-a-half ago, Leon seemed to spend more and more time away. The other bloods were talking, wondering if Leon had just “lost it,” or maybe wondering if he was selling them out. Jerome, in particular, was getting a little too full of himself for Alan, even though Jerome was now the leader—and doing a fairly good job at managing both their territory and their “operations.”

But still, every other day or so, Leon would just disappear from their “hood” on Kildare, a few blocks from the intersection of Roosevelt and Cisero. At first, several of them had tried to follow Leon, but he was on to them, and just too good at shakin’ folks off his tail. That, among other reasons, was why he’d been the “man” for so long in the first place. Well, Alan hadn’t given up. He had to know what his brother was doing, and where he was going. Leon had always been his idol and was a good brother, despite their inevitable differences. For them, as their momma had always taught them, the “blood was thicker than the mud.”

So Alan had continued to follow, and had continued to get shook. But he’d had a “long term” plan and it was paying off this evening. He simply kept track of where he’d been shook each time. Sometimes a little further east, other times a little further north...but each time getting closer and closer to downtown. Oh, Leon was good, and used different routes, but still the pattern developed—and it had ultimately led right here to the Harold Washington Memorial Library.

As he waited, Alan reflected. Leon was seventeen years old. He’d dropped out of school at 14, and Alan, always wanting to follow in his big brother’s footsteps, had dropped out just a year later when he was twelve. Alan was big for his age, and that fact, along with a lot of exercise, helped establish him in the “Heat” next to his brother. But things weren’t the same anymore and tonight Alan was going to confront Leon and find out why.

**May 21, same time****Inside the Harold Washington Memorial Library****Chicago, IL**

Inside the Library, Leon had just finished printing out the most important document to that point in his life. What he now held in his hand was more important than his suspended driver’s license. It was much more important than the many citations, tickets, and complaints which he had received. It was more important that the juvenile court judgments he’d lived under while actively being a part of the “Heat.”

What he held in his hand now was even more important than the High School Equivalency that he’d earned just eight weeks ago, and which he’d kept secret, but also kept with him wherever he went. Until today, earning that equivalency had been the proudest moment in Leon’s entire seventeen years. But what Leon now held in his hand was, like his High School Equivalency, a “ticket” of a different sort. It was his ticket to a new life. It was the paperwork informing him that he had been accepted to Boise State University in Boise, Idaho that fall, and granting him a partial scholarship as well. Leon’s excitement was hard to contain. And it was made doubly hard by the fact that he had only shared the source of it with two other human beings.

“Mrs. Jenkins, would you look here? Can you believe it? I’m really going, Mrs. Jenkins. My momma is going to be so proud! She always talked to us about finding a way to knock on opportunity’s door. She’s told us since we were young that Jesus is waiting on the other side of that door to open it for anyone who is sincere and looking to follow His principles. Well, I finally started knocking on that door and He must have been standing there just waiting to help me. I just wish I’d knocked on it earlier.”

Mrs. Nellie Jenkins was an elderly assistant Librarian. She’d been helping Leon for the last several months as he laboriously studied and learned. It had not been easy for him. She never asked about it, but she knew this young man must have come from a very rough part of town; it was obvious from the way he had carried himself, and talked, in those first months. But he had stuck with it, and she had been impressed. Her husband, Charlie, a retired Marine gunnery sergeant, had come in on several occasions and helped, too. He’d taken quite a liking to Leon, and was convinced that the boy had tremendous potential. While he focused on discipline, honor, and the history of America, and the vision of its founders, she focused on English, writing, math and science. Their hours of involvement with this young man had paid off. Right now, Nellie Jenkins was almost as proud of Leon as if he had been her own son.

“Leon, God bless you. You’ve worked hard for this, and you deserve to take pride in your accomplishment. Boise is a long way from Chicago. But, from everything I have heard and read, BSU is a fine school, and the partial scholarship is a godsend. In addition, Charlie and I want to give you this,” Mrs. Jenkins said, as she passed an envelope over to Leon.

Leon took it and looked for a moment at this old white woman who had helped him so much. He remembered the many times her husband had come in and helped him with history and government. There was something about Charlie that Leon recognized and respected. Maybe he had tasted a little of it on the street, although he now knew that those street experiences had been pointing him in the wrong direction. Still, there was no doubting the qualities of leadership and respect and honor that Charlie possessed, and Leon wanted those qualities to be a part of his life as well.

He opened the envelope and read the congratulations card and the personal notes from both Mrs. Jenkins and Charlie, then he saw the check: a check made out to him for \$5,000.

“Mrs. Jenkins, this is... I don’t know what to say. You can’t give this to me! How can you afford it?”

“Don’t you worry about it, Leon. With Charlie’s retirement pay, and what he brings in on the side, and with my own job here, we have more than we can use. Charlie told me that doing this will not only help you, it will help this country; and I agree with him. Just be sure to write to us often once you get settled in Boise. We figure this will help until you find a job and get on your feet.”

With that, Mrs. Jenkins gave Leon a hug and pretended not to notice the glistening in his eye—or her own. When she was done, Leon put his acceptance letter and the notice for the partial scholarship in the fanny pack he carried with him everywhere he went, and walked over toward the stairs. As he started climbing, he turned and waved goodbye to his kindly benefactor.

**May 21, five minutes later**

**Outside the Harold Washington Memorial Library**

**Chicago, IL**

“Hey, blood! Wha’cha doin in there wit all dem crackers fo’ so long?”

Leon would recognize that voice anywhere, and turned in surprise toward the voice coming from across the street. Sure enough, there was his younger (couldn’t call him little anymore) brother, Alan, leaning against a street lamp on the other side. Leon crossed over to join him.

“Alan, how did you get here? I know I been shakin’ yo’ sorry black hide for the last three months. How’d ya do it?”

“Was simple, bro. You shook me every time, but every time we’s getting closa to somethin,’ and I noticed a pattern. All’s I had to do was let dat pattern lead me here...and now here we is. You gonna tell me what’s hangin’?”

Leon could hardly believe it. He knew he’d shaken Alan and several of the others. Obviously he’d underestimated the willpower, and the reasoning ability, of his brother. It gave him a lot of pride to see it evidenced here, even if its display meant that he had been “found out.”

“Well, I guess it had to come out sometime, bro. So here it is. Let’s sit down on that bench over there and I’ll tell you it all...but fo’ right now, it’s gotta be between us. You’ll have to promise before I go on.”

Alan knew a promise was important on the street. He knew his brother wouldn’t ask him for one unless he needed it. He also had gone to a lot of trouble, to find out what was going on. The decision was simple.

“No problem, Leon. You shoulda trusted yo’ little bro a long time ago, ya know. So, I promise. Go ahead and spill it.”

For the next half hour, Leon explained to his little brother how he’d started thinking more and more about the things their momma had tried to tell them at home about a year-and-a-half ago. At the time, Leon was the man in the “Heat,” but he was smart enough to see that too many of the “men” before him were either spending their time in the big house, or they were dead. He didn’t want such a future for himself or his brother, and he sure didn’t want to see his momma go through that. That had led him to trying to find out what more there was to life. He started spending more time thinking about making some kind of change than about how to sell dope to crackers, or how to keep their rivals off their turf. As time went on, all of those things associated with the “Heat” had started to lose their importance. His change of focus had cost him his position in the “Heat,” but it also ultimately led him to confide in his mother’s brother, Jack, who worked as a janitor downtown.

“Jack told me to find some books about math, and English, and government and history, and to start reading them. We always kind of looked down on him, ya know? Figured he was some sort of black honkey or somethin’—workin’ as a janitor for all those white people. But you know what? He’s got some money and a house of his own...not some “project” rental. And there ain’t no police chasin’ him all the time. He also ain’t fightin’ every other week with his neighbors, an’ watchin’ his friends get cut.”

Alan looked at his brother, he cared for him, but these words were so foreign to him that he was having a tough time accepting them.

“You know what, bro? It looks like Jerome and the others was right. You lost it, bro. You gettin’ soft. When you ever worried ‘bout all this befo’? What’s got into you? You sho’ ‘nough lost it, bro.”

Leon loved his brother. The acceptance and scholarship to Boise State represented what he could do if he put his mind to it. And if he succeeded in breaking out of the trap that life “on the street” had represented, he would be more determined than ever to help his brother do the same. He grabbed his brother’s arm with a fierceness that was born of determination. Alan was surprised. He had gotten to be almost as big as his older brother and thought he was in better shape. But the strength of that grip, and the determination in his brother’s eyes, brought him up short. All he could do was listen.

“You listen and you listen good, Alan. I ain’t lost nothin’ but the ignorance I was in. I’ve been comin’ down here to pull myself out of this trap we livin’ in. The politicians and all them rabble rousin’ folks who always tell us we are owed somethin’ been lyin’ to us. Bro, they want us here. They want us havin’ to count on their programs and handouts. They want us to treat them like some sort of king for takin’ other folks’ money and throwin’ it at us. But, look around! You see things gettin’ better? No, they ain’t! And they ain’t because they ain’t meant to! What those folks really want is us dependent on them.”

“I’ve been readin’ about history and how this country was formed, Alan. I’ve been readin’ about how folks, from all over the world, wanted to come here...and still do. I got on the internet and got me an email account. I’ve been talkin’ to folks from all over. One kid down in Texas I’ve come to know pretty well is white and his family works real hard on a farm. He’s my age and thinks a lot the way I do. Guess what? They ain’t rich, but they have things for themselves. He’s goin’ to Boise, Idaho this fall on a football scholarship. At first I thought it was just ‘cause they was white. Then I learned it was ‘cause they was willin’ to work and learn. Well, I decided I’m willin’ to do that too.”

At this point, Alan interrupted him. “Yea, bro. But what you got from it all? Nothin’ but a bunch of hours in a buildin’ filled wit books. You know how it is, them white folks, even the poor ones, they can get ahead...not you, and not me. We got to take what we can.”

Leon was frustrated. He knew his brother was just spouting the propaganda of politicians and bureaucrats who wanted nothing more than to keep folks like Alan dependent on their programs, to keep them mired in ignorance and poverty and fighting the “system.” But, although Leon was frustrated, he wasn’t about to give up on his brother.

“No! Alan, that’s the trap. They want you to think it’s owed to you. Or, better yet, vote them in and let them take it for you. But that ain’t how it is, and you know it. You are only owed what you earn, Alan...anywhere in life, including the street. Anyone tells you different is a liar and trying to control you. And you know what? The folks that founded this country? Yeah, they made some mistakes. But whatever mistakes they made, they knew what I’m talkin’ to you about, an they didn’t design it to work to keep folks like us down. Well, for me...no more. Look here.”

As he said this, Leon took his High School Equivalency, and his acceptance to Boise State, out and showed them to his brother. Alan wasn’t too good at reading, so Leon read it for him.

“You see, Alan, I did this for myself. Even learned how to talk real English, and learned Algebra and Geometry. There are some folks in that library who took a liking to me and helped me, and I want you to meet them.”

“Guess what, Alan? They’s white folks, and they treated me the way grandparents would treat one of their own. Now I got some learning, I’m going to college to get more, and I got some honest money. I’m leaving for Boise in six weeks. I’m taking momma with me, and I want you to come too.”

Alan was floored. He was thinking on what his brother had said. He could see the fire in his eyes, and when he thought about it, he could see the truth of it.

“But, Leon, what would I be doin’ there?”

Leon looked at his younger brother and knew he was willing, but also knew he was apprehensive. It wouldn’t be easy, but he knew Alan could do it.

“Well, we’ll start by getting you over to this library right now and helping you learn, then we’ll continue over there in Boise. You may go to school Alan, but I promise, it’ll be because you want to, not because you have to.”

With that, Leon put his arm around his brother’s shoulder and they began walking back towards the library to start arranging for Alan’s “ticket.”

**May 25, 23:05 local time**

### **Over the Yellow Sea**

“Well, here we go again,” thought Colonel “Mac” Mendenhall, as he checked his mission parameters. Everything looked good, “Except this time it’ll be solo,” Mac thought, “and we’ll be screaming. Talk about the need for speed.”

Mac was piloting the ultra-secret and ultra-high tech HR-7 aircraft for the NRO toward another over-flight of Red China, which had been ordered by the Air Force Chief of Operations and the Director of the NRO. He had been carried aloft by an SR-77 from Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada. After several refuelings, he had been released over the Yellow Sea. Following a few minutes of Mach

3 flight, he was ready for his 350-mile ingress and would be igniting his Pulse Detonation Wave Engines in 3...2...1...NOW!

As the turbojet engines idled down and flamed out, the PDWE kicked in. The pulsating vibration was tangible in the cockpit as the sharp, black triangular shape of the HR-7 rocketed to its maximum speed of Mach 7, and to its planned ingress altitude of 180,000 ft. for this mission.

At such speed, the leading edges of the aircraft would fail due to overheating, were it not for the liquid methane coolant circulating through the aircraft's ceramic leading edge. This same coolant was then injected into the PDW engines and ignited as fuel. Nevertheless, at such speed, the aircraft literally glowed from the heat of its passage through what little "air" existed at that altitude. During daylight hours, contrails that resembled "doughnuts on a rope" could be seen behind the aircraft.

Mac monitored his defensive MFD, and tracked the status of his monitoring and surveillance packages, as he approached the turn that would take him between Luda and Chengshan Point and into the Gulf of Chijhli. From there, he would fly on a direct line to Tanjin, finally making a 180 degree turn which would have its nearest approach 20 miles from Tianma Shipbuilding.

His defenses consisted of the inherent stealth of the HR7, its extremely high altitude and speed capability all complemented with a suite of electronic counter measures. There was literally no known weapon in that could challenge him. His most vulnerable moment would be when he slowed to Mach 3 during the turn, and reduced altitude to 150,000 ft. for the surveillance packages.

**May 25, 23:21 local time**

### **KS-2+ AAW Battery, South of Tangshan**

Lieutenant Hu Ziyang cupped his hand over the phone and addressed his men, "We have an intermittent inbound contact, approaching and decelerating through Mach 5. We are instructed to take our feed from the principal array at the airfield near Tangshan. Ensure that our own guidance is locked out and enable the missiles for remote guidance and terminal thermal lock from their own seeker heads. Quickly now. move!"

Taking his hand off the phone while his men feverishly made adjustments, he listened for any other instructions from the controllers near Tangshan. Things were happening quickly. He had received the call no more than two minutes ago when the first indications of an intruder were relayed. Incredibly, the initial profile was at an altitude of close to 60,000 meters, and an approach speed of Mach 7! Since then, the contact had slowed, and dropped in altitude, but there could be no doubt whose aircraft this was.

The advanced capabilities of this KS-2+ anti-aircraft missile were classified to the strictest top level clearance within Red China. The only two batteries deployed to date were this battery and another one across the bay near the mouth of the Huang Ho River. They were there for the official, "classified" purpose of protecting Beijing from air attack. But the real, top secret purpose was to protect the work that was going on at the Tanjin shipyards.

Using phased array radar, super computing, new software, advanced infrared and optical sensors and a second stage, the KS-2+ land-based anti-aircraft missile was the most advanced system the Red Chinese had. Many felt it rivaled the American Patriot Missile batteries. (In fact, much of the technology to create these missiles had either been purchased, pilfered, or handed over to the Red Chinese by American firms, American politicians and through "exchange" programs established during the mid to late 1990's).

As a result, the missile could be guided to the anticipated area of the target's approach by a controlling facility, by the launching facility, or in a launch-and-forget mode once lock-on was obtained. In any of the ground guidance modes, once the missile got within range of its advanced infrared/optical seeker, it could lock onto the target and destroy it independently.

Lieutenant Hu reflected that, with a ceiling of 45,000 meters and a speed during 2<sup>nd</sup> stage acceleration of Mach 4, if this American bogey would just continue to slow down and reduce its altitude, there might just be a possibility for his KS-2+ missiles to make an intercept.

"Lieutenant, our weapons are slaved to Tangshan. We have a missile launch—now a second!"

**May 25, same time**

### **Over the Gulf of Chijhli**

Mac had heard the audible alert tone in his headset; a tone that carried the ominous implication that several radar installations were attempting to acquire him. On his MFD, he noticed that the principal threats were near Tangshan, and across the bay near the mouth of the Huang Ho River. Both were painting him with their search radar, but there was no indication of any lock-on, so he felt relatively secure. At this point, Mac was seconds away from activating his surveillance package.

What Mac was not prepared for was the heightened alert tone that sounded in his headset a few seconds later, accompanied by the bright red "MISSILE LAUNCH WARNING" signal that suddenly lit up on his MFD.

"How in the hell?" Mac wondered as his instruments tracked the two missiles that had just been launched from near Tangshan.



It was decision time. He had been briefed extensively about the importance of this mission. The missiles would be coming at him from the rear. Any significant speed increase on his part to outrun them would take him deep into Chinese airspace. This was something that his plan strictly forbade.

The two missiles appeared to be Chinese KS-2's—missiles whose ceiling was around 75,000 to 80,000 feet, and whose max speed was around Mach 3. Lower and slower than he planned on operating.

Mac keyed his satellite transceiver and quickly stated, "Red Dragon! Red Dragon! Charlie Mike! I say again, Charlie Mike!"

The message was encrypted by his communications systems and sent to a US military satellite in gyro-synchronous orbit over the Philippine Sea.

### **May 24, same time**

#### **Secure Video Conference Center, The Pentagon**

"Red Dragon! Red Dragon! Charlie Mike! Charlie Mike!"

Everyone heard the message clearly. Major Tim Lawrence said, "He's been fired on...but he's indicating that he is continuing the mission."

"Fired upon?" asked John Bowers, "How did they manage that?"

"Can't say. We'll just have to wait for further word, but he should be safe. We know of no capability they have that can reach him," replied Major Lawrence.

"Well, we also thought that there was no way they could even acquire him. Apparently, someone forgot to tell the Red Chinese."

### **May 25, seconds Later**

#### **70,000 ft over the Gulf of Chijhli**

As their first stages flamed out, the second stages of the KS-2+ missiles ignited and boosted them to their maximum speed of Mach 4, continuing to increase their altitude.

Then, as the missiles passed through 120,000 feet, their seeker heads scanned the heavens for any optical or infrared source that they could lock on to. 30,000 feet above them, and ten miles in front, they found ample thermal energy from the PWDE and leading edges of "Mac's" HR-7 aircraft.

### **May 25, 23:25 local time**

#### **Over the Gulf of Chijhli**

Mac was getting his share of shocks this evening. The first had come when he had been notified that he'd been fired upon. The next, and greater, shock had come when what he thought were standard KS-2 missiles that his systems were tracking passed right through their supposed 75,000 foot ceiling. That unsettling occurrence had happened only 15 seconds into his surveillance run.

But none of the shocks had been as great as the one that followed a few seconds later, when the audible pitch of the warning tone changed to the unmistakably incessant warning sound of a missile lock, and the message MISSILE LOCK began flashing on his MFD.

Quickly now, Mac keyed his satellite communications and said.

"Combination! Combination...tip over!"

Mac broke off his carefully-scripted mission profile and began evasive maneuvers. First, he turned to minimize the angle of attack the missiles had on him and force them into a pure tail chase. This evasive maneuver also had the effect of tightening the turn he was already in and allowing him to come around for his egress quicker. He also began to increase his altitude.

As he did this, he was warned of two more missile launches from near the mouth of the Huang Ho River. With four missiles in the air, Mac's "pucker factor" increased significantly along with his anxiety.

### **May 24, same time**

#### **Secure Video Conference Center, The Pentagon**

Tim Lawrence spun around in his seat and looked in disbelief at John and Bill when he heard the second secure satellite transmission.

"Unbelievable! The missiles have locked on! He's taking evasive action!"

### **May 25, seconds later**

#### **140,000 ft over the Gulf of Chijhli**

Their second stages already spent, the KS-2+ missiles lost upward inertia and began to turn over at 140,000 ft. Their seeker heads maintained lock on the HR-7 until the missiles began falling towards the Gulf of Chijhli far below.

The HR-7, a mere ten thousand feet higher, and now only two miles in front of the missiles, came out of its turn and began to accelerate rapidly away from the threat of those first two missiles, while gaining altitude rapidly.

**May 25, 23:27 local time****KS-2+ AAW Battery, South of Tangshan**

Lieutenant Hu Ziyang hung up the phone and turned toward his men, the crew of the launch and control unit for his battery of KS-2+ missiles.

“We have served our motherland well this night, my friends. The advanced Yankee aircraft escaped our missiles, but we prevented it from entering our airspace, and caused it to break and run like a guilty dog with its tail between its legs! We have faced the best the Americans have and turned them away!”

The technicians raised their voices as one in a deafening cheer. Perhaps now the Americans would learn to not trifle with the People’s Republic of China.

**May 25, 23:30****180,000 feet over the Gulf of Chijhli**

Mac felt the sweat under his arms and on his forehead. That was far too close! And certainly not what he had expected.

Although the second set of missiles also missed, if he had not gained altitude and accelerated to his Mach 7 maximum speed, he could have been easily swimming in the Gulf of Chijhli right now—or he could have been dead.

Still, he had completed half of his surveillance without a problem. Even though the second half was degraded, he had survived. Now, he was bringing home data about the shipyards near Tanjin and a new Chinese missile system more advanced than anything they had imagined.

Instructing his systems to encrypt and send the electronic data from the night’s activities, Mac once again keyed his voice transmission link.

“Mary Chambers wet feet.”

**May 24, same time****Secure video conference center, The Pentagon**

“Okay, he’s completed the mission and is now egressing!”

As Tim said this, there was an unmistakable note of relief in his voice, and on his face.

John Bowers, himself visibly relieved, leaned back and said, “That’s for sure, Tim, thank God.”

Then, after a moment’s pause, during which they all contemplated the near-disaster the mission might have turned into, he continued:

“Okay, as soon as you have the data, pour every effort into it. The new missile system is probably as important as what we were looking for in the shipyards.”

“Thank goodness they don’t have a naval version of this system or Mac would never have completed that flight in March. Tim, you’d better get this one out on the boards as soon as we analyze it and have some definitive information. The Wild Weasel and Prowler crews are going to have a new threat to plan for.”

**May 28, 17:30 local time****Tianma Shipbuilding****Tianjin, China**

Lu Pham was very satisfied. Work was progressing better than he had expected. He had spoken with General Hunbaio just yesterday regarding their progress, and he knew that a favorable report had been passed on to Chin Zhongbaio, the Chairman of COSCO and a member of the Chinese Communist Politburo. New weapons development, particularly the new LRASD weapons, was a huge priority for the entire People’s Republic right now, and Lu Pham’s team was performing beyond expectations.

After the conversations of yesterday, Lu had determined to come to the shipyards today to convey the thanks of their superiors to the individuals who were making the full production deployment possible, and to review the progress being made in the technical and logistical facets of the work.

He was currently in the company of the top-performing production crew chief, Sung Hsu. As they walked towards one of the six dry dock areas where ships would ultimately be fitted with the modular changes, Lu turned and spoke to Sung.

“You have much to be proud of, Sung. The process improvement plans you have come up with for the placement and onboard maintenance of the LRASD stations are proving to be successful beyond our expectations. When the materiel pipeline for the modifications are ready, we will be able to stay well ahead of schedule with this portion of the refit. Both General Hunbaio and Chairman Chin send their regards and their appreciation.”

Sung took the compliment in stride, although it still was incomprehensible to think that his name was being spoken of in such high circles.

“Thank you, Commodore Lu. It is humbling to have such influential men take note of our efforts. Truly, we are only doing our job.”

Lu smiled knowingly. Although Sung was being reserved, one only had to look in his eyes to know of the pride this bright foreman took in these accomplishments... “and he has every right,” thought Lu.

“Sung, you honor your forefathers with your humility and dedication. Nonetheless, the ideas for the additional pivot points on the traversing unit, and the automated reloading mechanism you suggested, are going to make the ability to install, maintain, and reload these systems much easier and more efficient. You have done your homeland and all her citizens a great service.”

“And that’s the clear truth,” thought Lu Pham as they continued towards the dry docks. With his innovative production processes, Sung Hsu had reduced the time required for the refitting of each Amphibious Assault and Tactical Attack ship by seven to ten days. As they approached the stairs that would lead them down into the first of the dry docks, Lu Pham continued.

“The size and scope of these facilities never ceases to amaze me, Sung. One of my chief concerns has always been our ability to “mask” the logistics of preparing, and then actually refitting, these ships from the Americans. There is no doubt that they are becoming increasingly interested in our efforts. The activities of the other night clearly prove not only that they are determined to understand what we are doing, but that they now know where to look.”

Sung Hsu reflected on those events. He had been preparing to leave for the evening when the night sky to his east had lit up with the launch of the two missiles. They had been some kilometers distant, but it had been easy to see those brilliant points of light as they quickly climbed higher and higher. Then, from the south and west, two more had followed, also climbing so very high. But there had been no explosions.

Well, thought Sung, what was one to expect? The state security issues had been explained to him. These were military conversions he was working on, and his own assignment was to develop the methods and procedures for installing weapons, awesome new weapons, on these ships for his nation. The Americans and other countries should just let them alone. But apparently they wouldn’t.

As they continued their descent to the first of the dry docks, Sung Hsu continued.

“Comrade Lu, you can see here in the upper reaches of the dry dock the first of the new logistic delivery systems we are installing. These “channels,” or tunnels, lead back several hundred meters to entry points at ground level where materiel can be offloaded from rail and truck.”

“It is going to take time to build them all. But, when complete, all major components will be staged and delivered through them directly to the work area for both the Tactical Strike and Amphibious Assault conversions. Cranes and conveyer systems will be constructed to transport the materiel from the delivery platforms at the termination of each channel to the ship itself. This will provide for both stealth and protection for the materials as the conversions are made.”

Reviewing with pride the efforts of those working on the tunnels, along with the progress they had made to date, Lu Pham responded.

“And we have the workforce and the will to complete the effort in time for production in September. Sung, again, in addition to the innovations regarding the systems themselves, this logistical consideration will help immensely. It is just too bad that there is no method for doing likewise for the Sea Control carrier decks,” said Lu Pham as they continued their descent.

“Once we begin actually installing those decks, despite the large housings we intend to erect for their dry docks, our adversaries will know what we are doing. The components for the decks are simply too large.”

Sung Hsu pondered this concern. It was not the first time he had done so, because the problem was apparent to everyone involved. He had an idea regarding it and decided now was a good time to share it.

“Yes, but we will be doing this work at several shipyards. We will have these logistic practices installed at each of those facilities, so the efforts associated with those vessels should be much more difficult to ascertain.”

“I know it is not my area of responsibility, but I have an idea for the Sea Control vessels. Perhaps, we could erect the coverings at all of the dry docks being used for these vessels—except this one. Let the Americans find what they are looking for, but keep them focused here so the magnitude of what we are accomplishing is kept from their view.”

As they reached the bottom of the long staircase and began walking across the dry dock, Lu Pham considered his production crew chief’s words and suggestions, and was reminded anew of his dedication and ingenuity.

The two men had begun to associate with one another and their families in the weeks that had elapsed since their first meeting. The social interaction meant a lot to Lu because, despite his contributions, there were not many who would associate socially with a Vietnamese family. But in Sung, he believed he had found not only talented employee, but also a friend.

“Perhaps such misdirection will help, Sung, but it still does not address the fact that fabrication efforts at each site will be almost impossible to hide.”

Sung respected Lu Pham. He was a brilliant engineer. But Sung Hsu’s expertise was in production and manufacturing, and he had met many westerners over the years at the COSCO

facilities. He believed that such misdirection might work with what he had seen of the western mindset.

"I believe, with the coverings and with these logistical channels for other materials, that they will be less noticeable at those other facilities. By putting the Sea Control efforts of this facility right out in the open, perhaps they may have no reason to look at the others. Perhaps at this point, the best we can hope for is to keep the magnitude of the effort from them."

As they continued, Lu made up his mind to pass these recommendations on to General Hunbaio.

"Your ideas have merit, Sung. Perhaps that is the best we can hope for at this point. I will pass them on to General Hunbaio and we shall see where they lead. Now, let us hurry and view the preparations you are making for those pivot points on the traversing collars. My body tells me it is almost time to eat. We will have to hurry if my family is to be at your apartment by eight o'clock. But I know we can do it. You see, the excellent Chi Ro Mein that your wife makes is calling to me."

## **June 2**

### **White House Situation Room**

#### **Washington, D.C.**

Admiral Crowler contemplated on the import of this moment. The next one or two hours could potentially portend a critical watershed in the history of United States and Chinese relations; perhaps a watershed in world history. Admiral Crowler had been in the Navy all of his adult life. He had come up through the ranks, starting as a "snipe" on a conventionally-powered aircraft carrier. Ultimately he had risen to command one of the premier surface combatants, an Aegis Cruiser. From there he'd been promoted to a Task Force commander as a Rear Admiral. He rose to flag rank six years later. And, as a result of his personal relationship with, and mutual respect for, the President, he had recently been promoted to command the entire US Navy.

He had cut his command teeth during the "Reagan years" when the 600-ship navy had become a reality. He had also lived through the "Hell Years" of the 1990's when political correctness, sensitivity training, budget cuts and what the Admiral considered to be insane policy decisions had all but destroyed the morale and effectiveness of his "fighting" navy.

Now, he intended to ensure that those times were behind them. They were now in the business of seriously putting the whetstone to steel in order to restore the "cutting edge."

"Mr. President, as you know, we had an over-flight of Red China last week. The mission made some startling discoveries, at least four of which made for a very anxious time for all involved."

"I have reviewed the data and ramifications with your National Security Advisor, John Bowers, with the Director of the National Reconnaissance Office, the Chief over the Air Force, General Livingston, with my own boss, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Stone and with the Secretary of Defense, Timothy Hattering. Are there any general questions before I begin?"

Admiral Crowler patiently waited while the other attendees, in addition to those whom he had just named, considered his remarks. Those additional attendees included President Norm Weisskopf, Vice President Alan Reeves, Secretary of State, Fred Reissinger and Tom Lawton who was attending with the Director of the NRO at the Presidents express request.

Secretary of State Reissinger cleared his throat and spoke.

"Admiral, the launch of those missiles at our aircraft was seen by tens of thousands. The Chinese have lodged an official diplomatic protest and are having a hay day with the press. It is really a diplomatic nightmare as many nations are sending official inquiries regarding the "incident." I thought we were sure that nothing could either detect, acquire or fire upon our aircraft. I need something to respond to these inquiries with."

Admiral Crowler paused for a moment or two, collecting his thoughts.

"Mr. Secretary, we were all surprised by the capabilities of the new Chinese missiles. We will speak more to that later in the meeting. I understand the difficult diplomatic position it has placed us in. I believe we must stick to our guns and officially deny any involvement. As far as we are concerned and as far as the evidence shows...the Chinese launched their missiles at a meteor descending into the atmosphere which burned during reentry."

Turning to his boss and the Secretary of Defense, the Admiral inquired.

"General Stone, Secretary Hattering?"

At this, President Weisskopf spoke up.

"That will not be necessary. Fred, I am afraid there is not much we can do here explicitly other than stick to the explanation that we were not involved...maybe floating Admiral Crowler's explanation would not be a bad idea. In the mean time, let's continue with the briefing."

With the President's definitive word on the matter, Admiral Crowler continued.

"Thank you Mr. President. The agenda will be as follows. We are going to have Tom Lawton review the infrared, electronic and signals data we received as a result of Colonel Mendenhall's flight. Following this, we are going to look at our projections of the capabilities of the new missile system that was fired at our aircraft. Finally, we will discuss the ramifications of both the shipyard data and the new missile systems on our current and future relations with the PRC."

“So, with that said, Tom, would you care to make your presentation?”

Tom was well prepared. With enhanced photographs which were based on infrared imaging and radar imaging, he showed the attendees the significant work going on at the Tianma shipyards.

“They are working three shifts and have a huge number of manual and technical laborers preparing these four dry docks. Historically, at this facility, they have had only two dry docks, and these were used predominantly for shipwrecking. Bringing old hulks in and dismantling them for their metal and wiring and anything else of value that could be obtained.”

“If you will direct your attention at these openings in the sides of each dry dock, it is apparent that an intricate system of access tunnels are being constructed which extend back to the surface several hundred meters away. Each of them is in close proximity to a major transportation corridor, either rail or vehicle. The implication that they are ramping up for serious shipbuilding at these facilities is clear...and in a way that will make it much more difficult for either our satellites or other surveillance missions to determine what is going on exactly once they begin.”

“Though no ships were present, each dry dock is capable of handling a vessel 800 feet in length and 100 feet wide; typical size for their container ships.”

“With respect to the signals and electronic data we analyzed, it is also clear that those missile batteries and additional, lesser capable batteries have been set up in very thick matrix around these shipyards, particularly for any approach from the sea. They are clearly intent on defending this site.”

With respect to the advanced missiles themselves, I have prepared a summary of data regarding their performance against the HR-7 aircraft we had in the area. Please refer to your handout and to the screen.”

*General: Guided, high performance Anti-Air*  
*Guidance: Capable of multiple guidance points and terminal guidance*  
*Range: Fifty to Seventy Miles*  
*Ceiling: 140,000 ft.*  
*Speed: Two stage, max speed Mach 4*

“We do not know if the missile is capable of self guidance once initial lock on is obtained on the ground. We must presume it can because their other high performance missile, the KS-2 certainly can. In addition, it is clear that the terminal guidance includes at least infrared and probably includes radar.”

At this point, General Livingston, The US Air Force Chief, spoke.

“Excuse my interruption, Tom, but I want to emphasize something to everyone here. These are very capable missiles...perhaps as capable as our latest Patriot missiles, although their performance against a true ballistic threat is indeterminate. Somehow we need to determine their full capabilities, as well as their numbers and production status. As it is, we know that they are one of the most capable missiles, outside of our own, that we have encountered.”

The meeting continued and two things were made very clear:

The Red Chinese were gearing up for serious shipbuilding at the Tianma shipyards. Taking into account earlier CIA intelligence regarding the purpose, and eventual military significance, of the projects, the speculation that the Red Chinese were going to use those locations to build new carriers, or some other military vessels, began to assume more and more credence.

It was clear that the Red Chinese had employed a new, highly capable missile system in defense of these very shipyards, along with an entire multi-layered defense of other, less capable systems. This information served as the catalyst in reaching the determination that Tianma was in fact being converted to accommodate extensive military operations.

President Weisskopf addressed the meeting as it was winding down, and as Admiral Crowler sat down after the last agenda item.

“Ok, I want to thank everyone for their fine input. We will go forward with the Jimmy Carter mission early next month. I believe it is imperative, with the creation of the CAS, and given my own conversation with President Jien Zemin, that we gather as much intelligence as possible. Admiral Crowler, just ensure, as we have discussed, that the Commander understands that at no time can his boat encroach into internationally recognized territorial waters of Red China. He is to accomplish his mission without doing so, or he is to abort. General Stone, Admiral, is that understood?”

Both men responded immediately with a definitive, “Yes Sir.”

With that, the President concluded.

“Gentlemen, these are momentous and potentially dangerous times. Fred, we need to do everything possible to bolster the morale, and the confidence, of our allies and friends in the Pacific region, and to maintain civility with the Red Chinese. Spare no effort to ensure that the foreign ministers from Japan, to Singapore, to Australia understand this. Pass the word confidentially to our friends in the ROC.”

“Oh, and one more thing. Alan, I would like you to work with Fred at State and Mike at CIA to coordinate a detailed review of events of the last few weeks in Iran. We have not taken a hard enough look at that, in my opinion. I know there has not been a lot of news emanating from there—and little notice is being paid to what news has been released—but I want to know more about this Hasan

Sayed. His age, and the unusual, almost worshipful, deference that is being paid to him, has me worried. Too many differing Islamic sects saying too many good things. I have a feeling we need to know more. You guys get together off line and arrange to look a little deeper into this man, and his potential significance, both in Iran, and well beyond her borders.”

Alan Reeves liked nothing more than to have a myriad of diplomatic and international state affairs on his plate. It was part of the arrangement that President Weisskopf had made with him before he accepted the invitation to run as Weisskopf’s running mate. Given Reeves’ prior experience under the Reagan administration, the President let it be known from the beginning that he’d rely on Alan for input, and decision-making, where diplomatic and international trade issues were concerned. Alan had liked the offer, and nothing had since given him any reason to regret having accepted it. Weisskopf was not treating his VP in the traditional figurehead manner. He was putting as much as Alan could handle on his plate. And, without exception, Alan had proven capable of handling everything that was placed before him.

Alan operated best under such pressures, and had a “team” who mirrored his capabilities in this regard. The President had just filled their plates yet again, and Alan was anxious to have at it.”

“Mr. President, I will do it right away Sir. We’ll have a planning meeting tonight if that is okay with you, Fred and Mike, and then prepare a detailed briefing with you within the next few days.”

**June 6, 06:00**

### **Wolf Flight, training range**

#### **Ft. Hood, Texas**

Major Jess Simmons was charged up for this morning’s exercises. It was 6 a.m. and he and his back-seater and their flight of RAH-66 Comanches were on the point of the sword and moving forward.

For the last three days he had been in briefings and mission planning sessions in exhaustive preparation for the exercises that actually kicked off in the field today. The exercises would be the culmination of his, and many others,’ efforts of the last three years regarding the full deployment of the new RAH-66 Comanche helicopter.

In fact, for the last 9 years the program had been coming together, from that first prototype which had flown in 1996, to the six operational machines that had been delivered in 2002, when Jess had first been assigned duty with these amazing military aircraft. That was the year he had opted out and gone into the guard, after fifteen years in the Army. Despite his decision to leave the Army, his record in flying the AH-64 Apache helicopter had been so outstanding that Uncle Sam had immediately put him to work evaluating and testing the Comanche.

That work, and the performance of the aircraft itself, had been so outstanding, and so compelling, that the Army had sought, and received, approval to begin low-level production two years ahead of schedule. As a result, thirty aircraft had been produce early and now there were 65 operational.

The exercises kicking off this morning would be putting twenty-five of the RAH-65s through their paces for the next four days, covering all mission capabilities from Scout, to Armed Recon, to Attack, to Air Defense, and all of the tactics developed for them.

Jess was piloting the lead aircraft of his company in the attack role. He would locate and then attack opposing force (OPFOR) tanks and other targets of opportunity.

In some of the heavier units, the Comanches would be operating in the scout and armed recon role, handing off the actual attack to AH-64D “Longbow” Apache helicopters. Jess believed that, in the attack role, the Comanche was every bit as effective as (and, in some ways, even more effective than) the older Apaches. This was because, while with the additional stores pylons the Comanche could carry slightly less ordinance, it could do it more stealthily and more effectively. He was convinced that these exercises would serve as proof of the Comanche’s attack-mode superiority.

“Guidepost, guidepost, this is Wolf,” Jess spoke into his headset on the division’s frequency.

“Go ahead Wolf,” came back an almost instantaneous reply.

“We are at point Bravo. Confirm permission to proceed.”

The operational plan called for his lead element of Comanches to scout well in advance of the division and the other elements of his flight. Point Bravo was the “kick-off” point after which his blue force expected at any time to encounter the OPFOR. From point Bravo, his flight would begin an armed reconnaissance, looking for the lead elements of the OPFOR.

In this case, OPFOR consisted of Soviet block equipment, including T-80 tanks, BMP-3 personnel carriers, AAW support vehicles, Hokum attack helicopters and air support provided by OPFOR F-16s. The Hokums and F-16s were Jess’s major concern. They were very capable of targeting his flight of helicopters and taking them out.

For this reason, his flight of six Comanches included two aircraft operating in the air defense mode, carrying full loads of eight ATAS Block II (air-to-air stinger) missiles. Their call signs were Thresher 1 and Thresher 2.

“Roger, Wolf. You are cleared to proceed.”

With that, Jess spoke over his flight's frequency.

"Okay, flight, follow my lead. We'll scout the terrain over the next rise across the valley to our front. I'm on point. Thresher 1 and Thresher 2, take up positions on our left and right flanks respectively, and cover us for any bandits. Respond in sequence"

As he received the responses, Jess dashed across the small intervening valley and hovered just below the summit of the hills on the far side. He slowly brought his aircraft up so his millimeter wave radar system's FCR (Fire Control Radar) could peer over the tops of the trees. Just before the sensors were ready to "see" over the treetops, Jess spoke over the intercom.

"Okay, Todd, keep your mark 20 eyeballs peeled and all of our electronic eyeballs up to snuff."

As his infrared and other sensors got a good look at the next valley, his back-seater, Todd Christensen, was rewarded with a view of five OPFOR BMP-3's. They were sitting in a small clearing at the edge of a line of oak trees on the far side of the valley, nestled between two of the hills that marked the far side of that valley in this part of the Texas hill country.

"Okay, flight, on my mark all shooters ease up to targeting position. There are five BMP-3's on the far side of the valley. I will take the center target. Each of you take targets to my right and left, in order of sequence. I will take a second shot on the far right. Await my mark and then acquire and engage."

Quickly keying into the division frequency, Jess said,

"Guidepost, guidepost. This is Wolf. We have contact with lead scout element of OPFOR. Request permission to engage and fall back to point Bravo, executing plan Lima."

"Affirmative, Wolf. You have permission to engage."

Now, speaking back on his flight frequency, Jess commanded.

"Okay, gentlemen, on my Mark.. 3.. 2.. 1 Mark!"

The four Comanche attack helicopters rose, acquired their respective targets using their FCR, and engaged each with a special training round that simulated a Hellfire missile. The practice rounds left the launch pylons and homed in on their respective targets.

**June 6, 06:10**

**OPFOR Lead Element, training range**

**Ft. Hood, Texas**

As soon as the incoming fire was noticed, all five BMP-3's rapidly backed into the cover of the woods on the side of the hill. As they did so, their commander, Lieutenant Jensen, spoke to his own divisional headquarters.

"Hightower, Hightower. Vulture one and two execute Pincer three!"

Three of his units, including Jensen himself, made it safely into the trees. But two units were not as fortunate, as the training rounds "electronically" blew them apart, relegating them to "KIA" status in the training exercise.

Concurrent with Lt. Jensen's transmission, two flights of four Russian, KA-50B Hokum attack helicopters rose from behind the hills between which the BMP-3's had been nestled. Each flight angled away from the BMP-3's and up and over the respective hilltops to each side, circling towards the Comanches.

**June 6, 06:12**

**Wolf Flight**

**Ft. Hood, Texas**

"Incoming bandits! Coming over the rise from the left and right. Thresher 1 engaging!"

Jess saw the threat immediately. OPFOR had sprung a trap on his flight. It appeared that all of the aircraft were Hokums, and that they were armed for air-to-air combat, carrying two missiles each. These would be simulations of Russian infrared homing missiles similar to the AIM-9 Sidewinder in the US inventory.

Jess knew that, even though the Comanche had been designed to reduce its engine heat significantly, even over that of the very cool running Apache, trying to retreat would involve turning his engine exhaust to the OPFOR helicopters. This would maximize their chance to use those missiles against him.

Thresher 1 and Thresher 2 would certainly give them a lot to think about since, between the two of them, they carried as many missiles as all eight Hokums. On the other hand, leaving the two of them to engage the Hokums alone, while Jess and the remainder of the flight fled, could get them "killed." These thoughts passed through Jess' mind in an instant, and then he made up his mind.

"Thresher 1 and 2, engage immediately and then encircle. Remainder of flight, on my lead, move forward and engage with guns, then fall back."

**June 6, 06:16**

**OPFOR Lead Element, Training Range**

**Ft. Hood, Texas**

Lieutenant Jensen could not believe what he had just witnessed. The trap had been sprung perfectly and he'd thought that the blue team was toast when the eight Hokums came boiling over the ridges to his left and right.

He expected the four Comanches to fall back. They were outnumbered and did not appear to be armed for air-to-air combat. But that's not how it went down.

Two more Comanches, loaded for air-to-air combat, came over the ridge to his front, and each immediately shot two "simulated" missiles at the Hokums. Three of these four missiles "scored" on the Hokums, taking those three aircraft out of the exercise. At the same time, two Hokums had fired at those two Comanches, electronically eliminating only one of them.

Then, to his utter disbelief, the other four Comanches charged and attacked with their chin guns! In the resulting "fur ball," another Hokum was destroyed before the Comanches broke off and retreated. As they did so, the remaining four Hokums were able to take out one of the Comanches.

At that moment, the surviving air defense Comanche, which had circled around behind the Hokums, came back into the fight with a bit between its teeth. This Comanche scored "hits" on two more Hokums.

As the last two Hokums retreated back over the ridge, the four surviving Comanches regrouped on station. Two Comanches versus six Hokums had been taken out...and the Hokum was the most advanced OPFOR rotary aircraft in the world today.

**June 10<sup>th</sup>, 10:15**

**Debriefing Room, Ft. Hood, Texas**

"Major, I must say that your attack on the Hokum ambush that first day was an extremely gutsy thing to do. It was dangerous, unprecedented and very risky. It also worked, and set the tone for the entire exercise."

"You men listen up. I can not recommend such a move, but I can say that your analytical skills must be top notch to survive on the battlefield. You must know your enemy and their capabilities. You must know how they stack up against your capabilities, without having to "remember" it. It must come naturally."

"If you study, train and live with this in mind, then, when faced with circumstances such as Major Simmons was, you will be able to arrive at the split-second decisions that may well save your command. Equally, and perhaps even more importantly, you will make the decisions that will allow you to complete your mission and save many other commands who are depending on you."

General Jamison looked over the assembled officers and senior non-commissioned officers who had taken part in Operation No Stars. The training exercise had purposely tested US Forces when facing highly capable OPFOR's, where the US advantage in overall battlefield management through digital and electronic technology had been negated. In other words, the units would be left to coordinate through more traditional radio frequency and verbal methods.

This was a part of a policy statement that had been issued by the President, the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff soon after President Weisskopf's inauguration. The policy was to ensure that US fighting forces were not overly dependent on the digital technology which had made them so invincible in many of the recent regional conflicts. General Jamison liked the attitude and the challenge. It was part of president Weisskopf's plainly stated "honing" strategy and General Jamison believed it was high time.

And the strategy was proving effective. Facing a numerically superior and very advanced OPFOR, the blue forces had come out on top and achieved every operational goal; though not without losses, some of them significant.

In General Jamison's estimation, though, this was a good thing. He recognized that some foes that the United States would face would have both the technology and the stomach for a fight. Those enemies had the smarts to put up a counter to America's best advantages, and also had the will to slug it out in a war of attrition they hoped would bring America to its knees.

"Major Simmons, do you have any advice or perspective?"

Jess Simmons did not like to be singled out, or held up on a pedestal. He did, however, like to take any opportunity to help train younger and/or less experienced personnel

"I can't really add much except to confirm."

Getting warmed up to the opportunity to teach, Jess continued,

"You know, folks, we didn't have our "God's unblinking Eye," Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar (JSTAR), up there giving us the advantage these last few days. We were all briefed on why."

"I can tell you that it is good to train for such contingencies. It is good because it is real. In Desert Storm, the Iraqis may not have been able to do much about such an advantage...and we see what



happens when an enemy can't or won't. But, think back to the Serbs in Kosovo. They did not have any extraordinary electronic countermeasures. What they did have was creative minds and a resolve. The result was that we were bombing ox carts with small engines in them, and other decoys that our "God Almighty" systems couldn't differentiate from the real thing."

"I was involved in both conflicts, gentlemen, and can tell you right now that there are folks who don't like us who are a lot more capable than the Serbs. I hope we never forget it. Study your enemy. Know his strengths and weaknesses. Live them, breathe them. Then be prepared to get right down in the mud and slug it out with him because that is what he is going to be trying to do to you if he can. Thanks, General, for the opportunity to share that."

Jess knew he had said enough, so, to a rousing ovation due to his performance and that of his team, Jess sat down. As he did so, he thought about Cindy and Billy and how the preparations for that next cut of hay were coming. In three days he'd be home and know.

**June 18, 09:00**

**Penthouse Suite, Park Avenue**

**New York City**

The unique tones from his "personal" satellite cell phone immediately got David's attention. His wife, Jennie, who was reading the morning paper, glanced knowingly over the top of the "Lifestyles" page she was reading.

"I'll take it in my study," said David over his shoulder as he got up and walked across the marble floor towards the double French doors that led into his "sanctum."

As he entered the six hundred square foot "study" and stepped onto the plush Italian carpet, David plugged the phone into its desktop receiver and quickly sat down and wondered about this call. It was *extremely* rare that Jien ever used the cell phone that they had presented to him on one of his many visits to China. Something important must be up and it would be best to get right to it. David pressed the answer button and spoke.

"Hello, Jien! What a surprise, and on a Saturday morning no less. What can I do for you?"

On the other end of the phone, and half a world away, but connected at the speed of light over the secure and encrypted satellite link, President Jien Zenim spoke.

"David, good to hear your voice. Yes, it is Saturday morning there, but late here. I have a few critical items to pass on to you—things I am sure our friends at WNN will love to have an exclusive on."

Amazing, thought David. Another exclusive!

"Outstanding, Jien! Please fill me in and I will get right on it. Oh!...and before I forget. Thank you so much for the exclusive tip on the CAS announcement, and the corresponding Russian announcement that Li passed on. I know that I am personally in your debt, as is WNN."

Jien continued.

"David, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, you will want to have camera crews on hand at the following national capitals: Kabul of Afghanistan, Ashgabat of Turkmenistan, Tashkent of Uzbekistan, Dushanbe of Tajikistan, Bishkek of Kyrgyzstan and Tehran, Iran. We have arranged for your crews to be in each place to cover the stunning announcements that will be made that day."

"It would be helpful, if as a run up to those special news breaks, you did a favorable piece on Hasan Sayeed of Iran...perhaps a few days before. He will figure greatly into these announcements, and will be making one of his own. We will handle the "arrangements" for your Swiss account as we normally do, and in fact will be transferring double the normal amount for this coverage."

David was dumbfounded. Twice the normal amount? \$100,000?

"Not a problem, Jien. I know I can arrange it. We have done a few stories on Hasan, but they have all been relatively light about how he came to power in Iran.

"Would it help if I forwarded you some information, Dave?" asked Jien.

"Absolutely!" exclaimed David, "What I would really like is to interview him one-on-one and at length. No one has done that yet."

This was precisely where Jien had hoped to lead the conversation. He knew that David would now be maneuvered into reporting things as Jien and his planners wanted.

"David, I will make an arrangement with you. If you broadcast a decent piece on Hasan, and then follow that up with live coverage of the announcements, I will arrange for you to have that exclusive interview, along with another double funds transfer. How will that be?"

David leapt at what he considered to be another tremendous opportunity to get an exclusive on a huge story, and to further enhance his own reputation as America's preeminent news anchor.

"I would move heaven and earth for such an interview. Jien, you just tell me when and where."

David couldn't believe how fortunate he was, or how lucky WNN was to have him and his "contacts." He wondered how long it would be before he would be in a position to take his place in the upper management of WNN. From David's perspective, it could not be too soon. Perhaps the next time he was in Beijing, he could raise the topic with Jien.

Jien, for his part, knew he had Krenshaw right where he wanted him, and he was prepared to maximize the advantage. Such influence over the information being presented to the American public, and to so much of the rest of the world, was easily worth several Army groups to Jien.

“Very fine, David. I knew I could count on you.”

For the next five minutes the two men conversed, with David taking many notes in preparation to plan the news coverage. Their discussion covered everything from recommendations concerning the camera crews in each of the capitals, to details regarding the production efforts at the broadcast studios in WNN headquarters.

When they hung up, Jien smiled...it had gone even better than he had anticipated. Turning to his long-time friend and confidant, Jien said.

“Li, tell our friends that operation “Imam Tiger” is approved, and should proceed accordingly.”

Back in the penthouse apartment in New York City, an exuberant and soon-to-be significantly wealthier David Krenshaw crossed the floor, snatched a paper from his wife's hands, and exclaimed.

“It’s *great* being me!”

## Chapter 3

*“A sly rabbit will have three openings to its den.”—Confucius*

**June 25, 22:00 local time**

**South China Sea**

**USS Jimmy Carter (SSN-23) 40 miles off Shanghai**

“Hold her at one two zero feet, steady as she goes, creep at 2 knots. What are the latest threat indicators?”

In answer to his Captain’s question, the officer on the deck informed him that no military traffic had been detected in the area and only nominal commercial shipping and air activity could be identified, all of which was a minimum of twenty-five miles distant.

“Very well Conn, get Lieutenant Commander Sheffield.”

Captain Simon Thompson was impatient at the moment. He was sitting one hundred and twenty feet below the surface, creeping along at two knots, only twenty-eight miles from the internationally recognized waters of Communist Red China in his nation’s quietest and most sophisticated attack submarine. The problem was, the Chinese claimed another 160 miles beyond his current location and would treat him as an enemy if they found him here. He was determined to minimize his exposure in such conditions, and to avoid being located at all costs. He would not feel some measure of comfort until there were another 100 miles between him and that coast, and another thousand feet of water beneath his keel.

“Sir, I have Lieutenant Commander Sheffield.”

Captain Thompson keyed the handset the officer of the deck gave him, and then spoke.

“Sheffield, are you and your wild Indians ready to get off my boat?”

Thompson smiled at the chuckle that preceded the response.

“Damn straight we are, Captain. But we’ll be happy to hitch a ride out of here with you about twenty four hours from now.”

Keying the handset again, Thompson replied.

“OK, we’ll rendezvous at twenty two hundred hours tomorrow evening at point Charlie. We’ll be there monitoring your frequency from twenty one hundred on. At twenty three hundred, if we have not heard anything, we will clear data and return on the next day for another try. If there are any surprises, we’ll contact you with a UHF SATCOM code on the hour per the OPPLAN. You are cleared to exit, Lieutenant Commander. Godspeed, and good hunting. Thompson out.”

With that, Captain Thompson monitored the departure of the SEAL (Sea, Air and Land) team under the command of Lieutenant Commander Sheffield. He then took the USS Jimmy Carter (SSN-23), third and last of the Sea Wolf class attack submarines, further out to sea and into the deeper waters that were its natural abode.

**June 25, 21:05 local time**

**South China Sea**

**On Board ASDS 3**

Terry Sheffield surveyed his team and their surroundings.

They were on board an Advanced SEAL Delivery System (ASDS)—a small, custom-built submarine, designed for the purpose of delivering SEAL teams to their targets along enemy or belligerent coasts. The USS Jimmy Carter (SSN-23), from which they had just exited, had been specifically modified during its construction to carry up to two of these vessels for just these sorts of clandestine missions. The first six of the new NSSN Virginia class attack submarines had similar capabilities. In fact, the first of that class was undergoing sea trials at the current time.

In addition to the crew of two who would pilot the vessel and himself, Terry had seven other SEAL team members for this mission. They and all of their diving and specific mission gear were housed inside the sixty-foot-long vessel. For communications, they were equipped with the SSIXS (Submarine Satellite Information Exchange System) UHF SATCOM communication systems, as well as the ability to receive VLF (Very Low Frequency) and ELF (Extremely Low Frequency) messages. Each ASDS weighed fifty-five tons and could travel through the water on its electric motor at eight knots for distances in excess of 120 miles...and they could do it while keeping their embarked SEAL team dry.

“A far cry from my early days in the SEALS,” thought Terry, “and a much needed improvement.”

Standing up and getting the entire team’s attention, Terry addressed the men.

“Okay, gentlemen. I will review the mission plan again, and then you might as well get a little shut eye if you can.”

Pulling down an electronic display board from an overhead slot, Terry directed his men’s attention to a diagram of the mission plan depicted on the board.

“Okay, we are en route from point Alpha here, some forty miles off the entrance to Shanghai harbor. We have approximately thirty-eight miles to go before we arrive on station at point Bravo, here. It’ll take us approximately four to five hours to get there if we don’t run into any difficulties. At that time, Ensign Murdock and Jack will remain on station here at Bravo in a low power mode monitoring communications, while the rest of us exit the vessel and proceed in.”

“Once we are in the water, we have a good six-hour swim ahead of us to map and reconnoiter the harbor and set up the gear per the plan. Each swim team will position and activate their eight MUAS (miniaturized underwater, all aspect surveillance) devices at the indicated positions to cover the required area of the harbor. Any need to deviate from the pre-planned position points must be exactly noted for proper correlation of the data. Once back in our little “hive” here, we will head for point Charlie, maintaining a low profile and the rendezvous with the Jimmy C.”

“Gentlemen, we have planned and trained for this over the last four weeks. Neither we, nor the Jimmy Carter, would have been assigned this mission if it were not of extreme importance. We are the “A” team, gentlemen. And it is time, once again, to demonstrate why.”

“Are there any questions? I didn’t think so. Well, you know the drill. Catch whatever rest you can. That is all.”

### **June 26, 6:12 local time Beneath Shanghai Harbor**

“There, the last MUAS device is anchored to the floor of the harbor and now it’s time to turn it on, arm its security package and get out of Dodge,” thought Terry. He had just watched his swim “buddy,” Chief Ben Kowalski complete the job of attaching the device firmly to the harbor floor. Kowalski then activated the device, armed the no-tamper circuitry, closed the access cover and joined him.

Utilizing hand signals, Terry indicated that it was time to make their way back to point Bravo and rendezvous with the other three swim teams at ASDS 3. Both of them then turned away from the device and began swimming towards point Bravo. As they did, Terry considered the high tech surveillance equipment they were leaving on the floor of Shanghai harbor.

The devices would monitor acoustic signatures, using a special low-power setting and extremely classified battery technology. When vessels meeting the criteria programmed into the micro-circuitry were sensed, the device would go into “record” mode. This mode would last only a moment or two as each vessel that met the requirements had an acoustical, photographic, electromagnetic and electronic recording made of it.

Each device was capable of making up to eighty such recordings and storing them digitally. The devices used classified material and circuitry that employed the saline ocean water to generate electrical power. This invaluable characteristic provided a service life of over twelve months.

With thirty-two such devices set on the harbor floor, every conceivable approach to the aircraft carrier shipyards in Shanghai was covered. For the next year, or until the capacity of every device was full, any suspicious or combatant vessel coming into the area would be recorded.

The data could be gathered either by sending more SEALS to recover it, or through activating a small buoy device by ELF signal. The buoy would then rise to the surface, orient a low-power transmitter towards the military satellite in gyro-synchronous orbit over the Philippine Sea and send an encrypted and condensed communication burst of the device’s memory. When informed of an “activation,” the military satellite would orient itself to “watch” the specific location of the activated device to pick up its low power burst. After communicating, the buoy would utilize chemicals to destroy itself as it sank back to the ocean floor. Each device carried five such buoys.

Twenty minutes later, Sheffield and Kowalski were joined by the other three swim teams who had all accomplished their missions. All of them were exhausted from their long swim and prolonged time in the water. They couldn’t help but think, as they cycled through the lockin-lockout chamber, how nice it would be to get back into the dry and relatively comfortable, if a little cramped, interior of the ASDS for the trip back to the Jimmy Carter.

### **June 26, 19:25 local time East China Sea, 88 Miles off Shanghai USS Jimmy Carter (SSN-23)**

“Captain, I have a surface contact, bearing two-three-seven degrees, heading one-nine-five degrees. Mark it as contact “Sierra” “...make that two surface contacts now, bearing two-three-seven degrees. Now tracking Sierra one and Sierra two.”

Captain Thompson swore to himself. That bearing and heading intercepted the course that the Jimmy Carter was taking to point Charlie for the rendezvous with the SEALS. He needed more information and he needed it now.

“Do you have a range on the contacts, speed, type?”

“Can just make out a speed of approximately 23 knots, Sir. Looks like the range is twenty miles...okay, Sierra one just went *active*! I say again, I have active sonar from Sierra one on its location. Mark both contacts, Sierra one and Sierra two, as Jiangwei-II class frigates.”

The Jiangwei-II frigate was a serious threat. Each carried one of the newer Ka-28 Helix derivative helicopters, which were license built in China from Russia, and which carried dipping sonar and anti-submarine torpedoes. The frigates also carried a variety of anti-submarine weapons from torpedoes to the newest sextuple, medium-range ASW rocket launchers. Their sonar, a multi-frequency, bow-mounted S-07H sonar, was effective, though it had not detected the Jimmy Carter which was below a protective thermal layer and was coated with sonar absorbing materiel. Those frigates, or their helicopters, would literally have to be right on top of the Jimmy Carter to get any kind of return.

“Helm, all slow. Make your speed five knots. Take us down another hundred feet to five hundred. Let’s make sure we stay below the thermal.”

Within sixty seconds, the sonar officer updated the situation.

“Captain, active sonar has stopped, but I now have a dipping sonar. Has to be from a helicopter off one of those frigates, bearing one-niner-six degrees, range of sixteen miles. Contacts Sierra one and Sierra two are also slowing to ten knots and coming to a heading of one-two-five degrees.”

“Well, that does it,” thought the Captain. “Those suckers are going to hang around our rendezvous area and we just can’t risk it at this stage.”

“OK, looks like they are in a random search pattern over there in the vicinity of point Charlie. Helm, make your heading oh-seven-two degrees and lay in a course to point Delta. Conn, transmit a UHF SATCOM message to our “friends” at twenty-hundred hours, code “Diane.””

**June 26, 20:00 local time**

**South China Sea, 20 miles from Point Charlie**

**On Board ASDS 3**

“Commander, we’re receiving a UHF SATCOM signal.”

Terry knew that he wouldn’t be getting any message unless there was a problem. Just as he wouldn’t send one unless he couldn’t make the rendezvous or had to use an alternate point. Something must be going down.

“Jack, go ahead and decode as it comes in.”

After a few seconds Jack looked up and said.

“From the Jimmy Carter Sir, one word: “Diane.””

When they heard this, everyone knew that they would have to revert to point Delta for their rendezvous with the Jimmy Carter. This would mean more time and miles since point Delta was twenty miles further to the southwest.

“Okay, Jack, respond in the affirmative to the message, and you and Ensign Murdock lay in a course for us to point Delta.”

**June 27, 01:10 local time**

**East China Sea, Point Delta**

**USS Jimmy Carter (SSN-23)**

As the XO (Executive Officer) of the USS Jimmy Carter reached to hang up the communications handset into which he had been speaking, he nodded to the Captain.

“Captain, ASDS secure and the SEALs are on board. Lieutenant Commander Sheffield reports ‘mission accomplished.’”

Thompson considered this, thankful that they had been able to avoid detection by the Jiangwei-II frigates. Now it was time to move on to part two of the mission.

“Let me see your commset, XO. I’d like to address the crew.”

The XO handed Captain Thompson the handset, and Thompson raised it to his mouth.

“Crew, this is the Captain. We have retrieved our special guests who successfully completed their mission. Great job to all for detecting, identifying and then avoiding those contacts earlier. It allowed us to stealthily and successfully retrieve our friends. I know we have been running silent for the last several days, but we have several more days of the same to complete the remainder of the mission. I want you to know I am proud of your performance and proud to serve with each of you. Carry on.”

Handing the commset back to the XO, the Captain continued, addressing him.

“Thanks, XO. Once you get us underway for the other objective in this OPPLAN off of Tanjin, please find Lieutenant Commander Sheffield and then the two of you join me in my quarters. I’d like to review each of your assessments and factor them into the Tanjin operation. The closer quarters up there have me nervous and we’re going to have to be at 110%.”

**June 27, 19:00**

**WNN Broadcast Studios**

**WNN HQ, New York City**

Looking into the camera with his famous “serious” look, David Krenshaw began the “News Special” regarding the remarkable rise to power of Hasan Sayeed.

“Ladies and gentlemen, tonight WNN news brings you a special broadcast regarding a remarkable individual of whom many of you have heard, but about whom little is known, other than the fact that he has recently come to power in Iran.”

“What is remarkable, at least from the Western perspective, is the age of this new leader. Hasan Sayeed is thirty-nine years old and has taken his position at the pinnacle of a religious, political and military hierarchy where most leaders’ ages are nearly twice his own. Yet these venerable leaders, including the Grand Ayatollah Khamenei, who was the leader of Iran until early last month, have willingly stepped aside to allow this individual to assume power peacefully, and, by all accounts, very effectively.”

“Naturally, we here at WNN are investigating how this came about and why. Tonight, as a result of the type of exclusive sources that you have come to expect from WNN, we believe we can answer some of those questions. Please stay with us for those answers after this break for our commercial advertisers.”

David was excited about the next several weeks. This show would kick off the plans he had made with his WNN producers and management, which mirrored the plans he had made with Jien. Over the next ten days, a virtual whirlwind of activity would take place in the Mid-East with the emergence of a greatly-expanded Islamic republic. And David and WNN would be right in the middle of it—exclusively in the middle of it.

After the break, in a multi-media display that dazzled the viewers, David told bits and pieces of Hasan’s life story. David touched on Hasan’s birthday and how it fell on the same date as that of the mystical 12<sup>th</sup> Imam of Shia faith and the strong beliefs the Sunni’s had regarding the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam. He portrayed Hasan’s remarkable entry into the religious schools and programs in Iran at such an early age. Using old Iranian military film, he showed live clips of Hasan’s death-defying charges at Abadan during the Iraq/Iran conflict. This footage was followed by various still and video clips of his years in leadership positions within the Pasdara, and then some very rare photos of his pilgrimage in the mountains and deserts of the ‘stan regions surrounding Iran.

This was all done through various narratives and interviews by other WNN commentators, and a few Islamic clergy who had spoken of Hasan in the past. The segment neared its end with video footage of the thousands of loyal followers who led Hasan out of the Center for Theological Studies in Qom, Iran after the Islamic recognition and confirmation of him as the Imam Hasan Sayeed. The segment concluded with a video of Hasan boarding a Lear jet, which would fly him to Tehran.

“So, what does this mean to America and to the west in general? This is a question that is difficult to answer at the moment. To date, Imam Sayeed, as he is called, has called for religious unity amongst all Islam, and has preached tolerant and peaceful co-existence with other nations of the world who do not interfere with the affairs of the Islamic Republic. While the message calling for the unification of Islam will give many Americans great unease, reminding us all of the events of September 11, 2001, the message of peace and tolerance is the antithesis of the message preached by those who were responsible for that horrific attack.”

“We at WNN are seeking to understand and report the implications of this story. The history of the West and Persia, and particularly the United States and Iran is a history of mixed signals and precarious diplomatic relations. Perhaps Hasan Sayeed can re-open ties with the West, but to date there has been no indication that this is his intention. Inside Iran, the power of the Islamic faith, and the Shia faith in particular, is consolidating and continuing its hold over virtually every aspect of society. Clearly, the source for the most reliable information is none other than Hasan Sayeed. As we close tonight, we at WNN are proud to announce an exclusive interview with the Imam Sayeed that has been scheduled for 7PM EST on August 9<sup>th</sup>. Please tune to WNN at that time as I interview this dynamic, new leader of Iran.”

“This is David Krenshaw, thanking you on behalf of WNN. Goodnight.”

As the “live” indicator went out and his producer gave him a “thumbs up,” David thought about how well the show had gone. The presentation had come off about as perfectly as possible.

“I wonder what those bozos over at Weisskopf’s State Department thought about that,” David wondered as he got up and began walking towards his dressing room. “Their jaws are probably hanging down to the floor right about now. Ha! Rank amateurs!”

**June 27, 20:05**

**State Department Conference Room**

**Washington, D.C.**

“Where does this guy get his information?”

Fred Reissinger looked around the room at Mike Rowley, the Director of the CIA, and several of their jointly-assembled subordinates.

"I swear, I feel like we're looking at scenes from Baghdad all over again. I remember back then during Desert Shield, and then Desert Storm, when many of us in the State Department and even over in Defense were getting part of our intelligence from the Cable News of the day.

"It's too bad we don't have any *embedded* reporters working this one like we did in Operation Iraqi Freedom."

Mike Rowley was also surprised at the depth of information that WNN had accumulated on Hasan—more than his own operatives had been able to gather for sure. Perhaps it was time that they started checking into Mr. Krenshaw and his "contacts"...if for no other reason than to gather intelligence and be able to be working on it before it was announced over the nightly news. Clearly, somehow, WNN was connected.

But Mike Crowley was also peeved.

"That little fart Krenshaw rubbed this in our face, Fred. The very idea of him calling your deputy like that and "advising" us to take a look at 7 p.m. this evening for 'all we ever wanted to know, but hadn't been able to find out about Hasan Sayeed.'"

"If I thought he was a loyal American and that he made that statement out of concern for our decided lack of intelligence that would be one thing. But of course, in that case he would have shared the information with us earlier. In addition, his commentaries on the President and his clear "longing" for the "good old days" of a couple of administrations ago just don't sit well with me. It was those "good old days" that created the majority of the problems we are facing right now."

Secretary Reissinger nodded appreciatively at the comments of his friend and compatriot in the Weisskopf administration. It was rare that the Secretary of State and the Director of the CIA saw things so similarly...and it was also an indication of the wisdom and capability of the President in putting together his cabinet,' thought Secretary Reissinger.

"Mike, I understand your feelings, but whether it was an intended snub or not doesn't matter at this point. At least we were watching it and can now get our staffs working on this, instead of hearing about it late tonight or tomorrow morning."

"I'd like to suggest we form a couple of task forces to look more closely at the situation: One can analyze things from a potential religious standpoint as it impacts the people in the region...that part about the confluence of Shia and Sunni faiths on this 12<sup>th</sup> Imam. The other can analyze things from a strictly political perspective, to find out how susceptible the surrounding governments are to any unifying influence Sayeed may wield."

**June 30, 11:45 local time**

**Public Assembly Square**

**Ashgabat, Turkmenistan**

Abduhl Selim was seventeen years old, soon to be eighteen. He was not happy about being here in the middle of this hot day in the middle of this big city, waiting for an announcement by his government. Abduhl had been raised in the Kara Kum desert near the Kopet Mountains. What he enjoyed most was being able to sit in the shade of the trees at the oasis in the foothills near his home, watering his father's sheep and looking out over the expanses of the desert. He wished he were doing that right now.

Although raised in a faithful Islamic family, Abduhl had not "taken" to the religious instruction like his siblings and many of his friends. Oh, he believed in Allah and believed that Mohammed was His prophet. He also said his prayers—when he was close to home. When he was away from home and away from the pious adults, he did not think on religion much at all, preferring to learn about the animals or the desert; or, more and more lately, about weapons.

But today, his father had insisted that they be in the capitol, Ashgabat, for the important government announcement. His father had indicated that their leader would announce something today of over-riding political and religious importance, something historic that they would all take great pride in. Something they would tell their children and grandchildren that they had seen and experienced themselves. So, here they were.

"Allah be praised that the fruit markets are open and have plentiful stock this day!' Abduhl thought as the mid-day heat and the proximity of tens of thousands of others kept him uncomfortable. Actually, his discomfort came more from the pressing crowds than the heat. But the fruit was good, so he ate another slice of the tangerine he had purchased and savored the flavor as he let the juice slowly run down his throat.

As he was savoring the sweet taste, and appreciating the juice quenching his thirst, there was movement on the great balcony of the government building that overlooked the large public square where Abduhl and his family were standing. He noticed the western TV personnel with camera crews off to each side and in front of the balcony. He recognized the President and Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, Saparmurat Niyazov, standing with several of the leading members of the Halk

Maslahaty and Assembly or Majlis. After a moment, the President began walking towards the podium.

As he did, Abduhl's Father, Muhamet, said, "Son, listen now and pay attention. It is said that this announcement will change all of our lives forever."

"My fellow countrymen. Today we are gathered here in our Capital for an announcement of great import. The proceedings are being televised throughout the nation and the world. My voice is being carried by radio wave to those areas where a television signal is not available."

"As most of you know, or may have heard, Hasan Sayeed became the leader of the Islamic Republic to our south early last month. It is a moment of great import for all Islam as Ayatollah Ol Osam Hasan Sayeed is recognized for his leadership, piety, wisdom and knowledge in all of Islam. He visited our country a number of years ago and shared his views and vision of a truly united Islam with our scholars and religious leaders. I had the opportunity to speak with him at length then, and have done so many times since."

"Early this spring, Hasan and the leading Ayatollah Ol Osams from the Islamic Republic began working with our own Halk Maslahaty and the Assembly or Majlis. As a result, a vote has been cast in both assemblies, and I have expressed my concurrence. On Independence Day, 27 October of this year, there will be a national referendum putting to the will of the people the issue of aligning ourselves with, and becoming a part of, the "Greater Islamic Republic.""

An audible intake of breath was heard throughout the crowd. Almost 90% of the population of Turkmenistan was Islamic. Such a prospect, a truly united Islam, was deeply rooted in the heart of all the faithful. That a true opportunity was presenting itself was both surprising and exhilarating to most of those assembled here. Soon, cries of, "Allah Ahkbar!" and "Imam Sayeed!" began echoing in the square and growing in volume.

Abduhl did not know what to think. Although he recognized the import of this announcement, to him, one government seemed like it would be pretty much like another. At the oasis and in the deserts, little government interaction was required or expected.

The President let the excitement build for a moment or two, then using the power of his amplified microphone, he continued.

"I am happy to announce, that today similar announcements are being made in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Iran."

With this, the cheers and the calls from the crowd climaxed. After several minutes, the President was again able to make himself heard.

"In some of these countries, the transition is being made immediately as of today. In others, like our own, referenda of the people will be held to approve the votes cast by their representatives. The target date is for full alignment and sovereignty as a single Greater Islamic Republic, made up of a constitution of these various republic states, by November of this year, with the Imam Sayeed as our leader."

"What it will mean is the creation of a nation numbering over one hundred twenty million, stretching from the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea to the Himalayas. A unified nation of Islam with the petroleum, precious metals, agricultural and moral strength to take its place at the seat of the world's great powers! To this I say, Allah mak! Allah mak!"

Despite his previous reservations, Abduhl joined with the tens of thousands gathered in the square as they shouted their assent along with their leader.

"Allah mak! Allah mak! Allah mak!"

**June 30, 3:17**

**WNN Broadcast Studios**

**WNN HQ, New York City**

"We repeat, WNN has been on the scene in the capital cities of Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan for the stunning announcements by the respective governments regarding the merger of these nations into a Greater Islamic Republic."

"Each nation, excepting Iran and Afghanistan, has announced referendum votes for the approval of the action being taken by their executive and legislative bodies. It is expected, given the overwhelming majority of Islamic people in each nation, that these referenda will pass."

"One of the surprises here is the actions in Afghanistan. We all remember there the military actions that resulted in the toppling of the Taliban and the routing and dissolution of Al Qaeda's hierarchy. It was thought that the resulting governing body, which was a mixture of democratic process coupled with more moderate Islamic clerics, would have been more resistant to such a merger. Clearly, that was an incorrect impression."

"If all of these referenda pass, as we believe they will, this will result in a unified nation of Islam numbering in excess of one hundred twenty-five million people possessing great natural resources. The on-screen map we have maintained throughout this broadcast in the inset on your screen to my upper right, is a map of the resulting 'Greater Islamic Republic.' Our understanding is that the capital



will be in Tehran, and the President will be Hasan Sayeed, about whom we here at WNN aired a special report several days ago.”

“We expect reaction from the surrounding governments of Iraq, Pakistan, India, Kazakhstan, China and Russia within the next few hours.”

“The reaction from the United States, Europe, and, in particular, from Israel, should be forthcoming as the day progresses. We will inform you of any such announcements as they occur.”

“Again, ladies and gentlemen, this has been David Krenshaw, reporting live on WNN with the stunning announcements which today are creating the new nation of the Greater Islamic Republic.”

**June 30, 8:20**

**Oval Office in the White House**

**Washington, D.C.**

“Somebody tell me why it is I feel like a fellow who hasn’t been invited to a party that all my friends are talking about. Fred, Mike, what in the hell is going on? First this unprecedented Coalition of Asian States, and now a “greater” Islamic Republic, as if we didn’t have a big enough headache with the “lesser” one. Come on guys, we’re not living in a vacuum here.”

“And what is this with Afghanistan? I thought the Northern Coalition, which helped us in the fight against the Taliban was going to ensure that this type of thing did not happen. What’s this with the immediate unification with Iran?”

Clearly, President Weisskopf was upset and frustrated. His own domestic agenda was progressing nicely through both a Senate and a House decidedly in the majority on his side of the issues. His agenda, which included governmental fiscal responsibility, more local control of education, seriously looking at a national sales tax to replace the IRS and the income tax and more emphasis on prosecuting and incarcerating violent criminals while utilizing rehabilitation, detoxification and community programs for the non-violent had broad based support. But achieving success in monitoring potentially dangerous international situations seemed to be an almost futile endeavor for Weisskopf and his cabinet.

Fred Reissinger slowly shook his head and looked at his boss and said, “Mr. President, we have a couple of task forces that are making good progress on understanding Hasan Sayeed and his potential influence in the area. I held a review meeting with them yesterday afternoon before we heard of these announcements. They have indicated a strong possibility, due to Sayeed’s religious instruction, the date of his birth and his stated views concerning Islamic unification that both the Sunni Muslims and the Shia Muslims may unite behind him. I was preparing a report for the cabinet last evening when this news broke. We were concerned that Afghanistan would quickly move to align themselves with Sayeed, and, even more disconcerting, we are concerned that at some point both Pakistan and Iraq may also enter into this ‘alignment.’”

At this suggestion, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense began speaking simultaneously.

“Great. That would result in one of our worst fears...a nuclear armed Islamic Republic!” was General Stone’s frustrated comment, while Secretary Hattering exclaimed, “Having a much larger and stronger nuclear power on their borders would scare the living daylights out of the Indians.

“And what’s this talk of Iraq maybe going the same way? What of our *supportive* Islamic democracy there? What of Chaliberi? I mean we put this guy in power...he owes everything he has to us. Can this Sayeed undo Iraqi Freedom just like that? Is the entire world turning upside down on us here?”

Secretary Reissinger spoke again.

“Gentlemen, please let me continue. Diplomatically, I believe it is absolutely critical that we consolidate and reassure our allies with all due haste. This must be an effort on two fronts now. “

“We already started an effort in Asia with the Philippines, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand and Australia in the face of the CAS. I might add that we are experiencing good progress, particularly with the Philippines and Thailand, in securing forward bases of operation in those two nations. Secretary Hattering is working closely with me on that. This is occurring in the face of significant protest from the Chinese concerning our efforts in this regard, and over the most recent surveillance flight.”

“In the Mid East we must redouble our efforts to ensure that we do the same negotiating and discussing with Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt in the Mid-East. In my opinion, those four nations are the key to heading off this Islamic fervor, with perhaps Iraq being the lynch pin. What we have accomplished there since Iraqi Freedom in 2003 is viewed by everyone as our own proof of concept. We cannot afford to allow Iraq to be pulled into this. We have done all in our power to establish Chaliberi in a position that is autonomous of our direct influence, while at the same time helping him develop a moderate, secular democracy in Iraq that we can work with. I cannot believe that he will be pulled away from that.

"If we can keep working with those other three nations to influence him and keep them all strongly "in the fold," I believe we can counter the growth and influence of Sayeed. It goes without saying that Israel remains our closest ally in the region."

The President agreed with what his Secretary of State was saying, but was still uneasy. He had met Jien Zenim and could not shake the feeling that his Chinese counterpart was somehow deeply involved in all of this.

"What are the Chinese saying, Fred?"

Fred had expected such a comment, and was prepared to discuss it.

"Mr. President, they issued a prepared statement this morning, about three hours after the announcements. Basically, they are saying that they welcome the developments. Their official comments were, as I recollect, 'The People's Republic of China welcomes and approves when any poor and oppressed peoples join together in unity and social equity to raise themselves above their circumstances and sit proudly at the table of world events.' Apparently, they plan to change their embassies in these nations to consulates, and then have the main embassy in Tehran serve as their embassy for them all as soon as the referenda are held."

At this juncture, Mike Rowley, the Director of the CIA, spoke up.

"Mr. President, we at CIA are involved with Fred's people in the task forces looking into the potential influence of Sayeed on the governments and people in the area. It is important to note that these countries are peopled by large majorities of Islamic. The largest non-Islamic population is in Kyrgyzstan, where the Russian Orthodox population numbers 20%."

"Apparently there is some resistance in that nation to this announcement. In fact, there was some violence in Bishkek during the announcement. From all accounts, the uprising has been apparently quickly and brutally suppressed. We have received reports of refugees already heading towards the Kazakhstan border. This is important because Kazakhstan was the focus of heavy Russian immigration during the Soviet years—which resulted in that nation's population being almost equally split between Europeans and Asians, and between the Russian orthodox faith and Islam. Not surprisingly, the people of European heritage hold most of the power there. We could be looking at a potential trouble spot in the region."

The President had heard enough. His press secretary was due to make an announcement at 9 a.m., and he wanted to obtain a consensus on the wording.

"Okay, Mike and Fred, keep on it. I want this situation to be emphasized in the daily briefings. Right now we have to announce something to the world. I am inclined to use the opportunity to suggest we normalize relations with Iran, and ensure that American companies and citizens in these other nations are reassured. Fred, please work with my press secretary to come up with wording to that effect and let's review it here at eight forty five."

"In addition, Fred, please move forward with the plans you spoke of regarding our allies and friends in Asia and the Mid-East. In that regard, I would like you to arrange for me to speak with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel and President Sezer of Turkey ASAP."

"Tim and General Stone, I would like you to work up an assessment of the military strength of these aligning nations and how quickly they can combine, both logistically and operationally. Include a worst case scenario that takes into account Pakistan and Iraq. Please schedule a meeting for early next week to review and discuss the implications."

**July 4, 21:45**

### **University of Wyoming football stadium**

#### **Laramie, Wyoming**

"Whoa, dude, look at that!"

Alan was really getting into this fireworks display.

"It sho' is somethin. I never would've thought to be here. Leon, we got you to thank fo' it. Mmmm, but I love this cool air up here."

Leon Campbell looked over at his mother. They had arrived in Laramie yesterday evening pretty late, and upon hearing about the big 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration, had decided to stay an extra day to take it in. He was glad they had. What a great time they were having. In fact, the last week had been the best time he could remember. He, his brother Alan and his momma, Geneva, all traveling out west together, seeing things none of them had ever seen before.

It hadn't taken long either. As they drove west on Interstate 80, they left the city of Chicago behind soon enough. As soon as they got 20 miles outside the city, they reached the furthest extent that any of them had ever traveled. It was such an experience seeing all of the open farmland right there in Illinois. They had never imagined it was like that so close to them.

Then, they had crossed the Mississippi River at Rock Island. They had all heard of the Mississippi and how it was a large river, but nothing compared to driving almost a mile across the biggest bridge they had ever seen, over water the entire time.

The further west they had gone, the more amazing the experience had been to them all. As they traveled across Iowa, they were amazed at the cornfields. Row after row, field after field.

“Now I knows where all dat corn a fixed for you boys growin’ up came from,” had been their mother’s comment after passing by one extremely large field. They had all laughed together at the statement. Surely, they thought, no place on earth could grow so much corn.

Then had come Nebraska. The sheer magnitude of it, the open spaces, the scenery of rolling hills for mile after mile. They had stopped in North Platte and visited the Buffalo Bill Ranch State Park near there and had purchased some souvenirs. Trying to imagine a time when buffaloes by the millions roamed that land was not as difficult when you were driving across its great expanse.

The further west they went, the more the scenery changed. Soon, they weren’t looking at all of the green grass or fields of corn. There were more and more wheat fields as the land became progressively drier. There were more and more hills and rock outcroppings.

Although Nebraska seemed to go on forever, soon enough they came to the Wyoming border. Not long after entering that state they got their first glimpse of mountain ranges off in the distance. When they did, Leon stopped the car and got out. As he was gazing into the distance, he spoke to his brother Alan.

“Would you look at that, Alan! Who would have imagined it? Those mountains must be over sixty or seventy miles away. The pioneers must have felt something like this!”

Alan couldn’t say he was as excited as Leon, but he had to admit that this first glimpse of the Rocky Mountains was quite the experience.

“I know I feel like a pioneer, Leon. This is all new to me, bro. I never would have thought there was so much open space in the whole world!”

After passing through Cheyenne, they had begun to climb into the mountains themselves and were soon passing by the higher peaks of the Continental divide.

They stopped at the pass above Laramie and spent several hours walking and talking and enjoying the moment. One family from Utah had stopped and engaged them for over an hour in some really pleasant conversation. The family was on their way home from a vacation in Illinois. They had visited a small town of Nauvoo on the Mississippi River. Apparently that town carried some sort of significance for their religion. Upon hearing of the Campbell’s story and travels, they had been sincerely excited for them and spoke of how great it was for them to be making such an effort as a family. Before they drove off, the father and son had shaken Leon’s and Alan’s hand and the wife had given their mother a hug. It wasn’t the first time on this trip that people had spoken to them kindly, and had taken an interest in their circumstances. They weren’t used to such friendly behavior, but it felt good, and they knew they could easily become accustomed to it.

There on that pass, when the sun had gone down, it got cool quickly and they had returned to their car, driven into Laramie and found a hotel room for that first night. Now here they were, the next day, Independence Day, sitting in a full football stadium watching fireworks.

Leon thought about that. How fitting, he thought to himself.

For him and his brother and mother, this was like their Independence Day. As surely as those colonial folks had thrown off the chains of their English bondage, he and his family were throwing off the chains of their lifestyle and circumstances. The prospect had Leon both humbled and excited.

A local civic organization and a local church had gotten together and organized a choir for the holiday event. Now, as the fireworks continued to light up the night sky, the crowd began to sing patriotic songs in the background. As they sang *America the Beautiful*, all three of the Campbells were mesmerized by the words—words they had all heard before, but had never really listened to, or appreciated.

*“Oh beautiful for spacious skies,  
For amber waves of grain,  
For Purple Mountains majesty,  
Above the fruited plain.”*

*“America, America,  
God shed His grace on thee,  
And crown thy good  
With brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea.”*

“I never knew it before, momma, but America sure is a rich, blessed and good land. Talk about your ‘spacious skies,’ we know that’s the truth now don’t we? Guess we’re going to discover how much more truth we’ve missed out on. Who would have ever thought it?”

Geneva Campbell looked over at her son. There were tears in her eyes. This boy, this good bright son, he had been their ‘explorer,’ their ‘pioneer.’ ‘God be praised for the likes of Leon,’ she thought.

“Leon, I expect we goin’ to find out a lot more. Just like you say. Yo daddy had a lot of good in him, God rest his soul. I wish he could see us now. He would have been proud of you, Leon...and you too, Alan.”

“It takes a real man, a real special man, to be able to pull hisself up and break out of a no good mold. Leon, that’s just what you are doin, and Alan, you’s helpin’ and had the strength to see it fo’ yo

self...and you's bringin' you old momma wid you. We got a long ways to go to this Boise, Idaho...but we got someone special wid us...I do believe the good Lord's along for this ride."

**July 7, 15:30 local time**

## **Islamic Republic Government Offices**

### **Tehran, Iran**

Imam Hasan al-Askari Sayeed considered his growing inner circle of government, military and religious figureheads. He knew he would be wise to consolidate and keep this number manageable. At the same time, he had to remain careful. He was riding high on a wave of public acclaim and great expectation. His message of Islamic unity and a basic application of the Three Wisdoms to the world of Islam were falling on very receptive ears.

Hasan turned to his closest advisor and friend, Ayatollah OI Osam Sadiq Shiraziha, whom he had appointed as the foreign minister and asked.

"And what of General Musharraf in Pakistan? Are the overtures continuing?"

Sadiq reviewed the notes on his Palm computer and responded.

"Imam, the Pakistani's are very interested in aligning with us and thus extending the Greater Islamic Republic. They recognize the wisdom in this unification, the power and influence it will bring Islam overall. They marvel at the success you have had thus far. You are receiving widespread approval and support amongst the people of Pakistan and I believe this is fueling Musharraf's overtures."

"General Musharraf is insisting, however, on Pakistan being given a voice equal to the current number of seats in our Parliament, due to the size of their population. He is also insisting that he be named as overall Defense Minister for the entire Greater Islamic Republic."

Hasan considered this. The Pakistani had a point from a representation standpoint, but Hasan was more interested in Musharraf's acceptance of his Imamate. The acceptance of this, and most importantly, the people's acceptance of this, would negate any influence in the Parliament.

Military Minister was another issue altogether. Hasan had no intention of having anyone supplant him in that role, particularly not someone who had made overtures to the west the way Musharraf had during the US action against the Taliban. Hasan understood the position Musharraf had been put in, but it had been a true test of his commitment to Islam, and he had failed when he allowed America to use his airspace and bases. Besides, Sayeed believed that multiple military subordinates could always be used to ensure that no individual ever accumulated the power to challenge his authority.

"And what of the Imamate?"

"Imam, Musharraf is indicating that he and his ministers are willing to accept the reality of your Imamate and recognize you publicly as the true ruling Imam for all of Islam, both Sunni and Shia, as you have desired."

Ah! There it was then, a public recognition. Hasan bowed his head and meditated for a moment, awaiting the inner voice. When he was satisfied that he had heard the promptings from within, he lifted his head and spoke to his long time supporter and confidant.

"Sadiq, tell General Musharraf that we will accept his terms regarding the Parliament, but that his request regarding the Defense Minister position will have to be put to the Ayatollah OI Osams and the collective senior Mujtahids and Mullahs several weeks after the unification in August."

"Sadiq, as you well know, the vote will go against him. Musharraf, in requesting the position of Defense Minister, has shown his lack of faith regarding the Imamate. We will remember this, and deal appropriately with it later. In the meantime, begin making arrangements with the clerics."

"Now, what is the position of Chaliberi Iraq?"

Sadiq did not have to refer to his Palm computer. The question regarding Iraq was a touchy one. It was absolutely necessary to bring Iraq into the fold of the Greater Islamic Republic. Sadiq knew this. But the new moderate leader of Iraq, who owed his existence to the West—and from the entire Islamic world's perspective was being used by them—was not willing to surrender his role as the leader of Iraq to the Imam, or consider the urgings of the Shia clergy to do so.

"Imam, Chaliberi continues to insist that the only offer he will consider is that he share power with you in some form of moderate, secular government my Imam. He indicates that without him we will never be able to reverse the growing influence of the Americans on all of the Arab nations, not to mention, he says, the Iraqi people themselves. He feels he is the key to unification you are urging."

Hasan knew that Chaliberi was a cunning leader. He also knew that he was not pious or committed heart and soul to the one faith, outside of using it as a tool to help advance his own ambitions. It was clear however, that support of the west was his mainstay to power, and this was something that could be used against him.

"Chaliberi overestimates his influence in all of these areas, including and especially the loyalty of his own people. It is because his faith is not pure. He uses it only as a tool to rationalize his own actions in being the harlot and whore to the West."

“Very well. He has made his decision, and established the course. Are our contacts and arrangements with Hamas complete? Are our own operatives in place and prepared to act?”

Sadiq, aware that with this line of questioning the decision to act had been made, affirmed to his Imam that all contacts with Hamas were secure, and that their own special operatives and sleeper agents in Iraq were in place and prepared to carry out their assignments.

“Very well, my loyal and trusted friend,” replied Hasan. “Then I will issue the necessary orders to have Operation Zakat proceed as we have planned. May Allah be with the faithful.”

**July 15, 09:30 local time**

**Along the Yenisey River**

**Krasnoyarsk, Russia (Siberia)**

“Stop right here, don’t go any further.”

Colonel Andrei Nosik could not believe his eyes. His battalion of 40 BTR-80 personnel carriers had offloaded here in Krasnoyarsk to “assist” with the Indian and Chinese workers streaming into the Trans-Siberian region. But no provisions had been made for their billeting or maintenance.

So, the Colonel had picked an open “park” area along the Yenisey River near the Trans-Siberian railroad and directed his vehicles and men to park there. But the civilians and the “foreigners” were all getting in the way.

“What garbage this is! This is no way to use the Motherland’s military might”, thought the Colonel as his company commanders and their non-comms began to organize the mass confusion.

He had forty of the “special” light recon version of the BTR-80, fitted with a crew of two (instead of three), lighter armament and better communications, and capable of carrying eight combat soldiers and their gear. In this case, he would be carrying ten of these filthy foreigners whom the President had seen fit to invite into the Motherland.

The Colonel understood the reasons for this mission. He understood the value of the currency and resources the vast number of Indians and Chinese would bring his financially-strapped nation, but he didn’t have to like being the one picked to be the nursemaid for them.

He had 600 men. Eighty crew members, forty back-up/reserve crew members, a security detachment of 200 men and logistical personnel numbering 280 and all of their vehicles and equipment. He also had twenty special trailers to house and transport the research, exploration and initial production equipment they would be hauling into the wilderness.

If all went well, he would be taking the initial load of 300 engineers and workmen by rail 800 kilometers north and west of Krasnoyarsk. There they would disembark and run another 200 kilometers off road to the west in their BTR-80’s to their target exploration and production area.

He was scheduled to make a total of three trips, bringing a total of 600 of the miserable excuses for humanity to their “base,” and then providing for their security, transportation and communication needs.

Eventually, they were ordered to cut a rough airfield out of the wilderness so more supplies and materiel could be brought in by air.

“Well, it could be worse. The devils could be strolling around the countryside without supervision”, thought the Colonel as he summoned his company commanders for a planning meeting.

As he waited for them, his mind wandered to his earlier service experiences in Chechnya, when his personal feelings for foreigners and their influence took root. The Muslims there fought so rabidly. There was nothing sacred, nothing honorable; not that war can ever really be honorable.

Just the same, there are certain lines which, when crossed, turn the combatants more into animals than men. The Muslims in Chechnya had forced that on them; and Chechnya had been too close to home. Far too close to mother Russia to not understand that one had to prevent at all costs such terrors being introduced to ones homeland.

The Colonel was determined to do his duty, to do it professionally, to obey orders, and to ensure, at all costs, that the Rodina was defended from such horror. That’s what had him worried now. In the Chinese and the Indians, he saw foreigners, with foreign cultures and foreign ways of thinking. More opportunities to unleash the horror on his homeland.

Well, he would help them develop. He would help them pull money and resources out of the ground to secure his nation. He would also watch them. Their “security” ran two ways. Like a two edged sword, it was sharp on both sides.

As his commanders entered his tent, which was set up and ready now, Colonel Nosil began.

“Good morning, gentlemen. We have a busy day in front of us, and an even busier tomorrow. Let’s review the operation plan as it exists today. Given the godforsaken conditions we found here, we will have to modify things from a logistical standpoint. Once we determine the actual status of our civilian guests and their equipment, we may have to revise it from a personnel and/or operations standpoint as well.”

“I expect this information to be available this afternoon by fourteen hundred hours. We will meet then to review it in detail. After that, I want each of you to get back with your teams and develop your

final operation plans that I expect to see here on this desk no later than nineteen hundred hours. Understood? Good. This meeting is over.”

**July 16, 13:15 local time**

**Along the Trans-Siberian railroad**

**50km outside of Krasnoyarsk, Russia (Siberia)**

Dr. Buhendra Gavanker was standing on the flatcar outside of the BTR-80 to which he had been assigned. Even though July, it was cool this far north, at least by his Indian standards.

Dr. Gavanker had been raised in Madras, on the southern coast of India. After a tour of four years in the army, he had completed his undergraduate schooling in Bangalore in Mechanical Engineering and had then gone on to obtain a masters of science in Geology and a Ph.D. in Fossil Fuel Exploration. Those advanced degrees had come while he worked for Larsen and Tubro in Bombay.

While working at Larsen and Tubro, he had been approached by the Minister in charge of the Energy Directorate for the Indian government. An offer had been made and Dr. Gavanker, fiercely loyal to his nation, had accepted. For the last ten years, he had worked in analyzing geological formation in India and surrounding friendly nations to search for more petroleum production. He had been quite successful.

So, when the People’s Republic of China and India had announced their economic coalition, Dr. Gavanker had been a natural selection to lead the teams of Indian scientists, engineers and workers into Siberia in search of more petroleum. His initial studies had indicated that hundreds of kilometers to the north and west of Krasnoyarsk, there was a potential for a large, untapped reserve of petroleum. Initial samples had been promising and had indicated where the test bores should be drilled. Dr. Gavanker had decided to lead the team that would sink those bores and then set up initial production operations once the reserves were located and being pumped out of the ground. If his calculations were even close to being correct, this find had every chance of being a major oil field, perhaps rivaling the Baku oil field in the Crimea.

“Colonel Nosik, I could not help but notice that all of these personnel carriers remain armed, and that a number of them are fully armed with larger weapons systems. Why?”

Colonel Nosik recognized the intellect of the Indian standing next to him. He had been fully briefed on the Doctor’s capabilities and what a large find could mean to Russia in terms of their share of the oil, and in terms of the capital that would be realized as a result of India’s and China’s royalty payments on their shares. This consideration allowed him to overcome somewhat his aversion to so many foreigners entering his nation.

“Doctor, this country is wilderness. We lose smaller convoys and supplies to bandits and armed insurgents each year. This joint effort to develop these hinterlands is too important to risk to such. I hope that helps you understand. If the bandits see power in overwhelming numbers, they will not think of interfering with us in any way.”

Dr. Gavanker had not imagined that such concerns would be his. He knew that in the mountainous Kashmir regions of his own country there were similar problems, but had not thought to consider that anything like that would exist where his government had sent him. On the other hand, he had skipped several of the orientation meetings as he was immersed in his research.

“I understand, Colonel. We have similar problems in the Kashmir in India. How long do you expect it will be before we arrive on location at the base camp?”

Mentally reviewing the schedule, and then doing a little quick math, the Colonel responded.

“The train will be fairly slow. There will be several stops at small towns along the way. I expect we will get off the train sometime tomorrow evening. We will then check our equipment and start out overland the following morning. With no problems, I expect we may arrive late the next day—that would be the nineteenth—or, at the latest, early on the twentieth.”

Dr. Gavanker did not relish another day-and-a-half on this flat car, followed by a day-and-a-half cooped up in the cramped confines of the BTR-80. But given what the Colonel had described, given the fact that no airfield existed in this country at this time of the year, and given the great potential for his nation represented by the petroleum. He was content with the schedule and the discomfort; he had little choice in any event.

“Very well, Colonel. Thank you for the information. I look forward to working with you and your men. I know it is not what military men are accustomed to, or like to do. I served in India’s army for four years. Though it was over twenty years ago, I remember what soldiers liked and what they didn’t like. I hope you and your men will be patient with us. In the end, it will pay off handsomely for both of our nations.”

As the Indian walked over to a group of his own people who were sitting on one of the vehicles, the Colonel thought to himself, “He might be a foreigner, but at least he understands and appreciates our position. Perhaps this duty will not be as unpleasant as I had imagined.”

**July 18, 10:00**  
**White House Situation Room**  
**Washington, D.C.**

General Jeremy Stone pressed the advance button on his hand held controller and went to the next slide in his computer generated presentation. This slide was the key for the entire meeting and one he would spend several minutes explaining to, and discussing with, the group.

"Now I will direct your attention to the screen and the projected Force analysis for the emerging "Greater" Islamic Republic. As you can see, the numbers are significant, particularly in the worst case scenario where Pakistan and Iraq become a part of Sayeed's growing confederation. Overall they represent an order of magnitude greater than what we faced in Iraq in either Desert Storm or Iraqi Freedom. Our big concern is that they also represent a force that is much more dedicated to their cause than in either of those cases as well. In other words, they will fight.

"And this does not take into consideration their strategic nuclear assets. So, please turn your attention to the screen and let's run through these numbers."

**GIR ARMED FORCE**  
**ANALYSIS ARMY AND AIR FORCES**

Country	IDiv	ADiv	Tanks	APC	AHelo	Aircraft
Iran	35	15	1350	900	250	250
Afghanistan	5	3	250	300	100	100
Turkmenistan	2	3	500	800	20	150
Uzbekistan	3	1	200	400	20	100
Tajikistan		1	100	100	10	50
Kyrgyzstan		1	100	100	25	100
<b>Best Case GIR</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>2500</b>	<b>2600</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>750</b>
Iraq	10	5	1000	1000	200	100
Pakistan	35	20	2000	900	150	200
<b>Worst Case</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>4500</b>	<b>4500</b>	<b>775</b>	<b>1050</b>
Modern Equip	50	25	2000	2000	300	500

**Naval**

Country	FFG	Subs	Aircraft
Iran	16	6	32
Pakistan	14	12	24
<b>Worst Case GIR</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>56</b>

"We expect that these numbers will be pared down some as they consolidate their offensive capability to a number closer to the modern and effective numbers you see at the bottom of the first chart. Still, these are significant numbers and they will end up with perhaps as many as seventy-five infantry divisions and thirty armored divisions, with the older units being used in-country for internal security. They can organize this into twelve army groups of approximately six infantry and three armored divisions each. We expect the India-China-Kazakh border—with their perceived threat there being Russia—and Saudi borders to get two of those army groups each.

"They have a sufficient number of high-quality airfields that they can disperse their fighter and attack aircraft accordingly in support of these army groups. As I indicated, we expect the two to four Army groups to be dispersed internally in support of their internal security units.

"We'll have to watch their training and their disbursements, but we are already seeing signs of movement to training areas in the six combining Islamic nations that support these conclusions.

"With respect to their naval assets, we expect that they will be concentrated along their coast at the entrance to, and along, the Persian Gulf, with Pakistani units being stationed along the Arabian Sea in the vicinity of India. Although the total force is relatively small, the subs have us worried. It was bad enough having to worry about those three Kilos the Iranians had, but the Pakistanis have four or five very effective and modern diesel/electric boats in their inventory that we will have to be more concerned about now.

"A force of eight to ten diesel/electric subs could wreak havoc in the Persian Gulf, Mr. President if they ever got the mind to, particularly with the addition of any significant land-based air support out of Iran. They could shut the Gulf down and we would be obliged to go in and clean them out under very difficult circumstances, either from land bases in Saudi, Kuwait and Bahrain, or from carrier-based air.

"All in all, gentlemen, the combined arms of this emerging "Republic" will make them the 4th strongest conventional military force in the world. That puts them behind ourselves, the Russians and the People's Republic of China. And with the financial and maintenance difficulties the Russian have been having, they could arguably be called the third strongest conventional force.

“Strategically, we already know Pakistan has nuclear capability and we have long suspected it of Iran. If Pakistan joins in, then we will know for sure. In addition, both Pakistan and Iraq, if they should swing towards the GIR, have significant manpower potential. Bottom line is this: They have theater-capable missiles and doubtless will be able to hit Israel or any of our allies in the region. One of our major concerns is how the Israelis will react. The Pakistani installations are too numerous, and too distant, for Israel to expect to be able to pull off a large enough conventional, unilateral strike to take them all out.”

President Weisskopf was taking all of this in. It was pretty much as he suspected, but nonetheless extremely sobering to hear. In fact, everyone in the room was unsettled, from the Vice President on down. The long-standing and delicate stability that the west had maintained in the Middle East which was only maintained by playing rival Islamic factions off against one another, was being undone by Hasan Sayeed. This was extremely concerning to the President and all of his foreign policy team. In 2001 through 2003, in addition to the clear need for retribution for the terrible attacks on America of September 11, 2001, the message of Usama bin Laden, one of uniting Islam and doing it with terror, had been the compelling strategic reason for stopping him and his Al Qaeda. The emerging Greater Islamic Republic provided an even more compelling strategic reason because of the unquestioned success in that unification that Sayeed was having. But Sayeed was not giving them any pointed reason to take action and he appeared poised to upset the entire balance of power in the Middle East. Thinking of this, and what such goals had produced back in 2001, took the president off on a tangent for a few minutes.

“Okay, I want to make sure that all of our security arrangements at the airports and on domestic flights remain in place, as well as what we are doing for other major infrastructure, water supply and power. I believe with Federal officers running airport security checks and with Marshals on the airplanes, that we have effectively curtailed terrorist attacks using our airlines. But what we have here is a situation where Islamic fundamentalists are coming to power on an unprecedented scale. Before we continue with the discussion regarding the GIR military capabilities, I want to ask Stewart to address our overall Homeland Security initiatives.”

Stewart Langstrom had been appointed by the President to direct the office of Homeland Security. It was a new position, having come into being in the wake of the 2001 terror attack, and was only the second person to ever fill the office. Stewart had been raised in the mid-west and was extremely conservative. He had served eight year in the US Army, rising to the rank of Captain. He’d been deployed in Desert Storm, but saw no combat as he led a logistics detachment that supplied materiel to the front. After his service, he had done well in business, running his own small textile business in St. Louis, before running for Congress in 1998. He had been there ever since, being given some fairly plum assignments on Defense and transportation committees. But then President Weisskopf, had selected him to fill the position as the Director of Homeland Security.

“Mr. President, my predecessor was very successful in getting the FAA to control and run airport security and in getting Air Marshals on every flight. As you know, there has not been another successful terrorist hijacking of a US airliner since that time. In addition, he worked with the Coast Guard, the National Directorate of the National Guard and with the fifty governors to establish security at our major infrastructure sites such as Hoover Dam, the Grand Coulee Dam and other sites inside our borders.

“Still, we have a long way to go. I am hoping to be able to implement security communications and procedures to the county level, such that the local county Sheriff’s work with their own people to establish “Home Guard” units to watch the local infrastructure. There are many small sub stations, dams and other sites that would have a large impact on our nation if they were taken out. I would like to pattern the program after a successful grass-roots program already implemented in Idaho.”

The head of FEMA, Curt Johnson, who was also attending, spoke up at this.

“Come on Stewart. You’re talking about old men and boys who have no training trying to do a professional’s job. We’ll spend more money on false alarms and cleaning up after them than we would...”

Stewart didn’t flinch. He felt Curt was competent, but also did not particularly like his “us or them” view of the civilian population, the people who paid his salary.

“No, Curt, I am talking about having this thing controlled at the level it should be controlled, the local level. The Sheriff’s know their people and they are the ones best suited to establish the small, volunteer units. If we went the way your tone is indicating, not only could we not afford it, but we would create far too many “Federal Police” interacting with the local people. They would resent it. This way, we have the people who are apt to have the most personal buy-in, involved in the protection of their own communities.”

The President didn’t want to get too sidetracked. He particularly did not want Stewart and Curt clashing here. There were still too many procedural issues to clear up regarding command and control of the nation in the event of a wide scale national emergency. Under many executive orders, the head of FEMA accrued significant power in such a circumstance. The President was very committed to spreading that power around, as he felt it should be. Stewart would be one of those, along with the rest



of his cabinet, who would lead in such a circumstance. But Weisskopf was committed to having full executive powers centered on him, the President, as it should be according to the Constitution. But those things were all in the works and could be handled at a different date.

"I like it Stewart. I'd like you to proceed in that direction, but let's make sure there are enough training dollars at least so that Curt's fears can be addressed. Something the Sheriff's can elect to use or not as needed.

"Now, turning back to the principal topic we were discussing, and forgive me for sidetracking the meeting like that, but General, how quickly before the GIR can consolidate all of these personnel and equipment and become an effective force? The numbers are impressive, but we all know that the logistical and training challenges they face are enormous."

General Stone turned to the Director of the CIA.

"If I may Mr. President, let me allow Mike to answer that, as his assets are already in place and reporting on these very things. Mike?"

Mike Rowley looked up from his seat over on the far side of the table from General Stone.

"Mr. President, the fact is we have had people in many of these nations since the wall came down and the Soviet Union split up. We are weak in Iran, Afghanistan and Iraq, but have good assets in place in all of the others. What they are already telling us is troubling."

"Within ten days of the announcements, Iranian military advisors were in each of these nations. They are also already in Pakistan even though there has not even been an announcement there yet. They are setting up a rigorous training program for the officers and senior non-commissioned officers that will then be rolled out to their troops in general. This program looks like an Iranian version of a combined arms tactics course, and it emphasizes increased communications and mobility.

"In addition, they are setting up the training and military infrastructure to allow for fairly dynamic logistical flexibility. In the commercial or at least non-military sector, we are seeing a similar ramp up in terms of preparing for the civil infrastructure to support this.

"Bottom line? Mr. President, we feel that within twelve months they are going to be fairly cohesive. Within twenty four months, if they continue on the path they are on right now, they will have strong mobility and logistic capability throughout their area of influence."

Fred Reissinger, the Secretary of State, interrupted at this point.

"Come on, Mike. Isn't this forecast a little aggressive? I mean we are talking about desert wasteland and terribly rough mountainous terrain. It would require an effort on their part that would be something equivalent to our effort to get to the moon. I can't believe they have the expertise, equipment or money to pull it off."

"Mr. Secretary, they certainly have the money—and money talks. In order to prevent the realization of this scenario, what we need is to convince our European allies, and even our own corporations, not to help the Islamic effort. We also need this necessary allied understanding in place soon, or we need the necessary trade restrictions in place to prevent what you have described from coming to pass. Our major concern is that the Coalition of Asian States will decide to get involved in helping this from an infrastructure and construction standpoint. If that happens, then there may be very little we can do to prevent it, and it may accelerate their capability."

The President interjected.

"That's exactly my concern, Jeremy. What we are seeing here is a tremendous shift in power and influence in Asia, the subcontinent and the Mid-East. It is one we have little hope of influencing or controlling unless we act very quickly to find some leverage or division that we can exploit and use to fracture it. Fred, Mike and John, we need some answers on this. If it builds up too much momentum, and if somehow this Greater Islamic Republic and the Coalition of Asian States get together...well, with Russia playing footsie with them, we could have a huge problem in Asia and the Mid East. I mean a *huge* problem."

Fred Reissinger had been thinking about just these things.

"Mr. President, I believe that the long-standing enmity between India and Pakistan is one of the keys in what you just mentioned. I believe that the friction between Iraq and Iran is the other one. There are enough ideological differences and long-term animosities in those areas right there, if we exploit them, to fracture this."

John Bowers, who had been quiet the entire meeting, now took this opportunity to speak up.

"I agree, Mr. Secretary. But, Mr. President, we are behind the eight ball on this. Things over there have taken on a life of their own. The religious unity that Sayeed is bringing to both the Sunnis and Shias in all of these nations is unprecedented, and it is breaking down some of those animosities. If we expect to capitalize on any of their historical differences, I believe from a diplomatic and economic standpoint we are going to have to do it in a hurry."

President Weisskopf nodded his agreement.

"I agree, John. Ok, here's what I would like to do. Alan, I'd like you to head up a working team with Fred, Mike and John to develop some options here in the next five to seven days. Let's plan to get back together on the 25<sup>th</sup> with the idea of deciding on some firm options in the diplomatic and

economic areas that we can move forward with by the first of August. It's time we had a surprise "announcement" of our own, perhaps by the 28<sup>th</sup>. Alan, keep me apprised of the group's progress."

"Thank you all for attending, and thank you, Jeremy, for an excellent briefing."

**July 18, 23:10**

**Private presidential quarters, The White House**

**Washington, D.C.**

The First Lady, Linda Weisskopf, was sitting up in bed, reading an historical novel about colonial America, waiting for her husband.

"Norm, could you get me a glass of water when you come to bed?"

President Weisskopf had been sitting in his lounge chair in the living room, winding down from the day somewhat, but still reviewing in his mind the developments in the Mid East and the Far East and how they were fitting together. He knew there was a "plan" and that the Chinese were somehow behind it, but what was the end game?

"Sure, honey. I'll be in there in just a second."

Linda loved her husband so much. No matter how high his career and capabilities had taken him, he never forgot what she considered to be the "important things." Things like being willing, without question or reservation, to get a glass of ice water for his wife, or taking walks along the river in the moonlight. She thought, "Norm Weisskopf is as capable a leader, thinker, strategist and warrior as his nation has probably ever produced, but he never lets it go to his head, and he never, ever forgets any of those who have helped him get there."

As the President handed his wife the ice water and then climbed into bed beside her, she sensed his continued unease.

"You're still worried about a Zenim/Sayeed alliance aren't you?"

Having discussed his apprehensions with her somewhat on the night of the WNN Special Report on Sayeed, and then again when the various surrounding Islamic nations announced their alignment with the "Greater" Islamic Republic, Norm Weisskopf was not surprised that his wife had taken note. He was also not the least bit surprised that she had pegged his continued and growing apprehension in that regard.

"Alliance? Perhaps not that strong. But am I worried about an alignment of convenience? Yes I am, very much so. Despite the unlikely nature of it, there are just too many unprecedented things happening, and I can't help but feel that they are not coincidental."

"Someone is going somewhere with this, and I believe Jien Zenim and Red China are involved. I just can't put my finger on exactly where they are going. It's clear that our best interests are not a part of that equation, and I am feeling this urgent need to get those interests out front and center, and to make sure they are accounted for as this picture comes into focus."

Linda was not an expert on foreign policy or the strategy associated with all of the economic, diplomatic and military pieces that populated the game board in Norm's mind. She was, however, an expert on Norm. And she knew that, whether she understood the game or not, it was critical to have people like her husband who did understand it in leadership positions—people who played the game with the understanding that "American interests" served as the game-piece that would not be sacrificed under any circumstances. It seemed to her that Norm was the first President squarely focused on those interests since the early 1980's, almost twenty-five years ago. She also knew that Norm had a basic religious faith, and that a higher power often guided his good heart through those feelings he experienced and the ideas that germinated as a result of them.

"Norm, listen to your heart and the feelings you've been blessed with. They have never led you astray. I believe they come from God."

"Also, listen to the good, honest people you have been impressed to surround yourself with. I have faith in you, honey. If anyone can see clearly how to keep the peace and maintain our nation's interests, it's you. You're not in this position alone—or by accident—and we both know it."

The President regarded his wife's wisdom and forthrightness with awe on many occasions. This was one of those occasions.

"Thanks, sweetheart. What you say is true. I believe in my heart that America is guided by the hand of God. It's just difficult to keep that belief in perspective in the middle of a long day with so many issues mounting.... Good night."

As he closed his eyes, and laid his head back into his favorite feather pillow. Before sleep took him, he voiced this simple request in his mind.

"Dear Father, let Linda be right. Just point me."

A few minutes later, Linda finished her small glass of water. She noticed that Norm's breathing had become deep and regular and he was asleep. As she turned out the light, she uttered her own prayer.

"Please, Lord. Just show him the right direction. He can take it from there and, with Your help, accomplish what needs to be done."

**July 21, 02:10 local time**

**Near the entrance of Shanghai harbor**

**Shanghai, PRC**

The leading escort cut a fine line through the water as it entered Shanghai harbor. It was an updated Jiangwei frigate, the 540 Huainan, and it entered the harbor first and feathered off to one side to stand as a sentinel for the procession that followed. Behind it, in a much tighter group than they had formed during the early evening hours, came three of the most modern and fastest container ships in the world.

Trailing them was a single Luhai guided missile destroyer, the 168 Shenzhen, bristling with modern weapons systems, sensors and two modern anti-submarine warfare (ASW) helicopters. One of those helicopters hovered near the mouth of the harbor as the convoy entered, using its dipping sonar to ensure that no unwanted guests were lurking nearby.

As the Shenzhen loitered near the mouth of the harbor, the three container ships slowly moved towards their pre-assigned dry docks. By morning they would be secured in them.

What the ASW helicopter and the escorts did not pick up were the small surveillance devices anchored to the bottom of the harbor. As each of the Chinese ships maneuvered into the harbor, they passed over these devices that were hidden in the silent blackness 40–60 meters below. These were the MUAS devices that the SEAL team from the USS Jimmy Carter had ‘planted’ almost a month before. Each of them faithfully recorded the presence and movement of each ship that passed close enough to activate its sensors.

The same scenario played itself out several hundred miles to the north/northeast, as a similar convoy of two military escorts and three container ships entered the harbor at Tanjin. There, the faithful MUAS devices activated and recorded the presence and passage of each ship as well.

But what was not recorded by any American surveillance device were the other two, separate convoys that entered different harbors that night. Nor would any recording be made of the passage of convoys, over the next several weeks, into eight other harbors not covered by MUAS devices around the People’s Republic of China.

Within twenty-four hours of the passage of the convoys, the first signal was transmitted from the ELF facilities stretching across Michigan to the MUAS devices in Shanghai and Tanjin harbors. That signal activated the release of the first communication buoys from each of the devices. The release occurred on a staggered, thirty-minute schedule between releases. This was a safeguard against detection by the Chinese as a result of too many devices communicating at once, even at the low power setting. Once the buoys reached the surface, they transmitted the information to the waiting satellite.

**July 31, 10:45**

**WNN broadcast studios**

**New York City**

“Summarizing then, our guest today on “Meet the Nation” has been Secretary of State, Fred Reissinger. Mr. Reissinger made surprise announcements regarding diplomatic relations in the Mid East and in India.”

“In the initial announcement, the Secretary announced new and much more aggressive relief and aid packages directed at Iraq. Food, agricultural initiatives, economic development initiatives and significant incentives to American companies to take the lead in implementing them have all been announced. Secondly, in a startling and important announcement, the Secretary of State outlined new proposals for economic, diplomatic and military initiatives with India. This is an announcement of great surprise coming so soon on the heels of the formation of the Coalition of Asian states by the People’s Republic of China and India.”

“Just how China will respond to the Indian initiative of the United States is yet to be seen. In addition, the reaction of the Greater Islamic Republic and its leader, Hasan Sayeed, is awaited with equal anticipation.”

“Speaking of Hasan Sayeed, WNN is proud to announce that the Imam Sayeed’s first western interview will be held by WNN’s own David Krenshaw one week from tomorrow night at 7 pm EDT. As world events continue to unfold, we know our viewers will not want to miss such an important interview.”

“Mr. Secretary, thank you for agreeing to appear on “Meet the Nation.” We look forward to the press conference the President will hold regarding these announcements tomorrow. Now, as is our custom on “Meet the Nation,” the last word is yours, Mr. Secretary.”

From years of experience dealing with on-air interviews, Secretary Reissinger expertly turned and faced the active camera.

“Thank you. Let me just say that the United States has shown its willingness to help the peoples of the world, even its own adversaries, when they are faced with hardship and trial. Today, we have offered to significantly escalate our efforts in Iraq, hoping they will accept our outstretched hand and

continue along the path started in 2003 and Operation Iraqi Freedom, to improve the quality of life and the liberty of the Iraqi people.”

“At the same time, the United States is known for its ability to enhance a nation’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and standard of living through trade, technology exchanges and strong diplomatic ties. In the sub-continent region, it is past time that America strengthen its ties with the largest Republic in the world: India. With today’s proposed initiatives, we have taken important steps to accomplish this alliance. We look forward to the opportunity to work with our friends in India to make it a reality.”

As Secretary Reissinger finished, the host of WNN’s “Meet the Nation” turned toward the camera and closed the show.

“Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Folks, that’s all we have time for. This has been Sunday Morning’s “Meet the Nation” on WNN. Thank you and good day.”

**July 22, 13:15**

**National Reconnaissance Office headquarters**

**IMINT Directorate**

**Chantilly, VA**

The signals from the MUAS devices were processed from the military satellite in gyro-synchronous orbit over the Philippine Sea and relayed to CINCPAC (Commander in Chief Pacific) naval headquarters in Hawaii for analysis. Simultaneously, they were transmitted to the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) in the Pentagon, and to the NRO offices in Virginia.

Tom Lawton had received the information almost an hour-and-a-half ago. He had been waiting for it impatiently. Once he received it, he immediately processed it into an analysis program he had written himself for this very purpose. The program had plotted the location of each MUAS device onto digital images of the two harbors. When the data was processed, the program would plot the tracks of any ships recorded by the devices that fit within the parameters of their sensor algorithms.

Tom Lawton was studying the printout of data from the recordings made early on the morning of July 21.

“I believe we have something here, Bill. Looks like, that early on the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup>, we had convoys that appear to have been escorted by military vessels enter both Shanghai and Tanjin harbors. The ships they were escorting were large container ship varieties, and all of them moved immediately towards the dry dock facilities we have been observing at Shanghai and Tanjin.”

Bill Hendrickson had assisted Tom in writing the analysis program through which Tom had just run the data. After taking in what Tom had said and considering it for a moment, he knew exactly what they needed to do with this information.

“Have you run that part of the data through the second stage analysis to identify the specific ship types?”

In fact, Tom had just submitted the data for analysis. Once something of interest was located using the initial portion of the program that plotted the time, location, size and basic type of ship, it could be run through a second analysis which compared the acoustical and electronic data against known signatures for various ships. The result of that analysis could deliver specific ship classes, and even the name and designation of each specific ship.

“I just entered it, Bill. Should have the results in a couple of minutes.”

“Ok, here it comes now. We’re looking at a Jianwei frigate and a Luhai destroyer escorting three of...what looks like their newer large container ships. Each of those container ships made for individual dry dock facilities in each harbor.”

Bill Hendrickson considered this. Those dry dock facilities had been logistically set up for significant conversion and, from their prior surveillance and analysis, had significant underground storage areas for the materiel that would go into those conversions.

“This looks like it’s developing into something significant. We need to continue to watch the satellite imagery, and maybe schedule more time if we see them doing anything to those container ships that could be remotely related to their naval air activities.”

“Let’s go ahead and document these findings as soon as possible. I’ll set up a conference call with the Naval folks at CINCPAC and the ONI. I expect they will come to similar conclusions, but let’s go through the motions to make sure. After that, it’ll be time to get Mr. Bowers involved again and see where they want to take this.”

“It’ll be interesting to see what takes shape in those dry docks. Tom, I don’t know why I didn’t think of it before, but take the deck configuration from those airfields and overlay it on one of those container ships going into the dry docks up there at Tanjin. Let’s see what we get.”

## Chapter 4

*“He who sells his next life for life in this world, loses both.”—The Prophet*

**August 2, 14:00 local time**

**Presidential bunker complex number A312C**

**Outside of Baghdad, Iraq**

Isam Chaliberi contemplated the meeting that was about to be held. Here, in one of the ten remaining presidential bunkers, fifty meters below the ground, more very secretive attacks on the Israelis, the “Little Satan,” would be planned. Despite the best efforts of America, and despite their victory in Operation Iraqi Freedom and installation of what they perceived to be a pro-American, pro-western regime, that same regime had quickly continued funding and planning retribution and violence on the Jews who continued to occupy Palestine and who continued to persecute what almost all Muslims considered its rightful citizens, the Palestinians.

Today, Sahid Ibrahim, the operations officer for the Hamas, one of the principal organizations conducting operations against the Israelis on the West Bank, was meeting with Chaliberi and his closest and most trusted aides. Chaliberi was really his own council, particularly since being backed by the Americans and most of these men simply carried out his wishes. The subject of today’s meeting would be the funding of the next month’s operations for the Hamas. Chaliberi funded these activities out of accounts which, if ever fully traced, would lead away from Iraq to Iranian off-shore commercial interests.

In this thing, Chaliberi trusted no one. He had survived for several decades as an exiled opposition leader for Iraq, surviving the very worst that any enemy, particularly the ruthless Hussein, had attempted against him. He had done so by being cunning, ruthless and completely thorough in his security arrangements, while convincing in his support for whomever he felt could advance his cause...in that case the Americans.

Anyone gaining access to him in one of these secretive meetings had to pass through metal detectors, dogs trained to find explosives and a complete body search, including a thorough x-ray. At all times, when within fifty meters him, any visitor was covered by no less than three locked and loaded weapons. The guards carrying these weapons were prepared to defend Chaliberi at all costs. They were extremely loyal to him due to the promotions and favors that Chaliberi had showered upon them since coming to power—and due to the imminent threat of death that hung over their entire families should there be even a suspicion of disloyalty.

Even those armed and primed guards, whose loyalty was thought completely secure, were themselves under the eye of other hidden and completely compartmentalized snipers whose loyalty was similarly ensured.

All of these security arrangements were complemented by the presidential bunkers that Chaliberi had taken over and applied to the use of his own government. It had been a rather simple thing to convince the Americans of the need, so long as they were allowed regular access.

No matter, words were all that were spoken here, and Chaliberi had been able to outfit at least one room in each facility to be completely free of any outside eavesdropping.

In truth, Chaliberi’s greatest anxiety was caused by the protracted “war on Terrorism” that the United States was continuing to conduct. It required more of a presence of American military and state department personnel in Iraq than Chaliberi was comfortable with. But there was little he could do about it...and in truth, knew that he needed the additional protection against the more fundamental segments of the population, at least until he could consolidate the government and his hold on the system of democracy as it was developing here in Iraq.

That consolidation would ultimately hold because it was thoroughly understood and completely compromised by Chaliberi’s operatives. It also worked in this instance, in such a risky and secretive meeting because the security was rigidly enforced. Today, after they were cleared for access to meet with him, Ibrahim and his aid would not be allowed to bring their own pens, pencils, notebooks or any other article to the meeting. Despite the fact that Chaliberi had known Sahid personally for over fifteen years and had held many meetings with him, security could never be compromised or taken for granted.

“No,” Chaliberi thought, “I have not survived the best attempts of my many adversaries for so long by being lax on security measures.” To date those measures had allowed him to outlive his principle antagonist, Saddam Hussein, and live to take his place as the leader of Iraq. He felt certain they would continue to protect him today.

But he was wrong.

Chaliberi took notice of the movement at the door. As he watched, Sahid and his aid were brought into the conference room. As the door was closed, Chaliberi rose and greeted his longtime compatriot from the head of the table.

“Is-salaam maleekum , my brother, keef Haalak.”

Sahid returned the classic Arab greeting as he was guided towards his chair.

“Wa maleekum is-salaam, il-Hamdulillaah!”

As he was moving towards his seat, Sahid took note of his surroundings. There were ten armed guards in the room, his own aid, eight of Iraq’s military council, and, of course, Chaliberi. Sahid thought for a moment about his mission and all of the planning that had gone into it—all of the faith that was vested in it. The truth was, he had always thought highly of Chaliberi and amazing ability he had to influence the west towards his own ends.

But, despite this admiration, over the years it had become clear to Sahid that little if any progress was being made in the holy cause of Islam. In fact, Sahid had become convinced that the Great Satan was using Chaliberi much more than Chaliberi was using the Great Satan. They were using his position and their military might to keep the Israelis strong and to keep their own people and industries focused, united, against Islam and blinded to the travails of his people.

Although Sahid had firmly come to these conclusions, until recently he had felt that these difficulties were Allah’s will, and he was content to await the hand of Allah in showing how they should fight their enemies more effectively. That “hand,” and the long-anticipated answer for Sahid, had finally come in the form of the great Imam Hasan Sayeed.

Faithful Arabs in many countries were calling him the “Great Uniter,” the modern messenger of Allah. Sahid believed he was the 12th Imam who had returned to lead Islam to victory over the infidels. Sahid was prepared to sacrifice his all, his very life, to help ensure that victory. Right now, that victory required Iraq to join with the Greater Islamic Republic for a mighty Jihad against the unfaithful, and then against their enemies. But Chaliberi had chosen to place his own thirst for prestige over the will of Allah, and this self-aggrandizing behavior was thwarting the growth of the Greater Islamic Republic.

This state of affairs could not be allowed to continue.

As he was taking his seat, Sahid thought about the carefully-scripted role he would play over the next few minutes in bringing Islam together, and how what he was about to do would ensure his own entry into the great paradise of God. His aid, a good and valiant defender of the faith, would join him there, though the aid was completely oblivious to what was about to happen.

As he dragged his chair up to the mahogany conference table, Sahid began to put pressure on the lower back molars on each side of his jaw. Those molars had been filled and crowned years ago and were taken for granted by the security detachments in these facilities. After all, they had seen them on their x-ray machines many times.

Three days before coming to Iraq, the crowns covering those two molars had been removed and the fillings drilled out and filled with small, pressurized cartridges that were coated with the same material from which the fillings were made. The crowns had been replaced, but not glued in. By exerting the right pressure, Sahid could remove the crowns and activate the pressurized gas within each cartridge.

By the time Sahid was seated comfortably at the conference table, he had already removed the crowns with practiced precision. After Chaliberi had finished with the introduction, which consisted of his carefully scripted and flowery words about how he was in fact taking advantage of Israel and America, he invited Sahid to stand and speak concerning the plans that were to be the object of the meeting.

Sahid stood and looked around the room. He took a deep breath and then, to everyone’s complete astonishment, he uttered the following words:

“Isam Chaliberi, on behalf of the United States of America, I find you guilty of treason against the new government of Iraq and treachery against the united States government that has placed you in this position!”

At the mention of the “United States,” “guilty” and “treachery,” the guards began to bring their weapons to bear on Sahid. But it was too late. A small cloud of mist erupted from Sahid’s mouth and shot towards Chaliberi, while diffusing around the room. It was a mist filled with an extremely toxic nerve gas that did not have to be inhaled to produce its deadly effects. It was absorbed into the body upon contact with the skin of the victim.

Even as the subsonic bullets from the guards standing behind Sahid began to rip into his body, the first tiny particles of the mist began to fall upon Chaliberi’s exposed face and arms. In an effort to avoid the gas, Chaliberi had thrown up his arms to protect his face and fallen back in his chair, but the desperate action proved futile.

Chaliberi rolled back in his chair in shocked surprise. A stunned silence fell over the room as Sahid’s lifeless body thudded to the floor. Looking around the room, a wry smile appeared on Chaliberi’s face for an instant as he thought there would be no ill effect from the mist—but the instant was fleeting.

Suddenly a terrible, almost animal-like scream erupted from his throat. His entire body began to writhe in horrific spasms and convulsions as the nerve agent began to destroy his central nervous system. Over a few seconds, the spasms, the convulsions—and the screams—got worse, much worse.

Similar screams began to erupt from all around the room as others began to experience the same effects.

Two of the guards standing in the back of the room, and three of the council members who were sitting in the back, were quick-witted enough to exit the room at the first hint of any untoward action and with the gunfire. They were able to do so before any of the expanding and diffusing mist particles touched their skin. They proved to be the only survivors.

As the shocked guards who were monitoring the audio and video feed watched, the hapless victims thrashed around in unbelievably violent contortions as their spasms worsened. Horribly, three or four audible “cracks” were heard as convulsions wracked the spinal cords of the victims into unnatural backward aches—so unnatural that their spines literally snapped. The screams were beyond description; the sight beyond imagination and, ironically, every minute of the grotesque human horror was recorded in full by Chaliberi’s own audio and video security equipment.

Within five minutes it was over. All sixteen individuals who remained in the room were dead and sprawled about the room in a most grotesque manner. The five who had gotten out were not allowed to exit the outer room to the conference center for many hours.

Iraqi toxicologists, scientists, medical doctors and investigators would secretly and carefully analyze the scene, while protected by full bio-chemical suits, for several days before announcing their preliminary conclusions to the new Iraqi hierarchy and before Chaliberi’s absence became a cause for concern amongst the Americans. The discovery of the cartridges in Sahid’s mouth from which the gas had erupted would play heavily into the reaction of the Iraqi leadership. Upon performing a microscopic examination of each of these cartridges, astonishingly, they would find the following letters stenciled on the side of each in tiny script: “MANF. TO US MIL SPEC-0602.”

In addition, the Iraqi investigators, and later independent investigators, would find clear forensic evidence that Sahid’s fingerprints had been medically altered. The Iraqis surmised that this had been done with a technology and precision that could only have originated in the west, and which was reserved for the highest level clandestine operatives.

**August 2, 20:00 local time**  
**Islamic Republic government offices**  
**Tehran, Iran**

Minister Sadiq Shiraziha gently knocked on the door to Imam Sayeed’s personal office. After a moment or two, during which Sadiq waited patiently, he heard Hasan give him permission to enter.

As Sadiq entered the room, Hasan rose from where he had been praying. After exchanging Arabic greetings, Hasan spoke.

“I take it there is news out of Iraq?”

Respectfully waiting for his Imam to get to his desk and be seated there, Sadiq then answered.

“Yes, Imam. We have received word. Operation Zakat has been successfully completed. President Chaliberi is dead. Our operatives report that five of his eight closest aides died with him, along with a number of personal guards. Sahid Ibrahim and his aid were also amongst the dead. God rest their souls.”

Hasan thought about the guards and some of the military council in Iraq. Some of those men had been faithful Muslims and would now be with Allah in paradise. A special place was surely reserved there for the faithful and patriotic Sahid.

Hasan also thought of individuals like Chaliberi who aligned themselves with the west out of personal interest and lust for power, wealth and decadent western vice.

“Allah be with Sahid and all of the faithful who entered into paradise today.”

“Their sacrifice has not been in vain. Today, with his great act of martyrdom, I believe that the faithful servant Sahid Ibrahim did more for the cause of Islam and its unification, than all of the combined acts of the great Ayatollahs of the past hundred years. I say this with no disrespect whatsoever meant for those faithful servants.”

“But, we must move on. Sadiq, what of the political and civil situation within Iraq in the aftermath of Chaliberi’s death?”

Sadiq reflected just a moment as he recollected the communiqués and conversations to which he had been privy during the last several hours.

“Imam, as instructed, our agents in the Iraqi Foreign Ministry have announced Chaliberi’s death to the world, along with the allegations regarding the West. A video of the entire incident that was made as a standard security procedure has been released. It will be the major news story in the west in their afternoon editions and their evening news.”

“As for the local, civil situation in Iraq: surprisingly, on the streets there is great chaos amongst the common citizens. This is perhaps as clear an indication as one could imagine of the true feelings of the people towards Chaliberi and his western regime. There are many anti-western and anti-American demonstrations forming.”

“There is also some indication that the surviving governmental council is trying to consolidate power. But our efforts amongst the people are already producing significant progress in developing a

popular movement to join the Greater Islamic Republic and face the West in solidarity. I believe our people in the Foreign Ministry and mounting public pressure will give us the opportunity we need, within the next few days, to formally offer a proposal for alignment, in order to calm the situation and prevent anarchy, chaos and further bloodshed.”

Hasan was pleased. Allah’s will for a unified Islam was pressing forward. It would press forward through all obstacles, both those thrown in its path by the infidels as well as by the unfaithful.

“Excellent. Keep me informed of the developments, Sadiq. Perhaps I can make this announcement during the upcoming WNN interview. It would come just two days after the Pakistani announcement and would serve to keep the West all the more off balance.”

“Though I have been troubled by the recent efforts of the Americans with respect to Pakistan and Iraq...those efforts have been seen for what they are, very transparent and belated attempts to divide a solidarity that is blessed by Allah and growing rapidly.”

“Nonetheless, it is indicative that the American leadership is awakening to what is happening around them. I believe that the reality of a united Islamic Republic stretching from Syria to the Himalayas will quickly remove any remaining sleep from their eyes. We will have to proceed carefully once they begin to see things clearly.”

**August 3, 07:50**

**News Stand, Central Park**

**New York City**

**Herald Post**

**Special Edition**

### **Isam Chaliberi Assassinated!**

**Iraqis Blame United States CIA Operation**

**Video of Assassination Released**

*Baghdad, Iraq—August 2—(UIP) In horrific detail, the death of Iraqi President, Isam Chaliberi, who returned from exile after Iraq was liberated by the United States, and a long time ally of the United States, was captured on video yesterday as it occurred in one of the nation's remaining Presidential Bunker facilities. The stunning video captured the final words of the assassin, a terrorist leader in the Hamas organization, which preceded the death. These words, and other alleged circumstances surrounding the killing, have led the Iraqi Foreign Minister to blame America and the CIA for the assassination.*

*The statement by the terrorist, “Isam Chaliberi, on behalf of the United States of America, I find you guilty of treason against the new government of Iraq and treachery against the United States government that has placed you in this position!” preceded the release of an unknown mist from the speaker’s mouth. This mist, which spread throughout the room, killed Chaliberi and many members of his executive council who were present at the time. The Hamas leader was shot and killed by Iraqi guards before the effects of the mist resulted in the other deaths. Experts speculate that the mist was some form of nerve gas.*

Amazingly, in an era of almost instant news gratification via the internet, email, connected wireless phones and Palm computers...tens of thousands of people were flocking to the newsstands to pick up their copy of the Special Edition news print.

And this was not just occurring in America, where the passing of the supposed ally was greeted with significant angst...and with a question of what now would become of Iraq. Newspaper stands all over the world were swamped with people anxious to “read all about it.” Web sites that carried the story experienced unprecedented traffic. Online newspapers and news service sites were so overloaded that some of their servers could not effectively handle the increased load.

Everywhere, the world held its collective breath, wondering what would occur as a result of the death of Isam Chaliberi. Everywhere, people sensed that great changes in political and ideological alignments were afoot in the world.

In the Arab world, outside of his ruling party and many of the Palestinians, Chaliberi had been feared and maligned because of his ties to the west. Nonetheless, the prospect of a potential assassination of an Arab leader by a western power generated animosity, mass demonstrations and calls for independent investigations.

In the West and Far East there had been more concern about Chaliberi’s uncertain future. Yet, despite this, people had recognized him as a great hope for the Middle East and a real test of American policy in the region. His absence now created a dangerous vacuum—and nature abhors vacuums. Inevitably, the void created by Chaliberi’s death would be filled by something else, something as yet unknown.

**August 3, 14:20**

**White House press briefing**

**Washington, D.C.**

“In closing, let me assure you all, that under *no* circumstances did the United States government or any of its agencies take part in, plan, or in any way instigate the assassination of Isam Chaliberi.



The United States viewed Chaliberi as an ally—and as a leader who had the first real hope of significantly contributing to peace and stability in the entire Middle East. Under no circumstance does the United States condone assassination as a means of promoting or realizing global political stability.”

President Weisskopf looked at the sea of hands that were immediately and impatiently raised as he completed his statement. The chorus began at once.

“Mr. President! Mr. President!”

“Bill.”

“Thank you, Mr. President. What is the United States response to the video of the assassination in which the killer specifically referenced the United States?”

President Weisskopf had asked a similar question earlier in the day of his own advisors, particularly Mike Rowley, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. The answer had satisfied him, but the explanation offered for public consumption had to remain less forthright for the time being.

“Until we have a chance to analyze this video in detail, and until more information is forthcoming, we will withhold our comment. However, I can once again reiterate that the United States had nothing to do with this.”

“Mr. President! Mr. President!”

“Judy.”

“Mr. President. You indicated that our government had nothing to do with this assassination. Yet how can you reassure the people that our government is being forthright? In light of past activities, both domestic and international, from presidential activities to the activities of law enforcement and the military, the government has been caught lying time and again. How can the American people believe you, Mr. President?”

Norm Weisskopf did not like having his honor or his integrity called into question. He had learned a long time ago at West Point to personally maintain nothing but the highest standards in this regard. It was an integral part of his character. And one he took seriously.

“Judy, I am not one of the former Presidents to which you refer. My own military record and stance on the issue of integrity is open to the public and well documented. A government that will directly lie to its people in an effort to cover wrong or illegal activity is a government not worthy to rule a free people.”

“I will say it again: the United States had nothing to do with this assassination. Thank you.”

“Mr. President! Mr. President!”

The President’s press secretary had stepped up to the podium as the President exited the room.

“Thank you, the press briefing is over. Good day.”

**August 5, 10:35 local time**

**Office of the president**

**New Delhi, India**

“Mr. President, the People’s Republic of China has every intention of insuring the peace between the United States and the Greater Islamic Republic (GIR) once Pakistan carries out its intention of uniting with the GIR. We are willing to sign a treaty with all involved parties to that effect at any time you would desire.”

“In addition, we are hoping that at some date in the near future our peoples in the PRC, the GIR and India will come together in an even greater coalition, despite any religious or ideological differences, and in the spirit of the Three Wisdoms. Such an alignment would affect an economic and political coalition that would rival anything the west can put together. Can you imagine it? Having the economy, the buying power, the influence to challenge the United States or the European Union on our own terms, eye to eye, without the need to blink at all?”

President KP Narayanan of India listened with respect to what Li Peng had to say. He knew that Li was President Jien Zenim’s closest advisor and spoke for him. He knew that the coalition that he and Jien had announced and implemented was surpassing their economic and political aspirations. Now it was time to invite others to the table...but the Pakistanis? Could it be true that Hasan Sayeed had so much influence that he could break down those barriers? More importantly, does Jien Zenim believe that he possesses both the necessary trust, and the necessary power, to be able to incorporate Hasan and his minions into his overall plans?

“I believe we will avoid a direct “military” alliance or commitment at this time, Minister Li. However, we are open to expanding the CAS. At the same time, we are concerned about the growing power of the GIR, particularly now that it will be moving to our borders by encompassing Pakistan. Although a nation’s name may change, the old rivalries and animosities are still there and are difficult to forget about.”

“Still, we feel that we are strong enough to preserve the peace on our own borders and will wait to see how the GIR conducts itself. Becoming a member of the CAS, and committing to the economic and social principles that form its basis, would be an initial step in the right direction, and one we

would welcome—albeit, as I say, due to historical precedence, it is a step of which we would be wise to remain somewhat wary.”

“Inasmuch as the PRC is working with us in the CAS towards our mutual goals, we would welcome your efforts as an arbitrator from a diplomatic standpoint with any issues that arise that we cannot mutually resolve.”

Li Peng sensed some of the reservation, and had to admit that there was good historical precedent for it. At the same time, he knew that his leader’s goals and directions in this regard were critical, and explicit. The latest US efforts to keep the wedge driven deep between Pakistan and India could not be allowed the slightest prospect of success.

“President Narayannen, allow me to address a critical point, and, with your pardon, let me do so very directly. What of the recent overtures by the United States, and their attempts to draw India away from our developing CAS relationship?”

President Narayannen considered this point carefully. He and his advisors had discussed this very subject in great detail. Some were for opening their arms to the Americans. An alliance with the United States was something many in India had wanted for a long time. But others, Narayannen included, argued that America’s attention was not sincere. They argued, quite convincingly, that American overtures had occurred only as a result of shifting economies and balances which appeared to threaten them. In short: America was fickle, and could not be relied upon. The counter to this had been that the new administration under Weisskopf was strong, and could be trusted. But the inevitable response to that argument had been that the Reagan administration, too, was a strong and trustworthy one—and look at what had followed a few short years later.

“Minister Li, we have discussed this in detail in our cabinet meetings. We feel that the American overtures are insincere. We are very happy with, and committed to, our CAS responsibilities and agreements. We view the CAS, and its basis in social equity, to be in the best long-term interests of the people of India.”

“Having said that, we will take advantage of any offers the Americans make that do not hamper or interfere with those long-term commitments and responsibilities to the CAS. We will ensure that the Americans understand this, and if they wish to make equitable trade agreements and concessions to us in spite of it. . .well, we would be foolish to not take advantage of them.”

“But, please be sure to convey to President Jien in no uncertain terms our commitment to the CAS and to the plans he and I have discussed for the last several years.”

This is what Li had hoped to hear. The Indians were not buying the American plans, and with the announcement by Pakistan’s General Musharraf on August 7<sup>th</sup>, now only two days away, it would be clear to the world that the Pakistanis weren’t buying them either.

“I will certainly convey that message to President Jien. I know he will be gratified to hear of it. On behalf of President Jien, and on behalf of the People’s Republic of China, I offer my thanks for your hospitality and your commitment. May the success, well-being and prosperity of our peoples remain linked through such bonds of friendship and commitment to social equity.”

**August 7, 13:35 local time**

**National Security Council pressroom**

**Islamabad, Pakistan**

General Pervez Musharraf looked out over the assembled news reporters, heads of state and their representatives, his own eight-member National Security Council and the many others who had been invited to hear this announcement. They were all waiting expectantly in the large pressroom. The announcement he was about to make had been discussed by him and the Security Council (every member of which he had personally appointed after his military coup seized government power in 1999) for many weeks. Every possible angle had been debated.

There was no doubt that Hasan Sayeed represented the best opportunity for Islamic unification since the Prophet himself. The trouble with this was that it was so obvious, and had been discussed so much, that the people themselves knew it and were demanding it.

This left the General in a quandary. He had been successful in his coup. He had successfully played the competing western, eastern and religious influences against one another. . .even during the Americans terror war that had placed him in such a tenuous position and caused such upheaval. In the process, he had demonstrated to the world the new nuclear capability the Pakistanis had obtained in response to the Indians. He had been able to modernize his military with both American and Chinese hardware. And he had, at least from his perspective, improved the standard of living for many of his people in the process. But the quandary was that the people were now looking to Hasan and not to him.

Trying to walk a tightrope between the competing ideological influences of the west and east had been a dangerous game and a “touch and go” proposition for his governmental position. To go against the will of the Islamic people in his Islamic nation could prove fatal to him personally—he took note of the demise of Isam Chaliberi with special interest in this regard. The various news media around

the world might buy into the propaganda regarding the cause of Chaliberi's death, but General Musharraf knew better.

Contemplating this precarious situation caused the General to realize again that he had little choice in the matter. He placed his hands on either side of the podium, looked directly into the camera, and began.

"Today we in Pakistan make an historic announcement to add to those of the last several months. We of the National Security Council of Pakistan have reviewed the growth of the Greater Islamic Republic with growing interest and excitement. The prospect of a unified Islam has touched our hearts and our spirits. It is truly the dream of ages—but one that cannot be contemplated lightly or without serious reflection."

"Therefore, we have spoken with, counseled with and negotiated with the leaders of the GIR, and with Imam Hasan Sayeed himself, over the last many weeks. We have considered the impact of a unified Islam on our people, their security, their potential for growth and prosperity and their physical, social and spiritual well-being. As a result, we have made important decisions on behalf of our people which we wish to announce today."

"First, we are convinced that Hasan Sayeed represents a true Imamate for all Islamic people. Today we recognize him as such and proclaim to all true believers everywhere that they should similarly consider the meaning of this reality for themselves."

"Second, we announce today the alliance and merging of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan with the Greater Islamic Republic. It is the will of the people. It is the will of Allah—we can but follow."

"The details of the agreement between Pakistan and the Greater Islamic Republic are provided in the packages you have been given. These same details will be voted on by the people in a national referendum on September 1st. We expect the agreement to be overwhelming approved by the people of Pakistan and will proceed diplomatically on that basis from this date."

"This completes the announcement. There will be no questions."

**August 7, 09:35**

**Oval Office, The White House**

**Washington, D.C.**

"OK Fred, let's hear it."

The Secretary of State, understanding full well the gravity of the developing situation, began his comments.

"Mr. President, the unification announcement by Musharraf will create a serious situation in the region. Not only does it significantly add to the size, influence and overall capability of the Greater Islamic Republic, but it exasperates an already delicate situation in the Kashmir bordering India."

"Our efforts regarding India are making progress. They have made clear to us their intent to remain committed to the CAS, but the fact that they are willing to conduct and accept some trade and diplomatic negotiations indicates a potential for making inroads into that commitment. In addition, I believe they want to "hedge their bets" in terms of continued awareness of the growing threat across their eastern border. I believe, if we play our cards right, we can make progress with India and perhaps create a wedge in the CAS, and any potential for development of the CAS with the GIR."

Tim Hattering listened with increasing concern. He believed that the Pakistani announcement was an unmitigated disaster and he could not stand by while it was soft-pedaled to his President.

"Excuse me for the interruption, Fred, but wait just a minute. This thing with Pakistan is a disaster! We have sunk hundreds of millions of dollars, maybe billions, into Pakistan's military hardware and into the research that led to their nuclear capability. Now, all of that, every damn penny of it, is in the hands of a fundamentalist Islamic state that has sponsored terrorism against the United States, and has made its intent clear regarding all of the Middle East. Sooner or later that is going to mean an abject threat to our friends and our own strategic interests in the area."

"The CAS is an equal threat and I appreciate our efforts diplomatically with India to undercut it. But, I am more interested in the immediate threat and ramifications of the ideological and military impact of Pakistan being gobbled up by the GIR. I thought our efforts with India and Pakistan were supposed to help prevent this very thing."

Fred Reissinger was not swayed by Tim's outburst. In fact he had expected it. There was no doubt that the military implications of the growing GIR were weighing heavily on the minds of military leaders around the world.

"Tim, let me remind you that in our last meeting we discussed this very eventuality. We have only had a short amount of time to dissuade and prevent something that appeared to be on the verge of happening anyway. If you remember, General Stone indicated that GIR "advisors" were already on the ground in Pakistan. No, our best bet with respect to Pakistan and the GIR is to keep India nervous and looking to us for help if at all possible."

"But, let's jump to the GIR and talk about that. The Iraqi situation has me very concerned. We are trying to influence Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Syria, but everyone is nervous. The GIR influence is growing and right now, Iraq has almost gone into a state of abject anarchy, despite the three brigades

we have maintained in the country. There is little we can do diplomatically there at this point. What little political infrastructure remains believes we are guilty of murdering Chaliberi.”

As President Weisskopf listened, he realized that the unease he had been feeling since before his initial meeting with Jien Zenim of China had continued to grow. It was like an ever-present mole eating away beneath the surface. If you weren't careful, you'd step in a hole and fall and break a leg, or worse yet, eventually the complete foundation of your entire surface world would be undermined and lead to a massive collapse. That's how the President felt as international conditions continued to deteriorate.

“Fred, or Mike, what is the likelihood of any group in Iraq allowing us to help them come to power?”

Fred Reissinger was aghast.

“Mr. President, from a diplomatic standpoint, I have to advise against such a course of action. If we now blatantly help any group in Iraq, it will be viewed as an admission of guilt with respect to Chaliberi's death.”

The President wasted no time in replying.

“Fred, they already think we are responsible for it, and things are going to hell in a hand basket. We cannot afford to allow the GIR to occupy Iraq, and I promise you, that is where this is headed. America did not allow a fundamental Islamic regime to come to power in 2003, and we are not going to allow it now.”

Very concerned about the current situation, the Secretary of State did not relent.

“What you say is absolutely true, Mr. President, but the difference is this. The first time we deposed a ruthless tyrant. This time we are talking about an individual that we placed in power.

“To all the world it will look like we are now in the business of removing one leader, any leader, by military invasion or assassination whenever it suits us. I must warn that the consequences of that perception being allowed to take root will be disastrous.”

The president had known and trusted Fred Reissinger for years. He did not take his advise lightly.

“You're right Fred, I understand we cannot just waltz in there and once again take over Iraq in these circumstances. But the consequences of a fundamental Islamic government that either leans toward or joins the GIR would be equally disastrous.

“I am going to need your help to assist me with the Saudis and the Turks especially, so whatever options we have can be accomplished with their support. What about it, Mike? Is there anyone we can work with over there? What about the Kurds?”

Mike Rowley had been polling his CIA assets for days. He had a pretty good picture of the conditions, and the prospects weren't good.

“Mr. President, despite our use of them in Operation Iraqi Freedom, many of the Kurds in the North of Iraq are still wary of us. The same holds with many of the Shias in the south, who are more and more disposed toward Sayeed. Despite Iraqi Freedom, many of them remember still that we gave them the “green light” back then to go after Saddam and implied we would help them. Then we stood back and watched while the army we had just defeated slaughtered them. I can have our folks in country give it a try, but prospects are not a sure thing at all. In such an environment, there will be a real threat to our operatives.”

President Weisskopf never took his command authority and its potential for mortal impact on those he commanded lightly. But he couldn't shake the feeling—no, the almost sure knowledge, that this entire affair was getting away from them. If they allowed it to do so, the consequences could be much more deadly than even he wanted to contemplate. He simply would not allow the realization of such a scenario.

“I know Mike, but this is one time we are going to have to risk it. Tell our own people to get ready to earn some hazardous duty pay and have the contacts we maintain on the ground in Iraq make the effort.”

“John, what's the opinion of the NSA regarding the impact of Iraq coming under the GIR? Give me a best case and a worse case scenario from your people's analysis.”

John Bowers had been busier than at any point in his life. The planning sessions with respect to his own combat involvement in Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom had been a cake walk compared to trying to keep up with the CAS and GIR developments and their potential impacts. But he and his people had made the effort, and they had good people in all branches of the military helping them.

“Mr. President, the best case is that everyone in the region is made extremely nervous and that the influence of the GIR is used to impact oil prices, production and delivery to our detriment.”

“The worst case is that the GIR continues to grow and that other Islamic states continue to come under their influence to the point where we are totally pushed out of the Mid East.”

This was just about what the President had expected, though having it put in those clear, stark terms was like a slap in the face.

“John, let's continue down this path. What is our dependence on Mid East oil at this point, and how long would our strategic reserves last if our Mid East supply were cut off?”

“Mr. President, since we began drilling off the west coast, and added more drilling in Alaska under the last administration, we have cut the dependence down to about 30%, but we are still very reliant on them. Without those measures from the last administration, the current situation would be much bleaker. Even so, my analysis indicates that with no Mid East oil, but continued production from other sources, our ninety-day emergency reserve could be stretched to about six months.”

Six months in normal, peacetime circumstances. It's not enough, but is all he could hope for. Clearly, in a wartime scenario, those numbers could only be stretched one way. Turning now towards his Federal Emergency Management Director, the head of FEMA, Curt Johnson, the President said: “You all know Curt. I asked him to attend this meeting today specifically because I feared these types of developments. Curt, I want you to work with John Bowers and write up and Executive Order (EO) for me to sign which will accomplish the following:

I want to be able to quickly treat our energy supply situation as a National Emergency and allow the government to restrict consumption by government agencies and establish quotas for non-critical agencies.

I want to open up to petroleum exploration and production all Federal Lands that any of my Executive Agencies manage.

I want the Department of Energy to relax requirements on the construction of nuclear power plants, so that they must only adhere to the Nuclear Construction Code at the date of approval of construction, as opposed to having to retrofit construction to newer codes while the plant is being built. This act alone will spur the Bechtels and Brown and Roots to immediately look at building more plants here in this country.

“Please have such an order on my desk prepared to be signed within five days. I hate to say this, and it can go no further than this room, but what is taking shape here could well turn into as great a crisis to our nation and its interests as anything since the second world war. It is time we began putting in place some preparations in that regard.”

“Tim and General Stone, please work with our friends in Kuwait to arrange for a “training exercise” involving two additional wings of F-15E strike eagles, a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) and all of the logistical support necessary to maintain them there for a six month period at least.”

At this point, Curt Johnson spoke up.

“Excuse me for the interruption Mr. President, but while I understand the need for the provisions in the EO for the restrictions and quotas for governmental agencies, why is there nothing in your instructions for the private sector? That is where the vast bulk of the utilization lies. Unless we curb usage there, we will buy very little.”

President Weisskopf had expected such a question. The measures he was taking were necessary, but many in government felt that their “duty” would be to extend such provisions to the public. But Norm Weisskopf knew the limits of his powers, and he had taken an oath to abide by them.

“Curt, I am only going to say this once, and I want all of you in this room to understand it completely. We are the servants of the people, not their masters. Our duties and powers are very explicitly laid out in a training manual we all took an oath to bear true faith and allegiance to. It's called the Constitution. I intend to do just that: bear true faith and allegiance to it, so help me God, even when the going gets tough.”

“The reason I do not include such provisions in my executive order is that I have no power or authority to do so. I would be violating my oath of office to presume to do so—irrespective of whatever “Acts” congress has passed, or whatever rulings the Court has made. Simply put, they cannot pass an act, or make a ruling, that supercedes the Constitution any more than I can write an order that does so...and have it be legitimate. If it's not legitimate, it's illegal and a violation of our oath of office.”

“This EO will be preparatory. It is a “just in case,” which will allow us to be better prepared as a government should things get worse. If they do, at that time we will work with the governors, the Congress and with the people to extend such provisions as necessary, but we will do it according to what the Constitution dictates. We will not become, in any way, shape or form, suppressors of individual freedom ourselves, irrespective of the bad precedent established by prior administrations. Is that understood? Is that understood by everyone in this room?”

As Curt responded in a quick affirmative, and as everyone else in the room did likewise, John Bowers glanced over to General Jeremy Stone and both men gave one another a knowing, but barely perceptive, nod. John and General Stone both felt, at that moment, that whatever else happened, a real American patriot and hero was in the saddle for this ride, regardless of how rough it got. They would spread the word through the ranks that the “Old Man” had what it took to see them through.

**August 9, 17:00 local time**

**Presidential offices**

**Tehran, Greater Islamic Republic**

As the red light flashed and David knew that they were back on the air after the commercial break, he continued.

“Welcome back. We are here in Tehran conducting an exclusive live interview with Imam Hasan Sayeed. We have discussed his roots and education. We have discussed his military experiences during the war with Iraq and his amazing exploits during those years...exploits which established Hasan’s bravery and remarkable leadership skills.”

“We have discussed his rise in power and influence within Iran and his ultimate recognition as Imam by the Iranian clerics and Ayatollahs. Finally, in the last segment, we discussed with the Imam the amazing growth of the Islamic Republic. Now, Imam Sayeed, we would like to discuss current events and ask for your perceptions regarding them. Let us start with the Coalition of Asian States. What are your views and intentions towards that unprecedented and developing influence?”

Hasan felt that the interview was going extraordinarily well. This American, while clearly in love with himself and his perceived influence, was giving Hasan every opportunity to tell his own story and relate things from his own perspective, just as Li Peng had indicated he would when the interview had been suggested by Li on behalf of Jien Zenim.

“Well, David, the CAS is, as you indicate, an unprecedented coalition. Who would have thought that, with their past differences, the Indian Republic and the People’s Republic of China would have bridged their gaps and created such an alignment? But, on the other hand, when one reflects on the basis for that agreement, namely the Three Wisdoms, it is not so unlikely or unprecedented as one would think.”

“All men and women are equal.”

“All share equally in the bounty of a working and industrious society.”

“One goal, one thought, one people for World peace.”

“These are tenets that much of your own nation’s amazing productivity, longevity and success have been based upon. Is it so surprising then that other nations who embrace these philosophies are also successful?”

“As to the intent and views of the Greater Islamic Republic regarding the CAS, we welcome on our borders a coalition that embraces such views. Islam embraces many similar views. The Prophet taught us that we should treat others as we would be treated; that we should look to do good and not evil. Equality, sharing and peace are all good things that we should all seek. The Greater Islamic Republic can live in peace with any people who truly seek these things.”

David Krenshaw had been amazed throughout the interview at how smooth and well-spoken Hasan was. He continued to have that impression.

“Yes, but if I may, I take some issue with what you have just said. In the American system all do not share equally in society. The principles of capitalism are more geared towards the hope that everyone has equal opportunity to share, but that anyone can rise as high as their individual efforts will take them, while others who are either not inclined, or unable, do not rise as high. Also, in the Islamic world it cannot be said that men and women are equal.”

“It is true, David, that capitalism—the system of government in many of the western nations, the United States in particular—does represent a differing political and social philosophy from the system of social equity that the CAS is focusing upon. But, when one considers the numbers of people in the CAS, and the potential for suffering amongst two billion people, it is a difference that can be understood, and one that can be accommodated.”

“Within Islam, we prefer to look upon equality as something that exists within the sexes as opposed to between the sexes. For example, anyone with a perceptive eye can tell that men and women are not really “equal.” In this way, the nations of Islam try to follow a path that embraces the best of both systems, while desiring to live in peace with all.”

David noticed that his time was running short, and he had saved what he felt to be the most pressing topic until last. If he began now, he felt he had just enough time to have a healthy discussion regarding it.

“Thank you, Imam. As our interview winds down, let us move on to the topic of Iraq. As you know, Isam Chaliberi was assassinated one week ago today. There are serious allegations regarding that assassination and my own government’s possible involvement. In addition, Iraq appears to be in a state of anarchy, and what is left of Chaliberi’s government is having a difficult, if not impossible, time of ruling the nation. What are your thoughts on this state of affairs? And what, if anything, are the intentions of the Greater Islamic Republic in this regard?”

Hasan had patiently waited for this opportunity. The time was at hand to bring the rest of Islam together, and Iraq was a major remaining keystone in that effort. With this interview, at this moment, Hasan had been given the perfect audience by Allah to make that appeal, and he intended to seize the opportunity.

“David, the death of Isam Chaliberi has been felt with sadness and remorse throughout Islam. Whatever else you may say about him—and as you know I did not trust his ties to, or his dependence on the west— Chaliberi was a talented and dedicated leader. Throughout his life, he fought to advance what he considered to be the cause of his people. We will miss that strong voice, that relentless effort to improve the lot of our brothers and sisters in Iraq.”

“As to the allegations regarding his assassination...they are serious and would be viewed seriously by any nation if they are proven correct. We will not pass judgment in that regard until more information is available, to allow for an informed and sure determination.”

“The civil conditions in Iraq are difficult. What little economy was returning after years of warfare and sanctions, has been injured all the more by the current circumstances. These dire circumstances affect the children and the widows and the infirm the most. We desire to see such suffering stop. We call on the west to lift all sanctions and send what humanitarian aid they can. We are doing the same.”

“As you know, David, there is a significant percentage of the population in Iraq which is calling for unification with the Greater Islamic Republic. Although we make no secret or apology for our stated intention to unite all of Islam, we will not presume to take advantage of such conditions by coercion or deception.”

“At the same time, we feel that, in the American tradition, the voice of the people should be heard. As a result, we have met with, and obtained the approval of, various NGO’s and agencies in the UN to call for a UN-sponsored referendum in Iraq. Since their own government is not in a position to do so, this will put the option for unification with the Greater Islamic Republic before the people. We are proposing that such a referendum occur on September 1<sup>st</sup>, in conjunction with the similar referendum in Pakistan.”

“The Greater Islamic Republic, outside of proposing to the general assembly such a referendum, will in no way be involved with the actual voting or its administration.”

David Krenshaw was dumbfounded. Here was the leader of what was developing into one of the superpowers of the world announcing during his exclusive interview such a politically and diplomatically explosive proposal. Although he knew he should feel used, his unease was counterbalanced by the fact that he would be remembered as the one who ferreted out such news.

“Imam, I, of course, am not in a position to render official judgment or approval for such a proposal. I am sure my government will respond officially, and that the UN will render its own decision. I can say that this is an unprecedented venue for such an announcement, and I thank you for the opportunity to bring such “news” to the world. That is, after all, the primary purpose of WNN, and the focal point of my own career.”

“One more question if you will. Imam, what can you say to the west today, to America in particular, to ease their mind regarding your clear call for a united Islam. Just a few years ago, another very charismatic leader called for the same, and he then proceeded to kill many thousands of Americans in the infamous 911 attacks?”

Sayed had known that this question was certain to come up. Everyday Americans would indeed be concerned. He meant to put their fears to rest.

“I can simply say this. There are vast differences between that individual and his terrorist organization that called for Islamic unification and our current efforts. The foremost is the message of peace and tolerance we not only preach, but practice when it comes to the western nations. Surely the west, surely no one anywhere would deny us the opportunity to unite in peace and tolerance. We have no intention of attacking anyone as long as our borders and strategic interests are not violated”

David Krenshaw was pleased with the answer.

“Okay, Imam, I must say that what you have stated is a clear difference in message and rhetoric. Unfortunately, we are out of time. I want to thank you, Imam Hasan Sayeed, for this interview, and thank everyone at WNN and within the Greater Islamic Republic who worked so hard to make it possible. This has been David Krenshaw with WNN from Tehran. “

**August 15, 18:20**

**Ann Morris Park, on the Boise Rover**

**Boise, Idaho**

It was a warm day, about eighty-nine degrees. But in the shade of the trees by the river and with a steady breeze, it was quite comfortable. Geneva Campbell was enjoying herself in Boise. This park was so lovely and peaceful. The weather was simply grand. Even when the temperatures hovered near ninety degrees, with the low humidity in the western part of the nation, and with shade and a breeze, it was quite comfortable compared to Chicago.

She watched her two sons. Reflecting on fond memories of her deceased husband, a thought came unbidden into her mind. “Lord, Jerome, I wish you could see your boys now.” She continued in that vein as Leon and Alan threw a Frisbee back and forth to each other in a small meadow near where she sat, “Maybe you do, Jerome, maybe you do.”

“Hey Leon, what time did you say those folks from Texas was supposed to be here?”

Leon made a dive for the Frisbee, caught it in his outstretched fingers, rolled and rose to his feet in one fluid motion.

“Mom, the Simmons said they’d be here about six thirty. I expect we’ll see them any time. Billy said he’d be wearing a big cowboy hat and we couldn’t miss him.”

Geneva was a bit apprehensive. She still wasn't used to meeting all of these people. But Leon had assured her that the Simmons were good folk who worked the land and were God-fearing. Thus far in Boise, the Campbells had fared very well in the people they had met. So many had been kind to them and anxious to help the "newcomers." "So," she concluded to herself, "perhaps it won't be so bad after all." Best to just enjoy this cool breeze and clear dry air until these folks get here.

One hundred yards to the north, along the paved path in the park, Jess, Cindy and Billy Simmons were walking towards the south and looking for the Campbells. They had driven from Texas to Boise, arriving yesterday evening, and it had been a long but beautiful drive.

They left Montague County, Texas on August 12th and drove to the northwest along US Highway 287 all the way through Amarillo to Dumas, Texas. There they had taken US Highway 84, which they followed all the way to Raton, New Mexico. Along that portion of the trip, they stopped for an hour at the Capulin National Monument in northeast New Mexico and viewed the inactive volcano cone there. It was a beautiful view from the top and they could see the Rocky Mountains clearly. It had only been a forty-five minute drive to Raton from the national monument.

At Raton, New Mexico, they had taken Interstate Highway 25 north over the beautiful and historic Raton Pass into Colorado to Trinidad. They spent that first night in Trinidad.

The next day they rose to a cool (by Texas standards) morning and continued their journey. They followed Interstate 25 further north along the majestic "front range" of the Rocky Mountains. They passed through Colorado Springs about noon and ate lunch there and took some pictures with the mountains as a back drop. North of Colorado Springs, they came upon the US Air Force Academy. Both Jess and Billy wanted to stop there, so they had spent two hours touring the campus. As summer cadets and some of the staff there learned of Jess Simmons' military status and his "flight" capabilities, it had led to several interesting and enjoyable conversations. Late in the afternoon they passed through Denver. At Fort Carson, they got back on US 287 and drove across a beautiful mountain pass into Wyoming. At the bottom of that pass they came to Laramie, Wyoming on Interstate Highway 80 where they spent the second night.

The next morning, another brisk one for these native Texans, they followed the same path the Campbells had taken a little over a month earlier along Interstate 80. Around 5 p.m. yesterday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, they had arrived in Boise. After staying in a nice hotel right off of Interstate 84 last night, they had found Boise State University (BSU) in the morning, met the coaching staff, who treated them to lunch, just before noon, and then got Billy checked into his dorm by 2 p.m..

Now, as they walked through the beautiful Ann Morris Park, they hoped to soon find the Campbells and make acquaintance with Leon and his family. They did not have long to wait.

"Hey, Leon! Look down there. Here comes a big white guy with a big ol' white cowboy hat just like you said. Looks like his parents are with him. I bet it's your friend Billy."

Leon turned and looked up the path. Sure enough, just coming around the bend were three people, one of them wearing a big white cowboy hat. "Whew," thought Leon, "if that's Billy, he's a monster."

"Momma, let's get up and walk down that way and meet the Simmons. I'm positive that's them."

As Geneva got up from the bench and joined her sons, almost a hundred yards away, Billy noticed the movement and turned to his Dad.

"Dad, that must be them down there near that clearing. Look, I bet that colored guy waving to us is Leon!"

Billy waved back and started to jog towards the three Campbells.

"I hope this works out, Jess." Cindy Simmons said to her husband. "Billy seems real excited, but I'm just a little nervous. I mean this young man was a gang leader in Chicago and has been involved in who all knows what."

Jess considered his wife's remarks. Jess could understand her concern. Fact was, he had been concerned himself. But he had talked to Billy and trusted his son's instincts, his ability to handle himself in difficult circumstances and his commitment to doing what was right.

"Cindy, I know what you mean. I have had similar concerns. But, you know, Billy is eighteen now. He's a man and has to make his own way. I believe we've raised him right, and I believe it'll show. I think, from what I have heard, he and Leon are going to get along just fine.

"Leon's story is quite remarkable, you know. Very few have the strength, or vision, or faith in themselves to pull themselves out of a situation like he was in, let alone to pull their entire family out with them. Some get pulled out of it by parents who have the strength; some get pulled out by a teacher along the way; some come out of it after going through the discipline and structure of the military. I have seen quite a few of those cases myself. "

"Most never come out of it. It's too bad, because it's no secret that many of the government programs perpetuate the conditions—and many of the politicians know it—but they feel their agendas and political careers are empowered by those same conditions, so they keep it up. No, honey, it's rare that an individual like Leon comes along and pulls himself up by the bootstraps on his own. That being the case, I believe Billy and Leon are going to get along just fine."



With that conversation complete, the two families met and introduced themselves. There was a lot of laughter, and back-slapping stories to share on all sides. In this fashion, for the next two and half hours they enjoyed a wonderful and pleasant evening getting acquainted next to the clear running waters of the Boise River.

**August 18, 14:37 local time**

**Jiangnan Shipyards, Special Conversion dry docks**

**Shanghai, PRC**

Lu Pham was glad to have Sung Hsu with him on this trip. Sung had developed so many excellent procedures and manufacturing processes in Tanjin that he was now a supervising director over construction foremen for the overall conversion process. As such, he was reviewing the implementation of those practices and processes in the various shipyards where the conversions were taking place. Lu was reviewing the LRASD weapons systems and their logistical preparations at each shipyard.

As a result of the growing friendship between themselves and their families, it made for a much more pleasant trip.

“Lu, we are over a week ahead of schedule at all the other shipyards. But here in Shanghai, we are several days behind. This morning I think I found out why.”

“It’s simply a matter of the process for installing the LRASD pivot assembly. For some reason the crews here have gotten two of the initial installation instructions reversed. While the systems can be assembled successfully with these two steps reversed, it is causing a work flow issue.”

“Materiel that has been logistically staged to be handled last is being retrieved first, before it can be moved into a position to be picked up most efficiently. The extra time in transit, repeated over and over again, is impacting the schedule.”

“I spoke with the foreman and had the procedure re-written to the correct sequence. They are going to try to add additional individuals working during the swing and midnight shifts to make up for the time loss.”

It never ceased to amaze Lu how Sung fit so seamlessly into the large scale manufacturing role. Of course he had been at it for over fifteen years, but Lu knew others who were outstanding managers, who had been at it even longer than Sung, but who did not have the gift for it that Sung had.

“Outstanding, Sung. You have a way of analyzing, locating, deciphering and resolving issues that would put most doctors of research to shame, my friend. For my part, all of the weapons systems and their logistics are in order. The testing is completed and the systems have but to be installed and integrated into the fire control and PROM (Programmable Read Only Memory) processors on board each ship. All is progressing most excellently!”

“Oh, by the way, Sung. The suggestions that you gave several weeks ago regarding the Sea Control ships have been studied and implemented. A single dock in Tanjin is going to be making conversions in the open, where the prying eyes of the Americans are sure to take note.”

“The other facilities will do their conversions under the cover of the housings we have built for those dry docks. In those cases, the landing decks are being cut up to move by rail so they can be delivered to the other sites in such a manner as to avoid detection by the American surveillance satellites and aircraft. The decks will then be reassembled on site.”

Sung was very gratified at hearing this. He was extremely satisfied in his new work on these “special” conversions. He was proud to be contributing to the success of his nation in such a manifest way.

“Lu, what decision was made on how to transport the decks on those Sea Control Ships being converted at Tanjin?”

“They will be transporting them by large barges, pulled behind two of our large sea-going tugs. In fact, tomorrow evening, the first deck is scheduled to be loaded up and transported. I expect the Americans will quickly discover the transit with their surveillance satellites and hopefully have their full attention riveted to it. I would love to be a fly on the wall in their planning sessions when they see that.”

**August 19, 23:37 local time**

**Yulin Naval Base, near Haikou**

**Hainan Island, PRC**

The Yulin Naval Base was one of the People’s Republic of China’s most extensive facilities. It had originally been built by the Japanese, but had been extensively expanded and modernized by the PLAN.

The base was capable of making the most extensive repairs to any ship in the PLAN. In order to accommodate this, it had extensive repair facilities, two large dry docks and ten large crane systems capable of lifting several hundred tons each. Tonight, these cranes were going to be utilized for the largest lift job in the history of the naval base, or in the history of the People’s Republic of China.

The special carrier deck had been installed near the airfield portion of the naval base. The deck was two hundred and fifty meters long and forty meters wide. It was constructed of steel and had been strengthened against blast damage. It weighed almost five thousand tons.

Each of the ten cranes would lift a little less than five hundred tons. Since they were rated at five hundred and fifty tons each, the system had the capacity. Still, it was a complicated effort. The cranes were positioned along a rail system that had been built so they could move virtually anywhere along the waterfront. They had been aligned on two specially built rails, fifty meters apart. Five cranes were situated on each side of these rails.

The deck had been moved there by a large multi-tracked vehicle, specially built for this purpose, which had been constructed in an underground facility where it had remained until needed. Two days earlier, the transport vehicle had been driven under the deck through a specially constructed access path specifically built with this day in mind. Once under the deck, it had used its own hydraulic lifts...two hundred of them, to lift the deck clear of the anchoring sub-structure and start it on its way to the harbor. It had taken a full twenty-four hours to cover the two miles.

Once the deck was in position between the cranes, the cranes were attached to the deck at special hoist points and they began to slowly and carefully lift the deck. Once the deck came clear of the transport vehicle, the cranes themselves began to move slowly along their rails towards the harbor inlet where the barge awaited.

The barge itself was three hundred meters long and thirty-five meters wide. It had a carrying capacity of seventy-five hundred tons. Earlier in the evening, at seven thirty, the cranes arrived in position with the deck suspended above the barge.

At that time, the deck was slowly lowered onto it. Once this was done, and the deck was resting on its support points, but still held by the cranes, workers spent four hours attaching the deck to the barge at each of the support points. Once this was accomplished, the cranes were moved away from the barge and the deck was finally ready to be towed away.

Around midnight, two Dinghai class sea going tugs of the PLAN came alongside the barge. Once they were attached, they began towing it out of its berth and out of the harbor. At eight knots, it would take four days to tow the deck to Tanjin shipyards where it would be permanently installed on one of the container ships.

Early the next morning, the tugs and their barge were some ninety kilometers up the coast towards Tanjin, steaming about ten kilometers off the coast. At this point, not long after first light, they were observed by a US reconnaissance satellite as they continued to slowly made their way north, up the coast of China.

The images recorded by the satellite were immediately communicated to CINCPAC in Hawaii, to the ONI in the Pentagon and to the NRO in Virginia, according to the procedures already in place for any reconnaissance coming in from the South China Sea that dealt with the PRC.

**August 20, 09:12**

**National Reconnaissance Office Headquarters**

**IMINT Directorate, Chantilly, VA**

"I'd say that about ices it, Tom. Just ensure we get a track on that barge and the two tugs and find out where they are going. My bet is Tanjin. Those crafty devils are going to create some conversion aircraft carriers from their friggin' container ships. Who would have thought it?"

Tom was sure his boss was right. Ever since they had overlaid the deck design onto the Container Ship plan view, it was clear that those deck configurations were made for these ships. The only question had been, how were they going to get those decks, or ones like them, fitted onto the ships?

Well, this morning that had become clear as the semi-weekly photographs of the Hainan Island area had captured what appeared to be a small aircraft carrier moving up the coast. Once Tom had analyzed the information, it became clear that two large tugs were towing a barge which had the deck attached to it.

"The photographs of the Yulin Naval Base show that the deck is gone, and we already know where. This is interesting, though. I have checked the other airfields where these special naval "decks" had been installed and the only one that is missing is the one from Hainan."

Bill was not concerned about this fact. The other decks would move as the PRC was prepared to add them to container ships. "Boy, that must be a heck of a conversion," he thought.

"They're probably just biding their time, Tom. Let's go ahead and report on all that we have deduced at our 10 a.m. video conference. I am sure CINCPAC and ONI have seen this and have come to the same conclusions. Anyhow, now that we know how the Chinese are going about it, there'll be no problem keeping track of it."

Or so they thought.

## Chapter 5

*“To command a group requires truthfulness.”—Sun Tsu*

**August 25, 03:50 local time**

**Along the Great Zab River**

**Near Irbil, Iraq**

“The insertion had gone almost perfectly,” thought Will as his team gathered around him.

Having flown into the northern area of Iraq from Turkey aboard a specially configured C-17 Globemaster aircraft owned and operated by the CIA, the eight-man team had made a “HALO” (High Altitude, Low Opening) drop.

They had parachuted into a remote wash two hours ago and made their way to their designated rendezvous point near the Great Zab River. Now, they were concealed and waiting for their contact.

Will Peterson was a senior CIA field officer and a former Delta Force Company Commander. He had six special-forces non-commissioned officers and his XO with him. All of them had spent years in the elite Delta Force and all of them had been recruited by the “Agency” to help conduct America’s foreign affairs in places where the bright lights of cameras were never meant to shine.

Will heard the slight sound of someone moving stealthily along the dirt path below them. The sound stopped and after a moment a single phrase was whispered.

“al-Mustaqbal”

Will’s point man, and the most fluent in Arabic among them (though they all looked Arabic and could speak fluently) responded.

“Shaheda.”

Within fifteen minutes their guide had led them further up the canyon of the Great Zab River where they branched off on a small footpath into a feeder canyon. After another twenty minutes of rather steep ascent, they moved to one side of the canyon where the team waited while their guide removed brush from the expertly concealed mouth of a cave and exchanged whispered identification and greetings with two well-concealed sentries. Upon entering the cave, and after following it through several turns, they found that it widened into a rather spacious, natural room. Several men attired in unremarkable desert dress were in the room gathered around or sitting at a table. One of them looked up as Will and his team entered.

“Will, how good to see you after so many months! Please, bring your friends and join us here at the table.”

Will’s team looked to him and he nodded his head back to the entry. Two of the team silently walked back and took up positions between the gathering and the entrance to the cavern. Will and the other five team members then walked over to the table.

“Jabal, it is good to see you my friend. I take it Badar bin Sultan arrangements for the delivery have been successfully completed and your people are prepared?”

Jabal Talabari’s Patriotic Kurdistan Front had been fighting for an independent Kurdistan for many, many years. He had known Will Peterson, if that was his real name, since just a few months after the 1996 fiasco in Irbil.

Jabal had great reason not to trust the Americans and be wary of them. Many of his friends were dead as a result of American promises that had not been kept. First one American president and then another had sent men like Will to help overthrow the Iraqis...only to have them pulled out when the heat was turned up...which is exactly what had happened in Irbil in 1996.

Perhaps this time, with Weisskopf as President, with so many new weapons and with the Saudi and Turkish backing, they could be successful.

“Yes, we have the weapons; we have the ‘ballots;’ we have the polling locations and we have made our plans. Kurdistan will not vote to join Iraq in their alignment with the Iranians, and the voting in Baghdad and other areas will not go as they envision. I was reviewing our plans just now with each of these division commanders as you arrived.”

At Jabal’s direction, Will’s team members were paired off with Jabal’s division commanders. Will worked directly with Jabal. Over the next several days their specific operational plans were reviewed and modified and the timing between events and the various elements of the PKF was worked out. Then the entire OPPLAN was relentlessly rehearsed with the division commanders and their subordinates.

**August 28, 11:50 local time**

**The Knesset**

**Tel Aviv, Israel**

“Summing up then, we must recognize that a tremendous and mortal threat to our very existence is developing in this Greater Islamic Republic. Adding Pakistan’s mature nuclear program to Iran’s elementary capabilities will add up to as great a threat to our survival as we have faced in our history.”

Prime Minister Benjehmin Netanyahu sat down. He had poured out his soul to his compatriots and he was as worried as he had ever been.

“Mr. Prime Minister, while the potential for a threat is real, we have yet to see any clear indication from Sayeed or any of his ministers that they intend us any harm. I believe, if we work with their Foreign Minister and seek to live in harmony with them, we can avoid conflict. They know we are similarly armed and they know we are willing to use those arms.”

“If we rattle our sabers in their face, if we provoke them when no reason has been given, then we risk causing the very confrontation you want to avoid.”

Netanyahu considered the words of his rival, Isaac bin Ammon, the leader of the opposition Labor party. The words were not new; the logic was as old as history, and history had proven it incorrect on countless occasions.

“You sound for all the world like one of the doves in the American Senate, Isaac. Have we learned nothing? We must send a message of strength and resolution to Sayeed. We cannot afford to allow him to think for a moment that we are weak, or that we fear him. Iran, which is the focal point for the Greater Islamic Republic, has financed and trained many of our worst enemies. I have seen no reduction in that effort.”

“Now Afghanistan has joined their ranks and it appears that Pakistan and Iraq will soon follow. All of these “states” have spent untold billions to train and equip those terrorists and themselves to fight and destroy us. We dare not forget this. The American President issued us a warning a few weeks ago. He felt strongly enough about it to call and talk directly to me. I believe we should take this warning and his recommendation to establish and maintain our readiness seriously.”

Isaac bin Ammon rolled his eyes. He certainly believed in their nuclear deterrent. He believed in remaining strong. He was simply tired of these so called “hawks” who were intent on provoking every nation around them with their “in your face” attitude.

“Benjehmin, we have gone around and around on this over the years. I believe that Hasan Sayeed is reasonable...certainly more reasonable

“Save us from the naiveté and incompetence of fools,” Netanyahu thought.

“Isaac, I believe that Sayeed is responsible for the death of the Iraqi leader. Our latest intelligence documents a direct tie between Hamas and Sayeed, and between the Hamas operative and the Iraqi leader. What more do we need?”

He turned to his defense minister.

“Jacob, increase our readiness, across the board. Also, request more time from the American satellites and utilize our own assets to monitor the Army groups that are training near Ahvaz. I want the anti-aircraft missile defenses and our artillery on the Golan Heights strengthened too.”

“Let’s pray that somehow the “elections” in Pakistan and Iraq do not turn out as our predictions indicate.”

### **August 30, 17:50 local time**

### **Israeli Defense Force (IDF) positions**

#### **Golan Heights**

Colonel Abraham Eshkol had been monitoring the placement of new AAM batteries all day. It had been a hot day, too. Even here on the heights the temperature had hovered at forty degrees Celsius most of the afternoon.

The new Arrow missile system, developed and manufactured by Israel, was impressive. “Every bit as capable as the newer Block 3 Patriot systems,” the Colonel thought, even if the altitude capabilities are a little less. When complemented by the new American system firing the ground-based version of the AMRAAM (Advanced Medium Range Anti Aircraft Missile), the Golan Heights would be as well protected against air attack as possible.

Now the Colonel turned his attention towards the perimeter defenses and the new artillery that was being added to his position. As he did so, he summoned his executive officer.

“Major, I want a report of your progress today on my desk by nineteen hundred hours. Just make sure that our perimeter defenses are completed within the next three days. I want that new line of bunkers dug in below and forward of the existing defenses. As we discussed, also ensure that the extra batteries of the 155’s and those new MRL’s (Multiple Rocket Launchers) are positioned in their revetments. Carry on.”

As the Colonel turned and walked toward his command vehicle, he contemplated his latest improvements and orders.

“Threat Condition Three and significantly increased strength. Must be concerned that this Hasan Sayeed’s influence will continue to spread.”

The prospect of a united Islam spreading closer and closer to his homeland was enough to cause him serious consideration and consternation.

As he gazed from his elevated position to the west and north out across Syria, he was reminded of the Masada where long ago his forefathers had been besieged by the Romans. That siege had ended with mass suicide.

“Well, we will not end up in such a position here. Any enemy trying to assault these heights will find their own death waiting here, not ours.”

**September 1, 14:23 local time**

**Voting precinct**

**Islamabad, Pakistan**

The lines went on for hundreds of yards outside of the building housing the voting booths. Tens of thousands were lined all across the city, as they had been since before the polls opened at this morning.

The same scene was being played out across Pakistan in all of the major cities, as well as smallest villages.

Here in Islamabad, and at a few other high profile places, the camera crews of WNN and other major media outlets were recording it all and broadcasting it across the world. No exit polling was allowed, but it was clear beyond doubt what the results were going to be.

The population and military power of the Greater Islamic Republic would more than double this day. In truth, preparations for insuring this pre-ordained victory, and capitalizing on it, had been ongoing since the announcement by President Musharraf several weeks ago.

**September 1, same time**

**UN monitoring station outside of a voting precinct**

**Baghdad, Iraq**

The stooped and crippled old man was in line, waiting his turn to vote like the thousands of others. He was within fifteen meters of the entrance to the building that housed the voting booths, and was just passing the UN monitoring station. The UN had a contingent of officials with side arms at the monitoring station, and several others within the voting facility.

The UN-provided monitoring and light security was backed up by Iraqi troops who manned a security station at the entrance to the voting facility itself. The Iraqi contingent was more heavily armed and was using a UN-supplied metal detector to prevent weapons from entering.

As the stooped old man approached the security station, he noted carefully the position of the alert guards: two men with automatic assault rifles standing to either side of their compatriots at the metal detector, and one UN officer just outside of the station whose hand rested lightly on his side arm.

Underneath the stooped frame and the wrinkles of the old man in line, was the heart of a fighter. Concealed by the robes, and belied by the stooped posture, was the body of a twenty-four year old Kurdish freedom fighter, along with an AK-47 rifle and three hand grenades.

When he was within five meters of the security station, the Kurdish militant armed his first grenade while holding it under his robes with one hand. His other hand had already charged his assault rifle. Pretending to stoop even lower, as though looking at something on the ground, he gently tossed his hand grenade back towards the UN monitoring station while lifting his AK-47 towards the security station. Grabbing the rifle with both hands now, he expertly pulled the trigger while he swept the muzzle across the security station, cutting down the two guards and one of the Iraqis manning the metal detector. An instant later, the grenade detonated with a thunderous report, directly in front of the UN monitoring station.

In the pandemonium that was breaking out around the voting facility, the Kurdish freedom fighter calmly walked up to the security station and fired a three-round burst into the heads of each of the downed Iraqis and then tossed another of his hand grenades into the voting facility. Hurrying now, he ran back towards the UN monitoring station where several UN officials were staggering out of the ruined doorway.

As the blast of the second grenade tore through the polling place, the young Kurd again pulled the trigger of his AK-47, knocking down two of the UN officials and driving the others back into the building.

Lobbing his last grenade into the UN monitoring station itself, before it could explode, he discarded his AK-47 and disappeared into the crowd that was fleeing the scene in terror.

As he melted into the stampeding throng, he whispered to himself in Arabic: “For the liberty and sovereignty of Kurdistan!”

**September 1, 19:42 local time**

**Patriotic Kurdistan Front cavern**

**Near Irbil, Iraq**

“Things have gone as well as can be expected. Here in the Kurdistan area, the referendum has been defeated and our “write-in” ballot efforts will make it plain that we have voted for our own independence.”

“In the more southern areas, there has been significant disruption by our personnel, but the vote is overwhelmingly for unification with the Greater Islamic Republic.”

As Jabal completed his thoughts and status report, Will felt he had to interject.

“Don’t be too optimistic yet, my friend. While the election here has certainly gone as we hoped, and while our efforts at disruption in other areas were mildly successful, you can bet that there are Iraqi armed forces gathering to move against us as we speak.”

“And I’ll tell you what I think. Though we may be prepared to take on the revamped Iraqi military forces, I am concerned about the much more massive forces of the Greater Islamic Republic. We need to be prepared for them. They will certainly only look at the overall voting totals which will indicate that the Iraqi people have chosen, by a significant margin, to unify with Sayeed.”

Jabal considered this analysis. What Will said was true: the GIR would certainly try to get the UN to recognize the overall results of the voting only. Furthermore, even though, thanks to the Americans, there were substantial weapons caches and significant intelligence, reconnaissance and planning assets at his disposal, Jabal was not as optimistic as his friend about standing up to the Iraqi armor. After all, they had tried several times in the past and failed.

But, with the continued attacks by his forces in the south diverting significant Iraqi assets in that direction, perhaps they could indeed hold off the Iraqi armed forces. But the combined forces of the Greater Islamic Republic would be a different matter altogether. The GIR’s military capabilities were not something to be taken lightly. They represented a viable and committed military entity the likes of which Jabal was not eager to reckon with, but he was fairly certain that the day of reckoning was not far off.

“What of your nation’s commitment and help, Will? Will your President Weisskopf diplomatically support us? More importantly, if it requires it, will he militarily support us?”

From everything he had heard, Will had no doubts what President Weisskopf’s inclination would be. The question was, what would his party...what would the congress...what would the people in America allow Weisskopf to do?

“Jabal, if it goes that far, our intent is to do just that. We must protect your people’s sovereignty and we must keep the growing Greater Islamic Republic contained with every means at our disposal.”

“Let’s review your defensive posture now, and see if we can be ready to repel those Iraqi columns should they head this way.”

**September 2, 14:18**

**Oval Office, The White House**

**Washington, D.C.**

Vice President Alan Reeves could appreciate his boss’s special “feelings” that guided his policies and many of his major decisions. The Vice President was in fact having one himself regarding the current situation with the GIR.

“Who would have thought that in the space of a few short months we would be looking at a unified Islamic Republic of this magnitude?” he thought.

“Mr. President, the Pakistani vote was overwhelming. Although only some 70% of the vote is counted, the decision to unite with the Greater Islamic Republic is enjoying an astounding 94% plurality.”

“In Iraq the vote is somewhat less impressive, with only about a 68% unification vote, with 62% of the vote reporting. These results are not without incident either. We have at least half a dozen reports, at least two of them confirmed, of violence at voting places.”

“The Kurds in the north have voted overwhelmingly to establish their own Kurdish homeland, inviting Kurds from Turkey and Iran to join in. They utilized ballots covertly supplied to them in place of the UN-supplied ballots. Those “new” ballots looked very official, but added the choice to create a Kurdish homeland, Kurdistan. That choice, or option, is passing in those northern areas by 84%.”

“Kurds from both Turkey and Iran are streaming into northern Iraq and they are preparing defensive positions against any attempt by the Iraqi army to intervene. In this regard, the Kurdish ruling council, which has been in place since their vote for autonomy in the 1990’s after the Gulf War, and which continued into the new regime after Hussein’s fall in 2003, is already making official inquiries to us and other nations regarding recognition and assistance. Yesterday, they officially declared their independence.”

President Weisskopf carefully considered this information. Things were going as they had hoped in the North, but the election overall had not been disrupted and the results were convincing. Recognition of Kurdistan would be a very risky business and most probably a somewhat isolated position. England, Australia and Israel would possibly join in such a recognition, and it was hoped that Saudi Arabia and Turkey, who had covertly been a part of the “help” given the Kurds, would also join in. But the real question was what the reaction of the GIR would be.

“How has the GIR officially reacted, and what are we seeing regarding any troop movements?”

Vice President Reeves turned to the Secretary of State, Fred Reissinger.

“I’ll let Fred address the GIR reaction, Mr. President.”

“Mr. President, the GIR, as you can imagine, has officially applauded the current results. They have indicated that there would be an official announcement by Hasan Sayeed himself once the figures are final. We expect the final results will be in by tomorrow or the next day at the latest.”

“To date, they have been silent on the issue of the Kurds in the north, although the provisional Iraqi government is loudly condemning the vote, and publicly indicating that no attempt to split the traditional Iraqi nation will be tolerated.”

“John, what are we seeing regarding GIR troop movements?”

John Bowers had checked with the NRO and with the Pentagon before the meeting regarding this very issue.

“The GIR has had military advisors in increasing numbers in both Pakistan and Iraq since the announcements of the referenda. They have stationed one entire Army Group and fairly large numbers of aircraft near their border with each country. As of this morning, no movement has been noticed from those Army units, although there can be no doubt that they are logistically preparing to move.”

Well, there could be no doubt as to how the GIR would react. Hasan Sayeed had made a mission out of uniting the Islamic world. Incredibly, he had succeeded beyond anyone’s wildest imaginings...and now there would probably be hell to pay. Norm Weisskopf knew that now was the time to make clear America’s resolve in the area, rather than to simply allow all of Islam to be consolidated under Sayeed.

“OK, Fred, let’s start moving towards an initial diplomatic relationship with Kurdistan. Other nations, outside of Israel, are going to await our lead. I’d like a diplomatic mission established in Irbil and an announcement that we are sending a diplomatic team over there to discuss Kurdistan’s future amongst the family of nation. Perhaps this kind of pre-emptive diplomacy will forestall the Iraqis and the GIR for a short time.”

### **September 4, 15:00 local time**

#### **Islamic Republic Government offices**

#### **Tehran, The Greater Islamic Republic**

“We are pleased to announce the overwhelming results of the referenda in both Pakistan and Iraq regarding the people’s choice in those two countries to unite with our Greater Islamic Republic. The voting in Pakistan resulted in an astounding 94.6% of the voters choosing the path of unification.”

“In Iraq 72.3% of the people chose to join in our efforts to unite our Islamic brothers and sisters everywhere. Sadly, the voting was marked by some violence and the results would have been higher had extremists and terrorists not attempted to thwart the will of the people. Such interference will not be tolerated and will be ruthlessly put down.”

“Nonetheless, the results are clear: the former nations of Pakistan and Iraq have voted, by overwhelming super majorities, to become a part of the Greater Islamic Republic. We will move quickly to consolidate these regions and peoples into our peaceful and prosperous Republic.”

“To this end, I have two important announcements to make.”

“First, after serious and in-depth negotiations over the last several weeks, we announce today that the Greater Islamic Republic is officially joining the Coalition of Asian States. I must thank our Foreign Minister, the Ayatollah Ol Asam Sadiq Shiraziha, for his unceasing efforts in this regard. We proudly join with India and the People’s Republic of China in the tacit recognition of the “Three Wisdoms.” Here in the Greater Islamic Republic, they shall be phrased as follows:

1. “All men and woman are created equal in their distinct roles in society.”
2. “All share equally in a working and industrious society.”
3. “One goal, one thought, one people for World peace.”

“This economic and social coalition is sweeping the world and we invite all to join with us in our commitment to social equity for all people.”

“Second, with respect to attempts to break apart the traditional nation of Iraq which has voted to join with the Greater Islamic Republic, we announce our unwavering commitment to the integrity of our borders and our people. Outside interference will not be tolerated. I have ordered elements of our national defense forces to prepare to put down any attempt to split off a portion of our nation and thereby thwart the will of the people.”

“To the Kurdish people we say, join with your countrymen in our quest for social equity. This is not the old regime in Iraq, which I, too, fought against. This is a new day for all Islam—a day we should mark by living in peace with one another and moving forward in the spirit of Shaheda and Sarum in our Islamic faith. For those who would attempt to subvert our nation and the will of the people, the answer will be the Jihad. There is no independent Kurdish state.”

“In this spirit, we announce a moratorium on action in this regard until November 1st. We will work with the autonomous Kurdish region to negotiate a peaceful unification with our Republic until that date. We will be prepared to enforce the will of the people after that time. We warn foreigners seeking to influence events to their own advantage to not meddle in the internal affairs of our nation. Outside influence and moves toward diplomatic recognition of a break-away state will not be tolerated.”

**September 8, 10:25**  
**UN General Assembly**  
**New York City, USA**

“The resolution passes by a vote of 95 in favor and 12 against.”

Ambassador Wong Yingfong sat back with pride and satisfaction. The issue had never really been in doubt, but to have won such a lopsided victory was all the more gratifying. When introduced to the general assembly the day before yesterday, it had taken favors and promises to get the resolution to the floor so quickly, but Wong had been a diplomat for many years and knew the ways of the United Nations. Now, the resolution has passed. A Resolution recognizing the passage of popular referenda in the former nations of Pakistan and Iraq uniting both with the Greater Islamic Republic.” An article of that resolution specifically condemned efforts by any portions of the nationalities to ignore the will of the people and break away from their former nations. The Article did not describe specific action that would be taken in response to de-unifying efforts, and there were no binding commitments. It was more of a “sense of the General Assembly.”

But, the United States, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Great Britain, Australia, Japan, Canada, Israel, Brazil, South Korea, Thailand and Egypt had voted against the resolution. The United States, Turkey, Great Britain, Canada and Australia had already made diplomatic contact with the leaders of what they were calling Kurdistan, though this contact had stopped well short of official recognition to date.

With The People’s Republic of China, India, Russia and the Greater Islamic Republic voting for the resolution, the growing economic and ideological influence of those combined entities had swayed many nations. Others had been content to remain on the sidelines with Germany, France, Greece, Italy and twenty other nations abstaining.

As he made his way out of the general assembly hall, Wong saw that his counterparts from India, the GIR and Russia were waiting for him. Shaking hands with the Ambassador from the GIR, Ambassador Wong addressed the others.

“Greetings, my friends! Let’s now retire to the conference room in my mission where we can discuss developing some method to give this resolution some teeth.”

**September 11, 19:25**  
**The Oval Office, The White House**  
**Washington, D.C.**

“Imam, I understand that the resolution has passed, and I understand your offer which expires at 12 a.m. on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. My point is simply that the Kurdish people are already autonomous and that they have voted to not unite with the GIR. The issue here is an intrinsic change in the nation of Iraq and its people. The people in the “Kurdistan” area have chosen to make their autonomy permanent.”

President Weisskopf had agreed to this call at the insistence of his Secretary of State. Normal communications and contacts were not producing any results and time was short. But Hasan Sayeed felt he was holding all the cards and he was communicating accordingly.

“President Weisskopf, with all due respect, there is no Kurdistan. Neither was there any provision for independence for the autonomous regions of which you speak. What there is, is a commitment by the GIR to keep things as they were, with the existing autonomy conceded by the former Iraq. This is all we are willing to agree to, and it is what the UN General Assembly has voted to support.”

The President had to suppress his growing ire. Sayeed was determined to have all of Iraq and with the help of Red China, India and Russia he felt he was in a position to force the issue.

“Imam, first of all, as you know, the UN resolution is non-binding. Second, referring to the former Iraq, I am speaking of the Iraq prior to the 2003 war which brought that regime down, and its “concessions” does not impress the United States. Quite frankly, as you know, Saddam Hussein was a tyrant. The fact is this: the people of that region have spoken anew; they have declared their independence. I want you to understand our commitment and firmness in this regard. We, along with several of our allies, intend to recognize Kurdistan as an independent nation.”

Now it was Hasan Sayeed’s turn to restrain his growing ire. Wasn’t it just like these infidels to go against the prevailing feelings of the world and attempt to force their will on entire nations?

“Mr. President, from your time as a youth, you are familiar with the people of my nation. You know that, for the most part, we are committed to our faith and to the people of our faith, as well as to the people of our nation. Iraq is now a part of our nation—all of it. If we are allowed, if we are not interfered with, we are certain that the people in northern Iraq will recognize our commitment and embrace it. It is the interference of other nations, including your own, which has led to the current conditions.

“I do not intend to debate this with you. We are convinced from our own intelligence sources that the irregular ballots in the north, and much of the violence in other areas, was instigated by your CIA and the operatives of other nations. We have said nothing of this publicly, but we insist at this time that such interference cease.



“With respect to your commitments and firmness on the matter, I assure you, Mr. President, we are equally committed and firm. If the Kurdish population persist in their efforts to divide Iraq beyond November 1<sup>st</sup>, our response will be swift, devastating and decisive. Good day, Mr. President.”

Click.

Everyone in the room was surprised at the abruptness with which the call was terminated. Fred Reissinger had hoped that a direct exchange between the two leaders could produce some opening, some chance to avoid confrontation. That hope was now all but gone.

“He’s serious. First of all, the CAS is hurting us economically, even more so our allies in Western Europe. The Chinese, the Indians and now the GIR are exclusively exploiting Russia’s Siberian resources. American and European efforts in the region have been shut down, contracts have been reneged upon, and hundreds of millions, if not billions, have been lost. Now, we are being faced with an ultimatum regarding the Kurds and Sayeed feels he has the international support and military power to stand us down.”

Interjecting at this point, Russell Gage, the Secretary of the Treasury, and leader of the National Economic Council (NEC), whose principal function was overseeing the Administration’s domestic and international economic policy-making process, spoke up.

“Mr. President, as we discussed when the CAS first announced its objectives, we are seeing significant weakening in our petroleum, precious metals and natural gas industries. This undercutting is due to the adverse effects that most of the large players in these markets are experiencing as a result of CAS actions and policies.”

“As Fred has said, they have simply reneged on contracts already in place, forcing our firms to eat huge capital investments. This is beginning to have a very real impact on the stock markets in those sectors of the economy, and has every potential of impacting other sectors as well. With the vast petroleum reserves and resources of the GIR being added to this scenario, economic prospects are not good. In a very real sense, we will be vulnerable to economic warfare every bit as serious as the military kind.”

Secretary of Defense Tim Hattering considered the Secretary of State’s and the Secretary of the Treasury’s pronouncements. He agreed with both, but wanted to ensure that the meeting stayed on track in focusing on addressing the immediate Kurd situation.

“Excuse me, Russ, but, Mr. President, I agree with the warnings and comments of both Fred and Russ and have to add to it my own with respect to the immediate issue of the Kurds. Over the last several days, we have tracked several Iraqi divisions taking up “jump off positions” at critical junctures leading into “Kurdistan.” It is apparent they are staging supplies and aircraft to support a quick and overwhelming strike toward Irbil and then Kirkuk, and another towards the west along the Turkish frontier.”

“What’s of even greater concern is that the GIR is moving two entire Army groups and their air support towards the former border with Iran. We believe one of them will support the Iraqi units to the north in their plan for keeping Kurdistan in line, while the other will secure their border with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.”

The President took this in.

“What strength are we talking about here?”

Tim consulted his notes.

“Mr. President, I do not have precise numbers, but right now Iraq is amassing fifty to sixty thousand combat troops, two to three hundred tanks, more APC’s and about a hundred combat aircraft. Following behind that are perhaps one hundred thousand GIR combat troops in each Army group supported by six to eight hundred tanks and three to four hundred combat aircraft... that is, that many aircraft for each group.”

They are serious indeed, thought the President. Such numbers are more than enough to handle the Kurds in the north, and far more than enough to secure their borders with Saudi and Kuwait, unless of course they are assuming we are going to contest this militarily, or...

“OK, I want everyone to listen very carefully. I’m afraid that there is a very real possibility that the GIR is not just planning to secure their borders with Kuwait and Saudi. They have assembled a force that would be capable of crossing those borders. I want us to start looking at that possibility right now.”

Turning to the grouping of chairs where the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of State sat, the President continued.

“Tim, work with General Stone, the Joint Chiefs, John, and Mike to start analyzing and planning from that perspective. General Stone, you’d best look at very inconspicuously calling up the reserve units associated with Central Command and the 24<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Division to augment the MEU we have already sent over there to train with the Kuwaitis. Get the ready brigade of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne prepared to airlift over to Kuwait on my order. Jeremy, make sure General Horton of Central Command understands our need to field a force capable of defending Kuwait and Saudi and have him start the planning. I know exactly what he’s going through and will give him the full support of this Presidency. Make sure he understands that.”

“Fred, begin working with Kuwait, Saudi and Bahrain and get the necessary agreements in place to activate our pre-positioned equipment and allow for the manning of that equipment. In addition, prepare an official diplomatic recognition of Kurdistan and coordinate it with Great Britain, Canada, Australia, Turkey and Saudi Arabia.”

“Also, work with Russ and the NEC to analyze the numbers and consequences in anticipation of a possible revocation of Normal Trade Relation Status for all of the CAS, including Russia. I know this can be a potential bombshell to the economy and the markets, but we may have to experience such difficulties to extract ourselves from a very compromising position. We have simply allowed ourselves to become too dependent on a potential adversary. Review this analysis with Alan and brief me on how best to communicate it to our friends and allies. I will make an announcement to the nation regarding all of this on Friday evening, September 15<sup>th</sup>, and I want to ensure that we coordinate it with whatever similar announcements and actions our allies can take in concert with us.”

Finally, turning to his right where his Vice President, Alan Reeves, was seated with his National Security Advisor, John Bowers, the President concluded.

“Alan, please work with Fred, particularly in preparing the way with our allies who abstained in the general assembly vote regarding Iraqi. I’d like to think that we could get at least Germany and Italy behind us on the recognition of Kurdistan. In addition, we want to make sure that Japan, South Korea and the others who voted with us, but are not yet prepared to recognize Kurdistan, don’t vacillate.

I also want frank discussions on the potential need to utilize our trade relations with all of the CAS and Russia as an incentive for them to ensure continued free trade with respect to the Siberian resources, and in particular the outstanding contracts and commitments that have been unilaterally terminated. We should probably also include in that discussion the CAS policy regarding the labor tariffs. If necessary, Alan, visit their heads of state personally to discuss these issues frankly, or arrange meetings between them and myself.”

### **September 12, same time**

#### **Presidential Offices**

#### **Tehran, The Greater Islamic Republic**

“Instruct our 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Army group forces to immediately initiate operation Mongoose and proceed beyond the borders of the former Iraq and take up staging positions. Make it clear that there are to be no accidents, no provocation. Just move to the staging areas and await further orders.”

“Sadiq, arrange personal calls with President Zenim of the People’s Republic of China and President Putin of the Russian Federation. I believe it is time we expend further funds on more weapons systems and supplies.”

“Then, call for a meeting of the ruling Mujtahids and senior Mullahs within the next three or four days. We must request the faith of our people in this and seek Allah’s will in the measures that will be necessary to complete our task of uniting all of Islam. After that meeting, within one or two days, I would like to hold a meeting of the entire military council.”

Hasan Sayeed watched his Foreign Minister and devoted subordinate leave to make the arrangements he had directed. The culmination of his primary mission, the unification of all of Islam, was within grasp. But before that mission would be realized, Hasan knew a testing would have to be endured. The time for that testing would begin in earnest appeared to be close at hand.

### **September 13, 10:25**

#### **College of Engineering, Boise State University**

#### **Boise, Idaho**

Both Billy and Leon had noticed him when he came in. He quietly took a seat in the back row of the lecture hall, took off his cap and sat quietly as the professor explained first order derivatives to the class.

School had been in session for just a couple of weeks and Billy and Leon were in two classes together, one of which was this Calculus class that was required for Billy’s Mechanical Engineering major and for Leon’s Physics major. The two of them had become close friends and Billy enjoyed the opportunity for some home cooking as Leon invited him over to their apartment to eat three or four times a week.

They had talked about everything. From the inevitable talks about girls, to long discussions on cars, to their thoughts about politics and finally to their mutual desire to get into the military. Although Billy’s father was in the U.S. Army, both Billy and Leon were more drawn to the Marines, Billy as a result of his studies of all the military service branches (he thought he would like infantry operations, ships and helicopters and he could get all of them in the Marines). Leon was drawn there as a result of his experiences with Charlie Jenkins, the retired Marine husband of Nellie Jenkins, the librarian back in the Harold Washington Memorial Public Library in Chicago who had helped him so much.

The lecture went on. As they took notes and listened to the professor, both boys stole glances to the back of the amphitheater style lecture hall. He was still there. Dressed in what looked like a service

“C” Uniform, a Gunnery Sergeant of the United States Marine Corps for some reason was sitting back there in their Calculus class.

When the lecture ended and the professor dismissed class, the Gunny moved to the double exit doors and simply stood there as the students left the lecture hall. As Billy and Leon approached the doors, the Marine looked straight at Leon and spoke while stretching his hand forward for a handshake.

“Leon Campbell? Hi, my name is Sergeant Ken Bennett. My friends either call me deadeye, or just Gunny “D.” Sergeant Major Jenkins gave me a call a week or so ago and said I ought to look you up, so here I am.”

As Leon shook the firm hand, he had to think a minute. Sergeant Major Jenkins? Oh! He must mean Charlie!

“You mean Charlie? Well that’s great! Charlie taught me a lot about our country and what it is really all about...he also spoke a lot about the Marines.”

“Oh! Excuse me Sergeant. This is my friend Billy. He’s from Texas and his Dad flies the most advanced attack helicopter in the military.”

Gunny “D” turned and shook Billy’s hand.

“So your Dad is a Marine? He flies the AH-1Z Super Cobra?”

Billy had studied everything he could about every active attack helicopter in the world. He was very familiar with the debate.

“No, Sir. My Dad is in the U.S. Army reserve and flies the RAH-66 Comanche. It’s a great bird with unbelievable stealth characteristics, and very maneuverable—but it can’t carry the ordinance the King Cobra can.”

Gunny “D” was impressed.

“Well, Billy, you sure know your helo’s. And from what Sergeant major Jenkins told me about you, Leon, you’re anxious to look at how to become a Marine while taking advantage of your scholarship.”

“Tell you both what. Why don’t you come over to my office and I’ll show you some films. Some of them will knock your socks off because of the neat, intense scenes of our equipment in action... tanks, LAV’s, helicopters, jet aircraft, amphibious assault ships, aircraft carriers, etc.”

“Others will tell you a lot about the Marine Corps and the various ways to sign up. Either way, you are both welcome any time. How about this afternoon, or right now if you have the time?”

The Sergeant had taken the liberty of looking at Leon’s schedule before coming. He knew Leon was free this afternoon and now hoped that his friend, Billy, was too.

“Sounds *great* to me,” said Billy, “I wouldn’t miss it and I can come over right now.”

Leon also agreed, and all three left the Engineering building for Sergeant Bennett’s office.

**September 14, 20:30**

**Lazy H Ranch**

**Outside Montague, Texas**

“OK, that’s great, honey. Glad to hear you enjoyed it so much. Yes, you bet, I’ll be sure to pass that on to your father. Please wait for him to talk to you before you make any final decision. I know, I know; that’s the main reason you called.”

“Tell Leon and his family hi for us. Good luck in the game this weekend...we hope you get to play. Don’t forget your studies. Yes, I know you do. Ok, honey. Bye.”

Cindy hung up the phone. Billy sure had been impressed by a Marine recruiter there on the BSU campus. Well, this was no big surprise. He had always indicated a preference for the Marine Corps. But Cindy sure wanted him to take advantage of his education before he joined up. Well, Jess would talk it over with him and give him the best advice possible. She was confident Billy would then make the best decision. As she thought about this, she heard the pickup pull into the driveway and the engine stop. A few seconds later, the front door opened.

“There you are. I was beginning to wonder if you had gotten lost.”

Jess crossed the room and gave his wife a hug and then walked into the kitchen with her.

“Nope, just had to dicker with old long-winded Harv Harberson about that hay he wants to buy. In the end that was alright, though, because he ended up settling for more than I was going to ask. Sort of talked himself into it. Anyhow, sorry I was late.”

As they sat down at the table together, Cindy reassuringly put her hand on Jess’s arm.

“Well, it was no big thing. Too much longer and I honestly would have started worrying, though. But you did miss a call from Billy.”

Jess had thought a lot about his son over the last few weeks since he and Cindy had returned from Idaho. He wanted to know what was going on...wanted to know how his son was faring...what was the football program like...whom was he befriending...how were his classes. Jess trusted his son implicitly. He just wanted to share these things with him. Cindy wanted to know all of this too, and even more. But wisely, they knew that their son was off on his own and needed some independence and space to let him stand on his own two feet. He would call them if he needed help or had news.

“Now,” Jess thought, “I’ve missed one of those calls.”

“What did he have to say?”

Cindy watched Jess’s eyes carefully as she told him of Billy’s meeting with the Marine recruiter and Billy’s excitement at the films he had watched. She particularly watched Jess as she told of Billy’s excitement as he learned of the capabilities of the AH-Z King Cobra helicopter the Marines were deploying.

“He’s talking about trying to find a way to join the Marines now and get his basic training out of the way after football season or next summer. He says he thinks he can work it out between the school and the Marines to defer his active duty until after graduation, or something like that.”

“Jess, he sure sounded excited. I could hear it in his voice. He has the eyesight and the smarts for it. He wants to be a pilot like his Dad.”

Jess’s eyes never betrayed any hint of disappointment regarding a possible Marine career for his son as opposed to the U.S. Army. There was none. Jess knew it was an honorable thing to desire to serve your nation in any capacity and Jess already had great respect for the U.S. Marine Corps.

“I’ll have to look into whether the Marines have such programs and what the particulars are for them. My guess is they will help him with some of his expenses, although the football scholarship is full ride.”

“That new Cobra is a nice bird. He could do a heck of a lot worse. I’m glad they are on our side, although the Comanche is still the hottest thing flying under a rotor.”

As Jess said this, the phone rang.

“I’ll get it, honey.”

“Hello. Yes, this is he....I see. When? Yep, that’ll be more than enough. Ok. Ok. Not a problem, I’ll be there. Thanks. Goodbye.”

When Jess hung up the phone, Cindy stood and walked over to him. They had been together too long and she had heard too many similar calls to not recognize the inflection in his voice or the types of answers he had given. She could recognize in an instant his “military” voice and knew he had just received some type of call pertaining to it.

“Jess, I already know. When do you have to report?”

“It’s a call to active duty. Couldn’t go into any details over the phone, but I am to report to Tampa, Florida next Wednesday, the 20<sup>th</sup>. It’s a minimum of three months.”

**September 15, 9:50 local time**

**Former Iran/Iraq frontier**

**Between Abadan and Basra, GIR**

Abduhl Selim was exhilarated as his squad leader announced that they had just crossed into the former nation of Iraq. So much had happened in the last four months since his country of Turkmenistan had united with Iran and helped to form the Greater Islamic Republic.

Abduhl had turned eighteen years old soon after the announcement of that unification. That announcement had changed his life and stirred his soul. It had been almost a religious event for him as he had cheered the announcement of unification and the creation of a greater Islamic Republic. Although not overly religious himself, that event had given birth to a keen desire within his soul to be a part of the historical events unfolding around him. When they had returned to their home after the announcement, he had gone to his father and shared with him his love for weapons and his desire to join the armed forces of this blossoming new world power.

His father had shared much with Abduhl. To Abduhl’s utter shock and amazement, his father had not only assented, but had talked long hours with him about Abduhl’s feelings, and what his father considered his strengths and weaknesses. It turned out, his father knew more than he would have possibly imagined...and his father understood him.

From that point, he had gone into the basic training with the former Turkmenistan armed forces. That very training was in the process of being modified and updated by representatives from Iran, now the Greater Islamic Republic. During his six weeks of training, Abduhl had proven so phenomenally proficient with a rifle that he had been recommended and approved for transfer to one of the more elite regular GIR units. As a result, upon completion of his basic training, Abduhl was on his way south into the former Iran and to his new unit, an assault company in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army group of the Greater Islamic Republic.

Now, a month later, here he was, traveling as a part of a scout squad for his company, riding in a eight-wheeled BTR-80 armored personnel carrier. Every few moments the sound of low flying attack helicopters or jet aircraft could be heard passing overhead.

“Abduhl, come forward. It’s your turn to take watch.”

The BTR-80 had several firing and observation ports through which the embarked infantry could observe their surroundings and fire their weapons in response to combat situations. While in transit, in non-combat areas, the soldiers had been trained to keep a regular watch through a few of the observation/firing ports in an effort to avoid their being surprised by enemy forces or insurgents.

Although many of the soldiers did not like this duty, Abduhl enjoyed it because it provided a break in the monotony of riding in the canvas seats, and it let him see glimpses of the countryside through the clouds of dust raised by other vehicles.

“Yes, Sir! Right away, Sir!”

The sergeant hid a smile at the enthusiasm and willingness of this young soldier.

Allah be praised, he thought, I pray this youngster’s attitude is infectious.

“Just make sure you keep your eyes open. As we approach closer to Basra, there will be more buildings and we want to be on our guard. In Basra, our column will be taking the “E” highway to the north towards Baghdad and support of the Iraqi forces preparing to reclaim the regions in the north, should the rebels continue in their rebellious ways. We’ll change watch in Basra. That’s about two hours from now.”

Abduhl smiled as he cradled his AK-74 assault rifle in his arms and took up his position at the observation port. Two hours to Basra! Baghdad by tomorrow evening! And all of it as a part of his nation: one people, one faith and one leader.

That leader was one Abduhl was coming to trust and respect more as the days went on. He was a leader who had the will to secure their nation’s place in world affairs...a leader who would not let any other power, particularly any western power, interfere in the affairs of their nation. Although Abduhl was mature enough to understand that it would be better for the Kurds to align themselves with their Islamic brothers peacefully and willfully, a part of him hoped they would try to maintain their rebellion. He wondered if the Americans would be inclined to interfere.

Abduhl did not have to wait long to find out.

**September 15, 19:00**

**The Oval Office, The White House**

**Washington, D.C.**

“Good evening, my fellow Americans. I come before you this evening to inform you directly of certain actions your government is taking in response to world events. I believe it is imperative that the people of this nation are as informed as possible regarding the state of international conditions worldwide. It is equally imperative that the citizens are informed regarding our national interests and how we, as your elected representatives respond to them on your behalf. We are a nation governed by the people and for the people, and it is, and will continue to be, this administration’s policy to never forget that critical and fundamental principle.”

“As most of you are aware, there have been extraordinary developments in world affairs over the last several months. In the Far East a very strong Coalition of Asian States formed several months ago with the idea of uniting dissimilar cultures, governments and peoples along ideological and economic lines that are extremely socialistic at best, and Marxist at worst. They are attempting to accomplish this coalition by entering into exclusive trade agreements with several nations, Russia in particular. These relations have harmed many corporations based in America and Europe, as well as many in Asia, which are headquartered in nations outside of the CAS. This is because in those areas being exploited by the CAS, the arrangements are exclusive to CAS member states and, accordingly, the host countries have canceled contracts and arrangements of long standing with our corporations and many corporations of our friends and allies.”

“In addition, within the CAS, a new tariff has been attached to the labor force of the member countries. This high tariff has driven many more American and other firms out of the market, forcing them to abandon significant capital investments which the CAS nations then pick up for pennies on the dollar at best. Many of our companies are going out of business as a result.”

“Inasmuch as these practices violate the very essence of free and fair trade, we are taking the following action by way of response.”

“First, we are asking the National Economic Council, headed by the Secretary of the Treasury, to examine the impact of removing normal trade status from the nations of India, The People’s Republic of China and all members of The Greater Islamic Republic. Unless these nations indicate a clear commitment to reverse these unfair and confrontational trade practices, as President I will recommend revocation of normal trade relations for these countries by November 1<sup>st</sup> of this year.”

“Such measures, if they are implemented, will create hardship for some American companies. We will offset these hardships through short-term subsidies to encourage economic development and the opening of markets in other areas more favorable for US trade. Conditions for said subsidies and areas targeted for companies desiring to qualify will be announced in concert with any suspension in normal trade relations with the aforementioned nations.”

“My fellow citizens, it is past time that we step forward in our fair and free trade efforts and ensure that said trade is always fair to American firms and in keeping with American national interests. In so doing, we will not impair nor impede the free market. We will apply normal trade relation status with all three of these criteria in mind...free, fair to America and not at odds with American national interests. It will require the efforts of all of us, working together as individual

citizens, to ensure that these measures work. Send a personal message to these nations with your pocketbook.”

“Second, on the agenda tonight, is a matter of utmost importance, and one that strikes at the heart of our most cherished national principles. It is the principle of self-determination and sovereignty. As most of you are aware, the nation of Iraq has virtually ceased to exist. Our ally in the region, President Chaliberi, was recently assassinated, and the nation of Iraq fell into a state of virtual anarchy. The resulting atmosphere in the Mid East has been one of extreme tension, and we have been monitoring that potentially volatile atmosphere closely.”

“We have supported the UN initiative to allow the people of Iraq to hold a referendum to establish the direction of their peoples. The results of that election sent two very important and distinct messages to the world.”

“First, the peoples of central and southern Iraq voted clearly to unite themselves with the Greater Islamic republic. We support their will in this decision, although we would rather have seen them remain independent.”

“Second, the already autonomous Kurdish areas of northern Iraq voted to establish their independence. This is something they have sought since World War I when the current borders of Iraq were imposed upon them. They have never ceased working for their independence and were kept from it by one of the most brutal tyrants of the last fifty years. The suffering of the Kurds has been well documented.”

“Now these people have voted overwhelmingly for self determination and independence in creating the Republic of Kurdistan.”

“Ladies and gentlemen, my fellow citizens and all those listening across the world. Tonight, as President of the United States, and in concert with the nations of Great Britain, Canada, Australia, Israel, Turkey and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, I announce the official recognition of the Republic of Kurdistan as a free and independent, sovereign nation.”

“In the weeks to come, we will establish our embassy in the capitol of Irbil.”

“We urge calm and peace in the region. We especially urge the Imam Hasan Sayeed and the Greater Islamic Republic to honor the express wish of the people of the Republic of Kurdistan. The borders of the Republic of Kurdistan and its sovereignty must be respected.”

“To help ensure the integrity of this sovereign nation, the United States will present a resolution to the security council and the general assembly of the United Nations calling for the establishment of observers on the border and calling for mediation between the GIR and the Republic of Kurdistan. These resolutions will also propose creating a “buffer” zone between the two forces until a diplomatic resolution is reached. For your information, the map being displayed on your TV screen and on our live broadcast site on the Internet, portrays the location of the new Republic of Kurdistan, the proposed buffer zones, and the final vote counts according to the UN monitoring teams.”

“As a precaution against coercion by outside forces, and as a demonstration of our own commitment, I have activated a number of U.S. Army reserve units to be available to support our Marine Expeditionary Unit which is in Kuwait training at the moment. These forces will also be available to support our forces on the ground in Turkey should they require such support for any contingency. The specific units and their function will be announced tomorrow morning at a press conference to be held by the Secretary of Defense, Tim Hattering, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Jeremy Stone.”

“We believe these measures constitute an appropriate response to conditions which pose risks and challenges to our national interests and our ability to conduct free and fair trade. We urge the nations of the CAS to carefully consider their economic policies, and to work to meet us half way in developing fair trade policies between the CAS member nations and America and her allies.”

“Again, we urge restraint on the part of the Greater Islamic Republic in dealing with the new nation, the Republic of Kurdistan. In the spirit of our own independence, we in America, along with several of our allies, have taken the step to recognize them as an independent nation because of the historical nature of their struggle, and because of the ideals they embrace.”

“We state in clear and unmistakable language, to any nation that would attempt to coerce a free people: the decision we have made to recognize the Republic of Kurdistan is not a step we have taken lightly. Nor is it one from which we will walk away.”

“Now, my fellow citizens, goodnight, and may God bless our great Republic; may God bless the United States of America.”

**September 16, 08:03**

**WNN Broadcast Studios**

**New York city, New York**

“Continuing with our top story.”

“Reactions to President Weisskopf’s dramatic announcements yesterday are pouring in from around the world. Impact on Wall Street has been mixed as the Blue Chips have been steady to higher while the Technology sector is taking a beating. The volatility is due to the large investment in high

tech design and manufacturing in the People's Republic of China and the impact that cessation of normal trade relations will have on those investments.”

“On Capitol Hill, many on both sides of the aisle are condemning the announcement by the President as being too harsh and too reactionary. Others, predominantly conservatives, are hailing the President's actions as long overdue, given the continued military build-up of the People's Republic of China and its expanding unfair and unfriendly economic influence in the region.”

“Reactions from overseas are mixed.”

“The most severe reactions, as might be expected, are coming from The Greater Islamic Republic, India and The People's Republic of China.”

“President Jien Zenim of the People's Republic of China was quoted this morning in the China News with this response:”

“It is unfortunate that the United States has chosen to react in this fashion. Economically and diplomatically, President Weisskopf has embarked on a path of confrontation and vilification instead of understanding. The People's Republic of China will not follow suit. We will work both with the United States and with our CAS partners and come to as amiable a solution to these difficulties as possible.”

“Harsher words were quoted by the Imam Hasan Sayeed, the leader of the Greater Islamic Republic:”

“How dare the United States interfere with our internal affairs as a sovereign nation? The people of Iraq have spoken, in the American tradition of democracy, and have voted to unite themselves with the Greater Islamic Republic. The elections were monitored and certified by the United Nations and sanctioned by the general assembly of that body, despite violence that attempted to disrupt and destroy the election, perpetrated by the very people whom the United States claims it is backing.”

“We repeat to the United States and to the world: we will not tolerate outside interference in our internal affairs. We are negotiating with the leaders in the autonomous northern regions of the former Iraq in good faith. We offer amnesty to those involved with the independence movement, other than those we intend to identify who committed violence during, or attempted to defraud, the election process itself. We guarantee the continued autonomy of the region within the Greater Islamic Republic. We urge all citizens in the region, both Kurds and those of other ethnic or cultural backgrounds, to maintain order and avoid outside influence and attempts to divide our nation and our faith.”

“We repeat. Any efforts, after November 1<sup>st</sup>, to divide our nation will not be tolerated. We warn those nations establishing diplomatic ties with this break-away region: you will not be accorded normal diplomatic protections should the revolt continue. We do not recognize the rebellion or any of the institutions which are trying to legitimize it.”

“Other nations either condemning the moves by the U.S. President, or responding negatively to them, are India, Russia, Libya, North Korea, Vietnam, South Africa, and the Western Hemisphere nations of Cuba, Venezuela and Panama.”

“Finally, reactions from America's allies and friends are cautious. Support ranging from cautious to unqualified comes from England, Canada, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey, South Korea and Taiwan. Germany, Italy, France, Greece, Brazil, Egypt and Japan have all expressed their reservations and their intent to await further developments.”

“With the response around the world varying so widely, it is highly unlikely that the United States will realize its desires for a UN monitoring force in the region to establish a buffer zone between the former Iraq and the break-away Republic of Kurdistan. We will update our viewers immediately with breaking news from the region.”

“Now, for other news.”

**September 19, 15:28 local time**

**COSTIND Headquarters**

**Beijing, PRC**

Seated in the plush corporate management conference room were:

General Hunbaio, the commander of all of The People's Republic of China's weapons development, along with several of his deputies,

Chin Zhongbaio, the CEO of Red China's COSCO shipping company, the largest ship builder in the world, along with his managing directors,

Lu Pham, the mastermind behind, and designer of, Red China's newest and most secret weapon, the LRASD and,

Sung Hsu, the ingenious head of COSCO manufacturing.

The General was addressing the group, and was completing a review of the status of progress on the COSCO shipping military conversion project, and building towards two special presentations.

“I am pleased to announce that as of this morning we have launched the Beijing, our first Sea Control Carrier from the Tanjin shipyards. This is a proud day for the People's Republic of China and her people. We have entered a new era of Naval Power and Naval history for the People's Republic of

China. And we intend to continue along that path. We expect to begin launching more of these ships from our more secure facilities by the middle of November.

"In addition, over the next two weeks, we will launch our first Amphibious Assault ship and our first Tactical Attack ship from our other conversion facilities. These ships will not only allow us to extend our capacity to project our nation's foreign policy around the globe, but the new LRASD weapons systems which they carry will also allow us to do so without fear or concern of how our adversaries might attempt to interfere."

"In addition to this review, today we have gathered ourselves together to recognize the tremendous efforts and roles of two of our most talented personnel in the achievement of these accomplishments. One of these two individuals is Commodore Lu Pham, the designer and developer of our new LRASD weapon system. The other individual is Sr. Manager Sung Hsu, the brilliant manufacturing manager who has seen to it that the conversion of these vessels proceeded smoothly and ahead of schedule."

"In recognition of those efforts, Lu and Sung, please stand up."

Sung Hsu was embarrassed, proud, moved and patriotic all at the same time as he stood next to his friend, Lu Pham. He was glad that Lu was here to experience this with him. He only wished his wife and children could also share it with him. No matter, he would spare no description in sharing it with them (at least as much as security would allow) when he got home.

For his part, Lu Pham was proud and richly gratified as he stood. He was fulfilling his dream of creating an extremely complex and revolutionary weapons system that would be used to pay back the United States for its crimes against his family. He had never allowed this underlying desire for retribution to affect or taint his work, but it had been a fundamental motivation for him the entire time, nonetheless.

"Commodore Lu Pham, in recognition of your contributions and command performance, I am proud to promote you to Admiral in the Navy of the People's Republic of China. From this point, you will report directly to me in your efforts on the LRASD weapons system and its integration into the fleet. Congratulations in your new responsibilities Admiral Lu."

As the General shook Lu's hand he presented his new insignia.

"Chin Zhongbaio will now make the presentation to Sung Hsu."

Chin Zhongbaio stood and approached Sung Hsu. Chin was one of the most powerful men in the People's Republic of China. A member of the politburo with the confidence of, President Jien Zenim, he was also the Chief Executive Officer of the largest shipping company in the world, which he had personally managed the growth of since its inception.

Chin prided himself on the prestige, honor and power his accomplishments brought COSCO and his homeland, and on his ability to recognize and develop talent which served COSCO and the PRC. In Sung Hsu, he had discovered and developed one of the most promising of talents...in truth, with Sung, there was little development necessary. Sung developed himself.

"Sung Hsu, in honor of your accomplishments on the Amphibious Assault conversion project, and further suggestions which have benefited all of our military conversion projects, today I promote you to the position of Senior Vice President of Manufacturing, Military Conversion Projects. In this position of responsibility, you will report directly to me. Congratulations."

**September 20, 08:15**

**National Reconnaissance Office Headquarters**

**IMINT Directorate, Chantilly, VA**

More satellite photos had come in early this morning. What they showed was not a tremendous surprise, but was stunning nonetheless. There, with tugs to either side moving her towards the harbor entrance (and being recorded faithfully by the SEAL MUAS units as it did), was the first Chinese designed and built aircraft carrier to enter the service of the People's Republic of China.

"Bill, you might want to take a look...they've launched her. We knew it was coming, but now it's official. As of late yesterday China time, she was moving out of the Tanjin harbor."

Bill had expected it would be soon. The Chinese had moved with stunning speed in the conversion of this very impressive VSTOL (Vertical and Short Take Off and Landing) Aircraft Carrier. They had clearly been planning it for several years and had executed the plan almost flawlessly. Bill had to respect that effort, but it concerned him just the same.

"And what of the shipyards?"

Tom and Bill had discussed their opinions of how quickly the Chinese would turn things around and begin converting another ship. The answer had largely been answered several days ago when another COSCO container ship had been photographed pulling up near the dry dock shipyard into a position which would allow it to quickly be placed in the dry dock and worked on. Today, all of that was confirmed through satellite imagery.

"Already in the dock, Bill. In the last two-and-a-half days, they floated the first out and have the second in there ready to go for round two."



Bill had expected as much. It looked like the People's Republic of China was going to be able to launch Sea Control Aircraft Carriers every few months. The question now was how long it would take for them to make these things operational.

"We'd best get this together and get with John Bowers and the Navy. The Navy has already got an advanced LA Class SSN over there ready to track this lady through trials. With everything else that's going on in the Mid East, though, our ability to focus on this will be impaired. We're going to have to find a way to stay on top of it anyway, between all of these Central Command requests we are getting."

### **September 20 through November 1**

Bill Hendrickson was right. The focus was on the Middle East, and over the ensuing six weeks conditions there continued to deteriorate as diplomatic efforts increased dramatically and military preparations began in earnest.

On September 22, the United States introduced its resolution to the General Assembly of the United Nations for a monitoring force and a buffer zone between the Greater Islamic Republic and the Republic of Kurdistan. This resolution, after two days of heated debate, was defeated by a vote of 47 in favor and 65 against.

Thereafter, visits by the Vice President of the United States and the U.S. Secretary of State proceeded at a rapid pace. The Vice President ably assumed the task of reaching out to allies and friends and putting together a coalition of nations who favored the independence of Kurdistan. Along with Great Britain, Canada, Australia, Israel, Turkey and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, by October 10<sup>th</sup> the Vice President was able to convince South Korea, The United Arab Emirates (UAR), The Republic of China (Taiwan), Egypt, Germany and Brazil to officially recognize the new nation.

In the meantime, the Greater Islamic Republic was able to gather significant support for its position that the Republic of Kurdistan was a region rebelling against the legitimate wishes of the people of the Greater Islamic Republic. The nations of Libya, Syria, Jordan, North Korea, Vietnam and Uzbekistan stood firmly behind the GIR's deadline of November 1<sup>st</sup> for the use of force. The People's Republic of China, India and Russia did not recognize the new Republic of Kurdistan. But they supported GIR efforts to end what they called the "rebellion." They also made a great show of volunteering to mediate the "crisis" between the United States and the GIR.

Militarily, the United States activated its pre-positioned equipment (consisting of armor, ammunition, fuel and other logistical supplies) in Kuwait, the UAR, Saudi Arabia and in the Indian Ocean at Diego Garcia. The U.S. Central Command, under four star General Lyman Horton, was given overall theater command for what had been labeled Operation "Desert Sentinel" and began beefing up its troop strength. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne ready brigade, the Marine Expeditionary Unit already in Kuwait, and initial elements of the 24<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Division's armor and infantry brigades were all deployed. Other reserve and regular units in lesser numbers were sent to Turkey to strengthen the airfields there.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force began flying in squadrons of F-15E, A-10 and F-16 strike fighters along with F-15 air superiority fighters and all of the supporting aircraft to airfields in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Turkey. Turkey augmented the already strengthened U.S. security around the airbases with its own forces.

In addition to the MEU and its supporting ships already deployed in the area, the U.S. Navy also deployed one Carrier Battle Group (CBG) in the Persian Gulf and another off the coast of Turkey as a show of force and commitment, and to support Operation Desert Sentinel. In addition, two Surface Action Groups (SAG's), consisting of one Arleigh Burke class guided missile destroyer (DDG) and two new Littoral Combat Ships (LCS), were deployed to the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea. Four Los Angeles class nuclear attack submarines (SSN) were also deployed to the area.

Most of the U.S. ground strength and that of its allies of England, Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, were located along the Kuwait and Saudi Arabian borders as a shield for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Arrayed against them were the much larger numbers of the GIR 1<sup>st</sup> Army group, which were augmented by the former Iraqi Army units in the southern areas of former Iraq, south and west of Basra near the Kuwait and Saudi Arabian borders. These units had continued to pour into Iraq along with the GIR 2<sup>nd</sup> Army Group. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Army Group moved north to augment the Iraqi Army units there that had taken up positions along the Kurdistan frontier between Baghdad and Irbil. All units made a point of deploying to staging areas well off the border.

Hundreds of military aircraft including modern SU-27, MIG-29, SU-24 and SU-25 aircraft were also ferried to airfields in, Southern and Central Iraq. As air patrols of the GIR and air patrols of both the U.S. and its allies began to fly in proximity to one another, tensions escalated.

In mid-October, Hasan Sayeed issued a general call up for reserves and volunteers to augment the already massive ground forces of the GIR. The answer was unprecedented as hundreds of thousands of young to middle-aged Islamic men flocked to military training facilities in every major town across the broad expanse of the Greater Islamic Republic. Arms shipments from both Russia and

the People's Republic of China were arriving daily as the oil wealth available to the GIR was used for expedited shipments.

By October 25<sup>th</sup>, one week before the deadline established by Hasan Sayeed was set to expire, the entire world again held its breath as belligerent forces were arrayed facing one another in the Middle East.

By that date, more than 200,000 GIR forces were prepared to occupy Kurdistan, supported by 800 tanks, 200 attack helicopters and 500 combat aircraft. In the south, along the Kuwait and Saudi borders, the GIR had an even larger force of approximately 225,000 troops, supported by 1200 tanks, 250 attack helicopters and 800 combat aircraft.

By comparison, the coalition put together by the United States had 200 aircraft in Turkey, supported by 50,000 Turkish troops and 15,000 U.S. forces which were there to act as a final defense for the air bases out of which the U.S., English and Canadian aircraft were operating.

In the south, the U.S. had amassed 50,000 combat troops supported by another 25,000 coalition troops. The ground troops were established in a defensive posture along the border between the GIR, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, along with their equipment, which included 400 tanks, 200 attack helicopters and 300 combat aircraft. All of these numbers were growing daily and as the days of October dwindled, the feeling of anxiety hung palpably in the desert air.

## Chapter 6

*“Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake.”—Napoleon*

**October 30, 06:50 local time**

**Republic of Kurdistan Military Headquarters**

**In a cavern near Irbil, Iraq**

With the move towards independence, Jabal Talabari had been appointed the commanding General for all of Kurdistan’s military forces. Over the last weeks, in addition to the fifteen to twenty thousand members of Jabal’s original Patriotic Kurdistan Front, Jabal, along with help from Will Peterson and his American CIA compatriots, had been able to recruit another thirty thousand personnel. The Kurdistan people were anxious to defend their new nation, but given the time constraints, only very rudimentary training could be conducted. Despite the lack of “formal” training, they were willing to fight for their new republic and Jabal felt they could make up in commitment and desire what they lacked in training. Unfortunately, the only way to do that when facing a well-disciplined and well-trained enemy was to pay the butcher’s bill.

Forty-five thousand personnel, with no heavy armor and only minimal anti-tank and anti-aircraft, were facing over 200,000 of the enemy with hundreds of heavy tanks, hundreds of modern attack aircraft and attack helicopters. The weapons that had been provided to them by the United States were modern and would function well. Ultimately, the support they received from the U.S. Air Force out of Turkey and its effectiveness would be the key to the coming battle. In addition, in the end, it would come down to whether the U.S. and its allies were prepared to commit ground troops to support his new nation should the tremendous numerical advantage the GIR enjoyed overwhelm his forces.

Using his pointer, Jabal began the briefing, indicating the major bridges along the Tigris River within the Republic of Kurdistan territory.

“Will, we are as prepared as we can be given the training and disposition of our forces. The bridges along the Tigris here at Bayji where large number of Iraqi and GIR forces are located, here, here—and here are all ready to be destroyed. This bridge in the city and this one near Bayji will be the most difficult to take down.”

“We have our 2nd and 3rd infantry divisions between the Great and Little Zab rivers in defensive positions. They will protect the Capital and hopefully spring the trap should the GIR take the bait.”

“Our 4th infantry division is placed before Karkuk in a defensive mode and we expect them to take the brunt of the initial assault from the GIR units now staging northwest of Khanaqin. Our people will fall back rapidly under what we believe will be a major attack, and allow the GIR to push them hard towards the Little Zab river. Although admittedly a very risky strategy, we plan to allow the capture of two of the bridges over the Little Zab, here, and here as the GIR continues the pursuit of our “routed” 4th infantry division. When they enter these canyons to the north and west of the bridges, the 2nd and 3rd divisions will spring the trap.”

“Our reserves consist of the 1st mechanized division, which is located in the hills outside of Mosul. Once the 4th infantry division begins its retreat, the 1st mechanized division will rapidly perform an encircling movement to approach the GIR forces from the rear as they pursue our retreating 4th, about the time they cross the Little Zab River.”

Will Peterson reviewed and carefully considered the plan. The whole thing would depend on the U.S. Air Force keeping the GIR aircraft from conducting ground support or reconnaissance to discover the positioning and disposition of the reserve division, and the specific location of the 2nd and 3rd infantry divisions. It would also depend on the GIR making its primary push up towards Karkuk, which meant the U.S. Air Force would have to locate and subvert any other “thrusts” by the GIR, particularly any major push to the west on that side of the Tigris river towards Mosul. Will was certain there would be just such an effort by the GIR in that regard, and U.S. reconnaissance seemed to confirm his suspicions: the GIR was staging its forces at Bayji and on the north side of the Euphrates river near Al Qa’im. Locating and thwarting that western thrust would also be one of the primary keys to the upcoming battle.

Though it had been discussed here in Kurdistan, Will was certain that, other than a few Special Forces squads, the U.S. would not commit significant ground forces in the Republic of Kurdistan; too risky at this point. The missiles—Javelins, Stingers and LAWS—provided to the Kurdish ground forces would have to be complimented by the U.S. Air Force destroying GIR armor from the air.

“Jabal, the plan looks good, though I remain concerned about any major GIR thrust towards Mosul from west of the Tigris. If our aircraft do not find and stop such an offensive, it could easily catch our mechanized reserves in a vulnerable position. I am in touch with U.S. Air Force personnel out of Turkey and will have my people coordinating air support with each of your divisions. We need to make sure that your forward controllers are tied into my men and that we have multiple backups for

that communication. It will be one of the primary keys to success on the battlefield. How are the anti-tank and anti-air defenses distributed?"

Jabal consulted his notes briefly.

"The 4th infantry division at Karkuk has our older Soviet block anti-tank weapons and shoulder-fired anti-air missiles. They have been well instructed in purposely minimizing their effectiveness so as to draw the GIR forces in, while not allowing themselves to be over run. We have about half of our most seasoned soldiers and NCO's in that division. The others are split equally between the reserve mechanized division and the divisions who will represent the jaws of our trap."

"The 2nd and 3rd infantry divisions have almost all of the Javelin and LAWS missiles. We have 100 Javelins and 150 LAWS split between those divisions. They also have roughly half of the Stinger missile systems; 75 in all. The 1st mechanized division has only a few of the anti-tank missiles since they will be depending on their mounted chain guns and light cannons taking the GIR vehicles from the rear. They are carrying the other half of the Stinger missiles for anti-air."

Will knew that the strategy was risky, but it was the best he, Jabal, and the planners back in the states could come up with given the forces at their disposal. Upon this plan, and upon the U.S. support of it, the future independence of the newly formed Republic of Kurdistan would hinge.

"Well, continue reviewing the plan and refining it with your division commanders, and they with their brigade and company commanders—all the way down to the squad level. We won't have too long to wait. My guess is that the GIR is going to come boiling out of their staging areas tomorrow and be right up on the border on the 1st."

**October 31, 06:50 local time**

**Incirlik Air Force Base Ready Room**

**Near Adana, Turkey**

Brigadier General Wesley Howell, the commander of the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary force in Turkey, reviewed the assembled pilots and logistical officers assembled before him. They were assembled in the largest briefing room on base, not far from the Command Center.

The General had allowed photographers and reporters in this briefing. As a result, he was to the point, and very upbeat. As the flashes went off on the cameras around him, the General began.

"OK, we're on 24 hour alert status as of this morning. Our operational goals are simple in the event of an invasion of Kurdistan. Our part of Operation Sentinel, as you all know, is simply to:

1. Prevent GIR air from penetrating Kurdistan air space.
2. Maintain air superiority over Kurdistan.
3. Provide air support to Kurdistan forces as requested.
4. Destroy any GIR anti-air assets directed at our forces.
5. Destroy any GIR AEW assets tracking our forces."

"In order to accomplish this, we will have combat air patrols increased to an around-the-clock basis starting this afternoon. Three flights of F-15 Eagles will maintain CAP over Kurdistan at all times with two flights of ready-air birds here on the ground at all times. The CAP flights will be directed by two E-3 AEW aircraft, and each one of those will be escorted by two F-15s."

"In addition, we will have two flights of Wild Weasel F-16 aircraft up at all times, who will vector in to any GIR anti-air assets encountered."

"Finally, there will be one flight of four F-15E Strike Eagles and one flight of British Tornados airborne at all times with matching flights on ready alert status here at the base. These will provide ground support to Kurdistan forces as requested, or be used to interdict GIR ground forces as they cross the border into Kurdistan. Control for these flights, will be provided by one JOINT STAR aircraft and its escorts which will be on patrol near the border."

"Folks, the pilots and aircraft you will encounter and the anti-air you are apt to meet are considered several notches above the opposition we faced in Iraqi Freedom. Be cognizant of this at all times. We will have a final briefing at 0400 hours tomorrow morning."

**November 1st, 12:00**

**WNN Broadcast Headquarters**

**New York City, New York, USA**

"As we report the top news at noon, all eyes are on the Middle East where in just an hour the deadline, the "line in the sand" established by Hasan Sayeed, will expire. This deadline represents when the Kurdish citizens in the northern provinces of the former Iran must cease their efforts toward achieving independence, or face military reprisal by the GIR."

"Tensions are running extremely high in the region as the deadline approaches. U.S. President Norm Weisskopf has indicated that the United States and its allies will support the new Republic of Kurdistan. To that end they have been moving troops and equipment to the Middle East over the last several weeks. These recent maneuvers have been eerily reminiscent of those which preceded the Desert Shield effort in Kuwait and Iraq so many years ago. WNN conducted a live broadcast of a briefing from the U.S. Air base at Incirlik, Turkey last evening where the Commanding General,

General Wesley Howell, laid out in clear terms what the U.S. Air Force goals will be should hostilities erupt. He indicated that the primary goals are to maintain air superiority should GIR aircraft attempt to enter Kurdistan airspace, to provide air support to Kurdistan forces as requested and to destroy any GIR forces, including airborne early warning craft, which appear threatening to our forces.”

“WNN has news crews on the scene in Baghdad, Irbil, the U.S. Air Base at Incirlik, and near the GIR front lines in Bayji. We will update you immediately with any breaking news and will include on-the-spot, real time coverage wherever possible.”

“Now, on to other stories around the nation.”

**November 1st, 23:50 local time**

**GIR forces**

**Kurdistan Frontier**

The GIR Operation, “Veiled Sword,” had been planned in great detail. At 0500 on November 2nd, from Bayji an entire GIR corps would feint towards Karkuk and then wheel north towards Mosul. With two hundred main battle tanks, four hundred armored personnel carriers, six hundred troop-carrying trucks, two hundred pieces of artillery, fifty attack helicopters and the support of one hundred and fifty fighter and attack aircraft, it was a thrust the Americans and Kurds could not ignore.

Four hours after this thrust began, an even larger mechanized thrust of three hundred main battle tanks, five hundred armored personnel carriers, three hundred artillery pieces and fifty attack helicopters, supported by two hundred fighter and attack aircraft would strike towards Mosul from Al Qa'im in the western desert.

The GIR's operation plans called for Mosul to be taken at all costs, so that any forces protecting Irbil and Karkuk would be cut off. In order to hold those forces in place, a large corps-sized thrust would also be made from the frontier north and west of Khanaqin. This thrust would include one hundred main battle tanks, two hundred armored personnel carriers, five hundred trucks, three hundred pieces of artillery (one hundred of which were Multiple Launch Rocket systems) supported by one hundred attack helicopters and another one hundred and fifty fighter and attack aircraft. This part of the attack would begin coincident with the attack originating from Bayji

In order to neutralize American air, the GIR was also diverting three hundred fighter and attack aircraft from its bases deep within the former borders of Iran. These had been flown to five different air bases in the eastern part of the country and were already taking off to form up into their combat groups. They would be refueled over GIR territory in the former Iran and then would fly nap of the earth through the darkness to the north of Tabriz before turning west into Turkey north and east of Lake Van. From there they would proceed directly to attack Incirlik Air Force Base.

It was anticipated that the Americans would respond strongly to this large force out of the GIR. When they did, Veiled Sword called for half of the fighter and attack aircraft supporting the thrusts toward Mosul to break off and fly directly to Incirlik to attack. It was expected that this massive four hundred and seventy-five aircraft attack on Incirlik would overwhelm the defenses and lay waste to the airfield and other aircraft parked there.

All of the GIR aircraft, would be controlled by three GIR Ilyushin Il-76 “Mainstay” AEW aircraft. These aircraft had been purchased by the GIR from Russia, and were dedicated to the Veiled Sword operation. They were crewed by volunteers Muslims from the Russian Federation as a part of the overall deal for the aircraft.

**November 2nd, 04:30 local time**

**E3 Sentry “Overseer,” 35,000 ft over Zakho**

**Kurdistan Frontier with Turkey**

“Bravo flight, Bravo flight, this is Overseer. We have many unidentified aircraft approaching Bayji from the south. Count is forty aircraft and climbing—make it fifty-two aircraft and climbing. Vector two-seven-niner degrees, angels forty to intercept.”

The controller on the U.S. Air Force E3 aircraft was observing the approaching GIR support air for the GIR 4th Corps thrust north of Bayji. He had just vectored one of the flights of F-15 Eagles to intercept this force and he was in the process of vectoring a second flight of F-15s and calling for reserves.

“Aircraft identified as bandits. I say again we have bandit aircraft approaching from the south and entering Kurdistan airspace. Weapons free. Charlie flight, vector one-one-three degrees, angels forty to intercept.”

“Home plate, this is Overseer. Release Delta flight and have two more flights go to ready standby status. It's going to get thick up here.”

In answer to a request from Alpha flight to also vector them towards the action, the four F-15s further to the north and east, the controller on board the E3 elected to have them maintain station.

“Negative Alpha flight. Maintain position.”

Now eight of the twelve airborne F-15s were converging on the over one hundred fighter and attack aircraft that were supporting the GIR 4th Corp thrust towards Mosul. Each Eagle carried eight

missiles, four AMRAAMs and four Sidewinder air-to-air missiles. The AMRAAM - radar guided with a range of about forty miles, the Sidewinder—a close in infrared homing missile, with an effective range of ten to twelve miles.

Very quickly the lead element of F-15s was in range.

**November 2nd, 04:42 local time**

**F-15 Eagle Bravo flight, 40,000 ft over Kurdistan**

**Between Mosul and Bayij, Kurdistan**

“Fox-1, Fox-1.”

The leader of Bravo Flight launched two of his AMRAAM radar guided missiles and continued in towards the approaching GIR aircraft. At 35,000 feet and about 30 miles in front of him, the initial flight of MiG-29 aircraft was approaching. There were twelve of them and they were all painting him and his flight with their N-019 radar in an attempt to get a “lock on” and prepare to launch their own missiles.

As his wingman and the other members of his flight each launched two missiles, the approaching GIR flight attempted to perform a splitting maneuver to evade the eight missiles launched at them. But two of the aircraft collided and exploded in flames and the other ten had to break their maneuver to avoid the debris. The more deadly condition for the GIR pilots was the oncoming flight of AMRAAM missiles. The AMRAAM was the most advanced radar-guided air-to-air missile in the world. A true “fire and forget” missile that had its own internal radar and homing guidance, the missile had an effective range of over forty miles. When the AMRAAMs arrived, six of the remaining ten MiG-29s fell in flames. At this point the distance had closed to 20 miles and the second flight of GIR fighters, this time twelve SU-27 Flankers, was also approaching.

The four remaining MiG-29s launched two of their long-range R-27 missiles each, and eight missiles were coming at the four F-15s. At the same moment, the F-15s launched another AMRAAM each at the oncoming MIGs. Half of the GIR missiles were the R-27R semi-active radar homing missiles; the other half were the R-27T infrared homing missiles.

“On my mark, break. Mark!”

Upon command, each of the four American fighters performed its breaking maneuver flawlessly and attempted to change its aspect ratio to the oncoming missiles and reduce its radar cross section, while actively jamming the missiles. This worked for the R-27R missiles and only one of those four missiles found its mark as an F-15 took a hit. That pilot ejected safely as he lost control of the aircraft. Not fooled by jamming or aspect ratio changes, two R-27T infrared homing missiles impacted two American aircraft, both of which exploded. There were no chutes. The two F-15 pilots were the first Americans lost in this first battle of what later would evolve into a very long and horrific war. Only one of the Americans, the wingman to the flight leader, was able to employ his infrared defensive flares to draw the heat-seeking missiles away from his aircraft.

Meanwhile, the four AMRAAM missiles had destroyed another three MIGs. Now, one MiG-29 faced one remaining F-15, a mere twelve miles apart.

The last F-15 launched its last AMRAAM at the MiG-29, and then turned away from the oncoming SU-27's in an effort to egress the area as more missile launch warnings appeared on the pilot's HUD.

“Overseer, this is the Jinx from Bravo flight. Be advised we have three aircraft down, bandits still approaching. I am attempting to disengage.”

But the warning was too late. The SU-27's had already launched four R-27 missiles and before it could complete its turn it was destroyed.

At this point, the second flight of F-15s came within range.

**November 2nd, 04:55**

**SU-27 GIR Flight, 37,000 ft over Kurdistan**

**South of Mosul, Kurdistan**

“Missile launch! Perform evasive maneuver three on my command...Now!”

The flight leader for the twelve SU-27's, a more capable fighter aircraft than the MiG-29, quickly had his entire flight of twelve aircraft perform their evasive tactics in the face of eight oncoming AMRAAM missiles. The maneuver was performed successfully, but the deadly AMRAAM missiles found their marks and SU-27's fell in flames.

As the remaining eight SU-27's turned to continue their approach, the Americans launched another eight AMRAAM missiles. By this time, the distance had closed to the point where the SU-27's could lock onto the Americans and launch their own radar and infrared-guided missiles if they chose to press the attack. In the face of the deadly threat of the oncoming AMRAAMs, the disciplined and well-trained GIR flight leader made a fateful decision.

“Do not evade. I repeat do not evade. Obtain lock and launch two missiles each at the oncoming targets.”

The SU-27 carried a longer-range version of the R-27 missile than the MiG-29, which included a radar homing version, R-27R1 and an infrared version, R-27T1. Quickly, twelve of these missiles were in the air, targeted on the F-15s from Charlie flight.

**November 2nd, 05:05 local time**

**E3 Sentry "Overseer," 35,000 ft over Zakho**

**Kurdistan Frontier with Turkey**

"Home plate, this is Overseer. I am declaring an air emergency! Repeat: air emergency! We have just picked up many bandits approaching from the east over Lake Zan. Count is over one hundred and growing."

"Alpha flight, vector oh-niner-three, angels 20, weapons free."

"Home plate, scramble all ready aircraft. We now have a massive raid approaching from the east in addition to those approaching from the south. Bravo and Charlie flights are down. I repeat: both flights are down. Bandits continue to approach."

As the controller communicated this warning, he noticed that twenty aircraft had broken from the formation approaching over Lake Zan, and were vectoring towards his aircraft. Keying the local frequency, he informed the pilot and his own escort.

"Colonel, we have a flight of twenty bandits vectoring towards our position. Our escorts should vector at one-two-five degrees at angles 20 to intercept. We are going to have to evade back towards Home plate ASAP."

Colonel Frank realized he and his crew were in mortal danger. The GIR was pulling out all the stops to overwhelm their layered defense. Nothing remotely similar to this had ever occurred in Desert Storm.

"OK. Get strapped in back there. We are headed for the deck. Inform Home plate and alert Starlight and their escort that they'd best RTB."

**November 2nd, 05:20 local time**

**Control Tower**

**Incirlik Airbase. Turkey**

"Sir, we have that large raid approaching from the east and the two smaller groups approaching from the southeast. Overseer is off the air. Alpha, Bravo and Charlie flights are all down, Sir; 100% down. Our two reserve flights have engaged and expended all missiles. Of those eight reserve aircraft, two are left and they are attempting to RTB. Our strike aircraft are engaging the mechanized columns that are moving towards Mosul, but they are suffering significant attrition due to GIR air in those areas. After their munitions are expended, or when their position becomes untenable, they are going to egress to the Turkish airfield at Diyarbakir.

"Enemy strength remains high and they are continuing to press their advantage. Our current analysis indicates that our own efforts and the two intercepts performed by the Turks have eliminated over eighty of their aircraft at a loss of eighteen of our own fighters and twelve Turkish. In addition, Overseer is off the air and presumed down and we have lost Starlight, the JOINT STAR aircraft. The raid strength from the east appears to be at over two hundred and fifty aircraft, and there are over one hundred and twenty combined aircraft approaching from the southeast."

At this report, General Howell looked grimly at the screens and reports. The loss of the E-3 Sentry and the E-8 were tragic, and would have made the entire GIR effort worth it from their perspective. But the GIR was clearly intent on more than eliminating critical assets over the battlefield. They were intent on eliminating U.S. air superiority altogether in the region. Within twenty minutes all hell was going to break loose at Incirlik.

The General considered his remaining assets. He had his remaining fifteen F-15s up on a barrier CAP forty miles out from the base. His B-1's, KC-135s and remaining two reserve E-3s were supposed to be airborne already, and en route away from Incirlik. His last remaining E-3 was airborne and fifty miles to the west of Incirlik with an escort of four F-15s. That E-3 AWACS aircraft would help control the coming battle.

As the raid approached, the General was trying desperately to rearm his F-15Es and F-16s for air-to-air, but the raid was going to arrive before he was complete. Still, it would be a near thing and if those F-15s could delay things for even a few minutes, there was a chance.

"OK, ensure that our airborne F-15s remain well outside the twenty mile free fire zone we have set up for our ground-based AAW defenses. Make sure the Hawk and Patriot batteries understand that they will have free fire authorization from us within the next few minutes. Make sure our ground defense forces understand the same with their shoulder-launched Stingers and their Avenger air defense systems."

"Are the B-1's, E-3s and KC-135s and their escorts away?"

Before replying, the Major checked his notes and information on his palmtop computer. Then replying to the General he said,

“Yes, Sir. Those aircraft and their escort have cleared the free fire zone and are en route to Izmir. Izmir is providing a CAP two hundred miles out along the axis of their approach. Between that CAP and their own escorts, I feel they are as safe as we can make them”

“Good, pass the order on to the air defense batteries informing that they are weapons free within the free fire zone, and get everyone into the shelters—particularly those news people. I’ll be down in the command center.”

**November 2nd, 05:40 local time**

**25,000 ft., GIR Raid,**

**110 Miles East of Incirlik Airbase. Turkey**

General Mahdavi Ardakani, the commander of the GIR raid on Incirlik and the individual responsible for developing the plan, surveyed his accompanying aircraft. The four U.S. Air Force F-15s had taken out five of his MiG-21 and seven of his MiG-29 aircraft, but all of the F-15s had been destroyed in the process. The two Turkish attacks had destroyed another eight of his MiG-21 aircraft and seven of his MiG-27 attack aircraft while all twelve of the Turkish F-16 and F-5 aircraft were destroyed. This left the general with two hundred and sixty-two aircraft for his raid on Incirlik.

He knew that there were approximately ten to fifteen F-15s prepared to meet him, and then there would be the air defense at the base itself. As a result of the heavy jamming from off to the west, it was difficult to tell at this point. For the ground attack, he had twenty SU-24 Fencers, twenty-four SU-27’s, twenty-four MiG-29s, sixty MiG-21s forty MiG-27s and forty of his own American built F-5’s. Escorting all of these he had a total of fifty-four other MiG-29s, SU-27’s and MiG-21s outfitted for air-to-air combat.

It was the latter that he was about to employ against the F-15s that were defending the air base. It was the General’s hope to blow a hole through those defenses and allow his attack aircraft to pulverize the base.

“Flights C through G, this is command. Perform pincer three on my mark...three, two, one...mark!”

“Attack flights A and B, and flights L through Q, await my order for execution of OPLAN order four C.”

On his order, eight SU-27’s and six MiG-29s split to the north while ten SU-27’s and six more MiG-29s split south. They all went to full combat throttle and wheeled around to come at the defending F-15s from the resulting pincer positions. As this was occurring, twenty-two escorting MiG-21s went to afterburner and shot ahead of the attack group towards the F-15s. Over two hundred attack aircraft continued relentlessly towards Incirlik.

Each of the attacking SU-24s carried two Kh-59 TV-command guided missiles, which had a range of sixty miles. The General was betting that all of them could get within range of Incirlik and launch those missiles before being intercepted by any surviving F-15s. He had positioned the SU-24s forward, near the center of his attack formations. In the next few seconds, the General would order them to full combat throttle so they could dash forward, launch their Kh-59 missiles and then egress quickly towards GIR territory with an escort of six SU-27’s.

**November 2nd, 05:45 local time**

**30,000 ft., Barrier CAP F-15s**

**30 Miles East of Incirlik Airbase. Turkey**

Colonel Jim Phillips immediately saw the developing situation. The GIR was trying to run a classic pincer maneuver on him. In addition to the advantageous positioning they were attempting, they had overwhelming numbers on their side. He desperately needed to break through the oncoming fighters so he could get to the attack aircraft and perform some significant attrition on them before they could reach the base.

Things were going to be desperate for their base and they all knew it. The sheer numbers of the oncoming GIR raids were going to inundate the defenses well past the point of saturation. The desperation was beginning to show somewhat in their voices and in their protocol.

“Bob, on my mark take your flight and break left to those bogies coming down from the north. Jerry, take your flight and break right to those bogies coming in from the south. Everyone else, follow me. On my mark we’re going to attempt to break through the middle and get to those attack aircraft.”

“All units, use Watchtower for targeting and guidance as long as possible. Watchtower, Home plate, do you copy?”

The E-3 Sentry did indeed copy, as did the controller at the tower at Incirlik.

“We copy, Lone Star. Good luck. Even up those numbers for us.”

Setting his resolve and focus, Colonel Phillips concentrated on the timing of his ordered maneuvers.

“...three, two, one...mark!”

“Good shooting, and may God have mercy on us all.”



**November 2nd, same time****WNN Broadcast Studios****New York City, New York, WNN**

“We interrupt this program to bring you a *Special News Report*.”

On TV screens across America and around the world, David Krenshaw’s face appeared as WNN interrupted normal programming.

“Incirlik Air Base, Turkey. We have reports of military activity and are cutting live to our on-scene reporter, Maria Gomez. Go ahead, Maria.”

The feed cut to a night picture of a young Spanish American female reporter. Her hair was blowing in a gusty wind and she had her ear to her headset. In the background, crews were seen feverishly working on an F-15E Strike Eagle. Maria looked up into the camera and began speaking.

“Yes, David, this is Maria Gomez at the U.S. Air Force base at Incirlik in Turkey. We are about one hundred yards away from the command center here in an area that has been set up for the press to view aircraft as they taxi and then take off. Earlier this evening there was significant activity on the line which we have on video and will share with you later.”

“Right now, we are experiencing high tension and frantic action here as many aircraft are being feverishly readied in the background.”

“Within the past five minutes we have witnessed the launch of several dozen missiles from what we presume to be anti-air batteries. Several of them were Patriot missile launches. Incirlik base appears to be under attack.”

“BLAMMMmmm”

“Joe, get that explosion over to our right, about one half mile over. Several of the missile launches earlier originated in that area. Apparently one of those batteries was just destroyed after what could only be a missile streaked in at unbelievable speed and exploded.”

“You can hear the sirens in the background which have been going off incessantly for the last ten to fifteen minutes. As they started, we were stopped by Air Force security and asked to seek shelter, but when they had to rush off to another location, Joe and I made our way back here to get as much of the attack as possible on video.

“Oh! Another set of missiles is coming in! Joe, pan left!”

As the camera panned left, two exhaust trails were clearly visible, leading from the ground about a mile distant and trailing up behind two rapidly climbing missiles. As the missiles got higher and more distant, the cameraman expertly zoomed in and videoed the destruction of a GIR MiG-27 “Flogger” aircraft in a tremendous explosion when its fuel and ordinance ignited simultaneously with the impact of one of the missiles.

“Unbelievable! David, did you catch that? Ladies and gentlemen, we are witnessing a live GIR air attack on Incirlik airbase. Quickly, Joe, over there on the runway, there’s a flight of four Strike Eagles just taking off.”

Again the cameraman panned and caught four F-15E Strike Eagle aircraft as they took off under full afterburner thrust and rocketed almost straight up into the night sky. They had risen no more than three thousand feet when the aircraft on the far left of the formation was hit by a missile and exploded in a brilliant flash of light and burning debris. There was no chute.

“My God! They took out one of those F-15Es!”

The scene became more hectic as the cameraman swung back to catch as much of the action on the flight line as possible. There were numerous explosions on the taxiways where aircraft were being rearmed and several ejection seats lifted off from those positions. Many more didn’t.

“Look, Joe, quickly pan towards the far end of the runway. Do you see them? Those are unmistakably MiG-29 aircraft coming towards us. Look, they are releasing some type of missiles or bombs. Joe, are you catching this? Now, they are rocketing almost completely vertical. Oh. No! Joe, get down, one of those bombs is homing in on the Command Center!”

On the screen, the unmistakable image of a bomb came flying towards the news crew as Joe zoomed in directly on it. The weapon flew off at a slight angle towards the Command Center when suddenly there was an incredibly bright flash, and then nothing but static.

“...Ladies and gentlemen, we seem to have lost our feed from Incirlik. We will try to reconnect with Maria momentarily and continue with the on-scene report of the action there in Turkey.”

**November 2nd, 06:15 local time****Incirlik Airbase.****Turkey**

Within the thirty minutes, it was over.

Colonel Phillips’ force on barrier CAP gave an excellent account of itself. The GIR pincer movement failed to capture and destroy all of the American aircraft before they could engage the GIR attack aircraft formations. All eight of the F-15s sent to foil that pincer maneuver were destroyed, but not before they shot down eight GIR MiG-29s and ten SU-27’s. This still left four MiG-29s and eight

SU-27's to fly CAP over the attacking forces as at that moment no more U.S. defenders were in the air, outside of the four F-15s protecting the last E-3 Sentry.

Colonel Phillips himself penetrated the main GIR formation with his seven aircraft and was able to get into range before the twenty-two MIG-21s and their R-73 missiles could counter them. Colonel Phillips and his flight launched twenty-eight AMRAAM missiles into the oncoming horde of GIR aircraft. The AMRAAMs were launched just as the SU-24 aircraft, which had surged slightly ahead of the main attack group, launched forty-eight air-to-ground Kh-59 missiles and then turned away. While the American AMRAAMs were flying towards their targets, the MIG-21s came into range and launched eighteen R-73 "Archer" infrared missiles at the F-15s. In the resulting "dog fight," five of Colonel Phillips' aircraft were destroyed, including the Colonel's own. His last living thought had come while sighting on a MiG-29 attack aircraft. He announced "Fox-2" as he launched a Sidewinder missile, just an instant before being destroyed by two "Archer" missiles launched from two of the four MIG-21s that were targeting him.

Altogether eighteen GIR attack aircraft and ten of the escorting MIG-21s were destroyed by Colonel Phillips' attack. His disregard for his own life in the face of overwhelming odds would later earn him, posthumously, the Medal of Honor.

As the WNN news crew observed, the longer-range Patriot missile batteries and the Hawk missile batteries engaged the Kh-59 missiles first. These were fast, anti-radiation (or anti-radar) missiles that had been designed specifically to attack anti-air missile defenses. The resulting "engagement" destroyed 50% of Incirlik's Patriot and Hawk missile sites, and caused another 25% to expend their missiles defending themselves. Nonetheless, the remaining Hawk systems and the Patriot systems exacted a heavy toll on the GIR attack aircraft before they reached the base, destroying twelve MIG-27s, eight F-5's and fourteen MIG-21s. At this point, the shoulder-fired Stinger missiles and the Avenger missile systems came into play.

Just as the GIR attack aircraft appeared over the base proper, the first flight of re-armed F-15E strike eagles took off. As related in the *Special Broadcast*, their takeoff and the vivid destruction of one of their number was seen around the world as a result of Maria Gomez's reporting and the live video captured by her cameraman, Joe. The three remaining aircraft, armed with four AMRAAM and four Sidewinder missiles, had to fight their way to altitude in order to launch their missiles. They succeeded and engaged the first wave of MiG-27 "Flogger" attack aircraft which were making their bombing runs on the runways. These Strike Eagles destroyed fourteen aircraft in a wild, twisting and confusing dogfight, before they were destroyed themselves. These were the last American aircraft to get into the air from Incirlik that day, or for the remainder of the battle for Kurdistan.

The MIG-27s caught twenty F-16s and twelve F-15Es on the ground at Incirlik as they were rearming. Tremendous secondary explosions occurred as GIR munitions exploded amongst these aircraft on the taxiways and runways. Several pilots were able to eject from their aircraft and survived, but most were killed where they sat. While performing these ground attacks, another eighteen GIR aircraft were destroyed by the shoulder-fired Stinger missiles and the Avenger missile systems among the defense forces.

As the MIG-27s completed their work on the runway, two flights of twelve MIG-29s, fitted for ground attack, appeared unmolested over the airfield. These were the fateful aircraft that Maria Gomez described. Each carried one Fuel Air Explosive (FAE) device used to attack the command and control facilities, the fuel dumps, the barracks, the hangars and revetments.

FAE devices create huge detonations by spraying a fine mist of highly explosive liquid into the atmosphere, and then igniting it to produce extremely large, lethal explosions. Such detonations could level almost any structure within hundreds of yards. The resulting twenty-four massive detonations destroyed most of the structures on the base, killing the entire command staff in the command center, including Brigadier General Howell. That same explosion also killed Maria Gomez and her cameraman, Joe, of WNN as they caught their own impending demise on film.

While these ground attacks were going on, the dozens of remaining MiG-21 and F-5 aircraft were making run after run against the ground defense forces and more attacks against the air base's runways. This resulted in numerous US casualties on the ground.

When this large raid from the East completed its attack and departed, right behind it came the one hundred aircraft from the Southeast. These aircraft were completely unopposed, except for the remaining light, but effective, Stinger missiles defenses among the ground forces. These defenses accounted for ten more GIR aircraft, but another dozen FAE explosions and scores of bombing and strafing runs ensured the already definitive results of the earlier attack. For all intents and purposes, Incirlik was completely out of commission.

## **November 2nd**

### **Republic of Kurdistan**

The result of the massive pre-dawn raid on Incirlik was that the GIR, with the exception of some early morning engagements, enjoyed total air superiority in its operations against Mosul and against Karkuk that day. Both assaults on Mosul, the one from Bayji and the one from Al Qa'im, achieved

their goals with little impediment, once the initial F-15Es and F-16s had expended their munitions. In these attacks, and the resulting dog fights with supporting GIR aircraft, another eight F-16s and six F-15Es were lost, along with twelve MiG-29 and eight SU-27 aircraft.

The Kurdistan 1st Mechanized Division near Mosul, with no air support, and little chance for effective reconnaissance, was caught out in the open as it made its enveloping move towards Karkuk. Their light armor and APC's could not compete with the heavy armor divisions in the corps-sized GIR assault on Mosul. Well before the end of the day, except for a few straggler units which had been lucky enough to escape, the Kurdish 1st Mechanized Division ceased to exist as a fighting force.

Given the air support the GIR mechanized columns experienced, damage to them was limited to the loss of twenty-two tanks and approximately thirty armored personnel carriers and trucks. By the end of the day, the two assault forces had combined into a massive force that took up positions within, and to the north of, Mosul. GIR aircraft were landing and being refueled and rearmed at the former Iraqi air base there that night.

The GIR assault on Karkuk also enjoyed tremendous success and was carried out completely unhindered by U.S. or allied air forces. Although much of the rapid advance by the GIR was due to the Kurd plan of falling back in a mock retreat, nonetheless, the speed of the advance was so great that it almost caused the "mock" retreat to fail. The Kurd forces were almost overrun, as they could not "retreat" fast enough.

Despite this, the Kurd forces did inflict some damage on the advancing GIR armored columns. These losses added up to a dozen tanks and eighteen armored personnel carriers.

When night fell, except for local resistance in and around Karkuk, the GIR forces had bypassed the city and reached the Little Zab River where they stopped to re-provision. Their plans called for the crossing of the Little Zab to occur very early the next morning using the two bridges they had captured intact, and to proceed towards the Kurdistan capital of Irbil.

**November 2nd, 07:30**

### **Situation Room, The White House**

#### **Washington, D.C.**

It was General Jeremy Stone's sad duty to brief the President and his closest advisors on yesterday morning's engagements in Turkey and Kurdistan. He didn't look forward to it. Quite frankly, he was somewhat shocked by the disturbing content of his briefing, but it was nonetheless his duty and one he was bound to fulfill.

"Sir, we have reviewed what we know and the results are devastating."

"Incirlik has been destroyed. We physically hold the base and there has been no ground incursion into Turkey, but the base is completely non-functional, and anticipating further air attacks tomorrow."

"The first indications of the attack came from large numbers of aircraft coming up from the south, from bases north of Baghdad, in what appeared to be supporting air for ground assaults into Kurdistan from Bayji and Al Qa'im. When our aircraft crossed the border to intercept, roughly half of those aircraft engaged our aircraft."

"When they did, a massive raid of what appeared to be approximately three hundred aircraft was picked up coming out of the GIR over Tabriz and then Lake Van. This group caught our aircraft out of position and was able to destroy both the forward E-3 Sentry and our Joint Star aircraft and their escorts while en route to Incirlik."

"From there, things developed into essentially a two-pronged attack on Incirlik. As the second larger group proceeded towards Incirlik, the first group overwhelmed the twelve aircraft we had sent to intercept them. These two forces then converged on Incirlik, one after another, from two different directions in a massive and well-coordinated attack."

"Regrettably, General Howell was killed in that attack and we lost approximately three hundred and fifty personnel on the ground."

"Of the over four hundred aircraft used by the GIR to attack Incirlik, we estimate that we destroyed over one hundred and sixty. Our losses amounted to forty-three aircraft in the air and thirty-two more aircraft on the ground. The British lost a total of twelve of their Tornados."

Audible intakes of breath could be heard all around the table. The President's face was impassive. This was the worst day for the U.S. Air Forces in its entire history. It was the worst day for U.S. Air Power since World War II when it had been called the Army Air Corps. Although they had inflicted severe damage on the GIR's attacking forces, the GIR had achieved all of its operational goals and prevented the United States from achieving any of theirs. In addition, a pivotal base had been destroyed and it would take time to rebuild it...a rebuilding that would have to occur under fire. The real loss to the United States and its allies was in their ability to inflict damage on the forces that were occupying Kurdistan, and the loss of time...of which Kurdistan had precious little.

"OK, this is devastating and I will have to talk to the American people this evening. We will miss General Howell. His loss, in itself, is a national tragedy. I want to ensure that the sincerest of condolences are passed to his wife and family. Jeremy, please see to this personally, and, if need be, I will also speak with Joan."

“In the meantime, what can we do from the south? Can we send aircraft from the south around the eastern border of Saudi to get at the GIR in the north? How about escorted B-52 strikes from Diego Garcia or Carrier strikes from the Reagan in the Gulf? What can the Turks do to help us?”

Secretary of State Reissinger took the opportunity to answer the President’s questions regarding Turkey.

“Mr. President, regarding the situation with Turkey, I was on line with their Foreign Minister this morning. They condemn the actions of the GIR, and will beef up their air defenses in their eastern provinces to more capably intercept any future GIR incursions. They are moving forces to help ensure this now. They are also calling up reserve units and moving ground forces to ensure that their borders are secure. But, one thing they will not do is attack GIR forces in Kurdistan. But they continue to fully support our efforts to do so through the use of forces now based in Turkey.”

General Stone assessed the military options.

“Mr. President, we could probably put together a package from the Ronald Reagan supporting heavies from Diego Garcia. The problem is, they would be fighting their way through, both coming and going.”

“The GIR is not asleep at the wheel. They have significant forces in Theater, and they have proven themselves willing to carry the fight to us. I believe such an effort would suffer terrific attrition, and may not effectively provide the support we desire.”

“I recommend that we not bring the Ronald Reagan any closer in towards the Gulf. In fact, I believe we should move the Reagan and its battle group away from the Gulf and give them more room to maneuver in the Arabian Sea. With the number of aircraft the GIR is apparently willing to lose, it is not worth the risk.”

“We are putting up a significant CAP over Incirlik and believe we can have planes launching from there inside of three days. They would be controlled by portable facilities on the ground and from E-3 Sentry AWACS flying out of Izmir, until the runway is sufficiently repaired to allow for the larger aircraft—that’s about three to five days out.”

“We can launch sorties out of Izmir earlier, refueling them in flight, to attack the GIR forces our satellites are showing massing for their push on Irbil. I believe this is the course we should pursue. We have already weakened their air capability in that area, and this will provide the best chance for us to break through. I recommend that we do this immediately, if we want to have any hope for our plan to support the Kurdistan divisions around Irbil to succeed.”

The President considered his options. He had a strong blocking force to the south that he had to maintain in case the GIR also decided to attack Kuwait and/or Saudi. He had to keep the majority of his supporting air forces there on hand and ready to help defend against such an attack. Trying to use part of them to fight through to the north did not seem feasible or practical.

The sorties out of Izmir were clearly the best method of bringing force to bear on the GIR forces in Kurdistan. And the Kurdistan defenders would be in desperate need of that force early tomorrow.

“OK, Jeremy, make it happen. Have the Reagan stand off further into the Arabian Sea, and have our aircraft out of Izmir conduct operations against the GIR in Kurdistan.”

# **DRAGON'S FURY**

**WORLD WAR  
AGAINST AMERICA  
AND THE WEST**

## **YEAR TWO**



**J E F F  
H E A D**

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**November 3rd, 05:30 local time**  
**Little Zab River, GIR**  
**Outside of Karkuk, Kurdistan**

Yesterday had been Abduhl's introduction to battle. It had not gone at all as he had imagined. His unit's advance had been so swift, and so unhindered for most of the day, that they had scarcely been able to stop and get out and stretch their legs, much less engage any enemy units.

At one point, during one of the rare occasions in which the enemy had stood and fought, Abduhl had seen men die horribly. A BTR-80 in their formation had taken a direct hit from a Kurd anti-tank weapon of some sort. His NCO had called it an American Javelin missile, but Abduhl did not know one enemy missile from another. What he did know was that the armored personnel carrier next to them, with eight soldiers and three crew members, had suddenly become a blazing, hellacious funeral pyre.

They had stopped their own BTR-80 and dismounted while its machine guns provided covering fire. In the distance, Abduhl could see two of their support helicopters circling back to try to locate the attackers. Abduhl and his squad, under the direction of their NCO, had scrambled to the cover of a small levy on the far side of the wash they had been following. The smoke track from the missile that had destroyed the other BTR-80 still hung in the air, and at least two of the men in the fiercely burning BTR-80 were dying horribly, their weakening screams still audible to those who allowed themselves to hear.

"Abduhl, take your sniper rifle and circle over to that rock out cropping to the left. Get as high in those rocks as you can and see if you can spot the enemy who fired that missile."

Abduhl immediately sprang to obey.

"Yes Sir!"

In his desire to anxiously obey, for a moment he forgot his training and began to rise. Simultaneous with his feet being kicked out from under him by the NCO, a small "*crack*" sounded just above his now prone body.

"Dear Allah, Abduhl! I didn't ask you to kill yourself. *stay down* and get your butt over to that outcropping. This time *keep low!*"

Kicking himself mentally, and at the same time grateful to the NCO for saving his life, Abduhl made his way to the rocks and began climbing.

As he neared the top, he remembered his training and moved off to the side of the "summit" of the rocks so as to not be "profiled" against the skyline. He began to gaze across the scrub brush covered hill that lay in front of him. After no more than five seconds, his peripheral vision caught sight of a group of men, located at a distance of about five hundred yards, who were slowly moving up the hillside towards a small saddle.

"Once they reach that saddle, they'll disappear over into the next drainage" thought Abduhl.

Carefully bringing his rifle up to his shoulder, Abduhl took aim at the back of the individual leading the group, adjusting for the range and the slight breeze. He took a deep breath, and as he slowly let it out, he squeezed.

"BANG!"

The leader and the man behind him both fell. The third individual in the group began to scurry towards the summit at a much quicker pace. Again taking aim, this time at the lone survivor, Abduhl pulled the trigger. As the man scrambled for the saddle, Abduhl took three more shots, adjusting for what he anticipated the man would do to avoid getting hit. On the third shot, some twenty feet below the saddle, Abduhl connected again.

Later, it was discovered that Abduhl had severely wounded the leader of the group and killed the second man with his first shot. It had been too low for the first individual and had hit the second man high on the back near his neck, breaking his spine. Fragments of bone and bullet from that shot had severely injured the leading individual.

The NCO had been able to gain some valuable intelligence from the mortally wounded man before mercifully ending his life with a quick shot to the head. "God rest his soul," Abduhl thought, barely keeping from retching.

This event had initiated Abduhl as a fully functional part of the squad. Despite his age, and despite his origin, such shooting skill was a valued commodity in any combat situation—one that could make the difference between life and death for any member of their team.

Now here they were, as the darkness yielded to the brightening sky of the next morning, winding up a steep road from the Little Zab River, making their way to the rebel capital, now less than 50 kilometers away.

### **November 3rd, 06:55 local time**

#### **Kurdistan blocking position**

##### **One valley over, Kurdistan**

Jabal surveyed his intelligence once more. The air disaster that had befallen the United States the day before was sobering and had created a serious situation for his forces. Although the US had destroyed larger numbers of GIR aircraft, it was clear that the GIR had gained the advantage by sheer numbers and was advancing rapidly towards him.

His spotters and forward scouts had indicated that the enemy's initial assault division was just over the rise on the far side of the valley, about 6 kilometers away, and that they had the additional benefit of attack helicopters and close air support. There was audible and visual evidence of both. Jabal had heard the rotors already this morning, and he could now make out the contrails in the lightening sky above him.

"Just light enough to see," he thought.

"Will, we are going to be needing that air support soon. The GIR forces are going to come over that ridge any minute and..."

As Jabal said this, there was a "WHOOOSHHHH" sound followed by a large explosion about fifty meters downhill from them in the vicinity of some concealed bunkers, followed by yet another "WHOOOSHHHH" and explosion, then a third, and a fourth. The numbers of impacts and explosions increased to a crescendo where one could hardly discern between one explosion and the next.

In a few moments it was over. Jabal rose from his prone position in the bunker, thankful that none of the multiple rocket impacts had scored a direct hit on his position.

Almost immediately, there was the sound of a low-flying jet aircraft overhead, followed by a thunderous explosion somewhere up the hill from his position. Almost immediately after the initial explosion, several more jets came into view over the top of the rise, from the other side of the valley.

"Hold your fire! Hold your fire! Do not engage any aircraft or helo's until you get my order!"

Jabal turned back to the American Special Forces commander, turned CIA field team leader.

"Will, we need those support aircraft now!"

Will Peterson understood their need. He also understood that, without air superiority, any assets coming into Kurdistan had to fight their way in, and then fight to remain on station.

Just such an effort was in the process of occurring, but it was meeting resistance in the form of many GIR MiG-29, SU-27, MiG-25 and MiG-21 fighter aircraft.

"We're going to have to hold another five minutes, Jabal. We have F-15s and F-18s attempting to sweep the GIR aircraft out of the way so our attack aircraft can hit those advancing mechanized columns."

"There's a big dogfight, that our boys are about to win, going on right now over the Great Zab River Valley. But until that happens they cannot risk sending the attack aircraft in."

### **November 3rd, 07:00 local time**

#### **Anvil Flight 42,000 ft**

##### **Over the Great Zab River, Kurdistan**

"Fox-2, Fox-2. Tracking...scratch another MiG-29!"

"Okay, Anvil flight. Re-form on me. Control indicates the other bandits are punching out of this one. Proceed to point Echo and take up a CAP position at angels forty."

The remaining F/A-18Cs of Anvil flight proceeded to point Echo over the Little Zab River drainage above Jabal's blocking position. They had started the day with three flights of four F/A-18C aircraft. Now the remaining five were taking up CAP positions over the battlefield to protect the attack aircraft, F-18s, F-16s and F-15Es that were now approaching and would be used against the advancing GIR armor columns.

Ten miles to the east, a similar condition developed as three F-15 Eagles destroyed the last MiG-29 and took up CAP. These three were from an original group of eight.

"Seven Hornets lost in one engagement!" thought Anvil flight leader. "Well, those rag headed bastards paid dearly for our losses."

In fact, the GIR had lost another eight SU-27's, nine MIG-29s, six MIG-25s and eleven MIG-21s in attempting to hold up the American fighter sweep and trailing attack aircraft formations. Although their efforts had diminished the US Navy and US Air Force ranks by a total of twelve aircraft, they had failed to stop them.

Now, twelve F-15Es, twelve F-16s and eight F-18s were barreling in on the Little Zab drainage and the advancing GIR mechanized Corps.

Even as they approached, the GIR was launching a massive retaliatory raid of its own from GIR bases to the east in the former state of Iran. Within twenty minutes, over one hundred GIR fighters would descend on the attacking American forces.

**November 3rd, 07:07 local time**  
**Kurdistan Forces blocking position**  
**Outside Irbil, Kurdistan**

The mechanized assault on Jabal's position had gotten very intense in just the last few minutes. He was losing positions too fast to the mortar, artillery and now the direct tank assaults on his bunkers and fortified locations. Clearly the GIR was not surprised that they were here, though perhaps they were still not aware of their full numbers and disposition.

Although the Javelin and LAWS missiles his men employed were having a telling effect on the GIR armor and personnel carriers, there were simply not enough of them. Where was that American air support?

"Red dog, Red dog! There's a platoon of T-80s moving towards your right flank. Say your status."

Jabal knew that the numbers would soon tell on his forces. Without immediate air support, he was going to have to fall back very soon. At least the air assault on his position had finally ceased and he took this as a good sign, particularly with those lazy contrails now weaving and circling overhead. If they weren't firing on him, he figured they must be friends, and if they were friends, perhaps help would soon arrive.

Even as he surveyed the advancing GIR T-80 platoon off to Red-dog's right, he saw a number of missile launches from among the GIR forces. At first he was about to issue orders for his forces to respond, but then he saw that the missiles were traveling up into the air beyond his position. As this occurred, several vehicles that had fired those missiles exploded in bright flashes of light, followed seconds later by the sound waves from those explosions.

Above and behind him there was an explosion in the air as a US F-16 aircraft was hit. This produced fiery wreckage that rained from the sky on his positions. It also produced a parachute as the pilot ejected and came floating down behind his lines.

Within a minute, the leading echelon of GIR tanks and armored personnel carriers began exploding as more US Aircraft streaked in at low altitude and attacked the advancing columns. More and more tanks and armored personnel carriers began exploding and being ripped apart by U.S. air-launched munitions, including AGN-65A and -65C Maverick missiles, GBU-12D Paveway II laser-guided bombs, 30 millimeter cannon fire, M20 Rockeye cluster bombs, IAU rockets and MK82 general purpose bombs.

"Well, Jabal, there's your air support. Look at those fly-boys hammering them! We'd best make the most of it."

Jabal looked at his American "advisor" and nodded his head. The firepower was truly awesome and as more GIR vehicles were destroyed, and the rest veered off to unload their troops and take up defensive positions, Jabal began to have hope that their plan might work after all.

Just as this thought was forming, his radioman indicated he had a call from the government headquarters in Irbil. Jabal listened intently for a moment, put the radio hand set down, and then, with a sober look, he addressed Will Peterson.

"The large GIR forces which took Mosul yesterday are on the move. According to our intelligence, those forces completely destroyed our reserve mechanized division and are now advancing on Irbil and our undefended rear. Can U.S. Air Force attack missions be called in against those forces? It appears to be an entire armored corps."

Will knew that missions could be planned, but he also knew that such planning took time—a precious commodity of which they were running precariously short. Any aircraft devoted to such a mission (if there were any available) would have to fight their way in, just like the group that was supporting them right now. It was also likely that the GIR would soon be delivering another air attack. It was clear that neither side was able to maintain air superiority at this point in the battle.

"I'll get on the radio right now, Jabal, and try to arrange it. But I do not believe there are many assets close enough to get it done very quickly. We dare not divert any of these aircraft if we want to have a chance to hold this line. My recommendation is to presume that this is all we are going to get, and to make the most of it while we have it."

**November 3rd, 07:25 local time**  
**GIR assault forces**  
**Outside Irbil, Kurdistan**

Abduhl had never been so scared in all of his life. In the midst of exploding tanks and exploding armored personnel carriers, his unit and several of those around him had somehow been spared. They had dismounted in a rocky gully and had taken up defensive positions as the American attack aircraft pounded the lead elements of the assault division to which he was attached.

Just when he thought they might come away from the air assault untouched, one of the American aircraft found his group and started a steep bank to come around and attack them. His NCO indicated it was an American F-15E Strike Eagle.



“Everyone down! Hit the dirt now!” yelled the Abduhl’s NCO.

As the F-15E made its attack run, it used its GPU-5/A Gun pod which housed a GAU-13/A 30 mm cannon, to strafe Abduhl’s unit. There was a sound in the air like a large buzz saw, and scores of large “thuds” impacted all around him. The left side of Abduhl’s head was severely cut by a chunk of rock that exploded to his right. After the aircraft passed, when Abduhl looked up, he could hardly see anything because of all the dust in the air. As it cleared, he saw that his NCO was ruined, destroyed, turned into a bloody mass of meat with no appendages.

“Alright, form up on me! We have orders to move out.”

The Junior NCO took command and they got into their BTR-80, which had been shielded from the attack by two large rock outcroppings between which it had been parked. There were only four of the assault team and two of the crewmembers left to respond. The others had just been killed.

Five good men gone; in just a few seconds, thought Abduhl.

As he was stepping into their idling BTR-80, Abduhl noticed a number of flashes to his west and saw two American aircraft fall from the sky. As this occurred, several GIR MIG-29s streaked over their position.

“Our aircraft are back! Sir, look!”

The Junior NCO, demoralized by the extensive losses his squad and division had taken, was heartened as he stuck his head out and watched numerous GIR aircraft fly by.

“Yes, it seems help has arrived. I wish they had been here ten minutes ago. Come on, Abduhl, this day’s work is far from over.”

### **November 3rd, 18:00 local time**

#### **Outside of Irbil, Kurdistan**

With the return of large numbers of GIR aircraft, the American aircraft were forced to retire. The five F/A-18Cs and three F-15s flying CAP for the ground attack aircraft fought hard, but in the face of overwhelming numbers, and forewarned by their AWACS aircraft, they quickly broke off and retreated after a brief engagement.

Some of the American “ground pounders,” who were in the midst of making “last” attack runs, remained on station a little too long against the now disorganized 1st echelon of GIR ground forces. In so doing, they ensured their own demise, being caught off guard as scores of GIR aircraft filled the air above the valley, leaving them no place to run.

Even so, the numbers were lopsided as the US forces lost two more Hornets, two F-15s, three F-16s and two F-15Es in this engagement against six MIG-29s, four SU-27’s and five MIG-25s. The number of aircraft lost made no difference on the ground once the Americans departed. The GIR had regained air superiority over the battlefield. As the 2nd echelon of GIR mechanized forces pressed the attack, they were able to quickly drive Jabal and his Kurdistan forces from their positions defending Irbil and then begin advancing towards the city.

### **November 3rd, 17:00 local time**

#### **GIR Forces**

#### **Outskirts of Irbil, Kurdistan**

The Junior NCO who was now commanding Abduhl’s squad listened intently to his company commander over the radio. After a few seconds he hung up his hand set and turned to what was left of his squad in the BTR-80 that had carried them so far this day.

“By order of the Imam, the assault on Irbil has been unilaterally suspended.”

There were a number of audible moans, and a couple of “but why’s and: “but we have this scum in the palm of our hands. The NCO continued.

“Imam Hasan Sayeed will make a national statement at 20:00 hours explaining his intent. Apparently, his statement will be broadcast internationally. We will receive it over the command frequency right here in our unit.”

“Until then, we have been ordered to take up defensive positions above Irbil in these ridges south and east of the city. Apparently, our sister divisions, which have advanced to within fifteen kilometers of the city from the west, will take up positions there.”

“So, let’s get our gear in order. We will be able to restock ammunition and provisions at 22:00 hours. Until then, let’s set up our camp along the ridgeline, dig into our positions and await further orders. The Imam will address us at 20:00. Let’s get finished before then.”

### **November 3rd, 18:45 local time**

#### **Retreating Kurdistan force**

#### **North of Irbil, Kurdistan**

Jabal was leading his men overland to a strong defensive position in the mountains between Rayat and Aqrah. From there, if driven off again, they could quickly retreat into Turkey to continue the fight from exile.

Who would have thought that the mighty US forces would be pushed from the air twice in as many days? It was true that they had decimated many of the GIR’s aircraft in an awesome and terrible

display of firepower, but the GIR was apparently ready and willing to suffer such losses to achieve its goals. Now, the dream of an independent Kurdistan was drifting away like smoke in the wind.

As he pondered the best way to keep up the fight, Will Peterson, who had been talking into his satellite set, hung up and spoke.

“Jabal, US intelligence is reporting that the GIR has stopped its advance on Irbil. Apparently, Hasan Sayeed has made a unilateral decision and intends to deliver an address to the world in about an hour.”

Jabal was shocked. Irbil was the GIR’s for the taking. Its fall would spell the end of the push for Kurdistan independence. Outside of some harassing forces he had left behind to slow the advance, Jabal knew that the GIR forces could be in Irbil tonight.

“It will be interesting to find out what he has to say. I can think of no military reason for him to stop his advance and take the pressure off of us. Perhaps something has occurred on the diplomatic or economic front. Maybe your people have finally found some threat or lever that has influenced him.”

Will did not know, but he doubted the accuracy of Jabal’s speculation. The people at the Agency he had been talking to were as mystified as Jabal, which meant that whatever Hasan Sayeed’s reasons were, they were not being forced upon him by the United States. It was more likely that Sayeed saw some advantage to the GIR in taking this action, though what advantage could be gained by “pulling back” when one’s forces had the strategic momentum was hard to comprehend. Jabal, Will, and many others, particularly those in US intelligence, were left scratching their heads.

“Well, we’ll be able to listen if you want. The entire message is supposed to be only ten to fifteen minutes long, and they are going to pipe it through the satellite so we can hear it here.”

**November 3rd, 20:00 local time**

**Presidential Offices**

**Tehran, Greater Islamic Republic**

“Good evening. I have come before the people of the world this evening, and before my brothers and sisters of faith throughout Islam in particular, to express my deep sorrow for the hostilities gripping the northern regions of the former Iraq, and the attendant loss of life over the last two days. I express my sincerest sorrow to the families, friends, and countrymen of those who have fallen in combat, and those innocents who are inevitably displaced, injured, or killed by the ravages of war.”

“It is easy to indicate that such actions were appropriate and necessary due to the actions of a rebellious few. But, despite whatever justifications, despite whatever provocation, the loss of a father, a brother, a husband...or the tragic death and suffering of a sister, mother, or children, cannot be soothed or reconciled by such talk. Therefore, in an effort to end such tragedy in these regions, I have ordered all GIR forces to unilaterally cease their offensive operations. We will look to diplomacy resolve this issue now.”

“In that spirit, I will personally become involved with the negotiations.”

“Let me explain to those of my own faith more of the detail of my heartfelt reasons for doing this. It goes beyond the worthy desire which all the world recognizes to soothe the brokenhearted. There is a reference in the Holy Koran to the writings of the ancient prophet, Jasher, wherein Jasher speaks of the days during the rise of the Mahdi. It may interest many listening tonight that the prophet Jasher is also mentioned in the Jewish Talmud and the Christian Bible. Within the Shia faith, our Mullahs, senior clerics and Ayatollahs have had access to these writings for many centuries, and have used them as reference material to the Holy Koran. With respect to the current situation in which followers of Islam are warring against one another, let me quote the following from the words of Jasher:”

“In those days will the Mahdi arise and punish the infidels and the unfaithful with the heavy hand of Allah. But ere he can accomplish this, he shall make peace between his warring brothers and sisters.

“Yea in the midst of battle will he call a halt and himself become as a dove to them, uniting them and restoring them to the house of unity and faith. From thence will he then go forth, gird about with the armor of truth, like a stone breaking forth from the mountains, until it has cleansed and filled the entire earth.”

“My brothers and sisters in Irbil, Karkuk, Mosul and all of the regions round about. We must stop warring among ourselves! Can you not see that we are being manipulated by the decadent powers of Europe and America into this quarreling, so that we remain weak and divided before them? It is they who seek to keep us at odds. We must resist their manipulation. We must not fall prey to it.”

“Irbil, the capital, lies before the forces of the GIR. It is within our power to destroy it and ruthlessly put down this rebellion. But I shall not do it. No more shall the faithful kill the faithful. I call a halt. We represent the *Greater Islamic Republic!*”

“I will personally make a pilgrimage from Karkuk to Irbil, beginning next week, to resolve this issue through negotiation and diplomacy. I call on all the faithful leaders in the area to meet with me. Together we will resolve this issue peacefully.”

“For those who would interfere, I warn you: Though our aim is peace, though we seek not the invasion or destruction of other lands, we have proven our ability to resist your interference and to deter you in your vain attempts to divide us. We will not brook interference. We will resolve our issues among ourselves with peace, dignity and honor.”

“Good night, and may Allah rest your spirits and soothe your souls.”

**November 3rd, 10:16**

**Broadcast Studios, WNN Headquarters**

**New York City, New York**

As the final touches of makeup were applied in preparation for another Special Report, David Krenshaw reviewed in his mind the events of the past few days.

The many weeks of U.S. and allied buildup in Saudi Arabia and Turkey had culminated in hostilities two days ago. The surprising audacity of the GIR and its willingness to incur casualties as it met its objectives had surprised the world. The videos and reports from Maria at Incirlik Air Base in Turkey, as it was attacked by GIR aircraft, resulting in the destruction of that U.S. Air base—as well as the live feed of the deaths of Maria and her crew—were unsettling, and unprecedented.

How could one reconcile the expensive (in terms of human life and materiel) victory as GIR forces bore down on Irbil, followed by the shocking unilateral halt in that offensive, which seemed to be on the verge of accomplishing its costly mission? And now there was the amazing, unprecedented announcement that had just been made by Hasan Sayeed...Hasan Sayeed who had only been interviewed once by any western media organization...Hasan Sayeed who had given that exclusive interview to David Krenshaw himself.

In response to an urgent indication from one of the producers, the make up personnel moved away.

“Three, two, one...On Air!”

“Good morning. This is David Krenshaw with a Special Report from WNN. The leader of the GIR, Hasan Sayeed, has just made a startling announcement indicating a unilateral cessation of hostilities in and around the northern provinces of the former nation of Iraq.”

“With the success of the GIR offensive to bring these same provinces into line with the unification election results of two months ago, it was expected that the GIR would only have a mop up operation left after the capture of Irbil, the capital of the breakaway provinces. But, moments ago, Hasan Sayeed called a unilateral halt to that offensive and now indicates that he personally will lead a diplomatic delegation to Irbil. In his internationally broadcast announcement, which WNN aired earlier today, Sayeed appealed directly to the Islamic faithful in those provinces to join with him, indicating that this gesture of halting the offensive was tied to obscure and ancient prophecies in the Islamic faith.”

“Officials from the Republic of Kurdistan immediately accepted Sayeed’s cease fire proposal and his request for negotiations. In truth, given the tactical situation and defeated condition of their armed forces, they had little choice.”

“We are still awaiting the official U.S. response. There is no doubt that the GIR has the upper hand, both militarily and diplomatically, as a result of Hasan Sayeed’s humanitarian gesture. The real question now is whether he can maintain the advantage he enjoys.”

**November 3rd, same time**

**Situation Room, The White House**

**Washington, D.C.**

The President sat listening to the WNN report with his closest advisors and cabinet members. Alan Reeves, the Vice President, Fred Reissinger, the Secretary of State, Tim Hattering, the Secretary of Defense, John Bowers, the National Security Advisor, General Jeremy Stone, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and Mike Rowley, the Director of the CIA, were all listening with the President.

When the broadcast ended and the normal programming resumed, the President broke the quiet and somber mood of the gathering.

“Well, this Hasan Sayeed is a very shrewd operator. He has presented the Kurd leaders with a way out short of abject defeat, and he is effectively forestalling our “knock-out” punch to his air assets within his borders. Jeremy, have we got those airfields targeted?”

Over the last two days, General Jeremy Stone had spent many hours listening to advisors and planners of all types. Personnel at the War College, personnel from the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), national security advisors, advisors from every branch of the armed forces at the Pentagon and, of course, the planners from Central Command themselves had all participated.

After the first day of failing to achieve any of their objectives, the second day had been a partial success. More importantly, the second day had helped pinpoint the location of several of the airfields within the former borders of Iraq and Iran from which the massive numbers of GIR aircraft were originating. Analysis of the last two days had given America and her allies a pretty good idea of when the aircraft were launching each day. This intelligence had led to the planning of massive raids on

those airfields for the next morning. Those raids would include cruise missile launches from the Navy and from Air force B1-B Lancers, followed by the launching of strike packages from the USS Carl Vinson in the Mediterranean and from the Izmir Air Base.

"Mr. President, Central Command is prepared to give the launch order for this evening's raid at 3:30 this afternoon. I recommend we give the order in spite of the unilateral cease-fire by the GIR. We need to thin the GIR aircraft numbers out faster. The best time to do that is while they are on the ground. Besides, we need to teach these bastards a hard lesson about messing with the United States of America."

Norm Weisskopf knew his Secretary of State wanted to respond to the General, but he held his hand up to indicate that he, Weisskopf, had the floor, and he was not about to relinquish it.

"Fred, I know what you are going to say, and at this point I have to agree with you, irrespective of how much I would like to allow the General to carry the fight to those airfields for both of the reasons he gave."

"However, we would be hard pressed to defend such an action in the face of Sayeed's proposal. Particularly since we are not in a declared state of war, and particularly since his forces have stood down."

"Believe me, from my own time over there, I have heard this rhetoric from the more fundamental Muslims over and over. Such cunning strategizing has been going on a long time, and was a major concern before and during Desert Storm. Hasan Sayeed considers the "unfaithful" to be Saudi Arabia, the UAR, Turkey, Egypt and anyone else who is willing to work with the west. In this regard, Sayeed is no different than Saddam Hussein, except that he is not corrupt, and he is much more dangerous than we ever conceived Hussein of being. In a similar fashion, his desire to unite all of Islam under his fundamental interpretations are no different that Usama bin Laden's were, except Hasan Sayeed is not off trying to do it on his own. He has the full support of the main stream clerics and several Islamic governments behind him. He is going about his goal to unite Islam in a much more strategic manner. Despite the death and destruction Usama bin Laden caused, I believe Hasan Sayeed has the potential of being much more dangerous to this country."

"Mike, what is your intelligence telling you about Sayeed? Where's he taking this thing? What is "punishing" the unfaithful going to mean?"

Mike Rowley had anticipated this line of discussion. His people had been analyzing Sayeed specifically. What the President really was asking was, "How big a threat is Hasan Sayeed himself?"

"Mr. President, as you know, Sayeed has the unparalleled and unprecedented support of both the Shia and Sunni sects of Islam. The people see him as their Mahdi—in plain English that translates pretty much into "Messiah." An analysis of their prophecies and beliefs, shows us that the majority of Muslims believe that the Mahdi will unite the faithful in Islam in a massive Jihad, or Holy War, against the unfaithful and the infidels."

"We at the Agency believe that Hasan Sayeed, on his own, will develop into a very dangerous threat to world stability, world peace and to our own vital national interests. When coupled with his ties to the CAS in general, and to Beijing in particular, the situation has the potential of developing into a bigger threat to the United States than the Axis powers of World War II, or the Soviet Union of the Cold War era."

President Weisskopf had already come to this conclusion, especially the part coupling Jien Zenim and Hasan Sayeed.

"Let's talk about Red China in a moment. Mike, we still have that team on the ground in Kurdistan, right? What is their location and status?"

Mike Rowley thought about the team he had in Iraq.

"Yes, Sir. Eight former Special Forces personnel, most of them former Delta Force. The leader is one of our best field operatives. During the blocking actions they had been divided up between the various divisions as forward air controllers for our aircraft, but are now all reunited with Jabal's headquarters company north of Irbil."

The General mentally envisioned a map of the region.

"Good, Mike. I would like you and John to meet with me after this meeting to discuss the most expedient method of extracting that team. Let's meet right here."

"Beyond that, Fred, I believe that we need to prepare for the eventuality that Kurdistan is going to capitulate, and agree to relinquish its independence and unite with the GIR. I want to know what diplomatic and economic steps we can take to demonstrate our firm disagreement. Clearly the Kurds are being coerced into this. In addition, discreetly arrange an offer for the existing leaders there to have the opportunity to take refuge under our protection and continue their efforts from exile. Please coordinate this."

"Now, a final point I want to make before we adjourn. The Red Chinese are continuing to build their military at a break-neck pace. Their launching of this new "Sea Control Carrier" is indicative of their intentions."

"I know everyone is busy and extremely preoccupied with the situation in the Mid East. That is understandable, particularly given our buildup there, and the current confrontation. At the same time,

we cannot afford to take our eyes off of what China is doing. John, make sure the NRO and our other reconnaissance assets don't forget that."

"Specifically, I want to know how quickly they are going to launch these new carriers, and I want to know how in the world they are going to support them. Somewhere there's a logistics chain built up to maintain these vessels and their carrier wings. I want to know the weak links in that chain."

**November 3rd, 10:37**

**Situation Room, The White House  
Washington, D.C.**

"OK, Mike. What is the likelihood that your team can get into position along Sayeed's intended path and observe his "pilgrimage" before we extract them?"

Mike Rowley weighed carefully what his President was asking him.

"Mr. President, I can order them to accomplish such a task very quickly. I have full confidence that they could take up the best possible position for such observation within twenty-four hours. But Mr. President, what is the purpose of such an observation? WNN and every other major media outlet will probably carry Sayeed's "walk" live."

The President understood exactly what he had to order, and he knew these two men were among the most trusted whom he knew.

"Mike and John, I want this perfectly understood. Our duty is to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States and bear true faith and allegiance to the same. We have all served in the uniform of our country in allegiance to that oath. We are to defend said Constitution, and, by extension, the life, liberty and well being of our nation and its citizens against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Do both of you concur? John?"

John already had deduced what was coming. From the moment the President had asked about Sayeed's personal threat, he had guessed where this was leading. When the President asked about that CIA team in Kurdistan, it had removed all doubt.

"Yes, Mr. President. That is exactly how I perceive it."

The President turned back towards Mike.

"Mike?"

Mike knew where this was going as well. He had personally known Tony, whose cover name was Will Peterson, for eight years, and had known of him for long before that. There wasn't a better field operations man to have on the ground over there.

"Mr. President, of course I agree 100% with your assessment."

The President was gratified at the unwavering dedication of these two men. They knew where he was going—where he *had* to go, and they were steady as a rock in the face of it.

"OK, then, with that understanding, I want your team led by... is it Tony?"

At Mike Rowley's nod, the President continued.

"Yes. Well, inform Tony that he has NCA approval to take whatever measures he deems necessary to protect and defend the vital interests of this nation against its enemies while he is observing near Irbil."

Mike Rowley had to be sure of the full implications. He had to voice his need for complete comprehension.

"Mr. President, you understand the likely implications? The likely consequences for these men?"

Norm Weisskopf was no stranger to command decisions, or the mortal consequences they could carry. He had agonized over such decisions involving hundreds of thousands of young Americans sixteen years earlier. But he had never wavered or faltered in that decision-making capacity. Any man who had ever served under his command, who had any knowledge of him, knew that the "General" would gladly stand in for them in *any* duty he ordered them to fulfill. It was no different now.

"Yes, Mike. I understand all too well the likely consequences. Pass the order along. After making the observations, and executing any measures he deems necessary, have them get out of there and egress to the nearest pick-up point—and, Mike, tell Tony directly from me, God's speed."

**November 5th, 15:37 local time**

**A bluff above the main highway to Karkuk  
Irbil, Kurdistan**

There was a *lot* of security. Anything within about a thousand meters of the highway was literally blanketed by GIR security forces. Infantry, APC's, tanks stationed at critical junctures and a lot of helicopters flying up and down the route on both sides. Although the vast majority of GIR troops in the vicinity had not advanced beyond the lines established by Hasan Sayeed's unilateral cease-fire declaration. He apparently was more than willing to allow a strong contingent to line the road to ensure the security aspect of his intended "pilgrimage" into Irbil.

Will Peterson viewed the scene from 1800 meters away. He was clad in a complete desert ghillie suit and had his egress route planned. Jabal had insisted on serving as his security, and they were both in the firing position they had chosen the day before—a location that overlooked the main road. The

rest of Peterson's team, along with Jabal's men, were waiting another four hundred meters behind them, further into the hills. They would serve as additional security during their egress, if required.

Very early in the morning on the day before, the orders had come in over the satellite set, direct from Washington. It had not taken Will more than an instant to understand exactly what he was being ordered to do. He contemplated those orders now as he awaited Hasan Sayeed's entourage.

"You will take up a position to observe the advance of GIR military and Command and Control (C&C) assets towards Irbil. You are authorized to act with extreme prejudice in engaging any high-value targets that pose a threat to the national security interests of the United States. After observing the passage of GIR C&C, and taking any action deemed necessary, egress the area and arrange for pick-up at the nearest landing zone (LZ)."

Will's weapon of choice in very long-range situations like this was the "Windrunner" .50 cal. Compact Tactical Sniper Rifle (CTSR). He had arranged for the CIA to purchase one for him some years ago. Will believed this weapon to be far superior to the military's M82A1A .50 cal. sniper rifle. The CTSR was more accurate at longer range than the M82A1A. In tests at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds it had recorded an incredible 1/2-minute of angle (MOA) at over 1000 yards. In addition, the CTSR had a removable barrel with fixed-head spacing, was made of 4140 chromoly heat-treated steel, had an adjustable sliding stock with adjustable cheek rest, and weighed in at less than thirty pounds—including the rifle, bipod and scope. Will had a standard M14 bipod mounted on the rifle and used a Leupold SN-1/TAR Long Range Precision Sniper Optical System.

"I have them, Will. There are two T80 tanks followed by a BTR-80 command vehicle just coming out from behind that hill to the south. There are BMP-2's on either side of the road and another BTR-80 and two tanks bringing up the rear. They're moving slow, and there is definitely a group of individuals walking on the road in the middle of the formation."

"Yes! There's Sayeed. He's dressed in the lightly colored, robe walking in the middle of a number of Mullahs and a security detachment."

Jabal thought about what he'd just said. A number of Mullah's, probably even Ayatollahs, were with Sayeed; men of the faith: Jabal's spiritual leaders. But of course they would be. They had officially recognized him as the Imam for all of Islam.

"OK, Jabal. Great. I've got him. I make the range just under two miles. He'll come to us."

**November 5th, 15:42 local time**

**On the main highway to Karkuk**

**Irbil, Kurdistan**

Hasan Sayeed was closer to Irbil and his dream of a united Islam. Thus far, his plans had gone amazingly well. Surely the hand of Allah was with him.

Jien Zenim, the Chinese leader, had called him personally and asked him to reconsider this "pilgrimage." But Jien Zenim did not understand matters of faith. He was a godless infidel, but he was a very powerful and wise infidel whose influence had opened many doors. Nonetheless, Jien Zenim had not been happy at Hasan's insistence that this pilgrimage, and direct involvement, was necessary if Hasan was going to bring closure to this "rebellion," this fracture with the Kurds.

Of course Hasan's own staff and many of the faithful had also asked him to reconsider, fearing for his life. He understood their concerns, but did not share them. His objective was to see the fulfillment of the burning desire in his breast, the fulfillment of what the internal, eternal voice whispered to him: Unite Islam! Purge the unfaithful! Excise the infidel! All else, even his own life, or at the least the risks to his life, were secondary.

In Hasan's mind, the choices were simple. If Allah wanted him to complete his calling, he would. If, in Allah's wisdom, he was not to complete it, but was to die in the attempt...well, what of it? He would not try to defy the will of Allah. He had learned long ago the useless nature of such a fight by seeing others engaged in it.

So, here he was within five kilometers of the outskirts of Irbil. Tonight he would be in the city, preparing for tomorrow's negotiations with the defeated Kurd leaders. He had every confidence those negotiations would go well, and he intended to show great compassion and mercy to the Kurds in general, although a few harsh examples would have to be made.

As these thoughts passed through his mind, he turned to get a better view of his surroundings. This close to Irbil, more and more people were beginning to gather along the security perimeter that had been established by his forces. In addition, a number of western news teams were present.

Viewed from this particular location, to his right there was a long sloping rise to a bluff overlooking the road a little less than two kilometers away. The bluff itself appeared to be outside the direct security area. Strange, Hasan thought. Looking up there just now he could have sworn he had seen a glint of sunlight reflecting off of something for just an instant.

Hasan Sayeed had been in mortal danger too many times not to give heed to the sinking sensation that suddenly called out for recognition from the pit of his stomach. While he continued to gaze, he spoke to his good friend, the foreign minister.

“Sadiq, have the commander of the security attachment notified. I want him to send a squad of men up to that bluff. I just saw a glint of sunlight up there that is very out of place.”

**November 5th, 15:43 local time**

**The bluff above the main highway to Karkuk**

**Irbil, Kurdistan**

As Will Peterson saw the upturned face, he took a deep breath and slowly began to release it as he prepared to apply pressure to the trigger. As he did so, Jabal, who was kneeling behind him, thought, “The 12th Imam...he will make peace with his brothers...he will call a halt to the fighting amongst the faithful...he will unite *all* of Islam. Yes, he *will* unite all of Islam!”

As Jabal thought this, Will was just beginning to apply pressure to the trigger as he focused through his scope and became “one” with his rifle. While doing so he thought, “There, just like that, you SOB. Come on now. Hold that pose and I’ll...”

“BANG!”

Those were Will Peterson’s last living thoughts as a 9mm bullet from Jabal’s pistol slammed into the back of his head, destroying his brain stem, killing him instantly.

Jabal knelt over the now-dead body of the CIA operative and former Delta Force commander, as the report of the pistol echoed down the valley and reached the road. The procession abruptly stopped. Security guards jumped on top of Hasan and rode him to the ground, covering and protecting his body with their own. Others, both from the road and from the surrounding security forces, looked towards the firing position, searching for the source of the shot.

“Will, you were a good soldier, but I have finally come to see you for the infidel you were in the service of the Great Satan.”

Laying the pistol down, Jabal laid out spread-eagle on the ground as the nearest soldiers, APC’s and helicopters converged on his position.

**November 5th, 15:45 local time**

**Behind the bluff above the main highway to Karkuk**

**Irbil, Kurdistan**

As soon as the shot rang out, the other members of the CIA team knew something had gone horribly wrong. That was no rifle shot. Their training and instructions kicked in immediately. At a signal from their second in command, Lt. Riley Adams, the team quickly issued orders to their Kurd compatriots and quietly turned away, back into the scrub-covered hills. Using the cover of the scrub brush...they successfully moved away while the attention of the security forces was focused on the firing position where Jabal now lay on the ground.

Within two days, the remainder of the team would be picked up by a specially configured CV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft which had been outfitted for the CIA. In it, they were carried away from the short-lived Republic of Kurdistan, which by the time they landed in Turkey, no longer existed.

**November 5th, 22:55 local time**

**Special Conference Room, University of Salah al-Din**

**Irbil, Kurdistan**

“My Imam, there is no identification on the body of the shooter. The body itself is that of a male in his late thirties whose exact origins are indeterminate, though his dental work would indicate western origins, probably the United States, perhaps England or Israel. The weapon is an American made .50 cal sniper rifle, but not the type normally carried by U.S. military personnel.”

“There is no doubt that this individual was positioned to make an attempt on your life. If the rebel, Jabal, had not killed him, it is likely that the assassin would have succeeded in his attempt.”

Hasan Sayeed considered the report from the commander of his security detachment. Someone, probably the Americans, perhaps the Israelis, was getting very concerned about him. Clearly, Allah was watching over him and his call to unite the faithful.

“And what of this Jabal? Is he talking?”

The security commander had spent several hours watching the interrogation of Jabal, who was well known as the military leader of the people they had been sent here to subdue. The interrogation had gone smoothly. Jabal was more than willing to cooperate. There had been no need for extra persuasive measures or threats. Everything Jabal was telling them checked out, in as far as their own security and intelligence apparatus allowed them to verify it on such short notice.

“My Imam, Jabal has indicated that this was a CIA attempt on your life, and that he could not allow it to proceed. He indicated that the name of the dead man is Will Peterson, but we have found no such name in our records, or in any review of the data we have on known American operatives. It is likely that this name was a cover.”

“Nonetheless, Jabal pointed out to us where other members of this team had been in hiding and his information has already allowed us to capture a number of the rebels, although any other Americans are still at large. Jabal insists that he would like to speak with the personnel we are

capturing. In fact he wants to speak to all of the Kurds, to convince them of the need to take up your cause and join in a united Islam.”

Hasan could see that, if this turned out to be true, and Jabal had indeed made a decision based on the true faith, there was a potential political, spiritual and international coup of major proportions to be enjoyed here. Jabal had been an effective leader for so many years in the Kurd efforts to gain their independence from Saddam Hussein. He had led well in this encounter with Hasan’s own GIR forces and, if the American plans for air superiority had materialized, he probably would have been successful in preventing the GIR victory. If he was indeed convinced that the call to unite Islam was divine, and of Hasan’s own role in that call as Imam...

“Commander, I would like you to bring Jabal here now so that I can speak with him and interrogate him personally. The Ayatollah Ol Osam Sadiq Shiraziha and I will talk with him here in private, while you and your men wait just outside the door. Leave one of your side arms here with us, but I do not believe we will find use for it.”

Later that night, after much discussion and a lot of pointed and in-depth questioning by Hasan, the plans for the Kurds were complete. With Jabal’s unqualified support and urging, the unification of the Kurds with the GIR would be a foregone conclusion. Considering Jabal’s knowledge of the Americans, and his leadership and strategy capabilities, the leadership role for GIR forces in this region was also settled.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, when Hasan made his announcement regarding the whole of Iraq becoming an official part of the GIR, closely followed by Jabal’s speech to the world’s press, the American’s would know. They would know that their plans to thwart the will of Allah were in complete disarray and a total failure. They would also know that Hasan Sayeed knew exactly what they had attempted today on the road to Irbil. Hasan vowed before Allah that those actions would come back to haunt them.



## Chapter 7

*"It is more honorable to repair a wrong than to persist in it."- Jefferson*

**November 6th, 10:55**

**CBC, "Face the Press"**

**New York City, New York**

"...this President, like so many other Presidents from his party, has found it necessary to go sticking our nose into the affairs of other nations. The United Nations' General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to allow the elections in Iraq and Pakistan to stand. Many of us in the Senate and in the House opposed the recognition of Kurdistan. If it was so important, why didn't this same President, when he was the General in charge of all armed forces in Desert Storm, demand his President allow the creation of the so called "Republic of Kurdistan" back then? Or why didn't he insist on it as an advisor at the conclusion of the Iraqi Freedom Operation a short two and one half years ago?"

"I'll tell you why he didn't. It's because the world community would no more accept it then than it does now. So, instead of allowing a nation of people to vote their conscience and unite with people of like faith and culture, this President too quickly sends in the "Marines" and we get our nose bloodied in the worst air battle disaster since World War II, and for what? The Kurdish people are now willing to unite with the GIR anyway!"

"I'll tell you, it's preposterous. I am calling on my colleagues in the Senate and the House to conduct a full investigation. I believe we have the votes in the Senate to force a vote on censure, and that's exactly what I intend to do.

"The American people I represent are not interested in us forcing our will and our interpretation of the world view on other peoples. They are interested in maintaining low interest rates and high stock values, and in expanding our trade relations with the emerging nations, with organizations like the Coalition of Asian States. This president has taken actions that are damaging to all of these interests."

As the senior Senator from Massachusetts completed his comments, the commentator on the popular Sunday morning news show turned to his other guest, the Secretary of State, Fred Reissinger.

"Well, Mr. Secretary, there you have a fairly stinging rebuke and a threat of censure by one of the leading opposition Senators. How is the Administration reading the apparent disapproval of its actions in the Persian Gulf by many in the Congress, and, according to the polls, a growing percentage of American citizens as well? How does the administration plan to respond?"

Fred Reissinger was a consummate negotiator, but his loyalties were immovable, not only in relation to his friend and boss, the President, but also on principle. This was something he felt sure could not be said for far too many of the career politicians on both sides of the aisle with whom he rubbed shoulders on an almost daily basis. In the Secretary's opinion, the lack of steadfastness to principle was especially true of the inhabitants of the other side of the aisle, and was most particularly apparent in this individual with whom he shared the stage on this morning's show.

"With all due respect to the Senator from Massachusetts, the people of the Kurdish region also voted, and overwhelming I might add, to declare their independence. I find it ironic that the Senator would refer back to the Gulf War, and actions taken during that time by then General Weisskopf. At that time, General Weisskopf was under a Constitutional requirement, as are all of our service personnel, to obey the lawful orders of his civilian leadership. Would the Senator have had him disobey those orders? No...Norm Weisskopf knows where his duty lies, and I defy anyone, including the good senator, to compare their record with that of the President in this regard.

"Well, we're now fifteen years removed from that conflict and Norm Weisskopf is the civilian leadership, the National Command Authority. He recognizes, along with many leaders in our nation and around the world, the great threat that is building in the Middle East. We have an Islamic union comprised of many states, a number of which have trained and harbored terrorists who have killed innocent Americans in cold blood. An Islamic state with nuclear weapons and rapidly expanding borders. Their influence and rapidly expanding military capabilities are perilously close to interfering with our own vital national interests and those of our friends and allies.

"With respect to the economic conditions, we are at a crossroads and have important choices to make. We can either continue a self-destructive policy of open trade with those nations who show by their actions that they use our generosity against us, or we can take a position to ensure that those trade relations are consistent with America's best interests, both now and in the future. I will not attempt to intrude on Secretary Gage's turf, or to speak for him. But I can say that Russell Gage is a recognized scholar of economics. He understands the relation between trade issues and international politics perhaps better than anyone who has ever served as Secretary of the Treasury. It is his contention that the policy of appeasement and "free trade," at the expense of "fair trade," is ultimately destructive to our economy. The NEC to my knowledge has his full confidence."

At this point the CBC commentator interjected.

“Yes, but isn’t it true, Mr. Secretary, that the European Union, outside of our historically close ties to Great Britain, is very nervous about the current situation in the Mid East? In addition, what of the Senator’s contention regarding the announcement from Irbil this morning that they will unite with the GIR? In fact, one of our former staunchest allies in the region, a man your administration has backed, supported and depended upon, has now announced his support of unification. Jabal Talabari was the head of the Patriotic Kurdistan Front, and then, after their declaration of independence, he served as the General in charge of the Republic of Kurdistan armed forces. Let me quote from his announcement yesterday:

“I accept the appointment by Imam Hasan Sayeed as the military leader of this region of the GIR. I announce my loyalty to him and to the goal of Islamic unification. I urge all Kurdish people and others living in the region to support our decision to unify with the Greater Islamic Republic and vote “yes” in the referendum vote next week.”

“Now, let me say just a word about the drastic change I personally have made. I was raised as a faithful Sunni. I am devout in the faith. I am also of Kurdish descent. I have fought hard for many years for what I believed to be best for the Kurdish people. We fought the tyrant Saddam Hussein, and we were supported in that fight by other powers, principally the United States. I was led to believe, and indoctrinated by those supporting us, that Hasan Sayeed was just another Hussein. But, to use the western saying, “actions speak louder than words.” Hasan Sayeed’s actions have spoken louder than all the words Hussein ever uttered, and louder than the foreign voices from the west.”

“His unilateral cease fire and his personal involvement with the negotiations ignited a spark within my heart. He had it within his power to rout us, to utterly destroy us, and yet he chose, even as prophesy indicated, to bind up the wounds and make peace with his brothers and sisters. Peace and unity in the faith are the best things for the Kurdish people. Hasan Sayeed offers this. The west offers us only more conflict and division. I came to the conclusion that I must reject what they now offer. I warn them, and their agents, to cease seeking to instigate divisiveness and conflict amongst our people.”

“It is our intent to defuse the military situation and deploy the forces of this region of the GIR in a defensive posture. Those forces necessary to secure our borders and rebuild our infrastructure will remain. Other forces will be re-deployed throughout the GIR as indicated by our supreme military council, led by the Imam himself. The movement of troops and equipment and materiel with respect to these goals will begin in the next few days. Thank you.”

“Secretary Reissinger, how does the administration respond to this? Here you have a former ally, a key player in this administration’s hopes to limit the growth of the GIR, turning one hundred and eighty degrees and now supporting the GIR’s expansion?”

The Secretary of State had been up since the early morning hours as news of the agreement in Irbil filtered out. He had spent several hours with the President and his key cabinet members and advisors mapping out their strategy and response. He had, in fact, already voiced that response just a few minutes ago in answer to the liberal Senator from Massachusetts.

“I have already addressed this issue. We are, of course, saddened by this turn of events. Jabal Talabari and his people were staring down the barrel of a loaded GIR gun. I view any of the so-called “agreements” coming out of Irbil as decisions made under duress. Clearly, when not under such duress, the people of Kurdistan voted overwhelmingly to be independent. I believe that is what we should focus on.”

“I cannot speak for the Secretary of Defense or the Joint Chiefs. We will watch the diplomatic scene carefully and continue to offer the leaders in the Republic of Kurdistan safe haven and sanctuary with our forces.”

With the flashing of the red warning light indicating that there were only two minutes left in the program, the commentator interjected.

“Thank you Mr. Secretary. This crisis has once again captured the attention of our nation and its people. It has also sharply divided many.”

“WNN will continue to carry live updates along with our interviews from both sides of the political aisle. Again, Mr. Secretary of State, Mr. Senator, we thank you both for your time and your comments.”

### **November 14th, 16:12 local time**

#### **Off the coast of India**

#### **80 Kilometers west of Cochin**

The two fleets sailed in formation a little less than 10 kilometers apart. These joint operations were a first, and many interested eyes were observing. Peering from above were the satellites: American, Russian, Israeli, French and Japanese. On the surface of the ocean, two American Perry class frigates and an improved Los Angeles class attack submarine were shadowing the battle groups, along with several ships and submarines from other nations.

The object of all of this interest was the joint naval exercise between India and the People's Republic of China. This was a major exercise that included the largest and most modern combatants from each nation.

The Indians had both of their carriers involved. One was the older jump jet carrier, Viraat, which the British launched as Hermes in 1953 and the Italians purchased in 1986. The Viraat had recently completed a service life extension and been modernized extensively.

The other was the new Indian carrier, Cochin, which the Russians had launched as the Baku and the Indians purchased in 2000. The Indian government had spent three years rebuilding and refitting the former Russian VTOL carrier into a Short Take-off and Landing (STOL) carrier with a ski jump bow. Now, the Cochin was on her sea trials and would ultimately replace the Viraat after a second modern carrier was completed.

The Viraat carried a complement of twelve Sea Harrier VTOL aircraft, while the Cochin carried eighteen MIG-29 attack/fighter aircraft. Escorting the two carriers were eight very capable surface combatants.

These included two of the modern Delhi guided missile destroyers (DDG's), two Rajput class DDG's (which had been upgraded from former Russian Kashin class DDG's), two of the newer Kashmir class guided missile frigates (FFG's) and two of the improved Godavari class FFG's.

All of these destroyers and frigates were the most modern classes in the Indian navy and were equipped with the latest radar and sonar, as well as modern anti-aircraft and surface to surface missile systems. In addition, the Indians had the Rajaba and Jyoti replenishment ships taking part in the exercises.

The centerpiece of the Chinese group was the brand new Beijing sea control carrier, which was also conducting her sea trials. The Beijing was carrying a minimal compliment of twelve SU-33s, but was capable of carrying a total of thirty attack and support aircraft. These included the SU-33 derivatives now being license manufactured in China, as well as SU-25 "Frogfoot" attack aircraft and a new STOL early warning (AEW) aircraft the Chinese had recently developed. The Beijing was accompanied by two of the new Hangzhou class DDG's, which were upgrades of the most modern Russian Sovremenny designs, two of the indigenous and very capable PRC Luhai class DDG's and four Jiangwei-II class FFG's. With the aircraft carrier and its eight escorts, this was the most powerful Chinese naval group ever assembled.

The exercises were scheduled to last for ten days. During that time, joint air operations, joint anti-submarine warfare (ASW) operations, joint oceangoing maneuvers and joint replenishment exercises would all be conducted. Early on in the exercises, a joint CAP was established over the fleets that consisted of two close-in Indian Sea Harriers and MIG-29s augmented by three SU-33s flying out further from the fleet (40–70 kilometers) along the primary and secondary threat axis. These units were rotated and configured differently depending on the type of exercise being conducted. Scenarios representing cruise missile defense, air defense, war at sea, ground support and forced transit were all exercised.

### **November 16th, 16:12 local time**

#### **COSCO Fabrication Facilities**

##### **Port of Macua, PRC**

The original fabrication had occurred several months ago in the small city of JingCheng near the confluence of the Yenshi Xi and Xingiao He Rivers in southeastern China. There, in a small fiberglass research and manufacturing facility owned by COSCO, a mold had been developed using rigid polyurethane foam as the primary material. No gelcoat was required, which made the entire process less expensive, in keeping with the planned disposable nature of the finished product.

Once composition and design of the principal product had been decided upon, the engineers in JingCheng began testing various inserts to help strengthen and provide hard points for the addition of various types of equipment—and weapons. As a result, the product had numerous strengthened areas where various types and sizes of steel plate inserts could be fitted for the desired purposes.

Now, after significant testing and further cost reduction and manufacturing improvements, the master mold was complete and the process was ready to be implemented into mass production at many facilities. That production would occur rapidly in various places along the Chinese coasts and along several rivers that emptied into the South China Sea. Literally scores of production facilities were being prepared to mass-produce these products by the thousands.

There would be four principal production regions, with a principal gathering and outfitting facility for each region. These principal gathering and outfitting facilities were established as follows along the South China Sea Coast of the PRC: One of the facilities was at Shantou, which included twenty feeder facilities along the Han Jiang River. Another facility was at Mawei, which included thirty-seven feeder facilities along the Min Jiang River. A third facility was at Xiamen, which included forty-three facilities along the Jiulong Jieng River. Xiamen also included the research facility at Jingcheng. The final facility was here at Macua which included its thirty-six feeder facilities along the Xi Jiang River.

Now, at long last, the molds and materiel were in place. The senior Director over this project looked at the manufacturing and gathering facilities that had been erected here in Macau.

“So, Tang, when will your production crews be ready? Your facility will kick off the mass production and will generate the initial quality benchmarks and other test results that will serve as a template for the other three principal gathering points. The schedule calls for initial production to start on November 30th, but it appears that you are ahead of schedule.”

Tang Xinsheng was indeed ahead of schedule. He was proud of what his workers had accomplished, and he believed that the quality metrics would prove their competence and expertise once production started. He planned to achieve the highest marks both for quality and for quantity.

“Minister and Senior Director Qiao. We are ahead of schedule and will commence phased production next Monday, the 21st. We expect to reach full production by December 12th.”

In addition to being a Senior Director within the COSCO Group, Qiao Wenzhong was also the Assistant Vice Minister of internal production for the Guangdong Province of the People’s Republic of China. He was impressed and satisfied that Tang had this critical portion of the project under control. The other ministers and the Politburo itself would also be gratified and impressed.

“This is very good news, Tang. What rates of production do you foresee when your facility is fully completed and functional?”

Tang had those figures with him. He opened his notebook and pulled out a production folder. After looking at several lines of printout on a number of pages, he answered Qiao.

“Minister Qiao, the addition and testing of the removable turbine engines, the water jets, the navigation and communication controls and equipment, defensive electronics and radar, the living facilities and plumbing, the ramp controls and the weapons will occur in final assembly. As you know this adds several days to the entire process. But once we get the production lines fully operational, I anticipate we will be producing one hundred of these landing craft per week here in the Macau operation.”

For Qiao Wenzhong, this was excellent news. If the other three facilities could approach similar production rates, then the People’s Republic of China would be turning out between four and five hundred thirty-meter-long landing craft per week by mid December.

These landing craft, officially designated as the Project 071, Yunana II class, would be armed with one HQ-7 SAM system containing eight missiles, one multiple 122mm barrage rocket launcher and two 25mm DP (dual purpose) guns. They would be capable of carrying 150 tons of materiel. This could consist of two tanks and two squads of soldiers, two APC’s and three squads of soldiers or six squads of soldiers, over a range of 150–250 km for up to ten days of endurance.

The Yunana II class could also be carried on board numerous ships of the PLAN. Four of them would fit in the well deck of the new Amphibious Assault ships that were just beginning to come off their production lines. With the use of large davit systems or cranes, they could also be carried on most cargo and container ships available to the PLAN from COSCO’s large fleet. The design was essentially a lengthened version of the Yunana class, made of fiberglass construction with metal reinforcement and turbine engines. They were designed to be very seaworthy in wind force 6–7 and to be expendable and easy to manufacture in mass quantities.

“Outstanding, Tang. You are doing excellent work here and it will not go unnoticed or unrewarded. Please, carry on with the tour.”

**November 19, 18:35**

### **Sea King Boat Company, Mid West Region St. Louis, Missouri**

Marge Basar stared at the monitor of her computer as she read the latest sales figures for the mid west region of the Sea King Boat company. Marge was the regional director of sales, and this year was going to be the best year she had experienced while working at Sea King, as well as one of the best years in the company’s thirty-seven year history. Dealers all over the mid-west were selling Sea King boats at a record clip.

Sales of the thirty-two foot cruiser model were up fifteen percent over the previous year, and, on average, the cruisers being ordered were being outfitted with many of the higher-end options. Each of these boats was powered by two Cummins turbo diesel engines and could cruise all day long at over thirty knots, while carrying six passengers and over a ton of gear.

In addition to the sales of the cruisers, in the last three months five of Sea King’s very expensive, top of the line houseboats had been ordered. These forty-two foot behemoths were powered by twin Mercury 250 horsepower outboards and were the apex of the luxury boat builders’ craft. Each one was capable of sleeping eight passengers and could carry a load of over three thousand pounds, all while maintaining a steady twelve knots.

The orders had come in from dealers all along the Mississippi River. A few phone calls to the owners of those marine dealers had verified additional reasons for Marge to be pleased. The buyers of these boats had all ordered top-of-the-line communication equipment along with some very

sophisticated navigation equipment to go with their “package.” All of this would add very nicely to the mid west region’s bottom line.

If Marge could manage a sixth houseboat in the region before the end of the year, the mid west region would have sold more of the 42-foot houseboats in the second half of this year than the entire company had sold in any entire preceding year. The bonus money alone would be great, and the credits she accrued towards the company’s annual sales trip would ensure that she would earn one of those outside cabins on the luxury deck on her way to the Bahamas.

“I’ll just have to keep those dealers hopping for another six weeks or so to make this a sure thing,” she thought.

Marge picked up the phone to call the CFO of Sea King Boats and give him the good news.

“These sales are just dynamite,” she thought to herself as she dialed the correct extension.

Marge Basar had no idea how prophetic that would turn out to be.

**November 22, 10:25**

**Marine Recruiting Office, Boise State University**

**Boise, Idaho**

Sergeant Ken Bennett put his hand over the phone and leaned over his desk.

“Leon, this is Charlie Jenkins on the phone. He wants to talk to you.”

As Sergeant Bennett handed the phone to Leon, he turned his attention to Billy Simmons.

“Well, Billy, why don’t we move over to the conference room and sit down and talk while Leon is on the phone? How’s your Dad? It seems like his unit got over to Saudi just in time for them to watch the end of the show and come home. That’s too bad, too. We needed to open a can of “whoop” on those folks real bad, and your Dad sounds like just the man to have gotten it done, too. You pretty glad he’s coming home?”

Billy had thought a lot about his Dad over the last few weeks. He had been called up and then deployed over to Saudi Arabia so quickly. But that was part of the program. He was glad his Dad hadn’t been sent to Turkey where the air battles had been fought...and yes, he was glad his Dad was coming home. Even though America was taking a hit over the inability to preserve Kurdistan independence, Billy was proud that the United States had made the attempt, and that his country was willing to stand forthrightly behind its promises.

“You bet. I’m glad he’s coming home and that he’s safe. He is currently slated to rotate back to Florida around December 1<sup>st</sup>, and then will be officially back in reserve status and home by New Year’s day.”

As Leon continued to talk with his friend and mentor, Charlie Jenkins, who was calling from Chicago, the Sergeant continued.

“I can sure understand that. I spent several months over there back in Desert Shield and Desert Storm. I’m glad Weisskopf is the President right now, irrespective of those talking heads on the boob tube and cable. I have a sneaky feeling we haven’t heard the last of Hasan Sayeed in the Mid East...and I know we are ultimately going to have to face down Red China. Did you hear about that new carrier they surprised us with and are using to conduct exercises with the Indians? Sounds like a tough ship. And I can promise you, they aren’t building them as show boats.”

Billy had heard about the new carrier. The surprise had been that it even existed because everyone thought the Chinese were working on the larger carriers near Shanghai. Those weren’t supposed to be launched for another year or so. The one Sergeant Bennett was referring to had seemed to come out of nowhere.

As a result of all of these surprises, the media and certain elements of Congress were really down on President Weisskopf. That vote in Congress to censure him, even though it had failed, was an embarrassment. Despite the losses in the Mid East, and despite the surprises, Billy agreed with the Sergeant, and he agreed with his Dad...America was lucky to have President Norm Weisskopf at the helm in these perilous times.

“I have heard about it. Even saw the pictures. It’s a pretty radical design with the crossing deck pattern and the island in the back. Makes it clear it’s a conversion. If the time to fight comes, though, we’ll be putting them down and under. That thing may be good for regional activity against their regional adversaries, but a Nimitz class carrier with its battle group will take it down.”

“But let’s talk about why Leon and I came over today. We can go into more detail when he gets off the phone, but Sergeant, we’ve decided. With what all is going on, we’re ready to join up: now, today.”

Bennett was surprised. It was the middle of the school year. Football season was still on. Billy was on a full ride scholarship.

“Wait a minute, Billy. This is pretty abrupt. Don’t get me wrong. Your country wants your service and will be proud to have you in it. But we can wait until the semester break at least. What about football and your coaches? Have you talked with your parents?”

Fact was, Billy had considered all of these things. With the benefits offered, Billy figured he would finish his education while he worked his career. His coaches were not happy and wanted him to

wait at least until the season was over. Billy had worked with his professors and instructors to take tests and finish the semester early. By doing so, he could also accommodate his coaches' wishes. His mom was supportive, but Billy could tell she was worried. She had indicated she would talk to his Dad about it, but Billy knew his Dad would support him. His Dad trusted him. Oh, he might offer some advice, but he had nurtured Billy's independence through high school and had plainly stated that once Billy turned eighteen, he was a man in his Dad's eyes. His Dad had treated him that way, too.

"Sergeant, I appreciate your concerns and your questions. But I have thought it all out. I want to join now and get started. I am going to fly the Super Cobra and make a career out of serving my country. Leon can tell you his own reasons, but he's made the same decision."

In the middle of that exchange, Leon had finished talking with the retired Sergeant Major Jenkins. He had walked into the conference room just as Billy had finished his last comments.

"That's right, Sergeant. We're signing up. I talked to my Mom and she's proud. I figure it will also set the right example for my little brother. I just told Charlie and he's already congratulated me."

"I figure I'm going to ultimately work towards Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP). I got a knack for sneaking around and doing it quietly. I also figure I am going to be a crack shot."

"So, both of us have all our affairs with schooling worked out. We're both ahead in most of our classes and can test out and get the credits for this semester so we can apply those later on down the line. We'll be done with our testing by December 5<sup>th</sup>, and from then on it's going to be Semper Fidelis!"

Sergeant Ken Bennett had been in the Marines for many years. He had been recruiting all over the country for the last four years. There had been many times when he came away disillusioned with today's American youth. But experiences like this one made up for that, and then some. Whenever he saw young men like Leon and Billy, who were willing to give up their lifestyles and willing to serve their nation, he knew America would always survive and that there would be good hands to which he could pass the torch.

"Well, it seems like you vermin have everything all figured out. Sounds like you got it planned down to the last detail, with all of your I's dotted and all of your T's crossed. You know what? I don't see any holes in your OPLAN either. Let's sit down and map out both of your strategies. One towards aviation and Super Cobras, and the other towards reconnaissance, sniper school and that LRRP spot."

"But before we do that, let me tell you that you boys have made my day. This deserves a real celebration and I'm going to tell you that a Marine takes advantage of such opportunities whenever he can. Yep, I feel a big feed comin' on and this one's on me!"

**November 24, 20:45**

**National Reconnaissance Office Headquarters**

**IMINT Directorate**

**Chantilly, VA**

John Bowers looked at the assembled technicians and analysts. "Wow!" he thought. "They really have staffed up over here." It didn't surprise him. With all of the requests coming in from the Middle East, and with the continued demand for information on the Chinese, plus the normal activities, it was little wonder they didn't have more people than they did.

"Tom, let me first offer my congratulations on your promotion. You're going to do a heck of a job managing this operation and I cannot think of a more deserving person. Now, let's see what got you so fired up that you needed to call me over here this evening."

Tom Lawton had been promoted to Manager, Imagery Intelligence Analysts just a couple of weeks ago. His old boss, Bill Hendrickson, had also moved up the food chain and was now a Director of Imagery Intelligence. The promotion had not kept Tom from continuing to work like an analyst, though. He spent several hours each day personally reviewing imagery from the latest hot spots, and, in particular, from Red China—where his observations and analysis ten months earlier had warned the United States of Red China's extraordinary efforts in the Naval Aviation area. It was his recent discovery of further developments in this area that Tom wanted to show the National Security Advisor.

"John, take a look at this image."

Turning to his computer, Tom typed in a few commands on his keyboard and an overhead view of a Red Chinese Sea Control aircraft carrier was displayed on the screen.

"OK, Tom, that looks like the new Chinese aircraft carrier, the Beijing. It's a good shot of it for sure, but what is so special about this particular image?"

Tom typed in a few more commands. In the upper left-hand corner of the image, some text appeared, identifying the time the image was made, and its location. That text simply read:

11/22/05 03:25.34 Zulu

21:13:45 N 116:26:15 E

South China Sea

"John, notice the date and location."

John Bowers took just an instant before realization dawned on him.

“What! Wait just a second. Tom, those figures can’t be right, can they? The Beijing was supposed to be off the Indian coast—in fact, I know it was off the Indian coast on that date. I remember the briefing. How on earth could that date and location be correct?”

Tom had already gone over this same question in his mind several times. In resolving the dilemma, he had decided that the evidence pointed to the only conclusion possible.

“The picture and time stamp is correct, John. The answer is simple. That’s not the Beijing. It’s a second Red Chinese Sea Control aircraft carrier.”

Taking a seat next to Tom, John’s mind went into overdrive.

“But just last week we saw pictures of the second one still in its dry dock in the Tanjin shipyards. How could they have possibly completed, outfitted and rigged that ship in this amount of time?”

Tom displayed another image on his screen. This one showed a similar ship, still in dry dock, but nearing completion. The date stamp on this image was two days after the first picture, and its location was the Tanjin shipyards.

“John, that ship is still building in Tanjin. The first image is an entirely different vessel that the Chinese built and launched without our knowledge at all. What it means is that very soon the Chinese are going to have at least three of these things launched and on trials.”

“And here’s the shocker; at least a possible shocker. We know they were training eight air wings on those temporary landing decks they had installed at several airfields. We know that they are capable of moving these decks and then installing them on these container ships, which they then structurally and electronically modify to produce these sea control carriers. Based on what we are seeing here, we’re going to have to presume that the Chinese are building six to eight of these vessels, not just the two.”

John absorbed this information, almost reluctantly. It was incredible. But it looked to be exactly what the Chinese were doing. If you added the two larger deck aircraft carriers the Chinese were building in Shanghai to the potential eight, it meant that the Chinese would have ten aircraft carriers operational within the next eighteen to twenty-four months!

“OK, Tom. You don’t need to do any further convincing. This is a major development. Almost beyond belief, but the images don’t lie.”

“We’re going to have to either divert more of our existing resources, or, more likely, launch more satellite assets to watch this twenty-four/seven. I want to find where these other carriers are being built. We may need some HUMINT help from the Agency. I also want to do a much more thorough analysis of all of the PRC’s shipbuilding activities, commercial and military. I’ll get Bill into the loop, as well as the NRO Director himself. Use the equipment resources that you have available now, and request whatever overtime or additional personnel you feel you will need, so we can prepare a preliminary briefing for the NCA day after tomorrow.”

“I’ll set up the meeting with the President, the SecDef, the Joint Chiefs, CIA and State. We’ll make the request for more equipment to be launched out of Vandenberg at the earliest window of opportunity. Given what we are seeing here, I expect that particular request will be approved without delay. In addition, we’ll discuss the potential for HUMINT operations during the meeting.”

**November 27, 22:47**

**WNN Broadcast Headquarters**

**New York City, New York**

David Krenshaw was ecstatic. Here he was, sitting in the CEO’s office being offered the position of which he had always dreamed, and which he had worked so hard to attain.

“David, I can’t tell you how excited we are at your acceptance of our offer of a position on the Board of Directors at WNN, as well as your acceptance of the promotion to President and General Manager for our World Wide News Operations. In that role, in addition to our agreement to have you continue as an anchor and producer of Special Reports, your expertise, contacts and historical capabilities will help you in your management responsibilities. You will be responsible for the network’s day-to-day news operations for Cable, TV and the net, including all aspects of programming and production. You have a very capable management team made up of Vice Presidents and Directors, most of whom you have known and interacted with for several years.”

“Both your position on the Board of Directors and as President and General Manager of World Wide News places you on the WNN Executive Committee. It is an exciting day here at WNN, David, and we congratulate you.”

“Finally, although the offer is not affiliated with WNN, my position in this organization allows me to extend to you another offer. On behalf of the Council on International Relations, and as a result of your significant ties with, and involvement in, international affairs, I would like to offer you membership in the Council. As you know, membership is an honor and a very prestigious form of recognition...it is also by invitation only. At the director level on the CIR, we have discussed you

many times, David, and my recommendation on your behalf has been tendered several times. Your work over the last year has caught everyone's attention, and last week the application was approved."

David had desired a position on the CIR for several years. He knew he had to be recommended, and that an offer had to be made, but he had liberally spread the word that he was interested in being a part of the group, dropping the hint, whenever appropriate, to every member he knew. Apparently his behavior had finally "paid off." This new position of influence-wielding responsibility was going to give him the opportunity he desired to not only report the news and help shape it through that reporting...but to actually help *make* the news.

"Of course I accept, Phil. As you know it is an opportunity that I have wanted for a long time. I look forward to working with the Council in all its efforts to promote sound world wide foreign relations and to stimulate conditions throughout the world towards those ends."

Philip Rheinholdt was the Chairman and CEO of WNN. He had been helping mentor David for several years. Although, based on David's uncanny ability to break and then produce major news events on the international scene, David's spot on the Board of Directors had become a forgone conclusion, and quite frankly, Philip probably would not have placed him in the management position over World Wide News. Really, it had been a purely political move. David's Asian and Near East allies and mentors were influential and had invested greatly in WNN. Promoting David over the heads of other Vice Presidents and Directors who had better management skills and more seniority would be a management issue he and David would have to deal with. But, all in all, it may not be a bad thing. Keeps the troops honest and a little off balance.

Having David on the CIR would also be a mixed blessing. David was very connected, so much so that sometimes other members were worried about that influence on his loyalty. Phillip shared their concerns. The CIR was interested in people loyal to promoting foreign relations and the network of ties that bound such relations together. In Philip's view such networks transcended ideology and nationalities. This was also the view of many of the senior members of the Council. There was concern that David's commitment to membership in the CIR would be much more a matter of David's desire to promote himself than it was a commitment to promote the goals of the Council.

Philip knew that, to one degree or another, the same was true of all individuals and he was confident that David's other positive and valuable assets could be used to advance the goals of the Council and of WNN, despite the drawbacks. After all, the CIR had been using all types of individuals, from Presidents, to University Chancellors, to Network CEO's, to Senators and military leaders for decades to formulate and build the international community and network as it existed today and as it would exist in the future.

Many of the members of the CIR were very self-centered and ambitious individuals. In a few cases they were downright despicable and sorry excuses for humanity outside of their brilliant abilities in specific areas. The Council used them all, just as it would use David Krenshaw. Just the same, his ambition and loyalties would bear watching, and Philip would relate as much to the Council along with Dave's acceptance.

"Great, David. Congratulations on your acceptance of membership in the CIR and all of your other achievements. I know it is a big day for you. We are going to have a small celebration tomorrow evening on your behalf in the corporate banquet room on the top floor...just down the corridor from your new office, in fact. Many of our WNN executives will be there along with quite a few members of the Council. Please extend the invitation to your wonderful wife, Jennie, too."

**December 2, 06:20**

**30<sup>th</sup> Air Wing Operations, 2nd Space Launch Squadron**

**Space Launch Complex 4E**

**Vandenberg Air Force Base, California**

The 2nd Space Launch Squadron of the 30th Air Wing of the U.S. Air Force existed to conduct safe, reliable, and timely launch operations in support of Department of Defense and other governmental and commercial launches into space. Its location at Vandenberg Air Force base near Lompoc on California's central coast allowed the 2nd Space Launch Squadron to be the only squadron in the U.S. Air Force capable of launching payloads directly into low-earth polar and sun-synchronous orbits. Using the Titan IV heavy lift vehicle, the Atlas IIAS medium-heavy lift vehicle, and the Titan II and Delta II medium lift vehicles, the 2nd had the capability for diverse space launch missions unmatched by any other Air Force Squadron.

On this date, the operations personnel were monitoring the impending launch of a KH-12 (formerly known as the KH-11B or KH-11/I) reconnaissance satellite from Space Launch Complex 4E, as ordered by the NCA and carried out through the NRO and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. The KH-12 weighs over thirty thousand pounds at launch and requires a Titan IV B heavy lift booster to insert it into orbit. That is what today's launch called for, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 30<sup>th</sup> was prepared to make it happen.

As to the capabilities of the satellite itself, the sensors of the KH-12 operate in visible and near infrared light, as well as thermal infrared for detection of heat sources. They also incorporate low-



light-level image intensifiers to provide for imaging during night operations. The KH-12's have an infrared capability superior to that of the earlier KH-11 satellites, which is used primarily for detection of camouflaged targets and for observing differential thermal inertia in the target area. It is also used for looking at structures or targets buried underground, and for differentiating operating production factories from those that are not.

In addition, the KH-12's sophisticated electronics package provides sharper images than the older KH-11, with a resolution approaching ten centimeters. A periscope-like rotating mirror on the satellite reflects images onto the primary mirror, enabling the KH-12 to take pictures at very high oblique angles. This means that the KH-12 can provide high resolution images of objects hundreds of kilometers to either side of its flight path.

All of these traits would serve this satellite well as it was launched into orbit to provide much more in-depth coverage of the Chinese coast and Chinese shipbuilding activities. Its mission would be to search for those shipbuilding activities related to the new Sea Control aircraft carriers the PRC was producing. Since noticing the 2<sup>nd</sup> at-sea carrier, the NRO had discovered yet another, this one conducting trials between the East China Sea and the Yellow Sea.

The information regarding the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sea Control Carrier had produced rapid results when it was presented to the president and his key advisors by the National Security Advisor, John Bowers, and Tom Lawton of the National Reconnaissance Office. The concern it evoked at the highest levels of government in the United States was expressed by this expedited launch of a very sophisticated and expensive KH-12.

"We are a go for launch. All systems are checking in good to go. I repeat, we are go. T-minus 15 seconds and counting."

"10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1...Launch!"

Out on the launch pad, the gantry suddenly became visible in the darkness as the Titan IV B's three massive stage "O" solid-rocket motors ignited. Slowly, then with increasing speed, the rocket lifted its payload into the air trailing a massive gout of flame.

"All systems are nominal. Down range tracking is on. Stage "O" separation and Stage 1 ignition coming up on my mark...mark!"

Approximately two minutes into the flight, the first stage LR87 liquid-propellant rocket ignited as the solid rocket boosters fell away. Then, Stage 2, using a LR91 liquid-propellant engine ignited. Mission parameters used a final Boeing Aerospace inertial upper stage to lift the Kh-12 to the desired orbit.

Within the hour, the Air Force K-12 satellite had achieved its optimal orbit and was completely checked out and pronounced in perfect operating condition for its mission.

## **December 5**

### **Along the Kuwait/GIR Border**

#### **The Greater Islamic Republic**

The entire region surrounding the Persian Gulf was arrayed like a massive chessboard where the playing pieces were the various Army, Navy, and Air Force groups deployed in the region by the opposing forces. As would occur in any difficult chess match, at times the two opponents observed their adversary's disposition of forces and the intent behind that disposition and then prepared to make countering moves accordingly with their own 'pieces.' In the Persian Gulf, on December 5, the movement of forces as a result of the initial clash was underway.

The GIR was maintaining a relatively large force in the vicinity of Irbil, and had established the headquarters for its 2<sup>nd</sup> Army group in Basra. This army group would be responsible for maintaining order in all of the former Iraq and providing for the defense along the Turkish/Saudi and Kuwaiti frontiers. To that end, this army group was being organized into a force of three hundred thousand troops along with several thousand artillery pieces, over fifteen hundred tanks, three hundred helicopters and seven hundred fighter and attack aircraft. The northern areas were to receive about one third of this force while the southern sector, which faced Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, fielded two thirds of the strength.

The GIR 1<sup>st</sup> Army group had been reconstituted and pulled out of the former Iraq back deeper into the Greater Islamic Republic, but only as far as Ahvaz, a distance of one hundred miles. This force would consist of close to one hundred and fifty thousand troops, two thousand artillery pieces, five hundred tanks, one hundred and fifty helicopters and six hundred military aircraft. These forces would be tasked with the security and defense of the GIR Persian Gulf coast from Abadan to the Mand River and the security of the internal regions, primarily the Karkeh, Dez and Marun river drainages.

With the reduction in forces in the former Iraq on the GIR's part, and with significant political pressure from opposition political leaders at home who claimed that the reason for the force buildup had vanished, the United States and its allies were also downsizing in the Gulf region. This downsizing would result in the United States and Great Britain maintaining a total reaction force of

twenty-five thousand troops (20K U.S. and 5K British) in the Kuwait area who were backed up by the Kuwaiti Army of twenty thousand active duty personnel and a Saudi contingent of ten thousand. It was anticipated that these force numbers would be reduced over the next several months as tensions continued to reduce, but Weisskopf was in no hurry—particularly given the proximity of the GIR 1<sup>st</sup> Army group.

The U.S. Navy kept a single carrier battle group in the Mediterranean and another in the Arabian Sea. The U.S. Air Force was downsizing its force to one hundred fighter and attack aircraft in Saudi and another one hundred in Turkey, augmented by the Kuwaiti, Saudi and Turkish Air Forces.

Incirlik Air Base in Turkey was in the process of being repaired and rebuilt. U.S. aircraft were already flying CAP missions and surveillance missions from the repaired runways and ground radar installations were operating out of temporary facilities. It would be another two weeks before longer airstrips accommodating E-3, KC-135 or B1-B aircraft were complete.

As these reductions and movements continued, an uneasy calm settled over the entire region. In the chess game, the players eyed each other's movements and tried to divine intentions. They both realized that the brief, violent exchange that had resulted in the termination of the Kurdish independence efforts in all likelihood only represented the opening moves in a longer, more difficult match.

That brief military exchange was being called simply the “Kurd War,” or the “Two Day War.” It was agreed that, in terms of military measurements, the confrontation had been a virtual draw, with the GIR losing far more equipment and personnel while achieving its goals, while the Americans lost less materiel and personnel, but failed to prevent the pacification of Kurdistan by the GIR.

However, diplomatically and strategically the outcome was viewed as a clear victory for the GIR. Most nations (outside of the United States and its immediate allies) believed that the unification of the Kurdish areas with the GIR was acceptable on the international scene. Still, there was an underlying feeling that business had been left unfinished. This meant that tensions remained high even though force levels continued to reduce.

Some history enthusiasts began to refer to this tense situation and standoff between the GIR and the United States as the “Persian Gulf phony war.” This was in reference to the time period during World War II after Germany had defeated Poland, but before hostilities between major powers ensued when France was attacked. Politicians and military analysts on both sides wondered how long this “phony war” might last before erupting into a more major conflict.

**December 7, 10:00 local time**

**Government Conference Center, Beijing**

**The People's Republic of China**

Jien Zenim considered the historic gathering that he had arranged. Here in the secure conference room with him, with no one else but their most trusted advisor in attendance, were:

Imam Hasan Sayeed—The Political, Military and Spiritual leader of the Greater Islamic Republic.

President KP Narayannan—The President of India.

President Jien Zenim—The leader of the most populous and (at least from his own perspective) the most powerful nation in the world.

The three of them made up the executive council of the CAS, or Coalition of Asian States. Through years of discipline and commitment, with unflinching focus and unflinching resolve, he had formed the most powerful economic coalition the world had ever known. Between the People's Republic of China, India, The Greater Islamic Republic and their exclusive rights to Siberia, the Coalition of Asian States was poised to dramatically shift the balance of world economic and political power. One would have to be a fool to think that the military balance would not also be correspondingly shifted.

It was to discuss this eventuality and their plans for it that the great leaders had come together here in Beijing at Jien's invitation. Throughout the weekend they had discussed their economic plans and their response to the current American sanctions. They had agreed that between themselves and their own markets, a divided European market and a hungry Russian market they had the demand and the resources to survive, intact, the American economic and international pressure.

Now the time had come to discuss the other matter. The potential for their political and economic activities to produce a corresponding military reaction had been recently displayed to them in a direct way over the Kurd issue. Although Jien had recommended against any premature military adventure by the GIR against the Kurds, correctly predicting the reaction of the Americans...the more information that had come out regarding it, the better he felt. Particularly now that force levels were reducing.

“Imam, you are correct. The benefits that have resulted from this exchange far outnumber the detriments. I still believe the risks were far greater than what materialized, but that is of no concern now. We have several issues we can make great use of as we build towards our ultimate goals.”

Through good planning, commitment and attrition, the American military machine can be held at bay and denied their desire to control the battlefield. In the process, if it is forced upon us, we can achieve our goals while so occupying their forces or those of their allies.

The Americans can be kept from amassing an overwhelming international or political coalition against any one of us. With our own influence and satellites, we can effectively block the creation of any such coalition by the west against any CAS member state.

The Americans have shown their hand in their assassination attempt of Hasan. The evidence provided to us by Hasan is incontrovertible.

“Imam Sayeed, congratulations on your victory. I believe the planning, the tactics and an explanation of the events surrounding your successful attack on the American air base at Incirlik, Turkey and your defense of you own ground forces the next day should be distributed to every military commander within each of our nations. It will be something they can learn from and take heart in. We should derive the basic strategies, how they played on American weakness and then school our own people in these strategies until they know them instinctively.

“I believe we can use these three issues to enhance our own plans.”

As he said this, Jien motioned and an aide brought in several copies of a leather-bound document and handed one to each person present.

“These plans represent a formal compilation and formulation of what I have discussed with each of you personally over the last several years. We have been successful beyond expectation to date and it is now time to turn these plans into reality. The plan, should it be required—and I believe from my study of history and my study of the Americans that it will be unavoidably necessary—is called “Breath of Fire.” Please open to the first section and follow along both within the document and on the screen.”

At this, Jien Zenim motioned for his advisor, Li Peng, who turned on the multi-media video equipment and prepared to display the various images that would follow along with Jien’s presentation. Jien continued.

“Breath of Fire” involves, foremost, our desire to establish the CAS as the dominant economic power in Asia, and an equal competitor in Europe and the Americas. If this goal is interfered with militarily, then it involves leading the Americans and their allies onto fatal terrain. This is a Chinese strategy put forth by the greatest war strategist in history, Sun Tsu. It simply means providing the Americans with the options that they expect where the range of their responses will all lead them into a position where they have no defense and no escape.”

President Narayannen carefully considered what Jien said. To date, the CAS had proved a huge economic boom for India. The Indian exploration teams in Siberia were finding and developing tremendous resources. The markets for Indian labor, manufacturing and technology in China, Russia and even in parts of the GIR were growing rapidly, and the European markets were continuing to grow as well.

Thus far, this economic windfall had all been accomplished with minimum risk. As an added benefit, this progress was steadily eating into areas where American firms and markets had long been entrenched. As a result, the Americans had attempted to establish sanctions and policies that would place pressure on India. Although Narayannen was favorably disposed to America’s ideological foundation...he just didn’t believe the current crop of American politicians and businessmen were disposed to being truly committed to it themselves. Zenim and Sayeed were also committed. Their fundamental ideology might be less appealing, but the results to India were clear, and the unwavering nature of the commitment to the principles that produced these results was something he felt he and his people could count on.

“Let us examine this plan together, Mr. President. We in India will move forward with a determination to avoid conflict if at all possible and establish the CAS as the influence in Asia that we all desire. At the same time, while it pains me, it is only prudent to prepare for the implementation of “Breath of Fire” should it become necessary.”

Hasan Sayeed knew that “Breath of Fire,” or something like it would be necessary. The Americans were realizing the true nature of the opposition. Hasan knew personally how serious they viewed that opposition and to what lengths they were prepared to go to forestall or eliminate it.

“President Zenim, we were truly blessed to have been successful in our short, but sharply fought efforts to retain the northern regions of the former Iraq. Do not be fooled. We were successful, but it was the type of success any of us could only stand so much of. I am confident that the Islamic people have the heart and the commitment to sustain such losses longer than the Americans, but do not think it will be an easy thing.

“Having said this, I will freely share with you that it is my conviction that “Breath of Fire,” as I see it explained here in the overview, will be absolutely necessary. It will be so, not because we desire it, but because it will be forced upon us. I do not believe the Americans, or their allies—several of which I am sorry to say are unfaithful Islamic states—will accept a second place status, economically or influence-wise, anywhere on the face of this globe we call earth. They will not accept such a status

particularly in areas where they have traditionally been recognized as supreme. So I believe we must study this plan, voice our input, revise it accordingly, and then stand prepared to implement it.

“Finally, I agree wholeheartedly that the tactics and the strategies that proved successful for us in holding off the American air superiority should be shared throughout our command structures. It amounts basically to this: throw more at them than they imagine. Make them use up all of their expensive weapons and then overwhelm them with what you have left.

“Your people must be absolutely disciplined in such an effort, because they must persevere in the face of horrendous losses. We threw approximately four hundred aircraft at the American base at Incirlik. Initially they had only twelve aircraft airborne. To this they added another eight, and then twelve more. These thirty-two aircraft shot down well over one hundred of ours. Their air defenses shot down another sixty. We lost over one hundred and sixty aircraft to accomplish our goals that day. Do not forget the basic math of this equation.”

Jien Zenim was impressed by both of these leaders. As they studied “Breath of Fire” they would find ample economic, political and military challenge and reward for their perspective nations and peoples. Much of it would come down to the discipline and will of which Sayeed spoke. But even more of it would come down to their ability to lead the Americans to the fatal terrain Jien had mentioned earlier.

Jien Zenim was very familiar with, and respectful of, the Americans’ capability, and, by extension, the capabilities of their allies. He had no intention, except where absolutely necessary, of directly challenging their strength. Hasan had used brute force and good planning and he had been successful. But as he himself admitted, you could only afford to “win” so many of those kind of battles. No, Jien was not afraid to pay the butcher’s bill when required, and though he had the will and the resources to accumulate such bills more so than any other sitting in this room, he preferred to manipulate circumstances so that the bill was paid by his adversaries instead. This was particularly true for the western allies because they had fewer resources with which to pay such bills, and, every time they did, it would substantially lessen their ability to force such payment terms on Jien and his people.

“Good, let us then review the introduction and overview. I believe you will find the summary to be succinct and to the point. It provides projected time frames, triggering events and goals for initial operations that will hold our adversaries in place, and then outlines how we will draw our adversaries onto the fatal terrain I have spoken of. After reviewing and commenting on the summary, and modifying it where necessary, we can launch into the details of each specific area of the plan.”

“It is my hope and goal that we can leave here tomorrow with both our economic plans that we have developed over the last two days, as well as the military options that we develop from these plans, in place.”

“Shall we proceed then?”

**December 9, 18:09 local time**

**800 KM Northwest of Krasnoyarsk**

**Siberia, The Russian Federation**

Dr. Gavanker was very proud of what his team had accomplished in the five months they had been in Siberia. By early August, the test bores had been sunk and they had brought back information beyond expectations. The field would in fact be bigger than the Baku field in the Crimea. He had been immediately informed by first the Indian government, and then the Russians, to expect to be provided with a significant increase in workers and materiel so that he could get initial production underway before winter.

By September the staff on his team had been tripled to almost two thousand workers. A regular “boom” town was developing, and a spur from the main rail lines two hundred kilometers to the east had been built and opened before November. By that time the weather had begun to worsen, but Dr. Gavanker and his team had already sunk six production wells and had also completed pipelines to the railhead so that the initial crude could be transported for refinement. This would have to do until a pipeline could be completed directly to their location. That was scheduled for the end of January, but progress was being slowed due to the weather.

As the increase in workers and materiel and business to support them all mushroomed, the Russians also increased the security forces. Military engineers came in and took the roughed-out airfield and turned it into a dual-use commercial and military air base with the latest military radar and with significant equipment for operations in winter. As a result of his success in helping develop the resource, building the initial airfield and having an unblemished record in securing this resource jewel for mother Russia, Colonel Nosik was promoted to General. In addition to a significantly increased security force, including more men and equipment, some heavy armor, and a number of interceptor and support aircraft, Nosik was given responsibility for the maintaining the security of two other resource projects. One was a new Chinese Cobaltite mine, and the other was a new Indian low-sulfur coking coalmine. The largest operation was here in Gavank, where he established his headquarters.

Over the preceding months, as their fortunes mutually improved, and they assumed more and more responsibility, Dr. Gavanker and General Nosik formed a friendship of sorts. General Nosik held weekly staff meetings and invited Dr. Gavanker to a number of them, to report on the status of the various civilian projects going on at Gavank. In turn, when Dr. Gavanker held his staff meetings, he would reserve a portion of each meeting for the General, or his Chief of Staff, to discuss security issues. Generally, on Fridays, the two men met informally over dinner and discussed the week's events and their thoughts in general. That is what they were doing today.

"Andrei, who could have guessed that things would go so well? Or who would have thought that a crusty old war dog like you would tolerate a theorist and soft foreigner like me to be a part of your operations for so many months?"

The General had to nod. He would not have imagined it himself—and if someone had told him it would be so a year ago, he would have laughed in their face. Yet it had worked out exactly as Buhpendra described it. Well, almost exactly.

"Buhpendra, you know I would never describe you as a "theorist," my friend. You have shown us all, on countless occasions, your ability to apply those theories to the real world and make this project a success. It could not have been a success without your strong grounding in reality. As to soft: humpf! No one who lives here in the wilds of Siberia as we have done these last months is deserving of the term "soft." I will admit to the crusty old war dog title, though."

Dr. Gavanker also nodded at the General's reply. He had come to enjoy these Friday evening get-togethers. There was so much they could discuss, and hearing and weighing their separate views of world events, politics, ideologies and beliefs had provided many hours of reflection and appreciation over the last several months.

"So, now that forces are reducing, and after some time to reflect, what do you think of the way the Muslims handled the Americans, my friend? I thought it was somewhat surprising."

General Nosik had not been too surprised. He had faced Muslims who were eager to fight, and committed to their faith. Such fighters were fierce, dedicated and willing to take significant losses to achieve their goals.

"I was not overly surprised. All Arabs are not like the Iraqis of Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom. Those poor wretches were forced to be there and had no commitment to their cause...a surrender waiting to happen.

"This Hasan Sayeed, though: he has a commitment, and is gathering a committed people around him. Such a people, driven by their faith—and believe me, Buhpendra, such fighters are fierce—would be a very serious adversary. Many will gladly sacrifice their life simply to help attain their collective goals. The Americans, even with their technological advantage, will find it difficult to readily defeat such a people. I believe this is what they experienced in the brief exchange.

"But, I would not count the Americans out. It is true they are soft and have experienced many years where there was no appreciable challenge. It will probably take some fairly bloody noses to get their attention. But, like Yamamoto of Japan remarked in World War II after he pulled off perhaps the greatest defeat of the Americans at Pearl Harbor, I would be careful of waking that giant from its slumber. Better to just let it sleep, if you can, while you tiptoe around it and steal all of its belongings! Ha! Particularly with an old fighting bear like Weisskopf leading them. That's what I think."

Buhpendra was not a military man. He prided himself on being a strategic thinker and on being able to make clear, logical decisions. Those qualities had served him well throughout his career and they were serving him here in Siberia. Applying them to world affairs was not new to him. His work in the Energy Directorate for his country had required that he regularly factor in such strategy. But the military angle was new to him and he enjoyed discussing it and exploring it with the General.

"I agree about Weisskopf. His political enemies are using the current circumstances against him, but I would not count him out if things flare up again. He is a fighter and a fine leader and has the respect of his armed forces. Thank goodness things appear to have quieted down, even though the Americans' goal for an independent Kurdistan was not realized. Let's hope it remains that way."

**December 11, 22:00**

**Marine Recruit Training Depot**

**San Diego, California**

"*Come on! Come on! Come on!* Get off that bus, you maggots! What do you think this is? Where do you think you're going anyhow? To the matinee? Let's go! *What are you waiting for?*"

"I am Drill Instructor Sergeant Matthews. At *all* times, you *will* address me as "Sir." If you have a request or a statement to make to me, you *will* formulate it with the words *Drill Instructor Sergeant Matthews, Sir!*"

As Drill Instructor Sergeant Matthews continued, Billy and Leon stepped off the bus at the Marine Recruit Training base in San Diego. They had arrived on schedule at ten p.m., to be processed in.

"*Article 86 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice prohibits absence without leave. Article 91 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice prohibits disobedience to a lawful order. Article 93 of the*

Uniform Code of Military Justice *prohibits disrespect to a senior officer*. These are *absolute, non-breakable* laws you *will live by* for the next 13 weeks...and throughout your military career.”

Other armed services give their recruits a slight break during the in-processing phase of basic training. But not the Marine Corps. Discipline starts the instant the recruits step off the bus. Leon and Billy had been informed by Sergeant Bennett how things were going to be. They were finding out that he had been absolutely correct. Marine Corps drill instructors must be addressed loudly as “Sir.” They hadn’t even gotten off the bus before being taught that first lesson.

As they entered the building, Drill Instructor Sergeant Matthews continued to instruct them in clear, loud tones about what it was they needed to do, and about many of the other regulations they would have to live by for the next 13 weeks of their basic training.

The other services do a quick in-processing and allow recruits to get some sleep for the remainder of the first night. But in the Marine Corps new recruits are up the entire first night and all of the next day. During this time, they complete paperwork, get their hair cut off...all of it...turn in every bit of civilian clothing and articles they own, are issued their initial uniforms and field gear, and receive personal hygiene items from the PX, the cost of which is deducted from their pay.

Leon and Billy would spend the next three to five days in Receiving. During that time, they might be tempted to believe they were already in boot camp with Drill Instructors yelling at them, drilling them, marching them, showing them how to wear their uniforms, showing them how to make their “rack” presentable for inspection, feeding them, and more.—all “by the numbers.”

While in Receiving, Leon and Billy would also be given their Initial Strength Test (IST). To pass (and avoid being assigned to a Physical Conditioning Platoon), they would be required to do two pull-ups, thirty-five sit-ups in two minutes, and a one and one half mile run in thirteen and a half minutes or less. Leon and Billy would have no problem with the IST.

As Leon and Billy would learn, after Receiving the fun really begins when they are transported to their squad bay and introduced to their Senior Drill Instructor and his two assistants. These three would be the constant instructors, prodders, transformers, mentors, examples, trainers, indoctrinators and daddies of the sixty to eighty recruits who made up Leon and Billy’s platoon in Company B of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at the San Diego Recruit Training Depot.

The hard core definition of the Marine Drill Instructor (DI) indicates that he is a short-tempered, impatient, deep-voiced, screaming, seemingly-psychotic, un-patronizing, but deeply-devoted and fully-dedicated Marine NCO who works his magic on new Marine recruits. That magic teaches them to “surrender body and spirit to harsh instruction so as to receive a soul.” It instills into them the makings of disciplined Marines who will stand and fight for duty, honor, country and their comrades when every other inborn instinct tells them to run.

The DI is an individual whom the new recruits hate—but whom the new Marines revere. The DI magic would work especially well on Leon and Billy, as future events would indisputably reveal.

**December 16, 16:30**

**Oval Office, The White House**

**Washington, D.C.**

The President had once again gathered his principal foreign relations team in the Oval Office. This team included the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Secretary of State, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Vice President. They had been discussing the continued issues associated with the growing Coalition of Asian States and the influence it was having in Asia through the People’s Republic of China and India, and its influence in the Middle East in the form of the Greater Islamic Republic.

“Summarizing, then, from diplomatic and relations standpoint: with the addition of Vietnam, North Korea, Cambodia, Mongolia, Laos, Nepal and Bangladesh, the CAS continues to grow as a world economic and ideological power. The Siberian resources are beginning to flow into China and India from the new oil fields, natural gas fields, gold mines and other mineral mines that are being rapidly brought into production. We estimate that there are one hundred and seventy-five to two hundred thousand Indian workers in Siberia now, and that there are in excess of two hundred thousand Chinese workers there. Russia is benefiting from their own percentage of each find, as well as from their royalties on the portions delivered to India and Red China.”

“Russia is also reaping rich profits and boosts to their economy by the arms sales going on to China, India and the GIR. Their arms and munitions plants, their armor factories, their naval yards and their aircraft factories are operating at levels in excess of the highest production rates during the cold war.”

“Mr. President, all of this adds up to significant economic and political pressure on many of our allies. Japan, South Korea and much of Europe are much more dependent on Mid East oil than we are. For our allies in the Far East, all of that oil flows through waters in which the CAS is showing a greater and greater presence. With their naval build up, the military installations they have established on so many critical islands and their tremendous influence on OPEC pricing and production, our friends are getting very nervous.”

As the Vice President paused, Norm Weisskopf assessed the strategic situation in his own mind. Someone on the other side was one heck of a chess player. As far as he was concerned, that someone had to be Jien Zemin. But where was he going with it? What was his end game? Better yet, how long before the confrontation?

Norm Weisskopf was absolutely sure the confrontation was coming. He couldn't see any way to avoid it if the United States wanted to maintain any high degree of influence in the Western Pacific, or in the Mid East.

"John, let's put this in perspective. Please summarize what we're seeing in terms of intelligence and surveillance on the military side."

John Bowers had been playing point on this for the President for some time now. Although he had gotten over his discomfort in speaking to matters that he was sure Defense and the CIA felt were their own areas of influence, he was still somewhat ill at ease speaking for them. Nonetheless, he had learned to work well with the various teams those two organizations could provide and spent countless hours in briefings and planning sessions with them.

"Mr. President. The greatest immediate threat remains in the Middle East. The GIR has pulled back an entire Army group, but they are still largely intact in the vicinity of the former Iraq/Iran border. They have not dispersed nearly as much as would be expected if they were going to garrison all of the bases and facilities located throughout that area of the GIR for peacetime deployment. We feel they are still poised to threaten Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

"The forces in the former Iraq are deployed in strength along or near the Kuwait and Saudi border in the south, and the Turkish border in the north. They outnumber our forces considerably in both areas, particularly as a result of our force reductions since Desert Sentinel ended.

"Of significant note is the announcement of joint training exercises by Syria along the GIR border in Late January and early February. That is a situation we will have to watch."

At this point, General Stone, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs added,

"Sir, if I might add a thing or two here. First, Incirlik Air Base is fully functional again. We have increased our normal contingent of F-15s by a factor of two there. In Saudi, our first operational wing of F-22 Raptors has been deployed and is adding significantly to our defensive capabilities for the Kingdom.

"One other thing, if I may. Our Israeli friends are very nervous about the GIR, as you can imagine. They have increased their force readiness across the board. They are also significantly increasing their forces along their borders, particularly on the Golan Heights."

As the General finished, John continued.

"One more item of concern in the Middle East: Our old friend, Qaddafi, in Libya is mobilizing his forces and putting them in a state of readiness that we haven't seen since Reagan thumped him real hard in the 1980's. He is also assisting Chad with men and materiel in the final phases of their suppression of rebel forces there. There is a significant concern that he will soon announce his allegiance to Hasan Sayeed and his desire to become an official part of the GIR.

"As you are all aware, there are also approximately two hundred thousand Chinese in Chad. To begin with, they were involved in relief work, but lately we have word that many of them are working in arms factories, and are participating in the training of new Chad recruits. This is another area that bears watching. Mike, do your people on the ground have anything newer than my meeting at Langley last week?"

The Director of the CIA had gotten a report the evening before. As a result of John Bowers' meeting and the discussion of this very issue, Mike had instructed the Deputy Director of Operations to contact the embassy there in Chad and their operatives. The results of that inquiry had come in late last night.

"As a matter of fact, John, I do. Late last night we received a situation report (SitRep) from our people in Chad. It is clear that the Chinese there are assuming a more and more active role in armament manufacture, and in training and instruction of military forces. Many more Libyan advisors have also arrived in just the last week to ten days.

"Mr. President, given the numbers involved, and given the apparent militarization of the Chinese relief workers, I believe we should view these developments gravely. Particularly when you consider the close ties Sudan has with Libya and its recent positive behavior towards the GIR. Our friends in Egypt are concerned about an encirclement of fundamentalism that could threaten their interests."

The Secretary of State chimed in on this particular topic.

"Mr. President, we should immediately lodge a protest with the United Nations. Red China was operating under very specific guidelines in its appeal to provide assistance to Chad. That assistance is limited to humanitarian relief alone. If they are in any way involved with military assistance, we must lodge a protest and seek a vote condemning their actions and revoking the UN resolution that sent them there in the first place."

The President understood Secretary Reissinger's concern and the reason for his protest.

"Fred, I understand your frustration and your diplomatic ire. I agree we should make the protest. But I do not believe we will succeed in getting things turned around there. The UN was shown for the

paper tiger that it is at best just preceding Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. I haven't seen anything to indicate that it is anything more than that since. We'll use it where we can, but we will never allow it to determine our own course of action. Red China will simply veto any Security Council initiative, and we have seen that there is little prospect for a vote in the general assembly.

"Just the same, I believe it is politically and diplomatically necessary to make the effort. Please have our ambassador to the UN make the necessary arrangements and see who we can get to support it. Alan, please work with our allies and coordinate with Fred and the ambassador. Now, John, please continue."

John Bowers wasted no time in doing so.

"OK. Finally, we have several issues in the Far East that are equally distressing, if not as immediate. This involves the Red Chinese and the CAS.

"Of immediate concern is the buildup of North Korean forces along the demilitarized zone for their winter exercises. This is always a tense time of the year, and we are paying particular attention to their movements this year as our commitments in the Middle East have us spread fairly thin.

"We believe that conditions in the North are still extremely desperate in terms of food, but Red China, as a result of its continued economic growth and as a result of North Korea joining the CAS, has announced a food relief program of large proportions. They are getting millions of metric tons of wheat from Russia, Brazil, Venezuela and Canada and shipping it to North Korea. Along with the wheat, thousands of Chinese relief workers and newer farming equipment are being "loaned" to the North to improve their farming techniques. The first of the materiel has already arrived there.

"Finally, turning to the continued buildup of the PLAN: They continue with the very rapid manufacture and deployment of their newest generation of destroyers and frigates. Also, as you all know, in addition to their two large aircraft carriers being built in the Shanghai area, we have discovered that the Chinese have also embarked on a very rapid development and build of these smaller sea control aircraft carriers. The first of these, the Beijing, was launched in September and almost immediately took part in joint naval exercises with India. Since that time, they have launched two more and are building five others. We have utilized our best surveillance equipment coupled with Mike's HUMINT assets to discover the four shipyards where these conversions are taking place.

"Apparently, the Red Chinese purposely allowed us to find one of these facilities operating in the open some months ago in the hopes that our attention would be diverted. They were successful. In the meantime, they developed three other yards with completely enclosed dry dock spaces for the clandestine manufacture of more vessels. The result is that they will have eight of these very capable aircraft carriers in the Western Pacific in the next four to six months, followed by two larger deck carriers by next summer. This will represent a significant shift in power and one we cannot ignore or take lightly."

The picture that was developing was not pretty economically, diplomatically or militarily. While there was always the chance that the diplomatic and economic conditions in the world could shift, rise, fall and equivocate either to the nation's good or ill, there was no excuse for being in the military position they were now in. That is, no good excuse. Apathy, comfort, technological prowess and sheer arrogance all had grown to the point of extreme overconfidence. All of that had resulted in spending plans, building plans, force dispositions and strategies that reflected the same—and had done so for several years. The situation couldn't be turned around overnight.

That arrogant overconfidence had gotten the wind knocked out of it a few weeks ago in Kurdistan, the President thought. It reminded him of Desert Storm and his first weeks there, when he knew that if Saddam Hussein had chosen to come at Saudi, there was nothing that he could have done to stop it. Back then the enemy, for reasons of his own, had chosen not to come. A few weeks ago, the enemy had come and had come in overwhelming numbers: twelve F-15s against four hundred enemy aircraft. What do you do when your missiles are expended and your guns are empty? Answer: you either run or die.

"Ok, let's talk about what we can do about this. I want diplomatic, economic and military options on the table by the end of this meeting. Let's go in the order I just outlined. Alan, first you, and then Fred, outline your thoughts on diplomatic efforts that might be employed to stabilize this situation."

**December 17, 16:30**

**Sea Worthy Marina, along the Fox River**

**On Highway 31, north of Batavia, Illinois**

Ahmed Haddad immigrated to America from Lebanon in the early 1990s. He came to attend school at Northwestern University in Chicago, majoring in medicine. His visa had indicated that he was a student of Dentistry. Indeed, he went on to earn a degree from Northwestern and opened a dental practice that served the burgeoning immigrant population in that city. Allah was kind, and his business flourished, making Ahmed a wealthy man and leading to his becoming a naturalized American citizen.

And, to all outside appearances, Ahmed Haddad became the model American citizen. He worked hard, owned a business, and was a leader in his local community. What none of his American



friends knew about him was that his parents had been killed in an Israeli bombing raid just before he left his home country.

The Israeli government had called it an attack on a terrorist base, but there had been civilian casualties and Ahmed's parents were unfortunate enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Shortly after their deaths, Ahmed joined the Hezbollah.

Soon thereafter, through the Hezbollah leaders, Allah had decided in his infinite wisdom that Ahmed would come to America. There, he was to bide his time until he was in a position to strike at those who had paid for the bombs which had taken the lives of his parents and so many others. Until then, his instructions were to simply work hard, stay out of trouble, fit into the society and wait patiently for instructions. Last month, those instructions had finally come.

Ahmed Haddad smiled as he signed the paperwork that completed the purchase of his forty-two foot Sea King houseboat. As he was doing so, the salesman commented.

"Mr. Haddad, you and your family are really going to enjoy yourselves on this boat. It will make a wonderful Christmas present for the family."

"I am sure we will have many unforgettable experiences on her. She is indeed a beautiful boat." Ahmed said.

As he said this, he also thought, "Are all American so ignorant? A Christmas gift indeed. Can't this fool see that I am Arabic?" No matter, after the last few years and the general underlying distrust of anyone who had Arabic features, it would be best to not let any irritation whatsoever show.

The salesman continued.

"She is absolutely top of the line, Sir. We've outfitted her exactly as you requested. The GPS gear and the radios you ordered have been installed and checked out. The radar equipment has also been installed and tested, just as you asked, and her name has been painted on the rear of the boat."

Ahmed smiled to himself as he signed the check to complete the transaction. What the salesman didn't know was that Ahmed was just getting started customizing his new boat. Once the houseboat left the dealer, it would be transported to a large warehouse that Ahmed and several of his close friends owned on the outskirts of Chicago near Schaumburg. There, further and more extensive modifications would be made to the boat, none of which had ever been anticipated by its designers. Just like the modifications that would be made to the other more than half a dozen cruisers and houseboats that Ahmed was involved with having purchased.

"Thank you so much for your service to me." Ahmed said as he shook the salesman's hand and rose to leave. "A truck will arrive later this afternoon to transport the boat to my slip."

As he shook Haddad's hand, the salesman had one last question.

"You're very welcome, Mr. Haddad. You know, that's quite the name you have for her. We've never had a boat named the "Dhul Fiqar" before. Excuse me if I pronounce it wrong. What does it mean anyway?"

Ahmed had arrived at the name for this particular boat long ago.

"No matter. It is not uncommon to mispronounce it in English. It's pronounced D'-hul Fi'car and it's an old Arabic expression of faith. Again, it has been a pleasure doing business with you."

Seeing the salesman nod, Ahmed turned and left. What he hadn't told the salesman was the complete meaning of the name. In Arabic, "Dhul Fiqar" translates into "The Prophet's Sword."

## Chapter 8

*“See first with your mind, then with your eyes, and finally with your body”—Yagyū Munenori*

### Christmas

Throughout Christendom, the festive, joyful atmosphere was in full swing. All across Europe and North America, record purchase volumes had been set as shoppers visited the malls and their favorite stores and shops to purchase gifts for their relatives and friends. Christmas day dawned bright and cool across the better portion of North America and Europe, although in the northern sections a lingering snow cover from snowfall several days earlier made for a white Christmas nonetheless.

The President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Britain made a joint, Christmas Day appearance to troops in the Mid East who were still stationed there as a result of the hostilities that had occurred in early November. Both men made a morning appearance on the ground in Kuwait to their Army and forward deployed Air Force personnel. Then, later in the afternoon they made appearances on board two ships in the Persian Gulf. President Weisskopf visited the USS Shiloh (CG 68), an Aegis class guided missile cruiser (CG) of the US 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet. The British Prime Minister visited the HMS Argyll (F 231), a Duke class, Type 23 FFG and flagship of the United Kingdom’s 6<sup>th</sup> Frigate Squadron.

Both ships were deployed, along with several others, in the Persian Gulf to supply radar warning, additional anti-air defenses and fire support to allied ground and air forces should it be required. No major capital ships such as American or British aircraft carriers or large amphibious assault ships were being allowed into the Gulf. With the GIR’s proven willingness to launch massive air assaults and take tremendous casualties, the confines of the Persian Gulf made the prospect of these large ships and their embarked air wings and expeditionary ground forces too risky.

Security for these visits was extremely pronounced. No fewer than fifty interceptor aircraft were in the air at all times in conjunction with the Presidential and Prime Minister’s visit. Although there had been some threats from specific terrorists groups which created a corresponding higher alert status at each of the bases. No untoward incidents occurred.

Meanwhile, a potential inter-Arab crisis and condition was developing along the border of Syria and the GIR, at the former Iraqi border. The Syrian Army and Air Force were conducting exercises south of Turkey along that border. Syria indicated through diplomatic channels that these exercises were needed for its armed forces and were also meant to send a strong message to the GIR to respect Syria’s borders. Although Syria had not taken part in Operation Iraqi Freedom and had been warned by the United States not to attempt to help Saddam Hussein or his Ba’ath party at that time, Syria had participated earlier in Desert Storm on the side of the allies. Many western analysts viewed the current military posturing by Syria as a much needed and strong signal to the GIR and Hasan Sayeed. They presumed it indicated that Sayeed’s influence did not extend to all of Islam, including some of those states viewed as very fundamental and faithful to the Islamic faith.

The exercises themselves involved upwards of one hundred thousand personnel as three full divisions practiced armored assault, mechanized advance and air assault operations. Syria’s logistical supply operations were also exercised in support of these operations. In addition, close air support and combat air patrol operations were held in support of the armored and mechanized exercises.

The GIR communicated many warnings to the Syrians regarding these exercises throughout the week between Christmas and the New Year. Hasan Sayeed personally warned the Syrian King to ensure that no encroachment occurred by the one thousand tanks, twelve hundred armored personnel carriers and four hundred military aircraft involved in the exercises. Most of this equipment was newer and perceived as a significant threat. T-72 and T-80 tanks, BTR-80 and BMP-2 armored personnel carriers, Mig-29, Mig-27 and SU-22 aircraft and HIND-E attack helicopters were all employed.

Mediation by various members of the Arab League was attempted as the GIR beefed up its own forces in the areas along their northern border with Syria. This involved transferring some of the forces that had been deployed around Irbil and Karkuk after the defeat of the Kurds. As part of the GIR 1<sup>st</sup> Army group that had been pulled back deeper into the GIR began mobilizing for movement, negotiations and calls for caution were issued by the European Union, the Security Council of the United Nations and by the United States.

On December 30<sup>th</sup>, Jien Zenim announced that the People’s Republic of China would lead a delegation of several of the Coalition of Asian States to the region during the first week of January in an attempt to negotiate and defuse the crisis. Jien’s close confidant and ally, Li Peng, would head the delegation on behalf of the PRC and the CAS.

### New Year

As the people all around the globe rang in the New Year with celebration and festivities, the world also anxiously awaited the resolution of the crisis brewing between the GIR and Syria. While

the delegations were preparing for the Chinese brokered summit, and while Syrian and GIR troops by the hundreds of thousands faced each other over what appeared to be a very tense frontier, other disturbing developments were coming to light on the international scene.

North Korea's annual military exercises were the largest in its history. Over three hundred thousand North Korean combat troops and their equipment were gathered right along the DMZ conducting exercises meant to simulate the North's capability to invade the South. These exercises and the numbers of troops participating meant that the US forces and South Korean forces were placed on their highest state of alert. Recognizing that an outbreak of hostilities on the Korean peninsula would almost certainly end up involving them, Japan and Taiwan also placed their forces on their highest state of readiness.

All of this added substantially to the overall unease felt around the world, particularly in the west and in those nations of Asia that had not become a part of the CAS. Markets were down sharply, particularly the high tech and petroleum markets that depended on these regions for their production.

While this was occurring, the CAS continued experiencing growth and prosperity. This prosperity was enjoyed by all of its member states, but particularly China, India and the GIR. Russia was also benefiting immensely from her relationship to the CAS through the exclusive exploitation of Siberia, and through its blossoming arms sales to members of the CAS and the GIR. By January 1<sup>st</sup>, the number of nations that had officially joined with the CAS included China, Cambodia, India, Mongolia, The Greater Islamic Republic, Laos, Vietnam, Nepal, North Korea, and Bangladesh.

The GIR was itself growing and reaching ever further towards the Imam Hasan Sayeed's goal for a unified Islam. By January 1<sup>st</sup>, the GIR included all of the former states of Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Iraq.

This amounted to an Islamic population of over two hundred and seventy million citizens who looked to the Imam Hasan Sayeed as their political, military and spiritual leader. The developing Islamic Republic, like its predecessor Iran, was a fundamental Islamic state where freedom of religion was not recognized and freedom of speech and the press was severely suppressed. The fact that most of these people were choosing to live in such conditions was mystifying to the west, but alluring to other Islamic nations that leaned towards fundamentalism.

**January 5, 16:00 local time**

**Foreign Ministry press room**

**Damascus, Syria**

"All I can tell you is that we have reached a very delicate stage of the negotiations. The Syrian and GIR military and diplomatic representatives have requested to continue meeting and negotiating behind closed doors. Thus far we have made tremendous progress which the various news services have witnessed in open meetings of the last three days. Now, the time has come for more delicate issues to be discussed which will be pivotal in having the two armed forces back away from their high levels of alert and move away from their borders. I have every confidence that within the next few days we will be successful in those aims.

"I will take a question or two. Yes, the young lady on the 2<sup>nd</sup> row."

As Li Ping motioned to the ABS reporter who had raised her hand, he briefly thought about the status of the meetings to date. Things were going just a Jien Zemin and Hasan Sayeed had planned. This very news conference had been a part of that elaborate planning, and here were all of the major news services of the world, particularly of the western world, hungry for the story. That hunger was represented in all of their eyes and their clamoring to ask their questions. The ABS reporter he had chosen first, Linda McPherson, was a well known journalist whose dislike and disdain for the current US President was well documented.

"Mr. Li, you indicated that great progress had been made thus far at this summit. Can you outline for us what that progress consists of?"

Excellent question, thought Li.

"I would be happy to, though you will understand if I do not delve deeply into specifics at the moment. Syria is clearly reacting to the presence of so many troops near its borders as a result of the unfortunate hostilities in the area last November. Although the GIR stated in plain language that it had no intent to violate any other nation's sovereignty or borders, nonetheless, one can understand Syria's prudence when there is someone with a big stick standing outside your unlocked and largely undefended back door. This is particularly true when the individual carrying the stick is confused for a bully who has been known to wield the stick at weaker neighbors in the past.

"This prudence has invoked a similar reaction from the GIR, whose new borders also need to be secure. When they see large forces on their doorstep, they naturally move a countering force nearby, just in case.

"The most important progress to date has been our ability, as respected mediators and friends of both nations, to point out that the old bully on the street is no longer there. That both neighbors need to cautiously realize that miscommunication, presumptions and historical fears have led to the current situation. In essence, that the two nations and forces really need not fear each other. To realize that the

most likely situation that would lead to hostilities in this particular situation is the proximity of the forces and their high degree of alert—not a pre-determined desire or plan to violate the border of one or the other. I believe we have arrived at that understanding, which places us in a position to move forward.”

“Next question. There, in the third row on the left, the young man with the brown blazer.”

The leading Middle East correspondent for WNN stood up.

“Yes. Without going into any specifics of the “delicate” portions of the current negotiations, can you tell us what your preferred time table would be, and what general steps could lead towards a stand down by both forces?”

Li decided that this would be an opportune time to release some leading information. Information the “free press” would surely take up and spread abroad. Information that would be used to pressure politicians in a manner congruent with the long term plans of the CAS.

“Well, the short answer on the time table portion is: as soon as possible, or as you Americans say ASAP.”

Li paused for the laughter that rippled through the press room. When it had died down, he continued.

“But, more seriously, I expect we can arrive at a detailed plan for bringing the border regions into a normal mode within three to four days. Once we achieve that understanding, and develop non threatening logistical plans towards that end, we can then proceed to lower threat and alert levels, reduce combat air patrols and move forces back away from the border itself. I hope this gives you a general feel for where we hope to take these negotiations. One last question. Yes, you here on the back row.”

JT Samson could not believe his good fortune. His Internet news site, SierraLines, had been in operation almost eight years. Up until last year, it had operated on a shoe-string budget, barely earning enough to keep his few employees paid, and have enough left over for living expenses. In fact, had it not been for his wife’s medical practice, which was really what was putting bread on the table, SierraLines would have gone under long ago.

But all of that had changed during the last presidential elections. At a fund raising dinner in Denver, it had been JT’s microphone which had caught now President Norm Weisskopf’s unguarded and now famous remark about “wrestling” with the husband of his opponent, a former President himself, who had commented on Weisskopf’s age.

That brief recording and its subsequent publication on his site, had brought him all of the notoriety and advertising and news contracts he needed to turn SierraLines into what was now considered the pre-eminent conservative news site on the internet. It had given him the time and the money to travel and chase after major news events all over the world—and JT had proven quite good at it. The fact was, he had *always* been good at it, he just needed the opportunity.

So here he was, chasing his instincts. He remembered seeing the video of the event he had in mind, the muffled crack of a single gunshot and then the security forces riding Hasan Sayeed to the ground. He had seen it only once on the networks...and then no more. Yes, he had a question for Li Peng, an individual JT recognized as an “insider” in the PRC leadership; and that question wasn’t related to the current Syrian “crisis” at all.

“Mr. Li, is it true that you and the PRC leadership are privy to information that during Hasan Sayeed’s recent pilgrimage to Irbil, before he successfully negotiated the inclusion of the Kurds into the GIR, that he was the victim of an assassination attempt? Do you, or do you not have clear evidence that the assassination attempt was conducted by the United States CIA and was foiled by none other than Jabal Talabari, the former leader of the Kurd military and the current leader of the GIR military in this crisis?”

As the question had been formulated, the pleasant smile on Li Peng’s face had slowly given way to a guarded incredulous look. The room had gone deathly silent, a silence that lingered for a few pregnant heartbeats as Li prepared to answer.

Then, bedlam as the room erupted into a deafening chorus of shouts, questions and attempts to get Li’s attention. All hands were raised, most reporters were on their feet. Li looked around, wondering how the mood and the focus of the meeting could have turned so drastically. Finally, he raised his voice loud enough to be heard over the din.

“I cannot comment on any such report. The security forces of the GIR and their investigative agencies are in the best position to answer such allegations. Thank you all. This concludes the press conference.”

**January 10, 14:00 local time**

**General People’s Congress**

**Tripoli, Libya**

Premier Mubarak al-Shamik stood and walked to the podium and the microphones. The People’s Congress had voted and the voting had been unanimous, just as their leader, Muamar Abu al-Qahdafa

had predicted it would be. Now, it was left to him, Premier Mubarik Shamik to make the historic announcement.

“My brothers, citizens of Libya, today we are becoming part of history; part of a divine destiny. It is with great pleasure and pride that I present you with the results of the historic vote. Let it be recorded that today, Monday, January 10, the General People’s Congress has voted unanimously to unite ourselves with the Greater Islamic Republic and to proclaim the Imam Hasan Sayeed as our Mahdi.”

“The recent revelations regarding the Great Satan’s, America’s, role in the attempted assassination of the Imam have hastened this decision. We, as the faithful in Islam, must unite to stave off these insidious influences and attacks by the west.”

“In addition, I am further pleased to say that as I speak, concurrently in Algiers, Algeria; N’Djamena, Chad; Khartoum, Sudan; Sanaa, Yemen; and Muscat, Oman similar announcements are being made.”

“It has become an irresistible force as sure as the pull of gravity and it is sweeping all of Islam. Our people and faith are being united into a greater whole and the Imam Sayeed is God’s instrument in making it happen. I urge all Islamic people to join with us. Our revolutionary leader, Muamar Qahdafa was the first to sign this document and he has authorized me, on his behalf, to endorse our unification in the holy name of Allah.”

As a roar of approval erupted from the congress, Premier Shamik returned to his seat. He sat down and contemplated the coming struggles. With today’s announcement, enough members of OPEC (four out of eleven) were now a part of the GIR to be able to hold up almost any measure they desired. The west would understand the meaning of this. In addition, almost one third of the Arab League (seven out of twenty-two) was now a part of the GIR. If things worked as the Imam had planned, soon a much higher percentage of both organizations would be a part of the GIR.

Shamik was relatively cynical. He had been involved as a politician and a leader under one of the most ruthless Muslim dictators in the world and had therefore seen his share of purges and elimination, faithful follower of Allah or not. Yet, despite this, he was himself a man of faith and it took his breath away to contemplate the coming together of so much of the Muslim world: Iran, Tajikistan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Chad, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, Algeria, Uzbekistan, Iraq, Oman, Libya.

All of these were now one nation! Could it be true? Would it hold and allow Allah’s will to be manifest through them? Shamik felt that much of that depended on the Arab states that were resisting. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, Turkey, The United Arab Emirate, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon had still not made any definitive move. In fact, some of them were openly hostile. Those states and how they reacted to coming events would be the key for the realization of the long awaited dream, Shamik was sure of this.

**January 12, 15:25**

**Salt Lake City International Airport**

**Salt Lake City, UT**

“Ladies and Gentlemen, Delta Airlines welcomes you to Salt Lake City where the local time is 3:25 p.m. Mountain Standard Time.”

The landing was smooth and Hector Ortiz was awakened from his nap only by the roar of the engines operating in reverse thrust and the customary arrival announcement by the flight attendant. Ortiz looked out the window and saw the mountains to the east of the airport in the valley of the Great Salt Lake. His flight had begun in Monterey and having already cleared customs at Dallas-Forth Worth, he anticipated a quick stop at the Avis counter and a short drive to his hotel. Tomorrow, he had a number of appointments to keep in both the Salt Lake and the further south, Utah valleys.

While Hector Ortiz enjoyed his frequent trips to the United States, the home of his customers and the source of his income, he had no love for the American people or their system of government. He hoped, and worked for the day, that the map of the American continent would be very different. Secretly, he had rejoiced when the bin Laden organization had successfully attacked America some years ago. He had not let it show then, or at any time since. He was far too shrewd for that, but he had secretly hoped at the time that those events would have toppled the American eagle off of its perch. When it hadn’t, he had filed and stored the experience, understanding that without supporting actions such attacks, even as large as those that occurred in September of 2001, had little hope of doing more than momentarily stunning a nation as large and capable as the United States.

Ortiz was engaged in the business of international trade. In its visible activities, his trucking company was one of several which facilitated the burgeoning flow of goods from Mexico to the United States as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The freight manifests of his company showed finished goods of all kinds, including home appliances, hardware, automotive parts and industrial electrical devices which were assembled in the maquiladora towns for export to “El Norte.” This enterprise provided him with knowledge of traps and hazards to be avoided in

conducting his shadowy and even more profitable operations—conveying contraband cargo across the long, porous border between the two nations.

Ortiz saw the United States as a land of contradictions. A nation whose economic vitality was born in its traditions of liberty and free enterprise, now America ironically provided profit opportunities to smugglers like himself through its prohibition policies, just as the ban of alcohol had given rise to the gangland entrepreneurs of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A land both powerful and yet so very vulnerable, dependent upon its webs of technology and energy. That vulnerability had been very aptly demonstrated back in 2001, and the Americans had attempted to respond, while maintaining their open society. The President at that time had created a new cabinet level position, the “Office of Homeland Security” and many procedures and plans had been established to protect the more obvious targets within America. Plans and procedures had been in place for the last five years, but they had never been tested. Soon perhaps they would be.

Despite his personal financial success resulting from his businesses, Ortiz, who was borne in Ciudad Juarez, was a student of history. He held that the lands of the US southwest were stolen by conquest in the wars of 1836 through 1846 or coerced purchases, and that they rightfully belonged to the Hispanic people. For more than thirty years, Hispanic nationalists within the US had been promoting the idea of Aztlan, a new nation which would be comprised of these lands. Certainly, demographic trends that might be conducive to such a development were already developing in the United States. In addition, the events of the past year involving the Greater Islamic Republic had proven, to an even greater degree than the breakup of the old Soviet Union, that such monumental changes were possible, and perhaps even inevitable.

To that end, Ortiz had been contacted recently by an old friend, an aging head of state, who asked for his assistance in bringing about similar changes to North America. Hector would use his own resources to study the current state of the infrastructure networks—the pipelines, irrigation systems, power lines and their nodes throughout the sparsely populated American West. Then, based on further instructions from his friend, he would put together a number of “projects” related to that infrastructure.

Hector recalled a conversation with Miguel Santos, one of his drivers from the early days when his business was small, but who had risen to be a trusted senior member of Hector’s inner circle. Miguel had told him of working in the United States in the mid to late 1990s as a range land fire fighter. Once, over two thousand fire fighters were brought in to fight a brushfire in an isolated area of the state of Utah where brushfires are usually left to burn out behind a fire line. Miguel mentioned that an electric power substation some fifteen miles from the town of Fontaine was the junction point for transmission of 10% of the electric power required for southern California. The men had been brought in to ensure that this juncture was not damaged and they had been ordered to keep the fire from it at all costs.

That had been a number of years ago, and the firefighters, who had camped in the Fontaine, Utah, City Park, had in fact saved the transmission station. Now, in conjunction with the assignment from his employer, Ortiz had already done substantial research on this facility, along with many others, and the Bonneville Power Administration Company that maintained and administered it. He had used on-line resources principally, but since his friend funded this effort so well, he had also purchased SPOT satellite images of the station. This had revealed much to him about the substation and how it had been designed and placed generally.

However, as he had learned from his underground business, there was no substitute for first hand, close up observations. Ortiz was committed to making those observations over the next two days between and after his legitimate business appointments. Those observations would also include an assessment of how America’s “Office of Homeland Defense” may have instituted policies that would prevent or inhibit his plans out in these rural areas, over the next two days.

**January 16, 19:38**

**White House Situation Room**

**Washington, D.C.**

The mood was tense. They had been meeting here for over four hours, and for the President of the United States, four hours was huge block of time. Conditions warranted it.

“OK, you’re telling me that all of our SIGINT data NRO images are indicating that the GIR and Syria are moving away from one another, but NOT standing down?”

Jeremy Stone paused before answering the President’s question.

“Mr. President, that is essentially correct, but I believe that the flavor John Bowers is putting on this is much closer to what the real picture could shape up to be.

“We have two very large forces, who we believed, up until a few days ago, were potentially belligerent towards one another. But, the positions they are moving towards along the Turkish border, and the disposition of their logistics trains are causing our War College and think tankers a lot of concern. I guess I can best sum it up by quoting what one of our junior analysts quipped the other day before the direction and disposition became clear. I believe his exact words were, “Boy, if those two

forces were on the same side, now that would be one hell of a pincer about to deploy into Turkey.” This quote opened a lot of eyes and led to our current concerns Mr. President.”

As the President digested the magnitude of what General Stone had just said, John Bowers, the National Security Advisor to the President contemplated the ramifications.

Simply put, they had been suckered and led around like an animal with a ring in its nose. The Syrians had over one hundred thousand combat troops moving west along their border with Turkey. The Greater Islamic Republic had over one hundred and twenty thousand troops moving east along their border with Turkey. Between them, they had over 2,300 main battle tanks and almost 3,500 armored personnel carriers in those two army groups, not to mention some 850 combat aircraft. If they somehow could coordinate their activities and move, pincer-like into Turkey—well, Turkey’s total military strength comprised about 390,000 of which 340,000 were draftees. Turkey had almost 4,000 tanks, but only 1,000 of them were modern. The entire Turkish Air Force consisted of only 350–400 modern aircraft. This could get very dangerous, very quickly.

“Jeremy, Tim and John: how quickly can we, or the Turks have forces in place to counter a move should the Syrians and/or the GIR invade Turkey?”

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs fielded the question.

“Mr. President, we have staffed down significantly in terms of ground troops. Incirlik has a strong air wing and we could start ferrying troops in there fairly quickly. But we are many weeks away from having a large enough blocking force in place with the equipment to effectively block such an operations. The Turks are certainly watching this, but their total Army is barely larger than these two forces combined. They could block maybe one of these thrusts if they started today and the GIR and Syrians held off for at least a couple of weeks. Otherwise, there would be serious loss of ground before a defense could be set up.”

It didn’t take very long for the President to make up his mind.

“OK, let’s get the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne headed for Turkey. I want the orders cut and the initial people in the air by tomorrow. Tim, work with General Stone and follow that up with planning to place a force in depth there to assist Turkey as soon as possible.”

“Fred, we need to immediately set up a conference call between myself and the President of Turkey. We need to apprise him of our concerns and suspicions and coordinate a meeting ASAP between our military people and Turkey’s. Make sure we include NATO in this as we are looking at a potential NATO response should there be any hostilities. Tim, please ensure that all of our military people are hooked tight into this very quickly.”

“Fred, also get me a conference call with Hasan Sayeed, we need to make our intentions and commitment with respect to Turkey very plain.”

“Finally, Tim and Jeremy, please have the basic ingredients of your plan for the defense of Turkey prepared to discuss with the Turkish government and any NATO personnel during the meeting that Fred will be setting up.”

“Let’s meet back here tomorrow morning at seven o’clock a.m. to work out the details of the schedule for all of this. Ladies and gentlemen, with these developments in Turkey, the developments along the DMZ in Korea, the continued build up of Red China and the political and military encirclement of Egypt, we face a developing crisis as large as that preceding World War II. We must face it with the same level of gravity and commitment.”

**January 17, 07:30 local time**

**Pope Air Force Base Flight Line**

**Ft. Bragg, North Carolina**

On the flight line of Pope Air Force Base, the first group of C-17 Globe Master III Heavy Lift Transports were spooling up and preparing for departure. The C-17 military airlift aircraft could carry payloads up to 169,000 pounds anywhere in the world to land on small, unimproved airfields. In this case, they were going to be carrying their payload to the recently repaired airfield at Incirlik, Turkey. The payloads could include these troops and their equipment, up to and including HUMMV’s, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, Sheridan Tanks and M1A1 main battle tanks. In this case, the initial flights would be heavily laden with troops and some of their supporting equipment, principally HUMMV’s and some of their APC’s.

This early winter morning, long lines of soldiers carrying their personal equipment and effects were strung out next to each aircraft as elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the 82<sup>nd</sup> boarded. Their collective breath could be seen rising in small clouds as the temperature outside was hovering at twenty-five degrees Fahrenheit. These troops would be arriving in Turkey in eighteen to twenty hours as the initial phase of the United States response to the looming threat of the Syrian and GIR forces massing on the Turkish border.

Away from the flight line, crews were in the final stages of preparing attack helicopters from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Aviation Regiment for transport to Turkey. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Aviation Regiment was the only Army attack and support helicopter unit prepared to deploy anywhere in the world within

eighteen hours notice. Right now, they were feverishly preparing their OH-58D and newly delivered RH-66 Comanche helicopters, and their UH-60 helicopters for transport and combat.

As the first C-17 Globemaster lifted into the air and crossed the outer barrier of the base, a small Fiat sedan parked just off the base in an area frequented by military enthusiasts, started its engine and drove away. Inside, Jabeel Suma, a twenty-three year old Arabic student at the local community college in Fayetteville, North Carolina, closed his notepad and set it on the seat next to him. He drove into Fayetteville, in an area fairly far removed from his apartment, near downtown where he stopped and got out of his car. He walked into the city park.

Five minutes later, from a bench in the middle of the city park, Jabeel used his cell phone to send a coded message. The message gave the details of the deployment of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division to his primary contact, an attaché to the Greater Islamic Republic ambassador to the United Nations in New York City. From there, the information was transmitted to Tehran and Damascus and then routed to the Syrian and GIR headquarters along the Turkish border. That message, detailing the time and initial quantities of C-17s involved in the take off arrived at those headquarters within four hours, fully fifteen hours before the C-17s arrived in Incirlik.

Over the next two days, seven similar messages would be sent as more elements of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division departed Ft. Bragg and flew to Turkey. But, it was that first message that had the most telling effect.

**January 18, 21:30 local time**

**Presidential Press Room**

**Tehran, Greater Islamic Republic**

“...therefore, as of 8:00 p.m. this evening, a state of war exists between the Greater Islamic Republic and those Islamic Nations which have broken the faith, which have embraced the infidel western societies and whored our collective resources to them, who are destroying our faith, the very foundation of our culture and society. These nations include Turkey, Kazikstan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, The United Arab Emirate and Morocco. The sword of Allah hangs over them and they shall be brought into alignment with the faith.”

“Concurrent announcements are being made in the capitols of the following member nations as I speak: Iran, Tajikistan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Chad, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, Algeria, Uzbekistan, Iraq, Syria, Oman, Libya, Jordan, Sudan, and Ethiopia.”

“Today’s announcement includes four new names, who themselves are announcing a solidarity and unification with the Greater Islamic Republic, Syria, Sudan, Ethiopia and Jordan.”

“To the western nations, particularly the United States, NATO and Israel, we say: do not interfere and you will not be interfered with. We seek to live at peace with the rest of the world and will allow you your faith, your commerce and your culture, as faithless and as corrupt as much of it is.”

“But, make no mistake, we will answer the call of our brothers and sisters in Islamic states who are being disenfranchised and destroyed by governments that have a solemn duty to uphold and defend their faith. The nations I have spoken of all fall into this category and it is to their governments that we solemnly proclaim: cease your whoring, cease your desecration, cease your persecutions of the faithful for we will humble you if you do not do so at once. To the faithful in those countries we say, rise up and join with us. Our armies, your faithful brethren will soon be amongst you and will bring you all into the fold. This concludes my remarks.”

**January 18, same time**

**Approaching Turkish Air Space**

**Off the coast of Turkey over the Mediterranean**

Colonel Newhouse glanced at his Multi-Functional Display (MFD). He was in navigation mode while his co-pilot monitored various other aspects of the aircraft and their surroundings. The aircraft, carrying the command element of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division and its security detachment, was about fifty miles off the coast of Turkey and still some three hundred miles from Incirlik Air Base.

Colonel Newhouse’s C-17 Globemaster was the lead element of a flight of fifteen Globemasters strung out over one hundred and fifty miles. There was approximately ten miles distance between each aircraft in this first flight of fifteen. Additional flights of C17’s and C-141’s, carrying the entire 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne were strung out all the way back to North Carolina. All of the flights represented a veritable river of men and materiel flowing towards Turkey. They had refueled over the middle of the Mediterranean and had plenty of fuel for their approach and landing at Incirlik.

The Colonel was contemplating the rapid turn around he was scheduled to make at Incirlik when he was contacted by the AWACS aircraft, code named Skyman, controlling this final leg of the trip. Skyman also controlled the four F-22 Raptor fighter aircraft that were escorting the Colonel’s flight of C-17s into this potentially hostile air space.



“Greyhound one, come to bearing 135 degrees angels 10. Many unidentified aircraft approaching from the southeast, range 225 miles. Bogies are going supersonic. Incirlik had declared an air emergency and is under heavy ballistic missile attack at the current moment”

Immediately Colonel Newhouse and his co-pilot snapped to. Warning lights were flashed to the loadmaster and the passengers in the cargo and carrying area. The “passengers” immediately took their seats and strapped themselves in. The co-pilot switched to the defensive system option on his MFD while Colonel Newhouse maneuvered the aircraft.

“Roger that Skyman, 135 degrees, angels 10.”

Switching to the command frequency, Col. Newhouse continued.

“Dave, contact the entire flight and have all aircraft immediately wave off from Incirlik and divert to Izmir, then get me on the command frequency to Izmir. We may only have a few minutes.”

As Colonel Newhouse’s co-pilot complied, all four F-22 Raptor aircraft vectored off to the east-southeast to intercept. They went to “super cruise” mode to reach supersonic speed without engaging their afterburners, thus saving significant fuel.

The F-22 was the crown jewel of America’s (and everyone else’s) fighter aircraft industry. It was capable of carrying as much ordinance as the F-15, but further, faster, with vectored thrust, and it employed the latest stealth technology. There were simply no other aircraft in that could engage it head to head. But the GIR had no intention of engaging America’s superior technology one on one.

Each of these carried six AMRAAM missiles and two Sidewinder missiles and would be in missile range in four and a half minutes.

**January 18, 20:05 local time**

**Over the Turkish coast, outside Turkish airspace**

**West of Adana, Turkey**

Once again, GIR Air Force General Mahdavi Ardakani, surveyed the aircraft that were accompanying him to attack American interests.

On this day, an even larger attack into Turkey was occurring than what had occurred in November, a little over two-and-a-half months earlier. Many of the same elements of the GIR Air Force in this theater, which had been reinforced to make up for earlier losses, were being joined today by a large portion of the Syrian Air Force in this assault on Turkey. Incirlik airbase was again targeted and was even now being attacked by well over 200 ballistic missiles carrying conventional munitions preparatory to an attack by well over two hundred aircraft.

Every major airfield and military base in southern and eastern Turkey was going to be hit this evening and throughout tomorrow as the Syrian and GIR armies crossed the border in a two pronged drive into central Turkey along the Tigris River, and along the coast towards Adana. All in all, between the GIR and Syria (which itself had just announced its own unification with the GIR), over eight hundred military aircraft were involved here in what they were calling simply “Operation Turkey.”

The General’s flight of 48 fighter aircraft was specifically targeted on the incoming C-17 aircraft carrying the advance elements of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. Thwarting a strengthened American presence in front of the invading armies was critical. Thirty-two of the aircraft were SU-27’s, but the General’s aircraft and another eleven were the more modern SU-35s which were flying in three flights of four in the middle rear of the overall formation. The General also had along four of the tandem seat SU-34s which were being used as electronics warfare aircraft. All of the General’s 48 aircraft were now within a few minutes of catching the large aircraft, which his radar was showing scattering. Like a small herd of sheep before a pack of wolves, thought the General.

He was surprised there were no escorting American fighters.

No matter, given the range and their fuel status, he calculated that his aircraft should be able to down four or five of the advanced and very expensive cargo planes before he had to turn back.

Just as he was preparing to order the various flight leaders to vector towards their corresponding targets, missile launch warning tones began erupting in the cockpits of all of the aircraft in the lead flights.

Cries of “Missile launch” and orders for evasive maneuvering were heard over the command frequency as the various flights being targeted sought to evade the oncoming missiles which appeared to have materialized out of nowhere. Very quickly, two of the General’s SU-34 EW aircraft had backtracked the oncoming missiles and re-calibrated their instrumentation.

“Hawk Leader, we have marginal identification on four enemy aircraft, bearing fifteen degrees, altitude approximately ten thousand meters, range forty-five kilometers. We are identifying these as US F-22 Raptor aircraft. Very little electronic, radar or thermal signature.”

Raptors! Finally a head to head combat confrontation with the latest American fighters. From the looks of it, they are everything they have been advertised as being, the General thought.

There had been no warning, just the missiles themselves in the air—AMRAAMS, from the looks of it. Well, he hoped that his SU-35 and SU-34 combination he had included in this attack would allow him to not only complete his mission, but to defeat several of the F-22s as well.

**January 18, the next five minutes**  
**Over the Turkish coast, outside Turkish airspace**  
**West of Adana, Turkey**

Over the next few minutes, four more launches of AMRAAMS by the US aircraft were accomplished before the range closed and the GIR aircraft got close enough to make IR contact and lock with the Americans. In that time, of the twenty missiles launched, fourteen of them found their mark and brought down SU-27's.

In the ensuing fight, General Ardakani committed four of his SU-35s and twelve of his remaining SU-27's against the four F-22s. With his remaining eight SU-35s, eight SU-27's and all four SU-34s, the General accelerated through the melee and continued on towards the C-17 aircraft which were now low to the deck, making an evasive egress towards Izmir.

Three F-22s were destroyed, two by R-27T1 infrared homing missiles and one by gunfire as the combat closed to "knife fight" range. The fourth F-22 was able to escape. This had cost the GIR another four SU-27's and two of the four SU-35s that had engaged the Americans. The total GIR cost to break through to the C-17 cargo aircraft had been twelve SU-27's and two SU-35s versus three F-22s. Although the numbers were again very lopsided, the data recorded of the battle with the F-22s would later prove very advantageous to the GIR and her allies. It was also heralded as a great "victory" as the GIR not only accomplished its mission, but also overcame the vaunted, supposedly undefeatable American technology in doing so, despite horrendous losses that would not be so heralded.

General Ardakani's flight of aircraft caught up to and shot down three of the C-17s. Colonel Newhouse's aircraft was not one of these. In the action, pursued by no less than four SU-35s, including General Ardakani's aircraft, Colonel Newhouse's C-17 evaded six R-27 GIR missiles before being severely damaged by a R-27T1 infrared homing missile, which took out one of the C-17s engines, and another impact from a R-27R1 radar homing missile above and behind the cockpit. The explosion killed the co-pilot and severely injured the Colonel. Despite severe damage to aircraft hydraulics and attitude control, the Colonel was able to make an emergency landing along a dirt roadway fifteen miles inland in Turkey. His heroic actions in landing the aircraft under these circumstances saved the lives of the command staff for the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and would earn the Colonel a Medal of Honor.

**January 18, 16:35**  
**Situation Room, The White House**  
**Washington, D.C.**

As the reports came in, everyone in the room was silent.

Not two hours ago the world had been shocked at the announcements from the GIR. War had been declared by the GIR against America's staunchest Arab allies, including Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Several new nations had announced their unification with the GIR, including Syria, which only confirmed the worst fears of those in the United States. The President had immediately called his closest advisors into session in the situation room to monitor events. This included the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Vice President. Immediately following the announcement by Hasan Sayeed of the declaration of war, the GIR launched another attack on Incirlik, equally devastating to the one two months earlier, and executed an ambush of the lead elements of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne division off the Turkish coast. In that ambush, three F-22s and four C-17s were destroyed (this included the emergency landing of the C-17 by Colonel Newhouse where the decision had been made to destroy the aircraft on the ground after landing and evacuating it). This resulted in several hundred members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade being killed along with the destruction of their equipment.

Now, from around the region, more bad news was pouring in. After the end of the latest report coming in from secure satellite link in Saudi Arabia, Jeremy Stone, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs addressed those assembled.

"So, let's summarize what we know so far. We have a two-pronged invasion of Turkey, one consisting of a large GIR army group moving along the Tigris River with an apparent initial goal of Diyarbakir. The other is led by the Syrian Army Group, now also a GIR group, and is pointed along the coast with an apparent initial goal of Adana. Logistical support is already in place for both of these Army groups and men, equipment, materiel and supplies are flowing behind them. Our resources in the area are severely hampered by the destruction of Incirlik and the apparent airborne landing occurring in the vicinity now. Izmir is receiving the 82<sup>nd</sup>, but we are clearly on a defensive posture there and are working with the Turkish armed forces to establish a cohesive line of defense extending from Mersin on the Mediterranean coast to Samsun on the Black Sea.

"Latest reports from Saudi indicate that the large GIR army group in the vicinity of Kuwait is also on the move. We expect a crossing of the Kuwait border sometime early tomorrow. We are experiencing heavy ballistic missile attack throughout the region as we speak and expect heavy air

attacks to follow. Our air forces in the Saudi Kingdom are strong, but we frankly do not have enough men and materiel to fight anything short of a holding action in the Kuwait area. Given their announced intention to punish Saudi Arabia and their declaration of war, we believe that the GIR will proceed directly through Kuwait into the oil rich areas along the Persian Gulf Coast of Saudi Arabia and The United Arab Emirate. Mr. President, our initial recommendation will be to fall back and inflict as much attrition on the advancing GIR forces as possible. Again, their logistic lines are in place and set up to feed this invasion force as well. This map of the region should make clear what the GIR's intentions with respect to Saudi Arabia are."

"Finally, Egypt is in no better condition. With Chad, Libya, the Sudan and Ethiopia all joining with the Greater Islamic Republic, Egypt's position is as bad as Saudi Arabia's and just as grave. With the declaration of war on Egypt, the disposition of forces to the East and South of Egypt bring the strategic picture into clear focus. We expect that those Libyan and Sudanese forces that have been mobilizing are in a position to attack Egypt within the week. If for any reason the Chinese in Chad join in this, the prospects for Egypt are very grave."

President Weisskopf soberly took this in. There was little doubt that Hasan Sayeed was eliminating western influence, and particularly U.S influence in the Mid East. But in attacking Turkey, the stakes had been increased significantly. Would the NATO nations honor their commitments?

"Fred and Tim, can we expect full support and involvement by all of NATO in protecting Turkey?"

Tim Hattering considered this. Militarily it would require a full NATO mobilization to repel the GIR forces that were currently assaulting her, and those mobilizing to support that assault. But, whether or not all the NATO nations would do so was the question. Those nations were much more dependent on the oil from the Middle East than the United States.

"Mr. President, if all of NATO honors their treaty obligations, we can repel this invasion. My concern is the oil issue and the influence it is sure to have on many of these nations. Fred, what is your read? I believe we can really only count on Canada, Great Britain and Germany."

Fred Reissinger had been talking to his counterparts in Europe over the last week since it had become clear that a potential for an attack on Turkey existed. The results had not been good.

"Mr. President, I believe we can count 100% on Great Britain and Canada. I believe Germany is 90% there, but we are going to have to help them find alternate sources for petroleum. Outside of this, I believe the Danes, the Poles, the Czechoslovakians and most of eastern Europe may also join, but the French and others are very iffy."

The President again soberly considered this.

"Well, I guess there is no great surprise there, particularly from the French. Let's get the House and Senate leadership of both parties over here. In the mean time, Fred, get the Prime Ministers Great Britain and Canada and the Chancellor of Germany on the line in that order. It is my intention to request declaration of war between the United States and the GIR as of this evening. I want the vote in Congress done quickly so I can announce the same in a nation wide broadcast."

**January 18, 22:30**

**The Oval Office, The White House  
Washington, D.C.**

"My fellow Americans. It with heavy heart but with crystal clear intent that I must speak with you tonight."

"Most of you have heard of the declaration of war announced by the leader of the Greater Islamic Republic earlier today on the nations of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirate. These are some of America's most trusted and loyal allies in the Middle East."

"The GIR has followed up that announcement with immediate attacks on Turkish and Saudi Arabian installations and cities. With great regret I must announce that these attacks included attacks on American installations in Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. There has been significant loss of life. Incirlik airbase has once again been devastated by an unprovoked and overwhelming attack. GIR airborne forces have landed there and there is fierce fighting going on there as I speak to you tonight."

"My fellow citizens, we have strict obligations to our allies in this region. Turkey is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to which we also belong. In the fifth article of that treaty, we are bound to treat any attack on any member as an attack on ourselves. We intend to comply with and fulfill our treaty obligations."

"In addition, our own forces have been attacked in an unprovoked and malicious way. It is clear that Hasan Sayeed and his leadership intend to coerce all Islamic nations to join with them. Those that will not are to be forced into their totalitarian and dogmatic society, a society where the most basic and fundamental of rights to religion and free speech are not only denied, but brutally suppressed. The United States of America *will not stand by* and watch our friends and allies be coerced into such an environment in any way, and particularly not at force of arms."

"This is not like the attack we suffered a few years ago that we all remember. In that attack, a rogue network of terrorist organizations supported by one or two governments assaulted our

homeland. In this instance, we have dedicated and large armies invading our allies. Where the “War on Terrorism” was against fiercely dedicated but small cells of terrorists and the relatively minor governments that supported them, this conflict will be waged against large nations and their armies. These nations have demonstrated their intent on conquering other nations and will, if not stopped, ultimately threaten our shores with similar attempts at conquest.

Therefore, I have consulted with the congressional leadership and a vote by your representatives has already taken place. As of 10:00 p.m. this evening, January 18, a state of war officially exists between the Greater Islamic Republic and the United States of America.”

“I must urge calm upon all of our citizens. This war will not be easy or quick. The GIR and its allies represent a population greater than our own, and production capacity almost equal to our own. The GIR sit astride some of the largest oil deposits in the world. They are in the process of attempting to take, at force of arms, oil deposits for which we and our allies have contracted with friendly nations to make use of. The hardships that this situation has the potential of inflicting on our citizens are enormous.”

“I am calling up 300,000 reservists today, to bolster our Army, Air and Naval forces so that we can contain and then kill this naked aggression.”

“As tyrants, warmongers and despots have discovered: when aroused, the American people are capable of not only suffering through great hardship, but are capable of rising to levels of production and commitment unseen throughout the rest of the world. This is because we are free and because our freedom is founded upon absolutely firm moral principles.”

“I urge all Americans to make tomorrow, January 19<sup>th</sup> a national day of prayer and reflection. Let us consider the roots of our liberty and what it is all based on. Then let us ask the hand of Providence to support us as we go forth once again as a people to defeat tyranny that would crush ourselves and our friends under its unrelenting heel.”

“In conjunction with this announcement, I am informed that the Canadian and British parliaments are in session considering similar articles of war which will place them in this war at our side. We expect to hear of the positive results of these votes within the hour.”

“Announcements regarding mobilization of all reserve units, of emergency actions regarding production and usage of strategic materiel and of war time policies will be forth coming beginning tomorrow.”

“My fellow citizens, let us rise to the occasion and as a people answer these atrocities and these incursions with fierce resolution and with the American ingenuity and attitude that has been the hallmark of American history. God bless you all. Good night.”

**January 19, 07:00**

**News stands**

**New York City, New York**

“Extra, Extra! Read all about it... War Declared in Mid East. US declares WAR on the Greater Islamic Republic! President calls for national day of prayer and reflection... read all about it!”

The newsboys were shouting it all over the city, waving the latest, hot off the press editions of the New York Herald Post. Similar scenes were being played out across America’s major cities and throughout the world.

**Herald Post**

**Special Edition**

## **WAR DECLARED!**

*Washington, D.C., January 19—An angry, indignant Hasan Sayeed announced to the world yesterday that his nation, or group of nations making up the Greater Islamic Republic, had declared war on the nations of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirate and Egypt. Coincident with this announcement was the announcement that Syria, Jordan, Sudan and Ethiopia would be joining the GIR.*

*Within eight hours, and after attacks on U.S. military installations and personnel in the area, the President of the United States, Norm Weisskopf, announced that the U.S. Congress had met and declared war on the Greater Islamic Republic. This announcement was followed shortly thereafter by similar announcements from Great Britain and Canada, which are now added to the earlier announcements by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirate.*

*As of 5 a.m., EST, GIR armies had already penetrated into Turkey on two fronts and were closing on the Kuwait border. Heavy fighting is reported in both areas, as well as at the U.S. Air Force base at Incirlik, Turkey, where GIR air borne forces landed in strength after a massive ballistic missile and air attack rendered the air base inoperable.*

*In addition, two GIR Army groups are massing near Egypt, one to the west of Egypt near the Libyan border and another to the south along the border with Sudan. Both of these groups are expected to invade Egypt within the next few days.*

The news rocketed around the globe.

January 19 became known as another “Dark Thursday” as both the DOW and NASDAQ plummeted. By the end of the day, both indexes were down record amounts on the day, despite safe

guards that halted trading and then restarted it several times. Total losses for the day were in excess of ten percent. Trillions of dollars of wealth evaporated against the fear of negative impact on energy and against an anticipated expanding war.

German politicians continued a very hot debate regarding their treaty obligations under NATO. By the end of the day, Germany voted in favor of honoring article five of their NATO treaty commitment, but it was a very narrow victory.

In Italy and Spain, the vote never occurred. Those against those nations entry into the war held enough power for the moment to thwart the vote coming to the floor of their respective legislative bodies.

In the far east, Japan, Korea, The Republic of China and other far eastern nations took “wait and see” attitude about the conflict, although Australia immediately voted to logistically support the United States and her allies in any way possible short of declaring war themselves.

The CAS released a harshly worded communiqué on behalf of Red China and India, denouncing what it called “the hasty decision” by NATO countries to declare war on a member state of the CAS. That same communiqué praised other NATO countries for showing restraint in what it viewed as a regional issue centered around religious persecution and intolerance by those states upon whom the GIR had declared war. Both the Russian Federation and Red China offered to mediate and called for an immediate meeting of the UN Security Council to work out a meeting of the parties at the negotiating table.

**January 22, 21:30 local time**

**CP, 39th Security Forces Squadron**

**Incirlik Air Force Base, Turkey**

Captain Hanson surveyed what he had left as a fighting force. He was down to about one-third strength for his security forces, but had augmented that with various grades of enlisted and officer rank personnel left over from the 39th Support, Transportation, Logistics and Medical groups and a few from the Air Wing Group. A few members of the 628th Air Mobility Support Squadron and US Army Corps of Engineers were also with him.

He had been fighting a rear guard action since the major evacuation from the base after the devastating ballistic missile and air attacks of the 18<sup>th</sup>. His original job had been to ensure that all critical equipment and materiel left behind in the evacuation was destroyed and that any stragglers were gathered up for the final evacuation which was supposed to have occurred late yesterday afternoon. But that was before the GIR had landed in battalion strength in airdrops to the south and east of the base the afternoon of the 20<sup>th</sup>, soon after the major evacuation was completed. They had been lucky that the transport, support and escort aircraft had made it out, and that the ground convoy had escaped.

The GIR had been reinforced and now controlled roughly two-thirds of the base. He had destroyed a lot of classified materiel and equipment, but useful equipment had still fallen into the hands of their attackers.

Captain Hanson did not expect any further re-supply. The first evening, the U.S. Air Force had returned in strength and supported him, accomplishing close air support and dropping ammunition, medical supplies and other materiel to the beleaguered defenders. But last night the sky belonged to the GIR, and it was looking like they had established air superiority in the region. His radio communications were being effectively jammed, and the last message had given him the initiative to continue the fight for as long as practicable, or retreat at his discretion. Reports indicated that an entire GIR Army group, numbering in excess of one hundred and twenty thousand men, had broken through Turkish defenses near Osmaniye, fifty miles to the east. This meant that advance elements would be arriving very soon, possibly this evening, and certainly by tomorrow morning.

Hanson had decided to withdraw this evening. He had six deuce-and-a-half trucks for transportation, his last three Avenger-2 Missile systems (mounted on HUMMV chassis) for anti-air coverage, his last three V-150 APC's, six Peacekeeper APC's and six HUMMV's (two of which were outfitted with TOW missiles). Altogether, he had two hundred personnel to transport, with twenty-seven of these being severely wounded and unable to assist in any defense.

In order to accomplish the withdrawal, the Captain had requested a volunteer force of twenty security personnel, which he would lead as a diversion. He planned to use one Avenger, one V-150 and one of the Peacekeepers with this force to punch through the GIR lines and attack a logistics depot on the opposite side of the base near the northern perimeter. Two of his scouts had discovered this logistics point last evening as they were reconnoitering behind enemy lines. The depot appeared to be fairly well defended.

This “diversion” would be Captain Hanson's answer to the GIR brokered cease-fire for him to consider terms for surrender. A part of the diversion included an escape route north into the hills for any who could manage it.

An hour ago there was still an open corridor back through Adana to a small security detachment, also under his command, with the 39<sup>th</sup> Wing A 39 Supply Squadron in Yumurtalik, thirty kilometers

away. Once his XO joined up with them, they would retreat to the east and join U.S. or Turkish forces north of Mersin along the defenses being created there.

**January 22, 22:23 local time**

**GIR logistics point**

**Incirlik Air Force Base, Turkey**

The firefight was over. It had been short and incredibly intense. Colonel Ahmass could hardly believe the audacity of it. Twenty minutes ago when he had been informed that the Americans had made a breakthrough and were proceeding towards his position with several APCs and an unknown number of personnel, the Colonel had prepared accordingly.

Colonel Ahmass' unit was a lead element of the large GIR/Syrian Army that was invading Turkey along the Mediterranean coast. The Colonel had arrived yesterday and was the one who set up the logistics depot and its defenses.

Those defenses consisted of a detachment of one hundred and fifty soldiers with two ZSU-23-4 AAW vehicles, four BMP-2 tracked APC's, four BTR-152 wheeled APC's and several 7.62 MM PK machine guns.

As the Americans approached, the Colonel called in air support in the form of two Mi-28N Havoc attack helicopters from locations just behind the advancing GIR army group. When they arrived, the lead unit immediately attacked one of the American APC's, the Peacekeeper, with an Ataka anti-tank missile, and completely destroyed it. To the Colonel's shock, the small U.S. attacking force included a very capable AAW platform, the U.S. Avenger, which immediately engaged both Havoc helicopters and shot both out of the air with Stinger missiles.

The American V-150 laid down a deadly fire with its 20 mm cannon, immediately engaging one BMP-2 and destroying it. As the other GIR BMP-2's came into play, American soldiers on foot employed their man-portable M47 Dragon anti-tank missiles and destroyed two of them. Finally, the last BMP-2 scored a direct hit on the rear of the V-150 with an AT-4 Spigot missile, and then finished the vehicle off with its 30 mm cannon using twenty to thirty AP-T (armor piercing-tracer) rounds. That BMP-2 then quickly dispatched the American Avenger unit as it tried to escape to the north. This was accomplished with a second AT-4 Spigot missile which quickly traveled the 1,500 meters that separated the two vehicles, completely destroying the lightly armed Avenger in a spectacular explosion as its remaining Stinger missiles cooked off in the conflagration. After this, a brief firefight ensued which ended up driving off the last four or five American soldiers who retreated to the north.

The GIR logistics depot had been defended, but it had cost Colonel Ahmass the two Mi-28N attack helicopters, three of his BMP-2's, one of his BTR-152's and about forty personnel. For this carnage, he could count two American APC's, the Avenger and what appeared to be the bodies of about fifteen American soldiers.

Captain Hanson was among the five survivors who escaped into the hills to the north where he ultimately joined up with Turkish partisans in what would prove to be a very long and bitter fight against the GIR forces which were sweeping across Turkey.

**January 22, 22:35 local time**

**Outside Adana International Airport**

**Adana, Turkey**

As the firefight at the logistics depot ended, the retreating American column sped along the four-lane highway on the outskirts of Adana near the International Airport. The Americans were unaware that just two hours earlier a number of transports had landed GIR Special Forces at the airport. These forces, supported by attack helicopters, took control of the airport in a brief firefight with elements of the local Turkish defense forces. Thereafter, twenty-five transport aircraft landed a full armored reconnaissance company at the airport as an advance contingent of the armored division that was currently en route along the coast.

As the retreating Americans passed the airport entrance, four Type-63 light tanks had just taken up position there along with four BMP-2's and four BTR-80 APC's. Both sides were completely surprised to encounter one another. The ensuing fight was brief and deadly as the Americans attempted to force their way past.

In the fight, the Americans lost four of their six deuce-and-a-half trucks and most of the personnel riding in them. In addition, they lost both V-150 APC's, four of their six Peacekeeper APC's and three HUMMV's. Most of these vehicles were destroyed by cannon fire from the Type-63 tanks and anti-tank munitions from the BMP-2 and BTR-80 APC's. Both Avenger AAW units were able to speed past the airport entrance in the fighting and confusion.

Of the nearly 200 personnel retreating in the American convoy, only sixty-five personnel made it past the airport and ultimately joined up with the smaller security detachment for the A 39 Supply Squadron that was anxiously waiting for them in Yumurtalik. One hundred and three Americans were killed, most in the loaded and unprotected deuce-and-a-half trucks, and another forty-three were wounded and captured along with twenty other personnel who had not been injured in the fighting. Of

these sixty-three captured personnel, the GIR spared fifteen officers and senior enlisted men for questioning while mercilessly executing the rest where they stood or lay to the horror of the fifteen survivors.

In the fight, the American V-150's and the TOW equipped HUMMV's exacted a heavy toll from the GIR forces. Two of the Type-63 tanks, three of the BMP-2's and three of the BTR-80's were destroyed. Most of the soldiers in the GIR APC's were killed as the units had just arrived and the troops had not unloaded from them when the fighting began. In all, eighty-three GIR personnel were killed and fifteen wounded. An armed scout helicopter that was sent to attack the fleeing Americans was shot down by one of the escorting Avenger AAW vehicles, and thereafter the American retreat was not interfered with.

With this battle, the fall of the U.S. airbase at Incirlik, Turkey was complete and the GIR had established a strong foothold along the coast of Turkey.

**January 24, 16:35**

**Lazy H Ranch**

**Outside Montague, Texas**

Jess took off his over boots as he stepped onto the back porch.

Boy, that north wind is howling, he thought as he took off his insulated coveralls and placed them on a peg.

At least those are still easily found, Made in America, he thought as he went through the back door. Jess took great satisfaction in only buying "Made in America" goods for his own personal clothing and implements. The rest of the family had never been quite as serious about it, though they did make the effort, for which Jess was grateful. But, Jess had been to many of those "foreign" places and saw how the people lived, how their governments treated them. He did not want that for America and figured, in his own small way, he could help avoid it by "buying American."

"Hey sweetheart," he called, "what's to eat?"

Cindy not only heard Jess come in, what with that north wind blowing, she also felt him come in by the blast of cold air that accompanied his entry.

"We've got some Chili Beans and cornbread honey, made just the way you like it and piping hot."

"How cold is it out there, anyway. Wind's been blowing all day and I know I've seen some flakes of snow blowing past the windows here."

Actually, the snow was coming down harder now and Jess thought they were in for at least several inches by morning. Temperature had been dropping since yesterday when that norther came through and it had fallen through the twenties today and was sitting at eighteen degrees right now. Despite impressions to the contrary, here in north central Texas, especially up here near the Red River, snow, ice and cold were a typical part of winter, even if the winter was relatively short.

But Jess knew that this small talk about weather was just that. He knew Cindy was concerned about the declaration of war and the notice he had already received. This was not going to be any short duration TDY type of thing. He was being called to active duty for the duration. And his intuition told him that it could be a long time.

He couldn't tell Cindy where he was going. The verbal orders, delivered over secure lines, posting him to Israel to deliver a secretly purchased squadron of Comanches and to train the Israeli military in their use was all very much top secret—and it was indicative of the view of leadership just where this fighting was going to ultimately lead. But, he knew he could be completely open with her about the gravity of the situation and its likely duration, and he knew he would have to do that tonight.

"Boy that smells good honey! Can't wait to get a bowl full into me. Even with the welder going in the barn, it was awful cold out there this afternoon."

After the prayer, and after Jess got started, Cindy broached the topic.

"...so, I got your things together and they are packed and ready. Saturday morning is going to come quick. Do you think this will blow over as quick as that last set-to did?"

Jess could only be as honest as his oaths and sworn duty would allow...but he owed it to this, his best friend and closest confidant in the world.

"Honey, I am afraid this is "the big one." The GIR has a lot of resources and is buying up a lot of modern equipment. From everything I have read, they have developed a phenomenal training program and they are committed. Who would have thought they could pull off those attacks on Incirlik, and now the invasions of Turkey, Kuwait and Saudi."

"It's going to be a tough, long fight in pushing them back, and that's if some of these other tinhorns that have an axe to grind with us don't jump in somewhere else around the world. No, I believe you'll see me now and again on leave when that can be arranged, but I'm afraid we're in this for the long haul. Probably end up being a lot of austere war-time provisions, maybe a lot like our parents experienced in World War II."

Cindy had feared as much, but she was grateful that Jess always served it up to her straight. They discussed preparations and they discussed Billy and his likely role, particularly his timing as he

finished his training and went on to the various schools. Then as they finished cleaning up the dishes, Cindy took Jess's hand and said.

"Babe, given what we are facing, we're just going to have to work real hard to get as prepared as we can. We'll also have to work extra hard at giving you the kind of send off my man deserves and one you can keep close to your heart through whatever you may be called to face."

**January 26, 22:00**

**Marine Recruit Training Depot  
San Diego, California**

Company B of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at the San Diego Recruit Training Depot was ready to enter its live fire training. For the next two weeks, they would become versed in the operation and firing of the standard issue M-16A2 assault rifle.

"OK girls, listen up! Over the next two weeks you are going to be dedicated to extensive weapons training and all-out live-fire training with your M-16 rifles. You'll fire on a variety of targets, still, moving and pop-up and you will fire on both normal straight ranges and combat ranges."

"All of you *will* qualify as a "marksman" before this two week period is complete."

"Each of you has already spent many hours taking this rifle apart, cleaning it thoroughly, and putting it back together, familiarizing yourselves with every piece of it. But now, before we actually let you children fire one of these fine weapons, you will practice aiming and dry-firing your rifle until you can't stand it anymore. By the time you fire that first actual shot, you'll have dry-fired your rifle in every conceivable position many hundreds of times."

"In addition to rifle training, during these two weeks, you'll receive basic training on grenades and other types of weapons."

"I expect each of you to pay close attention. As has already been drilled into you, this is your most basic implement as a Marine. We are teaching you to kill and destroy our nation's enemies, and as recent events are proving, we have plenty of them that would like nothing better than to bring the eagle down. So, of necessity, we are training you to be very good at it. While all of your training is paramount to your survival, coming to know and respect your weapon in intimate detail will make the difference in your life or death. The weapon must become an extension of you, and we'll make it just that."

"Remember this, every Marine, from the lowliest private to a fighter jock, to medics and doctors is an infantryman first and foremost. You take and hold ground with people, plain and simple. It's the way it has always been, and it is no different now, regardless of how much high tech they create and introduce. Don't ever forget it Marines. At some point, that knowledge will be your friend and save your tail."

Both Billy Simmons and Leon Campbell listened intently. They were both natural leaders and other recruits were already following their lead. Jess had a lot of experience with rifles, having shot many thousands of rounds through his Mini-14 on the ranch back home. He had also been well versed in its operation, maintenance and assembly by his Dad. Leo had learned quickly and had benefited from his friendship with Billy. To anyone noticing, it was clear that Leon had every intention of taking his DI's words to heart. The rifle was becoming a part of him, and he a part of it. It was the path he had chosen, recon—sniper.

They had both come into boot camp in relatively good shape, but the last six weeks had honed each of them down to the epitome of lean, mean fighting machines. Drill evaluations, 3- 4- and 5-mile hikes with fully loaded packs, the Confidence Course, Combat Water Survival and Martial Arts training had all contributed.

Both were also excelling in their academic classes. Core values, first aide, Marine customs, survival and many other topics were adding to the well-rounded nature of the training all of the recruits were receiving, where excellence was demanded. Already, in their own private discussions, the DI's from various platoons and even the other companies were talking about the "magnificent duo" that existed in Billy and Leon.

In private, more than a few bets were being placed on how these two, in the same platoon, would impact the overall platoon competition that was a part of the tradition. Of course, none of this was ever alluded to in front of any of the recruits. There, the equality of the discipline and "strong encouragement" to excellence, to achievement and to learning and maintaining the high standard of the Marine Corps reigned supreme. It could be no other way.

**February 2, 06:00**

**Situation Room, The White House**

**Daily War Briefing**

**Washington, D.C.**

Jeremy Stone had taken on the daily task of briefing the President and his key cabinet members. His briefings were attended by the other Joint Chiefs of Staff and key Congressional leaders whenever possible.



“Let’s begin. Mr. President, we will start with the current, on-the-ground situation in Turkey, followed by the same in Saudi Arabia. We will then briefly touch on developments in and around Egypt.

“In Turkey, we have established a defensive line from Samsun to the north, down to Kayseri in the center and it is holding. The GIR Army Group out of the former Iran has only probed our defenses there, and it’s a good thing since the defense is not yet established in depth. But that is improving as those lines are augmented by elements of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, just arriving British forces and of course, in the main by the Turkish army.

“We expect the first heavy armor out of Germany and infantry out of Canada to arrive in the next seven to ten days, but this will then take several days to get moved to the front lines. In the mean time, the GIR is consolidating its holdings and is being helped by the more hard line Islamic citizens who are welcoming them as heroes, especially in the cities of Erzurum and Malatya. Nonetheless there is significant partisan and guerilla activity behind their lines, particularly in the mountains. We are in contact with the remnants of part of the Incirlik security forces. In fact, the commanding officer of those security forces has linked up with some Turkish partisans there.

“To the south in Turkey, the news is not as good. Our original plan to try and establish an anchor on the coast at Mersin has failed. We were unable to get enough forces in place after the rapid fall of Incirlik and Adana. A full battalion of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne was flown in and worked well with the local Turkish forces, but it was a case of too little too late. Heavy losses were inflicted on the advancing Syrian Army Group, but that close to the GIR, with their massive numbers of aircraft, air superiority was not achieved and we were left with no choice but to withdraw. It was orderly, but we suffered moderate losses amongst elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne that were engaged there. We also suffered significant attrition in the air wing of the U.S.S. Eisenhower as it flew support operations along with our aircraft out of Izmir.

“We are now working at establishing an interim defense point at Ulukisia in the canyons there exiting the Taurus Mountains, but it is likely that our firm defense will have to be set up where the central plain there narrows between Lake Golu and Konya.

“Speaking of the GIR air forces, satellite imagery indicates that they are close to having the airbase at Incirlik repaired and operational. We expect a fairly massive influx of aircraft there as they establish forward air bases to support their ongoing offensive in Turkey. We are waiting for those aircraft and intend to spring a surprise of our own. Admiral Crowler and General Livingston will hold a briefing on this operation at 4 p.m. today.

“Finally, in Saudi Arabia. Our Marine Expeditionary Unit has made an orderly retreat with elements of the Kuwait army in front of the advancing GIR 1<sup>st</sup> Army Group. We estimate that nearly 200,000 effective combat troops with 1,200 tanks and the same number of APC’s are moving across the Kuwait border as we speak. We intend to fight a holding action from the Saudi border at Al Khafji on the Persian Gulf to KK Military City. If the GIR forces are serious about advancing, we will conduct a fighting withdrawal from those points back to firmer defenses we are now establishing stretching from Abu Hadriyah to Az Zilfi to Medina.

“Mr. President, knowing the Kingdom as you do, I believe now is the time for the Summit you proposed so that the King can prepare the people for this invasion. As in Turkey, there are factions within Saudi Arabia that will welcome Hasan Sayeed and proclaim him their Imam.”

The President asked a few pertinent questions regarding the disposition of forces and how long it would take to gather enough forces to blunt the enemies’ offenses and then mount a credible offense of their own. Having had experience in Desert Storm, he knew it would be a long wait. The “nightmare scenario” from Desert Storm, an invasion of Saudi Arabia before their defenses were prepared, was playing out in front of him. Not only that, another serious invasion was already in process in Turkey and a third appeared to be imminent in Egypt.

“Fred, are we ready for the summit? We are talking about Egypt, Turkey, Saudi, Great Britain, Canada and Germany. I expect to talk frankly about these events and regarding what I view as the very real possibility of conflict in Asia while this is occurring.”

Fred Reissinger was on top of this. He had made all of the contacts and he had done it discreetly. The plans were already in place for a discreet, really a secretive, meeting early next week.

“Mr. President, the meetings are set up for next week, February 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> in Iceland. You will be flying out on Air Force One Sunday morning the 5<sup>th</sup>, and returning to Andrews on the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup>.”

Norm Weisskopf nodded his approval.

“Good, it can’t be soon enough. I have a feeling we are looking at a long hard road in front of us gentlemen—of major world war proportions. We must discreetly prepare and plan accordingly. After lunch, we will be meeting with Curt to put FEMA preparations into motion for our Federal War Time footing, which we then hope to roll out to each of the states. General Stone, please continue, what is the situation in Egypt?”

**February 2, 11:10**  
**Lot 8, Building 14, Woodfield Industrial Park**  
**Schaumburg, Illinois**

The industrial park consisted of over one hundred buildings, each with either a private or semi-private entry drive that could accommodate semi tractor-trailers off of Woodfield Road, near its intersection with National Parkway in Schaumburg. Each industrial building had elevated docks with entry bays, which could accommodate equipment or vehicles up to thirty feet wide and twenty-five feet tall.

Ahmed Haddad entered the small entry door. His presence had been noted and accepted by the security staff that manned the security console twenty-four hours a day. That staff was small, but well trained. Like Ahmed, most had been in America for many years, some had been born here. They had all worked in the security profession for most of their careers, some having included local law enforcement work.

Ahmed's presence had been noted when his vehicle turned into the lot, his license had been matched via digital video recording and character recognition. Once Ahmed exited his vehicle and began approaching the building, he was watched closely by the duty officer. Finally, before entering the building, a personal identification card, which was digitally encoded with Ahmed's entry code, was read at the door. The bay door, and the inset door within it, were both made of solid steel, three inches thick.

But, to outward appearances, other than the reader on the inset door, the entire facility looked like the other bland warehouse and industrial buildings in the complex. The only identification was a small sign on the front door that said, "Haddad and Jones Enterprises." Anyone checking into the name would show that the firm specialized in the repair and rework of dental equipment. Nonetheless, with the enhanced security in America since September of 2001, one could never be too careful.

The bay that Ahmed entered was a self-contained portion of the building. It had the single outside entry and a single, similarly secure inside entry to the rest of the facility. Within the thirty-foot wide, by sixty-foot long, by twenty-five foot high bay, there were numerous work, equipment, machinery and storage facilities—and sitting in the middle of the bay was the "Dhul Fiqar": "The Prophet's Sword."

As he looked over the lines of this forty-two foot houseboat, he noted the visible progress on the modifications. The strengthened and protected attachment points along the railings, the mountings along the aft quarter deck and the numerous antennae and electronic fairings along the top of the wheel house, which was really looking more and more like the control room it would be. As he noticed this, he called out.

"My brothers, how is our work progressing today?"

Almost immediately, a dark headed and bearded man of approximately thirty years of age stuck his head out of the wheel house and responded.

"Ahmed, *great* to see you my friend. Progress is proceeding ahead of schedule. All of the electronics are in; all of the attachment points are completed. We have only to test the circuitry and then apply a thorough quality test for reliability and functioning under shock conditions. I anticipate we will be ready to load the boat for transportation to our berth within a four to five days if you so desire."

Ahmed considered this response. It was really quite good news, but they weren't scheduled to be complete until the 10<sup>th</sup> of March, with actual travel occurring almost anytime thereafter. But, having a few extra weeks would be good as long as security held. The other boats were not ahead of schedule and Ahmed wanted to make sure that the timing of all of the missions was as perfectly synchronized as possible.

"Outstanding, Jahmil. I was just at the other Schaumburg location off of Golf Road and Esau is on schedule. Two of our other locations, Aurora and Joliet are actually two days behind, so early completion here will allow us to shift the proven expertise of your group to assist in those locations. Loading and transportation will stay on the current schedule. We'll just use the extra time to ensure everyone is ready. Now, show me how the special equipment is going to attach to the hardened and protected points you've created."

**February 3, 13:23 local time**  
**Gavank, 800 KM northwest of Krasnoyarsk**  
**Siberia, The Russian Federation**

The insulation sleeve had been fitted around the last joint and the welders had finished their task. This was the last section of the pipeline that would now carry the fruits of their labors to India and to the Russian Federation. From his control vehicle, Dr. Buhendra Gavanker observed the final construction sequences with satisfaction.

These last few miles had been accomplished in conditions that Dr. Gavanker would have thought impossible. Winds howling at over 80 km/hour, actual temperature at minus forty centigrade, snow

coming down horizontally and drifting well over two meters. No, Dr. Gavanker had been briefed, he had seen films, he had heard the stories, but to experience it was something else all together. Thank goodness the Russians had sent in their team of specialists: men who were versed in applying Gavanker's instructions in these harsh conditions. The results? Well, very soon now, perhaps as early as tomorrow, full time, year round crude oil production would commence.

The railhead would still be used for transportation of materiel, supplies and personnel. The year-round airfield was also capable of bringing in personnel and supplies. But the crude, in the quantities that these fields would produce, that required the large pipelines like the one that had just been completed. By spring, another one just like it would be in place. Given the escalating war in the Middle East, it was going to be very timely. His nation would be able to significantly reduce its dependence on Middle East oil, even if the GIR was officially part of the CAS.

Always best to be self sufficient thought the Doctor.

As he contemplated this, his assistant, who was monitoring outside communications from the front portion of the cabin, turned in his seat and addressed him.

"Dr., I have a relayed call to you from General Nosik. Would you like to take it back there at your seat Sir?"

The Doctor nodded his assent, and when the red light on his handset blinked, he picked up the phone and spoke.

"Andrei, how are you? Very good to hear from you. I imagine you are interested in the progress on the pipeline?"

Listening for a brief moment to the General's reply, the Doctor continued.

"Yes, we have just finished with the final assembly and fabrication. We are finalizing the test of the welds and the integrity of this last section and expect oil to be flowing as soon as tomorrow morning, perhaps by tomorrow evening...How are the mining operations progressing? The Chinese Cobaltite and our low-sulfur coking coal mine."

The Doctor's eyes lit up at the short response.

"Now, now, Andrei. You know I am not intending to breach your security. For mercy's sake, those mines and their locations have been written up in several trade publications with readership on three continents. And your own nation announced to the world your promotion to General and your responsibilities over the security for those very mines. Or do you fear your own internal security my friend?"

Buhpendra laughed at the reply.

"Fine, I will be more careful on these "un-secure" lines. Are we still on for that schedule review day after tomorrow? I have been requested to make a personal report back in New Delhi at the end of the month and we will need to work that into our mutual operational plans."

After another short pause, Gavanker finished the conversation.

"Great, we will see you then. Goodbye."

**February 4, 17:28 local time**

**COSTIND Headquarters**

**Beijing, PRC**

General Hunbaio was excited about this meeting. It was a preliminary culmination of many years of work. COSTIND's weapons and systems development efforts (over which the General presided) were proving successful beyond their most aggressive projections. To see many years of work come together in success was always rewarding and gratifying, particularly when it had such a strong impact on his nation's strategic goals.

As anticipated, several of these new systems were coming on line now, ahead of schedule, and were already well into their trial periods. New aircraft, new missile systems, new Ship classes of all types, new weapons systems—all coming together at the appointed time.

The new conversion ships were astounding in their ease of manufacture and their capabilities. Four of the Sea Control carriers, eight of the tactical assault ships and six of the Amphibious Assault ships were already at sea. The latter two classes of vessel were still unknown to the west, because until used for their appointed purposes, they could pass for the container ships from which they had been converted. This was exactly the intent, as several more of each would be ready before commencement of "Breath of Fire."

The Project 071, Yunana II class landing craft that would be so critical for the full implementation of "Breath of Fire" were now being produced by the score. The new LRASD Super Cavitating weapons and the ship borne strategic missile derivatives had been fully tested and excelled in all of their operating parameters. Production efforts for these two weapons systems had ramped up to where dozens of each were being produced each week.

In attendance at this meeting were Admiral Lu Pham, Sr. Vice President, Sung Hsu, Assistant Vice Minister Qiao Wenzhong and the commanding Admiral of the PLAN, Li Huang and their aides. All of these individuals would be briefing not only General Hunbaio, but more importantly, they would be briefing their special guests, President Jien Zenim and Chairman Chin Zhongbaio and their

top aides regarding the operational status of each of these systems and their availability for the upcoming operations.

After an introduction to this effect, Chin Zhongbaio, the Chairman of COSCO and a high ranking Politburo member, addressed the gathering.

“Comrades, I need not go into great detail regarding the importance of these meetings and the briefings they will encompass. The work your various organizations have accomplished are of the utmost importance to the future and viability of our People’s Republic and our continuing People’s Revolution as couched in the work of the Three Wisdoms that our leader has introduced to the world. The change and improvement to social equity and justice that this revolution will now bring to the world as a whole, and to the developing nations and their people will be as momentous and as long lasting as any change witnessed throughout recorded history. Your efforts represent the very foundational insurance for that change.

“I want to reiterate to each of you, our foremost desire is for these changes to occur as the peaceful, natural consequence of social evolution that they represent. However, in order to overcome the less equitable capitalistic and class-dividing western systems that currently pollute our regions, it is likely that we will have to make use of the insurance your developments represent. As you know, we anticipate this to be the case and have prudently made plans accordingly. We look forward to now hearing of your preparations and status with respect to those plans.”

Lu Pham sat through these opening remarks reflecting on the amazing developments in the last few years. Not only for him personally, but for the nation and social system that he was involved with. Oh, he knew as well as the Chairman here, as well as Jien Zenim himself in fact, that the system they were talking about would still have its inequities. Such a system would always need those with the strength and vision to implement the necessary changes. He was marveling that somehow he had become one of those directly involved with the vision.

It has always been thus, thought Lu. Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Ho Chi Minh—and now Jien Zenim. The Americans had developed their own: Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Lincoln, Roosevelt, Reagan and now Weiskopf. But Lu was convinced that this developing system would truly eclipse all others in terms of its ability to provide for fuller social justice and equity for the teeming masses of Asia and any other developing nations. The American model pitted people against one another as individuals, always striving to improve themselves over others around them. Lu felt this had provided for marvelous innovation and the ability for a relative few to fulfill their potential. But he felt it was limited by its nature in its ability to bring such achievement and fulfillment to the entire society. The model Jien Zenim espoused called for the group, the collective to willingly work together and improve all; and it was molded for once in a fashion that Lu truly felt would allow for it to be accomplished, far superior to the corruption plagued Stalinist systems of prior times.

Of course, what Lu failed to take into account in this optimistic analysis was that his enthusiasm for the new system was directly related to his own personal involvement in the upper levels of the decision-making. His relative new status as one of the inner circle allowed him to enjoy the types of latitude and personal decision making freedom that he eschewed the rival “western” system for. It would only be after significant trial, hardship and eye opening experience acquired over years of actually attempting to implement the “Three Wisdoms” dream that this would dawn on Lu.

## Chapter 9

*“The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water”—Solomon*

**February 6, 03:23 local time**

**USS Michigan SSGN-727**

**300 nautical miles south of Adana, Turkey**

**Mediterranean Sea**

All along the length of the boat, behind the sail, the coverings for fifteen of the Multiple All-around Canisters (MAC's) were hinging back to reveal the lethal cargo they protected. Underneath each covering, fitted into each of the former tubes for Trident missiles, the MAC's housed seven Tomahawk SLCM's (Sub Launched Cruise Missiles).

The Michigan was one of four conversions that had been made to former Trident SSBM submarines between the years of 2001 and 2004, enabling them to carry up to 154 SLCM's each, along with a significant contingent of Navy SEAL personnel for special operations. Two served in the Pacific and two in the Atlantic. Since the outbreak of hostilities last November, one of the two Atlantic boats had been on patrol in the Mediterranean for just such a contingency as this current mission.

“We have the mark. Conn, steady as she goes, bearing one two zero degrees. Missile Control, you may commence firing sequence when ready.”

In the missile control center, the fire control officer responded.

“Aye, aye Sir, all systems are *go* and ready for launch. Ripple firing sequence commencing on my mark. Three, two, one...Mark!”

The MK 98 digital computer fire control system, which had been modified for the SSGN conversion to integrate the tactical Tomahawk weapon control systems, took over from that point. Target coordinates and flight profiles had already been downloaded into the missiles.

Within four minutes, over one hundred SLCM's had been launched and were out of the water and on their way. Flying at a very low level for most of the trip, each missile would arrive at their destination precisely thirty-three minutes after launch, where they would perform a pop-up maneuver over their targets and announce their deadly presence.

**February 6, same time**

**Thruster Flight, B1-B Lancer Bombers**

**357 miles west of Adana, Turkey**

The four stealthy wraiths were flying nape of the earth, just under Mach One over south-central Turkey. Over Egridir Lake, Thruster flight reached its launch point.

“Weapons release in on my mark in three...two...one...Mark!”

At the eight attachment points along the under side of each B1-B Lancer bomber (commonly called “Bones”), a total of fourteen ALCM's (Air Launched Cruise Missiles) began their pre-programmed release from each aircraft. These were followed by six ALCM's from each aircraft's rotary launcher in the internal bomb bay, making a total of twenty ALCM's that were launched from each aircraft.

High above Thruster flight, two flights of F-22 fighters patrolled, but they were not interfered with. The large diversion attack along the front lines to the north and east near the hotly contested city of Keyseri was attracting the attention of most of the GIR's air assets. One large contingent of aircraft that the GIR did not have involved in the fighting along the front lines was the large number of attack aircraft, fighter aircraft and even two flights of TU-22M Bombers that had landed within the last two hours at Incirlik airbase near Adana. These aircraft, almost two hundred of them, were now being refueled and rearmed for use by the GIR commanders in this theater.

Those very GIR assets were the focus of Thruster flight and USS Michigan. Having been notified of the landing of those GIR aircraft at Incirlik by satellite observation, the orders had gone out to the USS Michigan and B1-B's at Izmir. Within the next few minutes, the results would be apparent.

**February 6, 04:02 local time**

**GIR Incirlik Air Base**

**Near Adana, Turkey**

The aircraft were crowding every portion of open space on the service apron, along the taxiways, the newly constructed revetments and the few hangars that had been reconstructed since GIR forces had taken the airfield. They were a mixture of SU-25 “Frogfoot” attack aircraft, MIG-27 “Flogger” attack aircraft, SU-24 “Fencer” attack aircraft, SU-22 “Fitter” fighter aircraft, SU-27 “Flanker” fighter aircraft and the two flights of TU-22M “Backfire” bombers. These one 180 aircraft had arrived over the last few hours. Their presence here, when added to the two dozen fighter and attack aircraft already present at the base, represented the GIR's “front line” aircraft commitment to the southern sector of their Turkey operation.

A flight of four SU-27 fighters was up providing combat air patrol (CAP) for the base at all times, controlled by a GIR Ilyushin Il-76 "Mainstay" AEW aircraft that was loitering above the base.

Numerous ZSU-23 vehicles had been stationed around the airfield in revetments especially built for them. These rapid-fire 23 mm anti-aircraft weapons were very effective against low-flying aircraft. It was hoped that the SA-11 and SA-13 missile batteries stationed around the base would be effective against many of the American and Turkish aircraft and those of their allies, and force them to fly low and in range of the ZSU-23-4's.

The incoming U.S. cruise missiles were targeted for every revetment, radar emplacement, command and control facility and anti-aircraft emplacement that had been located by satellite. Each had been assigned multiple missiles. The first missiles were targeted at the anti-air defenses themselves.

The missiles were flying very low, and were designed to be difficult to acquire on radar. But with the GIR Mainstay AEW aircraft aloft, its doppler radar spotted the first missiles in the stream from the USS Michigan when they were fifteen miles away. Traveling at 500 knots, this meant that the defenses had a little over one-and-a-half minutes to prepare.

"We have many inbound missile tracks to the east southeast, counting twenty tracks and growing; altitude 100-200 meters. Have all missile batteries hold their fire, while we vector Wolf Flight to intercept. Have close in anti-air defenses prepared for cruise missile attack."

The controller on the Mainstay vectored the four SU-27 aircraft to an intercept course. Wolf flight, with four SU-27's that had their own effective doppler radar, picked up the American SLCM's and engaged them.

"Engaging with radar guided missiles, and then cannons!"

Radar lock was difficult to obtain and the SU-27's found themselves having to engage, circle and re-engage. In the process, many missiles "leaked" through before Wolf Flight had expended its ordnance. In so doing though, twenty-two of the first 105 cruise missiles were destroyed.

The GIR had a system of revetments for its ZSU-23's all around the base where they rotated from one revetment to another. As the first missiles leaked past Wolf Flight's intercept, they were engaged by the ZSU-23's. Many of these first missiles were targeted on the ZSU-23 revetments themselves. With its excellent low-level radar, its wide engagement angles (elevation of -4 to +85 degrees; 360 degrees azimuth) and its high rate of fire—800 to 1000 rounds per minute for each of its four barrels—the ZSU-23 was a very effective close-in AAW platform. The eight units on that eastern side of the base were able to knock down eighteen more SLCM's before succumbing to the multiple missiles targeted on each revetment.

At this point, forty missiles had been downed and another thirty-two expended on the ZSU-23 and missile defenses. This left thirty-three missiles from the initial stream launched by the USS Michigan still targeted on the airfield and its structures. Of these, another fourteen were downed by portable, shoulder fired SA-14 "Gremlin" missiles. With an all-aspect targeting capability similar to the US Stinger missile, the "Gremlin" was a potent tool in defending against low-level aircraft attacks of all types.

The twenty missiles that impacted the service aprons, revetments and hangars caused heavy damage to the aircraft being refueled and rearmed there. Many secondary explosions occurred as ordnance and fuel exploded with the aircraft. Many highly trained pilots and other personnel were killed.

Even as the last missiles from the USS Michigan were detected by the GIR AEW aircraft, controllers on that same aircraft picked up the second stream of eighty ALCM's coming from the BI-B flight. These eighty missiles were engaged by the SA-11 and SA-13 batteries as the SU-27 CAP had expended its munitions. Those batteries were far less effective against low-level cruise missile attacks and had themselves been subjected to losses from the first group of SLCM's from the USS Michigan. Although scores AAW missiles were fired at the incoming stream of ALCM's, only thirteen missiles were downed by the missile batteries.

Once over the base, the remaining sixty-six missiles were again engaged by SA-14 "Gremlins" fired by personnel on the base itself. Another nine ALCM's were destroyed as a result of this last defensive flurry. The net result was that another fifty-eight cruise missiles impacted all over the airfield among already burning aircraft, aircraft that personnel were desperately trying to move out of the way and the support facilities that the GIR had hastily repaired and built on the base. More aircraft were destroyed or damaged, more personnel were killed and injured and more facilities were wrecked or damaged.

When the all clear signal at Incirlik was given at 05:00 hours, over 120 aircraft on the ground were either destroyed or heavily damaged. In addition, several hundred personnel had been killed or injured and the airfield itself was closed. Because of its proximity to the sea and the exposure to quick SLCM attack, Incirlik would not open again as a major airfield, the GIR preferring smaller fields further inland where they would have more warning and where they could develop more layered defenses.

**February 7, 14:00 local time**  
**Secure Conference Center, U.S. Embassy**  
**Reykjavik, Iceland**

The meetings were wrapping up. For the last two days, the principal western allies in the two-week old war in the Middle East had been in summit. The United States, Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt were all represented. They had met the entire time in a secure conference center in the U.S. embassy under tight security. Top aides had accompanied each of the leaders. The best “war college” scenarios that each respective nation could produce had been analyzed.

Military operations were ongoing during the summit. Airlifts into Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE were proceeding. Pre-positioned materiel and equipment all around the region was activated and transported to logistic areas well in advance of the on coming GIR forces. These efforts were focused on building up adequate defenses, in an attempt to stem the tide of the GIR onslaught.

In the field, the allies were back on their heels and some difficult strategic decisions were necessary. Kuwait had fallen, Saudi Arabia had been invaded and the GIR forces were advancing along the Persian Gulf Coast toward the UAE and inland towards the Saudi capital. Defensive lines kept shifting further south and west in hopes of slowing the GIR advance.

Despite a highly successful tactical attack on Incirlik, Turkey was in desperate circumstances as the GIR armies had literally divided the country and were pressing their advantage. A significant GIR buildup in the center of the line gave every indication of producing a break through soon, which would mean the defensive lines in Turkey would also shift to the west.

Additionally, two large GIR armies were moving towards the Egyptian border from Libya and the Sudan. Deploying sufficient allied strength in front of them was going to be difficult at best, particularly given the pressures and requirements for allied deployments to protect the Arabian oil fields and Turkey.

In light of all of this, the leaders had discussed overall strategy and come to some initial, path setting decisions. President Weisskopf was summarizing as the meetings wound up.

“We have agreed that the United States and its forces would provide over-all strategic control and that the theater commanders will be American, supported by allied commanders in their various roles and in specific operational areas. I understand that this will produce some political difficulties, but in light of the desperate and monumental task before us, and in light of the vast majority of equipment and materiel coming out of America in each operational area, we will proceed as we have agreed.

“We have discussed a number of likely reactions to and consequences of the current conflict and we have agreed that escalation is likely, particularly in the Far East. As a result of this, we have agreed that the Middle East and the Mediterranean Theater will be our first order of focus. As with World War II, should war break out in the Far East, we will focus on securing and winning the war in the west first.

“While pursuing this primary objective, in so much as it is practicable, we will fight a holding action in the Far East Theater until we can turn the full weight of our production and capability to that part of the world. Each of us must take these decisions back to our military and civil command structures and implement them accordingly, coordinating through the command structures we have discussed here. I expect that summits like this will be held regularly, perhaps every four to six months.”

As the President paused, the Prime Minister of Great Britain spoke.

“Mr. President, should the Far East Theater escalate into war with the CAS, we can expect Japan, Korea, Australia and other European nations to become a part of this summit. In that event, there will be great pressure exerted on our priorities and strategic decisions. I want to ensure that we all understand our commitment here and the decisions we are making today.”

President Weisskopf had already contemplated this exact issue.

“Mr. Prime Minister, I understand your point. I share concerns about the Far East, and particularly any participation by the CAS as an ally of the GIR, but I cannot see that we have any choice in the matter right now.

“I will close my remarks with this: we are facing a challenge and a danger of unprecedented proportions. Should the CAS and the GIR unite in conflict against the west, as we consider likely, in my estimation we will be facing a threat far greater than that of the combined Nazi and Imperial Japanese capability of sixty-five years ago.

This should sober us, it should galvanize us and it should spur us on to the necessary decisions and actions as allies and on each of our home fronts. I believe this summit is a good start at that, but I believe we must not for an instant let our guard down or forget the nature of the threat we face. Thank you, and may God bless our united efforts.”

As he returned to his seat, Norm Weisskopf again contemplated his remarks and the decisions they had made. The Far East escalation was a projection, the war in the Middle East was real and a desperate fight. World-wide oil production was at stake. Whole economies were going to be ruined.

Nonetheless, President Weisskopf still wondered about that over-riding strategic decision they had made regarding the Far East conflict, should it come. Really, at the current time, just as he had indicated to the Prime Minister, they had no choice. But putting that decision into motion in the deployments, in the production schedules that would result, in the build-up—it would be difficult if not impossible to change later.

Still, he just couldn't shake the feeling that the primary menace was that big red dragon that had yet to project its real intent onto these events. Norm felt an overpowering conviction in his soul regarding that dragon's fury. Should it be unleashed and not quickly contained, it would be more difficult to suppress and overpower than they could possibly imagine.

As the meeting ended, President Weisskopf began working with his staff on his national address slated for the next evening. He intended to review the basics of this meeting with the allied leaders and then "lay it out" for the American people, many of whom had not yet had the reality of the true nature of this conflict hit home for them. What the President did not yet appreciate himself was how remarkably accurate his convictions regarding the threat in the Far East would prove, or how much he would regret not pushing harder to establish a strategy accordingly when he had the chance.

**February 9, 10:02**

**U.S. Army Recruiting Station**

**NW 53<sup>rd</sup> Terrace**

**Miami, Florida**

Hernando Rodriguez waited patiently in line. It really wasn't too terribly long a line at all, in fact not nearly as long as he'd expected. After last night's speech to the nation by President Weisskopf, which Hernando would always remember as the most patriotic and inspiring speech of his life, he'd expected the recruiting center to be literally packed with people signing up. The speech had surely affected him that way and he naturally expected it to have affected others in the same way.

And to some degree it had. The recruiting station here at The Augusta Building on NW 53<sup>rd</sup> Terrace had been doing a fairly brisk business all morning. Never more than eight or ten people waiting, but there had also not been an open counter all morning as young men and women came in and joined the Army.

The recruiting officers had been noticing a gradual pick up in recruitment ever since the declaration of war in the Middle East three weeks ago. This was occurring here in Miami and at other major recruiting stations around the country. There had been a few very brisk days right after the declaration, but it had leveled off somewhat as people watched events unfold and as the buildup proceeded. But the continued rapid decline in the stock market and the anxiety over fuel costs and rumored fuel allocations were driving home to people that this was a "real" war, and one that would not be soon in ending.

Today's surge in activity was associated directly with the President's speech last night. In that speech he directly and succinctly outlined the gravity of the situation facing America and its allies. Even with the reserve units he was calling up, there would not be enough men at arms to stop and then roll back the Greater Islamic Republic and its naked aggression in the Middle East. The President had made it clear that now was one of those times in history when America's cream must rise to the top. The President had shown by way of graphs, multi-media displays and heart-felt explanation that the situation was dire. America could "expect worse news before better"—that in all probability our friendly oil supplies would be taken or destroyed in the conflict and that America was facing energy shortages in the near future. Then the President had outlined the emergency provisions he was directing all federal agencies to adopt. Many of these agencies interfaced with the public and many of them regulated activities that the public was involved with, like the transportation department's involvement with gas pricing and distribution, and the defense department's interface with the defense industry. It was clear that millions of Americans would be impacted. The President then asked for the governors and legislators from each of the fifty states to adopt similar measure to conserve strategic resources and to more fully organize the public sector for what lay ahead. The President had ended by announcing a call up of 500,000 more reservists, an appeal for more enlistment and finally an inspired statement of confidence in the nation, its strength, depth and basic goodness. Hernando had "felt" those words and with that feeling came the clear knowledge of what he must do.

Early this morning he had called into the maintenance department at Florida State University where he worked. He had told his boss Stan that he would not be in today—that in fact he would not be coming back at all. When questioned, he had simply told Stan that he was joining the Army.

Stan had thought him crazy.

"What? Come on Hernando, you have to be kidding me, right?"

When Hernando made it clear he was not joking, Stan continued.



“Look man, there’s no draft. They have an ‘all volunteer Army’ for this, you don’t have to do it. We’ll end up kicking this Sayeed guy the same way we did bin Laden.”

The reply had been immediate, “I don’t think so Stan. Didn’t you hear what the President was saying last night?”

But Stan would not listen, or consider. He just knew he was losing a very good worker, and someone he considered his friend.

“What about your future, Hernando? You are in a position here to get your education paid for and you have a very good job that will provide for the future you keep talking about with Maria.”

All Hernando could think to say was, “I am doing it for our future Stan, Maria’s, our kids... that’s what this is all about. Look, I’m sorry you don’t agree, and I am sorry this is so abrupt. God bless you man, you’ve been a good boss. Pray for me. I gotta go.”

How could Hernando explain it to someone like Stan. Stan had never experienced, or heard first hand about what life was like without the basic liberties and freedoms he and so many other Americas took for granted. Despite the unbelievable death toll America had sustained as a result of the terror attack in 2001, once the terrorists and the governments supporting them had been defeated, many Americans felt that chapter in history had been put behind them. Once again now, only a few years later, the apathy and the attitude of entitlement was setting in.

After talking to Stan, the call to his mom and dad had been a little harder to initiate, but much more gratifying in its reaction. They were concerned, but they were *proud* of him.

“God bless you son, you are a true American,” his father had simply said. But with those simple words, his heart had soared.

“God *will* bless you Hernando. We have raised you well and will pray for you every night. Have you told Maria? Don’t worry, we will help take care of her while you are gone. My heart fears for your safety, even as it bursts with pride over your goodness and commitment”

Hernando had told Maria. They had been at his place watching TV when the speech had been given last night. He had immediately shared with her what his convictions were. They had done the only thing two devout Catholics, who were intended for one another in their hearts could do. They had sought out their Priest after the speech, explained their circumstance and then been wed late last night in a simple ceremony with just themselves and the Priest present. They had then spent last evening together, their first ever, and last for a long time.

“Mom, Dad, Maria is now your daughter in-law. Please forgive me, but we were married last night by Father Chapman. Maria has let her folks know and she will be living in my apartment.”

“Mother of God! Why...this is...this is...oh Hernando, this is *wonderful* news. We will treat her as our own. She will need to save her money! We will work with her parents and ensure that she is watched over and taken good care of; you need not worry over it.”

Hernando loved his parents. They were good, solid people. They worked hard. They had an abiding faith and they practiced it devoutly and freely. He had every confidence that between Maria’s parents (who were similar in all ways to his own) and his own parents, that Maria would be well watched over until he returned. Besides, Hernando knew that Maria was his equal in faith, commitment, drive and energy and would be watching out for herself.

Beyond this, as first generation Cuban Americans, people who had escaped relatively recently from the continuing hell hole that Cuba was, Hernando’s parents only wished that the fight would be carried to what they called the “old scoundrel” in Havana.

Well, Hernando didn’t know about that, he had been too young when his parents had escaped by boat, really just a small child of six years; he just *knew* that he had to do this. At twenty-two years of age, Hernando knew he had to stand up now and fight for liberty so that he and his Maria could enjoy it and pass it on to their children after them.

**February 12, 14:30**

**FTA Trucking, U.S. Headquarters**

**Dallas, TX**

Miguel Santos leaned back in his leather chair. As he waited for his boss and close friend, he gazed out of the window of his office. It was a corner suite on the fourteenth floor of a fifteen-story office building at the intersection of Central Expressway and the LBJ on the north side of Dallas.

“What a view,” he thought to himself as he looked to the south and saw the majestic skyline of downtown Dallas. The Americans certainly did love their material wealth, their glamour. It was written not only all over many of their faces, it was etched into their very skylines. Yes, Miguel admitted it was entrancing, and it was almost intoxicating. Look at how many other entire nations sought to emulate them. It was at such times that Miguel had only to think back on his childhood, the poverty and want he had experienced in Cuba, to break the spell in which it often held him. All that misery at the hands of these Americans who were living in such opulence, who had cut his nation from the trade and aid that could have benefited so many!

He had seen it as a youth and a young adult in Mexico, the place he called home now. The same poverty, the same hunger, while just across an imaginary line so many enjoyed so much.

Well, Miguel had risen above it himself, and he was thankful to be a part of something that he felt certain was going to help uncounted others too. In fact, it never ceased to amaze him that he, a former poultry truck driver, once living in Chihuahua, could have risen to such a position. Here he was, senior VP of U.S. Operations. He had Hector to thank for it all. Hector who had taken a liking to him early on, who appreciated not only Miguel's willingness to work very hard, but who also recognized the organizational and management potential in Miguel. Hector had nurtured those talents and both men had prospered greatly, now both owning substantial Haciendas back in central Mexico where their wives and children were safe from the darker and more dangerous aspects of their businesses, and away from the alluring material influence of America.

They had profited enormously through the opportunities afforded by America's openness, particularly through the expansion of their international trucking business resulting from provisions of the NAFTA agreement. They profited even more by dealing very carefully in the illicit trades that were so desired by many Americans, mixing in a healthy dose of trafficking in the items they required for their future political aspirations; weapons and the people who knew how to use them.

As he mused on this, his secretary rang to let him know his guest had arrived and was on his way in.

"Hector, my dear friend, how good to see you!"

The two men met half way across the floor and hugged one another while slapping one another's backs.

"Miguel, my friend, as always, it is my pleasure to visit with you as well. I can't tell you how pleased I am with your success, and my certainty that the performance of your operations will end up exceeding our goals and projections. Let's get right to the review and the plans for the future."

All of this was genuine, but it was also couched in key words. Miguel's operations were indeed out pacing the expectations set for them, but the review they would be conducting today had nothing to do with trucking. The two men were so adept at discussing one thing while meaning another, that they had even built entire presentations around the art. Pictures, charts and verbiage appearing to mean one thing, while conveying something entirely different.

Miguel moved to his desk and activated the automatic curtains for his office windows. The multi-media presentation required that the sunlight be blocked, but the curtains coming down blocked much more than sunlight. Even though the room was "scrubbed" daily for listening devices, by pressing another button, Miguel activated some soft background music, which was especially digitally encoded and projected more than simply audible melodies. The final element of their security was then activated, a projector that created an ionic shield which helped foil any electronic eavesdropping not effected by the other security measures.

After implementing all of this, Miguel joined Hector at the small conference table and keyed the remote audio-video equipment. Hector's digitally encoded RWDVD was placed in the machinery and the presentation began.

The presentation centered on the various trucking "corridors" on which FTA Trucking concentrated to transport goods back and forth from Mexico as well as other central and south American countries into the United States. Originally they had focused on the "I-35" north-south corridor, which ran from southern Texas up into Minnesota. They had been so successful along that line, with their ability to haul freight at reduced rates using their equipment and personnel from Mexico that they had soon expanded. By using US Highway 287 and the I-40 corridor, and by using the I-20 and I-10 corridors, they had tapped next into the I-25 corridor running from El Paso all the way up into Montana. Finally, they had expanded further west along the I-10 corridor and were now mounting very profitable operations from southern California up the I-15 corridor into Utah and Idaho and up the I-5 corridor into northern California, Oregon and Washington.

As they discussed each of these corridors, operations and their profitability, what would not be apparent to anyone overhearing the presentation, was that the two were reviewing in detail the status of six other "projects" associated with each corridor. Projects related to the planning and execution of the mission given to Hector Ortiz by his friend, the aging head of state.

"So, Hector, it appears we are in fact ahead of schedule in all six corridors. What is the company's current target date for reaching the final profitability figures in each?"

Without the slightest pause or hesitation, Hector answered both questions that had been posed by the single interrogatory.

"We must reach these figures by early March. The exact timing is something we can float a couple of weeks, but no sooner than March 5th and probably no later than the 20th. As we get closer to our year end financial reviews back at the corporate offices in Mexico City, I will communicate a more exact date to you.

"As you know, I intend to personally come and meet with the employees in the three western corridors to congratulate them on a job well done, while you personally handle the appreciation here in Texas and in Colorado."

Miguel was pleased that Hector was following through with his commitment to get in the field and personally coordinate three of these "projects."

“Yes, my friend, I know. I am confident that our employees there will give you every reason to congratulate them. They are looking forward to your time with them. It means a lot to them Hector, and it is one of the things about FTA that our employees like the most, the willingness of upper management to be involved right there in the trenches with them.”

**February 17, 19:30 local time**

**Presidential Office Suite**

**Tehran, GIR**

“Continue with the briefing General.”

Hasan Sayeed waited anxiously for the details of what he already knew generally. GIR forces were advancing on all fronts. It was true that the advance was not as quick as he would like, and it was true that their losses were extensive. Despite this he respected and followed both General Jabal Talabari’s and his foreign minister’s, and trusted ally, Ayatollah Sadiq Shiraziha’s, advice to pace their advance so as to ensure that occupied areas were properly consolidated and capable of supporting logistics activities for his advancing forces.

Nonetheless, in the space of just a few weeks, half of Turkey had fallen and Kuwait had been conquered. Additionally, the rich oil fields along the Saudi Arabian coast had been taken as far south as Al Jubayl and significant progress had been made into interior portions of the Arabian Peninsula toward Medina. Now, another offensive was about to begin in the western deserts of Egypt and from the south moving north along the Nile.

Against this, the Turkish, Saudi, UAR and of course the American forces were making a determined defense with their as yet inferior numbers. More NATO troops, including British and German were coming into both Turkey and Egypt. But the numbers were not with them yet, and Hasan had no intention of allowing them to build up forces while he sat behind berms and in trenches as the fool Hussein had done over ten years earlier.

“Please begin with your estimates of the American buildup in eastern Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. What can we expect to be up against as our forces continue to advance?”

General Jabal Talabari was prepared to answer his Imam’s questions. He had risen rapidly in the ranks and had become the Theater Commander by Hasan’s personal order. The overall Defense Minister and Generals who were in Tehran were his nominal direct line commanders, but he enjoyed and respected that Hasan himself sat in on these briefings.

“My Imam, we are progressing nicely in both Saudi Arabia and in Turkey. We have broken through the initial defensive lines, but have also suffered significant attrition in moving up to their second lines of defense.

“We fought our first pitched armored battle in the coastal deserts just north of Abu Hadriyah two days ago. In that battle over fifty-five American Abrams tanks were destroyed while we lost over one hundred and sixty of our own. The Americans had set up a defensive position along the coast, extending out into the desert towards the Ad Dah Na. Their defense was in-depth with significant air cover. By making a feint in force towards Riyadh, we were able to draw enough of their strength away to commit our reserve right along the coast and punch through all the way to Al Jubayl and the oilfields there. The Americans were quick to recover and we suffered significant losses, but we achieved our objectives.

“It will be of interest to you, and should be passed on to our allies that we have developed a tactic with our T-80s and T-90s where we can defeat the M1A1 Abrams. It requires a two-to-one superiority and it requires enough air cover to keep the A-10’s and Apaches off of our columns. by working two of our T-80s as a team focusing on a single M1A1, we are finding that in 70% of the engagements at least one of our T-80s moves on, leaving a smoking M1A1 hulk in the desert.

“In addition, we have devised another tactic regarding the very capable U.S. MLRS system. These tracked Multiple Launch Rocket Systems are deadly against massed armor of any type, or massed infantry. Our armor and infantry face so many lethal threats, the Apache helicopters, the A-10 aircraft and the MLRS, before we are even able to engage the American armor directly. MLRS systems have punished us terribly during the entire campaign in Saudi to date.

“Over fifty of the tanks we lost in the battle I just described were due to an MLRS battery the Americans employed. I am happy to inform you that we were able to completely destroy this battery. We kept a full squadron of SU-25s in reserve for just this purpose, escorted by a squadron of SU-33s. Since our counter battery fire has been ineffective against the highly mobile MLRS, once we had determined the location of the MLRS attack by radar, we immediately dispatched the SU-25s. Our aircraft caught the MLRS battery in transit away from the positions they had fired from and destroyed them. Our SU-33s engaged several American and Saudi aircraft, but only three of the SU-25s were lost. This is another tactic that should be passed along and used against the American technology.

“Still, once we are able to engage the American armor directly, we require the numeric advantage. This brings me to my major point before speaking to the American buildup. I would plead with my respected superiors: our logistics lines *must* remain open and the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Army groups must quickly move up to reinforce and strengthen the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> groups respectively. The Americans

are employing their B1-B's and their cruise missiles to great effect in hampering our supply lines. I plead with you to either find a way to prevent this, or send enough support to ensure that the requisite amount of men, equipment and munitions reach our staging areas."

And so the meeting went. Hasan Sayeed was very satisfied with Jabal's performance. He had chosen correctly when he named Jabal theater commander over the objections of his Defense Minister and leading military commanders. To their credit, they were now exploiting Jabal's understanding of how the Americans would employ their forces and react.

Nonetheless, the American and NATO buildup was progressing at a faster than expected rate. At the current rate, it would allow them to field enough of their technology to blunt the GIR advance in the next eight to ten weeks. Hasan could not go into the details in this meeting, but he was expecting that rate to dramatically diminish in the next three to four weeks. He would take Jabal aside after the meeting, sometime later this evening while they were at dinner, and quietly let him know what to expect from "Breath of Fire" so he could have contingency plans prepared accordingly.

## **February 20, 18:55 local time**

### **GIR forward position**

#### **East of Cicekdag, Turkey**

Sergeant Abduhl Selim watched the highway below, running through the valley. His position on the hill overlooking the main highway to Ankara was the furthest position forward in the GIR line, and from his point of view, clearly the most exposed. But that was nothing new to the Sergeant.

GIR forces had broken through the Turkish and British lines at Kayseri on the 17<sup>th</sup>, just as reports of advancing German armor and Canadian reinforcements were being received. As a result of the breakthrough, they had caught the German and Canadian forces in transit and forced them to retreat. The last three days had brought them to this position. Reconnaissance flights and patrols indicated that the German armor and Canadian infantry had withdrawn and heavily reinforced the U.S. 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division which was already dug in at the next line of defense just three kilometers up the road, around the hills off to the west.

Abduhl had been promoted to the senior NCO for his platoon three weeks ago after the former NCO had been killed. In fact, Abduhl and two other men were the only surviving members of the original squad that had entered Iraq in September. So here he was, an eighteen-year-old, who was a crack shot and who had become battle hardened in the space of six months.

"Okay, okay! I want each of you men dug in along this line on each side of the ridge towards the east here, five-meter separation. We may be up here all night. In fact, we probably will be up here all night and nothing is coming up that valley or over that ridge without us knowing about it and reporting back to the company. Let's go, be quick about it!"

Turning to several sets of two man teams that had just arrived at his position, Abduhl began issuing them orders too.

"Set up those anti-tank positions on each side of the ridge, near the military crest in positions fifteen meters back from the forward end of the line, and those anti-aircraft teams in the middle on each side of the ridge.

"Any aircraft or armor they send scouting are going to pay a heavy price. Dig in deep, once they find we're here they will barrage us quickly."

In fact, the men didn't know it yet, but the young sergeant was going to have them dig a secondary position two hundred meters to their rear as soon as they had completed this one. He figured he had just enough time to get those second positions prepared, and then get his men into their forward position with their night vision headsets on before it got too dark.

His two AT-4 Spigot anti-tank missile teams would be fine for engaging scout or recon APC's or IFV's, but they would be of questionable use against frontal armor of the American and German main battle tanks (MBT's). To date, he had fought against the older variety if Turkish MBT's, the M-60's. Since the Spigot had a tough time penetrating frontal armor, he knew that against the newer tanks his missiles would even be more questionable. In that event, he would alert his command of their presence and attempt to wait and let them begin to get past him, allowing their side and rear armor to be targeted, before engaging them.

The SA-14 Gremlin missiles his two, two-man teams carried were effective against helicopters or low flying attack aircraft. They were the Russian built equivalent of the American "Stinger" missile. Perhaps not as capable, but capable enough. Abduhl knew that when his teams launched them, the targeted aircraft immediately attempted to evade and egress...but he also knew that his entire position would then be targeted in return.

As Abduhl sent out the first of his reconnaissance patrols that would cover the surrounding area to their front and flanks through the night, he thought about the coming ground confrontation with the Americans.

The American 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, he thought. He had heard his former NCO's, talk a lot about the American 101<sup>st</sup> and 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Divisions, hoping they would have a chance to fight them. Even though they wanted a chance to confront them, Abduhl knew they had a very healthy respect for them.

Abduhl had seen what American air power could do. Most of those NCO's he was remembering were now dead because of it, the rest died at the hands of the Turks. He knew that the American ground forces were going to be just as effective as their air forces had been and he was going to just have to do his best to prepare for that.

"Perhaps we will find out tonight. It'll be getting dark within the hour; and everyone has told me that the Americans like the night."

**February 20, same time**

**82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Scout**

**East of Cicekdag, Turkey**

Sixteen hundred and seventy-five yards to the north and east of Sergeant Selim, along the next ridgeline over and running tangential to the front, Master Sergeant Michael O'Malley was watching the GIR forward position through his 10X dual purpose monocular-range finder. The Sergeant and his three-man security/communications team were forward observers for the very 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division that Selim was worrying about.

"Okay, these guys are real smart. It looks like they are preparing a secondary fall back position. They have anti-tank, anti-air and some forward observation in an oversized platoon. They're sending out a patrol right now, you got them Johannsen?"

Private Johannsen was one of two soldiers providing security for O'Malley. He was quick to respond to his sergeant.

"I got 'em, six guys, heading north along this side of the ridge. I'll keep an eye on them and let you know if they start our way."

O'Malley responded.

"Great Private, you make sure you do. Corporal, pass these two coordinates that I'm about to give you back to battalion. Go ahead and get them on the horn. This'll take just a couple of seconds."

The Master Sergeant checked his optics and then compared it to the representation that he called up on the ruggedized tablet computer he carried. He used a stylus to scroll to the correct position on the 3-D digital map of the surrounding area that was loaded into the computer. As he did, the coordinates he desired appeared on the display.

He had an option to upload the information via wireless communication directly to a JOINT STAR aircraft if one was available and had been programmed into the system, or he could store the coordinates locally and then use standard radio communication to call them into his battalion headquarters. Since total air superiority had not been achieved, and the loss of one of the very expensive JOINT STAR aircraft late last year over eastern Turkey was still fresh in everyone's mind, no JOINT STAR aircraft would be risked this close to the front. That left the radio.

"OK, here's the first coordinate. Let's see if we can't arrange a little surprise for these folks around 0430 when the counterattack kicks off. That is, if they stay put that long"

**February 24, 16:50**

**Simplot Corporate Offices**

**Boise, ID**

Geneva glanced at the clock. Ten minutes until five on a Friday afternoon. She was probably going to have to work a few minutes late in order to finish up the word processing that was needed for Monday morning. She might even come in on Saturday if necessary.

Geneva had gotten the job several months ago. She had taken a local class on computers and then on word processing and surprised herself and Alan too when she had literally excelled at it. The school had a placement program and Simplot had taken her on as a temp in their word processing pool. After three months as a temp, they had brought her on full time and she really enjoyed the work.

The one caveat had been she needed a week's vacation in March to drive down to San Diego. Simplot had very strict rules about vacation and sick leave and when one could qualify for it. However, in Geneva's case, when they had heard what the vacation was for...her supervisor had talked with management and they had arranged for her to take the time as a paid leave, not impacting future vacation she might accrue.

Simplot had a reputation as a very strict, no-nonsense company that was somewhat of a corporate piranha. It showed in their earnings, even in the hard times. Simplot was also a *very* patriotic company. Few people knew that the company had tragically lost a number of civilian employees in World War II when the Japanese invaded and took over Wake Island. Several Simplot employees had been captured along with the Marines defending the Island and they had been, almost to the man, executed by the Japanese. So when it came to a Marine Boot Camp graduation, Simplot was not only understanding, they were extremely accommodating.

"Let's see," Geneva thought for a moment, "February 20<sup>th</sup>, this will mark the end of his eleventh week, only two more weeks to go! I'll bet that boy is cutting quite the figure after all that training!"

As she thought about him and continued her work, she saw the other employees leaving as the five o'clock hour came and passed.

“RINNNNGGG!”

“Oh! I wonder who that could be this late on a Friday afternoon?” Geneva thought as she picked up her extension and answered it.

“Simplot, this is Geneva Campbell in Word Processing.”

On the other end of the phone the familiar voice of Alan spoke up.

“Hi mom, what’s happenin’ girl?”

Geneva had to smile, Alan was always checking up on his mom. Sometimes it made her wonder just who the parent was.

“Alan, what’s going on? You better have a good reason for calling, ‘cause you know you’re not supposed to call work. This is a company line.”

Alan loved his mom. He knew she took her work and her work ethic seriously, and he was sure it was rubbing off on him just as it had on Leon.

“Mom, that’s why I waited until after five. I knew you’d be slavin’ away doin’ the “perfect” job and all, and I just wanted to see when you thought you’d be home. I’m fixin’ *you* dinner tonight.”

Geneva smiled. That Alan, he sure was a sweet talker; and it was genuine. It was hard for anyone to remain out of sorts with Alan.

“Okay, okay. I figure I’ll be leaving in the next fifteen minutes or so. That should get me home between five-thirty and six.”

Alan paused for a moment on the phone, then he set the hook.

“Well, okay. I just wanted you to know that Leon called. He said he’d call back at five-thirty. He wants to finalize the schedule and plans for our trip down to his graduation.”

Geneva took back everything she’d just thought. That rascal Alan!

“Alan, I swear boy you are going to drive me crazy. Why didn’t you just tell me that to begin with? No, I know, I know, you just wanted to lead me long. I’ll be home at five-thirty; you make sure Leon waits for me—and you stop playin’ with my emotions so!”

Alan laughed out loud, not in a bad way, but in the good natured, loving way that always disarmed his mom, even if she was put out with him.

“Okay Mom, but I’ll have that dinner ready when you get here.”

**February 28<sup>th</sup>, 22:30 local time**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division Headquarters**

**Camp Red Cloud, Uijongbu, South Korea**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division was the United States principal ground combat unit within the US Forces Korea (USFK). Over 20,000 soldiers were continuously standing in the breach between the free world and totalitarianism. Along with their South Korean allies and comrades in arms, who numbered a half million in the active armed forces, they faced off against a standing army of over twice their size, with ready reserves that could turn the ratio to eight to one in a matter of days.

Particularly on the occasions, like now, when North Korea conducted massive military exercises along the DMZ, the alert levels were high and the tension was palpable.

In the intelligence section, Colonel Martinez, who was in charge, was pacing the floor. He was a constant, almost twenty-four hour per day presence around the intelligence offices while the North Korean exercises were going on. He literally slept and ate here. He felt he had good cause. He wanted to be available personally to make the decisions necessary if the North ever decided to “come.” He didn’t want any confusion or indecision in those critical first few moments that an attack was either discovered, or launched.

Just as he was walking past the analyst section, a young Lt. noticed him and waved him over.

“Holy cow, Colonel, take a look at this.”

The protocol may not have been the best, but the Colonel focused on results. This young man may look the “nerd” to a lot of the “gung-ho” soldiers—and in fact he was a nerd—but he was committed to his job. He was also as good at analyzing photographic and SIGINT data and tying the two together as anyone the Colonel had ever known.

“Okay, Lt. Finley, what’s got you so excited you forgot to say ‘Sir’?”

The Lt. blushed in embarrassment as he answered.

“Oh! Sorry, Sir! I have correlated our latest reconnaissance photos from an over flight along the DMZ two hours ago with the latest NRO data. In fact, the folks back in NRO in northern Virginia were so anxious that they ftp’d me their data just a few minutes ago. I’ve got both sets of data and the graphics up on the screen right now. Please Sir, take a look while I brief you on it, though I believe the graphics tell the story pretty straight forwardly.”

As Martinez studied the screen, the hair on the back of his neck literally stood up. There it was, laid out for them. The reconnaissance photos showed several suspected forward deployment positions for North Korean artillery occupied with stacks of munitions being piled up next to them. You could actually see the workers stacking the shells. In several images, the positions revealed North Korean 127mm mobile rocket launchers, again with stacks of reloads piled near the launchers.

In addition, the National Reconnaissance Office satellite photos showed a steady stream of supplies moving towards the front from depots in the rear. Those satellite photos confirmed that a lot more ammo, troops, equipment and heavy armor were moving towards the DMZ. If more ordinance was moving up in those numbers, then...

“Okay, great job Lt. Captain, get CINCCFC on the line immediately, *I mean right now!*”

He didn't know how long he had. Let's see...two hours. Looking at those photos it could go anytime now. Which would mean—my God, their Special Forces: the sappers!

“Lt. Finley, you get the Base Commander on the line *now!* I want to speak with the commander of the Security Forces here on the base as well. Then line up the same at Camp Humphreys, Camp Henry, Husan Air Base and Osan Air Base.”

**February 28<sup>th</sup>, same time**

**Forward Observation Post (FOP)**

**West of Chorwon, Along the DMZ, Korea**

There was a lot of activity out there tonight. You could hear the Korean voices drifting across the DMZ along with a lot of equipment moving. But, no one had ventured out into the forbidden area between the two nations, so the small contingent of American soldiers who were on duty here tonight kept their eyes and ears open, but did not display overt concern.

Except for Private Teasedale. He was out at the observation post right now along with the Corporal while the other six men of their squad rested back in the FOP bunker or monitored the listening, infrared or electronic devices that were also watching their section of the DMZ. Three, who were not on watch duty at the time, played games, read books or slept, waiting for their watch.

But, Private Teasedale was new to Korea, having been “in country” for only six weeks now. As a part of his “in processing” he had heard several lectures, read some operations manuals and listened to the required audio tapes. One tape he could not get out of his mind was the excellent report that the Commanding General of all USFK had given to the United States Congress a few years earlier. It had been so succinct, so well delivered, that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division had made it a standard part of their “in processing” for new arrivals. The one phrase from that tape that had been riveted into Private Teasedale's mind that day had been this:

“The North Korean Army would be able to sustain a rate of artillery fire of five hundred thousand shells per hour for prolonged periods.”

As he sat there this evening, watching the DMZ with his night vision scope, hearing all of the Korean talk, movement and equipment across the zone, that statement kept coming back to his mind again and again.

“...a rate of artillery fire of 500,000 shells per hour.”

Now, from across the way, the private heard several whistles being blown. Sounded like dozens of them, no, scores, maybe hundreds. He turned to the corporal, who had also perked up and was listening.

“Corporal, do you hear that? What does it mean? Why are they blowing those...”

As he asked this question, from down the tunnel in the bunker he heard the land-line begin to ring.

“Rinnnggg, Rinnnggg, Rinnnggg”

And then the entire sky, from horizon to horizon along, the DMZ in front of him lit up brightly. But it was a flash that did not die. It kept being repeated time and again, giving the appearance of a huge, bright strobe light, just below the horizon and stretching for miles in either direction. In addition, thousands of streaks of light reached rapidly across the sky in what must have appeared to be the grandest and mightiest fireworks display of all time; except that these streaks and that whistling sound, were all coming towards the young private.

Then the 127mm rockets and the 122mm, 152mm and 180mm high explosive (HE) rounds began to land and nothing else mattered.

**March 1, 05:30 local time**

**Politburo**

**Beijing, China**

“Kim Jong-Il's forces are moving forward faster than expected Mr. President. Since the initiation of hostilities last evening, the entire DMZ has been over-run. The attack is ahead of schedule.

“Democratic People's Republic forces are advancing along a broad front and are entering Pyokche and Uijongbu on the outskirts of Seoul. The civilian population is in complete pandemonium and the chaos is hampering ROK and US forces. This morning's missile strikes in Seoul have included strikes on their financial and governmental centers that have hit several of the high rise buildings. Subsequently, many of these buildings have collapsed into rubble adding to the chaos.

“This missile and artillery barrage is being coupled with massive air strikes in advance of the three pronged assault on Seoul. One leg of that assault is a thrust at Incheon along the coast, which is hitting the outskirts of Seoul to the west. This is the army group now entering Pyokche. A second

thrust is coming from the north through Uijongbu. The third thrust is several divisions from the attack down the middle of the country through Ch'unch'on, approaching Seoul from the north and east.

"Along the coast DPRK forces have advanced as far as YangYang. Right now, the penetration, except for small pockets of resistance, is along a line running from YangYang, eastward to Ch'ung'on, over to Uijongbu and then to the eastern coast at Pyokche. We expect DPRK forces to enter Seoul this afternoon, either tonight or tomorrow morning at the latest. Given the current rate of advance, I would be surprised if it wasn't today.

"We can attribute much of this success to the DPRK Special Forces who were extremely successful in sabotaging many ROK and US aircraft before they could take off, which were followed up by massive ballistic missile strikes on all airports and airfields. Those strikes are continuing to this moment. Unfortunately, those same forces were not successful in eliminating the U.S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division leadership at Camp Red Cloud, although they did penetrate the perimeter briefly where they attacked a number of housing units. This added significantly to the confusion."

Jien Zenim sat back in his custom-made Natuzzi chair and considered the developing world situation. The GIR was continuing to advance in the Middle East, albeit their rate of advance was slowing. The Americans and NATO had been pouring men and equipment into that region for many weeks now and would be in a position to start seriously challenging GIR forces within a few short weeks. Now, they would have this to deal with.

He tried to picture the "situation room" in the White House. Surely they were concerned, perhaps even panicking, worrying about China's response.

"Li, make sure that we open up a direct line call to President Weisskopf. I want to offer to mediate. And make sure word of that is passed on to David Krenshaw at WNN."

Jien doubted that the conversation with Weisskopf would even take place, although the American State Department (and probably their Defense Department too) would be urging the President to avoid any confrontation with China at this point, given the overall world situation.

Jien was well aware of that situation. He and his comrades had been manipulating it towards this for years. After all, the cold war was over, America was the world's only superpower and that had warranted those deep cuts. It just made such perfect sense, particularly when China was catching the capitalism fever and wanted to "open" its markets, particularly when so many American politicians were so easily bought off with money or vice.

No, Jien knew exactly what situation America's military was in, and what situation his own was in. The irony of it was, that America had funded both for their own cut backs and China's build-up with their own money!

Now, the Americans were in a situation where any major theater engagement on the ground taxed them; and now they were facing three major theater engagements in Turkey, Saudi/Egypt and now Korea. Soon, the beleaguered Americans would be facing a fourth theater scale confrontation, and Jien had ensured that the fourth one, his own, would be the largest and costliest from the outset. China's role in "Breath of Fire" would be, "the straw that broke the camel's back," as the Americans would say. Or as Sun Tsu taught: the application of overwhelming force when your enemy was distracted in another direction.

In the mean time, Jien would cause as much political and moral damage as he could by continuing to manipulate the American public through their press up until the final hour. The more dissension, the more confusion and loss of confidence he could instill in them, the better.

**February 28, 13:17**

**Situation Room, White House**

**Washington, D.C.**

"This is an unmitigated disaster! Akin to what happened in the Philippines after Pearl Harbor.

"You are telling me we are down to 50% operational strength for the 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force over there—in just one day? How in the hell did that happen, Jeremy? And we're down to 65% in terms of combat effectiveness for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division.

"Gentlemen, we were supposed to be on heightened security alert and measures at all bases! The North was conducting exercises that emulated this very attack!"

Jeremy Stone understood his President's frustration. Jeremy was frustrated too, and knowing that the President himself had been one the most successful military general's in the last half century, he could just imagine the old general wanting to come out in him. But, while being frustrated, he could also understand why the disaster in Korea was occurring.

"Mr. President, I have to be honest with you. It may not help at the moment, in fact the only thing that will help those boys over there at the moment is their grit and determination and that of our allies, the South Koreans—and us getting them some relief as quickly as possible. They are going to have to conduct a fighting withdrawal while forces to the south establish a strong defense line. It'll mean abandoning Seoul and Inchon. If we wait though, our forces there are going to be surrounded and we'll be looking at a surrender of those forces in a matter of weeks, if not days.



“But, in terms of the current disaster, Mr. President, we were just too thin. When our enemy can lob ballistic missiles and rockets at us at a rate of hundreds of thousands per hour, Sir, there just are not enough Patriot, Improved Hawk or any other defensive missiles to get them all; and we’ve been watching them build up like this for years, while we staffed down and tried to “talk.” No disrespect meant, Secretary Reissinger, but we should have backed up all of that talk with a credible force.

“The results were predictable. Our defenses were overwhelmed, despite our hi-tech advantage. In addition, despite the increased security measures of the last few years, it turns out the North Koreans had dozens of sleepers working at each of our bases. People we had known and reviewed for years, in some cases decades. That contributed to the sabotage of our aircraft, equipment and storage as they let the DPRK Special Forces units onto the bases, and conducted sabotage themselves.

“Had it not been for one quick thinking Intelligence Officer in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, a Colonel Martinez I believe, we very well could have been decapitated as well. As it was, his quick analysis of recon photos and NRO satellite photos from guess who? That’s right, from Tom Lawton’s people. And Martinez’ quick witted decisions, probably saved the command echelon of many of our prime units there. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, the 19<sup>th</sup> Theater Army Area Command, the 8<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> Fighter wings of the 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force, the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade and the CINC of all USFK were each warned in time. Those warnings allowed those commanders and most of their staffs to be surrounded by security troops very quickly and escorted to secure areas while the attacks were being made. Unfortunately we still lost some of their staff, and the commanders of the 1<sup>st</sup> Signal Brigade and the 8<sup>th</sup> Military Police Brigade were lost due to enemy action last night.

“Since then, as you know, the situation has been chaotic, and there’s been a lot of ground loss—and we’re going to lose more. But our forces are beginning to come together along with the ROK forces who were equally targeted. I believe they are capable of a fighting withdrawal while we establish a firm line further to the south.”

The President knew Jeremy was right. America had been downsizing the military for years after the end of the cold war with the Soviet Union. Even the horrific terrorist attacks of 2001 had not altogether halted that trend, but it had slowed or abated it in some critical areas.

Well, thank God for small miracles, thought the President. He would hate to have to respond to these crises had the headlong trends continued completely unabated. Nonetheless, America had continued to bank on and count on the “silver bullets” of high tech. That was good as long as you had plenty of it to shoot, and keep shooting at the enemy. It generally worked *great* for small or single theater confrontations. But now, the whole world was erupting around them and there just weren’t enough. Not enough forces overall, and certainly not enough hi-tech inventory. They were going to have to implement a full-scale war time production effort. He’d have to address that in his speech to the nation tonight.

“Mr. President, how do you want to respond to this request by Jien Zenim for a conference? He wants to try and mediate.”

The President knew exactly how he wanted to respond.

“Fred, I firmly believe that Jien Zenim is up to his eyeballs in all of this. I think it is only a matter of time before his hammer falls, and I believe we *must* respond decisively in Korea to have any hope of forestalling that. Tell President Zenim that I appreciate his offer, but regrettably, given the circumstances, we will have to talk later. Perhaps in a few weeks, after we get some help to South Korea and start pushing these tyrants back, then we can hold a summit. Tell him three to four weeks and arrange it...and just for the sake of everyone sitting here, my message at such a summit is going to be *very* direct to the Chinese. *Do not* interfere. I will also make sure that they understand that North Korea is not going to exist as a nation state after the fighting is over and President Jien Zenim can take that to the bank!

“Now, Tim and Jeremy, we are going to have to call up significant numbers of reserves, I’m talking a million men to add to our current forces. We are going to also have to push very hard for much more enlistment. I want a package from the Congress, committed to today after their formal declaration of war on North Korea that gives great incentive for folks to join. Something like the old GI bill used to be, with just as many perks. We will have to make those perks retroactive for everyone who is already serving. It’s going to cost a lot, but not nearly as much as the other measures we are going to have to take if we expect the light of liberty to continue burning brightly in the world. As much as those costs may add up to, they will be *nothing* compared to what it will cost should we fail, because I believe *that* cost will end up being our national survival.

“Okay, Tim and Jeremy, here’s what I would like to do in broad strokes. I want to establish two Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTF’s) for Korea, each made up of two augmented MEU’s. Can we do that?”

The Secretary of Defense, Tim Hattering, deferred to General Stone.

“I believe we can Mr. President. We have two of our east coast MEU’s already on the ground in the Mid-East, but the Army has built up enough force there now that they can bring one of them home. If we take the other East Coast MEU, the 24<sup>th</sup>, and have it do a rapid transit to the west coast for temporary basing there, we could move all three west coast MEU’s towards Korea to form up with the

31<sup>st</sup> in Okinawa. I would want to have them escorted by two Carrier Battle groups that would join up with the Kitty Hawk out of Japan.”

The President considered this, and then looked at Tim.

“Well, Tim, what do you think?”

Tim was thinking about the strain on the numbers of amphibious assault ships and Carriers. Four carriers already in the Mid East, and now three in the Far East. That’s seven of twelve, and three were in service life upgrades. Similar numbers existed for their twelve large amphibious assault ships.

“Mr. President, we are going to have to either halt or expedite some of the Service Life Programs that are going on if we want to have any Carriers and Amphibious Assault ships in reserve. Also, we are going to have to have the Marines begin to form up more MEU’s. If we do that to backfill, I would feel very comfortable expediting this.”

The President was in high gear. He was beginning to see what types of things he had to get done to stabilize an extremely dire and unstable condition. He felt he had the team here with him who could make it happen.

“Great, I will sign off on the requisite orders. I want each MAGTF to comprise ten thousand fighting men and I want them in Korea yesterday. You guys make it happen, the carriers will stay on in support.

“In addition, since we already have the 82<sup>nd</sup> Air Borne in Turkey and the 101<sup>st</sup> in Egypt, Jeremy, we’re going to have to look at flying more men into Korea. I want another ten thousand men already there when these MAGTF’s arrive. The materiel is already pre-positioned for this.”

At this, Tim Hattering spoke.

“Pardon the interruption Mr. President, but our military transport and our civilian air carriers are maximized right now trying to build up our forces in the Middle East and still maintain their commercial operations. We’re going to have to get significant additional buy-in from the commercial sector to make what you just stated possible, and we will have to subsidize them if they are to remain financially viable.”

Norm’s mind was already out in front of his Secretary of Defense. When he thought full-scale war mobilization, he meant it. America already had a model for such efforts and he had lived through it as a young boy.

“I understand Tim. You have done a *great* job working with the airlines to date, and now we are going to have to depend on you to even do more. I will make this a part of the speech tonight, we’re going to have to get more lift out of the commercial carriers. Please have the FAA Administrator and the appropriate Congressional representatives meet with us this afternoon.”

**February 28, 19:12**

**WNN Broadcasting Studios**

**New York City, New York**

As the commercial was running, David thought how much he continued to enjoy his job, a job he felt he did extraordinarily well. Here he was, continuing in his plum anchor roll, while being on the Board of Directors and the President of World Wide News for WNN, involved in the principal management decisions for the entire network. When you add to that his bird’s eye view of emerging events through his membership in the prestigious Council on International Relations, well life just didn’t get much better. Perhaps in a few years, he’ll allow these roles to propel him into politics. But now, the thirty-second light had come on and he needed to get back to today’s dramatic events.

“This is David Krenshaw, back with WNN. Continuing the status of fighting in Korea. WNN has learned that the Combined Command structure of both the Republic of Korea and the United States have decided to withdraw from Seoul and Inchon rather than fight what they consider to be a losing battle and risk having what forces remain being cut off. Those commands indicate to WNN reporters on the scene, that fighting is heavy, that there have been significant losses inflicted upon the North’s forces, but that significant losses have been experienced amongst allied forces as well.

“The dramatic pictures you saw on WNN earlier were of actual fighting in the outskirts of Seoul. As missiles were launched into the heart of Seoul, apparently targeting governmental offices there, you saw the collapse of many high rise buildings within the city itself due to missile impacts that weakened the buildings and the fires which caused those weakened structures to ultimately collapse. The death toll amongst the civilian population in Seoul is thought to number in the many thousands.

“The result has been a further Declaration of War by the U.S. Congress and by the Republic of Korea on North Korea. Almost immediately, the GIR also declared war on South Korea and announced solidarity with North Korea in the name of their CAS economic agreement. By invoking the CAS economic agreements as a reason to enter this conflict, when they are already embroiled in a conflict thousands of miles away with America, the GIR has raised a question that interests the entire world. Where is China in this conflict? What will China’s response be?

“WNN can announce that through an exclusive phone interview, we are in a position to provide some answers and insight into that question.

“Earlier today, I spoke with Li Peng, the head of the Chinese Parliament and a close friend and confidant of President Jien Zenim. Li asked me to convey his respect to the American people and indicated that his government was not involving itself in the fight between North and South Korea. He indicated that China viewed it as an internal matter and would not become involved unless it spilled over and began threatening either China or other surrounding nations. He went on to speak of his efforts to communicate with and provide immediate mediation in the conflict. Here are the words he spoke during that interview, as recorded earlier this afternoon:”

*“The People’s Republic of China stands ready to immediately step in and provide mediation of this conflict. We have a vested interest in peace in this part of the world since we are the largest trading partner of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and one of America’s largest trading partners as well.”*

*“Unfortunately, the current administration in America has indicated that they cannot meet with us on this critical matter for several weeks. This is most unfortunate. We urge the United States to utilize every tool at their disposal to stop the killing in Korea, where brother is fighting against brother. We urge them, as we have now for many years, to extract themselves from that conflict so these brothers can most effectively solve their differences without any undue, outside influence or military forces. We urge the American people to prevail upon your elected officials to allow this mediation summit to occur. We have already talked to the Kin Sung-II’s foreign minister and there is a willingness to call a halt in place to allow for it.”*

“That was an exclusive WNN taping of Li Peng, the leader of the Chinese parliament. He has made an extraordinary appeal to mediate and we will keep you informed of those efforts as well as the Weisskopf administration’s response to them. Now, onto other news while we wait for the President’s national address at 8 p.m.”

**February 28, 20:00**  
**The Oval Office**  
**Washington, D.C.**

“My fellow Americans, I come before you tonight with news that is distressing. As you are all aware, massive forces of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, whom we call North Korea, ruthlessly attacked their neighbor to the south and our ally, the Republic of Korea. This attack was unprovoked and was carried out while North Korean forces were conducting training exercises.

“I wish I could tell you that the attack has been foiled and thrown back. I cannot. The harsh reality is that we are rapidly being pushed back on the Korean peninsula. Seoul has been attacked and there is heavy fighting going on there as we speak. Many of you saw the horrific photos of high-rise buildings in Seoul collapsing after being shelled and struck by North Korean missiles. The civilian death count is unimaginable.

“Our forces have fought well, but have suffered many casualties.

“As a result, at 5:56 this afternoon, our Congress voted to declare war on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

“My fellow citizens, I must be blunt and direct. What we have witnessed in the last few months, the tremendous struggle taking place in the Mid East, and now this dastardly and major attack in the Far East, is rapidly turning into World War. We are ill-prepared for it. As a people, we love peace, and I am afraid that our love for peace, which in and of itself is a very good and desirable thing, and our fixation on our material pursuits, has resulted in tremendous complacency and apathy about the dangers that surround us. About the true nature of the world we live in.

“Any individual who has spent any appreciable time outside of the borders of this great Republic has a notion of what that nature is. While conditions vary, particularly in Western Europe, the harsh reality is that most areas of the world are terribly poor, they are very ignorant and they are easily taken advantage of. This gives rise to despots and tyrants who seek to control those people and others in their quest for power, riches and vice.

“In short, it is a dangerous world, dangerous for truth, dangerous for the open study of knowledge. In short, dangerous for liberty.

“But, we are “the land of the free” and we must face these dangers directly and with squared shoulders, or we will forever sacrifice and surrender those liberties to those who would destroy them.

“We have come awfully close to doing just that my fellow Americans. We convinced ourselves that the world was a safer place to live in with the demise of the former Soviet Union, and then we began to act like it actually was. We cut our armed forces, we reduced our numbers and our research into future programs and procurement. We cut training and we glossed it over with a relatively few high technology weapons we convinced ourselves would keep us safe. We were wrong.

“I led the military campaign during Operation Desert Storm a number of years ago where we utilized many of those high technology weapons to win a war and to make it look much easier than it was. We were lucky, my fellow Americans. We were lucky that the tyrant of the day wavered and did not push on into Saudi Arabia at the time. We were lucky that his conscripts were more afraid of him than they were of us and were thus willing to surrender in droves when the actual fighting started.

Finally, we were lucky we were still basking in the appropriate build-up of arms and materiel that had occurred under President Ronald Reagan, one of our greatest all-time Presidents in my opinion.

“Just a few short years ago, in 2003, we went up against that same tyrant in Iraq and finished the job, with much the same results. We fought a large army and prevailed, but it was an army more afraid of its master than of us and they surrendered or just went home and did not fight.

“As a result, we squandered away the forces needed to confront any truly dangerous tyrant, one who uses charisma and the strength of their personality to convince an entire people to follow a misguided cause. We have slashed our defenses, and we have placed ourselves in positions of dependency when we ought not to have done so.

“All the while, conditions in the world as a whole have not changed. Evil still exists in great abundance. Ignorance still exists in large measure; poverty still exists in most places. All of these provide fertile soil for evil and conspiring forces. Unfortunately, as we have found by spending trillions, it is a condition that we cannot fix. The peoples of these nations have to fix it, they have to want to fix it. We can only assist those who really do, otherwise, we are planting the seeds and funding the very forces that would destroy us, who hate our liberty and way of life. This is the harsh, cruel reality of the world in which we live. It has always been so.

“We saw a natural evolution of this in 2001 when one such tyrant attacked our nation and killed many innocent people. It was a misguided, evil effort to lash out at and destroy our morale, our financial capabilities and thereby our influence. We responded and brought that individual and his organization to justice, along with the few governments who were willing to support him.

“Now, the evolution of despair, ignorance and hate has stepped up. Now we find, once again on the world scene, ruthless dictators and despots who have convinced entire people’s to follow them and support them in their tyranny. We can no more allow this to stand than we could allow the acts of September 11, 2001 to stand. In fact, even more so, we must come together as a people and, like “the greatest generation,” we must astound the world with our ability to produce, to unite and to successfully confront tyranny.

“Let there be no mistake, it is going to take just such an effort. We face a situation every bit as dangerous as our fathers and grandfathers faced in the early 1940’s. Perhaps even more so.

“So, to the questions of how do we respond? And how do we avoid this in the future? I intend to give some answers tonight. I intend, with the support of the congress and the support of the people, to place us on a path to win this war. We *will* win it decisively and will win it in a manner that will cause us to never forget, to never allow ourselves to become so complacent again. Here is the formula. It is not a new formula, my fellow Americans. It is the same formula our founders used to win our independence and vouchsafe those unalienable rights that have been endowed to each of us by, as our founders labeled Him, our Creator.

“First, we must immediately embark on a full-scale war-time mobilization. A mobilization of our forces and a mobilization of industry to give those forces what they need to wage and win this war.

“In that regard, I am calling up one million reserves. Details of this call up will be announced by the Secretary of Defense starting tomorrow. In addition, I have spoken with the leaders in Congress and gotten their support in calling for a significant increase in what used to be called the GI Bill. We will elevate it to what it used to be in terms of providing for education, health care, homesteading and job opportunity for those who serve.

“I expect this to be a long and costly war. We may yet suffer attacks on this land. We are going to need every able-bodied man between the ages of 18 and 45 to be prepared to serve their country, at home and abroad. We do not want and have no plans to institute a “draft.” We want volunteers and we are going to make it worth the while of those who do so. It will take the agreement and the willingness to do so of those who are not in a position to serve to make this possible. I ask you tonight, my fellow Americans, for that commitment, for that willingness.

“But that is not all I ask of you.

“For those not able or willing to sign up directly with the military, our Director of Homeland Security will be announcing in the next few weeks a program for “Home Guard” units who will work with their local Sheriffs to help maintain security here on our shores. These units will be volunteer units, they will be armed, they will be trained and they will have communications devices to get them immediately in touch with their local sheriff’s and through them with their state’s National Guard. The training, the weapons and the communications will be provided by the government and will become the property of those who volunteer.

“With respect to mobilization of fighting forces, we are going to have to come to the aide of our allies and friends, and our own forces in Korea. I have ordered up immediate relief in terms of several Marine units and the ships and aircraft to support them. I am ordering significant ground forces to be ferried over by aircraft, both military and commercial.

“Now this is going to place a significant burden on our airline travel, our commercial travel. But the need is urgent and the situation is critical. We need to move ten thousand men to Korea, and escort them safely there, in the next two weeks. These men will then be supported by several times their number arriving with the Marine Task Forces. In order to do this, restrictions on commercial flying

will be announced tomorrow by all of the major airlines. These restrictions are voluntary, but once volunteered, I have made it plain that they will be in existence through the duration of the emergency. I have requested and received the agreement from the CEO's of all of the major airlines. I am proud of these patriotic leaders in our business community.

"In that vein, let me turn to the second requirement for our mobilization. That is our tremendous industrial capacity. Sadly, we have squandered much of it away over the last few years in the name of building a so-called "service economy." Well, in my mind a "service economy" is an economy of servants, and it has placed us in this very dangerous situation. In the name of so-called "free trade," we have shipped much of our capacity off shore, in some cases to the very nations that now either threaten us, or are being destroyed by those who do. In order for trade to really be "free," it must also be fair, and we have neglected that side of the equation, particularly for our own industries. We cannot afford to allow this to continue. Not for energy, not for manufacturing, not for food, and not for any other strategic and critical industry.

"Therefore, today, I am announcing all of the following:

"There will be an immediate cessation of all restrictions on the search for, and production of, oil reserves that are local to the United States and its territories. This includes the Alaskan north-slope fields and the fields just off of our west coast. We were already moving in this regard, but were being severely hampered by provisions of several Acts of Congress, some of which had expired but were still funded. All acts that have expired will, as of this date, no longer be funded or recognized by this administration or any of its agencies. Other acts hindering our ability to remain energy free in either the petroleum, nuclear, coal or alternate fuel areas will, by executive order, be administratively set aside by all agencies under my executive direction until they are rescinded by Congress. I have requested this of the leadership in Congress and both sides of the aisle have assured me, in the interest of national security and survival, that it will be done. I have instructed all of the Directors and Secretaries of Executive Branch agencies accordingly.

"I have requested and expect to get agreement from Congress and from all state governors, agreement regarding the establishment of priorities for the use of strategic materiel required for the war effort, or the re-institution of industries critical to that effort. This will result in some rationing by the state governments for private citizens and non-essential industries. I want to thank the governors who have already responded and those I expect will respond, along with the congressional leadership for their approval of these measures. Again, once implemented, they will be in effect for the duration of the emergency. I expect that over the next few weeks, executive branch agency heads and state officials will announce the specific allocation plans.

"I have instructed the Secretary of Commerce to draw up import and export guidelines, similar to those we recently implemented with the CAS that will now apply generally. We intend to allow free trade, my fellow Americans, but never again will our free trade be unfair to our own. Any nation seeking to do business with America will have to do it on our terms, or not at all. They will have to comply with our standards, or not at all. If their governments subsidizes their efforts and they comply with our standards, then our producers will either get an amount equal to what that government is providing, and it will come from *that* government, or they can take their business elsewhere.

"The playing field will either be level, or they will not be allowed on it in America. In this way, we will keep our industries competitive right here in America if they are willing to apply that Yankee ingenuity we have always been famous for. It will also allow us to slowly remove the artificial supports that have been put in place in some industries that never should have been there in the first place. They were efforts that tried to address playing fields that were so lopsided that they could not hope to be addressed. We will remove the burden from the American taxpayer and put it where it belongs, on those nations and those companies wanting to do business here."

"Other measures may become necessary as time goes on and depending on circumstances with the war effort. As they do, I will speak with your representatives, your state leaders and with you as I have done here tonight.

"In closing, my fellow Americans, this is a time for three things:

"First, it is once again a time for national prayer. We must unite our collective faith so we are equal to the challenges that lie before us. We have a long road, it is a road that may get worse before it gets better. It will require our collective faith to walk that road. Therefore, I am calling for March 1<sup>st</sup> to be established as an annual National Day of Prayer and Reflection. All federal government offices will release their workers tomorrow at 11:30 a.m. and allow them to gather in their churches, their synagogues, their assembly halls, their mosques and their own quiet places for the remainder of the day. In future years, this will be a full day holiday.

"Second, it is a time for unity. Let us put aside all of the hyphenated Americans. Let us put aside our differences, so that we might remain free to have them. Let us work together as compatriots, as brother and sister Americans to walk this path, to climb this hill, to put down this dark tyranny. It is a tyranny that would force on our friends, and ultimately on us, the denial of individual rights in the name of some collective, a collective invariably controlled and ruled by a select few. We have seen this ideology in our world my fellow Americans, history is littered with the skeletons and debris of the

peoples who mistakenly embraced it, and with those peoples who were not resolute or strong enough to stand up against it. We shall not be such debris—we shall stand!

“Finally, it is a time for sacrifice. The collective effort to produce the materiel, the arms, the personnel and the equipment to allow our eventual triumph is going to require that we step outside our comfort zone. It is going to require that we willingly give up some of our creature comforts through the duration of this crisis, so that we can retain them in perpetuity for our children and grandchildren.

“I urge each of you, to voluntarily find the ways you can give, to find the ways you can help, to work with your relatives, friends and neighbors, to follow your elected representatives.

“And I commit to you, that I, and each member of my staff, and every member of any agency working for me will sacrifice similarly and accordingly. I commit that under our constitution, whatever measures we take will be in strict accordance with that constitution. It is the banner we look to, after we look to our faith. It is the instrument all of your public representatives and officials swear an oath to bear true faith and allegiance to. I commit to each of you, that throughout this crisis, I will ensure that I am always true to that oath, and that everyone working for me is true to it, or be removed from office, so help me God!

“God bless you each. May He be with us all as we go forward. May God bless America this night and in the future to be strong, to be brave, to be committed and to be true, whatever the cost. Good night.

## Chapter 10

*“When China awakens, the world will tremble.”—Napoleon Bonaparte*

**March 7, 06:30 local time**

**Flag Observation Deck, PLAN 1001 Beijing**

**15 Kilometers east of Shanghai, China Sea**

As Admiral Yao Hsu stood on the flag officer’s observation post outside of Air Operations, he turned and looked back over the wake of his flagship as she glided through the mild seas and away from land. Even after all of these years, this was a time he cherished greatly, a time of anticipation and expectation. Every time he made out to sea, he experienced these feelings, and the years and circumstances never seemed to dim them.

Trials for the PLAN’s new Sea Control Carrier had gone better than expected and now circumstance dictated that he take her out for a different type of trial, a trial by fire. The apprehension associated with that, with wondering if the tactics, the weapons systems and the experiences so new to the PLAN would be sufficient to the task at hand, understandably dampened the Admiral’s normal feelings as they made to sea. But the anticipation and excitement associated with making out to sea, and with testing himself and his nation against their most formidable adversary, overshadowed any apprehension or other concern.

To starboard and perhaps two or three kilometers off his bow, the lead ship of the Lanzhou class of area air-defense guided missile destroyers had accelerated to thirty knots to take up its position as the principle inner-ring escort for his carrier. As he watched her, his thoughts focused on the undeniable beauty of what he was seeing.

What a beautiful ship she is! Sleek, low to the water and a match for any surface combatant on earth, even the so called “war God” Aegis cruisers that the U.S. Navy employed, and whose function she executed so effectively.

Thinking of the Americans caused him some reflection. Funny, for many years he felt awed by their navy, their ship handling, the balance of the various ship classes, their carriers, their battle groups—and particularly the technology they employed. In fact, a lot of that technology had gone into the development of the ship he was standing on. Through so-called “exchange” programs, Admiral Hsu himself had been aboard U.S. Carriers and U.S. Aegis warships in the late 1990’s and seen how they functioned. The information and knowledge had been invaluable. In addition, through acquisition of “dual use” technologies, some by bribery, some by clandestine methods and others as simple gifts from the Americans, many of the electronics, sensors and automated controls had been refined far beyond what the PLAN would have been capable of just a few years ago.

But now, all of that had all been improved upon and refined to produce newer classes of ships, newer tactics and newer weapons systems that were, in the Admiral’s view, a match for any thing the Americans had, and in fact, in his eye’s, even better.

The Beijing task force was centered around the carrier, and included two Lanzhou class DDG’s, one of the latest Hangzhou class guided missile destroyers, one of the newer Guangzhou class DDG’s, and four Ma’anshan class FFG’s. All of the DDGs, in addition to their other formidable armaments, had been upgraded and armed with four of the new LRASD weapons and the targeting and fire control systems to control them.

The Beijing itself had a full combat load of twelve SU-35 fighter aircraft, six of the EW variants of the SU-35 aircraft and twelve navalized J-10 attack aircraft. In addition, she carried four of the new Biao STOL AEW aircraft and four Ka-28 ASW helicopters. All of these were now being built in China, and at a rapid production rate to outfit the new carriers being produced.

In addition, the Beijing carried vertical launch missiles (VLS) which included forty tubes for anti-aircraft and ten tubes of anti-surface. Unlike the American system, these could all be automatically reloaded within minutes and the Beijing class of carrier carried five reloads for each. The anti-air missiles were the new ship borne KS-2 missile which had a range of 45 kilometers and an effective altitude ceiling of 25,000 meters; very effective indeed. The anti-surface missile were the SS-26 Yakhont missile (also now license produced within China), which had a range of 300 kilometers and were mach 2.5 sea-skimming missiles.

Still, one had to have great respect for the experience, knowledge, tactics, weapons and technology that the Americans employed. They had the operational experience, and they still had the numbers in terms of ships, ship classes and aircraft. One could not fail to recognize this. One could never underestimate them.

As he thought this, the rising sound of jet turbines pulled his attention to the port launching position. A quick glance to port confirmed that an SU-35 was spooling up, preparing to launch. He glanced at his watch. It read 0635 local. He nodded his head almost imperceptibly. This aircraft was due on station at 0640 for the morning Combat Air Patrol (CAP). Another SU-35, behind and to the

side of the first one, also began to spool up. Within forty-five seconds, both aircraft had launched right after one another. As they circled to gain altitude, the Admiral turned and went back inside and made his way through Air Operations towards his cabin.

“Admiral, a moment if you please.”

Captain Tuan Hongwen had waited for the commanding officer of Task Force Beijing to come in before addressing him. Having served for several years with the Admiral in other capacities, he knew of the Admiral’s love for taking a moment alone while making out to sea and he had not disturbed him while he took those few moments. The matter was not urgent, but the Admiral did need to hear of it. As Admiral Yao stopped and turned towards him, Captain Tuan continued.

“Admiral, all units report under way towards point SUN. Recent intelligence indicates that a massive American fleet has put to sea and will be rendezvousing with the USS Kitty Hawk near Okinawa within seven days. They are not taking any great pains to hide their intentions.”

The Admiral considered this information for a moment and then replied as he continued towards his cabin.

“Thank you Captain. I would not expect the Americans to do anything other than charge forward with a bit in their mouth at this point, particularly given their deteriorating position in South Korea. Keep me apprised...by the way Tuan, the ship and crew are very fit, my compliments to you and your staff. Until my staff briefing at 0800, I will be in my cabin.”

As the Admiral entered his cabin moments later, his eyes were drawn to his locked security safe. He opened it and withdrew his orders. As he took them in hand, he sat down and reviewed them once again.

XXXXXXXXXXXX// 170003MAR06 \\\XXXXXXXXXXXX

FR: COMEAST

TO: COMBEIJING

SJ: EXECUTE OP SENTINEL

SITREP: US, UK and CAN naval forces forming for approach Korean peninsula. US CBG’s Stennis, Constellation & Kitty Hawk with many Amphib groups. UK two (2) CHV, one (1) LPH. CAN SAG. Sub threat high

ORDERS: Utilize rendezvous point SUN. Coordinate movement and operations of TFs Gansu, Yunman, Fujian, Hunan, Jilin and Hennan according to op Sentinel. Warning: Prepare execute op BREATHOFFIRE between 14MAR & 16MAR.

ROE: weapons status white until execution order.

XOXOXOXOXOXOXOXOXOXO

The Admiral reflected on the import of these orders. The moment he, Admiral Li Huang Chin Zhongbaio, General Hunbaio and so many others had worked and planned for so many years was soon to be upon them. The Tactical Attack Ships (TAS) that would be under his command were already under way, with their escorts to their respective operational areas. Others, the first several out of production, were long since under way to their positions off the east and west coasts of America. Those were the most vulnerable; they had no escort and would have to fend for themselves.

If Operation *Breath of Fire* was executed, and with these orders it appeared almost a certainty, his life, and the life of all his countrymen would change dramatically. If successful, it would place China and the Coalition of Asian States in the forefront of economic and political development for the entire western Pacific and Asian areas for the foreseeable future. If it failed, they would have a much more difficult time attaining that goal.

But, he did not expect it would fail. The Americans were so predictable, and they felt themselves unassailable. Despite their bruises and losses in the Mid East, they felt that these had occurred principally in the air and against overwhelming number where they had inflicted severe losses on their enemies. They simply could not conceive that they could also be assailed on the open seas—or that a true military strike was possible on their own shores. Well, *Breath of Fire* would either prove the planning, commitment and strategy of the leaders in the People’s Republic to be accurate and successful, or it would prove that the American arrogance was well founded. It was now time to find out which it would be.

He looked again at his watch, 0655. Time to plan his staff meeting for 0800. In that meeting, after his intelligence people spoke, after the commanders of the various ships in his Task Force had the opportunity to speak, he would brief them all on the true nature and import of their orders.

**March 7, 04:25 local time**

**Rendezvous Point Designated Point Conception**

**250 nautical miles west of San Diego, Eastern Pacific**

The orders that the President had issued had been reviewed and the details developed for the support of South Korea. Those detailed orders for troops embarking on air carriers, and for Marines embarking on naval vessels had been passed down the line and were now being carried out. As



airliners flew over the Pacific from various points in the country, ships of the U.S. Navy set sail from all along the western coast of the United States.

Now, the many ships that would be transiting the Pacific to Korea were gathering at their initial rendezvous point, point Conception. The gathering force would be the largest task force of U.S. Navy warships in the Pacific since the World War II.

The Task Force would use the designated number for the Combined Task Force (CTF) in the Western Pacific, CBT 77, which would be under the overall command of Admiral Reginald Patterson.

To prepare for that transit across the Pacific, large portions of CBT 77 were gathering off the California coast. That transit group would consist of two CTF's, CTF 77.2 and CTF 77.3.

CTF 77.2 would be centered on Carrier Group 7 comprised of the USS John Stennis (CVN 74) and its escort and support vessels. CTF 77.2 would also include two augmented Amphibious Squadrons (PHIBRONs). The first would be PHIBRON 3, centered on the USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) embarking the 11<sup>th</sup> MEU. The second would be PHIBRON 1, centered on the USS Peleliu (LHA 5) ARG, embarking the 15<sup>th</sup> MEU.

CTF 77.3 would be centered on Carrier Group 2 comprised of the USS Constellation (CV 64) and its escort and support vessels. CTF 77.3 would also include the augmented PHIBRON 7, centered on the USS Wasp (LHD 1) ARG, embarking the 13<sup>th</sup> MEU.

Once the transit groups reached the Okinawa area, they would be joined by CBT 77.1, which would include Carrier Group 5, centered on the USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63) and its escort and support vessels. CBT 77.1 would also include PHIBRON 11, centered on the USS Essex (LHD 2) ARG, embarking the 31<sup>st</sup> MEU. Carrier Group 5 and PHIBRON 11 were permanently deployed in Japan and at Okinawa respectively.

Altogether, three Carrier Groups and four Amphibious Squadrons would be included in the task force. Each of the Carrier Groups would be comprised of the following:

- One (1) Aircraft Carrier (CV or CVN)
- Two (2) Aegis Cruisers (CG)
- Three (3) Burke Class Guided Missile Destroyers (DDG)
- Two (2) Improved Los Angeles Attack Submarines (SSN)
- One (1) Fast Combat Support Ship (AOR)

Each of the augmented Amphibious Squadrons that the Carrier Groups were protecting would consist of the following:

- One (1) Amphibious Assault Ship (LHD or LHA)
- Two (2) Amphibious Transport Docks (LPD)
- Two (2) Dock Landing Ships (LSD)
- Two (2) Burke Class Guided Missile Destroyers (DDG)
- Two (2) Oliver Hazard Perry Guided Missile Frigates (FFG)
- One (1) Replenishment Oiler (T-AO)

In addition, attached to each of the CTFs in transit, sailing with one of the augmented PHIBRONs, the following ships were included:

- One (1) Amphibious Cargo Ship (LTKA)
- One (1) Ammunition Ship (T-AE)
- One (1) Combat Stores Ship (T-AFS)
- One (1) Oliver Hazard Perry Guided Missile Frigate (FFG)

This amounted to seventy-five U.S. Navy warships, fully one fifth of the entire U.S. Navy war fleet. Onboard these ships would be over twenty-five thousand sailors. In addition, there were over twenty thousand U.S. Marines embarked on the ships of the various PHIBRONs.

Off the southern coast of Japan the plan called for CTF 77 to be joined by two allied Task Forces. One was a British task force centered on two of their Invincible Class jump jet carriers (CVH) and two of their newest amphibious ships, the HMS Ocean (LPH) and the HMS Albion (LPD), along with several escorts and support vessels. The second was a Canadian Task Force consisting of two Iroquois guided missile destroyers (DDG's), two Halifax guided missile frigates (FFG's) and two new Canadian sealift ships. These two task forces were transporting another three thousand troops to assist the United States and the Republic of Korea in their fight on the peninsula.

### **March 7, same time**

#### **Task Force Commander's Cabin, USS Lake Chaplain (CG 57)**

#### **250 nautical miles west of San Diego, Eastern Pacific**

JT Samson was enjoying himself immensely, despite the gravity of the situation. The very fact that he was a part of a very limited press pool on this mission to South Korea had to be one of the high points of his career as a journalist—an admittedly "conservative" journalist.

As the owner and Chief Editor of SierraLines, JT's reputation for ferreting out stories and then reporting on them from a *very* pro-American standpoint ("pro" in the sense that JT *always* insisted on

coming at his reporting and editorials from a Constitutional perspective) preceded him. That reputation had first caught the administration's eye when JT had reported so positively on the then candidate Weisskopf's challenge to the husband of his challenger during the presidential campaign. It had done so again when he had so thoroughly derailed a press conference by Li Peng, the head of the Chinese Parliament, in Damascus back in January. The pointed question he had asked, had gotten him an invite to the White House. There, the President's chief of staff, at the direction of the President, had personally briefed him on the situation and indicated how the President "hoped" at least some in the media would handle that particular story once they had all of the "facts." The President had even given his permission to use the Chief of Staff specifically as the source.

The ensuing story had vaulted JT's SierraLines into the spotlight and finally established once and for all that an Internet News outlet could compete head-to-head with the major networks. It had also earned JT a "point" position as an embedded reporter for any story associated with the war just by requesting it. He had selected to be "point" on this operation to Korea. Tens of millions of Americans were anxiously awaiting his daily reports, subject to military screening, regarding the progress of the largest U.S. naval combat operation since World War II.

JT was now waiting to board a Sea Hawk helicopter to return to the USS Bonhomme Richard, the ship on which he was embarked. The USS Lake Chaplain, an Aegis guided missile cruiser, was Admiral Patterson's flagship for the entire combined task force.

JT had just completed his initial interview with the Admiral. Calling it an interview was really a stretch. Actually the Admiral had invited JT over to introduce himself and to make sure that he was being treated according to the guidelines that had been established for all embedded reporters. It was clear that the Admiral was very interested in getting a clear, concise, accurate and positive report back to the American people regarding this operation. JT was committed to all of those things, but would allow the "positive" portion of it to be decided by the people, and he made sure that the Admiral understood it.

The Admiral had understood, and indicated he was convinced that if the report were simply clear, concise and accurate, that the positive portion would take care of itself. He had ended their time together with a hearty handshake, sincere thanks, and a statement to his Chief of Staff, Commander Lewis, to see to JT's needs and schedule a more thorough interview within the next few days.

JT would include the results of this meeting, in his next "update."

**March 11, 16:42**

**Marine Recruit Training Depot  
San Diego, California**

Alan could not believe how strong his brother had gotten. He had just given him a hug, and had squeezed as hard as he could to try and impress Leon. But the squeeze back had nearly cracked Alan's ribs! Leon must have known it, because he lightened up at about the moment Alan thought he couldn't take any more. Neither brother had said anything, they had just looked at one another with that "knowing" look.

Alan was so proud of Leon. He looked so good in his Marine uniform. It was clear that Leon could not be any prouder than he had been when he showed Alan and their mother the Eagle, Globe and Anchor emblem of the U.S. Marine Corps that he had earned. The emblem had been given to him by his DI after he had completed the Crucible, two weeks ago. The Crucible was the supreme test for Marine Corps recruits. It was where they either made it or broke it. A 54 hour physical, mental and moral test which included food and sleep deprivation while marching over forty miles to obstacles ranging from the long march, to combat assault courses, to problem solving and reaction course, to the team building stations spread out along the way. Once a recruit successfully completes that test, from thereafter they are one of the few and the proud. Leon had completed it, and he was proud. He was proud of himself, proud of Billy, proud of his new friends, and proud of his country for giving him the opportunity.

Alan moved out of the way for his Mom to get a hug. As Leon hugged his Mom, and held on tight for several seconds, Geneva Campbell said, "Boy, I am so proud of you! Just look at yourself. I wish your daddy could see you now."

Leon considered this for a moment, and then, bowing his head so no one would notice the tears, he said,

"Mom, I believe he does see it. I really believe he knows."

Right then, Billy Simmons walked up, with his Mom, Cindy.

"Leon, bro! How does it feel? We actually did it man, can you believe it, we are now officially U.S. Marines!" After Billy and Leon exchanged congratulatory bear hugs, Geneva embraced Billy, giving him a big kiss and asked "What's next for you boys?" Billy replied: "Now, Mrs. Campbell we're off to Camp Lejeune over in North Carolina to get into our Infantry training and then some specific Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) that we're both going after."

As Leon and Billy were talking, Geneva noticed Cindy holding on to her son's arm so tightly. She didn't see Billy's Dad, Jess.

“Cindy, where’s Jess?”

Cindy turned to Geneva, and smiling, responded, “Oh, Geneva, he’s off doing what these boys are learning. He got his orders several weeks ago, and off he went. He’s over in the Mid East somewhere. I got a letter from him just last week. He’s involved with something all hush, hush because he can’t say a thing about where he is. But, I’ve gotten use to it. The good Lord will take care of Jess and me too, until we are reunited.”

“Well, why don’t we all go and get us some dinner? I’ll tell you what, I’ll treat the whole bunch of you!”

**March 12, 19:55**

**Situation Room, White House**

**Washington, D.C.**

“Ladies and gentlemen, I have to warn you, what you are about to see is *extremely* disturbing and *extremely* graphic. We have all heard rumors and talk about the atrocities being committed by North Korean forces in the South, and particularly in Seoul. What you are about to witness is documented proof of that. Anyone who either does not want to witness the following, or who feels their stomach may rebel, please step out into the waiting area and we will invite you back in after the film.”

Despite the warning from the President’s Chief of Staff, no one left. They were all leaders of their nation. None of them got any pleasure or approved of graphic violence or sex, but they would not step back from the reality of the situation in Korea either. They knew that if such a culture and society were allowed free reign in America the same thing would happen. They knew that if they did not stand up to it while it was afflicting their friends and allies, they opened the door to the possibility that it could come to these shores. So, despite the Chief of Staff’s warning they all watched with misgivings as the film was started.

As the film was played, on a number of occasion exclamations of “My God,” “Dear God, no,” “Sweet Jesus,” “Those sorry bastards,” and other such comments were made by those in attendance.

What the film showed was the literal rape of Seoul. A U.S. Army cameraman, who had gotten separated from his unit, had been trapped behind lines in Seoul and had been able to record scenes of abject horror. In one particularly graphic incident, lines of North Korean soldiers could be seen coming down either side of a main thoroughfare, with armored vehicles, tanks and IFV’s advancing down the center of the street. Smoke was rising from several modern buildings in the background, and rubble from the collapse of buildings could be seen everywhere. There were bodies strewn in the street with the smoking hulks of cars and South Korean APCs.

As this group advanced, they came to the entrance to a building. Apparently, one of the soldiers heard something. He lifted his hand and the line stopped on that side of the street. Crouching down, the lead soldier and seven others rushed into the building. Seconds later, they exited the building, leading a group of four American GI’s and a family of six Koreans. The GI’s were not armed, had their hands raised, and were forced to lay down spread eagled on the street with two North Korean soldiers holding each down, one with his boot on the neck of each GI. The Korean family consisted of a man in his forties, his wife, what looked to be two teenage daughters and a son about ten years old. They were all being handled roughly by the soldiers.

An officer was called to the front. When he got there he separated the three women. As he was doing so, the father rushed after his wife and daughters and the officer ruthlessly and coldly shot him in the face with his service pistol. He then walked to the ten year old boy, who was standing there sobbing over his father, wetting his pants and the officer shot him in the head. All of the American soldiers began struggling to rise. The officer barked out an order and all four of the Americans were also executed.

All three women were separated. The entire column was now halted, and other soldiers, drivers and vehicle commanders were milling around. The officer barked out several orders in Korean and many of the men began lining up around each of the three women. Then, to the horror of those watching, those poor women were literally raped to death. The cameraman could be heard reciting Mother Mary’s and quietly sobbing as he filmed. Long after the women had either lost consciousness or died, the horror continued. Finally, their limp bodies were dragged out into the street and the same officer delivered a final shot to the head of each. Then, the soldiers got back into their vehicles, reformed their lines and continued down the street.

After it was over, the President himself spoke to those gathered.

“Let’s spend a moment in silent prayer for those poor souls who were so brutally killed.”

After another moment’s pause, the President continued on soberly.

“I showed this to you today so there would be no doubt in your minds what types of horror we are up against in Korea. Our suspicions of similar things going on in the Mid East, were recently confirmed by a young Lieutenant who escaped after being held prisoner after the taking of Incirlik air base. He provided detailed accounts of summary execution of our soldiers by GIR forces. Please listen to his statement”

Turning to his Chief of Staff, he indicated that the audiotape of the Lieutenant's statement should be played. What it recounted, in grim, brutal detail, was the execution of the wounded, and those not deemed having any useful information after the battle at the Adana International Airport. Sixty-three Americans had been captured, forty-eight had been executed by their captors. The young Lieutenant broke down as he recounted the sudden violent death of his friends and comrades. He then told of the brutal death and torture of others as a means of extracting information from those whom the GIR retained. He had escaped several days later and had ultimately made it to friendly lines.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is the nature of those whom we fight. According to this Lieutenant, and we have no reason to doubt him, even senior officers participated in the atrocities he experienced. Regarding the film out of Korea, our analysts have enhanced parts of that film and found that the North Korean officer during the one scene is a full Colonel.

"Let the reality of these atrocities burn into your memories. One day we will have justice and there will be a reckoning and a lasting retribution. As you can see, these incidents are not isolated, or committed by a single unit. They are widespread. Wherever the cameraman went he filmed similar atrocities. We must never forget this.

"This film and the audio tape will be made available to our commanders and to our allies so they can understand the abject brutality and inhumanity of these attackers. We expect in South Korea, it will spur the people as a whole to resist with every thing they have, and they need to. I will spend some time deciding how we can best present the knowledge of this to our own people.

"Now, General Stone, please proceed with the briefing."

General Stone gave a thorough briefing. The military situation was not good. After brief success with a counter attack by the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in the center of the defensive line in Turkey, the GIR funneled more troops and aircraft into the area. Within three days all of the ground made up had been lost. Now, the GIR was closing in on the Turkish capital.

In Saudi Arabia, the situation was similar. GIR forces there had reached the United Arab Emirate (UAE) and had expanded their coastal operations towards the Saudi capital of Riyadh. American armor in all areas was still terribly outnumbered and was falling back. Though they were being forced back, they were exacting a heavy toll on the GIR forces arrayed against them. It was generally taken for granted that once sufficient forces were built up in staging areas along the Red Sea and on the Mediterranean, U.S., NATO and other allied forces would push the GIR back from all of their gains.

In Egypt, the General reported that the Libyans and the Sudanese had begun their offensive. Egyptian and U.K. defensive lines were set up well to the east and north of these attacks. Allied forces were doing little more than harassing the advance, hoping that the advancing GIR columns would break themselves on allied defenses and allied air power, which in that area were well established.

As the film had indicated, the situation in Korea continued to be very grim. Seoul had been lost along with Inchon. The remainder of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division and the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry brigade had narrowly avoided encirclement. They were barely able to maintain an orderly fighting withdrawal back along the western side of the peninsula to defenses that were being set up along a line running from Ulchin on the east coast, through Ch'ongju, to P'yongt'aek on the west coast.

U.S. soldiers were arriving by airlift in Pusan and being moved towards the front as rapidly as possible. Even though there were plenty of small arms and ammunition, the heavy armor and artillery available was not sufficient to guarantee that the defensive line could hold. The Marines and their equipment were needed desperately. They were expected to arrive at Pusan within three to four days.

### **March 14, 16:20 local time**

#### **Israeli Defense Force (IDF) positions**

##### **Golan Heights**

Colonel Abraham Eshkol warmly shook the hand of the American Major who would be working with them for the next few months.

"Major Simmons, it is a real pleasure to meet you, and I don't mind saying, it is even a greater pleasure to meet your aircraft!"

Jess Simmons returned the vigorous handshake.

"Colonel, the feeling is mutual. You sure have a wonderful view up here, and I might add an extremely defensible one."

The Colonel turned and gazed in the direction the Major was looking, the direction from which any attack out of Syria would come.

"Any military person who comes here immediately grasps the import of this position. It is why we refuse to give it up. We would be foolish to do so.

"The ground was taken from an aggressor nation, the same one that sits out there below us now. I believe should another war come, and it is looking more and more likely, that we will simply annex the area and officially call it a part of Israel and be done with it. That is of course presuming that we are victorious—and that is the only presumption I will allow on these heights."

Jess could tell that he was going to like this Colonel.

“Colonel, I’ll you what, in as much as I am sitting up here with you, that’s the only presumption I will make as well. We are absolutely united on that point. Back home in Texas we would say “we’re closer than two peas in a pod on that.” I hope you understand my meaning.

“Now, let me show you and your people you a thing or two about these twelve birds your country has purchased. After that, either late today, or early tomorrow, we’ll take them up and show you a thing or two about what they can do in the air and you can see for yourself on your own detection equipment how difficult they are to acquire and track”

The Colonel enjoyed this Texas Major’s manner of speech, and the way he thought. Beyond that, he was looking forward to having the Comanche helicopters here. Their specifications and reputation preceded them. In addition, despite it being relatively quiet here now, and despite that no Arab country had yet attacked Israel in Hasan Sayeed’s war, there was no doubt in the Colonel’s mind that they would desperately need these helicopters in the future. In Colonel Eshkol’s estimation, that eventuality would be all too soon in coming. He planned, with the U.S. Major’s help, to be as prepared as humanly possible when it did.

**March 14, 22:45**

**North Side of Little Havana**

**Miami, FL**

Isabelle Rodriguez read through the letter from her son, for the sixth time. Her husband Oscar had read it earlier in the afternoon, and had already written a reply and gotten it to the post office that afternoon.

But Isabelle needed more time to gather her feelings, to formulate her thoughts and then to respond to her son as only a mother could.

*Dear Mom and Dad,*

*Basic training is very hard. I mean, I have never worked so hard in all my life! I have never been so sore in my life. I have never been so tired in my life. And I thought I was in pretty good shape.*

*Dad, the drill instructors are tough, mean and on us all the time. But you know what? I’m grateful for it. After a while you get used to it, and if you respond and don’t fight it, you can almost hear in their next insults and demands...well, a respect, like they can see you’re getting it. Anyway, I know we’re going to have to react quickly and be mentally alert and tough to handle what we are being trained for and that’s what their job is: to get us there.*

*Everyone here talks about it all the time at night when we are in the barracks before bed. We read the letters from our loved ones. We hear the news. It’s pretty plain that our country needs more of us, a lot more. Most here are anxious to get out there and help stop what’s going on, particularly before it can ever get to our shores.*

*Anyway, I emailed Maria today. You guys should really get a computer and getting set up so you can get email. It makes the communication quicker, cheaper and, well just more effective. She seems to be doing very well, and guess what? We’re going to be parents! You and Dad are going to be grandparents! Maybe Maria already told you, but if she hasn’t, let her.*

*Well, I have to go now, pretty soon it’s lights out, and I am dead anyway. I’ll write more when I can. Only eight weeks to go!*

*Your son, Hernando*

Isabelle had to wipe the tears away, again.

She was so proud of her son. So happy for him and Maria and the coming baby—and so scared for him. It was becoming obvious, with the President’s remarks, the restrictions on air travel and gasoline; this was a serious, serious situation and would probably last a long time to come.

As she began to write a reply to her son, she voiced a silent prayer.

“Dear God, please bless Hernando. Help him to be brave, help him to do well. Help him to learn and please, please, keep him safe.”

**March 15, 01:12 local time**

**Bridge of PLAN 2004 Guizhou TAS**

**220 Kilometers east of Norfolk, VA, Atlantic Ocean**

Captain Bin Lin had his crew navigate their container vessel turned Tactical Attack Ship into the assigned position amongst other cargo and container vessels awaiting transit into U.S. territorial waters. Based on past experience, he calculated that he had about a twenty-four hour wait. That was fine. He expected his execute order to come in the next twelve to eighteen hours, and if it was longer, he was prepared to execute his orders from wherever he stood at the time.

To anyone looking, the ship appeared to be a standard COSCO container vessel. Only by boarding and actually opening the crates that surrounded the LRASD box launchers, or moving the pallets covering the tactical missile hatches, could anyone determine that his vessel was anything more than what it appeared.

Captain Bin had at first wished that he had been assigned to the forces that would be confronting the U.S. Navy directly in the western Pacific. He wanted to pit his skills against his American

counterparts. Besides, each of those vessels had an escorting Luhu or Luda class destroyer with them, each of which carried four more LRASD weapons along with their other anti-air, anti-submarine and anti-surface weapons. But, as he thought about it more, he felt honored to be one of those who had been selected to be involved with the American mainland directly, even if he was working alone and therefore more vulnerable to counter attack.

If attacked, he had no intention of being boarded. He had a contingent of one hundred well-armed Chinese Marines aboard to prevent that. He had his LRASD weapons to defend against surface or submarine attack, and he had the very capable KS-2 VLS battery, each tube with five reloads, to defend against air attack.

Of course, if the Americans identified him and tasted of any of these measures, they would quickly come at him with standoff weapons and overwhelm his defenses. He hoped all of that could be avoided. He would prefer of course, to just fire his missiles, and then turn to the south as planned and make for the COSCO facility in Bermuda.

There were fourteen other such vessels taking up positions along the entire coast of the United States. From Maine to Georgia, from Pensacola to Corpus Christi, and from San Diego to Seattle, PLAN Tactical Attack Ships loaded with over 500 conventional ballistic missiles were preparing for a surprise attack on the continental United States.

Most would get the execute order while well out to sea like himself. Others would be closer in, and a few might even be in port when the order came. This last condition was, of course to be avoided if at all possible. The new "Homeland Security" rules for vessels desiring to dock at U.S. ports called for a thorough examination of selected ship's cargo before they were allowed to enter U.S. waters. This had been implemented after the attacks of 2001 when American defense analysts began worrying what a terrorist with a large cargo ship could do if it were full of any potent explosive—or just full of the right type of fertilizer for that matter.

All of the Chinese ships had explicit orders to not allow any boarding if at all possible. They were to time their approach to be buffered by other vessels desiring entry. Failing this, they were to stay well out to sea, feigning mechanical problems.

Of course, if they were boarded and something was found, the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Customs personnel would be eliminated along with their vessel. In such an event, that Chinese vessel would then run for the open sea like a rogue ship—which is exactly what it would be labeled—and they would be expected to scuttle their ship in the deepest water available. This was the circumstance to be avoided at all costs.

"Officer of the deck. All stop, all stop. Drop anchor, and maintain position. I'll be in the Combat Information Center (CIC). Maintain an EMCONN status of passive except for our normal, commercial surface and air radar."

**March 15, 02:57**

**National Reconnaissance Office Headquarters**

**IMINT Directorate, Chantilly, VA**

"Okay, Diane, let's review this. It's late, but we need to understand and decide its priority."

Tom hung up the phone and waited for his new, junior analyst, Diane Smiley to come in. Diane had joined the group recently as a result of more funding, and was four years out of college. When Diane arrived, Tom had swung his dual screen monitor around so she could see it.

"Earlier today, while reviewing some pictures of newer PLAN class destroyers, you noticed some railing missing behind one of the life boat davits of the ship. Thinking it odd, you zoomed in on that portion if the ship and noticed, in the shadows of an overhang from the next higher deck, what appeared to be something out of place. Enhancing the photo, you were able to produce this."

Tom called up the image of a rectangular object on the right screen of the dual screen display.

"Then, as a result of heightened interest, you began looking at all new, or recently refitted Chinese destroyers, to see if there were more, and came up with this really clear picture."

Tom called up a clear picture of one of the structure in full light on a Luhu class destroyer. "At this point you brought it to my attention, right?"

Diane meekly looked down and nodded her head while saying,

"Yes Sir."

Tom continued.

"Okay. At that point I asked you to look at other large PLAN vessels to see if you could find more. As a result of your efforts, around 10 p.m. you came back and told me you had in fact found more of these structures on several classes of vessels. Is that correct?"

Again, feeling even more uncertain of herself, Diane nodded and repeated, "Yes Sir."

Tom was getting perplexed with the effect he was having on Diane.

"Look Diane, you're not in trouble here or anything, okay? I am asking all of these questions because as analysts, that's what we have to do to make absolutely sure we understand what we are talking about. So, don't be so worried or concerned. I happen to think that what you've found here is of critical importance. I'm just trying to get my arms around it.

“Anyhow, after discovering more of these structures, I asked you to broaden your search while I continued to follow up on my ideas. Were you able to find more?”

Having heard Tom indicate that the data could be critical and that he wasn't giving her the third degree because of problems, Diane perked up.

“Well, no, I didn't find any more of these “boxes”, but I did find something else. Why don't you call up this file?”

Diane gave Tom the network location of a file that he quickly called up on the screen. It was a picture of some kind of swivel joint.

“Tom, this is the attach point of one of those “boxes” on the deck of the Luhai DDG. This joint appears to allow for both traverse and elevation movement. When I take that knowledge and factor it in to the locations on the decks of the ships, it is clear that these “boxes” will swing out from the side of the ship through a fairly broad angle.”

Tom took this information and factored it into the things that he had discovered. It was beginning to paint a picture that he didn't like one bit.

“Okay Diane, I believe that is important information regarding the function of these things. Let me tell you what I have discovered.

“As you know, we have been concerned about the PLAN's capability to convert some its container ships into very effective sea control Aircraft Carriers in a relatively short space of time. We have been scouring Chinese port and repair facilities to locate all of the places they are doing this. In looking at all of those facilities, we have found three potential sites, two of which we are sure of.

“There are many other sites where COSCO refits and repairs its container ships, or other places in the PRC where this could occur. We have been checking them all. One of the things I noticed coming out of other locations, not involved with the carrier conversions, were container ships that left their dry dock or repair dock looking like this.”

Tom called up a container ship just leaving a dry dock facility. Zooming in on the deck, there were six of the large rectangular containers along each side. Tom zoomed in on one and highlighted the container and brought it up on his left-hand screen.

“Now look what happens when we compare your “boxes” to these containers.”

Tom called up one of Diane's “boxes” on the right screen, highlighted it and dragged it over to the left hand screen and superimposed it over the container. The “box” fit right inside.

“Those “boxes” from the destroyers fit right inside these containers from the container ships with about six inches to spare all around.”

Diane thought about this for no more than a second and then jumped right on the implication.

“Okay, perhaps the Chinese are using the pretext of the refit or repair of their container ships to transport these “boxes” to where the destroyers can get at them. Now I want to know what they use them for on those destroyers.”

Tom appreciated Diane's focus, but she was still young and not used to looking for a bigger picture in case it was there.

“Good idea, that was my first thought too. So, I went and looked for container ships that have been refitted at these same places over the last three months or more. I figured I would find some photos of ships that had the containers at one point, and then later “lost” them.

“But that's not what I found. What I found was that in all cases the container ships still had the containers on them that the boxes fit into. In all cases, once these ships put to sea doing their container hauling, the other cargo and containers were stacked around them. Then, when the other containers are off loaded, these remain.

“You want to know what I think now that you've shown me how they are attached?”

Actually, Diane was anxious to hear. Her boss Tom was sharp and she wanted to learn a lot from him. His reputation as an analyst himself was legend around here and she was excited that her first major “find” had caught his attention.

“Absolutely, shoot.”

Tom did.

“I think these are weapons of some sort, and that we now have armed container ships plowing the seas. Ask yourself why the Red Chinese would do this. Who are they afraid of? Who do they feel these ships, particularly the container ships, are going to have to fight?”

“Now, this is a preliminary assessment and we're going to have to do even more research to verify or disprove this; but I believe it is critical that we do so.

“Look, it's late. Why don't you head home and get a few hours sleep. After I work out some assignments for this, I will do the same. Meet me back here at 9 a.m. and we'll get right back on this.”

Diane was glad for the opportunity to get some sleep. She'd been here since 7:30 a.m. and now it was after 3 a.m.—almost twenty hours!

“Okay boss, thanks for the help and thanks for the encouragement. I'll see you here at 9 a.m.”

As she left his office, Tom did draw up plans and assignments for Diane to address the next morning. When he was done with that, he stayed on and continued to do the research, analysis and contemplation necessary to either firm up, or dispel his theory. By 9 a.m. when Diane arrived, he had

arrived at the conclusion that the PLAN was deploying an unknown new weapon system on all of its guided missile destroyers and on many of its container ships. After meeting again with Diane at 11:30 a.m. and confirming his apprehensions, he sent a report at 12:30 p.m. to his NRO command chain, CINCPAC and the NSA.

It would take this report eight hours to be read, analyzed and forwarded to bases and units around the world, including CBT 77. By then, it would be too late to make any difference in the events of that early evening of March 15<sup>th</sup> in America, or at the same time in the early morning hours of March 16<sup>th</sup> in the Western Pacific.

### **March 16, 05:35 local time**

#### **Flag Briefing Room, USS Lake Chaplain (CG 57)**

#### **420 nautical miles ENE of Okinawa, Western Pacific Ocean**

The briefing had just ended. Admiral Reginald Patterson was pleased. He had served in many positions in his twenty-eight year tenure with the United States Navy. He had served on many staffs, and had quite a few staffs serve under him. He honestly believed that the staff serving with him now in CBT 77 was the best, and in the Admiral's way of thinking, that's exactly how it should be.

The decision had been made several days ago to send the CBT 77.1 with the USS Kitty Hawk CSG and the USS Essex ARG further north, to transit into the Sea of Japan north of the southern most main island of Japan. This was occurring this morning. In the mean time, CBT 77.2 and CBT 77.3, transited into the China Sea north of Okinawa.

The rendezvous of all elements would occur off of Pusan day after tomorrow, which would allow the Kitty Hawk to provide needed air support to the US and Korean forces for two full days before the landings off Pusan would begin.

"Commander Lewis, you gave a very good overview of the exclusion zones and the current status of allied and neutral shipping with respect to them. It seems pretty crowded out there."

Lewis, in addition to being the Admiral's chief of staff, was also an excellent tactician and intelligence analyst.

"Admiral, as you know, this is one of the highest traffic sea lanes in the world. There are always a lot of ships in here. I suppose short of all-out maritime warfare directed against Japan and its shipping, there's not much that will slow it down.

"The bit about the Chinese "escorting" their container ships bothers me though. As a supposedly neutral power, I suppose it may be understandable, but we both know how much military, tactical, logistic and supply support they have given the North Koreans before the outbreak of hostilities. There's not a one of us who believes that the North Koreans would ever have undertaken this invasion without the tacit approval of Beijing. Their neutrality is dubious and therefore their warships are potential belligerents."

Admiral Patterson understood. The fact was, most of the chain of command believed the same thing, including, as he understood it, the NCA himself.

"Well, they are not violating any of the zones we've established, but we'd best keep an eye on them. I am not overly concerned about any two, or any ten of their Luhai and Luhu class destroyers. It would be suicide for them to consider trying to get close enough to inflict damage on this task force. Just the same, draw up instructions for each task force commander to develop operational plans to keep each of those particular Chinese groups under close observation.

"I'm more concerned about their two Chinese carrier task forces, the one centered on the Beijing south and west of Okinawa in the China Sea, and the one centered on the Shanghai in the South China Sea. We need to keep those groups under constant surveillance, whether by satellite or by aircraft out of Okinawa or from this task force. I know those are already standing orders, let's just make sure they are emphasized."

Unknown to Admiral Patterson and Commander Lewis, those "not to be overly concerned about" Chinese groups centered on the "container ships" had already launched long range weapons. The results would make history and they would establish the parameters that would govern maritime warfare throughout the remainder of World War III.

### **March 16, 06:00 local time**

#### **Combat Information Center, PLAN 1001 Beijing**

#### **250 km WSW of Okinawa, China Sea**

Admiral Yao Hsu would remain in the CIC throughout the engagement. Captain Tuan Hongwen was working with his people to ensure that the Beijing was prepared to execute her portion of the attack at the appointed hour. That would amount to a launch of four full salvos of his SS-26 missiles at Okinawa's airbase and command and control facilities. Forty-eight missiles arriving in four waves of twelve, each wave would be less than five minutes apart. Arriving with the fourth wave would be an air attack of six SU-35s and ten J-10s, supported by one AEW aircraft.

It would be critical that air cover from the mainland arrive over the carrier to augment the six remaining SU-35s at the proper time. Everyone expected some sort of air attack from Okinawa or



American airfields in Korea and Japan. At the appointed time, ships would conduct ballistic missile attacks on American airfields in Japan, while Chinese missiles from across the Yellow Sea would hit bases in Korea.

Finally, the Shanghai, PLAN 1002, in conjunction with PLAN 83, the Shi Lang, would lead a strike on the HMS Ark Royal Task Force that was approaching from the South China Sea. With the carrier air groups, with the carrier launched surface-to-surface missiles (SSM) and with assistance from PLAN aircraft from the mainland, it was expected that the HMS task force would be quickly and totally destroyed.

As it stood now, 125 LRASD devices were rapidly approaching the American Task Forces. When they commenced their destructive work, the moment of truth would be upon them all.

PLAN attack submarines were passively listening well off of the American task forces. As soon as any one of them reported that the engagement had begun, an order would go out to all of the waiting Chinese forces. At that moment Tactical Attack Ships both here and off America, the Chinese missile bases and the various other task forces, including this one, would launch their attacks.

"Perhaps America is a sleeping giant," thought the Admiral. "Well, we will not make the mistakes of the Japanese sixty-five years ago. We will not deal in half measures. Our "surprise" will knock the American's unconscious. By the time they awaken and try and respond, the new order of things here in the Pacific and Asia will be too far advanced for them to counter."

At least, that was the plan.

**March 16, 06:22 local time**

**Control Room, USS Jefferson City (SSN 759)**

**370 nautical miles ENE of Okinawa, Western Pacific Ocean**

"Captain, we have multiple contacts well off our port bow."

Captain Wellington looked up from the plotting board as his executive officer made this statement. He had just been reviewing their patrol course out in front of Carrier Group Seven.

"What do we have?"

The executive officer responded.

"Sir, they say they'd like you to come and listen. They're not sure."

The Captain considered this, almost made a sarcastic remark, but then said, "Okay, Steve, you have the Conn."

The Captain quickly made his way over to sonar.

"Okay guys, what do you over here that requires me to listen?"

Looking up from his station, the duty officer, a Lieutenant, responded as he handed the Captain a pair of earphones.

"Sir, I've got the sound of many propellers, faint, but closing. Range 20,000 yards. They are definitely mechanical, no known acoustic match."

The Captain put on the earphones and was silent for a moment. Sure enough, he could faintly hear the sound of propellers.

"How many, at what approximate depth, and what closure rate?"

Looking at the readout on the screen at his duty station, the Lieutenant quickly pressed a few keys and then answered.

"Captain, the count keeps increasing, now twenty-one targets. Range to closest is now 19,100 yards and closing on a tangent of 223 degrees. Depth estimated at 600 feet. Speed is 48 knots."

Digesting this, the Captain quickly calculated and then said "That course is taking them in towards the Task Force."

Picking up a communications phone, the Captain called his XO.

"Steve, sound general quarters. This is no drill. Set course to interdict incoming targets, go to 20 knots and arm tubes one through four."

**March 16, same time**

**PLAN 2012 Gansu LRASD Strike**

**386 nautical miles ENE of Okinawa, Western Pacific Ocean**

The twenty-five LRASD strike that had been launched by the Gansu group were one of three strikes that were now inbound toward CBT 77.2 and CBT 77.3. The LRASD devices were programmable by both acoustic signature and sonar image. They were also programmable by depth, course, distance, loiter time and loiter pattern. The devices had been set up to have several different primary and secondary targets. The lead units of each strike were programmed to look for U.S. attack submarines—predominantly LA Class submarines that were typically escorting carrier battle groups.

At 18,000 yards, both lead LRASDs acquired the faint acoustic signature of the Jefferson City which was now approaching them. The two lead units plotted an intercept course at their current 48 knot speed and continued until the range had closed to 10,000 yards. At this point, both units broadcast a tight sonar pulse down the bearing of the acoustic match. The resulting sonar signature confirmed their acoustic data.

What followed was the culmination of Lu Pham's engineering efforts. In the space of three seconds, the two devices lined themselves up on an interception course for the Jefferson City, set their proximity destruction to preprogrammed parameters and ignited their rocket engines. Within two seconds, the devices began supercavitating as they were designed to do and reached their maximum speed of 600 knots within five seconds. By this time the range had closed to 8,000 yards, less than twenty-five seconds from impact.

**March 16, 06:34 local time**

**Sonar, USS Jefferson City (SSN 759)**

**369 nautical miles ENE of Okinawa, Western Pacific Ocean**

Captain Wellington had remained in sonar with the Lieutenant, relaying his commands to the Executive Officer in the control room.

"Okay, Lieutenant, what have we got?"

The Lieutenant now believed that the Captain's nerves were made of steel. Since the two closest targets had briefly gone active, they had continued their approach. At the captain's order, the Jefferson City had also gone briefly active and now had much more data on the approaching threat.

They knew that these entities were approximately fifty feet long and a good six to eight feet in diameter. Traveling underwater at forty-eight knots, the Captain had concluded they were some type of small miniature submarine.

"Captain, they are continuing on their current course towards us at forty-eight knots. Range now... just under 10,000 yards. *Wait!* There's a change in aspect ratio. *Wow!* Something new here, new propulsion, very loud! Speed increasing. ... Captain! These two targets are now approaching at 600 knots!"

The Captain was stunned for an instant. 600 knots! Unbelievable. No, it couldn't be! There was no time. He didn't ask the Lieutenant if he was sure; he knew full well the import of that speed and what had happened.

Grabbing the phone set, he called to his executive officer.

"Steve, Emergency stop! Blow all ballasts!"

Since the Lieutenant had voiced the warning that the incoming targets were approaching at 600 knots, the Captain had reacted quickly. He had issued his orders to his executive officer in just under ten seconds. The executive officer had issued those same orders within another five seconds, now fifteen seconds after the Lieutenant's warning. The ship actually began to slow and rise at the nineteen second mark, six seconds before impact.

Given the nature of the information they were presented with, it was remarkable that the captain and crew reacted so quickly. It was a testament to their training. But nothing they had been trained for as a crew prepared them for this, and it wasn't fast enough.

At 06:35 a.m. on March 16, in the Western Pacific, as the Jefferson City rose through a 400 foot depth, the pair of LRASD weapons arrived almost simultaneously. One hit just under the sail; the other struck amidships. Each LRASD carried a 2,000 kilogram (4,400 pound) high explosive warhead. The resulting, almost simultaneous explosions, tore the Jefferson City into three pieces. The center section was pushed another 100 feet higher in the water before joining the fore and aft sections in sinking.

Captain Wellington, his executive officer, the lieutenant in the sonar spaces and the entire crew only had enough time to briefly stare one another in the eye in the closing seconds as they heard the onrushing sound of their doom. They had to accept their deaths in whatever means that were left available to them in those brief seconds. Then they, and their boat, were committed to the deep. A few moments later a small emergency buoy rose to the surface to announce the news to listening satellites, while the explosion itself announced the deed to closer ears.

The 142 officers and crew of the USS Jefferson City (SSN 759) thus became the first casualties of a war with Red China that would prove to be the longest and most costly in American history.

**March 16, 06:38 local time**

**Bridge, USS Jarrett (FFG 33)**

**385 Miles ENE of Okinawa, Western Pacific Ocean**

"Whoa! Sir, sonar reports a very large underwater explosion, could have been two almost simultaneous explosions of some type, bearing 31 degrees. Must be twenty to twenty-five miles out."

Commander Carlson considered the report from the duty officer.

"That would be in the Jefferson City's patrol zone. Are we getting anything else?"

The duty officer paused momentarily and then responded.

"No Sir, just that large explosion. Had to be very large to come across the way it did."

Carlson considered the information. He was a sonar and missile picket, about twenty miles in advance of the main body of Carrier Group Seven of CBT 77.2. The Jefferson City was the vanguard, doing ASW work along the primary threat axis.

“Okay, have our Sea Hawk immediately investigate and pass the report back to the battle group commander. As soon as the Sea Hawk is within ten miles of the area, get them on the line for me. I want to personally talk to them as they approach.”

**March 16, 06:44 local time**

**Admiral’s Cabin, USS Lake Chaplain (CG 57)**

**402 miles ENE of Okinawa, Western Pacific Ocean**

After his morning walk up on the bridge, and breakfast, Admiral Patterson had just finished a quick shower and was almost done dressing when the knock at his door came. As he took a couple of quick steps to the door and opened it, he answered.

“Yes, what is it?”

The young ensign quickly saluted and reported.

“Begging the Admiral’s pardon Sir, Commander Lewis requests your urgent presence in the CIC Sir regarding reports from the Jarrett concerning explosions in the Jefferson City patrol area, Sir!”

The Admiral listened attentively.

“Okay Ensign, I’m coming right now. Let’s get down to CIC.”

As they quickly made their way, the Admiral finished buttoning his shirt. He also thought about the import of the information he’d just received. It must be serious or Lewis would have waited. Lewis was an “on the ball” officer and had the knack of knowing precisely when something needed to be passed up the line, and when more information was warranted before doing so. That is precisely what made him such an excellent Chief of Staff. As they walked into the CIC, things were extremely hectic. It was clear something serious was developing. On entering the CIC, he acknowledged Lewis, and then approached the Captain of the Lake Chaplain, Captain Merrill, who was in an animated conversation with the CO of Carrier Group Seven, Admiral Flynn.

“Admiral! The Jarrett has reported multiple inbound submerged targets approaching this task force from his position! He is now reporting explosions from both the Jefferson City and the Salt Lake City patrol areas!”

After a pause, the Captain continued.

“I know that Sir, but I believe we are...”

The Captain turned and consulted briefly with another of his officers who handed him a note.

“Excuse me, Sir, we have just received word from the Jarrett. He is reporting he is under attack, I repeat, he is under attack. Submerged contact has turned towards him on a collision course and is approaching at—my God, approaching at 600 knots!”

Admiral Patterson digested the information. As the CINC of the entire CBT 77, he could wait no longer.

“Captain, please give me the phone.”

The Captain informed Admiral Flynn that CINC CBT 77 was going to speak to him and handed the phone to Admiral Patterson.

“Jim, yea, this is Reg. Look, we are clearly under attack. Get on the horn with your PHIBRON and then patch me through to Ben over at CBT 77.3 and then to the Kitty Hawk.

“I want you all to immediately execute a turn back to the southeast on an axis directly away from the reports of these contacts. That should be a heading of about 220 degrees. Make sure your Ospreys lay out patterns between this task force and the oncoming threat. Yes, I know that it will take some time, but we have to put more space between us and what’s coming. Also, launch your ready alert birds and augment both your anti-air and anti-surface birds.

“I’m not sure who it is yet, but there can only be a couple of possibilities. Clearly someone has developed and fielded a supercavitating weapon and is using it against this task force. Please patch Troy and the Kitty Hawk through to me right here.”

After giving the commanders of Task Force 77.3 and 77.1 the same orders, the Admiral got the attention of Captain Merrill.

“Captain, how many contacts were there reported by the Jarrett and what speed were they approaching at?”

The Captain cupped his hand over the phone for a moment.

“Admiral I am on the line with the Commander of the Jarrett right now. He’s in trouble, Sir. He indicated in excess of twenty in-bounds moving at 50 knots initially, but they have now increased their speed to 75 knots. Just one moment, Sir.”

The Captain uncovered the phone and then spoke briefly. In the middle of a sentence he stopped, called urgently and loudly for Commander Carlson several times, and then, turning to the Admiral, he spoke in a now surprisingly quiet CIC.

“Sir, Commander Carlson was cut off in mid sentence. This...threat was approaching and then, right in the middle of describing the unbelievable speed of the approaching track, nothing. We lost radio contact with the Jarrett.”

Turning to one of his officers in CIC, the Captain asked “Radar, what do you have on Jarrett?”

The radar officer, gazing closely at the display answered.

“Sir, rapidly weakening signal at Jarrett’s last reported position.”

Admiral Patterson reacted quickly in the stunned silence.

“Okay, Commander Lewis, get the following SITREP off to CINCPAC and to Washington: CBT 77 under attack. Multiple inbound threats detected, probable supercavitating devices of some type. USS Jarrett lost, USS Jefferson City and USS Salt Lake City presumed lost. Taking evasive action. Send it *now!*”

The Admiral had already done the math, it would be ten minutes before all of the ships in the task force could turn in an orderly fashion. At 75 knots these weapons would be amongst them in those same ten minutes. That would be too late.

“Captain, on my authority, you are to turn this vessel around to the southeast *immediately* while continuing to cover for the John Stennis. Patch me through to the Task Force commanders, and the Captains of the John Stennis, the Constellation and the Kitty Hawk. I intend to order all vessels in all task forces, meaning all ships in the Carrier Groups and PHIBRONS to immediately turn and egress at maximum speed away from these threats.”

**March 16, 12:45**

**Naval Headquarters, CINCPAC**

**Honolulu, Hawaii**

“Sir, we are now picking up emergency distress signals from four of our attacks submarines in the western Pacific. The USS Jefferson City and the USS Salt Lake City with Carrier Group Seven attached to CBT 77.2, the USS Santa Fe with Carrier Group Two attached to CBT 77.3 and the USS Pasadena with Carrier Group Five attached to CBT 77.1. All in the last ten minutes.”

Commander Banks digested this sobering information. Distress signals from attack submarines on station meant one thing: that the boat had gone down and the buoy had been released after the hull passed crush depth. But to have four at once—and from a task force standing into combat.

“Okay, Lieutenant, work on exact fixes for each and continue trying to contact CBT 77 for a situation report. I have to contact the CINC.”

Before Commander Banks could finish dialing the emergency number for the CINC of Pacific Naval Operations, the SITREP from CBT 77 came in.

“...CBT 77 under attack. Multiple inbound threats detected, probable supercavitating devices of some type. USS Jarrett lost, USS Jefferson City and USS Salt Lake City presumed lost. Taking evasive action.”

Banks finished dialing the number. Admiral Sullivan, CINCPAC, immediately answered.

“Sullivan.”

Banks wasted no time, “Admiral Sir, sorry to disturb you, but this is Commander Banks in operations. Between 23:37 and 23:45 we picked up four, emergency distress beacons from attack submarines attached to CBT 77. At 23:49, we received a SITREP from Admiral Patterson NE of Okinawa indicating that the Task Force was under attack, that several vessels were lost, and that he was taking evasive action.”

The Admiral listened in stunned silence...but just for an instant.

“Okay commander. I will be in operations within ten minutes right about midnight. I would like to speak directly with Admiral Patterson at 00:10 if at all possible.

“Immediately contact Admiral Crowley and arrange to conference him into to that call. Out.”

**March 16, 06:55 local time**

**Approximately 400 nautical miles ENE of Okinawa**

**Western Pacific Ocean**

Admiral Patterson’s orders were prudent given the information he had at the time. They would also have been more effective except that two other LSRAD strikes were approaching his task force as well. A total of seventy-five LRASDs had been launched at the sixty-two ships in CBT’s 77.2 and 77.3. One group of these was approaching from the southwest, which diminished the effectiveness of Patterson’s retreat to the southeast.

As the ships of the two Carrier Groups and three augmented PHIBRONS completed their turns, the LRASD devices, moving at 75 knots, entered the target area. As they did so, they slowed and surveyed their surroundings.

The lead LRASD units, upon detecting and identifying targets that fit their programmed profiles, aligned themselves on those targets and activated their rocket engines. From distances ranging from 6,000 yards to 12,000 yards, 2,000 kilogram high explosive underwater missiles began attacking their targets at 600 knots, a closure rate equal to approximately one mile (1,700 yards) every five seconds.

**March 16, 06:56 local time**

**Bridge, USS Lake Chaplain (CG 57)**

**404 nautical miles ENE of Okinawa, Western Pacific Ocean**

Admiral Patterson had decided to join Captain Merrill who had gone to the bridge to observe the action. Commander Lewis had accompanied the Admiral there.

Seconds after their arrival on the bridge, there was a tremendous flash off to the north, just over the horizon, but producing flames that must have reached hundreds of feet into the air to be seen at this distance. The Admiral, still looking to the distant explosion, asked "What was that?"

Captain Merrill, who had been monitoring the attack while the Admiral made his way to the bridge from CIC, took the phone from his ear and answered.

"That was the Howard. One of those submerged devices had just lit up and was bearing down on her as you came in Admiral."

After listening to his phone for just a few seconds, a look of disillusionment passed over his face and he said,

"Dear God, the Decatur is reporting that the Howard has broken in half and is sinking rapidly. Few, if any survivors."

A sober moment passed, then closer in, Commander Lewis got their attention and pointed to the south. "Sir, there in the PHIBRON group!"

As the Admiral and the Captain turned to the south, they could see that Carrier Group Seven and PHIBRON One, one of the two PHIBRONs that they were escorting, were beginning to mix. Off to the south, perhaps four miles out, the LHA Peleliu, a Tarawa class amphibious assault ship, had completed its turn to the southeast.

As they watched, the large, carrier-like ship began to lean into a hard turn to starboard. While this was occurring, two faint streaks in the water approached at unbelievable speed and struck the Peleliu. Two tremendous geysers of water accompanied by two tremendous explosions obscured and then hid the entire ship. When the water fell and the smoke began to clear a few seconds later, the great ship had completely capsized, revealing two horrendous gashes in her side, the lower ends of which were already below the water line. Clearly, the ship was sinking rapidly and would be gone in just a few more moments.

Admiral Patterson could only exclaim "Dear God in Heaven, there were over 3,000 sailors and marines on that ship!"

The horrors were far from over. As they were absorbing the shock of the loss of the Peleliu, two S3B's flew over them at very low altitude and continued not far above the waves for approximately a mile before turning to and lining up on two more streaks approaching from that quarter. Admiral Patterson immediately assessed the threat.

"Those two are headed for the John Stennis."

As they watched, each S3B released a Mk-50 torpedo in front of the rapidly approaching streaks. One was clearly too late and hit the water hundreds of feet behind and to the left of its intended target/streak. But the second S3B managed to lay its Mk-50 a good quarter mile in front of its streaking target. Almost immediately, the streak converged with the place where the torpedo had entered the water and there was an explosion. That streak did not continue past the point of impact.

Captain Merrill was exuberant.

"Yes! Did you see that? That S3 driver *nailed* that SOB!"

But the remaining streak covered the mile-and-a-half to the John Stennis in just under eight seconds, far too quickly for the big carrier to avoid it. As the three men on the Lake Chaplain watched in shock, another huge geyser erupted; followed by a tremendous explosion and what appeared to be a literal "lurch" in the ship's aft section. The big ship immediately lost headway as tremendous amounts of smoke and fire poured out of her aft, port elevator where a jagged gash, extending down below the water line had appeared above the point of impact.

For several seconds, the three men sat in disbelief, stunned into silence, as they watched one of the very symbols, the essence of American military projection, slow in the water and then begin to stop. Fires and large secondary explosions attested to the damage inflicted upon the John Stennis.

Commander Lewis spoke first.

"She's hit bad Admiral, real bad."

As they watched the drama play out, a crack extended above the gash, right though the elevator and onto the flight deck. Presently, the entire aft end of the great ship tore away from the fore section. That aft end began to sink quickly. The forward three-fifths of the ship began to settle in the water by the new aft end. Although it would be longer in suffering, it was clear that the fore section of the USS John Stennis, nuclear powered super carrier, would share the fate of the smaller aft section.

The silence was broken by more reports coming in to Captain Merrill. As he reported on the status of CBT 77.2 and CBT 77.3, Admiral Patterson ordered Commander Lewis to send a FLASH SITREP to CINCPAC and Washington.

"FLASH: From CINC CBT 77. Continuing to evade large numbers of supercavitating weapons. USS Howard sunk, feared lost with all hands, USS Peleliu capsized and sinking rapidly with heavy loss, USS John Stennis broken in two and sinking. No contact with Constellation."

As Commander Lewis returned to the bridge after sending the flash message, the Lake Chaplain, began to turn extremely hard to port. All three men had to hold to railing to remain upright. Captain Merrill continued to issue orders while the Admiral and Commander looked on. They then noticed and followed the horrified gaze of the Captain well off to the starboard side of the ship.

There, coming directly at them with astonishing speed, was a streak like the others they had seen over the last few minutes. It appeared that Captain Merrill's violent maneuver was going to cause the weapon to miss. Then, at its closest approach, a mere twenty feet from their hull, the 4,400 pounds of high explosive detonated according to its proximity programming.

The force of the explosion caused the Lake Chaplain to lean over drastically. Right at the moment when the men on the bridge who were still capable of sensing it, most having been thrown violently to the floor and injured, felt that the ship must capsize, she righted herself.

Captain Merrill was the first up and he immediately helped Admiral Patterson up. The Admiral had broken a shoulder in the fall and was in great pain. Nonetheless, they went over to the fallen form of Commander Lewis to help him up; but he was beyond help. The fall had violently thrown him into a bulkhead and broken his neck.

Captain Merrill attempted to get damage control on his phone, but communications were out. He and the Admiral walked over to the starboard side and looked over the side of the ship. Smoke was pouring out of a rent to their aft. Clearly, the hull had been compromised by the explosion.

"We'd best get you to sick bay, that shoulder looks broke to hell."

Turning to an uninjured officer, the Captain gave some orders.

"Ensign, get the Admiral here below to sick bay. I will be here on the bridge coordinating damage control as we establish communications."

The admiral, in great pain and holding his arm close to his body to keep it immobile, could only nod in assent.

As the Ensign led the way into the ship, the Lake Chaplain began to list to the starboard. It began relatively slowly, but the further they went, the worse it became. By the time they had arrived at sick bay, it had gotten so bad, that again, they began to feel they would surely capsize.

They were right. At 07:08, the Lake Chaplain, an Aegis guided missile cruiser, rolled over and sank. Along with 90% of her crew, Admiral Patterson and Captain Merrill went down with the ship.

### **March 16, 07:00 local time**

#### **Western Pacific Ocean**

The LRASD attacks were not just centered on CBT 77.2 and CBT 77.3, nor were the LRASD attacks the only portion of the attack on American forces and her allies conducted by the Chinese in the Western Pacific that day. But, they were an important part, because neutralizing American carrier power in the western Pacific was critical to the overall success of the operation.

With the initial attack on the Jefferson City, two Han class Chinese attack submarines, that had been sitting quietly and passively, and would not actively participate in the fighting, monitored the explosions well out in front of CBT 77.2 and CBT 77.3. They had been told to expect it, and they had very specific orders regarding it. As soon as the explosion was detected, a single communications buoy was released by both subs. The buoy rose to the surface and transmitted a single code word in Mandarin: "Breath."

Units throughout eastern China, on the high seas in the South China Sea, in the China Sea, in the Yellow Sea and in the Sea of Japan had been awaiting this transmission. When received, they all began countdown to attack sequences. It had been planned that within twenty-five minutes of any LRASD attack on any escorting American attack submarine, the other LRASD units would arrive and begin decimating the American fleets. Therefore, twenty-five minutes after that attack on the USS Jefferson City, at 07:00 hours, other Chinese forces began unleashing their attacks as well.

From Taiwan to Okinawa to the islands of Japan to the Korean peninsula, massive ballistic missile barrages rained down on US installations and the installations of its allies. These continued throughout the day and were interspersed by attacks from Chinese land-based, or carrier-based aircraft. The attacks included strikes against the British Task Force approaching from the south and against Japanese Maritime Defense Force (JMDF) ships in the Sea of Japan.

Surprise was total.

Within days, the surprise Chinese air attacks on Korea and Taiwan would be followed by large numbers of Chinese ground troops. These would be carried to their destinations by the new Yunana II landing craft, by the new Amphibious Assault ships and by many other craft. The invasion forces would be escorted by Beijing class carrier groups whose aircraft, and more land based aircraft, would protect them from attack by Korean, Japanese and ROC (Taiwan) forces.

And this was not all. The order to begin China's "Breath of Fire" operation was also transmitted to the Tactical Attack Ships waiting off the coasts of the United States and to operatives whose teams within the United States were staged and ready. These unleashed their attacks on American soil with a savagery and effectiveness that surprised even the Chinese planners.

**March 15, 19:04**

**Presidential Quarters entry way**

**White House, Washington, D.C.**

As the first couple exited their armored, specially outfitted limousine, Linda Weisskopf thought fondly on their dinner.

“Now wasn’t that the wonderful dinner?” she thought. Norm had been such a gentlemen, and had take such pains to have everything appear normal, though she knew that events and their potential impact were weighing heavily on his mind. In fact, a National Security meeting was waiting for him in the situation room right now.

As they stepped up to the entry, flanked by their Secret Service detail, she thought she would mention her gratitude and appreciation to him.

“Norm?” she said, as she tugged on the sleeve of his coat. He turned to look at her.

“Yes sweetheart.”

As they briefly paused, she continued.

“I just wanted you to know how much I appreci...”

That was as far as she got. Before she could finish, the agent in charge of their detail came bursting back through the entry and yelled.

“Turn around. Get the President and First Lady back on Marine One and away *now!*”

He had his hand to his ear, listening, as he came forward. Norm turned and took Linda by the arm and they literally ran to the landing area where Marine One, was already spooling up its engines.

The pilot was waiting for the President, First Lady and their immediate Secret Service detail to board. A Marine was standing just outside, waving them emphatically on.

As the aircraft lifted off, the President, gaining his wits, quickly asked “Alright Burt, what on earth is going on?”

He turned to the President with a desperate look on his face.

“Mr. President, NORAD and local tracking just picked up multiple ballistic missile launches within the last three minutes. All are between one and three hundred miles off the coast. Multiple tracks targeting Washington, D.C., Sir.”

The President grimly took this in. Ballistic launches only a few hundred miles away. My God, he thought. If they are nuclear... Looking directly at Burt while holding Linda’s hand, The President could see in Burt’s and the other agents’ eyes the grim conclusions that they had drawn.

“My God, Burt, if they launched from that close in, then their flight time would be...”

The answers to the both timing and the composition of the warhead came at that moment.

**BLAM!**

Marine One was scarcely two hundred feet in the air and only a few hundred yards away from the White House when the first of four conventional missiles targeted on the White House impacted. Luckily, though the turbulence was severe, the pilot was experienced and had seen worse in combat he had previously flown in. He brought them out of a roll to the left, steadied the aircraft and kept gaining altitude and distance.

As the President and First Lady watched out their windows in horror, three more missiles impacted on and around the White House, then more missiles began impacting on and around the Capitol building and the Pentagon. Very quickly large pillars of smoke and tremendous flames began to rise from all three places.

As they flew on the President asked, “Has Andrews been attacked?”

The agent in charge went forward to the pilot’s compartment and returned in a few seconds.

“No Sir, Andrews appears to be intact at the moment. We are receiving reports of significant attacks at Newport News and Hampton Roads, others coming in from elsewhere in the country.”

The President didn’t hesitate. Calling to the pilot “Captain!”

The response from the flight deck was immediate.

“Yes Sir!”

“Get me over to Andrews. Contact them and tell them it is my direct order to have Air Force One standing by when I arrive, ready for immediate take off.”

Though the agent in charge tried to protest and suggest that they fly to a site that was not so high-profile a target, the President would have none of it.

“Burt, I appreciate your concerns, but this is a direct order from your commander in chief. Now get me to Andrews and get me on Air Force One. I *must* establish communications with military and political leaders, I can do that best from Air Force One!”

As Marine One banked towards Andrews and communicated with flight control and the command chain there, Norm Weisskopf sat back and consoled his wife, while watching the landscape pass underneath him.

## **March 15, same time**

### **Construction Yard, CVN-77**

#### **Newport News Shipbuilding, Newport News, VA**

In many ways, except for the “odd” look to her island, and the fact that it was set further back on her flight deck than America’s other super-carriers, she looked just like the super carrier that was in dry dock next to her undergoing its Service Life Extension Program (SLEP).

But looks can be deceiving.

CVN-78 was the first of the “new” generation of U.S. aircraft carriers. Billions of dollars had been invested in the construction, the new technology, the practices and the configurations that would make her more operationally effective, over 20% less costly and would require a much smaller crew. This would make way for more improvements in her follow on sister ships, one of which was already under construction further down the “line.”

Several of the improvements and innovations that the “CV-21” class would incorporate over the current “Nimitz” class would include:

- A open system architecture for all computers and combat systems,
- A fully integrated information system,
- A composite construction island,
- Multifunctional embedded antennas,
- Redundant fiber optic cabling for all communications,
- Zonal electrical distribution systems,
- New, much more efficient nuclear power plants,
- The SPY-1F AEGIS radar system,
- Improved close-in defenses adding the Mk-31 (RAM) missile system.
- Provisions for upgrading to linear electromagnetic-motor catapults.

In addition, these would be the first carriers to be built with the new air wing composition in mind. That air wing would consist of twenty-four F/A-18E single-seat air-superiority fighters, twelve F/A-18F two-seat attack/fighters, twelve JSF V/STOL attack/fighters, and 14–16 Common Support Aircraft (CSA). The CSA would likely be comprised of four E-2C AEW aircraft, four EF-18G Electronic Warfare aircraft and ten of the new S-22B Osprey ASW aircraft.

But, plans for the launch of this formidable new carrier, the CVN-78, as well as for the re-launch of the SLEP carrier were now being put on long term hold.

Over ninety ballistic missiles were now falling on the carriers and the construction yards that were building or refitting them. Each missile carried a 1,000-pound warhead guided unflinchingly by GPS coordinates that had been programmed into them resulting from the many Chinese military “exchange” guests who had visited the facilities. In fact, in attacks on fixed American installations in the United States and the Far East that were occurring this day—and would occur in future attacks—the unerring accuracy resulted from this same “guest exchange program.” As with the White House, the Pentagon and the Capitol, there was very little warning time, only three to five minutes.

Machinery and equipment critical to the construction were exploding all around. Huge, gaping holes were appearing in the carrier decks, followed immediately by bone-rattling detonations that further ripped the carrier decks apart and gutted the interior spaces. The islands were hammered into smoking piles of twisted metal and equipment. Skilled laborers were killed and injured by the hundreds at each location.

When it was over just a few minutes later, the construction yards and docks were a burning, smoking and twisted ruin. The ships themselves were wrecked hulks burning out of control. On this day, America lost four of its super carriers: Two operational carriers in the Western Pacific, and two more here at Newport News.

## **March 15, 18:12**

### **Construction Yard, DDX**

#### **Ingalls Shipbuilding, Pascagoula, MS**

The sleek, new ship was scheduled to be launched in July. Built low to the water and gliding through the waves on new electric drive propulsion, planners had been hoping for a July 4<sup>th</sup> christening and launch to punctuate the patriotic nature of this next Naval “defender” of America.

The lead ship in the DDX program was being built to revolutionize sea warfare. A fully modular design, this class would initially be delivered as a Maritime Fire Support Ship with two new, one hundred mile range 155mm guns, two sixty-four cell VLS blocks holding many Land Attack and anti-surface Tomahawk missiles, as well as evolved Sea Sparrow missiles for anti-air self defense.

Later versions of the design would incorporate full anti-submarine capabilities and then, still later, theater-wide anti-ballistic, anti-air capabilities.

The technology being used to construct the ship was state of the art and specially designed for the many innovations in propulsion, fire support, radar and automation being incorporated. Ingalls



Shipbuilding was one of two primary shipyards building destroyers for the United States Navy. The other was Bath Iron Works in Maine.

At 6:12 p.m., sixty tactical missiles fired from less than two hundred miles away began raining down on these shipyards as well. The primary targets were the construction yards for the DDX and the construction yards for continuing construction of the Block II A version of the Arleigh Burke class of guided missile destroyers, another of which was under construction.

As large explosions racked the yards from secondary explosions of fuels and other combustibles stored there, workers ran in a frenzied panic to seek shelter. Within a few short minutes, both ships and the equipment and facilities for their construction were either very badly damaged or destroyed in the attack. In addition, hundreds of more skilled ship builders were killed, some with skills honed over thirty years of building modern destroyers for the U.S. Navy.

The same scene was played out at Bath Iron Works in Maine, where the second DDX ship was under construction and where another Arleigh Burke class destroyer was being built.

**March 15, 18:09**

### **Propane Storage Facility**

#### **Missouri Shore of the Mississippi River, Just North of St. Louis, MO**

The propane storage facilities here were massive: close to two million gallons of propane stored at this single site. Fully 12% of U.S. available resource was stored here for transmission across the country. In addition to trucks and pipelines that carried the gas away from the facility, large propane storage barges were used to transport the fuel up and down the Mississippi River to alternate distribution sites.

Ahmed Haddad, Jahmil and his six subordinates had selected this target well. They had studied the schedules and documented the security, both ashore and on the water. Traveling in their refitted Sea King houseboat, the Dhul Fiqar, they had just made the turn toward the facility, traveling at their maximum speed of twelve knots.

Below, surrounded by a special protective shielding of Kevlar armor and hardened stainless steel, was two thousand pounds of C4 explosive. The shielding would protect it during transit, and then project its force in the desired manner upon detonation. Ahead now, about two miles directly in front of them, was the target, a huge propane barge moored next to a large storage tank taking on propane.

“Keep her steady Jahmil. Aim directly for the middle of that barge. We will soon be in paradise together my brother.”

Jahmil knew that what his friend of many years said was true, and he looked forward to it.

“Allah Mak, Ahmed, God is truly great, and hopefully we will send many of these infidels to hell when we step into paradise this day, my friend.”

As they continued their approach towards the facility, finally, as they knew it ultimately must, came the sound of a large horn off to their left. From behind a group of several other craft that had shielded the Dhul Fiqar’s turn towards the facility, a forty-one foot U.S. Coast Guard Ports and Waterways patrol boat turned directly towards them and picked up speed.

This craft, and two others like it, worked three shifts and were the principal waterway security for the propane facility. Powered by two diesel engines, the patrol boat was capable of sustaining twenty-eight knots, far faster than the Dhul Fiqar. It was armed with a bow-mounted M2 HB fifty-caliber machine gun and two M-60 thirty-caliber machine guns. It was carried a very powerful loud speaker.

“Sea King houseboat, heave to. You are approaching a restricted area and are ordered by the U.S. Coast Guard to heave to.”

Ahmed looked at Jahmil briefly then ordered him to continue. They only had a little over a mile to go now, and they could be there in about four minutes.

The pilothouse of the Dhul Fiqar, where Jahmil was stationed, had been reinforced and was also coated in Kevlar armor for just this contingency. In addition, the Dhul Fiqar was well armed for any encounter with the U.S. Coast Guard. They had installed mounts for one twenty-millimeter cannon and one M-60, thirty-caliber machinegun. Ahmed now had five of the other team members taking out this weaponry and preparing to mount it. Two of his men would man the twenty-millimeter cannon, while another manned the M-60 machine gun. Two other team members would be armed with M16A1 assault rifles mounting 40mm M202 grenade launchers. The last member of Ahmed’s team would maintain the engine, and serve as a reserve for the firing positions, wherever needed.

When the U.S. Coast Guard officer saw that the Dhul Fiqar had no intention of stopping, he tried one last broadcast.

“Dhul Fiqar, you are ordered to heave to. If you do not comply immediately, we will be forced to fire upon you.”

Several Coast Guard crewmembers were now out on the forward deck uncovering the fifty-caliber machinegun mounted there. Two other members were already manning smaller M-60 thirty-caliber machineguns on mounts towards the aft portion of the boat.

To indicate they meant business, the Coast Guard officer commanding the craft ordered his crew to fire several rounds across the bow of the Dhul Fiqar.

Bap Bap Bap...Bap Bap Bap

The rounds kicked up impressive geysers in front of the Dhul Fiqar.

When the Dhul Fiqar began taking evasive maneuvers by turning slightly in a weaving pattern towards the propane facility, the Coast Guard boat increased speed to their maximum 28 knots. From several hundred yards to the side and behind, the patrol craft began overtaking the Dhul Fiqar rapidly, firing as they came.

1,200 yards to go.

Ahmed and his men took cover behind specially prepared Kevlar coated positions at their firing stations as many rounds hit the boat, tearing off materiel and punching holes in the hull. When the Coast Guard patrol boat had closed to within 200 yards, Ahmed ordered his men to man their firing stations and open fire. As they rose up and began firing back at the Coast Guard vessel, the Coast Guard crew began targeting them. Almost immediately, two of Ahmed's six men were cut down, but the other four began returning a murderous fire on the unarmored Coast Guard boat.

The twenty-millimeter cannon began scoring direct hits on the Coast Guard pilothouse and the boat veered off as those piloting the U.S. craft were killed or injured. The twenty millimeter-cannon then began concentrating on the Coast Guard patrol boat's hull, punching many large holes in it and damaging other vital equipment. Upon seeing this heavy weapon and its impact on their vessel, the Coast Guard crew manning the fifty-caliber machinegun raked the twenty-millimeter position and killed both men there.

800 yards to go.

As this was occurring, one of the crew with a grenade launcher found his range and dropped one forty millimeter grenade in the aft section of the Coast Guard boat, killing both of the Coast Guard M-60 machine gunners and destroying the two Cummins diesel engines used to power the craft. As the Coast Guard patrol boat went dead in the water and began to burn, the fifty-caliber machinegun crew again raked the Dhul Fiqar, seriously wounding Ahmed's man who held the grenade launcher, knocking him overboard.

300 yards to go.

Ahmed made his way towards the pilothouse. Now only he and Jahmil were left on the Dhul Fiqar. Just as he was opening the door to the pilothouse, a fifty-caliber round hit him in the shoulder and threw him violently into the pilothouse and onto the floor. Jahmil quickly closed the door. The Kevlar protection, three inches thick around the pilothouse, was not a guarantee of safety, but it had worked thus far. Looking down at his friend, Jahmil saw that he was terribly wounded and bleeding profusely. The fifty-caliber round had taken off Ahmed's entire right arm and part of the shoulder. Although he was still conscious, and trying to stand, there was no doubt that Ahmed would soon die from shock and loss of blood.

100 yards to go.

Now, with only about fifteen seconds before impact, Ahmed's condition did not matter. Jahmil locked the rudder into position and then helped his friend, Ahmed, stand up so he could see their fate.

Workers were running for their lives. Many were diving into the river trying to swim away and others were running down planks onto shore. Some of the brave security personnel were firing on the Dhul Fiqar, but their small arms fire was ineffectual. Jahmil knew that any escape and any resistance was truly futile at this point. He and Ahmed had wrapped the fate of all of these, and many more, together with their own.

Impact.

The Dhul Fiqar plowed into the middle of the propane barge and the last thing Jahmil and Ahmed perceived was a brilliantly bright flash of light, as the pressure sensors on the bow of the craft worked as they had been designed and set off the C4 explosives. The 2,000 pounds of very high explosive created a brilliant, elongated fireball that expanded to over 75 yards in diameter and 150 yards long in milliseconds, directing its energy forward into the barge, although as it turned out, with the Dhul Fiqar so close to the barge, it was wholly unnecessary.

Within additional milliseconds, the propane stored on the barge, almost a full load of 100,000 gallons, ignited in a much larger explosion. The fireball from that detonation was a full three hundred yards in diameter and immediately incinerated anything within its reach. That reach included the nearest storage tank, which was being used to load the barge and where over one quarter of a million gallons of propane were stored. The fireball from that conflagration was fully one-third of a mile in diameter and set off a domino effect of similarly massive explosions as every storage tank in the facility, six of them, detonated one after another.

The blast and shock waves resulting from the massive explosions of the propane storage tanks leveled every building within a one half-mile radius of the facility, and set fire to most structures within a mile. Over 20,000 people worked or lived within a mile radius of the facility, and the mortality rate to those individuals was just under thirty percent, just over 6,000 people killed, with double that number injured, many of them seriously.

**March 15, 18:27**

**Bonneville Power Administration Substation**

**15 Miles Northwest of Fontaine, UT**

Hector Ortiz and his five comrades looked down on the substation.

There was no one around.

Hector turned to his men and simply said, "Let's go."

They drove their four wheelers down the slope of the gravel road that ran next to the substation.

Three of the men went down the road a quarter of a mile to provide security, but as it turned out none was needed. Apart from some small motion detectors that Hector recognized inside the fence, and what appeared to be a video camera, there appeared to be no security. The camera and the motion detectors were quickly dispensed of with a silenced pistol Hector carried.

Hector and his men had camped out in a popular four wheeling area for the last two days several miles west of the substation. At night they rested and planned, and during the day they did the minimum amount of four wheeling necessary to keep up appearances that they were learning to use these new vehicles they had purchased from friends. Outside of friendly advice from passers by, no one asked anything of them.

Then, last evening, the warning for the execution of their operation came in code over Hector's radio. Immediately after receiving the message, they all retired and slept well for the night. This afternoon, the actual execute order had come and they had gathered their "equipment" and drove over the intervening hills to the substation.

Now, explosives had been set to completely destroy the substation and several of the high voltage lines leading into and away from it. They were all wired together to a single timer, and the timer had been set. All of them had then moved back into the hills where Hector brought out his remote detonation device in case it was needed.

It was not.

From a distance of two miles, they watched the explosions as the substation was destroyed and as the towers came down. As they crashed to the earth, 10% of the power supply to Southern California was also cut off.

This had a rippling and cascading effect throughout the western electric grid, particularly considering the success of some of Hector's other teams that day. It all amounted to complete power outage that lasted three days to over ten million Americans in the western United States, at a time when fear and chaos gripped the entire country.

But not all of Hector's teams enjoyed such success that day.

**March 15, 18:42**

**Above Lucky Peak Dam**

**12 miles northeast of Boise, ID**

Brent was watching the hills and ravines across the canyon from their hilltop. David was watching the near side, down and to the right and to the left of their position on the hill. Both men had normal and thermal night vision scopes for their M-14 rifles, and both men had been well trained in their use.

Brent and David carried Motorola, frequency-hopping, hand-held military radios with which they communicated with the Ada County response team located below them, near the dam. Brent and David were volunteers in a State of Idaho program providing local security to local infrastructure.

The program was called, "Homeland Defenders," and it had been started eighteen months earlier in nearby Gem County. Basically, it called for volunteers from the local population to stand watch over major infrastructure, and augment local law enforcement in protecting them from terrorists. It had been the brainchild of a local citizen in Gem County in the wake of the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. in September of 2001. The program simply called for the local Sheriff's office to recruit and train volunteers who would stand watch twenty-four hours a day. Eight, three hour shifts of two-man teams at each critical infrastructure were called for. The positions were completely voluntary, meaning there was no pay; but the team members did get the training and they were issued fine thirty-caliber rifles with day and night scopes, which they got to keep.

There had been more volunteers than there were places to guard.

The idea had caught on in Idaho: from several county Sheriffs who adopted it, to the Governor who later officially endorsed it and implemented it statewide. The next year, the governors of Montana, Wyoming, and Nevada did the same thing. This was the program the Director of National Homeland Security wanted to implement nation-wide.

Now, this early evening in Ada County, Brent and David were taking their watch, which would end at 9 p.m.

"Holy crap, Ada County Three-Seven, this is Sentinel, I've got something!"

David listened for a moment. He had been coming up here three times a week for the last year with Brent, and though they'd seen a few teenagers hiking around and perhaps an occasional local misdemeanor, he'd never heard Brent use this tone.

"Go ahead Sentinel, this is Ada County Three-Seven. State your condition."

Brent continued speaking into the microphone clipped to his lapel.

"Six, no, eight guys. Coming down the slope three hundred yards to the northwest of the turn onto the dam. They're using the military crest on the opposite side away from the dam to descend. Four appear to be carrying large duffel bags over their backs, the other four are armed with what appears to be assault rifles. I'll call them AR-15's."

David scanned his area again, and seeing nothing, he looked over to where Brent was indicating. Sure enough, with the aid of the scope, he could clearly see several men stealthily descending in a manner that would allow them to approach the road onto the top of the dam unobserved. Right now they were stopped and two of them were using thermal scopes of their own.

"We copy that Sentinel. Be advised. Ada Air One-One is en route. Ada County Three-Seven will interdict as they cross the road. Please advise when they are crossing and provide covering fire if necessary. You are authorized to fire upon any Tango who raises a weapon once the order to stop and surrender is given."

Brent looked at David, knowing that he had heard.

"Okay David, we'll target the shooters. You take any shooter on the left, and I'll take the right. I'll pass the word to Ada County just before they reach the road, and we'll go from there."

Over the next few minutes, as dusk set in, the eight man team slowly made their way to a position a few yards from the road. When they had held that position for a couple of minutes, assuring themselves that they were ready and that no vehicles were approaching, they began to approach the road.

As they reached the road, a spotlight was turned on from Ada County Three-Seven, an armored, four-wheel-drive SWAT Team carrier.

"You next to the road, this is the Ada County Sheriff's office, you are surrounded and covered. Throw down your weapons and put your hand in the air *now*."

The response was immediate—three of the shooters raised their rifles. Brent and David fired simultaneously and one of the shooters went down. The others opened fire and took out the spotlight.

What followed was a classic firefight. The SWAT team and the terrorists had tracer ammo, so a deadly light show showed positions and aim. Both sides had thermal and starlight equipment to assist them, so the shots were not entirely wild, though a few wild rounds were directed at the hilltop upon where Brent and David sat. But with Brent and David on the opposite hill commanding the high ground with their rifles, and with the arrival of Ada Air One-One, the terrorists never had a chance.

In the end, after two Sheriff's deputies were killed, and another two wounded, all eight terrorists were either killed or seriously wounded before it ended. Once this occurred, the Sheriff's deputies began to warily approach the area, while Ada Air One-One spotlighted the location. Before the deputies could get to them, and as Brent and David looked on, the least wounded of the three surviving terrorists quickly used a small hand gun to kill the other two, and then himself.

Later, as Brent and David were debriefed, it became clear what the purpose of the assault on the dam was intended to do. The duffel bags were filled with 100 pounds of C4 each, and with shaped contact charges, and the wiring to attempt to blow a hole in the dam.

Below the dam, in the Boise River valley, over fifty thousand people, the Capitol and the Governor's mansion would have all been at mortal risk from any breach of that dam. Brent and David were justifiably hailed as heroes in Idaho and across the nation. The "Homeland Defenders" program would now easily be established nation-wide after news of its successful implementation in Idaho spread around the country.

**March 16, 07:27 local time**

**Flight Leader, "Spider" Flight, SU-35**

**320 Kilometers south east of Taiwan, South China Sea**

Commander Ni Hsu reflected on the past fifteen minutes of combat as his flight returned to his carrier, PLAN 1002 Shanghai. So much had happened so quickly.

With twelve SU-30's, ten SU-25s and six SU-35s from the two carriers supported by twelve B6-D bombers and twelve A-5 Fantan strike aircraft, Commander Ni had expected the British task force to be a push over. He had been wrong.

First of all, the Shanghai and Shi Lang carrier group had not been able to get in position to launch a strike with their surface to surface missiles. Had those missiles arrived just prior to his attack, he was certain that the entire British Task Force would have been destroyed. As it was, they were forced to rely on air-launched missiles alone, which required them to get much closer and forced them to contend with the Harrier and Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) air cover over the two British carriers.

His eight air superiority SU-30's would have been more than a match for the Harriers lone, except he had not counted on the numbers of JSF aircraft that were present and the effectiveness of

their AMRAAM missiles. Reflecting back, the ability of the new AEW.7 Sea King helicopter to detect them at two hundred and eighty kilometers as opposed to the one hundred and eighty they had anticipated made a significant difference.

What should have been a British CAP of four aircraft had instead been eight. Other Harriers and JSF aircraft quickly added to the defense over the two Carriers.

The ensuing dogfight required Ni to employ his other four SU-30's which were supposed to have been dedicated to surface strike missions. The AMRAAM's from the eight British aircraft had destroyed six of his SU-30's before they had a chance to engage. Once the remaining SU-30's became involved at closer range, they had been able to down six aircraft and sent the other two into a headlong retreat while losing two more SU-30's.

While this had been taking place, the second group of eight British aircraft had been vectored towards the twenty-four HY-4 anti-ship missiles launched by the B6-D bombers. These twenty-four missiles heavily damaged one British Type 42C escort, the York, and sank a Type 23 escort, the Duke. In addition, they necessitated the expenditure of many anti-aircraft missiles and drew off the remaining enemy aircraft. This left the path open for his strike force to launch its missiles.

Each of the SU-35s carried four AS-11 Kilter anti-radar missiles. All twenty-four of these were launched. At a speed in excess of Mach 2, they attacked the British radar systems, particularly on the two undamaged Type 42 AAW destroyers. Simultaneously, the SU-25s came into range and launched their AS-17 anti-ship missiles. These had been specially configured by the Chinese to operate from their naval SU-25s. Each Su-25 carried four AS-17 missiles. Very quickly, forty mach-two AS-17's were inbound on the British task force. The effect was devastating.

Eighteen of the AS-17's targeted the Invincible. Anti-air missile shot down four of the missiles, and then the CIWS on the Invincible downed three more. But eleven AS-17's scored on the carrier. As she slowed and then stopped in the water, fires burned out of control all along the flight deck and secondary explosions racked the ship. Another ten AS-17's targeted the HMS Ocean, the newest British helicopter carrier. Only one of these was destroyed before the Ocean's CIWS accounted for another two. Seven missiles impacted the Ocean motionless, listing, and burning.

The last twelve AS-17's were split evenly between the carrier *Illustrious* and the assault ship *Albion*. Having to choose between protecting the carrier or the LPD, most of the defenses were directed at knocking down the missiles targeted on *Illustrious*. Between the escorts and the *Illustrious'* CIWS, this effort was successful and no impacts were scored on the second carrier. But four of the six missiles targeted on the *Albion* scored direct hits, setting her ablaze from stem to stern. Thirty seconds after these impacts a tremendous secondary explosion broke her back and sent her beneath the waves.

During this attack, another six Harriers from the *Illustrious* ravaged Ni's attack group destroying two more SU-30's, one of his SU-35s and four SU-25s.

The A-5 Fantom attack followed all of this action. Its missiles sank the burning *Invincible* and the damaged Type 42 escort, damaged another Type 42, and sank a second Type 23 escort. In the process this group lost nine of their aircraft to British aircraft returning from their attack on the HY-4 missiles.

Now, as Ni was returning to the Shanghai, he counted the costs. From a total of twenty-eight attacking aircraft with his group, he was returning with thirteen. The land-based air group lost nine aircraft. That was a total of twenty-four high performance attack aircraft for three destroyers, a carrier, a large helicopter assault ship, and an amphibious assault ship. It certainly had not been a push over, but a great victory nonetheless.

The decimated British task force turned away, trailing dark smoke from the *HMS Illustrious*. Ultimately, it would make good its escape. The *Illustrious*, a Type 42 escort, and two Type 22 escorts were all that returned to England. No British ships or men would arrive to help South Korea.

### **March 16, 07:45 local time**

#### **415 Nautical miles ENE of Okinawa**

#### **Fantail of USS *Bonhomme Richard*, Western Pacific Ocean**

JT was not a deeply religious man. Oh, he believed in God, and he knew that God was the source of rights and true morality; he just wasn't one to very often articulate such things. Today was an exception. No, today, He thanked God openly and vocally that he was alive.

All around him, similar sentiments were being expressed. Feelings of humility, shock, bewilderment, anger and all of the emotions one would expect in such circumstances were running wild amongst those who were not on duty. Many of them, like JT, were on the fantail of the vessel taking a smoke to relieve the tension as the ship put more distance between itself and the horrendous ambush that had been staged against the U.S. Navy.

Some of the toughest, deadliest Marines in America's compliment were unashamedly crying. Some of the crustiest, most foul-mouthed sailors on the face of the earth were weeping uncontrollably and uttering whispered prayers. All of them were still shaken from their near death.

Seeing almost six thousand men and women die right before your very eyes has a way of doing that to a person, thought JT.

The USS Constellation's destruction had been just like that. No more than three miles off their starboard side, JT had watched the ungodly speed of those streaks in the water, leaving their surreal wakes, as they sped towards the Constellation. And there was not a solitary thing anyone could do to stop them. Two of them had hit the Constellation within about one hundred feet of one another directly amidships.

To see a structure that massive, that housed that many people just split apart and fold in two like that, and do it so quickly was beyond words to describe. Even now he could hear the God forsaken sound of that rending, he could still see all the aircraft—the F/A-18Fs, the JSFs, the EF-18Gs, and the Hawkeyes—sliding together like so many toys into that maelstrom in the middle. He could see all those specks sliding down the deck, flying through the air...men and women.

It was an image that would stay with him the rest of his life, and with every living soul who had witnessed it. It was an image he had to share with America so that they could understand what had happened here. It was also an image of a sudden death that JT had almost experienced himself.

Had it not been for the USS Thach, that marvelously quick and nimble frigate, whose commander had unflinchingly run in between the Bonhomme Richard and a similar approaching death, JT knew he would be dead right now. What an act of selflessness and what an act of heroism that saving action had been. JT hoped that the Captain of the Thach would be awarded the Medal of Honor for it. JT knew he deserved it.

"God bless them and rest them...God bless them all!"

JT voiced out loud with great emotion and tears streaming down his face as he thought on it. Surrounding sailors and Marines could only nod, or voice an "amen" in response...they knew exactly what he was talking about.

No, America *must* hear this tale and see the images of it occurring as he had digitally recorded it. So that they could understand what the awful ambush had produced in the way of death and anguish, and in the way of heroism. So that they would never forget—and so that America would produce the righteous indignation and absolute commitment to a just retribution that this act *must* produce for an ultimately victorious America.

But right now, that victory looked to be a long, long ways away.

**March 16, 08:04 local time**

**Flag Conference Room, USS Kitty Hawk**

**Exiting Bungo Strait, Between Kyushu and Shikoku, Japan**

Admiral Ben Ryan reflected on the grim reality of this day; a day that had barely started on the clock, but that had already lasted for an eternity. He was the soul surviving task force commander of CBT 77. So many good men, so many close friends, so many future plans; all gone.

He looked at the shocked faces of those with him in this briefing.

"Folks, I know you are shocked, I know we have all lost a lot of good friends today. But, I need you to pull together now. We have been trained to defend our nation in just these circumstances, and our nation has been savaged today—and not just here in the Western Pacific."

At the mention of this, several faces looked up, an alertness returning to their eyes. This is exactly what the Admiral had hoped for.

"That's right, there have been other attacks. The principal of which, ladies and gentlemen, occurred on the continental United States!"

Audible intakes of breath could be heard as the Admiral paused for just a moment and then continued.

"Apparently, hundreds of ballistic missiles were used. All of them conventional thank God. Just like those an hour or so ago that descended on airfields and shipyards in Japan. The White House has been destroyed, but I can say that the President is safe, having narrowly escaped. The Vice President and several members of the cabinet were killed. The Pentagon, the Capitol, Newport News Shipyards, Ingalls Shipyards, Bath Iron Works, San Diego, Bremerton and many other sites have been hit. There are reports of terrorist attacks on all types of infrastructure in inland areas. There are many, many civilian casualties."

After allowing this to sink in for a few seconds, he continued.

"We have been trained to do something about this, and we are going to do so. Just after the attacks began, we received a communiqué from the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO). It indicated that the Chinese had fielded a new sub-surface weapon of some sort on many of their container ships and on all of their destroyer classes. We now know what these weapons are and what they are capable of.

"We also know the location of five to seven "groups" of Red Chinese ships that launched these weapons on us. They are made up of a single container ship escorted by two destroyers from those classes I just mentioned.

"Due to the nature of the risk and due to the need for force protection for the gators that have survived, we have been ordered to retire to Hawaii with all due haste. We are to gather the remainder of CBT 77, from the other Joint Task Forces as we go.

“As we depart, I have ordered the aircraft from the John Stennis and the Constellation, which were airborne when the attack came, to form up and make a strike on one of these groups. They will attack in conjunction with a Tomahawk strike that has already been launched from our task force. Based on the outcome of that attack, we may plan additional air strikes on the other groups while we are still in range to do so. We will launch as many Tomahawk missiles as we can. The Japanese Air Force and Navy have assured me that they will continue to do likewise after our departure.

“Regarding the Japanese Navy, they will be augmenting our escort as we depart by providing additional ASW and AAW support. You will see two of their new Takanami class guided missile destroyers and one of their Kongo class Aegis destroyers, the Myoko, form up with us in the next hour or so. They will travel with us for fifteen hundred miles, until we are clear of imminent danger. They are doing this at great risk to themselves, at a time when they are sorely needed. We should remember this. They are going to need our help over here as soon as we can possibly return.”

**March 16, 08:21 local time**

### **Raptor Strike**

#### **280 nautical miles SE of Okinawa, Western Pacific Ocean**

They had named themselves “Raptor Strike.” Although they were a mixed group from two carriers that no longer existed, they still carried a lot of sting.

Each carrier had already sent an E-2C Hawkeye AEW aircraft aloft that morning before the attack. In addition they each had four F/A-18Fs aloft for CAP and two more aloft for anti-surface duties. When Admiral Patterson had ordered the ready birds to be launched around 06:45, both carriers had launched two more F/A-18Fs, a F/A-18 with buddy stores for refueling, and an EF-18G EW aircraft. Now, from this, a strike package was assembled to go after one of the Red Chinese container ship groups, the one off to their southwest that had attacked them this morning.

Four F/A-18Fs carrying four AGM-94 Joint Air to Surface Standoff Missiles (JASSM) each, two EF-18Gs carrying four AGM-88 High Speed Anti-radiation Missiles (HARM) each, four F/A-18Fs flying escort and one E-2C Hawkeye providing radar and early warning coverage were approaching their launch coordinates.

“Raptor flight leader, this is Frisbee two-three, be advised that Tomahawk strike is now seventy miles from target. You have reached the launch window and you may launch at any time.”

The flight leader knew that timing was everything, he felt that they were behind schedule and therefore, rather than launch at the maximum distance, he decided to close another twenty miles.

“Frisbee two-three, this is Raptor lead. Roger your last. We will ingress further to maximize strike effectiveness. Will advise, out.”

This would have the dual advantage of getting his JASSM’s, which were slower than the Tomahawks, in much closer before launch. This would give them a better chance of a hit and would have them arriving soon after the Tomahawks. It would also allow his anti-radar missiles, which were very fast and which would surge ahead of the Tomahawks to optimize the spread between themselves and the trailing Tomahawks. Launch too soon, and the HARM’s get there too far in advance of the slower Tomahawks. In that event, the enemy simply turns off their radar until the HARM’s expend themselves, and then turn it back on to engage the Tomahawks. Launch too late, and the enemy has engaged all of your slow Tomahawks before your HARM’s can do anything about it.

When Raptor flight closed to within fifty miles of their target, but still twelve to fifteen miles outside of the range of the KS-2 missiles that the targeted ships carried, the flight leader had all aircraft launch their missiles. Eight HARM’s and sixteen JASSM’s were launched. As this took place, twenty-four Tomahawks from the Kitty Hawk battle group were just entering the effective range of the KS-2.

Except for two F/A-18Fs left to observe, Raptor flight then turned towards the Kitty Hawk. En route, they would refuel and then proceed to land on the carrier’s overloaded deck.

As the inbound Tomahawk strike closed on the Chinese group of three ships, the first layer of defenses encountered was the KS-2 anti-air missile. The KS-2 was a very effective missile, but the Tomahawks were coming in low, just above the waves, and using their own electronic counter measures. The result was that the stream of twenty-four Tomahawks was reduced to twelve by the long-range KS-2 defenses of the three Chinese ships. The most effective of these was the Tactical Strike ship itself, the PLAN 2019 Hunan. With its forty VLS cells filled with KS-2 missiles, and its reload capability, it simply kept pumping out the missiles until the incoming threat was too close. Then, the close-in defenses of each ship came into play.

The escorting Luda class destroyer was the weakest anti-air platform of the three, so therefore to it fell the dire task of illuminating all of its radar so as to draw missiles away from the other two ships. As a result, it took the brunt of the HARM missiles attack, soaking up six of the eight missiles. These hits severely disabled the ship and may have sunk it, but that was rendered moot a few moments later as three of the surviving Tomahawk missiles also struck the vessel. With the penetrating design of the Tomahawk warhead, and its 1,000 pound payload of high explosive, the Luda class destroyer was completely obliterated and she sank with all hands in just under two minutes.

The Luhai class destroyer escorting the Hunan was a much more modern and capable design. Her close-in defenses were layered and effective, consisting of both short range Crotale missiles and eight thirty-seven millimeter close in weapon systems (CIWS). As a result, three of the five Tomahawks targeted on her were downed by her defenses, but the last two HARM missiles and two of the Tomahawks impacted. She broke in half and sank with heavy loss.

The Hunan also had effective close-in defenses. This consisted of eight, thirty millimeter, fifty-four caliber, AK-630M gatling guns that operated much like the twenty millimeter Phalanx systems on U.S. ships, but shooting a larger projectile. This system knocked down all of the Tomahawk missiles targeting her, the last being destroyed a mere four hundred yards from the port side of the ship. This near miss damaged the ship as exploding fuel and debris, continuing to move forward with their failing inertia, impacted the ship, killing a number of crewmen, setting a moderate fire on deck and disabling two of the LRASD mounts on that side.

While the Hunan and her Luhai escort were engaged in defending themselves against the HARM and Tomahawk threat, the JASSM strike launched by the F/A-18Fs was bearing down on the vessels.

Of the sixteen JASSM's launched, only four were destroyed by the distracted and therefore much less effective KS-2 defenses. Of the remaining twelve missiles, eight targeted the Hunan and four the sinking Luhai class destroyer. A total of four of the eight JASSM's impacted on the Hunan, resulting in many serious secondary explosions, causing her to go dead in the water with a significant list to her port side. Two of the four JASSM's targeted on the Luhai impacted with catastrophic results hastening her sinking.

All of this was observed by the pair of F/A-18Fs that remained in the area to observe results of the attack. They were able to do this with impunity. Based on their reports, a follow-on strike of eight Tomahawks found the Hunan ninety minutes later as she tried to limp away, and sent her to the bottom of the Pacific.

It was a very hollow victory on this day of abject defeat.

**15 March, 20:29**

**Bridge, USCGS Gallatin (WHEC 721)**

**150 Miles NE of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, Atlantic, Ocean**

Captain Thames listened as the reports continued to come in. Death, destruction, terror and chaos were gripping areas all over the country.

Apparently the President was alive, but he was still not in a position to address the nation. A nation that was not sure how many of its other political and military leaders *were* alive.

The Pentagon had been hit hard, much worse than the September 2001 attacks. Three of the five sides took hits and many portions collapsed. The Capitol building was attacked; apparently the dome had completely collapsed with much of the structure under the weight of several direct hits. Many representatives and senators had not escaped.

"Well," the Captain thought, "we're out here in the water trying to track down one of the perpetrators."

The message had been broadcast to all units now: Chinese container ships may have weapons aboard, including long range ballistic missiles.

He felt his High Endurance Cutter (WHEC) was up to and capable of tracking down and prosecuting such a target if he got the chance. With his seventy-six millimeter dual-purpose deck gun, his twenty millimeter Phalanx (CIWS) and particularly his eight Harpoon missiles, he was ready to catch up with any vessel that had attacked his nation and either take it down, or put it down.

Right now, he was prosecuting one such lead. A single Chinese container ship had been waiting for clearance into the Chesapeake when the attacks occurred and several other ships that were also waiting had named this ship, the Guizhou, as the shooter. He had a track on it now, about seventy miles in front of him.

"Jake, get Lieutenant Ross on the horn for me."

Less than thirty seconds later, the Captain was handed the hand set. Lieutenant Ross was the pilot of the HH-35 Dauphin helicopter that was embarked on the Gallatin. The Dauphin was a good design, perfect qualities for the multiple roles required of the Coast Guard of search and rescue, interdiction, and potential combat. The Captain keyed his hand set.

"Mallet, this is Cut-base, how do you copy? State your situation"

A clear signal came immediately back.

"Cut-base, I read you loud and clear. I'm thirty miles from tango-01 and have him on radar. You should be getting the feed. A single ship, looks like a container ship from here, but I am going in for a closer look."

The Captain talked briefly with his Combat Information Center. They did indeed have the radar track and already had four Harpoons targeted on the vessel.

"Ross, we have the digital feed and all targeting is already programmed. Try and get a positive ID, then get back to me. Be careful, Cut-base out."



The line was silent for a several seconds, then “I roger that Cut-base. We are closing to twenty-five miles now and reducing altitude... *wait one*, we are being illuminated, I say again, vessel has lit us up. *Missile launch*, I have a missile launch...two, three launches. Evading.”

The abrupt nature of the change stunned the Captain and everyone on the bridge momentarily.

“Ross, get down on the deck and get the hell out of their range!”

“CIC, fire! I say again, *Fire!* Engage the target!”

“Ross? Mallet? Radar, what do you have on Mallet?”

The radar officer looked at his scope and then at his screen.

“Captain, he’s off radar and we have lost the data feed.”

Just then, from forward of the bridge, massive gouts of flame kicked out of launch canisters as one after another, four RGM-84A Harpoon missiles were launched. They accelerated to 600 knots and after an initial climb, arched over and descended to fifty feet above the water, continuing on their track towards the target.

Eight minutes later, when it was clear that three of the missiles had been shot down before they could reach the target, the Captain ordered another four launched.

This time, only two of his missiles were definitely shot down, but the radar image of the Guizhou was still on the screen and moving, although now the speed had slowed from twenty to eight knots. Smoke could be seen over the horizon as the Gallatin continued to close.

At a range of twenty miles, the masts and upper super structure of the Guizhou could just be seen over the horizon, with smoke billowing up from its forward section. The Captain ordered the Gallatin to close to within firing range of their seventy-six millimeter dual-purpose gun, another twelve miles.

But they never made it.

At a range of eighteen miles from the Chinese vessel, the sonar operator shouted a warning of an object in the water coming at them at unbelievable speed from off the starboard bow, and four miles out. The Captain ran to the starboard side of the bridge and saw an unbelievably fast streak, trailing a fearsome wake close on his ship and explode almost directly beneath where he was standing. It was the last thing he saw on this earth.

The USCGS Gallatin (WHEC 721) stopped dead in the water as the sea flowed into the gaping rent. Very quickly, she settled and sank four minutes later at 22:07. Only thirty-three members of the crew, out of total of one hundred and seventy-seven, escaped alive.

The Guizhou, damaged by two Harpoon missile hits from the Gallatin, continued to limp further south, where she was located at 23:25 hours by a flight of two P3-C Orion’s out of Oceana Naval Air Station. Each Orion employed very powerful surface search radar and carried four Harpoon missiles. Eight missiles were launched at the Guizhou from well outside of anti-aircraft missile range. Of the eight, five got through her defenses and scored hits on her. One produced a massive secondary explosion in the forward section of the ship as reloads for the VLS missile system detonated. This explosion literally blew off the Guizhou’s bow and at 23:52, she too sank beneath the waves.

The position of the Guizhou’s sinking was painstakingly noted by circling US aircraft as rescue ships were dispatched. American intelligence agencies, shocked and stinging from the day’s events, were already anxious to gather as much information regarding the new Chinese technologies and weapons systems as possible. They intended to accomplish this in whatever manner they could, from surviving crew, from wreckage floating on the ocean surface or from a deep-sea salvage operation if necessary. As far as they were concerned, and given the gravity of the situation, the sooner that information was recovered, the better.

## Aftermath of the Attack

**March 16, 10:00 local time**  
**Government Conference Center**  
**Beijing, The People's Republic of China**

Jien Zenim stood resolute before the cameras. In a few seconds he would deliver a historically momentous statement to the people of China and to the world. That statement would be direct. It would announce in fact what the original CAS announcement had said in principle over a year ago.

Mao had been right about where all political power derives from ... the point of a gun.

As he waited, he thought of the events of this morning. Initial reports were beyond belief in terms of their success. The Chinese portion of "Breath of Fire" was exceeding expectations, both here in Asia and in America. He was certain that the hold that America had on eastern Asia had been broken, and he was convinced that China's leadership in the CAS would keep it that way.

As the light flashed to green, he began his prepared statement.

"People of China, it is with sorrow that I announce to you that a state of war exists between The People's Republic of China and the United States of America. This is not what the peace loving people of China have desired, but it is now thrust upon us.

"As a result of unequivocal information we have received we now know beyond a doubt that the United States government has embarked on a systematic program to thwart the will of free peoples around the world. They have done this by plundering the resources of other nations, by undermining the social order of other nations, by ignoring the confirmed vote of other nations, and by seeking to murder the heads of state of other nations whenever it suits their presumed needs.

"We have seen this recently in the former state of Iraq, where the people voted to align themselves with the Greater Islamic Republic after the death of their head of state. Evidence indicated then that the United States might have been complicit in the death of that head of state. America then tried to thwart the will of the people by raising up and supporting a puppet, break away government in northern Iraq. They resorted to military force to force the issue. When GIR forces liberated those areas, and when the leader of the GIR unilaterally offered an end to the fighting, America resorted to an attempted assassination to thwart that leader's attempt to bring peace.

"Now, here in Asia, we see an internal dispute among the Korean peoples. Again, the United States is seeking to exert its will. They were sending a vast armada with tens of thousands of soldiers to accomplish this.

"The People of China are a patient people. We are a peace loving people. But we are also a just people who can only stand back so long while such a bully ravages others—particularly others who have entered into peaceful and profitable economic and friendship agreements with the People's Republic of China. Today, the Chinese people reached their limit.

"This morning at 06:00, I ordered elements of the People's Liberation Army to engage and interdict American forces approaching Korea and elsewhere. I must tell you that our forces have succeeded beyond our projections. You can be proud of your heroes, they have made all of China proud, and they will continue to make us proud as we push this alien mentality back across the ocean from where it came.

"In that regard, as I am sure most of you have heard, I also ordered our forces to strike America in its homeland, the same way they have done to so many other nations. The targets were all military in nature, from their command and control, up to and including their commander in chief, to their shipbuilding, air force and other bases. We have heard reports of terror attacks on American citizens and we unequivocally disavow such attacks. We have no knowledge of, and will provide no support to, such attacks.

"To the people of America I say. We are your friends. We seek peace. Use the tools and institutions you have to remove those in your own government who use your resources in such terrible ways. Elect new leaders, who are truly interested in peace, and there will be peace.

"To America's allies I say, cease your support for such a monstrous government. We invite you to adopt the Three Wisdoms of which you have heard us speak. Adapt it to your particular culture and economic principles. If you do not desire this, that is fine. But, if you persist in your support of the monstrous policies of the current American administration, then we will wage war on you until you can no longer export such a base value system.

"To the people of China, and all the peoples of the Coalition of Asian States I say, let us unite and keep interlopers and intruders and those who would destroy our cultures and our peace away. Let us push them and their corporations of greed and death and vice far from our shores, and let us not stop until they are not capable of exporting them here again.

"Good night."

**March 16, 01:20**  
**Aspen Lodge , Presidential Bedroom**  
**Camp David, Maryland**

Norm Weisskopf could not sleep. He was thankful for his wife's deep, even breathing, for her life. He was also thankful that he finally got aboard Air Force One to communicate with the military commands that protected the nation. For about half an hour they had been very close to a full nuclear exchange with China. But when it was clear that none of the missiles were nuclear, biological or chemical, that crisis had passed.

"Well, we utterly failed our nation today," thought the President. The list of estimate losses in the western Pacific kept appearing again and again in his mind.

EYES ONLY--TOP SECRET ESTIMATED LOSSES-03/16/06

Ship Class	Ship Name	Damage	Killed	Injured
CVN-74	John Stennis	Sunk	4,758	1,108
CV-64	Constellation	Sunk	5,965	48
LHA-5	Peleliu	Sunk	2,760	235
LHD-3	Kearsage	Sunk	1,850	653
LPD-15	Ponce	Sunk	885	575
LPD-10	Juneau	Sunk	774	250
LPD-8	Dubuque	Sunk	1,212	38
LSD-52	Pearl Harbor	Sunk	921	208
LSD-50	Carter Hill	Sunk	450	376
LSD-45	Comstock	Sunk	621	256
LSD-42	Germantown	Sunk	345	173
CG-65	Chosin	Sunk	421	85
CG-75	Lake Chaplain	Sunk	389	38
DDG-73	Decatur	Sunk	231	78
DDG-83	Howard	Sunk	252	24
FFG-43	Thach	Sunk	198	79
FFG-33	Jarrett	Sunk	149	94
AOE-7	Rainer	Sunk	321	123
AOE-10	Bridge	Sunk	298	175
SSN 763	Santa Fe	Sunk	142	0
SSN 759	Jefferson City	Sunk	142	0
SSN 752	Pasadena	Sunk	142	0
SSN 716	Salt Lake City	Sunk	142	0
USCG-721	Gallatin	Sunk	144	18
LHD-2	Essex	25%	124	221
LPD-17	San Antonio	35%	155	289
LPD-49	Harper's Ferry	30%	106	189
LSD-47	Rushmore	35%	154	202
LSD-43	Fort McHenry	40%	195	102
CG-73	Port Royal	20%	89	77
CG-73	Port Royal	20%	89	97
DDG-65	Benford	60%	108	105
DDG-90	Chaffee	50%	67	124
TOTALS	Sunk-25 Damaged-8		24,510	6,001

Those were just the losses at sea in the western Pacific and did not take into account the losses on Okinawa, the losses on Japan, the losses in Korea—and then the horrific losses here in the continental United States itself. Bath Iron Works, Norfolk Shipyards, Newport News Shipbuilding, Ingalls Shipbuilding, San Diego, Los Angeles, Bremerton, the Pentagon, the Capitol, the White House, the unspeakable toll in St. Louis...the numbers were just too much to take in; too much to contemplate. The United States appeared to have lost more people in this one horrific day than in the entire ten year span of the Vietnam War!

And it was just the beginning. Later reports indicated that large Chinese invasion forces, with hundreds and hundreds of small landing craft, were gathering along the coasts of China. They looked

to be preparing for incursions into Korea across the Yellow Sea, across the Taiwan Straits at the Republic of China (Taiwan) and another force that could well be targeting the Philippines.

“My God, where art Thou?” thought the troubled President. It should bring tears to his eyes just to think on all of this and what it would mean; but he had no more tears to shed.

Tomorrow morning, here at Camp David at 06:00 in the Laurel Lodge, he would hold his cabinet meeting. Dear God, some good people and close friends were gone! Alan, Timothy and Mike were all dead. Great Americans killed in the fulfilling of their duties. Apparently the three of them had been attending to other business upstairs in the White House while they waited on him to return from lunch to start the National Security meeting. The rest were already seated down in the situation room and had been spared, albeit Jeremy and Fred had both been injured. The Vice President, the Secretary of Defense and the Director of the CIA were all dead and it was all he could do to contain his emotions.

Then at 8 a.m. he would have a joint session of Congress; at least those who were alive and healthy enough to come. They would hold it in the Chapel here at Camp David and tend to the business of declaring war on the Chinese. Congress was also decimated by this attack. Over one hundred Congressmen and thirty-seven Senators were dead in the collapsed Capitol and adjoining buildings. More good, cream of the crop Americans: gone.

At 10 a.m. he would address the nation, and he prayed that God in Heaven would give him the strength and the wisdom to know what to say, to know how to lead his nation out of these horrific circumstances and return peace and stability to the world. It would take strength, it would take steel.

His mind wandered to the Pentagon. Over two thousand five hundred missing. Lots of good, loyal and hard working Americans who had made a lifetime out of serving their country. What about Admiral Patterson? There was an honest to God, modern John Wayne American if there ever was one—now gone—died fighting for his country.

All of those hundreds and hundreds of loyal craftsmen at the shipbuilding companies. So many of them gone this day too.

The DD-21 and the CVX: destroyed before they could even be completed.

My God! The John Stennis and the Constellation! Both gone? It was just too much to take in.

And then that lying, smug bastard Zenim. The very idea of his audacity! How dare he make such statements over the blood he shed this day! Well, he certainly left no doubt as to who the enemy is.

“Dear God in Heaven, let it be his undoing. Fashion us as an instrument to bring just retribution to the Jien Zenim’s and Hasan Sayeed’s of this world, a retribution they so richly deserve.”

As he thought this, he finally, mercifully, drifted off to sleep.

**March 16, 09:57**

**Presidential Office, Laurel House**

**Camp David, Maryland**

Just a few minutes from now and a nation in total and abject shock and a world on the precipice of world war, would receive a verbal answer from the United States of America, an answer that would be voiced by Norm Weisskopf.

He had slept exhaustedly for the few hours that had been available to him. Then, this morning he had held his staff and cabinet meetings. There would be many, many more.

The cabinet meeting had gone well, considering the familiar faces and good friends who were not there, who would never be there again. The agency heads were receiving a lot of information and the picture of what had been done to America was becoming horrifically clear.

It was becoming more and more obvious to the President that China was the principal enemy, the probable mastermind behind most of what had been going on for many months...and probably a lot longer than that. China had waited until America was fully engaged in the Middle East, and then lured significant American reserves into the Far East through its proxy, North Korea, before attacking. It was a deadly serious undertaking, as China had made clear with the very nature of its attack. The fact that the terror attacks across the nation had occurred at virtually the same time made it clear that they were part and parcel of the same operation, doing things that even China didn’t want to “officially” muddy its hands with.

Thousands and thousands of American civilians were dead. Millions were without electricity. Propane heating fuel was going to be short for the rest of the spring.

The nation was going to have to take some significant time and effort to fully secure its borders, to secure its coastlines. All efforts would be poured into mobilizing America for war: her military, her industry, her financial dealings ... her people.

The congressional session had also been heartening, considering the circumstances and the many who would never be there again. But other Americans would step in. Special elections would be held soon. The Declaration of War had been unanimous. The President had then shared with the representatives, and the cabinet who were present in the room, what his intentions were. He was heartened by their support. The nature of the threat was clear; and exactly who the enemy was, was also clear. Other political or partisan issues would be placed aside, defeating the common enemy would take precedence over all else.

On the allied front, the British, who were also savaged with the loss of the majority of their task force, were squarely in the war beside the United States. Canada and Australia had made their own declarations of war against China. The major European nations were taking up the matter. The United States was demanding that all NATO countries honor article five of that agreement.

As the cameras turned on, the President could be seen sitting in the Presidential office of the Laurel house at Camp David, with the Presidential Seal behind him and an American flag to his side.

"My fellow Americans. I spoke to you on February twenty-eighth about the true nature of the conflict we find ourselves embroiled in. I spoke of sacrifice, of faith, of self-sufficiency, and of unity. The absolute need for all of these was brought home to us yesterday in a dastardly, sneak attack without provocation or precedent on this nation.

"We have suffered a terrible ambush and a tremendous loss. Our White House is destroyed, along with many loyal Americans who worked there including several of the cabinet, and including, regrettably, the Vice President of the United States.

"Our Capitol building has been destroyed along with close to 150 of our representatives and senators, all of whom were going about their sworn duty to this nation.

"Our Pentagon was again attacked, and damaged terribly, much more so than the attack in September of 2001. We have lost many, many good and loyal Americans who have devoted much of their careers to the protection of our nation, of our liberties. Now they have offered their lives.

"Our military forces in the Far East were decimated and savaged in surprise attacks by ships posing as commercial vessels and by a nation professing its neutrality. This is the same nation that carried out the attacks against our homeland here that I have just described to you. It is certain that the total death toll from these attacks will be close to 50,000 Americans. A number that may exceed our total combat losses in all of the Vietnam War.

"Yesterday, we heard the brazen words of a tyrant, a tyrant who tried to couch reprehensible acts of terror and treachery in flowery phrases. We the people of the United States of America reject those blatant lies. We in America have seen and fought and defeated this kind before, and we shall do so now. The time for flowery words is past. We will bury our dead, we will approach our God in our grief, and then we will fight.

"As of 9:30 a.m. EST today, March 16, a state of war exists between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China. It will be a long war, it will be a costly war, but it will be a war fought for liberty and freedom and against the most blatant and abject tyranny the world has seen since Hitler, Stalin and Mao.

"I will not propose to speak for or to the citizens of other nations, but I will speak directly to Jien Zenim. I want you to listen to me Zenim, from this date forward I will never attach any title to your name, you are not deserving of any.

"So, listen well. You have made the same fatal mistake that the Japanese made when they attacked America at Pearl Harbor in 1941. On that occasion, sixty-five years ago, their military leader, Admiral Yamamoto, indicated that he "feared they had awakened a sleeping giant and filled him with a terrible resolve." You have done just that, Zenim. Read your history and find out what we Americans did to Admiral Yamamoto. We discovered where he was flying and then sent our aircraft in overwhelming numbers and hunted him down and killed him. Then we defeated the Japanese armies and their navies, and when they would not surrender unconditionally, we firebombed and then nuclear bombed their cities until they did. We did essentially the same to cities of Nazi Germany and the world has been better for it. You have filled us with a terrible resolve that is many times greater than the resolve we developed from Pearl Harbor in 1941, and you and any peoples who stand with you, shall suffer the horrible consequences.

"This is not a threat, it is a promise. It is a personal promise from me, and from any one who may follow me in this office, to you, and to those who support you. We need no "coalition" to fulfill this promise and to prosecute this purpose. You have filled us with our own coalition. It is the people of the United States, and if you thought your veiled threats would alter us from this purpose, you are again sadly and fatally mistaken.

"Zenim, you have admitted your cold-blooded, calculated butchery to the world, and tried to call it good. History will judge you the same way it did Hitler, and the same way it did Mao, at least in the free, civilized world where the truth of tens of millions of dead is discussed for the genocide it is.

"I make a commitment before the citizens of America and before God. We will not rest, we will not stop, we will never, *ever give up!* If it takes us three years, or if it takes us ten years, our nation will overcome your dastardly and cowardly attack. We will produce aircraft carriers like the ones you sank by the dozens, we will produce technology to defeat whatever you may throw at us. We will produce weapons and methodologies that you will never conceive of in your closed, collective society.

"To our allies I say, *stand with us.*

"We may have been knocked to the ground, we may have been ravished by our enemies, but you can count on us getting back up on our feet stronger than before, filled with a righteous indignation and a resolve that we will pour out on our enemies to their utter astonishment and their eventual complete destruction.

“*Stand with us.*

“We will not forsake you. The United States of America makes a solemn commitment and promise to return to liberate any who fall under the blight that is now spreading. . . .and we shall return!

There will be no iron curtains at the end of this fight. The governments currently prosecuting these invasions and this tyranny will cease to exist every bit as much as Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan ceased to exist. In their place will be constitutional Republics that cherish peace and liberty and have the will to defend it.

“*Stand with us.*

“And we will stand with you to the end. If you choose not to, then all we ask is for you to stay out of the way, we will do this with, or without help.

“To our forces who are fighting on in Asia in the face of monumental odds. Who fight with the knowledge that our relief efforts have failed and that relief is far off, I say: “*Fight on.*

“Fight this enemy wherever you may find him and out of whatever circumstances you may find yourself. Take to the hills if you must, take to the streets, take to the night. They are the enemies of all we believe in and all we as a people stand for.

“*Fight on.*

“With your weapons, with your fists, with stones and clubs if you must. Fight with your words, fight with non-compliance, fight with your silence. Like an American hero from the Vietnam War, Rocky Versace. When they captured him and beat him and ultimately marched him off to execute him, he was singing “God bless America.”

“*Fight on.*

“And never give up. We will make every effort to come for you soon, but if we cannot, do not despair. As surely as the sun rises in the east, we are coming. The time will arrive when like at Normandy on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944, you will look out and see the sea and the sky filled with the innumerable host of your comrades come to liberate the captive and put down the tyrant.

“To the American people I say, take heart! Yes, armies of tyranny and coercion are on the march in the Middle East and now ominously in Asia. Yes, many of our own have died at the hands of these tyrants. Yes, some of our friends will undoubtedly fall under the control of these tyrants, but our fathers and grandfathers faced the same threats. The fight for liberty has always been so tested. Like them, America will rise to the challenge and again be the vanguard for liberty for the world. We will liberate the captive and destroy the despot.

“In the mean time, *We hold the course.*

“We will hold new elections to replace those who have fallen.

“*We hold the course.*

“We will submit new names for the heads of those agencies to congress for approval where the former leaders have been taken from us.

“*We hold the course.*

“We will establish, in keeping with the brave example from Idaho that yesterday saved tens of thousands of lives, a national Homeland Defenders, a Home Guard program. This program will be established at the local level, allowing any American to sign up and defend infrastructure in this nation in the best traditions of local militia and deputized civilians defending their own.

“*We hold the course.*

“I announce today, two national goals associated with the war effort, from which we will not step back even after we win this war.

1. We will be *totally* energy independent within eighteen months.

2. We will build and deploy an effective anti-ballistic missile shield for the entire United States within three years.

“We hold the course and that course is liberty!

“It is individual liberty, morality, accountability and responsibility. These are the key ingredients of our success as a people and our way of life.

“To punctuate this, let me close with the following two quotes.

“From the Declaration of Independence:

“*We hold these truths to be self evident. That all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.*”

“The other is from Patrick Henry. “

“*We shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of Nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, Sir, is not to the strong alone. It is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, Sir, we have no choice. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery!*”

“So my fellow Americans, *we hold the course.* Though we have been injured, though we have been grievously hurt, we do not bow, and *we do not cower.*”

“Millions who have gone before have purchased our right to stand now.

“Millions who are yet to come are depending on us.

“We shall overcome this darkest day in American history, and when we do, with the help of God, we will find the bright lining that rims every dark cloud. “

“Thank you all, keep the faith, and may God bless America in this hour of our greatest need!”

### **March 17-19**

#### **Aftermath of “Breath of Fire”**

The western world was numb and in shock. No one had believed it possible, not even after the setbacks America had suffered in the Middle East late the year before and early that year. Everyone simply presumed that it was only a matter of time until the United States and her allies would build up sufficient force and materiel in-theater and utterly destroy their enemies. But no one, not even those planning the surprise attacks against the United States in the Pacific, had believed that America could suffer a defeat as overwhelming as what had occurred on March 15-16. The fact that no one had deemed it possible had only enhanced the effect when it actually occurred. No individual, no organization, no Allied nation and no group was prepared for it. But the nations and individuals who had planned it, even if they had not anticipated the magnitude of their victory, were prepared to take abject advantage of it.

Never had the United States of America suffered such a catastrophic military defeat in all its long and distinguished history. New York City in the Revolutionary War could not compare. Manassas in the Civil War could not compare. The Little Bighorn in the western Indian wars could not compare. Pearl Harbor in World War II could not compare (although there were similarities in military and a strategic positioning). Vietnam could not compare (which had not actually been a military defeat as much as it was a political one). Even the horrific events of September 11, 2001 could not compare. March 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of that year would be forever remembered as the darkest single day in American history...a defining date for America and the world. What that definition would ultimately produce was yet to be determined, but the immediate results were clear...America and her allies were in retreat in the Pacific and falling back before powerful and emboldened forces in the Mid-East.

What the Red Chinese and their Coalition of Asian State (CAS) and Greater Islamic Republic (GIR) allies had accomplish was to effectively defeat all major U.S. military assets in the Western Pacific. That defeat had sent the surviving relief forces reeling and scurrying back eastward towards the protection of the vast Pacific and ultimately their home waters, while leaving those in-place units to fend for themselves, without hope of reinforcement. The surprise attack, a Chinese operation plan entitled “Breath of Fire” had succeeded beyond the grandest expectation of its design.

Jien Zenim, the President of the People’s Republic of China, had been the mastermind of the entire set of events, having secretly met and planned with the heads of states, or those he planned installing as the heads of state, for several years. His formation of the CAS as a new Asian superpower, both economically and militarily had set the stage. He had established that Coalition on an ideology of his own making, one that combined the foundational Maoist and Marxist principles with what he considered to be the reality of a market driven economy. He called this ideology the “Three Wisdoms” and had used it as the basis to drive the economic and social order he foresaw. Simply put, the Three Wisdoms stated:

1. All men and women are equal.
2. All share equally in the bounty of an industrious society.
3. One goal, one thought, one people for world peace.

Hasan Sayeed, who with the help of Zenim had come to power in the former state of Iran, embraced these tenets and preached a fundamental brand of Islam that incorporated the basis for them into his efforts. Once in power he proceeded, to the astonishment of the world and the consternation of America and her allies, to unify much of the Islamic world into what was now known as the GIR. His successes had been the catalyst to Jien Zenim’s overall plan. His actions in the Middle East and the resulting conflict had locked in place the bulk of the United States force projection, which had left the door open for a massive invasion of South Korea by the North. The events in the Middle East and the invasion of South Korea had been part of Jien Zenim’s lead up to “Breath of Fire,” a plan to deliver a devastating surprise attack on the relief forces sent to help the beleaguered U.S. Forces in Korea (USFK). That attack had taken place, and had been a resounding success.

As a result, the U.S. Navy, which had not suffered even a minor military setback in over sixty years, had been dealt a blow that would have totally eliminated most modern navies, and which decimated America’s carrier air-wing and amphibious capabilities in the Pacific. Two super carriers and two carrier-like, large amphibious assault ships were sunk along with many of their escorts. In addition, numerous other auxiliary ships and some of their escorts had also been sunk. This had included two Aegis cruisers, an Arleigh Burke class Aegis destroyer and eight other amphibious ships of various classes. In all twenty-four U.S. Naval vessels had been sunk in the Pacific and over twenty-five thousand personnel killed. Literally hundreds and hundreds of American tanks, armored

personnel carriers, trucks, artillery and HMMWVs (High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles) or “Hummers” had been lost with the amphibious ships.

The Chinese had committed the surprise attack against the U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet with modern container ship vessels and their escorts, upon which they had deployed their LRASD and other modern weapons. The LRASD, a large, underwater, supercavitating weapon with a highly advanced sonar and acoustical search and targeting capability that had a range in excess of 500 kilometers, moved to its attack area under conventional propulsion at upwards of 50 knots, and then performed a terminal attack from 15-20 kilometers using advanced rocket engines that propelled the weapon through the water at over 600 knots. With a 2000-Kg warhead, the effects on any ship struck by such a device were cataclysmic.

Outside of South Korea, where South Korean and U.S. forces were engaged in all-out war against the massive invading forces of North, U.S. Army and Air Force assets had been caught by surprise all across the Japanese Islands and in Okinawa. Hundreds of personnel had been killed and many air superiority and strike aircraft destroyed by surprise ballistic missile attacks from other converted Chinese container ships and their escorts. Many of these aircraft had been extremely vital to the continued defense of the Korean peninsula.

The Korean forces and their support units in Japan were now effectively cut off and facing a very ominous situation as local populations and governments began considering their own reaction in the face of the Chinese and CAS threat. And the local governments had reason to be concerned. Several large invasion forces consisting of the newly developed and deployed PLAN amphibious assault groups escorted by newly deployed Chinese STOL aircraft carrier groups had formed up. These were moving towards the western shores of South Korea, towards the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan and towards the Philippines.

In the continental United States (CONUS), surprise ballistic missile attacks by many converted Chinese container ships had been devastating. Every major U.S. Navy shipyard and construction yard up and down the East and West Coasts, and even on the Gulf Coast, had been hit and severally damaged. Thousands of workers were dead and many thousands more injured. New ships, in particular the new destroyer and carrier designs that were about to be launched, had been destroyed in place. The White House, the Capitol building, and the Pentagon had all been virtually destroyed by conventional ballistic missiles launched from converted Chinese container ships lying off of the U.S. coast in international waters. Many elected and appointed government officials had been killed, including the Vice President, some senior members of the cabinet and many congressmen and senators in this “decapitation” strike by PLAN forces. The President himself, Norm Weisskopf, had narrowly escaped the same fate as he and his wife were whisked away from the White House in Marine One in the very nick of time.

Terror attacks by individuals and groups of individuals had disrupted many areas within the United States, killing thousands of U.S. citizens. These attacks were continuing. Power was off to large portions of the American West. In St Louis, a large commercial business area was destroyed in a huge propane explosion, killing several thousand citizens. Several dams had been breached near major metropolitan areas and one large office complex in the Chicago area had been attacked. A number of major bridges had been destroyed along the Mississippi River, and attacks aimed at locks and storage areas were continuing up and down the river by heavily armed small craft.

In the Middle East, U.S. forces that had been conducting strategic withdrawals in Saudi Arabia and Turkey to buy time for reinforcement and re-supply were stunned by the news. Critical forces that had been allocated for America’s emergency relief effort in Korea were now lost. Critical re-supply efforts and materiel that were in route to the Middle East were now going to have to be shared while America built up to defend itself at home and to fight large major wars on two fronts. The morale and logistics impact of the defeat in the Pacific had ominous implications for the war in the Middle East.

America’s allies were extremely concerned. Their own defense capabilities had always been tied to the might of America, and now as the western world’s financial system tumbled towards massive depression and failure, some questioned their own future course of action. England, Canada, Germany, and Australia remained strong, but France, Italy, Greece and Spain were wavering.

Enemy nations were ecstatic at the success of the surprise attacks and there were celebrations in the streets of Beijing, Shanghai, Tehran, Baghdad, Damascus, Islamabad, Tripoli, and to a lesser extent in New Delhi, Bombay, and Calcutta. Those nations were rapidly moving forward with their plans to consolidate and make use of the advantages they had won.

All of this represented the conditions that America and her citizens found themselves in. Many thousands of her finest were dead, with many more wounded and injured. Tens of thousands of her troops and citizens in Asia were cut off without prospect of relief while others were retreating in the hopes of regrouping and fighting another day. The shock was still fresh to both the military and civilian populations. That shock would soon give way, but to what? The answer to this question would be one of the critical determining factors in the direction that events would soon take



## Chapter 11

*“Use all of your strength to keep a wounded enemy from rising.”—Ancient Chinese Warlord*

**March 18, 01:30 local time**

**Bridge of USS Kitty Hawk, CTF 77**

**Western Pacific Ocean, North of Bonin Island**

Ben Ryan watched the wake of his flagship as she continued to make her way north and eastward.

“What a difference a day or two makes,” he thought.

Two days ago at this time, three strong carrier task forces (TF) of Combined Task Force (CTF) 77 of the United States Navy had been making their way towards Korea bent on reinforcing the besieged and reeling American forces there and turning the tide of war on that peninsula. Today, the remnants of those three task forces were retreating across the Pacific, leaving Korea and the entire Pacific Rim to their own devices in the face of a now much more dangerous enemy.

That remnant was itself a strong task force by any nation’s standard. In and of itself, it was stronger than many other entire navies. But it had not been a “floating” navy that had made the difference in the early morning hours of the 16<sup>th</sup> of March. Nor had it been a floating or airborne threat that was now sending the remainder of his forces scurrying to the east as quickly as their props would take them. No, a new submerged threat had been manifest, an extremely lethal and as yet undefined submerged threat that had cut through the United States Navy like a scythe through wheat. Two other task force commanders and most of their staffs were dead as a result, including the overall commander Admiral Reginald Patterson, as brilliant, brave and loyal a U.S. naval officer as had ever proudly donned the uniform. Two mighty United States Navy super carriers, numerous escort ships and many amphibious and supply ships they were shepherding were also gone, twenty-four ships in all...and upwards of twenty-five thousand American service personnel.

“My God, how could this have happened?” thought Admiral Ryan. “Where was the monumental breakdown that permitted the development and deployment of these weapons without a shred of notice, and that allowed for the political will to carry off such an attack against our forces?”

It was a question political and military leaders all over the world were asking. . .it was a question in the minds of tens of millions of civilians as well. The Admiral realized that the answer was not to be found in a short-term analysis of the situation. Ryan recognized that the motivations empowering these events had been building for decades. It was apparent now, after such horrendous losses, that a complacent and almost criminally negligent rush to develop “new” markets and “broader” political acceptance had fueled forces bent on delivering a paralyzing, if not fatal, blow to America.

It was clear now that the government of the People’s Republic of China had taken advantage of every American overture and every American effort with a clear and patient plan in mind to evict America from the Western Pacific region. It was also clear that many American business leaders and politicians had been enticed, had looked the other way, or worse, had abetted the very plans that had led to the current situation, as they sought to enhance their own positions.

“Yes, what a difference a day or two makes,” thought the Admiral. All of this was now so much clearer. The Admiral himself had followed orders on many occasions, and issued them on others, to allow for joint activities and “sharing” with the very enemies who had attacked them yesterday. The same enemies who had just yesterday so callously announced to the world what their real intentions were regarding world peace. Now there would be hell to pay in putting this particular genie back in the bottle, if it indeed could be placed back in the bottle at all.

As the Admiral turned and reentered the bridge in route to one more briefing before catching a few hours of sleep, he reviewed the hastily thrown together operation plan (OPLAN) for CTF 77. After driving almost due east and rendezvousing with the remnant of TF 77.2 and TF 77.3, the CTF had turned north by northeast 150 miles west of Bonin Island yesterday. It was at this point that the Japanese escorting vessels that had been sailing with them as added protection turned back towards Japan. Those three destroyers, two Takanami and one Kongo class, had been very welcome in the long hours of the 16<sup>th</sup>, when additional attacks had been considered imminent. Now they were turning back to their home islands, which desperately needed their strong sonar and air defense capabilities to stand against the imminent threat of the same forces which had mauled the U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet. Their willingness to help their U.S. allies in an hour of abject need would not soon be forgotten.

After several hours of rapid transit (as rapid as the accompanying amphibious and replenishment ships would allow), the CTF had rendezvoused with the retreating Canadian Task Force that would have joined them today off Korea’s shores. That Canadian Task Force (CANTFOR), although it had not been itself attacked, recognized the futility of proceeding into those dangerous waters after the losses inflicted on the much stronger U.S and British Task Forces.

As a result, two Iroquois guided missile destroyers, two Halifax guided missile frigates and two new Canadian rapid sea lift transports would now accompany CTF 77 eastward to fulfill their new mission. That new mission called for a strengthening of Guam and Wake Islands' defenses as CTF 77 made its way back to Hawaii. Marines, materiel, and aircraft would be offloaded at both islands to help prepare them for what was considered the likely prospect that China and her CAS allies would seek rapid expansion in all of Asia and into the Pacific.

The Admiral desired above all else to relieve U.S. forces in Korea, at Okinawa and Japan, and the Special Forces units in the Philippines. But, it was painfully obvious that the nature and capabilities of the new weapons systems employed against him made any mission further west suicidal for U.S. surface forces at this point. Having personally seen them in action, the Admiral knew full well that the enemy to the west was formidable and deadly, but their full capabilities and how widely they had deployed these systems were still unknown. Therefore, a highly unpredictable course had been plotted that would lead CTF 77 away from immediate danger and make it difficult to pinpoint their location, while allowing them to deliver the desired reinforcements to both Guam and Wake Island on their way back to Pearl Harbor.

Any offensive action from the sea would now have to come from the same type of forces that the enemy had employed, that of submerged forces. In this area the United States was not lacking, and at this very hour back at CINCPAC, considerable thought was going into how to best apply those forces. With all of this firmly in mind, Admiral Ryan entered the briefing conference room to inform his staff and the rest of the task force where their duty lay for the next two weeks and how they would fulfill it. He would then dispatch a few messages to CINCPAC before retiring for the night.

**March 18, 04:30 local time**

**Stateroom aboard USS Bonhomme Richard  
Western Pacific Ocean, NE of Bonin Island**

JT Samson contemplated the hours since midnight. He had worked feverishly for a day and a half to take the images he had captured during the horrific attack, and put together a narrative to go with them. That narrative had come from the heart like no other in JT's career. He had witnessed death and destruction unparalleled in American history, and he had transformed it into a powerful, heart-wrenching, soul-searching presentation that depicted the brutality and suddenness of the attack.

The destruction of the aircraft carrier USS Constellation after being hit by two of those incredibly fast torpedo-like weapons, and the unbelievable folding together of its two halves as its back broke and it rapidly slipped beneath the waves, was the most appalling and gut-wrenching thing JT had ever witnessed. The resulting maelstrom of aircraft, equipment and people falling together in the middle of that wreckage had been clearly visible two miles away from where JT had photographed it.

In addition, he had captured the unbelievable heroic action of the captain of the USS Thach when he timed perfectly his frigate's insertion between the Bonhomme Richard and another of those destructive devices. That action had cost the life of almost every sailor on the Thach, but had saved many times that number on the Bonhomme Richard.

"Everyone one of us on this ship owe that man our lives...we owe *that whole crew* our lives. My God! They faithfully carried out their orders in the face of certain death, never flinching and never wavering. They knew their duty, and they carried it out regardless of the consequences," thought JT, realizing as he thought it that such integrity, such virtue, and such commitment was what would be required in the face of the storm they all now faced.

"We owe them a debt of honor...I owe them a debt of honor," he continued in his mind. "And I'm going to pay that debt in full by making sure that the folks back home and the entire world know of their sacrifice...and never forget it!"

JT had also filmed the reaction of those hardened, totally in-shape Marines on the Bonhomme Richard as they witnessed each of these events, and took in the death and destruction before their very eyes. That reaction was an emotional and almost spiritually patriotic occurrence of shock, surprise, sadness, and then evolving resolve that JT was convinced the entire nation needed to see.

When he finally had the material in a form that he felt captured and conveyed the essences of all of these thoughts, JT delivered all of it to Admiral Ryan's staff in accordance with his pre-arranged press agreement. JT had not expected that his request for an immediate transfer of the unedited story back to the United States would be allowed, particularly since he also requested that his own online news service receive the material with as little editing as possible for publication. To his surprise, after a staff meeting in the early hours of this morning, word had come back that the Admiral himself had approved of the transfer of his report with his request to Washington, D.C. directly. The assessment of its content would occur at Camp David, Maryland, where the President's staff would review the material and make the final decision as to how to proceed.

"So, the Admiral felt it, too," mused JT, "and he passed it all, unedited, directly to Weisskopf's staff, bypassing CINCPAC entirely. I'll bet he had to jump through hoops to get that approved."

This was one of those occasions where every instinct told JT that the material he had captured would have significant and long-lasting impact in the world of news. It was not unlike that event

during the presidential election when JT's open microphone had captured then-Presidential candidate Norman Weisskopf's reaction to some comments by his challenger's husband, himself a former president, regarding Weisskopf's age. The honesty and uniquely American nature of that reaction had propelled Norman Weisskopf to the presidency. It had also made a name for JT Samson and his online news service, SierraLines, propelling them to a leading position amongst all online news services...and winning Samson a place in the new President's heart.

"That place very nearly cost me my life," thought JT as he once again reflected on how close he had come to sharing the fate of those brave sailors on the USS Constellation and USS Thach. The invitation to join the Task Force had come from the highest levels in the administration. There was no doubt that the administration trusted him to report events honestly and accurately. "They certainly never had in mind that those events would take this course," he thought.

"Well, the report and the data is on their way," concluded JT in his mind. "We'll see if Weisskopf's people are true to their word about reporting the events as openly and accurately to the American people as possible."

And with that, JT lay down on his berth and immediately fell into a deep and exhausted sleep, it having been almost forty eight hours since he had last had any.

**March 18, 06:30 EST**

**Executive Conference Room, Laurel House  
Camp David, Maryland**

The presentation was over and the President's chief of staff turned off the AV equipment. Everyone in the room sat in stunned shock, despite what they themselves had experienced in the last forty-eight hours. Even though they all had access to and had read the casualty reports which listed the estimated loss of life, and identified destroyed and damaged ships, nothing short of being there could have prepared them for the brutal reality of the images they had just seen.

After almost a half minute of silence, the President spoke.

"Well folks, I can hardly begin to describe the feelings...this is the second time I have seen this, the first being early this morning not long after the report was brought to my attention. I am of the opinion and inclination to show most of this report to the nation, exactly as JT Samson narrated it and then to approve his request that it be made available on his news service web site."

Curt Johnson, the Head of FEMA, disagreed. "Are you sure we want to do that, Mr. President? I mean, we have continuing attacks occurring within the borders of this nation, and they are not trivial. We have panic in some areas where citizens are suffering from a complete loss of critical services. Not everyone will see it, and it could contribute to further deterioration of morale here at home."

President Weisskopf answered immediately.

"Curt, the people of this nation represent our employers. Whenever possible, I intend to give them as full a disclosure as possible of the gravity of the situation facing us all. We will make it the policy of this administration to trust them more than your typical politician has done in the past. So, in answer to your question, yes, I am sure I want to do this. Particularly because I feel that by having the people know the full gravity of the situation we are facing, they will support us as their representatives in the full mobilization measures that will be required for our victory in this war."

Jeremy Stone, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, used the President's pause as an opportunity to interject his own thoughts.

"Mr. President, I understand your convictions in this matter and, quite frankly, I share them and applaud them. At the same time, I must urge caution. These films are not only graphic from a human standpoint as to what our enemies did, they are graphic from a military and an intelligence standpoint. They will provide direct battle damage assessment (BDA) to our enemies. For this reason, I believe I must urge caution and restraint in making such a film available to the general public."

During the entire time that General Stone was speaking, the President had been nodding his head. At the conclusion of General Stone's remarks, the President spoke.

"Jeremy, I said I wanted the American people to be fully aware of the gravity of the situation; I did not say that all details need to be revealed. In fact, I believe we can take this opportunity to expose our citizens to the full gravity of the situation, and sow some confusion amongst the enemy at the same time. To date, they know that they have succeeded in winning a huge victory and that we are retreating, but I do not believe they know the full extent of that victory. What if, for example, they thought that the Constellation was the only carrier sunk? According to our NRO people, there were no Chinese satellites positioned to get a view of that attack. What if we were able to sow seeds of doubt in their minds regarding what we have available to us in the way of carriers in the Pacific?"

"I believe we can edit out the sensitive portions of this film to help accomplish both aims. Jeremy, John, Fred and Admiral Crowler, I want you to put your best people on this and come up with a plan that uses the Kitty Hawk in the same way the USS Enterprise was used in the early days of World War II. In short, make the enemy believe that we only lost one carrier in the engagement on the 16<sup>th</sup>. At the same time, I want the relevant portions of the death of the Constellation and the Thach

aired, along with the sobering and tremendously emotional shots of those Marines aboard the Bonhomme Richard. We'll give up some BDA in that, but if we can make the ruse more believable by doing so, then we will come out ahead in the end.

"As far as the Kitty Hawk's operational plans, I will leave that to you, Jeremy, and Admiral Crowler. But my guess is you will have to utilize quite a few LA Class and at least one of our Sea Wolf class subs to insure that the Kitty Hawk is properly protected from the submerged threat. Under no circumstances could we afford to lose her...but we cannot afford not to use her, either."

John Bowers, the President's National Security Advisor (NSA) spoke as the President paused to look at his cabinet members.

"Mr. President, despite the fact that there were apparently no Chinese reconnaissance satellites in a position to view the John Stennis at the time of the attack, it will be difficult to carry off this ruse for very long. We lost almost five thousand personnel on the John Stennis. Those personnel have families, friends and other ties. They have friends throughout the service. Hundreds of others saw the John Stennis get hit and go down. How will we be able to keep the loss away from family and friends, the press, and from those agents sure to be here amongst us?"

The President reflected for only a second or two before responding.

"John, we are in all-out war. All operational security procedures in wartime apply. I want the American people to be aware of the gravity of the situation and will share whatever knowledge possible to insure that...but we will not compromise ongoing operations to do so. It is a fine line – perhaps razor edge—but Admiral Crowley, perhaps assisted by your staff, will have to mete out the announcement of the deaths of those service people appropriately in order to insure the security of the operational plan as it is developed. I believe that by announcing factually what occurred to the Constellation group, and what occurred in the Stennis group excluding the carrier, we will fulfill my desire regarding making the people aware. We will just have to insure that Admiral Ryan conveys to his staff – and that they impart to their staffs as well – the overriding necessity to preserve operational security. I believe JT Samson will abide by this as well. He's probably the most patriotic, yet straightforward and honest journalist I know.

"Now, gentlemen, let's turn to the remaining items on the agenda. They include: one, the domestic front; two, the situation in Korea; three, the status of our thousands of citizens who are now trapped inside the People's Republic of China; four, the status of Chinese satellite and reconnaissance capabilities and our ability to destroy them; five, the formation of these Chinese invasion forces in the Yellow Sea; six, an update on India's involvement; and seven, the overall situation in the Mid East.

"Okay, let's start with the continuing attacks occurring here domestically. We must get a handle on this so we can put down the terror attacks occurring within our borders. At that point, our full mobilization and wartime production plans can move forward.

"Curt, please update us on the FEMA efforts here in the CONUS, and then Russell, give us your report on how Homeland Security is containing the terrorists and enemy agents amongst us?"

**March 18, 18:28 EST**

**WNN Broadcast Studios**

**New York, New York**

David Krenshaw had viewed the video earlier, before the President had broadcast it to the nation in the last hour. WNN, along with all the major networks, had received an advance copy so that they could put together their report and commentary to be aired after the President's address. The clarity was amazing...the graphic nature of the death and destruction appalling.

"Too bad it was already copyrighted and all fees for its use and viewing would go to that upstart Internet operation," thought David. "Perhaps I can convince the CEO and CFO here at WNN to offer enough to purchase the rights from that amateur."

As an executive at WNN, and as a member of the Council on International Relations (CIR), David was a rising star in the worldwide broadcast and news industry. He was one of the most recognized newscasters on earth. Recently, he was finally given the opportunity to show that his organizational and overall production management skills matched his camera presence and delivery. David had never doubted for an instant that such an opportunity was not only deserved, it was his destined avenue to worldwide influence to match his recognition.

Now, he was going to present potentially one of the most important commentaries he had ever broadcast, a commentary on the beginning of global war, a war that pitted his own nation against some of the most influential people in David's career. Jien Zemin, the President of the People's Republic of China, and David Krenshaw were friends, and had been for many years...no, more than friends. David liked to believe that they were mutual confidants, and David was anxious for that relationship to continue, despite the conflict and the resulting complications.

"Yes, that's important...extremely critical for some point of contact, some point of trust to be maintained in these horrible circumstances," thought David as the final touches were applied to his makeup prior to the broadcast.

It was just such reasoning that had led David to transmit a copy of the video in its entirety over the secure satellite phone to his “friend and confidant” just two hours ago. It was such reasoning that influenced the entire production David was about to broadcast. Despite the location of his headquarters, despite David’s citizenship and the declaration of war, David felt he had “global responsibilities” to fulfill. He felt his unique position and relationship with the Chinese leadership placed him in a position to individually influence both sides and to make a difference in this conflict.

“Surely this is so,” reflected David. Jien Zenim had told him so himself not three hours ago.

As he completed that sobering, yet satisfying, thought, his production assistant and attending technicians informed him of the timing and the countdown began. At zero, the production assistant motioned to David, the red light blinked on, and David Krenshaw turned to the camera and spoke.

“Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to this special commentary on world events by WNN. I am David Krenshaw, a member of the Board of Directors at WNN and President and General Manager for Worldwide News. I will be your host this evening.

“We have just witnessed a broadcast from the President of the United States that is so horrifying as to shock us all into fully realizing the peril into which our nation and the world were thrust as a result of the attacks just two days ago. The loss of life is monumental. The destruction of some of the most advanced technology in America’s arsenal is highly troubling. Despite the shock and the horror, or maybe even as a result, perhaps this is a time to pause and let that shock sink in so we can find a way to escape from this abyss that has opened wide its jaws before us.

“Please do not misunderstand. What occurred on March 15<sup>th</sup> was a brutal and unexpected attack on the United States and, as the President so aptly pointed out, justice for those actions must be satisfied. We here at WNN hope that the U.S. government will seek the most judicious path to attain that justice. However, we hope that in seeking justice, we will not be subject to a repetition of the horrors depicted in this broadcast.

“Such costs, according to the Pentagon and the Weisskopf administration, as the sinking of a U.S. Navy super carrier, the USS Constellation, and the sinking of two of our large assault ships, and many of their escorts, cannot be borne again. We urge the administration to find a way to open dialog with both the GIR and the CAS that will halt the hostilities and allow justice to be served.

“We’ll now turn to our chief military analyst for an explanation of what these losses represent in terms of naval capabilities for the United States in the Pacific...”

**March 19, 19:10 CST**

**FTA Trucking, U.S. Headquarters**

**Dallas, TX**

Both men sat quietly, reflecting on the corporate conference that they had concluded ten minutes earlier. The officers and managers who had attended had been apprised of the impact on trucking operations that the current restrictions on all interstate travel would have on their operations. That impact was expected to be severe in the short term, and therefore the absolute necessity to maintain all required documentation and paper work for all operations, and each individual trip, was emphasized.

These two men, Miguel Santos and Hector Ortiz, were already personally familiar with many of these restrictions. Both men had been officially “on vacation” when the attacks, which had initiated the restrictions, had occurred on March 15<sup>th</sup>. Both men had then traveled by personal car back to Dallas from their “vacations” in the western states. While arranging for this conference by cell phone during their return trip, they had both experienced first-hand the restrictions—the border and random checkpoints manned by hastily organized National Guard and local State Patrol and Sheriff’s units.

Although they may have been put together hastily, there was nothing hasty about the review of each person traveling through the checkpoints. Some of the waits had been over an hour in length. Of course, both Miguel and Hector carried papers establishing beyond doubt their credibility as executive officers of one of the premier NAFTA success stories.

Despite that success, and despite the high level positions each man held, there is nothing quite so sobering, as the feeling one gets when looking at the business end of an automatic military assault rifle, or squad serviced machine guns and infantry fighting vehicles. As they reflected on that, the two began to get down to the real purpose of their follow-up meeting. Hector broke the silence and began.

“Miguel, your operations along I-15, I-5 and I-25 have gone very well. Congratulations on a job well done. As you know, Mexico City has approved your shift of some resources to press this advantage. I suppose it is most correct to say that I and my superiors have approved it. I’m more than interested in hearing your assessment of operations involving the temporary shift of resource from the I-35 corridor to the I-25, from the U.S. 287 corridor to I-25 and from I-40 to I-5 in California.”

Miguel understood every bit of Hector’s coded conversation. That conversation was spoken in code as a final insurance against eavesdropping. The other aspects of the security included the special electromagnetically shielded curtains, the daily scrubbing for bugs (in five years, not one had ever been found), and the barely audibly but digitally synthesized and encoded background music they employed to thwart any other outside, directional, or sophisticated listening devices.

All of that aside, in fact, the three most successful operations out of the ten that Hector and Miguel's teams had undertaken on March 15<sup>th</sup> had occurred along I-5 in southern California, I-15 in Utah, and I-25 in Colorado. Hector and Miguel had both been personally involved in leading two of those teams before returning to Dallas for these meetings. As a result, large areas of southern California, Arizona, Utah, New Mexico and Colorado remained without power today.

Now, the more serious follow-on operations were about to begin. Whereas before, the teams in those areas had been involved principally in the destruction of critical substations in the power grid, they were now about to embark on more direct and violent action. By combining teams from other areas, Miguel and Hector were about to unleash three fifty-man teams, armed with RPGs, fully automatic weapons and shoulder launched anti-armor and anti-aircraft weapons, against three high value targets in the principle metropolitan areas of Salt Lake City, Denver, and Los Angeles.

"Thank you Hector, Your faith and trust in our U.S. operations have sustained us and inspired the very success we are now experiencing. Without your personal involvement, these successes would not have been possible. We estimate that we can consolidate and coordinate the activities of the additional personnel within a short period in order to produce the desired results for our operations in all three areas by the 18<sup>th</sup> of next month."

Hector understood that the 18<sup>th</sup> of the next month meant 1800 hours of the next day.

All is going according to plan, then. By late tomorrow evening, the news networks should be covering yet another large and horrific attack on the United States and her people," thought Hector. "Whatever it takes."

Hector believed that the time had come to bring the conflict home to these people to pay a price, a stiff price. In his mind, they were a people who had for so long, been living in the lap of luxury, and off the largesse of gains and wealth acquired at the expense of other peoples throughout the world. In particular he believed the Americans had been doing this off of land and wealth usurped from the "rightful" owners of the lands of "El Norte". He had been receiving funding for years from his friends in the Caribbean and in South America, and large amounts of interest that had been generated from those funds. With that money he had equipped and brought hundreds of individuals into America across her poorly protected southern border, individuals whom his people had trained well over the years. Now Hector believed that preparations for the long-planned-for attack were complete.

In Hector's mind, the time had finally arrived for the oppressed Latino peoples of the Americas to work hand-in-hand with other forces around the world. He felt it was time to work in concert with the leader of the Greater Islamic Republic acting on behalf of the oppressed Middle Eastern peoples, and with the leader of the Coalition of Asian States acting on behalf of the exploited Asian peoples. The time was right for them all to throw off the yoke of economic oppression and the ever-present and coercive military presence of the United States.

And if he, Hector Ortiz, and his loyal adherents like Miguel personally profited from the undertaking and the resultant new order they would impose in the aftermath...well then, what of it?

"Wonderful news, Miguel! I will anxiously await the reports on your activities and watch closely the growing profit margin and increased market share. Let's toast a successful fulfillment of our goals in this regard, both from a corporate perspective and from your own U.S. Operations perspective. I assure you, the success of these operations will be spread liberally throughout the organization"

**March 19, 22:35 MST**

**Henry's Ranch Subdivision**

**Boise, ID**

Geneva watched intently as her son Alan worked at the computer and prepared to read the email they had just received from Leon, her oldest son. He was writing from Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, where he was going through Marine Infantry Training after having completed basic training just over a week ago. With the attack on the 15<sup>th</sup>, all leaves had been canceled and every Marine had been called back to his or her duty station. For Leon, and for his friend, Billy Simmons, this had meant immediate travel to Camp Lejeune and an accelerated training so they could get to their individual Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) training as rapidly as possible. It was clear that every one of them was going to be needed, and quickly.

"Could it really have only been one week ago?" thought Geneva as Alan began to read. Their entire world had turned completely upside down in that week with the attacks on American forces in the Pacific and the direct attacks on America. The destruction of the White House, the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., and most of the Pentagon—as well as the attacks on so many port facilities and shipbuilding yards had everyone. Not to mention the attempted destruction of the dam above Boise, just a few miles upstream from the very subdivision that she now lived in.

"Lord Almighty!" thought Geneva. "They done gone and brought this fighting right here to my new home." In fact, had that attack been successful—had not those brave young men who were working with the sheriff's department as a part of Idaho's Home Guard program been successful in preventing it—then Geneva and Alan both probably would have died in the resulting flood. They would have died along with thousands of other Idahoans along the Boise River.

Leon had been able to catch a military transport the very next day and had arrived in North Carolina the next day. Now he had sent them an email to let them know he was safely there. Geneva reviewed all of this in her mind, and as Alan read the words of the email from Leon, her motherly instincts and love for her boys welled up and the tears ran down her cheeks.

*“Dear Mom and Alan,*

*“I just arrived at Camp Lejeune this morning. It was a long flight. The seating was not what some folks would call first class, but it was a lot better than no seating at all, so it was a ‘good’ flight.*

*“They were all ready for us. As orderly as basic training had been, it was nothing compared to the all-business attitude and regiment we are seeing now. We are Marines and we are ready! Mom, I have never felt so alive in my whole life...more committed...more proud to be a part of something!*

*“Alan, you get yourself ready, little brother. It was freedom that allowed us the opportunity of a fresh start, and that’s what this country stands for. And it’s under attack, so it’s time for us to stand up for it. If you’re grateful for the blessings we’ve enjoyed, I hope and pray that you will consider joining me as your blood brother and as your brother in arms in fighting for it!*

*“We are now going through an accelerated Infantry Training Course, shaving off a full ten days calendar time, but working longer hours each day. Then it will be on to our individual MOS training. As a sniper, I will go through scout and specialized sniper training course work. Billy is going into flying helicopter gunships, like his father does in the Army...except the Army does not have the new AH-IZ Viper Cobra that we have in the Marines—the ones that Billy will be flying. There is going to come a time when we will see those birds come flying to our assistance, like angels flying on heavenly wings. I’ll see him for the next few weeks, but then he will be off to Florida to learn to fly, and then who knows when we will next cross paths?*

*“Well, I don’t have much time. I want all of you to stay safe and not worry in the least about me! Alan, you might consider joining up with one of those Home Guard units as you finish high school. They were sure effective there at that dam near Boise! I tell you, saving lives and defending freedom against our enemies is great training for preparing to be a Marine! So, please think about it.*

*“I love you both. And Momma, don’t you worry. I am not only in the good Lord’s hands, I am in the hands of some crusty old NCOs and fine officers here who will do everything in their power, in their own way, to take care of me just as He would. Especially the NCOs...even if most folks would be hard pressed to understand it that way. But I understand it that way, and I want you to, too.*

*“Love, your son and brother, Leon”*

**March 20, 07:04 local time**

**800 miles Northwest of Krasnoyarsk**

**Gavank, Siberia, the Russian Federation**

General Andrei Nosik listened to the briefing from his intelligence officer. Things here in Gavank were tolerable. The Russian military men in charge of security had found that the Indians were generally a hard working and peaceable people. Oh, there was the occasional flare-up and brawl—and on occasion there had even been a knifing or two. But, all in all, there had been no major difficulties for the security forces under General Nosik’s command. This good fortune applied equally to the major petroleum production going on here at Gavank, as well as the low sulfur coking operation 300 kilometers to the east, also an Indian operation.

The Cobaltite mine to the south was a different matter. Perhaps it was the long-standing distrust between the people, or perhaps it was from what General Nosik considered the too-cramped and crowded living conditions there, but the Chinese operations had provided his forces and the Colonel commanding them there no end of trouble. Brawls were more frequent, and there had been numerous deaths there amongst the workers due to knifings and the occasional shooting.

Colonel Propov had required several meetings with the Chinese Project Management team to impress upon them the absolute need for discipline and order. Of course Li Fan, the manager for the Chinese workers there, had promised compliance, and had worked hard to achieve it, exerting firm discipline on his people that sometimes had included summary executions of the worst offenders.

Li also knew that the operation would go on, regardless of the difficulties with the workers and the protestations of the Russian security forces. Simply put, Li, Colonel Propov, and General Nosik all knew that the Russian Federation simply required the hard currency produced by these operations too badly to allow a few Chinese brawls or deaths to interfere. The Chinese, particularly now that they had grabbed the Tiger’s tail, needed the raw materials too badly, and Russia needed the money.

Nonetheless, General Nosik was concerned and would remain so. His concerns went beyond the local lawlessness and disorder, extending to the Indian operations as well. There were simply too many foreigners within the borders of his country for his liking—and most of them were young, healthy, military-aged men. Although it not so for Dr. Gavanker here at Gavank, most of the other “Project Managers” with whom Nosik was familiar had too much of the military bearing about them.

General Nosik had been a military man for his entire adult life, beginning with the old Soviet Union and extending into the new Russian Federation. He had served in the West on the old Iron

Curtain, and had seen significant and meritorious service in the Soviet operation in Afghanistan. He had also served with distinction in various operations and areas within the Russian Federation.

General Nosik's latest service was here in Siberia, where he had been promoted to General in charge of security for an entire region and for three of the largest projects in the Siberian Economic Development Treaty signed well over a year ago. That treaty, negotiated by the administration of President Vladimir Putin between the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, and India, had opened up vast tracts of Siberia and its resources to tremendous exploitation.

There were over thirty projects in operation, and the influx of hard currency into Russia and raw materials into India and China, were making for a literal economic boom for all three countries. General Nosik could not deny that the entire treaty was advantageous to his nation, and was helping bolster the readiness of her military forces. Nonetheless, General Nosik was and always would be extremely leery of any treaty, understanding or project that allowed literally hundreds of thousands of young men to be on the sovereign soil of Russia.

He could not help but compare the eight thousand military personnel he had at his disposal to the thirty-five thousand foreign workers employed on these three projects. It did not help the General's concerns to know that his force was the best equipped and largest of all the security forces for the thirty-some-odd projects scattered about Siberia. In all, over three hundred and fifty thousand foreign workers were being "secured" by less than thirty thousand Russian personnel...not to mention the Siberian bandits, gangs and "independence" minded insurgent-rabble he had to deal with. No, by far and away those three hundred and fifty thousand foreigners, most of them relatively young men, were his greatest security concern, even if Moscow discounted the threat. As these thoughts ran through his mind, he heard the intelligence officer continuing his briefing.

"Summing up, then, outside of a few minor disturbances over the weekend here in Gavank and at the low-sulfur operations, the Indian projects are going very smoothly from an internal security standpoint. As usual, this is not the case with the Chinese Cobaltite operations to the south. Over the weekend a more serious class-three incident occurred. It was a riot really, in Block 3-D of their worker dorms, where our security personnel under Colonel Propov, assisted by Chinese management, were forced to use rubber bullets, shields, riot batons, and tear gas to disperse the combatants. Nine injuries and one death resulted. Despite last weekend's incident, the overall count of class-three incidents at the Chinese project is down over forty percent in the last two months, and Colonel Propov and his staff should be commended for their work in this regard.

"Turning to external security, for the single specific incident outside of the regional and global considerations that I briefed you all on earlier, I will turn the time over to Colonel Butoma. Colonel, please brief us on your regiment's response to the incident that caused the destruction of a section of the rail spur to the main line to Krasnoyarsk. Tell us what measures have been taken to insure the security of that line, as well as to punish the bandits responsible for the short break in operations. After Colonel Butoma's report, Dr. Gavanker will share with us his weekly update on production operations. Colonel Butoma."

### **March 20, 14:45 local time**

#### **Secure Governmental Command Facility**

#### **45 KM Southwest of the Republic of China**

The National Security Council of the Republic of China on Taiwan had sat in conference in this secure facility since early this morning. The meeting had been a closely held secret as the principal members of the council, including the President, were reported to be away in the mountains on holiday. The rest of the attendees had come to the location by circuitous routes after being seen to attend meetings in other locations that were otherwise on their agendas.

The topic was both stark and very urgent, and although hundreds of meters of solid rock covered and protected them, it did not provide much comfort for the harsh reality of the situation they faced. That situation was the task of maintaining the defense of the Island of Taiwan, the ROC, against an expected mainland Chinese onslaught in the very near future, a defense without the kingpin they had always counted on: the assistance of the United States of America. Oh, they had war gamed it out, trying to see how long they could hold on without such assistance, but even in those scenarios they had counted on the power and presence of the United States. Those scenarios had included U.S. materiel and logistics support, and they had always presumed the certainty of direct and massive U.S. intervention if the situation became desperate...and those had been the worst-case scenarios.

Now, a new worst-case scenario had been created—the prospect of little if any U.S. materiel, logistics, or moral support at all, much less direct military intervention. With Okinawa in ruins and under constant follow-up attack, with U.S. Forces on the Korean peninsula in dire circumstances with no prospect for relief, it was clear American forces remaining in the region could offer no help.

Further, with Japan hunkered down to protect itself, and considering negotiations with China and with large Chinese task forces forming for apparent assaults on Korea, Taiwan and potentially staging for the Philippines, the successful defense of the free Republic of China was now in grave doubt.



President Chen Shu-bien considered the meeting. The National Security Council consisted of several members of his cabinet. These included the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defense, and Heads of the General Staff of each of the major Armed Services, the head of the Coast Guard Administration, the Minister of Transportation and Communications and the Vice President. In addition, for this particular meeting, they had in attendance the Dean of the Chungshan Institute of Technology and two of his leading Professors of Research.

Debate had raged all morning on how the defenses should be postured. The new weaponry that the People's Republic of China had employed to defeat the United States Navy was one of the principle points of concern. The Republic of China's policy had been to interdict any mainland Chinese attempt at invasion in the Formosa Straits, and they had built up a modern technological Navy (one they still considered to be superior to the PLAN) in order to help their Air Force do this.

It was felt that the Air Force could hold out much longer, perhaps indefinitely with the Navy's help. That help would come in the form of the newer area air defense ships, particularly the four former U.S. Kidd class destroyers and the two newer Arleigh Burke class Aegis destroyers, which would augment their air-to-air fighting capabilities with the long range Standard missiles supplied by the U.S. In effect, with the newer IDF, F-16 and Mirage 2000 aircraft utilizing AMRAAM and indigenous Sky Sword II missiles, and with the Navy's Standard missiles, a wall of steel would be erected down the length of the Formosa Straits that the PLA Air Force and Navy could not break. But that had presumed that these ships could navigate freely in the straits and position themselves where required in support of the Air Force.

There was no doubt that these new ships, augmented by the modern Kuang Hua I (ex-U.S. Halsey class FFGs) and Kuang Hua II (new French La Fayette class FFGs) would be a match for any surface combatant or submarine the communists could throw at them. But that entire premise, depending on their surface fleet to augment their Air Force, had been entirely swept away with the deployment of the new super-cavitating devices that the People's Republic had employed so successfully against the Americans. As he was thinking this, President Chen picked up on Professor of Research Bin Hau's summary of these very weapons.

"Therefore, based on this satellite, sonar and eyewitness intelligence data shared with us by the United States that I have explained to you, it appears that these devices have an extremely long range, perhaps 400 to 500 kilometers, which they traverse on traditional propulsion. Then, when within twenty to twenty-five kilometers of their target, they ignite a rocket engine that propels them through the water at almost supersonic speeds, so that they literally reach the target before it can maneuver out of the way. The warhead appears to be extremely large, probably in the 2,000-kilogram range. Any craft struck by any single such weapon, at least any in our inventory, would be sunk by it.

"The implications regarding miniaturization, computerization, targeting via sonar and acoustic signature are very distressing. We must presume that the People's Republic has captured the signatures of our own vessels as they clearly demonstrated that they have captured the Americans, including their Los Angeles class attack submarines, four of which were destroyed. We must presume that all of our major combatants are in their database, including our new diesel submarines, and that they are all therefore vulnerable."

The Chief of the ROC Air Force, General Li Hsieh, took this opportunity to speak up, and once again press for what he considered to be their best response.

"Gentlemen, I must insist that we face reality here. Professor Bin has given us a good dose of it with respect to the capabilities of these new weapons systems, and what they mean to our long-standing plans. As long as these weapons are employed without a clear counter or defense, our fine Navy, like the Americans, has been rendered moot on the high seas in defense of our Republic. I believe we must station the principal area defense ships in the major ports to provide air defense, particularly to augment the Patriot batteries around the Capitol. I then strongly urge that we utilize our technological strength in our Air Force, and perform a unilateral, surprise strike against the two large PLAN task forces that are forming across the straits in the vicinity of Quanzhou and Xiamen.

"These task forces are comprised of one of their new amphibious assault ships each, one of their new carrier groups, numerous escort vessels including Hangzhou and Lanzhou DDGs and many, many of these new LCU type landing craft. They are clearly forming for one reason, and one reason alone. If we can mass our assets and strike quickly and resolutely, we can destroy a large part of their amphibious capabilities and perhaps their capitol ships as well."

And so, the debate that had been taking place all morning picked up again as Admiral Chang, the Chief of the Naval Forces, spoke against such a plan.

"General, I agree that our area defense ships cannot be risked in the Straits at this time. It is unfortunate and is causing us to reassess our defense strategy, which I believe will lead exactly to what you propose with respect to those assets. However, with all due respect, I cannot condone an attempted mass attack into the teeth of the People's Republic strength—the disparity in numbers is just too unfavorable. Not to mention the fact that their new SU-33s and SU-35s are the technological equivalent of our own forces. They are deploying them in increasing numbers across the straits to

blunt our advantage, particularly if they are willing to suffer attrition in their older aircraft—and I bet they are willing to do that. Who would bet against it?

“What good would we do if we sank a lot of those landing craft, or even some of their larger combatants and suffered severe attrition of our own? It would leave us wide open to any force these ships and landing craft in large numbers. No, I say, let them come to us. We just draw back, soak up their ballistic missile barrage, and wait until they try and force a crossing. They will still have to come within range of our area defense destroyers before they can launch, and that, in my opinion, is when our Air Force can be used to the best effect just like we planned, in concert with our naval assets.”

The General interrupted. “Just soak up their ballistic missile barrage? Listen to yourself, Admiral. We are here to protect our people, and I believe we can perhaps forestall such barrages by immediately going on the offensive. Those hundreds and even thousands of missiles will exact an unacceptable toll on our population and production efforts. If we do not act, they will do so before we ever inflicted any casualties on the enemy—and they would probably be successful in taking out at least a part of our own defenses, particularly your ships if they are restricted to their harbors.”

The Admiral’s composure began to weaken as he responded.

“Would it be better to lose a part of our people and production facilities, or all of it, General? I say we must modify our plans to fit these terrible circumstances, but still keep intact the basic premise, and that is of a defense in depth. Force the communists to come to us!”

Finally, President Chen raised his hand, and indicated that he was ready to speak, and render a decision and seek consensus.

“Gentlemen... General, Admiral, please compose yourselves. This is a critical time in which all of us are working towards the same end—that of preserving our nation and our people. It is a harsh time as well, where difficult decisions will have to be made that will inevitably result in the destruction of property and the loss of life either way. Thank you for your input. This has been a long day, and we have all heard much. I will order the immediate implementation of our Emergency Plan for full war time mobilization. Our people have long prepared for this, though we had all hoped to avoid it.

“I will request that the Legislative Yuan immediately approve the State of Emergency, and that we institute martial law. All reserves will be called up according to our National Emergency Defense Plan for defending the island against infiltration, and against amphibious or air assault. Minister Hsu, please ensure that transportation and communications are immediately regulated and curtailed according to plan, as soon as the Legislative Yuan approves, which I expect this evening.

“General, I believe there is some merit in attempting a scaled-down surprise attack against the People’s Republic forces massing to our east. I want specifically to conduct a raid on the two large amphibious assault ships, and use as minimal force as possible to achieve this. Use that attack as an effort to lure as many PLA Air Force fighters back across the Strait into SAM traps that you set up with the area defense ships. I will, of course, leave all the details to you. Outside of that, I want a defense plan along the lines that the Admiral has proposed.

“We are going to face a war of attrition, and we cannot afford to lose that war! If we do, we will be invaded and their numbers will ultimately defeat us. So, we must avoid any chance for anything approaching parity, or even good kill ratios that benefit our side. No, we must develop strategies and plans that force tremendous odds and tremendous kill ratios if we are to survive. Is this understood?”

The President, the youngest ever elected by the Republic of China, eyed each of his military and cabinet members individually. As he went around the room, each met his gaze steadily and with grim determination. Each also nodded their assent.

**March 20, 17:45 local time**

**People’s Republic of China Politburo**

**Beijing, China**

Lu Pham knew why he was here today. He was deeply honored that this recognition would be accorded him. Here in his adopted homeland, those who had so much influence and power over the lives of everyone were honoring him. Despite the recognition, despite the surroundings, despite the acclaim he would be receiving, there was nothing that could compare with the knowledge that his inventions, his instruments, had fulfilled their purpose and worked so well against the Americans.

The feeling he had felt in his breast—in his heart—when he had heard over the secure transmission facilities that at least one American carrier and two of their large assault ships had been hit was a dream come true...his dream. The fact that so many of the American escorting vessels, including Aegis cruisers and many destroyers, had been hit just added to the feeling. Now, seeing the actual video images of that destruction from the Americans themselves here in the company of the leaders of the Chinese Politburo allowed him to relive the feeling of that fulfillment all over again! He finally felt that his long dead parents, killed by American Special Forces in South Vietnam as they trained the Vietcong so long ago, could rest in peace. He had kept his word to avenge them.

It was a promise he had felt he would never fulfill for so many years as he worked in the University in Hanoi, particularly as relations thawed between America and Vietnam. He knew he had

the Chinese to thank for the opportunity to realize that dream. They had resurrected the plans of Lu's youth. Those plans that he had been developed while working for the meager North Vietnamese Naval forces. Those grandiose plans for North Vietnamese forces to take on the most powerful navy in the world through the use of revolutionary super-cavitating weapons that flew through the water as a missile flies through the air. But to his surprise and disappointment, his North Vietnamese leaders had squashed the idea out of hand.

It was the Chinese, whose intelligence apparatus had retrieved the plans, who believed in such weapons and that their use against the Americans was possible. General Hunbaio and his intelligence operatives had tracked Lu down, and made the contact and the offer. Chin Zhongbaio, the President of COSCO had the vision for those specific plans and had directed General Hunbaio to find Lu. Jien Zenim himself, the leader of the People's Republic possessed the will and the drive to confront and defeat the Americans and build a new order in Asia based on the Three Wisdoms.

And there were many more, like Sung Hsu, with whom Lu had worked to bring the theories and paper designs to reality. Lu knew that all of this came together so he could fulfill his promise to his parents, to make good on his dream. Now, at the conclusion of the video presentation, they awaited his acceptance of the honor they were bestowing.

"Comrades, I am honored to stand here among you. I am almost speechless at the conclusion of this video that so aptly demonstrates the effectiveness of our plans, and of the instruments that helped us achieve them. I can do no more than thank you for the honor you bestow upon me, a foreigner whom you took to your side and provided the means to accomplish what we have just witnessed. It is you leaders who deserve the honor and recognition, for having the foresight to confront our enemy, to plan and then put in place the pieces to carry off that plan. I am truly no more than one of the pieces of that plan, one of the parts of the puzzle that you have seen so clearly and assembled so adeptly. Thank you for the opportunity to work within that framework.

"Quite frankly, I am surprised that the Americans released such a video, because even now, in my mind, I am analyzing it, seeing the strengths of our design and evaluating some weaknesses. But that is for another time, and I am sure you do not wish to have me belabor the success of that attack with such technical analysis and jargon.

"Let me just close by saying that the team I manage is even now working on improvements to the system, working to stay ahead of the Americans in their attempts to counter our achievements. There is no doubt that they will seek to do so. In fact, this video displays some of those avenues that were attempted in an *ad hoc* fashion by their on-scene commanders in the heat of battle. We will maintain the upper hand. We will provide our fighting forces with the technology and the systems to continue to defeat the Americans and their allies, and drive them from this part of the world.

"Once again, I thank you for the honor you bestow. I accept it in all humility, knowing full well that it is you, the leaders here who are deserving of the greater honor, who made possible whatever small contribution I may have made. Thank you."

Jien Zenim rose and applauded Lu Pham as he returned to his seat. He was aware of Lu's humility and desire to avoid the limelight. He was also aware, through his trusted ally and compatriot Chin Zhongbaio, of exactly how significant Lu's contribution had been. Quite frankly, they would have preferred to have developed and deployed these weapons without the need to find and recruit Lu Pham at all. But that had turned out to be impossible.

None of their other scientists and researchers had been able to bring those old designs to fruition. It wasn't until Lu had been recruited and brought onto the project that progress was made towards truly modernizing and completing the design and then deploying it. Now, the heretofore indestructible, indomitable U.S. Navy had been defeated, and every major PLAN combatant was either already equipped, or soon would be outfitted, with these fabulous weapons.

And what a defeat it had been!

Jien spoke. "My friends and compatriots, the realization of every plan and global aspiration that we have been putting together for the last ten years lies before us and our allies as a result of those few hours of success a few days ago. Surely the very foundations of the western world's power, strength, economic system, and the hold they had on the rest of the world had been shaken by those events, particularly that of the our principal adversary, the Americans. And they needed to be shaken—they deserved to be shaken. We will yet shake them to their very core so that their grip is completely undone. With the emergence of the CAS, we are creating a new order that will replace them.

"It is ironic, is it not, that many in the West have helped us establish this? Some have helped unwittingly through greed and vice; others helped knowingly in their lust for power. And then there are a few who truly share our collective ideology. Over the last twenty years, we have developed resources amongst all three varieties in abundance within the West, and in America in particular. We will continue to use them all, and, except for our true ideological allies, we will destroy them all as we sweep them from their places of influence.

"And we have committed individuals here at home, like you, Lu Pham, who are helping to make this all possible. Lu, your enthusiasm, your untiring efforts and your humility are recognized, appreciated and respected by everyone here. You are completely deserving of the honor that we are

bestowing to you. Such an honor, to be named as a hero of the People's Republic, has never before been granted to any foreigner. I can think of no one more deserving, Chinese or not. All we ask is that you continue forward with the same spirit and brilliance, and do exactly what you have committed to do here today. We know you will not disappoint us—you have proven it by your actions to date. You are excused to return to your family and your duties.”

Lu Pham rose to the applause of the assembled leaders, and accepted their congratulatory handshakes as he took his leave with the family, friends, and compatriots who had been invited to share in his honor. When he was out of the room, Jien Zenim continued.

“Now, my friends, with the departure of our colleague, let us move on to a summary of the planning that has been done for the three major near-term tasks before us. Those tasks include first, assisting our Korean brothers in reuniting their peninsula once and for all; second, the reunification of our own wayward province on Formosa; and third, the bringing of the four principle Asian Island powers into the fold of the CAS—namely Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia. In that regard, as soon as the Americans begin their attacks on our satellites, my orders are to immediately implement operation Falling Star against *all* of their space-based assets.”

**March 20, 17:45 local time**

### **GIR Forward Positions**

#### **To the East and Above Kirikkale, Turkey**

Lieutenant Abduhl Selim finished his evening prayers. He had often missed his prayers while herding his father's sheep and goats back in Turkmenistan. In those days, he had taken religion in general, and his personal attachment to it, lightly. After many months of combat, after many friends had gone on to meet Allah, Abduhl never missed an opportunity to pray now.

He was eighteen years old, soon to be nineteen. He had fought with GIR forces across what had once been northern Iraq and now deep into Turkey, facing first Turkish forces and then various NATO forces, and finally the vaunted Americans themselves. All of the western forces had fought hard. All of them employed technology that was years ahead of their own. With numbers and with a willingness on the part of their leaders, and the soldiers themselves, to spend those numbers against the western technology, the GIR forces, of which Abduhl was a part, had pushed them all back.

In the course of that fighting, Abduhl, who had started out as the lowest grade non-commissioned soldier in the GIR ground forces, had learned to fight and to survive. Much of his education was due to his upbringing, and the insistence that his father had made on his learning how to shoot and how to survive as he tended his family's herds.

It was also due to Abduhl's developing code of honor and conduct. He was dedicated to his people's cause, and particularly to the cause of the great Imam Hasan Sayeed, who led the Greater Islamic Republic. Abduhl honestly believed that all of Islam should be united—that as one they would stand eye to eye with any other people in the world in terms of their culture, their economic output, and their ability to defend themselves.

Now as a result of attrition in the ranks, as a result of his own actions in combat, and as a result of his developing and unerring leadership capabilities, Abduhl had been given a battlefield commission to Lieutenant. He had been the ranking NCO in his platoon for only eight weeks when he was commissioned an officer, but what an eight weeks it had been.

They had finally faced the famed American 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, who had counterattacked just outside of Cicekdag. They had come at night, as Abduhl had been told they would by his former (and by then dead) NCOs. Abduhl had prepared the forward position for this company that very afternoon, and had even prepared a strong fallback position should their location be targeted. When the Americans had come, he found both his primary and his secondary positions had already been precisely targeted by American missile and artillery fire. Falling back to that second position had only led to a death trap for much of his platoon. It had only been the will of Allah that had allowed him and a few of his men to survive.

Nonetheless, Abduhl had rallied them, and they had surprised themselves and the Americans by attacking down the slope into the flank of the advancing American forces. That attack had the effect of slowing the American advance temporarily as they were forced to deal with his small force. But that momentary hesitation had made the difference between a total annihilation of the GIR's front-line forces, of which Abduhl's platoon had been a part, and their ability to conduct a hasty retreat.

For the next several days, Abduhl and his few remaining companions had tried to harass American platoons and recon units whenever they could feasibly get away with it as they searched for their own lines. Ultimately they had found them, dug in with their comrades, and held against the weight of American technology as more GIR forces were funneled into the battle, and as more GIR aircraft thwarted the Americans' attempt at total air superiority. Finally, after several days and many kilometers of lost ground, the sheer numbers of the GIR's corps sized force blunted the Americans' attack, and then pushed it back.

The encounter had been costly, more costly than Abduhl could fathom, but it had ultimately led to regaining all of the lost ground and more. In the process, Abduhl had been given his battlefield

commission, and was now the officer in charge of an entire platoon and the new Executive Officer for his company. The men, the NCOs, and even his commanding officer had great respect for this young man who had survived so much, and who was willing to face such extreme peril, to charge into the teeth of the tiger and emerge alive and willing to fight another day.

Then, four days ago had come news of the tremendous victory that the Coalition of Asian States and the Red Chinese had scored over the Americans in the Pacific Ocean. For several hours, he and his men had basked in the glow of that occurrence and had celebrated as best they could in the battlefield conditions they faced. Following this news, for three days, in fact up until today, the American and the Turkish morale had seemingly been dashed as the GIR advance moved at an increased rate. At least that was what the higher-level officers were saying to the troops.

“More likely,” thought Abduhl, “the Americans are simply falling back to better prepared positions around the Turkish capital of Ankara.”

And that is exactly what Abduhl told his men. He had no intention of underestimating the professionalism of the American troops, or their NATO allies. They had proven to him their effectiveness and their ability to mete out severe punishment at almost every turn. Abduhl just hoped that the supply of GIR soldiers committed to the cause did not run out before their goals were realized—before they conquered Turkey and brought this worldly and western-sympathetic nation back into the fold of the true Islam represented by the Greater Islamic Republic.

**March 20, 17:55 MST**

**Outside of Foothill Mall**

**Denver, CO**

As Sandy walked out to her car with her three children she couldn't help but notice the chill in the air. The weatherman had forecast dropping temperatures and perhaps a late winter/early spring snowstorm for later tonight and tomorrow, and it looked as if he might be right. But, none of that mattered. She had finished shopping for her husband's birthday, which they would celebrate tomorrow, and he had decided to take the day off. What a wonderful day it would be, enjoying Troy's celebration there at home with their three children. The kids would be so happy that Daddy was home.

She was glad that he would be home, too. With the grave conditions that the nation faced, it would be so reassuring to have him there. Though the attacks and horror seemed far removed from them here on the outskirts of Denver, still, Sandy knew people on the East Coast who had witnessed the fire and destruction a few days ago. Some of those friends personally knew people who had been killed. She and Troy had watched the news reports many times in sober contemplation. They had even witnessed some of the impact and consequences of those attacks here in Denver over the last couple of days with the increased security around the Capitol building and the airport.

“Apparently they're even extending it a bit out here in the suburbs,” she thought as she exited the mall parking lot on the east side, away from the mountains, and passed two military camouflaged HMMWVs that were pulling into the parking lot as she left.

“I've never seen the National Guard here before,” she thought as she turned onto Pearle Avenue, en route to the freeway that would convey them to their subdivision a couple of miles to the north.

“I'm glad they aren't taking any chances,” she said out loud as she looked into her rearview mirror and saw one of the vehicles pull across the entrance, blocking it as the first few flakes of snow blew in a brief flurry between her and the mall.

As she turned onto the entrance ramp to the freeway and lost sight of the mall, she didn't know that she, along with a few other vehicles, were the last ones to leave the mall safely that afternoon.

**March 20, 17:59 MST**

**Outside of Foothill Mall**

**Denver, CO**

Manuel wished he could have interdicted that last vehicle that had just left the parking lot. The more of these soft Americans he could catch, the better. But he was disciplined, and knew that the mission parameters did not allow for it at this point. He would do nothing to risk the mission with any premature antics. No, the mission would kick off at precisely 1800 hours, just as he had planned it with his team leaders, and would then proceed from there. They had twenty-one minutes before the helicopters would arrive and extract them, and they had to make the absolute most of every one of those minutes in executing the operation as planned.

Manuel figured he had the resources and the people to do so. Ten HMMWVs, all purchased separately over the last several months here in the intermountain west. All were driven to Denver after their purchase and housed in various large storage units, where they were painted camouflage to match the local National Guard units. Each of these vehicles now contained five camouflaged and heavily armed men, each of whom knew his part perfectly.

One of those units, an ambush and blocking unit, was taking up position on the freeway median by the underpass where Pearle passed over I-225. It would interdict the inevitable support that would

be sent by local authorities. Another blocking unit was taking up position one-quarter mile down Pearle in the opposite direction, at the other major intersection that fed the mall on that side.

Each of these units had one individual dedicated to a Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) launcher, and who would make use of the twenty warheads each vehicle carried. The man serving as backup to the RPG launcher would operate the Stinger missile launcher each of these units also carried if it became necessary. The other three men provided security by way of two M-16 assault rifles and a 7.62-mm sniper rifle. The local authorities would have their hands full trying to get past these units to the mall, and that was the entire idea.

In the parking lot, Manuel watched as his accompanying unit pulled across the parking lot entrance that they had just used. The same thing was happening at all four parking lot entrances to the mall. These blocking forces would be used initially to contain the civilian vehicles inside the parking lot, and then to destroy them. Later, if required, they would engage any enemy units that got past the initial ambush and blocking forces. Each of those four units contained a similar weapons composition as the units out on the freeway and down by the major intersection, except no sniper rifle was employed. The security personnel for these units all had M-16 assault rifles.

Manuel now proceeded towards the front of the mall and the primary entrance, converging with another unit proceeding towards the other entrance to the mall on this side. Two more units were converging on the backside of the mall, towards the two major entrances there. Manuel's unit, and all of the units converging on the mall itself, contained a light, 5.56 mm machine gun, which one of his men was now mounting on the top of the HMMWV through a hatch that had been cut into the top for that purpose. Each of these weapons would make use of the over 5,000 rounds in belt-fed boxes on the floor of the HMMWV. They would be used for direct fire support at the front of the mall and then later in the parking lot. The assault vehicles also contained another RPG launcher and three M-16 assault rifles, with numerous grenades and a large satchel of C-4 plastic explosives.

As their vehicle pulled right up onto the sidewalk leading to the mall entrance and skidded to a stop twenty feet from the doors, departing shoppers scrambled to get out of the way. Two of them, an elderly man and his grandson, were too slow, or perhaps just in the wrong place at the wrong time, and were crushed as the vehicle skid over them. The backlit digits on Manuel's digital watch turned over to 1800 as the vehicle came to a stop. As it did, Manuel quickly clicked his hand-held microphone twice to indicate that all units should commence operation as planned.

**March 20, 18:00 MST**

**Main Entrance to Foothill Mall  
Denver, CO**

Officer Frank Acosta was on patrol duty in the front entryway to the mall this evening. He typically enjoyed duty at the mall because it rarely required more than the apprehension of an occasional shoplifter or trying to settle squabbles between local youth. As Manuel's vehicle slid to a stop outside the entrance, Frank noticed the movement out of the corner of his eye through the glass doors and turned to see what was happening.

For an instant, he was frozen as he saw what appeared to be a National Guard HMMWV outside, and two National Guardsmen jumping out of the vehicle with assault rifles. His right hand automatically went to his holstered pistol and unsnapped the retainer. With his other hand he keyed his lapel-mounted mic and said, "Control, dispatch."

Almost immediately there was a response, "Go ahead, this is dispatch."

Frank began to respond, "Dispatch, Officer Acosta here. I've got a National Guard HMMWV loaded for bear at the main mall entrance. Two soldiers are..."

...and then it all hit the fan.

Manuel's man at the machine gun on top of the HMMWV began laying down fire directly through the glass doors, sweeping the weapon and its stream of lethal bullets across the entire mall entry hall. Immediately, there were the agonized screams of the wounded mixing with the screams of the terrified, breaking glass, and ricocheting bullets.

Frank's training kicked in, and he immediately threw himself to the ground while pulling out his service pistol. He rolled towards an information kiosk for cover. He was trying to bring his weapon to bear on one of the men coming through the door. At the same time he again keyed his mic and, as he watched a fleeing young teenage girl fall to the floor in a limp and bloody heap as she was stitched across the back.

He yelled into his mic. "Officer needs assistance! Automatic weapons fire at the front..."

But that was as far as he got.

Manuel had noticed the officer dive to the floor and roll towards the kiosk as he came through a door off to Frank's left. While Frank was frantically trying to bring his pistol to bear on the man in front of him, Manuel calmly fired a three-round burst into Frank's side from fifty feet away. He then walked directly over to Frank's thrashing body, kicked the pistol away, and fired another two rounds into Frank's head.

The initial attack was having the desired effect of driving the shoppers back into the mall. Manuel was sure that the same was occurring at the other three mall entrances as he heard the firing from those assaults echoing up and down the main mall corridor to his position. Manuel and his comrade quickly cleared the few small stores here in the entryway, killing all the civilians left in the entryway, and tossing hand grenades into each of the stores before entering them and eliminating anyone they found alive.

Within ninety seconds, their entrance was cleared. A third man entered the mall and came through the entry hall with the C-4, while the machine gunner on the HMMWV turned his attention to the parking lot and sidewalks behind them. Moving carefully, with Manuel and the others providing cover up and down the main corridor of the mall, he moved toward the supporting columns at the end of the entryway, and set explosives next to them.

Once there, Manuel came over, knelt down and quickly keyed his handheld mic three times. Within fifteen seconds he had three single keys back, informing him that all three other teams had successfully cleared their entry halls and placed their charges. Manuel keyed his mic twice more, counted to three, and then set the charge for sixty seconds. He and his two men then quickly exited the mall, all the while watching the C-4 charge they had left next to the support column. At twenty-five seconds, they climbed back into their idling HMMWV. The driver immediately backed out of the mall entrance, and screeched to a halt in the parking lot almost two hundred feet away.

As Manuel's vehicle skidded to a stop, a tremendous explosion rocked the front of the mall, and a cloud of dust and smoke shot out of the entrance towards the parking lot. Debris rained down and a portion of the front of the two-story structure collapsed. Almost simultaneously, three similar explosions erupted from the other three entrances to the mall, with similar effects.

Manuel looked at his watch—18:03.35.

"Three and a half minutes...excellent," thought Manuel, as his team now took up positions around their HMMWV and amongst the vehicles surrounding it. They began to concentrate on anyone coming out of the emergency exits of the now-burning mall and any vehicles or persons they observed nearby, indiscriminately shooting them down, and using the RPGs to create burning infernos of any occupied vehicles trying to escape. As they did so, Manuel heard the first sirens approaching.

**March 20, 18:04 MST**

### **I-225 Underpass Outside Foothill Mall**

**Denver, CO**

A rising volume of gunfire was occurring at the parking lot exits of the mall, and coming from the vicinity of the mall itself. Through the increasing flurries of snow, Hernando could hear the intensity of the various teams' firing as they concentrated on the increasing number of vehicles and persons frantically trying to get to the parking lot exits, and as the assault teams cleared the entry halls in the mall. A few RPG explosions were heard as well, and then, just a moment ago, the tremendous explosions of the C-4 as all four charges went off within a second or two of each other.

Smoke was now pouring out of the mall, and the rate of fire was picking up as the four assault teams set up in the parking lot and began targeting vehicles and people there. Approaching sirens could be heard in the distance.

"Okay, compadres, any moment now, and it will be our turn. Be ready," Hernando told his team next to the underpass as the sounds came closer.

"Sounds like two or three on the other side of the mall, and several coming up the freeway."

As he said this, he saw several vehicles, lights flashing, come around the curve in the freeway one-half mile to the south and east of them. His orders were clear: engage the responding units as they pass on the exit ramp. Do not announce your presence prematurely—ambush as many as possible before they stop to engage you."

Sure enough, here came four local police cars around that turn. Their dispatcher had routed them together as they responded to calls from security personnel and officers at the mall. In their rush to get to the mall, they did not notice Hernando's team there under the bridge.

All four turned off their lights and sirens as they took the exit. Hernando's RPG launcher was kneeling next to him, tracking the lead vehicle, with the launcher extending over the hood of the HMMWV. As that vehicle got halfway up the exit ramp, Hernando patted his man on the shoulder and an RPG rocketed towards the lead car, just as the officer driving that vehicle, who was clearly visible, turned and stared wide-eyed towards his impending doom. As he raised his radio microphone to his mouth in a vain attempt to broadcast a warning, the RPG punched through his door and exploded, creating a blazing crematorium for him and his partner.

Immediately, Hernando and one of the security men began raking the other three cars with their M-16s. One of these, the second in line, veered to avoid the raging wreck in front of him, caught the rear bumper of that vehicle as it careened off the roadway and flipped onto its top, sliding down the embankment of the exit ramp. It came to rest no more than fifty yards from Hernando's team, who poured fire into it for a second or two until it was clear that the two officers inside were dead.

While this was happening, the RPG launcher had lined up on the last vehicle and fired another round. That vehicle had fishtailed off the road, and was just coming to rest with its back facing the ambush team when the RPG entered the trunk and exploded, sending the trunk lid spiraling wildly seventy-five feet into the air and creating another inferno inside that vehicle.

Within a few more seconds it was over. One officer in the last vehicle had gotten out of the wreck and returned a few rounds of ineffective pistol fire before being cut down by Hernando's sniper. All seven of the other officers were killed in their vehicles. While that was occurring, Hernando's RPG launcher and his security man successfully engaged an ambulance and a fire truck that were responding to the mall. They were following several hundred yards behind the police cars. Those two vehicles were now burning hulks, their occupants either dead or dying, and the smoke from their wreckage now adding to that of the police cars.

With that, Hernando's team began engaging, indiscriminately, every vehicle on the freeway. Very quickly, for hundreds of yards in either direction of the underpass, the freeway became littered with destroyed and burning vehicles and the bodies of their occupants.

**March 20, 18:08 MST**

**On I-225 Southeast of Foothill Mall**

**Denver, CO**

Lieutenant Gary Douglas was becoming more alarmed by the moment. The radio traffic was filled with short-lived, frantic cries for assistance and calls of "officer down." As they came around the sweeping curve that led to the exit near the mall, he could clearly see the huge cloud of smoke billowing over the top of the berm from the vicinity of the mall. There was also smoke rising from the vicinity of the freeway itself where he knew those four local cars had last been heard from. The hairs stood up on the back of his neck as that thought sank in.

"Pull it over, Charlie! Pull it over in the ditch *now!*"

Deputy Charles Duncan pulled their Tahoe over and quickly came to a halt as the other two Sheriff's Deputy vehicles followed their lead. Lieutenant Douglas grabbed the binoculars he kept in the glove compartment, as well as the Ruger Mini-14 rifle from the rack in the back as he got out.

"Lieutenant, why are we stopping here?" one of the other deputies asked as he got out of his vehicle and hurried over to the Lieutenant's side.

"Doyle, take a look at that smoke coming off the freeway there around the bend. A few moments ago four squad cars went barreling around that corner towards the mall...and no one has heard from them since. Tell the others to set up a perimeter right here clear across the freeway. Stop all traffic here. Then, you come along and catch up with me, and we'll do a little recon," answered Douglas. "Just make sure you stay low, for God's sake."

Lieutenant Douglas kept low to the earth on the side of the berm as he made his way forward about a hundred yards. Finally, he reached a point where he could just see around the bend to the exit ramp. What greeted him was a scene of destruction and carnage. Another hundred yards in front of him was the burning wreckage of the fire truck. Beyond that were several wrecked and burning cars, and over on the exit ramp were the burning remains of the police cars.

There were a number of bodies strewn over the median and up the sides of the freeway where people had tried to escape. A few people were still moving behind vehicles. One noticed him, and waved frantically to him for help. Shots rang out, and that individual slumped over and fell to the ground. This caused the lieutenant to notice the camouflaged HMMWV down by the underpass, less than a half mile away, from which the fire originated. He also noticed he was in their line of sight.

Immediately, he realized he needed to move back about a hundred feet so he had the side of the berm between him and the snipers by the underpass. Slowly and quietly he did so. When he was within thirty feet of his objective, his friend and fellow county deputy, Doyle, came into the line of fire from around the curve. The lieutenant quickly made hand motions for Doyle to get down and to go back, but it was too late.

Back beneath the underpass, Hernando was attracted to movement beyond the burning fire truck. He saw what looked like a state patrolman just coming around the bend.

"Rodrigo, there, beyond the fire truck!" he yelled to his sniper as he also noticed the other officer, a little closer to them and very low to the ground, moving away.

Rodrigo turned, sighted in on the first officer, who was beginning to crouch down, and fired.

Gary Douglas heard the small "snap" as a bullet passed by him at supersonic speed. He heard the audible "THUD" as that bullet impacted, and he watched as his friend fell backward to the ground.

"Crap!" exclaimed Gary as he dodged and wove the thirty feet to his friend.

Another bullet passed near him, and then another, the audible "crack" of the rifle following hard on the heels of the bullet's passage. He picked Doyle up by the collar and dragged him around the bend far enough to be out of the line of fire. He noticed the trail of blood from his friend as he sat him down, quickly ripped open his shirt, and removed the Kevlar vest that had been perforated by the high-velocity bullet. As he applied pressure to the wound on Doyle's left breast, he keyed his mic.



“Dispatch, officer down on I-225, approximately one-half mile east of the exit ramp! Need medical assistance immediately. Setting up perimeter here. We cannot get to the mall. We have several tangos at the underpass of I-225 and Pearle. See if Air-1 can get a look at these people.”

“Acknowledged. Will advise all units. Air-1 will be over you in thirty seconds. I will divert him to check out that underpass. Dispatch out.”

Gary could hear the helicopter now as two more deputies came up, and one of them took over for him in seeing to Doyle’s wound. Looking up and around, he located the sheriff’s helicopter as it approached at about 1,000 feet.

“Air-1, this is Douglas. What can you tell me about those tangos under the bridge?”

“This is Air-1. We’ve got them. There appear to be four or five...wait! One of them just fired some sort of RPG at a civilian vehicle approaching from the north. Ah! They’ve destroyed that vehicle. Okay, we’re back on the tangos...clearly four of them...no, there’s a fifth coming out from behind that HMMWV. Wait! He’s got a...hold! We’re going to be busy here.”

Douglas had scurried on his stomach to where he could get a line of sight on the underpass. As he did, there was a loud “WHOOOSH” and a cloud of smoke billowed out from the underpass. A small missile rapidly rose from that position to Air-1, and impacted the engine of the helicopter. The helicopter immediately lost power, and began to gyrate and oscillate wildly as it fell, burning.

“Mayday! Mayday!! This is Air-1. We’re going down!”

The transmission cut off as Air-1 plunged into a subdivision across the freeway, producing a brilliant fireball and a small black mushroom cloud that rose into the sky.

“Dispatch, the tangos just shot down Air-1! Advise all air units to stay well clear. They used some kind of shoulder-fired missile. We’re going to need heavy support here, I repeat, heavy support.”

With that, the lieutenant and two of his deputies began using their Ruger Mini-14 rifles to trade fire with Hernando’s men.

**March 20, 18:13 MST**

**Orchard Subdivision, Near Foothill Mall**

**Denver, CO**

Eldon Hightower ran to the berm. There were five of his friends with him, and his next door neighbors were right behind them. He and the first five were armed with their hunting rifles. A sheriff’s helicopter had just crashed into some houses in their subdivision with a resounding explosion after passing over their heads in a fiery, wildly twisting, and fatal descent. It had been shot down by some form of surface-to-air missile (SAM); Eldon took just a second to look back and be sure that it had crashed well clear of his own home and family in the Orchard subdivision, the place he and these others called home.

Eldon had been in his backyard, staking out the location of a new sprinkler system he planned to put in this summer when all of the shooting and explosions had started over by the mall. Upon hearing all of the firing, he ran to the berm overlooking the freeway just in time to see the attack on the initial responding squad cars from the HMMWV beneath the underpass. Eldon had not hesitated. He had served as a Ranger in the Army for eight years. He ran home and grabbed his hunting rifle, a Savage .308 with a 4X12 scope, and started back for the berm. As he did this, he had called out to friends and neighbors who were also coming out of their homes to see what was going on.

“Terrorists are attacking the mall!” he cried. “Get your rifles! They’re taking out the police on the freeway as they arrive. Those officers need our help!”

Many who heard Eldon quickly ran back into their houses and began calling the police themselves, adding pressure and traffic to an already overloaded circuit. But several others had done just what Eldon suggested, and had in turn, as they dashed towards their homes, called to others to do the same. Wives and children were fearfully asking what was going on as husbands and older brothers ran into their homes, grabbed their hunting and assault rifles, and handfuls or boxes of cartridges before running out their doors.

Now, Eldon and five others were the first to arrive back at the berm, take up positions along it. They began firing on Hernando’s men under the bridge just as Lieutenant Douglas and his deputies opened fire from up the highway.

Eldon’s next-door neighbors, Sean and Sarah, were running just behind Eldon and the other five men. They had heard Eldon’s call when they came out of their house after all of the explosions and firing started. Sean worked as a local volunteer fireman, and his wife was a nurse at the area clinic. Upon hearing the unmistakable sounds of gunfire and seeing Eldon running towards that sound with his rifle, and gathering as many neighbors as he could, Sean and Sarah had turned towards each other for just an instant and stared. An unspoken understanding passed between them, and they rushed into the house to get their first aid packs, and followed Eldon at a dead run. They arrived at the berm just as Eldon was instructing his five friends.

“Stay low to this berm. Fire your rifle, and then roll over a few feet before firing again. Shoot at the muzzle flashes from their weapons and at that HMMWV. If we provide enough cover fire, the officers down there—and hopefully the Guard—will be able to take these suckers out.”

Eldon had lived in the Orchard subdivision for ten years. He had moved here and taken a job after getting out of the service; he figured it was the right mix of good work and proximity to the hunting and fishing that he enjoyed. The environs of Denver had never disappointed him in either regard. Even though Denver was a growing high-tech and cosmopolitan community, it was still a big city on the edge of the Rocky Mountains, and a lot of hunters just like Eldon lived here. Each of them had a high-powered rifle similar to the one Rodrigo was using at the underpass—and they all knew how to use them. Others simply enjoyed exercising their 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment rights on weekends at shooting ranges. Either for fun, or for matches, these individuals were proficient shots.

Now, here at Orchard Subdivision across I-225 from Foothill Mall, the real purpose of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution regarding the right of the people to keep and bear arms was made clearly manifest. As Sean and Sarah set up to administer first aid, which quickly evolved into treating trauma cases fifteen yards behind the crest of the berm, a hot and vicious firefight developed between the residents of Orchard subdivision and the terrorist team by the underpass.

**March 20, 18:16 MST**

**I-225 Underpass Outside Foothill Mall**

**Denver, CO**

It was time to go. Hernando knew that in a few short minutes, the helicopters would be coming to extract them all. The trouble was, Hernando and his two remaining men were completely pinned down and were not going anywhere. For the last several minutes, the amount of fire being directed at them had increased tremendously; some was coming from the officers down the freeway, where he was sure the local authorities were gathering their forces to try and push past him. But that was the plan, and he was prepared to handle that until he had to leave.

No, what was pinning him down, and had killed Rodrigo and his RPG launcher, was the increasing fire coming from that subdivision. A heavy volume of well placed, directed fire.

It had started right after they had shot the small helicopter down. Sporadic at first, it had grown to a fevered pitch very quickly, and had now killed two of his men, wounded another, and incapacitated their HMMWV, their ride out of here. They had fired many RPGs in the last few minutes towards that berm in an effort to break up the volume of fire. Hernando was sure they had killed a number of those people over there—but the rate of fire and the numbers of people didn’t diminish. They both just kept increasing. He was sure there were no less than a hundred people over there firing on him now.

“Where in Diablo’s Hades did they all come from?” he muttered to himself as he clicked his hand-held radio three times in quick succession, and then repeated that signal four times to inform Manuel that his team was in deep trouble. “How could they mobilize such a large force so quickly?”

He heard another unmistakable “thud” of a hit to the body behind him, and turned in time to see his backup RPG launcher, the man who had shot the helicopter down, fall back with a bloody, puckered hole in the center of his forehead. Crouching low, he moved to the support pillar for the underpass behind their HMMWV, from where his last man was still firing. This man was wounded in the thigh, and had applied a tourniquet to stanch the bleeding.

As he tried to take cover, Hernando felt a stiff tug at his own shoulder and fell down. When he tried to get up, he noticed the blood pouring down his shirt from a ragged wound high on his shoulder. A high velocity bullet had passed through there, and his collarbone was shattered. He knew that the pain would hit any second. The bullets were coming more rapidly now, impacting all around them.

Hernando painfully reached into the opposite pocket of his camouflage jacket with his good hand, and pulled out his electronic transmitter. It was intended for use during their departure in the helicopters, to activate a demolition charge of C-4 in their HMMWV and destroy it in an attempt to ensure their security. Each team had one. Now Hernando knew he was going to have to use his before the helicopters ever got there.

Talking to his last remaining team member, Hernando said, “My friend, we have done all we could. These gringos didn’t get past us, eh? We took out a lot of them, too. That helicopter of theirs going down was a sight to see! But, I am afraid we are not going to make it. What do you think?”

Hernando noticed that no more weapons fire was coming from his friend. Turning his head to look toward his position, Hernando was greeted only by the flat, vacant stare of the dead.

“Such a shame,” thought Hernando. That was his last conscious thought as he pressed the button on his transmitter, and his mortal world ended in a hot, fiery flash, not unlike those his team had been dealing out to others over the last ten to twelve minutes.

**March 20, 18:20 MST**  
**Parking Lot of Foothill Mall**  
**Denver, CO**

Over in the parking lot of the mall, in front of the now-ruined main entrance, Manuel heard the four Bell Ranger helicopters approaching. That sound diverted his attention from the rising cloud of smoke he had just seen mushroom up from the direction of the underpass of the freeway. He had heard the signal from Hernando, indicating he was in trouble and unable to comply with the egress. That had been followed less than thirty seconds later by the explosion Manuel recognized as the self-destruction of Hernando's blocking team HMMWV.

"That was an incredible volume of fire over there," thought Manuel. "Too bad, Hernando, my friend. You will be missed. You were one of the best," was all Manuel could allow in passing for his friend and compatriot. If he survived, there would be time enough later to properly mourn the loss.

Manuel had received similar signals from the blocking team at the intersection of Pearle, and from the parking lot entrance team closest to them on the other side of the mall. Those had occurred one after another a few moments before Hernando's signal, and there had been no other signal from them—just a lot of firing, some RPG and other explosions, and now nothing. Manuel assumed the worst. Through those signals and sounds, Manuel had tracked his enemy's movements towards him.

Manuel ran over the figures in his head. "Three teams unaccounted for and probably down. Two teams on the other side of the mall still fully engaged and unable to break off and withdraw. Four teams now converging on this position."

He had cleared an area for the helicopters to land, and established a final perimeter for defense while loading. Manuel had already keyed a code to the helicopters, waving one off. There would be no one to board it anyway, and it was senseless to bring it down under such circumstances. Manuel would try and use that last helicopter as his eyes above the fray.

Then the other three helicopters landed, and the men boarded their designated aircraft. Each of the helicopters had been painstakingly painted to match local TV station helicopters in color, and even in designation numbers. Each of them had been legally purchased over the last five years by legitimate front firms, financed through blind accounts created by financial personnel in the employ of Hector Ortiz's aging statesman friend. Tracking those accounts to their source would prove impossible.

Each of the helicopters had been reported "stolen" by their "legitimate" owners on March 15<sup>th</sup>. The confusion and massive amount of investigative work required for the attacks themselves had hindered sufficient attention being directed at these individual thefts to tie them together in time.

Now, as they loaded, Manuel and five others provided the final security. They directed several bursts of fire at approaching Sheriff's vehicles, squad cars, and a couple of National Guard HMMWVs that were now entering the parking lot on this side of the mall, and trying to converge on his position. When he felt he had gotten their attention and they stopped and took cover, he motioned to his men. They all boarded the last helicopter, which immediately rose at a very high rate of ascent into the increasing snowfall.

Hernando carefully waited as several vehicles converged on the HMMWVs that they had left behind. When the first three vehicles pulled up to them and Hernando could see the figures of men with assault rifles getting out through the snow, he pressed all of the self-destruct transmitters simultaneously. The resulting explosions caught these three vehicles and their occupants inside the blast radius, and caused the others to stop and take cover at a safe distance.

"That should hold them for another few minutes," he thought. "At least until they get their EOD people in to check out the wreckage. By then, we will be far away from here."

Manuel keyed in the last order on his mic and all four helicopters, flying at just over one thousand feet towards the west, immediately split apart and dropped below five hundred feet. They then embarked on their own weaving and diverging paths to the northwest, west and southwest towards the mountains and their separately planned escape routes.

**March 20, 18:21 MST**  
**25,000 ft and Ten Miles West of Foothill Mall**  
**Denver, CO**

"Sky-watch, this is Bolt-cutter, I have four tangos diverging and heading for the mountains on the deck, dropping below angels one."

The flight of two F-15C aircraft had just taken up position to the west of the mall, and well up into the overcast. They had been vectored there from their duty station covering the Denver International airport by their AWACS controller, Sky-watch. Each F-15C was armed with four Sidewinder air-to-air heat-seeking missiles and four Sparrow air-to-air radar-guided missiles. Their rules of engagement (ROE) had been clearly communicated while en route: Track the targets by radar, let the tangos clear the subdivisions, and then take them down at the first opportunity where their destruction would not harm innocent civilians on the ground. Bolt-cutter transmitted to Sky-watch.

“Sky-watch, Bolt-cutter will track and engage the two northern targets designated tango-1 and 2. Sword-man will track and engage the two southern targets, designated tango-3 and 4, copy?”

“Sky-watch copies five by five.”

As the helicopters made their way towards the mountains and employed desperate effort to use the steep, narrow canyons to help cover their escape, they approached landscape that was becoming less and less inhabited. As they flew over steep foothills, or barren washes, where no dwellings were located, one by one they were each turned into twisted, burning and exploding masses of wrecked metal, wire, fiberglass and flesh by the missiles from Bolt-cutter and Sword-man.

Bolt-cutter had no problem destroying both tango-1 and tango-2, but was drawn off to the north while targeting and destroying tango-1, placing him out of range to support Sword-man. Sword-man had to make a wide swing to the south to target tango-4 when it came over terrain compatible with his ROE. After firing and destroying tango-4, he planned to circle back and take out tango-3. But tango-3's flight path kept it over inhabited terrain, right into one of the many canyons leading up into the mountains from the foothills. In fact, that canyon itself was heavily built up with some of the most expensive dwellings in the Denver metro area, well up into the mountains. By keeping below the ridgelines on either side of the canyon, tango-3 disappeared from Sword-man's, Bolt-cutter's and Sky-watch's radar. The overcast they were flying in made any visual tracking impossible for the fighters.

This was no accident. Tango-3 was Manuel's helicopter, and he had personally laid out the flight plan to maintain its flight over inhabited territory right up into the mountains. Other teams had opted away from this, feeling that to do so would make it too easy for citizens to track their progress by sight and sound for too long. Manuel had been less afraid of the civilians than he was of the AWACS and any American fighters that might interdict them in time, and he had urged the other team leaders to do likewise. But the need to separate during their egress, and the feeling of the other team leaders that a direct and quick flight to relatively rugged and uninhabited terrain was best, had dictated otherwise.

“To their destruction,” thought Manuel as he noted the loss of each of the other helicopters. These local Americans, despite the surprise and destruction, had reacted quickly.

As Manuel's pilot gained a little altitude and dashed through a low divide, they passed out of the lavishly built-up canyon filled with expensive dwellings into a larger, but more rugged and less inhabited one. Staying just below the cloud bases, they zigzagged and wove between canyons along their escape route. With every passing minute, Manuel's planning was vindicated by the very lives of the seven men with him. They would be the only attackers on Foothill Mall to escape alive.

**March 20, 18:45 MST**

**Parking Lot of Foothill Mall**

**Denver, CO**

As the snowfall steadily increased, Lieutenant Gary Douglas surveyed the scene in front of the main entrance to Foothill Mall. Between here and the battle out on the freeway, three deputies were killed and another was injured. Two of those deaths had occurred right there, where the remaining terrorists had left their Hummers after boarding their helicopters and leaving. One of his vehicles had rushed to the scene with two local police cars, as the helicopters took off to try to prevent their escape and see if there were any wounded that they could take into custody.

In the rush and intensity of the moment, they had not even considered booby-traps. It had cost his deputies their lives, along with four other officers from the local police department. It was not something any of them would soon forget when dealing with such attacks.

But, as bad and as heart-wrenchingly painful as the deaths of his deputies were for him personally, they were nothing compared to the carnage in the mall or its parking lot, or out on the freeway. or over at the major intersection on Pearle. Carnage that was almost impossible to comprehend here in suburban America...unless you had experienced it yourself as the lieutenant and so many others had here today.

“These bastards came here to kill as many civilians as they could,” he thought. “And they succeeded, my God, they succeeded!”

There were twenty-three dead terrorists here around the mall, including the five that had been killed out on the freeway. Police officers and their second SWAT team (the first SWAT team had been ambushed over at the intersection on Pearle) had wounded and captured three more on the other side of the mall. Lieutenant Douglas was certain that they would not have killed many terrorists at all, and that they likely would not have captured a single one, if those citizens in the subdivision, and a number over at the intersection, had not gotten involved and helped. The amount of fire that subdivision had rained down on the terrorists over on the freeway had prevented their escape and had saved deputies' lives. Douglas was certain of it...even if it had cost a number of those civilians their own lives in the process.

Over at the major intersection on Pearle, the owner of Pearle Sports and Guns had reacted quickly upon hearing and seeing the terrorist blocking team open fire just up the street from his store. He had opened his store to citizens, and later to police officers, to make liberal use of his stock of rifles and ammo. The resulting volume of fire had created similar problems for the terrorists on the other

side of the mall as the terrorists had experienced by the underpass. There, too, a good number of those civilians, including the owner of Pearle Sports and Guns, had been killed.

“God bless them and rest them,” thought Douglas. “It makes me proud to be an American.”

He did not really want to know how many civilians had been butchered here in the parking lot, or in the mall. But it was his job to find out just the same. It looked to be several hundred dead, and an equal number injured. Quite a few people were coming out of the mall now, as the fire department now fought the fires there as it was clear that the danger of being shot down while doing so was past.

At least they had been able to prevent all of the terrorists from escaping here, and apparently the U.S. Air Force had gotten a lot more. As he reflected on this, Douglas could not help but again think of the help rendered by those brave citizens. Those terrorists at the freeway and at the major intersection would have surely kept his men, the local police, and the few National Guard who responded in time from disrupting their plans if those armed citizens had not become involved. Armed citizen involvement in these circumstance was something Lieutenant Douglas would never forget.

From dispatch and from other officers and civilians, it was now apparent that the attack here on Foothill Mall was not isolated. It was now all over the news networks that another mall south of Salt Lake City, as well as the Los Angeles International Airport, had also been attacked in similar fashion. The Lieutenant knew he did not have the time to worry about or consider that now. There were still too many people needing help here and too much work to be done before he could even consider finding out more about those attacks. And before he did, when he was finally done here, he was going to go home and hold his wife and children for a long, long time.

## Chapter 12

*“The principle of the sovereignty of the people governs the whole political system of the Anglo-Americans.” – Alexis de Tocqueville*

**March 20, 22:05 EST**

**Executive Conference Room, Laurel House**

**Camp David, Maryland**

“Alright, I’m going on air in fifty-five minutes to address the nation. I’ll need the latest update on casualties and the current situation with specifics on the following: Have all three locations been secured? What about the situation on the Mississippi River? Are we any closer to containing those attacks? We have to move quickly in addressing these particular attacks, and I want input from each of you regarding your thoughts on how we should respond to them. In that regard, I had already been preparing a set of Presidential Directives and Executive Orders to address the overall situation that we will also discuss. Now that these attacks have occurred, I have decided to announce them all tonight ... I intend to do the physical signing on air while explaining them to the people.”

Turning to his Attorney General, Dean Byron Hull, the outspoken, extremely conservative former Governor of Wyoming, the President continued.

“Dean, I want you and Ross in the Presidential Office with me on my right during my address. Curt, you and Stewart will be on my left, and Russell, I would like you standing behind me and to the left. The people know that each of you is either a member of the cabinet, or a high-ranking advisor reporting to the cabinet. Just the same, I want the people to see each of you as I announce these measures and as I discuss the individual parts each of your agencies will play in implementing them.”

Nodding to his Chief of Staff, the President said,

“Talbot, make sure the press people understand that the cameramen is to focus on each of these gentlemen as I announce their roles in these emergency measures.

“Okay, Stewart, brief us on the current situation in Denver, L.A. and Salt Lake City. We’ll follow that up with a review of the situation on the Mississippi River.”

Stewart Langstrom, the Director of Homeland Security, wore an earpiece providing him with continuous updates of the latest details of the attacks. Curt Johnson, the Director of FEMA, Dean Hull, the Attorney General, Ross Sessions, the Director of the FBI, and Admiral Tom Gwinn, the Commandant of the Coast Guard were all receiving similar up-to-date information. As updated information came in to each of them, Langstrom began his report.

“Mr. President, in Denver, twenty-three terrorists were killed on the ground and three were captured. F-15s flying CAP over the Denver airport responded and downed three of the helicopters making their escape with the surviving terrorists. The count is still uncertain, but from films of those helicopters as they were loading, it appears that another fourteen to twenty terrorists were aboard the three kills. Six to eight terrorists escaped in one helicopter and we’re searching for it with every available asset at our disposal in the mountains west of Denver at the current time.

The civilian causality count is not yet precisely known, but it will be several hundred dead and a similar number injured in Denver.”

At this point, Curt Johnson interjected.

“And what of the unilateral actions of those “citizens” Stewart. Sounds like a bunch of cowboys to me. The BATF people are saying, these civilians shot up half the freeway and they’ve identified some illegal weaponry in their possession. They are continuing their investigation.”

Stewart, annoyed at the interruption, and even more annoyed at the tone and content of Curt’s interruption, quickly replied:

“Curt, those “cowboys” as you call them are what allowed the local Sheriff’s department to break through a blocking force that the terrorists had placed on the highway. Similar actions at a major intersection on the other side of the mall had the same effect. Without those “cowboys” who put their necks right on the line, law enforcement and the available military would never have pressed the terrorists and killed so many, or captured the others ... and we would have had one hell of a lot more casualties. I will not sit here and listen to you take jabs at citizens who both risked and lost their lives while fighting our enemies. So I suggest that you put a lid on those comments ... now !”

The President could see the heat rising in both men. They were both extremely talented, and they both had strong wills. On this particular issue, the President sided with his Homeland Security Director, as did most of the Cabinet.

“Curt, what those people did in Denver helped prevent an even worse disaster. I believe that particular local Sheriff’s department will welcome Stewart’s Home Guard initiatives, and I intend to use the power of this office to help in any way I can. Some of the Directives and Executive Orders that I am announcing tonight are directly related to this effort. They may seem extreme to some, but we’re facing an extreme situation and we need the help of our citizens. I will say this ... there will be

NO investigation of those local citizens and certainly no prosecution for their part in engaging the terrorists. The very notion of it is repugnant.

“Right now, let’s finish the briefing. Go ahead Stewart, continue.”

The Director of Homeland security recognized that he, like Curt and pretty much everyone in the room, was operating on too little sleep, was under a lot of pressure, and was experiencing a great deal of frustration. Composing himself, he continued.

“In the Provo area, just south of Salt Lake City, the situation ended up being somewhat more fluid, though the scene itself is now secure. The small mall there collapsed completely and an unknown number of citizens remain trapped, injured or buried under the wreckage. Again, the count will be several hundred fatalities and a similar number injured. F-16 aircraft operating out of Hill Air Force Base downed all of the helicopters transporting the terrorists away from the scene. The last helicopter was shot down just one half hour ago as it was identified and downed in central Utah south of a small town called Green River. Forty terrorists are dead and ten wounded and captured.”

“Los Angeles International Airport is completely shut down. The terrorists there got onto the tarmac with the apparent help of insiders at the airport itself... apparently a group of undocumented, illegal alien workers. One group conducted a surprise RPG and machine gun assault on the airport response team command center at the outset. Another group of terrorists concentrated on the aircraft awaiting departure on the taxi-ways while a final group attacked the main terminal itself.”

“RPG’s fired into airliners as they sat waiting for take-off destroyed six on the ground. One pilot who saw what was happening to the planes behind him attempted an emergency take-off, but collided with another airliner in the middle of the runway and both of these aircraft exploded. That’s a total of eight loaded aircraft destroyed. A portion of the main terminal collapsed during the attack.

The death toll is likely to exceed fifteen hundred, perhaps as high as two thousand. Lesser numbers injured, certainly many hundreds, but very few people escaped from those airliners on the taxiway ... they were all full of fuel awaiting take off ... the carnage is unbelievable.

“The terrorists who attacked LAX used waiting Lear Jets to attempt their escape. Only ten or twelve of the terrorists were interdicted on the ground before those five Lear Jets took off. Our F15s were able to down three of the five. We got two out over the ocean at low level and one was shot down in Riverside County. Unfortunately, that one crashed into a residential neighborhood and there are a number of fatalities there on the ground. Two other aircraft are being searched for, but were able to avoid our patrols as they flew nap of the earth over the LA basin and made their way into the mountains ... one directly east and the other to the north.

“That’s the current update Mr. President, and I must add something in closing. All of the bodies of these terrorists and all of those captured are of Spanish or Latino origin. The prisoners are not speaking English, only Spanish. None of them have any identification, but the FBI is working hard on running all of their fingerprints and checking them both here at home and with Interpol and our allies.”

Everyone sat in silence for a few seconds as the reality of these latest attacks continued to sink in. The Secretary of Commerce, Russell Gage, spoke up first.

“While it’s been quite a few years since my military service, I have to say that these acts appear very well coordinated and very well funded. The ramifications are extremely distressing.”

The President, slowly shaking his head at the tremendous toll, turned and replied.

“Russ, there is no doubt about it ... these acts are planned to strike fear into our citizens and to incapacitate our mobilization. But by God, they are going to fail ! For the sake of morale as well as logistics, we must demonstrate that they will not be successful in those aims. Certainly we have been hurt by their attacks but we will show our nation’s resolve by minimizing any impact and by mobilizing our citizens and Stewart’s “Home Guards” effectively. We must rapidly defeat these infiltrators who are engaging us here at home now, and quickly identify and defeat any who pop up in the future. The measures we announce tonight will go a long way towards making that happen.

“Admiral Gwinn, what is the latest update on the Mississippi River?”

Tom Gwinn was a full admiral (four stars) in the U.S. Navy and had been selected for the four-year stint as the Commandant for the Coast Guard by President Weiskopf. Gwinn had earned the President’s respect and trust through their mutual service in the liberation of Kuwait from Iraq in 1990. With the latest Declaration of War, the President had placed the Coast Guard under the auspices of the Navy for the duration of the war effort. Admiral Gwinn was in this internal security and Homeland Defense meeting, along with General Nicholson Prebal, the Commanding General over the Continental United States (CONUS) Defense Forces now called Northern Command, or NORCOM. Normally, both of them reported in these capacities to Stewart Langstrom, the Director of Homeland Security. Overall, they both also reported up through their Joint Chiefs and participated as required in the National Security meetings that were held separately for the overseas war efforts. Now, Admiral Gwinn made his report on the ongoing attacks along the Mississippi.

“Mr. President, we are facing continuing action along the Mississippi. We have an enemy who has obviously prepared very well for years ... a sort of fifth column effort on their part. Militarily, that effort is inconsequential. But, from a logistics standpoint and from its impact on the civilian perceptions it could be highly detrimental to our efforts.

“In addition to the devastating attack on the propane storage facilities in St. Louis on the 15<sup>th</sup>, we have had no less than twenty separate attacks carried out on bridges, locks, dikes, other storage facilities, natural gas pipelines and electrical transmission towers along the river. These have occurred from northern Louisiana in the south to up near Minneapolis in the north. In addition, some of these “craft” have also made forays along the Ohio River as far up as Louisville, KY. The craft range in size from 28-foot cruisers to 48-foot houseboats. All of them appear to possess engines substantially more powerful than the usual for their size as well as military armament, including a mix of hand-held anti-air missiles, RPG’s, larger caliber machine guns and assault rifles. In many instances they are packed with high explosives for suicide attacks. We estimate that there are between fifteen and twenty of these craft remaining in the Mississippi and its tributaries.

“We have lost two helicopters and one F-16 to them in the last two days along with six of our smaller Ports and Water Ways 41-foot armed utility boats. In the process, nine of the enemy craft have been destroyed either by our forces or when they were destroyed in suicide attacks as with the craft involved with the propane storage farm in St. Louis. To date, we have captured five terrorist survivors. Mr. President, all of the prisoners and the recovered bodies are of Mid-Eastern descent.”

“We are now sending two flotillas of craft up the river from New Orleans. Each consists of two 110-foot Island Class Patrol Craft, two 87-foot Protector Class Patrol Boats and four each of the 41-foot armed utility craft. They will make their way north, one branching off up the Ohio River, over the next several days, destroying or capturing the terrorists and driving them northward to heavily fortified blocking positions we have set up at various places along each river. Their 25mm bushmaster and 50 caliber guns will be more than a match for craft either flotilla encounters.

“Mr. President, we expect to have the Mississippi situation fully contained in the next 7 days, with declining attacks throughout that time, as long as no other enemy craft are launched.”

The President considered that the Mississippi River and its tributaries accounted for a healthy percentage of America’s commerce, more than most American realized. Any lengthy paralysis of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers would severely hamper mobilization efforts, and the knew it.

“General Prebal, work with Stewart to ensure that we have the Air National Guard, Air Force, and Coast Guard helicopters necessary to patrol the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. We must locate and eliminate these enemies as quickly as possible per Admiral Gwinn’s plans. I certainly do not want this to drag out longer than the seven days Admiral Gwinn forecasts. I would rather see it contained even sooner if possible. If additional air units can help achieve this, give it priority.

“Ok, time is short. You all understand the serious nature of the situation we face. We are clearly experiencing internal attacks for which the perpetrators have spent a long time preparing. Cells of terrorists are being activated in an effort to weaken our resolve, terrorize our people, destroy our infrastructure and limit our mobilization. All of these motives are clearly a part of the overall war effort against us. We have to act forcefully to bring this situation under control as quickly as possible.

“Each of you is being given a copy of the Presidential Directives and Executive Orders I will be signing this evening. Many of them will involve your organizations and people. I am invoking emergency powers that the executive branch of government will exercise for the duration of the emergency. It is my intent that some changes associated with these orders will become permanent. In all likelihood, there will be some political fallout from these measures. Some of you may find your personal philosophy irreconcilable with these orders. Should conscience compel your resignation, I shall respect and honor your decision. To be sure, there can be no vacillation. The potential for disagreement and resignation aside, I insist on this team’s absolute unity in the face of these attacks. I can countenance no less. We must present a solid, united front to the people, to our enemies and to those politically motivated individuals and those they influence who may oppose this. Please take the next ten minutes to review these documents, and we will pick up the meeting at that point.”

As the Chief of Staff distributed the paperwork, the President responded to a signal from Jeremy Stone, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Fred Reisinger, the Secretary of State, who motioned for him to approach them. Both men had been injured in the March 15<sup>th</sup> attack on the White House, and despite their wounds, they were up and attending to duties. After a few seconds of hushed conversation, the President quickly followed them, exited the conference room and proceeded to the communication center, manned by U.S. Marines, to receive a critical transmission from Turkey.

**March 20, 22:23 EST**

**Communication Center, Laurel House**

**Camp David, Maryland**

“Mr. President, I am sure you have heard, or soon will hear of the situation here. I wanted to personally apprise you of our current circumstance.”

President Weisskopf listened attentively as President Ahmin Sezir of Turkey continued.

“The GIR has achieved a breakthrough at Kirikkale, some fifty kilometers to our east. We are being forced to move the seat of government and have determined that Istanbul is to be the new location. I, and the members of the National Security Counsel and the Cabinet, will be leaving here within two hours. We expect to mount a vigorous defense of Ankara. But, given the extent of the



breakthrough, the numbers of the GIR forces and the likelihood that these facilities will be targeted by air attack at any time and by rocket and artillery in the next several hours, we are forced to evacuate.

“The National Assembly will do the same, although a number of them are missing and assumed either captured or in hiding behind enemy lines. Those who are captured are being summarily tried under Islamic Law and executed by the GIR for supposedly betraying the faith.”

Norman Weisskopf visibly winced upon hearing this. The GIR was apparently every bit as harsh, barbaric and cruel in their operations as the vivid videos were showing the North Koreans to be. The President solemnly swore to himself that there would be an accounting for these atrocities ... it may take a long time...but he swore before God, that there would be a day of reckoning.

“Ahmed, I am very sorry to hear this. I know you leave the capital there with great reservation, but you are doing the right thing. Your nation needs you...the entire civilized world needs you and we need Turkey to continue holding the line as long as possible to enable us to turn the tide.

“General Stone will coordinate with your Military leaders, NATO and our own commanders to insure that the time is not far distant when we do just that.”

President Weisskopf, General Stone and Secretary Reisinger could not see it, but a security detachment entered the Presidential Offices there in Ankara and urgently conferred with President Sezir while the American President was speaking.

“I am told Mr. President that a large GIR air raid is inbound to the capital. I must leave now. We plan to dispatch Prime Minister Bulint Eseven to you there in America as soon as we land in Istanbul. He will catch a connecting flight. He will be carrying proposals regarding the defense of the remainder of our country and the disposition of your troops that will require your approval.”

Norm Weisskopf turned questioningly to Fred Reisinger who simply shrugged his shoulders to indicate that these the existence of these proposals was news to him.

“That is fine. We will receive the Prime Minister with open arms and will immediately confer with him. Good luck. We will not take more of your time. God’s speed to you Ahmed.”

### **That same time**

### **Presidential Offices**

### **Tehran, Greater Islamic Republic**

As President Weisskopf ended his conversation with the Turkish President, a similar conversation, but from a much different perspective, was just beginning on the other side of the globe. President Hassan Sayeed of the GIR, or simple the Imam to much of the Islamic world, was listening intently to the speaker phone on his desk. On the other end of the encrypted conversation was General Jabal Talabari, the commander in Chief of the GIR forces that were on the offensive in Turkey.

“My Imam, we have achieved a major breakthrough near the Turkish capital of Ankara. The Turkish, NATO and American forces are retreating in a major withdrawal. I believe we will take the capital in the next twenty-four hours, two days at the outside.”

Hasan Sayeed was pleased with this. Turkey was a major kingpin for the western influence of all of the Middle East and had been for decades. The leaders there had become secular and had adopted many western ways...and accepted western finance and equipment as payment to turn against their brothers. Oh, the west attempted to exert influence on the more fundamental states it was true. But, it was through their real Islamic surrogates, the Turks and the ruling class in Saudi Arabia and Egypt that the major influence was brought to bear against their Muslim brothers and sisters.

Hasan and others had tried for many years to influence the leaders in those nations away from such a course. Individuals like Sahdam Hussein had filled their coffers and strengthened their own hold on power by appearing to cozy up to the west. He had taken their wares and allowed himself to be played off against his brothers while trying to build an Islamic coalition himself that would, in the end, turn on the west. Others, like Usama bin Laden, had taken a very fundamental path, perpetrating terror attacks against the west thereby hoping to instigate a spontaneous Holy war against the west.

But the west had proved too resilient and too wise to allow such actions to thwart their purposes. Sahdam had been corrupt and swayed by his personal ambitions, and ultimately he had been killed for them. Usama had been too much the maverick with no high ranking clerical backing and little major governmental support, aside from the upstart and isolated Taliban. The Americans had crushed his networks and hunted him down and killed him for his attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. No, in the end, Hasan saw that all such efforts had ultimately proven to be abject failures.

Well, Hasan was neither corrupt nor a maverick. He was fulfilling the prophecies under Allah’s direction. He alone had won support of the leading clerics in both the Shia and Sunni sects of Islam. He had been named the Imam of all of Iran, the original Islamic Republic and had moved forward with the stated purpose of forming a Greater Islamic Republic, the GIR as the westerners called it. And he had been successful. Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and then Iran had all come into his fold. Libya, Syria, and many others had followed suit. As anticipated and as planned with his Asian allies, the creation of a powerful, unified Islamic state had led to war with the west in general, and America in particular.

Now, with the help of his CAS allies, who had overwhelmingly surprised and were now also driving back western forces in Asia and the Pacific, he was moving steadily forward with the first of his major goals. He intended to bring the wayward Islamic nations into the fold. This meant that the secular Turkish, Saudi Arabian and Egyptian governments all had to capitulate or fall. As expected, they were attempting to stand with their western backers and their western equipment.

“But who could stand against Allah’s will?” Hasan thought as he now responded to Jabal.

“What of the Turkish government, the National Security Council, the Cabinet and General Assembly in Ankara? I want as many of them captured and tried under Islamic law as possible.”

On the other end of the line, in his command headquarters, which had been set up near Diyarbakir in eastern Turkey, Jabal wasted no time in responding.

“We have captured quite a few of the General Assembly who were not able to escape our advance across the country. Each is being tried in turn for supporting the infidel western influence that has been perverting Islam. Several have already been publicly executed as a result. The national government, particularly the executive branch, was last reported to be in session in Ankara. As we speak, there is a massive air strike being conducted against the capital. The legislative and executive complexes are targeted. We may eliminate some as a result of this strike, but my guess would be that they evacuated as soon as they got word of the breakthrough.

“One last comment if I may, Imam. During the attack on the American flank, where Turkish and NATO forces were massed, we used the first of the Turkish national brigades we have incorporated into our service. The element of surprise and the impact on morale, particularly as regards the Turkish forces, were very effective. We had large numbers surrender to their countrymen, some literally closely related by blood. This was the impetus that led to the collapse of the American lines. When the Americans or British are teamed closely with their allied Turkish units, they are much more difficult to defeat. But when we confront the Turkish forces head-on, away from the western influence, we have experienced much greater success. With this attack, we have proven that when we utilize those local forces loyal to our cause to confront the “puppet” troops of the west, the results are monumentally to our benefit. We then exploit that benefit to perform encirclements and flanking maneuvers on the purely western forces. The Americans and their western allies do not understand this yet my Imam, and though our losses are severe ... even horrendous, it is encouraging our troops. We must press this advantage for as long as possible before American and NATO intelligence recognize it and take measures to minimize their exposure. If you can continue to provide me with the materiel, I will push the western forces and their supporters out of Asia in six weeks!”

This is exactly what Hasan wanted to hear. He had chosen well in promoting Jabal into this leadership role. Many had warned against it. After all, Jabal had once been in the employ of the Americans against Saddam. But when Jabal had thwarted an attempt on Hasan’s own life last November outside of Irbil, and killed a senior CIA operative in the process, Hasan knew that he had found a truly faithful follower.

**March 20, 22:35 EST**

**Executive Conference Room, Laurel House**

**Camp David, Maryland**

The President re-entered the room. Everyone was sitting at the table and only a few were still reading. Most were caught up in what appeared to be sober contemplation. A couple of them were visibly upset. Norm Weisskopf knew he had to come directly to the point and quickly obtain consensus, while weeding out those within his cabinet who could not support him. Turning in the direction from which he expected the greatest resistance, he spoke to the man who headed the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA.

“Curt, you look like you have a lot to say. Let’s get to it. Speak you mind openly and frankly.”

The President was not amiss in his expectations.

“Mr. President, quite frankly, I am shocked! Our duty here is clear. The Congress has passed laws that we are bound to uphold. Your issuing of these directives and orders will reverse the better part of thirty years of legislation when it comes to gun control and two of the primary federal agencies established to enforce those laws.

“I believe the changes to the BATF and the FBI that you are proposing will compromise our capacity to deal with the threats of saboteurs such as we’ve seen. The measures you propose establishing checkpoints along our waterways and throughout our highway system and at state borders are understandable. But, please help me understand your directives to ignore, or set aside enforcement of laws which congress has passed and your predecessors have signed, Mr. President. As I interpret them, I simply cannot support, or carry out these directives regarding firearms.”

The President had expected Curt’s disagreement. He knew that he needed to move quickly now and determine whether he or any others, would need to be removed from this administration and replaced by others who could support the measures. One thing was for certain: In the current circumstances, with war raging on two continents and America losing that war- and with abject

terrorism and military attacks occurring right here at home-America needed every available individual in the fight. Dissension at the top of the command chain was not an option.

“Curt, I am going to explain this to you in two ways. I hope that explanation will allow you to understand and be able to support me through these extraordinarily difficult times. If not, speak now ... and that goes for anyone else.”

“Number one. We face continuing attacks of unprecedented scale within our borders. Hundreds ... no, thousands of our citizens are being butchered by an unknown number of highly trained, ruthless and well-provisioned enemies who have taken up residence amongst us. Our “open border” policy and efforts to extend amnesty, or near amnesty to hundreds of thousands of illegal workers and aliens in this nation while we continue to only interdict small percentages of those crossing our borders has led to this. When you consider that this mass migration has been going on for decades you cannot discount the possibility that it has added significantly to the number of those willing to attack us within our borders. We clearly have enemies who have planned these attacks for years and we have given them the means to infiltrate the attackers right in amongst us. The sappers are therefore within the perimeter and I don’t need to tell you that this is a mortally perilous situation.

“It is a situation we must address expeditiously. We must thwart these attacks whenever they occur and minimize the loss of innocent life. We do not know where the next attacks will occur, and we delude ourselves if we think that any drastic curtailment of the lawful citizen’s rights to travel, association and free assembly will prevent it. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to have every area as prepared as possible for the next attack. The best way to do that is to arm the people themselves.

“In this regard, I intend to implement a policy that the Israelis enacted several years ago during the Palestinian intifadah of 2000-2003. The Israeli Prime Minister indicated that he wanted to ensure that armed citizen were in the right place at the right time when it came to terror attacks. In order to do that, they issued 60,000 additional concealed weapons permits to their citizens. The program was an astounding success. Terror attacks were interdicted as they developed, not after they butchered Israeli citizens. And this was in a country where the inherent right to bear arms is not recognized.”

“Well, in this nation, the people already have that right. Over the last several decades, in the name of “saving the children,” “security,” and in the name of any number of wrong headed initiatives, that right has been watered down by well intentioned but self serving politicians and organizations. But “shall not be infringed” is fairly easy to understand. And it is even easier to enact and respect.”

“The hard reality is this. We need armed citizens in place to confront these terrorists, these enemies, at the very moment they raise their heads. We saw this clearly in Idaho a few days ago during the attacks of the 15<sup>th</sup> where a state program had citizens armed and on patrol at infrastructure sites far too numerous to be covered by any “official” government agency. Those armed citizens helped prevent a catastrophe that could have cost tens of thousands of lives. Thank God they were there, thank God they were armed and thank God they were willing. Then, today, we had upwards of a hundred armed men in a neighborhood respond with their hunting and sporting rifles when their local mall was attacked. Another large group used weapons handed out by a gun-store owner, who himself was killed, to take on another group of these animals. Their intervention helped drastically lessen an atrocious and horrific attack on the innocent. Again, thank God they were there and willing ... and thank God they had the weapons to respond. What if those armed men had been inside the mall and in the parking lot when the terrorists started? I’ll tell you what. More of the terrorists would be dead, and a lot less of our citizens would be.

“Curt, we simply do not have enough law enforcement to go around. And many of those we do have are the right age and disposition to be used to fend off foreign armies bent on conquering the entire world...and sooner or later that will mean those would-be conquerors come to us here unless those individuals help stop them “over there”. In the hopes of stopping them “over there” I have already called up one million reservists. I am afraid we are going to have to call up a lot more before we are successful in halting and then defeating the enemy.

“All of this adds up to the fact that we have to have the people who remain here armed and in place to defend our homes, lives and liberty against these internal attacks. The answer is not 100,000 more police officers...or a million more. The answer is to be sure that honest, law-abiding citizens are armed and liberally distributed amongst us to stop these events as they happen. I believe it is the duty of law-abiding citizens to help in such situations where they are able. I know that is not a popular opinion amongst those who believe that agencies of government are the only ones capable in this area, but it is nonetheless my sentiment, particularly in these extreme, emergency conditions.

“So in this down to earth, practical sense, I intend to see to it that more of our people are armed, as many as possible. When was the last time you heard of a serious terror attack in Switzerland, where there is an automatic assault rifle in almost every home? The answer is you haven’t.”

“Now, number two. I have discussed this with our White House legal council, and have talked about it and considered it with friends of mine in the legislature and judiciary, Supreme Court judges and Senators and Representatives now retired. Actually, I have been doing this for some time as I have contemplated and anticipated such a need. The time has come to act. In so doing, we can never forget that the executive branch is a co-equal with the other two branches of government. It executes

the laws, the legislature passes the laws and the judiciary interprets the laws. It is a triad of power and influence, each member of which has taken the same oath...to protect, defend and bear true allegiance to the Constitution. To some extent, this means we are all watchdogs over the other branches, and that we are all in a position to counter any extra-constitutional moves that may arise. I have a moral and a legal duty and obligation to specifically challenge or ignore any law I deem unconstitutional. There is historical and legal precedence for this. Any such law, by long standing Supreme Court ruling is null and void anyway, and always has been.

"In addition, we are living in an abject emergency and significant power is vested in the executive branch...perhaps too much power from a constitutional perspective...to address such emergencies as directly as possible. Therefore, I have the wherewithal to approach this from two perspectives, the National Emergency perspective and the Constitutional perspective.

"And that's exactly what I intend to do. Today, as a part of our emergency plan, I intend to instruct the employees in the executive branch to simply not enforce many of the federal gun laws that are in existence. I will implement this policy on a dual foundation of constitutionality and emergency need. The leaders in the house and senate have already indicated to me that given the circumstances, we will not get the Executive Order thrown back at us. I intend tonight to begin undoing a lot of present gun legislation using the exact same tactics that got many of them passed. What this means is that the American people are going to be told, and they are going to see, how being unarmed leads to a significant increase in the violence, and ultimately in the death count of our citizens. I will then propose the solution that we arm the people according to the directives and orders you have just read.

"In addition, as these directives and orders indicate, I am requesting that the leaders in congress and the state governors and legislatures, enact legislation that will support and uphold these provisions not only for the duration of the emergency, but also once we are victorious and the emergency is past. I intend to do all in my power to get us out of the vulnerable position we find ourselves in and get back to a safer condition more in keeping with the original intent of our Constitution. I make no bones about using this horrible emergency and the patriotic fervor that it has naturally engendered to get this done. It begs to be done. It will save the lives of many more of our citizens right now, and even more importantly, it will get our nation back to a reliance on the principles that it was founded upon, and under which it prospered for the longest period of time."

"That's the explanation Curt...now it's time to decide. Are you with me? or on the sidelines?"

Curt Johnson was a product of a moderate philosophy when it came to gun laws specifically, and to all legislation in general. Although he was a moderate who favored basically smaller government over what the other side of the aisle promoted, he still believed that there were several areas where the government was far superior than the "private sector". In those functions he felt that the "common" citizen had absolutely no business. Law enforcement was one of these areas and to Curt's way of thinking, gun rights had to be restricted to sporting and some hunting in order to assure that there was no cross over, that no amateur citizens got in the professional's way.

"Mr. President, I simply cannot support what I consider a perversion of law enforcement and the creation of an abject constitutional crisis."

President Weisskopf was genuinely saddened, but not surprised. He shook his head for a moment and then looked Curt Johnson in the eye and said.

"I believe you are wrong Curt, but it is your decision to make. In view of your feelings, I will expect your resignation on my desk first thing in the morning."

Then, looking around at the faces of the others in the room, the President continued.

"Are there any others who feel as Curt does?"

The Director of the FBI, a hold over from the previous administration and another individual who was fairly outspoken regarding the absolute need for waiting periods, limits on personal firearms and other progressive gun restrictions, looked around the room for a moment, and then said.

"You'd best count me out Mr. President. I understand your position and what you are trying to do. And I respect the urgency of the situation, but I just cannot support the use of this crisis to undermine what I consider to be the progress we have made on this issue over the last many years. As Curt already said, it will create a Constitutional crisis at a time when we can least afford it."

Again, the President's countenance fell briefly and a saddened look passed momentarily across his face. Then he answered the Director of the FBI.

"Ross, I respect your desire to follow the dictates of your own conscience on this issue. But, I will tell you this: The Constitutional crisis in this regard has existed for a long time in my opinion. What we are doing with these measures is finally - even belatedly - addressing it. The Constitutional crisis in this regard began when a fundamental right laid out in the Constitution was first compromised. You cannot compromise a fundamental right. The moment you do the right has been forfeited...and that is what has been happening to one of the most fundamental rights upon which this nation was founded. The effort to return to a reverence and defense of that right simply represents the solution to an already existing crisis. That solution needs to be implemented now more than ever before. As we face this overwhelming external threat - and what I am sure is its offspring in the

horrific attacks we are experiencing on our own shore - we need to set this right. We are going to begin doing that this evening. In view of your feelings, I must ask for your resignation as well.

"Now, I would ask you to dismiss yourselves from this meeting, clean out your desks and have those resignations on my desk first thing tomorrow morning."

As Ross Sessions and Curt Johnson exited the conference room, President Weisskopf continued.

"Okay, they're both going to be missed for their management and administrative skills...but those can be replaced. We can't afford such deep philosophical splits. Unity of spirit and purpose in this administration will be vital if we are to prevail in this war. The crisis is too grave to risk our resolve or commitment at the leadership level with fundamental disagreements of this nature. The opposition, even during this crisis, is apt to be too intense for us to have the slightest waver in our commitment. Given those conditions, I must now ask again...are all of you with me on this?"

The President looked around the room, gazing intently into the eyes of each of those present for any sign of wavering. What he got back were the steady gazes and firm nods of a group of people who were as committed to these principles as he was...who were committed to enacting measures that would, in their eyes, drastically curtail the possibility of new attacks like those today.

"Now, for the presentation to the nation this evening, Dean, you stay on my right and until we have a replacement for Ross, I will refer to you for all matters concerning the FBI. Stewart, you continue on the left and with Curt gone, I will refer to you for FEMA activities. With the restructuring of the FBI, FEMA and the BATF outlined in these directives, Stewart, you and Dean will share overall responsibility for our internal security and response operations anyway. Let's get these final arrangements in place then, and I believe we need another fifteen or thirty minutes to do it."

Turning to his chief of staff, the President continued

"Talbot, please contact the networks and make sure that they know we are going to push back the address until 11:30 PM Eastern. In addition, make sure that the camera people know to focus on Stewart and Dean alone at the appropriate times. Do you have those nomination lists? Please give them to me and I will hand them out while you are talking to the network people"

The chief of Staff pulled several folders out of his brief case, handed them to the President, and then left the room to make the arrangements with the media. As he was leaving, the President handed one of these folders to each of the members of his cabinet who were present in the room.

"I need to immediately present the names for the heads of the FBI and FEMA along with the CIA and Secretary of Defense nominations, to Congress. In anticipation of this evening's resignations, and after a lot of soul searching regarding the other positions, here are the names I'd like to propose. I'd like each of you members of the cabinet who are receiving these names to review them and be prepared to offer your comments regarding them in tomorrow's 10 AM cabinet meeting. The other members already have their copies and will bring their input to that same meeting. I will present the names to Congress as early as tomorrow evening if possible.

"Please note that in light of current conditions. I hope to have that one available within the next week and will work further on it this evening after tonight's address to the nation."

**March 23, 19:30 local time**

**IDF Briefing Room**

**Tel Aviv, Israel**

"Therefore, coordinated operations of the RAH-66 in the Scout/Attack role with armored and mechanized battalions will maximize their effectiveness against the massed attacks you're likely to encounter. As we have demonstrated over the last several days, it is stealthy and visually hard to detect, it is extremely agile, it can defend itself against other attack helicopters and even against strike aircraft, and it carries the same weapons as the heavier AH-64. However, what it lacks in throw weight when compared to the Apache, it very nearly makes up for in overall effectiveness ... and it is more reliable and maintainable. All in all, for those amongst you who are history buffs, the Comanche is well named. For those of you who are not, I would suggest you read up on your 19<sup>th</sup> century American history, particularly regarding the southwest. The Comanche were amongst the most feared warriors of that time. Today's Comanche will represent the same to any enemy it faces.

"Let me close by saying this. We have been carefully analyzing the attack patterns against US and allied forces on the Arabian Peninsula, in Turkey and in western Egypt. The enemy is making good use of its principle asset...numbers. They are pairing up two and three units of relatively modern T-80 and T-90 tanks to take on individual M-60 and Abrams units and advancing in formations designed to allow for this. In addition, they are committing massive numbers of their strike aircraft to the air space over the battlefield and directly behind it. They are using these strike aircraft as a type of counter battery fire against our MLRS, and against our own attack helicopters. We are winning the air battle in terms of kill ratios in a big way, but we are not able to maintain air superiority, and certainly not air dominance. All this is critical when developing the operations plan for the Comanche in IDF service as an armor killer as the fighting progresses towards Israel.

“There is no doubt in my mind that the GIR intends to turn its attention to Israel if or when it is able to defeat the bordering Islamic states that have been allied with America. In that eventuality, the counter strategies to the GIR attacks being employed against American forces as we have discussed here today must be battle ready. I have been authorized to copy the U.S. battlefield command and planning staffs in both Turkey and Saudi Arabia on counter strategies as we develop and test them. We will be provided with their analysis and simulation results incorporating their own operational plans and, if available, actual battlefield reports and assessments.

“Are there any questions?”

Jess Simmons looked around the room. The briefing of the IDF leadership on plans to deliver a squadron of Comanche helicopters had gone well. Many of those in the room were people Major Simmons had worked closely with in the reinforcement of the Golan Heights defenses in the face of the rapid expansion of the GIR. His part in the “beef-up” had been to demonstrate the RAH-66 and development of plans for effectively integrating the first twelve Comanches into Israeli operations.

A hand was raised to his left.

“Yes Captain?”

“Major Simmons, I know this is not an overall intelligence briefing, and I know that this question may seem off topic...but what can you tell us of your country’s logistic support plans for the Arabian Peninsula? The reality is that GIR forces are moving effectively along the western coast of the Persian Gulf cutting off Qatar and entering the United Arab Emirates, and thrusting into the interior from Dhahran towards Riyadh. Without massive re-supply and reinforcement, Saudi Arabia will fall. If it does, this will trap US forces between two Corps sized GIR army groups. Such an eventuality will create a situation where integrating these few attack helicopters would be dwarfed by the urgent need to provide support for the withdrawal and regrouping of a much larger US force here in Israel.”

The question was informal and the fact that it had been asked at all indicated clearly that either the briefing had gone extremely well, or that the over riding concerns of those present was focused on a much larger picture. Jess was betting that this particular question was a result of the latter.

“Captain, let me answer your question this way. I am of course not in a position to speak to the much larger issues that your question raises. I will let our President, our Secretary of State and our Secretary of Defense articulate our official position. I will also leave it to our Theater Commander and his staff to address the specifics of the logistical situation. Please do not misunderstand. Your question is a good one, and one that is on everyone’s mind. I can assure you that the United States and my compatriots in the War College and in the various planning staffs are planning for every contingency...including the dire one you raise. In such a scenario, the experience that we gain now by integrating this particular system, the RAH-66 into your operations will be invaluable.

“With respect to the Comanche itself I can say this. For all the reasons I have already enumerated, the RAH-66 Comanche can be a significant force multiplier for the commanders who employ it. That is the reason your nation requested it, and in light of the current global circumstance, it is the reason my nation agreed to provide this first contingent to you. Should the need arise, either on the Golan Heights, or elsewhere here in Israel, I have no doubt that both of our forces in the area will be extremely grateful that the Comanche is present.

“Next question?”

From there, the question answer portion of Major Simmons briefing evolved into specific technical issues regarding the RAH-66 operating envelope and its capabilities. Comparisons of the Comanche with the Apache and Cobra helicopter gun ships already deployed by the IDF as well as the various platforms that the Comanche could expect to face, both on land and in the air, were put forward. Major Simmons’ combat experience and his expertise with the Comanche provided invaluable insights for the IDF, both in overview for the attending senior commanders, as well as for the more specific needs of those tasked with employing the Comanche for the IDF.

Colonel Abraham Eshkol was one of the latter. He had put in many hours along side Major Simmons over the last several days to avail himself of the Major’s experience in fully preparing his units on the Golan Heights. While it had been one of his captains who had posed the initial question regarding strategic considerations, the Colonel would not chastise him for raising the issue. He himself expected that the GIR would turn its attention towards Israel sooner rather than later.

“Apparently only after they succeed in pacifying the more moderate Arab states surrounding us,” thought the Colonel as Major Simmons completed his briefing and began to gather his material.

And the most troubling thing about the current situation was the calculated discipline displayed in the GIR strategy. With their lightning strikes on the more moderate Arab states, the GIR was putting Israel in a box. Should they succeed in pushing the Americans back and defeating Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, they would isolate Israel like she had never been isolated before. Should that occur, Colonel Eshkol knew that the Golan Heights and his forces occupying them would then sit squarely in the sights of the GIR juggernaut, flush with victory and emboldened.

“Great briefing Jess, you handled the questions well. I hope we can fully tap your wealth of expertise before you are reassigned. My nation is grateful that America would provide you to us at a time when you could so clearly be used to great advantage by your own forces elsewhere.”

The sixteen-hour duty shifts the two men had worked over the last week had given rise to the development of a close professional and personal bond between them. On the half-day they had been able to take off en route to this briefing, Jess had been a dinner guest of the Eshkol family and their relationship had developed to the point of a first name basis.

“Abe, I couldn’t have done it without your input and advice...and the excellent help of your staff. You already know the high esteem I hold for the professionalism and discipline of the IDF. The more I am here and the more I interact with your people at all levels, the more that is confirmed. Also the more convinced I am that your people will put these Comanches to good use. This is going to be one hellacious fight, however long it lasts, and I pray that we will all be reunited in peace with our loved ones when it’s over. I know I’m looking forward to that reunion more than I can say.”

**March 26, 09:23 EST**

**ABS Broadcast Studios, “Meet the Nation”**

**New York City, New York**

After the junior Senator from California completed her comments, the well-known host turned to the Attorney General of the United States, Dean Byron Hull, and said.

“Mr. Hull, you must admit that the measures contained in these Executive Orders and Presidential Directives are unprecedented in the history of our nation. At a time when so many Americans are concerned about violence, the President has taken steps to make instruments of violence more prevalent than ever. The Senator from California has just raised some pointed concerns with respect to the constitutionality of the President’s unilaterally suspending laws enacted by Congress. Two high ranking members of the President’s administration have resigned over this.

“So, one more time...isn’t the President bound to uphold the laws of the land as passed by the Congress? Isn’t anything short of that a violation of his oath of office? Isn’t it true, that as the Attorney General in this administration, your job is to execute faithfully the laws of the United States as passed by Congress, and prosecute any who would break them?”

The Attorney General had expected a grilling. Many of those who had made names for themselves, and even careers, by seeking and enacting legislation to limit the use of firearms, were not taking the President’s Executive Orders and Presidential Directives well at all. Since he had so straightforwardly announced them earlier in the week, many of the leaders in the firearms control movement, in and out of political office, were trumpeting their opposition to the measures in an effort to draw attention to themselves. However, despite such politically motivated opposition, in the midst of the crisis, public opinion and sentiment in the congress strongly backed the President.

“Fred, we have been over this several times already. The President himself has addressed these issues very directly, including a straightforward statement about the resignations. With all due respect to you and the Senator, these “unprecedented” actions are necessary precisely because we live in such unprecedented times and are confront such unprecedented attacks within our nation. We are at war, part of that war is now being waged within our own borders and hundreds, even thousands of our own citizens are being killed and terribly wounded. The Executive Branch is given broad ranging powers when it comes to repelling invasion and overcoming insurrection in such circumstances.

“What is happening here is that the President is simply exercising those powers. In this sense, the actions of the President are not nearly as precedent setting as those of Abraham Lincoln during the civil war when states legislative assemblies were cancelled and legislators were imprisoned for how they might vote on the question of secession. So, from the executive powers standpoint, what the President is doing is responding as the Commander in Chief in directing the nation’s response to its enemies in a time of war. In so doing, he has the strong support of the vast majority of the people.

“With respect to the oath of office, both for myself and the President ... and for that matter for every governmental official and uniformed member of the armed forces, that oath is to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution. It is not an oath to any single person. It is not an oath to any group of persons, and it is not an oath to a set of laws outside of the Constitution. It is an oath to the Constitution and all of us are bound by that oath to oppose any laws or actions that are not consistent with the Constitution. It is through taking this oath to heart that each branch of government remains a watchdog over the actions of the others.”

“Some of our colleagues disagree with the President from a constitutional perspective and they are free to pursue the constitutional avenues to address that disagreement. I do not think they will be successful. Clearly, gun ownership and possession is protected by the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment. “Shall not be infringed” is clear and unambiguous language. The history of the nation indicates that for a much longer period of time than some of the current legislation has been in existence, that fairly unrestricted ownership and possession of firearms was protected under the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment. Nothing short of a constitutional amendment can change that, and there are questions regarding the validity of that approach when the issue is contemplated in terms of the “unalienable rights” position.”

“Fred, again, as I stated to you in my opening remarks, this administration is committed to bearing true faith and allegiance to the Constitution...particularly under the current set of

circumstances. America's security will be at increased peril if we continue to perpetuate the faulty reasoning inherent to unconstitutional prohibitions."

The junior Senator could not contain herself and interrupted:

"Dean, I must say that I am ashamed of you. What you and the President and this administration are doing is using a horrific situation to push a radical, right-wing gun agenda on the rest of the nation. What you are doing is not only shameful, it's obscene. I tell you now, I along with a number of other Senators and representatives are going to do all we can to stop this either in the congress, or in court.

"I noticed you did not dwell too much on the resignations of the Director of the FBI or the head of FEMA. I think it is because they would agree that this is a malignant abuse of executive powers."

The Attorney General had expected unrelenting opposition from Senator Susan Crater. Her stand on gun rights and their stringent control was well documented. It was why the producers of the "Meet the Nation" show had invited her to discuss the issue with the Attorney General. Not even in these dire circumstances could she be moved from her ideological position, never mind the fact that her position was in direct opposition to the simple wording of the second amendment itself.

Dean Hull felt that the Senator's tenacious resistance to these initiatives, and her relative soft pedaling of the whole conflict with the People's Republic of China, was partly due to the close business and financial relationships with entities within the PRC. There were longstanding relations that she and her husband had maintained and that had started soon after her election to the Senate. Those same relationships were now a matter of discrete inquiry by the Justice Department for the possibilities of coercion or blackmail given the Senator's sensitive position.

But the fact that the network had invited her alone as the junior Senator from California onto the show was very telling. Originally, both Senators from California had been slated to be on the show with the Attorney General. In fact, the administration itself had expected similar abject opposition from California's senior Senator as well. The circumstances surrounding the conspicuous absence of the senior Senator and her silence in this matter would now be the Attorney General's "Ace in the Hole" in culminating his response to the comments by Senator Crater.

"Well Senator, once again with all due respect, I must say that our "radical" stance is much more in keeping with the views and actions of the individuals who founded this nation than what you propose. And in answer to the allegation that you and others raise that those individuals lived in a "different time", let me answer that in this way. While the nation was smaller and much more agrarian, while the means of communication and travel were slower and while their firearms were primitive by today's standards, one thing that has remained the same is the human heart. Those men understood human nature and provided for it in an inspired way in putting together the government that has endured for so long. In the midst of establishing it, they themselves stated how critical an armed populace was in preserving the government that they created. All other considerations aside, I will put my faith in what they crafted and in their own words concerning it.

"With respect to your attempts to use the Congress or the Judiciary to reverse what the President started on the evening of the 20th...it is your right to pursue such an avenue with your colleagues if you wish. But you'd best hurry because the numbers of those colleagues are diminishing rapidly. Very few people misunderstand the import of what occurred on the 20th at Foothill Mall in Colorado, or on the 15th near Boise, Idaho. Armed citizens repelled enemy attacks. Armed citizens saved lives. If more had been armed, far fewer of our people would now be dead or injured.

"Like I say, people on both sides of the aisle are seeing this for the obvious truth that it is. Let me quote your own distinguished colleague, the senior Senator from California, Senator Stonefeld in her press release yesterday,"

*"While I have typically been associated with what some call the gun control lobby, I will support the President in this initiative. These are perilous and terrible times. They are times that call for new ways of thinking. Perhaps after the crisis has past we can consider some common sense legislation once again. But in this crisis, and perhaps extending beyond it, I must support the President in arming more of our decent, law-abiding citizens so they might be in place to counteract such attacks and the loss of lives. Of course this has been made tragically and painfully obvious to me personally as a result of the loss of our dear nephew and niece at LAX earlier this week. That experience has caused me to rethink my stance on this issue like no other could."*

Senator Crater's demeanor was visibly impacted by the quote. She had always considered herself and Senator Stonefeld to be two of the leaders in the efforts to place strict controls on the so called and uniquely American "right" to own guns. That such verbiage would originate from the senior Senator was bad enough, that this lackey of what she considered to be an "out of control" administration would parade that verbiage in front of millions of Americans was just too much.

"Dean, that's way out of line. How dare you use what was clearly an emotional statement by Deborah, that was made at a time of numbing grief, to help push this agenda!"

For one instant, the Attorney General allowed his control slip as he, in turn, interrupted, the Senator. With eyes flashing briefly, he said,

"No Senator, how dare YOU doubt the seriousness of the situation, and how dare you ascribe your own agenda and ideology to a situation that clearly calls for us as a people to rise to the occasion



and fight for our very survival. The tragic loss that Senator Stonefeld experienced is being shared by tens of thousands of families all across this nation, the vast majority of whom recognize the gravity of the situation. They agree, and now she agrees, with the President on how we as a people must face it.”

Turning to the host of the show while noticing the clock, the Attorney General continued.

“Fred, even though time is short, let me just briefly review once again the essence of the President’s initiatives by citing the following five points:

“First, the only considerations that the federal government will recognize and pursue with respect to denying gun ownership and possession to any citizen of this nation are prior felony convictions involving the use of a firearm in the commission of that crime. Any existing background checks will be restricted to those areas alone and must occur immediately with the burden being placed on the federal system. In other words, there will be no waiting period, and if there are any troubles with the system, the check will occur manually and the sale will proceed. The only transactions that will be disallowed will be those in which the system identifies such individuals.

“Second, with the exception of fully automatic or crew serviced weaponry or explosive devices, all limitations on the import and sale of firearms in the United States will be lifted. This includes all semi-automatic rifles, various types of ammunition and certain handgun bans and restrictions.

“Third, all records associated with points one and two being held or archived by any federal agency will be destroyed.”

“Fourth, the law enforcement operations of the BATF have been dissolved. Investigative operations will now operate as a branch of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and be known as the ATFID, the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Investigative Directorate. All future enforcement requirements will be the responsibility of the criminal division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and with respect to firearms, these will be restricted to the two areas I have just mentioned.

“And, fifth, the President is urging and expecting Congress to submit to him bills for his signature to establish these initiatives in law. Suggestions for a Federal Firearm’s Act reflecting these measures will be forwarded to the Congress within the week.

“So, Senator, I would humbly suggest that you put aside your commitment to an ideology that is so clearly out of touch with reality and join with us, just as Senator Crater has done. Either way, the President has made it clear that this administration is going forward with the measures he announced three nights ago, and we are confident that we have the votes in Congress and the support of the judiciary to insure that that they are carried out.”

### **March 26, 21:23 local**

#### **Inside the PRC Consulate**

#### **Panama City, Republic of Panama**

“Our security forces are already set up and in place around each installation and around the canal. The anti-air missile batteries have been erected and are protecting all critical air space according to plan. Our TAS vessels are positioned and ready to launch at zero hour. They are also positioned to utilize their LRASD weaponry against any threat from vessels out in the Gulf. We have a large flight of three hundred aircraft, supported by in-flight refueling en route as we speak. They will arrive tomorrow morning in conjunction with the operation against the growing US presence. Are the Panamanian Defense Forces prepared for the planned ground and air support?”

“Well that was the real question wasn’t it?” thought the foreign minister as the Chinese General posed his question.

“Of course, General, the President and his military council inform me that the US training bases and logistics centers in our country will be hit just before dawn as your aircraft arrive. Our aircraft will provide the necessary coverage as your aircraft carry out their attacks.”

“We are looking very forward to this...many of us have waited many years to regain our honor after what the Americans did to us in 1989. It was quite some time ago, but we have not forgotten. The ceding of the canal and removal of most of their military was a necessary first step...we are ready now to complete their eviction once and for all and keep them from re-establishing themselves here.”

### **March 27, 04:50 local**

#### **Just off the city of Colon**

#### **Republic of Panama**

The three Tactical Attack Ships (TAS) camouflaged as container ships had taken up position off the terminus of the canal near Colon. They were positioned to both launch their tactical missiles and to guard against the approach of any enemy vessels approaching from the Gulf. They had been in Panamanian waters for over two weeks, arriving just a few days before the initial Chinese attacks on America that had taken place on March 17<sup>th</sup>. This morning there were three more TAS vessels taking up similar positions on the western side of the canal.

The Chinese had been in Panama in significant numbers for years. Soon after the United States ceded the canal back to Panama in the year 2000, the Panamanians had awarded the maintenance and operation contracts for the canal to commercial firms from the People’s Republic of China. But these

“commercial” firms had also been fronts for the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). For years now they had been secretly bringing in more and more military personnel disguised as canal workers. During the same time they had been bringing in more and more military equipment and caching it for just this eventuality. The latest container ships, including the six TAS ships now in Panamanian waters, had brought in significant amounts of heavier weaponry, including twelve KS-2 missile batteries, almost one hundred and fifty tanks and enough ammunition to supply the Chinese security forces for twelve weeks of operations.

At zero hour, a total of seventy two ballistic missiles were launched from the TAS vessels at targets along the Gulf Coast of the United States, from Corpus Christi, Texas, to Houston, to New Orleans, to the Naval facilities in Pascagoula, MS. These were the same naval facilities that had been hit so hard on March 17<sup>th</sup>. While these launches were occurring, joint PLA and Panamanian Defense Force armor assaults were carried against all US facilities. These ground assaults were accompanied by air attacks against those same facilities by arriving Chinese attack aircraft.

Though the various detachments of Americans fought fiercely and well, they were taken completely by surprise and overwhelmed by the large numbers of Chinese and Panamanian infantry and armor forces accompanied by the surprising and very strong air support. By noon, most of the heavy fighting around the canal zone was over. A number of attempted air attacks by the United States that were staged out of Texas were ineffective. Quite a few American aircraft were lost to the KS-2 missiles on the TAS vessels and the KS-2 missile batteries that had been erected around the canal, in Panama City and near Colon. There were also a number lost to the SU-30 combat air patrols flying over the canal zone when the American aircraft arrived. These high performance and modern air defenses came as a complete shock to American forces who were in the process of building up forces in Panama themselves to retake the canal and defend it against just this sort of attack.

By the next day, US hyper-velocity reconnaissance flights showed the entire canal-zone under tight PRC military control...the canal works themselves rigged for demolition. The President ordered a cessation of any more hasty attempts to prevent the coup that the Chinese had already pulled off. Instead, he ordered the military to perform whatever harassing operations were possible while he ordered the State Department to immediately contact the Mexican government and the Columbia government for permission to stage troops and materiel in their countries. He then ordered the Joint Chiefs of Staff to have a plan ready to present to him within the week to reverse the situation entirely, but due to other intervening events, that reversal would be much longer in coming.

**March 29, 03:23 local**

**USS Jimmy Carter (SSN-23), Control Room**

**South China Sea**

“Ok, Tony, quietly take us down and make your depth six-zero-zero. Then maintain a steady bearing of two-oh-three degrees at five knots.”

Captain Simon Thompson was back in the South China Sea on a mission in the deep water off the coast. Unlike prior visits to this area, the United States of America was now at war and the Chinese. Any “contacts” would be enemies who would immediately do all in their power to destroy his vessel and his crew if they discovered them there ... and, with the new supercavitating weapons that the Chinese now had in their arsenal, they were very capable of doing just that.

“Well, they must be having a really difficult time finding us, otherwise we would already be dead,” Captain Thompson thought as he reflected on this harsh reality.

The USS Jimmy Carter was the third and last of the Sea Wolf attack submarine class. The most advanced, quietest and most deadly class of submarine in existence. Built to a standard that envisioned insuring dominance over what had been the continued expansion of the Soviet Union Navy submarine capability at the time, the Sea Wolf class had found itself literally “too good” ... and too expensive ... for the anticipated operations when the Soviet Union collapsed. Instead, a newer, less expensive and somewhat less capable-in terms of overall weapons capacity-submarine class, the Virginia Class, had been designed. It was this class that would be built in the numbers originally envisioned for the Sea Wolf class. The first three of that class were already complete, and the namesake, the SSN 774, USS Virginia, had recently been ordered to the Arabian Sea when hostilities with the Greater Islamic Republic had broken out.

“I wish we had a half dozen more Sea Wolf’s,” thought the Captain. He realized that the net effect on operations resulting from designing and building the new class of submarine had meant that for several years no new US submarines had been commissioned and sent forth into the world’s oceans. Of course, that thought had been that since nothing afloat was capable of contending even with the older class US submarines anyway, that there was time to allow for the break.

“Well, hindsight is 20-20,” reflected Thompson. The Jimmy Carter had been the last new submarine in the US inventory until the Virginia class had started coming on line.

Her construction had itself exceeded original schedule by several years due to the requirement to accommodate several enhancements to her original design. Most notable of these were lengthening of the hull to accommodate the Advanced SEAL Delivery System (ASDS) submersible and all of the

provisions and weapons for two full teams of Navy SEALs. The ASDS was really a mini-submarine itself that could carry up to ten Seals and their equipment in a safer dry environment than the earlier “wet” submersibles that the SEALs had employed.

On this mission, the Jimmy Carter carried her contingent of SEALs, but no ASDS. This was a mission for which stealth was the highest priority. While the ASDS itself was as quiet as the SSN, the piggy-back configuration with the ASDS mounted behind the sail, inevitably perturbed the perfect stream line flow around the Jimmy Carter’s hull and on this mission there could be no risk of even the slightest additional sound. The mission was to observe the activities, operations and characteristics of the new Chinese naval craft and particularly the new super-cavitating weapons they carried that they had launched so effectively against American warships.

“Their success had cost the lives of thousands of American service men and women, including some of my personal friends,” thought the Captain.

In the last week it had also been made painfully obvious that the Chinese had effectively acquired the acoustical signature of US submarines in particular. As a result the backbone of the US fast attack fleet, the Los Angeles (LA) class boats, were at serious risk. Well off the Taiwan coast, the Jimmy Carter had listened helplessly as an LA class boat had attempted an approach and attack on a Chinese Surface Action Group (SAG). The SAG was centered on one of the new Chinese Tactical Attack Ships (TAS) and escorted by two Jiangwei-II frigates and a Hangzhou class guided missile destroyer. All of these escort ships were capable anti-submarine platforms and the TAS and the Hangzhou were outfitted with the same LRASD weapons systems that had mauled the 7th Fleet.

As the Jimmy Carter observed, the LA class boat got into position and fired a spread of torpedoes targeting the TAS, the Hangzhou and the closest Jiangwei-II frigate. What had happened next was something everyone on board the Jimmy Carter would remember forever.

The Hangzhou and the TAS had each immediately fired a single LRASD. These two devices had entered the water and tracked off to the northwest towards the firing position of the LA class boat, now some fifteen kilometers distant and maintaining wire guidance on it’s own Mark-50 torpedoes. The LRASD weapons had been in the water and running at close to fifty knots for no more than three minutes when they each lit off their rocket engines and accelerated rapidly to over 500 knots and made directly for the LA class boat. In seconds the weapons had arrived on station and caught the US submarine as it had attempted to turn away and accelerate.

“There just hadn’t been enough time,” thought Captain Thompson.

The entire crew had heard the thunderous explosions of the mammoth warheads that the LRASD weapons carried. They both went off within a few seconds of one another. The first device had exploded within fifty feet of the LA class boat, breaching and crushing the pressure hull like an egg shell. The second device had plowed into the mass of turbulence created by the detonation of the first weapon and exploded as well. What fell out of the two explosions and sank to the ocean floor was no longer recognizable as a US attack submarine by the sensing devices on the Jimmy Carter.

The spread of “fish” fired by the American boat had only struck one victim, and that had been the nearest Jiangwei-II frigate, which had burned ferociously for over an hour and a half before settling in the water and sinking bow first. The lines to the other American torpedoes had been cut too soon to allow them to acquire the TAS or the Hangzhou, either of which was by far the greater prize. In a one for one battle with the Chinese, the loss of US LA Class SSN while claiming only the single Jiangwei-II frigate was a disastrous exchange.

The death of that American vessel, along with one hundred and fifty of their fellow countrymen, had been sobering for the captain and crew of the USS Jimmy Carter. This crew knew the gory details of the attacks on the fifteenth. They had also seen the extraordinary video of the death of the USS Constellation. Despite this clinical knowledge, they had not been personally present when Task Force 77 had been so terribly savaged and therefore had not developed the true gut-wrenching, mind-shocking personal experience that such a presence would evoke.

That was not the case here. They had witnessed the death of that LA class boat up close and personal, and there was nothing comparable in their experience. The crews of the US Navy’s SSNs had grown comfortable over several decades as the top predators in the world’s oceans. In this mind set, for the crews of US attack submarines, there were only two types of vessels, their submarine and “targets”. The last several minutes had all too vividly shown them the new reality...they were no longer invulnerable...now they could just as easily be the “target”. Their challenger was deadly and would attack with a fury that, for now at least, they could not counter. They themselves could have just as easily been the victims as those lost on the LA class boat.

The LA class boats, particular the Advanced Capability (ADCAP) boats, were superior to any other navy’s submarines. The US had over fifty such submarines at the onset of hostilities and it was felt that they would make quick work of the new Chinese surface combatants, despite the fact that on the first day of the war, four of those submarines had been sunk. Immediately thereafter, CINCPAC had dispatched twenty towards the South China Sea, the Yellow Sea and to conduct operations off of Japan and the Philippines. Since that time, the first four scheduled to arrive on station had failed to

report in and were now well overdue. The Jimmy Carter had, in all probability, just witnessed what had befallen those missing boats.

Despite the desire to avenge their countrymen, the Captain had maintained the absolute discipline that was required for the completion of his mission. Although he and every man on the Jimmy Carter felt certain that they could sink the entire Chinese SAG, they also knew that every man aboard the hapless LA class boat had thought the same thing. It was a risk they simply could not take, and it was not in keeping with their operation plan and specific orders.

No, the time for avenging would come later. He and the crew would have to be satisfied with the Situation Report (SITREP) that they would communicate back to CINCPAC later in the day regarding the demise of that LA class boat. Right now, the Jimmy Carter's acoustical emanations were either below the detection threshold of the Chinese sonar systems or they had not been entered into the database of the new weapons. Captain Thompson intended to keep it that way for as long as possible in order to gather sufficient information about these deadly threats. CINCPAC would then come up with effective counter measures and the means to defeat them.

**March 28, 04:35 local time**

**Lightning Flight**

**75,000 ft over Alaska**

"Backstop, Lightning lead ... Alpha window in 50 seconds.."

Captain Becky Bosworth was speaking to her controller on the E-3 Sentry AWACS aircraft which had taken up station to the north of Fairbanks. Captain Bosworth and her flight of four modified F-15C fighter aircraft were each carrying one of the latest upgraded Anti-Satellite (ASAT) missiles built almost twenty years earlier by Vought Missiles and Space Corporation and regularly upgraded to incorporate successive generations of avionics and sensors. The ASAT carried both active radar homing and infrared homing seekers for terminal guidance of their warhead. However, this would be the first time that they had ever been used in combat and everyone from the president down to Bosworth were anxious about this first engagement. A lot was riding on the ability of these missiles to take out the Chinese surveillance satellite capability.

"Lightning lead, Backstop ... Initiate profile ... slave to Backstop for Alpha launch at T-minus 10. Maintain profile through launch."

Backstop was instructing the Lightning flight leader and her wingman to slave the final acquisition and launch of the ASAT missiles to the E-3 Sentry, who would provide a digital data link to US Space Command facilities that were providing the actual data for the engagement. That data would be downloaded to the missiles via the digital link right up until launch. Upon final approach, the missiles themselves would activate their seekers and destroy the targets. During the entire time, US Space Command, through a multitude of sensors, would monitor the engagement. They would then analyze the outcome and assess the engagement, recommending any follow-up necessary.

"Backstop ... Lightning slaves at T-minus 10 ... profile through launch."

Within a few seconds, Captain Bosworth and her wingman received a green light on their panels verifying the status of communication data links with Backstop, and their ASAT missiles began receiving targeting information from the controlling aircraft.

"Backstop, systems nominal. Slaving in 3, 2, 1, Mark! Weapons slaved. You have the ball."

Ten seconds later, from an altitude now in excess of 60,000 feet, the ASAT missiles from the two F-15Cs lit and climbed rapidly away, accelerating through the thinning atmosphere until main engine burnout. Within 2 minutes they were at an altitude of 100 miles, and now seeking their target - a Chinese satellite that would be passing over the north Pacific.

Fifteen minutes later, a second pair of F-15C's in Lightning flight had launched their ASAT's at a second Chinese satellite passing over the central Pacific Ocean.

**March 28, 04:42 local time**

**In Orbit**

**Over the northern Pacific Ocean**

The latest reconnaissance satellites employed by the People's Republic of China were only marginally inferior to the United States KH-12 in terms of sensor capability, resolution and range. Their rapid advance was due largely to the efforts of intelligence operatives in the 1990s, entering America as exchange students who later obtained jobs in US technology firms and gathered information for several years while they worked their. Their rapid advances were also due to commercial "exchange" operations that netted significant information and materiel, to "joint" military operations and liaisons and through outright bribery of US officials. But the PLA had not stopped there. Under General Hunbaio, commander of the People's Republic's weapons research operations, a team had been specifically tasked with developing defenses for Chinese satellite assets against the very type of attack the United States had just launched.

That effort had produced powerful orbital adjustment jets for each satellite with enough fuel for several orbital adjustments. In addition, each satellite was fitted with an array of wide-angle infrared

sensors to detect the exhaust plume of attackers, and its defenses included chaff dispensers for releasing small clouds of metallic foil particles which mimicked the satellite's radar image to decoy any attack. Finally, each satellite was equipped with a relatively powerful Electronic Warfare (EW) suite which including jamming and the capability to produce small, but tightly focused electromagnetic pulses (EMP) directed at attacking systems. All of this was masked by the large size of the satellite vehicles themselves, which effectively masked the jets and their fuel cells, and also masked the degree of miniaturization that the Chinese had been able to achieve in including these other packages onboard. That larger size also fit conveniently to the western intelligence assessment of Chinese capabilities. The net effect was that each Chinese satellite could produce two or three decoys of itself while adjusting its own position by several thousand meters if alerted in time of a attack by ground controllers or by the satellite's own on-board sensors. If these efforts failed, the satellites could then attempt to jam or destroy the electronics of any approaching warhead.

And that is exactly what the Chinese satellite over the northern Pacific Ocean attempted to do.

As the two US ASAT missiles approached, they were detected first by ground controllers and then by the satellite's sensors. A preprogrammed evasive sequence was executed and two foil patterns were ejected before the missiles arrived. One of the missiles was drawn off by a false radar image and exploded harmlessly amidst that foil pattern. The other locked onto the actual satellite but was unable to adjust its trajectory sufficiently to make a direct hit. The US upgrades included both a home on jam and a shielding against EMP capability, so the electronic countermeasures were not effective when employed by the Chinese satellite.

As the warhead passed within two hundred meters of the satellite, a proximity sensor ignited the warhead. Of the thousands of pieces of shrapnel radiating out from the resulting explosion, only a few actually struck the satellite. One of these cut through the outer skin of the satellite, destroying one of the attitude jets and several electronic components that controlled the satellite's primary gyro. This damage produced an uncontrollable spin and a velocity change that sent the satellite into a lower, unstable orbit. Despite the efforts of the Chinese ground control crew, the orbit and the satellite's attitude continued to deteriorate and it burned up in the earth's atmosphere less than an hour later.

The Chinese satellite over the central Pacific was not damaged at all. Both US missiles missed as a result of the PLA ground control team having several more minutes to move the satellite further out of its normal orbit and produce more numerous and more effective radar decoys.

Within three hours, Lightning flight was back in the air over Alaska. This time they launched all four of their ASAT missiles at the remaining Chinese satellite as it passed over the central Pacific. With four missiles targeting it, one of the warheads made a direct hit and completely destroyed the satellite. The result was the creation of a huge gap in Chinese satellite reconnaissance over the Pacific Ocean that the United States planned to take advantage of through operational plans for the USS Kitty Hawk. Another result was that the attack triggered the Chinese into implementing their "Falling Star" operation targeting US space based assets as ordered by Jien Zenim.

### **March 29, 20:45 local time**

### **PLA Satellite Launch Facilities, 100 kilometers outside Kuqa**

### **The People's Republic of China**

General Xien Lei-Hsu watched silently as the last of three boosters lifted its payload rapidly into the clear night air. He had stepped outside of the control facility onto the VIP observation deck just a few seconds after the last of the three launches to watch the rocket rise into the atmosphere. The launch facility was located at an altitude of almost three thousand meters where the air was clear, thin and dry...and it made for an ideal location to insert satellites or other space-bound payloads into earth orbit. It was a location that the People's Liberation Army was making good use of this evening with the three "ripple" launches within just a few minutes of one another.

"Ideal for space launches, but not so ideal for civilized man," thought the General as the chill in the early spring air seeped through his parka. Spring was a very relative term in this location compared to other duty assignments where the General had served.

Regardless, the General thought that having the privilege of initiating the most visible and politically damaging portion of "Falling Star" was well worth the discomfort of tonight's weather. He knew that the several other launches occurring at other satellite launch facilities throughout the PRC would be assumed by the Americans to be launches of replacement satellites for those that they had downed earlier in the evening. He also knew that they would be wrong in their assumptions.

"No, for this location, at this time of the year, the discomfort is not bad ... not bad at all. It could be worse," he thought as the rocket faded from view and he made his way back into the facility.

"Soon it will be the Americans who are feeling the discomfort."

**March 28, 18:42 MST**  
**Global Watch Section, NORAD**  
**Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado**

“OK, there they go. I have multiple launches from all three locations inside the PRC. I’ve got a total of ten, no, twelve tracks now. We’ll have trajectory information momentarily.”

Noticing the anxiety in the watch section’s report, despite the discipline, the duty officer immediately communicated the report of the launches over secure lines to NORAD command. NORAD command would in turn broadcast it to a multitude of US Military commands around the world, including the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) and the National Command Authority (NCA), the President himself. After several seconds, the watch section continued.

“OK...launch vehicles are NOT ICBMs ...all tracks show orbital insertion. No imminent threat to CONUS (Continental United States) or any other land target. Update on the orbits momentarily.”

Again the information was communicated to the US military and to the civilian leadership. As they heard the report that the tracks were not directed at the CONUS, many heart rates slowed and many sighs of relief were uttered...even though this was the expected news. Once the threat of any ballistic missile attack was allayed, most of the leadership presumed that the twelve tracks simply represented a PRC effort to replace the eight satellites that the US had downed early that morning, and to place redundant systems in orbit in case of more attacks. As such, they viewed each of these as more targets for ASAT missiles and went on about their business. Those involved directly with the operation to eliminate PRC satellites began to prepare for more attacks as soon as they had the data.

These presumption and the plans based upon them, along with the relief and the slower heart rates were all very short lived as the watch section began to receive the analysis regarding the specific orbits for each Chinese track. As one after another the orbits were plotted and the deadly celestial ballet began to materialize to the watch section, the duty officer raised the warning.

“Hold! I am declaring a NORAD defense emergency! All inclinations and apsides deviate from established patterns...the orbital tracks do not match normal insertions for recon. I repeat, the orbital tracks do not match normal insertions for recon. Projected tracks will intercept major national assets.”

This information raced around the world at the speed of light as the duty officer sent the report to NORAD command and as NORAD in turn passed it on as flash traffic. Duty officers and their commanders around the world set up in rapt attention as the information continued to come in. The NORAD duty officer was hard pressed to keep up with the reporting as more data regarding the specific orbital tracks kept pouring in through the watch section ... and it only got worse.

“Analysis data now indicates a 100% probability of orbital intercept insertions targeting NRO, US Space Command, civilian and NASA assets!

“We are now seeing a second wave of Chinese launches ... another 12 tracks.

“Primary target analysis indicates that our KH-12 satellites, our military communication satellites and major civilian communications satellites are all targeted. Wait, there’s more...analysis indicates that...dear God, they’re targeting the International Space Station!”

## Chapter 13

*“When the star falls from the sky, you will know that the end is near.”—Ancient Biblical Era Prophecy*

**March 26, 18:50 local time**

**Command Module**

**International Space Station**

“Captain Wynn! This is Lieutenant Clyde in the Command Module. You’d better get over here and take a look at this. We have Flash traffic coming in from Mission Control in Houston. It says ‘Eyes Only’ and is addressed to you.”

The fact that Larry was addressing him in a military fashion alerted Captain Bart Wynn, United States Navy, that something extraordinary was going on. Since the space station and NASA itself were civilian operations, informality was the rule in day-to-day operations, even if various members of the crew came from military branches of service of their respective governments.

Three of the four Americans were U.S. military officers assigned to NASA, had been in the program for years, and were experienced astronauts. The fourth member was a scientist who had worked for the government her whole life, and was also a very experienced NASA astronaut. The other six members of the crew hailed from three countries: the United Kingdom, Japan and Germany. Of these, only two were military personnel, Colonel Erickson of the United Kingdom, and Lieutenant Stuedler of Germany. The Germans and the Japanese had only last week replaced two Russian and two Canadian crew members who had returned to Earth on the U.S. Shuttle Atlantis. The U.S. Shuttle Discovery was currently docked at the space station, and two of its crew would be replacing two of the Americans the day after tomorrow and returning earth side.

“I wonder if there is a problem with the Discovery schedule,” thought the Captain as he typed in his access code and viewed the message.

It didn’t take Captain Bart Wynn but a few seconds to realize the import, the immediacy, and the danger of the situation facing the space station. The training and experience he had acquired as an astronaut, coupled with his fifteen years of prior active duty experience on board ships of the U.S. Navy, had prepared him well for such command conditions. His first action was to immediately reach over on the control console and manually activate the collision alert alarm.

As his friend Lieutenant Clyde Norris looked at him in surprise, the Captain said, “Lieutenant, this station is under attack by the People’s Republic of China. Three warheads of undetermined characteristics have been inserted into an intercept orbit for this station and they will arrive here within the next fifteen minutes.

“Inform Commander Granger on Discovery to immediately prepare for an emergency departure carrying all members of this crew. Also, activate the maneuvering thrusters and begin moving this station outbound, normal to our orbit. I doubt it will make much difference, but we have to try to move it as far out of harm’s way as possible before those weapons arrive.”

The incessant buzzing of the collision alert brought every member of the crew to the command module to find out what the situation was. Upon their arrival, Captain Wynn informed each of them of the grave danger they faced. There was little time. It would take another seven to eight minutes for the shuttle to prepare for an emergency departure; then the crew would have the remaining minutes to maneuver Discovery as far as possible away from the space station. Each crew member was given specific orders by Captain Wynn, instructing them to completely suit up, to power systems down, to seal modules, and do everything humanly possible to limit the damage in the time they had remaining.

All too soon, the time passed and the captain, who had been in contact with both the commander of the shuttle Discovery and with NASA Mission Control, ordered them all to board the Discovery and prepare for immediate departure.

**March 26, 19:02 local time**

**Command Deck**

**U.S. Shuttle Discovery**

“Our relative velocity to the station is now three meters per second outbound. The station is up to one point five meters per second. Commander. We are two hundred meters distant.”

Commander Granger soberly considered the data that his Executive Officer, Lieutenant John Burnett, the pilot of the Discovery, had just given him. Discovery was completely overloaded with fourteen people on board, and not enough couches to accommodate them. He had all eight of the couches filled, and everyone else was strapped into bunks on the lower deck. He hoped it wouldn’t get too rough, but he could tell that they were not going to get as far away from the station as he would like before those Chinese warheads arrived. Mission Control and the U.S. military had no idea what kind of warheads they were, and it was clear that he and those with him would be the to first find out.

Per instructions from Mission Control—and the Commander understood that the command came all the way from the NCA (National Command Authority or the President himself)—the Discovery was filming the station as he departed, along the expected approach vector of the Chinese warheads.

He asked his Executive Officer, “John, what’s the ETA for those weapons?”

Several minutes ago, the XO had set up a real-time readout of the estimated time to impact on his own console. Giving it a quick glance, he responded, “Commander, we’re estimating ninety seconds.”

Granger noticed Captain Wynn looking his way. He returned the look with a barely perceptible nod. They both were doing the math. They both understood what was occurring here. The “intercept” was not a matter of the Chinese missiles that overtaking the Space Station in the traditional sense of an intercept. What was really occurring was that the Chinese were simply placing these three warheads of some type in their orbital path and allowing them to run into them. Even if they were not explosive warheads, at the orbital velocity of many thousands of miles per hour, simple contact would be absolutely catastrophic. They’d be lucky to be four hundred meters from the shuttle when the intercept occurred, and that was simply not far enough for the commander.

“John, bring all the thrusters online now. Vector them for maximum velocity...peg it!”

The XO turned to his commander with a shocked look and replied, “Commander, that will stress the system and expend our maneuvering fuel. We won’t have any margin of error for re-entry!”

Like Captain Wynn, Commander Granger had served for many years in the Navy on combat ships. Part of that time had been spent off the coast of Yemen assisting the USS Cole after it had been attacked and almost destroyed by terrorists on October 12, 2000. Later, he had been the XO of a guided missile destroyer (DDG) off the coast of Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom against the Al Qaeda and Taliban forces after the 9-11 attacks of 2001. As a result, Commander Granger had a firm grasp on the reality of the combat situation they faced.

“John, we have *no* time for debate. If we do not survive the next one hundred seconds, the additional fuel and the integrity of our hull will be meaningless. So kick it into high gear and do it now! That’s a direct order.”

The Lieutenant immediately complied with what had suddenly become a military imperative from his commanding officer. By activating all of the thrusters and vectoring them for appropriate movement, the stress on the Shuttle was perceptible to all on board. With the passing seconds, the XO continued to read out their velocity, their distance from the station, and the time to impact.

“We’re now at four point five meters per second relative velocity, two hundred seventy-five meters distant and forty five seconds to impact...now at five meters per second, three hundred ninety meters and twenty-eight seconds to impact...six meters per second, five hundred twenty meters and ten seconds to impact. Nine, eight, seven, six...I have some kind of separation on the warheads!”

When the XO made this statement, everyone’s eyes turned and quickly locked on the display monitor, magnifying the area of space where the warheads that they were rapidly approaching were located. There, in the distance, at the very limit of the shuttle’s on-board optical capability, barely perceptible flashes of light represented the location of the warheads for the intercept.

### **March 26, 19:04 local time**

#### **PLA Intercept warheads**

#### **Orbital path of U.S. Shuttle Discovery**

Those barely perceptible flashes marked the detonation of small separation charges on each warhead. Their purpose was not sophisticated at all in terms of tracking or targeting beyond what had already occurred in getting those “kill-vehicles” (KV) into their present position. Each had simply blown a group of buckshot-sized pellets out in front of itself in a circular pattern. For each warhead, this separation produced close to twenty-five hundred miniature “meteorites” that were thrown out in an expanding pattern that would reach almost four hundred meters in diameter before the interception trajectory of the Space Station would pass through them.

This meant that seventy-five hundred small, solid projectiles filled a twelve hundred meter front as the Space Station approached at orbital velocity. That was the extent of the Chinese ASAT technology, and it was about to be proven very effective.

### **March 28, 10:05 local time**

#### **Command Deck**

#### **U.S. Shuttle Discovery**

The shuttle rocked violently as the time for the interception came and went.

Amid the resulting warning lights, alarm buzzers and general confusion, Commander Granger and his XO quickly evaluated the condition of the shuttle.

“I have positive pressure on both decks.

“I’m showing a loss of both primary and secondary hydraulics for the port wing control surfaces...checking further now.

“The system is reporting a loss in integrity of the thermal shield on the leading edge and underneath the port wing surfaces. Looks like we have serious damage to that port wing.”



As members of the Space Station crew shouted questions, Commander Granger raised his voice. "All right, people, we are alive but damaged. Hold all conversations for the time being to the minimum. Let the crew do its job."

Captain Wynn added his own directive. "That's right. Folks, we are visitors on this craft. Commander Granger is in charge. He will let us know what is going on in good time, and he will inform us of any way that we can help. For the time being, let's stay calm and let them do their jobs...and thank God that we are alive."

"Take a look at the Space Station if you doubt for an instant the need to be thankful."

With that, all eyes, except Commander Granger and the XO, who were still exerting military discipline and assessing the condition of their craft, turned to the display monitor for their on-board cameras that were focused on the Space Station...or better said, the remains of the Space Station. The video, which was also down linked to Mission Control, the command of NORAD, and the President and his situation team at Camp David, showed the shredded remains of what had been, up until just a few seconds ago, the most sophisticated and greatest undertaking of mankind in space to date.

"Gone...just like that, in only a split second," thought Captain Wynn as he viewed the drifting and expanding field of wreckage a few hundred meters away.

The basic command, living and scientific modules remained intact as units, but even from this distance, it was clear that they had all been perforated hundreds of times by the interception. The bulk of those modules appeared to be separating from the vicinity of the space shuttle at a noticeable rate...towards the clouds below. In addition, all of the communications, power, observation and other antennae and sensors had been stripped away and destroyed in the literal hailstorm of projectiles through which the station had passed. Except for a few larger components of the solar array, very few of the pieces were even recognizable. That entire wreckage field was drifting away with the modules.

"It's no wonder all of that was stripped away," thought the Captain. "At those velocities, even the smallest objects laid in our path carried enough energy to make mincemeat out of all of those antennae, sensors, and receivers."

As the occupants of the shuttle and the personnel who were earth-side contemplated the devastation, Commander Granger relayed his initial assessment of the attack on the Space Station, and the consequences it held for Discovery to Mission Control in Houston.

"Mission Control, this is Granger. The Space Station is a complete loss. Initial calculations from this location indicate that the station's orbit has been completely compromised, and it is falling rapidly into an unstable track that will cause it to re-enter the Earth's atmosphere. You guys are going to be better able to verify that and to determine the exact track from your position...and we are going to have our own hands full, anyway."

"Apparently we passed through the extreme edge of the target pattern of those weapons. It was a very close call. A few tens of meters less departure on our part, and we would have all been gone. As it was, we took severe damage to our port side wing. I have a camera looking at it now, and you can see for yourself that the integrity of that wing has been compromised beyond our ability to repair it with the expertise and materiel we have on board."

"John, bring up the video of that wing on the so that everyone on board can see."

As the XO brought up the disturbing image, everyone turned to that display and saw what the Commander was talking about...saw exactly what Mission Control, NORAD, and the situation room in Maryland were also seeing. The port side wing of the shuttle had been perforated in scores of places. The control surfaces on the trailing edge were still hanging onto the structure closer in to the hull of the Discovery, but were dangling loosely out in space beyond that. A large number of black tiles, both whole and in fragments, could be seen drifting out into space around the shuttle where they had been fractured and knocked free by the projectiles that had passed through the wing. Towards the tip end of the wing, the outer covering had been stripped away, exposing the bare structure beneath it.

"Houston, we will not be landing this craft as is. While the crew cabin sustained no apparent damage, and life support, fuel and other consumables are all intact, damage to the flight and control surfaces on the port wing, and to its heat shield eliminate that as an option without extensive repairs. I believe we will be able to maneuver here in orbit, but I would suggest that ground control put their heads together and come up with a good evasive plan while we're up here. We'll want to be able to avoid future intercepts should the enemy track our orbit, which I am sure they will try to do."

"What are your thoughts on having our science officer make an EVA within the next hour or two to obtain a full assessment of the damage. We can probably accomplish that assessment in a two to three hour EVA. The close-up video of the damage that we obtain during the EVA will help the engineering team down there to come up with the plan for how to proceed."

"John and I need your input in stretching our consumables to maximize our endurance given the number of personnel on-board. I will also ask Captain Wynn and his XOs assistance in developing and implementing these plans and a rotation schedule."

Mission Control concurred with Commander Granger's assessment. Over the next forty-five minutes, definitive plans were derived from that assessment, and were discussed and analyzed by all those on board and by those on the ground with a calm and discipline that had been honed in rigorous

pre-flight simulations. Their calm belied the desperate nature of the crisis facing the crew and occupants of the Discovery. At the same time, those on the ground, from the President and his staff down to the individual controllers of the various American military satellites, came to terms with the full impact of this latest attack by the Chinese.

**March 26, 20:10 EST**

**Situation Room, Laurel House**

**Camp David, Maryland**

"Okay, that sums up the situation in Panama. I need not remind you all of how critical that canal is to us for logistical purposes. We simply must find a way to get it back, or at the very least eject that Chinese expeditionary force out of Central America as soon as possible. Although we need the plans to do this yesterday, I am afraid that our ability to put together and execute such plans are going to take some time given the situation in the Mid East and in Asia. Nonetheless, General Stone, I want the process started and the operational plans developed. In spite of the conditions in other theaters, we will have to consider Central America a new theater of operations and put together the forces to execute those plans as soon as possible.

"Now, let's turn to the exchange in Space. I have asked John to brief us on that. John?"

As the President sat down, John Bowers thought for a moment as he made his way to the front and the small podium in front of the President's National Security team in the situation room at the Laurel House at Camp David. As the National Security Advisor to the President, he had significant direct access to most of the other members on the President's cabinet. If circumstances warranted it, he also had direct access to the President on most occasions, able to interrupt what would otherwise be closed meetings. In fact, when the President had asked him to serve in this capacity, he had made it clear to John that such unfettered access was a part of the job description.

John Bowers' association with the President went far beyond political. They had served as comrades in arms during Desert Storm, when then-Captain Bowers in the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the U.S. Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division had led a platoon of Abrams tanks that had been the pivotal unit in the destruction of an Iraqi Republican Guard Armored Division. The resulting recognition and awards ceremonies had introduced Captain Bowers directly to the "General" and they had remained close ever since, as was now evidenced by Bowers serving as the President's National Security Advisor.

Now, with all that had happened since that appointment, he reflected on the current circumstance. America was in a deadly mortal struggle. Against most odds and against the thinking of most analysts of the day, the People's Republic of China had opened up a broad war on the United States and her allies. It was a war in which the United States was not faring well to date. Of course, the President and others like John Bowers had themselves not been in step with the thinking of the analysts. It was one of the reasons the President had been elected.

In the short time available to them since the election, they had done all in their power to revamp and prepare America's military and her people, so as to avoid the type of situation they now found themselves in. There had simply not been enough time, and clearly their enemies had recognized the effort and had acted to pre-empt it. Those enemies were determined that there would be no "Reagan-style" revamping of America's military that had proven so successful in the 1980s.

At this point, outside of the President himself, John knew that no one else in this room was privy to the next assignment that the President had for him. He was floored by the mention of it during his confidential meeting with the President three days ago, after the Presidential address to the nation—thunderstruck was probably a better word. The one exception regarding knowledge of John's new assignment was the President's wife, Linda, if John was any judge. But that would soon end.

By the upcoming weekend, it would become clear to the nation, and to the world, that the President intended to nominate John Bowers as the next Vice-President of the United States. It was beyond John's comprehension as to all of the reasons why, but John was a loyal and dedicated American and would not turn down any call to serve, particularly at this time. He had required little time in coming to that decision, and the deal had been cemented after speaking to his wife, who was as committed and loyal an American as her husband.

This nomination would, of course, create another vacancy in the National Security Advisor position. The President had asked John for his recommendation. John had not hesitated, and had named Bill Hendrickson, the man running all of the nation's imagery intelligence over at the National Reconnaissance Office. John knew Bill had a very good sense of worldwide geopolitical conditions. Bill also possessed a strong knowledge of history, was a dedicated and absolutely loyal American who agreed with the President's initiatives, was very capable at briefing the NCA, and was a brilliant analyst in his own right who was unafraid to think outside the box.

In addition, Tom Lawton, whom Bill would recommend for promotion to fill his current position in Imagery Analysis, would completely fill his predecessor's shoes. The President had concurred with the appointment of Hendrickson, and had asked John to make the necessary initial contact, after which the President himself would meet with his new National Security Advisor. That meeting had occurred

just yesterday. As a result, Hendrickson's appointment would be announced this weekend also, immediately following the announcement of John Bowers' nomination as Vice President.

For now, John had to continue with his present assignment. There was a briefing to give.

"Okay, here is the latest status regarding the exchange with the PRC in space. For our part, Operation Lightning Bolt completely negated the PRC's satellite surveillance capabilities over the Pacific and most of Eastern Asia. In short, we completely accomplished the goals we had established. The operation did require more ASAT missiles than we planned because those Chinese satellites proved tougher to kill than we had anticipated. Our analysts are looking at the data now, and we are confident that we will achieve better kill ratios in the future. Just the same, we should restart ASAT production to maintain our capability, pending wider deployment of the Ballistic Missile Defense, particularly the phase implementing our capability against exo-atmospheric threats, which will then provide similar capability for satellite intercepts.

"In that regard, our Theater High Altitude operational tests involving the Block IVA Standard missile have come to a successful completion, and we have two Aegis platforms already carrying their normal complement of those missiles. I suggest that our wartime mobilization plans call for a 150-200% ramp up in production such that we can deploy six of these platforms off the East Coast, and up to ten off the West Coast by November.

"Now, for the results of the Chinese attack. Quite frankly, we were caught completely off guard. We realized the Chinese had been testing ASAT capabilities, but our assessments underestimated their ability to deploy anything effective in this time frame. Our best estimate is that they deployed in mass production without full testing. Clearly, whatever level of testing they had implemented was effective, because they achieved a 90% success ratio for the weapons they launched.

"They used all three of their space launch facilities and ripple-launched multiple payloads within a few hours of our downing of their satellites. This was obviously a pre-planned response to our attack. As a result they launched twenty-four KV's (kill vehicles), of which twenty-two successfully achieved intercept insertions into orbit. Those twenty-two KV's engaged our Space Command, NRO, military, NASA and civilian satellite assets, including the International Space Station."

The Secretary of State interjected at this point. "And what of the crew on the Space Station? That was an international crew, including Germans, Japanese and Canadians. What is their status?"

John knew that his initial response would be well received, but it was not as rosy as it seemed.

"Mr. Secretary, everyone on the Space Station was evacuated safely. Luckily, and coincidentally, we had the Discovery at the Space Station at the time of the attack. Despite very little notice, Captain Wynn and Commander Granger successfully evacuated all personnel to the shuttle, and were able to avoid destruction by quickly maneuvering away from the Space Station.

"Unfortunately, the Space Station was hit and is a complete loss. Its wreckage will fall to earth sometime on the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup> in what we hope is a remote area of the southwest Atlantic Ocean, although the exact location is as of yet undetermined.

"Also, unfortunately, Discovery did not avoid damage, and the damage is severe. As most of you have already seen on the video, one of the shuttle's wings was damaged by the weapon's kinetic payload. The damage has rendered the shuttle incapable of re-entering the Earth's atmosphere and landing. Without relief, the fourteen personnel on the shuttle have enough air for a maximum of twelve more days. Without relief before that time, they will all die."

The relative silence of the room was broken at this point by the murmured conversation of several of those present, and a number of people trying to question John at once. To bring order to the room, and to allow the briefing to continue, the President spoke up.

"I know this is distressing news for all of us. It represents a tremendous setback to the international community...the free international community. The investment in time and in hardware is lost, but certainly not in the knowledge we have developed and not, as of yet in, those fourteen brave souls marooned on the Discovery. We will find a way to bring them down, so help me God.

"In the meantime, as difficult as it is to say this, the hard fact is that the rest of John's briefing is even more important and more distressing from an overall perspective. John, please continue."

John Bowers was grateful for the President's intervention. He did not want to cut people off in mid-conversation—people who were still his senior cabinet members, and who were coming to grips with so many difficulties at once. He preferred to let the President handle that.

As the room quieted down, he continued, "As the President has said, from an overall strategic and military perspective, the rest of the briefing is even more significant. With the exceptions of our geosynchronous assets, two satellites that the Chinese KV's missed, two KH-12s that we were able to maneuver out of the way, and one KH-12 that was severely damaged, all of the other satellites targeted by the Chinese have been destroyed. The following table summarizes these losses."

**TOP SECRET ----- TABLE 1-1 ----- EYES ONLY**

SUMMARY OF SATELLITE LOSSES 03-26-06

ASSET	AGENCY/BRANCH	STATUS	PRC KV's
Space Station	NASA	1 destroyed	3

Shuttle Discovery	NASA	1 damaged	N/A
KH-12 Satellites	NRO	2 destroyed	10
		1 damaged	
		2 undamaged	
		3 not targeted	
Commsats	SPACOM	3 destroyed	3
		6 not targeted	
GPS SATs	Army/Navy	3 destroyed	3
		8 not targeted	
Civilian SATs	News/GPS	3 destroyed	3
		12 not targeted	
Totals		12 destroyed	18 functioned
		2 damaged	2 malfunctioned
		29 not targeted	2 missed

After everyone had scanned the table for a few seconds, the National Security Advisor continued, "Okay, just what does this mean?"

"Quite frankly, it means that we have lost a significant portion of our surveillance, GPS targeting, satellite communication, and satellite-based news communication capabilities in the Western Pacific and the Middle East. In essence, the People's Republic has very nearly done to us what we have done to them. With the two surviving and operational KH-12s, we have retained only limited surveillance capability. That remaining capability is predominantly focused in a band over the more southern portions of the two theaters of operation.

"It also means that we must presume that the Chinese, once they have assessed the results of their operation, will attempt to finish the job, both in the Pacific and Middle East and perhaps elsewhere, just as we will be doing. We do not know how much inventory they have, or what their capability is to restock it, but we must now presume that they have stockpiled significant quantities and that they came to this fight prepared. Anything less makes no sense.

"Finally, in closing, what are we capable of doing about it?"

"Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, we have several options, some of them based on operational plans worked up in the war college for very similar situations. The problem is that a number of them were postulated to occur a few years later, if at all, when our own technological advantage and capabilities would have been even more pronounced.

"We have atmospheric capabilities of which we have already made good use, and which we can continue to utilize. The SR-77 Pervador and HR-7 Thunder Dart aircraft are the most advanced systems of their type and are still very capable in this regard. And they are even more versatile in that they are not limited by the orbital mechanics that constrain our space-based systems. In essence, we can make more use of these and 'Continue the Mission'."

At this point in the briefing, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Jeremy Stone, wanted to clarify things with respect to the SR-77 and HR-7 for the rest of the attendees.

"John, what you say is true, and those reconnaissance platforms of ours are very capable. But I do want to remind everyone that the Chinese have developed systems that can threaten both platforms. The improved version of their KS-2 anti-aircraft missile, what we have designated as the KS-2+, is the primary threat. Without going into detail, in May of last year, they proved this capability against the HR-7 itself and showed a surprising capability to track, lock-on and engage the HR-7.

"Admittedly, the engagement to which I refer took place under a certain set of parameters at the lower end of the HR-7 operating envelope. But I just want everyone to know that this is not a sure thing, or a risk-free proposition...and I am sure the Chinese have not been resting in the meantime."

John appreciated General Stone's input. The fact was, they were facing a much more capable and committed enemy than they would have imagined. America was going to lose a lot of people in defeating this enemy. Indeed, from the very outset of this conflict, America received a taste of how expensive the butcher's bill was going to be. In addition, ultimate triumph was by no means assured at this point, although John's faith in America, his faith in her people, and his faith in God would allow him to consider no other alternative.

"Thank you, General. It is imperative that we all understand the reality of the threat and the risks. You have punctuated both, and your reminder is both timely and well stated. I apologize if I was not clear enough on that point, or if I presumed too much. Despite the advanced technology of the HR-77 and its companion HR-7, they are not immune to interdiction or destruction by our enemy.

"If I may then, I will now continue with the other options we have for addressing the current situation. We can continue to launch satellites, although we have no idea how many anti-satellite vehicles the Chinese have. But, as I said, we must presume that they have stockpiled them in anticipation of these very conditions. They may be more than willing to level the playing field in this

regard if they can keep on downing our satellites. If they are successful, they will have negated a tremendous advantage. We cannot allow them to be successful in such an aim.

"In this regard, clearly one of our options is to mount operations against the launch facilities inside the PRC, and against the associated technology and infrastructure. We have several options in this regard, ranging from ballistic missile attacks, to cruise missile attacks, to stealth bomber attacks, to conventional attacks with B1-B bombers.

"I believe it is imperative that, in addition to whatever other measures we may take, we hit those installations and hit them hard. . .and keep on hitting them so we can regain our eyes in the sky while denying the same to our enemies.

"Now, briefly, with respect to the shuttle Discovery, we also have a number of options. The first is the immediate launching of another shuttle on a relief mission. The risk is great for such a mission because, as they have just proven, the Chinese are capable of shooting it out of the sky. Another option is to launch much smaller packages into orbit and have the Discovery rendezvous with them. Such packages could contain provisions, fuel, materiel, and equipment to help in their repair efforts. Such missions are also more difficult for the Chinese to interdict and, from their perspective, a much more costly tradeoff.

"A highly irregular and evasive orbital pattern has been developed for the shuttle, but the maintenance of that pattern will require that the Shuttle's fuel be supplemented regularly until we can bring them down. In order to do this, I believe that the second option is the best for the time being. It may keep the operations at Vandenberg and the Cape hopping, but a manned relief mission is just too risky at the present time. Earth orbit just became a very dangerous place.

"That concludes the overview portion of the briefing."

As John completed his part of the briefing, a number of hands went up. The President indicated that John should continue to lead the discussion. For the next ninety minutes, the group considered actions and possible responses to China's attack on American space-based assets. Those discussions led to leadership decisions regarding America's initial policy for near space over the course of the conflict. Those decisions would be turned into operational plans that would be reviewed, then analyzed, and then reviewed again. Once finalized, those operational plans would be put into motion and executed in the midst of the myriad of other ongoing operations in the Pacific and in the Mid East.

It would in fact be four weeks before the Shuttle Discovery, after being re-provisioned several times and after effecting emergency repairs, could land in the California desert after a hair-raising re-entry that "snuck" through a break in PRC efforts to down her. But well before that happened, a preliminary portion of America's response to the attack would be implemented.

### **March 28, 04:10 local time**

### **200,000 ft and West of the Kuril Islands**

### **Far Western Pacific Ocean**

"Mac" Mendenhall checked his flight profile one last time before going feet dry. On this mission he would be pushing the envelope of the HR-7's capabilities in almost every operational parameter. Altitude would be max'ed out at his current 200,000 feet. Speed would be max'ed out at Mach 7-over 5,000 miles per hour-for most of the duration of the flight. Most importantly, and probably most worrisome, the endurance of his aircraft would be max'ed out too. Once he went feet dry over Asia, there would be no friendly presence for a long, long time.

He would pass into China just to the north of the border with North Korea. He would then fly the entire length of the former Chinese-Mongolian border, flying over the highland wastes of the Gobi Desert, and into western China's Takla Makan. As he did this, he would be gathering information on all three of the PRC's known space launch facilities. He would then vector south and west just to the east of the Hindu Kush, passing over India and into the Arabian Sea. There, courtesy of the U.S. Navy, he would refuel his very thirsty bird.

While his Pulse Detonation Wave Engines (PDWE) were economical, it was stretching them to their max and beyond to fly almost 5,000 miles between fueling. As a matter of fact, for a manned military mission, he was about to set a new record. Also as a matter of fact, the mission parameters called for him to run out of fuel for his PWDE and descend for two hundred miles in an unpowered glide. He would restart his turbo-jet engines at an altitude and speed that would sustain them, but was still sufficiently high to avoid all known Indian air defense systems.

"Well, when you're the best, they can't call on the rest," thought the Colonel as the steadily pulsating vibrations of the engines permeated every inch of his cockpit space.

"That only holds if the ChiComs haven't shared any of those hotrod missiles with the Indians that I ran up against last year over the Gulf of Chijhli," he concluded.

He remembered that mission very well. It had been one of the most stressful of his career. The Chinese had almost got him with their improved version of the KS-2. He had been vectored in to take pictures of the Chinese shipyards at Tianjin in a profile designed to have a significant safety margin from the KS-2+ missile, which he was assured was the best the Chinese had. It wasn't. As he had

slowed and dropped altitude to maximize the effectiveness of his surveillance equipment, but was still well above the KS-2's effective range, the Chinese had acquired him, locked on, and engaged. It had been one of the great shocks of his life—and it had very nearly been the *last* shock of his life. At Mach 4 and at 150,000 feet, those missiles had still come within a few thousand feet of reaching him.

Well, he didn't plan on coming anywhere near those parameters on this mission. He was going to be almost twice as fast and 50,000 feet higher—except right at the end as he exited India. If the Indians had acquired those KS-2+ missiles and had established them along their coast north of Bombay, he could be in deep trouble.

"Very risky indeed," thought the Colonel. "But if it were easy, they wouldn't ask for me!"

For the next hour anyway, he knew that he could probably sit back and enjoy the ride, monitoring his automated profile and ready to intervene if necessary.

**March 28, 04:22 local time**

**Eastern Sector Air Defense Center**

**Changchun, PRC**

"General, we have several stations reporting a faint, intermittent contact passing just to our north. No acquisition or lock-on possible, but the readings, if they are to be believed, indicate an altitude in excess of 60,000 meters, and a speed in excess of 9,000 kilometers per hour."

The General in charge of all air defense in the northeastern portion of China considered what he had just been told. He did not like being awakened, but understood the gravity of the potential contact.

"Well Colonel, given our wartime posture and who our principle enemy is, what would you say regarding the believability of the readings?"

The Colonel, who was the lead duty officer for the sector at this hour of the morning, knew exactly where the General was going.

"General, I would presume that the Americans were performing a hyper-velocity over-flight of our territory for surveillance purposes. I would further presume, given the flight profile, that their principle target lies far to our west, where our recent space interdiction operation originated."

The General was pleased. He had chosen well in assigning this man to be the lead duty officer for the sector. It was in anticipation of just such violations of their airspace, of just such attacks on his country, that he had made his choice.

"Colonel, I concur. We do not have much time at their current velocity, but immediately declare a Level Three alert and pass the word along to Beijing, our Central Sector, and to the commanders at each of the launch facilities. In addition, post this information to that new CAS unified communication link. This American is going to have to come out of CAS airspace somewhere, and that exit will have to be towards either the Bay of Bengal, or the Arabian Sea."

The word of the potential over-flight flashed ahead of the American HR-7 at the speed of light, still arriving at the launch facilities only minutes before Colonel Mendenhall. Despite a flurry of activity, and raised voices and anxiety, there simply wasn't sufficient time to take any concrete action to physically "button up" those facilities, and prevent the surveillance from getting a good look at ongoing operations at each launch pad.

There was enough time, however, to take some electronic action. Electronic communication channels between the control facilities, and more kill vehicles sitting atop their boosters were shut down to prevent the recording or measuring of those frequencies and parameters. In addition, each facility's own air search sensors were fine tuned to data passed on from the eastern provinces, and more information regarding the capabilities of the HR-7 was gathered for later analysis.

**March 28, forty minutes later**

**60,000 feet and 400 miles east of Bombay, India**

**Over the Arabian Gulf**

"Spinner-3, this is Hyper. Monday Cruising, do you copy, I say Monday Cruising?"

Colonel Mac Mendenhall was resting easy as he contacted the Navy controller for his fill-up. Everything had gone perfectly, "No glitches and no hitches," he thought. The flight across China had been high, it had been fast, and, except for the telltale signs of various enemy radar trying to acquire him—which he was happy and relieved to say none had done—it had been uneventful.

"Mission Accomplished... just like you knew it would," summed up the Colonel.

"Hyper-flight, this is Spinner-3, reading you 5x5. Rolling through, I say again, Rolling through, please activate your FOF (Friend or Foe)."

With that authentication, Mac used his mission planning Multi-Function Display (MFD) to activate his FOF transceiver, and was immediately designated as a confirmed friendly on the E-2C Hawkeye airborne early warning and air control aircraft that was holding station another two hundred and fifty miles to his west. That Hawkeye was from the USS Enterprise (CVN 65), whose battle group was stationed another one hundred and fifty miles to the southwest, in the Arabian Sea.

As he made his way to their location, he picked up a pair of F-18E Super Hornet escorts en route, who were each loaded to the gills with war-shot air-to-air missiles consisting of four of the latest

Sidewinders and four AMRAAMs. Mac was glad for their protection after the tense moments of decreasing altitude and decreasing speed when he had passed over the coast of India. That had been when he was at his most vulnerable, but apparently the Indians either didn't have the improved KS-2s from the Chinese in that area, or they were not vigilant in their use. Either way, Mac was glad for it.

As he made his way further from hostile shores and towards his refueling, he went through the procedures and communications necessary with Spinner-3 to send his surveillance data through a secure digital link to the Hawkeye, who would in turn relay it back to the carrier. When he had completed that task, he prepared for his refueling from the buddy stores on an F-18F. From there, he would fly on westward and ultimately, after several more refuelings, would land again at his home base, Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada, having literally circumnavigated the globe on this mission.

**March 28, 10:10 EST**

**Firing Range, Combat Training Battalion  
Ft. Benning, Georgia**

Hernando breathed out slowly as he sighted in on the target at two hundred yards and then squeezed the trigger of his M16A1 rifle. The nudge of the recoil and the "crack" of the discharge to which he had become so accustomed over the last two weeks followed. He was sure he was doing better, but would know for sure in a few minutes when the targets were examined.

"That's right, Rodriguez. That's better. We'll make an infantry rifleman out of you yet! ...even if my own grandma can still shoot better than you ever will!"

Was Hernando hearing things? Was there the slightest bit of encouragement in that latest comment? Even though the endless comparisons to the Drill Sergeant's grandma seemed to never cease, perhaps he was making progress...or maybe the DS had just slipped for an instant. Whatever the case, Hernando felt that the DS wasn't quite as rough on them as he had been those first few weeks. At any rate, he had learned well what the only acceptable response was.

"Yes, Drill Sergeant!"

Hernando was almost finished with his second phase of basic training in the U.S. Army here at Fort Benning, Georgia. He was at Fort Benning because he had indicated that he wanted straight infantry training, and that he wanted his specialized training to also be infantry. That's what they do at Fort Benning. When he had completed his nine-weeks of basic training, he would have a short leave and then be back at Fort Benning for twelve weeks for his Infantry Training before being shipped out.

Normally, in peacetime, that advanced infantry training that he would take was a fourteen-week course. But in the wartime situation the nation faced, the course had been accelerated to twelve weeks. The same was true for part of the Army's basic training with which he was now involved. Normally those nine weeks followed what was a two-week "Reception Battalion" where the operative phrase, at least from what Hernando had been told, had always been "hurry up and wait." But, since the declaration of war against the GIR in January, that two weeks had been cut down to the 18 hours of processing it really represented, and the new recruits were in and out of "Purgatory", as the Reception Battalion was referred to, in two to three days.

That had been almost six weeks ago, and Hernando had experienced a lot since then. The first phase of training, the Red Phase, had been physically and mentally challenging, as it was meant to be. He completed those three weeks and endured the verbal assaults of the Drill Sergeant (DS) as the Army had exerted "Total Control" on the new recruits, and put them through their intensive Physical Training (PT). He had also learned to never "eyeball" a DS. When he had first started Phase One he had thought it good to look the DS in the eye and respond directly. But had learned the hard way that any eyeballing of a DS by a recruit would result in a ten minute tongue lashing and an ultimate "drop and give me twenty"...or more pushups. The first lesson had been enough for Hernando.

He had been introduced to his rifle (not his "gun," not his "weapon," but his rifle), and learned to clean it, care for it, and keep it in perfect working order. He could take it apart and put it back together in his sleep. He had come to dream of the rifle, taking it apart and putting it back together while he slept towards the end of the Red phase of training.

Hernando had never owned or fired a gun before joining the Army. But, now that his White Phase, or Gunfighter Phase, of training was nearing its end, it was almost as though he had never been without it. Although he would not consider himself nearly the marksman that some of these recruits who had grown up around firearms were, he certainly was proud of the proficiency he was developing with it. In this phase, that first week they had spent so much time firing the rifle that the sound of the firing range was actually almost a comfort to him now. Then, along with the in-class sessions about the Army and its traditions, had come bayonet training and the skills associated with being able to use it to defend yourself—to stick it into another person and kill him before he could do the same to you.

Hernando was not a violent person in any sense, but he recognized that there were those who were violent, and that sometimes, either individually or as a nation, you had no choice but to defend yourself against them. He understood that in so doing it defended one's own liberty and well being, along with the liberty and well being of friends and loved ones. Hernando, even though a gentle soul, was committed to doing just that.

That was why he had joined the Army. From his parent who had escaped from Cuba with him as a young child, he knew what a loss of freedom would mean. What it would mean to lifestyle, what it would mean to the ability to achieve, what it would mean to the soul. As the GIR had first attacked Turkey, and then devoured Kuwait, and entered Saudi Arabia early this year, there in south Florida Hernando had clearly seen that the threat, if not stopped, would ultimately impact him and his family—and now his new bride, Maria. In his heart and soul he could not sit back and let others do the fighting for him. Out of that conviction, he had stepped forward on his own, as hard as it had been to leave his home, his family...and his new bride.

After the events of March 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, which had occurred in the middle of his Red phase of training, he felt even more vindicated in his heart for that decision. America, his home and still the bastion of freedom and self-government in the world, was in trouble and he was glad he was in a position to do his part to defend her and the ideals that she represented. Now confronted on one side by the Greater Islamic Republic, and on the other by the Chinese and Koreans, Hernando was not only glad to be in uniform, he was anxious to put what he had learned into practice in his country's defense. This was particularly true after the direct attacks on his homeland that had killed so many Americans.

Although the training was difficult, although the DS was loud, obnoxious and verbally abusive...Hernando had seen through all of that to where it was leading. It was leading to a group of disciplined individuals who would hang together and fight for what was right. Knowing that engendered respect within Hernando. Respect for the DS and respect for the system. He could see that it was leading him and these other recruits to the place Hernando wanted to go anyway. In the middle of all of the sweat, work, endurance and hardship, the seven Core Values that the Army espoused to the recruits kept coming to him again and again: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Honor, Integrity, Selfless Service, and Personal Courage.

These were the same principles that Hernando had been taught at home, along with one other...Faith. Hernando believed in them all; he believed they would see him through, and he believed in the ultimate triumph of good over evil, of liberty over coercion, and of virtue over vice. It was what he had been taught all of his life in southern Florida by good, faithful parents—and he was determined that the ability to teach such enduring truths would carry on into the future.

"Okay, here are the results. Rodriguez! Surprise, surprise! You scored at the top on this particular shoot. I suppose miracles will never cease. Thompson..."

Hernando was doing better! Funny how something so simple could mean so much. Yet, he knew that something so simple would also later save his life and the lives of those around him. Soon they would assemble and move over to their next assignment for the day, and the one in which Hernando was taking more and more interest: anti-tank, anti-mechanized weapon training. But not for the reason most would think. Hernando enjoyed learning how to operate the weapons, and in learning to defeat what would be a mortal threat to any infantry unit caught out in the open without such weapons. Even more than the weapons to defeat the enemy mechanized units, Hernando had developed a keen interest in his nation's mechanized equipment itself.

He had always been something of a mechanic, working on cars in high school and fixing them up with glass packs, four-barrel carburetors for the muscle cars, and as fine a set of tires as he could afford. He loved the way those big engines sounded and the way they could carry infantrymen like himself over terrain. More and more he was considering working toward a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) of 11B in his career with the Army, that of Fighting Vehicle Infantryman.

But that would not come until later. He still had to finish Phase Three of his basic training, the Blue Phase or Warrior Phase, and graduate. That would start next week and would involve a lot of time in the field. He had never camped in his life either, but he was looking forward to it now, wondering if maybe this was how some of those kids who had gone into the Boy Scouts back in grade and middle school had felt. In retrospect, he wished he had pursued scouting with some of those kids back then. Lord knew that the guys here with Scout training were excelling and assuming leadership positions. But, hindsight is 20/20, and even though he didn't get the woodcraft, the camping, the knot-tying, and some of the other skills those boys had learned in Boy Scouts, he had gotten the most important lessons and principles they were taught: those of integrity, faith, ethics and honor, and he had gotten those at home, from his parents, which was the still the best place to learn them, as far as Hernando was concerned. As long as he had those, he felt he could catch up on the others.

"As soon as I can, I'm going tell Maria that very thing," he thought as he took another shot.

**March 29, 09:10 CST**

**Lazy H Ranch**

**Outside Montague, Texas**

Cindy Simmons looked out of her window at the beautiful spring morning in north central Texas. The wildflowers were in full bloom, the trees were all budding, the sun was shining down through partly cloudy skies, and there was a gentle southerly breeze, so typical of this time of the year, coming off the Gulf of Mexico three hundred miles to the south. It was pleasant out there, humid, but not too



warm. With the breeze it would be delightful, a far cry from the heat they would experience later on about the middle to the end of May. But by then, she wouldn't be here to experience it.

As she signed and then folded the letter she has been writing, she couldn't help but reflect upon her husband Jess, the love of her life, to whom she was writing, and who was stationed so far away. Stationed somewhere—she knew not where—serving his country, and working with those attack helicopters that he loved so much.

There were times when he was away on duty like this that she was tempted to begrudge him the time; they had spent so much of their married life apart. But she knew she couldn't do that. Jess was a good man who loved his God, his family, and his country, and she knew he loved them in that order...even when duty called him away from them. Actually, it was only calling him *away* from her this time. Now that their son, Billy had joined the Marines to be something as close to “just like his Dad” as he could become, he was already away himself.

“Well, he could sure do a whole heck of a lot worse,” thought Cindy as she reflected on Billy going through his MOS training down in Florida.

“At least I know where he is and will see him during leave late next month,” she thought.

By that time, the plans she had made and was informing Jess of in her letter would already be in motion, and would be a “done deal,” as they say in Texas.

As she looked out the window, she saw the old Case tractor through the doorway in the barn where it was parked. Jess sure loved that tractor, even if he was always threatening to get a newer air-conditioned variety. She knew it was all talk...that he never would. He was a man who believed that “real work” involved sweat—and that the sweat of such labor helped purify the soul. Cindy believed he was right. When that old tractor finally wore out, Jess was likely to just find and buy another one just like it, and use it until it wore out. But the way he kept this one in tip-top running shape, it was sure to be a long time before they had to worry about the old thing wearing out.

“If he were here, he'd be on that old tractor right now,” thought Cindy. “Preparing some of the fields for later planting, nurturing the spring growth in other fields of hay that would be harvested in the first cut in just a few weeks.”

But Jess wasn't here. The war had come in between all of that and the Simmons family, and Cindy could tell it was not going to be a short war. She prayed nightly that Jess and Billy would both be brought home safely to her. But she knew in her heart that this war was shaping up to be a long, knock-down, drag-out affair. It was apparent in everything that was going on. It was apparent in her heart. She saw it in the terrible attacks America had suffered on their own soil—both military and civilian targets being attacked by ruthless enemies.

She saw it in the cut-off of Mid-East oil and the President's forthright explanations about the rationing, and the hardships that were coming—and the commitment it would take to get through them. She saw it in the defeats and setbacks America's military were suffering in the Mid-East, in the Pacific, and in Korea. And she felt it in those quiet hours at night, or first thing in the early morning, when she thought and prayed about her men who were off fighting.

“Now I believe I know what my parents must have felt in those dark early months of World War II,” thought Cindy.

Well, Cindy had made up her mind. Perhaps she wouldn't be called upon to fight, though she owned a gun and knew how to use it. With the President's announcement, and the subsequent announcement by the Governor of Texas, she was determined to have it with her wherever she went. No, she might not be called upon to fight, but she could be prepared to do so if necessary, and she sure enough could help in other ways. She'd seen the films of women working in World War II, and it had given her an idea. Jess wasn't here to consult, but he was off fighting and sacrificing. Sacrifice and hard work was something she could do, too.

With all the young men, and even older men in their thirties and forties clamoring to sign up for military service in the Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW) area, there were plenty of important war-related jobs a girl could do. In particular, down at the old aircraft plant in Fort Worth, just down U.S. Highway 287 from Bowie which was ten miles to her west, important work was going on regarding the war effort. The aircraft company that now owned that plant was designing and building the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) there. They had won the contract back in 2001 to deploy the fighters in numbers to America's military and those of her allies. Now that full mobilization efforts were being put in place, everyone who could be taught to do so was being asked to hire on and help push those fighters out immediately.

She already knew from the old films of World War II that women would fill those roles, and she had driven to Fort Worth two weeks ago, interviewed, and been selected to start at the assembly plant next week. The foreman, an older gentleman in his sixties, had moist eyes when Cindy explained who she was, who her husband and son were, and why she felt compelled to come down to the “big” city and apply for this work. After that, there had been no question about her getting a job. That man had lost a son in Vietnam years ago and wanted to do everything he could to minimize the number of sons who would be lost in this conflict. Producing the JSF was now a joint and personal effort to do so.

Since that time, she had taken care of her affairs in Montague and leased out the entire place, except for the land right around the house, to a neighbor whom she and Jess had known for almost

fifteen years. He was older and still operated his place as a full production farm and ranch. He indicated that he could put the Simmons's property into production and would pay a good lease for it. This opened the door for Cindy to work in the factory in Fort Worth, feeling secure that her place in Montague was being well taken care of, and that it was also helping in the effort by feeding the cows that fed the people.

Her new employer had even set up an apartment for her close to the plant, paying for it themselves rather than trying to obtain a special allocation of precious fuel for the fifty-mile commute from Montague. The doors had been opened, and Cindy had walked through them. Now she was prepared to do her part.

She reflected on the letter she had written Jess, and because of the close relationship they had developed over the last nineteen years of marriage, she knew he would be concerned when he read it. She knew he would have reservations about it and worry about her being "square in the crosshairs of the target" (as if he himself weren't). But she also knew that, after a few moments of sober contemplation, that his heart would swell with pride, and he would accept her decision one hundred percent. He would support her judgment completely, since she was the "commander on the scene."

"... and his ability to do that very thing is part of what makes him a great Colonel in the service of his country, in addition to being the best husband a girl could hope for, and a father that most kids in today's world can only dream of," thought Cindy.

As she thought this, she again reviewed in her mind the closing paragraphs of the letter she had written Jess, and hoped he would receive it as soon as possible

*So, Hon, I have gone ahead and done it. I start on Monday down in Fort Worth on the assembly line. I'll be helping to fabricate the wing assemblies of aircraft that one day may have to pull your fat out of the fire...and you know what? If that time ever comes, I hope and pray they are right there to do it, too! One of the ones I worked on.*

*Mr. Harbisen has leased the entire place and promises he will take care of the lawn around the house while I'm down in Fort Worth. He told me to be sure to tell you to hurry back so he could dicker with you in the future...that I drive too hard of a bargain. I don't believe that all of that was in jest, either! I have to say I got a good, fair price for the use of our place. You'd be proud of me!*

*With the fuel allocation I'll be receiving, it looks like I'll have enough gas to get up to the place once every two weeks and tidy things up. The apartment that Lockheed got for me is nice...it's not very big, but there are two bedrooms. So if you and Billy are home at the same time, there will be enough room for all of us. I try not to think about that too much...you being home. I feel in my heart that it is going to be a longer time than I want to contemplate. But I know it is necessary, and I know that this is what the good Lord wants me to do while you are away and while this conflict goes on... and it is what I want to do. Any way I can help you, and help our nation defeat these horrible enemies is what I want to do, and after praying about it, I feel real good about this.*

*I'll see Billy in a few weeks, and hope to have your latest letter to let him read when he is here. You'd be proud of him, Jess. He wants to be like his Dad, and it's because he knows his Dad is a good man, a patriotic man and a God-fearing man who knows his duty and goes about fulfilling it. What a blessing in this day and age to have such a son. I hope our nation has millions just like him...Lord knows we are going to need them.*

*One last thing. You know those daisies I am so fond of that you planted for me in front of the porch, around the Live Oak tree and over around the mailbox? Well you should see them this year! They are so beautiful and bright! The ones around the Live Oak tree look for all the world like a big ol' yellow ribbon around the base of that tree! You picture them in your mind, sweetheart, and know that they are your "yellow ribbon around the old oak tree." I will keep them bright for you, even if I can only get up there every two weeks. All spring, all summer...into the late fall until the first freeze...they'll be waiting here for you...and so will I.*

*Well, I'd best go now. The day is getting on and I still have a lot to do before closing up shop here and going down to Fort Worth. Just know I am thinking about you always. Remember your yellow ribbon, because I will be here.*

*Yours forever,*

*Love,*

*Cindy*

**March 29, 23:34 local time**

**Rau Cosme Velho**

**Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**

The winding twisting course of Rau Cosme Velho was lined for as far as the eye could see with vehicles and people. The same held true for every other road and avenue leading up into the hills and mountains surrounding Rio de Janeiro that held any chance for a view out to sea, out over the Atlantic Ocean beyond Guanabara Bay. Where the road twisted behind the hills in its ascent, the people had simply gotten out of their vehicles and either walked along the road until they could see, or climbed

the particular hill that was blocking their view. The result was that the roadways and hills were covered with people. People had come out this night literally by the millions to watch the sky.

All of the radio and TV stations were carrying the story, as they had been for the last thirty-six hours since the Americans' space agency, NASA, had announced that the station would fall to earth in the Atlantic Ocean somewhere well off the Brazilian coast. The TV stations and the international press, including large satellite trucks from ABS, CBC, and WNN had occupied the most prominent hilltops and mountaintops in order to carry the story live. A favorite spot for them was the Christ the Redeemer Monument, to which Rau Cosme Velho led. All of today's newspapers had also carried the story on their front pages. The people who had either not seen the TV or newspapers, or not heard it on the radio, had heard it from their relatives and friends. The result was that a substantial portion of Rio de Janeiro's almost ten million metropolitan area inhabitants was out watching the sky off to their west tonight, waiting for the remains of the Space Station to pass overhead from west to east.

Felix had brought his wife Henrietta and their two children along to watch. They felt it was a once in a lifetime opportunity, and would be something they and their children would share and remember together for their entire lives. Juan was their oldest and he was seven years old; their daughter Bertice was four years old. Felix provided a modest living for them, living and working in the northern area of the crowded city... the area that was home to many of the working class people of Rio de Janeiro. Felix was proud of his position as a lower level accountant in one of the departments of a shipping company down at the docks, and he was looking forward to the time when he could save enough money to move his family to a little nicer area of the city.

Now, just to the east of and well above the major thoroughfare of Avenue Paulo de Frontin, Felix and his family sat on Rau Cosme Velho looking to the west over the mountains. Like the hundreds of thousands around them, and the millions around the city, they sat there waiting... watching.

**March 29, 23:36 local time**

**Fifty Miles over Araraquara, Brazil**

**Two hundred and fifty miles west of Rio de Janeiro**

The command, living, scientific and five service modules of the International Space Station were all falling together in one piece through re-entry, though one would not be able to recognize them as such at this exact moment. Despite the reports, despite the calculations, despite the hopes and assurances to the contrary... the modules had hung together as a single entity to this point and none of the smaller portions had broken off to enter earth's atmosphere separately.

No, as of two seconds ago, a molten mass of material several hundred thousand pounds heavier than expected had entered the upper reaches of the denser portion of the earth's atmosphere and had begun to burn up. It immediately left a blue-green trail behind it as outside material became molten and dropped away, and as the gasses from the extreme frictional heating ignited and burned behind the wreckage when they came into contact with the oxygen in the denser, lower atmosphere.

The miscalculations on the resulting orbit and its re-entry point meant that the remains of the station were coming down and entering the atmosphere several hundred miles further east than expected, and at a steeper angle. This meant that instead of falling through the atmosphere and either completely or nearly incinerating before it impacted somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean, it was going to come down somewhere very near the Brazilian coast. It also meant that a significant portion of it would remain intact through re-entry and impact that coast at high velocity. For the people watching in Rio de Janeiro, it made for a spectacular light show right before their very eyes—while putting each and every one of them in mortal danger.

**March 29, 23:36 local time**

**Rau Cosme Velho**

**Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**

Off to the west, well out over the mountains and high in the heavens, what started as an almost indistinguishable pinpoint of light that could barely be seen over the brightness of the city lights... quickly flared brightly. It trailed a bright blue-green trail as it moved eastward towards Rio de Janeiro and fell lower into the atmosphere. Small sparks could be seen flying off of the object as molten pieces fell away and flared brightly as they burned up.

As it flared, and the pretty blue-green trail blossomed with what looked to be small sparks flying off, the young boy, Juan, turned to his mother and pointed to the sky off to the west over the mountains as he excitedly exclaimed.

“Olhe Mom! Uma estrela de queda! (Look Mom! A falling star!)”

Henrietta had already seen the approaching light in the heavens, but knew it was not a falling star in the sense that her son meant. But, in a moment of reflection and perception about the world conditions that were bringing this event about, she responded to her son almost without thinking about the dual meaning of the words she uttered.

“Sim filho, você é direito. É uma estrela de queda na verdade “ (You are right, son. It is a falling star in truth).

“Deixe-nos pray que se levanta outra vez logo.” (Let us pray that it rises again soon.)

As she said this, and as she continued to watch the approaching object, she realized that the display was going on far too long, and that something was dreadfully wrong. Her heartbeat quickened, and felt as if it was catching in her throat just as her husband’s arm stiffened around her waist in alarm.

Still well off to the west, but approaching rapidly now, it became apparent to everyone watching that the man-made meteorite was not going to burn up completely in the atmosphere, that it was going to fall all the way to earth. In the short time since its appearance, it had fallen entirely through the atmosphere and was now approaching at a rate that still measured many times faster than the speed of sound, trailing molten material and burning gasses as it came. As the people watched in horror, a large portion of it broke away from the rest and fell off at a slightly different and steeper angle.

Just as he had planned and envisioned it, Felix and his family would indeed never forget this sight as long as they lived. But it now turned into a much different sight than he had expected, and for a few awful moments he felt as if they were all surely going to perish as a result.

The large portion of the remains of the space station angled towards the earth a little further north of the original track and at a steeper rate of descent. That piece, being larger and containing more mass, flared much brighter and trailed flame and burning gasses much farther behind it than the smaller piece. The sight of this larger piece transfixed most of those watching, and that fixation produced an audible intake of breath from millions of throats—a kind of communal gasp—that was literally heard all over the city as the wreckage passed from view behind the mountain range to their west. There it produced a brilliant glow upon impact well off to the west-northwest in the vicinity of the city, Juiz de For. And the glow did not diminish, but could be clearly seen even over the tops of those same mountains off to the west-northwest.

Although most of those watching fixed their eyes on the largest falling object, a small percentage of the people were fixated on the smaller piece of the station, which was in actuality the remains of a portion of one of the service modules, still attached to the main scientific module. While it appeared to fall less steeply and somewhat more slowly, this was an optical illusion, and it arrived on the scene in the instant just after the larger piece passed behind the mountains. Though not as bright, it too trailed molten material and burning gasses as it approached. One of the local TV stations and the ABS camera crew focused on this piece of wreckage, and tracked it all the way to impact. All of the other camera crews had tracked the larger piece of wreckage as it fell on the west side of the mountains, producing the tremendous glow there.

When the group of the people who were following the descent of the smaller piece of the wreckage realized what was about to happen, they began to scream and started to run. The pandemonium caught the attention of the majority of the crowd, which had been watching the larger piece fall off to the west. When they turned to see what was happening, the speed of its approach allowed only an instant of paralyzing horror. In an instant, what was later estimated as a twenty-five ton piece of the International Space Station traveling at six times the speed of sound passed over a ridge and produced a deafening and destructive multiple-detonation sonic boom. With a roar that many of the peasants described as the voice of God, it then impacted immediately to the east of Santos Dumont airport in the vicinity of Avenida Rio Branco.

The impact produced a blinding explosion whose immediate blast diameter covered several city blocks. It sent out a shock wave that spread to the east and out onto the Bay at unbelievable speed, destroying every structure and killing every exposed human between it and the Bay, then literally wiping the bay clean of smaller craft, while wrecking or capsizing larger ships.

Henrietta and the children were screaming hysterically as Felix pushed them to the ground behind their car and then covered them with his own body as best he could just as the wreckage impacted some five miles from their location. A hot, stiff wind passed over them a few seconds later as the deafening sonic boom, roar, and explosion reached their ears. Luckily for them, and for everyone who occupied the road with them, the shock wave was focused to the east, and the smaller portion that did move to the west quickly dissipated its energy against the hills below Felix and his family. Aside from some minor flash burns resulting from the brief, hot, furnace blast of air that passed by, they and their vehicle were practically unscathed.

Rising from that position high up on Rau Cosme Velho, and while his wife and children continued to huddle and cry there at his feet, Felix saw the rising mushroom cloud from the impact to his east, and the raging inferno it had produced. It was an inferno that was obliterating and annihilating the very area of the city to which he had one day hoped to move his wife and children. As it did, it also incinerated all of the inhabitants of that portion of the city who were anywhere near the impact.

When he realized this, when the massive scene of death and destruction before his eyes registered on his brain, Felix began to unshamedly shed tears as he bowed his head, and thanked God for something for which he had never envisioned himself being thankful. He thanked Him for the grace of being poor, a condition that today had meant their mortal salvation—a genuine miracle that had spared his life, and the lives of his family. It was this miracle, even more than the memory of the horror of the event itself, that he and his family would remember the most, and retell to one another and to others, for the rest of their lives.

Along with the feelings associated with that miracle, there was something else germinating in the depths of Felix's very soul—and it was germinating in the souls of the millions of people who had witnessed this unbelievably terrible tragedy. It was the stirrings of a deep resentment and rock-solid resolve regarding the cause of this horror that had befallen their nation and suddenly killed so many of their citizens. It would grow most quickly in those who had personally witnessed it, but it would spread almost as swiftly amongst those who had witnessed it on TV this night, or who would witness it on TV in the coming days. This number would ultimately include the vast majority of the population of Brazil as word spread and as relatives, friends and neighbors encouraged everyone to see for themselves the direct results to Brazil of the conflict that was going on between east and west.

The results of that sentiment would shock the world and establish a pattern for other countries who felt or hoped that this particular conflict would have nothing to do with them or their people. It was a pattern that would radiate from Rio de Janeiro, and the global impact would reach far beyond Brazil. It would radiate throughout South America, and across oceans and continents like the ripples spreading out on a lake when a stone strikes its surface. But, unlike the united sentiment that began to build that very hour in Rio de Janeiro, the worldwide sentiment would not be unified—it would be split between both sides of the conflict and serve to intensify it dramatically.

Now, as Felix leaned down to help his wife stand up, and as he attempted to comfort both her and his children, he saw little Juan's tear-streaked, upturned face and heard his scared and trembling voice ask his mother, "Mom, Uma estrela de queda?" (Mom, a falling star?)

## Chapter 14

*“When the heart believes the lie, the eyes shall not betray it.” – Unknown Hindu Philosopher*

**April 4, 10:00 local time**

**Presidential Offices**

**Tehran, Greater Islamic Republic**

“This is my official response to the horrible events in Brazil of April 2<sup>nd</sup>.”

“As a religious people here in the Greater Islamic Republic, we project our faith and join in prayer with those who have been afflicted by these terrible events. We pledge to do all in our power to send relief to those so afflicted as Allah would bid us. We extend our hand to the people of Brazil in your hour of need and ask the blessings of Allah to be upon the innocent.

“In doing this, we are compelled to make known our concerns regarding the conditions that led up to this tragedy. An act of aggression led to this tragedy. In violation of every international treaty regarding the use of space, the United States broadened the current conflict and unilaterally attacked the People’s Republic of China’s civilian communications satellites without warning.”

“Our intelligence indicates that telemetry, communications and surveillance for these attacks came from America’s ground observation posts and its space-based assets, including their military personnel on the International Space Station. The peace loving people of the People’s Republic of China responded in self defense and attacked the very assets that had been used to attack them.

“We understand the nature of these things in our faith. Islam is a peaceful religion, except when aroused by the attacks of our enemies or by the unfaithful. It is only then that Allah wields his sword through the instrumentality of our hands...and we respect the right of other nations, and other faiths to do the same, as our friends in the People’s Republic of China have done in this instance.

“Now, in closing, I will sound a note of caution. It appears that there are elements amongst our enemies, and their agents and puppets amongst other nations in the world who would twist and pervert this terrible tragedy to their own ends. They would try to place the blame for this on our allies, on those who were simply defending themselves from aggression as any civilized nation would. Do not pay head to their lies. Doing so can only lead to more strife, to more conflict and to a condition in which those very nations who would twist the truth will take abject advantage of you and your people as they have done in so many other areas of the world. We speak from experience in this regard. The past evil that our enemies have perpetrated, and a desire not to allow them to continue with their belligerence and lies, with is why we are engaged in this monumental struggle. We will throw off their yoke and throw off their influence, as God is our witness. Do not be fooled into listening to these manipulators, and do not allow yourself to be caught in their web of deceit. Do not let them talk you into setting your foot on the path that they tread. It portends nothing but disaster.”

**April 5, 20:30 local time**

**Politburo Press Briefing Room**

**Beijing, PRC**

The press conference in Beijing was attended by a limited number of the world’s press. The number of media representatives from any western nations was particularly limited. Nonetheless, the state-run news networks from China, the Greater Islamic Republic and the relatively free press from India were there, along with a respectable number of reporters from Russia and the Ukraine and a handful from France, Italy and Spain. These latter three were there by virtue of the fact that their governments had not taken an official stance on the fighting yet, despite their own investment in the International Space Station and the fact that some of their citizens had been aboard from time to time.

As the room buzzed with conversation in anticipation of the announcement by Jien Zenim regarding the horror that had befallen Brazil, the mahogany door to the left opened and he entered, wasting no time in stepping to the podium and speaking directly into the microphone.

“I have a brief statement for the world press and then I will take a question or two.

“On March 28<sup>th</sup> in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Juiz de For in Brazil, the entire world witnessed the deadly consequence of a belligerent nation that militarizes space. We witnessed the deadly consequence of a nation breaking every known international treaty and attacking a nation in space without warning or provocation. The attack forced a measured response by the PRC to protect itself from future attacks, and to punish those who would venture to do so.

“We regret the unfortunate and horrible loss of innocent life on the ground in Brazil. The People’s Republic of China places the blame for this unprecedented tragedy squarely on the shoulders of the United States of America, where it rightfully belongs. It is they who chose to broaden the scope of the current struggle and unilaterally extend it into space. It is they who used an international platform to help in the same, I suppose in the hopes of hiding behind it. There were consequences to them for those actions, and unfortunately those consequences involved the loss of innocent lives on the ground. That innocent blood is on America’s hands.

“That concludes my statement. Are there any questions?”

Hands shot up all over the room, but the script that was to be played out had been carefully choreographed. Turning to a young woman reporter from India, President Jien recognized her.

“Yes, the young lady in the third row.”

“Mr. President, how do you respond to the President of Brazil’s allegation that it is the PRC who is to blame for this terrible tragedy?”

Jien Zenim appeared to frown for just a moment, and then paused reflectively.

“It is natural for them to lash out when something this terrible befalls an individual and its people.

We interpret the President’s words as just that. We will not condemn him and trust that he, his government and his people will do the right thing after having more time to reflect.

“I can say this ... the PRC is not to blame. I have already addressed blame in this meeting and have no further comment regarding that obvious issue.

“Next?”

Turning to a French correspondent from the WNN, a correspondent who worked for David Krenshaw, and who was here specifically as a result of that reporting relationship, the President said.

“Yes, Francois, please.”

“Mr. President, I have a general question and, if you please, a follow-up. The non-combatant nations along the Pacific Rim and on my side of the world in Europe are tremendously concerned about the ongoing conflict. It seems to be escalating and spiraling out of control. What can you tell such nations who are not involved in the fighting that will comfort them and help calm the situation?”

This question, and its follow-up, was what this news conference was really all about. Jien Zenim and the leaders of the People’s Republic, above all else, wanted to control the spin to the non-aligned nations of the world. They wanted to prevent any coalition against the CAS and their allies, the GIR. They were prepared to offer open arms to all who would accept them in order to achieve that.

“Francois, we do not seek conflict and turmoil. I have addressed how and why this conflict began. The People of China are patient, they are equitable and they are just. They also do not seek strife. We extend the hand of mutual approbation and peace and prosperity to anyone who will grasp it, and we offer it to all as equals.

“To the people’s of Korea we say...stop fighting amongst yourselves. Unify as the single people you are and become a part of our Asian Coalition. You will be accepted as full partners.

“To the people of Formosa we say...re-unite with your homeland. Let go of the western influence that has stifled your cultural heritage and turned you against your own. We offer complete and unequivocal reconciliation without malice.

“To the people of Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and even Australia we say...come, join with us. Many of your people and your factories are already here. There need be no further disruption. We will gladly welcome each of you into our Coalition of Asian States also as full partners. Come, share in the prosperity.

“To the people of Europe, Africa, the Mid East and South and Central America we say...trade with us, work with us. We offer competitive products and materials and we offer them at substantially lower price and on better delivery and support terms than you are apt to find almost anywhere else. We do not desire conflict or contention. Urge your other trading partners, and in some cases your allies to end their hostilities against us. We have tried, but have only been rebuffed.

“Finally, to the people of America and her allies we entreat you to settle with us. Our differences may seem severe, and the unfortunate loss of life two weeks ago as we interceded on behalf of our people and friends in this part of the world will be difficult to set aside. But please reflect and realize that countless numbers of other people have suffered and died as a result of the policies of your government over the years. Of all peoples in the world, you have it in your power to change those policies. We ask that you do so now...that you force your leaders to negotiate a just and lasting peace with us, or replace them with those who will. Only then can we stand beside you as equals and open the world market to true free trade, to develop a truly unfettered and competitive global trade system that can’t help but improve each and every nation that is a part of it.

“Francois, your follow-up?”

The French reporter consulted his palm-pilot where the notes he had received from WNN were recorded. Carefully, he worded the second question exactly as it had been communicated to him.

“Mr. President, with all due respect, although the concessions and the proposals you make sound reasonable, what concrete steps can be taken that will lead the People’s Republic of China and the United States of America to the peace and resumption in world trade that you suggest? Most people believe that if America and the People’s Republic could negotiate a peace, then, with your influence, that peace could spread to the Mid East.”

Jien Zenim intended to take the “slow pitch” that this question represented and, as the Americans themselves would say, “knock it out of the park”.

“Francois, the insight contained in the question you just asked is astounding in its simplicity and far reaching in its implications.

“We in the People’s Republic are serious about the offers we have made. We are willing to call a halt to all offensive operations - a halt in place if you will - and to exert our influence on our allies to do the same, if the Americans will agree to meet with us and negotiate a cease-fire. We would tie the cease-fire agreement to a cessation in American military involvement in Korea and to any continued arms sales to our break-away province on Formosa.

“In turn, we would be willing to work with the United States for fair and balanced referenda regarding the reunification of both North and South Korea, and the reunification of our own peoples. Such referenda would be held in the best traditions of America’s own electoral process and we would open both the entirety of the People’s Republic of China and the Koreans to monitoring of the process. While we are confident that the balloting would favor reunification in both cases and we would assist with the implementation, we would respect the decision of the electorate whatever it may be.

“In addition, we would extend the opportunity for membership in the CAS to all involved nations in the Pacific Rim region.

“This is what we say; this is what we offer...and to these offers we add this note of caution, particularly for the government of the United States. Do not think that we will go back to the old order. In Asia and on the Pacific Rim, a new order has been established. It is a historical occurrence very similar to almost two hundred years ago when the tides of history changed on the western margins of the Atlantic, resulting in the doctrine proclaimed by your own President Monroe. The new order in the western Pacific has been established for the people of this area, by the people of this area. As long as your aim is to undermine this new order - as long as your aim is to damage or destroy this new order - then we are your enemy. As such, you will then find that our offers of peace will blow away in the hot wind of our indignation and we will be unrelenting in our defense of this new order until you no longer have the capability or the will to pursue such aims.

“Our forces are already gathered and prepared to do this...they will continue to gather and continue to prepare as long as necessary. Without a clear response to these offers, proposals and initiatives within the next forty-eight hours, we will proceed to use those forces to ensure the aims I have outlined for you all here today.”

As the President of the People’s Republic of China finished this statement, many hands shot up for more questions. Rather than point to one or the other of the reporters, Jien Zenim simply folded his papers, leaned close in to the microphone and said,

“Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your time. This concludes the news conference.”

With that the President turned to leave the podium as his aides signaled the conclusion of the news conference.

**April 6, 17:50 local time**

**Joint Session, Brazilian Parliament**

**Brasilia, Brazil**

The President of Brazil, Alfonso Hermosa, a man in his mid-fifties of medium build, an individual with prominent facial features and natural, wavy, jet-black hair, approached the podium in Brazil’s parliament and began delivering the most important speech of his long political career.

“Distinguished lawmakers, ladies and gentlemen of the world’s press, our honored guests and most importantly, citizens of Brazil. Last night, the Parliament of Brazil met at my direction to consider articles of war. This was an unprecedented request and an unprecedented vote. It was a vote necessitated by the unspeakable horror and tragedy that was visited on our nation last Saturday evening, April 2<sup>nd</sup> and continuing through Sunday morning, April 3<sup>rd</sup> when all the fires were brought under control and rescue and recovery operations could begin in earnest.

“Now, some of the detractors to our unequivocal response have indicated that this tragedy was the result of a monumental accident...a tragic error...an “Act of God” that befell our nation, and that therefore such drastic action as a Declaration of War is unwarranted. To this I can only reply that those individuals have a right to their opinion, but that I consider such an opinion as the height of ignorance and the height of denial. We can afford neither in such circumstances. It is likely that in Rio de Janeiro alone that the death toll will exceed 25,000 souls. In the vicinity of Juiz de For the estimates are not nearly as precise because of the location of the impact on the outskirts of the city and because the city itself is more remote...but the toll there is likely to exceed 10,000.

“We can not afford to ignore an evil that would produce such death and rain down such destruction on the innocent. By attacking the international space station and causing its destruction, the People’s Republic of China has committed an affront to the civilized world otherwise uninvolved in their conflict with the United States of America. Let there be no mistake...this was no accident. The Chinese intended to destroy the Space Station, an undertaking to which we ourselves have contributed over the years through our scientific, research and manufacturing community. The benefits from the international research being performed there in space have been helpful to many nations, indeed to the whole world. The Space Station enabled us to envision unprecedented advances in health and disease control. Now that vision no longer exists.



“Not only have tens of thousands of innocent people been killed as a result of this belligerent and irresponsible act on the part of the People’s Republic of China, but the potential for positive advances in the health and longevity of the people of the world has been shattered.

“The people of Brazil are a peaceful people, particularly in our international relations. Our history testifies to this. We readily embrace such peaceful initiatives as the International Space Station represented...and we condemn aggression and abuse of the innocent and defenseless wherever we see it...east and west, north and south. That is why we must not only condemn this horrific act of aggression, but we must also actively respond to it in a manner that will stop it and prevent its repeat in the future. Passivity is not an option.

“The Chinese used conventional weapons that were incapable of destroying the space station entirely. They did not dare use unconventional weapons out of fear of retaliation in kind by the United States that would be much more severe. But the weapons they did use were certain to cause the station to re-enter the atmosphere and impact here on earth. It is apparent that they gave no consideration to where that impact would take place, and that they were aware that it could occur anywhere along the length of the orbital track of the station. Therefore, their act is an act of naked aggression against any nation along that path, and particularly against us. The results to Brazil are as if a weapon of mass destruction had been unleashed upon us. This is how we in Brazil, of our own free will, out of our own painfully firsthand experience with the situation, choose to view it.

“As I have stated since the day before yesterday, and despite the patently insincere, misleading and untruthful statements to the contrary by the leader of the GIR and by the President of the People’s Republic of China, an abject act of war has been committed against Brazil. It is an act that demands our unequivocal response.

“Today that response has been delivered. As of this afternoon at 4:30 PM, an official state of war exists between the Republic of Brazil and the People’s Republic of China. We willingly, and with absolute focus and determination, join the growing coalition of nations who are committed to defeating this evil that has already caused so much death and destruction throughout the free world.

“I have a warning for this enemy: Do not underestimate the capability, the determination or the resolve of the people of the free world. You have seriously miscalculated. Cease your aggression while you still have a formal government that can do so. We will avenge our citizens and bring a lasting and a just retribution to those who perpetrated this crime, and any who abet it...however long that may take...whatever hardship it may create for us.

“To the people of Brazil I say...take heart. We are a strong people, we are a bright people and we are a people committed to the principles of justice and equity. I have absolute faith that these qualities will allow us to endure the conditions that will be necessary to ensure our victory in this struggle. I am sure of this because I know that our people recognize that the hardships of defeating such an enemy will always be lighter than the hardships that would follow a surrender to such an enemy...and we shall never lay down, we shall never surrender to such evil. The Minister of the Interior will hold a press conference tomorrow morning to announce the first measures that will be required to establish our nation’s prosecution of this effort, as well as specific details relating to public and commercial interests.

“To the other nations of the free world I say this: Do not wait until such evil befalls you to take sides in this conflict. I predict that ultimately it will touch you all. Do not wait until it touches you as it has us. Do not wait until the evil stands at your own door. A few years ago, in September of 2001, another dastardly attack that we all remember occurred upon innocents. The leader of that nation, and its people, rose up in great moral clarity and, with one voice, expressed a sentiment that I wish to share with the world again now. I do so because I believe the clarity must be just as riveting...in fact, it must be even more so. The vile cancer of 9-11, has spread from evil terrorist organizations and a network of relatively small supporting countries to an evil of monstrous proportions. We now see some of the most powerful nations in the world willingly banding together to coerce, threaten and destroy any nation or people that stands in their way. As was the case on 9-11 in America, the evildoers who wreaked havoc on our nation acted with great callousness and disregard for innocent life.

“So, I repeat the imperative that was so clearly stated by the American President after the 9-11 attacks. I repeat it to the free world today, to anyone listening to the sound of my voice...

*“You are either with us, are you are with these monsters.”*

“I join with the American President, a man I respect greatly, President Weisskopf, in saying, ‘Either join us, get out of our way, or prepare to fight us.’ This struggle allows for no other choices.

“Now, in conclusion, I also join with President Weisskopf in his statement earlier this morning to the leaders of the GIR and the PRC in response to their news conferences of the last two days. The President of the United States addressed both Hasan Sayeed and Jien Zenim in those remarks. To date, since we are embroiled only with the People’s Republic of China, my words are addressed only to its President and to the people of the nation that he leads.

“President Jien Zenim of the People’s Republic of China, I address you directly and join with the President of the United States in saying on behalf of my nation, Brazil, that nothing short of your unconditional surrender will be acceptable to bring this conflict to a close.

“Your words regarding elections, your words regarding invitations for nations to join your coalition, your words regarding trade and competition...all of them are meaningless in light of your actions. Without the unconditional surrender of which I speak, there is no point in further discussions outside of the contest of arms.”

“This concludes my remarks. May God bless our nation and our people...and may He bless the entire free world in this struggle so that the light of freedom, the spark of individual initiative and free will continue to bless our planet.”

**April 7, 04:50 local time**

**400 feet below the surface**

**70 km North of Wakasa Bay, The Sea of Japan**

They were floating there over one hundred and twenty meters below the surface...buoyant, waiting, listening...well below the thermal layer that was hiding them, eight LRASD devices of the People's Republic of China patiently waited according to the parameters of their programming. Like their cousins, they were sleek and long...huge by the standards of any known torpedo...but they were also a new variety, an innovation produced and tested by the scientists working for Lu Pham. A variant that had not been ready for the momentous attack in mid-March when other similar, but less advanced devices had been used against the United States 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet. This was to be their combat debut.

The initial and more widely-produced variant that had attacked the Americans moved swiftly to the respective area of operation before acquiring targets and then performing their deadly supercavitating attack. This variant moved more slowly and stealthily to its area of operation, or was placed there, and then waited...silently, quietly, unobserved...for days or even weeks if necessary...before acquiring its target and then performing the same deadly attack maneuver.

These particular units, and the other three groups of eight that were similarly waiting in their designated locations, did not have much longer to wait.

This particular group also had some unanticipated, and undetected, company.

**April 7, that same time**

**400 feet below the surface**

**Approaching the LRASD devices, The Sea of Japan**

“There! Just a little closer and I can make it out,” thought Chief Ben Kowalski as he and his swim buddy got closer to the object and made out its dim shape in front of them in the limited illumination provided by their underwater lamps.

“Holy cow! That’s one big mother. Must be over fifty feet long and a good eight feet in diameter,” he calculated as he swam right up to what appeared to be a huge torpedo of some type.

“Shelf, Crazy Horse here. We have a visual on the target.”

Approximately one mile back, in the SEAL command spaces of the USS Jimmy Carter, Lieutenant Commander Terry Sheffield had monitored the progress of his team as they approached the nearest of the eight objects that Captain Thompson had sent them out to investigate.

“How fitting that we should be the ones getting up close and personal with these things,” thought the Lieutenant Commander. After all, it had been his very team that had laid the surveillance devices on the sea bottom of the Chinese harbors that had initially verified that the Chinese were making much more rapid naval advances than had been previously thought. That had been almost a year ago in a clandestine operation long before the countries were at war. In that operation, he and Chief Kowalski had personally set several of the miniaturized underwater, all aspect surveillance (MUAS) devices that had discovered the types of ships from which these weapons had been launched. On that mission both he and Kowalski had been in the water, having been delivered near the mouth of the harbors by their ASDS 3 that normally rode piggyback on the Jimmy Carter.

Now Kowalski was in the water, there was no ASDS with them, and Sheffield was here coordinating this mission from the Jimmy Carter itself. With him, he had Ensign Murdock, who normally “drove” their ASDS but was today acting as a communications officer for the mission. Their mission was to gather as much data on these devices that Captain Thompson felt relatively sure were eight of the supercavitating weapons that the Chinese were employing with such deadly efficiency against the United States Navy and her allies. Sheffield responded to Kowalski.

“Ten-Four, Crazy Horse. What are the essentials?”

Kowalski’s reply was almost instantaneous.

“Shelf, we’re looking at fifty by eight, or something very close to that. This is one big, scary SOB. The nose end of this thing has a really weird shape...tapers off to a long, needle-nosed point. Just a second Shelf. There’s a line coming off the device we need to check out.”

As the Chief had reconnoitered around to the front of the device, he had noticed a line of some type that ascended in the water directly above the front of the device, about six feet back from the nose and then disappeared above them. He now took his partner and swam upwards following the line.

About seventy-five feet above them, they came to the end of the line, to which was attached some sort of electronic device housed in an object that was round, about eighteen inches in diameter

and concave shaped on the bottom. Clearly, when pulled back to the device below, it would fit perfectly into the hole from which the line had originated such that the top of this circular device would fit flush to the outer skin of the large object below.

"Shelf, we have some sort of small electronic package about seventy-five feet above the main device. It is just floating here in the current at the end of its tether."

Lt. Commander Sheffield deduced quickly what he felt certain the small package represented.

"Okay Crazy Horse. This sounds like some sort of sensor or detection device floating in the water there above the thermal. Get back to the main device and check out the aft end. Report back."

A few minutes after he had finished this transmission, Ensign Murdock informed him that they had just received a message from the bridge of the Jimmy Carter.

"What do we have Ensign?"

Ensign Murdock read directly off the printout he had just received.

"Captain Thompson is passing on an update on those earlier faint surface contacts sir. Now that the ASW screen of helicopters and other contacts have passed over us, what we now have is a large number of confirmed surface contacts moving towards us from the general direction of Wasaka Bay. Preliminary identification indicates many Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) vessels, including several Kongo Class destroyers at a range of about fifteen miles."

Lieutenant Commander Sheffield considered this information.

"Several of their Kongo class?" he asked himself. That would mean something huge was up if the Japanese were committing the bulk of their most important vessels. When combined with the other data he already had, a disturbing picture was taking shape in his mind.

The USS Jimmy Carter had tracked the large Chinese surface contact that had sunk a US attack submarine off of Taiwan north through the treacherous Korean Straits and into the Sea of Japan. It was in the company of several very capable escorts and the Jimmy Carter had to maintain its "tail" very carefully. Captain Thompson had performed this surveillance exceptionally well, gathering more and more information about the ship and its propulsion, electronic and weapons capabilities. Thompson and his men had even gathered critical data on what could only have been an attempted airborne engagement of their target ship either by South Korean, Japanese, or surviving US aircraft. The target ship had come through it apparently unscathed and had continued on into the Sea of Japan. In the process, it had picked up several more escort vessels.

Then, yesterday morning, the entire procession had slowed considerably and the target vessel had discharged eight devices, seemingly in the middle of nowhere. The eight devices were of the same physical characteristics as the weapons that had been used to kill the Los Angeles class attack boat a few days earlier. They had set off by themselves towards this location at a rate of ten knots per hour and a depth of several hundred feet, just below the thermal layer.

Faced with the dilemma of whether to follow the target ship, or to follow these weapons, Captain Thompson had convened a quick staff meeting to get input from his officers. Lieutenant Commander Sheffield had been asked to join and provide his input as well. Although there had been some opinion on both sides of the issue, the vast majority, including Sheffield, and (as it turned out) the Captain himself, had been for following the weapons. That is exactly what they had done and the weapons had arrived at this location late yesterday where they had stopped and began simply holding the position where Chief Kowalski was now examining them.

Now here came several Kongo class destroyers, Japan's most valuable naval asset, behind a strong ASW sweep in front of them...a sweep that probably would have detected almost any submarine, and certainly any moving "super-torpedo" device. But these devices weren't moving...they were just sitting here waiting. It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what was up. The Japanese were walking into a carefully laid trap.

Picking up his internal comm-set, the SEAL commander addressed the Captain.

"Captain. Thompson, Sheffield here ... this is urgent.

"Based on the reports I am getting from my team, and from your most recent update, it's clear that these devices are sitting out here like Limpet mines, waiting for targets. The most valuable targets in theater, perhaps outside of the Jimmy Carter, are those Kongo destroyers. They're walking into a trap, sir...is there anything we can do to warn them off?"

There was a brief pause, followed by the Captain's answer.

"Terry, I know. We've come to the same conclusion up here. We're trying to figure out how to contact the Japanese forces directly without compromising our location, signature and mission. I can't reiterate strongly enough the importance this mission has taken on for the long term war effort...as much as I want to, I simply cannot risk that mission, or the information we are gathering, with any kind of direct communication.

"We did send off a VLF message two minutes ago informing CINCPAC of the details and stressing the urgency of the situation, particularly for the Japanese vessels.

"Right now, that's the best we can do. We'll have to just hope and pray it is enough. In the meantime, we Charlie Mike and gather as much information as we can. With respect to your men in the water, these vessels are closing our position rapidly. You'd better call them back."

Sheffield concurred with the Captain and told Ensign Murdock to immediately contact Chief Kowalski. As he prepared to do so, the Chief contacted him first.

**April 7, 05:03 local time**

**400 feet below the surface**

**The Sea of Japan**

“Shelf, I am at the aft end of the device, off to the port side. There is a conventional torpedo screw on the tail of this thing, but forward of that, perhaps six to eight feet, recessed into the body of the device are four ports. I’m going to go forward there and take a look.”

Lieutenant Commander Sheffield urged the Chief on, hurrying him.

“Okay, Crazy Horse. But the situation is getting urgent...hurry this up and RTB (return to base). You have maybe two to three minutes before you have to RTB.”

Those tense minutes passed as the Lieutenant waited for Kowalski to report back in.

“Okay, I have taken a good look at those ports. Shelf, I read them as exhaust ports...equally spaced, one every ninety degrees.”

“Wait a minute!...something is going on. That line to the device above the thermal layer was just cut and released...okay, now the device is clearly activating and swinging through a pretty good arc. Maneuvering thrusters forward and aft around the circumference...noise is picking up ...”

Sheffield knew what was coming. Raising his voice, he broke protocol.

“Kowalski, get the hell out of there NOW! Move away from the aft end of that thing...”

But it was too late.

**April 7, 05:15 local time**

**400 feet below the surface**

**LRASD Device, The Sea of Japan**

Just moments after the Jimmy Carter had positively identified the approaching JMSDF destroyers, the remote sensor connected to the LRASD had done the same thing from its position above the thermal layer. Once identified, the device had patiently waited as the Kongo class contacts, which were approaching at flank speed, closed the range. As the digital processor within the electronic “brain” of the device went through the range calculations, an “if, then, else” statement in the device programming that controlled engagement sequencing was satisfied and a solution indicating the optimum bearing and timing for an intercept of the selected target was calculated.

Once this occurred, the remote sensor was immediately released. Chief Kowalski saw the line to the sensing device go slack and had reported it to Lieutenant Commander Sheffield. Just as he completed that report, maneuvering thrusters built into the sides of the LRASD activated and swung the weapon through the proper arc until it was “aimed” along the right bearing to intercept its primary target. As this was occurring, the pumps for the rocket engine began to activate and at precisely the right moment, the processing unit activated the rocket engine. Immediately, a tongue superheated exhaust gasses shot out of each of the four exhaust ports, creating an area of superheated steam behind the LRASD as it began to rapidly accelerate towards the oncoming JMSDF task force.

All of this occurred in an instant, just as Lieutenant Sheffield’s frantic communication to get out of the area reached the Chief. But the ignition of the rocket engine coincided with the Lieutenant’s transmission and there was simply no time to react. In the first second of ignition, the superheated steam created by the exhaust incinerated both Chief Kowalski and the man with him before they fully realized what was happening, and certainly before the Chief could respond to the Lieutenant. There was just a brief instant of recognition in Kowalski’s mind as he saw the rocket engine ignite and then the expanding gases and steam shot out of the exhaust ports and engulfed the two of them.

Chief Warrant Officer Ben Kowalski, eighteen-year veteran of the US Navy, and eleven-year veteran in the “teams”, died doing what he enjoyed best...serving his nation with his closest friends.

**April 7, that same time**

**JMSDF Task Force**

**Northwest of Wakasa Bay, The Sea of Japan**

The JMSDF task force was already at battle stations and was approaching its area of operation when the LRASD weapons “lit” off. The flagship for the task force was the Shirane class destroyer, the DDH 144 Kurama, flagship of the entire 2nd Escort Flotilla for the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force based out of Sasebo, Japan. Today, she was leading the largest and most powerful combat naval task force that Japan had put to sea in over sixty years...a task force of twelve ships and over 3000 sailors that represented roughly one fourth of the JMSDF overall combat capability.

Over the last two to three decades, the Japanese had built up what was considered to be the best all around destroyer navy in the world. Numbering over fifty ships and comprising several very modern and very capable classes, the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force boasted, next to the US Navy itself, the most modern, the most numerous and the most comprehensive destroyer fleet in the world. Many analysts felt that except for the numbers (the US Navy included over sixty destroyers) and the overall anti-air technology (the US force included over forty Aegis class destroyers against

five for the JMSDF), that the JMSDF was the equal to the U.S Navy. The JMSDF had worked hard, had trained hard, and many felt that they had achieved parity in terms of pure capability in either the anti-submarine or the anti-surface warfare role, and in terms of overall seamanship and training.

Today, these claims were going to be put to the test. The Kurama was leading a task force of three of the five JMSDF Kongo class Aegis destroyers along with eight other modern escorts at flank speed to the coordinates necessary for an optimum intercept of a large Chinese air raid that was forming to attack the main Japanese islands.

The Kurama led the task force because she and her sister ship, the Shirane, were unique in their roles as large, helicopter-carrying destroyers. Each was capable of carrying three SH-60J anti-submarine helicopters (something no other destroyer in the world could do) and each was additionally outfitted with all the necessary sensors and weapons systems for hunting down and killing submarines, or any other submerged threat. They had also been built specifically to serve as the flagship for JMSDF flotillas and major task forces. They included worldwide communication, war-fighting coordination capabilities and the facilities to house the flotilla commander and his staff.

But the ability to coordinate the engagement of sub-surface threats was the real reason the Kurama was specifically with the task force today. Along with her significant capabilities, the task force included four other very capable Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) vessels of the JMSDF. These included two Murasame class destroyers and two Asagiri class destroyers. The powerful sonars, the ASW SH-60J helicopters with their sonar-buoys, the many anti-submarine torpedoes and the joint communication and targeting capabilities of these five ASW vessels were all on maximum alert. They were being employed to insure that no submerged threat, and in particular that no supercavitating threat, could approach the task force to hinder it from its primary mission.

That primary mission was the interdiction of the huge air raid on Japan that intelligence had confirmed was being launched from North Korea and the People's Republic of China. The raid was now forming in the vicinity of Harbin in the People's Republic of China and would consist of several hundred aircraft of multiple varieties including SU-24 Fencer bombers, TU-22M bombers, SU-30 fighters and Mig-29 fighters. Intelligence indicated that the raid would approach Japan over Wasaka Bay and then split into two groups, one attacking Osaka and the larger group attacking Tokyo.

To counter this, the planning staffs for the Japanese Defense Forces had devised a defense strategy using the formidable Air Defense forces and their AWACS aircraft teamed with F-15s coupled with the significant area coverage capabilities of the Aegis class destroyers of the maritime self defense forces. In order to ensure the safety of the capital assets that the Aegis destroyers represented, the significant ASW capability had been integrated into the task force and was additionally augmented by twelve, P-3C Orion ASW aircraft operating from land bases in the area. These formidable ASW capabilities were sweeping the ocean out to 100 kilometers in advance of the task force while SH-60J ASW helicopters off of other vessels in the task force sanitized the inner zone closer to the task force.

It was felt that a one hundred kilometer clear zone was necessary to protect the task force from any of the long-range devices that the Chinese had employed against the Americans. The now well-documented ability for those devices to approach at upwards of fifty kilometers per hour and then to engage in a terminal attack in the supercavitating mode at 600 kilometers per hour necessitated such a buffer for the Japanese. They dared not risk their Kongo class destroyers without it.

The three Kongo class destroyers included the DDG 173 Kongo, the DDG 175 Myoko and the DDG 176 Chokai. Each was licensed-built version of the United States Arleigh Burke class of Aegis destroyers, which had included some alterations and improvements specifically designed into the Japanese vessels. Those alterations included a back-up surface/air radar system, a faster firing 127-mm main gun with its own dedicated fire control system and a more elaborate Electronic Warfare Suite. The additions had been expensive and had added extra weight, but had been considered critical to the Japanese given their more limited operating environment so close to very large and potentially belligerent adversaries. But the principle advantage that they provided was their Aegis anti-air warfare capability that controlled the ninety long-range standard missiles that each vessel carried. The system was capable of tracking literally hundreds of targets simultaneously and quickly engaging them from the vertical launch (VLS) missile system that each vessel carried.

In addition to the three Kongo Class destroyers, the task force also included another four very capable AAW destroyers. This included two of the newer Improved Murasame class destroyers, each of which carried thirty-two standard missiles in vertical launch cells, and two Tachikaze class destroyers, which held forty standard missiles each. Each of these class destroyers was capable of slaving the targeting and firing of their anti-aircraft missiles to any one of the Kongo class vessels in the task force, thereby significantly improving the overall effectiveness of the task force as a whole. With the missiles of the Kongo class destroyers complimented by these vessels, the task force was moving into a position to "ambush" the approaching Chinese air raid with well over 400 of the most modern and most capable anti-aircraft missiles available on earth.

And the ambush was about to be "sprung" as planned...only the Japanese had not planned it.

**April 7, 05:16 local time**  
**Combat Information Center**

**DDH 144 Kurama, The Sea of Japan**

Admiral Arai Shigeru, commander of the JMSDF task force, was conferring with Captain Minamoto Ohira of the Kurama. They were discussing the best position for the Kurama relative to the rest of the task force now that they had reached their area of operations. As they were doing so, the communications officer abruptly interrupted them.

“Admiral, I have flash traffic from the Defense Ministry. They are routing a direct message from US CINCPAC to your attention, marked urgent.

Looking at the Captain with some surprise, the Admiral said, “A direct message from CINCPAC? ... I wonder what it could be?... must be important. Go ahead Lieutenant.”

But the Lieutenant did not get the chance to begin delivering the message before there was a simultaneous, excited pronouncement by the Ensign monitoring the sonar readings there in the Combat Information Center (CIC).

“What!... I have multiple very loud transients bearing oh-two-five degrees... now others bearing three-four-six degrees. Range one-six kilometers... speed... speed increasing now through 200 kilometers per hour... continuing to increase. Now another group!”

Every sonar operator on every ship in the task force was hearing the same awful sounds that the sonar operator on the Kurama was reporting. Every one of them was also in the process of frantically reporting it to his commanding officer.

Admiral Shigeru immediately realized the significance of the report. Despite the ASW screen, despite what the Admiral felt were the best possible efforts to the contrary, somehow the Chinese had been able to get their weapons inside their defenses where they were now attacking them. Turning to Captain Ohira, the Admiral immediately began issuing orders in accordance with contingency plans he had hoped to never implement.

“Captain, execute formation plan Gama immediately and transmit that order to the rest of the Task Force now! Inform the Defense Ministry that we are under attack by supercavitating weapons.”

Immediately the Kurama and every other capable ship in the task force lay down an ASROC (Anti-submarine Rocket Assisted Torpedo) barrage in front of the approaching contacts using the predetermined Zebra pattern. The inner-zone ASW aircraft converged on approaching contacts to get their fish in the water in front of them as a secondary line of defense...utilizing the attack patterns and disposition suggested and communicated by the Americans the previous week.

**April 7, 05:17 local time**  
**JMSDF Task Force**

**Northwest of Wakasa Bay, The Sea of Japan**

Formation plan Gama was a dispersal formation that would place the most expendable vessels in front of the more highly valued Kongo class destroyers and the Kurama. The problem was, they were currently in a tight, air-defense formation used for the most effective use of their anti-air weaponry. Getting to the dispersal formation would take several minutes...minutes they no longer had.

The ASROC intercept calculations were quickly performed by the advanced computer systems on the Kongo class vessels and relayed through digital links to those vessels that had them in their vertical launch cell magazines. The DDG 173 Kongo was tasked with defensive ASW weapons control and so the other ships slaved their launches to the Kongo in order to achieve the most effective intercept pattern possible. Within a few seconds, sixteen of the weapons were airborne, vectoring towards the three different groups of approaching LRASD weapons. They had been programmed to land in front of the contacts, penetrate into the water and immediately explode in the hopes of collapsing the cavities through which the Chinese weapons were “flying”. Their hopes were based on the single instance of success that the Americans had experienced over two weeks earlier when attacked by the Chinese with these same weapons. In that instance, a single Mk-50 Barracuda torpedo, dropped by a CV-22, Osprey, ASW aircraft, had been manually exploded in front of one of the weapons and had successfully destroyed its cavity, whereupon the weapon had literally destroyed itself as it impacted the water at 600 knots.

The results were mixed. Of the twenty-four weapons now targeting the twelve JMSDF vessels, six were destroyed, a fact that would be analyzed in great depth later. But eighteen weapons bore right through the Japanese barrage and continued towards their targets. This left the two inner zone SH-60J ASW helicopters to try to interdict the incoming weapons. But, given the location of their ASW patrols prior to the attack, neither of them was capable of the speed necessary to intercept the LRASD weapons. They could only watch the incredibly fast streaks move towards the vessels of their task force and explode, one after another, as they tried in vain to intercept them. Less than sixty seconds after the initial ASROC intercept, the naval engagement was over.

Six of the twelve JMSDF ships were sunk outright, being completely torn apart by impacting LRASD weapons and sinking immediately with almost all hands. This included each of the Kongo

class destroyers that had been targeted by four weapons each, and the Kumara, which had also been targeted by four weapons. Admiral Shigeru and Captain Ohira, two of the most seasoned officers in the JMSDF, were lost with their entire crew. Three ships, one of the Improved Murasame destroyers and two of the Takikaze destroyers, sank more slowly due to the weapons targeting them exploding close in to the vessels as their proximity fuses activated, but not impacting those vessels directly. The resulting explosions were close enough to the vessels that they broke the back of two of them and the other was holed severely below the water line. All three would sink within two hours of the attack.

In what would later be called the pivotal, "Battle of the Sea of Japan", only three of the vessels in the JMSDF Task Force survived. Two of these were the two Asagiri ASW destroyers that had been conducting ASW duties on the extreme edge of the formation, one on either side. Both had been able to turn away violently enough without danger of collision and were therefore able to maneuver out of the way of the approaching weapons. Those weapons did come close enough for their proximity fuses to activate and detonate their warheads, but those explosions were far enough away to inflict only minor damage and casualties to both ships. The other survivor, one of the improved Murasame destroyers located closer to the center of the formation, was severely damaged but would survive. That vessel had actually been struck by one of the weapons and every man on board who saw it thought that they were witnessing their own deaths. Miraculously, the warhead had failed to detonate and the severe damage was due to the shear impact of the weapon itself at 600 knots. The resulting collision had holed the side of the vessel below the waterline and caused a terrible fire that would take twelve hours to extinguish. It also caused significant structural damage that would require several weeks in dry dock to repair.

The entire disastrous confrontation was recorded in detail and at close quarters by the sensors on the USS Jimmy Carter...and the more audible sounds, the sounds of the destruction of each of the Japanese ships, were heard by every member of the crew.

**April 7, 05:25 local time**

### **Approaching PRC Air Raid**

#### **Over Wakasa Bay, The Sea of Japan**

Stripped of the Aegis AAW defenses that they had expected to exact a tremendous toll on the approaching raid, the Japanese aircraft were neither numerous enough, nor sufficiently more technologically advanced to hold back the Chinese. Their F-15s exacted a heavy toll on the bomber and attack aircraft where they could break through the Chinese fighter cover, but such breakthroughs were very rare. The Chinese were employing over two hundred of their advanced SU-30 air superiority fighters to cover the attack aircraft and these SU-30's were very close to a technological match for the F-15s employed by the Japanese. In addition, the Chinese had been training extensively over the last two years to produce pilots with the experience to go up against the western pilots who historically logged many more hours training them for future combat.

The Chinese training, and their overwhelming numbers, paid off. It was a strategy that the GIR had already proven was effective in Turkey against western technology. The result of the initial air battle, while providing a higher kill ratio to the Japanese, was disastrous for Japan because it failed to stop the raid. Ultimately, the Japanese fighters either ran out of ordinance, or were swept from the sky as close to three hundred and fifty Chinese and North Korean attack aircraft continued towards their targets, still escorted by over one hundred fighter aircraft.

Over Wakasa Bay, the attack aircraft reached their point of departure and split into two large groups. One hundred and fifty aircraft proceeded towards the city of Osaka; the other two hundred proceeded towards Tokyo. Japanese reinforcement aircraft were being alerted and rushed to the scene from all over the islands. Some of these arrived in time to do battle with the Chinese who had quickly swept the small combat air patrols from the sky that had been left in reserve over each city. This allowed the attack aircraft to prosecute their targets. These included air defense sites, ship-yards, manufacturing plants, petroleum processing and storage facilities, military bases, police headquarters, power plants, bridges, governmental offices and communication facilities...all of which were hit hard by the raid. Once air defenses had been suppressed, the Chinese aircraft had free reign over both cities for almost an hour. The remaining Chinese fighter aircraft engaged the increasing numbers of Japanese fighter aircraft arriving from other bases until the attack aircraft began to egress.

During the flight back to China, Japanese aircraft, pursuing the fleeing attackers like angry hornets, were able to break through to attack aircraft and punish them. These Japanese fighter aircraft were, in turn, set upon by more and more Chinese aircraft the closer they came to Chinese and North Korean airspace and a large dog fight ensued on the western side of the Sea of Japan.

In the end, the Chinese lost over one hundred fighter aircraft and close to the same number of attack aircraft...over two hundred aircraft altogether. The Japanese lost less than one hundred of their F-15 and other indigenous fighter aircraft in the overall melee. Although this was an appreciable loss to the Chinese, they had many hundreds more aircraft to throw into the battle...and they appeared more than willing to do so. For the Japanese, the loss of so many aircraft had a much greater impact. They could not afford such attrition. Coupled with the naval losses, the overall losses to Japan on

April 7<sup>th</sup> were disastrous, both in terms of strategic military consequences, as well as morale. Added to this, the Japanese also suffered thousands and thousands of casualties in Osaka and Tokyo and terrible logistical and infrastructure loss. Fires in those two cities raged out of control throughout the day on the 7<sup>th</sup> and into the night.

And that night, another even larger raid returned and punished the cities again. In that second battle, the Japanese suffered losses in the air similar to those that the battle that morning had exacted. And, while the Japanese aircraft were able to inflict heavy losses on the Chinese fighter cover, they were not able to muster enough aircraft to break through the Chinese fighter cover to the attack aircraft as they returned to the mainland.

April 8<sup>th</sup> dawned clear and bright...except over the cities of Osaka and Tokyo where the pallor of smoke hung high in the atmosphere over both cities and was visible from locations all over the islands. But April 8<sup>th</sup> dawned a new day. It was a day that began with the Japanese air force having been reduced in numbers by almost 40% over the previous day. It was a day that began with the Japanese Maritime Defense Forces depleted by almost 20% of their destroyer strength over the previous day. It was a day when the Japanese people and many individuals in Japanese leadership were questioning their ability to defend themselves. It was a day when more and more Japanese contemplated a futility unknown since the days of August 1945.

### **April 8, 17:30 local time**

### **Emergency Command Shelter**

### **Outside of Tokyo, Japan**

Prime Minister Hatoyama Kakuei listened as the various ministers continued their discussion with the heads of the various branches of the military regarding the traumatic events of the last thirty-six hours. Virtually everyone in this room had lost someone dear to them. Thankfully, outside of a number of more minor air skirmishes, and continuing ballistic missile barrages directed at military installations, there had been a lull in the fighting for most of the day. Nonetheless, the political debate regarding what to do next had raged all day.

The Prime Minister and his cabinet were a representation of the Liberal Democratic political party that had held together a majority coalition in the Japanese government for so many years...actually for decades. On social issues they had always been liberal, even socialistic by some standards...but on military issues they had always been fairly conservative. Despite this, due to the events of the last six weeks, there were cracks appearing in that coalition. Things had been viewed as difficult - even catastrophic - after the defeat of the large American-led Korean relief force last month. Now that the Japanese themselves had suffered such a defeat, for many in attendance at this meeting the situation was beginning to look absolutely hopeless. The military did not believe so. The heads of all three major service branches of the Japanese Defense Forces were convinced that they had the capability and the will to continue the defense of their homeland, and to carry the fight to their enemies. They were pressuring their civilian leadership for three things:

1. Planning and conducting a massive retaliatory attack against major Chinese military installations, governmental facilities and infrastructure using Air Force and Maritime forces.
2. Authorization to utilize in the proposed attack the dozen nuclear weapons that the Japanese had very carefully and secretly produced and stored over the last five years.
3. Immediate authorization to implement emergency production of dozens more such devices, according to plans that had been secretly developed for several years.

Hatoyama Kakuei harbored mixed emotions. Clearly at current attrition rates, if the Chinese and North Koreans were willing to continue - and every indication showed that they were - the ability for the Japanese Defense forces to even mount such an attack would evaporate within a few days. Their very ability to defend Japan at all against air attack would disappear not long thereafter. The opportunity to strike back existed now, and it had to be either used, or discarded.

On the other hand, what were the chances of such an attack being successfully carried off? The Chinese numbers were overwhelming and would be tough to break through with the resources left to Japan. And what if Japan were successful? What would be the consequences?

That latter question was somewhat easier to answer. The Chinese also possessed nuclear weapons and they were more numerous and potentially more devastating than the weapons that the Japanese possessed. They would surely use them against Japan. Japan was a much smaller and more densely populated nation...and of all nations, Japan knew what the consequences of nuclear detonation on populated cities would be. It was a consequence that the Prime Minister would do almost anything to avoid.

"So," Kakuei mused, "either we fight to the death...a death that would probably not be too long in coming...or we face defeat...either abject military defeat, or a negotiated one."

Of all the options, perhaps there was still some room for an honorable, negotiated end to this...before it was too late for all the citizens in his nation. With that thought in mind, he interrupted the ongoing conversation and addressed his cabinet and the military leadership.



“Gentlemen, I believe we have but three options, and they are the options we have discussed in detail over the last several hours. The first option, one that we all desire emotionally, is that we decide to wage all out war and punish the Chinese for their aggression. In such a scenario, we would use the weapons at our disposal, invoking the inevitable response from the Chinese whether we succeeded or not. Our only hope in such a scenario is that the United States replies with overwhelming devastation and puts an end to The People’s Republic of China. I ask you to carefully and soberly consider this option, putting pure emotion aside. If we pursue such a course, the Chinese would certainly punish our nation when they retaliate, with a result far worse than any we could inflict upon them. We would be decades recovering from such destruction in the best of circumstances. Then, what of the potential consequences of a massive attack on China by the Americans? What would be the fallout experienced by our nation, lying in such close geographical proximity? Prevailing winds would normally help, but there are times when the winds do blow towards us...what then when that heavy fallout blows across our already ruined nation?”

“Another choice is to continue fighting conventionally to the end. The last two days have shown us where this path leads. There are simply too many aircraft at the enemy’s disposal. We would ultimately lose and terms would be dictated to us, probably after our nation is invaded, our cities destroyed and our people violated.

“Our third option, and the one that I am leaning towards, is that we threaten China with our nuclear weapons and then put up the best defense we can over a period of time, while dispersing our remaining naval forces to bases we occupy away from the main islands. Then we must try to negotiate the best terms for peace possible with the People’s Republic of China.”

When the Prime Minister made this statement, there was an immediate, loud chorus of “NO!” and “NEVER!” shouted from many in the room, particularly the military commanders. Arguments broke out all around and a state of general chaos and pandemonium ensued. As the Prime Minister tried to retain control of the meeting, his chief of staff entered the room and handed him a note.

The Prime Minister opened the note and read the single line written there.

“President Jien Zenim of the People’s Republic of China is on a secure connection and is asking to speak directly to you.”

Hatoyama Kakuei looked sharply at his chief of staff and received a very sober and quick nod in reply. It was apparent that Zenim was waiting. The Prime Minister had to literally shout to get the attention of those in the room. Once he had their attention, he informed them of the call, summoned his Foreign Minister and Defense Minister to him, and the three of them departed.

### **April 8, that same time**

#### **Presidential Offices**

#### **Beijing, PRC**

As Jien Zenim prepared to speak to the Japanese Prime Minister, he felt very pleased. To date, operation “Tempered Shaft” had gone extremely well, despite larger-than-expected losses to the air forces. Those losses, however, had led to the accomplishment of all mission goals more quickly than anticipated. With the stepped-up production that China had already implemented in license building of aircraft, and with the additional funds set aside for the purchase of ongoing manufacturing capacity in the Russian Federation...all of the aircraft losses would be replaced within three months.

The strategy of leaking the planning and timing of the initial dual air raid on Osaka and Tokyo to a known Japanese agent had worked flawlessly. The Japanese had jumped at the chance to utilize their Aegis warships to decimate China’s aircraft and had taken every precaution against their knowledge of the operational parameters of the supercavitating weapons that the PLA had at their disposal. In all probability, if that knowledge had represented the full extent of those capabilities, the Japanese defenses would have worked very well. But, that had not been the extent of those capabilities. The Japanese had been completely unaware of the “sleep-mode” variant, which allowed the weapons to hold their position silently while waiting for a known enemy to come to them. And that is exactly what the Japanese had done. And that is exactly what had allowed that variant to be so devastatingly effective against the Japanese fleet. The Japanese had paid a terrible price for their assumptions and ignorance, and once those Aegis assets had been neutralized, the raid had proceeded as planned, and as the Japanese anticipated ... and their air force alone had been powerless to stop it.

“But such is the nature of warfare,” thought the Chinese President. “As Sun Tsu had said ... *all warfare is deception.*”

And now it was time to extend the olive branch with one hand...while still very visibly holding the club that delivered such effective blows in the other. If his offers were phrased properly...if he could reach through and touch the Prime Minister’s inner force and quell it, along with those of his ministers, then the prize of the Japanese Islands would fall to China without need for further hostilities. And the fall would happen far quicker than anyone, including the President himself, had envisioned.

As the connection was opened and the Japanese Prime Minister completed his curt greeting on behalf of himself and his ministers, Jien Zenim spoke.

“Hatoyama-san, thank you for taking my call. Under the circumstances I know it must be difficult. I have called to reiterate the same offer that was extended by the People’s Republic of China to the Western Rim nations several days ago.

“Clearly, these intensified hostilities have resulted in tragic losses to both of our peoples. We in the People’s Republic wish to end the bloodshed and are willing to call a halt to the fighting if you are in a position to do likewise.

“Mr. Prime Minister, let me be frank. Although we have no quarrel directly with your people, your support of, and your continued prosecution in proxy of, American foreign policy has brought us into conflict with one another. It is a conflict that can be put behind us, and quickly, if you simply disavow yourself from those policies and engage with us in the economic prosperity that an alignment of our interests is sure to bring.”

“Let me cite one example: Siberia. There is no doubt that Japan has historically been interested in exploiting the resources of that region. Today there is the opportunity to do just that. The Coalition of Asian States, as you are aware, has been working with the Russian Federation for the past year to further explore and develop the vast resources there on an exclusive basis. As a member of the CAS, Japan would be in a position to do that with us.

“Now, wouldn’t such opportunities be far better for Japan and her people than the current conflict? I know that they would for the People’s Republic, and that is exactly why I have made this call. I urge you to consider this proposition. Any positive consideration would generate an immediate long-term cease-fire and would see our Foreign Minister make the trip to Tokyo to negotiate a meaningful treaty between us. Such a treaty would inevitably involve a brief occupation of some of your military bases and other infrastructure to ensure that no lingering American influence was able to undermine our agreement, and to ensure that your defense forces are thoroughly trained and integrated into the overall CAS defense structure. In the end, such arrangements would prove advantageous for your nation as it would assure the continued prosperity that our alignment would produce.

“On the other hand, Mr. Prime Minister, I must be equally direct regarding the other path. If you continue to pursue your current course of defending American interests and exploitation, we will step up our operations and rain down the punishment you have experienced in the last two days at Osaka and Tokyo on all of your cities. After your ability to defend against it is thoroughly neutralized, we will invade your nation and occupy all of your cities in a much more harsh alternative to the very peaceful proposal I just made. Make no mistake. We know your force strength and readiness...we know how long you can continue to mount your defenses and we have far more than enough resources at our disposal to drain you completely. Let me add this: We also know of the few weapons of mass destruction that you have developed and warn you against the deployment of any of them at the cost of the most grave consequences to your entire nation.

“So, I urge you to consider my offer. I will call for a unilateral cessation of hostilities for thirty-six hours. At the end of that time, I must have your response. Do you have any questions of me?”

Hatoyama Kakuei, the Prime Minister of Japan, and his Foreign Minister had more than a few questions for Jien Zenim, and the conversation went on for several hours.

**April 9, 11:39 local time**  
**CINCPAC Headquarters**  
**Honolulu, Hawaii**

The messages came pouring in from surviving personnel at US bases and from many elements of various Japanese Defense Force commands. The messages spoke of betrayal, they asked for help, they told of plans...most of all, they spoke of internal fighting. It appeared that, despite the lull of the last two days, the recent attacks on Japan were so severe, and the losses so drastic, that order was breaking down. Exactly why, the analysts weren’t completely sure yet...but the rumors indicated that negotiations and dialog had been opened between the Japanese leadership and the PRC.

A number of Japanese Maritime Force commanders were proposing that vessels would form into two large task forces and head east. These commanders were not inconsequential and included two Flotilla Admirals and the captains of two of Japan’s newest Osumi class amphibious assault ships escorted by a number of their modern, high value destroyers... including one of the two remaining Aegis destroyers, the DDG 174 Kirishima.

The same thing was occurring with Japanese air force fighter and attack units, who were proposing forming up with AWACS and refueling aircraft to make their way eastward to US bases, or south and east to Australia. Army units were vying for open places on the amphibious and transport ships that were speaking now in open terms of “seeking asylum”.

As the Admiral walked into the command center, Commander Banks gave him a short briefing.

“Admiral, the reports first started coming in about an hour ago. It was just a trickle at that point and we routed them to intelligence. But, in the last twenty minutes, the volume has increased to a real flood and it is obvious that something major is going on.

“When we got the call from Captain Deleon by short wave from our base in Sendai, we made the call to you, sir. Per your instructions, he is now holding.”

The Commander in Chief of US Forces in the Pacific (CINCPAC), Admiral Richard Sullivan, listened closely. Commander Banks was a “good hand” in a crisis, as he had already proven during the attacks on the 7th Fleet almost a month ago. He had continued to prove his mettle and effectiveness ever since, in one crisis after another. Outside of the current events, the Admiral considered briefly the continuing stream of requests from the Commander for a combat command as quickly as possible. The Admiral was inclined to grant that request...but not just yet. First they had another major, unanticipated crisis to address.

“Jim, can you hear me?”

The connection wasn’t that good. There was quite a bit of static on the encrypted line, but the response was clearly understood.

“Yes, Admiral. Sorry to pull you in, sir. I’ll get right to it. The situation here is critical.

“Fifteen minutes ago I spoke to the Deputy Minister of Defense. He told me directly that a deal has been cut. Japan will announce tomorrow evening Tokyo time, less than a day from now, a complete cease fire and a negotiated settlement that will lead to Japan’s full membership in the CAS within twelve months. During those twelve months, the PLA will occupy selected areas of the country, including all US bases and most Defense Force bases. The cease fire will become effective immediately upon announcement and they will sign the documents during the announcement.

“As rumor of this, and now actual word of it, has spread, there’s been fighting, and the fighting is intensifying. Many in the military are not going along with it and there are rumors that PLA troops are already landing at secured airfields to help quell the growing violence. The civilian population is in pandemonium as the rumors spread. Already there are significant numbers of small craft loading up and making for sea...craft of all types and sizes. It has the making of a real human tragedy of monumental proportions, sir, that will make the South Vietnamese “boat lift” look like child’s play.”

The Admiral soberly took this in. He did not hesitate in his response.

“Jim, I want you to listen to me and listen well. You may not have much time. I know you are already probably executing contingency plans to destroy all classified material. But, I need you to continue your dialog with the Deputy Defense Minister if you can. There are a number of prime Japanese assets that cannot, under any circumstances, be allowed to fall into PRC hands. I am thinking specifically of those two remaining Aegis destroyers.”

After a pause in transmission, the Captain responded.

“We’re already way out in front of you there, Admiral. One of those Aegis destroyers will be the principle escort to the two Osumi assault ships and a number of other vessels that will be forming up early tonight. In fact, it is the same vessel and the same skipper that helped escort the Kitty Hawk out of those same waters after the March 15<sup>th</sup> attacks. They will make for Guam, and then further west, maybe Hawaii, and will be looking for escort and air cover as quickly as we can provide it.

“The other Aegis destroyer is under the command of an individual who will remain absolutely loyal to the dictates of Japan’s Prime Minister. He has already taken security measures onboard to prepare for a hand-over to the PLAN. However, his executive officer has already discretely contacted the Deputy Prime Minister’s faction and indicated that he will allow a contingent of Japanese Marines on the vessel to scuttle it. That operation will be occurring off the east coast of Japan before dawn.

“In addition - and this is of utmost importance and should be held at the highest levels of classification...the Deputy Prime Minister has passed on to me information regarding the attack on their naval forces. It contains all of the electronic and acoustical data, as well as their after-action reports. In addition, the Deputy Prime Minister has indicated that they have recovered the wreckage of one of the supercavitating devices that impacted one of their improved Murasame destroyers. Its warhead failed to detonate. That wreckage has already been loaded onto one of the large assault vessels in the hanger bay. It will be transferred into our custody when they arrive in Guam.”

The Admiral knew he needed to contact his boss, Admiral Crowley, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), in order to get this information to the President. He imagined that there would be intelligence and diplomatic confirmation, but he couldn’t take the chance that there wasn’t, and they were sure not to have the detail that he had regarding military issues. In addition, he needed direction specifically regarding the harboring of these Japanese assets, and attempts to evacuate remaining Americans. It sounded as if it were too late for most of the latter, outside of the relative few that could get on board these vessels, but he was certain he could help with the former. In fact, because of time constraints, he would issue orders on his own volition to insure he could help with the escorting and protection of those vessels until they made safe harbor. If the President were advised otherwise and heeded such recommendations, he would have to countermand such orders. Under the circumstances, and knowing the “General”, Sullivan felt very certain in anticipating Norm Weisskopf’s decision.

“Okay, Jim, let the Japanese know that there will be adequate air cover off of Guam, as far as our tankers there can extend it. In addition, let them know that we will direct submarine and surface escorts to rendezvous with them as quickly as possible. Let them know we will welcome their help, and will stand with them. I will issue the necessary orders following this conversation.

“Now, Captain, as for you...this is a direct order. Get yourself and your people on one of those ships or aircraft and get back here to Honolulu. Bring those tapes with you. Make sure that the

Deputy Defense Minister knows that this order that I just gave, and your ability to comply with it, will be my own personal condition for the substantial help I am ordering out to meet his people.

“If there is nothing else, carry on Captain. Sullivan out.”

**April 10, 07:52, EDT**

**Situation Room, Laurel House**

**Camp David, Maryland**

The entire cabinet sat in stunned silence and disbelief. They had known it was coming...they had all followed the progress of the battles and seen the pictures of the fires and destruction in Tokyo and Osaka, they had all read the reports from CINCPAC that had been transmitted earlier in the day. Just the same, the news conference that had just been carried live on WNN, and transmitted around the world, drove home the awful, final reality of the situation. It had shown in stark clarity the Prime Minister of Japan and the President of the People’s Republic of China making their joint announcement and then signing the documents that everyone in that room realized rendered United States foreign policy and prestige in the Pacific all but impotent. It also rendered decades of careful planning which had resulted in the conversion of a former enemy into a strong ally, and literally trillions of dollars of economic and military investment, worthless to America...while filling the coffers of the People’s Republic of China.

Everyone there knew that all hope for any hold out by American and South Korean forces, as unlikely as it had been in any case, was now completely gone. That scenario, when it was finally played out, would deliver a double dose of the same medicine to American foreign policy and its economy. It would mean that more decades of planning and careful cultivation of a foreign ally were gone along with more trillions of dollars of investment. Not only gone, but delivered lock, stock and barrel over to an enemy growing more powerful by the day.

“What had taken decades and trillions upon trillions to build and develop is now gone in a matter of a few days,” thought Fred Reisinger as he prepared to speak to those gathered regarding the continuing diplomatic fallout of China’s lightning offensive and stunning victories.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, let me be frank. We are witnessing a diplomatic nightmare of unprecedented proportions. I will focus on a summary of the diplomatic fallout. We have already heard the military summary from General Stone and we will here of the equally tremendous economic impact from Secretary Gage. This nightmare is of course most highly focused in the Far East and the Mid East where these belligerent nations are making the most headway. As you can imagine, with the setbacks in Turkey and Saudi Arabia, with the continued retreat in South Korea, and now with the shocking capitulation of Japan, other nations facing the joint GIR and CAS juggernauts are reluctant to join our alliance. At this point, they are reluctant to even voice support for our position for fear of literally being crushed. This is particularly true of nations smaller and weaker than those our enemies have already succeeded in taking down. Korea and Japan were keys to our strategic position in the Far East. Their rapid fall is casting a pall of fear and doubt over the whole region.

“Even more alarming is the effect of these events and their economic consequences on the positions of nations outside of the combat theaters, particularly in Europe. More directly put, we have a number of long standing allies, some of whom are members of NATO, who are simply vacillating and calling for restraint and caution as we move forward. They are understandably concerned about the loss of oil but to such extent of as to render them completely timorous.

“Clearly, this is going to be a long and hard-fought war. We are going to have to demonstrate successes before some of these nations will be willing to risk joining us in defeating tyranny. The battle for the morale of our allies is as essential as any physical battle we face with the PRC and GIR.

“Despite these dire conditions, there are a number of bright spots. Of course, Canada, the UK and Australia are with us completely. Brazil has led the way in South America...all of these proposing a formal alliance, a tremendous coalition of free nations under the leadership of the United States. Within that alliance, we will forge the closest of economic and trade ties. Within that alliance, all parties will provide men, equipment and materiel to the war effort until its successful completion, a completion that will only occur with the unconditional surrender of the CAS and the GIR. Those nations are:

Great Britain	Canada	Australia	Brazil	Turkey
Germany	Poland	Iceland	Belarus	Norway
Austria	Ecuador	Egypt	Costa Rica	Columbia
Israel	Nigeria	The ROC	Czech Republic	

“We expect to have all paperwork and instruments for the formation of this alliance prepared for signature within a few days. At that time, the formal treaty will be signed by all parties and this great Coalition for Liberty forged. Important to note in this regard is that the ROC, due to its isolated nature, will be signing the document that will be delivered to them via clandestine methods, and returned in the same fashion. Their position is clearly very desperate.

“In the meantime, our other diplomatic efforts will continue to focus on those nations which are currently sitting on the fence out of either fear of military assault or fear of economic impact. Our

message to them remains that they must choose...that the consequence of not choosing will only strengthen tyranny and insure their own ultimate succumbing to it. Our goal in this regard will be to have them join us. If that commitment is not forthcoming, then it would be best to have them sit on the sidelines with no official stance...or, lastly, and at the very least, to have them declare themselves neutral. Above all else, we will make every effort to keep them from aligning with either the CAS or the GIR. As the President has said, and as was so eloquently verbalized by the Brazilian President as well, I do not believe other nations will be able to remain unaligned or neutral the longer the conflict goes on. I am convinced that the goal of the CAS is global dominance and the GIR is in league inssofar as it advances the spread of Islam and their own self-interests."

**April 10, 11:52, EDT**

**Presidential Bedroom, Aspen House**

**Camp David, Maryland**

Linda Weisskopf was ready to go to sleep. She had been sitting in bed reading her novel for some time. Norm had completed his preparations for bed and had climbed in himself only a few minutes ago after completing his last meeting. That meeting had been a military briefing via satellite with Admiral Sullivan, who as CINCPAC was commanding all US Forces in the Pacific, and General Horton, who as CINCCEN was the commander of all US and Allied forces in Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Having spent so many years with him, Linda could tell from her husband's demeanor that the meeting was weighing on his mind.

"Honey, things'll be alright. Our nation has been down before, but we'll come back again."

Norm turned around and gave his wife a hug and kissed her forehead.

"I pray you are right sweetheart...and I believe it. In fact, within the next couple of days, we are going to try something rather risky, but if it's successful, it will help to bolster our forces and may strike some doubt and fear into the enemy. But it is perilous, and even if it works it will not begin to even the score compared to the losses we have sustained. No, I am not sure we have ever faced such odds as these...it is going to take the absolute commitment of our people to overcome and out produce the powerhouse these enemies have become. I pray we are up to it as a nation...as a people."

Linda knew that the nation would be up to it, however long it took, and however grim it got, just as long as Norm was there leading them.

"Norm, this nation has seen bleaker days and you know it. I've heard you speak of it...of General Washington and those desperate days after the fall of New York when he was being chased across New Jersey by a much larger army from the most powerful nation on earth at the time. They were just one battle away from total defeat...I believe that was a bleaker than what we face now.

"You've told me how Washington lost almost every battle but somehow preserved his army until the inspiration of a nighttime crossing of the Delaware in weather that no one would have believed possible turned the tables that year. That inspiration came from somewhere...I have no doubts, no matter how dark it gets...no matter what odds we face...that similar inspiration will be forthcoming. Enemies can't plan or prepare for that."

That thought struck the President powerfully as he rolled it over in his mind.

"No, they certainly can't plan for that, can they? Such preparation is not possible."

Norm never ceased to be amazed at this woman's optimism. Here they were, hidden away in the hills of Maryland because they had been driven from their home...no, because their home had been destroyed. So here they were, with the next in line to the President dead and his successor not in place...and she is the one with the positive mental attitude.

"Thank God for her," the President thought. "She doesn't realize how much I need her."

Then, on second thought, the President continued, "...oh yes she does."

For her part, Linda knew that Norm had been cooped up in these hills for too long.

Yes, she understood about security. Yes, she understood about succession of the Presidency. Yes, she understood that they still didn't have a confirmed Vice President. But she also understood something else. She understood Norm Weisskopf and she knew he needed to be out. He needed to be "visiting the troops" and building them up. In this case, the "troops" were not just the actual soldiers out in harm's way. As much as he would enjoy those trips, the President had plenty of very capable and good generals who could accomplish that task.

No, the troops that needed bolstering were the American people, and Norm was the one who needed to bolster them. Norm needed to be out doing that himself. Irrespective of the danger, irrespective of those who would oppose the idea...it was time, and Linda knew it. Reaching out and taking hold of each of his arms as Norm looked at her, she stared right back into his eyes. Then with that knowing look that can only pass between those who have spent decades learning one another's hearts and souls through the dedicated companionship of a married couple, she said,

"Norm, it's time you got out. I know all about security, succession, and all the reasons they are keeping you here. But you need to be out, and the people need you out there. I already mentioned it to Talbot earlier this evening. He probably thought it uncharacteristic that I would make it a "strong"

suggestion. Yet he did say that he would put a schedule together just in case. But you are going to need to push it if it is going to happen. I hope you will consider it.”

Norm had been thinking the same thing for days. When would he ever learn? He had held back for fear of leaving Linda too soon after the traumatic events of a few weeks ago. That reasoning had fit well into his advisors' and protectors' plans for him being at Camp David and “safe” until the full line of succession was back in place, and those reasons had all made very good, perfect sense. They had all assured him, and he believed it, that the people in the nation understood and that there was not the slightest indication of dissatisfaction or concern. But what people felt, and what they needed, were sometimes two different things. Despite his regular televised broadcast messages to the American people and the continuing appearance of his subordinates, Norm had sensed for several days that the people needed a leadership presence in their midst . . . and that would have to be him.

For a brief moment, Norm Weisskopf vaguely remembered a poignant scene from a Civil War movie he had seen as a child. It was a scene in which a Union general mounted his horse and rode among his troops amidst tremendous enemy fire, uplifting and inspiring them to hold fast to the ground they occupied. At such a young and impressionable age, he remembered admiring General Hancock, and he remembered thinking to himself that putting oneself in harm's way in order to inspire others must be one of the signs of a true leader. “Funny how seemingly insignificant childhood memories sometimes find a place, and a purpose, so many years later,” he mused to himself, while absentmindedly caressing Linda's arm.

Linda was right, and Norm knew it. This was an undertaking he could do something.

“Honey, you never cease to amaze me. I will talk to Talbot in the morning, and then the cabinet, and we will set the schedule up. It is time. And who knows? In getting out, maybe the doors will open a little wider for that inspiration you were just talking about.”

**April 13, 03:42**

### **350 NM East of the Kuril Islands**

#### **USS Kitty Hawk CIC, Western Pacific Ocean**

Admiral Ryan contemplated the strike force gathering around him, and over him, as he watched the multiple displays arrayed in the Combat Information Center of the USS Kitty Hawk. He was glad to be moving and, despite the grave risk, he was glad to be providing some small measure of “pay back” this morning. With the destruction of the Chinese satellite surveillance capabilities over this part of the Pacific, operation “Yellow Jacket” was hopefully going to come as a surprise and a shock to the Chinese and their allies. And, if the Chinese held their daily “briefing” for the world press as they had been doing every day for the last three weeks, it would also be a surprise that the whole world would witness. In witnessing it, the world would come to understand that America may have been hurt, she may have been thrown back, but she was far from “out”.

The USS Kitty Hawk had steamed for several days at flank speed to arrive here at this “way point” for the operation. Counter intelligence was indicating that she was actually the USS John Stennis for the benefit of their enemies, and any media that picked up on the story. As far as the “leaked” messages and orders were concerned, the USS Kitty Hawk was still in the vicinity of Guam and preparing to cruise over to Wake Island in a hurried effort to reinforce and re-supply those islands in preparation for any upcoming enemy action. As far as their enemies were concerned, it was the hastily repaired USS John Stennis that had left the vicinity of Guam for an unnamed combat operation. . . a ship whose shattered remains actually lay in the depths of the western Pacific.

Now, here was the Kitty Hawk in company with two Ticonderoga class Aegis cruisers and two Arleigh Burke class Aegis destroyers. In addition, riding shotgun were two Los Angeles class attack submarines and even more importantly, the USS Jimmy Carter, the Sea Wolf class submarine that had already proven so effective in monitoring the enemy and avoiding their new weapons. In anticipation of this operation, the Jimmy Carter had been ordered northward after witnessing and recording the destruction of the Japanese task force. The Admiral felt much more comfortable with her out there on point, particularly now that she had provided the acoustical characteristics and attack profiles of the weapons that were being so effectively employed by the enemy. That data had been provided to every ship and aircraft system being used by this task force and Admiral Ryan felt confident that his ASW efforts would be much more effective as result. But then, as he had already learned, “effective” was a very relative term when dealing with the supercavitating weapons the Chinese were employing.

One other vessel had also joined the task force just a few hours earlier. It was the USS Ohio, a submarine that previously would normally never come close to such a task force since its' primary mission involved months at a time in the deepest, most remote areas of the earth's oceans, training and holding silent vigil, waiting for orders it hoped would never come. The USS Ohio had been christened a nuclear powered ballistic missile submarine. In her original configuration, she had carried 24 Trident nuclear missiles, each carrying ten multiple, independent re-entry vehicles (MIRVs) capable of raining down nuclear fire on any enemy foolish enough to provoke America into responding. In fact, in that original configuration, she had carried more nuclear weapons than most other countries had in their entire arsenal, outside of Russian and perhaps the United Kingdom.

But the USS Ohio no longer carried an SSBN designation for nuclear powered Ballistic Missile submarine or any Trident missiles. During the last several years the USS Ohio, along with three of her seventeen sisters, had undergone significant conversion and refitting and now carried an SSGN designation for a nuclear powered guided missile submarine, in particular, sea launched cruise missiles. She was here with the task force specifically to add her one hundred and forty cruise missiles to the punch that Admiral Ryan was about to deliver.

With the Ohio, the four Aegis vessels and the two Los Angeles class submarines, Admiral Ryan was prepared, in the next few minutes, to launch over two hundred and seventy cruise missiles at the People's Republic of China. Those missiles would be targeting the shipyard facilities and other factory and logistic facilities surrounding Tianjin, factories and critical infrastructure in Beijing and, also in Beijing, critical governmental facilities, including the Politburo and the Presidential offices. These ship and submarine launched missiles would arrive hard on the heels of the main "punch" that Admiral Ryan's joint task force would be delivering to the Chinese this morning. That initial punch would be the result of the substantial number of US strike aircraft that were staging out of the CONUS and were now gathering overhead at this same "way point".

### **April 13, that same time**

#### **350 NM East of the Kuril Islands**

#### **"Stinger" Flight**

"All aircraft, this is stinger lead. Depart X-ray in oh-seven minutes on my mark, I repeat, on my mark, oh-seven minutes ... Mark!"

Colonel Theodore Saunders was prepared to lead the largest group of US heavy bombers gathered for a single combat mission since World War II into battle. Not even the "Linebacker" missions of the Vietnam War, had approached the size of this mission. Nor had any single strike package of Operations Desert Storm, Enduring Freedom, or Iraqi Freedom. No, it had literally been since the German and Japanese missions of World War II that as large a single force of American heavy bombers had been employed against any enemy.

"Fittingly," thought the Colonel, "since this fight is now a World War of equal proportions."

Staging out of Dyess air base in Texas and Ellsworth air base in South Dakota, the Colonel was now leading fifty of America's inventory of sixty-seven B-1B "Lancer" bombers. Each was carrying ten air-launched cruise missiles (ALCM) that were going to target air defense sites, military air-bases and other critical infrastructure within the People's Republic of China around Tianjin and Beijing.

"If everything goes as planned, this punch will not just open the door for the Navy's follow-on punch trailing our strike...it will knock that door off its hinges and lay it out flat on the ground," thought the Colonel.

"Stinger Lead, this is Dish Plate-two. Do you copy?"

Saunders replied immediately to the US Navy E-2C AWACS control aircraft from the Kitty Hawk that would be controlling their ingress and egress this morning.

"Stinger leads copies. Go ahead, Dish Plate."

"Stinger lead, be advised that Wildcat-One, Wildcat-Two and Raptor-One flights are formed up and will use your X-ray departure for their own, twenty-five miles to your front at angels 40."

"Alright!" thought the Colonel. "The Navy is ready to go."

Two flights of eight F/A-18E Super Hornet aircraft configured for long-range air-to-air warfare were going to be riding his front door. Each was armed with six medium range AMRAAM missiles that could reach out and "touch" the enemy at over 60+ miles. In addition, a flight of eight F/A-18F Hornet aircraft would provide more coverage with the eight AMRAAM missiles that each of them carried. Any enemy attempting to break through to do harm to Stinger flight was going to get stung hard themselves...and based on some of the mission parameters and goals, that was the whole idea.

The message from Dish Plate meant that the Hornets were topped off with fuel and ready to go. The Colonel knew that Dish Plate was out there almost one hundred miles to his front with an escort of four F/A-18F Super Hornets, providing defense for Dish Plate and for a flight of tankers that would refuel the naval aircraft upon their return. Dish Plate's passive sensors would allow them to approach the Chinese coast and pick up any active searches performed by the Chinese air defense forces, or any other for that matter...like the North Koreans or even the Russians. Until they either reached their launch point, or were discovered, they would be approaching in a passive mode themselves, hoping to achieve those launch points before discovery. Once discovered, or when they had reached the appropriate position for launch, Dish Plate's powerful radar, and the radar on selected units, would go active to insure their safe egress and to draw in as many Chinese aircraft as possible.

"Roger, Dish Plate. Wildcat and Raptor to use X-ray in oh-three minutes, to our front 25 miles and angels 40."

**April 13, 05:48 local time**  
**East of the North Korean and Chinese borders**  
**Russian Federation**

As the American strike force approached the Kuril Islands from the west, it dropped literally down to the deck and threaded its way through the remote portions of those islands and then made its approach on the Russian coast. Crossing into Russian airspace over the most remote portion of the Sikhotealin mountain range and then following a central, high valley in that range to the south and east, the fighters, bombers and the trailing stream of ship and submarine launched cruise missiles made their way towards China. By approaching on the deck, in one of the most remote areas of Eastern Russia, having used SEAL teams to neutralize the few radar stations the Russians had along that area of their coast, and by remaining far from the Russian Naval base at Vladivostok, the entire package was able to avoid Russian air defense detection. Once the strike package cleared the southern end of the mountain range, the fighter aircraft increased their altitude so they could better defend the bombers. This occurred just outside of Chinese and North Korean airspace as the bombers and trailing cruise missiles continued flying nap of the earth, less than one hundred feet above ground.

When the escorting US fighter aircraft became visible on the North Korean and Chinese air-defense radar systems, multiple flights of Chinese and North Korean fighters were immediately vectored towards them. These included license built Chinese SU-30's, the latest variant of their newest indigenous and highly maneuverable J-10 fighters and their long range JH-7 fighters. They also included North Korean Mig-29 Fulcrum and older Mig-25 Foxbat aircraft. When picking up signs of the Chinese and North Korean movement on their passive systems, the American E-2C AWACS aircraft, Dish Plate, which was trailing the strike package well off the coast with its accompanying escort and tanker aircraft, illuminated the entire area with its powerful radar system. At that same moment, the designated aircraft in the fighter cover activated their own radar and electronic warfare packages. Most of the fighter aircraft remained "passive" and would use their digital link to Dish Plate to target the enemy aircraft.

A moment of confusion ensued for the Chinese and North Korean air controllers when many new targets showed up on their systems and as they began to feel the effects of the electronics warfare. It was in this moment that the leading Super Hornets attacked with their first volley of sixteen AMRAAM missiles, followed within three seconds by a second volley targeting the approaching Chinese and North Korean interceptors.

The AMRAAM missiles rapidly approached the enemy fighters, using their fire-and-forget radar capabilities and began raining down on the approaching North Korean and Chinese aircraft. Those who had the time and who were able, immediately took evasive action...only to have the second volley fall amongst them. Within just a few moments, and before the controllers could change their attack profile, twenty-six North Korean and Chinese aircraft were destroyed and falling to earth in burning, smoking, charred ruins.

The second and even stronger approaching wave of enemy aircraft was now aware of the American aircraft, and they were preparing to attack accordingly. Before they could do so, the Stinger strike force launched its cruise missiles. Very quickly, five hundred cruise missiles were in the air flying towards their targets. Continuing to fly nap of the earth, they branched off towards their respective target areas in either Beijing or Tianjin. As they did so, the bombers turned back towards the sea while gaining altitude, allowing their fighter cover to engage the approaching wave of Chinese and North Korean fighters. Thanks to the long-range standoff capability of the cruise missiles and to the range of the AMRAAM missile, none of the Chinese and North Korean fighters were able to break through the US fighter cover to launch missiles at the departing B1-B bombers.

Of the five hundred missiles launched by the B-1B force, three hundred of the leading missiles were of a new variety known as Anti-Radiation Cruise Missiles (ARCM). These missiles operated on the same principle as the High-speed Anti-Radiation Missile (HARM) in terms of their targeting capabilities. As they flew forward, their detector heads scanned for any active radar targeting them. When a radar was located, the missile would home in on the radar signal itself and then, based on complex algorithms concerning "lock" state, distance from target, angle of attack and several other considerations, the missile could then target the source of that radar and attack it.

In the attack mode, the missiles were programmed to continually home on the latest source for the radar signal. In this way, if the enemy controllers attempted to foil the attack by iterating the signal between on and off, or by turning the signal completely off, the missile would still home in on the last known location. The ARCM missiles were also capable of communicating between one another regarding the nature and location of their targets. The onboard mission planner programming provided real time target evaluation and determined the optimum number of ARCMs to attack each particular emitter. Although significantly slower than the HARM, the ARCM carried a larger payload and its larger size accommodated the electronics to provide a higher level of ECM sophistication. As a result, the detection, targeting and homing functions were improved over HARM as was the survivability due to the enhanced electronic warfare capabilities.



All of this resulted in a rolling wave of attacks against anti-aircraft sites (including the very dangerous KS-2+ sites), air radar sites, radar controlled anti-aircraft artillery and gun platforms like the ZSU-23 employed by the Chinese. The initial three hundred ARCM missiles opened the door for the two hundred B-1B-launched land-attack cruise missiles that followed, which were then followed by the two hundred and seventy cruise missiles launched by the US Navy.

### **April 13, 08:02 local time**

#### **Press Room, Politburo**

#### **Beijing, China**

Li Peng, the head of the People's Republic Parliament and close associate of Jien Zenim, had just started the press briefing when a security officer entered the room and rushed over to his side.

"Excuse me, Minister Li. Please exit immediately through the door to your left and my staff will escort you to safety. The capital is under attack."

Turning to the crowd of astonished reporters, the officer then took the microphone that Li Peng had just vacated in his hand and said.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the press, please bear with us, we ..."

His voice was interrupted by the sudden start of wailing sirens, not only there near the Politburo, but also throughout the city.

"As you can all hear, there is an air raid warning and we ask each of you to exit the rear of the conference center and follow the two security personnel there. They will guide all of you to safety."

As the reporters rushed for the rear of the room, distant but very distinct "thuds" could be heard, along with anti-aircraft fire that was now mixing in with the sirens. Coming out of the building, the press people could see a number of missile-launches erupting to their east as the "thuds" grew closer.

While exiting the Politburo, Li Ping had received a priority call on his cell phone. When he noticed that it was Jien Zenim himself, he halted his impatient security procession so he could hear the words of the President of the People's Republic,

"Yes. Mr. President. I know, but I stopped the briefing since this attack is obviously aimed at the capital and we needed to get ourselves and the reporters to safety."

"Yes, Mr. President. Where are you? Have you been escorted to safety?"

After Jien Zenim acknowledged that he was safe in the bomb shelter below the Presidential offices, Li confirmed Jien's order that the press briefing resume following the all clear sign.

"Good, I will..."

He was not able to finish the sentence. He was interrupted by a huge explosion that occurred in the wing of the building adjoining the one they were in. The brightness of the explosion flashed through the windows, just before the pressure wave blew the glass into the assembled group, cutting several of the security personnel severely and nicking Li Ping on the left cheek, producing a small trickle of blood that ran down his face.

"Excuse me, sir. We must leave NOW!"

The security team leader was urgent now, not caring that he was interrupting a conversation with his own President as he took Li Ping's arm and forcefully led him down the hall. They were rapidly approaching a secure and heavily fortified elevator that would take them down to the staff bunker far below ground level. Just another twenty feet and they would be there. In fact, two of the security team were already at the door and were holding it open in anticipation of Li Ping's arrival.

"Just a few more seconds and I believe we are going to be alright," thought Li as the leading element of the security guards that had formed a protective shield around him reached the elevator.

He was wrong.

Just as the first of those men entered the elevator, and as Li himself was stepping across the threshold, there was tremendously bright flash behind him. Li only registered the surreal contrast between the bright light that was reflected on the inside wall of the elevator and his shadow which was cast on that same wall. It was his last conscious, mortal thought as his body, and the bodies of the five men around him, were tossed like so much tissue paper into that same elevator wall by the overpressure from the blast. The blast resulting from the impact of a United States ALCM that occurred only fifty feet behind them.

Li Ping, President of the People's Republic of China's Parliament, member of the Politburo for the communist party and close confidant and unofficial spokesman for Jien Zenim, was killed instantly. He would not resume the press briefing that morning.

When it finally did resume, the press conference would be anything but "normal".

### **April 14**

#### **The People's Republic of China**

The American attack on Beijing was a significant success, both from a political and a propaganda standpoint, and to a lesser extent, from a military standpoint. Many critical anti-aircraft defense installations were destroyed by the attack. A significant exception to this was one complex of very high value KS-2+ missile batteries right around Tianjin. Captain Hu Ziyang, who had been

instrumental in the near downing of an American HS-7 aircraft a year earlier, had been promoted to a position over all KS-2+ batteries in the Tianjin area. Upon recognizing the nature of the massive American raid, and its targeting of Chinese anti-air assets, he had ordered all KS-2+ operation in Tianjin shut down and saved many of the missile batteries.

But Captain Hu was one of the few who exhibited such good judgment. So, beyond the destruction of many other anti-aircraft defense installations, the American B1-B raid also inflicted significant damage to critical infrastructure in Tianjin and Beijing, and to many of the critical shipyard facilities in Tianjin dedicated to the military conversion of Chinese container ships. In addition, the Politburo facilities and Presidential offices in Beijing were completely destroyed. But, equally important was the death of Li Ping, who had been a significant political and diplomatic strategist for the Chinese and a strong ally of Jien Zenim.

Much of the attack in Beijing was captured on video by the cameras of the press. In one dramatic sequence, a photographer from Italy captured the hits on the Politburo facilities that resulted in Li Ping's death. US Tomahawk missiles were clearly seen impacting first one wing, and then a few seconds later the adjoining wing where the PLA security team had escorted Li Ping. The tremendous explosions of both weapons caused both wings to collapse into smoldering ruins. Although the Chinese government and military attempted to censor the videos, some of it inevitably made its way out of the country and was shown to the world, including the sequence of the collapse of the two wings of the Politburo facilities. But despite the tremendous amount of anti-aircraft fire that was directed into the air over Beijing, not one video showed any damage to any American aircraft. It was apparent that no American aircraft outside of the cruise missiles ever appeared over Beijing or Tianjin. All of the combat associated with the aircraft that participated in the raid occurred hundreds of miles away. In that combat, the Chinese lost seventy-five of their fighter aircraft while the Americans lost only five Super Hornets and not a single B-1B bomber.

As successful as the massive B1-B raid had been, Operation "Yellow Jacket" served as a major diversion to what was deemed the more important American military operation that day, Operation "Sudden Thunder". That operation dedicated fully one half of America's twenty B-2 stealth bomber force to a deep strike within China, coming over the North Pole and down across Siberia. That attack targeted the three satellite launch facilities across northern China, along the former Mongolian border. With Chinese national command and control capabilities focused on the attack on Beijing, Sudden Thunder was a complete success. The B-2's were not detected before or after the launch of their standoff missiles in the pre-dawn hours. A total of one hundred twenty missiles were launched at the three facilities, forty targeted at each. A total of only twenty-eight of these were shot down by the Chinese before they reached their targets, impacting at roughly the same time the cruise missiles were raining down on Beijing and Tianjin. The result was that all three facilities were severely damaged and launch operations would not be restored at any of them for three months.

The day after these attacks, amidst the euphoria that ensued in the United States when reports and videos began being broadcast, President Weisskopf spoke to the people in a national address and urged them against over confidence. He let them know that the operations, while successful, amounted to a nothing more than a pin prick in the tremendous onslaught in the Pacific, and continuing in the Middle East, which were pushing back US and allied forces at an alarming rate. His words were meant to inspire a long-term, united commitment to what he explained again would be a monumental and years-long effort to "roll the tyrants back". He left the people soberly considering his words - words that seemed to transform the jubilation into more of a quiet determination to see the struggle through to a successful conclusion at whatever cost necessary. That cost in terms of lives, sacrifice and hardship was only just beginning to be truly felt by the common citizens of the United States. It was being felt as they came to understand more and more their part in a struggle which was already engulfing more than half of the world, and was now threatening to engulf the remainder of it.

## Chapter 15

*“Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!” – Admiral David Farragut, USN*

### Mid-April through June in the Mid East

As spring turned into summer in the northern hemisphere, in Turkey allied forces were slowly being pushed back, despite an influx of German, American and Canadian troops into Izmir and into Uskudart, across the Bosphorus from Istanbul. The Turkish government re-established itself in Istanbul and fortified defensive positions were developed on the peninsula to the east of the Bosphorus, all along the Dardanelles and in a ring around Izmir. It was hoped that these fortified positions, and the significant reserves that were being built up and held behind them would be sufficient to hold against the GIR onslaught. The plan was to counter attack once the retreating allied forces, now well to the west and southwest of Ankara, fell back. The GIR, with principally Iranian, former Iraqi and Syrian forces, committed over 800,000 men to the effort in Turkey, and those numbers and the 1800 tanks and 1200 aircraft now supporting them were pushing the allies back towards the straits that separated Asia and Europe.

In Saudi Arabia, a similar, but more desperate situation was developing. One US Army group had been pushed out of Riyadh and the capital had fallen. These 50,000 US and 25,000 allied troops were retreating along the major oil pipeline that connected the oil fields on the Persian Gulf with the Red Sea, using the roadways that had been built to service that pipeline. They were destroying the pipeline and the roadway as they conducted a fighting withdrawal. The major problem with that was that all re-supply efforts had to be accomplished through the use of airdrops using a dangerous route out of Israel, risking GIR interception.

Another US group on the Arabian peninsula was also in a desperate situation, having been completely encircled and cut off on the Qatar peninsula on the Persian Gulf. Over 30,000 US personnel consisting of Marine Expeditionary Brigade One (MEB-1) and elements of XVIII Corps, along with 15,000 other allied troops were trapped there. They were desperately holding a defensive line along the Qatar and UAE border at the base of the peninsula and receiving air support from the USS Enterprise carrier group in the Arabian Sea, as well as re-supply from Diego Garcia. In this case, there was literally nowhere to retreat to. By mid-June the Persian Gulf was completely unsafe for any US Naval force of any type due to the strong air forces in Iran that were attacking allied positions in Qatar and waiting for an opportunity to attack any allied vessel that ventured into those narrow, confined waters. To their front, across the defensive lines on the narrow peninsula, was a large GIR Army group of over 250,000 that was besieging them and preparing for an all out assault, the goal of which would be to dislodge and destroy the Americans and their allies in Qatar.

The GIR had committed a total of over 750,000 troops to the Arabian-peninsula campaign. Along with those troops, and despite losses inflicted by superior American technology, there were still over 2,500 tanks and 3,000 combat aircraft. The numbers were simply overwhelming, as was grimly evidenced by the retreat of the Americans forces across the Arabian Peninsula where, west of Riyadh along the major oil pipeline, 75,000 allied troops were being pursued by over 450,000 GIR personnel. By the end of June, those allied forces were approaching Medina and a critical decision. Should they turn north towards Israel and try and fight their way through to US and Israeli forces there? Or should they continue towards the Red Sea and a Dunkirk style evacuation there? As it turned out, the decision was made for them. On June 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> an expeditionary force of 75,000 Chinese, armed and trained while working as a part of the 200,000 strong Chinese “relief workers” in the Sudan, crossed the Red Sea and landed near Yanbu to cut the Americans off.

In Egypt, the allied Egyptian and British forces had been pushed back to defenses along the Nile River along a line from Alexandria to just south of Cairo. This defensive line extended across to Suez at the head of the Red Sea and was composed of over 200,000 soldiers, mostly Egyptian and 800 modern tanks and 500 aircraft. Facing them were over 550,000 GIR troops made up of Libyan, Algerian and Chad forces supported by over 1500 tanks and 1200 aircraft. The enemy had achieved a major breakthrough in late May when the second in command of the Egyptian Armed forces, General Nahas Sidqi Naguib had defected to the GIR with five full divisions of Egyptian troops. The loss of these 100,000 troops created a breach in allied lines that was catastrophic to desert positions to the west of Cairo and caused a rapid allied fall back to the Nile River.

Now, as July approached, the pressure on allied forces in Egypt was extreme. Any major breakthrough could lead to the surrender of Egypt, and endanger the Suez Canal. As extreme as the pressure was, it was about to grow even more extreme as the 125,000 Chinese who had been masquerading as “relief workers” in Sudan, were now armed, formed up and moving north down the Nile River toward the allied defensive line.

### Mid-April through June in the United States

In America, the securing of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers took longer than Admiral Gwinn had anticipated. His two Coast Guard flotillas had sailed up those rivers and engaged any terrorist craft

they could locate. But a good number continued to allude him and cause havoc along remote areas of the rivers. Finally, on May 28<sup>th</sup> the final showdown came in a climatic battle on the Mississippi River near Paducah, Kentucky. There, eight terrorist vessels armed with 20 millimeter cannons, rocket propelled grenades and automatic small arms were trapped and engaged by a 110-foot Island Class Patrol Craft, two 87-foot Protector Class Patrol Boats and six 41-foot armed utility craft of the US Coast Guard. In addition, air support was provided by two flights of four Air National Guard F-16C attack aircraft. In the ensuing battle, which lasted for over three hours, all terrorist vessels were destroyed, killing over sixty terrorists, and wounding and capturing eight. Coast Guard losses amounted to two of the 41-foot craft sunk, severe damage to one of the 87-foot Protector vessels and light damage to several other vessels. Two F-16C's were shot down. Twelve Coast Guard and two Air National Guardsmen were killed and sixteen Coast Guard personnel were injured. It was a battle and a display that citizens all along the banks on either side of the river would never forget ... and in which some of them participated by providing small arms fire directed at the terrorist craft from shore.

But this did not end terror in America. Many sleeper cells were located throughout the continental United States and Canada and they were being activated according to long established plans. Border interdiction of new potential terrorists improved tremendously as the southern border with Mexico was militarized along its entire length. But sleeper cells of between four and twelve trained and committed terrorists kept "popping up" throughout the nation. The most severe attacks occurred in Hartford, CT, Atlanta, GA, Wichita, KS, and Phoenix, AZ throughout the month of May. In each case, the terrorists were able to inflict initial damage and casualties at government buildings and critical infrastructure sites, but they were quickly put down by the response of both law-enforcement and armed civilians. Through the application of the President's "Arm the Citizens" initiatives (as they were being called) and by virtue of the more formal Home Guard Program being implemented by the Director of Homeland Security, the attacks were rendered less and less effective.

In June, Hector Ortiz pulled off a cunning move in Dallas, TX where he had a combined team of thirty attack in North Dallas, actually targeting the complex where Ortiz's American headquarters were located. The terrorists took the complex and the critical interchange of LBJ Freeway and Central Expressway and held it for over two hours. After killing over one hundred citizens and twenty-two law enforcement and National Guard respondents, ten remaining terrorists were pushed away from the interchange and fell back to, and occupied, the office complex overlooking the expressways. They had earlier taken a group of Hector's and other businesses' employees hostage and they now used these as bargaining chips and leverage for over three days. Ultimately, the US government used Hector himself to help negotiate the surrender of the remaining terrorists and the safe release of the hostages. In exchange, and as planned, three of the higher-ranking surviving members of the "team" provided "evidence" implicating one of Hector's rival drug operations in the attack. Those members avoided death penalty convictions in exchange for their "testimony" and "evidence". Each of them had already been assured beforehand by their handlers of their freedom at a later date when the "capitalists" were brought down. All three would later die in captivity, reportedly as a result of action within the prison system by members of those rival drug cartels.

The lower level members of the team, who had no knowledge of the fabricated and misleading origination of the attack, were considered expendable and would face the full weight of the US anti-terror legal system. This system had become quite proficient by this point in trying, convicting and executing sentence on terrorists who were captured ... of course only after a thorough interrogation. Those interrogations had become much more focused on getting valuable information regarding the plans and intent of the terrorists than they were focused on the absolute maintenance of their civil liberties. In the terrible times the United States was facing, those who had been caught "red-handed" in the terrorizing and killing of American citizens, and who would soon face a hangman's noose, a firing squad, lethal injection or electrocution as payment for their crimes, were afforded few civil liberties. All of the other seven surviving members of the team who had committed the assault in Dallas were brought to trial within six weeks, convicted and sentenced to death. Less than six weeks later, each sentence was carried out.

America's NORCOM or, Northern Command, assisted the FBI in the investigation of the terror attacks while the Department of Homeland Security assimilated information and assessed threats. Any terrorists that were captured were interrogated. Those who would willingly talk were given the opportunity, making it clear that solid, helpful information might help avoid certain death after trial. Those who wouldn't talk were then interrogated in more a more intense fashion in an attempt to gather any information from them that was possible before their execution. As a result, the FBI was tracking down many very solid leads ... following both the materiel and money trails of what they believed were several clandestine operatives operating working within the United States and funneling funds, materiel and personnel to the terrorist cause. Many of these trails were blind allies and dead-ends established by the terrorist organizations themselves, but some of them were more promising.

While all of this was occurring, new recruits by the hundreds of thousands were answering the President's and their nation's call. Every branch of service was breaking all time historical records for volunteer induction, exceeding by several hundred percent the rates established in World War II after

the attack on Pearl Harbor. Training programs were abbreviated and fighting personnel began pouring out of American bases in increasing numbers. But, while the numbers of personnel were more than adequate, the amount of ordinance and equipment lagged. This was because so much of the manufacturing capability of the United States had been moved off-shore over the preceding two decades in the unbridled move towards globalization and towards “free” trade at almost any cost. It was a move that did not utilize the ample historical precedent or hindsight that was available to warn against such trends. It hampered full production mobilization because the military production was already limited and could not be augmented by a conversion of vast commercial production operations to military ends. The “vast commercial production operations” no longer existed, it had been moved “off-shore”. It would now have to be rebuilt on American soil.

The sad fact was that a lot of America’s “off-shore” manufacturing capability was now benefiting the very nations that had attacked America and her allies. The retooling and rebuilding of that capability would take time. Time that was going to have to be bought by soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen who were operating on increasingly diminishing stocks of “high tech” war shots, and who were coming to depend more and more on the same lower level technology that their enemies were employing against them. By late June, a large number of these troops were ready to deploy all over the world. They were being sent to relieve beleaguered forces under attack, or to beef-up defenses along lines yet to be tested, or in a few instances to prepare where counter attacks were being contemplated. Leon Campbell would be among the first of the new arrivals, fresh out of MOS training and well prepared, but still a green Marine. He would be followed shortly by his friend, Billy Simmons, albeit in an different theater of operation.

### **Mid-April through June in Central and South America**

The Chinese and the Panamanians continued to consolidate their position around the Panama Canal, and to strengthen their positions in the rest of the country. During May, the Chinese were successful in avoiding most of the United States attempts to interdict air traffic into Panama. The flights coming in from the west were hard for American aircraft to detect and engage at the ranges involved. The result was that another fifty thousand Chinese troops were ferried into the country. This brought the PLA force level in Panama up to over 125,000. Coupled with the growing Panamanian Defense Forces, a total of over 300,000 troops were available to consolidate and then expand their holdings. With over 800 modern aircraft and hundreds of armored vehicles in support, that expansion would prove to be a very dire threat to America, and to the free nations of Central and South America.

As a result, Guatemala and Nicaragua declared their neutrality. Cuba, providing discreet support to the enemies of the United States all along, but understanding that any blatant move would be foolish, also officially declared its neutrality. Costa Rica, Honduras and Columbia, in keeping with their strong ties to the United States, demanded a complete withdrawal of all Chinese troops and all military equipment from Central America before July 1<sup>st</sup>. Both countries began calling up reservists and mobilizing their armed forces.

These activities, coupled with the Brazilian declaration of war, led to a number of announcements in South Americas that would impact the course of events. Ecuador, Peru and Chile, joined with Columbia in demanding the removal of Chinese forces and announced solidarity with the July 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. Argentina and Venezuela announced new economic ties with the Coalition of Asian states and indicated solidarity with Panama. They immediately formed the Coalition of South American States (COSAS) and indicated that any attack on one would be viewed as an attack on all.

Brazil, the strongest and most populous nation on the South American continent, continued to mobilize itself for war. Their two aircraft carriers were formed into a strong South American task force with Brazilian and American vessels. Their newest carrier, the San Paulo, the former French Foch that had been sold to Brazil in 2001, served as the Brazilian flagship. Production at Brazilian shipyards was stepped up. The increased production would mean quicker launches for their new Improved Niteroi class Aegis destroyers, and their Batch II Barroso class frigates. Producing these vessels in numbers was essential for the adequate protection of the Brazilian carriers and troop transports. In the meantime, two of each class that had been launched and had completed sea trials were deployed with two American Aegis destroyers to protect the two carriers.

But the problem facing the Brazilian navy, indeed, the problem facing all of the allied navies, continued to be the Chinese LRASD devices. Despite the fact that no known instances of vessels carrying such weapons in the southern Atlantic had been reported, it was simply viewed as too risky to take to the high seas until an effective defense had been devised. With its anti-submarine aircraft and its many LA class submarines “riding shotgun” for American carriers, and with the strategy of exploding their torpedoes in front of attacking supercavitating weapons, the US was willing to risk its assets to some degree. No other allied nation was. The allies simply did not have enough capable escort vessels and aircraft to mount an effective defense, and they did not have the depth to afford or risk attrition so early in the war. Even with the loss of two super carriers, the United States had ten left. Most allied nations didn’t have a single carrier, and of those that did, only two had more than one

... the United Kingdom and Brazil. France had two, and also had the capability to defend them as the US was doing. But thus far, France was sitting this one out, sitting on the fence between an outright declaration of neutrality and a conscience decision to announce nothing. Brazil, true to its word to seriously engage the People's Republic of China and its allies, was doing all in its power to build up the resource necessary to protect and commit its carriers to the offensive.

In addition, sign-ups for the Brazilian armed forces were at an all time high and continuing to increase in the wake of the impact of the international space station catastrophe. Dozens of training camps were being built to accommodate the massive overflow from existing facilities, even though those facilities had themselves been expanded. Brazilian planners, in consultation with their American and allied counterparts, estimated that they would be producing a new division of Brazilian fighting forces each month by the end of the year. Months before that time, the first major operation using Brazilian forces would commence.

### **Mid-April through June in the Far East**

In the Far East, the Japanese capitulation and occupation reverberated throughout the region. The Chinese and North Koreans made good use of their accomplishments in propaganda and in negotiations with other nations in the area. During the first week of May, in quick order, to the shock of the western world in general, and to the United States in particular, the Philippines and then Malaysia signed treaties with China and India, preparing for their full induction into the CAS within six months. In early June, Indonesia, the nation with the largest Muslim population in the world, officially joined the GIR and by extension, the CAS. These nations immediately provided naval, air and army bases for Chinese troops and disavowed any military or economic ties to the United States. Indonesia immediately embarked on a massive invasion of Timor without any interference from the "international community" and ruthlessly conquered the island within six weeks. In addition, and the real reason for their capitulation without firing a shot, the Philippines and Malaysia were spared violent and massive invasion by large Chinese task forces that were forming up all along the Chinese coast for that specific purpose. Now, instead of invasions and battle, these two nations were occupied and experiencing the oppression of their conquerors. Indonesia, as a full member of the GIR and as a source for ample troops to fuel the GIR drive, was spared any such occupation or action.

The horror of occupation was particularly felt in Japan. Several "incidents" of nationalist Japanese resistance to Chinese occupation were very forcefully and brutally put down, and then used for abjectly violating the soothing promises that Jien Zenim had made to the Japanese Prime Minister. In several instances, entire cities where such resistance occurred experienced the same type of pillaging, rape and massacre that the Japanese had inflicted in 1937 on the Chinese city of Nanjing in the incident that became known as "The Rape of Nanjing" during World War II. It was something the Chinese had never forgotten, and something they took any excuse as an opportunity to repay in kind in a "rape" of Japan. In fact, most of the occupation forces coming into Japan were from that very region of China for that very reason. The results were unprecedented and atrocious given the slightest provocation. The overall extent was far greater, by an order of magnitude, than what had occurred in China in 1937 ... as it was intended to be. The "pacification" of Japan was meant to send a message to other nations in the region regarding what they might expect if they resisted. It was a message that was as clear as it was horrific ... and it was not lost on those observing it, or hearing of it.

The quick military victory by Chinese forces over Japan, and the resulting negotiated settlements with Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines completely cutoff the desperate final struggle by US and allied forces in South Korea. The Chinese had used their new amphibious assault ships and new landing craft to cross the Yellow Sea and land more than 100,000 troops south of Seoul in an attempt to create a pincer movement between themselves and their North Korean allies on the retreating American and South Korean forces. While the pincer attempt failed, it succeeded in placing significantly more pressure on the beleaguered allied forces as they retreated towards the south and caused them to do so much more rapidly as they avoided encirclement. Those units that were capable of doing so, bravely fought on. But as more and more units were over-run, and as more and more South Korean units melted into the population, the outcome against such overwhelming forces with no prospect for relief was inevitable.

Finally, on June 17<sup>th</sup> the ranking commander of United States Forces in Korea (USFK), General Frank Martinez who had been given a battlefield commission to that position when his commander was killed on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, surrendered his force of 8,257 personnel unconditionally to Chinese and North Korean forces. This occurred outside of the defensive perimeter at Pusan and included elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division and some surviving portions of other commands that had been flown into Korea as part of the relief effort. All of the officers who the Chinese and Koreans felt might have information or intelligence of any use to them were taken into custody for violent interrogation and a long and deadly captivity by both the Chinese and North Koreans. The other officers were marched off to a secluded and mountainous area some twenty miles away and summarily executed. All of the male enlisted men were immediately put into North Korean work camps, which turned into death

camps as the men were mercilessly worked. Within twelve months, of the 6,390 enlisted men put into such camps, less than 1,000 were still alive.

The fate suffered by the 835 women of USFK was worse. Most were brutally used up by North Korean and Chinese enlisted men while a few became the “white whores” of some of the Chinese officers. Less than two dozen of these women would survive a single year in such captivity. Later, as word of the atrocious fate of these women leaked out, rumblings reminiscent of those that had been debated decades earlier began to be heard stateside as to the wisdom of allowing women to serve in any position that would subject them to combat or potential capture was debated. Yet women, as was the case with their male counterparts, were still signing up to serve in the armed services in record numbers. The desperate need for American forces all over the globe dictated that none could or should be turned away, but the debate arising from the fate of the USFK women did quickly resolve any question regarding women serving in specific combat roles.

United States Army, Navy, Marine and Air Force combat units and positions would henceforth be staffed exclusively with men. Women would only serve in supporting roles well behind the front lines. This freed up more men, who would otherwise fill those positions, for combat. Even so, to an even greater extent than was the case in World War II, many of these positions would prove dangerous throughout the course of the war and many women would distinguish themselves in such circumstances. The net result was that all of those, male or female, who wanted to serve their country during the desperate circumstances were allowed to sign-up and serve. Very few were dissuaded by the tragic fate of the American women who fell into the hands of the Chinese and North Koreans. To the contrary, as word of their fate spread, a deep-seated righteous indignation spread throughout the nation that led to even greater enlistment numbers of both male and female recruits.

While U.S. forces were being defeated on the Korean peninsula, the Chinese were very busy transporting men and materiel to the west and south across the mainland. This effort was targeted at providing their Indian and GIR allies with technology and weapons to use against allied forces in those theaters of operation. This included both LRASD weaponry and KS-2+ missiles and the personnel to train the Indians and the GIR in how to maintain and operate them. For years the Chinese had been building a super-highway and a parallel railway across their frontier towards the Himalayan Mountains and secretly excavating great tunnels through that range of mountains for the very purpose of moving men and materiel quickly in the event of invasion. Now these corridors were being put to use to move men and materiel out of China towards their allies, and the movement of resources into the growing production capabilities within the People’s Republic of China.

Great pressure was being exerted by China and by the GIR on India to become actively involved in the conflict. Thus far, outside of quickly consolidating the neighboring small nation of Nepal where the Indians, as opposed to the Chinese, were welcomed, the only military action for the Indian military had been in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, where operations proceeded smoothly and with little cost. By the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, those areas had been consolidated into the Republic of India and things were relatively quiet, outside of Indian forces striving to keep an eye on U.S. 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet assets in the Arabian Sea.

Now, as KS-2+ missile batteries were deployed around critical Indian infrastructure and military bases, and as LRASD weaponry was delivered and made operational on Indian warships, the Indian government was expected to become more actively involved. This pressure was centered on the desire to eliminate the U.S. Navy 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet carrier group that was perpetually stationed in the Arabian Sea and was helping prevent the elimination of allied forces in Qatar. Operational plans were studied, ratios were calculated and an implementation date was established for an Indian military operation against the US carrier group and to follow up the anticipated victory with an invasion of the U.S. base at Diego Garcia. This would extend Indian and CAS control over the entire Indian Ocean.

In addition, the Chinese and Indian governments eyed the nations of Burma and Thailand, who had declared their neutrality in the conflict, rather than agreeing to join the CAS as full members. It was obvious to the Chinese that both of these nations hoped that America and her allies would eventually return in numbers to the region and that they were “hedging their bets” in that likelihood. Operational plans were being prepared in both Beijing and New Delhi. The plans were focused on carving up these nations and incorporating them into the CAS through annexation, so that they might officially become provinces and “states” of the People’s Republic of China and the Indian Republic.

All of this left Taiwan completely isolated in Asia with no prospect of relief. The closest ally was Australia, and they were mobilizing as quickly as they could to try to establish a defense of their continent along a perimeter running from off the Timor Islands through New Guinea and onto the Solomon Islands, with a fall back on their own coasts if necessary. The People’s Republic of China had made repeated overtures for a “negotiated” settlement with their “rebellious province” on Taiwan ... as they lobbed thousands of missiles into Taipei and all of the other major cities. But the ROC steadfastly refused all PRC proposals. As a matter of fact, it seemed that the more provocation the People’s Republic initiated, the more resolute their “rebellious province” became.

Emergency wartime military powers kept most civilian anxiety in Taiwan under control, although there were a number of riots on some university campuses. These outbreaks, particularly those that urged unification with their “socialist” brothers, were ruthlessly put down. The videos that

were being smuggled into the country from Chinese-occupied Japan, the Philippines and Malaysia managed to keep in check any other trends towards giving in to unification with the mainland. The “a picture is worth a thousand words” maxim seemed to be ringing especially true for the Taiwanese. The videos graphically displayed the violent nature and superior attitude of the Chinese towards those people in the nations they were occupying. They also showed something else ... they showed that it was not just Chinese soldiers who were being shipped and flown into those countries. Chinese citizens, first by the tens of thousands, growing to the hundreds of thousands, were being “settled” in the occupied nations, displacing the inhabitants from their homes and businesses. Those who physically resisted were summarily executed. Knowledge of this part of The People’s Republic “unification” plans steered the people of Taiwan to resist at all costs.

As a result of Taiwan’s intransigence, the Chinese continued to rain down ballistic missiles on the island as they tried to draw the Taiwan Navy and Air Force away from the immediate vicinity of the island in order to overwhelm them and decisively defeat them. But the ROC had learned from the experiences of the Japanese and the Americans. Their air-defense ships remained solidly in port, behind heavy protective metal mesh and chain screens pulled across the mouths of each harbor. The ROC Air Force would not be drawn out over the Taiwan straits, but rather chose to engage the Red Chinese aircraft only when they came in close, or over the island itself. Through these tactics, major losses continued to be inflicted on the Chinese as they tried to force a decisive battle. Nonetheless, through the use of the ballistic missiles that the PLA was now producing as fast as they could fire them at Taiwan, and through an increasing use of more modern SU-30 aircraft, the People’s Republic was inflicting telling attrition on ROC forces that those forces could not afford.

By the end of June, it was apparent that the PLA was prepared to “force” a major confrontation in an attempt to attain air superiority over the island. They intended to do this through a buildup of even more ballistic missiles, a buildup of several of their new Beijing class carrier groups and land-based air, and a buildup of amphibious assets directly across the straits from Taiwan. The amphibious assets consisted of four of the new assault ship conversions and over one thousand of the Yunana II class landing craft, along with hundreds of other small craft that would be used to ferry troops across the straits once air superiority had been attained. The PLA planned to force that air superiority sometime in the first two weeks of July.

Outside of the attack on Beijing, Tianjin and the satellite facilities, there were only two major bright spots in the efforts against the Chinese in the western Pacific. One of these was the arrival of defecting Japanese naval and army forces on Guam. Two task forces consisting of over twenty Japanese naval ships each arrived at Guam carrying over forty thousand Japanese military personnel, political leaders and citizens ... including Captain Deleon and his staff. The destroyers and frigates and the amphibious assault ships represented an important addition to forces available in the Pacific for the defensive line America was establishing now, and for the ultimate offensive that would be mounted to push back the Chinese expansion.

The other bright spot, albeit bittersweet, was the use of US nuclear attack submarines in offensive action against the Chinese. Many Chinese ships, both naval and commercial, were being destroyed. Most of the tonnage was the result of the many Los Angeles class submarines operating in the area. They were quiet, they were well armed and deadly and they could get in close to convoys to attack, whether escorted or not. The only drawback for the LA class subs, and it was a horrendous one, was that any time they attacked a convoy that had any vessel that contained LRASD devices, they subjected themselves to the counter fire from those vessels. In this respect, the Chinese held an almost unassailable “trump” card and the counter fire invariably sent an LA class nuclear attack submarine to the bottom. By the end of June, of the initial twenty LA class boats sent into the western Pacific, and the ten others sent in relief behind them, only fourteen were still afloat. The loss of sixteen nuclear attack submarines was an attrition rate of over fifty percent, and was one the United States could not afford. By the end of June, CINCPAC ordered all remaining LA class boats back towards allied occupied areas to perform defensive and escort duties.

The only exception to these dismal statistics was the activities of the USS Jimmy Carter. After operation Yellow Jacket in which she so ably had taken part, she was ordered back to Guam to restock her provisions and reload her weapons. She was then sent into the Yellow Sea to perform a search and destroy mission where her orders simply stated that she should track and engage targets of opportunity, concentrating on any vessels carrying the supercavitating weapons system. She did this with great dispatch, sinking four Chinese merchantmen, three Chinese frigates, two destroyers and one each of one of the Chinese large amphibious and ballistic missile attack conversion ships. The latter was accomplished as that vessel made for its new homeport in Nagoya, Japan.

The efforts of the Jimmy Carter had not gone unnoticed by the PLAN. There was an all-out search for the “mystery” submarine that the Chinese had correctly determined to be an American Sea Wolf class nuclear attack submarine. Their efforts had produced several hair-raising experiences for the Captain and crew of the Jimmy Carter when Chinese vessels had counter fired LRASD weapons back along the attack tracks of the American sub’s approaching torpedoes. In these instances, the weapons had been unable to identify and “lock-on” to the Jimmy Carter and had missed entirely. But



twice, the unbelievably loud and rapid passage of those weapons came close enough to be heard by the entire crew as they passed within a few hundred yards of the Jimmy Carter's hull. During those instances, the crew, although highly trained to react to such an occurrence, was made painfully aware of the difference between theory and reality. Their own ears explained it to them very directly. They came away from those experiences with the realization that it might only be a matter of time before the acoustical characteristics of their own sub were no longer impermeable to Chinese weapons.

As a result of these experiences, the Chinese weapons specialists working under Lu Pham were tasked with developing new profiles in the LRASD targeting programs to seek out and destroy the newer American submarines. Complimenting this was an all-out espionage effort to acquire information from American or allied politicians, citizens or military personnel regarding the Sea Wolf and Virginia class submarine acoustical characteristics by theft, purchase or blackmail. While the Chinese implemented these plans, the Jimmy Carter was moving east across the Pacific. By the end of June, Captain Thompson and his crew were back in Guam to re-provision and to obtain new orders.

### **July 2, 21:10 local time**

### **Secure Housing Unit, COSTIND Conversion Operations**

### **Tianjin, The People's Republic of China**

Song Pham reflected on the condition of her family as she watched her husband, Lu, and his friend, Sung Hsu, converse after their meal. She and Sung's wife, Ming, cleared the table while keeping Ming's children occupied. As in most oriental households, the men did most of the serious, open talking ... but the women missed no part of the conversation and would later influence their men with their own thoughts, after the guests had left and when the two of them were alone.

"It will be no different tonight," thought Song as Lu and Sung spoke of work, politics and the world situation. Talk of their work was always in guarded and general terms. The highest levels of security were in effect throughout the nation, a condition under which Song had already lived for several years. But Song had come to sense certain things in that time. Based on that long experience, tonight there was no doubt that Lu and Sung were exuberant over some "breakthrough" at work that would allow China to further extend her influence in the world.

As they spoke of the "world", Song could not help but think back on those horrible moments ... moments she would remember for the rest of her life, when the American missiles had fallen like rain on Tianjin. Up until that moment, the reality of her life in China, of the entire reason her husband, along with the family, had been brought here had never really dawned on her. In less than a half an hour back in April, it had all become crystal clear.

Oh, she had heard Lu talk often of his desire to punish the Americans for the death of his parents so long ago in Vietnam. She had helped him develop some of his lectures to that effect when he had taught at the University in Hanoi after the Vietnam War and after unification with the south so many years ago. But such sentiments as those espoused by Lu had lost their appeal as time went on and as more powerful elements in Vietnam's governmental circles sought a reconciliation with America.

She could hear Lu's words from those times, echoing through the years,

"It is only for the American money that they do this. If they are not careful, they will become just like the corrupt, puppet government of the South that we fought against for so long."

Such thoughts had concerned Song. Not because they had not held the ring of truth for her, but because of the consequences to Lu, to her and to their children that such thoughts could bring. Through the practiced methods of oriental feminine persuasion, she convinced her husband that he needed to keep such thoughts to himself, or at the very least, between themselves. Those methods included the quality of being patient, of wisely interjecting comments at just the right moment, of calm discussion and of intimate persuasion ... and they had worked. To his credit, Lu had recognized the expediency of his wife's council (it was one of the reasons she loved him so much) and had indeed kept the thoughts and feelings to himself, rarely mentioning such things again, even to Song.

Song mused to herself, "Men seem to possess such rational, logical minds, and yet sometimes it is a woman's sense of diplomacy, or patience, that is needed in order to see to it that their plans do not go awry." A humble woman, who comprehended and accepted the role that she was played, she could not help but feel a kind of "calling" to occasionally instill a necessary element of moderation into her husband's impassioned thoughts and actions. Strangely, the need for her to do so in no way diminished her respect for him. His willingness to listen and moderate his own impassioned ideas based on her unassuming input was one of the things that endeared him most to her. Song knew that many men were totally unwilling to listen to such input, much less to alter their thinking and plans as a result of it. But Lu was, and in so doing he was able to retain his great passion and belief in what resulted. His ability to do this was one of the things she most admired about him.

So, the Chinese had come and resurrected Lu's old ideas and theories about the submerged weapon systems Lu had envisioned during the Vietnam War when he had worked as a mathematician and designer for the fledgling North Vietnamese Navy ... funded by the Russians. Not only had the Chinese resurrected those plans, they had used them like a lure to change Lu and Song's lives. Lu simply could not resist the opportunity to bring his plans to fruition, his plans to punish the Americans,

even after so many years. Song had seen it, had known he could not possibly refuse ... and they had been brought to China, to this foreign land. It had been twelve years ago and their two children, a young boy and a girl at the time, had completed their schooling and made their own lives. The daughter now worked in Beijing as a computer analyst. Song thought about her often, and wondered whether she had met any young men in whom she might have long-term interest.

Their son, with his father's influence, had joined the Navy of the People's Republic of China and was stationed on one of the newer ships. He had not seen any combat to date, although he was anxious to do so. Song was happy he had not, and hoped he would be spared it.

All in all, Song could not complain about their life here. They had been accepted. They had made many new friends and they lived in comfort, albeit a comfort that was under strict scrutiny due to Lu's work. They had been treated extremely well. She could never have hoped to have such a home ... so much space, so many pleasantries.

Lu had worked hard for these years ... driven to the accomplishment of his dream. He had impressed his superiors and his name and his plans had been the topic of discussion at the highest levels of the Chinese governmental hierarchy. A few weeks ago, with the onset of hostilities between the People's Republic of China and the United States, when Lu's inventions had worked so well, all of their reasons for coming to China had seemed vindicated. Lu had been awarded the highest award the Chinese could offer. He, a Vietnamese, had actually been named a Hero of the People's Republic. It was the first time in Chinese history that such a foreigner had been awarded that honor. It had all seemed like a never-ending fairy tale ... one that *could* never end ... that is, until April 13<sup>th</sup>.

On that day, the reality of her husband's job was brought home to Song. He designed instruments of war ... devices that killed other people. Now those "other" people who had seen their own people killed by those instruments were killing back, and one of their main targets would be where her husband worked ... would be her husband himself. During the attack, no missiles had landed in their housing unit, which was eight kilometers away from the shipyards themselves and which was protected by the highest of security. But they had come close. She and her friends had heard every one of the American missiles land ... they had *felt* every one of them land even at this distance and that experience had been terrifying. They had come out of their apartments at the bidding of the security personnel to hurry to the shelters. Those shelters had seemed so useless, such a waste of space and resource until that day. They certainly did not seem like a waste anymore.

As they had hurried along, they had seen the explosions in the distance, had seen the firing of guns at unseen attackers, had watched as their own missiles lifted off from that nearby missile base they had seen so often but never paid much attention to. Just before entering the shelter, two tremendous explosions occurred, just a kilometer from their housing units, and they had watched in terrified fascination as that same missile base was completely destroyed and large burning pieces of metal and other material fell to earth not far from them. Some of the building outside of their walled, secure compound had been set on fire by those burning pieces of material.

Then they had been hurried into the shelter where they spent over two hours before the all-clear signal was given and they were allowed to exit. Those two hours had been the longest two hours of Song's life as she feared for her husband, as she feared for her daughter in Beijing and as she feared for her son serving in the Navy.

After the all-clear signal, Lu had hurried home to check on Song. He arrived only a few minutes after she returned to their apartment. She would never forget the relief upon seeing him, the feeling of that reuniting. He assured her that, although destruction was significant in the dock and fabrication areas, his workspace was located in a safe area where no known conventional weapon could reach him. That evening their daughter, Chiang, had called and indicated that the Politburo and presidential offices had been destroyed in the attack, but that there had been no destruction near her.

"Don't worry, mother," she had said. "Beijing is a very large city. The destruction from the attacks occurred many kilometers away from where I live and work."

And finally, Lu had been able to find out that their son, Kao, was also safe. He was an anti-air missile technician on the new Amphibious Assault Ship, Chongqing, and was currently located somewhere in the China Sea with their task force escorted by the Beijing and its battle group. They had not been targeted.

Now, several weeks later, here she was with her husband and friends in their apartment carrying on as though nothing had happened. As she listened to Lu speak of the startling success of the Chinese military and diplomatic corps, as they talked of increased prosperity and influence, as they watched the Hsu's young children playing at their feet, it was easy to imagine that the attack had never happened. But Song could not forget. She knew that it had happened, and she carried the memory of the fear and sudden realizations it invoked deep in her heart.

**July 3, 18:28 local time**

**Field Headquarters, XVIII Corps**

**75 Kilometers West of Afif, Saudi Arabia**

General Olsen looked at the maps and data projected on the displays in his mobile field headquarters. The situation was grim, and not going to get any better any time soon. For the last eight weeks, the remainder of the United States XVIII Corps had been on the move, retreating in these God-forsaken deserts and wastes of the central Arabian Peninsula. And it was only a pitiful remainder, which consisted of elements of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, elements of the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and parts of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment. It had been a running battle. No, an almost continuous set of running battles, feints and maneuvers in which his men and equipment always gave better than they got ... but they were being forced back just the same. In so doing, they had been keeping just ahead of two full corps-sized elements of the Greater Islamic Republic's armies representing the GIR's 1<sup>st</sup> Army group ... over 450,000 men and their equipment.

Now, as he surveyed the terrain, he knew that he had been pushed a little further south than he wanted and he was facing the most critical decision of his entire military career, in fact of his entire life. It was a decision upon which would hang the lives of many of these men, perhaps all of them. It was a decision upon which his own life would hang as well.

"Colonel Stratton, before I finalize this, please relay to everyone here just once more the intelligence you have from CENCOM (Central Command)."

The intelligence officer on the General's staff moved around to the front of the long trailer and addressed the divisional commanders and their subordinates who were able to make this briefing.

"Gentlemen, it's pretty straight forward. Up until six hours ago we had one satellite that was giving us a good feed of the Arabian Peninsula and the surrounding territory. Unfortunately, it has now gone offline and we presume that the Chinese have downed it. However, before it went down, it showed the following very clearly from this morning."

The Colonel leaned forward and typed a few commands on the keyboard in front of him. On the large display to his left, an aerial map of the Red Sea was displayed. Zooming in, the Colonel focused in on the portion relevant to his next comments.

"These traces are ships crossing the Red Sea. Their air cover and support was sufficient enough to preclude effective interdiction. Over here to the right, along the coast, you can see many small oblong objects in the water near the coast. Most of these are transport ships and some naval escorts. The traces are crossing over from Sudan, while the ones next to the coast have been offloading men and equipment for the twelve-hour period before this photograph was taken. Back in the states, the NRO has analyzed these and confirmed that they are offloading military equipment and men. Estimates put this force near the Saudi town of Yanbu and number it, when you include the transports still in transit, at anywhere from 75,000 to 100,000 men supported by light armor and strong artillery."

"Now, if you will take a look at this, I believe it will sum up our position."

Another picture was displayed. The colonel zoomed out to an overall view of the central Arabian peninsula, and then focused in on a segment that looked to be approximately 150 kilometers to the East of XVIII Corps. There, large clouds of dust could be seen in streaks across the desert ... many, many streaks all moving west. On the northern edge there were a number of streaks, perhaps twenty to thirty of them angling, to the north and west of the main body.

"What we see here is the main body of the GIR forces that are pursuing us. This main body is a good 70-80 kilometers behind their front lines. What is of interest is that these streaks angling off to the northwest point directly through the least rugged portions of the central desert on a course that leads to a relatively narrow area of flat terrain in the vicinity of Hadiyah. Analysis indicates that there are a full two regiments of GIR armor involved in this maneuver with supporting personnel carriers."

"Summing this information up, we have a Chinese force of approximately 100,000 forming up to our northwest along the coast ... a coast we had hoped to reach in the next day or two. We also have two regiments of armor now angling off to our north to form a blocking force to any advance on our part to the north ... towards Israel. Finally, that leaves another five regiments of armor and well over 300,000 men approaching from the east and continuing to press our rear guard units very hard."

"General, I believe that sums up the satellite intelligence. An over-flight of a strategic Air Force reconnaissance aircraft was planned, but that data has not arrived. We do have the tactical reconnaissance I spoke of earlier associated with the combat air support out of Israel and the supply drops of this afternoon. Comm-sat is still up, but only through the three channels available on the single bird."

The General reflected again on this information, as he knew his commanders were also doing. The GIR was trying to cut them off from escape by the Red Sea and from movement north towards Israel and the strong allied forces there. They wanted him to go south, further from support and into rougher terrain where they could literally wear him out. He had no intention of doing that. Even with the airborne reinforcements he had received over the last few days, and even with the supplies ... he was down in strength and always right on the line with respect to fuel and provisions. He had fewer

than 80,000 men left and with that new Chinese force, they were now surrounded by over one half million ... except to the south.

Well, he knew that the GIR and Chinese troops were suffering from the same lack of satellite information that he was ... in fact, he was sure they had less than he had. Allied forces certainly weren't maintaining air dominance over the entire battlefield. It took almost everything they could provide to keep the air lanes open for his supplies. So, since he had only bare air superiority in some areas, and parity or less in the others, the general knew that the enemy was getting some good reconnaissance and intelligence from his own air assets in a tactical sense. Of course, added to that, XVIII corps own tracks in the sand were a clear indication of the direction they had taken. So, what to do? As he pondered this, an idea germinated in his mind based on the intelligence he had just seen.

"Okay gentlemen, here's what I believe we must do. Listen up and then let's take it apart and put it back together again. If we can make the ideas I am about to share with you work, I want operational plans to this effect from each of you by no later than 2300 hours tonight ready for a kick-off early tomorrow morning. I know this is quick, but we are all fueled up, we are on the move and clearly time is of the essence. Given what we have heard here, our ability to react quickly will probably determine whether or not we make it out of this sand box."

### **July 4, 03:28 local time**

### **Company A, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment**

### **Just west of Afif, Saudi Arabia**

Captain Singer had successfully wheeled the units in his company around and they were now rapidly approaching their jump-off point. The rear-guard and reconnaissance mission he had been performing for so long was about to turn into a flanking assault movement on the GIR armored battalion off to his left. Another company of mechanized Cavalry was performing a similar movement well off to his right. If things went as planned, these movements would attract the enemy's attention and pull support towards the two attacks. That movement towards the flanks would soften the center and allow an approaching reinforced battalion of heavy American M1A1 armor to punch right through it. The two battalions of GIR armor and supporting infantry in the center would be shredded as M1A1 battalion made its way into the enemy's rear and towards its approaching main body ... and hopefully its command units.

It felt good to be moving forward ... to be attacking. Outside of some fancy feinting movements, the last eight weeks had seen nothing but scouting, retreating and holding defensive position until overwhelming force caused them to repeat the entire process. Over and over again.

That is what they had been doing here west of Afif the last day and a half as the main body of XVIII Corp retreated further to the west. But here in the darkness of this early morning, they were going to do something entirely different, something he was sure the enemy forces would not expect. This morning, the hunted were going to turn into the hunter. Hopefully, all of this effort would buy enough time for the main body of XVIII Corps to successfully turn to the north and flank the blocking force the enemy had sent up there. Hopefully, in that process, this large diversion would also punish the enemy significantly. How fitting that it should all occur on July 4<sup>th</sup>, Independence Day.

"All units. Platoon leaders check in. Say your Able Ready status."

As the platoon leaders of his company checked in, Captain Singer reviewed the operation plan and layout of the ground he was approaching. He had twelve M2 Bradley fighting vehicles, each armed with a 25mm chain gun firing depleted uranium rounds capable of penetrating a main battle tank's side and rear armor ... everything but the heavy front armor. Each Bradley also carried four TOW missiles, whose range was further than the T-72 and T-80 tanks they faced. As the platoon leaders verified their ready status, Captain Singer contacted his air support.

"Tribal One, this is Able leader. How do you copy? State your status."

On the flight frequency, the response was almost instantaneous.

"Able leader, this is Tribal One leader. Read you 4X4 and are Able ready."

Captain Singer greeted this news with satisfaction and relief. He had expected nothing less, but it was good to confirm that the flight of four AH-64 Apache Longbow helicopters that would be supporting his action were right there with him, ready to go. Each of them carried sixteen Hellfire missiles as well as a 30mm chain gun that also fired depleted uranium shells capable of shooting right through the top of any armored vehicle they encountered.

It was time to move forward. They had to ascend 500 meters to a rise to their forward, and he expected to engage enemy units as soon as he crested it.

"Okay, this is what we get paid for. Able leader to all units, forward and engage! Good hunting."

Immediately, the M2 Bradley moved forward and covered the 500 meters to the summit of the rise in the desert. Once there, as he crested the rise looking through his infrared viewer, he immediately found several T-72 tanks, hull down in revetments facing his approach.

"Target left twenty-seven degrees, twenty-two hundred meters, TOW ... Fire!"

In his viewer, the scene automatically darkened as the bright light of the exhaust from the TOW caused the optics in his viewer to adjust accordingly. The missile rocketed forward and rapidly moved towards its target. Almost simultaneously, Singer saw similar flashes and streaks as other units in his company engaged the platoon of T-72 tanks guarding this sector. There were several shots from the T-72's that proved ineffective as the enemy was obviously caught completely by surprise. From above, what looked almost like a solid stream of light flashed down from one of the Apaches as it engaged a T-72 and destroyed it. At that same moment, Singer's missile impacted the turret of his target, punched a hole through it and caused tremendous secondary explosions.

"That's a kill," indicated the Captain as his company approached and made its way through the platoon of now wrecked and burning T-72 tanks. Now they had a battalion of GIR armor to bloody.

**July 4, 03:35 local time**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment**

**Just west of Afif, Saudi Arabia**

Four companies of M1A1 Abrams tanks were on the move. Each company was a reinforced company, meaning each had four platoons of six tanks. All in all, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion consisted of ninety-six of the most modern and efficient killing machines on the face of the earth this morning. And today they were out for "red meat".

Overhead and to their front were twelve supporting Apache helicopters. Like those supporting the flanking attacks, each was the "Longbow" variety with its own infrared and laser sensors mounted on the top of its rotor, allowing it to independently target and engage enemy units without the need of another helicopter or ground unit. Also like those helicopters in support of the companies attacking to the left and right of 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion, these Apaches each carried sixteen Hellfire missiles and their chain gun ... one hundred and ninety-two Hellfire missiles supporting ninety-six Abrams tanks.

"And we're going to need every bit of it," thought Colonel Gallagher. "We're charging hard into the teeth of eight hundred enemy tanks massed in that main body, not to mention this Division to our front that we have to defeat before we even get to play with the big boys."

But the Colonel had no doubts that they would break through the initial Division. Based on the radio traffic he was hearing and based on the JSTAR support they had this morning, the Company assaults to his right and left were having the desired effect on those portions of the GIR Division. Combined with the MLRS assault that should be occurring to his front in the next three to five minutes they should have a fairly easy time of it with the two Battalions immediately to his front. But he was sure that the approach in the main body would be an entirely different matter.

Over the command net, and from thirty kilometers to his rear, Colonel Gallagher heard the MLRS battery commander confirm his attack.

"Missiles away."

At the same moment, from the net monitoring their Apache air support, a communication was received from one of the Apache flight commanders patrolling seven kilometers to their front.

"Kingpin, this is Redman-2. Contact! I have eight tracked enemy units to my front, rolling out of the kill zone. Command unit, T-80, top hatch open, commander observing his front with viewing device ... maybe infrared. He is speaking into his mic now. Engaging."

There was a moment's pause as the Apache engaged the command vehicle and ordered his flight to engage the rest of the advancing enemy formation. The optics on the Apache flight commander's display automatically adjusted for the bright flash that resulted from the impact of his hellfire missile. Where the enemy commander had stood just seconds before in the hatch on his T-80, a bright gout of flame now jetted into the air from the remains of the now fiercely burning tank. The tank commander had simply disappeared in the instant of the hellfire's impact.

When the Apache commander observed the results of his own Hellfire attack, and as the units in his flight devastated the other seven enemy units, he commented over the net.

"Oh, baby, look at that hot plasma!"

And that action initiated a brief ten-minute fight with the portions of the initial GIR Division in front of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 3<sup>rd</sup>. As a result of the few minutes warning of action based on the flanking attacks and the GIR Division commander's reaction to it, it was obvious that the GIR forces had been caught off-guard and out of position when Colonel Gallagher's forces barreled into them. A number of units were attempting to move to the right and left in support of their comrades under attack in those sectors. These units were engaged by accurate MLRS barrages based on information passed to them by the JSTAR aircraft. Only a few of these came through those barrages and these were immediately set upon by Apache helicopters.

A number of other enemy armor units, like those initial eight tanks engaged by the Apache flight when the first MLRS barrage was fired, were moving forward to probe for oncoming American units in their own sectors. And like the initial enemy units, most of these were engaged by the two flights of Apaches patrolling in the front of the advancing 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion for that very purpose. A few did get through and were quickly engaged and destroyed by the advancing M1A1 tanks. In addition, twenty

enemy tanks from the main body of the GIR battalions in the center came through the MLRS barrage and were engaged piece-meal as the American force passed.

When the ten-minute running fight was over, Colonel Gallagher's Battalion had suffered only two tanks destroyed and another six damaged. All in all, the GIR had lost over seventy-five of their own tanks. The two GIR Battalions holding the center were completely decimated and the GIR Battalions to the right and to the left were being mauled by the American mechanized Companies and their Apache support helicopters that had been tasked with holding them in place.

"And that is exactly what they are supposed to be doing," the Colonel thought, "While we while punch through the center."

As more information was received that he had an open road to his front, Gallagher continued thinking along those lines, "Maybe this will be like Desert Storm after all. We should have turned on these suckers and carried the fight to them a long time ago!"

Colonel Gallagher's enthusiasm and optimism was understandably based on the mauling of that first GIR Division to his front. But, in the heat of the moment he was forgetting his earlier caution that was based on the huge main body of the GIR forces pursuing XVIII Corps and the success the GIR had experienced to date in doing just that. It was a lapse that would ultimately prove costly.

#### **July 4, 05:17 local time**

#### **Field Headquarters, XVIII Corps**

#### **37 Kilometers West of Hadiyah, Saudi Arabia**

"What's the status on that JSTAR? Is there any chance of him getting back on station?"

The question was an important one that General Olsen was asking as he watched the details on the latest situation display becoming less and less detailed and up to date.

"Sir, the JSTAR has taken evasive action and is low on the deck. He has only two remaining F-15s escorts. We have lost contact with the other six F-15 escorts who were engaging the GIR aircraft. The JSTAR and those last two escorts are now egressing towards Israel out in front of the GIR aircraft pursuing them. We have reinforcement aircraft, including a number of IDF aircraft, advancing out of Israeli airspace to engage the pursuing GIR aircraft. But right now it's a race against time, and will probably require those last two F-15s to break off and engage the enemy in the hopes of delaying them until support out of Israel can arrive in time to save the JSTAR."

The General considered the update from his intelligence officer. The GIR had reacted more quickly than they had anticipated and had driven the JSTAR aircraft off before the armor engagement was complete. The JSTAR, or JOINTSTAR as it was known, was a battlefield command aircraft. It performed a function for ground forces very similar to what an AWACS aircraft performed for fighter aircraft. Using synthetic aperture radar, very sophisticated (and top secret) imaging and electronic processing capabilities and the latest digital link hardware and software, the JSTAR aircraft could "see" every enemy armor or mechanized formation over one hundred miles behind enemy lines. It could also target those formations and pass the targeting data to any digitally linked forces. In some cases, depending on the system, it could actually perform the targeting and engagement using the weapons systems of the "slaved" equipment. In this manner, MLRS, Apache helicopters, Abraham tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles and even individual infantry units that were supported by a JSTAR aircraft gained a great advantage in terms of battlefield knowledge, overall combat coordination, and combat effectiveness over their enemy. Its availability had led to the completely lopsided victories that the US XVIII Corps forces had experienced thus far that night. Not having it available would "level the playing field" for the more numerous GIR forces.

Both the GIR leadership and General Olsen realized this.

"What about the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 3<sup>rd</sup>? What is their status against plan? Have they started back yet?"

After speaking briefly to one of his staff, the intelligence officer responded.

"General, Colonel Gallagher's forces were last observed by JSTAR engaging the GIR main body. Through targeting information provided by the JSTAR and as a result of information from the last Apache helicopter flight before it expended its ordinance and broke off, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 3<sup>rd</sup> was attempting to break through and reach the GIR command formation.

"Unfortunately, just as the engagement began, the flanking elements of the leading Division that the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 3<sup>rd</sup> had broken through earlier were observed falling back towards Colonel Gallagher's flank, while significant GIR air support was approaching from the direction of Riyadh. A warning was sent and an order issued to immediately break off the attack and execute the egress plan. But Colonel Gallagher indicated his intent to press his advantage with the hope of decapitating the GIR command structure. All attempts to contact the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 3<sup>rd</sup> since have been jammed and we have not received any more reports or communication from him.

"The units that provided the initial supporting attacks on the flanks for the 3<sup>rd</sup> have joined up and are reporting heavy fire in the direction of the GIR main body. They are too far away to help and they are holding their protective positions for Colonel Gallagher's force to break off and egress. They will be at a critical decision point regarding their own ability to egress the area in the next five minutes."

Again the General digested the latest information. Gallagher was in great danger, but his entire “attack” had been risky and devised to buy time for the main group of the XVIII to wheel around and break to the north behind the GIR blocking force. That part was proceeding very well, with only light contact off to their west. The plan to use the more rugged terrain to the east of the GIR blocking force to pass behind it in an effort to “break” for Israel and whatever measure of safety that might accord them had apparently succeeded ... at least for the time being.

But Gallagher, who served as the “diversion” for that move by the main body, was now many miles away, taking on the GIR main body in what they must think was a very major assault ... and the General was not in a position to provide any help. Gallagher was supposed to break off before such help was necessary and make his way with the other units to rendezvous with him, but Gallagher was late and apparently intent on doing as much damage to the enemy as he could.

“Is Gallagher a fool? ... or a hero?” thought the General, “Sometimes the dividing line between those two is very thin. How this turns out will determine which.”

In the General’s estimation, Colonel Gallagher and his command were going to be lucky to survive unless they broke off immediately. But, at the moment he had his own operation with the main body of XVIII Corps to successfully complete and he did not have the luxury to contemplate any further on how Colonel Gallagher’s action might or might not be remembered.

“Well, we can’t wait. Keep trying to contact the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and order them to break off. Get with any air assets available or in reserve up north and have them support the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 3<sup>rd</sup>. In the meantime, tell those two companies to wait as long as they can, but to absolutely *not* endanger their commands. Make that very clear. We are going to need every healthy unit and vehicle we can get before this is over. Have them proceed as planned.”

#### **July 4, 09:50 local time**

#### **Command Helicopter, GIR 1<sup>st</sup> Army Group 35 Kilometers West of Afif, Saudi Arabia**

General Talabari observed the destruction on the battlefield from an altitude of nearly one thousand feet. The special command version of the Russian made Mil-8 “Hip” helicopter he was in maneuvered at the bidding of his chief of staff and hovered when the general wanted to observe any specific location or piece of equipment. He had four escorting Ka-50 “Hokum” attack helicopters and a full squadron of SU-33 fighter aircraft flying combat air patrol above him for protection.

It had been just happenstance that the Theater Commander for all GIR forces in the Mid-East, General Talabari, had been here during the engagement. He had flown in the day before yesterday to Riyadh and had immediately flown out to this main group of the advancing 1<sup>st</sup> Army Group, which consisted of the entire GIR 1<sup>st</sup> Army and portions of the GIR 7<sup>th</sup> Army. The remainder of the advancing 1<sup>st</sup> Army Group on the Arabian peninsula, which consisted of the rest of the GIR 7<sup>th</sup> Army and three Divisions of Syrian troops, were positioned just south of Qatar, bottling up the US forces trapped there. General Talabari had intended to fly to those field headquarters this morning, but upon hearing of the American “assault” had elected to stay with the forces here to observe or help in this major engagement. Reluctantly the General had to admit that it had been a very near thing.

Now, surveying the battlefield in the light of day, it was obvious that what had been earlier reported this morning as two full divisions of American armor had actually been much less than that.

“More like a couple of battalions,” thought the General. “And what destruction they wrought!”

That morning the GIR 1<sup>st</sup> Army had lost almost four hundred tanks, over two hundred and fifty of them in the main group when those Americans had pressed their attack right in towards the center, driving towards the GIR command elements. The losses experienced in stopping that drive amounted to almost thirty percent of the GIR 1<sup>st</sup> Army’s total armor.

“It had almost amounted to the loss of the entire 1<sup>st</sup> Army command staff and the Theater commander as well,” thought the General as he observed a cluster of four destroyed M1A1 American tanks surrounded by perhaps twenty GIR hulks.

“Praise be to Allah that the American commander did not turn his entire force on us and attempt a full-scale counter attack,” continued the General in his mind. “They may well have carried the day and caused us to fall back all the way to Riyadh.”

But such were the fortunes of war. The General knew now that this attack had been a diversion for the American XVIII Corps’ turn to the north. Despite the fact that the GIR had suffered severe losses, the Americans had also suffered. In fact, this was the largest loss of US armor since World War II. General Talabari was sure of it ... perhaps the largest loss of US armor in one battle in history. Almost one hundred US M1A1 tanks lay scattered about between here, where the General was now observing, and the Saudi town of Afif where the Americans had initiated their attack.

It was a US “defeat” despite the significant GIR losses, and it would be reported that way. There were images here that could be used to great effect in the information war the GIR was also waging. Images of burning and smoldering US Abrams tanks would lift and embolden allies and demoralize and disenchant enemies.

Despite the satisfaction of those thoughts, the General knew that such “propaganda”, while useful, only belied the stark reality of his own experiences. That reality had been crystal clear in the moments before the lead US tanks were stopped only two kilometers short of the GIR command vehicles after their own security forces and armor had sped off to intercept the seemingly unstoppable American spearhead advancing towards them. When the sound of imminent warfare and destruction was upon them, only the timely arrival of GIR air support had saved the command. The clarity of those moments just before the dawn was instantly recalled in the General’s mind. No, his own thoughts and the thoughts of every man around him had been far removed from any “propaganda” campaign and how various “details” of the battle might later be reported to the their benefit. During those crucial, fateful moments, when their very lives hung in the balance, the General and every man with him had only focused on how best to fight and survive while facing their imminent destruction, a destruction from which they had been spared.

“Praise Allah for the timely arrival of that air support,” thought the General. “But what had driven that American commander?” he asked himself.

“He had to have known, with less than one hundred tanks, that this attack was bound to fail ... even if he had so nearly succeeded in “decapitating” the GIR forces in the area. He could have turned away a quarter of an hour earlier and saved much of his command and escaped to the north in the confusion as those initial flanking attackers had done.”

The General, despite his experience with and knowledge of the Americans had to ask himself what had driven this man to his death? The discipline of those under his command was astounding.

“Are the Americans then, in such conditions, capable of their own version of martyrdom?”

“Apparently so,” concluded the General as he looked upon the still smoking wreckage of one of the vaunted Apache helicopters.

In his many years of experience with the Americans, the vast majority of which had been as one of their allies in the Kurdish regions of the northern territories of the former Iraq, he had not considered the possibility of the Americans acting in such a fashion. While their “foot soldiers” were exceptionally well trained and very disciplined, they always seemed to place over-riding emphasis and value on their lives and their ability to survive.

“In fact, much of their planning centered around it,” thought the General. “It ‘s an important part of their culture.”

On top of this, their political leaders were usually so fickle and so conscience of “public” or “world” opinion, that they never seemed capable of making the hard choices. Now something was changing. Despite their defeats, the Americans were displaying a more steeled and determined face. The General knew what was driving this change. It was the quality, steel and determination of their new leadership. It was also the general realization amongst their ranks that without such steel and determination they could be defeated and driven out of the region entirely. In fact, they were being defeated and driven out of the region despite the American forces’ newfound resolve..

But the realization on the part of General Talabari regarding the American forces willingness to attack and die in such a fashion was something he would be forced to soberly take into account in his planning. He must take it into account in case the American leadership was ever willing to commit a significant portion of their high tech forces as this commander had done. If they were ever willing on a large scale to risk losing a large part or all of them in a bid to attain a specific operational goal, then the General seriously doubted that any force would be capable of stopping them while they maintained their technological advantage.

“At least not until they have expended most of their high tech ammunition and equipment,” contemplated Talabari.

The ability to survive in such an environment until the Americans expended those resources would have to be a critical part of the General’s instructions to his planning staff. In order to do that, he already knew he would need much more resource and a willingness to sacrifice time and ground “soaking up” any such American counterattack. In fact, if enough forces could be garnered, perhaps a plan to that effect could be developed. A plan to actually draw the Americans and their allies into making such a commitment, one where they were assured of defeating significant portions of GIR forces only to be overwhelmed by reserve forces once they ran out of their “force multipliers”. The prospect was both daunting and exciting. It was something he would have to bring before the Imam.

As the General ordered his helicopter to turn for Riyadh and his eventual visit to the command staff of the GIR 7<sup>th</sup> Army south of Qatar, he continued to ponder and plan for this new realization. He began to calculate the extents of a request to Tehran for even more overwhelming numbers to soak up and counter the largest attacks he could conceive of on the part of the Americans and their allies, and then to counter them with a devastating counterattack of his own.



**July 7, 23:59 local time**

**Combat Operations Center, PLAN 1001 Beijing**

**220 Kilometers Southeast of Shanghai, East China Sea**

The weapons officer continued the countdown. In a few seconds, the Beijing would again launch a salvo of the land attack variety of the SS-26 Yakhont missiles at the rebellious province.

“Five, Four, Three, Two, One, Zero ... Launch!”

Towards the bow of the distinctive x-shaped deck, a searing bright light lifted off in the darkness, illuminating its own smoke trail and casting a light over the entire ship as she drove forward through the sea. It rose quickly and tracked off towards the southeast. Within two seconds, another missile lifted off with the same effects. Within thirty seconds, all twelve missiles had been launched and were all in route towards Taiwan. In particular, all of these missiles were targeting one of Taiwan’s major air defense assets that had eluded the PLAN thus far in the conflict. This was one of the two Aegis anti-aircraft destroyers that the United States had sold to the rebellious island. Those two destroyers, along with the four Kidd class destroyers that had been sold earlier to the ROC, had played havoc with the Chinese air attacks on the island to date. As they held station in their assigned harbors, protected by their own American-made missiles and the Patriot missile batteries surrounding the harbors, those ships had downed many attacking Chinese aircraft and missiles.

By specifically targeting the ships with simultaneous launches of sea skimming Yakhont anti-shiping missiles from two other PLAN Beijing class aircraft carriers, and from several PLAN destroyers ... and by targeting the Patriot batteries with land and sea launched ballistic missiles, all four of the Kidd destroyers had ultimately been destroyed. Tonight’s operation would now focus on the destruction of the two Aegis class destroyers. They would be harder nuts to crack, and would require accordingly more resource. By committing the full missile loads of two carriers and three destroyers, a total of forty Mach-2, sea skimming, anti-shiping missiles were now in flight towards each of the ships. In addition, a total of seventy-two ballistic missiles were now targeting the Patriot missile defenses at each harbor. With so much of their high tech resource committed, the leadership of the People’s Republic of China had every expectation that the defenses for the ROC ships would be saturated and that they would be destroyed.

“All missiles have successfully tracked. We have a 100% launch and track ratio. Reports from the Shanghai indicate completion of their launching sequence. They are reporting a 92% launch and track ratio. We have a total of twenty-three missiles tracking. Estimated impact in five minutes, forty-eight seconds.”

Admiral Yao Hsu, the commander of the Beijing battle group and overall commander of PLAN operations around Taiwan, listened intently. Operation Mating Swan was being proceeding punctually and efficiently.

“Have our aircraft proceed as planned. Wish them success from me directly.”

Over the next twenty-four to thirty-six hours the immediate prospects for a forced reunification between the mainland and their rebellious province on Formosa, commonly called Taiwan in these days, would be decided. Two SU-35s escorted by eight SU-30’s from each carrier would make a battle damage assessment run on the Republic of China harbors from which the two remaining ROC destroyers were operating. If the ships were destroyed, the second phase of the operation would begin. If not, the launch of more Yakhont missiles and ballistic missiles would be repeated until they were. Once this was accomplished, the coordinated second phase would be implemented to draw out, engage and destroy the majority of the remaining ROC Air Force. Large numbers of land-based aircraft had massed close to the Taiwan straits over the last two weeks in anticipation of this operation. These were in addition to the ongoing operations against the island. Four PLAN carriers and their modern air wings were also massed around the island. The bait that would spring the trap was already out in the straits, awaiting the announcement regarding the disposition of the destroyers before proceeding directly towards the island.

**July 8, 00:25 local time**

**Tiger Squadron, Republic of China**

**Just west of the Taiwan Coast, Taiwan Straits**

Twenty-four IDF fighter/bombers of the Republic of China were accelerating to full combat throttle as they had crossed the coast and proceeded out into the straits. They were flying on the deck in attack formation and their targets were now less than sixty kilometers in front of them. To their north at an altitude of 30,000 feet was an escort consisting of twelve F-16 and sixteen F-5 aircraft, outfitted for air-to-air combat. To their south at an altitude of 35,000 feet was another escort of eight F-16 and twelve F-5 aircraft. Altogether this represented seventy-two of the most modern and capable aircraft the island had remaining in its inventory. It also represented a full forty percent of that inventory. Clearly, for imminent operations, the ROC was placing all of its eggs in one basket. It had come down to a matter of the republic’s survival.

“Squadron lead to all flight leaders. We are two minutes from point Lima. At Lima go to angels-10, acquire and engage.”

The Republic of China Air Force (ROCAF) utilized several different varieties of aircraft. For the air-superiority role they had F-16C aircraft armed with American AMRAAM missiles and Taiwan Sky Sword II missiles. The F-16C could also be used in the attack role, but for that type of mission the ROC preferred the Taiwan built IDF fighter/bombers. The two-seat variant, like those being used on this mission, was capable of carrying four ROC Hsiung Feng II surface attack missiles. The missile design was very advanced and could be launched from aircraft, ships, submarines or land. It included a mid-course correction capability through digital link, active radar homing and infrared homing. It was a true “fire and forget” missile once the general location of the target was known. With significant electronic warfare hardening and a 190 kilogram warhead, the Hsiung Feng II (which means “Mighty Wind”) was a very potent threat to any vessel of the People’s Republic of China.

And there was significant PRC shipping for these twenty-four aircraft to attack with their ninety-six missiles. The PLAN was committing two of its new Amphibious Assault ships along with over two hundred Yunana II landing craft to an operation that appeared to be the onset of their amphibious attack on the island. Escorting this force were several destroyers. The entire group was steaming directly towards Taiwan and was now well out into the straits with what the ROC leadership considered to be marginal air cover. The feeling that this armada represented the main amphibious assault at a time when the ROC had significantly thinned the numbers of aircraft that the PRC had to defend the assault had enticed the ROC air force into the current operation.

It was the remaining ROC AWACS aircraft that noticed the approaching Chinese surface vessels and the disposition of their air cover. These remaining AWACS aircraft were very valuable to the ROC. They were E-2C aircraft purchased from the US Navy. Only two remained in the ROC inventory as a result of the Chinese expending large numbers of their lower tech aircraft in downing the other four in the weeks since the beginning of hostilities. As a result, one aircraft was flying on the opposite side of the island at all times, escorted by over one dozen of the best aircraft the ROC possessed, manned by the most experienced pilots. This allowed for good radar and electronics coverage over the straits in the general area of where the PLAN task force was approaching. But the location of the ROC AWACS aircraft on the eastern side of the island also meant much-decreased coverage over the Chinese mainland and points well to the north and south over the East China Sea and the South China Sea. The PRC was counting on this “blind spot” in the ROC surveillance and was now taking advantage it as over three hundred high-performance aircraft approached from the mainland to the west, and from the carrier groups to the north and south. They were coming in on the deck from the “dead” zones of the E-2C coverage, and would rocket skyward when detected.

“Tiger lead! Tiger lead! This is Overseer-1. Many bandits approaching, climbing through angels-5 at a speed of Mach-1 and accelerating. Break off ... I say again, *break off your attack!*”

But the warning came too late, and the Battle of the Taiwan Straits was joined.

### **July 8, 00:29 local time**

### **PLAN Amphibious Assault Ship Chongqing**

#### **Taiwan Straits**

Kao Pham had been at battle stations for well over an hour when they came, dozens and dozens of sleek and deadly aircraft from the west, like wraiths in the moonlight. They had flown in between and to either side of the Chongqing and her sister ship, the Guangzhou, at incredible speed ... just twenty meters off the water. Then, one after another, with a visible tongue of fire and an audible “BOOM” followed by rumbling thunder, they had ignited their afterburners and gone into almost vertical ascents to the east of the leading escorts of the formation. It was an awe-inspiring sight that he would never forget, and it was a sight that steeled him to what he knew was coming ... combat.

The anti-aircraft missile launchers were on the forward portion of the ship, as they were with every one of the new Chinese conversion ships regardless of design. It was one of the many modular features that made them easy to build and maintain, and cut costs. These missiles were KS-2 missiles and were very capable in the anti-air defense role against either aircraft or anti-shipping missiles. All of the tasks associated with targeting, launching and engaging the missiles were the responsibility of several weapons officers in the armored combat information center located beneath the bridge of the ship. The loading of the vertical launch tubes that housed the missiles was handled below deck by automated machinery. That machinery was maintained by other sailors whose battle stations were located next to and below the missiles themselves. The maintenance of the hatches for the vertical launch missile tubes above deck was the responsibility of the section of personnel to which Koa belonged. Their posts were located on a special deck just below the open deck where the missile hatches opened to the air. They had special observation ports that allowed them to visually monitor the hatches while observing all of the various parameters of their status on computer displays located at each post. Koa monitored and maintained ten of the forty hatches on his ship.

When one of the KS-2 missiles was launched, the hatch was electronically actuated to flip open an instant before the missile launched. There was a hydraulic backup system that could also open the

hatch. Each hatch had to open at precisely the right instant, open to the proper orientation and then close again to allow the system to function properly. The heat of the burning exhaust gas as a missile launched was extreme. The metal fatigue that it caused tended to alter the physical makeup of those hatches over time. Any of the systems could fail after prolonged use, or because material was nominally out of specification. Of course, combat operations could also damage or destroy the hatch mechanisms. It was Koa's responsibility to monitor the state of the hatches and the systems that operated them and to proactively maintain or replace hatches and systems before failure. A failure of a hatch during launch could lead to missile detonation and catastrophic results - results which could severely damage or even sink the ship if they were severe enough to lead to secondary explosions involving the entire magazine of KS-2 missiles.

Koa took his responsibilities very seriously. He had been given every reason to. Not only by his training, by his commanding officers, by his dedication to his duty and responsibility, or by his commitment to his friends on board the Chongqing ... he had also been given every reason by the upbringing his parents had provided him. Koa knew his father was an important person to the overall war effort, but Koa's parents' example had been a powerful one even before his father assumed his current position of importance. They had always been hard workers and had always stressed the need to be committed to the task and responsibility at hand ... they still were. Their children had inherited that work ethic, and now Koa, although only eighteen years old, felt he had been given a serious responsibility to fulfill. And he was right.

Looking through the hardened windows of the observation port, Koa and his shipmate had seen the fighters stream by, each loaded with its own set of six to eight missiles. After they had "gone vertical", they had disappeared into the night sky, passing through a mid-level deck of stratus clouds off to the west. A few moments after he caught his breath and turned his attention back to his display screens, Koa turned to his section leader.

"Wu, did you see that? There must have been over one hundred of them!"

Wu, a senior missile technician responsible for another ten hatches and acting as the lead in this observation post, had indeed seen them. Despite his years in the PLAN, and his having taken part in many training operations, he had never seen anything like it. Those SU-24, SU-33 and MIG-29 aircraft had performed an extremely complicated and dangerous maneuver in the moonlight. Given the circumstances, there could only be one reason to take such risks.

"Yes, Koa, I saw them. I believe there were well over one hundred of them. Thank the stars that they were all ours. We'd best get ready. I have a feeling our services are going to be required very soon ... and this will not be a training exercise."

A few moments after he finished saying this, red warning lights flashed on both of their displays indicating targeting information being fed to their missiles. Very quickly, both men noticed that the majority of their missiles were receiving data. Both Wu and Koa pulled the darkened covers over their face plates in case missiles were soon launched, so they could observe the hatches physically in spite of the bright fires from the missiles. As they did this, the flashing lights flashed much quicker, indicating that the missiles were locked on and prepared to launch. Almost immediately thereafter, the red lights burned continuously and missiles began to launch.

The flames, exhaust smoke, noise and the rapidity of the launches were phenomenal. All systems performed nominally and all hatches opened and closed flawlessly. Missiles climbed into the night and disappeared, some of them rising simultaneously, others rising one after another depending on their targeting. Within forty-five seconds, all of their missiles were gone.

Wu shouted over the subsiding noise.

"Must be a large raid! All of the missiles were launched so fast!"

It took less than two minutes for the machinery below decks to reload the missile tubes, perform a check on the systems and indicate that the system was ready for a second salvo, if necessary. As soon as the system indicated that it was ready, red lights began flashing again and the whole sequence was repeated. This time the missiles were launched even faster, completing the launch of the entire array in just over thirty seconds. Many of the missiles visibly turned over in their trajectories and rocketed forward at fairly low angles after reaching an altitude of no more than a hundred feet.

Both Wu and Koa had an unhindered view of one of these as it made a sharp turn to starboard a short distance in front of the ship. There was the slightest impression of another flashing light moving towards their formation when the KS-2 missile that had caught their attention detonated violently. This produced another explosion that rained debris into the ocean in front of them. In the distance, there were numerous flashes just below and within a bank of stratus clouds.

As another salvo of missiles loaded, Koa saw a stream of light erupt from one of the escort vessels in front of them. That stream of light reached into the heavens for a brief instant and found its target, producing a bright explosion out in front and to port of the escort. The explosion itself seemed to stretch right out towards the escort and touch it as debris and burning fuel swept over the forecabin of that ship. As it did, another stream of light reached out ... and missed! A large explosion engulfed the side of the escort. It visibly rolled toward them - and then righted itself - as it slowed in the water.

Suddenly, there was a loud buzzing sound to their port and another stream of light reached out, this time from their own ship. It seemed to point to the front of their sister ship, the Guangzhou, as a stream of light reached out from that ship itself. The two seemed to cross and there was a large explosion that rained debris and fire into the ocean in front of the Guangzhou. As this occurred, several flashes of light passed over them and continued on deeper into the PLAN formation, out of sight of Koa's observation post. Then, in rapid succession, there were two explosions on the Guangzhou. One was centered vertically on the bridge, another was just above the waterline on the starboard side. Very quickly, fires raged out of control as smoke poured from the ship.

The air defense missile system on the Chongqing again indicated its readiness and again the targeting light began flashing. This time fewer of the missiles were involved and when lock-on was achieved, followed by launch, even fewer were launched. There was no repeat for a fourth salvo.

It had all happened so quickly. From the first flashing of warning lights to the last launches of the third salvo had taken no more than six minutes. In that amount of time, the Chongqing had launched almost one hundred missiles and Koa had witnessed enemy missiles hit two of the ships in the formation. The escort was now very low in the water and looked to be sinking. The Guangzhou was still burning and was dropping off behind them and looked as if she would soon go dead in the water. There was no telling how many of his countrymen had been killed, but Koa was certain that the death toll was high. His thoughts invariably led to questioning what he could have done better, how he could have been an instrument in saving more of his countrymen's lives. As he reviewed the figures and data in connection with that question, his section leader, Wu, noticed Koa's consternation.

"Koa, you did very well. The system performed as required. It did so because we have kept it in good shape with our maintenance and training. While it is true our enemies scored some hits on our ships, it is also true that our actions, along with those of our comrades, saved a great many more lives that would otherwise have been lost. Concentrate on that, and concentrate on the fact that those who did die did so in the furtherance of our goals and our mission as a task force, as a nation and as a people. There is no greater duty than that, and there is no more honorable a sacrifice. Now, let's make sure everything is prepared to perform as well during the next engagement."

**July 8, 00:48 local time**

**Tiger Squadron Lead**

**Just east of the Taiwan Coast, Republic of China**

Tears were streaming down the Squadron leader's face as he went "feet dry" over Taiwan. Nevertheless, he maintained discipline as he flew back under the CAP protection that was available.

"Overseer-1, Tiger lead is feet dry."

Seventy-two aircraft had participated in the attack. Only ten were returning. Oh, they had given better than they had taken ... they always did ... but they had been ambushed plain and simple. Three of the twenty-four IDF aircraft from Tiger Flight were all that remained. Five of the twenty-four valuable F-16C aircraft were all that were returning. Only two of the twenty-four F-5 aircraft that had participated in the attack had survived.

"So many good pilots - good friends - gone. So much critical equipment lost. At least we were able to acquire targets and launch most of our missiles," he thought. "Even if the abort command had come too late and had caused confusion just as we were being attacked ourselves."

In the dogfight that had ensued, the ROC aircraft had destroyed almost one hundred and twenty-five Chinese and Korean aircraft. But since the attacking force had numbered more than three hundred aircraft, the results were a foregone conclusion. Only those ten ROC aircraft were returning, and that meant that nearly forty percent of their air defense capability was now lost. Judging from the reports, both Aegis class air defense vessels were also destroyed tonight along with a large portion of the Patriot missile batteries protecting them. There was no doubt what would come next. Probing, followed by almost uncontested air superiority, ultimately air dominance, and then ...

... and the tears continued to flow because the commander knew he was right and he knew what it would mean, although he could scarcely form the thoughts in his mind, much less utter the words. It did not matter that he did not know that his attack had achieved a measure of success. In fact, it had inflicted more damage than the PRC had envisioned. Two destroyers sunk, two more damaged. One of the new, large PLAN Amphibious Assault ships sunk. Twenty-two Yunana II class landing craft sunk and ten more damaged. Those losses represented many personnel and a large amount of equipment that was now lost to the PRC efforts to force the ROC to unite with the mainland. However, when compared to what the PRC was amassing for the invasion of Taiwan, those losses also represented a small fraction of what they were going to commit. The Squadron leader for the ROC knew this ... and he knew his enemies knew it and had planned for it. And so his tears were for much more than his lost comrades and equipment. They were for his nation and its people.

The door was now open for the invasion of Taiwan. The PRC intended to accomplish it with over 1000 Yunana II class landing craft, four more large Amphibious Assault ships, three hundred other PLAN military transports and landing craft of all types, and with over one thousand commandeered commercial vessels. All of them filled to the brim with soldiers and equipment. There

would be a total of over 300,000 soldiers in the initial crossing of the invasion fleet, which would be escorted by over two hundred PLAN combat vessels of all types, including four Chinese carrier groups. It was the largest Chinese naval operation in history and it would be supported by over 1200 fighter and attack aircraft from the mainland and from the decks of the carriers. It would also be supported by almost continuous barrages of hundreds of short-range ballistic missiles from the mainland and from TAS vessels sailing with the fleet.

**July 8, 09:45 local time**

**Secure Governmental Command Facility**

**45 KM Southwest of Taipei, the Republic of China**

“We will be invaded then. We have held them off for almost three months, but we will be invaded. When can we expect it to begin?”

Admiral Cheng heard the resignation in President Chen Shu-bien’s voice. He knew it was resignation to the fact that they would be invaded, not resignation from their cause.

“Mr. President, they are already beginning. The advance portion of their fleet is less than thirty kilometers off our coasts hoping to lure more of our aircraft into the teeth of their numbers. Their missile barrages and attack aircraft are pummeling our northern and central coasts. We expect they will try to land on those coasts within the next thirty-six to forty-eight hours.

“Mr. President, on behalf of all of the Chiefs of Staff, I must request again that you and the other critical leaders in the executive and legislative branches immediately evacuate the island and set up a government in exile amongst the Americans.”

The Admiral saw the color rise on the President’s face and saw him fix his jaw.

“Admiral, and everyone present in this room. Let me say this only one more time and make sure you understand ... I will not leave this island or our people. I intend to remain here and I intend to fight from this island until either we are victorious, or I am dead. Do each of you understand that? There is no room for equivocation or debate on that point. I have instructed ... no, let me rephrase that ... I have ordered the Vice President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to leave tonight with several ranking members of the Yuan to set up our government in exile. They will be leaving on the American submarine with a small marine security detachment and will make their way to American Samoa where they will make all of the necessary arrangements.

“I have one other matter to address before we adjourn. I believe everyone here has the need to know regarding this matter. General Li, are all the necessary assets in place for, and do we have the capability to communicate, an execute order to our people on the mainland for Operation Purify?”

General Li breathed a sigh of relief. He did not know whether the President was going to go through with it or not. He was glad he was. He had pushed for the implementation of this particular operation for over eight weeks now and wished it had been executed earlier. But for an operation like this ... it was better to do it now than not do it at all.

“Yes, Mr. President. Our people are in place and they understand their orders and they have the wherewithal and the will to carry them out.”

The President nodded his head reflectively and seriously. He had hoped that such an order would not be necessary.

“Very well. Send a warning order tonight indicating that the operation is expected to commence within thirty-six to forty-eight hours. Then, as soon as the PLAN landing craft begin reaching our shores, or as soon as any communist paratroopers land ... issue the execute order.”

“If there are no more questions, you all have your orders and understand the gravity of the situation. Dismissed.”

## Chapter 16

*“Teach him he must deny himself” – Robert E. Lee*

**July 10, 17:22 local time**

**President’s Conference Room, Executive Complex**

**New Delhi, India**

“Mr. President, with Taiwan being invaded, the surrender and occupation of Japan, and the treaties with the Philippines and Malaysia, the entire South China Sea and East China Sea have been secured for Coalition of Asian State commerce. That security extends out towards Indonesia, New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, the Marshall Islands and ultimately Australia and New Zealand. It is time for us to turn our attention to these matters. As a result of our recent treaty with Burma and our action in Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan, the Bay of Bengal is similarly secured. Only Thailand remains, and they are reconsidering their insistence on neutrality. With all of this in mind, I urge you to approve our operation directed at securing the Indian Ocean and thus completing the secure trade route for CAS goods from the Persian Gulf through the Indian Ocean and into the Seas of China.”

KP Narayannen, the President of India, knew that the time of decision had come. He could no longer delay; he could no longer waffle without bringing suspicion and doubt upon himself and his administration. That was something he was unwilling to do.

The trade and economic benefit that had accrued to India as a result of their involvement over the last fourteen months in the Coalition of Asian States had been tremendous. More Indians were working, the standard of living was rising, and the outlook for the future was better than ever before. The regional issues facing them in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan had all been resolved and the threat from Islam, China and Russia had all been dissolved in an enormous economic boom for all. The only potential dangers were resulting from the disenfranchisement of the West, and the warfare that had erupted and was raging as a result.

To this point, that warfare that had not touched India directly, but that was about to change. The US 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet was still strongly positioned in the Indian Ocean and sat squarely in the middle of the trade route so critical to the “New Order” the CAS had ushered into this part of the world. It was a presence that could not be tolerated and the Indian military and technology sectors were prepared to deal with it. But the coming confrontation was not something that could be entertained or embarked upon lightly. The West, and in particular the United States, had sharp teeth. They had been caught by surprise once, but such an ambush was going to be difficult to repeat. In addition, with fighting far from over on Taiwan, it was not an accurate representation to characterize the China Sea as “secure”. Before giving the approval for the go-ahead to carry out the military operation, the President felt it important to remind his cabinet of all of this.

“Minister Patel, I would not characterize the initial invasion of Taiwan and the current situation there as “securing” the China Sea. Every report indicates that the fighting is fierce and that incursion onto the island itself is at a virtual standstill not far from the beachheads. In addition, the civil unrest that has erupted along the Chinese mainland coast in the staging areas for the invasion and near the capital in Beijing is disconcerting.”

Over the last several months, the Foreign Minister, Rahmish Patel, had been rising in stature and influence throughout India. Whereas the President came across reserved and appeared almost reluctant in taking full advantage of the burgeoning relationship in the Coalition of Asian States, Patel was direct and outspoken. He took every opportunity to push for a more active part in diplomatic and military activities, and in condemnations of the west. The President considered Patel’s attitude and inclinations a dangerous and overly expansionist military philosophy. But with the growing economy, with the successful diplomatic and military action to date, the people were more and more willing to follow the lead of charismatic and influential leader like Patel ... and he knew it.

“Mr. President, despite the continued fighting, the Republic of China’s navy is either sunk or fleeing desperately to the east and their Air Force has ceased to exist as a viable threat. In this context, outside of only occasional American submarine activity, the China Sea is indeed secured. As to the fighting on the mainland, we have all known for a long time of the ROC’s attempted subversion of the citizens of the People’s Republic. It appears that they may have won a few more adherents than was expected. Nonetheless, I have no doubts that the legal and rightful government in China will quickly put the revolts down while continuing the campaign to pacify their rebellious province ... much as we have done now with Sri Lanka. That aside, how should I instruct our ambassadors and the members of our Foreign Service with respect to our operations in the Indian Ocean?”

The President had to hand it to his Foreign Minister. Despite his ambition, he was smooth and he had honed in on the critical point of this discussion. While the situation on Taiwan was critical for overall commerce, it was the responsibility of the People’s Republic. The interest of the cabinet in this

meeting was really focused on their own responsibilities and the matter of the US 5th Fleet in the Indian Ocean and securing that body of water for CAS trade.

“Let us hear a final assessment and review from the Minister of Technology regarding the enhancements and upgrades to the weapons we have acquired from the Chinese, whom I presume will provide a positive report regarding the same. Based on the outcome of that report you will be able to tell those members involved with the operation in the Foreign Service to proceed according to plan less than thirty-six hours from now.”

**July 11, 06:22 local time**

### **Main Runway, The Airfield**

### **Diego Garcia, Indian Ocean**

Diego Garcia is located just south of the Equator in the Indian Ocean. It is the southernmost and largest island in a chain of fifty-two hot and humid tropical islands known as the Chagos Archipelago. The entire group of islands falls under the administration of the United Kingdom in the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). Located some eighty miles from the nearest island in the chain, Diego Garcia is a long and narrow island in a crescent shape that forms a harbor over six miles wide and thirteen miles long, which provides good anchorage for ocean going vessels. The island itself, which is comprised of some 6,700 acres, is wide enough for a major airfield but is densely vegetated where it has not been cleared. The maximum elevation is just twenty-two feet above sea level.

The island was first discovered in the 1500's by two separate Portuguese explorers, one named Diego and the other named Garcia. The resulting dispute regarding who discovered the island first resulted in the island simply being named Diego Garcia. The French won claim to the island from the Portuguese and ultimately the British won claim to the island from the French. The British claim is recognized as the legal administrator and ruler of the island.

In 1971 the United Kingdom and the United States signed an agreement that allowed the United States to lease the island and to build up a significant military presence there. This resulted in the basing of many United States military commands on the island. These commands included a Naval Computer & Telecommunications Station, a major Naval Support Facility, a major Military Sealift Command Office, Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron Two (MPSRON-2), Afloat Prepositioning Squadron Four (APSRON-4), a Naval Mobile Construction Battalion and a Naval Security Detachment. It also included U.S. Navy Patrol Reconnaissance Wing One, U.S. Air Force Pacific Wings One and Thirteen, the 18<sup>th</sup> Space Surveillance Squadron Detachment Two, 22<sup>nd</sup> Space Operation Squadron Detachment Two, and several other supporting commands, including a number of civilian contractors. The British representative on the island (BRITREP) serves as the overall magistrate while also commanding the British Royal Marine detachment on the island. In order to accommodate all of these various military commands, construction began immediately after the signing of the 1971 agreement and continued for more than ten years. By 1972, the three thousand inhabitants of the island, mostly workers on Coconut Oil plantations, were moved to Mauritius, the island from which most of the workers' ancestry originated, although many of their families had been on Diego Garcia for generations.

During the cold war, the United States military presence on Diego Garcia was meant to keep track of and balance Soviet military activity in the region. Since the end of the cold war, its focus had shifted to protecting the vital oil routes coming out of the Persian Gulf and to providing a staging area for military activity in the Middle East should war ever break out. During operation Desert Storm against Iraq in the early 1990's, operation Enduring Freedom against the Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001-2000, and during Operation Iraqi Freedom starting in 2003, war actually broke out in the general Persian Gulf area. During those conflicts, though never threatened with attack, Diego Garcia had served as a critical staging area for U.S. operations and had paid significant dividends in terms of materiel and in terms of combat fight operations for long range bombers.

Now, this July there was a harsher reality as US Air Force C-17s were landing one after another and disgorging US Marines for imminent combat action on the island itself.

“Alright, Marines, form up! Come on, come on . . . this isn't some kind of lazy Sunday afternoon and it sure ain't your mama's picnic. On the double now!”

Lance Corporal Leon Campbell exited the rear of the aircraft on the double and was immediately assaulted by the heat and humidity. Such an oppressive climate was not unexpected here just below the Equator some 1500 miles southeast of the Arabian Peninsula and almost 1000 miles south of India. But one had to experience the intensity of it to appreciate just how hot and muggy it was.

“Man! Even North Carolina humidity can't compare to this!” thought Leon as he formed up with his platoon and began marching towards the facilities that would house them on the island.

“But it's not so bad. I know these boys are glad to have us here and it will be what I will always remember as my first real duty assignment, my first overseas assignment and my first wartime assignment all rolled up into one.”

And Leon was right. The soldiers who had been providing for the defense on Diego Garcia was very glad to see the arriving C-17s and their human “cargo”. The security detachment on the island

consisted of one company of Marines who had been diverted from Marine Expeditionary Brigade One (MEB-1) when it had been deployed in the Persian Gulf area at the outset of hostilities. Now, the rest of MEB-1 was completely cut off and trapped on the Qatar Peninsula. That had left the Marine company, the relatively small Air Force security detachment and a Royal Marine security detachment as the only combat ready forces on the island. That amounted to less than three companies of soldiers to defend one of the most strategic support and staging bases in the entire region.

The powers that be in Washington and London had decided that more was needed, particularly given the nature of the war at this point. So, Leon and the other Marines landing with him, and many others that would follow, had been sent here to bolster defenses and ensure that the strategic island remained in allied hands. The commitment represented an entire Marine Expeditionary Unit. An additional 2,500 men and their weapons and supplies to beef up the defenses at Diego Garcia. In addition to the small arms and mortars that the Marines brought, this augmented unit would also provide another eight tanks, ten fighter/bomber aircraft, thirty-six helicopters (twelve of which were the new AH-Z attack helicopters like Billy Simmons was learning to fly) and eight artillery batteries.

While he marched double time, Leon thought, "I wish Billy were here right now piloting one of those babies. I've got a feeling, with conditions over in the Persian Gulf being what they are, that it won't be long until they set their sights on us out here."

All of the heavy equipment for the MEU was already forward deployed at the base on the fast pre-positioning ships of MPSSRON-2 and APSSRON-4. The Marines and the aircraft were being flown in to mate up with that pre-positioned equipment. It wouldn't take them long to do so either. Naval personnel and the Marines already on the island had already off loaded all the equipment in preparation for the arrival of the MEU.

There was also a US Navy Surface Action Group (SAG) deployed around the island to provide additional security against air or sea attack. That SAG consisted of three Arleigh Burke Aegis guided-missile destroyers and two Oliver Hazard class frigates. This was in addition to the USS Enterprise Carrier Battle Group (CBG) on station in the Indian Ocean. The Enterprise CBG and the long-range aircraft at the airbase on Diego Garcia were all the air support the trapped units on Qatar had. But providing air cover to Qatar, helping protect Diego Garcia and interdicting CAS attempts at control of the Arabian Sea were wearing down air-wing operations on the carrier and causing the CBG to position itself such that an enemy's job of predicting its whereabouts was rendered much less difficult. This was a fact that was not lost on the Indian war planners, and something they were soon to use to their advantage.

**July 11, 11:41 local time**

### **Flight of Twenty-four Indian Tu-22M "Backfire" Bombers Over the Arabian Sea**

They were flying at over 1000 kilometers per hour, less than fifty meters off the water. Each of their shock waves was leaving a trail of raised and disturbed water behind them as they sped towards their release points. Another flight of twenty-four similarly configured TU-22M "Backfire" bombers was five minutes behind this one. All of them had entered the Arabian Sea just to the south of Bombay and proceeded on their current course towards their target acquisition area within twenty miles of the last reported position of the American carrier. That information had been purchased at the high price of several TU-142 Bear patrol aircraft and their long-range fighter escorts. But the price had been paid, the Americans had been found, and the operation to destroy them was now in progress.

To confuse the Americans and draw their attention away, a large raid of over two hundred aircraft was already in the air and proceeding to the attack them the direction of Karachi. Along that axis, the Indian Navy had amassed its largest combat task force in history. Both Indian aircraft carriers and over twelve escorting vessels were positioned there. They had launched missiles in support of the attack and were now proceeding at flank speed towards the American battle group. Aircraft from those carriers would be escorting the raid, along with ground based fighters. Every MiG-29 available to the Indian planners in that portion of India was in the air. Twenty TU-16 Badger bombers and another twelve TU-22M Backfire bombers were also assisting in that strike. It was a serious attack that the Americans could not ignore and it would be driven home in the hopes of damaging and destroying as many American vessels as possible.

But it was also a conventional attack of the sort that the designers of the American ships and weapons systems had anticipated for several decades. Their aircraft, their radar and electronic warfare systems, and their weapons systems had all been formulated to counter and defeat just such attacks. With two Ticonderoga Aegis cruisers and one Arleigh Burke Aegis destroyer, it was going to be very difficult to overwhelm the American missile defenses, particularly when those missile defenses were complimented F/A-18F Hornet air superiority aircraft that the American carrier Enterprise carried in abundance. But the Indian Air Force and Navy hoped to do just that and thereby eliminate a number of the escorting vessels, and perhaps the carrier itself, with their diversion attack from the north.

The greatest threat to the Americans would then approach from the east. It would come in, right on the deck, in the form of these twenty-four TU-22M Backfire bombers and the following squadron



of twenty-four more. Two of the bombers in each flight were outfitted with electronic warfare and additional target acquisition and communication hardware and software. Those two would “pop up” when they reached their target area and communicate information regarding the location of the American ships to the other aircraft. Upon learning of the location, those other aircraft would then proceed at low level and subsonic speed to the optimum location to launch their weapons.

As he contemplated this, the squadron leader and overall commander for this portion of the attack, General Raj Khanjar, thought to himself.

“It is then that we will deliver the weapons that have a proven track record of decimating American Carrier Battle Groups. Chinese LRASD weapons that our engineers have modified to be delivered by these very bombers. Just like the torpedo bombers of World War II, but with much more range and lethality. It is something the Americans will certainly not expect or be prepared for. I doubt that they believe that any of these weapons have even made their way into this theater of operations yet ... if that is so, they are about to be punished for their lack of intelligence.”

General Khanjar noticed the blinking yellow light on the console that provided automated course programming and monitoring. As the light continued to blink, he quickly broadcast on his local, narrow-band squadron frequency.

“Squadron leader to all units. Five minutes to acquisition point. Watch your threat displays. Hosdurg-1 and -2, prepare for pop-up maneuver, target acquisition and relay according to plan.”

They were quickly approaching the point where all of the planning, all of the designing and all of the preparations were about to be proven. The General knew that since they had not been discovered and attacked to this point, it suggested that the diversion off to the north was fulfilling its mission. Another few minutes followed by a successful acquisition and launch and there would be little the Americans could do to avoid devastation.

“I hope the modifications to the LRASD weaponry allow them to function after impact with the water,” thought the General. “All of the computer models and the few actual tests we had time to perform indicate they will. I just hope we have not missed anything.”

### **July 11, that same time**

#### **US Navy F/A-18F Barrier CAP**

#### **North of the USS Enterprise, Over the Arabian Sea**

“Yahoo! Talk about a Cake Walk! Look at those sorry SOB's disappearing off the screen. Don't mess with Uncle Sam, Gandhi!”

The flight leader, a full Navy Commander, had let the discipline break down for a moment or two, but it was time to rein it back in.

“Okay, that's enough. Cut the chatter. We're not done yet.”

In this sector, not one Indian aircraft had gotten through. Not one had gotten in range to launch missiles on the CSG (Carrier Strike Group). Off a little further to the east, those “Badgers” and “Backfires” had launched most of their longer range missiles and now those forty-seven missiles were inbound where the Aegis system would have to handle them. In addition, while they had engaged these attack aircraft and their escorts, a number of missiles launched by surface ships further off to the north had also gotten through and would enter the engagement zones of the standard missiles carried by the Aegis cruisers and destroyer. It looked like sixteen missiles from that axis. A total of sixty-three missiles inbound.

Thinking back on the engagement, the flight leader muttered to himself, “Those MIG-29s had come boring in like bats out of hell. Once the AWACS picked them up, they were toast. I suppose they were some kind of diversion for those “Badgers” and Backfires,” but it sure cost them.”

The Enterprise had been given ample warning of the approaching raid. It had numbered well over one hundred and fifty aircraft and had come in at altitudes ranging from ten thousand to thirty thousand feet. This meant that the attacking aircraft were high enough for the E-2C to see them hundreds of miles away, and in time for the aircraft carrier to launch adequate aircraft to engage them. Four aircraft had been left in CAP position over the carrier with another four on ready alert, while sixteen A/F-18F air superiority fighters had met the enemy here over two hundred miles north of the carrier. The result had been a completely lopsided dog-fight as the longer range and more effective US AMRAAM missiles ripped into the approaching flights of Indian aircraft.

“... and that enemy is ours,” continued the flight leader. “We downed over eighty and lost only three aircraft before they turned tail.” As he considered the words of the one exuberant pilot a few moments ago, he thought further, “Someday they will talk about the great Arabian Turkey Shoot of World War III just like they talk about the Marianas Turkey Shoot of World War II.”

And the Commander might have been right in his assessment had it not been for the approaching enemy forces from the east. Just as he was entertaining the thought about his engagement being compared to the World War II “Turkey Shoot” in the South Pacific, and as the Combat Information Centers of all the ships in the CSG were dealing with the imminent cruise missile threat, the new threat was discovered. A frantic warning went out from the E2-C close in to the carrier.

“Many bandits to the west, low level! Twenty-five miles out and approaching!”

## **July 11, the next ten minutes**

### **USS Enterprise Carrier Battle Group**

#### **The Arabian Sea**

As soon as General Khanjar's squadron of low-flying "Backfire" bombers was located, the AWACS aircraft vectored the local CAP towards them. In addition, targeting information was passed off to the "Goalkeeper" escort for the carrier, an Aegis cruiser. As this was happening, the two Indian aircraft tasked with final targeting rapidly gained altitude and immediately picked up the carrier and the three other surface ships in its immediate vicinity. This information was instantly passed to the other twenty-two attacking aircraft. The ships on the surface included the carrier, an escorting Aegis cruiser, an escorting Perry class frigate and an accompanying Supply class combat support/replenishment ship. Another Aegis cruiser and an Arleigh Burke Aegis destroyer in the CBG were located a good twenty-five miles to the north and northwest along that threat axis where they were engaging the incoming Indian cruise missiles.

As the American aircraft launched anti-air missiles at the Indian aircraft, the attackers engaged their full suite of electronic warfare packages that the license-built aircraft carried and that the Russians had designed specifically to counter American technology. Within one minute of detection, sixteen AMRAMM missiles were airborne and targeting the TU-22M aircraft from the F/A-18F Hornets. Ten standard missiles were also airborne from the Aegis cruiser. Of these twenty-six missiles, ten of them targeted the two Indian aircraft that had gained altitude for target acquisition. This was a result of their higher altitude and the incorrect presumption by the Americans that any aircraft that were gaining altitude represented the more severe and immediate threat. They incorrectly deduced that such a maneuver was a "pop up" preparatory to launching cruise missiles. The software and the operators therefore targeted these aircraft accordingly.

These ten missiles completely overwhelmed the two ascending Indian Backfires and both were destroyed, falling into the ocean as fiery debris. The other sixteen American missiles targeted the lower flying aircraft, but were much less effective due to their low altitude, a much smaller missile-to-aircraft ratio and due to jamming from the TU-22M's. Of the remaining twenty-two Indian aircraft, six were downed by the American missiles before the Indians could launch their LRASD weapons.

Before the full outcome of the first missile volley was known, the computers on the Aegis cruiser performed a rapid threat assessment and launched a second volley of missiles. By the time those missiles arrived, the Backfire bombers had come within ten miles of the carrier and had slowed to a launch speed of two hundred miles per hour. This volley consisted of thirty standard missiles, all launched within a span of two seconds from the vertical missile launch tubes on the cruiser. But they arrived too late to prevent launch of the LRASD weaponry that the Backfires carried.

As sixteen LRASD weapons fell away from the bombers, every defense officer in the Combat Information Centers (CIC) of the American ship formation noticed them on their radar and threat displays. They had been expecting them. They presumed they were large cruise missiles. The reaction was quick and very professional. On those ships so equipped, the defense systems were already in "full God mode" with the Aegis system on automatic. Standard missiles, shorter range Sea Sparrow missiles, Rolling Airframe Missiles (RAM), and Close in Weapons Systems (CIWS) were all primed to counter the threat. Other less-automated systems were activated on the other ships by defense officers as Dual Purpose (DP) guns and EW systems went active. It was all done very professionally, very efficiently ... but it all represented a reaction against the wrong type of threat.

As the objects were tracked on radar (and by some of the personnel on deck of the Perry escort closest to the aircraft), and as they slowed and impacted the water trailing their retarding parachutes, there was a brief moment of euphoria. For just a moment the Americans thought that every one of the attacking missiles had malfunctioned and crashed into the sea. But this thought and the associated euphoria was short lived as it became apparent that this was not the case.

All too quickly sonar operators in the CICs of every ship in the formation recognized the sound that had been recently drilled into them, and the sound that none of them wanted or expected to hear here in the Indian Ocean. It was the sound of approaching supercavitating weapons targeting their ships. Of the sixteen LRASD weapons, thirteen of them survived impact with the ocean and activated. Immediately acquiring the targets so close to them, they immediately went to rocket power. Five of them targeted the Enterprise, four of them targeted the escorting Aegis cruiser, two targeted the Perry frigate closest to them and two targeted an escorting LA class submarine that they detected in the near vicinity.

When activating their rocket engines, the LRASD weapons that targeted the Perry class frigate were only four miles away from that ship. Those targeting the Enterprise and its Aegis escort were eight miles away and the LA class submarine was eleven miles distant. Moving at a velocity approaching a mile every six seconds, the weapons had moved three miles before the officers on deck were able to respond to the sonar operators who had given the warning. They immediately took the helm and attempted to perform evasive maneuvers. But it was too late ... large ships do not turn on a dime ... they simply needed more time and more distance.

Within fifteen seconds, a tremendous spout of water, fire, smoke and debris rose from the port aft side of the frigate. The ship was literally lifted from the water and the ships back was broken. It immediately slowed in the water and began to sink. Twenty seconds later, two explosions racked the Aegis cruiser with even more devastating results as that ship was literally blown into three pieces, the largest of which capsized immediately while the fore and aft sections began to sink rapidly.

Just after the explosions on the Aegis cruiser, two blasts occurred toward the aft half of the starboard side of the Enterprise as it turned hard to avoid the weapons targeting it. Though it succeeded in avoiding three devices, the massive detonations of the two that struck home caused the large ship to list over thirty degrees to port. This rapid list dumped every aircraft and living soul on the deck that was not tied down into the ocean before the ship rolled back upright. The ship then rapidly went dead in the water. The tremendous rents in the side of the ship let in massive amounts of water and the carrier began to settle.

A few seconds later, a tremendous bulge and then geyser of water a mile and a half to the west of the aircraft carrier marked the death of the escorting Los Angeles class attack submarine.

Meanwhile, the missiles from the American ships had decimated the TU-22M squadron. The big bombers had turned radically after launch and gone to full afterburner power to escape, trying to use their top speed of mach-2. But before they attained anything close to that speed, the American standard missiles arrived. Of the sixteen aircraft that had launched LRASD weapons, only two managed to escape. Miraculously, one of these was the aircraft piloted by General Khanjar's who would survive the battle and give a gripping account of his squadron's successful attack on the American 5th Fleet.

As the surviving Perry class frigate rushed to the scene from its station five miles northwest of the carrier and as the undamaged Supply class replenishment ship began attempting to assist the carrier, six leaker missiles approached the ships from the north. The Aegis cruiser and Aegis destroyer had engaged and downed most of the Indian missiles that had been launched on the CBG by the aircraft to the north, but the cruiser itself had taken two missile strikes and was burning furiously amidships. The Aegis destroyer was unscathed and was now also making its best speed back towards the stricken carrier in an effort to help.

But the remaining six Indian "leaker" missiles would arrive long before the American destroyer would. Two each were targeting the undamaged Perry frigate, the damaged carrier and the replenishment ship. The Perry frigate used its own missile launcher and CIWS to destroy both of the missiles that were targeting it. In doing so, the frigate took significant damage to its helicopter hangar when the last missile was destroyed a mere two hundred yards away from the ship by the 20mm Phalanx CIWS. The momentum of that missile carried the exploding debris and its fiery fuel on into the destroyer near the helicopter hangar. Shrapnel impacting at several hundred miles per hour cut right through the hangar walls and exploded the SH-60 Seahawk helicopter that was parked there being prepared for an Anti-submarine warfare (ASW) mission. Its explosion added significantly to the fires that were already being set by the fuel from the missile itself that had also showered the area.

The Enterprise, though severely damaged, still had operational control over two of its four Sparrow missile launchers and one of its CIWS. These defensive weapon systems worked as designed and destroyed both missiles targeting the carrier. They also destroyed one of the missiles targeting the replenishment ship. However, due to budgetary constraints imposed in 1999 by the administration in Washington at the time, all US replenishment ships had all of their self-defense weapons systems removed and were defenseless against missile attacks themselves. Where before Sparrow missile launchers, RAM missile launchers and CIWS had once defended the ship very adequately against just this sort of attack, now nothing was in place to stop the last Indian missile. It came in low to the water at mach-2 and impacted the ship, penetrating deep into the interior before exploding in one of the aviation fuel storage areas. The resulting explosion immediately led to instantaneous secondary explosions that blew out one side and the bottom of the ship. As more fuel, ammunition, missiles and other flammable material were set off, within two minutes, the Supply class replenishment ship was sinking with most of its crew.

A few minutes after this attack, the second wave of Indian TU-22M Backfire bombers arrived and attacked the CSG with their LRASD weapons. The four F/A-18F CAP aircraft were alerted to their presence by the AWACS aircraft, which remained on station, and it directed the fighters to close and attack. The four aircraft only had eight short-range, infrared homing Sidewinder missiles left amongst them, but they used these and their cannons to good effect. Before the Indian aircraft could launch their weapons, eight of them were destroyed. Despite this, another twelve LRASD weapons were launched and ten of those weapons successfully activated after entering the ocean. Eight of them targeted the carrier and the last two targeted the Perry frigate that was rushing to the carrier's aid.

The USS Enterprise was going dead in the water and already listing heavily from the initial attack. It could not maneuver to avoid the approaching weapons at all. All eight of the LRASD devices impacted against the side of the carrier within seconds of one another causing a stupendous conflagration of explosions. When the smoke, water vapor and falling debris cleared ... the Enterprise was gone.

The approaching frigate fared better. Still some four miles beyond the carrier, and over fourteen miles distant from where the LRASD devices were launched, it had more time to take evasive action. Although both weapons missed, one of them passed close enough to the turning aft portion of the ship to activate its proximity fuse. The resulting explosion just behind the ship and to starboard was close enough to buckle the rudder and warp the prop on that side.

Later in the evening, burdened with several hundred survivors that were pulled out of the ocean, a severely damaged Ticonderoga class Aegis cruiser, an undamaged Arleigh Burke class Aegis destroyer, the damaged Perry class frigate and an undamaged Los Angeles class submarine left the area. They departed under the heaviest air cover available originating out of Diego Garcia. They were all that was left of the nine vessel, ever-present US Navy 5th Fleet CSG that had projected power and influence in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf for so many years. It would be quite a few years before an American CSG entered these waters again.

The four vessels set a course to the south for the only place of refuge left to them within thousands of miles, Diego Garcia where repair and re-provisioning facilities were available for the vessels, and hospital and recuperation facilities were available for the personnel requiring it. They would join two E2-C AWACS aircraft, two EA-6B Electronic warfare aircraft, four HV-22 anti-submarine aircraft and sixteen F/A-18F aircraft that had been in the air when the Enterprise went down. These twenty-four aircraft were all that remained of an air-wing of over seventy aircraft that had been on the Enterprise. The rest of the aircraft had either all gone down with the carrier, or been destroyed in the effort to protect her.

The surviving aircraft, ships and personnel would not have to wait long for the chance to avenge their compatriots. Their enemies would be bringing that chance to them.

**July 12, 07:30 EDT**

**Situation Room, Laurel House  
Camp David, Maryland**

President Weisskopf soberly contemplated recent activities and events as he prepared to open the National Security Meeting. It would be the last National Security Meeting here at Camp David in what had become known as the "Situation Room", but was really the Executive Conference Room at the Laurel House. The President and the Congress had insisted as a matter of national resolve and as an indication to their enemies of the nation's commitment to victory, to rebuild the White House and the US Capitol building housing Congress as rapidly as possible. Now, four months after the initial attacks, the portion of the White House that had been savaged in the attacks in March was repaired and rebuilt to the point where the President could again take up residency and conduct the nation's business there. The U.S. Capitol would not be complete for another six months as it was being almost completely rebuilt ... and ten months represented a phenomenal feat if it could be achieved. In addition to the new buildings (whose entire understructures were now constructed of hardened steel), the entire Washington DC area fairly bristled with defenses.

A new Theater Missile Defense (TMD) Aegis cruiser was stationed in the Potomac just outside of Washington DC, the first on the east coast. Ultimately a second would join it on permanent station to defend the nation's capitol against any further ballistic missile attacks, either conventional or nuclear. Each ship would carry a double load of the TMD enhancement to the Standard missile, with reloads immediately available from shore facilities. In addition, eight batteries of Patriot Missiles, employing the latest Block updates to those missiles, were now deployed around the capitol to strengthen the anti-missile and anti-air defenses. A Combat Air Patrol (CAP) of no less than twelve F-22 Raptor fighters was in the air at all times, 24X7, over the city with an entire squadron of attack aircraft in reserve. An entire division of U.S. Marines was deployed around the White House and Capitol buildings proper, with another U.S. Army infantry Division deployed in a buffer around the Washington DC metro area. It was felt that these defenses would be sufficient to counter any foreseeable threat from the nation's enemies, either by direct attack, or by terrorist activities.

The President had returned early from his third "road trip" when he received news of the engagement in the Indian Ocean and the sinking of the Enterprise. All three of the road trips had been the result of his wife's suggestion in April.

"Actually, 'suggestion' was not the term for it. More like insistence," thought the President.

"And she had been right ... dead on the money," he continued in thought while reflecting back on those trips. Under heavy security he had spent a week on the road each trip. Three speeches a day, taking conference calls and conferring in video-conferences on Air Force One at night and whenever necessary. The trips had been a rousing success and the effect had energized the public and raised their level of commitment to the war effort. The President had visited forty different cities and a total of more than ten million Americans had come out to see and hear him. Tens of millions more had heard his message over the television, radio or internet. Over and over again, he had scorned their enemies, spoken directly regarding the challenges that lay ahead and offered consistent encouragement against the backdrop of what seemed like endless disappointments and tragedies filtering back from overseas.

Now was the time for the political and military leadership to address more of those setbacks. Now that everyone had arrived and the chief of staff had closed the doors, the President began.

“Okay, everyone. Please be seated and let’s get started.

“We have four critical overseas issues to discuss from a military perspective and then we can move on to the status of our diplomatic relations with our allies and neutral countries, as well as those nations moving into the enemy’s camp. I’d like to start with the disaster in the Indian Ocean and then move to Israel, Turkey, Panama and, finally, the status as we know it on Taiwan. I want to discuss Taiwan last, after a special report that WNN is airing at 9:30 AM which we shall all view.

“Secretary Crowler, please proceed with General Stone and brief us on the current situation in the Indian Ocean, Israel and Turkey.”

George Crowler had recently been nominated, and quickly confirmed, as the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF). He replaced Secretary Tim Hattering in that role. Hattering had been killed on March 15<sup>th</sup> in the attack on the White House that had also killed the Vice President and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency on the same day. Before his nomination by the President, Admiral George Crowler had been the Chief of Naval Operations and as the Naval Chief had worked for General Jeremy Stone who was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Now General Stone was answering to Admiral Crowler, a reversal of roles.

“Mr. President, given my recent position, I will brief this group on the Indian Ocean situation and General Stone will brief the group on the situation on the Arabian Peninsula and in Turkey.”

“I will be direct. We have suffered a horrific tragedy in the Indian Ocean. The USS Enterprise, our first nuclear carrier and a mainstay of the entire fleet has been sunk with a tremendous loss of life. In addition, we have lost the Aegis cruiser USS Monterey, a Perry class frigate, the Kaufmann, the attack submarine USS Tucson, and the fast replenishment ship USS Bridge. All of these vessels were sunk by Indian forces deploying an aircraft delivered version of supercavitating devices that savaged our forces in the Pacific in March.”

There were audible intakes of breath at this news from those who were as yet unaware of it. The Secretary of State, Fred Reisinger, spoke up.

“Indian employed supercavitating weapons? This is extremely disheartening. We had hoped that India would continue to avoid direct hostilities with us despite what must be tremendous pressure, but this dashes those hopes. Exactly how far have the Chinese been able to proliferate these devices?”

Secretary Crowler was prepared for this question, even though he did not have a direct answer.

“Mr. Secretary, the answer is that we do not know exactly how far they have proliferated. But, if the Indians have them, then we must presume the GIR has also acquired them and, by extension, that we could face them anywhere. The fact that supercavitating weapons appear to be in the hands of more of our enemies than we had believed is news that we must pass on to our allies given the planning for other operations, particularly the pending and imminent Panama operation.

“What is perhaps even more critical is the method in which these weapons were delivered. As you know, due to the efforts of the USS Jimmy Carter, our third Sea Wolf class attack submarine, we have a significant amount of data gathered on these weapons. To date, they have only been delivered by two methods. One is a long-range launch where the weapon approaches its target area under conventional power and then acquires and attacks targets in a supercavitating mode upon reaching a pre-determined area of operation. As you know, our 7th Fleet was decimated in the first such deployment of these weapons on March 15<sup>th</sup>.

“The other method has been one in which these weapons are “pre-deployed” in an area of operation that our enemy expects our vessels to transverse. They lay there passively and quietly until a vessel approaches, whereupon they activate their rocket engines and attack by surprise from relatively short range in supercavitating mode. The Japanese fleet was decimated in this fashion. We have since experienced attacks in the Pacific in which both methods were used against us. In addition, due to the efforts of the Jimmy Carter, we have developed fairly effective initial strategies for combating both. Although not perfect by any means, and although we are developing better methods, these strategies have allowed us to avoid the large percentages of losses we had experienced. The 5th Fleet was employing these strategies when they were attacked yesterday and they failed.

“The reason they failed is that the Indian engineers have apparently devised and deployed a third method. It is really nothing new ... it is a method that was employed to good effect by our enemies and by our forces in World War II. The Indians have mated these systems to heavy bombers and are using them as torpedo bombers, coming in low and launching from eight to ten miles out. The Indians staged a massive conventional air raid against our forces that we were forced to respond to with significant carrier air assets. Then, a much smaller group of TU-22M aircraft came in from a completely different direction, very low to the water at supersonic speed and penetrated close enough to launch their weapons before most of those aircraft were shot down. Our AWACS was caught out of position, covering the leaker missiles from the larger assault.

“The situation now is that the damaged ships have made for Diego Garcia where our Marine Expeditionary Unit has now arrived and is setting up defensive positions. We have strong naval, air and ground forces on and around Diego Garcia. It is a position we cannot afford to lose ... it would

drive us entirely out of the Indian Ocean and dash any hope for continued influence in the Persian Gulf. Stacked up against our defensive position on Diego Garcia are the entire resources of India and significant GIR and probably Chinese resources as well. They will certainly play an attrition game against us as they have done against the Republic of China. If they gain sea control around the island, the outcome will be inevitable without a significant allied task force to destroy their naval assets and impose our own sea control. Until we negate the supercavitating threat in a much more effective way, the chance of successfully fulfilling the sea control mission are not good."

The entire room was quiet and sobered by this direct analysis. Admiral Crowler was a staunch proponent, and defender, of American naval power. His optimism when it came to the employment of that naval power was well known in this circle. For him to make such a bluntly foreboding statement indicated that the situation was indeed grave.

The President, who had put a lot of thought into the situation since he became aware of it in the early morning hours, spoke.

"Admiral, err, Secretary Crowler. Pending review by this group., proceed as we discussed this morning. Let me quickly review for the benefit of everyone here and to open it up for suggestion.

"If the replenishment ships with their significant supplies of materiel not directly related to the defense of the island can get out of there under good escort and if they can be protected from Indian air attack until they are out of range ... have them do so. Send one of the Aegis ships with them along with whatever other escorts are necessary. Insure that any non-combatants go with those ships. Keep two of the Aegis ships inside the anchorage where they will be most protected from any supercavitating threat and then have those Marines, the US Navy and the US Air Force defend that island with everything they have. Formulate a plan for evacuation should the situation get hopeless, but plan to keep it from getting that way. Use whatever forces we can muster to keep that island from being completely cut off by sea, to help defend it and to re-supply it.

"By God, if it is a fight these Indian SOB's want, they shall have one. And one way or another, the destruction of the Enterprise and all of those good men and women will be paid back in kind ... in fact, many times over. Fred, I know it is not your style, but craft a message with a direct quote from me to the Indian President and their Parliament to that effect. We will not rest until those involved in the decision to attack us are brought to justice. I will complete my discussions with the congressional leadership early this afternoon and will address the nation late this afternoon, once war is declared.

"Secretary Crowler, if there is no other suggestion at this time regarding the overall plan as I have outlined it thank you for the briefing and the direct assessment regarding the Indian Ocean. General Stone, please proceed with the briefing on Israel and Turkey. What is the latest status?"

Jeremy Stone was happy that Admiral Crowler was the new Secretary of Defense. Timothy Hattering, God rest his soul, had been a very effective Secretary, knew the Washington ropes and was very hawkish and capable of advancing the President's agenda. But, in wartime there was nothing quite like having a proven, steady hand who had "been there and done that" in combat by your side. George Crowler was all of that and more. He possessed all of the administrative capabilities and political seasoning that Tim Hattering had brought to the table as well.

"Mr. President, the XVIII Corps crossed the Jordanian frontier this morning, to the north and west of Tabuk. They are under much heavier Israeli and US air cover now and should reach their defensive staging area tomorrow afternoon just to the south of the Dead Sea. They will form a defensive line from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea against the GIR Army groups, which have been pursuing them across Saudi Arabia. Those groups are now staging well to the south and consolidating with the Chinese expeditionary force that has crossed over the Red Sea from the Sudan.

"With the large Syrian GIR forces dug in and strengthening around Damascus, with the larger GIR forces combining with the Chinese south of Jordan and with the Libyan, Chad and remaining Chinese forces approaching from the west in Egypt, the handwriting is on the wall for the Israelis. It is just a matter of time now. We expect a declaration of war from the Israeli Knesset within the day. It will be directed against the GIR and against The People's Republic of China.

"In the meantime, we are continuing to funnel large numbers of men and materiel, as are the British, across the Mediterranean into Israel and Egypt. The British and the remaining loyal Egyptians are formed up along the Nile with strong fallback position along the Suez Canal. As I said, our XVIII Corps will form the defensive line between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea, and the Israelis will defend along and to the east of the Jordan River to the Golan Heights and then across to the Mediterranean. They are strong positions and if we can keep the supply routes open, we should be able to maintain them until an opportunity for counterattack arises.

"The escape of the bulk of XVIII Corps is the good news. The bad news is the critical situation at Qatar. Marine Expeditionary Brigade One (MEB-1) is trapped there with stray elements having been cut off as XVIII Corps retreated with a number of allied forces. Over 45,000 personnel became trapped there several weeks ago. They had been receiving assistance from the Enterprise and Diego Garcia. With the loss of the Enterprise their position is desperate and they are down now in effective strength to under 30,000. The situation is almost hopeless, Mr. President, with their choices ranging from fighting against overwhelming odds until they run out of ammunition and then surrender to an

enraged foe who is apt to slaughter them, or not surrendering and ultimately facing the same slaughter. When your captor does not take prisoners, it leaves you little choice but to fight to the death.”

President Weisskopf, no stranger to command decisions that involved life and death considerations of hundreds of thousands of personnel, spoke directly. There was no room for equivocation, no time to mince words and this was no place for politicizing. The likely sacrifice of life and blood demanded that nothing but respect, honor and honesty be afforded to those in such delicate decision-making positions.

“General, this is not easy ... it is a horrific decision, but one that has been forced on us by our enemies. Every one of those people out there is someone’s son ... and a few daughters. Their safety and their service to our nation has been entrusted into our hands. The safety and liberty of this nation in this time of war is also entrusted to us as well. Sometimes we are forced to make terrible choices to balance those considerations. I wish to God I were there commanding that Brigade rather than making this decision ... but I am not. And you are not.

“As I stated earlier, if we have any hope of overcoming this aggression in the near future, we must hold at Diego Garcia. In order to do that, we are going to have very little to offer in defense of those forces still in Qatar. It is simply too far and too cut off. We will make the effort ... but the priority MUST be Diego Garcia and the forces there. They are also in danger of being placed in the same position. At the risk of appearing callous, we must consider the long-term effect of the defeat of our forces on Diego Garcia versus supplying protection to those still in Qatar. Diego Garcia represents a make or break position for us. Despite having to make painful choices as regards the protection of our forces elsewhere, there can be no half measures taken in defense of Diego Garcia.

“We must tell General Wilcox to rally his troops and hold on as long as he can, inflicting as severe casualties on the enemy as possible. Perhaps, if Providence smiles on us, our efforts at holding at Diego Garcia will be successful and we can accomplish that in time to relieve Qatar. If not, then the General will ultimately have to make the final decision, balancing the horrendous considerations you mentioned ... as long as he does his best to fulfill my orders to hold as long as possible and inflict as many casualties as possible.

“I will issue those orders myself. Arrange the communication so that I can speak directly to Greg. Let me know when that has occurred and break in on whatever else I am doing.”

Turning to the Chief of Staff, President Weisskopf said, “Talbot, make sure that is noted. Break in on whatever I am doing, at whatever time, when General Stone brings word that this communication channel is open.

“Now, General Stone, please continue. What of Turkey?”

If the President were any other individual except Norm Weisskopf, General Stone would insist on delivering the orders himself, or having them passed down the chain of command. But the circumstances and the background of this particular President made that insistence unnecessary. The fact was, Norm Weisskopf had “been there”, and he also knew Greg Wilcox better than General Stone did. No one would feel slighted by this President issuing any such order directly.

“Yes, sir. The situation in Turkey is very direct. We have successfully evacuated our forces from the vicinity of Izmir. The situation became untenable two weeks ago with a GIR breakthrough on the northern portion of the defensive perimeter occupied by Turkish forces. Once that breakthrough occurred, evacuation was inevitable. It is that evacuation operation that has gone so smoothly ... right under the nose of the enemy, thus avoiding the loss of many personnel and their equipment. The success was made possible by the rear-guard action of one company of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, and by a brigade of Turkish troops. I can go into detail later, but those men literally sacrificed their lives so that many tens of thousands of our troops and allied troops from Germany and Canada could escape. We must remember their action accordingly.

“Further north, the situation has stabilized and is holding on the narrow front near Uskundart, across the Bosphorus from Istanbul. We have a defense in great depth there and are steadily building our air forces up to deny the GIR any air superiority. At the present time we do not enjoy air superiority ourselves, but with the influx of more and more NATO equipment, and with Italy now firmly in the mix, we expect to gain air superiority over the Bosphorus soon. Other than contact with resistance forces in the interior with whom we are trying to plan some operations, and except for the area immediately to the east of the Bosphorus, all of Turkey has now come under GIR control.

“That concludes the briefing material. It provides an accurate SITREP, as we would say in the military, as of early this morning.”

With the conclusion of the briefing, the President opened the meeting up to comment, discussion and recommendation by the entire National Security team. The give-and-take went on for almost an hour as considerations of ongoing and currently planned operations were discussed for the Mid East and Asia in light of the most up-to-date information. In addition, potential new operations were considered and brainstormed, particularly regarding the relief of Diego Garcia.

Then, at 9:26 AM the President raised his hands and interrupted the meeting.

“This has been a good discussion. But right now we need to break off so we can watch the WNN presentation regarding Taiwan. We understand some new video footage from the island will

be shown. After that special news presentation, we will discuss the ROC and the ramifications of its fall, as well as our intelligence regarding their involvement in a number of violent internal conflicts on the mainland. After that, we will conclude the military briefing by discussing the situation in Central and South America in general, and Panama in particular, before turning the meeting over to Secretary Reisinger for a review of the diplomatic situation around the world.

**July 12, 09:27 EDT**

**WNN Broadcast Studios**

**New York, New York**

David Krenshaw prepared himself for the presentation. The material on Taiwan and China was astounding and he knew that his audience ... both in America and around the world ... would agree. It was also information that was in the sole possession of WNN, having arrived just yesterday by special courier. It was information of which he was fully prepared to take abject advantage on behalf of WNN ... and on behalf of himself. By unilaterally presenting it in this fashion, David was certain that the worldwide news ratings for WNN would jump significantly. And, since he was the President of Worldwide News at WNN ... well, his own position would be enhanced accordingly.

"Amazing how that works out," he mused as the final countdown began for the broadcast.

David was also certain that he could use the information, along with other discreet information he received on a weekly basis to continue to increase his influence and standing within the Council on International Relations, or the "CIR" as it was commonly referred to. Most of the members of that body of influential and powerful individuals viewed the growing war as a tremendous impediment to their goal of creating a worldwide economic and political "governance". It was to be a governance based on open trade and true international controls ... controls that superceded, whenever necessary, the sovereignty of what the CIR deemed as "nation states". It was a goal toward which that body had been working for decades and one toward which they had made significant progress. The progress had been made possible as a result of the tremendous influence the CIR was able to exert on either side of almost any issue through its prestigious members. Such influence was used to convince world leaders, particularly in the United States, to fill the leadership positions within their administrations with CIR members of their own "bent." The result had been that, since the Eisenhower administration of the 1950's, the Presidency itself and every major cabinet position had been filled almost exclusively by CIR members with few exceptions.

One of the notable exceptions to that decades-old precedent had been the current Weisskopf administration. His election had come as a surprise to everyone. He was popular and an old "war horse", but he was also a true "outsider" ... and he had filled his cabinet with outsiders. As a result, his administration was viewed as a "bump in the road" along the path to true "global" governance by the CIR. But with the outbreak of hostilities, and with China and the Islamic states not tracking to the economic or diplomatic norms that the CIR expected, that "bump in the road" was now viewed as necessary. This was because Weisskopf was recognized as possessing the wherewithal to defeat the monumental impediment that war with the CAS and GIR represented to CIR goals.

David viewed the war as anything but that. He viewed current events as just another path to the same goals, but a path where his own ambitions and prominence would experience a meteoric rise. He just had to finesse his unique position and influence to manage the CIR in the same manner that it managed the direction of world events. And he was experiencing some success. A number of prominent CIR members, particularly those with European Union ties, were listening to and seriously considering his carefully stated views. Views he already knew that Jien Zenim found acceptable.

Simply stated, those views were that an ideology such as that represented by the "three Wisdoms" of the CAS could be the vehicle to the global governance they all desired ... but only after a meaningful and acceptable peace had been negotiated. Such a peace would allow for four global spheres of influence working together for the very goals the CIR embraced. Those four spheres would be the CAS in Asia, the GIR in the Middle East and Africa, the European Union in Europe and the United States in the Americas.

"If I can be the moving force behind building a consensus for this in the west," thought David, "then President of Worldwide News at WNN will pale in comparison to the potential opportunities that will open up for me."

For David, today's "special" was really just another step along the path to those opportunities.

The red "On Air" indicator came on.

"Good Morning. This is David Krenshaw at WNN News with a Special News Report. We are interrupting our normally scheduled programming to bring you material we received yesterday out of Taiwan and mainland China.

"As our viewers may be aware, the Republic of China on the island of Taiwan, viewed as a "break-away" province by the People's Republic of China, was invaded on July 9<sup>th</sup>. This occurred after over three months of heavy missile and air attack against the island. It also occurred after the government on the island rejected every peace overture that the PRC offered. Ultimately the air and sea defenses on the island, without American assistance that had been earlier driven from the area,



were weakened to the point that they were unable to stop the physical landing. That landing occurred at dawn on July 9<sup>th</sup> at several points along the western shore of the island. Large numbers of soldiers were landed by amphibious assault, supported by airborne paratroops landing further inland. The landings are continuing as the PRC builds up its forces on the island as we speak. The fighting between the armed forces has been severe, particularly in Taipei. Surprisingly, a number of civilians on the island have sided with the PRC forces, in some cases welcoming them as “liberators”.

“Coincident with that landing, major internal upheaval and fighting broke out in Southern China near Guangzhou, at Fuzhou and near Shanghai. Of even more concern to the PRC, heavy fighting also broke out in the suburbs of Beijing. A limited scale civil war has been occurring on the mainland resulting in significant damage, injury and death ... death for which the beleaguered government of the Republic of China has claimed credit.

“We have received video footage, smuggled out of Taiwan and off the mainland, that bears vivid testimony to the nature of the fighting, both on the island and the mainland. We warn our viewers in advance of the graphic nature of what you are about to witness. Viewer discretion is advised.”

**July 12, 09:58 EDT**

**The Situation Room, Laurel House**

**Camp David, Maryland**

As the video presentation ended and David Krenshaw wrapped up the Special Report, the President’s National Security team sat in silence for a moment. The new Vice President, and former National Security Advisor to the President, John Bowers, broke that silence.

“Mr. President, I have three observations:

“1. The last we heard through our own channels from the ROC was that their operation “Purity” was coming off on the 9<sup>th</sup> and we understood the nature of that operation but had received no specifics regarding the location of their sleeper cells. We also had no indication or information regarding how extensive their overall network had grown. We have received no further official information since the invasion ... just rumors and the analysis of intelligence reports and electronic intercepts. This video footage and this information from WNN is significant. We could exploit the situation and support the rebellion with Air Force and Navy assets if we had more specific information and could contact those forces fighting the PRC.

“2. The situation on Taiwan is worse than we anticipated. Clearly, if the video footage of the fighting and landing is accurate, the ROC government has taken to the mountains and most of the fighting will be centered there as whatever forces are left to the ROC attempt to hold out. Almost 70% of that island is very rugged and mountainous and we know the ROC has prepared for this eventuality for decades. Their network of tunnels, caverns and facilities built into those mountains would make the Japanese fortifications on Okinawa or the Al Qaeda fortifications in Afghanistan look like child’s play. Despite losing the coastal cities and major urban areas, the ROC defenders led by their President will hold out for some time.

“3. Finally, with the video of cheering throngs welcoming the PLA soldiers, I believe that WNN is engaging in abject propaganda to the benefit of our enemies. I am appalled by this blatant attempt. I have spent quite a bit of time on the island of Taiwan and have many friends there. No way would those people “cheer” the Chinese troops as we saw in those films. The vast majority of civilians would fight to the death and the government emergency plans called for arming them to do just that. Either those people were coerced, or the Chinese are staging their own “warm welcome” with their own people after occupying those portions of the ROC. I believe this propagandistic sham needs to be investigated ... I would also like to know the source of the WNN videos. I smell a big rat and it is frankly making me very sick to my stomach.”

There were several assents from members of the National Security team as the consensus for what the Vice President had said regarding potential propaganda from their enemies spread around the room and was voiced. The President allowed it go on for a few seconds and then interrupted.

“Alright, I agree that there is a window of opportunity here for support of the rebelling forces on the mainland. But, before we discuss that, I want to insure that we follow up on the source of this information to WNN. I have had difficulties with their reporting for some time as it relates to our policies in general and to the war effort in particular. Fortunately, that is something in this nation that we must not only put up with, it is something that we all are defending ... their right to report the news as they see fit. I will not besmirch or attack their sincere efforts in that regard. It is a distinguishing factor in our free republic. However, I do want a discreet investigation regarding the sources. If there are any irregularities, or worse, if there is any influence by our enemies in this reporting ... I want it found out and rooted out. Any willing involvement in that regard will be prosecuted in the most severe manner. Let us hope it is nothing like that. I will have Attorney General Hull look into it.

“Now, returning to the matter at hand and the rebellion on the Chinese mainland. Obviously, before we render those rebelling forces whatever direct support we can muster, we are going to require a lot more information about the disposition of those forces and their location. I believe we may have some help in that regard.”

Turning to the new Director of the CIA, Robert Ballard, who had been confirmed to that position in the same timeframe as Admiral Crowler had been confirmed as SECDEF, the President asked.

“Bob, I believe now is the time to brief the team regarding the hard human intelligence (HUMINT) we have out of the People’s Republic on this?”

The new Director referred to his notes briefly. While he had served ably as the Director of Operations, he had not expected to be nominated as the Director of the Agency. His history was one in which he had risen through the ranks as a capable field operative after having served eight years in the US Army. Throughout his field service with the CIA, he showed increasing operational management capabilities and was accordingly given more and more responsibility. Ultimately, those skills, coupled with his own field experience, had made him a natural for running Operations.

But he was definitely not political. Results, a passionate desire to maintain the liberty of his country and a concern for the welfare of his people are what drove Robert Ballard. His outspokenness about these issues, irrespective of political implications or considerations for his own personal “success ladder”, were legendary at the Agency. Unknown to Ballard, the former Director, Mike Rowley, who had been killed on March 15<sup>th</sup> in the fateful attacks on America of that day, had spoken highly of him and positively referred him to other members of President Weisskopf’s staff on several occasions. Those referrals, followed by the President’s own review, had led to the nomination and appointment. Through that appointment, as was the case with many others before him, Bob Ballard learned that this President valued above all else the very willingness to set aside political and personal ambitions for the good of his country ... no matter whose feelings or career was affected by it. In short, the President sought to fill executive decision-making positions with people exactly like him.

“Mr. President, two things regarding this. First, we have had limited knowledge of the ROC’s capability in this area for some time, though we had no direct knowledge of operational considerations. These sleeper cells have been in place and growing for decades. Their existence occurred in a masterful way and involved the families and closest relatives of the operatives themselves who were left behind for this specific purpose when the free Chinese fled to the island of Formosa, now more commonly referred to as Taiwan. These “cells” assimilated so well in the confusion following the communist victory and played their roles so naturally, that their existence was unknown to the PRC. Many of the individuals involved rose to positions of some prominence in the military and the communist party.

“It has been the ROC’s most closely guarded secret, one we came upon only as a result of a member of our own field personnel’s family being directly related to members of one of the cells. It has taken literally years to garner the limited information we have and this has occurred without any contact with the ROC over the issue. As a result, we have guarded the information equally well ... even through the nineties when so much information was leaked and given away to the PRC. During that time, knowledge of what the ROC referred to as “The Breeze of Purity” was limited to two individuals, that operative and his controller. It was completely compartmentalized to ensure its security. The lives of literally tens of thousands depended on that security. Today, outside of this body, there are only three people aware of even this level of detail regarding the operation. More specific details are not something I am at liberty to discuss any further.

“Having said that, the best information we have concerns the activity in the vicinity of Shanghai and Fuzhou. I believe we have enough information in those areas to mount support operations.”

The President considered carefully what Director Ballard had divulged. When personally interviewing Bob for the position, and upon his acceptance, he had already shared this level of information with the President. There was no doubt in the President’s mind who the two people that were aware of this critical information had been during the dangerous period of time in the nineties. Clearly it had been Ballard himself and the operative whom he controlled, the agent who was related to one of the cells. Now, the new Director of Operations was personally controlling that same agent. Into this brief pause, Admiral Crowler interjected.

“With all due respect, Bob, knowledge of this type should have been made available much sooner to people on the National Security Team. We may have missed an earlier opportunity to influence the ROC to activate the operation at a more opportune moment for the conducting of this war. How dare you hold such vital information so close to your vest!”

The President was not surprised, and expected there were others who felt the same. It was time to reign those feelings in before they produced a split in his team.

“George, Bob did not keep this to himself. I was aware of the information weeks ago. It was shared with me during the interview process. I will not go into details, but your beef here would not be with Bob, it would be with me. Given the level of information that we possessed before the operation was implemented by the ROC, we could not have acted. Now is the time to act, and I pray those actions available to us can make a difference.

“Bob, you mentioned two things. What is the second?”

The new Director of the CIA was thankful for the President’s words. He had been concerned about the reaction of others on the President’s staff when they found out about his prior knowledge of this matter. Heck, he probably would have reacted similarly. He respected greatly the way the

President had handled it and taken it on his own shoulders. As time went on, he was discovering what he had already felt and hoped was true: this President was an exceptional leader.

“Yes, Mr. President. There is another critical concern. The day before yesterday we received information from one of our people working in the shipyards near Tianjin regarding a “breakthrough” by the PLA with their supercavitating weapons. Given this operative’s position, and given the abject efforts by the PRC to discover a way to counter the damage we are inflicting on their shipping with our attack submarine, the USS Jimmy Carter ... we believe this “breakthrough” deals with efforts in that regard. It could be directed at the Jimmy Carter specifically, it could be directed at the Sea Wolf class in general, and it could be directed at both the Sea Wolf and Virginia classes. We do not have enough detail to know specifically at this time. But our analysis clearly indicates that it deals with the PLA efforts to counter our most advanced submarine technology and they are moving it rapidly into production and deployment. It is vital that we take this into serious and careful consideration when planning and implementing any naval operations.

“Let me close by saying that transmitting this information to us has placed our operative there in great danger. We must act on the information, but when we do it is likely that this operative will immediately be suspect ... and we have no way of extracting him once that develops.”

This information was sober news to everyone attending the meeting, particularly those involved in the direct military chain of command. Everyone in the meeting was aware of, and optimistic about, the general success of the Jimmy Carter to date, and hoped it would continue. It was one of the few bright points thus far in the war. The chain of command was particularly concerned about this new revelation because an operation that would place another Sea Wolf class boat and the new USS Virginia in the western Pacific theater together for an offensive was already in final planning.

“Thanks, Bob. That is sobering but very timely and critical information.”

Turning to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the President then issued his orders.

“General Stone, based on the information Bob has provided, I want you and General Livingston to have your people work with the CIA to come up with an operation to support the ROC rebellion on the mainland in the Shanghai and Fuzhou areas if possible.”

Then, referring to the new Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), who had replaced Admiral Crowler when he became SECDEF, the President continued.

“In addition, you will certainly want to review current operations involving the Jimmy Carter or our other attack submarines with CINCPAC in light of this information.”

“Okay, let’s take a short break and then move on to the diplomatic front. Fred, we’ll meet back here in five minutes for your briefing on the current diplomatic situation and status with our allies, the neutral countries and the extent of the enemy’s support.”

**July 14, 18:58 CDT**

**Apartment 14D, DOD Housing  
Ft. Worth, Texas**

Cindy listened intently as her friend spoke to her over the cell phone. Despite having used them for so many years now, she nonetheless found it amazing that she could simply carry around a phone on her person or in her car, dial a number and speak to someone half a continent away ... or on the other side of the world for that matter.

“The marvels of modern technology,” she thought as her friend spoke on.

Of course, of late, the option for telephone conversations to the “other side of the world” was “out” in many areas. Then Cindy responded to her friend.

“Yes, he’s still somewhere overseas. I get letters from him two or three times a week, but he can’t say where he is.”

Cindy listened with some emotion as her friend expressed her own concern for Jess.

“Of course Liz, I’m always worried ... I’m just trying my best to view this like any other duty assignment in his career ... but with the attacks here on our own soil and the casualty lists each week it’s real hard to do. Heck, I’m trying to do my part by working in a defense plant here in Ft. Worth ... but it’s just almost impossible not to worry. Keeping busy 14-16 hours a day does help though.”

As Liz expressed dismay over the fact that Jess had been called out of retirement, Cindy’s response was impassioned.

“Now Liz, you know good and well that we had certainly hoped for that. In any normal condition with his retirement and reserve duty he could have avoided any serious duty assignments short of war. Jess sure loves working our ranch. But this is war and these are not ordinary or normal circumstances. Jess and I both believe and agree that our very survival as a people is at stake here ... just like our parents and grandparents faced in World War II ... even more so.

“... yes, Liz, even more so. These people have killed tens of thousands of our citizens. They’ve taken captive tens of thousands more who were simply on business or vacationing when hostilities broke out. I can’t tell you how many friends of ours have brothers, sisters, fathers or other relatives who are simply missing in Asia. They haven’t heard a thing.”

At this, Cindy's friend indicated that she and her husband also knew some people who had relatives that were now missing overseas.

"See ... you know many of them too"

What Cindy heard from her friend next was extremely surprising and disconcerting.

"... my goodness! You're kidding, You were that close? Thank God, you were kept safe! I'd heard on the news about that attack in the Boston area but just presumed that you and Joseph were well away from it in New Hampshire.

"I tell you Liz, I believe these animals are willing to enslave or kill as many of us who will not comply with their ideology as they can. They showed it to us on March 15<sup>th</sup> ... just like the terrorists did years ago on September 11<sup>th</sup>. And they have continued to do so with the attacks on our malls, our airports, our bridges ... and those missile attacks out of Panama on our coastal cities here on the Gulf coast have been terrible!"

The dismay Cindy's friend expressed was not uncommon. Americans were not used to warfare being conducted on their own soil. A few sporadic terror attacks, even some of them as large as 9-11 were one thing ... prolonged, multiple attacks that did not let up were another thing entirely.

"I have no idea. I am sure something is planned ... but the announcement of the losses in the Arabian Sea means we have to be even more careful with our military forces. My heart goes out to the families of those folks! I can empathize with them, now that both Jess and Billy are involved.

"The news is full of speculation about how we're going to defeat these new weapons ... these new "super-torpedoes". ... We just have to have faith that our people will come up with something and then the plans to use them. Liz, I have that faith ... and I know Jess does."

At mention of her son Billy, Liz asked about him.

"Billy was here over the fourth. ... It was great ... really good to have him here in his Marine uniform. I can tell you the people around here are sure behind our armed forces. I can't tell you how many hi-fives, pats on the back and compliments and well wishes he got as we walked around before the fireworks. He looked so good ... reminded me of his Dad."

Liz asked Cindy if she wasn't worried sick for the safety of her son.

"Of course I am! What mother wouldn't be? He's shipping out next week. Going to fly helicopters like his father. He can't say exactly where, but he told me he'd be in the Pacific Theater somewhere. I'm going to miss him and I am going to worry ... I don't know what else to do but put it in God's hands. I know He will use Billy as He sees fit."

When Liz agreed and asked God's blessings on them, Cindy responded with feeling.

"Thank you so much for that, Liz. ... How's Joseph's work?"

"It always amazes me what is being done with that. The potential of that project is a bright light for all of us ... it's just a shame that funding and resource for such a hopeful effort are suffering as we defend ourselves against those who would destroy it all ... but I am thankful we have the means to defend ourselves. I know Joseph's efforts on that project will pay off. I know how proud you are of him and you have every right to be ... and how's Patricia?"

Her friend lost no time in explaining her pride in her daughter Patricia and from the description of her achievements at college Cindy could tell why.

"Liz, that's just great! 4.0 you say at Rutgers? You have every reason to be a proud mother ... and from the work Joe is accomplishing, a proud wife too. Just keep that in mind and everything will work out for the best ... I know it will."

After expressing her thanks for Cindy's compliments and faith, her friend indicated that she had to hurry and finish cooking dinner for Joe.

"Okay, Liz. It's great to talk to you. I miss you. Let's talk again in a couple of weeks. Bye."

As Cindy hung up the phone she paused for a moment and considered her good friend Elizabeth Trevor. They had known each other since High School. She and her husband, Joseph, along with their daughter Patricia, had moved to the northeast over ten years ago. They lived outside of Boston in Nashua, New Hampshire. Joseph was a senior research scientist working on the Genome Project. Patricia, who was a year and a half older than Billy, had graduated from High School up there and gone on to college at Rutgers, majoring in communications.

Cindy and Elizabeth had kept in touch the entire time, generally writing or calling every two to three months. Now, with the outbreak of war and its impact on everyone, and with the Trevors knowing of Jess's and now Billy's involvement with the military, the frequency of contact had increased to every couple of weeks. Cindy was glad it had. It was good to keep in touch with your close friends in such times. Cindy was grateful for that friendship and hoped she could be as much a comfort and help to Elizabeth as Elizabeth was to her at this time. She knew Elizabeth understood.

### **July 14, that same time**

#### **Trevor Residence**

#### **Nashua, New Hampshire**

Elizabeth Trevor was having similar thoughts about her friend Cindy after she hung up her telephone. In fact, Cindy's decision to work in the defense plant and her experiences in doing so

while her husband was away had inspired Elizabeth. Although her husband wasn't "away" in the sense that he was overseas fighting, he was extremely involved in his work and spent many hours away from home as a result. With the war and the decrease in funds and resources, his "all work and little play" situation had only been exacerbated.

Elizabeth understood and respected her husband's dedication to the work with which he was involved. But ever since Patricia had gone off to school she had been feeling both of their absences acutely. It was a painful combination of the typical "empty nest syndrome" and Joseph's additional hours spent away from home, both occurring at such a perilous time, that added to Elizabeth's sense of "unrest" and aloneness.

Oh, she had tried a couple of hobbies ... but nothing had really captured her attention and her commitment. She had talked with Joseph and at first he had a hard time understanding.

"Haven't I provided a good living Liz?" he had asked. "You can have anything you want."

When she had broken down and started crying, finally sharing her feelings of loneliness, and confessing that what she really wanted was for them to have more time together ... he had understood. And he had made adjustments. But Elizabeth didn't want him to sacrifice his efforts. She believed in what he was doing. She wanted his understanding ... she wanted whatever effort was available ... and she wanted his support in finding something outside the home, and outside of her church involvement, to which she could devote herself during the long daylight hours.

Liz shared Cindy's experience with Joseph and indicated that she wanted to do something either in direct support of his work, or in support of the war effort. After a lot of talk, they had decided that she would look for a position on the outskirts of Boston, in either New Hampshire or Massachusetts. Joseph was familiar with a number of firms who were supporting the development efforts arising from the research on the Genome Project with which he was involved.

It had been immediately after an interview, while she was walking back to her car in the parking lot of the Raythone facility in Salem, New Hampshire that Elizabeth had heard what she thought at first were some firecrackers going off nearby. The sound had come from the direction of one of the metro stops just up and across the main thoroughfare from her. When the crackling had gone on ... and when the sounds had approached closer and closer to the parking lot where she was standing, it became apparent to Elizabeth that the sounds were not firecrackers at all ... they were gunshots.

Elizabeth had quickly crouched down behind her car and watched in horror as several men with hoods on their heads and carrying rifles ran into a parking lot directly across the street from her. There they took up positions amongst the cars there and began firing at those pursuing them. Then, a larger number of other men, some of them dressed in business suits, had surrounded those first men and shouted for them to surrender. The other men ignored the demand and kept firing. She watched as several of the men in the larger group were hit, clearly seeing the crimson on their clothing from where she sat. Elizabeth heard distinctly the ricochet of bullets off of the pavement and off of cars close to her as the shooting continued and while she crouched ever closer to the pavement, praying.

Ultimately, more and more civilians with guns had arrived along with several police cars and what looked like National Guard vehicles. By the time the National Guard vehicles arrived however, the issue had already been pretty much resolved. Very little fire was coming from that first group of men, although they still refused to surrender. Within another couple of minutes all of the firing had stopped and Elizabeth had cautiously looked over the hood of her car and seen the soldiers, officers and civilians carefully examining the place where the first group of armed men had taken cover. Two of them were apparently wounded and were taken away in ambulances, but only after four civilians who had been wounded were attended to first. There were a total of eight civilians and six of the others covered with sheets and laying on the ground around the area.

A police officer had come over and briefly interviewed Elizabeth regarding what she had seen. When she had finished giving him her statement, and after she had calmed down enough to collect her thoughts, Elizabeth had gotten back in her car and called Joseph on her cell phone. He had told her to stay right there while he got a friend to immediately drive him over. He arrived at break-neck speed within twenty minutes and, after consoling her, had driven her home.

It was this experience that Elizabeth had briefly relayed to Cindy. It was an experience she would never forget. It was an experience that had also firmly established in her mind an acceptance and approval of the President's initiatives regarding firearms in the hands of citizens. Up to that point, Elizabeth had viewed such a proposal with some concern for public safety, but no more. Elizabeth did not want to think about what that first group of men could have done had there been no one around to stop them when they first started firing at the bus stop down the street. Perhaps they had wanted to attack Raythone, where components of the Patriot missile were made ... but they had never gotten the chance. Elizabeth had experienced firsthand how citizens could stop such a terror attack and keep the terrorists occupied with something other than killing defenseless citizens.

As a result, Elizabeth made a decision about the location of her employment. Until Massachusetts passed laws similar to New Hampshire's which were in full support of the President's initiatives, Elizabeth had determined that she would be working in New Hampshire in any case. New Hampshire was one of forty-three states that had already passed such laws. In fact, New Hampshire

had been very close to the conditions adopted by the President before all of this had happened. Massachusetts was one of only seven states holding out with their now proven to be outmoded “common sense”, “tougher” gun legislation. Elizabeth hoped that the events she had witnessed, which had occurred on the outskirts of Boston, would help tilt the scales in Massachusetts and get the President’s initiatives adopted into state law there as well. But until they did, she would not work or spend time in a place that was an “open range” for terrorists like those who had attacked in Salem.

The conversation with Cindy had brought those memories of the terror attack back into Elizabeth’s mind and crystallized the truth in Cindy’s words: “These animals are willing to enslave or kill as many of us as they can.”

“But, enough of that,” she thought. “It’s past 8 PM and Joe will be home soon and I still have to get those potatoes on for dinner.”

**July 14, 8:34 PM, EDT**

### **Along Route 128**

#### **The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

Joseph guided his late model Lexus through the traffic on Route 128. He had made the mistake a number of times of calling it I-95 when he first arrived in the Boston area ten years ago. He had quickly learned that the local inhabitants still referred to it by its old name, Route 128, and that calling it I-95 pretty much established him as a “newcomer”. Route 128 was what he now called it himself.

One thing about working late hours was that the traffic was much more bearable at this hour of the evening. Rush hour traffic here could be brutal, bumper to bumper stop and go. He was glad he did not have to put up with that. Just the same, this was later than normal and he had just called Liz to let her know he was going to be even later than expected. While talking, the disappointment in her voice was evident and after the call he had vowed to himself again, for the umpteenth time, to make sure that he didn’t disappoint her like that again. She was such a loyal and good trooper!

In Joseph’s religious faith, he honestly believed that he and his wife would be together forever. To them marriage had always meant something more than “‘til death do you part” ... to them it meant “for time and all eternity”. It was one of the reasons, on average, that marriages amongst those of his faith tended to hold together well above the national average ... but not always. Joe honestly hoped he could live to warrant an eternity with his devoted and loving wife, but he knew his long hours and commitment to his career sometimes got in the way of his desire to be with her and nurture that relationship. It was a situation he longed to address ... but sometimes felt powerless to adequately do so due to the drive behind his commitment to “the project”.

Joseph Trevor was a senior research scientist and director working on the Human Genome Project (HGP), a US Department of Energy (DOE) led international scientific collaboration that was researching and detailing the genetic blueprint of the human species. Such research and the understanding that it provided were expected to produce significant medical and physiological benefits for all of mankind. It was a tremendously complex and delicate project, one that ranked with the Manhattan project and the Apollo lunar landings in the pantheon of major scientific projects undertaken by the United States, and one that was perhaps an order of magnitude more complex and difficult than either. As he drove towards home, Joe reflected on the path that had led him to his current position on that project.

After marriage and completing his undergraduate degree in physics at Brigham Young University in Utah, Joe and Elizabeth had moved back home to Texas to work there and to raise what they had hoped would be a large family. While there, Joseph had completed his Masters degree in Physiology and his Doctorate in Biophysics. The completion of his formal education had occurred while working for Talbott Laboratories in the Dallas area between 1983 and 1992.

In 1986 after several years of trying, their first child, a daughter they named Patricia, had been born. She was the first of what Joseph and Elizabeth hoped would be several naturally born children. But their hopes and aspirations in that regard were cut short after Liz tragically experienced a miscarriage and a still birth with the two following pregnancies. A genetic disorder that had led to the failed pregnancies was discovered within Elizabeth, a disorder that meant that there was only a one in ten chance that any pregnancy would be successful. As a result, they always considered Patricia to be their “miracle” baby. But she was a miracle baby afflicted with the same disorder as her mother.

A natural and understandable desire to comprehend this disorder and hopefully correct it drove Joe into further research and the study of biophysics. This desire led to Joseph’s doctorate in Biophysics and ultimately led him to complete significant research on human DNA while working at Talbott Labs. His papers were extraordinarily well researched and insightful. They were published and became well read throughout the entire biomedical scientific community. Several of them led to breakthrough understanding of the genetic links to cellular development and senescence.

Joseph’s research and his publications ultimately captured the attention of leading researchers and administrators throughout the country. In 1992 this notoriety led to an offer from the Director of the National Center for Human Genome Research for Joe to lead a human genome research effort in the Boston area for the National Institute of Health. In that capacity, the envisioned research center

would be an auxiliary and compliment to the three major DOE genome research facilities at Lawrence Berkeley, Lawrence Livermore and Los Alamos National Laboratories.

Professionally and personally it was an offer Joseph could not refuse. As the Director and lead research scientist at the facility, Joe would be in a position to “make the difference” that he longed for. It was also an offer Elizabeth prayed would lead Joe and his staff to discover cures for others suffering from the same types of genetic problems that had led to her failed pregnancies. She held onto a personal hope that perhaps it might also occur in time to help her and Joe with their goals for a larger family. As the years had passed, it became apparent that a breakthrough of that nature would not come in time for Elizabeth, but the personal hope naturally shifted, for both Joseph and Elizabeth, that it would come in time for their daughter Patricia.

Now, years later, as Joe neared the exit to Route 3 which would take him to Nashua, he once again experienced the renewal of the inner drive that had moved him over the years. It was a welcome renewal, particularly during this war-torn time when resources and personnel were in short supply. Joe was saddened that such efforts for good had to be impeded by the evil that had been brought upon them ... but he knew it was necessary lest the entire effort he was involved with be destroyed, or hijacked and misdirected by that same evil. Such a consideration was intolerable to Joseph and he therefore supported the war effort completely, despite its impact on his own efforts.

That impact was nonetheless leading to longer work hours on his part, even longer than his normal ten-hour workdays. Joe hoped Liz would continue to understand. He resolved in his mind to discuss it in detail with her this evening and see. He also wanted to share with her some of the hopes he was having regarding a particular line of research with which he was currently involved. Even though things were very premature, he found that sharing things like this at an early stage with Elizabeth and hearing her creative feedback and thoughts often stimulated his subconscious towards very fruitful follow-up lines of research. Elizabeth was not nearly as formally educated as Joe, but he sometimes believed that her natural “intuition”, common sense, and ability to analyze a situation or circumstance were worth far more than many college degrees, scientific or otherwise. This “collaboration” was their own personal “secret”, of course set within the bounds of any company or national confidentiality that Joe was honor bound to keep. Their ability to collaborate where they could was another reason that Joe honestly felt that his talents with respect to the project, along with his relationship to his wife, were both gifts from above. Still, the tradeoffs and the competing requirements on his time, were sometimes very difficult to resolve, even more so now, and he wanted to make sure he did all he could to allow for his wife’s feelings and needs.

“I’ll just have to keep at it,” he thought as his path on Route 3 crossed I-495 on the way to Nashua. “If the good Lord, Elizabeth and myself all know I am trying ... it will work out for the best in its own good time.”

After Elizabeth’s experience with that terrorist attack while she was in the Raythone parking lot over in Salem, New Hampshire a few weeks ago ... Joseph definitely hoped it would work out for the best sooner rather than later. Apparently that very interview had gone very well and they were asking Elizabeth to come back next week. Joe hoped it would lead to the opportunity she was looking for.

Joseph also hoped it would be “sooner” with regard to the particular line of research with which he was personally involved at work. For the last several days, while running pilot research studies on a more detailed examination of the protein coding instructions of genes that are transmitted indirectly through intermediary RNA molecules, Joseph had been using prototype atomic force microscopes and enhanced mass spectrometric analysis. These were recently developed methodologies using even newer prototype equipment. They were very unproven but they held great promise for allowing a much more thorough and detailed analysis of the protein coding instructions themselves. The result of the initial analysis was looking very promising in that regard. The promise of providing a much more thorough understanding of the coding itself and a concomitant understanding of its transmission through RNA appeared very real. But all of that would require more research, testing and analysis. In order for it to be duplicated and verified independently, it would also require the development of more refined and procedure-oriented methodologies involving the new equipment and approaches.

As exciting and potentially productive as that analysis was, it was not the issue that he wanted to share and talk about with Elizabeth. In addition to the initial results of the analysis of the coding instructions and their concomitant transmission through RNA, Joseph had noticed the slightest hint of something more basic-something that appeared to be underlying the whole DNA/RNA/Protein structure itself. Something in the sub-molecular or even in the atomic range that was barely perceptible to the new equipment and methods he was employing. Something with the faintest glimmer of electrical and physical characteristics that implied an even more rudimentary level to the entire basis for the coding instructions themselves, and for the entire transmission mechanism of those instructions. Something phenomenally complex that the entire DNA structure itself might rest upon ... something as yet never noticed, never studied ... never even imagined.

“Maybe I am just focusing or concentrating too hard ... maybe I am making something out of nothing,” he thought.

“These are some fantastic potential conclusions ... based on such small shreds of evidence and totally new and unproven methodologies,” he continued. “But still, there’s, there’s just a “feeling” to it ... there’s something there. I’m sure of it.”

Joseph resolved to review it all in much more detail over the next couple of weeks and make more observations. He knew he would need much more solid and compelling data before even considering mentioning it to anyone at the Center.

“I’ll *certainly* have to have my ducks in a major row before going to National Institute of Health’s National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) or the JGI (Department of Energy’s Joint Genome Institute). The people there will simply tear into any such notion of a more rudimentary structure with a vengeance. They will simply not want to believe it after all the research that has already been done. The idea that this could have been missed, even without the new methods would be too great a leap,” he thought.

“I have to admit myself that it is almost too phenomenal to even consider, and I am the one finding evidence of it. Well, its going to take a lot more of that evidence and a much more documented and detailed description before it goes anywhere ... but it sure is interesting ... and I just *know* that there is something to it.”

As Joe came up on the exit off of U.S. Highway 3 and took it towards his subdivision in Nashua, he looked forward to dinner and the discussion with Elizabeth before they retired for the night. He was anxious to set her mind at ease and share his feelings. He also looked forward to sharing his initial thoughts and findings on this new data and hearing what were sure to be her “out of the box” and very creative thoughts on the matter.

“We’ll just have to see where it leads,” he thought.

At the time, Joe could not comprehend where his research on this matter would lead or what impact it would ultimately have on his and Elizabeth’s lives ... or the even more dramatic impact it would have on world events.



## Chapter 17

*“Get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding.” – Proverbs*

**July 18, 10:15 EDT**

**The Rose Garden, The White House**

**Washington, D.C.**

Looking out over the assembly of reporters, journalists, administration officials, congressional and senatorial representatives, state governors and other U.S. and international VIPs assembled for the official opening, the President could not help but think back to the attacks that had made today's meeting necessary. So many had sacrificed so much. His own Vice President, the Secretary of Defense and the Director of the CIA had been amongst the first Americans to die in the fateful attacks back in March ... and they had died right here. He and his wife had barely escaped alive as they arrived at the White House that day and had been whisked immediately away in Marine-One by his Secret Service detail and by the Marines. Even more than his own earlier combat experiences, he would never forget those tense moments, moments made even sharper than any of his prior combat experience because his wife had been with him and because so much more had been at stake.

“Thank God they had not used nukes,” thought the President ... “If they had, I would not be here ... and neither would that half of the world.”

But today, a little more than four months later, while so many more Americans were sacrificing their all to maintain the Republic, the White House was reopening. A much stronger White House both structurally and representatively. Structurally because of the Herculean construction efforts that had gone into rebuilding and shoring it up with hardened steel, representatively because of the great awakening that was occurring in the nation despite the circumstances.

America was at war, was embroiled in perhaps the most deadly and dangerous war in her history.

“And that war is not going very well,” thought the President.

“But despite the setbacks and defeats, the people are rising to the challenge ... I have seen it ... I have felt it!” he continued in thought as he prepared to approach the podium and the people gathered there, the nation and most of the free world.

“Now if we are just granted the time to rise completely, we will shake off the complacency and moral equivocation that have beset us and that helped lead to this mess. We'll defeat these tyrants and free their peoples once and for all ... and we will never allow ourselves to be in this position again!”

The ceremony was being held in the open, but under the strictest of security. Contrails circled and lazily floated overhead from two flights of F-22 aircraft standing vigil. The beat of helicopter rotors could be heard in the background, where Blackhawk helicopters full of troops and Apache and Comanche attack helicopters hovered. As he approached the microphone the President knew that Stinger missile teams, Patriot missile batteries and the Aegis cruiser in the Bay were alert and ready for any contingency. Here in the Rose Garden there was a triple-sized section of Secret Service, and just beyond the bushes and fences there were hundreds of U.S. Marines armed and ready.

Looking into the cameras, seeing the “on air” light brighten, the President began.

“My fellow Americans, we are gathered here today to open the White House and again conduct the nation's business from its traditional seat of government for the executive branch. We made every effort possible to hasten this day. We did this for two reasons. First and foremost as a message to the aggressors ... to the criminal leaders of those nation that so dastardly and viciously attacked us in March. That message is straightforward.

*“You have not won. We are earnestly committed as a people and with our allies. As surely as we have rebuilt this house that you damaged and nearly destroyed, we will rebuild the world you are attempting to destroy, and it will be a world in which you do not exist!”*

The President had to wait a moment as thunderous applause and a chorus of affirmative yells rang out in response to these opening words. When the noise died down, the President continued.

“The second reason is to remember and commemorate those who have fallen, both here and across the world, for the sake of liberty and freedom. We shall never forget, we shall always remember their sacrifice for our Republic and for the principles upon which it stands. We shall never forget their loved ones who have been left behind. We shall continue this fight until it is won! Until once and for all the world is again safe for the principles of liberty and free determination for which we fight, and protected from the abject tyranny and oppression of those against whom we fight ... *against whom we will most certainly prevail!*”

Once again a thunderous ovation broke out, mixed with shouts of support of what the President was saying. Again he waited a moment or two for the noise to die down.

“As surely as we quickly assembled the resources and the materiel and the manpower to rebuild this building, our nation, along with the other free nations of the world, will quickly produce and bring together the resources, the materiel and the manpower to successfully prosecute this war effort. I will

not equivocate or mince words. We are in a dangerous position while our enemies are continuing to gain ground. Many of our very best are fighting, sacrificing, and dying to buy us the time to do what America has always done ... to out produce, to out think and to overcome the specter of tyranny.

"We shall not fail in this our calling. I call on all of the American people to redouble your efforts, to volunteer more of your time, to offer up more of your abilities in helping realize these goals. They are essential goals to the survival of our way of life, to the survival of our nation and to the perpetuation of liberty. I urge and beseech each of you to do this ... but we shall do it with or without you as individuals. I have absolute faith in this. Let me share with you a couple of reasons why.

"First, I have seen it in your faces and in your eyes as I have traveled around the nation. Our enemies have grossly miscalculated and continue to do so. They fight against our technology, our equipment and our munitions that are rightfully recognized as the best in the world. They fight against our young men who are recognized as the best trained and most capable in the world. But these things are merely an outgrowth of something much deeper and stronger. They are a representation of the inner strength of our citizenry, of that very thing I have felt and seen in so many of you. The people of America have faith in themselves and in their God-given rights as individuals. We are free. We are not ignorant, indoctrinated masses committed to an ideal preached to them by others. We are the most intelligent and most free people of the earth and we have tasted for ourselves what a liberty granted to us by the Creator can mean-and we have no intention of letting it be extinguished. Once aroused, this liberty and this individualism will produce technology and equipment and materiel in quantities and quality that shall astound the world and shall completely overwhelm our enemies. Have no doubts regarding this ... let's just be about it!"

Again the roar came ... and not just there in the Rose Garden. It was heard on the streets surrounding the Whiter House from the tens of thousands of those gathered and watching the proceeding over closed circuit TV. It was heard around the nation in the homes, businesses, taverns, gathering places and on the street as scores of millions listened in. It took longer to die down this time, but when it did, the President continued.

"This commitment, this faith has been well evidenced by our citizens as they have stood up by the tens of thousands to the acts of terror continuing amongst us. Our enemies have had people placed here for decades. But they are losing them ... and they will lose them all. Our initiatives at the borders where we have placed two full divisions of troops on our southern border and one division to the north to interdict illegal aliens crossing those borders have virtually shut off the supply. Those left are being confronted by our own armed citizens who are answering the call we made to arm themselves and interdict terror. Both these common citizens and our growing Home Guard initiatives are making a huge difference. Attacks are stopped and snuffed out before they can attain their aims.

"While we do not know overall numbers, our intelligence efforts indicate that those enemy terrorists and collaborators left amongst us are getting desperate. Their increasingly desperate condition may translate into increasingly desperate tactics. We are by no means finished with this business here within our own borders, but we are making great progress and we are thwarting the aim of our enemies. They want to frighten us, they want to paralyze us, they want to keep us from mobilizing so we can defeat their aggression in so many far a distant places around the globe-but they shall fail. I urge you as citizens to continue your efforts. You are our first line of defense in such a war and I commit myself to providing you with the tools and enabling legislation to insure that you can stand against our enemies wherever they are found.

"In that regard, I am proud to announce today a bipartisan agreement in the House and Senate regarding our firearms initiatives. In both bodies, legislation will be introduced tomorrow morning entitled "*The Firearms Restoration Act*". We have the votes to pass it quickly and Congress will do so. All but seven states have already passed similar legislation. I urge those remaining state Governors and legislators to join with us and pass similar acts for your states. The longer you delay, the greater the danger to your people. Arm your conscientious and law-abiding citizens and let them protect themselves and their loved ones. Do not provide a haven or a killing zone for our enemies.

"For the benefit of the public, I have included the final draft of the legislation that will be introduced tomorrow. For those of you watching TV, it should appear in a separate window on your screen. For others, it will be published in most major newspapers tomorrow."

## **THE FIREARMS RESTORATION ACT**

### **Section 1**

All prior laws, regulations and acts that in any way restrict, regulate, permit or license the sale or ownership of personal firearms to legal, lawful citizens of any of the several states or territories comprising the United States are hereby revoked and nullified.

1. For the purposes of this act, personal firearms shall be defined as any firearm that can be reasonably carried and operated by a single individual, irrespective of magazine capacity, firing rate, "look", "feel", cost, bayonet lug, folding stock, pistol grip, barrel length or any other operational or appearance characteristic.

2. For the purposes of this act, lawful citizen shall be defined as any citizen of any of the several states or territories comprising the United States who is of legal age to vote and who is not under any restriction as a result of any unfulfilled criminal conviction.
3. For the purposes of this act, any citizen sentenced to a criminal conviction who has fulfilled the requirements of that conviction (including all incarceration, probation and any other supervision required), shall have their full Second Amendment rights under this act restored. Existing restrictions or prohibitions on the Second Amendment rights of those citizens who have prior convictions, which they have fulfilled are, in accordance with this section of this act, nullified.
  1. The single exception to the restoration of Second Amendment rights cited in this section shall apply to any convicted felon whose conviction included the use of a firearm in the commission of a felonious act that willfully deprives other citizens of life, limb or property. In such cases the Second Amendment rights of citizens who are convicted of such acts shall be permanently relinquished.
4. The supremacy clause of the Constitution of the United States shall be in full force and effect in relation to this act restoring the right to keep and bear arms throughout the several states or territories comprising the United States.

### Section 2

No license, permit, waiting period, background check or other hindrance, restriction, or infringement shall be required of any lawful citizen purchasing a personal firearm or carrying a personal firearm on their person in any public place, or on, or in, their own property.

### Section 3

Any law abiding citizen in any of the several states or territories of the United States has the right to keep and bear arms in defense of themselves, their community, their state or their nation and for any other legal purpose. This right shall not be infringed for any lawful citizen of the United States outside of the conditions stated in Section 1.3.1 of this act. The only law applicable to the keeping and bearing of personal firearms shall be the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

1. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States reads as follows:  
 "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed."

**NOTE:** Regarding Section 1.3 of this act: If We the People are willing to restore the liberty of an individual who has committed a crime, then we must also restore their ability to defend that liberty. Otherwise, their liberty is an illusion. For this reason, any citizen who abuses their right to keep and bear arms by committing, while armed, a felonious act that willfully deprives fellow citizens of life, limb or property, shall be subject to a permanent relinquishment of their Second Amendment rights in addition to their prison sentence.

"It may have seemed inconceivable that such legislation would ever be introduced or passed just a few short months ago ... but circumstances have proven the error of that former way of thinking. It was well and truly said many, many years ago that an armed people are a free people, that an armed society is a polite society. On my watch as your President, I commit that we in government will not drift into such complacency again nor put our nation and its people at such risk. It took criminal actions on a horrific scale to awaken us from our complacency. Once we successfully conclude the horrible business of this war effort, let us not drift back into such complacency again.

"The second reason I mentioned has to do with the tenacity of our armed forces in facing such horrendous odds and overwhelming numbers. We have suffered setbacks and I expect we will suffer more before we eventually discover our "Battle of Midway" in this war. But even while enduring these setbacks, I can report that our young people and their officers and commanders are fighting with a will and resolve that is profound and awe inspiring. Without divulging operational details, let me say that two of the many areas where our forces are exhibiting such resolve at the current time are in the Persian Gulf region: on the Qatar Peninsula and on the Island of Diego Garcia.

"My fellow Americans, in both cases our forces are facing monumental and impossible odds. They are facing well-trained and indoctrinated armies that dwarf their own numbers. Enemies who will commit the worst of atrocities against them should they fall. They are surrounded and cut-off ... and yet they still fight. They are fighting to buy us time; they are fighting for their wives, their daughters, their sons, their parents, their friends ... their way of life and their faith in Him who provided it. Please remember them in your thoughts and prayers this day and in the coming days. Pray that we may be successful in our efforts to relieve them, or, failing that, that they may be successful in purchasing time for us to throw back the aggressors. It was well said by Thomas Paine over two hundred and thirty years ago,

*"Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as Freedom should not be highly rated."*

“Let us all recognize the cost that is being exacted and the price that is being paid. Let us all stand and willingly pay whatever price necessary to maintain this celestial gift of freedom with which we have been endowed. Please remember our forces on Qatar and Diego Garcia.

“Now, we will begin conducting the nation’s business here in the White House immediately after the official ribbon-cutting ceremony, which will be conducted by three very special women. These are three heroines to whom our nation owes a great debt of honor. They are the widows of the former Vice President, the former Secretary of Defense and the former Director of the CIA, all killed here at the White House in March as they were faithfully performing their duties. I knew each of these men personally and can tell you all that behind each of these great men stood a truly great wife, companion and counselor. Mrs. Reeves, Mrs. Hattering and Mrs. Rowley, please come forward now and accept the continuing condolences and honor of a grateful nation.”

As the three women came forward and the cameras focused on them, President Norm Weisskopf could be seen stepping back to stand with his own wife and quietly taking her hand in his own and visibly squeezing it as they both looked on. With little fanfare and with great solemnity, the three women came forward and took hold of the yellow ribbon that had been tied around the White House. They stood at their appointed places thirty feet apart from each other. Then, at the appointed signal, each used a pair of scissors to cut the ribbon and officially re-open the White House, the symbol of the seat of the American government and the residence and work place of the commander in chief.

As the ribbon was cut, and as another thunderous roar of approval broke forth all over the nation, the microphone closest to Mrs. Reeves, wife of the former Vice President, picked up a barely audible comment that she said to herself.

“For you Alan, may God rest you, and may He bless the nation you loved so much.”

### **July 18, that same time**

#### **Presidential Residence**

#### **Beijing, China**

The picture was grainy and the audio quality was much reduced over any local or regional broadcast, but it was visible and audible nonetheless. It was being seen here by a special and very closely held arrangement. With most of the major communication satellites on both sides of the conflict down, and the others in constant danger, this feed had taken a very circuitous route to China. Through cables across the Atlantic that carried the WNN broadcast to Europe, it was boosted and repeated across Europe to Moscow. There, the presentation itself was video taped by other WNN employees and broadcast to settlements in the Ural Mountains. There, another WNN crew from India video taped it once again and broadcast it down through Central Asia to the Himalayas. High in those mountains, three separate crews once again picked up the signal and boosted and repeated it to Tehran, New Delhi and Beijing, where it was finally being watched here in the Presidential residence and at the alternate and more secure facilities for the Politburo.

Jien Zenim, President and absolute leader of the People’s Republic of China and the Chairman of the larger coalition of Asian States, sipped on his Earl Grey tea and watched his principle adversary preside over ceremonies at the White House. Turning to two of his long time friends and allies, Chin Zhongbaio and General Hunbaio, who had come here specifically to view this broadcast in the privacy of the President’s quarters, Zenim commented on the broadcast they were watching.

“Encouraging and inspiring words for his people. Despite his age, the man remains a vibrant leader and therefore a danger, however remote, to all of our plans. His words alone will not change the fact that his forces and those of his allies are in retreat all across the Mid East and Asia and across the Pacific ... those words alone cannot build factories overnight that no longer exist. Still his inspiration and leadership can produce unpredictable results ... in fact he is promising to do so.

“As our influence spreads across this portion of the world, we need to ensure that our people benefit from the success we are experiencing. We also need to ensure that those who collaborate with our forces, or those of our allies ... and those who freely join us similarly benefit. We have an opportunity with our production capabilities intact, with capturing the Japanese, Singapore, Malaysian and Philippine factories intact, to create a high-tech mass production capability unlike anything ever seen on earth before. Irrespective of the American’s confidence in their future ability, we have the opportunity make such capabilities a reality now. I want to make sure that we do not squander it.

“I also want to implement our plans effectively to block the growth of any American capability. The activities of those assets that the Islamics and our allies on the Cuban Island have sponsored have been effective, but I believe the Americans are going to achieve the upper hand. In this regard, I believe that we should proceed earlier than scheduled with the preliminary planning for our military operation, “Hong-Lu-Dung”, against the Americans and the activation of our own internal assets inside America as a build up to it. In that regard, I want to see the elimination of Weisskopf and his obvious leadership capabilities in rallying and strengthening the American people. Chin, do you believe we have the necessary Politburo support for this, and the necessary assets to carry it off?”

Chin Zhongbaio was the Chief Executive Officer of Chinese Ocean-going Shipping Company (COSCO), which had grown to be the largest commercial shipping company in the world before the

onset of hostilities. With the destruction or capture of most of the Korean and Japanese shipping, there was no entity that could now compare. In addition, Chin was one of the most influential members of the Politburo where it was universally accepted that his knowledge of how to “do business” in the western world exceeded that of every other member of that body. And Chin had the experience and the balance sheet to prove it. He had also made the greatest contribution of almost anyone, outside of Jien Zenim, to the current planning and execution of the war. The new aircraft carriers, the large amphibious assault ships and the ballistic missile arsenal ships that had all been converted from COSCO container ships were all credited to Chin. In addition, the thousands of very capable and mass-produced landing craft that were ferrying troops and materiel all across the growing Chinese sphere of influence were a monument to COSCO planning, engineering and manufacturing. These innovations, and others like them from other quarters, were the gears and teeth to the mechanism Jien Zenim had envisioned and then implemented.

“Mr. President, with the success we are having economically, militarily and socially ... there is no member of the Politburo who would stand in the way of this plan, particularly given our successes against the United States to date. I would only suggest that we insure that our other operations in the Pacific, particularly against Guam, and our operations moving toward Australia through New Guinea not be negatively impacted by this earlier-than-planned execution of Hong-Lu-Dung.”

Jien considered the counsel of his friend carefully. All three operations were tremendous in scope and daunting from a planning and logistics standpoint. But Jien Zenim had no doubts that the production mechanisms already in place would be more than equal to the task. This was particularly true when considered in light of the significant additional resource coming out of the occupied nations of Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore. Rising from his plush leather chair, he walked over next to his friend, bidding him to stay seated, and placed his hand on his shoulder.

“Chin, I not only assure you that the other operations will not be delayed or negatively impacted ... I demand it. We have a growing capacity and we must use it to strike as quickly as possible so that our momentum is maintained and our enemies are kept off balance.

“Now, General, what are your thoughts on this matter? Can we maintain the advantage with our weaponry? I have read reports that concern me regarding a drop off in kill ratios with the U.S. Navy.”

General Hunbaio was the head of the Peoples Liberation Army’s weapons development efforts. He and Chin had worked together to develop the plans for mating the ships developed in Chin’s factories to weaponry that could make them effective. The LRASD weaponry that was proving so successful at sinking major ships of the U.S. Navy and keeping the rest at bay were recognized as being instruments of his creation. It had been the General’s personal idea to find and recruit the Vietnamese scientist, Lu Pham, who had perfected the design for the super-cavitating weaponry when their own people had failed to produce the necessary breakthrough. This was the same Lu Pham who had been made a Hero of the People’s Republic as a result of his years of service and that culminated recently in the success of his weapons against the U.S. Navy.

In addition, the General’s researchers, scientists and engineers had used their own technical expertise and the data and information pilfered from the West, and from America in particular, to develop many more advanced weapons. The advanced KS-2+ anti-aircraft missiles, the anti-satellite weaponry, longer ranged and more accurate ballistic missiles, improvements to Russian supplied aircraft and tank designs, all of these were products of the General’s efforts. Altogether, the General’s achievements when coupled with those of Chin Zhongbaio had provided the teeth to Jien Zenim’s overall plan of Chinese domination. And they were very sharp and powerful teeth indeed.

“Mr. President, we have, and will continue to produce and develop the weaponry to advance and accomplish the goals you have established and that have been approved by the full Politburo. I see no technical reason why we should not proceed with Lu Dung on an advanced timetable.

“With respect to the reduction in kill ratios. The explanation for this is simple. The Americans are not engaging us in numbers. They have become most respectful and wary of the LRASD weaponry our forces are employing. While it is true that they have had some success with their advanced Sea Wolf class submarines, they only have three of these and are very careful in their deployment. Their newer Virginia class boats have similar characteristics but a smaller weapons load. In this regard, our lead engineer, Admiral Lu Pham, informs me that a solution has been worked out for the acquisition and targeting firmware on the devices for the known characteristic parameters for these submarines. That update is currently being uploaded to all existing weapons and will be included as an integral part of new devices as they come off the assembly lines. The next time one of these American submarines appears in Chinese water, or near one of our LRASD armed war vessels, they will be in for a nasty, fatal surprise.

“In addition, the airborne variant of the device was successfully transferred to our forces two weeks before our Indian allies used them on the American 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet. Admiral Pham has informed me that the necessary modifications to our own existing devices and to our production facilities are finished. The necessary modifications to three regiments of our Badger bombers and three regiments of our Backfire bombers are complete. They are ready to be employed against our enemies.”

This was what Jien Zenim liked to hear. It was information, when taken together with the report given by Chin that would allow Jien to present his proposals to the Politburo with confidence.

“Good. Then we will use this information with influential members of the rest of the Politburo to insure that the PLA planning begins and is carried forward. I will propose this in detail in our meeting tomorrow. I want initial execution as early as this fall if possible, and no later than the beginning of next year. Then, as planned, the full Hong-Lu-Dung execution occurring three months thereafter.

“Finally, let me say a something to you both regarding the recent uprising and insurrection incited by those rebellious forces on Formosa. Although it was very disconcerting and potentially dangerous to each of us, our forces handled themselves well and did their duty for the people. Now that we have contained the insurrection, I am actually thankful that it happened as it did. As bloody as some of the fighting was, it has failed and it has allowed us to root out those forces of dissent from among us. I believe it was a desperate move by the rebel forces on the Island using what they considered to be their most important assets amongst us. Our victory over those assets means that our overall victory on the island is now assured. We know that there are many of them holding out in the mountains on the island, but it will only be a matter of time before they and their president are brought to justice for their treason against the People’s Republic. I want those of their number who have escaped and set up their “interim” government in exile in the American Samoan Islands also brought to justice. I plan to order an operation for that exact purpose.

“My friends, with the victory of the Indians over the American 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet and their imminent occupation of Diego Garcia, we have achieved our preliminary plans well ahead of schedule. I salute you both and all of your personnel who have worked so hard to make this a reality.”

As Jien Zenim said this, he returned to his leather recliner chair and pressed a button that was inset into the right arm of it. When the steward he had summoned appeared, he ordered him to rewind and replay the video of President Weisskopf once again so that he could personally continue to keep a measure of the American President.

**July 20, 03:32 MDT**

### **Abandoned House on Singleton Avenue**

#### **Meridian, Idaho**

As an intensely bright flash went off with a tremendous “BANG”, the door crashed in and several men dressed in black garb with helmets and weapons drawn rushed into the living room.

“Everybody down! Everybody down! On the floor ... this is the Police.”

Alan Campbell knew exactly what was happening and he silently cursed to himself as he assumed the position on the floor of the abandoned house in which they had been meeting. He hoped to God that none of these fools had brought any crack or other drugs with them. If they did, they were all going to be in a load of trouble and he had no idea how he would explain it to his mother ... or even worse, to his brother Leon when he found out.

“Everybody just do as they say”, he yelled as one of the officers stepped over, placed his black boot on Alan’s neck and told him in no uncertain terms to shut up.

Fighting a sudden urge to push that boot off of him, Alan closed his eyes and thought about the situation and what had led up to it.

During the summer months, Alan joined the Home Guard effort in Boise based on his brother’s recommendation. After training, he had pulled patrol duty three times a week around the western approach to the Boise Airport. He carried an M-14 rifle and communications equipment and had even been sworn in as a volunteer deputy with the Ada County Sheriff’s department. He had enjoyed the training immensely and had loved the work even more.

He had taken a full time job for the summer with the City of Boise where he was doing maintenance work on the road system. It paid pretty well and he was proud of the work he did. He found it hard to believe that the former gang member from Chicago was so happy in what he would have considered to be a “honky” lifestyle just one year ago. But that was before he had learned better, before he had discovered, through his brother, the truth of how he and those like him were being manipulated. Now he could see how particular aspects of the political system were bent on buying the votes of the poor through programs that kept them down or kept people like Alan and his brother so disillusioned with the system that they did not vote at all.

Alan and his brother had broken out of all of that and moved west, and they had brought their mother with them. Leon had gone to college and ultimately joined the Marines with his friend Billy Simmons. Alan was doing well in High School and would be a senior after this summer. So what was Alan doing here with a bunch of fledgling gangers in one of their local crack houses?

Simply put, Alan, with his knowledge of the street and experience with “real” gangs back in Chicago, had tried to help these people get out of their rut. When he first came up with the idea, he had gone out looking for the local gangs and had fairly quickly found them. The largest were predominately Hispanic but they were not too picky about letting him in, despite the color of his skin. He’d found that in the intermountain west, unlike the east and west coasts, or many of the major

metropolitan areas, the gangs were not nearly as bent on remaining so ethnically “pure”. If someone wanted to join and was willing to get in line behind the leaders, they were allowed in.

At first there had been a lot of mistrust for the newcomer ... but when they found out how street-wise he was and when he helped them avoid some, from Alan’s perspective, fairly straight forward mistakes with local authorities, that mistrust had turned to respect. This was exactly what Alan wanted and he had accomplished his goal without breaking any laws himself ... although, being that the other gang members were almost always in possession of illicit drugs, just by being caught with any of them he knew he would be jeopardizing his future. But he committed himself to trying to turn these guys towards something positive and getting them out of the very trap in which he and his brother had once found themselves.

Tonight’s meeting was to have been his “play”. He had invited a number of the members here who had given ear to some of his talk about “going straight”. He had been surprised at the turnout. About fifteen members and some of their friends had shown up. Now that a “raid” had occurred, Alan was pretty sure of what had happened. Undoubtedly, some of the other members of the gang, probably the leaders, worried about Alan’s growing influence, had called the police in themselves, anonymously. He was willing to bet that was the case.

**July 20, 05:40 MDT**

**Ada County Sheriff’s Office**

**Boise, Idaho**

“Well, Alan, your story checks out ... and you’d better be grateful that it does. Two of those kids had meth on them and another was carrying a 9mm pistol illegally. Despite the new gun initiatives, which by the way I happen to agree with, it is not legal for a boy thirteen years of age to be carrying such a gun. Particularly when he has a rap sheet a quarter mile long!

“Man, what were you thinking? I’ve just read your info. You did great in Home Guard training. Your reports on duty are meticulous and outstanding, particularly for someone your age. You have a bright future Alan. Why are you risking losing it all for this trash?”

That word “trash” meant something to Alan. He’d been quiet and submissive to this point, but when he heard that word he jerked his head up and stared straight into the deputy’s eyes.

“Deputy, I did it because I used to be what you would call “trash” just like them on the streets in Chicago. I got into that group to help them and I’ve worked hard at it. That whole meeting there in Meridian was about just that. When you ever seen a meeting of fifteen crack and meth heads where no one was smokin’ and nothin’ is sitting in the ashtrays? Where no one rushed into the bathroom to flush the dope down the toilet when the man came? Check it out. That’s what happened tonight.”

The deputy saw the intensity in Alan’s eyes and he believed him.

“I’ve already read the report Alan. What you say is true and agrees with what a few of the younger kids are saying ... the older ones are keeping their mouths shut. The Meridian police are stumped, but they do have that meth and they do have that gun. I believe I can explain it to them and get them on the right track with the investigation. Until we figure out what to do overall, I would suggest that you stay away from that gang over in Meridian. The leaders are going to say it was you.”

Alan knew the gang leaders were going to explain it just that way so as to ruin Alan’s reputation and any future influence with other gang members. But Alan also knew that it was likely that the leaders themselves had called in the raid and that most of the members of the gang who had come tonight would stand with him.

“Deputy, that’s good advice, but I can guarantee that the leaders of that gang called in the police themselves. I bet I can prove it if given the chance and then their whole game would come to an end.”

The deputy rolled the words over in his mind and they helped germinate an idea.

“I tell you what. You’re already released. Your mom is coming down here to get you. Let me talk to her a moment in private when she gets here and then you can go on home with her. Just don’t do something like this again, Alan, without telling someone what you are getting into. It could have gone bad. That kid with the gun could have screwed up and people could have been killed. If that had happened, no one could have helped you avoid some serious problems.”

As the deputy said this, he got up and walked to the door. As his idea coalesced, he stopped and turned back to Alan.

“One final thing, Alan. I have an idea for some new work for you with the Sheriff’s Department, but I want to bounce it off the Sheriff first and then we’ll have to talk to your mom ... are you game to “officially” help some of these people if we set it up?”

Alan didn’t have to think but an instant.

“Yes, sir. I am. Let me know what you come up with.”

The deputy left the room and Alan had nearly twenty minutes to consider his situation. He went through the evening’s events, the risk and the parting words of the deputy in his mind. He thought of how lucky he was to not be in serious trouble. As he contemplated how the Sheriff’s office might officially attempt what Alan had tried on his own, the door opened and there was his mom.

“Oh, Alan! What you got yourself into, boy? I was worried sick drivin’ down here!”

Alan had stood up when his mother had entered the room and as she said this he met her half way across the floor where he hugged her long and tight.

"I'm sorry, Mom. I was really trying to help and things just got out of hand."

Geneva heard the sorrow in her son's voice and recognized the sincerity of it. She knew it was a sorrow based on the potential impact on her of what he had done and she was grateful that Alan's heart was good. It was what she had prayed for over and over for as she drove to the station.

"I know, son. The deputy told me the whole story.

"I want you to know something, Alan. I'm proud of what you tried to do for those kids. I do not like the risk you took, or the particular way you went about it, but God will bless you for trying to help others get out of the same hole He helped you and Leon get out of. But you got to do it the right way. You could have ruined your life and brought shame on me and Leon by going about it this way.

"But I know your heart was right and we can be thankful that no harm came of it. Let's get on out of here and go home."

**July 24, 08:40 EDT**

**Greyhound Bust Stop**

**Little Havana, Florida**

Maria had been waiting since 7 AM, a full hour before the bus was supposed to arrive. Mr. And Mrs. Rodriguez and Father Chapman had arrived together at 7:45 AM and stood with her as they waited. When the time came and passed for the arrival of the bus they had all begun to worry. In today's environment, a late plane or bus or train or ship could easily mean that terrorists had struck again. Then, at 8:15, a representative of the bus company came out and announced that the bus had experienced a flat tire and would be arriving shortly.

Maria had seen the bus pull around the corner and had run to it and along side it as it came to a stop. She could see him through the window in his uniform and he saw her. He put his hand on the window and then stood up and got in the line of other passengers moving towards the exit. She ran to the front of the bus and stood by the small crowd gathering at the door. As she waited excitedly his parents and the Father came up and stood with her. Then, he was coming down the stairs.

"Hernando!" she cried, and ran into his arms.

Their embrace went on and on. Hernando's parents watched for a moment. When it became obvious that it was not going to end anytime soon, they joined in the "group" hug welcoming their son home on leave. After another moment, Father Chapman smiled and did the same.

By the time the hug finally ended the other passengers and their relatives and friends had all left the terminal and the driver of the bus was getting back on board after checking for messages and any dispatches or packages for him to carry. Father Chapman had stepped back at that point and was looking on. The driver stopped for a moment next to the Father and spoke to him.

"That's a new record for me, Father. Fifteen years I've been driving and I have never seen a welcome home hug last until I checked my messages and was getting back into the bus to drive away. Lately, though, I've seen a lot like it, and it's real good to see, particularly in these times I'll tell you."

The driver, gazing once more at the happy reunion, shook his head and took a deep breath as he put his paperwork in his document pouch. Turning once more to the priest, he remarked, "Well Father, I have a schedule to keep and I'd best be going."

Father Chapman, who had married Hernando and Maria in February when Hernando joined the Army after the outbreak of war with the Islamic nations, was glad to hear what this driver had to say. He had experienced much the same here in Little Havana in his parish. With the horrific attacks in March and with the continuing terrorist attacks around the nation, many people were re-assessing the importance of their relationships with their loved ones and with God. It was something the Father was thankful for and viewed as one of the few positive things to come out of these very troubled times.

"Bless you, my friend," said the Father as the driver shook his hand and began to climb onto the bus, "Drive safely and thank you for sharing your observations with me. Such true feelings of love are a blessing to us all and I pray they continue to grow. As you say, it's a real good thing to see."

As the bus drove away, Maria and Hernando finally broke their embrace. As they did, they and Hernando's parents all stepped back. After looking at one another for several seconds, they all broke into laughter and more hugs as Hernando greeted each of his parents individually.

"What? No long hug for your own mama?" Mrs. Rodriguez said after a warm hug from her son.

This brought on more laughter from everyone as Hernando picked up his duffel bag and began walking with his wife, his parents and his priest toward the parking lot where Maria had parked her small compact car and where the Rodriguez's min-van was parked.

As they walked there, Hernando's father looked upon his son with pride.

"So, when will you be shipping out to fight son?"

Hernando had been given strict orders to not discuss the details of any of his stationing or deployment orders. He could only speak in generalities.

"Well, Dad, I have a one week leave and then I will be catching either a military transport, or a bus, to Texas. Once I am over there I will receive more specific orders.



“I wish I could tell you more, but two things. Number one, I don’t have the specifics. They don’t share detailed plans with the lower ranks. Number two, even if I had all of the specifics, security reasons make it impossible for me to share them. If word leaked out it could harm our nation’s plans, and with these terrorist running all over the country, it could bring harm to you. I cannot risk either.”

Hernando had always been a young man with specific dreams and solid strategies regarding how to achieve them. He had picked this up from his father. At the same time, he had always been rather carefree and fun loving and tended to not be too strict about the plans he developed, focusing more on nurturing relationships, even if it meant that schedules slipped. He got this attribute from his mother. Now, after five months of training in military discipline, Hernando had matured in his ability to stay focused on achieving the goals. In the role he now played, not keeping that focus could cost lives. It could mean the difference between success and failure of the mission, and failure of the mission could cost his nation and his family dearly. He would find a way to discreetly let Maria know of his impending combat, but without passing on any indication of when or where it would occur.

The fact was, Corporal Rodriguez knew a bit more about his next assignment than he had communicated. He knew he was going to a large staging area near Corpus Christi, Texas for an imminent major combat operation in the Caribbean. But those were details he could not share.

As they reached the cars, Father Chapman took Maria’s keys to drive the small car while Maria and Hernando climbed into the mini-van with Hernando’s parents. It was a relatively short drive to the Rodriguez home and as they turned the corner and approached the house, Hernando saw a crowd of people. The welcome home signs, the smiles on his friends faces, the many friends and relatives ... all of this brought tears to Hernando’s eyes. He knew who was responsible.

“Mom, you shouldn’t have gone to all this trouble ... but I’m glad you did.”

As Corporal Hernando Rodriguez, U.S. Army Infantryman lately trained in the use of Light Armor Weapon Systems (LAWS), stepped out of the van with his wife at his side, he was greeted with a new round of hugs, slaps on the back, handshakes and well wishes. It was a good time and Hernando was so happy to see his friends and relatives. The conversation, stories and jokes would have gone on well into the afternoon had not Hernando’s mother and father called everyone to the backyard for the lunch they had prepared. Even then, the conversation did not abate.

Most of the young men around Hernando’s age wanted to know about Hernando’s training, particularly stories and any details he could give about the weapons. Quite a few of the older men there who had themselves served in the military wanted to know how Hernando had become a Corporal so soon. Hernando simply said he supposed that despite their gruff and “in your face” demeanor, he must have somehow impressed his NCOs. The truth was that Hernando had not only impressed the NCOs, but his accomplishments had also come to the attention of the commanding officers both at Basic Training and at his MOS training that followed. Hernando had such a can-do attitude, was so punctual, was so eager to learn and eager to help his team mates ... and so successful at helping them, that he had become something of an inspiration to the other recruits and to several of the NCOs as well. The result had been a recommendation for advancement and an approval. Before he had completed his MOS training, he had been advanced to Corporal Rodriguez.

Late that afternoon the friends had left and Hernando and Maria spent some time with Hernando’s parents catching up on all of the family news and talking of Hernando and Maria’s future. Depending on how things went, Hernando was seriously considering making a career out of service to his country. His parents and his wife accepted this and encouraged him in it.

Finally, that night, back in the privacy and comfort of their own home, Maria and Hernando shared themselves with one another as only a newlywed couple who have experienced a long separation can. It was more than a physical experience. It was an emotional and spiritual experience born of saving themselves for one another alone, and of a life-long commitment to honor those marital vows come what may. Their intimacy went far beyond the physical caressing and touching; it went to the depths of their very souls in a way that only those rooted in such lifestyle can experience ... a lifestyle that both were willing to sacrifice their all to maintain. They would each maintain it with the firm knowledge that the other would be true to it, to their holy vows, and to one another regardless of what else happened. She willing to send him forth and sacrifice their time together and potentially sacrifice him ... he willing to go forth and sacrifice his time with her and potentially his own life.

That evening their love was not diminished by the news they shared with one another, it was enhanced. Maria learned that her darling was destined for combat, fighting to maintain the lifestyle and freedom they both cherished. Hernando learned that he would have more to fight for than he had imagined. For his sweetheart Maria shared with him the news that the family they had so recently created through wedlock was soon to grow into a threesome. Hernando’s sweetheart, the love of his life, was pregnant with their first child.

**July 26, 19:23 local time**

**Mountainous Retreat above the Coruh River**

**West of Rize, Turkey**

The news was disheartening. No more Allied troops in Asia. It was hard to believe despite the last six months of seeing it happen. The remaining Allied forces were pulling back across the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, taking up a stronger defensive position on the far eastern end of the European portion of Turkey, the only portion now free of GIR occupation. The courier who had brought the news was someone he trusted, trusted with his life and so he knew it was as accurate as possible at this distance.

“You come to that,” he thought, “either you someone to trust with your life...or you lose it.”

It was not a new concept to him. It was something that had been drilled into him in training. It was something he came to accept as second nature through his many years of military service. But until you had faced combat up close and personal it was just a concept. Over the last six months he had learned to put it into practice through the hard cold truth of reality fighting with partisans and resistance forces in the remote areas of eastern Turkey.

Captain Hanson, former Commander of U.S. Air Force Security forces at Incirlik Airbase ... a command that no longer existed ... contemplated those last six months of reality.

It had started with his assignment to Incirlik Airbase just off the Mediterranean coast near the Turkish city of Adana. He had been assigned there immediately after the devastating attack on Incirlik in early November of last year when the GIR had used massive raids and paid the price of massive aircraft losses to devastate the base. They had been successful and U.S. air power had been rendered mute for the short fight over Kurdistan. With no U.S. air power to support the fledgling Kurdistan defense forces, the GIR had accomplished their aim of putting down the Kurdistan rebellion in what had been the former Iraq and thus annexing the whole of Iraq into the Greater Islamic Republic. Captain Hanson had been assigned to the base to take charge of security while the base was rebuilt and air operations were re-established.

He had gone at his work with a will and had established a very secure inner perimeter for U.S. Air Force operations, using several V-150 APC's armed with 20 mm cannon, a dozen Peacekeeper APC's armed with .50 caliber machineguns and several Avenger Anti-Aircraft HMMWVS armed with Stinger missiles. These forces were security forces however, not pitched battle forces. A Syrian Army group had been sent to their border region to keep vigil on the GIR army group in northern Iraq and insure it did not cross the Syrian frontier. When the Syrian army suddenly joined forces with that GIR group and invaded Turkey, there had not been enough time to counter it.

Captain Hanson had been left with unenviable task of trying to organize a rear-guard defense of the base with his small security detachment. It had not been enough. Once the GIR obtained air superiority over the base, using hundreds of aircraft in the process to counter the few dozen the United States had re-deployed to the base after the earlier attack, the outcome was assured. As the base was beginning to be overrun by the advanced echelon of the Syrian army group, a group that numbered over one hundred thousand personnel, Captain Hanson had ordered and led a counter attack through the advancing GIR front lines at a logistic depot that GIR forces were establishing on a portion of the base they had already occupied.

Using twenty personnel a V-150 APC, a Peacekeeper APC and one of his remaining Avenger AAW units, the Captain had achieved his aim of buying time for the retreating force, but his small force had been decimated in the process. He and only three of his team had survived, and they had been forced to retreat to the north into the hills surrounding the base.

Only later had the Captain learned that the retreating force had gotten off the base safely only to run into a much larger force of GIR airborne forces who had occupied the International Airport. A hot firefight ensued there where a portion of the retreating force made good its escape against a much superior GIR force. Only sixty-five of the over two hundred personnel involved in the withdrawal escaped. The rest were either killed in the fight or captured. Of the over one hundred personnel captured, fifteen officers and senior NCO were taken into custody for brutal questioning and the rest were summarily executed on the spot.

The Captain and his three men had escaped by the skin of their teeth, surviving by their wits and their training, hiding out by day in crevices and caves and traveling at night. They moved further north and to the east. They met up with a group of sixteen Turkish soldiers who had become separated from their unit when the GIR forces to the north overran their positions and pushed on to the east. Scavenging and keeping out of the way of the large GIR patrols and avoiding any of the largely Islamic communities, the group of twenty had slowly grown over the weeks until it numbered over sixty men. They had found some operational NATO communications gear and radios in an overrun outpost up near Goshkun that the Captain had used to contact the U.S. military. After his identity had finally been authenticated, his orders had come back.

“Perform reconnaissance, evasion and limited raids. Do not risk your command. Build a partisan network if possible to conduct harassment in the enemy's rear and disrupt logistics.”

And that is exactly what the Captain had done. He had split two of his surviving men off, both senior NCOs and had them take some of the Turkish regulars and partisans and form groups of their own, ultimately numbering over one hundred fighters each. They established courier and communication protocols. Those three groups had eventually grown to seven, and the Captain found himself commanding over a thousand fighting men within the space of four months. With those numbers and with the disruptions he began to cause, it was not long before they attracted serious attention from the GIR commanders in the area. As soon as the enemy became aware of their presence or operations, they were relentlessly hunted. But the Kurds had been playing this game for generations and were very adept at evasion and hiding.

“Boy, it’s a good thing that the GIR detection equipment is not as advanced as ours,” thought the Captain as he contemplated this. “Otherwise they would decimate us very quickly.”

But, what the GIR lacked in equipment sophistication, they made up for in numbers and ruthlessness. That was evidenced by the fact that only one of his own men was left alive. Chief Watson and Specialist Ricks had been killed, along with their entire unit, over six weeks ago in an ambush that GIR forces successfully carried out near Bayburt.

In the southern and central areas of Turkey where they had started their resistance operations, the population was not very amiable to resistance. In fact, most of the villages were welcoming the Islamic fighters unanimously. The few people who did not welcome them either kept quiet or they were slaughtered themselves, either by the GIR forces, or their own townspeople. So, Captain Hanson had moved his entire network further and further to the north and east.

As time went on, and as Allied forces fell further and further back to the west, communications became more and more sparse. He rarely had radio contact with American or any Allied forces now. Oh, they knew he was still out here, but either the range or the risk to security was too great. Most communications occurred now by courier, as this latest one had done. As he listened to the last of the courier’s message, he couldn’t help but think back on Chief Watson.

“God rest him,” thought Hanson. “He made sure he was not captured by the enemy and took as many of them with him as he and his men could.”

Now that Hanson had centered his efforts up closer to the border with Georgia and Armenia he found that more of the population was willing to resist the invading GIR forces as opposed to embracing them. In fact, Captain Hanson had made contact with some of the remaining Kurd resistance fighters in the Turkish mountains, in the northern reaches of Iraq and on the Armenian side of the border, where Captain Hanson had made two visits. There he had found some willingness on the part of the local people and even the civil authorities to support him and potentially establish a roundabout logistical route for materiel for him and his forces from Allied and U.S. forces.

Looking at the man seated with him, Captain Hanson asked, “Well Jake, what do you think?”

Chief Jake Grant was Hanson’s remaining American from his original command. Jake was an expert marksman and specialized in survival skills. The man with him was named San. San was short for Sannan. He was a Captain in the Turkish army and was Captain Hanson’s second in command or XO for their resistance forces. Over the last three months Captain Hanson, Jake Grant and every other member of the resistance group had developed deep respect for San’s leadership skills, his tenacious bravery and his fighting and planning skills. Both men had listened in silence as the courier delivered his report and as Captain Hanson had questioned him. Jake spoke first.

“Well, Cap, the way I see it this doesn’t change things too much for us. Allied forces have been falling back the entire time we’ve been out here. This message means they’ve just fallen back a little further. We have to keep on keepin’ on just like it was yesterday.”

“I still think we should develop an alternate logistic point of our own for supply along the coast. Better to have two than to put all of our apples into the Armenian thing.”

As Captain Hanson slowly nodded his understanding and agreement with the Chief’s comments, San added his thoughts.

“I agree Jake. Tactically, as far as our day-to-day operations are concerned, this does not make a lot of difference. It probably does mean that it is less likely that we will get any of the logistic support we were hoping for through Armenia, but we haven’t counted on that to date anyway.

“My concern is moral. Most of the Turks and Kurds whom we rely on for support are holding out hope that the great U.S. of A. is going to come storming back in here any day now and make everything all right. While I have my own thoughts about that, and believe that eventually your country will turn this around, this message makes it clear that such a day is not in the near future. I am afraid we may lose some of the support we rely on and we’d best prepare for that.

“Finally, I want to underscore what Jake just said about the logistic re-supply effort. I think we need to be very careful regarding the civil authorities that we have contacted in Armenia. It can surely not be long before both Armenia and Georgia feel GIR pressure to roll over. If they don’t, they will probably be invaded as the GIR seeks to get at Europe around the Black Sea. Either way, I believe that soon tremendous pressure is going to be brought to bear on those civil authorities and it will be likely that they will view turning us in, or giving leads to the GIR forces as bargaining chips of their

own. We have to take that into account when dealing with them and give them nothing to bargain with. Creating our own point on the coast would be a good contingency, Captain.”

Captain Hanson agreed. Although discussions in Armenia had gone very positively, he felt they were going a bit too fast.

“Okay guys, thanks. Jake, you take one of the platoons from our 2<sup>nd</sup> company and infiltrate to the coast well to the east of Rise and find a suitable place. San, please find someone to accompany Jake who knows that area and the people. In light of what you just said, make sure this guy understands that any local support we get has to be rock solid. He needs to be willing to bet his life on it because that is exactly what he will be doing. We need two things: a suitable cove or inlet on the coast that is remote, defensible and concealed, and a local support infrastructure that is absolutely dependable. Don’t come back with any suggestions or plans that don’t contain both.

“In the meantime, let’s get Rahib in here and finalize the planning for that raid on the GIR fuel supply depot to the west of Trabzon. My understanding is that the GIR has a full battalion over there for security and I don’t want another Bayburt debacle. We absolutely can’t afford it.”

**July 28, 03:07 local time**

**250 miles North of the Admiralty Islands**

**Southwest Pacific Ocean**

It was the largest U.S. naval strike operation in the Pacific since the March attacks and it involved the most precious assets the U.S. Navy had in theater. The USS Kitty Hawk and the USS Ronald Reagan, the only two full-deck U.S. aircraft carriers in the Pacific, were both being committed.

The USS Ronald Reagan had been temporarily stationed in the Mediterranean where the United States had five carriers operating in support of operations in the Middle East. Those carriers and their escorts had inflicted significant damage on GIR forces, but they, along with the commitment of U.S. and Allied ground forces in the area had not been able to halt the overwhelming enemy onslaught. In fact, two of the carriers, the USS Abraham Lincoln and the USS Carl Vinson along with a number of escort and support ships had themselves been damaged by massive conventional attacks requiring repairs at U.S. facilities in Italy.

The deployment of so many carriers and other military assets in the Mediterranean and the Middle East was based on decisions made at the allied summit in Iceland in February when hostilities in the Pacific had been anticipated by President Weisskopf and shared with the other Allied leaders. At that conference it had been decided to focus attention on winning in the Middle East while providing enough resource in the Pacific to hold ground against China. As a result, a number of ships and other military units normally stationed in the Pacific had been ordered to the Atlantic and on into the Mediterranean when the GIR had advanced so swiftly into Saudi Arabia.

But the conference in Iceland had not anticipated the magnitude of the conflict in either theater, or the losses the Allies and the United States in particular would sustain. Now, as a result of those losses, and for the duration of hostilities, the USS Ronald Reagan and her entire battle group had been returned to her normal duty in the Pacific. After losing three super carriers already in the war effort, the USS John Stennis, the USS Constellation and the USS Enterprise, the United States was down to nine available carriers. Of these nine, three were unavailable at present because two were in dry dock undergoing long term overhaul, including the refueling of their reactor cores, and another, the USS Nimitz, was being rushed through its final shakedown after overhaul. This left the four carriers now in the Mediterranean and the two carriers in the Pacific. It was a number that the Chief of Naval Operations was not comfortable with, given the extent of the enemy’s offensives, particularly in the Pacific. It was true that the Nimitz would rush through its trials and would be in theater around Guam within two weeks, but until that happened, he had only two carriers in the Pacific and he was afraid that even with three he was going to be shorthanded.

The Chinese were simply constructing their new vessels at far too fast a rate. They already had six of those short takeoff and landing (STOL) carriers in the water and each of them posed a serious threat to American interests and forces. Their production rate was phenomenal and it looked like they would have another four such carriers available to them by the fall if intelligence could be relied upon. The also had the Shi Liang, with its sizable air wing which was typically accompanied by at least one of the Beijing class carriers. In addition, in spite of several raids on the naval shipyards at Shanghai, the Chinese had still managed to launch and put through sea trials one of their two new full size carriers. The other had been severally damaged and its completion significantly delayed. But the new carrier, the Mao, displaced over 50,000 tons and carried a much larger compliment of aircraft than the smaller STOL carriers that were being mass produced as container ship conversions. It was against this new threat that the Kitty Hawk and the Reagan were deployed.

Intelligence indicated that the Mao and one of the new STOL carriers were sailing towards Rabaul in support of an amphibious operation landing Chinese and Indonesian troops in large numbers on Papua. According to the intelligence reports, two of the newer amphibious assault ships and literally hundreds of transports escorted by large numbers of guided missile destroyers and at least one other STOL carrier were involved in the amphibious operation. Those reports were based on

human intelligence, on over flights within the last twenty-four hours by SR-77 aircraft and by reconnaissance photos from the new unmanned, "Global Inspector" long-term reconnaissance aircraft being employed over the Pacific to make up for the loss of satellite coverage. Flying at close to 100,000 feet, equipped with thick, durable, and stealthy Mylar skins over composite structure, and able to loiter for literally days with their electronics driven by solar power while aloft at altitude, these aircraft were proving their worth.

As a result, CBT 77 had been deployed with the two carriers, the USS Essex, a Wasp class LHD vessel outfitted for the sea control mode, two Aegis cruisers, three Aegis destroyers, and four Oliver Hazard Perry guided missile frigates. In addition, four LA class attack submarines and the new Virginia class nuclear attack submarine, the USS Virginia, were also a part of the task force. With the two carriers and the Virginia deployed, literally the cream of America's naval crop was tasked with the mission of forestalling Chinese expansion in the Pacific. In addition, a number of new innovations and procedures were being incorporated into the effort.

First, an entire squadron of Joint Strike Fighters was embarked on board the USS Essex. In the sea control mode, the Essex operated as a VTOL aircraft carrier with twenty aircraft. The embarked JSF squadron was a U.S. Marine VTOL aircraft squadron whose aircraft were capable of strike and air superiority missions. In this instance, twelve of the aircraft were to be used for the inner zone airborne AAW protection for the entire task force. This would free up all of the longer range F/A-18 aircraft for strikes at sea against the Chinese task force. The JSF would be carrying a mix of four AMRAAM and two Sidewinder missiles.

The crew of the Essex was anxious to engage the Chinese. Like the USS Kitty Hawk, the Essex had been a part of the massive task force that had been sailing to the relief of U.S. forces in Korea when the Chinese had conducted their horrific surprise attack in March, moderately damaging her and killing over one hundred of her crew while injuring another two hundred. Many of her crew who had been on deck at the time had witnessed the destruction of the USS John Stennis, one of the American super carriers lost that day. They viewed the current operation as their chance to take part in some well deserved "pay back" and hoped that the upcoming operation would result in a major U.S. victory and help turn the tide of war in the Pacific.

The second innovation was aboard the Perry class frigates. They had been outfitted with a new system to help defend the capitol ships from the ravages of the LRASD supercavitating weapons. This system had been jointly developed at the Naval Weapons Laboratories at Newport, Rhode Island and Keyport, Washington and then hurriedly tested using three of the eight full sized LRASD weapons that had been recovered from the wreckage of the PLAN Guizhou. That vessel had been one of the Tactical Assault vessels the Chinese had used in attacking the U.S. mainland on March 15<sup>th</sup>. It had been sunk on that day by U.S. forces as it attempted to escape. Discovered in its wreckage had been eleven unused supercavitating LRASD devices. The twelfth had been used by the Guizhou to sink the U.S. Coast Guard cutter, the USCGS Gallatin. The Gallatin had located and attacked the Guizhou, disabling it before being sunk by the single supercavitating weapon fired by the Guizhou as the Coast Guard cutter closed on the Chinese ship. The eleven remaining LRASD weapons had netted U.S. salvage crews eight operational devices. This was accomplished when U.S. naval scientists dismantled three of the eleven devices and used them to reverse engineer the others.

The result was a new interim defensive system against the supercavitating weapons. It consisted of a line of high explosive charges that could be towed behind a frigate in lengths up to one mile and at speeds of twenty-four knots under state three sea conditions. The defensive weapons officer on the ship could vary the length, the depth (up to 50 meters) and the sensitivity of the system, which could operate either in a manual or an automatic defensive state. In automatic mode, the system itself contained both passive and active sonar sensors that were tuned to the acoustic signature of any approaching supercavitating weapon. The system would then track up to twelve approaching weapons and explode charges in front of individual threats in order to collapse their cavities. The enemy LRASD weapon then literally destroyed itself by crashing at hundreds of miles per hour into a wall of water produced by its collapsing cavity. Tests had shown the defensive system was completely successful in all three live tests that had been conducted. Computer models predicted a 94% interdiction rate for any weapon approaching an armed and activated system. It was felt that this system would be the primary defense, backed up by SH-60F Seahawk helicopters and HV-22 Osprey ASW aircraft whose Mk-50 torpedoes would then be used to interdict any "leaker" LRASD weapons that got through. It all represented a defense in depth that U.S. naval developers hoped to augment later with even more advanced and effective systems once they were developed.

Finally, the third major innovation consisted of new reconnaissance assets to make up for the almost total loss of satellite coverage. The task force was making use of the new, "Global Inspector" unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that were providing reconnaissance coverage in front of the task force to a distance of 400 miles and that were able to loiter over the expected route of the Chinese task force. These high flying and stealthy unmanned aircraft were capable of relaying information to one another and back to either an AWACS aircraft or the Combat Information Centers (CIC) of all of the vessels. The information provided was capable of being directly fed into either the Aegis defense

system, or any of the Ship Self-Defense Systems employed by the fleet. The “Global Inspector” UAVs were relatively slow, but they were made of radar absorbing composite material. As an additional safe guard against radar detection, their airframe had been designed to allow the thick Mylar covering to reflect radar signals away from the enemy emitter causing the radar image of the aircraft itself to be very small, equivalent to a sparrow in size.

With this powerful force of American warships seeking a pivotal engagement with the approaching Chinese task force, Guam was left to be protected by the ground air on the island and by the tremendous force of allied surface combatants gathered there. These Allied cruisers, destroyers, frigates, amphibious assault ships and support ships were staging there for even larger action against the Chinese at a future date. This force included the bulk of the JMSDF vessels that had escaped Japan. It also included several Korean and Taiwanese vessels that had escaped the Chinese advance, and the Thailand sea control carrier, the Chakri Naruebet and her escorts that had been sent to Guam by the Thai government immediately prior to their capitulation. And it included a large number of U.S. naval vessels in the Pacific which were based there and which were re-provisioning or protecting other remaining U.S. bases in the western Pacific. In all, over eighty-five major naval combatant vessels surrounded Guam. All of them, like CBT 77 then sailing north of the Admiralty Islands, were spoiling for a fight with the Chinese sooner rather than later.

The Chinese war planners were not going to disappoint them.

**July 28, 03:07 local time**

**Combat Information Center, USS Ronald Reagan, CVN 76**

**268 miles Northwest of the Admiralty Islands**

“I’ve got a contact! Now showing what appears to be a major surface force moving out from under that cloud cover four hundred and sixty nautical miles to our west from Stratos-3.

“I’m ID’ing two Jiangwei II class frigates and two Lanzhou class guided missile destroyers.”

Admiral Ryan, the task force commander, listened as the Officer in Charge (OIC) of the four Inspector UAV aircraft announced what they had all been waiting for, for the past two days. More information about this group of ships would have to come in before they were sure that this was the prey they sought and before they announced their presence with any type of strike package. But the timing was right, and the initial disposition of vessels was in line with standard PLAN doctrine.

Admiral Ben Ryan had transferred his flag from the older USS Kitty Hawk to the Ronald Reagan as soon as she had arrived in theater ten days ago. The Ronald Reagan was one of the newest nuclear aircraft carrier in America’s arsenal. The newest was CVN 77, the George Herbert Walker Bush which incorporated quite a few of the innovations planned for CVN-78, the first of the new CVN-21 class of carriers. That new carrier, which had been slated for launch this year, had been destroyed on the ways at Newport News shipbuilding in March when the Chinese had attacked America with ballistic missiles. Admiral Ryan would never forget the briefing he gave in Washington DC late that month, after returning home from the devastation he had experienced on the high seas in the western Pacific. To see similar ruin on the ground in America, the destruction of the Capitol building, the severe damage at the White House and the carnage at Newport News had been shocking, riveting ... galvanizing.

“They had to have used GPS guidance to hit 78 so accurately,” thought the Admiral. “Probably using our own satellites at the time.”

As he reflected back on it all, he continued, “Well, hopefully in a short time, we’ll begin to give these Red Chinese SOBs the beginnings of the real payback they so richly deserve.”

As he thought this, the Admiral’s attention turned to the Captain of the Ronald Reagan who began speaking about the information that was coming in through Stratos-3, the UAV that was transmitting the reconnaissance information that had captured all of their attention.

“It’s just like we thought might be the case. Apparently they were using that storm front coming down from the Philippine Sea to cover their approach. That’s pretty thick cloud cover ... but if this is the main group, they’re coming out from under it now, hoping we have no satellites to mark them.”

As the Captain paused, the OIC for the Inspectors sang out.

“Now marking one, no two Hangzhou class guided missile destroyers! Looks like a Beijing class STOL carrier too. ... now observing at least four type SU-33 aircraft flying air cover.”

The Captain’s response was immediate.

“Okay, that ices it. Admiral, what are your orders.”

Admiral Ryan contemplated the ramifications. He wanted to wait just another few moments.

“Let’s wait another moment. We need to be sure the Mao is with this group. We need to take that big mother down too. In the meantime, start launching the package and have them gather to our north and top off. Also insure that the Essex has a maximum inner zone CAP up.”

As the Captain carried out the Admiral’s orders for the Reagan, and as the Admiral’s chief of staff relayed the orders on to the Kitty Hawk and the Essex, the officer monitoring Stratos-3 continued.

“EMCOMM on the target task force is extremely low. ... Wait! I've got a potential paint being reported by Stratos-3. Now showing active Top-Plate and Front-Dome searches.”

The new Inspector UAV aircraft carried very sophisticated imaging and electronic emission equipment. They were very capable of sensing any radar signal directed at them, or elsewhere from a targeted source. In this case, the UAV was indicating that it was being “painted” or scanned by the primary anti-air defense radar from the Chinese task force. Nobody in the CIC of the Ronald Reagan thought that the Chinese had any way to acquire Stratos-3, much less target and fire upon it. So this news, while of concern, was in no way distressing to those in CBT 77.

But, as United States Air Force Colonel Mac Mendenhall had discovered flying the SR-77 and the even more capable HR-7 over China several months earlier, it was best not to underestimate a committed enemy. The next pronouncement from the OIC of Stratos-3 got everyone's attention.

“Stratos-3 has been acquired, I repeat, Stratos-3 has been acquired. Commencing electronic warfare countermeasures and evasion.”

Seconds passed, then.

“Now monitoring a missile launch from the lead Lanzhou ... now two more launches from both Hangzhou vessels.”

Time stretched out and what was only a few seconds seemed like minutes before the flow of information continued.

“Now marking a larger vessel just coming out from the cloud cover ... one moment and we'll ID her. Azimuth and inclination are off ... this is going to take a moment ... ah, we've lost Stratos-3, I say again, we've lost Stratos-3.”

The display froze with what they had last seen. At that point, the digital map showed two Jiangwei II frigates, two Lanzhou guided-missile destroyers, two Hangzhou guided-missile destroyers, a single Beijing class carrier and an as yet unidentified and larger vessel in the center of the formation. The current course was plotted, but with each passing moment the data became more outdated.

The Admiral would not dally.

“Okay, that's the group. Order the strike package to acquire, attack and sink those carriers. Feed them the coordinates from Stratos-3 and the projected headings and potential lines of departure. At the same time assess that new missile threat. It seems obvious that intelligence failed to discover that the Chinese have a new variant of SAM on their escort vessels ... now we know. The Lanzhou and the Hangzhou class vessels just shot one of our stealthy UAV birds out of the air flying at close to 90,000 feet. I know those UAVs are limited in maneuverability and in EW capabilities, but make sure the strike package commander understands the capabilities he is going to be going up against and make sure that his EW birds and wild-weasel birds take down those emitters.”

### **July 28, that same time**

#### **Bridge, PLAN 001 Mao**

#### **380 kilometers West Northwest of Jayapura, New Guinea**

“Convey to Captain Xinhua my congratulations. That was fine shooting. He mentioned to me in April of last year the absolute need for a naval version of the KS-2+ missiles on our major combatants after he was over-flown off of Hainan Island by an American stealth reconnaissance aircraft. I concurred and passed the request to the chief of staff. The deployment of that very thing in May of this year seems to have been timely, and seems to have been exactly what Captain Xinhua required. Again, convey to him my congratulations.”

After his successful attacks on American assets in March using the new STOL carrier, the PLAN 1001 Beijing, Admiral Yao Hsu had been promoted and assigned to the new, large deck carrier, the PLAN 001 Mao as the task force commander. He had weathered the attacks on it by American cruise missiles and aircraft and seen it through to completion, launch and through its sea trials in the South China Sea. Now, he was on a critical mission for his nation, one he hoped would draw out the American carriers. By all accounts, the fact that they had just shot down that stealthy, high-flying, slow American reconnaissance aircraft indicated that the hope would be fulfilled.

Addressing the Captain of the Mao and his own chief of staff, Admiral Yao continued.

“It is assured that the Americans have located us. Take evasive action and strengthen our inner CAP with aircraft from the Shanghai. Captain, create a barrier CAP off to our east and northeast with your aircraft and insure there is adequate electronics warfare capability in the air with that group.

“Contact the regimental command of those two Backfire bomber groups stationed at Ujung Pandang on Celebes and have them immediately launch a reconnaissance in force looking to our northeast and another looking to our east. Proceed to maximum range and report any electronic emissions immediately. Have their full regimental forces ready to respond immediately on acquisition. In addition, I want four SU-33s fitted for reconnaissance flying the same general search pattern. We shall see what the Americans throw our way.

“Finally, notify high command that Operation Sea Dragon is hereby executed and that the attack on Guam can commence when we transmit the signal indicating the American attack on us.”

As the Admiral turned away to monitor the threat board and prepared to move to the Combat Control Center, he considered his flagship. The Mao and its eventual sister ship, were a more modern Chinese version of the Shi Liang, the converted Russian Varyag. Through modular and highly automated methodologies, the Chinese had started construction on two such vessels of their own and completed them in four years. One was the Mao, the other was severely damaged on its ways in Shanghai and would require months of repair before being ready to launch.

The specifications for Admiral Yao's flagship were impressive. It carried an air wing of twenty-four SU-33 high-performance, air-superiority aircraft, four SU-35 EW aircraft, four of China's new AWACS aircraft and sixteen ASW helicopters. Its weapons systems included twelve Yakhont surface-to-surface anti-shiping missiles, a battery of forty-eight KS-2+ air-to-air missiles, four 30mm CIWS guns and eight LRASD devices mounted four to the side below the main deck. The Mao was a very formidable vessel indeed and it was about to experience its combat debut against two of the very ships and weapons systems it was built to counter.

### **July 28, the next ninety minutes**

#### **The Southwest Pacific Ocean**

Over the next hour and a half, both sides implemented their plans for this confrontation. CBT 77 took almost thirty-five minutes to launch and then form a massive strike package aimed at the PLAN task force centered on the PLAN 1001 Mao and PLAN 1002 Shanghai. The American strike package consisted of thirty-six F/A-18E aircraft fitted for the surface attack role, eight F/A-18F two seat Hornets fitted for the Wild-Weasel direct radar suppression role. It also consisted of four EA-6B aircraft fitted for indirect Electronics Warfare and direct radar suppression, twelve F/A-18E aircraft fitted for air superiority and two E2-C AWACS aircraft to provide early warning and radar services. There were also three F/A-18F aircraft with buddy stores flying with the AWACS to provide additional fuel for the return trip. The AWACS and tankers would be protected by five more F/A-18E air superiority aircraft. Seventy aircraft in all.

The American carrier group launched a large CAP as well. There were twelve of the new F/A-35 JSF aircraft in the inner zone close to the carriers launched from the Essex. To the north of the group, and four F/A-18E fighters from each CVN set up a barrier CAP some one hundred and fifty miles out. To the southwest, another barrier CAP was located at a similar distance consisting of six F/A-18E aircraft. Each of the barrier CAP groups were assisted by an E-2C AWACS and an EA-6B EW aircraft. All of this left a total of fourteen F/A-18E and twelve F-35 aircraft in reserve on the carriers. Once the strike package and CAP groups were launched, there were two F/A-18Es on ready launch alert at all times on each carrier and two more on five minute launch alert on each as well.

After ninety minutes, the U.S. strike force was within one hundred and fifty miles of the expected enemy position.

While the Americans were launching their strike package and preparing their defenses, the Chinese were doing the same. Two groups of four TU-22M Backfire bombers launched from Celebes Island in Indonesia to search for the American task force. Each of these aircraft was outfitted for the reconnaissance/strike role, being packed with electronics equipment and one AS-26 supersonic sea skimming anti-ship missile. They flew as groups of two aircraft each into their respective search areas at a speed in excess of Mach-1. After ninety minutes, one group of two aircraft was on a bearing that would take it immediately behind the U.S. strike force bearing down on Mao group. Another group was within one hundred and ninety miles of the barrier CAP to the southeast of CBT 77. Of the two groups flying to the south of these first four aircraft, the northern group was on a bearing that would take it one hundred and fifty miles to the south of CBT 77 while the other group would fly almost directly over the Admiralty Islands.

These Chinese reconnaissance aircraft were the "eyes" for two regiments of TU-22M Backfire bombers consisting of thirty-six aircraft each. One regiment was armed with AS-26 Yakhont missiles. The Yakhont had a range of 300 kilometers and flew at a speed in excess of Mach-2. Its terminal attack profile was a sea-skimming approach at an altitude of less than fifty feet. It performed its own terminal guidance. Since each TU-22M bomber carried two of these missiles, the regiment was armed with seventy-two of them. The other regiment of backfire bombers was armed with the air-launched variety of the LRASD supercavitating weapons, thirty-six weapons in all. All of these aircraft were waiting for their reconnaissance to announce the location of the American task force.

While these aircraft were launching, the Mao group had launched four of its own reconnaissance aircraft. Two SU-33 aircraft were flying to the north of the incoming U.S. strike group and would be detected, but not attacked by it. The Americans correctly identified them as a reconnaissance flight and did not want to prematurely expose their own position. The other two SU-33 aircraft flew well to the south of the U.S. carriers and were some two hundred and eighty miles distant from them, to their south southwest after ninety minutes.

While all of this was occurring, the Chinese had launched four regiments of attack aircraft at Guam. These consisted of a regiment of TU-16 Badger bombers and a regiment of FBC-7 fighter-bombers from the repaired base at Kadena, Okinawa. These were armed with two Yakhont missiles



each, for a total of one hundred and forty four missiles. Another regiment of TU-22M backfire bombers was launched from the recently occupied Clark airbase on the Philippine Island of Luzon, and a final regiment was launched from Japan. These aircraft carried a mix of the air launched version of the LRASD weapon, thirty-six weapons altogether, and more AS-26 Yakhont missiles. The Backfire bombers, being much faster, but also having to approach much closer, circled far to the north to come at Guam from the northeast while the Badger and FBC-7 bombers approached Guam from the northwest. After ninety minutes, these aircraft were within three hundred miles of the island.

On Guam, the Americans had a barrier CAP up one hundred and fifty miles to the west of the island that consisted of eight F-15C air superiority fighters. Another CAP was located directly over the island consisting of eight more F-15C eagles. There were a total of twelve AV-8B Harrier aircraft also flying CAP from the Thai carrier and eight F-35 JF aircraft off of the USS Bonhomme Richard near the island. Guam had four F-16 Falcons on ready launch alert on the main airfield on the island while two E3-B Sentry AWACS aircraft were airborne, one to the west and the other directly over the island, as the Chinese strike packages approached.

## Chapter 18

### The Battle of the Southwest Pacific JULY 28

**July 28, 04:45 local time**

**Off of New Guinea, North of the Admiralty Islands and Guam**

**U.S Strike Force Approaching the PLAN Task Force**

“Tiger Lead, this is Wild Willy-1. Imperative you hold off those bandits! We’re still short the window.”

The flight leader for the American Wild Weasel package was communicating with the flight leader of the CAP group as his flight of F/A-18F aircraft approached the Chinese task force off New Guinea. He was asking the fighters flying patrol over him to make sure that the Chinese SU-33 aircraft that the CAP was currently engaging were kept off of his aircraft at all costs as he approached his attack point.

“I roger that Wild Willy-1. Bandits will not break through. We are fully engaged. Out.”

As he approached ever closer to the Chinese task force, Wild- Willy-1’s back seat announced multiple Top Plate and Top Dome radar signatures tracking his flight. These were originating from the Hangzhou destroyers and from both of the PLAN carriers in the Chinese formation. His attack profile called for Wild Willy flight to draw enemy missile fire and then to return fire with his own High-speed Anti-Radiation Missiles (HARM) at the radar emitters on the enemy ships. The HARM missiles had a top speed of almost Mach-3 and the theory called for those missiles to reach the radar emitters and guidance on the enemy ships before the enemy missiles could reach his aircraft. The newest variety of the HARM missile had a range in excess of eighty miles and would home on jam, and home on cutoff should the Chinese turn off their emitters. Wild Willy-1 wanted to get to the optimal range of fifty miles before firing, which was still almost two minutes away.

Each of his high performance F/A-18F, two-seat aircraft carried four HARM missiles, making a total of thirty-two missiles with his flight. In addition, he was accompanied by two EA-6B Prowler electronic warfare aircraft that carried two HARM missiles each. This meant he had a total of thirty-six HARM missiles to fire at the Chinese ships. The Prowlers also carried extremely powerful jamming and scrambling equipment that the enemy radar and communications would have a very tough time burning through. At least this was the theory as he got closer and closer to the enemy, and it appeared to be working.. But it was a theory and a profile that did not account for the new navalized version of the Chinese KS-2+ missile, or the advances the Chinese had made in countering America’s electronic warfare packages.

As Wild Willy-1 closed to sixty miles, the Chinese vessels launched a total of twenty-four KS-2+ missiles at his flight of eight F/A-18F and two EA-6B aircraft. With a top speed approaching Mach-4, the KS-2+ missiles were faster than the American aircraft had planned on.

Wild Willy-1’s weapons and electronic officer announced from the back seat of the aircraft.

“I have multiple missile launches from the Chinese task force. Now tracking twenty ... no twenty-four inbound missiles. Speed ... Holy Cow, speed is Mach-4!”

The flight leader wasted no time ... he had none to waste.

“All aircraft, launch, launch, launch! Then hold steady until those HARMs get their own lock.”

In the tense, pressurized situation, some communications protocol broke down.

“Tim, go to full power with your jammers!”

Very quickly another thirty-six missiles were in the air, these targeting the Chinese radar systems. It would take only ninety seconds for the Chinese missiles to reach Wild Willy flight, while it would take almost two minutes for the HARM missiles to travel the same distance to the Chinese ships. Wild Willy-1 was betting his HARMs would get a good lock well before the Chinese missiles reached his flight so he could take evasive action. His calculations and his “gut” told him he would have some time, and he was right, but not as much time as he had hoped.

With their missile warning tone and light flashing more and more incessantly, the HARM missiles finally had a terminal lock when there were only six seconds remaining before the KS-2+ missiles reached the American aviators.

“Break off, break-off! All aircraft take evasive action!”

Long hours of training over several years paid off for the American aircraft as they broke off their attack profile. Each pilot performed the “break” maneuver flawlessly and there were no mid-air collisions. The full power jamming of the EA-6B Prowler aircraft and the violent maneuverability of the F/A-18F aircraft allowed some of the aircraft to safely escape the twenty-four missiles that were targeting them. As the KS-2+ missiles bore down on the fleeing and violently jiggling aircraft, eight of the missiles were successfully diverted by the EA-6B jamming. Another ten were successfully thrown off target by the jiggling, twisting and turning maneuvers of the American pilots. But eight

missiles struck home and six of the ten American aircraft fell from the sky, one EA-6B Prowler and five F/A-18F Hornets. Wild Willy-1's aircraft was among those that were destroyed.

His wingman immediately picked up command and broadcast over the command net.

"This is Wild Willy-2. Wild Willy-1 is down! I repeat, Wild Willy-1 is down! Now conducting visual BDA of our attack."

The thirty-six HARM missiles were reaching their targets at that same moment. More KS-2+ missiles had been launched at the incoming American missiles, but with the continued jamming of the remaining Prowler and the short interval left to them for intercept, only four of the HARMs were knocked down. At this point the CIWS on the Chinese ships activated, in turn emitting their own radar signals, and another ten U.S. missiles were downed. But twenty-two of the missiles struck home, six of them diverting to CIWS radar targets at the last moment. The results were effective, but not as effective as the Americans had hoped. All of the Top Plate and Top Dome radar on both Hangzhou destroyers and on the Shanghai carrier were shredded and put out of commission. But one of the Lanzhou destroyers and the Mao were relatively untouched outside of some debris and burning fuel that had showered portions of their decks. In addition, four CIWS weapons were destroyed within the Chinese task force, one on the Mao, two on the Shanghai and one on the Hangzhou itself.

As Wild Willy-2 reported his analysis, he handed off control to the rapidly approaching F/A-18E attack aircraft entering the corridor that Wild Willy flight had cleared for them. As Wild Willy-2 made his egress, he contacted the leader of the main strike package, Venom flight lead.

"Venom Lead, the door isn't wide open, but the screen door has been blown off and there's a wide crack for you to punch through. Good shooting!"

The thirty-six aircraft of Venom flight had already been reduced to thirty as a result of eight SU-33s that had broken through the CAP and attacked the left side of the formation. Six F/A-18E aircraft had been downed before those SU-33s fell to the missiles of the pursuing F/A-18E aircraft from the CAP and to some missiles from Venom flight itself. Now, Venom flight was closing on the Chinese task force with each aircraft carrying four AGM-84C Harpoon anti-shiping missiles, or four AGM-154C Joint Standoff Weapons (JSOW). This provided for a total of 120 missiles that would soon be launched at the Chinese task force.

As the Venom flight leader approached to within seventy miles of the Chinese task force, he was informed by his AWACS controller that the Chinese were launching missiles against his aircraft. He immediately ordered his entire flight to launch their missiles and the air filled with American weapons targeting the Chinese task force. He had allocated a total of fifteen Harpoons and fifteen JSOW missiles for each carrier, fully half of the missiles available. Another eight Harpoon and eight JSOW missiles targeted each Hangzhou destroyer. Four Harpoon and four JSOW missiles targeted each Lanzhou destroyer and finally, three of each missile were targeted on the Jiangwei II class frigates.

Since these missiles were all fire and forget munitions once their target coordinates had been locked in, Venom flight immediately turned and took evasive action, using afterburners to put as much distance between themselves and the incoming missiles as possible. Despite their best efforts, the eighteen KS-2+ missiles overtook Venom flight and four more F/A-18Es fell from the sky.

The American missiles flew at just under 600 miles an hour, meaning they covered six miles every minute. The Chinese defense was digitally linked between the more modern Chinese ships, the Lanzhou, the Hangzhou and both aircraft carriers. Being undamaged from the anti-radar attack, the Mao was able to control the anti-missile engagement for the Chinese task force. While not nearly as effective as the latest version of the American Aegis system, the Chinese system nonetheless allowed the Mao to launch KS-2+ missiles from all of the destroyers and both carriers. The only automated reload capability for AAW missiles in the Chinese task force existed on the Shanghai VTOL carrier and the Mao itself. Thus, after the first two salvos of missiles, only the Shanghai and Mao were able to continue launching missiles in the effort to shoot down the approaching American weapons. Two salvos of twenty-four missiles and two other salvos of sixteen missiles were launched by the Chinese. These eighty Chinese anti-missile missiles destroyed forty-eight American missiles. Then the remaining ninety-six American anti-shiping missiles came into CIWS range. The CIWS systems on the Hangzhou, the Shanghai and the Mao were most effective. But one of the CIWS weapons on the Mao and two of them on the Shanghai had been destroyed earlier in the engagement by the HARM missiles of Wild Willy flight.

The Shanghai had twenty-one missiles targeting it when its two remaining CIWS systems activated. These two high-speed, high-capacity 30 mm gun systems destroyed six American missiles. But seven Harpoon missiles and eight JSOW missiles impacted the Shanghai raking her from stern to stern. Six of the missiles penetrated into the hangar deck creating a conflagration that could not be quenched and rapidly spread to critical munitions and fuel storage areas of the ship producing tremendous secondary explosions. The mortally wounded carrier immediately slowed and began listing to its port side where the majority of the missiles had impacted.

The Mao had eighteen missiles targeting it when all four of its 30 mm CIWS weapons activated. These weapons produced a veritable "wall" of high velocity metal that the American missiles had to fly through to get at the Mao. Nine American missiles were destroyed. But another nine missiles

impacted the newest Chinese carrier in their fleet. Six Harpoon missiles impacted the Mao on its starboard side just above the waterline along a span two hundred feet long. Four JSOW missiles impacted just to the rear of this grouping near the aft portion of the ship and higher on the hull, three of them penetrating the hangar deck and setting off large stores of munitions being gathered there for an anticipated Chinese strike mission later that day. Although not as quickly apparent, the Mao was also mortally stricken and began to slow in the water. Despite very innovative watertight designs incorporated into the modular design, and despite the use of strengthened steel within the hull, the strikes along the two hundred foot span of the starboard side let in tremendous amounts of sea water and the Mao began to list dangerously while she burned.

Commander Jim Stevens, the Air Wing commander of the USS Ronald Reagan and the Venom flight leader made a sweeping circle back towards the Chinese task force after successfully evading the Chinese KS-2+ barrage. As he observed the results of the overall attack he announced his own initial damage assessment to the USS Ronald Reagan over the command net. It was heard by all of the wing leaders, by the AWACS controllers and by the bridge and CIC officers monitoring the attack. They were words that would be repeated many times over in the following years when speaking of the battle.

“Mr. President, scratch two Chinese flattops!”

In addition to the fatal damage inflicted upon both Chinese carriers, mortal damage was also inflicted upon both Jiangwei II frigates, one Lanzhou destroyer and one Hangzhou destroyer by the American attack. The other Hangzhou destroyer, the PLAN 136 Hangzhou was moderately damaged by two Harpoon missiles that were detonated just meters away from the ship. The other Lanzhou destroyer was untouched. In addition, a Shenyang guided missile destroyers in the task force escaped damage.

As a significantly reduced American strike force departed, it left a decimated Chinese task force mostly dead in the water, listing heavily and burning. Before the day was over both Chinese carriers, two destroyers and two frigates would sink beneath the waves. Almost six thousand Chinese sailors were killed and another twenty-three hundred wounded in the attacks. The American strike force suffered a total loss of six F/A-18F aircraft ten F/A-18E attack aircraft, six F/A-18E fighter aircraft, a total of twenty-two out of seventy aircraft. The deadly exchange rate favored the U.S. Navy ... at least up until that point.

As a severely wounded Admiral Yao transferred his flag to Captain Xinhua Zukang’s destroyer and was carried on board, past the Captain he requested that the stretcher-bearers pause. When they did, he motioned for the Captain to lean close to him. When Captain Xinhua was close, the Admiral whispered to him.

“Captain, I can only hope that our part as the lure in this operation was worth the cost.”

### **Barrier CAP and Blocking Force west of U.S. CBT 77**

One Chinese reconnaissance group came upon the U.S. barrier CAP to the west of CBT 77. This CAP was located in the vicinity of a U.S. Navy Oliver Hazard Perry frigate and a Arleigh Burke class destroyer that were operating as a blocking force well out on the threat axis away from the main body of CBT 77. Sensing the presence of an American E-2C AWACS aircraft and so many fighters, and sensing the distinctive signature of the powerful Aegis radar and defense system of the Burke destroyer, the Chinese reconnaissance group assumed that they had found the main body of the American task force. Before the American barrier CAP could shoot both aircraft down, they successfully radioed in their coordinates.

Forty-two minutes later, after all strike aircraft had been launched from Celebes and were traveling in excess of Mach-1 towards the first set of coordinates, a second reconnaissance group made another contact. This was two of the SU-33 aircraft launched by the Mao. From due south of the American task force, they had proceeded to execute a search pattern that ultimately brought them within range of the E-2C flying over the main body of CBT 77. When the Chinese aircraft electronic sensors passively picked up the E-2C, they climbed to a much higher altitude and went to maximum speed along the bearing of the E-2C contact. Extended range standard missiles were launched at these aircraft as they came within one hundred miles of the task force. One was downed at eighty miles, but the second avoided the initial salvo and proceeded on towards the American vessels. Miraculously, the second SU-33 also avoided a second salvo of standard missiles and approached to within forty miles of the task force before succumbing to a combination of Standard and AMRAMM missiles launched by an American JSF aircraft and an escort in the main body of CBT 77. Although this aircraft never observed any American vessels directly, electronically it did detect significant information. Before being killed, the pilot reported back the detection of multiple Aegis vessels, another American AWACS aircraft and the launch of those AMRAMM missiles. This second contact did not go unnoticed by the Chinese controllers on Celebes. In particular, at a hurriedly called briefing, the chief of staff of the Chinese General in charge of the air attack on the American carrier task force opened the briefing.

“Alright, here’s what we have. Right now we have both regiments split into three groups and approaching Contact-1 from the northwest, from the west and from the southwest. We have a single Aegis vessel and AWACS positioned roughly here.”

As he pointed to a designated location titled “Contact-1” on his map, he continued.

“Then, a little over forty minutes later, a flight of two reconnaissance SU-33s launched earlier from the Mao, reported another AWACS contact here.”

He pointed to another position on the map, well to the east of the first and a little further north, labeled “Contact-2”.

“Before losing contact with the last aircraft, he was able to penetrate to this location here, reporting multiple Aegis contacts, strong AWACS presence and finally, American AMRAAM missile launches.”

Sliding the marker for Contact-2 to a position about forty miles north of the second contact, the General went on.

“I believe this is the main body.”

The Chinese General in charge of the operation nodded his head in agreement. Looking around at the assembly of officers, he issued his orders based on this latest information.

“Have sixteen of the aircraft from the 32<sup>nd</sup> regiment carrying Yakhont missiles continue towards contact-1 and attack. Have the other twenty aircraft from that regiment swing further to the north and then approach Contact-2 at maximum speed and altitude.

“Have twelve of the aircraft from the 23<sup>rd</sup> regiment carrying the LRASD weapons continue towards contact-1 from the south east, but have the other twenty-four of those aircraft follow the same rough course as those SU-33s and approach Contact-2 flying on the deck.”

The engagement proceeded as the Chinese General had outlined. As sixteen aircraft from the 32<sup>nd</sup> Regiment approached the western barrier CAP that were holding position over the Arleigh Burke class guided missile destroyer and the Oliver Hazard Parry class guided missile frigate, the E-2C AWACS aircraft picked them up on radar. The E-2C immediately vectored six F/A-18E fighters to intercept them. All of these aircraft were carrying the very capable U.S. AMRAAM missile for longer-range engagements. The AMRAAM had an effective range of seventy miles. This meant that the intercepting American aircraft had to approach that close to the attacking Chinese aircraft before engaging them. It also meant that the Chinese aircraft got all that much closer to the two American ships before they were attacked. With no more F14s in the fleet, and more importantly no more of the extremely long range Phoenix missiles, it was a geometric equation in three dimensional space that was to prove costly for America and opportune for the Chinese.

Almost simultaneously, approximately 200 miles to the west of the small American formation, the American aircraft locked on and fired twenty of their thirty two anti-aircraft missiles at the approaching Backfire bombers while the leading TU-22M aircraft acquired the two American ships. When the Chinese aircraft acquired the U.S. naval vessels, they began launching their AS-26 Yakhont cruise missiles. More than two minutes before any American anti-aircraft missiles arrived, all thirty-two Yakhont missiles had been launched.

The Chinese missiles leveled off at an altitude of several thousand meters and accelerated to over Mach-2. Once the general coordinates for the target had been communicated, the Yakhont was a “fire and forget”, self-guided missile. As in previous engagements, what made it so dangerous was its terminal attack profile. From several miles away, the missile would drop to an altitude of 15 to 50 feet and sea skim into the target at over Mach-2.5. This represented the latest anti-shipping missile technology available to the Chinese where the missile was now license-built. They had been specifically designed by the Russians, and improved upon by the Chinese, to penetrate the vaunted American Aegis system.

Cries of, “Vampire! Vampire! Vampire!”, rang out in the cockpits of the American aircraft and in the CIC of the two American vessels. Patched in through digital link, the Combat Information Centers of the ships in the main body of CBT 77 saw a little more dispassionately what the officers under direct attack were experiencing.

The American CAP aircraft vectored towards the Chinese Backfire bombers had expended most of their anti-air missiles in the hopes of destroying the Chinese aircraft before they launched. Even though their missiles began to take their toll of the Chinese bombers, the American pilots were now concentrating on the rapidly approaching threat to the two ships stationed here with them to protect the main body of CBT 77. Their last twelve AMRAAM missiles were launched in an effort to intercept the Yakhont missiles and the pilots then tried in vain, through the use of their afterburners, to position themselves for an opportunity to intercept more Chinese missiles with their sixteen AIM-9X Sidewinder missiles.

As nine of the sixteen TU-22M aircraft fell to the initial attack of American anti-aircraft missiles and as four Yakhont missiles were downed with the second barrage of American missiles, the opportunity passed for further interception by the American CAP. The American pilots and controllers realized that the remaining Yakhont missiles were simply too fast for the American aircraft to position themselves for any further intercept. Now it would be up to the Aegis system on the Burke

class destroyer to direct the fire of its own standard missiles and those from its accompanying Oliver Hazard Perry guided-missile frigate.

The Vertical Launch System (VLS) on the Burke virtually exploded as the Yakhont missiles came in range and it began launching missiles from its forward and aft cells of standard missiles. At a distance of over eighty miles, the Burke class destroyer began launching two missiles at each Yakhont missile and then calculating the next intercepts and doing assessment as the prior missiles reached their intercept point. With closing speeds approaching 5000 miles per hour, the first intercept occurred in just under one minute. When the Aegis system determined that the first launch of fifty-six missiles had accounted for eleven more Yakhont missiles, the system allocated another two-to-one mix and launched thirty-four standard missiles from a range of fifty-five miles.

The second salvo of American missiles resulted in another seven Yakhont missiles being destroyed, leaving ten missiles inbound. At this point the Burke had only six missiles left in its magazine and it launched all of them. Immediately, the Aegis system then began drawing missiles from the much slower rate of fire Perry class frigate, which had a single-arm launcher that had to be automatically reloaded from a below deck magazine after each launch. A seventh missile was launched with the six, and then the system began launching a single missile every four seconds from the Perry class frigate. The seven-missile barrage accounted for another two Chinese missiles. Before the Chinese missiles dropped out of the Perry's engagement envelope when they began performing their terminal maneuver less than a minute later, another two missiles had been downed, leaving six missiles approaching the ships at an altitude of 20 to 30 feet and Mach-2. Four were targeting the Burke class destroyer and two were targeting the frigate.

The American Phalanx CIWS system was an effective weapon designed specifically to target terminal phase missiles or low flying aircraft attacking a ship. But the speed and altitude combination of the Yakhont missile was purposefully designed to be on the outer fringes of the CIWS engagement capability. Upgrades to American software had attempted to offset this, but no matter how you looked at the equation, a Mach-2.5 approach pitted against a weapon with a range of only 1.5 miles determined the basic parameters. In those three seconds that the system had to react, two of the four missiles targeting the Aegis destroyer were shot down and one of the two missiles targeting the frigate was destroyed. The following explosions and fires left both ships afloat but severely damaged and burning, making slow headway back towards the main body of the task force.

Three minutes later, a new threat warning was issued and the AWACS aircraft vectored three of its last four CAP aircraft towards it. These were the twelve TU-22M aircraft of the Chinese 23<sup>rd</sup> regiment that were approaching at close to Mach-2 and flying only fifty feet off the water themselves. Coming in as four groups of three from different directions, they arrived several minutes before relief aircraft launched from the Kitty Hawk and Ronald Reagan could arrive. The CAP aircraft accounted for two aircraft each from the three groups of three, leaving a total of six aircraft approaching. The remaining standard missiles from the Perry class frigate accounted for only one other TU-22M aircraft and five Chinese bombers penetrated closely enough to launch their LRASD weapons at the damaged American ships.

Five supercavitating LRASD weapons immediately boosted to rocket power and closed on the American vessels. Three of them targeted the Burke destroyer, one targeted the Perry frigate, and the final weapon detected and targeted a U.S. submarine lurking four miles to the east of the two ships. It was the USS Virginia, the latest American attack submarine and the namesake for that new super-quiet, stealthy class of nuclear powered submarines.

In a foreshadowing of larger events that would follow, the Perry frigate was positioned well to employ the new defensive system against the attacking weapons. But the speed and electronics had been degraded by the Yakhont missile attack, and the devices targeting the Burke destroyer were not coming in abreast of one another or from the same attack vector. The system worked as advertised against two of the weapons whose line of attack intercepted the defensive line of charges, exploding them both with dramatic, thunderous explosions producing a huge volume of water that was thrown into the air at each location. But the Perry frigate itself, slowed by the damage it had already sustained, was struck by the device targeting it and literally blown out of the water amidships, breaking its back and sending it to a fiery, watery grave with all hands within two minutes.

The final Chinese LRASD device targeting the Burke destroyer was not attacking from a position that ran across the Perry defensive line, which itself was being pulled down with that stricken ship. This last device ran true and fast towards the destroyer, impacting the aft third of the destroyer just below the helicopter hangar that had been built into the latest block of Burke destroyers. As the water and debris rained down, it became clear that the aft portion of the ship had been blown apart and the stern end of the destroyer was open to the sea. As the majority of the forward portion of the crew not killed or injured by the earlier Yakhont blasts began abandoning ship, and as the helicopter assigned to the destroyer hovered nearby, the destroyer settled rapidly into the water and sank twelve minutes after being struck.

Before that happened, approximately three minutes after the Burke destroyer was hit, the survivors making their way off the ship and those already in the water had their attention diverted for a

moment to look to their west. There, a tremendous bulge in the ocean rose up and broke the surface with a boiling, foaming and bubbling caldron. None of those witnessing it at the time know what it represented. What they had witnessed, before turning their attention back to their own immediate survival, had been the death of the American attack submarine, USS Virginia, the namesake of the newest and most advanced nuclear attack submarine class in the world. Until the weapon system that destroyed it was more effectively countered, those survivors had also witnessed an end to one of America's best hopes for quickly reversing the current tide of naval warfare in the Pacific and elsewhere in the world. Lu Pham's calculations and adjustments to the targeting firmware on his LRASD inventions had just proven successful.

### **The Ordeal of U.S. Navy CBT 77**

"Mr. President, scratch two Chinese flattops!"

The words from Commander Stevens came back into Admiral Ryan's mind as the engagement off to his west ended. The euphoria of that earlier moment had been blunted by the stark realization that they were still in a serious engagement with a committed and dedicated enemy. It was an enemy who had just destroyed two extremely capable surface vessels critical to the overall protection of CBT 77 while many officers here in the main body had been celebrating.

As the Admiral weighed this against their own accomplishments of the day, he soberly pondered another piece of information that had come out of that engagement off to his west.

"We may well have lost a third vessel if those reports are accurate. We'll know soon enough, but if it's true, it may represent perhaps the most telling factor of this entire engagement."

Everything was back to all business now as Captains and air wing commanders aboard the Ronald Reagan and Kitty Hawk began assessing their assets and the positioning of them. Their barrier CAP was just now being reinforced to their west, but the surface force out there operating in conjunction with that CAP and serving as their blocking force had been destroyed. The detection by that SU-33 off to their south was ominous and portended more attacks on the task force. To counter this, another barrier CAP was being established directly to the south by applying the ready aircraft and three of the aircraft off to the north. This was occurring as the task force was in the process of recovering the aircraft from the earlier strike that had proven so successful against the Chinese task force off of New Guinea. As all of this was being put into motion, threat warnings began to sound as the barrier CAP AWACS informed the task force of an approaching raid from their north. Within five minutes, another warning was sounded regarding an approaching raid from the south.

CBT 77 was much better positioned and much better armed than the small blocking group off to the west had been. With barrier CAPS in place, with the inner zone CAP up and with three fully functional Aegis vessels, the air defense was set up to be optimum. For protection against sub-surface threats, in particular against the LRASD weapons, the battle group was as prepared as possible. Three Perry class frigates were in position with their defensive lines deployed in front of all threat axis. Six HV-22 aircraft and eight SH-60F helicopters were positioned between the Perry's and the main body to target their own Mk-50 barracuda torpedoes against any leaker devices that might get through the defenses provided by the frigates.

As the twenty TU-22M aircraft from the Chinese 32<sup>nd</sup> regiment approached from the north, a virtual repeat of conditions surrounding the attack against the two American vessels to the west occurred. The Chinese aircraft were able to penetrate deeply enough to launch their missiles before American anti-aircraft missiles could reach them. Later, these two experiences would cause American war planners to reassess their strategies with respect to placement, fueling and endurance of American barrier CAPs around aircraft carriers. They would also cause the planners to immediately recommend emergency funding for the Advanced Long-Range Anti-Aircraft Missile (ALRAAM). But none of that would benefit CBT 77. As forty Yakhont missiles flew towards the fleet, it was left to the Aegis system to use the defense in depth strategies available to it. And it worked well.

The standard missiles from the two Aegis cruisers and the two Aegis destroyers did not run out. They were able to fire four full two-to-one salvos at the Chinese missiles before they passed into the inner zone. Here, the Admiral wisely ordered his forces to not use the anti-air missiles of the inner zone CAP aircraft to intercept the remaining Chinese missiles. Instead, the Admiral ordered that defenses against the nine "leaker" missiles be shifted to the shorter range RAM and Sea Sparrow missiles available on several of the ships. These defenses downed all but four Chinese Yakhont missiles before they came into the CIWS envelopes of the individual ships targeted. One of the missiles targeted a Perry class frigate and the other three targeted the Kitty Hawk, the Ronald Reagan and the Essex respectively.

The Perry class frigate took a hit on its bow. While not fatal to the ship, fifteen members of the crew were killed and another eighteen injured and the speed of the frigate was reduced significantly. This caused the frigate and its protective defensive line to lag the formation as it slowed due to the damage to its bow.

All of the other missiles were destroyed, although the one targeting the Ronald Reagan blew up close in on the starboard side and rained fiery fuel and debris on a flight deck that was crowded at the

time with the just-landed aircraft from Venom flight. Three of those aircraft exploded on deck as fiery debris punctured their fuel tanks and set off their ordinance. The resulting explosions of aircraft and fuel killed thirty three flight deck personnel and five crew members and closed down flight operations as the fire on deck burned out of control.

While this was occurring, the twenty-four LRASD carrying aircraft of the Chinese 23<sup>rd</sup> regiment approached from the south. Coming in low to the deck and at an angle that was inopportune for a direct intercept by the barrier CAP to the south, sixteen of these twenty-four aircraft were able to penetrate beyond the barrier CAP and approach the main body of CBT 77. They were met by the aircraft and missiles of the inner zone CAP, the F-35 JSF aircraft that proved their worth in this, their first major engagement. Of the sixteen aircraft approaching at close to Mach-2 and at an altitude of only forty feet, the inner zone CAP brought down fourteen of them. Six of these were destroyed at the last possible moment as they performed braking maneuvers preparing to launch their LRASD weapons. The last two of these aircraft were the only ones that were able to launch their LRASD weapons at the main body of CBT 77. One was launched at the Ronald Reagan, the deck of which was engulfed in flame at the time, but that was operating at flank speed. The other was launched at the USS Essex that was steaming on the aft end of the formation.

Both LRASD weapons immediately ignited their rocket engines and surged forward. The device targeting the Ronald Reagan tracked along an intercept path that took it right through the defensive line being towed by one of the Perry class frigates. The defenses worked exactly as designed and, as with the attack on the Burke class destroyer earlier in the engagement, the supercavitating weapon was destroyed as an explosive charge ignited in its path and as the cavity through which the weapon was "flying" collapsed.

The LRASD device targeting the USS Essex attacked on an oblique intercept course for that vessel. On that side the Perry class frigate that had been damaged by the Yakhont missile was providing the defensive screen for the Essex. That ship had fallen behind the formation in the few moments since it had taken the missile strike and its defensive line had fallen back with it. The result was a pivotal quirk of warfare: an unforeseen, unplanned failing that by the remotest chance provides opportunity for one side or the other. In this case, that single LRASD weapon found the opportunity for the Chinese and rocketed through the hole in the defense barrier for the Essex. The pilot of a SH-60F helicopter close-in to the big Amphibious Assault vessel turned Sea Control Carrier saw the approaching threat and attempted to intercept it according to the new doctrine for "leaker" supercavitating weapons. He dropped his Mk-50 barracuda torpedo in front of the supercavitating device, but from an angle to its left.

The American torpedo tracked and exploded just behind the LRASD and did not destroy its cavity. The resulting turbulence was enough to perceptibly deflect the course of the weapon, but it was too close to cause it to miss the Essex. Towards the fore portion of the ship, immediately aft of the large "2" painted on the side of the ship behind the anchor, a tremendous waterspout and explosion erupted. Two F-35 aircraft in a ready launch position were tossed up into the air and overboard by the violence of the explosion. Many of the crew on the flight deck near that side of the ship at the time were also knocked overboard. Secondary explosions below decks began to violently shake the vessel. Out of control fires in the area of the rent made their way upward, ultimately reaching the hangar deck and fuel storage, causing further explosions. Within ten minutes, the entire forward portion of the ship, from the island forward on the port side was engulfed in flame.

The big vessel visibly slowed and ultimately went dead in the water. A Perry class frigate and a Burke destroyer stood in close by to render assistance. Twenty-seven minutes after the attack the Captain of the Essex ordered "abandon ship". Over 2200 members of the crew were either rescued from the ship itself or from the water. Over 800 died. In the dramatic last moments, as the ship settled by the bow, two F-35 JSF aircraft and three SH-60F Seahawk helicopters, the choppers packed with survivors, lifted vertically off of the deck only moments before water washed over it and the angle became too steep to allow for safe departure. Those sailors and pilots were among the very last to be rescued from the ship.

If the Battle of the Southwest Pacific had ended there, at the end of the exchange between the Chinese task force and aircraft, and the American task force, there is no question but that a significant tactical victory would have been achieved by the Americans. They had sunk two Chinese aircraft carriers, two Chinese destroyers and two Chinese frigates compared to a loss of one U.S. destroyer, one U.S. frigate, one U.S. submarine and one U.S. Amphibious Assault ship configured for the Sea Control role. In addition, the Ronald Reagan had been damaged and would spend six days in repair in the Marshall Islands. In the air, the Chinese lost almost one hundred aircraft compared to twenty-four in the air for the Americans and another eight onboard the Essex. In tactical terms it was a two for one advantage to the Americans in terms of carriers. In strategic terms, the successful use of the LRASD weapon and its new modification against the USS Virginia was a significant advantage for the Chinese that would play out over the next several months.



But, that exchange was not the end of the Battle for the Southwest Pacific. The air assault on Guam and the massive U.S. and allied shipping interests assembled there began only fifteen minutes after the USS Essex sank beneath the waves.

### **The Attack on Guam**

The Chinese employed tactics in the air strike against U.S. forces on Guam similar to those that the GIR had employed the previous November against U.S. forces at the U.S. air base at Incirlik, Turkey ... and they did it for basically the same reasons. The tactics were simple and brutally direct. *Use overwhelming numbers and do not be afraid to lose a significant portion of them to achieve the goals of the operation.* These tactics were consistent with the psyche and dogma of both the Islamic and Chinese underlying cultures, which supplied an almost inexhaustible, supply of willing adherents to serve as fodder for the tactics.

The reasoning was equally direct and straightforward. The Chinese required that Guam be eliminated as a forward staging base for American military power. It was simply too close and too strategic, and posed too great a threat of allowing the Americans to strike at the flanks of planned Chinese operations in New Guinea, in the Solomon Islands and ultimately against Australia.

In order to accomplish their goals, the Chinese planners had developed an operation designed to draw off the American carrier force known to be near Guam by presenting them with a target too tempting to ignore. The Shanghai and Mao served as the bait for this operation in much the same fashion as Admiral Ozawa's Japanese carriers had served to draw off the American fast carriers of Halsey's Third Fleet during the Leyte Gulf engagement in World War II. The Chinese war-college and their war planning specialized in the study of operations against the American military and American mentality. It sought to capitalize on what it viewed as success in that study and learn from the failures. The Chinese viewed the World War II engagement at Leyte Gulf as a classic success in tactics, but a failure in implementation.

In that engagement during World War II, Admiral Ozawa's decoy carrier group had successfully drawn off Halsey's fast carrier force from covering the Philippine Islands. In the process the Japanese carrier force was decimated. But it had served its purpose when Japanese Admiral Kurita's powerful center force had appeared unmolested off of Samar on its way to destroy the large American anchorage of transports, tankers and supply ships in Leyte Gulf. The resulting battle found Admiral Clifton Sprague's group of six escort carriers screened by three destroyers and four destroyer escorts as the only force standing between Kurita and the anchorage. Pitted at close range against Kurita's four battleships, six heavy cruisers and six destroyers, Sprague's force should have suffered a lopsided, overwhelming defeat. But that defeat was turned into a successful American containment and victory due to the ferocity of the U.S. destroyers attacking into the teeth of the Japanese battle fleet. In his recollections of one of those attacks, the commanding officer of one of the tiny destroyer escorts spoke of his men.

*"To witness the conduct of the average enlisted man on this vessel, with an average of less than one year's service, would make any man proud to be an American. The crew were informed at the beginning of the action of the C.O.'s estimate of the situation. That we were fighting against overwhelming odds from which survival could not be expected, during which time we would do what damage we could. In the face of this knowledge the men zealously manned their stations and fought and worked with such calmness, courage and efficiency that no higher honor could be conceived than to command such a group."*

After sinking two of the escort carriers, two of the destroyers and one of the destroyer escorts, the Japanese had suddenly retired having suffered the loss of three heavy cruisers in the exchange.

In analyzing that battle, the Chinese believed that the Japanese had executed their plan very ably and created a situation to their advantage. They believed the Japanese clearly had victory within their grasp, but lost heart in the face of adversity and heavy losses of their own. And, so as not to adapt that same particular page from the Japanese history book, the Chinese had trained their officers to continue to press the attack in such situations and not lose heart. This quality would be abundantly displayed in the battle over Guam as four regiments of Chinese strike aircraft attacked.

With the regiments of TU-16 Badger and FBC-7 bombers based on Okinawa attacking from the west and northwest, and two regiments of TU-22M bombers based in the Philippines and Japan attacking from the north and northeast, the Chinese were committing one hundred and forty-four strike aircraft to the battle. When combined with the three regiments committed to the attack on the American carriers, this represented the cream of the Chinese naval-air long-range strike capability.

All of the TU-16 and FBC-7 bombers carried two AS-26 Yakhont cruise missiles each, half of them the land attack variety and the other half the anti-shipping variety. The TU-22M Backfire bombers, seventy-two in all, were split half-and-half between LRASD devices and more anti-shipping Yakhont missiles. All in all, the Chinese had one hundred and forty-four anti-shipping missiles, seventy-two land attack missiles and thirty-six LRASD devices targeted on the eighty-five surface combatant vessels operating around Guam and on the main airfield and its facilities on the island

The American E-3 Sentry AEW aircraft has a longer-range radar than the naval E-2C AWACS aircraft. This allowed the F-15C fighter aircraft flying barrier CAP to the north of the island to detect and be vectored to intercept the TU-16 regiment approaching Guam from the north more quickly than the naval CAP aircraft had been able to do earlier in the day. In addition, the TU-16 aircraft was subsonic and much slower than the FBC-7 and TU-22M Backfire bombers. This gave the F-15 fighter more time to acquire, lock-on and fire at the Chinese aircraft. The results were that the northern attack regiment carrying anti-shiping Yakhont missiles was reduced in numbers from thirty-six aircraft to seventeen aircraft before they ever launched a single missile. When they did launch, all thirty-four missiles successfully fired their engines and tracked towards Guam.

To the northwest, the entire regiment of FBC-7 aircraft was able to launch its missiles before being engaged by the barrier CAP to the west of Guam. This is because these aircraft were acquired only after achieving a position making a direct intercept by the western barrier CAP impossible. Those American aircraft performed a tail chase and fired their anti-aircraft missiles just as the Chinese aircraft launched their seventy-two land attack missiles on Guam and began to turn back for their home bases. As they did so, they ran headlong into the American missile barrage and twenty of the aircraft fell to the sea far below.

As a total of one hundred and eight Chinese missiles accelerated towards Guam, from the two regiments of the seventy two Badger and FBC-7 strike aircraft involved in the attack, only a total of fifteen would return to their bases the Philippines and in Japan. The TU-22M aircraft fared better.

The barrier CAP to the north that had been pulled off to engage the Badger aircraft were out of position to engage the TU-22M aircraft that came streaking in towards Guam from the north five minutes later. These aircraft carried more Yakhont missiles and were able to approach to the appropriate range and launch their missiles before they were engaged by American missiles. Turning away after the launch of their seventy-two missiles and igniting their afterburners as they escaped, they were able to depart for their bases in the Philippines with a total loss of only four aircraft.

As the American aircraft flying CAP directly over Guam and the vessels in the area contended with almost one hundred and eighty Yakhont missiles approaching on three axis at over Mach-2, the final regiment of Chinese strike aircraft approached from the northeast. Coming in just off the waves at almost Mach-2 themselves and engaging their full suite of electronic jamming, these aircraft were able to approach to within forty miles of Guam before being positively identified. As the CAP scrambled to interdict them with what remaining anti-aircraft missiles they had, and as Patriot missile batteries on the island joined in the defense, the first group of eighteen aircraft released their LRASD weapons amongst the ships on the eastern and northern side of the island.

The second group of eighteen Backfire aircraft was intercepted as it approached the launch points against the ships on the western side of the island that had just been savaged by the Yakhont missile attack. Six TU-22M bombers were shot down before they could launch their weapons, but twelve weapons were successfully launched just eight miles from the nearest formation of ships. In all, thirty LRASD weapons were successfully deployed amongst the Allied shipping gathered around Guam. As they began to ignite their rocket engines and attack specific Allied shipping, twenty-two of the attacking Chinese aircraft retreated. Before they could get out of range, another five were shot down, leaving seventeen of their regiment, less than half, to return to their bases in the Philippines.

Of the one hundred and forty-four aircraft sent by the Chinese to attack the American shipping and air base at Guam, only sixty-four aircraft would be returning. The pilots and crews of the Chinese aircraft had been true to their training to press the attack at all costs. The results were exactly what the Chinese planners had hoped to achieve. Of the eighty-five ships anchored or on patrol around Guam, sixty-eight of them were sunk or damaged. Fifty-five ships were sent to the bottom, including two American Aegis destroyers, one of the remaining Japanese Aegis destroyers, both of Japan's new amphibious assault ships, the Thai Sea Control carrier along with two of its escorts and the USS Bonhomme Richard. The Bonhomme Richard was the American Wasp class LHD that had so narrowly survived the initial Chinese attacks four months earlier off of Japan, from which JT Samson had made his now famous video of the USS Constellation breaking in two, folding up and sinking. In addition to these losses, a number of Taiwanese, South Korean and Canadian warships were sunk along with fourteen large supply transports, four of which were new fast Roll-on, Roll-off (RORO) U.S. Navy T-AKR Sealift ships laden with significant supplies for Guam and other remaining western Pacific American outposts.

Because so many allied ships were sunk there on July 28<sup>th</sup>, the waters around Guam were christened with a new name by the surviving sailors. It was a name that would spread from navy to navy, from fleet to fleet, all around the world as word of what transpired was relayed by word of mouth. It was a name that would be spoken in hushed tones and with respect as it called up mental images of what transpired that day. It was a name that would henceforth be used when describing those waters or any maritime activity in or near them. The name was "Steel Reef".

In addition, the two main airfields on Guam, Anderson Air Force base and Agana Naval Air Station, were both seriously damaged. As the scores of supersonic missiles rained down, all of their major runways were badly damaged and significant destruction was inflicted on command and

control facilities, fuel storage areas and hangars, all of which had been precisely targeted by Chinese operatives months before hostilities had begun.

Later that night, five tactical assault ships of the PLAN approached within 1200 kilometers of Guam escorted by two Beijing class aircraft carriers and their battle groups. These ships launched new, long-range tactical ballistic missiles at the facilities on and around the main military installations on Guam. As these sixty missiles approached at ballistic speeds, a much-degraded Patriot missile defense system engaged them shooting down only thirteen of the attacking missiles. The other forty-seven missiles impacted causing major damage and killing and wounding scores more military personnel, rescue workers, repair parties and civilians. That attack ended what came to be known as the Battle for Guam and it marked the last engagement of the Battle of the Southwest Pacific.

The outcome of the battle was a pivotal and momentous victory for the Red Chinese and their allies in the CAS and GIR, and it was another stunning defeat for the Americans and their allies, despite having sunk two of China's new aircraft carriers and most of their escorts.

### **Immediate Aftermath of the Battle of the Southwest Pacific**

The losses from the Battle of the Southwest Pacific, and in particular from the Battle for Guam, were stunning and shocking to America and her allies. The defeat was as major as the surprise attack off of Japan in March and in fact resulted in more vessels sunk. After the loss of so many personnel, ships, aircraft and their provisions, America's war planners had no choice but to reluctantly recommended conceding the western Pacific to the Chinese for the time being. This was particularly true because of the obvious danger to any remaining American installations in range of the major Chinese bases in the Philippines and Japan. Under this recommended plan, America would conduct a strategic withdrawal back to a line from New Caledonia and the eastern Solomon Islands north through the Marshall Islands to Wake Island and from there north to the Aleutians.

It represented a withdrawal of over 1000 miles that the Chinese properly labeled as a retreat. In the end, America's military leaders and analysts felt that making such a withdrawal was necessary while leaving strong garrisons on the Mariana Islands, the Caroline Islands and the eastern Solomon Islands. These garrisons were commanded to slow or even stall the Chinese advance if at all possible. It was hoped that these delays and the distances involved would buy enough time for allied forces to regroup and develop effective defensive weapons systems and operational strategies to employ against the Chinese before going on the counter offensive.

The President heard of this proposal on the afternoon of July 29<sup>th</sup> when the magnitude of the losses at Guam were still being analyzed. Despite what was viewed as a tremendous victory off of New Guinea, a victory that would be widely proclaimed in the press, it was clear that America had suffered a drastic blow and would not be able to maintain its forward line of defense against the Chinese. At its current position, such an attempt would only invite potentially catastrophic losses worse than those already suffered. On the morning of July 30<sup>th</sup>, after an all-night war council that included the National Security Council and all of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and many of their major commanders, the President reluctantly gave the necessary orders to implement the withdrawal.

After speaking with the Secretary of Defense and the Chief of Naval Operations, the President also ordered a major command change. Admiral Ben Ryan would be promoted to CINCPAC effective immediately. Admiral Richard Sullivan, the individual who had held that position up until that point was ordered to spend two weeks transitioning Admiral Ryan into his new command before reporting to Washington DC to lead strategic naval war planning at the Pentagon. To date, almost every successful counter-attack and assault on the Chinese onslaught in the Pacific, as few as they had been, had involved operations under Admiral Ryan's command. The Commander in Chief and his military advisors felt that it was time for a spirit and mantle of success, such as it was, to infuse and re-invigorate the overall Pacific Theater command. President Weisskopf, his Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Chief of Naval Operation all felt that Admiral Ben Ryan was the man to get that job done. It would be many months before the opportunity to achieve their aspirations in that regard would present itself.

## Chapter 19

*“The end of a matter is best understood well after it is completed.” – Ancient Buddhist Proverb*

**August 3rd, 21:49 EDT**

**The Oval Office, The White House**

**Washington, D.C.**

“Mr. President, WNN is airing a live feed from Qatar!”

President Weisskopf looked up from his conversation with the Attorney General, as his Chief of Staff, who had interrupted the meeting, continued to hold the door to the Oval Office open.

“Okay, let’s see what WNN says is happening over there. Dean, we’ll continue our discussion after we view this. Talbot, you’d best inform any other members of the cabinet, particularly the national Security Team and have them stand by. I may call a meeting after we see the feed.”

The President already knew that the situation in Qatar had gone from bad to worse. Admiral Crowley, the former Chief of Naval Operations who had become the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Jeremy Stone, had discussed the situation as they knew it in some detail with him last night. As of day before yesterday in their last direct communication with General Wilcox, who commanded the allied troops there, the situation was grim.

The GIR had been constantly bombarding the American and allied troops from the air, from their artillery positions near the neck of the peninsula and from the sea for several weeks. It was clear that they were preparing themselves logistically for a final assault. With the all out effort to hold Diego Garcia, there had been literally nothing America or her allies could do to relive and assist the forces in Qatar. General Wilcox, himself dug in deeply to a network of buried bunkers and tunnels thirty-five miles behind the front lines in the middle of the most rugged terrain on the peninsula had informed his command chain that an enemy breakthrough was imminent. He had been down to less than twenty thousand effective troops at that point from an original contingent of almost forty-five thousand. Conditions for the wounded were atrocious as virtually all critical medical supplies had been depleted.

“The fact that those troops had held out so long was nothing short of a miracle,” thought the President as the TV in the oval office came on.

General Wilcox had followed the President’s direct, personal orders to the tee. He had held on and held on, his forces subsisting on less and less rations, inflicting significant attrition on the enemy and holding in place a very large force that otherwise would be put to use somewhere else by the GIR against the allied effort. Estimates ranged up to 250,000 GIR troops involved in the siege.

But there had been no news since that communication two days ago. A HR-7 over-flight had occurred yesterday and prompted the meeting last night with the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Imagery provided by the National Reconnaissance Office had clearly shown the breakthrough that General Wilcox had feared. A large armored column was thrusting deep into the peninsula and was pointed directly at General Wilcox’s command headquarters.

Then the image of David Krenshaw from WNN appeared on the screen.

“This is David Krenshaw at WNN News. We are about to air a semi-live scene from the fighting on the Qatar peninsula in the Persian Gulf. The broadcast is being made available to us by our own confidential sources who have remained in the area at great risk. The transmission is going through a roundabout feed to arrive here in our headquarters in New York City and technicians inform me that there is actually about a four minute delay from real time. Again, this is a WNN exclusive from the war front on the Qatar Peninsula where I am informed the GIR has just forced the surrender of allied forces in the area. Viewer caution and discretion is advised.”

As looks of disbelief and shock passed between the President and the Attorney General, and as the stunned National Security Advisor stood in the doorway watching, the scene shifted to a desert location. There, thousands of soldiers could be seen standing off to the left of the screen, circling around out of view. In the center of the view were eight to ten GIR officers accompanied by thirty security personnel standing over the prostrate forms of twelve U.S. Army and U.S. Marine personnel who were being held down on the ground by other GIR soldiers. Behind those twelve, were row after row of American and allied troops, also lying prostrate on the ground, their arms outstretched.

“My, God,” whispered the President, “That’s General Wilcox on the ground there.”

As they watched and as more of the President’s cabinet arrived in the room, General Wilcox could be seen lifting his head and staring defiantly into the eyes of the GIR General addressing him. Arabic was spoken to the American General and then translated into heavily accented English by one of the personnel attending the GIR General.

“You and every one of your people will confess to the rape of Islamic lands and the flaunting of Islamic law! This is not a request, it is a . . .”

General Wilcox his head lifted from off the ground, his eyes staring defiantly, answered before the translator could complete his sentence.

“You, sir, can go straight to hell!”

Apparently the GIR General needed no translation. Walking resolutely over to the American General, and as General Wilcox strained to avoid it, the GIR General placed his foot firmly on General Wilcox’s head and ground his face into the sand with the heel of his boot.

A U.S. Marine Captain, being held down by two GIR soldiers behind the General, struggled with his captors and was able to free himself. Rising to his feet in an instant, he quickly charged the GIR General in an attempt to bodily knock him away from his commanding officer. Before he could reach his objective however, a volley of shots rang out and the Marine Captain fell dead next to his commanding officer.

A general melee ensued where hundreds of the U.S. and allied forces lying in the background rose up and attacked their captors with their bare hands yelling their outrage. Shots rang out and the firing rose to a fevered pitch for a few moments. It was a slaughter and when it was over, after the dust and smoke cleared, the GIR General, his service pistol drawn and smoking, still stood over General Wilcox who now lay unconscious at his feet. Several dead American and allied soldiers who had also tried to reach the form of their commanding officer lay dead near the GIR General who himself was surrounded by his own security forces, their assault rifles smoking.

Hundreds of dead and wounded allied soldiers lay about with a few score of GIR soldiers whom they had been able to reach. GIR soldiers were now in the process of scavenging the bodies and the uniforms of the dead and wounded allied soldiers. A large mass of huddled and standing allied prisoners were being hustled away at the point of bayonets while five living officers with General Wilcox were dragged to their feet and forced to carry the form of their commander from the scene.

“Turn that damn thing off,” commanded the President. “I don’t need to see any more and I certainly don’t need or want to hear the WNN commentary.

“This disgrace and atrocity shall not go unanswered!”

“Dean, I want to know exactly how WNN was able to get that live video. I do not, I cannot, believe that this airing was either coincidental or done without the knowledge and approval of those GIR forces present. Get with Director Ballard and apply whatever overseas assets necessary from your own agencies and from the CIA that may be required to add this to your ongoing investigation. If necessary, I will sign emergency findings to help obtain court orders to search WNN facilities.”

**August 12th, 19:36 local time**

**SH-60 Medivac Helicopter**

**Southwest of Diego Garcia, Indian Ocean**

Drifting in and out of consciousness, the IV drip constantly pumping sedatives and plasma into his ravaged body, Lance Corporal Leon Campbell was reliving bits and pieces of the long weeks of combat on Diego Garcia.

After the return of the remnant of the USS Enterprise battle group almost exactly one month ago, the entire force on the island took on a much more urgent and intense demeanor. To read about American aircraft carriers being sunk was one thing, to have the one defending your patch of land in the middle of the ocean be sunk is quite another. It had shocked the entire garrison.

In his mind, in his semi-conscious state, a memory was recalled. He could see it now, as if though it were happening again, as clearly and distinctly as when it had actually happened and he and those in his squad had personally experienced it. It was a day or two after the return of the surviving ships from the Enterprise battle group. Early in the morning, while they were out working on their positions, a flight of B1-B bombers had flown over the island on their way to do battle with the enemy still lurking somewhere out there, over the horizon, to the north and east of the island. Leon saw himself and those with him stand up and cheer and cheer until they were hoarse. And they had not been alone, virtually the entire garrison on the island had done the same thing. He would never forget the look of those beautifully sleek and deadly aircraft as they streaked across the island at low level and continued on out to sea. He could see them now, winging their way north and east ... the sun glinting off their wings as they made a precision turn a mile or two off shore.

For several days he remembered those flights had continued, sometimes with aircraft from the island taking off in large numbers and accompanying the bombers as they made their way towards the enemy, holding them at bay somewhere out there in the vast tracks of featureless water. But over the space of those several days, the numbers of American bombers flying out to meet the enemy began to decrease and the numbers of aircraft that were landing back on the island after such missions were even less. As they feverishly worked day-in and day-out to dig deeper into the island, to zero in their weapons, to establish kill zones and to place obstacles at any possible site for troop landings, the men talked about the decreasing number of aircraft returning from those missions. He remembered most of all, in the still, hot and humid evenings discussing what those decreasing numbers meant to them.

There was little doubt what it would eventually mean to Leon’s position on the only appreciable rise in elevation on the island. There, some thirty feet in elevation over the surrounding terrain, Leon and his squad could observe most of the rest of the island. From their positions at the military crest of the small rise that ran for over a kilometer along this end of the island he and his team could observe

virtually the entire island and the sea approaches leading to it. Leon and his team had constructed carefully concealed and fortified sniper positions from which they could control a wide area to their front and left. Behind them were a number of supply depots, some hardened bunkers and the designated spot where their command intended to conduct the final defense of the island should the need arise to be evacuated from the island ... should they be able to evacuate the island.

As he feverishly turned in the webbing they had him attached to in the helicopter, Leon relived the day when the first live air raid siren sounded its shrill note across the island. Leon watched the air above as he ran to his pre-assigned bomb shelter. Contrails from American aircraft above them moved rapidly off to the northeast where Leon could see many contrails approaching from that direction. He remembered noticing both of the Aegis ships in the harbor erupting on both their fore and aft ends as literally dozens of anti-aircraft missiles shot up from each and their smoke trails rapidly led up and off in the direction of those approaching contrails. More aircraft were taking off and Leon watched as a pair of F-15 Eagles rocketed off the runway to his north and immediately went vertical in a climb to gain altitude and do battle with their enemies. Once in the bunker, they had all distinctly felt the many "THUMPS" from strikes impacting the island. When they had come out of the shelter fifteen minutes later after the "all clear" signal had been given, thick black smoke was rising from the vicinity of the airfield and the ship repair facilities to the north and blowing towards them. As a groan escaped his throat, he could almost smell and taste that thick acrid smell again. Two ships in the harbor had been down by the bow and burning furiously when they looked across the anchorage from the vantage point of their position, while other ships moved about, some staying in port and others heading out to the open sea.

From that day forward, very rarely did flights of U.S. strike aircraft pass over the island. No, now it was GIR and Indian strike aircraft coming to the island and attacking Leon while the decreasing number of U.S. aircraft remaining at Diego Garcia contended with them in an attempt to hold back the tide. At that point, instead of counting how many U.S. aircraft returned from raids on the enemy, the Marines were counting how many aircraft were left on the island. It was a decreasing number, despite occasional replacement aircraft that were ferried in.

Finally, on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, there came the largest air raid on the island to that date. It left the airfield terribly damaged and left no American aircraft in the air. The raid went on and on as the enemy aircraft used up all of their ordinance in the uncontested moments available to them. Finally, when the Marines had come out of their shelter they saw the destruction off to their north around the airfield and the island administrative and command and control facilities with many fires raging out of control. There were no longer any ships afloat in the harbor. They had all either been sunk or had withdrawn to safer waters now far to the south and southwest. Leon also remembered seeing the many areas where single plumes of thick, black smoke rose high into the air, marking the final resting place for aircraft that had been shot down, both GIR and American.

They also observed something new. One of the senior NCOs had motioned for Leon and the other snipers on the ridge to come with him. They had marched for maybe two hundred yards through thick undergrowth until they came to an area that allowed them to look out to their north and northeast on the opposite side of the narrow and curving island. The sergeant handed Leon some binoculars and pointed there off to the north. What Leon saw had chilled him to the bone and it did so now once again as he relived it in his mind. There, many, many miles in the distance were many ships' masts, just visible above the horizon. The enemy fleet had arrived off of Diego Garcia.

For several days a period ensued where America's military made a courageous but vain attempt with aircraft arriving from distant bases, to prevent the Indian CAS forces and increasing GIR forces from establishing air superiority and ultimate air dominance over the island. Tremendous air battles were fought, the island was bombed and shelled almost continuously. Leon remembered wishing, after one particularly intense eighteen hour period, that the enemy would just land their forces and get it over with. Everyone could see that the Indian carriers and their aircraft were there, right off the island along with many ships whose guns and missiles could now target the American airfield and other installations at will. In addition, the Indian and GIR air bases were much closer than any comparable American facility. It was a simple math equation involving weapons loads, distances, fuel supplies and time. It was an equation with but one answer at that point ... and that answer had come on August 6<sup>th</sup> with the first Indian landings on the far northeastern end of the "U" shaped island, across the harbor from the main American installations.

Being several miles away, it was impossible for Leon's weapons to reach those enemy ships, soldiers and vehicles as they came ashore. But American artillery behind Leon had fired hotly and accurately. The Indian forces had not taken such counter fire lightly. Almost immediately, aircraft buzzed over those areas where American counter fire had originated. Some were shot down by the few remaining stinger missiles and the few Avenger AAW system available ... but most targeted and destroyed the American heavy weapons positions one by one.

For six days the American Marines and other personnel had fought a pitched battle as more and more Indian forces were poured into the northern end of the island. On August 9<sup>th</sup> the Indians had crossed the harbor directly and stormed the major facilities, most of which were already nothing but

burned out shells of buildings. More and more personnel straggled back behind the final perimeter on the hill as the Indians slowly made their way southward. Sometimes the rate and duration of the firing was almost surreal, almost unbelievable unless you had actually heard it and understood its language. It was the language of flesh and blood and death.

American planners had not rested or sat back during these tense days. A plan was feverishly put together to evacuate the garrison. It was a risky plan, but one that had to be attempted to avoid another Qatar. On August 4th two days before the initial Indian amphibious landings, the USS Abraham Lincoln and its battle group had departed the Mediterranean and sailed at flank speed through the Straits of Gibraltar and around the Horn of Africa. On August 11<sup>th</sup> the ships had arrived undetected two hundred and fifty miles to the south and east of Diego Garcia. Unbeknownst to Leon or the other lower ranking Marines with him, a massive air support mission was planned that would clear the way for the evacuation of the remaining men by helicopter. This very morning, the morning of August 12<sup>th</sup>, the evacuation plan was carried out by American forces. It occurred during the major Indian assault to annihilate the Marines or drive them off the island.

Leon remembered those final events most vividly and was reliving them again. The massive assault by the Indians, the constant firing of his .50 caliber sniper rifle as he targeted and "took out" Indian officers directing the attack. He had always watched in fascination as he had seen war movies and read novels that indicated how time seemed to slow down during intense moments like those he experienced this morning on Diego Garcia. Now he knew that the perception was true. Those life or death hours and minutes replayed themselves before his mind's eye. He remembered vividly the sudden appearance of American fighter and attack aircraft over the battlefield. He recalled the intense fighting on the ground and in the air, and the almost innumerable waves of Indian soldiers that just kept coming ... kept coming! It seemed he shot a thousand of them himself and they kept coming!

Finally, the helicopters, scores of them, had arrived as the American F F/A-18E aircraft gained the upper hand in the air over that end of the island temporarily. He and Private Jacobs, his security man, had continued firing as one by one the others in their line ran to the rear to be evacuated. He could feel the intense heat of rocket pod fire erupting almost directly over his head as Cobra gunships worked with him to hold the enemy back from the rally points behind him on the beach. After covering the retreat of all others, he and his senior NCO had been alone on the hill, being flanked by hundreds of enemy soldiers despite the air support. The NCO had taken a hit in the upper torso and another in fleshy area under his thigh and gone down.

Leon seemed to swing left, right and forward, like an automaton, firing until first one and then another clip were emptied. He picked up two more, rammed them home and continued to shoot. The enemy, climbing over the bodies of their own dead to get at him with an animal like intensity just kept coming. Private Jacobs went down, shot through the pelvis and writhing in agony.

"Leon, get the hell out of there!"

The shouted words had come to him almost like a dream, as if though from another world outside of the one he now knew and *lived*. It was like he had never known any other world, so warped had become his sense of time and proportion during those moments of intense combat. But that voice had come and he remembered slowly turning his head and looking down the slope to his commanding officer, standing at the base of the hill with an SH-60 behind him and five Marines providing security. It was the last helicopter in view.

Somehow that voice and the view of the CO and the helicopter had cut through to his rational mind and Leon had known what he had to do. Emptying his last magazine into a group of approaching Indian soldiers some fifty yards away, Leon had then thrown his empty rifle down and reached down with one hand and grabbed the NCO's pants at the waist. With his other hand, he similarly grabbed private Jacobs and then began to drag *both* men towards his CO and the helicopter. He had gone no more than ten yards when he felt a tremendous yank on his right leg at the calf and he collapsed to one knee on that side. Summoning all his strength and somehow ignoring the pain, he stood erect and kept coming. After a few more yards another tremendous jolt hit his back and he stumbled forward, almost falling but in the end retaining his footing. As he continued forward, he watched the Marines below him, now only thirty yards away, firing past him at figures appearing on the ridgeline behind him. He kept going but looked down and noticed the crimson on his chest, the ragged hole in the front of his fatigues and the ragged flesh ... his flesh ... surrounding the wound.

He somehow remained erect and kept moving down that small hill, both the NCO and Private Jacobs still in tow. Three of the five Marines were down now and being loaded into the helicopter. His CO and the other two Marines kept up a steady covering fire, joined now by a door gunner on the helicopter using an M-60 machine gun to stitch rows back and forth along the ridge. As he approached within five yards of the CO, Leon summoned up the strength and with an almost superhuman surge, he hurled both the NCO and Private Jacobs forward to the waiting arms of two corpsmen who had come forward from the helicopter. Just as they took the men from him, there was an incredibly bright flash to his rear and Leon had felt himself thrown forward.

He had been in and out of consciousness ever since, reliving events of the last weeks every time he drifted off and as he felt his body weakening from the damage inflicted upon it. Now, as he relived

that last experience of escaping the Island, and as the helicopter landed on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln, a light much more intense and bright than the one that had erupted behind him shined down on him in his mind's eye. All of a sudden he felt himself lifted and it was like he could see himself lying there in the helicopter as crew on the deck of the carrier frantically unstrapped him from the webbing and loaded him on a gurney to carry him across the deck. But the light above had turned incredibly warm, soothing and *penetrating*, more comforting than anything he had ever experienced. He found himself giving into its call as he lost site of the carrier deck and he felt as if his world was disappearing into the substance of that total light.

**August 17th, 20:26 MDT**

**Along Route 78**

**South of Pagosa Springs, Colorado**

The weather was perfect, not a cloud in the sky. Humidity extremely low, air very dry and hot. Yes extremely hot, even at this high an elevation of almost 3000 meters the temperature was still over 100 degrees Fahrenheit, almost 40 degrees centigrade!. And the wind ... well the wind was the most perfect thing about it. Sustained at forty to fifty kilometers per hour directly out of the south, the wind was drawing a continual supply of hot, dry air all the way from the waists of Mexico and funneling it right up here along the western side of the continental divide.

Manuel Mendoza had waited all summer for these conditions. It had been a relatively dry summer, but there had been regular systems coming in out of the Gulf of Alaska providing a constant re-charging of the atmosphere and producing sporadic rains throughout the American west. Such conditions were not desirable for the operation he had been tasked with. But over the last three weeks a huge high pressure system had moved in from the Pacific Ocean to the south of Los Angeles and it had parked itself directly over the central portion of the United States, between Dallas, Texas and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

This was what Mendoza had been told to watch for. Ever since that last operation in Dallas, he had been living and working with friends in these high mountains of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. He was doing manual ranch and farm labor, like all of the other "migrant" workers he was with. Many of whom had been living and working on these same ranches for years. So they had a good relationship with their employers who were anxious to avoid the many costly requirements of the labor laws in the United States and who gladly paid an honest wage to these hard working compadres from south of the border. But the "friends" with whom Manuel was staying were far more than just ordinary migrant workers.

The forecast called for the high pressure system to strengthen and actually build back to the west for the next two to three weeks. Hot, dry and windy was the forecast, and it held true from the Edwards Plateau of Texas, across to the Grand Canyon in Arizona, with that hot, dry Mexican air being funneled to the north all along that line ... all the way to the Canadian border in many places. And this afternoon was the time to take full advantage of it. Manuel had given the "execute" order yesterday afternoon, and sent the confirmation this morning. He had sent this to the ten lead members of the teams and to Miguel Santos back in Dallas.

Thinking of Dallas had reminded him of the operation in Dallas. How brilliant of Miguel to execute such an operation against his own headquarters. Actually, Manuel knew that the idea and planning really originated with Hector, but that was supposed to be a tightly guarded secret, with complete compartmentalization. There were supposed to be no ties between Hector and any operation, and the only direct tie to Miguel was Manuel. That was also supposed to be "forbidden", but a very strong bond of trust had been forged over the years between Miguel and Manuel. Over a fifteen-year period doing various work projects for Miguel and FTA Trucking, they had come to know one another as brothers.

Manuel's knowledge of Hector had not come through his friend and compatriot Miguel. Miguel was completely unaware that Manuel knew of Hector's association with all of the "wet" operations. Manuel had happened upon it by chance three years ago. He made his discovery at Miguel's house one afternoon when Miguel had taken his wife and children to Six Flags over Texas, leaving Manuel to watch VHS video movies at home. Behind Miguel's entertainment center, Manuel had happened upon a secret chamber which had opened as he had hit a hidden switch while searching for a Mexican gold piece which he had been flipping it into the air when watching one of Miguel's movies. The gold piece, which Manuel carried around for luck., had fallen underneath the lower shelf of a bookcase. While he was reaching underneath this, his fingers had felt a recessed indentation under the shelf, right up against the wall. Within the indentation was a metal toggle switch that Manuel had flipped, opening the chamber behind the entertainment center. In that chamber had been an entire library of audio and video recordings. These recordings had been of every major, clandestine meeting that Hector had held with Miguel regarding the "true" nature of FTA. It was a nature Manuel knew somewhat about already as he was involved with operations at Miguel's bidding. But he had never realized how vast the planning and goals were, or of who all was involved. He had spent the day watching videos all right, but not the ones Miguel had envisioned. After carefully putting everything



back exactly as he found it, Manuel had been there when Miguel came home and had never mentioned it to him.

Nor would he ever. Despite how close he and Miguel had grown in the intervening years, Manuel knew that such information could be fatal if either Miguel or Hector ever felt the security of their operation had been breached. Manuel understood this, it is exactly the way he would view it.

But now, here he was on Route 78, ready to execute his portion of the plan. Ten American SUV vehicles, four men to the vehicle, spread out between South Fork and Mancos, Colorado. Each vehicle had its own twenty mile route to "run" early this evening. Each team consisted of one driver, two "security" men armed with AR-10 semi-automatic assault rifles and one team member to work the window. In his team, the window man was Manuel himself. He looked next to him in the center seat of the Chevrolet Tahoe that they were driving. There, stacked in twenty boxes of ten to the box, were his two hundred large-stick matchboxes. Each had a short eight-inch stick firmly glued to the bottom and sticking out like a handle, with the heads of twenty or thirty matches sticking out of the box and the box covered in tissue paper. One swipe of a match would produce a brightly blazing device that would burn hot for more than enough time to toss into the high grass and dry timber all along the north side of the route they would be traveling this evening.

When his digital watch indicated exactly 8:30 PM, Manuel leaned forward and patted the driver on the shoulder and they pulled onto the road. Next to the driver, one of the other men held his AR-10 low and at the ready. He had two twenty round clips loaded and taped together, with one of the clips already inserted into the rifle. He was "locked and loaded". In the rear seat, was the other security man. They had removed the rear window of the Tahoe so he had an unobstructed view out the back."

Traveling at forty to fifty miles per hour, Manuel began lighting and throwing a device out every one tenth of a mile as called off by the driver. Ten devices to the mile, two hundred devices in twenty miles. They were traveling a remote paved highway with few vehicles. As they proceeded, a line of quickly growing fire was spreading to the north behind them, each small blaze quickly joining with that of the one before. There was only one difficulty that arose on their entire "run", and it involved two local citizens. After driving about seven miles a pickup truck passed them going the other way and must have figured that their vehicle was somehow creating the growing conflagration. That truck had turned around and quickly caught up with them. Two cowboys were waving their hands out the window wildly as they approached and the driver began blowing his horn as they got close. When they were close enough, the man in back had shot the driver in the face and the truck had crashed on the side of the road. Manuel had ordered his driver to stop and they had gone back and insured that both cowboys were incapable of ever identifying them or reporting on what had transpired.

After twelve miles they could see the smoke rising from the fires being set by the team to their west. As they came to the end of their "run", Manuel threw the last device out the window and watched as the fire it started raced to the north with the wind, trying to catch the fires that had been started five hundred feet to the west almost twenty minutes ago. Seeing that the operation was producing the desired results, Manuel and his team turned at an appointed crossroad and circled back on a gravel road to Juanita, Colorado before dropping into northern New Mexico where they spent the night with "migrant" friend outside of Lumberton.

In the mean time, an inferno was advancing northward through the mountains along an almost unbroken front two hundred miles wide, racing through the dried grass, fur and pine trees of southern Colorado. By sunset, the sky to the south of South Fork, Wolf Creek, Pagosa Springs, Durango and Mancos was brightly lit by the advancing fires. Already, many outlying homes and buildings had been destroyed. There simply wasn't time to perform a full evacuation as the fires advanced rapidly into these towns. In a desperate attempt to evacuate the many hundreds of people at the resort of Fairfield Pagosa, a massive traffic jam was created on U.S. Highway 160, which itself lay directly in the path of the advancing firestorm that had now created a life and an atmosphere of its own. Hundreds of those people died in their cars as the fires swept over the road and continued on unabated.

Hundreds of campers all along this beautiful stretch of southern Colorado were trapped that evening. Some burned in their tents, some suffocated when taking refuge in streams. A few were able to escape the path by either being along one end of the two hundred mile firestorm front, or by having massive outcroppings of rocks or mountains provide a lee in which to survive. Dawn came with the towns of South Fork, Pagosa Springs and Mancos lying in smoldering ruins. A valiant effort was made and succeeded in saving much of Durango, the largest town in the immediate path of the blaze and located in a fairly deep canyon, which provided natural protection from the flames.

Nonetheless, the flames continued on towards central Colorado and some of the most rugged and beautiful terrain on the continent. The towns of Wagon Wheel Gap, Vallicito, Tacoma and Stoner were next in the path of the blaze, along with uncounted numbers of vacationers, hikers and campers in the backcountry. Many of these people were unaware of the seriousness of the situation until they saw the advancing wall of smoke by day, or light by night stretching from horizon to horizon.

Mendoza was oblivious to these specifics as he slept that night near Lumberton, New Mexico. He was also oblivious to the fact that two large holes had been created in his "front" when two of his teams had been halted in the completion of their assignments. In one of those instances, local

cowhands saw the occupants in the SUV purposely tossing burning material into the dried grass along the side of the road. These cowboys made no attempt to “flag” the offending SUV down, particularly when weapons were brandished. The terrorists in that instance found it was they who died under a hail of gunfire from local cowboys who shot first and asked questions later in such circumstances.

In the second instance, a local Sheriff’s deputy saw the car pass and turned around to follow it, keeping his distance fearing just the sort of reception the terrorists had in store. He radioed in the report and assistance arrived twelve miles down the road in the form of two State Highway patrol cruisers and another County Sheriff who had formed a road block and were waiting with their own assault weapons. In the shoot out that ensued, three of the four terrorists were killed while two deputies were wounded.

**August 18th, 09:15 MDT**  
**Local Coop Feed and Supply Store**  
**Lumberton, New Mexico**

Manuel walked into the Feed and Supply store intent on filling the order for his foreman “friend” on behalf of the rancher his friend worked for. Upon walking into the store he saw a group of ranchers and farmers raptly watching the news about the fire on TV. He listened briefly to the grave status report of current conditions and a report that two “teams” of terrorists involved in the setting of the fire had been interdicted in their efforts to start portions of the fire and that many of them had been killed. The newscaster was reporting that according to initial investigations, up to eight other “teams” of terrorists had not been spotted or interrupted in their arson.

“They sure put that together fast,” thought Manuel as he turned from the TV and began gathering the order of feed and wire he had been sent to purchase “on account”. He decided he would hurry and fill the order and get back to the ranch where his friend could assign him and his compatriots to some high country fence-mending task at a remote line cabin. Some place where he could spend several weeks out of sight and out of harms way. But he would never get the chance.

What Manuel did not see was what followed the report regarding the stopping of his two teams. In stopping them, local civilians and law enforcement had killed six of the terrorists and captured two others. Following that report had been the report from a fisherman who had been out on Route 78 the evening before and had observed another car full of terrorists making their attack. The angler had the presence of mind to use his digital camera and take pictures of what he saw. When he heard the approach of a vehicle along Route 78 he looked up to the roadway and watched the SUV approach. He had clearly seen burning material being tossed out regularly and seen the line of fire trailing behind the vehicle along the road into the distance. He immediately removed his digital camera from its pouch and used it to take pictures of the vehicle and its occupants as it passed above him. One of the pictures showed a clear profile of Manuel as he tossed one of the burning devices out of the window. The picture had been made into a “Most Wanted” poster and was being prominently displayed on the TV in the Coop Feed and Supply store.

Several of the ranchers did a double take when they saw the picture on the TV. They immediately began looking around them for the individual they had just seen walk into the store who matched the picture on the TV so perfectly. They spotted Manuel several aisles over and they began speaking amongst themselves regarding him. One discreetly talked to the store manager who immediately went to his office and armed himself, asking his office manager to immediately call the police. When the store manager came back onto the store floor with his .44 magnum revolver he was joined by two local ranchers who had retrieved rifles from their pickup trucks. As Manuel turned a corner with his shopping cart full of the material he had been sent to purchase, he was confronted by three armed men blocking his path, each of whom had already drawn down on him. Turning to look around, he found four other large American ranchers blocking his path to the rear.

When the local constable arrived, Manuel Mendoza was already lying on the floor, hog tied.

**August 28th, 16:15 local time**  
**In the Knesset**  
**Tel Aviv, Israel**

“The old fool is at it again,” thought the Prime Minister as he listened to his rival drone on about seeking an audience with Sayeed and about “reasonable discourse”. But what he heard next from Isaac bin Ammon almost caused him to fall out of his seat.

“We have waited for a year, we have prepared militarily for a year. Our people have suffered and their social welfare needs have been neglected as we have followed the council of the Prime Minister and his coalition and prepared for that which has not happened. Uncounted monies have been spent. Even with the influx ... some are calling it an invasion ... of over one hundred and fifty thousand American troops, some of them crossing our borders through Jordan, the “vile” enemy that the Prime Minister has portrayed has never once threatened our nation.”

In stunned disbelief, Benjamin Netanyahu listened as the opposition leader continued.

“It is time for a change. It is time to put more weight, much more weight on diplomacy. I call for a vote of confidence here in the Knesset! I propose that we establish a new coalition government formed under the leadership of the Labor Party. I propose a mandate to meet with the leader of the GIR, Hasan Sayeed, and negotiate a lasting peace between Israel and a united Arab coalition, a coalition that perhaps now, with a unified voice, can seek the peace we have desired for so long.”

The Prime Minister wanted to stand up and wring that old fool's neck! But he held off as an uproar ensued. Despite knowing that Ammon was a “dove” who would negotiate Israel into a position of abject weakness, he was also a shrewd politician. He would not make such a proposal out in the open like this unless he was confident that he could win ... and this shocked the Prime Minister.

“Could I be that out of touch?” he asked himself. “Could I have missed a swing in the people's attitude of this proportion while preparing for the terrible storm that must soon come upon us?”

Such a vote of confidence, if not immediately challenged and defeated, would occur within a day or two. This would give Isaac time for the proposal to be floated in the court of public opinion, to potentially gain traction there and even worse, to give their enemies a view of dissension and weakness in their resolve. That could not be allowed.

Casting any further doubts aside, the Prime Minister stood, raising his arms until order was restored and the members there in assembly waited for him to respond.

“We have heard these proposals from the distinguished leader of the opposition before ... we have listened to them over and over. In the last year, need I remind you all what has transpired?”

“We now face a fundamental Islamic state of vast proportions. It is a state that believes it is led by its own Messiah. Do you plan to go and negotiate with the Islamic Messiah Isaac? Do you believe he is such? I do not ask this rhetorically. Unless you believe those things, or, unless you at least act like you believe them and carry yourself accordingly ... there will be no negotiations.

“Sayeed has set himself up in the eyes of these hundreds of millions to be their holy leader. Isaac, he is on a mission ... an errand from Allah to transform this entire region into a unified Islamic state ... ultimately he will desire to do so to the entire world and that is when his understanding with the Red Chinese will come to an end.

“But long before that happens, he will have disposed of us.

“Look around you. Our friends, the Americans and we too were caught unprepared. The Americans have consequently been driven completely off of the Arabian Peninsula and out of Turkey. Did negotiating help them? No it did not!

“Where are the nations of Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, or any of the other “moderate” Arab states today? Did negotiating help them? No it did not!

“If this Sayeed was willing so ruthlessly to invade, conquer and plunder these Arab nations in order to bring them into his fold, just what do you think he has planned for Israel? I'll tell you what he has planned. It is the same that every major Arabic leader has had planned since the 1940's ... to annihilate us or drive us into the sea!

“Isaac, your proposals are not only foolish, they are dangerous. We cannot, we must not grovel at the foot of this monster. Look to our east. Just what do you think the GIR Army over beyond Damascus intends? They number in excess of 350,000 combat ready and combat hardened troops. Look to our south. Just what do you think is proposed with the GIR Army group assembling in Jordan? The same Army group that drove the U.S. XVIII Corps off of the Arabian Peninsula. That Army now numbers over 400,000 combat hardened troops. And to the south and west, massing to assault the allied positions along the Suez, another GIR Army made up of over 300,000 troops.

“Isaac, what do you suppose all of these armies that number over one million intend? Will they stop at our borders while you talk? Will you return to us with a piece of paper like Chamberlain did to England before World War II? Will you further weaken us with your words while Hasan Sayeed continues to reinforce his armies that surround us, that have conquered the entire Arab world?”

“Our own intelligence service indicates that large number of troops are being brought down from Turkey to reinforce the Syrian group near Damascus. Another 250,000 men! In addition, out of Iran, Pakistan and Turkmenistan a large Army group numbering over 400,000 men is moving towards the Kuwait frontier for transit into Saudi Arabia. We have reports of large numbers of Indonesian troops being ferried across a now uncontested Indian Ocean into the Red Sea to reinforce the GIR Army in Jordan ... another 400,000 men! Another one million men at arms moving towards us.

“No, the time for talk is long past. It is time for action. This same Knesset took strong action a little over a month ago and declared war on the GIR and on Red China. I know you voted against that proposal, Isaac. Just like you voted against the show of strength back in late 2002 that finally ended the intifadah the Palestinians had prosecuted against us as a result of the utter failure of the Oslo accords. Do you remember those accords Isaac? You should, you helped institute them. They were a disaster and their failure became one of the lasting legacies of the administrations that negotiated them, both the Americans and our own. Ultimately, in order to put an end to the legacy of terror that they spawned, we had to cut against the grain of many of our own allies and the entire Arab world and institute the “Golan Doctrine”. Do you remember that doctrine Isaac? Do you remember the ultimate outcome? Let me remind you and everyone here of it.

“We were under an assault of terror like none witnessed in the history of our nation. A people, living amongst us and a situation fueled by our enemies and by foolish attempts and accords that tried to placate that which could not be placated. An entire generation of Palestinians had been raised to hate us and to destroy us with their own young bodies, blowing themselves up amongst our precious mothers, wives, daughters and sons. All of the negotiations, all of the appeasement did not quench their blood lust. Ultimately, we adopted the “Golan Doctrine”. It was direct and simple. It was the embodiment of the reasons we have held onto the Golan Heights all of these years, and always will.

“We informed the Palestinians and the world, that for every terror attack after that date, Israel would move our borders one kilometer forward on the West Bank and in the Gaza strip. Not occupy, not negotiate over ... we would *own* that land and never give it back. And that is exactly what we did. After the borders moved some twenty kilometers and after hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced into a smaller and smaller area, the Palestinians themselves solved their own terror problem and it has not recurred since. And what was the end result? Do you remember? Can you look around you today and see why we do not have a Gaza Strip or West Bank problem anymore? The result was that very moderate Palestinians came to power and they joined with us. Not two states, no desire any longer by the Palestinians to push us into the sea. It is why we are a unified nation today. At that point we were willing to negotiate, and we did. The only thing we had to give was something that already existed. We simply agreed to allow them the freedom to practice their religion in the former occupied areas so long as they did not attempt to proselyte or spread it. We then gave those who so desired a rigorous process whereby they could become Israeli citizens, while those who did not were bought out and deported. Those were terms both they and we were willing at that point to accept, and I need not remind you that few were the number of those former Palestinians who sought deportation.

“This did not occur by weakness. This did not occur by giving in to, or negotiating with abject aggression. It came by resolutely acting on our strength. We had already seen what the other path produced. It would produce the same on a much more horrific scale today. If we follow that path, then we are all fools and fully deserving of the lot of beggars, for that is what we would become.”

“Therefore, I move for an immediate vote on Isaac’s proposal for a vote of confidence. I move that we immediately invoke the parliamentary ratification procedures as outlined in our constitution. I know that such a vote of confidence is usually played out in the public eye, but if that can be avoided, it would be best for our people and best for either future course of action with respect to the GIR. I move that we take this vote on that parliamentary ratification now, immediately.”

Robbed of the opportunity to take his emotional plea to the press, and spurred on by the rousing words of the Prime Minister, the motion for a vote of confidence failed in the Knesset by a significant margin during the parliamentary ratification vote. As a result, the Prime Minister pressed his advantage and before the Knesset adjourned at 2 AM the next morning, more funding was approved whatever defensive and offensive operations were necessary to preserve the nation.

Walking from the meeting, the Prime Minister turned to his long time ally and friend, Jacob Keshet, who was also the Defense Minister and

“Jacob, pass onto General Olsen our success in obtaining the funding necessary to further augment our forces with more Comanche helicopters. Though I am certain the Americans will make effective use of their own, aircraft I believe that helicopter was designed with Israel and our unique terrain and geographical considerations in mind. If not in the mind of the designers themselves, then in the mind of Him who gave them their ideas.

“Also, please pass on my compliments to that American Major ... no, I believe the Americans have promoted him haven’t they? In any case, pass on my personal compliments to Colonel Simmons. He has done a magnificent job and deserves to be recognized by us as well. Soon now, we are going to need every bit of what he has helped to develop, and all that we have worked long years in preparing our nation and our people to face.”

**September 4th, 03:25 local time**

**CINC Personal Quarters**

**Gavank, Siberia, The Russian Federation**

He awoke with a start, perspiration running down his face and the memory of the dream fresh in his mind. It was the same dream, one that had been plaguing his sleep for months now. He had been so affected by it, and it had given him such strong feelings of foreboding, that he had sent his wife back home to St. Petersburg to live and wait for him there. Another year and he would be free of this thankless and disturbing assignment ... another year and he could finally retire.

Despite the thoughts of his wife and retirement, General Andrei Nosik could not shake the thoughts associated with the dream. He recognized the incessant flashing lights from his dream as the flash of artillery fire, artillery fire that was very close at hand. Whether directed at him or at someone else he could not tell. In any case, it went on and on, almost a constant reverberating light in his dream. But where there should have been the constant roar of the gunfire, there was only silence. Where there should have been the intense heat coming off the barrels, there was only intense cold.

Sometimes he could almost see the individual barrels in his dream. Hundreds and hundreds of them, canted at a steep angle. Large bore... if he could just get closer, he could tell whose they were.

Always in the dream, when he got to that point, it was as if he was lifted high into the atmosphere and transported from wherever he had been back over his home. From far above he could see the *Rodina*, from Volograd to Moscow to his own home city of St. Petersburg. What he saw, even from so great a distance, was frightening. Hundreds of thousands, no, millions of people ... refugees ... streaming to the east by foot, on roads, following rivers, across country ... any way they could. And no one to help them. It was at this point that he always woke up ... in a cold sweat, shaking.

"Well, it has awakened me once again," thought the General as he arose. "No sense in letting good time pass by. I'd best prepare now for that call with Moscow at 6:00."

Thinking about that call caused the General to reflect once again on his circumstance here in Siberia. He kept requesting more resource and he kept being denied. The Indians had found another oil field not thirty kilometers from Gavank and they had received permission from the Russian government to exploit it. Minister Gavanker, "Not Doctor Gavanker anymore," thought the General, had put together a plan to rapidly exploit the find and have it in production before the hard winter weather set in. It would mean another 15,000 workers and the new Minister had quickly put together the formal request to the Russian government and it had been just as quickly approved.

"I have to say," he thought, "making Gavanker a 'Minister' had cleared up a lot of red tape."

Simply said, what that meant was that it allowed both the General and the Minister to more effectively do their jobs. But being effective in getting things approved for the Indians did not necessarily mean that they were effectively implemented, particularly from a security standpoint. Another 15,000 workers was a significant security concern for the General.

Similarly, the Chinese had made two new mineral discoveries and were bringing in a total of 25,000 more workers to exploit them. Moscow rapidly approved access to Siberia by those workers over growing concern from the General. The addition of the three sites and the 40,000 new workers would mean that he would have the same 8,000 personnel to secure a work force now totaling 75,000. As a result of the Chinese growth in particular, Colonel Propov, the General's second in command and the officer in charge of security in the Chinese sector, had been literally begging for more support.

The situation was similar in all the sectors in the Economic Development zone created in Siberia. It seemed that in all of the sectors the Chinese and Indians had made significant new discoveries that required more and more workers. The General was very leery of it and had mentioned his concerns to his command chain in Moscow on many occasions.

"I think we must be very careful of how many of these people we bring into our country. This work force consists almost exclusively of young men of fighting age and their supervisors carry themselves more like military NCOs than construction, mining or drilling foremen," was the message he had communicated on several occasions.

"Well, what would you expect Andrei?" his commanding General had replied to these concerns from his plush offices back in Moscow.

"The Chinese and the Indians want to exploit these resources and are paying us handsomely to do so. Of course they are going to use strong young people to accomplish it... and they are going to have to keep them in line. No, you are seeing wolves where none exist. All three of our nations are profiting and benefiting tremendously from the Siberian Economic Development Treaty we all signed last year. Let's not create conditions that would reduce profits or productivity. Keep me informed."

To date, all requests for increased manpower, increased weaponry and for increased logistical support had been denied. Now the General was ready to speak directly to the Defense Minister, requesting an audience when he last discussed the situation with his commander back in Moscow. At the time, that commander, a ranking General who had climbed the political ladder and was ten years General Nosik's junior, had warned him that while such a request was sure to be honored, it would not bode well and might reflect negatively on what was otherwise a sterling career.

"What do I care," had been Andrei's frustrated response. "In one year I will retire and you and the younger breed will have the full weight of the concerns on your shoulders without this old war horse around to throw stones at your glass palaces. Until then, I must keep faith with my duty to protect the Motherland."

He knew he shouldn't have worded it that way to the "pup"... but it was exactly how he felt, and he was finding more and more as he aged that there were certain types of administrative fools he could not suffer. He was going to raise the concerns to the highest level to ensure that those in the real decision making positions had all the information available to them when reaching those decisions.

Now as he finished reviewing all of the various facts and figures regarding worker age, worker physical condition, organizational structure for the workers, crime rates, ratios and his own force readiness, he felt he was prepared to speak passionately and factually with the Minister of Defense. He intended to make a compelling case for more security. Somehow, he knew he must convince the leadership in Moscow of that imperative as he saw it out here in the field. As the need for that imperative weighed heavily on his mind, the General could not help but have his thoughts wander to his wife, Natalia, and what she was doing right then.

# **DRAGON'S FURY**

**WORLD WAR  
AGAINST AMERICA  
AND THE WEST**

## **YEAR THREE**



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### **November through February in the Mid-East**

Through the fall and winter the GIR set about building up massive forces in Syria, on the Saudi Arabian-Jordanian frontier, and in Egypt for the encirclement and ultimate assault on Israel. There were many pre-emptive air attacks targeting the GIR forces massing around Damascus and in Egypt by Israeli, U.S., and UK aircraft. At first these were very effective in destroying armor and disrupting the logistical framework the GIR was putting in place to sustain their large forces. Through the fall, though never able to obtain complete air dominance, allied forces did have strong air superiority and were thus able to inflict significant damage. But as the number of GIR aircraft increased, and particularly with the importation and deployment of KS-2+ missile batteries around GIR forces, and as the New Year dawned, the allied air superiority dwindled to air parity. By the end of February the GIR had amassed over three million personnel around Israel and amassed over 3500 aircraft, 5000 tanks and tens of thousands of artillery pieces prepared for their operations against Israel.

All the while, as Israel called up its entire reserve, American and English troops were entering the country. Over one million Israelis were armed and formed up by the first of the year. They were supported by 350,000 U.S. soldiers and their equipment and over 150,000 British troops. The allied forces numbered just over one and a half million and were supported by over 2000 high performance military aircraft, over 3000 tanks and the largest Naval force assembled since World War II. That force, sitting offshore in the Mediterranean, consisted of American, British, Canadian, Italian, Spanish and German vessels. Notably absent from those forces were the strong French carrier battle groups as France had yet to become actively involved, providing only logistical and materiel support, and reluctantly at that. As the New Year came and went, the world watched with bated breath as the millennia old enemies, Jewish and Islamic, squared off against each other in the relatively small confines surrounding the nation of Israel. It was the largest concentration of military power ever assembled in so small an area in history. Should they clash, as appeared all but certain by February 1<sup>st</sup>, the people of the world, despite the war raging across four other continents, knew that the outcome of that conflict would be pivotal to the future of the entire world.

In Turkey, a stalemate had been reached across the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. Frequent air attacks and artillery duels by both sides harassed the large forces arrayed across those narrow waters. But neither side could dislodge the other. While this was happening, the GIR reached an agreement with Armenia in late September guaranteeing their security while granting permission for peaceful passage of GIR forces through Armenian territory. Georgia refused a similar treaty offer and was promptly invaded on October 16<sup>th</sup> by over 150,000 GIR forces from the south, and another 100,000 entering from the east through Armenia. Though the fighting was sharp, Georgia fell to the GIR before the end of November. Once consolidated, a combined GIR force of over 350,00 troops set poised along the Caucasus Mountains by New Year's Day, where they took up defensive position along the Russian border, waiting for their orders.

Through the CAS, and through Jien Zenim specifically, Hassan Sayeed of the GIR requested that the Russian Federation allow passage of GIR troops through Russia in an attempt to circle the Black Sea and proceed against Europe from that direction. The request had been made in the utmost secrecy and confidentiality. President Vladimir Putin was placed in a perilous position by the request. It was a decision he could not, he dared not make alone. When he put the question to the members of his cabinet on the Russian National Security Council, a heated debate developed. Russia was already involved in a very profitable relationship with the CAS in Siberia and no one wanted to threaten that. On the other hand, their military neutrality in the current conflict was considered sacrosanct and under no circumstances would the Russian leadership risk seeing their entire western border become a hostile with the west. Russia still remembered well, over sixty-five years ago when that very border had erupted into what became known as the Great Patriotic War in which over twenty million Russians lost their lives.

The issue became an international crisis when word of the request and the potential deal spread to the Russian parliament due to a leak from one of Putin's cabinet members. From there it rapidly went public as the media picked up on it and it was first reported on February 18<sup>th</sup>. The ramifications of that report, and the international debate it generated would ultimately endanger the entire world.

### **November through February in Asia and the Pacific**

The Indian victory over Diego Garcia and its occupation secured the trade lanes for the GIR and the CAS from the Persian Gulf back to India and the Far East. Fuel, commodities, materiel, shipping, munitions, and troops all began to flow regularly and with little disruption. Occasional patrols by English and American attack submarines successfully sank a few ships, but this was almost always accompanied by the sinking of the attacking submarine by an LRASD weapon from a Chinese, Indian or GIR escort vessel. The allies were therefore very reluctant to commit their expensive vessels to such operations. This would remain true so long as these devices continued to rule the waves, unless a significant advantage could be obtained by the engagement and unless it could be shown that there

was a very high degree of probability that the attacking vessel could escape. The Chinese name for these weapons, like the Japanese name of "Long Lance" for their long range torpedoes during World War II, began to be used by forces on both sides of the conflict, that name was "the Dragon's Fury".

In Asia, the CAS and GIR consolidated their gains. There was little disruption outside of Cruise Missile and bomber attacks against key infrastructure, particularly for the CAS. With the addition of KS-2+ missiles and radar detection capabilities, particularly with significant improvement on stealth detection techniques, these unavoidably long-range attacks by the allies became less and less effective. The numbers of B-1B and B-2 bombers available for such missions were just too meager. America had never built them in sufficient numbers for a prolonged, multi-theater war. The policy and conclusions of the planners had indicated no need of it, that no military could develop the technology to stand against the small number that were procured and that therefore attrition due to enemy action would be negligible. They had been wrong.

So, throughout Asia, the sub-continent of India and the Middle East, production picked up. With the resources of all of Asia and the Middle East to draw on, aircraft, shipping, armor, artillery and the small arms and munitions required to wage war began rolling of production lines in large numbers.

The large numbers of Yunana II landing craft and increasing numbers of large Amphibious Assault vessels ferried huge numbers of Chinese and Indonesian troops into New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Port Moresby fell on December 30<sup>th</sup> to a combined force of over 200,000 enemy soldiers and their supporting aircraft and equipment who crossed the Owen-Stanley Mountain range from Morobe. Guadalcanal fell on January 14<sup>th</sup> as over 50,000 Chinese and Indonesian troops landed. The U.S. Marine and Australian force of 8000 on the island was simply overwhelmed. In the end they had little naval support as a large Chinese task force, backed by their own LRASD weapons and those carried by two full regiments of TU-22M Backfire bombers now flying out of Port Moresby and Rabaul drove allied naval vessels from the area. On the evening of January 13<sup>th</sup>, littoral vessels from Australia (two of their Canterbury hydrofoil amphibious vessels), supported by U.S. submarines and two frigates, safely evacuated over 5,000 remaining Allied troops off the island. But Guadalcanal was lost, and the United States was forced to fall back to the Santa Cruz Islands and to New Caledonia.

The door for the invasion of Australia swung open. On February 16<sup>th</sup> the Australian government firmly rejected a CAS proposal to either join the CAS as a provisional member or face war. After the rejection, it was clear that the Australian military, supported by U.S. British, Canadian and an expeditionary force of Brazilians, were simply too thinly spread to cover the entire northern coast of Australia to cover all of the possible landing sites available to their enemies. On February 18<sup>th</sup>, over 250,000 Chinese and Indonesian troops crossed the Timor Sea from Timor and landed near Anson Bay between Darwin and Port Keats. Resistance in that area was light, which allowed the Chinese and Indonesian forces to rapidly establish a strong beachhead. After doing so, they immediately set out to the south to attack Port Keats, which they took on February 20<sup>th</sup>. While that was occurring, a force also moved to the north towards Darwin, which was somewhat further away. The Australian government immediately began ferrying troops and equipment by air into the interior to the town of Bird and then transporting them down the highway that ran to Darwin. By the end of February, and advanced force of 45,000 Chinese troops was only 70 kilometers to the south of Darwin facing 25,000 Australian, American and Canadian troops.

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, in a completely unexpected move, a large task force of vessels that had set sail from Calcutta, India a week before, landed over 150,000 Indian troops on Eighty Mile Beach south of Broom. Other than a few coast watchers and light local patrols, there was no resistance to this invasion and the Indian forces consolidated their positions quickly. An advance force of 25,000 troops moved quickly to the north towards Broom and on the February 26<sup>th</sup>, occupied the city after defeating the local National Guard forces that had been called up to try and stop them.

As more and more Chinese, Indonesian and Indian troops landed in western Australia, the allies began focusing on where to establish their line of defense. The government called up every able bodied man between the ages of seventeen and fifty in the Western and Northern Australian territories. The problem was, both territories were so sparsely populated, that every able bodied man in those specific areas threatened by the growing enemy forces amounted to less than half of the enemy forces. The Brazilian expeditionary force of 25,000 was transported into Perth along with several small forces representing other Asian governments in exile. These forces included Japanese, Taiwanese Malaysian and Thai military units that had escaped before the fall of their nations. In total, the forces from these four nations added another 20,000 troops. In addition to these 45,000 troops, over 150,000 Australian troops were staging in Perth for a move north to counter the enemy before they could move down along the far southwestern coast.

Larger Australian, American, British and Canadian forces began to stage in the vast tracks of central Australia north of Alice Springs. This would develop into the primary countering force to anticipated offensive moves by the enemy. As more and more reservist were called up, and as more and more citizens joined in what was justifiably deemed to be a fight for Australian survival, the CAS issued a new ultimatum on the last day of February. Cede over the entirety of the Western and



Northern Australian provinces, or face the loss of the entire continent. The Australian government was given one week to respond.

While all of this was occurring in and around Australia, events in the Pacific Ocean continued the trend of Chinese victories. Guam and Saipan had fallen after the Chinese invaded with a large Amphibious force escorted by four of their STOL carriers and by three regiments of their Maritime strike aircraft. As a result of particularly severe resistance by American forces on the islands and by the local populations, the occupation and pacification of the islands was particularly brutal. Scenes similar to those experienced in Japan and Taiwan were common place. After those victories in October, the Chinese consolidated their gains in the Mariana, the Caroline and the Solomon Islands. Remaining wary of the “Dragon’s Fury” LRASD weapons, and waiting for an effective counter, American naval vessels rarely approached in strength, preferring to reconnoiter and assess growing Chinese troop strength and disposition.

In late November, the U.S. military finally acted and removed a small thorn from their side south of the Marshall Islands at Tarawa. The Chinese had been allowed to occupy the island and take over the lease of the island itself and the American-built satellite tracking and communication facilities in the 1990’s. This had occurred as a result of a highly controversial initiative implemented between the Chinese and American administrations at the time. Many surviving veterans of World War II who had fought the bloody and costly battle to liberate that island from the Japanese had strongly protested the move. But the protest and the acquisition by the Chinese had gone largely unreported in the press, and the Chinese had now had ten years to consolidate their holdings there.

Too far away from major bases for the Chinese to amount an effective support or re-supply effort, and too involved with other operations to mount any major defense, the Chinese garrison of military personnel and scientists on Tarawa was defeated on November 20<sup>th</sup>. U.S. Marines stormed ashore on November 19<sup>th</sup> in a scene very reminiscent of World War II Tarawa glory. The resistance at the beach was minimal, but the fighting inland around the tracking and communication facilities was sharp. Billy Simmons flew an AZ-1W Viper helicopter in a close air support role that day in his combat debut. There were very few strong enemy concentrations to target, though he did fire two Hellfire missiles into one particularly well built building from which a squad of Chinese marines was making a particularly spirited defense. That night, in a journal he was keeping, the young Lieutenant wrote that his initial impression of combat was that it was “fairly anti-climatic”. He would have ample reason to amend that impression later.

Throughout December, January and February, the Chinese and Indians continued to exploit their natural resource sites in Siberia. Both India and China had promoted their primary managers in the area to full Minister status, increasing their authority in dealing with the Russian federal government and the Siberian provisional government. Logistical and legal issues were expedited in order to exploit the huge amount of natural resources that were mined and pumped from the ground as huge payments of currency flowed into the coffers of the Russian Federation. All of this necessitated the influx of more Chinese and Indian workers, despite the misgivings and warnings of General Nosik, warnings that were largely ignored in light of what was deemed the excellent terms of the exchange the Russians were realizing from the Siberian Economic Compact.

### **November through February in the Caribbean and South America**

The large American force staging near Corpus Christi, Texas set sail early in October. An indirect route to the area of operation was established for the convoy and its escorts. The first leg consisted of sailing eastward in the Gulf until the convoy was off Gulfport, Mississippi, where it was joined by more escort vessels and more troop laden transports. Then the entire group formed into a task force and moved south into the Gulf of Mexico before turning back to the west and making a high speed run through the Yucatan Channel between Cuba and the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico. While transiting the channel, notice could not be avoided and the task force turned due south off of Cancun and continued at high speed to Trujillo, Honduras where over 50,000 U.S. troops were landed to help Honduras and Costa Rica train and prepare their growing armies.

Another 100,000 U.S. troops, including the young Corporal Hernando Rodriguez, set sail from Honduras on November 15<sup>th</sup> into the Caribbean Sea. They were escorted by two Aegis cruisers, two Aegis destroyers, six Oliver Hazard Perry Frigates carrying the LRASD defense system and three Sea control carriers upon which were embarked more new squadrons of F-35 JSF aircraft. Initially it had been planned to have this significant force join up with the substantial Brazilian task force two hundred miles south of Jamaica for an invasion of Panama. But with the loss of the USS Enterprise and the losses at Guam due to the air-launched version of the Dragon’s Fury weapons, a decision was made to delay the Panamanian operation until a more secure defense against those devices could be developed and deployed.

This meant the task force would conduct its alternate plan of engaging in a multiple front invasion of Venezuela. In order to accomplish this according to the planned timetable, the task force proceeded across the Caribbean to San Juan, Puerto Rico. While in route, the sailors and soldiers of the task force were subjected to their first combat operations as a flight of eight TU-22M bombers

flying out of Panama located the task force and attacked with Yakhont missiles. Of the sixteen missiles launched, two made it through the anti-missiles defenses and struck one Perry class frigate and one of the transports carrying men and equipment. Hernando witnessed the strike on the transport, which was sailing two miles off the starboard bow of his ship. The tremendous explosion, the ship going dead in the water was a shocking sight. Then the ultimate abandonment of that ship with great loss of life brought home to Hernando and every other sailor and soldier in the task force the brutal reality of the war, that death could come to any of them with little or no warning.

Ultimately the entire task force arrived off San Juan. An original execute date of December 13<sup>th</sup> for the operation was delayed. Then, due to weather, logistical and diplomatic reasons, the operation was delayed again and again. Finally, on February 12<sup>th</sup>, it was decided to reschedule the entire combined operation for the middle of May. An urgent need had developed in Costa Rica when Chinese troops invaded from Panama on February 10<sup>th</sup>. It was anticipated, that without help, the Chinese would break through the Costa Rican and American defenses and take San Jose. As a result, half of the forces, including Hernando, remained on Puerto Rico while the other half were transported back to Honduras where they would be airlifted into Costa Rica.

At the same time, a combined Panamanian and Chinese force had invaded Columbia from the north, while a large Venezuelan force had entered that country from the east. Both invasion forces were performing a pincer movement on Medellin and were making steady progress towards it. Standing in their way were two Colombian divisions that had been deployed near Medellin for drug interdiction and security, assisted by two companies of U.S. Army Rangers who had been acting in a advisor role. That role quickly changed to active combatants as the Chinese, Panamanian and Venezuelan forces were engaged. At Bogota's urgent request, Brazilian forces earmarked for the original invasion of Venezuela were re-deployed to help with the defense of Columbia. Over 100,000 troops were airlifted into Bogota to establish defenses there and to ultimately attempt a counter attack down the Magdalena River to flank the invading Venezuelan forces.

Elsewhere in South America, Brazil was on a full wartime footing and now had troops deployed in Colombia, along its own borders and in Australia. Manufacturing plants had been converted over to war time production and the population had been prepared for, and largely adjusted to, the austere conditions that would prevail through the duration of the conflict. The border with Argentina, in the narrow corridor between Paraguay and Uruguay, which had been tense for months, exploded into full combat at the same time Venezuela and Panama invaded Colombia. The Argentine government honored its Coalition of South American States treaty with Venezuela as soon as Brazilian forces entered Colombia to fight.

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, a large Argentine force moving from Mercedes crossed the border and took the Brazilian town of Itaquí after a sharp battle with Brazilian border forces there. The Argentine forces continued their advance towards Santa Maria where they were met by three divisions of Brazilian army regulars 50 kilometers west of town along the Uruguay River. Throughout the last week of February and into March, a general engagement raged that was drawing more and more forces from both nations into it.

### **November through February in Europe**

In Europe, throughout the remainder of the year, the European Union was in tatters. Disagreements between the various countries regarding their role in the world war that was raging almost everywhere outside of Europe caused all economic, diplomatic and military arrangements for the EU to be put on indefinite hold. The United Kingdom, Spain, Italy and Germany were all actively involved fighting the GIR and the CAS. France, Austria, Switzerland, the low countries and all of Scandinavia were teetering on official neutrality. Russia was involved in the Siberian economic compact with the CAS and had officially declared its neutrality. Greece declared its official neutrality in late November. Romania, the Czech Republic, the Ukraine and Poland on the other hand were all providing direct economic, military and logistical help to the allies, though none of them declared war.

The report that the GIR was attempting to make a diplomatic agreement with Russia allowing for massive numbers of troops to cross the Russian frontier and circle the Black Sea sent shock waves through all of Europe. To that point in the conflict many European nations thought ... or perhaps wished ... that the stalemate along the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus would continue indefinitely and that Europe would be spared any direct conflict. The announcement in the Russian press destroyed that illusion and made it clear that the GIR had intentions of crossing into Europe and defeating the Turks completely. Old primeval fears based on the invasion of Muslim armies in bygone millennia filled the hearts of the people with dread as the reports of how these modern armies were treating the conquered came in. By March 1<sup>st</sup>, active measures in the parliaments and legislatures of several countries that had been teetering on neutrality were leading them to warn the GIR directly about any pursuance of invasion plans. The Scandinavian countries and Greece did not take part in this posturing, but France and the low countries became more insistent in their diplomatic messages.

## November through February in the United States

The large fire in central Colorado burned until it was extinguished by snowfall in the late Fall. Over two million acres of land were burned. Almost fifteen hundred people were killed and more than two hundred thousand others were made homeless as the fire reached more inhabited areas and burned through several resort areas, including Aspen. The results were an even greater strengthening of the Home Guard program that was coordinated by the Department of Homeland Security, the State National Guards and the local Sheriff's offices.

A significant positive side of the terrible fire was the capture of Manuel Mendoza. A positive identification had been made and the FBI was slowly making his connections. By October the Federal authorities had established a definitive tie between Manuel and Miguel. Unfortunately, upon seeing Manuel's picture on national TV, Miguel immediately left the country with all of his family. A search of Miguel's home and offices produced nothing while a "shocked" Hector Ortiz scrambled to replace his executive over American operations and claimed shock and outrage at the "despicable activities" of the former executive. While Hector continued to secretly communicate with Miguel on his Hacienda in southern Mexico, the FBI requested help from the Mexican government to find and extradite him. The lip service and lack of concrete actions on the part of the Mexican administration began to strain relations between the two nations late in the year.

A more significant break would occur later in the Fall when the FBI came across an important lead regarding Manuel and the attack on Foothill Mall near Denver Colorado.

By November more than four million men and women had signed up, received training and been assigned to local infrastructure for three four hour watches per week in the Home Guard program. These watches were now extended to roving patrols all over the forested lands of the nation as more and more people signed up. Local citizens, trained, armed and deputized were watching over America. Armed with .30 caliber M-14 rifles and equipped with the latest in field radio technology, these teams were interdicting terror all over the nation. When coupled with the 250,000 National Guard troops stationed along the southern border with Mexico and the 75,000 troops patrolling the Canadian border, the opportunity for terror decreased dramatically. The source for new terror cells crossing the border was cut off by the National Guard, and the numbers of those already in the country dwindled as they were interdicted and either killed or captured.

In the production area, Americans were finding they were having to wait to do the work necessary to help the war effort. Steel factories, assembly plants, fabrication facilities, mines, new wells, refining and processing facilities had to be built first, all of them to replace production capabilities long since moved "off-shore" but now urgently required "on-shore". It would be a race to determine if these facilities could come online quickly enough to replace America's dwindling strategic reserve in so many areas. It would be a close race, and the very need for the race itself was being paid for in terms of lost ground and American lives.

Despite this ... or perhaps because of it ... Americans were answering the call in terms of their life styles and work habits. Many housewives, retired individuals and other individuals whose personal wealth freed them from the necessity of work, were volunteering for tasks of all types. Some worked to increase production capabilities of existing factories, while many others signed up on waiting lists for the hundreds of factories that were under construction. Others went to work for the oil and gas companies working towards the nation's goal of complete energy independence, searching for, extracting and refining oil and gas products from known reserves off the coasts, in Alaska and through the processing of petroleum from oil shale or tar sands. Others worked in areas to apply enhanced methods to extract more oil from existing wells. Like Cindy Simmons and Elizabeth Trevor, Americans everywhere were anxious to "do their part for the war effort".

And it was helping. The Newport News, Virginia and Pascagoula, Mississippi shipyards were repaired and rebuilt ahead of schedule. After close examination, both the first CV-21 CNN-78 Aircraft Carrier and the new DDX ships that had been hit so hard in March were scrapped entirely. The damage was simply too severe to repair the ships, or to do anything other than salvage what could be salvaged from them. New ships were laid down and components that could be salvaged off the damaged ships were applied to the new construction. The result was that by the middle of November, both ships were taking shape rapidly in a rushed effort to get them out. As a result of work in the weapons development laboratories, new firing ports were added into the hulls below the waterline of each ship. The firing ports were for anticipated hypervelocity, supercavitating defensive system for each ship class. It was expected that these innovations would be available by the time the ships launched, the first DDX in May and CVN-78 in September of the next year. While those shipyards were being repaired and those ships built in them, construction was started on nine new shipyards all around the country. Three of these would be capable of building full size aircraft carriers, three more would be devoted to submarines and four more would be dedicated to the construction of the smaller surface vessel varieties. The first of these shipyards would begin construction in the summer of the next year and hundreds of thousands of Americans were already signing up to work in them.

The President, the Vice President, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Attorney General formed an executive “bolster” committee and began rotating their travels around the nation. In spite of a still dangerous terror threat, these leaders began speaking at parades, sporting events, on holidays and at special wartime rallies all over the nation. Their speeches were direct, not seeking to hide the gravity of the situation or the extent of some of the losses America and her allies had, and were suffering. But they were also uplifting and encouraging. They exhorted the people to stand their ground, to unite, to defend their nation, their way of life, and to defend their liberty through whatever trial and hardship. The trips and efforts were a great success and the people continued to pull together. The President never missed the opportunity to inform people of his wife’s part in the formation of the American Bolstering Effort ... or “ABE” as it came to be referred to. On some occasions, when she traveled with him, he had her speak and she never failed to deliver an address that was as rousing and patriotic, if not more so, than that of the “main” speaker. To all observing, this clearly only increased the President’s pride in her and the love and esteem which he, and now the entire nation, held for her.

The result of all this was, that in spite of significant and continuing military setbacks, the American people were rallying. Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years passed. They were holidays celebrated in sorrow in so many instances. Sorrow for the civilian and military lives lost in the fighting, sorrow for the literally tens of thousands of American citizens that were simply “missing” overseas in the belligerent and occupied nations. But, with the sorrow, there was hope. Not one major terror attack was successfully conducted during those holidays. Several attacks by Islamic fundamentalist and Mexican/Spanish based terror groups were attempted, particularly during Christmas and New Year’s, but they were all either discovered and thwarted by the FBI, or they were interdicted at their onset by the Home Guard units and local citizens who had armed themselves in response to the President’s initiatives. Those initiatives regarding firearms in the hands of citizens had been turned into Federal and State law throughout the entire nation. After the incident outside of Boston, the state legislature in Massachusetts had quickly moved to adopt the President’s initiative and been followed by the other hold out states before the holiday period. Despite continued nay saying on the part of a few politicians and anti-gun lobby groups, the public could see the successful results and those results proved to be an irrefutable argument.

However, all of this was occurring before the advent of the initial stages of the Chinese operational plan, “Hong-Lu-Dung”. An operation where for the first time Americans would feel the presence and strength of the Chinese “sleeper” cells located throughout the country. By the end of February, the planning and preparation for this operation had reached its final stages and the Chinese were ready to begin implementing it. Like many Chinese operational plans, it was laced with misdirection and deception. It was a plan that was as large in its scope as it was in its daring and audacity ... and it would begin in America on a day that would come to many as no surprise.

**March 15, 06:29 EDT**

### **Overlooking Stevenson Dam**

#### **Housatonic River, Connecticut**

Harry Wu watched with his 10X50 binoculars for the small panel truck to make its way across the dam on Highway 34. Every few minutes he would look at his watch. It was almost 6:30 in the morning and the action upstream at the Shepaug Dam on Lake Lillinonah would be starting in just a moment. By 6:35 the large assault team upstream should accomplish its primary mission which would trigger Harry’s portion of the operation.

Harry worked at a small Chinese diner over in New Haven. He had worked there for over twelve years, having come to America in the hold of a COSCO merchant ship in 1995. Upon arrival, he had been set up with a “friend of the family” in his position as an assistant cook at the diner where he had toiled in that position ever since ... waiting for his activation signal. His training had prepared him for this long wait, but now it was about to pay off.

The day before yesterday, Harry had hired two local boys from Oxford to drive the panel truck over to Botsford and unload it. Their path would take them across the Stevenson Dam. It was two young men that Harry had used often over the years to hire for his front “Jim’s Overland Freight” company. Every few weeks he would hire them to haul fifty-five metal tables and three hundred and fifty metal chairs to Botsford where they would be unloaded in a warehouse. They would then sit there for two weeks before he hired two other young men in Botsford to haul them to a similar warehouse back in Oxford. He would then repeat the process a few weeks later, varying the interval by as many as five weeks on occasion. The Home Guard unit controlling highway access across dam, and the one watching the dam from their position on the other side of the valley were all familiar with this delivery. Over the last year, they had seen it done at least eighteen times. They would see it again this morning, but there would be a big difference. This time, loaded in the center of the truck, underneath the tables and chairs, was a powerful directed charge.

“Ah, there they are,” Harry muttered to himself, “right on time.” His watch showed 6:31 AM.

**March 15, 06:32 EDT**  
**On Highway 34 on the Stevenson Dam**  
**Housatonic River, Connecticut**

Pete eased the truck onto the highway that ran across the dam. He was anxious to get over to Botsford and unload this stuff for Jim's and get back home to Oxford. Today was the big commemoration. Oxford was holding a parade and service at noon like every other town and city across the country to commemorate the horrific tragedy of March 15<sup>th</sup> last year when the nation had been attacked. Pete didn't want to miss the activity.

"Boy, old Jim was all business today, wasn't he?" Pete asked as they proceeded across the dam.

"Yea, he sure was," replied Pete's partner, Dave. "But who can blame him? Everyone from the President on down to the mayor is warning to be on the lookout for trouble today."

Pete knew that Dave was right, everyone was antsy, but he felt there wasn't too much chance that anything would happen, particularly with the Home Guard Units and the military all over the country.

"Well, despite what's going on overseas, I think we have them on the run here ... and it's not going to be long before we do the same with those SOB's overseas as well."

As Pete completed his sentence, and just as the truck got about halfway across the dam, there was a sudden and loud, "PLANK"

Pete was quick to react as the engine seized up and the truck slowed, "What the? What was that? I'm losing oil pressure!"

"BANG, BANG"

With the two loud bangs, the truck lurched a little forward and to the side as first one, and then the other front tires blew out.

"Blow outs?" yelled Dave as he looked at Pete incredulously.

As the truck came to a complete halt, it immediately began to create a traffic jam on the dam. Highway 34 was well traveled and was a primary connector route between Interstate Highway 84 and Interstate Highway 95 in Connecticut. Within a minute or two, there would be dozens and dozens of vehicles backed up on the dam.

Pete and Dave both got out of the truck to inspect the problem. Both tires looked to have blown out completely. But why? Neither young man could understand. The tires were almost new. Pete was the first to take a look at the front of the truck where a lot of steam and smoke were rising from under the hood. Hot oil and water could be heard hitting the pavement underneath the truck.

"Engine must have blown," thought Dave as Pete reached to raise the hood.

"Holy cow ... Dave, you better get over here and look at this." Pete said before he even raised the hood and as he stood looking at something on the driver's side quarter panel.

When Dave got there, he saw exactly what Pete was looking at. There in the side of the truck, just above and in front of the wheel well, was a neatly punched hole, right through the side of the vehicle into the engine compartment.

"Man, oh man," Dave uttered as he breathed out and began looking around. "Someone shot us!"

As he said this, a Jeep Cherokee with flashing blue lights came driving up and Jim, the head of the Home Guard detail on the Oxford side of the dam got out and hurried towards them.

"What's going on here? Pete, you have to move this truck the heck off this dam and you have to do it now! We have a major terrorist attack going on at Lake Lillinonah right now and can't..."

That was as far as he got. As his voice was cut off in mid sentence, another neat hole appeared, this time on the right side of Jim's head. Immediately the left side of his face blew out showering that side of the panel truck with blood, bone fragments and brain tissue.

As it dawned on Pete and Dave what was happening, the both dove for cover as Jim's lifeless body hit the pavement. The other member of the Home Guard team that had driven out with Jim to see what the problem was, quickly got out on the other side of the vehicle with an M-14 rifle, scanning down stream for where the shooting was coming from. As he did so, he spoke into his radio.

"All units, this is Stevenson East. I have a man down and gunfire! Need assistance on the dam!"

The response was almost instant, and terrifying.

"Stevenson East, GET OFF THE DAM! ... GET EVERYONE OFF THAT DAM! Shepaug Dam has just been completely blown and there's a fifty foot wall of water coming down stream!"

**March 15, that same time**  
**Overlooking Stevenson Dam**  
**Housatonic River, Connecticut**

Hary was done shooting. He had received the "click" signal on his own hand held two-way radio that indicated the dam upstream had been blown. He had really hoped not to have to shoot anybody, but that Home Guard unit had responded too quickly and he couldn't take the chance that they would figure out what was going on and move the truck. Now they would be too worried about gunfire to check the truck for another few minutes, and it would be over long before then.

As Harry took one more look through his binoculars, he could see the two young men he had hired and the other member of the Home Guard Unit racing both direction along the line of cars on the dam, animatedly gesturing to the drivers to get off the dam.

"They must have gotten the word," Harry thought as he watched his watch very closely now. "Just another four or five seconds."

As the second hand on his watch got to the appointed moment, Harry activated his detonator.

Out on the dam there was a loud "BOOM" which literally lifted the panel truck up into the air a good five feet as a cloud of dust and smoke enveloped it. Harry briefly watched the dam below the truck through his binoculars. He could almost swear he saw the beginnings of a crack just below the truck and extending several feet down the face of the hundred foot tall dam.

"That's good enough," he thought as he disassembled the rifle and then let the individual parts slip down the side of the canyon wall. He was not worried about anyone seeing them or trying to retrieve them ... that would not be possible in another few minutes.

Harry's part in the operation was complete and he made his way to his parked car, got in and drove away along Highway 34 back towards New Haven. As he did, a number of emergency, law enforcement, and National Guard vehicles passed him going the other way towards the dam. Harry dutifully pulled over like all the other cars going his way to let them pass.

Back at the dam, the cloud from the explosion cleared as people continued to run to the safety of the canyon walls, most of them exiting their cars to do so. Ten miles up stream, at the head of Lake Zoar that was formed by Stevenson Dam, a wall of water still over forty-feet high pushed into the narrow lake. It had come the eight miles down stream from the destruction of the larger Shepaug Dam on Lake Lillinonah, sweeping away the towns of Berkshire Estates, Riverside, and Lakeside with it. Now, as it entered Lake Zoar it created a hydraulic pressure wave in the lake itself that was transmitted downstream to Stevenson Dam.

The Chinese mathematicians had done their work well. They had calculated that the hydraulic pressure alone would be sufficient to breach Stevenson Dam if a rapid enough release of the tremendous pressure represented by Lake Lillinonah was achieved. It was. But the Chinese planners had left nothing to chance. The directional charge in the panel truck was meant simply to weaken Stevenson dam in its center and insure that the pressure wave breached it. It did.

As a number of people were still trying to make their way off the dam, there was a thunderous "CRACK" as a two hundred foot section in the middle of the dam simply blew out, almost one hundred feet on a side from where the panel truck had detonated. Concrete, the panel truck, Jim's body and the empty cars on those sections of the dam fell into a cauldron of raging water, over eighty feet high. As it burst from its confines, the water pressure was too much for the weakened sides of the dam. Within five seconds, the rest of the dam failed and was swept away to within just a few feet of each end of the dam. The hapless thirty-one people still racing for the ends of the dam disappeared with their cars into the raging waters. Pete and Dave, who had both reached safety, stood on the side of the now ruined structure and stared in shock at one another.

**March 15, 07:00 EDT**

**Along the lower Housatonic River  
Derby and Shelton, Connecticut**

A wall of water some sixty feet high now rushed to the southeast down the confined valley of the lower Housatonic River at a speed of almost fifty miles per hour. It was a seething, churning, destructive wall that was filled not only with water, but with concrete chunks the size of houses, vehicles, turbines from the hydroelectric plant below Stevenson Dam, large trees uprooted by the water and all manner of other debris. The heavier objects, rolling and churning along the front of the wall of water, literally pounded into rubble anything in their path. Homes, businesses ... people. Ten minutes later and eight miles down stream, the wall of water slammed into the towns of Shelton and Derby. Although the word had gone out, there simply was no time to move so many people so early in the morning. Tens of thousands died in their homes.

Two miles southeast of the confluence of the Housatonic and the Naugatuck Rivers in the center of Derby, the now larger Housatonic River valley opened up considerably and the river made a hard bend to the south, towards Stratford. Here, the energy behind the wall of water bled off considerably as the water spread out and the raging torrent, now only twenty feet high, slowed to forty miles an hour. By the time it covered the five miles to Stratford it had slowed to thirty miles an hour and was fifteen feet high. But this was more than the Chinese planners had hoped for as their "weapon" approached its main target.

**March 15, 07:20 EDT**

**Sirsky Assembly Plant  
Stratford, Connecticut**

Earl and Lloyd had exited the plant when their shift ended at 7:00 AM as they had done every work day for the last ten years. They were close friends and they liked their jobs and the people they

worked with, particularly during these times. The two of them were machinists on the assembly line for the MH-53 Sea Dragon mine warfare helicopter manufactured for the U.S. Navy here at Sirsky's plant in Stratford. It was the largest helicopter manufacturing plant in the free world and it manufactured many other military helicopters in addition to the Sea Dragon. These included the Navy's SH-60 Sea Hawk, the Army's S-60 Black Hawk, the Army's RAH-66 Comanche, the Marine's CH-53 Super Sea Stallion and the Coast Guard's Jay Hawk helicopters.

As they had done at the end of almost every shift for the past ten years, Earl and Lloyd sat down on the tailgate of Lloyds pickup truck to drink some coffee and share some stories before they drove home. As they were doing so, siren's began blaring in town and a loud warning buzzer began going off at the plant over one hundred yards away.

"What do you think that's all about?" Earl asked as he stood up and looked past the Sirsky Bridge on Route 53 to the Housatonic River about four hundred yards upstream from where they sat.

"I don't know, but whatever it is, its got people exiting the facility. Look over there!" Lloyd responded to his friend as he too stood up and pointed to the hundreds of employees exiting the manufacturing facility.

As they watched for a few seconds, both men became aware of a dull roar that had just started to register on their consciousness. With ever passing second it got louder and louder and soon it became clear that it was approaching from upstream on the river.

"I sure don't like the sounds of that Earl, hop in the truck, we'd better get out of here."

As both men walked toward the pickup, Earl was brought up short as the sound grew perceptibly louder and he saw what was coming downstream on the river through the spans on the bridge.

"Sweet Jesus have mercy on us," he murmured as a slow motion image of cars, telephone poles, large fragments of reinforced concrete, parts of buildings, corrugated sheets of metal, bodies and frothing water came towards them.

After no more than two seconds, the two friends looked at one another and raced to their doors, got in, and Lloyd started the truck. Tires screeching, Lloyd pressed hard on the accelerator and headed for the plant entrance. He wasted no time on trying to use the clearly marked exit path, or the clogged entry and exit gates. Lloyd simply slammed the truck into low gear and rammed right through the barbed wire topped fence onto Main street and headed for higher ground. Lloyd and Earl were among the last to leave that parking lot alive.

The churning wall of water, fifteen feet high and traveling at thirty miles an hour, came barreling through the Sirsky facilities, sweeping all before it. The main buildings themselves stood for several minutes as water inundated them, but the cars, people, guard shacks and helicopters that were out in the open were swept up into that awful grinder on the front end of the wall of water. As more and more large objects struck the sides of the buildings, and as their foundations weakened, ultimately, one by one, the manufacturing facilities themselves were torn down. All but the heaviest pieces of equipment were swept along the sides of the river towards Long Island Sound at the mouth of the Housatonic. Ten minutes later, the first wrecked and ruined hulk of a CH-53 Super Stallion fresh off its assembly line was pushed roughly out into the mouth of the Housatonic River towards Stratford Point. As it floated for several minutes against the beat of incoming waves in the Sound, back in Stratford the Sirsky Bridge, assaulted by the same forces that tore down the Sirsky manufacturing facilities, slowly collapsed into the river below. When it did, it spilled several dozen cars and over one hundred people that had been trapped on its spans to their fate in the swift flowing and debris filled water that was maintaining a level of fifteen feet above flood stage.

### **March 15, 17:20 EDT**

#### **Situation Room**

#### **The White House, Washington, D.C.**

It had been another hair raising and horrendous day.

"Just like last year," the President thought as he sat with his Homeland and National Security Team in the situation room and reviewed the damage assessments.

With the word of several simultaneous attacks, the President had been rousted out of his living spaces along with the First Lady as they prepared for the noon meeting commemorating last year's attacks. Marine-One had flown them to Andrews Air Force Base in a repeat of the route they had taken last year on this same date. There, they had boarded Air Force-One and flown the randomly selected and pre-designated security route for the President that day. It had taken them out over the heartland of America where they were protected by empty space, long distances, and no less than twenty F-22 and F-15 fighter aircraft.

But, there had been no missile attacks and no large surprise military attacks in other theaters. The only shooting and real "military" action had occurred for the first few moments early that morning in several different locations around the country. All eight of the attacks had dealt with asymmetrical type warfare where small groups of enemy terrorists had used America's own infrastructure against it. When this had become clear, the President had ordered Air Force-One to return to Washington where he could meet with his Cabinet and military leaders.

Before the end of the meeting, the President was appraised of what was known. There had been eight attacks, six of them against dams and two to create landslides. Of the five attacks against dams, four had been unsuccessful due the efforts of local citizens, Home Guard units and local law enforcement. In those cases large firefights had erupted as the attackers were discovered either before they reached their target, or while they were preparing to destroy the dams they had picked. In one case the planned attack was prevented due to prior FBI infiltration and interdiction very early that morning before the attackers approached their target. While reporting on the successfully interdicted attacks, the Secretary of Homeland Security, Stewart Langstrom, delivered this sobering message.

“Mr. President. Each of the recovered bodies of terrorists in these attacks, and every captured terrorist appears to be of oriental descent. We have only positively identified two of the twenty-two subjects, but both of those are Chinese who have been here for many years. One is an illegal, the other a nationalized American.”

The President soberly took this in before commenting.

“Stewart, run it down with Dean. I’ll need more to go on than that, but it is certainly within their capability and something else we will have to look at in our immigration and naturalization policy. Continue, how bad is it in Connecticut?”

The review of the attack in Connecticut showed it to be a successful enemy action against the nation of horrific proportions. Over thirty-five thousand people were feared dead along the Housatonic River, most in the towns of Derby, Shelton and Stratford. Analysis indicated that the attack was significantly enhanced, and the destructive force of the flood maintained, by having multiple dams fail along the river to sustain the force. Analysis indicated that every one of the attacks on the dams had sought to achieve this.

In addition, it was clear that in each case an important military target was a prime reason for the respective attack. In Stratford, Connecticut, the Sirsky manufacturing facilities that built many of America’s most important helicopters had been completely destroyed, along with dozens and dozens of newly manufactured helicopters that were awaiting flight trials.

The planting and detonation of large demolition charges above two facilities in the Rocky Mountains had also resulted in significant destruction. The worst of these had occurred near Boulder, Colorado, where an avalanche was created high on a mountainside above a slide area that emptied near a sensitive electronic component fabrication facility. That facility manufactured sensitive chips used in target acquisition circuitry for virtually all of America’s armor units, from tanks to infantry fighting vehicles, including every HMMWV outfitted with TOW missiles.

The slide coming down the mountain emptied into a wash over eight hundred yards from the facility. A massive concrete wall had been built there to insure that any of the occasional rock slides or snow slides were contained. But it had not been designed for the millions of metric tons of material that had come down the mountain side this morning and literally buried the facility and everything surrounding it. An entire shift of skilled laborers and scientists appeared to have been killed and all of their equipment destroyed. It would be weeks before heavy equipment could recover all of the bodies or any salvageable equipment. This resulted in what the military defined as a “mission kill” for the other two shifts at that factory. A mission kill was when essential infrastructure, logistics disruption, or other non-fatal damage resulted in a military unit being rendered useless, without having to actually destroy it. That is exactly what occurred with the other two shifts of skilled laborers and scientists. They no longer had the facility or the equipment with which to do their job, so they were effectively dead for the time being.

At the conclusion of the reports and initial damage assessments, before discussing probable responsibility and response, the President sourly commented.

“They couldn’t reach us with their own bombers, they can’t get close enough with those “Q” ships of theirs and they dare not launch intercontinental missiles at us. So, these sorry bastards resort to this type of attack.

“Well, there’s a reckoning coming ... by God I warn you all now that I am considering a limited nuclear strike on the PRC and the GIR ... daring them to try and respond and to invite the full dose. With them killing thirty-five thousand of our citizens at a time, as far as I am concerned that equals a Weapon of Mass Destruction, however they achieved it”

Several members of the National Security Team nodded their heads in grave understanding, some looked up in shocked amazement. The President continued, turning to his Secretary of State.

“Fred, I don’t care how you do it. Front channels, WNN, clear air broadcast, or back channels. You get the message to Zenim and to Sayeed and you do it today ... any more massive U.S. citizen casualties, I don’t care from which source or how they do it. Any more such attacks will result in a response in kind with whatever tools and resources we have available. Spell it out clearly to them, I know I am emotional right now but I want them to understand this ... I will NUKE them back into the Stone Age. If they want to up the ante on that ... you tell them I’m willing because by God this is going to STOP!



“Fred, you’ll need to share the same information with our allies. Do it right after you send the message to Zenim and Sayeed. Let them know in fact that I am going to include the basis for this policy in my address to the nation tonight.

“Now, because of past policies we know that, like the other terrorist groups we have been dealing with, that it is likely that the Chinese have a lot of them here in the country. A lot of these “sleeper” cells. My guess is we’ll have to deal with them as they pop up just like we have done the others. Today we showed that our Homeland Security efforts through the Home Guard program and through arming our civilians can effectively do this, but that we don’t get them all. Let’s deal with these attacks as they come, by let’s also document the policy I just described regarding the massive attacks. I will not move off of it. Call it the Weisskopf Doctrine on Massive Terror Attacks ... we will view massive casualties as the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction no matter how they are inflicted and respond accordingly. Something of that nature, something worded that straightforwardly is what I want to announce to the nation in my address tonight.”

As the meeting continued, and then later as the President prepared to address the nation, the Chinese received the President’s message and moved right ahead with their own plans. Some of their “sleeper cells” would be active again, but not in a way that the President or his cabinet contemplated.

**April 6, 04:30 EDT**

**Trevor Master Bedroom**

**Nashua, New Hampshire**

Joseph listened to Elizabeth’s deep rhythmic breathing as she slept. While he was glad she was sleeping peacefully, he couldn’t rest. Since receiving the notification his head had been spinning.

“Has it really been nine months?” he thought as his mind attempted to grasp the enormity of it.

“Nine months since that initial discovery and discussion with Elizabeth ... since Elizabeth, with her creativity and intuition had pointed me in that direction that I otherwise would not have gone.”

He could remember her words as he had explained the faint electrical traces emanating from that underlying structure, that infinitely delicate but complex under girding he had now come to know so well. When he spoke to her about that hint of electrical characteristics, she had simply said.

“Electrical? Isn’t that the same type of thing that drives the brain and the nervous system?”

So, when he could find the spare time in the midst of his work projects dealing with the communication sequences and codes that RNA provided between DNA and proteins, he directed his research on the new structure in that direction. That avenue of research communicated to him by his wife led to discoveries for which the word momentous seemed almost inadequate

When Joseph had turned to the new analytical methodologies involving atomic force microscopy and enhanced mass spectrometric analysis methodologies he was developing for his DNA research to brain cells and the nervous system, what he had discovered was nothing short of a breakthrough in modern science. There, teaming in incomprehensible detail was the same underlying structure he had seen, only multiplied by several orders of magnitude. Every code, every signal from the brain transmitted through the nervous system seemed to be channeled and controlled by this structure.

“Electrical, Elizabeth?” Joseph reminisced, “Oh yes, electrical current in minute, almost undetectable quantities, but in a pattern and a coding unlike anything ever observed!”

For weeks Joseph had observed, tracked and recorded those electrical signals, which defined intricate paths infinitely finer and more delicate than nerves and synapses. It became evident that progress in understanding this discovery was a task far more than he could handle alone. Before he announced his initial findings and before he requested funding and resources, he had decided to do some other comparisons and some destructive testing. For this he choose some of the higher primate samples available to him. It was then that the truly astounding nature of his discovery became apparent. The structures were not apparent in the primates. Upon further testing, he discovered that the structures were not evident in any other mammalian or other tissue. It appeared that this unbelievable delicate and complex sub-molecular structure was unique to man!

From there Joseph had proceeded rapidly to make his initial findings and requests for a team. Those initial findings showed how the structure was most apparent and most abundant in the nervous system and particularly in the brain. Testing indicated that human messaging and coding of all types, including the genetic coding and sequencing were channeled through this structure. In man, it occurred in parallel to the overlaying DNA/RNA/Protein structure already discovered, but it occurred in a complexity almost impossible to fathom. Logically, since all mammals shared similar DNA/RNA/Protein structures, the function of this underlying structure must lay outside of the biological processes currently know to man, or mankind still had a lot to learn about those processes.

“So what is the primary function of this sub-molecular structure that I have discovered?” he asked himself one evening five months ago as he was almost ready to submit his findings. In one of those rare moments when somehow the doors to higher order discoveries are opened to the intuition and the mind of man, Joseph’s mind had somehow grasped onto a piece of pure knowledge. It was a thought that he instantly recognized as the truth, though he currently had no way of proving it.

“Man’s ability to reason...his self awareness...his capacity for insight as opposed to pure instinct are associated with these structures!”

The words had blurted out vocally as his mind caught hold of the thought.

Later that particular evening, Elizabeth had agreed and caused him to think of more religious and theological roots for the structures. As interesting and believable as that was for him, he knew he would have to stick to his scientific methods to gain funding and a team. Two days later, almost five months ago, he had submitted his initial findings and recommendations.

Things had moved quickly from there. The National Institute of Health and the DOE were intrigued. Joseph had meticulously documented his findings and presented a logically compelling hypothesis to explain his data. Within six weeks he found himself on a plane to Washington DC with a “commission” from both the NIH and the DOE to work in conjunction with the National Academy of Sciences to verify his original findings. Working with as bright and gifted a team of people as Joseph had ever been associated with, in eight weeks Joseph’s NAS program had indeed reproduced and confirmed the earlier results and the findings were published internationally to the free world.

What had come yesterday in the mail had been the shocker. Surely people at the NAS, NIH and DOE must have known. If they had, they had not shared their knowledge with him. What he had received was an official notification that he had been nominated for a Nobel Prize...which he would in fact be rewarded and presented in Stockholm later that year. The nomination, coupled with his continuing thoughts and theories on what was being tentatively called the “Human Reasoning Structure” (HRS) was what was keeping him awake.

What Joseph Trevor didn’t know was that his finding and its verification and attendant Nobel Prize were only the beginning of the impact of his research. The greatest impact was still well in the future...yet to come, and from a quarter wholly unexpected.

**May 1, 14:43 local time**

**Secure Conference Facilities**

**Srinagar, India**

The three leaders of the greatest military and economic alliance the world had ever known sat together drinking tea as their summit neared its conclusion. Together the three of them, Jien Zenim of the Peoples Republic of China, Hasan Sayeed of the GIR and President KP Narayannen of India, controlled over half the surface of the earth, and a good deal more than half of its population. Over one billion Muslims in the GIR, over one billion Hindus in India and well over one billion people, mostly of Buddhist background, in China...not to mention the hundreds and hundreds of millions of people that they had now conquered. All three felt that their collective time, and that of their peoples, had come. Those peoples, who had typically been labeled as “third world”, now controlled the largest military in the world, the third largest nuclear stockpile in the world and the greatest amount of natural resources in the world. With the addition of so many nations into their collective fold over, they also controlled the largest, most modern concentration of manufacturing resources in the world.

For the first two days the talks had centered on their economic ties and issues. Issues of production, quotas, delivery and pricing. As it turned out, much of the pricing was handled almost in a bartering fashion... so many hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil a day for so many hundreds of aircraft and the like. Economic and diplomatic methodologies were discussed for using their collective wealth to influence other nations and use them in their quest to defeat their enemies who were led by the United States.

Then, for the final two days, the talks had turned to matters of a more strategic and military nature. Those last two days amounted to a “war summit” as they were intended. It was a war summit held in historically one of the most war torn areas on the planet, an area that was not without its own dangers. For decades the Indians had fought Muslim insurgents near here in the Kashmir, insurgents supported by Pakistan. There were still those who hotly contested the region, despite the Aswah issued by Imam Sayeed concerning it well over a year ago when Pakistan had become a part of the Greater Islamic Republic. In that statement of faith, Hasan Sayeed had indicated that the faithful should allow Allah to handle the Kashmir in His own time and in His own fashion. The sword of the faithful was no longer required in the Kashmir. That had ended most of the contention.

But events in the years before that, when Pakistani intelligence had assisted insurgents in the Kashmir in attacking the local Indian Provincial Capital and the Indian Federal Parliament in New Delhi had left a lingering bitterness in the minds of many. Those attacks had left the two countries teetering on the brink of war at the time, a war that could well have become nuclear. As it was, other nations had mediated and war had been avoided. But the lingering bad taste remained in spite of Hasan Sayeed’s recent directive. To insure that these ill feelings were finally entirely put to rest, President Narayannen had called the meetings in this beautiful Indian city near the contested area.

The meetings, both economic and military, had been a great success. The three leaders were now recapping their summit and reviewing their military achievements and ongoing plans. They were reminded that a new dialog had been broached, in light of ample Mid East oil now exclusively controlled by the GIR. This new initiative involved a proposal for the GIR to share more directly in

the bonanza that China and India were experiencing in Siberia. It was agreed that China would carry the request forward to Russia with an offer of very cheap oil reserves from the GIR and a significant amount of cheap labor from India and China. While the topic had turned to Russia, the request to Russia regarding passage around the Black Sea had been brought up. There was much consternation expressed by all three leaders, but more particularly by Sayeed and Zenim that the request had been made public. Contingencies were planned and discussed for the possibility that the request would be denied now that so much pressure was being applied to the Russian Federation concerning the matter.

"I am not concerned with their threats to the GIR," commented Sayeed. "We are at war with Turkey, they all know it, and we will take whatever measures are necessary to defeat our wayward cousins. They are just afraid that we might extend our influence further towards them once we do ... and that is a very understandable concern on their part."

The review had proceeded from there to include a final overview regarding the current disposition of their forces around the world. The GIR controlled virtually the entire Middle East outside of a very narrow strip of land that represented Israel. Regarding this, Hasan Sayeed indicated to the other leaders that with the several million men surrounding them, Israel was contained. With several million men and the large amounts of military equipment he had staged all around Israel, he assured the other leaders that he had situation well in hand and that he could literally deal them when "the time was right" according to decisions made earlier at the summit.

India held the entire sub-continent, Sri Lanka, the strategic base at Diego Garcia and parts of Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Nepal and parts of Laos. President Narayannen reviewed how India's major "thrust" now lay in gathering more land on the Australian continent where it could relocate some of its masses to better conditions and where it could further expand its influence. The timing for the realization of this goal was discussed in light of the GIR's goal to eliminate Israel and Turkey, and in light of Jien Zemin's plans for the PRC.

China had made the most dramatic gains. All of the "Asian Tigers" and their modern production capabilities now belonged to China. The sphere of the PRC's direct influence had blossomed in a year to include Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, New Guinea, the Mariana Islands, the Caroline Islands and the Solomon Islands, including Guadalcanal. It also included a growing area of Central and South America that had embraced the CAS. This included Panama, Venezuela and Argentina, which had let to severe fighting in Colombia and along the Argentine border. But an important facet remained. Jien Zenim was addressing it now with his final remarks.

"So, gentlemen, what's next?" asked Jien Zenim rhetorically, "Shall we heed the Germans and Italians? Shall we ignore America's blatant attempt to influence us through nuclear blackmail?"

"... and oh, by the way, I am Weiskopf is capable of it."

Waiting for a brief moment for the import to be driven in, the President continued.

"So, again I ask, should we give-in? The answer is no! Instead, we shall influence them like we did a few weeks ago on their anniversary commemorating our initial attack. Our plans have progressed just as we'd hoped. Our goals to secure our resources and to punish the Americans are well advanced and already being implemented as we have discussed.

"All three phases of "Hong-Lu-Dung" will be implemented, the first of which has already begun with our attacks on America in March of this year. Those attacks resulted in significant death, power loss and military facility loss to America. We will continue lower grade attacks in the weeks and months to come and we will ultimately release the coded order to have the most important and final piece of phase one accomplished. As phase two and three are implemented, the operational goals will require us to not only control the skies, but to take land from our enemies and hold it.

"If the operations are successful and I have no reason to believe that they will not be, we will shock the world yet again in the coming months, and tear down another myth. It is another myth of American invulnerability. We have already shown in so many ways that they are not invulnerable, particularly through our "Dragon's Fury" weaponry. In fact, despite the respect we must hold for their technology and nuclear weapons, they can be defeated. Notice how Weiskopf sends us a message. Notice how he condemns us loud and long, and threatens us with his nuclear fire if we do not change our ways. If he was the strong leader that I thought, he would have simply sent us the message on the tips of those missiles...it is what I would have done had the positions been reversed. But he did not, and once our enhanced KS-3 missiles are in place, we will not fear his threats in that regard.

"In summary, we have done well ... far beyond our expectations. We shall continue to do so until our enemies lay down their arms and accept the new order that we have instituted. I have highly placed and powerful contacts within their countries that indicate a belief that they soon can be brought to that realization, even among the Americans. Their cause is futile and we must allow the American people and those still looking to them, or holding out hope concerning them, to realize just how futile their aspirations are. "Hong-Lu-Dung", when fully implemented will do this. It is an ambitious and an audacious plan, but it is really a straightforward plan that focuses on what we all know is important.

"By the time a year has passed and we meet for next year's spring summit, I believe we will have much more to discuss in terms of territory and resources. I also believe we may well be discussing what terms we will offer the Americans and their allies for their surrender."

## Chapter 20

*“For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.”—Newton’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Law of Motion*

**August, 23, 7:15 AM, CDT**

**Convalescent Care Unit, Private Room 1012A**

**U.S. Military Medical Facilities, San Antonio, Texas**

Almost imperceptibly, the all-enveloping light slightly faded. To anyone not accustomed to that bright and penetrating light, the fading would have gone unnoticed. But to Leon, who had been totally consumed by the light for what seemed to be many, many hours, the fading was noticeable and dramatic. The surrounding landscape, which until this time he had only perceived as gently rolling and too wondrous to adequately describe, came into better focus. The face of the figure that had been sitting with and speaking to him since he had realized he was in this place also came into view. Funny, although he was aware the man had been gently and calmly speaking to him and comforting him, he couldn’t remember exactly what had been said. Now, out of the glare of that comforting, penetrating light, the face became recognizable. It was the face of his deceased father.

“Dad! Is that really you? Where are we...how can...am I?”

His father’s understanding smile seemed to penetrate his heart and soul. It was a smile that he had not seen in many, many years...at the same time, it had a quality about it that he had never seen.

“Yes, son, it is really me...and if you are asking me whether or not you are dead, I can tell you that you are as close as one can come without it actually being so. But it is not your time to remain here in this realm—there is much more for you to accomplish before that time comes. The time has come for you to go back, and when you do, you will forget most of this experience. One thing you will not forget, though, is something I am grateful for—that you have seen me. Tell your mother and your brother that I am fine, and that I love them.”

Leon, despite the training and the hardness drilled into him by Marine NCOs, could not hold his tears back. They streamed down his face as he felt the warmth...the comfort...the love that this place exuded, and that was conveyed in his father’s voice which penetrated his very soul.

“But where are we? Why do I have to go? Dad, I have so much to ask and so much to tell you!”

His father’s eyes bored into Leon’s as he spoke. “It’s okay, son...I already know. One day you will, too...but not now. Remember, I am so proud of you!”

As his father said this, the light dimmed further, and the very elements in the atmosphere surrounding him seemed to coalesce and envelope him. Then, those elements appeared to circle around him like some kind of swirling gray cloud, blocking off the view of the realm he had just been in. A feeling came over him as if he were falling, and involuntarily his eyes closed and his mind drifted. As it did, he heard the voice of his commanding officer back on the island of Diego Garcia.

*“Leon, get the hell out of there!”*

Those shouted words came to him as if from a dream or from another world—a world outside of the one he had just known and *lived* so thoroughly. It was almost as if he had never known a world other than the one he had just visited. But the voice of the officer had cut through all of that. He found himself slowly turning his head, and looking down the slope to where his commanding officer was standing at its base. There, with its blades slowly rotating, was the SH-60 helicopter standing behind his CO where five Marines were providing security. It was the only helicopter in view.

Somehow that voice, and the view of his CO and the helicopter, had reawakened in Leon the knowledge of what he had to do. Turning quickly, he emptied his last magazine into a group of approaching Indian soldiers who appeared about fifty yards away. Throwing the empty rifle down, he reached down with one hand and grabbed his wounded NCOs pants at the waist. With his other hand, he grabbed the wounded Private Jacobs, and then dragged *both* men towards the helicopter.

Again he had gone no more than ten yards when he felt again that tremendous yank on his right calf, and he collapsed to one knee on that side. Summoning all his strength and ignoring the pain, he stood erect and kept going. After a few more yards, another tremendous jolt hit his back and he stumbled forward, almost falling but somehow retaining his footing. As he continued forward, he watched the Marines below him, now only thirty yards away, firing past him at figures appearing on the ridgeline behind him. As he trudged on, he looked down and noticed the crimson on his chest, the ragged hole in the front of his fatigues, and the ragged flesh—his flesh—surrounding the wound.

Inexplicably he remained standing and kept moving down that small hill, both the NCO and Private Jacobs still in tow. Three of the five Marines were down now and being loaded into the helicopter. His CO and the other two Marines kept up a steady covering fire, joined now by a door gunner on the helicopter using an M-60 machine gun to stitch rows back and forth along the ridge. As he approached within five yards of the CO, Leon again somehow gathered the strength and with an almost superhuman surge, he hurled both the NCO and Private Jacobs forward to the waiting arms of two medics who had come forward from the helicopter. Just as they took the men from him, there was

an incredibly bright flash immediately behind him and Leon's eyes opened wide as he was violently thrown forward.

**August, 23, 7:18 AM, CDT**

**Convalescent Care Unit, Private Room 1012A**

**U.S. Military Medical Facilities, San Antonio, Texas**

She had been there all night, like every other night for the last several months, keeping her vigil. Alan would help out in his off-hours during the afternoon and evening, then she would come and sit with Leon through the night until Alan could return. It was a cycle that she and her youngest son were intent on maintaining until Leon's condition resolved itself.

Late last year, when Leon had finally been transferred back to the United States and the hospital near Washington, D.C., Geneva and Alan had both taken time off to be with him. After the severe injuries he had sustained on Diego Garcia last August when the U.S. Marines retreated and were evacuated from the island, the prognosis had not been good. From the time he lost complete consciousness on the flight deck of the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln, Leon had remained unconscious and in a comatose state. His injuries had been severe, with a bullet wound to his leg and back, his head and back torn by shrapnel from a mortar round, the trauma of a severe concussion and significant trauma to his medulla.

But, over time, most of those injuries had healed, though Leon was still unable to breathe on his own, due to a continued loss of function from the injury to the medulla portion of his brain. The unconsciousness and comatose state resulting from those head injuries showed no signs of improvement. He had been in that state for over a year now. Many experts had tried to gently warn Geneva that he might never regain consciousness...that perhaps she should consider having the life support equipment turned off. It was something that Geneva would never consider, and Alan supported her 100 percent. They would stand vigil until Leon either regained consciousness, or until he passed from this world.

And they had the support of the public and the President in this decision. The President had been briefed on Leon's heroics soon after the fall of Diego Garcia. In an environment where America desperately needed every bit of good news it could find, and where the people needed to know of every inspirational and heroic event, the President had responded positively and quickly to the recommendation that Leon be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Moving swiftly, Congress had approved the award. In a nationally televised event in the middle of May—almost nine months after the action—the President had presented Leon the Medal of Honor here at his bedside, with a promise to have him to the Oval Office as soon as he regained consciousness and recovered.

Geneva would never forget the pride she felt as the news media focused on Leon's life, and how he had improved himself and lifted himself out of the gangland environment of Chicago to make something of himself. Leon's story of study at night in the city library, passing his proficiency and GED tests on his own, his acceptance to Boise State University, his study there, and finally his enlistment in the United States Marine Corps and subsequent actions were an inspiration to all Americans. They were particularly an inspiration to those still involved with the gangs Leon had forsaken. The talk on the street from the young men now was a desire to become like, or be compared to, "L.C.", and many were taking the initiative to do just that.

The feelings that filled Geneva's heart when the President had referred to all of this during his presentation, and when he had turned to her and thanked her and her deceased husband for instilling in Leon the values that made all of it possible, were something she could never put into words. Her respect for the President for recognizing Leon's upbringing, and making note of it to the nation, was something that magnified her respect for her him tenfold over. As she thought about all of this, a flicker of movement in her peripheral vision drew her attention to Leon's face.

"Did his eyelid just move?" she asked herself as she intently stared at her son's face.

He seemed to be peacefully lying there in his comatose state, when she witnessed his left eye move under his eyelid, and then both of his eyelashes began to flutter. She put her hand to her mouth and stifled a gasp as Leon suddenly opened his eyes in an intelligent and surprised stare.

"Captain!...Captain?" he muttered through his breathing apparatus as his eyes focused and he became aware of his immediate surroundings.

"Leon! Son, it's okay. Don't try to talk. I'll get a nurse," Geneva said to him as she leaned over him, held him by the shoulders, and looked into his clearing and more comprehending eyes.

She pressed the call button for the nurse, who arrived within a few seconds and began examining Leon, checking his pulse and looking into his eyes, checking the irises that now showed the abrupt and pronounced change of her patient's condition. The first nurse immediately called other nurses, who made calls to the staff physicians on duty. In the meantime, Geneva, according to long-held agreements between herself and Alan, called him on her cell phone and announced the good news, never taking her eyes off her son, who stared back at her just as intently.

"Alan! Oh, Alan! He's awake. Praise the good Lord, he is awake! Come quickly!"

**August, 23, 12:30 PM, CDT**

**Convalescent Care Unit**

**U.S. Military Medical Facilities, San Antonio, Texas**

"Leon appears to be remarkably alert, Mrs. Campbell. We were able to take him off the assisted breathing almost immediately, and he is anxious for you and Alan to come back into the room so he can share some things with you. His ability to converse is nothing short of astounding, and while I want to stress that my current impressions are nothing more than preliminary, he's a tough young man and I'm hopeful about the possibilities for his improvement.

"Now, there is no reason for me to keep you from going back in there and picking up where you left off. We performed a thorough exam and disconnected some of the life support and assistance equipment he had required up until this point. Don't be put off by the fact that the equipment is still in the room. We will keep it there as a precautionary measure in case there is a relapse. I personally believe that the chances for such a relapse at this point are remote, but we want to be safe."

As the doctor finished speaking, both Geneva and Alan thanked him, and entered Leon's room. As they did so, Geneva turned to the doctor. "Doctor, could you work with the folks here and the military, and make sure the reporters are held off for at least the rest of the day? I know they'll be wanting to get the story out, and I know it will be important and positive news for so many folks around the country who have taken a liking to Leon...but I would like him to not have to put up with all of that for a little while yet."

The doctor smiled knowingly and nodded. "Mrs. Campbell, don't you worry. The Colonel has already taken care of it. The news will be announced late tonight, and there will be no press allowed in Leon's presence for at least another forty-eight hours. Doctor's orders. The military public relations people will handle things during that period, although you and your son will most certainly be asked for interviews by the networks. How you respond to that is entirely up to you."

Geneva again thanked the doctor and entered Leon's room.

**August, 23, 12:32 PM, CDT**

**Convalescent Care Unit, Private Room 1012A**

**U.S. Military Medical Facilities, San Antonio, Texas**

Upon entering the room, she found Alan already sitting on the side of Leon's bed. Leon was propped up on the bed with pillows, and the two of them were just completing a brotherly embrace. Both had tears streaming down their faces. As she walked over to the chair next to the bed where she had spent so many nights, her cheeks glistened as well.

When she sat down, she was surprised to see Leon reach out his own hand, which had laid still for so many months, and weakly seek the touch of hers. Looking at her, with tears running down his face, he said, "Mom...I...I saw Dad! I don't know how...I can't explain it...but I saw him. He talked to me for the longest time, but I can't remember much of it...but he wanted you and Alan to know how much he loved you and how proud he was...how proud..."

At this point Leon broke down and sobbed openly. His memory of that experience and the feelings were simply overwhelming. Both his mother and his brother embraced him as they cried too. Geneva was amazed at Leon's declaration and wanted to ask him about it. But she knew that such questions could wait.

After a few minutes, Leon regained his composure and continued in his hoarse and tentative voice. "It seemed like only a few hours since I blacked out. The last thing I remember from the battle was landing on that aircraft carrier, and being taken off the helicopter...then nothing...except for the warm light and then Dad. It only seemed like hours...but it's been over a year? Where is everyone? How are the guys from my unit? What's happening with the war?"

So began a five-hour conversation where Geneva Campbell and Alan brought Leon up to date as on events that had transpired in the world over the past year since he had been wounded.

They informed him of all they knew of his unit. The senior NCO who had been with Leon on that hillock, and who was one of the two wounded men Leon had carried down the hill, had not made it, dying the very afternoon that they landed on the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln. Although Leon was disheartened and saddened by that news, he was elated to hear that Private (now Corporal) Jacobs, his security man, had survived, and had visited him often until he completely recovered from his own wounds and was shipped back to their unit. He had earned a Silver Star as a result of the action.

The CO whose voice had pulled Leon away from the combat had been wounded by the same explosion that had thrown Leon forward. It was the CO, wounded as he was, who had ultimately carried Leon to the helicopter as they made good their escape. The CO had recovered quickly, and was himself back with their unit in the field. He, too, had earned a Silver Star for his efforts that day on Diego Garcia. Both the CO and Corporal Jacobs wrote often and called on occasion to check up on Leon. They would be elated to hear that he had regained consciousness. They were both stationed somewhere in the Mediterranean, but their exact location or disposition was of course a matter to which neither Geneva nor Alan were privy.

With respect to the overall war effort, there had not been much good news in the last several months. The GIR had gathered a massive and still-growing army of over five million men around Israel. The United States, the United Kingdom, and the Canadians had valiantly kept the Mediterranean sea lanes open to assist Israel. Together they had all built up significant defenses in depth, even expanding the Israeli perimeter to include the southern valleys and coast of Lebanon and half of Jordan. Those two lines of defense were anchored in the center by the Golan Heights facing Syria. To the south, the Sinai Peninsula between the two arms of the Red Sea provided sound defenses that were anchored to the west along the Suez Canal. The canal itself was long since closed to all shipping due to the intense fighting that flared up around it very regularly.

In all, the Allies had 2.5 million regular troops and two million more citizens organized into citizen defense forces arrayed against the growing GIR force. Geneva and Alan were convinced that ultimately, a pivotal battle of gargantuan proportions was going to take place in that confined area. Leon knew they were right and that the GIR would carefully choose the time and place for it to begin... though he hoped Allied forces could build up enough men and materiel to pre-empt the GIR attack and counter their aims.

All of Northern Africa from Morocco to the Nile was under the control of the GIR. Italy and Spain had made valiant, combined force efforts to establish footholds along the coast in order to open up a second front and threaten the rear of the GIR force massing in Egypt, but they had failed and the GIR was consolidating its positions. Until the crisis around Israel was resolved, it appeared that little progress would be made in Africa.

This was because the rest of Europe was focused on another GIR threat, and this one was in Europe proper. The GIR had amassed an army of almost two million men in Georgia and had marched north along the coast of the Black Sea. After a surprising new expansion of the Siberian Economic Treaty to include the GIR, in exchange for tremendous access rights to Mid East oil and deep port anchorages along the Indian Ocean, the Russian Federation had ultimately agreed to transit rights for the GIR forces around the Black Sea.

In addition to severe protests to this move in Russia, particularly amongst the Orthodox Church, the outrage in Europe was extreme, and it had led to severe strains on diplomatic relations between all of the Allies and the Russian Federation. There had been talk of war, but in the end, the desire to avoid adding the strength and numbers of the Russians to that of the GIR and the CAS had wisely led to cooler heads prevailing. Instead of war and military conflict, diplomatic and economic sanctions were threatened and negotiations had begun... while the GIR approached Europe from the East.

The European Union had come together to meet this threat. Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and the low countries had all marshaled their forces and created a Unified European Defense Force (UEDF) which dispatched a large army to interdict the approaching GIR forces. Geneva and Alan explained that news reports indicated that the two forces would come together some time soon northeast of the Black Sea.

At about the same time, another threat to Europe became evident as the GIR pulled off a surprise airborne and amphibious crossing of the Dardanelles in late July. This occurred coincident with a shocking announcement by the government of Greece that would be forever remembered as the "Greek treachery," where it abandoned its neutrality and proclaimed solidarity with the GIR and CAS. This announcement was accompanied by a vicious surprise attack by the Greeks on Allied forces on the western side of the Dardanelles, the forces which were stationed there in order to defend the last remnants of free Turkey. In addition, large Greek attacks occurred on Cyprus, which to that point had maintained itself clear of GIR forces. The GIR had cemented the treacherous deal with the Greek government by promising a wholly controlled Greek Island of Cyprus and a promise to cede over of all Turkish lands on the Western side of the Dardanelles to Greece once Turkey was defeated. It was a deal the Greek regime was completely corrupted by, despite the protest of a large minority of its population. The protests were ruthlessly put down and written off as part of the fighting.

Those Allied forces were now on the verge of defeat as the Greek and GIR forces continued their relentless attacks from both sides, and as they consolidated their new front line well to the west of Istanbul, along the Greek border with Bulgaria. The newly organized UEDF was scrambling to respond to this new threat as local Bulgarian, Yugoslav, Romanian and Hungarian forces mobilized. Faced with thrusts from two directions, there was an almost panicked sense of urgency to fully mobilize European continental forces that had tried to avoid the menace of war for over a year.

In Asia, the picture was no more positive. Chinese, Indian, and Indonesian forces were consolidating and fortifying their gains in Malaysia, the Philippines, Japan, New Guinea, the Indian Ocean, and several major island chains in the western and southwestern Pacific. The Chinese had announced that all resistance in their newly "re-liberated" Province of Formosa had ceased, though through clandestine communications the Allies knew that there were still Republic of China resistance forces holding out in the mountains of Taiwan.

In addition, and of utmost concern to the Allies, large Chinese, Indian, and Indonesian forces were making steady gains in Australia where the entire western coast and the highly populated southwest coastal areas had fallen. From these positions, three large CAS and GIR thrusts were now

proceeding well into the interior to the east. It was clear that the CAS and GIR intended to conquer and occupy the entire continent. The Allied forces that had gathered around Alice Springs, as a planned large counterattack force, were now digging in as the main defense line against literally millions of CAS and GIR forces being funneled into the western side of the country. Reserves were attempting to stage along the eastern coast, but the numbers would have to grow substantially before any counterattack would be feasible.

The warfare in Australia was brutal and bloody. It was a war of survival as the aims of Indian, Chinese, and Indonesian forces to ultimately repopulate the whole of the nation with their own bulging masses was clear. In fact, according to western news sources, they were already doing just that in the western portions of the country. There the former inhabitants had the stark option of life as little more than second class serfs, or death as their lands and possessions were simply confiscated and used as the new owners saw fit.

Leon was shocked at the extent of the enemy's gains. He knew his good friend Billy Simmons, a Marine helicopter gunship pilot, was serving in the Pacific Theater of Operations, and he was concerned for him.

"Have either of you heard anything about Billy?" he asked as the thought crossed his mind.

Alan answered, "Back in June he was here in the States on leave. He spent a week with his Mom at their home near Fort Worth, and then they both came over here for several days to visit you, bro. He looked fine and said he had seen some combat...but he shipped out at the end of June somewhere in the Pacific. We get a letter or email from him, addressed to you, every couple of weeks. I got 'em all back at the apartment and'll bring them over this ev'nen, Leon. That's one good honky friend you got there, I got to say."

After a few more comments regarding Billy and some questions regarding his Mom and Dad, and after finding that nobody knew very much about Billy's father, Jess, due to his prolonged deployment somewhere in or around Israel, they continued to bring Leon up to date on events.

In South and Central America, bitter fighting raged in Columbia, northern and southern Brazil, and Argentina. From the reports, it was difficult to ascertain what progress, if any, was being made. In fact, it appeared that the fighting ebbed and flowed with little overall progress on either side. It was bloody, intense jungle warfare in many areas. American forces had massed with Allies for an invasion of Panama, but they had not been able to pull it off. The priority for resources in the Pacific, the Middle East, and Europe, as well as defense of the U.S. itself, delayed the force from "jumping off," although it had come close several times.

The supercavitating weapons continued to pose considerable threat. Despite many innovations and procedures that had been developed to counter and mitigate them, the Chinese and Indian engineers continued to produce their own innovations for the weapons. Paralleling the war effort itself, the struggle over the use and effect of this technology was a raging conflict in itself, and it was one the Allies had not successfully contained. This meant that large Allied task forces were committed to the sea in only the most extreme cases, and such a limitation was a severe handicap for the Allied cause as the CAS and GIR continued to expand.

In the United States itself, production levels were steadily climbing and more ships, aircraft, weapons, and materiel were pouring out of newly built or refurbished U.S. factories and shipyards. But the effort was not building quickly enough for the Allied war planners, and so their enemies continued to gain ground. Part of this was attributable to the rampant outsourcing efforts that had occurred in U.S. industry throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Firms had been tempted by the cheap labor and favorable economic conditions offered by the very countries now fighting the United States and her Allies, and by the short-sighted plans and philosophies of those who saw the increased profit and reduced tax liabilities as ends unto themselves.

As a result, large international U.S. firms, and all too often the U.S. government itself, spearheaded the headlong plunge to move more and more operations off shore. By 2005 a large percentage of U.S. manufacturing and engineering capability had been moved to, and was now owned by, the very nations who would be seeking to defeat America and her allies just a few years thereafter. Overcoming this lack of production capability was taking longer than anticipated, but progress was being made as the nation approached that task with a determination to survive, and a will to prevail.

But that progress itself was also being hampered by the continuing terror attacks on U.S. soil. Literally tens of thousands of American citizens had been killed. Billions of dollars of capital equipment, infrastructure, and property had been destroyed. Although the nation was now on a full wartime footing, overcoming these attacks interfered with efforts to ramp up. The President's initiatives on the Second Amendment, pushing and passing legislation at the national and state levels that eradicated most gun laws, had helped immensely. Citizens became the front line of defense and interdicted terror attacks as they developed. Coupled with this citizen activism, the state-coordinated and nationally-supported Homeland Security measures, particularly the local sheriff-operated Home Guard units, were proving very effective.

All across the nation, infrastructure ranging from critical to low level facilities, was guarded twenty-four hours a day by these volunteer units who served four six-hour shifts per week. Armed



with weapons and communications equipment procured from the government by their local sheriff's departments—equipment that became the property of the local citizens—and trained by a combination of local, state, and federal agencies, these individuals were the front line against terror attacks aimed at local infrastructure. Each individual unit was able to communicate with their sheriff, whose lines of communication went to the state and the national level if resource from those levels was necessary. It was an effective use of resource, and many older citizens gladly volunteered to watch their local areas.

Even so, attacks conducted by Hispanic, Oriental, and Muslim terrorists continued. Agents who had infiltrated the nation over many years, taking advantage of a lax immigration policy and porous borders were activated, to simply implement plans of long standing. Winning these destructive and deadly battles on the home front was critical to the hopes for victory in the overseas theaters.

In an effort to stop the flow of new terrorist combatants into the nation, and in addition to measures that Geneva and Alan explained regarding the Second Amendment and Home Guard, the Weisskopf administration implemented military-controlled borders. Several divisions of troops were deployed along the southern border of the United States, and a national buffer zone had been implemented on both sides of the southern border with Mexico, five miles deep into Mexico and one mile into the United States. In a vast operation, those areas on the U.S. side had been cleared of structures, businesses, and housing. The inhabitants and workers had been relocated and the Federal Government had given vast areas of former Federal Lands to duly and richly compensate those citizens so displaced – deeding over to them lands upon which the rebuilding of their business structures and dwellings was subsidized.

In the buffer zone, a national border fence was constructed comprising two well built fences 20 yards apart, topped by razor wire and having rolls of concentrine wire all along its length fifty meters to either side of the fence. Only designated, regular border crossings allowed legal residents, visa holders, or immigrants in, as well as those legally doing commerce across the border. The military patrolled the border heavily and the entire operation was seen as excellent training for forces due to rotate to either the Middle East, and later Africa. In fact a four to six month rotation for many troops became the norm, where their ROEs allowed them to forcibly stop anyone who attempted to illegally cross the border. UAVs and electronic devices augmented the patrols which occurred regularly using the roads which had been built on the US side of the fence.

In addition, due to the extreme nature of the attacks and the threat, internment camps had been established within the remote, intermountain areas of the American West. Similar in nature to those established in World War II for Japanese-Americans, these camps had one vast difference: no U.S. citizen was interred. U.S. citizens' constitutional rights were respected. Only foreign aliens found to be residing in the United States illegally were automatically interred. Legal aliens from the affected belligerent nations, where there was no proof of hostile involvement, were simply given the option of being returned to their respective nations as quickly and efficiently as possible, or they were interred for the duration of hostilities. Avoidance of compliance or dishonesty was rewarded with immediate internment. The internment policies were a direct reaction by the Weisskopf administration to rampant homeland terrorism, and they were completely supported by Congress. They were also controversial, but only to the most die-hard social and liberal proponents of "open" immigration. In the new, harsh reality, the numbers of those dissenting were few, and the vast majority of Americans approved and assisted in the effort.

Any American citizen suspected of, or found to be actively engaged in, the support of terror combatants was tried in the American court system, and sentenced accordingly when found guilty. Punishment for active involvement by U.S. citizens was similar to that meted out to the terrorist themselves...and generally required the invoking of the death penalty. Leon could see that his country had been transformed by the crisis, and he had to admit that he was pleased with the transformation. He could feel that the changes were leading to more honesty, more serious contemplation of the value of liberty, and the responsibilities associated with maintaining it. They also led to more willingness to work hard, and a greater trust in moral principle and the source of those principles than ever before.

As a Marine and as an American citizen, Leon knew that these changes, despite the horrific conditions that made them necessary, were for the good. They were changes that had America returning to its roots. He also knew from personal experience that they were absolutely necessary if the people of the United States—and the rest of the free world—were going to prevail against the implacable enemies whose goal was the eradication of such liberty—and all people who loved it.

## Chapter 21

*“For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.”—Newton’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Law of Motion*

**August 27, 22:37 PST**

### **Personal Study**

#### **Pacific Heights Subdivision, Palo Alto, California**

Sandra watched the data as it marched across her flat screen display. There was a lot of it, it was very technical and it was arriving over her T-1 connection from over seven thousand miles away. After arrival, the data would be decompressed and run through the analysis programs that she had written to search for specific information in her line of research. It was research where any study of the physical specimens themselves were forbidden by Presidential Directive and U.S law.

"But what I am doing is not illegal," thought Sandra, "No, not illegal in the least," she continued, quite contented with her progress and satisfied that she had found, developed and perfected a method for her continuing research in her chosen area of expertise.

Sandra Eleanor McPherson held a doctorate in biology, specializing in the area of fetal anatomy. She held a tenured professorship at Stanford University and had been a member of the faculty for over twenty years. She was well published in the field of fetal development and believed with all of her heart that fetal tissue held the key to overcoming a multitude of ailments that afflicted mankind. Unfortunately, for the last several years, ever since the Presidential elections of 2000, the pursuit of fetal tissue research had become increasingly difficult in the United States, up to the point where it was illegal to possess any such tissue for research purposes.

"Short-sighted, moralist fools," thought Sandra.

Couldn't they see that such research was going to go forward in any case in other areas of the world? Despite this damnable, nonsensical war, and despite efforts in the United States to the contrary, Sandra knew the research was continuing elsewhere and that it would ultimately produce results. She had considered moving to Europe where the inquiry was ongoing and very active, but her ties to California and her position here would not allow it. Besides, she was determined and convinced of the correctness of her position, so she had pressed forward with finding a way to continue her research in spite of increasingly difficult conditions.

And her perseverance had paid off. With her own programming and analytical capabilities and with the continuing technology explosion in communications, processors, memory and graphic computing, Sandra had simply made use of technology to carry on her studies via modeling and simulation in a virtual laboratory of her own creation. With a high speed internet connection and with secure channels across the web to friends and researchers in Europe, she was able to make use of their physical data, model it, and analyze it as if though it were present in California. As a result, officially she was just receiving digital data from Europe to assist in her fetal anatomy studies...unofficially, she was leading one of the most advanced fetal research teams on the planet.

"Not bad for a fifty-two year old, fully tenured, senior researcher and professor," she thought as her program automatically continued its analysis. "With the Dean's help, and the Chancellor's support, perhaps I can achieve the breakthrough we are all hoping for."

She and her team were studying several forms of cancer and some severe genetic disorders...but her personal area of research was centered on AIDS. Sandra considered AIDS to be a disease that had the potential of becoming the worst scourge in the history of mankind, in fact, in some areas of the world, it was already considered such. Sandra was personally committed to making sure it never attained that status world-wide, and she had very strong personal reasons for that commitment to go along with her professional ones.

At fifty-two, Sandra had never married and honestly felt at this point that she never would. Oh, she dated and had the occasional affair with men she was attracted to. But after Stephen, she knew she would never consider making the commitment, or suffering the distraction from her professional goals that she knew such a relationship would require.

"Oh, Stephen...how I miss you to this day," she allowed herself as she briefly contemplated those events over eighteen years ago.

That summer Sandra had already obtained her masters degree and was working on her doctorate while teaching at Stanford. Stephen was a social sciences professor in the College of Humanities. They had met at an activist event protesting a local "Right to Life" organization's attempt to picket a local abortion clinic. They had met there on the sidewalk, shared their own philosophical feelings regarding that particular protest and then had dinner together that evening after the event. Things had proceeded rapidly between them from there.

Never had Sandra met anyone so kind, so gentle, so sharing...and with what Sandra considered the perfect complimentary intellect to go along with her own. To that point, all of her other relationships had ultimately stumbled on that point. Sandra demanded intellectual stimulus, and she

could not maintain a close relationship for long with anyone who could not provide it in a way that stimulated her own. No matter the physical attraction, no matter the close friendship, Sandra knew she would never marry anyone who could not only keep up with, but who could also challenge her intellectually. Stephen did all of that and more. The next three months had her head spinning for the first time in her adult life...and had her recklessly falling in love. So close did they become, so wrapped up in their feeling for one another, that their relationship proceeded in an unguarded fashion mentally, intellectually, emotionally and physically into the fall of that year.

Perhaps it was the serious discussions of marriage that had caused it. Sandra did not know the reasons at the time, but Stephen became more and more reflective. The unguarded turned guarded. Oh, they continued to enjoy one another's presence and continued to revel in their intellectual compatibility, but Stephen was clearly distracted. Sandra took it simply as serious contemplation over the prospect of marriage, but she would never forget that night in early November.

"El, we have to talk," he had simply said over the phone. She had never heard him sound so serious or so guarded. After a few more words, she had immediately driven over to his apartment.

Stephen had sat next to her on the couch in his apartment and held her hand as he talked. He told her how much he loved her and wanted to always be with her.

"Now, I need to share with you some things about me, some things I have done, that I have kept from you. I was afraid ... I didn't know how to tell you. But now, as I examine my true feelings for you, I must tell you. I hope darling, that you will understand ... that you will still have me.

"Up until the time we met I played around a lot, I mean *a lot*. Relationships were a thing to me for fun and gratification. Oh, in the back of my mind I toyed with the idea of a serious long-standing relationship some day ... but I wasn't acting like it ... and I certainly wasn't seeking it.

"Honey, what I was seeking was fun and experimentation. And I did ... to the max. And I did not exclude anything or anyone. To put it bluntly, I was bisexual in my activities. I was not serious about it ... but I did it and I reveled in the fact that I could."

As the shocked expression on Sandra's face conveyed her surprise, Stephen hurried along.

"That all changed when I met you. I want you to know ... I *need* you to know that I have been completely loyal and true to you since the day we met."

Then, leaning closer to her, Stephen continued in an even more serious note. But it was his eyes that told Sandra that the worst was yet to come.

"There's more.

"I suppose my folks would say that there are consequences for such a life style and I suppose there are. Because some of the people I fooled around with were very at risk, I have had blood work done every three months. I wanted to be sure, I wanted to somehow prove I had not been at risk myself. But, the latest results are in ... and El ... I ... I don't know how to say this ..."

Tears were streaming down Stephen's cheeks as he made the awful revelation.

"It came back positive ... I am HIV positive."

The look of shock and disbelief that Sandra had shown at Stephen's earlier revelation were nothing compared to what she felt and displayed now. After a few seconds pause, she exclaimed.

"You *WHAT?* You ... you mean all this time you knew? My God what have you done!"

Stephen, weeping openly, wanted her to know that he loved her, that he wanted to spend the rest of his life with her and that he had been true to her since their first meeting. But he had also wanted, no *needed*, to share this past with her...and the consequences in the hopes they could face it together.

But Sandra was appalled. She wanted to hear nothing of it. How could he? How could he really love her and put her at such risk with their unguarded relationship? She got up and fled, not listening to his pleas to stay. Her heart had been crushed and she drove home and locked herself in her apartment for three days. She had called in sick, had ignored his phone calls. She had longed to call her mother and father, but they had died three years earlier and they had not been on good terms when they did. Now, when she needed them, they were not there.

Shock and anger had given way to sadness and depression. In that depression, she had thought about nothing but herself. Naturally, after her three-day seclusion, she had emerged and gone and gotten a blood test herself. Until the results came in, she had kept to herself and been ultimately relieved to find that she was not HIV positive. That relief broke through the depression and she began to think about Stephen. He had put it all on the line for her, truly sorrowful and thinking of her as he had made his revelation. After realizing this, she had called his apartment, only to get the answering machine and a vague message about a vacation. She had gone to the University and found he had taken a leave of absence. She became desperate and ultimately tracked down the whereabouts of his family. Funny, up until that point she had not considered them. They lived in the mid-west and she called and found Stephen was there with them. She had traveled to the small town in Indiana to see him and found a very traditional, very conservative household that had opened their arms to their son and older brother. He had shared his plight with them and they had, despite their differences with his lifestyle, opened their hearts to him in a display of their unwavering Christian faith.

Sandra had witnessed the miracle of love, family love as it was poured out, as it was meant to be. They did not approve of what he had done to himself. Their own religious upbringing, and

Stephen's, taught them that dire consequences followed such life styles and behavior. But despite all of that, he was their loved one, he was in need of their help and they were there for him out of that love and out of the same religious upbringing. It had caused Sandra to long for her parents and wished she had reconciled with them before they had died. In a way, she shared it now as Stephen's family bent every resource, sought every avenue to restore him to good health.

It had all been in vain. Somehow Stephen had been acutely sensitive to the disease. Very quickly it had developed into full-blown AIDS and within eight months, he had died taking his family's hopes, his keen intellect and gentle ways. . .and Sandra's heart and dreams with him.

She had returned to Stanford from her own leave of absence with a new purpose and dedication, a dedication to finding the secret to the killer disease of AIDS through whatever means she could acquire. She had made good progress in the intervening years, but any type of breakthrough had eluded her, as it had all of the AIDS research. Then, in 2000, with a new administration in Washington, her progress had been more and more stymied by new laws and by new administrative rulings. Her own conviction and drive had helped her find ways around most of the obstacles, but the outbreak of war almost eighteen months ago had created new obstacles, particularly to funding. It was frustrating and she wished the whole "War" would just go away.

But now, despite all the obstacles, Dr. Sandra Eleanor McPherson began looking at the first results of the analysis being performed on the latest digital samples of fetal tissue from Europe. What she saw confirmed her theories on the study she was performing. But what she needed was a sub-molecular, an almost atomic analysis of these samples, and she thought she knew where she could obtain it. It would take a lot of work, but she was certain the relatively new physical techniques she had in mind could be replicated digitally to allow for the level of analysis she desired.

"In fact, what I'm considering will be revolutionary in itself, and perhaps worth of a Nobel in its own right," she mused, "but first I must work on the algorithms and virtual tools."

**August 29, 00:37 local time**

**Combat Information Center (CIC), U.S.S. Kitty Hawk, CTF 77**

**Southwestern Pacific Ocean, Between New Zealand and Australia**

Admiral Ben Ryan contemplated the sweeping revolution in naval warfare that the last 18 months had wrought as he looked at the various threat displays. The impact of that revolution was evident in the composition of the very Carrier Strike Group (CSG) that he was commanding. It was not often that CINCPAC was seen outside of the Hawaiian Islands, but Admiral Ben Ryan believed in leading from the front whenever practicable.

The naval "front" in this case was right here with CTF 77 between New Zealand and Australia. Here, this CSG had one super carrier, the Kitty Hawk as flagship, and a new "jeep" or "Sea Control" carrier in support. Four O.H. Perry class frigates were sailing in the inner circle acting as "Killer Whale" shields to the capitol ships. One Aegis Cruiser and one Aegis Destroyer in the inner group provided close in and area coverage for anti-air. Two Surface Action Groups (SAGS) attached to the CSG and stationed out on the two principal threat axis consisted of two Arleigh Burke Aegis Destroyers and an Perry class Frigate. Six HV-22s were on patrol at all times in the inner circle as additional "Killer Whale" defense and new programming for the ASROC launchers had been added to all combat ships to assist in the destruction of attacking supercavitating "Killer Whale" weapons.

The harsh new reality meant that a sizable portion of this CBG was dedicated to defending the carriers against the continuing threat of these Chinese developed supercavitating weapons. Even then it was not always enough. Four U.S. super carriers were on the bottom of the ocean over the last year and a half of combat, leaving only eight currently operational. The U.S.S. Constellation, the U.S.S. John Stennis, the U.S.S. Enterprise and just two months ago, the U.S.S. Harry Truman.

The Truman was sunk in the Mediterranean as it operated in support of a major task force ferrying men and materiel to Israel. It had been a shocking confirmation that their enemies had been able to not only proliferate the weapons into that theater of operation, but also to enhance them with new innovations. The Truman had not been sunk by devices launched from other vessels in the area, or by devices launched from attacking aircraft. The Truman had been sunk by devices that appeared out of nowhere using attack profiles heretofore unseen by the Allies. Those devices were apparently a modification of the stationary devices, seeded in the anticipated path of Allied task forces that had been seen in the Pacific. But their attack profile was completely different. Instead of igniting their rocket motors when sensing a targeted vessel from a standoff range and attacking horizontally at a depth of just a few meters, these devices had come up from underneath the Truman, from very deep. In so doing they had avoided all efforts to interdict and intercept them, either from escort vessels trailing reactive lines, or from ASROC launches from other ships or from torpedo launches from patrolling aircraft. The resulting three explosions on the Truman had broken her back in three places and sent her underneath the waves in a phenomenally short time. Only forty-two seconds after impact, no major portion of that mighty vessel remained above the waves. Only fifteen of her crew had been saved. Three other vessels in that task force had suffered similar fates.

The Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean and now the Mediterranean Sea had all been the sites of successful and devastating attacks by the Chinese, Indian and now GIR supercavitating weapons against U.S. Navy aircraft carriers. Attacks in the South Atlantic had also occurred against allied shipping, but no U.S. carrier had been lost or damaged there to date.

"Only in the North Atlantic is there any demonstrated safety ... and that is probably simply because there has not been an opportunity yet," thought the Admiral.

"Well, now there is an opportunity," he thought and he prayed to God that the enemy was not aware of it. As his Task Force plowed the waves of the far Southwest Pacific there between Australia and New Zealand, in the far north Atlantic the newest and most modern American carrier was undergoing sea trials under the tightest security and heaviest defense imaginable.

"They're conducting those trials for the Shanksville up there because it's the farthest area of operations away from the enemy, because of the extremely rough seas and difficulty associated with finding her there...and because we've experienced no attacks there to date," the Admiral reflected. "Dear God, please don't let there be one now."

The U.S.S. Shanksville, CVN 93, named for the town near where Flight 93 had crashed to earth in Pennsylvania during the terrorists attacks of September 11, 2001, had been miraculously completed ahead of schedule and hurried into trials. Three more just like her were already taking shape on the ways at U.S. shipyards constructed for those purposes over the last fourteen months.

Once termed the CVN-21, and all but destroyed in the initial massive surprise attacks by the Chinese in March, the U.S.S. Shanksville had risen like a Phoenix from those shipyards and had been completed well ahead of schedule. That early completion and deployment was a monument to American know-how, ingenuity and perseverance in the most demanding times imaginable.

"And what an inspiration it's entire life has been to date," thought the Admiral of the new carrier. "Starting from the naming and the special dispensation to change the hull number to match Flight 93."

As the Admiral reflected on this, his heart swelled up with pride as he tried to imagine those American citizens who attacked and defeated their hijackers on that fateful day of 9-11. In fact, many key policy makers and planners looked back and considered that day as the real starting point for the third World War. With the passage of time, it was more and more clear that the even more horrific events that had started this war with China had been a natural and horrendous culmination of those events, when the world truly realized what 9-11 foreshadowed.

"I believe that the events of 9-11, up until that last struggle aboard Flight 93 will foreshadow this whole ugly and terrible affair," continued the Admiral to himself.

At least five passengers, and maybe more, had risen up and attacked the terrorists on that flight. Their struggle and victory was indicative to many of the predominance of the American spirit over the indoctrinated and radical spirit of their enemies. A stewardess, a woman traveler and three American businessmen, thrust into events more horrible than they could contemplate, had taken matters into their own hands when it became clear what the terrorists had in mind.

"They fought them with scalding hot water, their fists and anything they could lay their hands on. A model of the ability of liberty to win out over compulsion and tyranny," thought the Admiral.

"Truly it was the first victory in this struggle, and it ended that day with hope, after saving the lives of hundreds, perhaps thousands. There isn't a more fitting name for that new vessel up there in the North Atlantic than one that honors the sacrifice and commitment of those American heroes. They were like a first band of citizen's militia who took these people on head to head...and emerged victorious, thwarting those animals in their designs and ending them in a smoking crater in the Pennsylvania countryside, instead of the Capitol Building or the White House. I just pray that their example and victory will foreshadow the life of this new carrier," the Admiral concluded, "and that the Shanksville will get that opportunity."

The new carrier would deploy with a host of new technical innovations and equipment. These included new electromagnetic catapults, a much more automated logistics system, the latest phased array radar and AEGIS battle management systems, and a more layered defensive system. The new defenses included four Rolling Airframe Missile (RAM) stations along with four Close in Weapons Systems (CIWS) that U.S. Navy super carrier normally carried. There were provisions for four directed energy weapons as well, as soon as that technology was perfected. This was made possible by the tremendously efficient nuclear reactors that operated the carrier, providing almost 200% of the electrical power over former designs.

But, most importantly from Admiral Ryan's perspective, she mounted the new Submerged Threat Close in Weapons System (SUBT CIWS).

The SUBT CIWS had been designed specifically for countering the enemy's supercavitating weapons. Mounted on underwater turrets, partially recessed along the sides of the vessel, the SUBT CIWS shot projectiles along the path of an approaching threat, just like the above deck CIWS did at approaching missiles. With an underwater range of just under 1000 yards and shooting smart, explosive munitions at hypervelocity speed, the SUBT CIWS projectile was a supercavitating weapon itself, designed to destroy other supercavitating weapons by collapsing their cavity so that they impacted a literal wall of water at very high speed. The SUBT CIWS could also destroy conventional

torpedoes and mines as well. The U.S.S. Shanksville mounted four such turrets along each side, eight in all. And they would be tied directly into the overall AEGIS battle management system.

The big question was whether the new system would work against the Chinese "Killer Whales". Could they react quickly enough and score an intercept at an underwater object approaching at almost 600 knots. Added to that, was the question that if they did, would they be able to intercept them at a range significantly far enough away from the ship to avoid pieces of the wreckage that might reach the intended victim, in this case a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier. The designers and engineers indicated that the new system would accomplish all of this, and they based it on preliminary tests of the system when mounted on the U.S.S. Thorn, a Perry class frigate outfitted for weapons research. Now the U.S.S. Shanksville was going to final testing of the premise in the rough waters of the North Atlantic.

If even nominally successful, the U.S. Navy was already looking at the logistics of rotating current capitol ships (meaning Aircraft Carriers, the big Amphibious Assault ships and the AEGIS ships) into dry docks for retrofitting the turrets and weapons systems. All new vessels from frigate size on up were being designed to accommodate the SUBT CIWS.

Admiral Ryan already knew that the U.S.S. Kitty Hawk was fifth in the rotation and could not expect her dry dock refit until early next year. Until then, she would be out here with the U.S.S. Ronald Reagan, third in that same rotation, attempting to support the defense of Australia and New Zealand against the CAS juggernaut that had moved so quickly across Asia and the Pacific. The Ronald Reagan was supporting combat operations in Australia and could be augmented by the Kitty Hawk group as required. The Kitty Hawk was stationed as a blocking and interdiction force between Australia and New Zealand, where the Allies were already building up a significant contingency force and logistical base in the event conditions in Australia continued to deteriorate.

As all of these thoughts passed through his mind, he noticed his staff officer over intelligence approaching and the Admiral realized it was time for his 0100 intelligence briefing. When he was within a few feet he pulled up and saluted. Returning the salute, the Admiral spoke.

"Okay Commander, what do you have for me?"

"Admiral, G2 indicates that the enemy is keeping its capitol ships west of Australia under their own heavy air cover to protect the massive influx of troops and equipment that China, India and Indonesia are pouring into Australia. There are no less than four enemy carrier groups there covering dozens of convoys. Coast watchers behind enemy lines in Australia and New Guinea report increasing numbers of strike aircraft flying into western Australia.

"The Ronald Reagan is reporting probing air assaults, but nothing major. Our own barrier CAP has interdicted two CAS reconnaissance missions in the last fourteen hours, but no other threat has been detected to date. We are expecting a NRO Pervador flight tomorrow afternoon and the 30<sup>th</sup> Air Wing, 2<sup>nd</sup> Space Launch Squadron indicates a launch window for the latest attempt at maintaining a KH-12C satellite over the southwest Pacific out of Vandenberg. The Titan IV B is fueled and on the pad and the package is one of the ADCAP birds with the new thrusters and sensors...they believe they'll be able to detect and avoid any Chinese attempts to bring it down with kinetic weapons."

The Admiral contemplated this. He longed for the days when the US Air Force "eyes in the sky" were the trump card for U.S. Navy operations. But the last year had shown the futility in depending too heavily on such assets not directly under your own control, and lacking multiple redundancy.

"Thank you Commander. We will proceed as planned. Inform the Task Force Commander and the battle group commander to join me in my quarters. We must ensure that our own reconnaissance birds are up according to plan, particularly the UAVs. We will take whatever advantage we can gain from the Pervador over flight and the satellite...but we cannot afford to count on them. I'll brief them and then we'll cover all of this in staff meeting at 0400, update me with any new information just before that meeting."

**September 3, 14:41 local time**

**Outside Turkish Presidential Quarters**

**Istanbul, Turkey**

The noise was incredible, as well it should be with over one hundred thousand troops surrounding the presidential complex witnessing the ceremony. As the surrendering Turkish President, President Ahmed Sezir, approached General Talabari, Captain Abduhl Selim contemplated the many experiences that had led him to this point. The selection of Hojjatolesla Hasan al-Askari Sayeed as an Ayatollah Ol Osam for the Shia Muslim faith and a recognition of Sayeed as the overall Imam for all of Islam. The creation of the Greater Islamic Republic by the Imam soon thereafter and the inclusion of his home country of Turkmenistan into that Republic in the summer of the same year, when Abduhl was still seventeen. Abduhl's joining the great Army of the GIR and his training throughout that summer and into the fall. His deployment to the former state of Iraq to be a part of the GIR forces that were to put down the Kurdish rebellion when the people of Iraq voted overwhelmingly to become a part of the growing GIR. His introduction to combat that fall and his witnessing the might of the United States Air Force in their failed attempt to support the fledgling state of Kurdistan in its short three month history.

“Funny, the euphoria of that moment, when the Kurds were defeated and then spared humiliation by the Imam as they joined the GIR was not unlike this moment,” he thought. But there was much more feeling to this moment, even though the din of the celebration was similar. Since the defeat of the Kurds and their American air support, much more had happened in the intervening two years.

The GIR and Syria had staged a classic bait and switch operation along the Turkish border and then together invaded Turkey. The last eighteen months of Abduhl's life had been spent fighting his way across Turkey with GIR forces and ultimately crossing the Dardanelles when the Greeks had sided with the GIR, conducting a surprise attack from the west, aimed at the Turkish capitol, Istanbul.

In that time Abduhl had seen much, had experienced much...had lost much as friends and his boyhood were completely swallowed up by the raging war. He had fought hard against what he considered were the corrupted Turkish armies, but which were comprised of fierce and ruthless fighters. He had faced the might and superior technical capabilities of the Americans and had been driven from the field by the U.S. 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. He had also conducted a direct assault into their flank as he retreated which bought time for his comrades in other Companies and Divisions on that day. Slowly, inexorably, the GIR forces had pushed their way forward throughout Turkey until they had pushed the corrupt Turks and infidels off the main landmass of Asia, across the Dardanelles into Europe, well over a year ago. Then the months of sporadic fighting, repelling attempted Allied counter attacks and then finally themselves crossing the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles for the final assault only a few months before.

Through the long months, Abduhl had fought well, and had been recognized and promoted as a result. From Private to Corporal, from Corporal to Sergeant as his own NCOs fell. From Sergeant to a battlefield officer's commission to Lieutenant after the American counterattack was finally repelled outside of Cicekdag, and now to Captain. When it came to leading men in combat, when it came to understanding and inspiring his brothers in arms, no one excelled like Abduhl Selim...and his superiors knew it and made good use of it. His upbringing by his father in his native land and his teachings of the principles of Islam had figured heavily into making Abduhl what he was.

“I can see that now,” he thought, “although at the time back then, as a young boy before I came to truly depend on Allah, I would never have guessed or admitted to it.”

But, as it does to many, combat had caused Abduhl to reflect more and more on his upbringing and on his faith, and he had come to a firm commitment to the cause of Islam. That cause as Abduhl saw it, and as the great Imam Sayeed taught it, was to unite all of Islam while purging the corrupt and unfaithful, and then to humble the infidels. At the same time, or perhaps as a result of it, he had also come to be a natural leader of men. Now, at twenty years old, with an intense but distant look in his eyes, Captain Abduhl Selim stood with his Company of soldiers, most of them older than himself, and witnessed the final surrender of Turkey to the GIR.

### **September 3, that same time**

#### **Turkish Presidential Review Stand**

#### **Istanbul, Turkey**

The noise was over powering as President Ahmed Sezir approached the GIR General and his staff. Looking out over the masses of soldiers gathered in the courtyard and the surrounding grassed areas. He could not help but notice the sentinel soldiers on many of the surrounding rooftops and the camera crews located strategically throughout the crowd.

“There must be well over a hundred thousand enemy soldiers here,” he thought. “And they are going to make the most of the humiliation for their propaganda purposes. Well, they will get no humility and cowed spirit from me.”

As the President thought this, his emotions got the best of him and he cursed himself for his failure to defend what he deemed to be the most progressive and secular Islamic nation on earth. He cursed his allies and particularly the Americans for not being up to the task of helping him, for having themselves succumbed to so many of the allurements that had weakened them.

“... what I wouldn't give for a small tactical nuclear device right now,” he thought as he approached the podium where his conquerors stood.

As he did so, he determined to play his role to the tee, but to show no humility and no downtrodden spirit. He may surrender his nation's colors, but he would do it with his head held high. As he reached the appointed spot, he knelt to one knee and held out his nation's flag, rolled up, to General Talabari, the overall Commander in Chief of GIR forces in the Middle East.

“On behalf of the armed forces of Turkey and on behalf of the people of Turkey, I officially surrender to the combined forces of the Greater Islamic Republic,” he said. As he did, the crowd of soldiers erupted into a mind-numbing roar, and the flag was taken from him by one of General Talabari's aides. President Sezir then made his way solemnly over to a table that had been prepared for the purpose, and signed his name to the official surrender documents which secured what he deemed to be the best conditions for his people given the circumstances. When he was finished, he stood by the table as General Talabari approached.

**September 3, that same time**  
**Turkish Presidential Review Stand**  
**Istanbul, Turkey**

"Just listen to them," thought General Talabari as he prepared to officially execute the agreement and accept the Turkish surrender on behalf of the GIR.

"And they deserve it," he thought as reflected on the many long months of combat and the many, many casualties that had resulted in this moment.

He immediately signed the documents and then motioned for the now former President Sezir to join him at the podium facing the crowd. Raising his hands for silence, the General began.

"Today marks a critical day in the history of all Islam and the world. Today, for the first time in hundreds of years, all of Islam is united!"

The crowd of soldiers and civilians behind them erupted at this in a monumental roar of approval. It took several minutes for the General to get them quieted back down before he continued.

"According to our great Imam's vision, today we have completed a task dreamed of for over a millennium. From the isles of the Pacific in Indonesia, through the former Pakistan over to Persia, across the entire Fertile Crescent down through the Arabian Peninsula and into Africa, a united Islamic nation of over one billion souls now stands forth."

Again the crowd went wild as the signal was carried by local transmission to WNN affiliates outside of the actual occupied area. When things were again quiet, the General continued.

"But our work is not yet done. We yet have brothers and sisters in Europe and America living under the corrupt moral decadence of those societies. Our Imam has made our task and goals clear. Purge and punish the unfaithful... the humble and vanquish the decadent infidel

"Here before us stands a leader of the unfaithful who has just surrendered to us."

General Talabari looked into Ahmed Sezir's eyes. There was not a shred of humility, regret or fear in them. The General wondered if that would change as an aide approached and handed him an object sheathed in scarlet cloth which he proceeded to unwrap as he spoke.

"Today we show to the world what becomes of unfaithful nations and their leaders. Islamic law is clear, those who turn against Islam having once accepted it..."

The General quickly raised and pointed the 9mm automatic pistol he had produced from the cloth directly at the former President's head. The pistol was loaded with special sub-sonic hollow point bullets. Seeing the shock and recognition registering in Ahmed Sezir's eyes, but still no fear, the General pulled the trigger.

**BANG**

"...must die! *DEATH TO THE UNFAITHFUL!*"

The image of the Ahmed Sezir's corpse falling to the floor of the review stand with a slight red mist hanging in the air over where he had stood flashed around the world at the speed of light. As it did so, the crowd went wild with approval once more. The General let them go on for some time.

**September 4, 13:45 EST**  
**Situation Room, The White House**  
**Washington, DC**

For the third time President Norm Weisskopf watched the replay of the death of his friend, the President of Turkey, Ahmed Sezir. A rage at the callousness of it filled his soul, it was a rage he could scarce contain. When their copy of the broadcast ended with the noise of tens of thousands of soldiers yelling their approval, the President himself turned off the display and sat in silence for a few seconds with his security council.

"We have known for many months that we were dealing with barbaric animals, but this film has confirmed it once more to our hearts and minds. Ahmed was a good ally of this nation and a close personal friend. This atrocity and the loss of his nation will be deeply mourned...and they *will* be avenged in the only way one can deal with monsters who commit such acts."

As he finished speaking the President looked around the room. What he saw in the eyes of those in attendance, he approved of. There was certainly shock and revulsion at the murderous act they had just witnessed, but underlying that there was a steely conviction, forged and hardened by months of stress, trials, and defeats. It was a conviction to win at any cost, to destroy this brutal enemy...perhaps, thought the President, the most despicable and murderous the world had ever seen.

The President turned to his Director of Central Intelligence, Robert Ballard.

"Robert, we all know who Talabari is and his record of betrayal and murder. What can we do about this, how can we respond?"

Robert Ballard was seething just like the President. He did know of General Jabal Talabari. Talabari had once been the head of the Patriotic Kurdistan Front (PKF) and an American ally. Some of the best agents in the CIA had worked with him over the years to help bolster the Kurds against the regime in Iraq and against the Iranians. Later, when Hasan Sayeed came to power and created the GIR, the individual Ballard considered the Agency's best field operative and a close personal friend,



Tony Davis, was sent into the Kurd area to begin working and planning directly with Jabal for the defense of the Kurd people. Operating under the assumed name of Will Peterson, the plans for the defense of the Kurdish homeland had gone active several months later after the GIR's occupation of the former Iraq following a vote by the Iraqi people to join the GIR. Those same GIR forces then invaded the Kurd autonomous region when the Kurds voted to declare their independence.

After a quick, decisive battle, where the U.S. Air Force was driven from the skies over northern Iraq by overwhelming numbers of GIR aircraft, the Kurds had surrendered. When the GIR leader, Hasan Sayeed, announced his intentions to travel to the short-lived Kurd capitol to personally negotiate the final surrender, Tony had been given National Command Authority (NCA) approval to act with extreme prejudice to interdict the leader of the GIR along the road outside of Irbil.

During that operation, according to the after action report of Riley Adams, the second in command of the CIA team who was somehow able to escape, Jabal had personally killed Tony as he prepared to carry out his duty. It was a betrayal the United States would never forget, and it had vaulted Jabal Talabari into the lime light of the GIR military command. Ultimately, he had risen to be the Commander in Chief (CINC) of all GIR forces in the Mid East and had masterminded the current offensive. It was an offensive that had defeated Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, all U.S. forces on the Arabian Peninsula and now Turkey and all allied forces defending her.

"Mr. President, we are making progress in our Electronic Intercept (ELINT) capabilities as they relate to the GIR, and specifically as they relate to the movements of the GIR CINC there in the Mid East, specifically General Talabari's command headquarters. We believe that within a few weeks, short of some type of drastic change on the enemy's part, that we will be able to predict with some degree of accuracy, his movements."

President Weisskopf respected Ballard's professionalism. He knew that Robert Ballard had a personal axe to grind with Talabari, but he was not letting effect his planning or his assessments.

"Good, Robert. Please continue with that effort and report to us as progress is made. In connection with that effort, please take into consideration Operation Swift Eagle.

"Now, General Stone, we'll have your report followed by Secretary Crowler's. Please proceed."

Robert Ballard was relatively new as the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Before his appointment due to the death of the former Director, Mike Rowley, during attacks on America by the Chinese, Robert Ballard had run operations for the Agency. Now, he could scarcely believe what he had just heard from the President. He scanned the other faces and found John Bowers, the Vice President staring right back at him, knowingly. Apparently the comment about Operation Swift Eagle had passed right over the heads of the others...no, no, now he was certain that he had caught a glance from both Secretary of Defense Crowler during a pause in his presentation and from General Stone, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

"They know," he thought. "They know what the President just told me to do."

Operation Swift Eagle was the U.S. Army Air Corp operation during World War II that had been mounted to track down and kill Admiral Yamamoto of the Imperial Japanese fleet. It had been a successful operation when the U.S. Navy, as a result of breaking the Japanese code, had determined the exact time and place the Admiral would be traveling. On April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1943, eighteen specially configured P-38 long-range interceptors from Henderson air base on Guadalcanal caught up with Admiral Yamamoto's G4M Betty bomber and its six fighter aircraft escort over Bougainville Island and shot it down, killing all on board. Now, the President had just conveyed to his Director of the Central Intelligence Agency a clear desire to conduct a similar operation against General Talabari.

It was a task that Ballard would be happy to plan and execute. It would also be monumentally difficult to achieve. But Robert Ballard had just the agent in mind to put together the operation and pull it off. Trouble was, that individual was currently involved in another operation of critical importance in South America and there was another one of even greater importance planned after that one. It would be late October or November before Ballard could have him prepared for what he had in mind for Talabari.

"That's okay," thought the Director. "If we're going to do this, we will just have to afford the time to do it right and to make sure we use the right team."

**September 4, 18:40 PST**

**2 Miles East of Launch Complex 2E, 30<sup>th</sup> Air Wing Operations**

**2nd Space Launch Squadron, Vandenberg AFB, California**

Johnny Chen watched the lines connecting the gantry to the massive Titan IV B booster sitting on the launch pad as they slowly fell away. Perched atop the booster was America's latest and most advanced KH-12 satellite. Johnny knew that this rocket could not be allowed to successfully launch.

He slid the missile launcher forward from behind and next to him. It was a shoulder launcher for the FIM-92B Stinger missile that he also carried. The launcher had turned up missing from the California National Guard over five years earlier. The American authorities had searched and searched for the launcher and the three FIM-92B missiles that had disappeared with it, but had been unable to find any trace of them. Like the several hundred other pieces of ordinance that turned up

missing each year from America's domestic arsenal, when no trace was found, the Government Office of Accounting (GOA) ultimately wrote it off, thinking its disappearance was simply due to accounting error. But, like so many of the hundreds of other pieces of missing ordinance, it wasn't.

Vandenberg Air Force Base was large and it was devoted to Space. There were miles and miles of rough terrain all around its perimeter. All of it was well patrolled and under constant surveillance, particularly in wartime. But before the war, Johnny had literally spent years developing his access to the base. He had dug three different entry and escape routes under the perimeter fencing and carefully concealed their entrances and exits, which were all well over two hundred yards away from the perimeter itself. . He had also prepared four observation positions overlooking four of the major launch sites. Each of these observation positions had been dug meticulously with an escape route extending underground for fifty yards, exiting on the opposite side of the hill that they were dug into.

It had all been arduous, painstaking work. It had also been dangerous work with the constant threat of discovery and capture. But Johnny had been trained very well before being "inserted" into America those many years ago in the early 1990's. That training had taught him patience and the art of slow steady progress towards a goal expected to be achieved many years in the future.

Johnny's route into the United States, like many others, had taken him over the southern border as what the Americans termed an "illegal alien". This was as opposed to the use of COSCO container ships delivering personnel directly to American harbors that so many others had used during those years. If he had been caught while crossing, he would have been lumped into the early statistics of what the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) called OTMs, or "Other Than Mexicans" and returned to Taiwan where his meager paperwork indicated he was from. But Johnny had not been caught, and it turned out that getting into the United States had been ridiculously easy.

In northern Mexico he had hired the best "Coyote" money could buy by laying down enough "front" dollars to ensure a guided tour across the border for him and him alone. It had been expensive, but it was critical to the overall plan. Johnny thought back to the satisfaction on the Coyote's face as he had been paid in full with hard U.S. currency. Johnny had paid the man after they were well across the border and ready to part. He remembered how the satisfaction on the Coyote's face had turned to shock and brief agony as Johnny had quickly used a concealed ice pick and expertly placed a lightning thrust between the appropriate ribs into the man's heart. That Coyote's body was long since molding in the grave where Johnny had buried it deep in the desert well north of the border.

From that border area in eastern Arizona, Johnny had made his way to his target, Lompoc, California, and met up with his "family" there. He had been hired to work in the dry cleaning business that they operated. He had worked there ever since, patiently sorting clothes and saving his pay for his own personal needs. The "real" work he had accomplished on Vandenberg Air Base had been completed on weekends and in the evening hours during the week. He had never established any type of pattern and had been extremely careful.

As progress was made, the status was relayed back to his superiors in Beijing through a carefully established system of blind drops and completely compartmentalized personnel whom he had never met or seen. There had never been a problem, even after China and the United States had gone to war. No suspicion, no apprehension. His cover as a Nationalist Chinese who came over from Taiwan and who was very loyal to America had never been questioned, even to this day. He helped ensure it by attending all of the patriotic events in Lompoc, waving flags and even attaching a bumper sticker to his Toyota pick-up that said, "America, Love it or Leave it!"

Now his long preparations and training were going to be put to the test. His "observation" post was about to turn into an attack position.

"Hopefully, there won't be any complications," he thought. "I'll just fire the missile, retreat through this tunnel and make it to the holding room before they can even respond to the smoke trail that will lead them to this place."

The holding room Johnny thought of was a small earthen room built into each of his escape tunnels that was stocked with enough provisions to maintain Johnny for up to two weeks. He planned to use every bit of it to wait out the intense search he knew would follow the downing of the booster. After that, he would carefully make his way off the base and then return to work after he recovered from his "illness". It was a flu-like bug that had suddenly taken him a few days ago after getting the information and orders regarding the launch. It was an illness from which he would return voicing his own anger and incense at the attack on his beloved and adopted America.

Johnny had practiced his set up, firing and egress countless times. He knew he would fire and forget the Stinger missile and make his way to the back of the tunnel in seven seconds, only a couple of seconds after the missile hit the rising booster. Then, it would take him another three minutes to get across the small meadow and into the gully that led to the opening to his escape tunnel. Once in the gully, he would have dense coverage to shield him from the view of any helicopters that might have arrived. From there, another four minutes would put him into his escape tunnel of choice where he would pull down the covering and get to his holding room in another three minutes. Less than seven and one half minutes to get to his escape tunnel, less than ten and one half minutes for him to be where he would wait out the search.

To protect him from the very well known American forensic capabilities, Johnny had special, ultra-light sneakers on, with no traction or tread pattern whatsoever. He also wore a single piece, very light synthetic jump suit that was impervious to tearing or snagging while he escaped and would therefore leave no fibers for the Americans to analyze. The suit extended to the gloves he wore. Finally, he would be carrying the launcher with him. All they would have to go on was whatever rocket and exhaust residue they could get from the cave. That residue would have to come from soil samples as Johnny had built a self-destruct, cave-in mechanism into each firing position that he would manually activate on his way out. The cave-in mechanism was made entirely of natural material.

All of this ran through Johnny's mind as he intently watched the launch pad and the Titan booster sitting on it. His communication had indicated that the launch would come early this evening and he had been here waiting and preparing since just after midnight. As he watched he saw the first tell-tale signs of exhaust begin to rise from underneath the booster. Long before the first deep rumblings of sound reached him, the quantity of exhaust smoke rose dramatically and the booster itself began to rise off the pad. As the rocket rose on a tremendous gout of flame from the Titan IV B's three massive solid-rocket motors for stage "O", Johnny brought the Stinger launcher viewer up to his eye and targeted the slowly rising rocket. He held the acquisition dot on the rocket waiting for the tone that would indicate the seeker head on the Stinger missile had locked on.

"Come on, come on," Johnny whispered as he waited two seconds. "There!" he quietly exclaimed as a clear tone sounded when the missile acquired the signature of the Titan IV B.

Immediately Johnny squeezed the trigger and a loud *WHOOSH* sounded in the confines of Johnny's position as the missile shot forward toward the rising rocket and as exhaust gasses shot behind him down the tunnel. Immediately, carrying the Stinger launcher with him, Johnny scrambled back out of the tunnel, which he exited in five seconds, already ahead of schedule by two seconds.

### **September 4, that same time**

#### **30<sup>th</sup> Air Wing Operations, 2nd Space Launch Squadron**

#### **Space Launch Complex 2E, Vandenberg AFB, California**

In the command facility for the insertion of the KH-12 satellite into orbit, the launch of the Titan IV B was being monitored and reported on by Air Force ground control personnel. As the rocket slowly rose, the range safety officer monitored the vehicle's trajectory.

"All systems are nominal. Down range tracking has telemetry. Stage "O" separation and Stage 1 ignition in forty-five seconds, on my mark. Wait...what the! Hold...where did that come from?"

Into the view of the slowly rising booster, a small missile flew at a very high rate of speed and impacted the booster, on the nearest exhaust nozzle. A small explosion occurred which quickly spread through the solid fuel of the "O" stage and ruptured both tanks of the "burn on contact" UDMH and N2O4 liquid propellants, igniting the liquid fuel of Stage 1 in a second spectacular explosion. Immediately, the Titan IV B lost momentum and the upper portion of the rocket turned over and began falling to earth.

The ground crew and a number of the security personnel watched in mesmerized shock as the remains of the space craft struck the ground less than a mile and a half west of the launch facility and burst into a tremendous explosion. The explosion totally destroyed the booster and its precious cargo, the latest KH-12 satellite. It also totally destroyed the prospect of overall Allied satellite coverage of the Southwest Pacific for the next several months. As the burning pieces of wreckage and burning fuel fell to earth for hundreds of yards all around the impact area, a large brush fire ignited that would hamper all initial recovery and investigative efforts at the crash site for some time.

Not all of the personnel were shocked and mesmerized into immobility by the attack. Some reacted exactly as their had prepared them to do. The duty officer in the security station recognized immediately what was happening and followed the smoke trail of the missile back to where it originated. Upon seeing that point, he immediately reported over the command circuit.

"This is Security One, I have the launch point for the attacking missile identified. That location is approximately two miles to the east of Complex 2E on the side of Hill 345. . I am declaring a stage three security alert. We are under attack, I repeat, we are under attack. Dispatching Monitor-1 and Security Team-2 now."

Within ten seconds of the duty officer's report, an Air Force Bell Ranger patrol helicopter rose from behind a hill to the north of the complex and immediately sped towards the destination reported by the duty officer. A puff of smoke still hung in the air above the end of the smoke trail from the Stinger missile's path. That puff of smoke was clearly visible and made an easy target for the destination of the patrol helicopter. Just over three minutes after the launch of the attack, the Air Force patrol chopper was circling the hill and reporting back.

"Command, this is Monitor-1. I have arrived at the designated area and am circling. No joy on any tango's at this local. I will widen my radius and conduct an Able-2 search."

By the time the first helicopter arrived and began reporting, Johnny Chen had already entered the gully behind and to the North of the hill and was protected from sight by dense brush and tree coverage. In the intervening minutes, he had cut another ten seconds off his anticipated escape time.

As a result, he was not observed by the Air Force helicopter, having made it across the small meadow behind the hill and into the gully eight seconds before the helicopter's arrival.

Within two minutes, a Black Hawk helicopter arrived at the site of the Stinger missile launch. Eight Air Force Special Forces personnel attached to the security detachment for the base quickly rappelled down ropes onto the hilltop. Upon landing, they quickly set up a perimeter around the hill and began searching. All they could see of any consequence was the smoldering smoke coming out of the collapsed launch position and on the other side of the hill from the collapsed escape exit. The team leader immediately deduced the meaning and dispatched three of his personnel to the east on a line away from the position marked by the launch position and the smoldering exit. They were accompanied by one of the helicopters, flying low and scanning the terrain for any sign of an intruder. But they didn't find any trace of the individual who had fired the missile.

As that search proceeded, the security team leader radioed in the status, wondering if the attacker had perhaps been buried in a cave-in of his firing position. By that time, Johnny was already in his escape tunnel, had already pulled down the concealed covering and was approaching his "holding room". It was a place he would come to know very well over the next two weeks while the most intensive search ever conducted on Vandenberg Air Force Base was underway above him.

### **September 9, 17:35 Local Time**

#### **Presidential Offices**

#### **Tehran, GIR**

Hasan Sayeed watched his General, the Commander in Chief of all his Mid-East forces, closely. They had been in deep conversation and planning for the last three hours and were approaching the end of the meeting. At this point, all of the aides had been dismissed, the Defense Minister had been dismissed and it was just the Imam and the General. Sayeed knew that his other General's and political appointees within the military establishment were wary of Talabari. The CINC in the Far East, who himself was experiencing unparalleled success had mentioned it directly to him. The Imam knew that the Defense Minister was concerned and had taken what he deemed to be appropriate and confidential actions to protect his own interests. Such unilateral and self-serving action could not be permitted and later tonight, in a personal meeting with the Defense Minister this would be made clear.

Still, the great Imam, the spiritual, political and military leader of all of Islam had to admit, he was partial to Talabari. No other General had been as successful, no other military mind understood the western enemies as well, and no other General had saved his life in the manner that Talabari had. On that day in the Kurdish area of the former Iran, before their fledgling "capitol", Hassan Sayeed had sensed the danger, had seen the glinting light off of gunmetal and had known he was in the hands of Allah when the shot rang out. But that shot had come from the barrel of Talabari's pistol and it had ended the life of a very capable U.S. CIA operative. An operative who, to that point had been Talabari's ally of long standing. An operative sent there to end the Imam's life, his life, before he could begin to realize the great goals and missions that Allah had prepared and trained him for his entire life.

"Well, the American's failed," he thought, "and in failing they created an adversary in Jabal Talabari that has haunted them ever since."

Looking up from the planning documents for the next six to twelve months of operations, Sayeed gazed firmly into General Talabari's eyes and spoke.

"Jabal, these plans are extraordinary. What you propose, if successful, will not only end once and for all the Zionist occupation of Palestine and annihilate the American and British support for them, it will also cut into the heart of Eastern Europe and force a quick settlement with the European Union. After your worthy and bold display with the corrupt Turkish President of the fate awaiting the unfaithful, I am sure their leaders are considering their options much more carefully.

"I am inclined to approve your plan immediately as presented. The realization of these goals is certainly that tempting. But, before I do, I must do two things. I wish to consult with the leading Ayatollah's and Mullahs, and I must contemplate it in light of what I know of our allies' operations that are about to be implemented in Asia and in North America

"I will accomplish the latter before the former. Tonight, after my meeting with the Defense Minister and before I retire to my personal quarters, I will contemplate the overall situation and seek Allah's guidance. Then, on the 12<sup>th</sup> I will present the results to the leading clergy for their agreement. There is no doubt regarding that agreement, but Allah requires it all the same.

"Until then, please enjoy your stay here, General. All communication facilities are open to you. We will meet again and finalize short-term plans after that meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup>. I trust that every convenience and requirement you and your staff have has been met."

General Jabal Talabari returned his Imam's stare steadily and with solid conviction in his eyes. He was overjoyed at the reception he always received and the deference given him by his military and spiritual leader. He was constantly amazed that events had taken the course they had and that his own faith and confidence in the will of Allah had been reborn in the form of this man, this servant of Allah. All of his cynicism, all of his floundering in the faith and all of his connection to the infidels had been washed away in that moment on the bluff overlooking the road to Irbil. The bloodshed there had been

like an ancient sacrifice, and it had washed the film from his eyes. In the same manner, he had continued the cleansing wherever necessary with respect to the unfaithful and the infidel in the many months since. The latest example of this had been the death of the President of Turkey only a few days ago, and to which the Imam had just referred.

Like the majority of well over one billion Muslims, he now considered Hasan Sayeed to be the Mahdi of Allah, the one who would unite all of Islam and prepare the world for the coming of their Messiah. Islam was united, and now the General considered himself to be on a holy quest to help Sayeed prepare the world. They would prepare the world by vanquishing all of their infidel enemies, and, as it related to their "allies" by rendering them safe and available for their Muslim faith.

"Yes, my Imam. My needs have been well attended to. I will enjoy a pleasant stay here before returning to the field. Thank you. Allah Ahkbar and may Allah always be with you."

Sayeed knew that these words were spoken with truth and conviction. The sure, unequivocal feel of that loyalty was one of the things that he liked most about Talabari. He looked forward to the day when Talabari could assume the duties of the overall defense minister and handle all internal security as well. But that time would come when Allah willed it. Right now, Talabari was far too critical in the field using his evident genius to face the enemies of Allah. Sayeed himself, along with his other most trusted personnel, could handle any lacking in his other generals and administrators. In fact, he enjoyed doing so and playing them off against one another as he advanced the will of Allah.

With that in mind, he would prepare to do just that in the upcoming meeting with his Defense Minister that evening. A good man, and a loyal man, but far too concerned with his own influence. That was something that would begin to be addressed tonight.

After that, there would be two or three hours of contemplation, meditation, prayer and review of the overall global situation before retiring to his personal quarters. Then, the hours with his newest wife before he fell asleep would be pleasurable and would allow for his mind to experience the intuition and creativity he knew would come when he wasn't focused directly on the problems at hand.

"Study, contemplate, pray to Allah for direction, and then distract the mind," he said to himself as the General left the room.

He had found over long years of experience that such a method would very often allow Allah's will to be manifest to him personally. He had also learned, that whenever he had the opportunity, the best distraction from these serious matters could be found in the arms of one of his young wives.

Sayeed had three wives. The wife of his youth who was a close confidant, mother to six of his children, four of them boys, and was now almost thirty years old. The 2<sup>nd</sup> wife he had taken soon after he was named the great Imam from a prominent family of faith in Tehran. She had born him two children in the intervening two years and was now sixteen years old. His 3<sup>rd</sup> wife had been carefully selected and given to him by her faithful parents from Islamabad only three weeks ago. She was thirteen and as beautiful a flower as he had ever set eyes upon. She waited for him now in his personal quarters. He found that the excitement and the enthusiasm of youth in all the activities associated with his marriages stimulated him and helped open his mind. From intellectual debate, to discussions of the arts and culture, to their intimate moments, Hasan Sayeed took great pleasure in the challenge, the adoration and the enthusiasm his young wives gave to him.

Of course, the Imam, like so many others so wholly dedicated to the traditional Islamic faith, would never allow himself to contemplate how the adoration and manners of such young wives might change if they were ever given their own choice in the matter. No, should the day ever come when they discovered or realized that they had a choice in the matter, the enthusiasm shown to the great Imam would almost certainly disappear in a moment. In fact, it was out of the absolute conviction to never allow such an opportunity on the part of individuals like these young girls that the great Holy War was being waged against the secular, the unfaithful and against the infidel. This was particularly true with America, where such choice was their very way of life. Allowing for such freedom and its risk of vice was why much of Islam considered America to be the "Great Satan".

In Imam Hassan Sayeed's rendition of the will of Allah, such choices could never be permitted.

**September 12, 09:55 Local Time**

**Presidential Office, Executive Complex**

**New Delhi, India**

The Indian Foreign Minister, Rahmish Patel, listened as the President, KP Narayannen, droned on and on to his executive council about the successes their nation was enjoying.

"And he has every reason to crow about current events," thought the Foreign Minister, "even though I pushed him into the attack that made it possible when he really didn't want to. I can sense and smell it on him now, even after the successful completion and the very positive results."

Minister Patel was referring to the successful operation that had been mounted against the American 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet in the Indian Ocean and against the American base at Diego Garcia almost fifteen months ago. In a swift attack by GIR and Indian forces, the U.S.S. Enterprise had been destroyed along with much of its Carrier Battle Group. A large conventional attack from the north had drawn off a large part of the carrier's defensive air cover and then a second prong of Indian bombers carrying

the air-launched LRASD supercavitating weapons had come in and devastated the carrier and its inner ring of vessels. Afterward, in a month long operation that had cost over ten thousand Indian lives, the largest Indian Navy Task Force to ever put to sea carrying over 125,000 Indian soldiers, had worn down and ultimately defeated and occupied the Island of Diego Garcia.

Now, for the last year, the tides of war had continued outward and India had been able to consolidate the trade routes between the rich Persian Gulf oil area of the GIR, India, Indonesia and China and its newly acquired territories including Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan. Trade with the new territories of western Australia was growing as that area was consolidated into the expanding sphere of the GIR and CAS. Many more hundreds of thousands of Indian troops were now there in Australia fighting ... the number had recently gone over one million in fact. And they were being successful.

The result was nothing short of an economic boom for all of India. Coupled with the continuing rich resources being developed and brought into the nation as a result of the Siberian Economic Development Pact, there had never been a more prosperous time for India in all of its long history.

"I should have let him stub his toe," continued Patel as the President touched on just these issues. "It would have been better to have delayed our occupation of Diego Garcia and allowed a more powerful leader to come to power. A leader like me."

As it was, the President had thoughts of his own. He was uneasy about the continued warfare against the west. He knew that America, despite the striking setbacks she had suffered, was capable of astonishing feats and he hoped a negotiated settlement could be achieved before that came about. His allies in Beijing and Tehran felt that they just might defeat the United States before that time, but KP was not so sure. Nonetheless, India had fared well to date and was prospering beyond all expectation and forecast. Nepal, Bangladesh, a large part of Burma, Sri Lanka, Diego Garcia and the island chains to Madagascar were now all a part of the great Indian Republic. Their shipyards were producing fine destroyers and new aircraft carriers. The Indian Ocean was firmly in the control of the Indian Navy and multiple layers of defense had been established. The trade routes were open and protected except for the occasional U.S. or United Kingdom submarine attack. Invariably these attacks damaged convoys and commerce, but with the supercavitating weapons, they almost always sent the offending vessel to the bottom of the sea.

In fact all of India's major combatants were now equipped with the latest LRASD innovations, as were all of the wings of their maritime strike aircraft. They devices were now being license built in India and India's allies were license producing the air launched variety that had been engineered and developed in India last year prior to the attack on the U.S.S. Enterprise.

Still, the words of the American President, who the Indian President held a great deal of respect and esteem for, continued to haunt him.

*"Mr. President, if and when you get this communiqué, know with absolute certainty that the lives of our sailors on the Enterprise and her accompanying ships, and the lives of our Marines on Diego Garcia will be avenged. We will hold the leaders of your nation, you Mr. President, personally accountable for this atrocity."*

KP Narayannen knew that Norm Weisskopf meant what he said...literally. So, he hoped that either his own wishes of a negotiated settlement came about, or that his allies were successful in their direct attacks so that the threat was never carried out. Either way, Narayannen also knew of Patel's ambitions and was committed to keeping him from the absolute power he craved.

"That one would be as bad as Hitler if he ever gains the control of this government," thought the President, "I can see it in his eyes. He would commit the same types of atrocities as those barbaric Islamic are doing...just like that General, what is his name? Talabari, yes, just like Talabari."

The President had appointed this Foreign Minister out of political necessity and because he believed he could control the ambitious young politician. Now, much later, he saw his mistake. He could not be rid of him because his political power had grown, and because of his own concern for the welfare of his nation.

"As if though I myself have not opened us up to the possibility of the most dire circumstances," he thought. "Despite the prosperity, I have embraced the evil and it owns me."

What really worried the President the most was that most of the people, in the glow of the prosperity, were assenting to that same evil. An evil that was causing the sacrifice of almost every principle on which their republic had been established.

The recently completed invasion and occupation of Madagascar and the ongoing operations in Australia were prime examples. Both operations had the enthusiastic support, the almost wild support of the people. Many were petitioning the government for the prospect of "free" lands there. Both operations had also been approved and vigorously supported by the President in the hopes of averting a political collision with the Foreign Minister, and to date they had been successful. The President was convinced that once those objectives were complete, that India's military offensive involvement in World War III would also be complete. He hoped he could reign in the desire for further adventure and he would do all in his power to that end. They would then simply maintain and consolidate what they had taken, bring the west to the negotiation table or see them defeated, and then let the years of peaceful immigration to those areas do the rest.

“With India's population and growth rate, in not too many years those areas recently occupied would be, in the term popularized by American science fiction . . . assimilated.”

As the President explained his long-term policy in this regard to his cabinet, he could see that a majority of the Security Council agreed and was relieved to hear it. He could also see in Patel's eyes that he rejected such a notion, but that he was resigned to having to live with it at the moment.

### **September 17, 14:23 Local Time**

#### **Israeli Defense Force (IDF) positions**

#### **The Golan Heights, Israel**

Colonel Jess Simmons couldn't believe that this day had finally arrived. After more than two years of extended duty here in Israel, with not one trip home, he was finally going to get home to Texas and his wife. It would be a one-month leave, with a duty assignment to follow. Jess figured he would be right back here in some capacity, probably dealing with one of the American units employing the RAH-66 Comanche helicopters he had trained the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) to use here on the Golan Heights.

“... and Abe has done an extraordinary job integrating these birds into their operations up here,” mused Jess as he walked with his friend, Colonel Abraham Eshkol in a final review of the defensive systems and spotting equipment that had been established specifically to enhance the Comanche squadron attached to the IDF forces here.

“Well, things look about as ready as they can be,” Jess said as he stopped and looked to the west and north towards Damascus and the enemy. “Any GIR forces attempting a massed attack on this position will pay a steep price in blood and equipment.”

Abraham Eshkol contemplated his friend's words as he gazed out across the rolling hills and plains leading into Syria. From this vantage point they could see the dust clouds out on the horizon from GIR patrols. They were patrols in strength.

Over the last several months, as the situation in Turkey had deteriorated, Israel faced encirclement by the increasing numbers of GIR forces that had consolidated their positions and dug in all around them. Israeli patrols had clashed on numerous occasions with the probing elements of GIR forces. Although not in the chain of command, the American Colonel's tactical input and advice had proven invaluable. Not one Comanche helicopter had been lost and they had destroyed many of the enemies scout vehicles. Some of the Israeli's older helicopters had not fared so well, but despite those losses, the IDF was performing very well in this sector. But the GIR was continuing to build and was becoming increasingly aggressive in their probing. Each successive thrust included greater numbers attack helicopters, fighters, mobile SAM units and personnel and Colonel Eshkol knew it was just a matter of time before they began a general offensive.

“You're right Jess, I just hope that we have enough hardware and men to weather the storm when they do come. You are going to be sorely missed my friend. You've shown us much to blunt their probes and you helped turn at least two of those battles. I hope and pray that our officers have learned well the lessons we've taken from these engagements.”

Jess thought about this. He knew of which events Abe was speaking. The most recent one had occurred less than two weeks ago right off there to the northwest, just over the horizon. What had begun as a small skirmish between two small patrols had escalated into a major confrontation. For several minutes here in the command post buried deep into the solid rock of the Golan Heights, both Colonels had thought that perhaps the general offensive was beginning. The artillery and rocket barrage had begun and then intensified, for about fifteen minutes. Then, the fighting had ebbed, the fighter aircraft and helicopters had returned to base and the patrols had disengaged. Thirty-five minutes after it started, it was over and the ground lying between them and their enemy was again quiet. In that thirty-five minutes, the IDF had lost two fighter aircraft, two attack helicopters and three scout vehicles. Fifteen personnel had been killed and another twelve injured. The enemy losses had been significantly higher. Eight of their aircraft, four of their attack helicopters, and twelve of their BDM-2 assault vehicles had been destroyed, along with over forty of their soldiers.

In the minutes right after the artillery barrage struck the heights, when the confusion was highest, Jess had kept his cool and calmly suggested that the observation posts on the side of the heights being hit by the barrage be re-manned despite the danger. Specifically, after reviewing the order of battle in his mind and looking at the terrain, he had requested a specific observation along a particular low ridge off to the west. A flanking maneuver by the GIR forces, supported by mobile SAM launchers and attack helicopters had been discovered there just before it could engage IDF forces in that area. By quickly informing the IDF commander on the ground and by dispatching a flight of four reserve Comanches to that position, the surprise attack had been broken up with heavy loss to the GIR force. It had been a near thing, and it had cost the lives of two Israeli spotters on the heights, but Colonel Eshkol understood that Jess's suggestion had been vital in thwarting the GIR attack.

“I believe they have Abe. I just came up with an idea - your guys did the work. Anyway it won't be too many weeks before we get the opportunity to sit back in that Italian cafe back in Tel Aviv and swap stories once I return. I have a strong feeling that I will be right back here.”

Abraham Eshkol knew that his friend was being modest, and it was one of the things he liked most about him. Jess Simmons was there to win, and he didn't have to see his name in lights to do it.

"I hope what you say is right Jess, and that you are back with us soon. I believe that in the near future we will need every friend and ally like yourself that we can muster. In the mean time, we will miss you and your input, which we both know was somewhat more critical than you admit.

"Be that as it may, may the God of Israel be with you in your travels home and as you meet with your dear wife. I and my wife, Ruth, both feel like we almost know her and we look forward to the day when we can all sit down to some fine cuisine after this horrible business is concluded."

As Colonel Eshkol completed his statement, a vehicle approached and stopped right next to them. Colonel Simmons ride had arrived. The two friends shook hands, embraced briefly and then Colonel Simmons climbed in the vehicle and it departed for the Air Base and his trip home.

**September 19, 18:30 CST**

**Hyatt Anatole Hotel Lobby**

**Dallas, Texas**

Curt Johnson sat in the deep upholstery of the couch as he waited for the two individuals who were going to meet him here. He was apprehensive. He found it odd, that a long time conservative like himself would meet to discuss strategy with two individuals he had always considered to be abject liberals, whose policies were harmful to the America he wanted for his children and grandchildren.

"Well, difficult times breed strange allies," he thought as he contemplated this. "Those differences pale in comparison to the task I believe we have before us."

Curt had been, up until March of the prior year, the Director of FEMA for the Weisskopf administration. At that time, he had tendered his resignation over the President's blatant disregard for the statutes and laws passed by Congress as they pertained to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Claiming that many of those laws violated the Constitution and endangered the public in this war which had come to their very homes, the President had simply ordered his staff, the heads of the agencies reporting to him, to not enforce those laws. Curt would have nothing to do with it. He had told the President so to his face in front of his cabinet. The Director of the FBI at the time, Ross Sessions, had agreed with Curt and had also spoken out boldly and forcefully against what the President proposed. Both had resigned that very day.

Johnson was a moderate conservative who favored basically smaller government over what the other side of the aisle promoted, the side he would be meeting with tonight. He had been very successful for two sessions in the U.S. Senate from his home state of Iowa in promoting that very agenda before his appointment by the President. Before that, he had pursued a very successful legal career, first in his personal law practice, then as a local District Attorney and finally as his State's Attorney General. He had always believed that there were several areas in which professional governmental agencies were superior to the "private sector". In those functions he felt the "common" citizen had no place. Defense - whether civil or personal - was one of these areas in Curt's way of thinking and in his view gun rights pertained to sporting and hunting alone. The private citizen was at best a hindrance to the professionals in these matters. Curt had always supported gun laws consistent with this position and he therefore could never support what the President had recommended.

Despite Curt and Ross's resignation and their outspoken criticism afterward, the President's recommendation had been accepted. In fact, the Congress and all fifty states had passed the policy into law in the urgency of the events. Citizens were now combating the enemy at home, but Curt believed that tremendous long-term harm had been done to the balance of power between government and the people, and he intended to do something about it. That was the purpose of this meeting.

As he reflected on these things, he regretted that Ross Sessions had declined his offer to join him. Ross was out of politics now, but was involved locally with the war effort in helping to finance and manage one of the many new factories that had been built. He felt his services were more important there and had no desire to get involved in what he termed a "political slug fest" in wartime.

"If he feels that way then he shouldn't get involved. This effort is going to require full commitment and perseverance," thought Curt as he saw a middle-aged woman and a well-dressed black man approach. They came towards him, and then upon recognizing him, hurried over. Curt stood and shook both their hands.

"Senator...Mr. Woodson, so good to see you. I hope your flight was comfortable."

Both individuals indicated that the private flight into Love Field on Woodson's personal Lear Jet had been fine and they exchanged greetings and pleasantries. After a few minutes, Curt touched the Senator's elbow and announced,

"Look, I've reserved a meeting room on the second floor. If you don't mind, why don't we go there and get started. I have arranged for drinks and appetizers. We can eat dinner at your leisure."

The Senator, who had sparred forcefully with the Administration over the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment issues- and lost-looked forward to this evening's meetings. She believed that there just might be a chance to reverse the President's initiatives in this area and in many others. She honestly believed Curt could be a key to that opportunity. Turning to him and putting her arm through his, she said,



“Well, let’s be about it. I’m not hungry but will not presume to speak for Warren. Warren?”

Warren paused, thought about it for a second and then shook his head while replying.

“No, I’m with you, Susan. I can wait on food. Maybe later in the evening.”

The Senator then continued: “Okay, perhaps later or we can order something into the conference room or visit one of the restaurants. Lets be about what we came here for.”

With that, former FEMA Director, Curt Johnson led Senator Susan Crater, the Junior Senator from California and Warren Woodson, the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest individual contributor to the Democratic National Committee (DNC), towards the elevators and a quick ride to their second floor conference room. There, they spent the next three hours in discussion, followed by two hours over dinner, planning their strategy to have Curt Johnson and Susan Crater make a bid for the Democratic Presidential ticket. They would be attempting to unseat a popular and healthy President in wartime, something that had never been accomplished in the entire history of the United States of America. They believed that Warren could garner the political and financial backing of the DNC and that the name recognition of both the Senator and the former head of Weisskopf’s own FEMA would give them a chance. They also counted on the other Democratic candidates recognizing that they were the only viable option and then climbing on board their campaign very rapidly.

### **September 21, 16:39 EST**

#### **Alternate Research Laboratory**

#### **Center for Human Genome Research, Boston, Massachusetts**

Dr. Joseph Trevor hung up the phone and sat reflectively for a few moments. The call was perplexing on one hand, but it carried overtones of some very exciting possibilities on the other.

Although he was aware of Dr. Sandra McPherson’s research through her published works and her reputation, he had never met her personally. He had also never considered her line of research for collaboration since it entailed physiology rather than genetics, and her political and moral bent was very divergent from his own. She was a well-known liberal activist, particularly in favor of abortion whereas his own personal moral and religious beliefs were diametrically opposed to that. For that reason alone, her call was surprising to him.

On the other hand, their conversation had also raised some topics for future discussion and some avenues of investigation, which might offer exciting possibilities.

“Virtual microscopy?” he mused. “If in fact she had perfected techniques to extract additional detail from traditional microscopic studies, that would be something,” he thought. Might those same techniques be applicable to the atomic force microscopy and enhanced mass spectrometric analysis he had used in his own studies?

“Well, if they could that would be extraordinary . . . a real breakthrough,” he thought, “Yes that would be something indeed.”

Joseph Trevor was the Director of this Alternate Research Laboratory for the National Health Institute’s part of the Department of Energy Human Genome Project. It was a part of a multi-national effort to research the human genome and develop cures for all varieties of human genetic ailments. Dr. Trevor had been a rising star in the Pharmaceutical industry when he was selected to head this center. He had devoted his career to genetic research and his motivation of a personal desire to understand and ultimately cure the genetic ailment that afflicted his wife, and his grown daughter.

Last year, as a result of innovative work on his part and the insightful comments of his wife, he had used prototype atomic force microscopies and enhanced mass spectrometric analysis to isolate and research an underlying atomic level structure to DNA that later tests showed only existed in humans. After experimentation and studies conclusively proved that this structure enabled humans to think rationally and gave them their reasoning capabilities, the Dr. had presented his work to his superiors and to the scientific community. The National Health Institute and ultimately the National Academy of Sciences had verified his work and the Doctor had ultimately been recommended for and received a Nobel Prize earlier this year.

The resulting scientific uproar was continuing to this day.

“It will probably continue for decades,” was his opinion as he considered the way his discovery was reverberating through the scientific community.

It had opened up a wholly new field of study that promised to one-day dwarf the Genome Project itself, Dr. Trevor believed. But sadly, it had not advanced the research of the specific genetic disorders that were eluding Dr. Trevor’s efforts. Just the same, the Human Genome Project continued as one of the largest scientific undertakings ever attempted by mankind, and Dr. Trevor’s place in that study was secure. He would continue his efforts. But these underlying structures were orders of magnitude more complex than the human genome, and the resulting new field of study held almost unfathomable promise for the future.

In the process of accomplishing all of this, the Dr. Trevor had perfected the processes and procedures for the use of the prototype methodologies into main stream tools. There were already a lot of computational and computer-programming algorithms associated with the processes and procedures that Joseph had developed. But, if he understood it correctly, these virtual modeling

techniques that Sandra McPherson proposed would allow someone on the other side of the country who did not have the sophisticated equipment required to acquire the physical data, to study that data and research it as if though they did. It could just as easily allow someone on the other side of the world to do the same.

“The possibilities for enhancing, multiplying and ultimately completing research are almost incomprehensible,” he thought as he continued to reflect. “Why, we could set up virtual research centers where the bulk of the research was done and then use the existing equipment to feed them, focusing that equipment on simply acquiring data as rapidly as possible. And that would be an enormously good thing, despite what ever reservations I may have of Dr. McPherson’s personal beliefs and ideology.”

With those thoughts, Joseph determined in his mind that he would almost surely aggressively explore the proposal Dr. McPherson had made regarding their collaboration on the development of virtual modeling for his methodologies. But, before he finalized that decision, as was his custom, he would bounce the relevant portions of the thought process off of his wife, Elizabeth, for her input. Their late night discussions regarding the research that Joseph had completed through the years had been an inspiration to him that served as fuel for his creative drive. It had been especially true during the discovery of the “Human Reasoning Structures”, or HRS as they came to be known, that led to his Nobel Prize early this year. He would not abandon that source of inspiration and creativity now.

He picked up the phone and dialed his wife’s direct work number at Raythone Corporation in Salem, New Hampshire. She answered:

“Hello..... Elizabeth Trevor speaking.”

Hearing her standard response, he replied, “Hi, Liz, have you got a second?”

When she responded playfully that she had more than a second for him, he continued.

“Look, I’m going to take off a little early this afternoon and will probably beat you home. What do you say you leave dinner to me. I’ll make some Lasagna and it’ll be ready when you get there. I’m onto something new and I want to talk it through over dinner and afterward ... what do you say?”

Elizabeth did not hesitate.

“Sure sweetie, that sounds fine to me, you bake a mean Lasagna, and you know I’ve always got a listening ear whenever your involved. How about six thirty ? Okay, bye.”

## Chapter 22

*“The infidel will either bow to the Truth, or he shall bow to the sword.”—The Prophet*

**September 29, 23:02 PST**

**Hill overlooking A Canal Head Gates and Link River Dam**

**Klamath Lake, OR**

The men watched over their two charges very carefully. The weather was cool but dry, the air crystal clear with not a cloud in the sky. Off to the west and south was the Link River Dam, a relatively small structure that held back the immense expanse of Klamath Lake and generated electricity critical to northern California. To the north were the A Canal head gates that allowed irrigation water to feed the entire Klamath basin, which stretched into northern California down past Tule Lake. The variety of crops being produced in that basin, as was the case with every major agricultural valley in the western United States and throughout the rest of country, was now critical to America's ability to remain agriculturally independent during the war.

After two years of that war, America had re-established its agricultural prowess. From the Rio Grande to Florida, from the Central Valley of California to the Midwest and throughout the Intermountain West, vegetables, fruits, grains, feed and crops of every variety imaginable were being produced in record quantities. The American farmer was literally feeding the allied world, and had risen to that challenge after overcoming significant difficulty in getting both land and machinery back into production. As with America's industrial and manufacturing base, throughout the 1990's and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century much of America's commercial agricultural production had been “outsourced” to take advantage of the lower costs available in the world market. Now the folly of the magnitude and extent to which those practices had been applied was finally being overcome ... and the ultimate cost had been paid in lost lives and lost territory. Few people were as aware of these facts as they related to agriculture as were the men of the local Home Guard unit who were on watch this night above the A-Canal head gates and Link River Dam near Klamath Falls. They had experienced first hand the effects of being “completely idled” in the summer of 2001 and had already known what it took to get back into production in terms of money, effort and commitment long before this war ever began.

On top of the ridge, Stan, Darren, Jake and Joseph scanned the area around each structure carefully with their night vision equipment. Stan and Darren were watching the head gates, Jake and Joseph were watching the dam. Closer to each structure, patrols consisting of two men each were roving. Darren's younger brother, John and another local man, William, were near the head gates while another two men were patrolling close to the dam. Each of the groups had radios that allowed them to communicate with one another and with the Klamath County Sheriff's department. All of these men, and the other patrols out this evening around Klamath County were a part of America's Homeland Defense, Home Guard. All were armed with M-14 rifles and all had undergone training to allow them to conduct the surveillance of the county's critical infrastructure. Those duties did not include full police powers. They were simply watching over the infrastructure and reporting suspicious activity to the local Sheriff's dispatch. They were only empowered to interdict and use their weapons in the case of imminent attack or life threatening danger. In over two years of patrolling, there had never been so much as a suspicious report out of the teams here above the Lake ... but that was about to change.

“Well Stan, another evening watching over the source of our livelihoods.

“4 AM is not going to come soon enough for me,” remarked Darren as he watched the north edge of the lake leading to the head gates and then turned to the lake shore to the south of the gates.

Stan was also looking forward to 4 AM as he scanned along the canal itself leading away from the head gates. He thought it was strange how things had changed since the momentous events at the head gates in the summer of 2001. Back then, the government had not trusted these same men to so much as set foot on the ground around the very head gates that they were now protecting with loaded weapons. Thinking back to that water rights confrontation with Federal authorities, in which he and Darren and every other man on watch had been involved in, Stan said,

“Darren, we've been watching over these head gates our entire lives ... even when it wasn't popular. I guess we'll get through this evening, just like all the others, now that it is.”

Darren considered his friend's words as he scanned the area below them on the hillside. What Stan said was true. As farmers here in the basin, they had watched over, paid for and been concerned with the welfare and operation of these head gates their entire lives ... and their fathers before them, and theirs before them. The Reclamation Act creating the lake had been passed and implemented in the very early years of the twentieth century, in 1902 to be exact. The dam and head gates had been built and large scale irrigation implemented to compliment and vastly increase what was already in place at that time. Under the original terms of the Act, the farmers who were invited and enticed to come to this arid country were to pay monthly usage fees until they paid off the construction project.

After that time the entire irrigation project, including the head gates, was to have been privatized. In order to get people to come to the Klamath Basin over the years, the government had allowed them to homestead the land and had written the water rights into the agreement. The water rights associated with the reservoir attached to the land as an appurtenance. It was a good deal and through the first half of the century many farming families had taken up the challenge, overcome the obstacles and established profitable working farms in the Klamath Basin. Many of them were veterans whose land and water rights were signed by the President's of the United States at the time.

Ultimately, over fifteen hundred farming families worked in the Klamath Basin, families just like Darren's, Joseph's, Stan's and the others watching over the dam and head gates this night. The construction costs had been paid off in the forties, but the government had not lived up to its end of the bargain. For several decades, discussion and legal wrangling had held up the privatization. The farmers continued farming and producing, secure in the belief that the government would honor their rights and ultimately make good on the promise. But the farmers were mistaken.

In the nineteen seventies, another Act of congress was passed that would ultimately bring the farmers in the Klamath Basin into headlong conflict with their own government and into the national spotlight. This was the Endangered Species Act. Originally intended to be directed at saving entire species like the Bald Eagle, and originally meant to work hand-in-hand with conservation efforts of local governments, the bureaucracy and agencies surrounding that Act became disproportional to the Act's intended purpose. By the early nineteen nineties, when the Act was supposed to sunset, the budgets, special interest groups, and politics associated with what had been intended as a good faith effort to save endangered species, had taken on a life of its own. By that date, private citizen property rights and other civil rights were regularly being infringed in favor of the political ambitions and whims of those pushing a now radical environmental agenda. They used the hundreds of millions of dollars wrapped up in the Endangered Species Act and the agencies and organizations surrounding it, and the resulting power of the Federal government to implement that agenda. They also used the power of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) for the U.N. to accomplish the same goals. That agenda and those politics came to a head in the early spring and summer of 2001 in the Klamath Basin when they ran headlong into the farmers here. Farmers like Darren and Stan and these others. Darren remembered it well. It had very nearly destroyed him and his family and their livelihood.

An environmental group in the urban areas along the coast filed suite in Federal Court demanding that the water levels of Klamath Lake be held artificially high throughout the summer to protect the supposedly endangered sucker fish residing in Klamath Lake. A Federal Judge, appointed by the administration that had been in power in Washington DC during most of the nineties had agreed with what were later proven to be flawed scientific findings and ordered the Department of Interior to carry out the court's ruling. Rather than refuse to carry out the Judge's order and force a constitutional crisis over a ruling that would endanger the livelihood and security of over fifteen hundred law abiding families in the basin, the new administration had ordered the Department of Reclamation to carry out the Judge's order. In April of that year, the water was turned off, all of it ... no irrigation water flowed in the Klamath Basin.

The local farmers were flabbergasted, and devastated. The sucker fish were not endangered and everyone living in the intermountain west knew it. In most areas there were infestations of these bottom feeding fish, commonly referred to as "trash fish". They had to be literally exterminated in many areas to ensure that other fish, like trout, could subsist in various watersheds. In addition, the sucker fish in the Klamath Lake itself were in no danger. The science was flawed and the farmers knew it. They knew that if the Klamath Lake were drained to mud that year ... which had never happened ... that the sucker fish who were capable of burrowing into the wet mud, would be back the following year as soon as the snow melt filled up the lake. So the farmers protested.

In May of that year, over 20,000 people flocked to the small town of Klamath Falls along with all of the politicians and administrators to hear the farmer's case. The crowd was made up of farming families, various agricultural organizations and concerned citizens from every state of the union. After the speeches, people from every state of the union filled buckets from Klamath Lake and symbolically dumped them into the irrigation canal on the down stream side of the closed head gates. After many promises from politicians and administrators, everyone went their way confident that the politicians now saw the folly of the situation and would reverse it. The protesters called themselves the Bucket Brigade, but they all underestimated the power and influence that the environmental special interests groups had on many of their elected and appointed officials. May and then June passed with no change ... no water ... no crops ... and no income.

Facing certain failure and bankruptcy, a number of the farmers finally acted in early July. Someone manually opened one of the head gates in the first days of that month. The U.S. government ordered the Bureau of Reclamation to close the gates. On July 4<sup>th</sup>, a group of people protesting that closure opened the gates again. The government then sent armed U.S. Marshals to help the Bureau of Reclamation close the gates again, and ensure they stayed closed. On July 13<sup>th</sup> a crowd of over two hundred farmers and their supporters opened the head gates again, despite the presence of the

Marshals. This time they vowed to stay there and keep them opened. As the group sang gospel hymns, the two U.S. Marshals withdrew to call in reinforcements.

Darren remembered well the events that followed. He and most of these others on watch had been present. That night of July 13, 2001 most of the farmers and their supporters went home to sleep, feeling they would even have more support the following day. About a dozen farmers spent the night by the head gates and they were joined there in the middle of the night by a few others who had heard of their stand and came to supporters. One of those supporters was from an agricultural valley in southwestern Idaho who had been involved on behalf of the farmers on the internet and had written a petition on their behalf. He immediately warned the farmers that the federal officials would not take the event laying down and that the farmers should immediately call back all those who had gone home to sleep. But the farmers were convinced that it would take the government longer to react and they decided to wait for the morning and the help they knew would assemble then. They were wrong.

Early the next morning of July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2001 about 6:30 AM, a force of fifty or more armed law enforcement officers, including federal law enforcement who approached the gates from the back side of the facility, took the head gates back from the farmers and closed them down at gun point. What followed caused Darren's heart to swell with pride to this day. Pride in the people in the area and from all over the country who rallied to the farmers' aid.

Later that morning hundreds of people had come, with more arriving every hour. The law enforcement officers watching the now-closed head gates were surrounded and were held in their "compound". For the next four weeks the farmers harassed, outsmarted and literally went around the federal officers who were under siege as they "protected" the gates. Frequent choruses of "*Let the Water Flow*" were intermingled with patriotic songs, speeches and prayer. Local people donated food and drink for all of those keeping the vigil.

Ultimately, using irrigation pipe and pumps set into the lake itself, water was pumped around the federal authorities. The entire operation of setting up the pipe and pumps was done under the cover of a diversion where several farm animals were released into the grounds surrounding the head gates and the authorities guarding them. While the agents chased sheep and donkeys, the farmers laid pipe and primed pumps. When water started pumping into the canal, the surprise on the agents faces was obvious, and the entire crowd began the loud chant, "*Let the Water Flow*", "*Let the Water Flow*".

Once those pumps and pipes were in place, they came under twenty-four hour a day watch by the farmers and their hundreds of supporters. That watch was accomplished in a fashion that Darren now realized actually fore-shadowed the Home Guard activities he was now currently involved with.

The result of the pumping operation was a token amount of water, but the point made was not lost on anyone there or on other farmers throughout the west watching events unfold. Plans were discussed to dig a new canal around the head gates, or to place several 36' siphon pipes around the head gates to move the water in the necessary quantities for irrigation.

Helpers organized relief convoys of large trucks from Northwestern Montana, from Northern California and from Nevada. These convoys stopped in every major city and town as they made their way to Klamath. Salt Lake City, UT, Sacramento, CA, Boise, ID, and many other cities hosted stops. Tons of supplies and hundred of thousands of dollars were gathered to help the farmers who were standing up to an atrocious and unconstitutional action by their own government. The relief effort was a success and enough material was gathered, along with the farmers own efforts, to get them through the next winter to the next growing season.

Although tempers flared and harsh words were spoken, somehow violence was avoided. The Federal government looked for a way to gracefully extract themselves from the growing political crisis. When the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 occurred, the farmers who were manning their vigil offered a compromise to the government. They would stand down, remove the "siege" of the head gates and allow these federal officers to be deployed to where they were surely more desperately needed. The farming season was a loss, but the farmers now had enough to get through the winter. They indicated to the government that some arrangement and satisfactory resolution must be in place by January 2002, or the farmers would take back the head gates by force if necessary.

The Federal Government was grateful and ultimately corrected the immediate problem. The National Academy of Sciences was commissioned to review the science that had led to the Judge's ruling in the first place. They found the science flawed and the head gates were re-opened the next April ... and the farmers enjoyed normal irrigation for a normal season. Darren would never forget those events, or the people involved in helping them get through them.

"Stan, what ever became of that fellow from Idaho that showed up here and helped us those weeks during the stand at the head gates?"

Stan, while continuing to monitor the area along the canal, had also been reminiscing. The events of the summer of 2001 were still fresh in his mind, even though many years had now passed.

"Well, he went back to the Payette River valley over there in Idaho and spread the good word. He wrote a book about the whole thing in 2005 called, "The Stand at Klamath Falls – How rural western farmers stood up against entrenched environmentalism and agencies of the federal government and won," and it sold pretty well from what I gather.

"I'll tell you Darren, the farming communities all over the west, and all over the country learned from what we accomplished that summer. I do not believe the government will ever try that again, at least I hope not. I sure welcomed the efforts of that fellow, both as he stood right here with us and as he spread the word on those two Internet sites, SierraLines.com and the IndependentRepublic.com. Without those tens of thousands of people hearing about what was going on and contacting their own representatives and the White House like they did, I'm not sure it would have turned out like it did."

Darren agreed ... it had been amazing to see the people come to help and then to see their influence spread to hundreds of thousands before the major media ever really picked up the story.

"Well, old JT Samson sure took off from there didn't he?"

"I mean he came here and spoke at one of the rallies ... he was the editor of that online news source, SierraLines ... but look at him now."

Stan knew exactly what Darren was talking about. JT had come and worked with that fellow from Idaho and spoke to the crowd. It had been an inspiring speech and he had published the things that were going on here just as they occurred.

"I suppose his honesty served him well...it always does you know."

"That report he made about President Weisskopf's campaign comments during the election really got things rolling for him, and then he was right there on that ship when the Chinese attacked our ships headed for Korea. I will never forget, if I live to be a hundred years old, those images he sent back from that battle in the Pacific. That carrier splitting in two and going down like that was the most traumatic and graphic thing I have ever seen ... including the pictures of the towers from 9-11."

"Anyhow it's been kind of neat knowing a guy like that and seeing him make good and be in a real position to ... wait ... I've got something here."

Darren turned and looked at his friend as he stopped talking and concentrated on something down near the canal, to the east of the head gates.

"What is it Stan?"

"About two hundred yards to the east of the head gates, moving along the canal itself, down in the ditch ... two or three guys ... they're moving carefully towards the head gates."

Darren turned his attention to the same spot and saw the movement. There were three individuals, only their upper bodies occasionally visible as they moved towards the head gates.

"I got 'em. Go ahead and call it in Stan, I'll keep them in view."

Stan keyed his lapel mounted mic and called in the report.

"Klamath dispatch, this is A Canal, I have three individuals moving towards the head gates."

In the Klamath county Sheriff's office the dispatch officer immediately responded.

"A Canal, what is the disposition of your roving patrol? Are the suspects armed?"

At that very moment, Darren noticed that two of the individuals were armed with rifles of some sort and that the rifles were unslung and being carried by the suspects.

"Stan, these guys are armed with some kind of rifles... you'd better call that in too."

Stan wasted no time responding to dispatch.

"Two suspects are armed with rifles dispatch. Patrol is in a position to interdict."

"A Canal, I am patching you through direct to Sheriff Eslinger, go ahead Sheriff."

There was a brief pause and the Sheriff came on the channel.

"Who have we got there? Stan, is that you?"

Stan had met and gotten to know the Sheriff personally during the confrontation with the Federal authorities back in 2001. The Sheriff had ultimately asked the federal officers to leave and allow the local people to mediate. The Federal officers had refused and had not left until the agreement had been reached after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks of that year. But, in standing with the farmers, the Sheriff had endeared himself to them and many of them had supported him strongly ever since.

"Tim, this is Stan. We have a situation developing here, how long before units can respond?"

The Sheriff responded from his own vehicle that was in transit to the area and would arrive within ten minutes. He had one vehicle closer.

"I'm in route but about ten minutes out, I have another unit that'll be there a couple of minutes earlier, and then another in route behind me. We'll have six deputies there inside of twelve minutes."

Stan thought quickly, analyzing the distances and the rate at which the intruders were moving. The deputies would be too late.

"Tim, these guys are going to be on the head gates in five minutes. Look, we have loud speakers up here and I can get Darren's brother and Will in position to help interdict. We could try and warn them off just before you guys arrive, otherwise they are going to be right on top of those head gates."

Tim Eslinger trusted these farmers and their instincts. He had seen them in action before and had determined at that time to stand by them. He would do the same tonight.

"Okay Stan, maybe you can get one of the guys spotting for the dam to assist and go ahead and warn these people off ... we'll monitor and be there quickly. Eslinger out."

**September 29, 23:06 PST**  
**Ridge two miles to the West of the Dam**  
**Klamath Lake, OR**

The increased activity on the hill overlooking the head gates and the dam had been noticed by another set of eyes that were observing through their own night vision device. Michael Lee and his security man were watching the carefully planned drama unfold from just inside the timber line on the higher ridge to the west of the dam.

Michael was the leader of this assault. He had entered the United States in the early nineteen nineties with paperwork indicating that he was a dissident who had escaped from the Chinese occupation in Tibet into Thailand. He had worked in a Eugene Chinese Café ever since. In reality, he was another Chinese sleeper agent, trained by the PLA and sent to America over fifteen years ago. He had scoped out the Link River Dam on several occasions and knew that the electrical production resulting from the station below the dam and from other stations along the Klamath River were critical to California energy requirements. It was for that very reason that this operation was being conducted tonight, and that ten other similar operations were being conducted from Klamath Lake south, all along the Sierra Nevada mountain range at other electrical production and routing facilities.

Michael had seen the farmer's protests at the head gates in 2001 and taken great interest in them. He had marveled at how the farmers had stood up to their own government and at how the American Federal government had ultimately turned the issue around. He understood that there were significant political considerations in that decision, but was also aware of the many armed citizens in the United States and the raw power they represented. He knew the government could afford to push the armed citizens of America only so far and he believed that a fear of that power had kept the government from using brute force against those farmers in 2001. The vigor with which those farmers had laid siege to and defended their rights in regards to those head gates along with the development of these home guard units is what led Michael to planning tonight's mission in the manner that he had.

He had three of his team members currently approaching the head gates from the east as a diversion. Their orders were to briefly exchange fire with the patrol watching the head gate and then fall back. Michael would then activate the major assault on the dam itself as he watched things unfold from this position and as more of the county's personnel were sucked into the diversion.

"Just like the overall operations in this entire war. The Americans are so predictable ... so easy to pull into a diversion. Sun Tsu's methods are timeless."

As Michael watched, he saw an individual on the hill raise a mega-phone to his mouth and speak. He caught the words even at this distance as the wind carried them to him.

*"You there, to the east of the head gates along the canal. Stop and lay down your weapons, this is the Klamath County Sheriff's department."*

As the amplified voice carried to his three men, Michael swung his binoculars to their position just in time to see them take cover and open fire on the hilltop. The flashes of their weapons were clearly visible and the individuals on the hilltop immediately began to return fire. In addition, much closer to the three men, more fire was directed at them from the two man patrol closer to the head gates. One of Michael's men went down and he was helped by one of the others while the third individual provided cover fire and all three began to withdraw.

Within a few minutes a Sheriff's Office vehicle slid to a stop near the head gates and two deputies got out and began to advance on the retreating intruders, who were being slowed down by their wounded friend. Michael silently swore to himself and activated his own radio, quickly clicking the transmitter once, followed by three quick clicks ... a code that had been committed to memory by all of the operatives over several years.

As Michael watched, he saw his man helping the wounded one stop, embrace his friend briefly and then pull his silenced pistol from the belt around his waste and fire two rounds into the head of the wounded man. When complete, the other two began withdrawing more quickly, covering each other as they attempted to reach their extraction point where their escape vehicle was waiting.

As Michael watched, two other Sheriff's vehicles arrived and four more deputies got out, armed with rifles. They began making flanking movements on his remaining two personnel be converging on them along the berm that followed the canal. A helicopter could be heard approaching. Michael turned his attention back to the hilltop position overlooking the dam ... only one individual was left there, and he was watching the drama to his north and east as it played out. It was time to activate the primary assault on the dam. Michael clicked that code on the channel his entire team was monitoring.

**September 29, 23:19 PST**  
**Near Link River Dam**  
**Klamath Lake, OR**

Eight men, in two teams of four, who had carefully made their way to within two hundred yards of the dam, now rose and moved quickly towards the dam. Within two minutes they were noticed by

the roving patrol that was operating on the eastern side of the dam. Upon seeing their approach, the patrol immediately radioed their observations to the team overlooking the dam.

Joseph, who had been monitoring the chase and encirclement of the intruders down beyond the head gates, received the frantic report from the patrol near the dam. Quickly turning around, he focused on the area indicated by the patrol and immediately saw the eight heavily burdened intruders advancing on the dam, now only sixty yards in front of them. He immediately contacted dispatch.

"Klamath dispatch ... Tim ... we have eight heavily armed individuals approaching the dam from the west. The patrol is in position to the east of the dam to take them under fire, but there are too many of them. I can help out with fire from up here, but they are right on top of the dam now. We need help over here real quick."

The Sheriff, seeing that his deputies and most of the Home Guard units had been drawn out of position, immediately recognized what was happening.

"Joseph, you warn those folks off with mega-phone immediately and open fire the minute they make any move directly toward the dam, I'm going to call in help."

As Joseph spoke through his mega-phone the intruders immediately opened fire on him. As this occurred, the Sheriff contacted the state dispatcher for Homeland Defense for Southern Oregon.

"Homeland dispatch, this is Sheriff Eslinger in Klamath. We have a major situation here escalating out of control. Two teams of terrorists are assaulting the Klamath Lake dam and the A Canal head gates. The head gate assault is clearly a diversion and a much larger and more heavily armed unit is now assaulting the dam. We require immediate assistance. Home Guard unit designated Klamath Dam can assist with location and disposition of terrorist units."

By this time, after two years of terror attacks on U.S. soil, the Homeland Security apparatus within the United States was a well-honed mechanism. Within thirty seconds of the Sheriff's report, a request was forwarded to the Oregon National Guard. Two F-15E Strike Eagle aircraft that were on alert status at the National Guard Air Force base just outside of Klamath were contacted by their command. Thirty seconds later they were rocketing down the runway on afterburner in a full military thrust take-off. They would arrive over the dam in less than three minutes.

In the time since Joseph had made his request, a hot and one-sided firefight broke out near the dam. The two members of the roving patrol opened fire on the approaching intruders. But the intruders used their cover well and only two of them were hit. They responded with overwhelming automatic weapons fire at the muzzle flashes of the patrol, severally wounding one and killing the other. Joseph provided fire from the hilltop where he was joined by the other team members, Jake, Darren, and Stan. Under intense fire themselves from four of the terrorists, they returned fire with their M-14 rifles. With the heavy counter fire from the terrorists, their efforts were ineffective and two of the intruders quickly began setting charges all along the bottom face of the dam.

As they were doing so, the roar of the F-15E Strike Eagle's approach came thundering towards them. Joseph provided precise information regarding the location of the terrorists, but the F-15Es were unable to engage them for fear of damaging or destroying the dam themselves. As this news was relayed across the communication network, several things happened almost simultaneously.

First, another one of the terrorists was hit by fire from the Home Guard units on the hilltop. Immediately thereafter, Joseph was wounded in the upper thigh and fell, damaging his radio. As the placement of the explosive charges was completed, all of the terrorists began to withdraw and one of them launched a shoulder-fired surface-to-air missile at the loitering F-15Es.

While the F-15Es broke off to avoid the first missile, another shoulder-fired missile was launched from the higher ridge to the west where Michael's was coordinating the overall assault. One of the F-15Es was hit in an engine that immediately caught fire. That aircraft broke off completely and began to make its way back to the airfield, trailing smoke as it struggled forward on the remaining engine. The other F-15E diverted far to the south before evading the missile that had targeted it and then turned back towards the action, seriously peeved and looking for immediate pay back.

After Joseph was hit, Jake took charge and was monitoring the retreating terrorists and reporting on their position and disposition using Stan's radio.

"Klamath dispatch, this is Klamath Dam. Both of our patrol members are down, Joseph has been wounded up here on the hill. We need emergency medical attention.

"Shoulder fired missiles have been launched at Air Guard aircraft from the vicinity of the dam and by another group of individuals on the higher ridge to the west. One of the aircraft was hit and has broken off in the direction of the base. The other appears to be circling back.

"I am observing the terrorists. Wait one ... they've stopped. Oh no, he's blowing the dam."

As Jake finished the statement, there were several very bright flashes along the entire length of the dam. These were followed by the tremendous sound of explosions as debris flew high into the air. As that smoking debris fell to earth, it was clear that the dam had been breached and a wall of water filled with twisting, rolling wreckage washed down the river channel.

After briefly observing the result of their work, the terrorists turned to make their way up the hill to the timberline. As they began to separate, two thunderous explosions occurred amongst them, obliterating sight of them with the fire, smoke and debris from the blasts. Before the debris had fallen



to the earth the surviving F-15E screamed by to the east, having successfully launched two JDAM munitions on the terrorist location. When the dust began to clear, it was obvious from Jake's position that all of those terrorists had been killed.

By the time the F-15E turned back to target the terrorists on the higher ridge, no indication of them could be found. Michael had retreated into the dense timber immediately after his own security man had fired the second air to air missile. The two of them would be the only terrorists to escape.

**September 30, 06:17 PST**

**Outside the Sheriff's Office**

**Klamath Falls, OR**

Stan and Darren climbed into their pickup truck for the half-hour drive home.

"Long night, huh?" asked Darren as he settled into the passenger seat.

Stan, who was extremely tired, responded as he turned the ignition key and revved the engine. He turned on the headlights.

"It sure was. Those federal boys were sure full of lots of questions. Seems like they'll be debriefing all of us and asking more question for the next week. I want to get home, get a little sleep and then try and help out with Larry's family. Man, am I ever going to miss him.

"You know another thing, I'm glad the media isn't here in force yet. You can bet they will be later today. I'll be glad to be out in the basin getting things ready for winter when they start digging around. Maybe we ought to get with old JT Samson and let him tell the story."

Darren thought about the long winter ahead and the coming spring. They were going to need water for the crops.

"That sounds like a great idea, he'll be sure to get the word out. Let's get the old Bucket Brigade back together and in action. We can call everybody in the irrigation district and get word to all of our friends who helped back in 2001. We're going to need to get that dam rebuilt as quickly as possible so we can have irrigation water flowing come April.

"I figure if we have enough volunteers, we can get 'er done by then and to hell with these terrorists or anyone else who tries to shut that water off ... we have food and crops to be growin', Darren remarked as he turned to Stan, winked his eye and finished by saying,

"We got to *Let the Water Flow.*"

**October 1, 10:55 Local Time**

**Politburo**

**Beijing, China**

Jien Zenim read again the headlines from the western news source, a WNN affiliate.

*Massive Terrorist Attacks Against Electrical Grid in the Western United States  
Over Twenty-Two Million without electricity, hundreds dead.*

The openness of the western press never ceased to amaze the leader of the People's Republic of China and the head of the massive coalition that was having so much success against the west in the current struggle. The western news sources, particularly those headed by his special friend and confidant, David Krenshaw, provided almost as good a Battle Damage Assessment (BDA) as any professional military team he could put on the ground over there.

Even with a team on the ground, the communication back could take days, perhaps weeks, and was fraught with danger. With access to the free press in the west, Jien and the entire Coalition of Asian States and Greater Islamic Republic leadership could have critical information within a few hours of implementing major assaults, sometimes as it happened.

Apparently the vaunted and much touted Home Guard Units were fairly effective. Only three of six dams targeted in the latest operation had been breached according to the Generals in charge of intelligence. But, with that shock to the electrical grid, and with the several other large transmission lines and sub-stations destroyed in the attacks, apparently significant portions of America's electrical grid on the west coast had failed. This had cascaded into the intermountain west where several other million residents and business were without electricity.

"Hopefully it will be weeks before they can repair the damage ... and our people will continue to "pop-up" and harass them," Zenim thought as he finished reading the article for the third time.

The leader of the People's Republic of China had no allusions as he considered the success of the latest operation. The harassment that his sleeper cells and the various Islamic and Hispanic units within the CONUS were causing could only harass and impede America's production efforts. That is exactly what they were meant to do, as well as demoralize the American population. Without the current means to directly attack their cities and manufacturing plants, outside of the attacks being directed against the Gulf Coast from Panama, the Red Chinese and their allies had resorted to asymmetrical methods of attacking America's heartland. To a significant degree, those efforts were proving successful and yielding the desired results.

But not to the full extent the Chinese President wanted. Zenim knew that with the advent of the Home Guard units and the "Arm America Now" initiatives of the American President, that such

efforts would diminish in effectiveness. There were simply too many common citizens armed and they were apt to be in a position to interdict and impede attacks before they reached their targets or accomplished their goals. This most recent assault had once again proven this, despite some measure of success. Zenim knew that without such efforts, those attacks would have been much more successful and much more devastating to America's production efforts.

The Chinese planners had hoped to put America much more off balance and to cause much greater disruption ... he could only hope and trust that they were causing enough disruption to allow the CAS to accomplish their goals. He was positive that those asymmetrical efforts could cause enough disruption. He believed and had planned for years that such disruption, coupled with the impact of military operations like Hung-Lu-Dong, would lead America and her allies to sue for peace. Such a peace must then inevitably recognize and accept the new order of things, an order that left the Coalition of Asian States the undisputed power in all of Asia, standing on an equal footing economically and militarily with America and the European Union in the rest of the world.

"If they will not recognize that order of things ... they will cease to exist as a viable force themselves in world affairs," Jien thought.

Folding the paper he had been reading, he sat it on the conference table and prepared to lead the Politburo in a discussion of the final planning and implementation of Phase Two of Hung-Lu-Dung now scheduled for March of next year.

**October 3, 22:48 PST**

**Maximum Security Block, Solitary Confinement**

**Federal Detention Center, Outside of Portland, OR**

Manuel was a beaten man, and he knew it. He wasn't sure if his captors were entirely aware of it yet and he was continuing to try and keep it from them. But he knew it, and he hoped he would find release before they could take full advantage of it.

He longed to see his wife and children again, he hoped that Miguel had been able to escape and take Manuel's family with him. He was certain Miguel had escaped. He knew the man too well. As soon as those all-points-bulletins and pictures went out, particularly on the television like they had in New Mexico where Manuel had been captured, he was certain that Miguel had immediately left the country for his secure Hacienda in Mexico.

Manuel had held out as long as he could, carefully withholding names and relationships, despite the drugs, just as he had been trained to do so long ago. But he was much older now, and the training was like a dream, long in the past. He had ultimately given up Miguel's name and how they were tied together, along with almost every operation and every other name he held in his mind. The super fire they had set in Colorado, the attacks on power line transmission towers, substations, transformers and switches. All the planning of those missions with Miguel that he could remember. But it had all been meted out carefully, begrudgingly, as he had been trained. There was one name he had not divulged and there was one operation he had been involved with he would not detail. Hector and the attack on Foothill Mall in Colorado were going to remain safe with him...at least that was what Manuel thought.

In his confined world, it had taken months to give up the information he had divulged. Months of drugging, months of food deprivation, months of solitary confinement and even some rough physical handling by his FBI, military and Homeland Security captors. Actually, he was surprised that the physical handling had not been more severe, certainly in his own country it would have been. But apparently the Americans relied on their own methods, sprinkled with just a dose of physical abuse to keep the prisoner off guard. Manuel was sure it was also to try and maintain some semblance of their vaunted "civil" rights.

Manuel supposed that the Americans had learned, in the pressure and urgency of these current circumstances, where the war was also being waged on their own soil, that such notions sometimes took a back seat to expediency and survival. Manuel knew for him that it always did.

"Well, if my efforts have helped these Americans to learn to be more pragmatic," he thought, "Then that is something to be regretted."

As far as Manuel was concerned, the longer they remained soft and sacrificed pragmatism and their lives for principle, even when dealing with their abject enemies, the better.

Still, he missed his wife and three children. He knew he would never see them again and *that* was something he certainly did regret. He would hold out as long as he could and hopefully expire before they got those last two bits of information from him. But he was tired, and spent...truly defeated.

What Manuel did not know was that his captors had known of his relationship to Miguel's long before Manuel had broken and given it to them. In fact, they had gauged and fine-tuned their methods as a result of what it took to get that very information out of him, and how long it took them to do it. The psychologists working with the team had been there the entire time, profiling, analyzing and predicting. Now they indicated that Manuel was almost certainly still holding back even more critical data, 95% sure of it is what they indicated.

Director Andy Syke watched Manuel through the digital feed connected to the micro-camera located in the left cinder block wall of Manuel's cell. It was an oversized cell where he could be held

and interrogated without the necessity of moving him. He knew that the fatigue and the haggard look on Manuel's features were not a sham, not any more. He also suspected that the psychologists were right and that was more information to be coaxed and milked out of this prisoner. To date, Manuel had been a veritable treasure chest of information, but he had not given it up easily. The details of the planning of the super fire this man's team had set last year in southern Colorado along a one hundred and fifty-mile front were staggering. In the end, almost fifteen hundred people had been killed in the resulting firestorm amongst the towns and recreation areas that had been ravaged. More than two hundred thousand others were made homeless. Over three million acres of land had burned in southern and central Colorado, literally gutting the center of the state and some of the most scenic landscape in all of North America.

"This guy is a monster who needs to be executed as soon as possible," thought the Director, "but we have to be sure that we squeeze every single drop of information out him before we do, and that is *exactly* what we are going to do."

There were several micro-cameras on each wall and on the ceiling of Manuel's cell. Perpetual light, concrete floor, hard mattress cot built as a protrusion out of the wall with soft, curved edges and a simple bodily waste hole in the floor at the bottom of a slightly sloped tiled area were all that existed in the room. All of his water and food were delivered to the cell and had to be ingested without the use of utensils. Nothing hard, sharp or of a nature that could be used for suicidal tendencies was provided, though the psychologists indicated that he was not the type, only an 8% chance. But Director Syke took nothing for granted and left nothing to chance. In the current environment, Manuel, an enemy combatant, could be held indefinitely, without a lawyer and only with a Federal Judge's assent to his internment per the wartime legislative acts and executive orders. In the end, Syke knew that it would take only that Judge's assent and the sign-off of several individuals like himself to terminate this non-citizen, enemy combatant after a military style tribunal when the time finally came.

Andy Syke had been in the FBI for over twenty-four years, through the good and the bad. He was the top FBI official in this region and had come right up through the ranks as a field officer. He viewed himself as a loyal American and had never conceived the day where these types of procedures were enacted in the United States of America. But, with thousands of Americans dying at the hands of aliens like this Manuel Mendoza, the rules had changed for any enemy combatant that was not a U.S. citizen. America itself was a war zone, and for the enemy, particularly those dressed as civilians, it was being treated that way. Therefore, though the job before him was distasteful, it was something that had to be done for the security of the nation, and he would do it without batting an eye.

He had personally taken charge of this prisoner and his interrogation and internment when he had been transferred to this facility a few weeks after his capture. Andy had one senior detective, two case officers and three psychologists permanently assigned. Other agencies, including Homeland Security, the CIA and the Defense Department were routinely assigning people to work with him, as more information became available.

As he watched Manuel lying there now, he looked at his watch.

"Five minutes to Eleven," he thought. "Another five minutes and we'll find out just what else it is you are holding back you miserable SOB."

**October 3, 23:00 PST**

### **Maximum Security Block, Solitary Confinement**

### **Federal Detention Center, Outside of Portland, OR**

From almost out of nowhere, a door opened and several people walked into the cell. Somehow, three sides of his cell were accessible to the outside corridors or offices, and he never knew which side his captors, his enemies, would enter from. The doors were almost seamless and could not be seen to the naked eye until they literally swung or slid open.

A special team of four armed guards, looking like the epitome of U.S. Marine Gunnery Sergeants, a spectacled man and the senior detective all entered the room. Two of the guards came over and pulled Manuel over to the chair they had brought with them and secured him to it using the straps that were attached for that purpose. The other two guards had already secured the feet of the chair to the floor, screwing large bolts into threaded holes in the floor after uncovering them.

Once he was restrained, the detective approached.

"Well Manuel, how are you today?"

Though in a drug stupor, Manuel looked as firmly as he could into Detective Rollinson's eyes and replied in his Spanish accent.

"Detective, cut this small talk, okay? We've been through too many of these "discussions" over the months for it to have any meaning. Why don't you just get to the point."

Luis Rollinson had a begrudging respect for this man. He had worked him, stressed him and broken him down for several months and he could appreciate Manuel's remaining spirit. But none of that softened him or deterred him in the least from his duty.

"The point is simple, Manuel, how are you doing?"

Manuel lowered and shook his head slowly for a moment in silence. Then, lifting it once again so he could stare at the detective, he spoke with sarcasm in his voice.

"Well, I'm hungry, I am cold, there's too much light in this room, I can't get a decent night's sleep. I have no privacy and you people don't even knock before entering. By the way, where's the Director, I thought today it would be his turn."

That Manuel made light of the situation was one thing, but that his comments about his own conditions were all negative told the detective volumes. In fact, it was something that the spectacled man and his colleagues, the other psychologists, had told the detective to watch for specifically.

"Well, Manuel, Director Syke couldn't be here today, he's enjoying an outing with his wife and three children, the two boys and one girl."

At this statement, Manuel's head jerked up and a look of unadulterated hatred filled his eyes as he looked at the detective. Manuel had three children, two boys and one girl, and he had always enjoyed taking them on outings when he was at home. He knew that this reference was not an accident, and he also knew it was getting to him.

"You miss them don't you, Manuel? Well I have a surprise for you."

Turning to one of the husky guards, the detective motioned to him while speaking.

"Bring the kids in."

As Manuel watched, astonishingly his three children were marched into the room. There was Antonio, fourteen years old, tall and slender. Next was his only daughter, Bertrice, sixteen years old with beautiful long dark hair, then there was his oldest, Victor, seventeen and very muscular. All three were dressed in prison garb, and all three looked much to thin too Manuel with red and haggard eyes.

"What the hell is this? Why do you have them here? Antonio, Bertrice, Victor, tell these gringos nothing. No matter what they do to me, tell them nothing!"

His daughter broke down and began crying.

"Father, what have they done to you? You're so thin and weak." As she said this she tried to move towards him but the guards held her back as she continued sobbing.

"Father, tell these men to let us go. They have said such horrible things about you..."

"Shut up!" yelled Luis, cutting off Bertrice.

"This is not about doing things to you Manuel. Now I want you to listen very carefully. We must know the name of Miguel's control and we must know it today. Also, we must know the details of the attack early last year on the Foothill Mall in Denver. We know you were involved some way in that, Manuel, and we need the information.

"I'll give you one minute to start talking. Master Sergeant, line them up."

As Manuel watched, two of the large guards took his children and lined them up against the far wall. Detective Rollinson walked over to the leader of the detail and extracted the service pistol from the man's holster and jerked back the receiver, loading a bullet.

"Fifty seconds, Manuel."

Manuel couldn't believe it, no, he wouldn't believe it. The Americans would never do such a thing. They may have been hardened in the course of this war, and they may well have a few rogues in their Special Forces overseas. Manuel had heard some stories coming out of Central America years ago, and had also heard talk about events in South East Asia that caused him to wonder.

Manuel knew that if the Americans ever did allow such things to occur, that it was all under very deep cover, conducted by agencies whose names simply did not exist, far away, somewhere off-shore far from the prying eyes of their press and their citizens...but this? No, it was not possible. He actually smiled as he contemplated their bluff and how he would embarrass them by calling it. He was angered as he saw the fear in his children's eyes and the small puddle of urine that was forming under his youngest son's feet who was first in line.

"You can go straight to hell, I don't know what you are talking about and I wish to God I could spend just two minutes with you alone for the fear you are causing my children."

Detective Rollinson looked at him coldly.

"Your call."

With that, and to Manuel's utter shock and to the horror of the children, Detective Luis Rollinson walked over to Antonio, stopped three feet from him, took careful aim with the nine millimeter pistol, and shot him right in the middle of the forehead.

*BLAM!*

A small red hole appeared immediately in Antonio's head as his eyes rolled back and he was thrown violently against the wall, a wall now covered with blood, bone fragments and brain tissue. Then he slid slowly and lifelessly to the floor.

For just a second Manuel stared in pure disbelief...then he wretched terribly onto the floor...and then he began cursing and screaming, straining at his straps as his other two children also screamed and cried and had to be physically restrained and held in place by the guards. Detective Rollinson came up to within two feet of Manuel's face and spoke to him.

"Okay tough guy, now you have two kids left and one more minute to think about it. Who is Miguel's control and what do you know about that attack on that mall?"

Manuel bowed his head. He looked up with tears streaming down his face at the pathetic and terrorized figures of his two remaining children. He looked at the still form of Antonio.

"It feels a little different on this side of the fence doesn't it you miserable bastard?" asked Detective Rollinson, "You've got thirty seconds."

Manuel was finished. He broke down and begged the American to spare his other two children. He then spent the next forty-five minutes revealing every detail he knew about Hector Ortiz and the intricacies of FTA Trucking, the front company Hector had set up and run for so many years, smuggling weapons and terrorists into the United States. He also revealed all the details of last year's attack on Foothill Mall, including his own part in it, everything he knew about the attack's funding and how the remaining team members had been evacuated by helicopters that had been painted like those belonging to the local News Channels. During the confession, Manuel's other two children were led weeping from the room, with a promise that they would not be harmed.

Director Syke watched the entire affair. The methods were distasteful, and many would claim that they were out and out illegal and as bad as the enemy's actions. But Director Syke knew that it was the enemy that had started the terror, and he also knew that these methods had produced the desired results. What had happened here in this cell tonight would probably save hundreds, even thousands, of American lives, and they would allow the United States government to execute justice against some of its worst enemies. What Andy Syke didn't know at the time was that the information he had just heard would have even more far reaching consequences than he imagined, not only at home here in the CONUS, but abroad as well.

When Manuel was done talking and when Detective Rollinson was sure he had heard enough, he instructed the leader of the guard detail to carefully unstrap Manuel from the chair and let him spend a moment with his dead son.

Manuel, a completely broken man, knelt down and crawled over to the still form of his son. When he reached him, he carefully began to take his bloody head into his arms. As he began to do so, he saw his son's eyelid flutter briefly and for a moment he had a wild hope that somehow Antonio might still be alive.

But that hope was short lived. Oh, in fact both of his "son's" eyes opened alright, to the further astonishment of Manuel. Then to Manuel's shocked amazement, his son stood up. As he did so, he peeled off a complete head mask that extended well below his neck, turning it inside out and showing it to Manuel. From his position on his knees on the floor, Manuel looked up into the eyes of someone who was clearly not his son, someone who was much older.

"Masks Manuel... small explosive charges filled with the right ingredients," the operative said as he pointed out the location of the squib device on the inside of the mask where the tissue pack surrounding the small charge had been situated so as to look natural, another device on the front to produce the desired result, and a lot of practice and good timing.

"You saw what you expected to see ... thanks for all of the info."

Then, the U.S. operative, who had trained constantly for over eight weeks to fulfill the role he had just acted out with the others, stepped over Manuel and left the room. Manuel just sat there in utter bewilderment, shaking his head and trying to comprehend the enormity of the ruse.

Detective Rollinson and his team retrieved the chair and also began exiting the room. Before he left, the Detective stopped for a moment and looked back over his shoulder at Manuel and said.

"Be seeing you around... Amigo."

### **October 12, 06:35 Local Time**

#### **Viper Flight, 5000 Feet**

#### **East of Alice Springs, Australia**

Lt. Billy Simmons carefully took stock of his situation as he made his way back to the forward base from which he had taken off earlier that morning.

"Another twenty miles should do it. You copy that Roger?... Roger?" he called to his electronics and weapons officer in the back seat as he made his way to the east.

There was no response from Roger Farnsworth, there hadn't been any some time. Billy was very worried about him and could hear the air whistling through the holes in the canopy...bullet holes.

It had started like every other flight he had been making for the last three months since arriving here near the front lines in central Australia. In for planning and briefing at around 3 AM to get final intelligence. Out on the flight line for a final run down and checkout of their aircraft before 4 AM. Then, airborne by 4:30 AM for the fifteen minute flight to the lines just west of Alice Springs and support of the American and Australian troops there holding out against the almost continuous massed attacks being conducted against them.

"And they aren't just massed infantry attacks like they had been to begin with either," thought Billie as he reflected on the fighting. "There are a lot of mechanized and armor units joining in now."

"And that's not all, several times we've been driven from the sky by those older MIGS and attack helicopters when our CAP couldn't hold their numbers back."

He'd usually fly between four and six missions per day. Coming back, getting the aircraft fueled, repaired and checked out while he and his rear-seat got the latest intelligence and any new orders from HQ before mounting up again. So, up at 2:30 AM, continuous combat sorties until well after dark, finally finishing the planning for the next day and hitting the rack after 10 PM.

"Well, time really *flies* when you're busy," he whispered to himself, "18 or 19 hours a day. But I never thought it would come to this, particularly not after those first few weeks."

To begin with the missions had been an exercise in prosecuting an extremely "target rich" environment. Billy could hardly believe how many Chinese, Indian and Indonesian troops were there day in and day out, making their way towards the Allied defensive positions to attack. The Marine attack helicopters had simply slaughtered as many as they could with whatever ammunition they carried. They had wondered at the futility of it on their enemy's part. From the front lines, when they were back at base, they had heard the stories from the Marines on the ground about how the enemy dead were stacking up in front of the American lines. They had made jokes about it.

In those first weeks the enemy did have some aircraft coverage with mobile anti-aircraft batteries and a few shoulder-fired missiles. But the aircraft were no match for the American F-15 CAP and the weapons did not have the range his own missiles had. The American helicopters could just stand off and utilize their longer-range munitions to target enemy vehicles and positions before moving in with their chin mounted chain guns to clean up.

But the enemy kept coming.

On the rare occasions back then, when the enemy fielded longer-range weapons, the AH-1Z Viper's maneuverability and counter systems proved more than adequate. In those days there had also been plenty of the very accurate and very potent higher tech munitions, both Hellfire missiles and the hypervelocity Quick-shot missiles. But as time went on, and weeks turned to months, those munitions became less and less available. Two weeks ago those higher tech munitions had run out altogether. Now it was simple line-of-site rocket pods and straight ammo for their 20 mm chain gun.

And the enemy kept coming.

"Thank God there are still plenty of Sidewinders left," he thought. "Even if they aren't those AIM-9X missiles we had to begin with, they are keeping us alive... at least they were until today."

Today had been completely different. Today things had broken down from the very beginning.

Over a period of the last ten days, the entire chain of command had noticed and spoken of the increasing number of higher sophistication aircraft, vehicles and missiles being brought to bear by the enemy. The problem was that this was occurring precisely at the time when the allies were running short on their best munitions. Rarely did they conduct a mission now when there weren't several enemy fighters breaking through to harass the American attack helicopter supporting the allied positions. Rarely were they not dodging accurate and much more sophisticated shoulder or vehicle fired ground to air missiles. Rarely were they able to attack without giving wide birth to enemy ZSU-23 radar guided anti-aircraft vehicles supporting the enemy columns. With excellent low-level radar, with wide engagement angles and with a high rate of fire—800 to 1000 rounds per minute for each of its four barrels—the ZSU-23 was a very dangerous threat. Until destroyed, they were deadly against any allied attack helicopters.

"And today, there were simply too many for us, or for our JSF compadres to destroy."

Before they ever arrived at the operations area, the warning had come over the command frequency regarding enemy fighters already breaking through the CAP. Those enemy fighters today were not the vintage aircraft of the last few weeks. Oh, make no mistake, those vintage MIGS could mix it up well with the Viper's alright, but usually there were enough F-35 Joint Strike Fighters (JSF) flying support missions to help out and only a few of the Marine helicopters had been lost to them.

But today, the command circuit had warned right up front that the fighters breaking through were SU-30 and J-10 high performance fighters. The F-15s and F-35's had not been able to hold them back and so they had ravaged the Viper's before they ever reached their area of operations. What had been an entire squadron of twelve AH-1Z Vipers had been reduced to a single flight of four aircraft.

Those four had been ordered to proceed forward and support the beleaguered US Marine, US Army and Australian forces on the front lines. There, just west of Alice Springs they were facing the largest attack yet. In the early morning light, Billy had seen the tremendous volume of fire emanating from both sides as the enemy forces advanced towards the allied lines. He did not believe the advancing forces would be held back today.

He was right.

He had emptied all of his rocket pods and the last of his chain gun ammunition when he and his wingman had strayed into the range of four ZSU-23's defending an enemy mechanized battalion on the flank of the units Billy had been attacking. Apparently all four units had waited for an order to fire in unison. When they did, Billy's wingman was targeted first and took the brunt of the attack. Billy would never forget the brief warning over their local frequency from his wingman and the urgency and anxiety he had heard in it. He would also never forget how quickly that Viper had come completely apart under the intense gunfire.

"In less than a second, they were gone," he soberly reflected.

What had been the magnificent form of the most modern, most deadly attack helicopter on earth, an AH-1Z Viper, had in less than a second taken on the form of an exploding cloud of debris. From that cloud had emerged a severed main rotor, a shattered engine, thousands of raining pieces of burning metal and plastic...and the bodies of two American pilots that were literally blown to pieces. A cloud of smoking, raining, ruined metal, plastic, wiring and flesh.

Billy had reacted immediately, instinctively responding to his training and peeling off to the side away from the firing. His quickness and superb flying had saved his aircraft, but it had not been quick enough to avoid being hit as well. One stream of 23mm shells had cut right across the top of his canopy, angling down and behind him. Amidst the sound of shattering canopy and instruments, he could not shake from his mind the rapid succession of three dull thuds he had heard behind him as he passed out of the stream of fire. He had not been able to raise Roger on their internal communication system since. He had also not been able to raise any other Viper on their squadron frequency.

Now, less than twenty miles from his base, he was returning, the sole survivor of the entire squadron. From the frantic reports and calls for support coming from the front, Billy hoped he would have time to rearm and form up with other Viper units and continue to support the allied lines.

It was a vain hope.

A few minutes later when Billy flew over the ridge eight miles from base, he was shocked to see explosions and several smoke plumes rising over it in the distance. The base command frequency frantically responded to his inquiries and requests for clearance, letting him know that a ballistic missile attack had reduced the majority of the base to burning and smoldering ruins. There were very few serviceable areas for him to land, and very few operational aircraft of any type were left. Upon landing, he learned that the allied defensive lines around Alice Springs were being over-run at that very moment and a general withdrawal had been ordered for all allied units. Billy's new orders were to immediately take on as much fuel as possible and join the remaining flyable units in a retreat far to the East to regroup, re-provision and continue the fight.

The enemy was coming, and nobody was joking about it any more.

### **October 13, 22:55 Local Time**

#### **Flag Conference Room, U.S.S. Ronald Reagan**

#### **CTF 77, 300 nm off the Eastern Coast of Australia**

The Commander in Chief of all Allied forces in the Pacific, CINCPAC, listened as the full bird Colonel gave the intelligence briefing regarding the overall status on the ground in Australia. Ben Ryan listened closely and soberly to this briefing. In addition to himself as CINCPAC and his staff, all of the highest ranking allied commanders here in the Australian Theater of Operation were in attendance. The new Commander of CTF 77 (who also served as the U.S.S. Kitty Hawk carrier strike group commander) and the Commander of the U.S.S. Ronald Reagan carrier strike group were in attendance. The Commander in Chief of Allied ground forces in Australia and the Commander of all allied ground based air forces in the Theater were both in attendance. Finally, the commanders of the Australian and New Zealand air, ground and naval forces were also in attendance. All had flown out to the U.S.S. Ronald Reagan for this pivotal meeting.

"Therefore, what has occurred is a general breakthrough at Alice Springs. The defensive lines, after holding out for several months, and after inflicting untold casualties on our enemies, have broken down completely. The withdrawal is orderly, but it is complete and rushed.

"In addition. We are experiencing steady losses along the Northwestern Coast and the Southern Coast as the enemy Army Groups in those areas continue to push forward. A large contingent in each case broke off from those groups and began angling inland day before yesterday. It is clear their movement was timed in anticipation of this breakthrough and they are trying to envelop our retreating forces from Alice Springs.

"We are harassing the flanks of these forces, but we do not have sufficient forces to interdict them without seriously risking our efforts along the coastal areas themselves. The overall strategic result of these actions can be displayed as follows."

The Colonel motioned to an aide and the screen towards the front of the conference room lit up with a strategic map of the Australian continent. Two large red arrows, pointing to the Southeast emanated from the Alice Springs area. Two more large red arrows, one along the Northeast coast and another along the Southern coast pointed towards the far southeast coast of Australia. Two other smaller red arrows, diverging from the coastal lines, pointed towards the area between Alice Springs and the Southeast corner of the continent. There were small semi-circular blue positions marked on the map in front of the red arrows along the coast. In the mountains around Sydney in the far southeast were several more blue semi-circular markings. Out in front of those two large red arrows now to the east of Alice Springs were several smaller blue arrows pointing away, back towards semi-circular positions between their current location and Sydney.

"We are at a critical juncture here. If these defensive units now retreating from Alice Springs take up their planned fall back positions, they will be pinched in place there and most probably enveloped and destroyed. If they escape that trap and fall back towards the initial primary defenses

well out from Sydney and Melbourne, the enemy will have the option of using those two pincer forces to flank our positions on the coast.”

Admiral Ryan interjected at this point.

“Colonel, please indicate the size and composition of those enemy forces you have indicated on the map that are engaged in their offensive.”

The Colonel did not hesitate, having the facts and figured already in mind.

“Admiral, we estimate something on the order of 550,000 troops in each major arrow, and 225,000 troops in the smaller pincer movements. Over two million, five hundred and fifty thousand troops supported by armor and air.

“And those numbers are growing. Let me share these pictures with you.”

An aide handed out copies of photographs to those gathered in the conference room.

“I apologize for not having this up on the screen in digital format, but there wasn't time.

“What you are looking at are three major staging areas along the Australian coast far to the west. They are marked on the map on the screen by the three large circles along the western, southwestern and northwestern coast.”

The commanders saw huge areas of massed shipping, some unloading at docks, other unloading on shore. The numbers of ships in each case were phenomenal, ranging in size from the smallest ocean going vessels, up to the newer large amphibious ships being produced by the PLAN. The Australian Naval commander was the first to respond.

“For all the world this looks like three D-day sized efforts...they must be bringing in literally millions of men and their materiel.”

The Colonel continued.

“Before I continue, let me inform you. These photographs were purchased in blood from coast watchers still active behind enemy lines. Satellite imagery is now virtually non-existent. Newer Chinese anti-aircraft batteries are proving extremely capable and we are unable to mount even SR-77 or HR-7 reconnaissance safely. This is classified information for which you all hold the appropriate level of security, but we lost an HR-7 aircraft and its pilot last week over the Northwestern staging area. The aircraft was lost before it could transmit to one of our Global Inspector UAVs that was holding position 250 miles to the west.

“But, the point is, the enemy is bringing in staggering amounts of men and materiel. We actually estimate it now at something on the order of an additional three million men and growing, which they have already shown they are willing to lose in horrendous numbers to gain ground. In the Alice Springs area, we estimate that over 215,000 enemy combatants were killed in a twelve-week period. We lost close to 12,000 killed and 24,000 wounded...but in the end, the enemy occupied the ground.

“Finally, to close, they have set up blocking naval groups to prevent our forces from reaching their beach and dock areas. I have marked those suspected vicinities on the map in red cross hatch, here, here and here.”

As he said this, the Colonel pointed to three areas with his pointer. One was just off the Northwest coast of Australia, one was off the Southeast coast of Australia, and the last was off operating somewhere in the straits between New Guinea and Guadalcanal. After pointing out each of these areas on the map displayed on the screen, the Colonel completed his briefing.

“Each of these two northern groups consists of at least three of the Chinese Beijing class aircraft carriers, and the one of the Northwest coast also includes the Shi Liang and her heir escorts. The one to the Southeast is an Indian group consisting of their carriers Vikrant and Vikramaditya and their escorts. All of them are being supported by significant ground based strike aircraft. We estimate that at least three regiments of Backfire bombers, two regiments of Blinder bombers and two regiment of Bear bombers are now located within support distance of these naval groups.

“They are operating out of airfields in Australia and New Guinea. All have the capability of launching supersonic, sea-skimming cruise missiles...or the "Killer Whale" supercavitating weapons. We estimate that these regiments are being supported by three regiments of SU-24 Fencer strike aircraft and many squadrons of SU-30, J-10 and Mig-29 fighter aircraft, which are also flying support for their ground forces.

“This concludes the strategic briefing. I have specific tactical information for each of your areas of operation based on strategic assets, local HUMINT and on your own intelligence reports.”

As the Colonel took his seat, Ben Ryan stood up and walked to the podium at the front of the room next to the display screen. He had already reviewed with several of the U.S. commanders present, what his recommendation was going to be. He wanted consensus from the combat force commanders in the room, and particularly from the military leaders of Australia and New Zealand.

“Gentlemen, let me be blunt. Tactically, I see no alternative but to have our forces fall back to the major defenses extending 150 miles out from Sydney and Melbourne.”

At this statement the Australian military leaders interrupted with pleas and arguments to the contrary. Admiral Ryan did not give them time to swell into the chorus they might otherwise have done. Slamming his fist down loudly in the conference table next to him he shouted.



"I *WILL* have your attention. This is *NOT* some kind of press briefing and your gentlemen are *NOT* civilian reporters. This is a military environment and by God it will be treated as one or I will have you removed from the room! Is that understood?"

The room got deathly quiet and the Admiral continued.

"I know the situation is critical and deadly. I also know we must do all in our power to maintain a strong military presence here on the continent or things will get much worse for everyone involved.

"Now, I am not proposing giving up, and I am not proposing that we operate in purely a defensive mode. To the contrary I want all commanders to look for opportunities to counterattack and draw the enemy into large ambushes. In particular I want to look for specific opportunities to have the enemy mass his large forces for more of these large breakthroughs. Here is why."

Turning to one of his aides, the Admiral motioned and then continued.

"Commander, please escort all aides and staff out of the room, then hand out the packets to the commanders. I would ask that each of you receiving these packets begin to read and then hold your comments for a few minutes. The rest of you are dismissed. Tactical intelligence will be presented to you in the officers mess which has been set up for that purpose and where you will find information regarding the overall tactical plans waiting for you. Please begin preliminary planning based on those plans and your commanders will join you in a few minutes."

An aide to Admiral Ryan escorted the staff members and aides from the room and then began handing out red folders marked TOP SECRET to each of the commanders. As they opened them and began reading there were many wide eyes and audible intakes of breath. By the time the meeting of those commanders adjourned, the Admiral had his consensus on the strategic recommendations that now had to be communicated to Washington in the form of an urgent request.

**October 13, 18:23 EST**

**Situation Room, The White House  
Washington, DC**

The information packets regarding the current tactical situation in Australia had been distributed and read. The members of the National Security team were sobered by it. All of them, even those without a military background, could see where the situation was leading. Australia was on the verge of collapse and defeat. In a matter of weeks, a one hundred and fifty mile radius circular region, armed to the teeth, would be all that was left of free Australia. Very soon, Sydney and Melbourne would be subjected to brutal bombardment. How long could they hold out?

Every member of the team sat in serious reflection. From the Vice President, to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, including the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the Director of the CIA, the National Security Advisor, each and every one of them rolled the situation over and over in their minds. They each kept coming to the same awful conclusion.

After letting the team digest and contemplate the information and its implications for a few minutes, the President spoke.

"I don't need to lay out what the information in those packet means. We have in fact discussed this possibility on a number of occasions and what we would do about it if it came to pass. Those plans are well laid and well advanced and will make New Zealand an impenetrable fortress for liberty from which to mount our counter offensive if required.

"What I do want to discuss this evening is a recommendation I have received from our Commander in Chief in the Pacific, Admiral Ben Ryan. Now if you will, please open the second folder there in front of you, also labeled TOP SECRET, the one I asked you each to wait to open until we had finished with the first. Please hold your comments and questions until after everyone has completed and until after I say a thing or two."

In a virtual repeat of events the day before in the Flag Conference room aboard the U.S.S. Ronald Reagan, as the various members of the National Security team read the recommendations from CINCPAC, there were many wide eyes, audible intakes of breath and whispered oaths from all around the room.

"As you can see, the Admiral is requesting National Command Authorization for tactical nuclear strikes against the three staging areas our enemies have established along the western coast of Australia. He is also asking for permission to conduct tactical strikes against the three major naval battle groups that the enemy has deployed around Australia and against six major airfields in Australia and New Guinea.

"He feels, and justifiably so, that such strikes will break the back of the enemy offensive in Australia and allow him to launch major counterattacks against the front line elements of the remaining invasion forces. He feels that without their logistical, naval and air support, he will be able to isolate them and crush the head of the snake in Australia whose body will have already been destroyed by these strikes."

The President stopped for a moment and briefly reflected. He knew that militarily this plan could be made to work and that the enemy could be defeated in place in Australia. But a lot depended on

what the enemy had brought to Australia with them. The Chinese had tactical nuclear weapon capability. The Indians did as well. Through the former Pakistan, so did the GIR.

What and how much had they brought to Australia? While the President knew that American forces could certainly defeat them there with more numerous and more capable weapons... would it destroy Australia to do so? What type of strategic response would such a move invoke?

They would be crossing a critical line to unilaterally do this, even though they could stop the major enemy advance there. What would be the political fall out in terms of impact to the momentum they were attaining in persuading more and more nations to actively join in the fight against the new Axis of the CAS, the GIR and the CSAS?

With these thoughts fresh on his mind, he continued.

"I am inclined and believe from a pure military standpoint that this plan would work and we could in fact defeat these huge enemy forces in and around Australia."

When he said this, the Secretary of State, Fred Reissing, a staunch defender of the President and all of his policies, and a good friend, interrupted and said,

"Mr. President, you can't be seriously considering this. Are you actually proposing unilateral first use of nuclear weapons? It would destroy our coalition and allow the enemy to paint us with a brush so black as to justify their use of those same weapons whenever, wherever."

The President trusted his Secretary of State. He also respected him. He had expected that there would be interruptions, strong emotions and abject opposition to any contemplation of this path. But the President also could see ahead and knew that their enemies, with their overwhelming number, *must* be stopped somehow. If they weren't, he was certain that sooner or later they would be fighting those overwhelming numbers on American soil. Keeping the many foreign terror and sleeper cell attacks under control was a continuing problem, though great progress in that regard had been made. But tens of thousands of American citizens had died in the process, and they were continuing to die as new cells popped up and went about their murderous work.

"Fred, I am serious about considering it. Deadly serious and just as serious as Harry Truman was at the end of World War II.

"I believe we are looking at a situation that could be orders of magnitude worse than World War II in terms of human life, particularly American life, if we do not end this thing as quickly as possible. If we have the means, and if we honestly believe we can get away with it victoriously, I believe in the long run it will be far better.

"But I have not said I would do so unilaterally, particularly on Australian territory, and I have not indicated that strategically it would be best. I have simply said that there locally, tactically I believe we could use it to win. I want to explore the costs of that tactical win first, and then also explore all of other areas I just mentioned before any decision is made."

The President turned to his Secretary of Defense, George Crowler. Crowler had been, until last year, the Chief of Naval Operations. But after the death of the former Secretary of Defense, Timothy Hattering, in the surprise Chinese attacks nineteen months ago, Crowler had been nominated and approved as the new SECDEF. Addressing him, and expanding his gaze to take in the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the military, General Jeremy Stone, the President said,

"George, what do you and General Stone have to say regarding the tactical situation in Australia as it relates to the request from Admiral Ryan? What has China, India and Indonesia brought to Australia that they can use to counter with in terms of tactical nuclear capability?"

"After we discuss that aspect and assess the risks, I would like John to take us through the strategic situation. What do the Chinese have strategically to hit us with, either in Australia, New Zealand or here, and what have we got to protect against it. Specifically, what is the status and strength of our TMD defenses with the Aegis cruisers. How many do we have deployed and where?"

"Finally, Fred, you take us through the diplomatic impact. What nations would this be likely to adversely effect and what is the impact of lessening their resolve, or losing it. Speak directly to the Australian government's response as well.

"Let's proceed. George?"

For the next two hours the discussions continued. The tactical nuclear capability of the Chinese and Indians was discussed in detail and the likelihood of their having that capability in Australia. It was determined that while their capability was much less advanced and precise than America's, they had likely brought many weapons with them to Australia for use should they be attacked. It was considered unlikely that they would use them first in an offensive capacity. The range of their weapons were considered to be anywhere from 300 to 1500 kilometers with anywhere from a 1/4 to a 2 mile center of probability impact point. Such a capability would be very effective against cities or large stationary bases but not very effective against mobile military forces in the field. But, in the numbers they would likely employ, they would create a lot of severe, long term damage to Australia and once started, the allies would have to rain down many warheads of their own on the enemy forces to ultimately defeat them. It was considered likely that the price of stopping the enemy in Australia would be the destruction of all of the most habitable parts of Australia itself.

From a strategic standpoint, it was known that the Chinese had significantly improved their capabilities and their number of strategic warheads. They were thought to have upwards of one hundred warheads that could reach America, all of them in the far-western part of the nation. Hawaii and the west-coast cities would all be at risk. The United States had deployed five cruisers along the west coast with TMD capability. Similar to the two deployed near the nation's capitol, these warships had their magazines filled with a double load of the TMD enhanced standard missile. Twenty-four in each vertical launch cell making for 48 TMD missiles on each vessel. The range of these missiles was in excess of 150 miles to altitudes in excess of 200,000 ft. One such vessel was located each in San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland and Seattle. There was another vessel similarly armed in Hawaii and three were in the Australian area, one each with the U.S.S. Ronald Reagan and U.S.S. Kitty Hawk groups and one off the coast near Sydney. During this portion of the discussion, Vice President John Bowers made the following ominous statement.

"Mr. President, if the Chinese went all out and targeted all of their missiles at our west-coast cities, they would launch approximately twenty at each. In such an environment, we cannot guarantee that a single Aegis vessel equipped for TMD would get them all. We could lose anywhere from one to five cities in such an attack."

Before the Vice President could continue, the President responded just as ominously.

"For the which the Chinese would lose fifty of their major cities as we responded in an overwhelming fashion. The war would be over on that day...but we would be decades recovering.

"Which reminds me, John, where are we on the land-based variety of the TMD. We had talked earlier this year about appropriations for developing and deploying the basic launch cells and Aegis acquisition, control and guidance in land facilities. How has that proceeded?"

The Vice President took a moment to brief the President and the entire team on the project.

"We appropriated funds early this year for development and then deployment in the first ten major interior cities and our major military installations. The testing of the first operational site was completed two weeks ago and was an unqualified success. That was in Chicago where we now have three vertical launch cells deployed. We have also discreetly deployed six cells around the capitol to augment the two Aegis vessels on the Potomac. We will have similar operational deployments in and around San Diego, Minneapolis, Dallas, Atlanta, Denver and Los Angeles by the end of this year. After that we will deploy in Cincinnati, San Francisco, Phoenix, Seattle, St. Louis, Salt Lake City and Memphis. We will proceed from there with another twenty cities, the rest of the west coast metropolitan areas. All of that will be completed by the end of next year.

"Our major SAC and ICBM facilities will be protected this year, all of our other major strategic bases in the CONUS will be protected by the end of next year."

Clearly the President and everyone in the room was relieved to hear this news. After a moment or two of discussion regarding it, the meeting returned to its principal topic. John Bowers finished off his discussion with one of the most telling considerations. Nuclear weapons, even those that are not very accurate are very effective against massed, stationary targets. The Vice President, seconded by the Director of the CIA, felt very strongly that if the nuclear genie were let out of the bottle, that the GIR would use every nuclear weapon at their disposal. They would target, and they would likely convince India and China to also target the most massed concentration of allied military personnel and civilians in existence at the current time, Israel. At the same time, attacks on other headquarter facilities and bases overseas could be expected with similar attacks against the CONUS.

"Mr. President, depending on the number of missiles, I do not believe that our two TMD capable Aegis cruisers off the coast of Israel would be able to take them out. If they couldn't, the losses would be monumental, despite whatever retaliation we rained down on the enemy afterward."

After the Vice President sat down, Fred Reissinger led the discussion regarding international fallout. It was felt that many of the European nations currently wavering in their involvement, mainly France, would be pushed completely out of participation. It was also felt that Germany, Italy and perhaps Brazil would be weakened in their resolve and support of the United States as a result. Finally, it was believed that the government of Australia would rather go into exile with a later opportunity of liberating their country rather than see it destroyed by nuclear fire and fallout.

A candid conversation between President Weisskopf and his counterpart in Australia late that night proved this to be the exact case. After all was said and done, it was felt that the cost in terms of lives and expense of using the weapons first, would outweigh the cost of winning the war quickly. Even if it took much longer, and even if significant ground was lost in the mean time, a conventional victory was preferred.

The policy that the administration settled on was that the United States would retaliate in kind and overwhelmingly if attacked in such a fashion, but would not instigate initial use. This policy was made official and confidentially communicated to the heads of state of America's most trusted allies, which included the United Kingdom, Brazil, Germany, Australia and Canada. All of them breathed a collective sigh of relief.

It was a policy that America itself would violate within the year, but in a way that none of them could have foreseen at the time.

**October 14, 23:12 Local Time****Admiral's Quarters, U.S.S. Ronald Reagan****320 nm East of Sydney, Australia**

"Who is it," Admiral Ryan asked at the knock on his door.

"Admiral, sir, flash traffic from the NCA, marked your eyes only," was the reply.

The Admiral stepped out and took the flash priority message from the young officer. He retired with it back into his quarters where he opened it and quickly read its contents. After reading it a second time, he leaned back in his chair, sighed loudly and exhaled a long breath.

NCA DENIES REQUEST. OVERALL COSTS TOO HIGH. COORDINATE WITH YOUR CHAIN OF COMMAND. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO DEFEND YOUR FORCES AGAINST WMD ATTACK AND RESPOND IN KIND, OVERWHELMINGLY, IF SO ATTACKED.

HOLD OUT AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. INFLICT MAXIMUM CASUALTIES ON THE ENEMY. IMPLEMENT OPLAN NZ-AUTUMN AS MEASURE OF LAST RESORT.

SIGNED, WEISSKOPF.

"So. He honestly believes that we will ultimately stop these animals and throw them back conventionally...just not here. Well, I hope and pray he's right."

After a hasty conference with his leading commanders, informing them of the decision, the Admiral filed the communication in his secure, TOP SECRET cabinet and went to bed. It had been a long 48 hours. He would share the info with his entire staff in the morning and proceed according to the orders of his overall Commander in Chief. Right now he needed four hours of sleep.

**October 17, 16:35 CST****Main Joint Strike Fighter Production Facility****Parking Lot 3D, Fort Worth, Texas**

The whistle announcing the end of the shift had sounded almost five minutes ago and the number of people reaching their cars out in this part of the parking lot was beginning to increase rapidly. Jess watched them as they approached, scanning their faces, looking for the figure and shape of the one he knew so well. He was impatient.

Leaning against his rental car, his field of vision was directed past that old 1995, F-250 4X4 pickup truck that he knew so well towards the main manufacturing facility. He had parked his rental car in the next furthest row out from the plant and a few spaces down from where he had found the pickup. It gave him a position with a clear view of the workers as they approached from the plant. He had gained access into the parking lot through the gate with his military pass and a quick call to the guard's management, who had been told by their own superiors to expect him.

"Sometimes having friends in high places comes in handy," he thought as he continued to watch. "This was one of the more pleasant times and greasing these skids had been a pure joy."

While watching the people approach, and get into their vehicles, he reflected.

He had left Israel in the middle of September and been flown in a military C-17 transport directly to a NATO air base near Anzio, Italy. While there he had been asked to stick around a few days and brief visiting general officers and political figures on conditions in Israel. After that, he had been flown to the CONUS, landing at Andrews AFB near Washington, DC. where he had been assigned temporary duty to the Pentagon to assist and consult with the Army's planning department. That duty had lasted over two weeks and he had gotten more and more impatient as time passed, but had fulfilled his duty admirably just the same. The stakes were too high to consider anything different. His experiences while on the ground amongst the Israeli Defense Forces were invaluable to the Pentagon planners as they tried to anticipate and prepare for the major engagement that everyone knew was coming there. Ensuring that the United Kingdom troops and Israeli troops could hold up their end of the defense was one of the major concerns of the planners, in addition to ensuring that the U.S. Forces had more than enough supplies and materiel.

Jess wondered when the major fight would come. The massing of forces and the density of them there, on both sides, was simply phenomenal. It was also very troubling. When the fighting finally broke out in earnest, it was going to be a pure slaughter house all around. No way of avoiding it that he could see. Maneuver warfare in that environment would be difficult and the advantage would be with their enemies who had more room to do so. The victory would go to the side that could do it the best and slaughter the most while doing so.

But those thoughts were not foremost on his mind right now. He had anticipated getting home and being well into his sixty day leave at this point. All of that had been pushed back thirty days now by the assignments he had received between Israel and here. He was concerned that once the major engagement began, he would be immediately called back there because of his experience in the area, and that would cut short the time he had to spend with his wife, Cindy. Maximizing that time and their enjoyment of it was the foremost thought on his mind.

"But it could happen any day and my leave would be canceled," he thought as he pulled his collar up a little against the brisk north wind and hunkered down closer to the rental car. "I bet dollars to doughnuts they won't need a month to get me back over there when the time comes either."

It was a cold wind too. Here near the JSF assembly plant, which was in the same general vicinity as the Regional Joint Reserve Base that Jess was so familiar with from his long years of National Guard duty, the wind cut like a knife. It was blowing across what had once been a large prairie surrounded by low hills. That prairie was now filled with manufacturing facilities, an airfield and the military training facilities of the Joint Reserve Base. But the buildings were quite a distance away and out here in this parking lot, there was little to shield one from the wind...accept the cars themselves. While it was relatively rare for such a powerful cold front to come down through this part of Texas so early in the fall, it was not heard of.

"Temperature must be in the 40's," Jess thought. "Probably be down in the low 30's later."

As he thought this, his gaze over the hood of the car caught sight of a familiar form in the distance. Yes, there just coming out of the gate and entering the parking lot. He would recognize that figure and that walk anywhere. She was just saying goodbye to a group of other women who were now separating and making their way to their own vehicles.

Here she came and she had not seen him yet.

He pulled the dozen roses closer to him and sank down behind his rental car. At the rate she was approaching, he should be able to jump up on a ten count...no, he'd give it fifteen just to be sure.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven," he counted to himself. He could hear her footsteps now, getting closer. He tried to imagine her as she got close to the car and began getting the set of keys from her purse.

"Eight, nine, ten," he continued as the steps clearly sounded next to the pickup.

"She should be stopping now," he thought. But the footsteps kept coming!

"What the," he thought as he considered peering around the edge of the car. Could he have been wrong? No, couldn't be, he would recognize her anywhere he told himself

"Maybe she just has to put something in the back of the truck," he thought to himself as he continued counting. "Thirteen, fourteen ..."

Then her voice sounded, and much closer than he would have had expected.

"Jess Simmons, you come out from behind that car this instant before I hit you with my purse!"

**BUSTED!**

He stood up. There she was, as beautiful and as attractive to his tired eyes as ever, standing not eight feet from him on the other side of his rental car.

They stared at each other for a full three seconds. Then, he dropped his flowers and she let the purse slip from her shoulder to the ground as they both rushed around the car and into each other's arms. The flowers could wait, explanations could wait, talk could wait...everything on earth could wait as far as they were concerned. For the next five minutes they were completely lost to the world, oblivious to it as they simply held one another, basking in the warmth of the embrace and their joy there in the brisk north wind in Fort Worth, Texas.

## Chapter 23

*"Never, never, never ... never, never give up!"—Winston Churchill*

**October 25, 07:35 Local Time**

**Jungles of Central Columbia**

**400 miles Northwest of Bogota, Columbia**

The dripping was constant, in fact, it was not really a dripping at all, more like a steady showering here under the canopy. The heavier rain could be heard striking the canopy above in wind-swept torrents, providing a constant background roaring that eddied with the wind up above. But here under the canopy, there was very little wind, just the dense humidity, the constant roar, the very close quarters in the thick undergrowth and the constant, showering from the canopy above.

It wasn't that the Captain didn't have prior experience in jungle operations. To the contrary, he had operated in Southeast Asia on many occasions where the jungle was just as thick as this. He had also operated in African jungles where large carnivores could ruin an operation as surely as the enemy...and where those same animals could also eat you alive if you weren't careful. But somehow, those jungles were different. The humidity here seemed denser. The sounds of the jungle were somehow more muted to his keen ears. There was just a different *feeling* about the jungles here in South America. He had heard that it was worse right along the Amazon, where the Brazilians were fighting Argentine and Chinese infiltrators and insurgents.

"This Amazon basin is so vast," he thought. "A resourceful enemy could hide in there for years."

He wondered if he would be assigned to any operations over there in the future.

"Who knows? Can't be any worse than the deserts and mountains of Iraq. At least there is plenty of cover here and you don't feel so exposed, even if my Farsi and Arabic is better than my Spanish," he continued to himself. "But right now I have my hands full right here thank you very much."

*snap*

The Captain quickly turned his head and peered carefully out of the blind he had set up fifty feet from the trail and looked through the trees and foliage to a point sixty feet up the trail from his position. The other five members of his team did the same all along a circular portion of the trail where they had set up their ambush. All together he had eight members in the team, himself, three former U.S. Navy Seals, three members of the elite Colombian Special Forces and a local guide.

The point man had signaled to them six minutes ago that the enemy was approaching along the trail. A simple, almost inaudible *click* over the channel they were all monitoring had told them. About twenty seconds later a double *click* had informed them that the last man in the enemy group had passed and that their target was amongst them. Now those enemy personnel were approaching, entering the trap the Captain had set for them.

Each team member had carefully laid out a field of fire that overlapped those next to him but did not endanger other members on the other side of the semi-circle from them. Anyone fully entering the ambush would be subject to a deadly crossfire. On either end, to prevent anyone attempting to escape, deadly Claymore mines had been set up. Captain Riley Adams was in the center of the line, with the guide. One of his men was to the left, followed by one of the Colombians. To the right were the other two Colombians. In addition to the former SEAL who had warned them of the enemy group's approach, another one of Riley's team was further down the trail to warn of any approaching danger from that direction. The trail itself wound around a large rock outcropping here, with flat terrain off the trail and extremely dense undergrowth. There would be no place for the enemy to escape.

As the Captain contemplated this and went over the fields of fire in his mind, he caught sight of a slight movement on the trail. There, just coming around the bend, was the point man for the enemy. He was good, moving slowly and close to the earth, scanning the trail and to either side of it for the slightest thing out of place. He could see that this was a choke point and he held his hand up in a fist to tell those behind him to wait. The slight man moved forward a few steps, and then stepped off the trail and disappeared into the underbrush to Adam's right.

"He should pass right between the two Colombians," Riley thought. "Come on, come on...nothing to see here."

A few seconds later the enemy point man returned to the trail and continued on past the Captain. Several other members of the enemy patrol now began to appear in single file along the trail. Then, perhaps thirty feet past Adams, the point man again stopped and made the fist sign and disappeared again into the underbrush out of Riley's view, very close to the team member to Adam's left.

The Captain could see the other enemy soldiers more clearly now. Five or six men approximately fifteen feet apart and disappearing around the curve in the trail. He estimated that most of the enemy personnel were already in the trap, but not far enough for his liking. Just then, there was a slight rustling in the brush to his left, a muted *thunk* followed immediately by a relatively loud gasp.

Riley immediately looked up the trail. The next enemy in line had definitely heard something and now lifted his hand in a fist. While the others knelt down and took cover, he quickly moved forward, looked into the brush where his point man had left the trail. He saw something that startled him and was quickly turning around when ...

*Plunk, Plunk, Plunk*

The three-round burst from the silenced M-5 impacted the second enemy soldier, spun him around and flung him to the ground.

Captain Adams quickly clicked his transmitter three times to indicate that the team should open fire, brought his weapon to bear and began firing himself. As he did so, he cut down the second enemy soldier in line and then quickly exited the back of his firing position keeping several large trees between himself and the enemy. He and the guide then moved through the trees parallel to the trail firing at other figures on the trail in support of their other team members.

With the three clicks of the radio, the entire area had erupted in the muted sounds of the team's silenced weapons overshadowed by the loud *CRACKS* of the enemy's AK-74's, punctuated by several full auto bursts. From well up the trail Riley heard the sound of Chief Watson's FAL, cracking over and over again as rounds continued to fly through the undergrowth near him. Then there were several *BOOMS* as the Claymores were ignited. After that, there were only two or three more muted firings from the silenced M-5's. Then it was over.

"Well, Felipe, that was some kind of mess, huh?" Adams said as he turned back to his guide.

But the guide was not standing behind him anymore. Hurrying a few steps back through the foliage the Captain could see one of Felipe's booted legs sticking out of the brush. Rushing over to his side, he found Felipe lying on his side, a lot of blood pooling under his head. Adams reached down to Felipe's neck and checked for a pulse...there was none. Turning Felipe over he immediately found out why. An AK-74 round had punched a hole right through Felipe's glasses and entered his brain through his right eye. They'd have to be their own guides now.

Taking further stock of the situation, Adams found that one of his Colombian team members had been killed and another wounded. The wounded soldier was nicked fairly badly on the arm, but could walk fine. All eight of the enemy soldiers were dead, including the principle objective of the mission.

There, laid out on the trail, was Jose dePastoral, the head of security for the entire, now united, Colombian Drug Cartel that had allied itself with the Panamanians and the Chinese. Over the last year, this man and his followers had assisted, guided and conducted many operations against the Colombian government as it tried to resist the joint Chinese and Panamanian invasion of their country. Many peasants in outlying areas had been butchered. A number of mid-level government officials had been assassinated. On three occasions, battalion sized raids deep into Colombia had been conducted. This man had been the mastermind of it all, and he was now very well terminated. Riley had been specifically brought in and assigned the task of tracking this man down and eliminating him. It had taken months to accomplish that task.

After a number of pictures were taken and all the documents, weapons and anything else of value was stripped from the enemy, Riley Adams allowed his two remaining Colombians to do the honors to Jose while the Americans buried the others deeply, well off the trail. When the Americans returned, they saw the body of Jose, against a tree next to the trail. The body had been driven into that tree with six bayonets retrieved from the enemy dead. It was placed in such a position that anyone passing down the trail would have to notice it and the fact that it had no head.

On a wooden pike that the Colombians had fashioned and planted in the ground directly in the middle of the trail and in front of the body, the eyes in Jose dePastoral's decapitated head gazed sightlessly back up the trail. A small wooden sign that had been brought along for this very purpose was affixed to the wooden staff below Jose's head. In Spanish, it simply said.

*Jose dePastoral.*

*Thus ends an enemy to the Columbian people and a collaborator  
and supporter of Communists and Criminals. All who pass here take note.*

**October 25, 21:02 Local Time**

**Jungles of Central Columbia**

**385 miles Northwest of Bogota, Columbia**

They had put fifteen miles between themselves and the site of the ambush. After going almost a mile down the trail in the opposite direction from which the enemy had come, the team had taken off across country. They had climbed over one small ridge, down into the next drainage, and then up the next ridge, which they followed for three miles. Now, on the far side of that ridge, in a sheltered outcropping of rock, the team set up camp for the night. If things went well, they would be extracted late tomorrow afternoon by a specially configured AV-22, outfitted for CIA operations.

As camp was being set up and security established for the night, Captain Adams took out his ruggedized, special operations palm computer that had been built in American specifically for operations like this one. It was a newer piece of equipment, deployed within the last six months and

built specifically to allow for quick, almost impossible to trace communications in a world that did not have ready access to satellite communications.

Riley entered the message he intended to transmit, reporting on the successful operation and their plans for extraction. Once entered, that message was encrypted and compressed. He then attached the device to a 10 meter short wave radio carried by one of his team members. The device downloaded the message into random access memory (RAM) on the radio and then transmitted the compressed file in less than one half second on the appropriate frequency before shutting off.

The team then waited for one half an hour and turned the radio back on. Within three minutes, a response had been received and the radio was again switched off.

Riley Adams then downloaded the message onto his palm device and processed it through the decompression and decryption algorithms. When the message was available, the Captain read it... and then read it again. Then, quickly turning to the men, he issued his commands.

"Alright guys, mount up," he said to the five remaining team members. "We've just been congratulated and as a reward we've been ordered to make for an alternate extraction point tonight."

Only two of the team members had actually been looking at their team leader when he started talking, but all of them had been listening. When he commanded them to "mount up" and then spoke of an alternate extraction point tonight, they all turned their heads in his direction and listened intently. Their weariness was evident, as was their dislike for the orders. But the Captain knew they would professionally and without fail follow orders ... and that is exactly what they did.

"We're going to be pulled out of the alternate location at 2 AM and we have almost ten miles of tough humping to get there.

"Let's go!"

The six men quickly broke camp and prepared to move. As they did, Captain Adams reviewed in his mind the words of the message he had just received.

**COPIED YOUR LAST. NEG ON TOMORROW PM EXTRACTION. PROCEED THIS PM TO THE FOLLOWING COORDINATES FOR A 0200 ALTERNATE EXTRACTION. URGENT NEW OPERATIONAL ORDERS. MAKE ALL DUE HASTE. COORDINATES FOLLOW.**

**November 2, 21:40 PDT**

### **Personal Study**

#### **Pacific Heights Subdivision, Palo Alto, California**

Sandra was extremely excited. Her efforts with Dr. Trevor had paid off over the last six weeks. She had finally convinced him to share with her the methods, procedures and complexities of his use of atomic force microscopies and enhanced mass spectrometric analysis. She could tell he had misgivings, but she also sensed that he was an honest man who was willing to give any other scientist the benefit of the doubt, even if he disagreed with some of their own personal views. If he thought the effort was focused on the advancement of the sciences and the benefit of mankind, and if he felt the methods were legal and moral, he would share.

After making all of this clear, after satisfying himself that it was the case, and after working out the details of their collaborative agreement, he had forwarded the data and the procedures to her. Now, after more weeks of intensive study and programming she had successfully developed the initial algorithms to emulate those techniques in a virtual model similar to her earlier efforts with older, slower and less resolute technology. The net result was that she was finally prepared to apply the new computational, processing and graphical power to the task at hand.

In addition to the latest methodologies and procedures, Dr. Trevor had also supplied her with the initial data samples that he had used to conduct the research that had ultimately led to the discovery of the Human Reasoning Structures, which she had examined and studied thoroughly. She had the data representing the tissue specimens and she had the outcome of his initial efforts with the atomic microscopies and enhanced spectrum analysis. She also had her new algorithms compiled, installed and ready to apply to the initial data. Hopefully, the algorithms would run and produce a viable result that she could then compare to the physical data resulting from Dr. Trevors initial studies. By comparing the outcome of her virtual analysis with the actual physical outcome she would be able to gauge precisely whether her modeling techniques had been successful, and she would be able to iterate the process in order to fine-tune the algorithms to maximize her success.

"Now, we'll just feed the data into the algorithms and see what they produce," she thought as she used the touch screen menu she had created and touched the "LOAD DATA" option.

She made her way through the various menu selections for the tissue type, the magnitude and type of analysis and the specific algorithms to be employed. Ultimately there would be several options for each selection based on the analysis selected. Tonight, with this initial test, there was only one algorithm and one level of analysis. Once she had made the appropriate selections and had actually loaded the test data into memory, she was finally ready to proceed.

"Nothing left now but to process," she said to herself as she placed her finger on the screen and pressed the "PROCESS" button.



She was using one of the new 25 GHz machines loaded with Thirty-two gigabytes of Random Access Memory (RAM) and 2 Gb of graphics memory for the 34 inch flat panel color display ... a real screamer. Nonetheless, given the amount of data being processed the machine labored through her algorithms for thirty seconds. At the end of that time a flashing PROCESSING COMPLETE message was displayed on the screen and a new menu option became active, DISPLAY RESULTS.

Saundra touched the DISPLAY RESULTS button and then picked the GRAPHICAL option so she could see the result on her flat panel display as they would appear under a microscope image generator. This took several more seconds to process graphically and then ...

She couldn't recognize a thing.

Something had gone wrong. Where had she made the mistake? This display was just so much gibberish compared to the results Dr. Trevor had obtained from his physical analysis.

Then it hit her. The resolution was all wrong. Working quickly she checked the resolution of the data provided by Dr. Trevor and zoomed the screen image to the proper setting to match.

And there it was. In fact, due to enhancements she had made in the algorithms based on the later research that Dr. Trevor had done, as well as the findings of the National Academy of Sciences ... her image was much more accurate and revealing than those initial findings Trevor had produced.

"My goodness ... this is very, very nice. This is absolutely exciting!" she muttered out loud as she panned around the image, comparing it to the one derived from the actual physical studies.

"I'll have to add a resolution setting option into the setup menu," she said to herself,

"I just can't believe I didn't provide for that from the start. I guess I was in such a hurry to get going that I just forgot and let it default to the highest resolution. Well, now that I know, it won't happen again," she continued.

"Now for the nitty-gritty of comparing the empirical data."

For the next three hours Saundra worked comparing data and fine tuning her set up and modeling algorithms. Then, well after midnight, she composed an email to Dr. Trevor and added and encrypted attachment that contained the results of her last iteration with the algorithms. She had no doubts that Dr. Trevor would be extremely impressed.

"He'll probably want some kind of live demo, either online or in person," she thought.

"But that's okay, we can give that to him any time now."

She was sure that once Trevor had verified the accuracy and reality of what she had produced with this experiment and demonstration that he would move rapidly within his own circles to establish the funding to completely productize the results for his own area of research. By agreement, that funding would include a percentage that would in turn pay for Saundra's further development of the algorithms and modeling into other fields of study, particularly her own.

"Now that I have successfully proven the concept, I am absolutely confident that it is just a matter of time before we experience the breakthroughs in fetal tissue research we have been looking for all of these years," she thought to herself as she finished composing the email to Dr. Trevor.

... and she was right, there would be a breakthrough ... but not the variety she expected.

**DRAGON'S FURY**  
**WORLD WAR**  
**AGAINST AMERICA**  
**AND THE WEST**

**YEAR FOUR**



**J E F F**  
**H E A D**

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**November 8, 14:40 EDT**  
**Director's Conference Room**  
**FBI Headquarters, Washington, DC**

"Okay, let's have a final review of the principle timeline and schedule for Operation Alvarez, both Plans A and B. I want to brief the President and both of the security teams this evening. This is a major counter-terrorist operation and is going to have significant impact on the overall war effort.

"Gerald, start with the domestic operations and proceed to the planned operations in Mexico, particularly on the status of the Mexican government's disposition as it pertains to the raids and our current surveillance on the targets. Then review the physical plans for the raids and the financial components in each area. I'll need a write up on your review after the meeting."

The FBI Director, Doyle Maxwell, sat down while the Senior Agent in Charge of the operation, Gerald Ludlow, proceeded. Operation Alvarez had been long in planning and represented a tremendous opportunity for Federal Law Enforcement, operating in conjunction with the Office of Homeland Security and with NORCOM of the Defense Department, to completely shut down and destroy one of the largest terror networks operating within the United States. It was a network that had been directly responsible for the deaths of thousands of Americans and the injury of thousands more...not to mention property damage valued in the billions...over the last two and one-half years.

FTA Trucking had been recognized as one of the darlings of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in the 1990's. The company was headquartered in Mexico City, but its North American Operations were headquartered in Dallas, Texas. The company had grown to a fleet of hundreds of new, big rig trucks and had employed thousands. Delivering materiel up and down the Interstate 35 corridor, which had been dubbed the NAFTA Highway, the company had been an overnight success because its new trucks met American safety guidelines (without the licensing fees) and because it boasted a driver training and safety program second to none. It had quickly expanded its operations to the Interstate 25, Interstate 15 and Interstate 5 corridors in New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and California respectively.

The President of the parent company, Hector Ortiz, had wooed Congressmen and State Governors in the years leading up to and following the passage of NAFTA by the U.S. Congress. His political influence was well known and he was a well-spoken and very dynamic individual. His success had spurred others to look more favorably on NAFTA at a time when many Americans, particularly in the agricultural and trucking industry, were castigating the legislation for what they pointed out were its unfair provisions for foreign trucking and foreign agriculture. In effect they said, it provided legitimacy to and fostered the low wage practices of foreign governments at the expense of their own people and at the expense of American jobs. Those concerns had fallen on deaf ears at a time when American politicians and CEO's were anxious to defend the legislation because of the better earnings it would bring their multi-national corporations, the catering it provided to special interest groups (not to mention the votes those groups might provide) and because many of them felt that the global economy called for and demanded such practices.

All of those issues aside, as it turned out, Hector Ortiz was also a master terrorist who had ties to international terrorism and communism. Behind his global free market façade was a devoted Marxist and proponent for the Aztlan movement to carve out a new Spanish-speaking nation from portions of northern Mexico and the southwestern United States. In this regard, FTA Trucking was not only profitable or him personally, but also fit exactly into what he had planned politically and ideologically.

Each year Ortiz funneled many hundreds of terrorists and tons of weapons and explosives into the United States for use during what he viewed as the inevitable conflict. His clandestine ties to foreign governments led to the development of numerous operational plans long years in advance of the outbreak of hostilities. He had installed one of his foremost allies and proponents, Miguel Santos, as the President of the U.S. Operations for FTA and they had prepared carefully for events in conjunction with the eventual conflict they hoped to be a part of. With the Chinese attack against America, that opportunity had come. The FBI's latest data indicated that teams recruited, financed and supported by FTA Trucking had been involved with terrorist attacks against American infrastructure and civilians from the outset of hostilities, continuing right up to the current time.

Only the quick thinking and actions of ranchers and farmers in northern New Mexico had allowed for the ultimate break in the case. During and after the setting of the "super fire" in southern Colorado, ranchers had seen and identified the team leader of the terrorist cell that had set that blaze. Later, when that team leader had come into the small town of Lumberton, New Mexico, to buy supplies for the ranch where he and his team had taken refuge as "migrant" workers, ranchers in the town had recognized him from TV reports and had captured and held him for authorities. A raid on the ranch had captured or killed the rest of that team. In this way, Manuel Mendoza, one of the most experienced and dangerous team leaders in Miguel's and Hector's employ had been captured. Over the ensuing months his long interrogation had paid off and resulted in the identification of numerous terror cells being run by FTA, including the direct involvement of the top man, Hector Ortiz.

Miguel Santos, had long since escaped from the United States and fled to a hacienda he owned in southern Mexico. CIA and special forces operative had gathered enough intelligence on his operations there to show that he was continuing to train and support ongoing terror activities in the United States. Hector Ortiz was apparently unaware of the intelligence the American authorities now had tying him directly to Manuel's and Miguel's activities. He was secure in his continued position at the helm of FTA and felt he had put the stigma of his U.S. Operation's President having been associated with terrorism behind him, all the while continuing those very terrorist operations himself.

Now, the FBI, Homeland Security, NORCOMM and the President of the United States himself, were all anxiously waiting for Hector to make his next scheduled trip down to Dallas to review his U.S. operations. That trip was scheduled for November 12<sup>th</sup> and Alvarez called for him to be taken into custody on American soil as he sat in conference with his U.S. executive staff. Operation Alvarez would also involve a special forces raid into Mexico to take Miguel Santos into custody in conjunction with several other raids within the borders of the United States to capture or destroy other known cells. All of these raids would occur the night of November 12<sup>th</sup> as Hector himself was taken into custody.

The problem with the plan from the outset had been concern over Mexican approval and assistance. Several within the task force had advocated simply doing the job and not being concerned over Mexican approval. The concern for them was that the Mexican government was corrupt and possibly in league with many of the terrorists themselves. Although Director Maxwell understood and sympathized with this notion at a practical and tactical level, he also understood the political reality. The United States could not afford to have other allies react adversely to any blatant violation of sovereignty. Despite Mexico's potential corruption, the camp favoring gaining approval, pointed out that the nation was an effective buffer against the hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops now moving north into Costa Rica in Central America. America would need the support of every nation in the area to defeat and push back the Chinese and retake the Panama Canal. But the Director knew this was true of Mexico only in so far that the corruption did not extend to the point of collusion with China. There were many in the administration who had grave concerns over just that issue.

The President himself had ultimately made the decision. Weeks ago he determined that he would personally speak with Presidente Conejo of Mexico and ask his approval for operations directed at a significant terror cell within Mexico's borders. The Mexican President had tentatively agreed with President Weisskopf's request, but wanted more information ... more specifics. When the President had indicated that such intelligence would not be possible until just hours before the operation, the Mexican President had voiced his displeasure. When President Weisskopf had held firm, Conejo had indicated that his Internal Security Minister, Minister Madera, would work out the details with the designated American officials. Doyle Maxwell had been assigned the task of coordination with the Mexican authorities and was now waiting for Agent Gerald Ludlow to inform the entire team of the final results of that effort. As the Director finished his own personal review of the situation in his mind, Ludlow was just reviewing the most recent, and what would turn out to be the last, communication with Minister Madera in that regard.

"As to approval and coordination with Mexican authorities, I am sorry to have to report that there has been a complete breakdown in that regard. Minister Madera informed me as of two hours ago that the Mexican government could not possibly approve of any American penetration of its borders unless the operation was planned with Mexican security forces at least seventy-two hours prior to the raid, with Mexican forces actively involved in the assault and with full disclosure of targets and evidence to Mexican local and federal officials in advance of that final planning. I am afraid we will have to ask the President to approve Plan B as regards the assault itself."

**November 8, 21:30 EDT**

**Situation Room, The White House**

**Washington, DC**

"Mr. President, there can be no doubt. Two minutes after completing his call to Agent Ludlow, Madera walked over to Conejo's office and was granted immediate access. That meeting lasted seventeen minutes.

"Madera then left that meeting, returned to his office and placed the call to Santos directly, the transcript of which you have before you. Even though the call was placed on a highly encrypted cellular phone which we could not directly intercept, one of our operatives in the Executive Offices of the Mexican government was able to tape Madera's side of the conversation and our special forces people operating outside of the hacienda in southern Mexico caught Santos' side of the conversation as he spoke on the putting green outside of his home. We have both sides of the conversation.

"Madera made six other calls from within his office on the same phone. He was warning what we believe to be several drug and terror cells-and in most cases they overlap-of a significant "gringo" operation directed at entities unknown and that they should all consider either beefing up their security or moving their operations as soon as possible.

“With respect to Santos, it is clear that he is not sure if he is the target or not. But he is very likely to take some action in the event he is a target and in the event that the timetable is eminent. We have to believe that Ortiz has been similarly warned, though we have no record of it.”

President Weisskopf considered the words of his CIA Director as he watched the other members of the team in the room with him. He felt a growing anger towards those in power south of the American border. The Director of the FBI, his Homeland Security Director, the Commander of NORCOMM, the Vice President of the United States, the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs were all present. He could tell from their posture and from the looks on their faces that each of them were contemplating this revelation and the national security issues it raised along the same lines as he was

Turning to his NSA, the President asked,

“Well, Bill, do we have any indication that Santos is moving?”

Bill Hendrickson had checked the latest real time images coming in from the Global Inspector UAV loitering high above Santos’ hacienda before coming to the meeting. Built of radar absorbing materiel and designed to reflect any radar waves away from the radar’s receiver, the newest Global Inspector UAV aircraft could remain on station for days, even weeks at a time without detection over a nation with the capabilities of Mexico. The People’s Republic was turning out to be a different matter of late, but Mexico simply had no way of detecting the aircraft, short of Mexican defense aircraft happening upon it. That was not going to happen because the Mexican government would give no overt indication of support to the likes of Santos.

“Sir, as of twenty hundred hours there was no indication of any move. Santos, his principle lieutenants and his family are all at the compound and we have seen no indication of planning, either from overhead, or as I understand it from Director Ballard, from our assets on the ground.

“Robert, jump in here and correct me if I am wrong.”

The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency quickly answered.

“No, Bill, you are completely correct. No indication from the ground that Santos is planning a move. Of course, we might not get much indication, he may just hop in a vehicle and drive away.”

As everyone reflected on that very real possibility, Bill Hendrickson continued.

“This afternoon we did see that they brought in more personnel and they are mounting some fairly sophisticated man portable surface to air missiles along with heavy caliber weapons. At any one time we are estimating now that Santos has what amounts to a full Company of irregular forces within his compound and two or three platoon strength patrols outside of the perimeter at all times.”

The President took all of this in and then turned to FBI Director, Doyle Maxwell.

“Well, Doyle, as the individual in charge of the overall operation, what are your recommendations considering everything we have heard?”

Doyle had already thought through all of this. He and Special Agent Ludlow and the entire planning team had discussed it in depth and, short of surprising revelations in this meeting, had already decided upon their recommendation. He spoke without hesitation.

“Mr. President, I recommend we initiate Plan B and proceed with Operation Alvarez. We simply MUST put these terrorists and enemies out of business. There is no telling what further intelligence we may acquire when we do, and we must make an example of these individuals who have caused the death and destruction to so many of our citizens and their property. While I would like the support and coordination of the Mexican officials and forces, I know we can accomplish all of our aims, including those within Mexico without it.”

The President was satisfied with Director Maxwell’s response. It was exactly the way he felt.

“Alright then, you have my NCA approval. Initiate Plan B of Alvarez as it has been developed. Fred, I would like to meet with you afterwards to develop a very direct and to the point communiqué to President Conejo and his government. I would like that communiqué delivered to them just as the operation starts, while our people are in the process of making their assaults, arrests and confiscations.

“I want it to be clear to Conejo, and by extension and by copy, to any other governments on the sidelines in this conflict or contemplating any type of support for our enemies. In the words of the former President Bush ... *you are either with us, or you are with the terrorists!*

“Make it clear to President Conejo, that while we regret and do not relish this violation of his space, that we will do so now ... and do so again ... in order to protect ourselves from our enemies finding any sanctuary or harbor any place in his nation. Our communiqué must make that last part very plain to him ... *any place in his nation ... any place!*

“Indicate that in this regard we want to give him one last chance to grant us permission while we are doing it ... and that we expect Minister Madera to be apprehended, held and turned over to our forces for trial. Share with him the transcript of this phone conversation as evidence and our concerns about such corruption and leanings reaching to the highest levels of President Conejo's government.”

**November 12, 22:15 CDT**  
**Executive Conference Room, FTA Trucking**  
**Dallas, TX**

Hector listened closely as the meeting proceeded. Operations were going well, both commercially and the more clandestine variety. Many of the directors and managers present were not involved in the latter and their reports were solely what they purported to be, reviews of FTA trucking operations along the various Interstate Highway corridors in the United States.

But several of the higher level directors and the vice presidents of U.S. operations, gave their reports in an elaborate code, the same type of code that had served Hector and Miguel so well over the years. Those reports had a double meaning of not only operational status for the commercial business, but also the operational status of the next wave of attacks and disruptions by operatives FTA had placed all across the central and western United States.

"Times are difficult," he thought.

"None of the operations go cleanly any more ... few of the participants escape to fight another day. The Americans under Weisskopf have certainly not responded as many we hoped."

Hector was referring specifically to the Homeland Security Department and their way it had been altered under Weisskopf. It had gone from a behemoth department encompassing many of America's Federal Law enforcement agencies and attempting to force that federal bureaucracy down to the local level in an effort to "secure" America, to a Department that coordinated and assisted the rapidly growing efforts of those localities themselves. President Weisskopf's "Home Guard" initiatives in conjunction with the Firearms Restoration Act had galvanized the American citizenry themselves to provide their own security. This had been the single most effective measure the American's had taken in fighting Hector's operations, and other like it...and Hector knew it all too well. Manuel was in custody, maybe dead. Miguel was in hiding in southern Mexico.

"Simply put, too many of them are armed," Hector thought as the meeting continued.

"And now they are organized to use those arms. How do you fight and infiltrate when there are more than eighty million armed and prepared citizens in your way?"

Despite this, Hector viewed his efforts as a success. Even though the Americans were stepping up their efforts and were tightening their security and improving their interdiction and investigations, they had been hurt. For the last two and a half years America's ability to mobilize had been hampered and retarded by his own efforts, by the efforts of the many Islamic fundamentalists within America willing to practice Jihad and by the large number of Chinese operatives who had infiltrated the United States. The magnitude and effectiveness of this last group was even surprising Hector. It was turning out that the Chinese had a network within America that was more effective and more numerous than his own and the Islamics combined.

"I believe it will be enough. With the Chinese forces making such substantial gains in the Pacific and Australia assisted by the Indians, with the Chinese gains in Central and South America, and with the Islamic gains in the Mid East, Africa and even Europe ... I don't think the Americans will be able to overcome their losses.

"If things go as hoped, the general military fighting should be here in America soon, and so it is time for me to gracefully step back and let that occur."

Hector had no allusions. He knew that in addition to the potential for large military operations coming to America, there was the more eminent threat of the American security and law enforcement organizations catching up to him. Manuel's capture and detention, Miguel having to flee...all of that represented a series of events leading ever closer to Hector himself. He had been warned by his own sources and confidants in the Mexican government several days ago, before that fool Madera had contacted him, that a U.S. intelligence operation was imminent. The threat was vague, but Hector was not willing to take too many chances.

In the end, he had decided that it was more risky to break his announced schedule and not appear at this meeting than it would be to go ahead and keep the appointment. His arrival at DFW airport had been nervous, but uneventful as nothing untoward had occurred. He had breathed much easier as he had traveled here to the intersection of I-635 and Central Expressway for the meeting. Apparently, the alert was going to prove to be another false alarm. Besides, he had important news to announce that would facilitate a graceful and fully legal exit for himself and his trusted lieutenants.

FTA Trucking was being sold. A group of wholly uninvolved investors representing a number of independent American trucking firms had formed an investment consortium and had tendered an offer. After significant confidential negotiating, Hector and his team in Mexico City had secured a profitable deal and had approved it. He would announce it to the executives here at the end of the meeting tonight, and to the press tomorrow. Then, on the 15<sup>th</sup> he would travel back to Mexico City and plan for the future he felt was within his grasp. His mentors, in the Caribbean, in South America, and in Asia, had assured him that Aztlán would be one of the results of their victory, and that he, Hector Ortiz, would figure heavily into the creation and governing of that new nation.

But his mentors were wrong.

As Hector contemplated these satisfying and self-congratulatory thoughts, a small red light on the executive console in front of him began to flash. Almost simultaneously, a soft but insistent vibration from his personal, encrypted security cell phone began demanding his attention.

Hector's blood ran cold. There was only one reason for that light to start flashing and the vibrations from his cell phone only confirmed it. Hector glanced around the room as he rose and excused himself to enter the executive washroom off of the conference room. As he did so, and as the meeting continued behind him, he noticed the Vice President of Operations excusing himself from across the room and walking towards the washroom himself.

Hector could not, he would not wait. He had not survived this long by being lax, or charitable. As he entered the washroom he quickly activated a concealed, triple dead-bolt lock. From a hidden compartment he withdrew a Glock 9mm pistol and then reached under the counter, slid a covering off a concealed indentation, and then flipped the switch it revealed. As the doorknob to the washroom turned from the outside, first tentatively and then more and more urgently ... even frantically, Hector stepped into the concealed corridor that had been revealed with the flip of the switch and allowed the door that revealed it to close behind him..

Ten seconds after Hector stepped into the hidden corridor, the double doors to the executive conference room to FTA trucking flew open from the outside and fifteen heavily armed members of a Joint Terrorism Task Force burst into the room and began detaining everyone there.

Hector never heard the commotion back in the conference room. He had already climbed down two ladders and was approaching a landing that would take him into the fire exit corridor two floors below the offices he had just exited. As he prepared to enter the security code into the digital pad attached to the hidden door, Hector found he no longer had control of his fingers ... or his arms ... or his legs. Although completely conscience, Hector dropped the Glock and fell to the steel grated floor of the landing, twisting as he did so until his face was directed back in the direction from which he had come. As he watched in an uncomfortably detached way, two sets of boots approached from around the corner of the landing and two sets of strong hands lifted him up.

Once standing ... or more correctly, once being held in a standing position, what he saw shocked him. Four men, dressed in full chemical protective garb approached him while two other men, similarly garbed, held him up. One of the four had picked up and was placing a small cylinder into a protective sleeve of some type. Another of the four approached and spoke directly to him.

"Hector Ortiz, I am Special Agent Ludlow of the FBI and the Region VI Joint Terrorism Task Force. I know you can hear and understand me.

"You are experiencing the effects of a non-lethal nerve agent that has rendered you incapacitated. I am placing you under arrest for murder and terrorist acts against the United States of America, and for conspiracy to commit terrorist acts and murder against the government and people of the United States of America, among a number of other federal and various local charges."

With that, the agent himself entered the code on the digital pad and the door opened to a stairwell full of more armed men who carried Hector back into the normal areas of the building. He was taken to an elevator and down to the basement of the building where a waiting unmarked FBI SUV would transport him to Federal detention and interrogation.

### **November 12, that same time**

#### **Main Entry Hall**

#### **Santos Hacienda, Southern Mexico**

Sporadic firing was still coming from the fields and forests outside of the compound, but here inside the compound, and particularly inside of the main building, all was now quiet.

Riley Adams led the assault on the compound and was surprised everything had gone so well.

"This is one of those few occasions where everything went according to plan, even after the firing started," he thought to himself.

Sniper teams had taken out the surface to air missile teams that were identified in real time by the Global Inspector UAV overhead. They did this as the specially configured SPECOPS aircraft approached up the valley from the east. Those first two aircraft, specially outfitted AC-130H Specter aircraft escorted by F-15C Eagles far overhead, carried two specially configured electronic counter measure pods and two large gas canister pods, one of each under each wing. One of the counter measure pods was a standard jamming pod that jammed every available radio and communication frequency that could possibly be used by the security forces at the hacienda. The other pod was a Electro-Magnetic Pulse (EMP) generator that would fry every unhardened electronic device in its path for a half mile wide. The two planes together generated a path of electronic destruction a mile wide as they approached the hacienda and everything from radios to radar to motor vehicles to electric shavers had their electronics fried and simply stopped working as the aircraft approached and then flew overhead. As they passed over, they released a non-lethal nerve gas from their canisters. It was odorless and tasteless, just like the gas used to capture Hector Ortiz. It reacted with the human nervous system upon contact with any exposed skin. Earlier less developed forms had proven

dangerous to certain age and health demographic groups, as the Russians had found out when they used their own such an agent to break up a Chechen Terror attack in Moscow in the fall of 2002.

"The stuff we use today is sure a lot more effective," thought Captain Riley as he contemplated its effects here this evening.

Because the gas had been delivered by air in a "crop dusting" fashion, it had dispersed unevenly and not all of Miguel's men had been incapacitated, particularly those indoors at the time. But it had played havoc on the large numbers of men patrolling in and near to the hacienda and had made the Special Forces insertion much easier and not nearly so "hot" as it otherwise could have been.

Two hundred Special Forces troops had come in behind the AC-130H gun ships that were by then orbiting in protective mode over the battle area. The troops arrived in eight AV-22 transport aircraft and landed to the east, south and north of the facility. Some sporadic gunfire greeted them, but it was quickly quelled by the AC-130 gunships and by sniper teams pre-positioned in the hills around the facility. The force had quickly rolled over the hacienda perimeter with little resistance.

A brief and fierce firefight had erupted as Miguel's forces contested the American's assault on the main building and its adjoining recreation room which was doubling as the communications center. Those ten minutes of heavy fighting had resulted in two American deaths this night, and most of the six casualties. By comparison, the enemy had suffered thirty-seven dead and over forty wounded, and over one hundred others who were incapacitated taken into custody. Some sporadic fighting was still going on in the surrounding hills and jungles as stragglers tried to escape.

As Captain Riley contemplated all of this, one of his Lieutenants and a senior NCO entered the room with several people in chains and with bags over their heads.

"What have you got for me Lieutenant?" Adams asked as they approached and the NCO instructed the captives to lie down on the floor.

The Lieutenant, once he was sure the captives were completely secure, turned to his Riley.

"Sir, I believe we have the Avocado himself here along with three of his security team.

"Sergeant Hollister is holding Mrs. Avocado and her three kids in a back room for extraction and delivery as planned. Originally there were eight members of the security team...but they resisted."

Satisfied that the Lieutenant had made a positive ID before reporting, Riley walked over to where the captives were lying. Once the Avocado was pointed out to him, Adams approached and knelt down next to him and spoke into his ear.

"Miguel, I know you understand everything I am saying to you. I am the officer in charge of the American forces who have taken you prisoner. You and the surviving members of your forces are going to be extradited back to the United States where you will stand trial for murder, terrorist acts against the United States and for conspiracy to commit murder and terrorist acts against the people and government of the United States.

"Your wife and children will be interrogated and held pending the outcome of tribunals concerning their disposition. It is fairly safe to say that you will never see any of them again in this life... and, unless my surmise is wrong, it is unlikely that you will be seeing them afterward either.

"Lieutenant, get these vermin out of here."

**November 29, 4:30 PM**

**Steps of the Capitol Building**

**Washington, DC**

The media was here in all its splendor. In fact, there was David Krenshaw of WNN preparing to start his own coverage.

"Amazing that he would be out here personally," thought Curt.

"That guy never misses an opportunity to be in front of a camera for a major event."

Of course, all of this was carefully choreographed. David Krenshaw, as a powerful member of the Council of International Relations, was very supportive of this effort. Off the record, there had already been several very positive discussions and Curt felt he could count on WNN coverage in the best possible light. As he considered this, Curt Johnson tried to imagine the road ahead. Here he was, with an extremely liberal Senator from California, about to announce their bid for the Presidency of the United States. It would be an effort to accomplish something that had never been done before, unseating a sitting U.S. President in the middle of an ongoing war.

"... and a very popular President at that," thought Johnson as he continued thinking of the course that lay before him.

Things had moved quickly since that meeting in Dallas. Warren Woodson had effectively lobbied the DNC and other major contributors to the Democratic party. They all viewed Johnson as an outsider, which he was, and a moderate at best ... but they all knew that nothing else would have a chance of challenging President Weisskopf and his current popularity. The fact that Susan Crater would be on the ticket to balance it and hold the base was what pushed the idea over the top.

Most of the major party leadership simply went along because it was the least politically dangerous. Very few of them felt that the ticket had a snow balls chance of seriously challenging the President and they viewed this as a way of advancing a place holder for the party until more favorable



conditions presented themselves. At that time they could advance the real party agenda with their major candidates who would have no political baggage left over from this failed campaign.

Curt knew all of this, and he was fine with it. From his perspective, this was not about either political party. He did not view himself as a politician, but he had some strong beliefs about what this President was establishing as a result of the war time conditions. Certainly his feelings about the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment and the roll back of what he viewed as “sensible” controls on public ownership and use of firearms was at the forefront of that. But he knew that was not all.

In fact, Curt Johnson also had serious concerns and disagreement on immigration and detention policies that were ongoing in the nation right now. He felt that there must certainly be a way to control their borders without the gross infringement on what he deemed as the civil rights of the these “immigrants” desiring entry into the country. He felt that the President and his administration were appealing to, and taking advantage of, the fears and anxieties that the war was necessarily producing to advance a very bigoted policy that would ultimately lead to long term stagnation ... and he was not afraid to say so on this topic, or any of the other several major issues he intended to raise ... and if his brief and informal discussions with David Krenshaw were any indication, as evidenced by his presence here, Curt felt he was attracting some powerful allies to his cause.

Curt Johnson, despite his tendencies towards lesser government and moderate positions, firmly believed that the immigration issue was an important one to tens of millions of citizens of recent foreign decent, and he was perfectly prepared to allow the party handlers to make as much political hay out of that as possible. He knew the effort would be hard, he knew that there was likely very little chance that he would succeed, but he felt strongly that he had to make the effort. The embarrassment and the stigma surrounding his resignation and discharge from the Weisskopf administration only further fueled his commitment to get these issues squarely in the public eye in order to foster healthy debate regarding them and hopefully, to have them propel him into the Presidency.

Very soon now, the head of the DNC would stand up to the podium and announce the candidacy of Curt Johnson and Susan Crater for the Presidency of the United States and the party leadership’s full support of that campaign. The plan that they had developed over the last weeks called for little Democratic opposition in the primaries in order to best prepare for the national election next November. Curt’s thoughts in this regard were interrupted as Susan and her husband arrived and took their seats next to Curt and his wife.

Curt stood and warmly shook both of their hands, a move that cameramen from four networks caught from various angles and that would lead into the news stories that would on the evening news.

“Glad you could make it,” Curt joked, “Are you ready for the games to begin?”

Susan Crater contemplated for a moment and then replied as she sat down.

“About as ready as one can be Curt.

“We have a long road in front of us, but I believe it will end up being an historic one.”

... and historic it would be, but not in the way either Curt or Susan contemplated.

**December 5, 1:47 PM**

**Outside the State Capitol Building**

**Sacramento, California**

As the crowd pressed to get as close to the President’s path as the security detail would allow, Secret Service and other law enforcement agency snipers manned the tops of every building within a mile of the President. Above them all, specially configured and outfitted helicopters buzzed over the area while Air Force fighter jets and surveillance aircraft circled at higher altitudes. If the President insisted on these regular visits around the country to bolster the moral of the populace, then those tasked with his security and protection would spare no effort or cost to ensure he did so safely.

As the President approached his motorcade, the reporters jostled for position and called out questions to get the President’s attention.

“Mr. President, Mr. President,” the yelled.

One in particular, JT Samson of SierraLines, was able to get his entire question heard above all of the rest in a brief lull as the President approached his vehicle.

“Mr. President, what is your response to the announcement of the candidacy of Curt Johnson and Senator Crater ... it’s been almost a week?”

The President paused and turned to the crowd and the reporters.

“No direct response is necessary. Their announcement speaks for itself. This is a part of our great Republic and the institutions that define it. I welcome an exercise of that process that leads to the fundamental right of American citizens to choose their leaders ... it is, after all, the same process that placed me in the position of responsibility that I now hold.

“I will say this, and you reporters can record it as a policy announcement.

“I will not be campaigning per se in this election. The responsibility that I have in the current circumstances prevent me from even thinking of taking the time to do so. As a nation, as a people ... as a culture ... we face perhaps the greatest challenge and mortal threat in our history. The people of this great nation have seen me in action over the last three years ... in times that have tried us all.

"I will continue doing my job and let the people decide this issue on that basis. I am sure the party will do its share of campaigning. The necessary paperwork will be filed for both the primaries and the national election when that time comes. But neither myself or anyone in my administration will take the time, the money or the effort to hit the campaign trail. We will let our conscientious efforts to fulfill our duty be our campaign. Thank you."

With that, and as JT Samson hurriedly scribbled down his own thoughts on the President's comments, which would be up on his main page at SierraLines on the internet within fifteen minutes, the President waived to the crowd and slipped into the limousine that would take him to Air Force One and his flight back across the country to Washington, DC.

### **December through February in Asia and the Pacific**

As the western nations prepared to celebrate the Holiday season, events in the Pacific Ocean muted the joyous occasions surrounding the birth of the Spiritual King of Christendom and the ringing in of a new year. Australia was on the verge of collapse with heavy fighting raging around Sydney. The allies were preparing a massive Dunkirk-type evacuation in case the outer ring of defenses fell, and that fall appeared imminent.

Admiral Ryan, the overall commander of U.S. and Allied forces in and around Australia continued to attempt to draw the Chinese and their allies into a decisive sea battle that would favor the allies. But the Coalition of Asian State naval forces were content to guard the sea lanes to their Australian staging areas as their ground forces continued to make progress in the southeast and as they consolidated their positions throughout the continent. The result were several sharp but minor naval engagements, but no decisive battle. As February approached its end, Admiral Ryan was preparing a bold plan to force the issue.

Elsewhere in the western Pacific and Asia, the Coalition of Asian States reigned. All nations had fallen before them from Japan across the ocean and across Asia to the other side of India. The line of advance in the Pacific itself extended well out towards Wake Island and encompassed all of the Solomon Islands down to the southeast coast of Australia. There was still guerilla warfare being waged in areas of the Philippines, in Thailand and behind the lines in Australia, but without support and re-supply, the efforts, while bothersome to CAS troops, were inconsequential to the larger effort.

Lu Pham, the research and development genius responsible for the Chinese LRASD weaponry, and his family enjoyed relative peace, outside of only occasional air raids by allied aircraft and cruise missiles. Lu Pham's team of engineers continued to produce innovative advances for the LRASD weaponry that blunted allied attempts to negate the tremendous advantage these weapons were giving CAS and GIR forces. These new innovations were immediately tested and deployed upon the literally hundreds of conversion ships that the Chinese continued to build. Lu Pham's good friend, Sung Hsu, continued to rise in prominence in the military shipbuilding industry and was contributing extensively to the manufacturing innovations that were allowing the Chinese, through their large shipbuilding conglomerate, COSCO, to meet the war demands of their nation. Hundreds of Chinese ships, with thousands of the latest revisions of the LRASD, Killer Whale weaponry, continued to be one of the key factors allowing the CAS and GIR to continue their expansion without fear of what advantages that the U.S. Navy and her allies could otherwise bring to bear.

However, the latest American innovations in the form of the Submerged Threat Close in Weapons System (SUBT CIWS) was about to make its debut in the Pacific Ocean. The U.S.S. Shanksville had taken longer to finish its shakedown and trials because of several problems with some of its new systems. Some of those problems included timing and effectiveness of the CSUBT CIWS. But the American developers and weapons engineers believed they had corrected those issues and the Shanksville along with several escorts employing the same defenses would be entering combat theaters of operation in March and April. Soon thereafter, increasing numbers of retrofitted ships would also be coming out of dry docks throughout the CONUS and from the larger repair and dry-dock facilities in the various theaters of operations.

At the end of February, the only areas free of the CAS rule in all of the western Pacific and Asia were those areas of Russia and Siberia that had entered into the economic pact with the CAS and the GIR to exploit Siberian resources. This arrangement had proven immensely profitable to Russia and critical to the war effort for the CAS and GIR. Now, as Spring approached, the continuation of Phase II of the CAS war plan entitled Hung-Lu-Dong turned its attention to the north in preparation for the even more ambitious Phase III, as Jien Zenim had long since envisioned and planned.

### **December through February in The Middle East**

The GIR continued to consolidate and build up its positions around Israel through the opening days of the year, according to Imam Hassan Sayeed's overall direction implemented by his theater CINC, General Talabari. Outside of an area bounded by southern Lebanon to the Golan Heights, extending on the east side of Jordan down past the Dead Sea to the Red Sea and then encompassing the entire Sinai peninsula over to positions along the now closed Suez Canal, the entire Middle East was controlled by the GIR. GIR forces continued to flood into those areas surrounding Israel in

preparation for what everyone knew would certainly be one of the most intense, concentrated and viscous battles in history. The lives of many millions hung in the balance.

While the GIR was consolidating and reinforcing, the allies were doing the same. At great cost, the sea and air lanes across the Mediterranean Sea were kept open into Israel and a river of men and materiel continued to flow into the small nation. While this was happening, the GIR had increased their numbers of Chinese LRASD "Killer Whale" devices and were launching them literally from anything that could carry them into the Sea. Trawlers, cargo ships and all sorts of combatants were modified to carry the various versions of the weaponry. Many of these would then make a suicidal dash into the sea to launch them.

The U. S. Navy and her allies were literally sinking any unknown vessel on contact to avoid the horrific results of a successful launch of these weapons. Ultimately, as a result of the relative short ranges involved all along the eastern Mediterranean coast, the GIR successfully developed coastal launchers for the weapons and employed them successfully. On January 12<sup>th</sup>, the U.S.S. Kearsage and the HMS Pendleton Amphibious assault ships were both sunk along with two of their escorts as they approached the Israeli coast by LRASD weapons launched from shore installations to the north.

Elsewhere, the GIR consolidated its strong positions in northern Africa and all along the Nile River down into Ethiopia and Kenya which had both officially joined the GIR in December. From the Horn of Africa, extending over 300 miles inland up to the Mediterranean and extending westward along the Mediterranean to just south of Gibraltar, the GIR controlled all of Northern Africa. Well over one billion Muslims now practiced their faith under the great Imam's political, religious and social order ... an order he fully intended to export to as many infidel nations as Allah would grant.

The only positive response, outside of the continued successful defense of Israel, that the allies were able to accomplish was the landing of significant forces in Nigeria in an effort to establish a strong presence and base of operations in Africa. Brazil, local nations, and small contingents from several European nations had committed forces to this task and a force of several hundred thousand was now safely ashore. Their hope was to move north and east in an effort to bring pressure on and hopefully out flank the massive GIR forces preparing to attack Israel from Egypt.

### **December through February in Central and South America**

War continued to rage in Central and South America. Venezuela, Panama and Argentina, supported by increasing numbers of Chinese, continued to attempt to advance throughout the region. To the north they were advancing into Costa Rica and Nicaragua. In the center they were advancing into Colombia. To the south they were fighting and attempting to advance into Brazil from Argentina. More and more Chinese forces were arriving by submarine, by aircraft, and by the Chinese surface combatant or commercial cargo ships that got through American and allied patrols.

In Costa Rica American forces fell back in a begrudging retreat. San Jose fell and the allied defense strategy called for a fall back into Nicaragua to defensive positions in the hills above the coastal low lands as far north as Managua. Corporal Hernando Rodriguez and the U.S. Army Company that he was a part of had been moved into position along these defensive lines and he was awaiting his first real ground combat there. The retreating American, Costa Rican and Nicaraguan forces were falling back towards them and would take up positions along the line with the larger American forces of which Rodriguez was a part. As March approached, he shared his thoughts, anxieties, aspirations and hopes with his wife Maria and his parents back in Florida by mail. He also made sure that Maria understood that she must pass his love and thoughts to his new son, Felipe, who had been born in March of that year in his absence.

In South America, Panamanian and Chinese forces advanced into Columbia from the north as Brazilian, American and Columbian forces fought them. Due to the nature of the two pronged attack by the Chinese and Coalition of South American States (CSAS) forces, the fall of Columbia was a very real prospect early that year. A beleaguered allied supply system was strained, but as demands for more call-ups and volunteers went out, the Brazilian and American public responded and more forces were trained and deployed into the fight.

The entire circumstance in Colombia and further north in Costa Rica was exasperated by the continued warfare along Brazil's southern border with Argentina. The battles had sea-sawed back and forth between Mercedes, Argentina and Santa Maria, Brazil for over a year, with neither side making any significant progress. The entire countryside in that part of the continent was turned into a blasted and ruined wilderness as both forces continued to surge back and forth over the same devastated terrain, seeking an advantage to allow them to break through and defeat their enemy. But despite the bloody stalemate, the Argentine forces were accomplishing their mission. That mission was simply to hold and occupy as many Brazilian forces as possible in order to keep them from other theaters of combat. If the Argentine forces could achieve a breakthrough and cause more harm to Brazil, that would be viewed as a significant bonus. In a circumstance where Brazil normally would have had no problem defeating Argentine incursions, the Chinese and CSAS planners knew that the Brazilians would be unable to bring sufficient force to bear because of their commitments elsewhere. In fact it was hoped that the Brazilians would be forced to lessen their commitments in those other areas as a

result of the threat in the south, and that hope was bearing fruit. In Africa, the planned expeditionary force of 250,000 Brazilians assembling in Nigeria to prepare for northward movement against the GIR had already been reduced to 200,000 to allow more forces to be thrown into the fight with Argentina.

### **December through February in Europe**

Europe was continuing to mobilize for war. The dream of a European Union was finally realized as the result of the abject threat from GIR forces attacking from Greece into Bulgaria and from GIR armies approaching Ukraine. Due to the fact that Italy, Germany and particularly the United Kingdom had been involved with the warfare from the outset, they carried considerably more weight with the EU. France, which was now involved in a complete mobilization but which had dragged its feet through the earlier days of the fighting, was relegated to a much more minor position in the developing hierarchy and power structures of the new European Union. This structure, with the three aforementioned nations filling most of the powerful positions on the various economic, military and social committees, was formerly adopted by the last holdout nations in late December.

The Euro, now adopted by the entire continent, including the United Kingdom, was doing quite well given the circumstances ... better than anyone had imagined. Funding for production and power facilities, particularly alternative energy facilities was not an issue within the European Union. The Continent's major concern was fuel and, taking their lead from energy policies in the United States, all oil fields were being exploited, both on land and in the North Sea as environmental issues were placed completely on the back burner in the face of the mortal threat.

The large Unified European Defense Force was already in place to attempt to block the GIR thrust coming across the top of the Black Sea. This force was bolstered by twenty divisions of French, Dutch and Scandinavian forces that arrived to reinforce them. The GIR forces they faced, who were technically already in Europe, were receiving large numbers of reinforcements daily funneled through Georgia, Armenia and up the open road the Russian Federation had allowed them.

Those GIR forces were continually harassed and picked at as they passed through the Armenian region by the partisan and guerilla network that was growing there under the direction of Captain Luke Hanson. Captain Hanson had become of a local hero in the entire region as his forces continued to harass the GIR forces stationed there, as well as those passing through. He was also considered a hero and an extremely valuable asset by the his entire command structure. His band of fighters would figure heavily into future events, particularly as the CIA Director prepared Riley Adams for insertion into the area for his upcoming mission.

Despite the harassment, over a million GIR personnel had passed through Georgia and Armenia and had moved north of the Black Sea where they were poised for the invasion of free Europe in earnest. Abduhl Selim, now an experienced Captain in the GIR forces, was with this group. He continued to climb through the ranks and had been recognized all the way up to the upper echelon of commanders in the GIR army who had awarded Abduhl with the GIR Order of the Imam medal for his role in preventing a large riot from escalating in Russian territory as GIR forces paused at a large supply depot to re-supply.

While waiting there, GIR forces were accosted by a large crowd of angry Russian citizens who were members of the Russian Orthodox Church from a nearby city. Only Selim's quick thinking and absolute control over his soldiers had prevented that major riot from turning into a massacre of Russian civilians that could have had drastic results to Russian/GIR relations at the most critical time.

The Order of the Imam medal was the equivalent to America's Silver Star, just one level below the GIR's Mahdi Award, which was the equivalent of the Medal of Honor. It had been awarded on the basis of Selim, while under direct fire himself, personally maneuvering through all of his personnel and holding them in check, taking the minimal action necessary to extract his more powerful force from the area when most commanders would have overwhelmed their attackers. General Talabari had presented the award to Selim himself and become somewhat enamored with the young Captain and his history. He ordered his staff to research the complete story of Selim and prepare a summary of his accomplishments and experience for presentation to him in March. General Talabari was already formulating plans for the young Captain, but he wanted to be thorough.

To the south in Europe, another European force of German, French, Italian, Spanish, Czech and Austrian forces were moving across the Balkans to the aide of the Bulgarians, Romanians and Yugoslavs who were being pushed back by the powerful invading forces of the GIR and Greece.

The biggest concern in Europe continued to be the disposition of Russian forces. There was great concern with the continuing bonanza that the Russians were experiencing out of Siberia, and with the relationship that Russia already had with the CAS and GIR in that regard, that it would not take too much for the Russians to form a military alliance with Europe's enemies and add their great weight to the invasions that were already occurring. This concern stretched across the Atlantic and was a major focus of the Weisskopf administration. The Americans were working closely with the various representatives of the European Union to keep Russia neutral at the worst, or to turn them completely away from the CAS and GIR at the best and have them enter the war on the side of the allies, thereby cutting off the wealth of resources those enemies were extracting out of Siberia.

## December through February in The United States

The United States was rapidly increasing its production capabilities as it moved closer and closer to complete energy independence, a goal the Weisskopf administration intended to achieve by the end of that year. Rich new oil fields in the Gulf of Mexico, off the west coast and particularly in Alaska had been developed and were in full production. These oil fields would reduce American dependence by over 50% once they were fully operational.

Huge tracts of the American southwest had been set aside for and developed into solar and wind energy fields. From Texas to southern California, twenty-five separate mega-facilities had been created. Although each had a primary focus of either wind or solar electrical generation, each was also a hybrid system utilizing the secondary source, either wind or solar, to compliment the primary. Most facilities covered several hundred acres at a minimum and were placed in remote areas with strictly enforced ground and air approach security zones. These federal and state efforts in the southwest when coupled with the individual efforts of corporations and individuals across the nation were reducing America's energy independence by another 30%.

Finally, from an energy perspective, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission had been revamped and redirected by initiatives and Executive Orders from the Weisskopf administration. This was resulting in the building of several dozen new nuclear plants all across America by large Architectural, Engineering and Construction (AEC) firms. For decades these companies had not been able to afford to build nuclear plants in America as a result of successful efforts by environmental and other lobbying groups in establishing policy that called for any nuclear plant to have to meet the latest nuclear code while the plant was being built, as opposed to locking in the code (outside of any major safety discoveries) when the plant construction was started. That policy had killed the nuclear plant industry in America because no AEC firm could afford to build such a plant when there was the potential for a complete retrofit to new code at anytime during the construction, including only months or weeks before the plant was complete. The risk of such costly retrofits, and the eventual retrofits themselves, drove costs up so far that it was not economically feasible to consider building new nuclear plants in America after the late 1970's and early 1980's.

So, the AEC firms in America had been building safe nuclear plants, the safest in the world, for nations outside the United States for all of those years since. Many of those plants, in fact the majority of them, were now benefiting America's enemies. Under the Weisskopf administration, Executive Orders were signed, legislation was adopted and policies were changed so that nuclear plant construction once again conformed to the nuclear building codes in existence at the start of the project. Immediately upon the institution of these policies and regulations, dozens of plants were started in the continental United States and they were all now almost finished due to the emphasis on completion, the huge work force available for construction, and because the focus was clearing red tape for the construction rather than creating it. These plants would reduce the dependence on foreign oil in America by another 25% themselves, meaning that once all three of these three areas were implemented, America would be energy independent.

Despite periodic missile attacks from the Gulf of Mexico and on occasion from area off the Pacific Coast, several dozen new shipyards had also been completed and they were now pumping out new cargo ships, new tankers, new support and auxiliary ships, new destroyers, new frigates, new cruisers, new amphibious assault ships (which were serving a dual role as troop carriers and sea control ships) and new full deck carriers. The rates weren't what the President had called for yet, but production was picking up and new flotillas, new task forces and new fleets were forming up as quickly as they could be built and as quickly as they could be outfitted and manned. Unfortunately, there was a great need for them as so many ships were falling victim to the LRASD devices being employed by the enemies of the United States. President Weisskopf and his administration had successfully lobbied the congress to provide the funding to meet the challenge. America was not going to hold back because of a fear of losses. The survival of the nation was depending upon America's willingness and ability rise above the adversity and President Weisskopf was determined to help the nation do just that...regardless of cost.

Terrorist attacks still occurred on a regular basis targeting infrastructure around the nation. But the numbers and effectiveness were dropping off as the borders were now fully secured, as the Home Guard Units became more and more effective, and as existing terrorists were killed off in a war of attrition. Most Americans recognized the success and progress in this area, but they knew that the fight was far from over as most felt that there were many cells of terrorist still within the borders who had not been activated. The citizens were also increasingly concerned about enemy forces and their progress in Central America. In addition, more and more analysts, editors and members of the common public recognized the tenseness in relations with Mexico and were more and more concerned with the potential for Mexican collusion with their enemies. Federal and State forces all along the border were bolstered as a result.

During this period of time, Leon Campbell enjoyed his recuperation with his family in the Boise, Idaho area. He spent many hours with his brother, Alan, talking with him, encouraging him and

preparing him for service to his nation. Leon was interviewed regularly by local and national news and talk shows and became quite the spokesman for vigilance amongst the citizenry in support of the war effort. In early January, he began working in recruitment. He was a natural at it, and a national icon that drew young men to the service of their country. He was stateside and he was safe...but it was not something Leon was comfortable or satisfied with. He wanted to be back out in the action.

Colonel Jess Simmons was surprised that he was allowed to stay in Texas much longer than expected, allowing him many weeks of quality time with his wife. He also spent a lot of time at the Joint Reserve Base in Ft. Worth, training and schooling units that were slated for transfer to Israel. In addition, he was able to spend several weekends on his ranch near Montague, Texas, repairing fence lines, clearing brush and doing general maintenance work that was needed as a result of his long absence. All too quickly the time passed and the inevitable call came. In mid-February, Jess bid Cindy farewell as he shipped out for Israel. As he thought of her working back in the aircraft plant there in Ft. Worth, his heart swelled with love and with pride. He was so blessed to have had the time with her, but he regretted that he had been unable to see his son while he had been at home.

Billy Simmons, who had received a battlefield commission to the rank of Captain, was still fighting in Australia and any leaves he got were very short and taken in-theater, usually right there near Sydney, or occasionally in New Zealand. Jess was immensely proud of his son and naturally concerned for his welfare. But he knew that the dangers, the risks and the severity of the situation all came with the territory. As Colonel Simmons contemplated his son's situation before trying to catch a few hours sleep on the long flight across the Atlantic, he knew there was the real possibility that he would never have the opportunity in his life to meet his son face to face again.

In Florida, Maria Rodriguez was busily raising her young son, Felipe. He was only a few months old, but as he learned to crawl and became aware of his surroundings, Maria could see so much of his father in him. She spent a lot of time with Hernando's parents and they talked for many long hours about the future when Hernando returned from the war. None of them could hide their fear and anxiety regarding Hernando. So many right there in south Florida and all around the nation were dealing with the loss of loved ones.

The fear was not relegated to losses on the battlefield in some distant country either. Maria and the Rodriguez's were also concerned for the safety and welfare of one another, particularly young Felipe. Terror attacks continued within the borders of the United States. Mr. Rodriguez had joined a local Home Guard unit and faithfully fulfilled his watch duty each week. He had learned to shoot and regularly took his wife and Maria out to the range so they would be prepared as well. Maria carried a small automatic pistol with her wherever she went and was proficient in its use. She was proud of that fact and shared it with Hernando, who also swelled with pride at how his wife was responding. He was comforted to know that she and her family had taken measures to provide for their own personal defense, while he was away helping provide for the national defense.

Maria was also proud of her father-in-law. Mr. Rodriguez took his Home Guard duty seriously, as did millions of other Americans. He trained as hard as he could and was religiously punctual for his four, six hour watch duties each week. They had all learned, all over the country, by hard experience what a lack of vigilance could mean. It was written in the blood of tens of thousands who had died and scores of thousands who had been injured or wounded ... and they knew it was not over. For his part, Mr. Rodriguez wrote regularly to his son and shared in writing with him the experiences of their mutual service to their country. The feelings this engendered between father and son, between wife and husband, between extended family members were extraordinary. It was a phenomena that was sweeping the country and binding the nation together to unitedly face the mortal threat as men and women serving directly in the armed services became brothers and sisters in arms to their many family members and friends who were also serving at home.

In Boston, Dr. Joseph Trevor had received and reviewed Sandra McPherson's work. He was extremely impressed and excited about the prospects this software would enable for continued advances in genome research and particularly for further advancement and understanding of the Human Reasoning Structures he had discovered. As Sandra had thought, Dr. Trevor wanted to personally see a demonstration of the prototype software she had created. Dr. Trevor made the trip out to California in early December with his wife Elizabeth who had gotten the time off from her work to do so. The result were even more compelling than the initial test. Sandra had continued to modify and improve the algorithms and her persistence and talent paid off. While there, Joseph learned to use the software himself and was able to replicate the results against another sample of data he had brought with him to California, hoping for just that opportunity.

As a result, when he returned to Boston in mid-January, Joseph was able to quickly convince his own superiors of the importance of funding the development of software modeling in a major way. He used the demonstration software right there in the conference room to help convince them, and they were completely convinced.

As Dr. McPherson began receiving funds to further develop the software package and extend its functionality in late January, she worked with her friends in Europe to prepare the initial samples of fetal tissue from which she would develop the data she would then use in California. By late February

the preparations were complete, the tissue had been gathered, the data had been created and she was anxiously anticipating its arrival so she could apply her newly-developed virtual atomic microscopy software to model it and try to unlock its secrets..

As the primary season approached for the presidential election, Curt Johnson and Susan Crater doubled their efforts to position themselves for the eventual campaign against President Weisskopf. Even with the full support of the DNC, there were a number of other candidates attempting to mount credible local challenges to their nomination to lead the Democratic party. Johnson and Crater largely ignored those challenges, preferring to spend the time developing and pointing out the differences between their ideas and plans and those of the President's administration. They felt that with all of the bad news on the war front, that they had a good chance of discrediting the President and undermining his popularity. But they also knew they had to be very careful in doing so to ensure that they did not offend the citizenry at a time when so many Americans were paying the ultimate price.

For his part, President Weisskopf was unerringly true to the position statement he had given outside of the state house in Sacramento, CA, regarding the election. He did not campaign and he did not mention his challengers. Many in the press and amongst the opposite party tried to point out that his many trips across America to inspire and bolster the public from a moral and a production perspective were, in effect, what they called *stealth campaigning* ... but the charge never stuck in the minds of the people, despite efforts to the contrary. President Weisskopf in public and in his security, economic and social meetings never mentioned the election or the positions of his challengers. He simply continued his monumental personal efforts on the war front. His party, his supporters ... and increasingly larger numbers of the common citizenry ... loved it and took up the same sentiment. For the first time in history, as a presidential primary season approached, there were no challengers on the Republican party's primary ballots in any of the fifty states for the office of Presidency.

One of the most critical and time consuming tasks for the President, and one of the most frustrating, was what the President considered the strategic issues of the war to date. That was the diplomatic efforts associated with influencing the Russian Federation. On many occasions the President and his staff, particularly the State Department, despaired over the seemingly nonchalant attitude of the Russian President. The President couldn't count the times that he had personally spoken with President Vladimir Putin and urged him to consider moving away from the ideological and economic ties Russia was embracing with the CAS and GIR. The trouble was, Weisskopf genuinely liked Putin and could not understand how he could be so blind to the historical precedence for his own nation, not to mention the clear and present danger to American and the rest of the allies.

Ultimately, Weisskopf surmised that the Russian President wasn't oblivious to the dangers at all. He determined that Putin simply felt that he had the situation under control, figuring that neither the West or the East was in a position to risk having Russia become their enemy. Weisskopf came to the conclusion that Putin's reasoning provided that as long as the two gargantuan cultures of West and East were embroiled in mortal and resource depleting combat, that the Russian Federation could therefore simply remain above the fray. As time went on Weisskopf wondered if the Russian was right, whether he was actually going to be able to maintain such a position throughout the war.

Weisskopf knew that if the positions were reversed, he could not coddle such danger. He could not cozy up to such risk in the hope that the untrustworthy and monstrously evil of the CAS and GIR would be satisfied only with America and Europe ... he felt certain that they would not and that it would be better to stand united than to stand alone. He spared no effort in sharing this sentiment with President Putin, but he was disappointed by the continued assurances from Putin that the American was not to worry, the he, Putin, had everything under control. Unknown to both leaders, the ultimate disposition of Russia in World War III was about to be decided for her, and it was not a decision that either man could control.

## Chapter 24

*“Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other” –John Adams*

### **March 12, 12:35 Local Time Outside of the Presidential Offices New Delhi, India**

Minister Buhpendra Gavanker sat patiently awaiting his meeting with the President.

“Perhaps now I will learn what this emergency is all about,” he thought, “they had to bring me all the way here from Siberia and I had to attend the meeting personally to know.”

He'd been called back to the capitol here in New Delhi two days ago from his posting in Gavank, Siberia. It had been unplanned and very urgent. He would not soon forget the flash dispatch he had received or the fact that an Indian military aircraft was within twenty minutes of arriving for him when he had received the message. An Indian officer, a Colonel, had arrived with the transport and he had been whisked away with only an hour to pack.

As he had been leaving for the airport, he could still hear General Nosik's parting jab.

“Well Bu, I suppose you must come to expect these things now that you are an official *minister*. You will find that the higher up that food chain you climb, the more immediate and firm the claim your bosses will have upon you!”

This from a Russian General who had recently been promoted to the commander in chief of all Russian security forces in Siberia had laughed heartily as he slapped Buhpendra on the back.

“That Andrei,” thought the Minister, “he certainly has a sense of humor, but he also knows how to use it to cause one to think. I really do wonder sometimes if this Minister title they have hung on me will be worth it in the end. It certainly has helped with the handling of requisitions and getting a response from the Siberian officials, but the General certainly has a point.”

As he concluded his thoughts, an aide came out of the President's office and invited Buhpendra to come in for his meeting with the President. When he stepped into the room, the President rose from behind his desk and came around to greet him.

“Come in, come in, Minister Gavanker, so good to finally meet you. Please,” he said as he put his arm around Buhpendra's shoulder, “have a seat.”

Buhpendra noticed that there were four other people in the room. There was a high ranking General officer in the Indian Army, another officer of similar rank in the Indian Air Force, the Defense Minister and the Foreign Minister, Rahmish Patel, all attending this meeting with the President, and waiting on him! The Foreign Minister, in Buhpendra's estimation, was a very capable diplomat and administrator. He pushed very hard for India's best interests, but he was also extremely ambitious. After a few introductions and pleasantries, the President began the meeting.

“We are sorry for the urgent nature of this meeting Buhpendra, but as you will find, it was completely necessary.

“As you know, your efforts in Siberia as a part of the Siberian Economic Development Treaty on behalf of India have been very much appreciated by all of us here in New Delhi. In fact, they have been very critical to our economic progress and to the improving conditions and well being of our citizens throughout the nation. We commend you for that service and promoted you to the Minister representing India to Siberia as a result of it. We want to continue to emphasize the critical nature of your assignment and work there.

“It is our of a recognition of the critical nature of your work there, and due to significant developments associated with it, that we called this meeting. Before I allow the Foreign Minister and the other gentlemen here in this meeting to continue, let me preface their remarks with the following.

“Everything that will be discussed today is classified Top Secret. Given the nature of the new developments that we are about to share with you, I want to ensure that everyone in this room, including yourself, Minister Gavanker, understands the gravity of the situation. Our national security is directly dependent on our recognition of this and on our commitment to it. Do you understand?”

Buhpendra was taken back by this language. He wondered what on earth could have developed that could evoke such a prelude. He thought it must have something to do with the war effort, something he was unaware of. Perhaps some rare elements had been discovered that he was unaware of, probably associated with the nuclear program. No matter, he was a loyal Indian and completely understood his duty and intended to fulfill it.

“Yes, Mr. President, I understand and will comply completely with any security requirements. What are the developments of which you speak and how can I be of service?”

The President turned to Foreign Minister Patel and said,

“Rahmish, please fill Minister Gavanker in on the diplomatic essence of the developments. When you are complete, we'll have the Defense Minister and the General's continue.”



**March 12, Two hours later**  
**Outside the Presidential Offices**  
**New Delhi, India**

Buhpendra was shocked. Despite the explanations, assurances and plans that had been rehearsed to him in the President's office, he continued to ask himself.

"An independent Siberia? An official announcement tomorrow morning? Troops and materiel to support the independence already in place from both India and China?"

Gavanker was not a military man, but he had a keen mind and that mind had already put together the essence of the puzzle.

"They knew all along. It must have been the plan from the beginning and Andrei was right. Andrei! How will he react to this?"

Buhpendra already knew the answer to that question.

"He will fight."

The Siberian Economic Development Treaty had been signed by The Russian Federation, India and the People's of Republic of China over two and one-half years ago. Since that time, the GIR had been brought into the fold. All were exploiting the vast resources of Siberia, trading materiel resources for hard currency. India and China, the principle members of the Coalition of Asian States (CAS) and the Greater Islamic Republic (GIR) were receiving tremendous amounts of natural resources in exchange for the hard currency that the Russian Federation desperately needed. China and India alone had sent hundreds of thousands of workers into Siberia to discover and exploit the minerals, lumber, hydro-electric, petroleum and other resources so abundantly available there.

Andrei Nosik, the Russian General in charge of security for the various sites inside of Siberia, had been very distrustful of the entire affair from the beginning. As the Colonel in charge of securing the "sites", he had noted that most of the workers were young men. It was not lost on him that their discipline and their immediate supervisors resembled something much more akin to military units than they did work crews. But he had been over-ruled by his Moscow superiors, and he had done the best with the forces he had been supplied.

His ability to "make due" had not been lost on his superiors. He was promoted first to the General in command of a major region of Siberia, and ultimately, in the last few months, to command all Siberian security forces for the Russian Federation. That latest promotion had forestalled his planned retirement, a retirement that Buhpendra knew the General had been looking forward to.

Now, given his continuing regular and insistent communiqés back to Moscow requesting more resource, his superiors recognized those concerns for what they were...loyalty to the Rodina, to the Motherland. And, although those same superiors did little to respond to the requests, they nonetheless remained confident that Nosik's prior experiences in Afghanistan and in Eastern Europe would allow him to fulfill his assignment, even if he felt he was undermined. Still, the General was constantly commenting, that he didn't feel he had enough. That he would make such comments to Buhpendra, was a testament to the friendship that had developed over the last thirty months between them.

"Now it is clear that he was right all along," thought the Minister.

But Minister Buhpendra Gavanker, soon to be the Indian Ambassador to Siberia, would not let that friendship stand in the way of his duty. If the Siberians desired independence, and if his nation was going to recognize and support it, his duty was clear, despite whatever feelings he may have towards Andrei personally and despite whatever action Andrei would take opposing it.

"And he most assuredly will take action," concluded Buhpendra.

His conviction regarding this had been candidly communicated to the President, the Foreign Minister, the Defense Minister and the Indian Generals. In response to this conviction, the Defense Minister and the Generals informed him that operational plans already accounted for it.

85,000 of the Indian "workers" in Siberia had been soldiers all along. Their small arms, mortars and machineguns were already cached in the wilderness outside of patrol perimeters that the Russian security forces had established. Perimeters that Nosik had briefed the Indians on regularly and that had been included as a matter of course in Gavanker's reports back to New Delhi. The non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and officers were already there acting as supervisors just as the Russian General had feared all along. The same was true for 150,000 of the Chinese workers. When coupled with the 50,000 troops the Siberians would muster, close to 300,000 troops would be deployed in Siberia in the next few days in support of independence. Taking into consideration the element of surprise they hoped to maintain, it was felt that these forces would be more than sufficient to deal with the Russian security force of 35,00-40,000 under General Nosik.

Within two weeks, China, India and the GIR planned to insert well over 500,000 more troops into Siberia, moving along the western Siberian border with Russia in support of the new Siberian government. They would be moved in from the border areas of those nations with other internal forces already en route to take their place on the border. The same iteration would be accelerated and occur ten times over the next two and one half months as over five million GIR, Chinese and Indian troops were committed to what each was now designating as Barbarosa East in their own languages.

But Ambassador Gavanker was not yet aware of the full extent of the operation. He would return to the Siberian capitol within a few days, after the Russian security forces had been withdrawn, defeated, or completely driven from the Capitol. The Russian forces at the work sites, particularly at Gavanker where General Nosik's headquarters were located, would not be given any such opportunity. The military's operational plans called for their positions to be completely over-run in a surprise attack the next morning just before the Siberian official announcement in the Capitol.

**March 13, 04:15 Local Time**

**Private Quarters, CINC**

**Russian Security Forces HQ, Gavank, Siberia**

*THUD*

The sound immediately awakened him from a deep sleep as his phone began to ring. As a result of his prior combat experience in Afghanistan, he recognized what was happening...heavy mortar fire.

"One, two, three, four ..." he counted, waiting for the sound he knew was coming as his phone continued to ring and as more and more *THUDS* sounded.

*BOOM!*

"Less than 1500 meters," he thought. Quickly picking up the phone he answered, "Nosik."

The intensity in the voice of the duty officer told him as much about the current situation as the sounds coming from outside, where more *THUDS* were mixing in now with the sound of small arms and machinegun fire.

"General, we are under attack. Overwhelming numbers of enemy personnel of unknown origin are breaching our perimeter on the east and south. There is significant suppressing fire also coming from the north and west."

The east and south were the directions to the large Indian dormitory and housing units.

"Order all units to execute defense plan Zebra immediately. Have my staff meet me at point Kilo in five minutes," the General said as he hung up the phone and his security detachment began pounding on his door.

Defense plan Zebra was the contingency plan that the General had his staff work up for the potential of hostilities between his forces and the on-site Indian workers. There were almost six thousand of his personnel at Gavank and over forty thousand workers. These numbers, particularly if there were any quantity of arms supplied to the workers, made the outcome a foregone conclusion.

"Given the sounds of those mortars, machineguns and small arms, I would say the workers are well armed," the General surmised as he quickly prepared to leave.

The plan called for several large transport aircraft, several fighter aircraft, half a dozen attack aircraft and four attack helicopters to be on an alert-five status twenty-four hours a day. It also called for the collapsing of the perimeter of the base to right around the airfield in a holding action. The plan utilized a number of his tanks and Infantry Fighting Vehicles (IFV) to immediately extend security out along the take-off flight path of departing aircraft to protect against anti-aircraft fire. Over the last twenty-four months, since he instituted these procedures, it had been difficult to maintain the readiness of these forces to the degree the General wanted. But he had persevered.

"This morning we shall see if it pays off," thought the General as he picked up his own personal sidearm and the fully loaded AK-74 he kept in his personal quarters. Upon doing so, he opened the door and his security team quickly hustled him towards the alternate command center at Point Kilo.

**March 13, Seven Minutes later**

**Alternate Command Post, Point Kilo**

**Russian Security Forces HQ, Gavank, Siberia**

"Kalinkov, what is the situation," the General demanded as their impromptu meeting got underway. He could not help but notice that several members of his staff had not arrived. He concluded, correctly, that they never would.

The commander of the base's security forces, Colonel Kalinkov responded.

"General, we have fallen back to the planned security lines established for defense plan Zebra. The rest of the base has been over-run. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Companies are intact and engaged along the perimeter but all other commands are completely disorganized. We are currently forming up another Company from existing combat units and ..."

The General interrupted.

"As of this minute, all remaining personnel on this base *ARE* combat units. Do you understand?"

As the security force commander soberly nodded, the General continued.

"Good, form up as many companies as possible from the available personnel. Arm them all and put seasoned officers or NCOs over them. I want to provide a defense in depth as we evacuate to our contingency site. We must get as many aircraft as possible into the air to accomplish that purpose. What is the contingency location for today, and has Moscow been informed?"

The General's chief of staff checked his notes and responded.

“General, the contingency base for today is fire base Lima. Preparation there have been complete for three months and our personnel report that the base is secure.

“As to communications with Moscow, our long range communications were taken out in the initial attack by sappers. Our aircraft in the air are attempting to communicate as we speak, relaying the message to any friendly unit they can speak to.”

General Nosik was pleased to hear about the contingency base, but knew that communicating this attack, which he suspected was wide spread, was critical. He also knew that they would have to fight hard to get his command and the assets on this base relocated to the contingency site.

“Alright. What about communication with our other forces? Also, what is the status of our aircraft and the perimeter now. Colonel?”

Colonel Kalinkov had been speaking with his own staff as the Chief of Staff had been talking.

“General, we lost communications with all other bases when the sapper took out our communication facilities. They took out both the primary and the secondary equipment. When our initial aircraft took off, they ran into significant surface to air attacks. Our armor had deployed, but several surface-to-air missiles were launched from prepared positions before we could respond. We lost three of the attack aircraft and two of the helicopters. The remaining airborne aircraft are now punishing the enemy, both those trying to storm our perimeter to the east and south, and those suppressing us to the west and north.

“General, one of the fighters flying CAP briefly made contact with our forces at the Cobalt operation. They indicated that Chinese workers were over-running their position and that Colonel Propov had been killed while trying to make his way from his quarters to the command post...we then lost all communications with our forces there.”

Andrei Nosik was deeply effected by the loss of Colonel Propov. He had been a good soldier and a good friend. He would take time later to properly mourn him, and to avenge him. He also contemplated how closely he had surely come to death this morning as well. Surely the enemy had targeted him immediately. Only their prior planning, his quick instincts, and the professionalism of his security team, mixed in with a healthy dose of luck, had saved him.

“Each of you understands and knows your duty. We will proceed with Zebra as planned. Get as many aircraft loaded and airborne as possible. Form a phalanx with the remaining armor, IFV's, trucks and other vehicles carrying the rest of the personnel. Once the aircraft are away, that mechanized battalion will brake out and make its way by the route proscribed to Lima.

“I want my staff and their security team to get on the first transport out and set up the command HQ at Kilo. I will follow on the last transport with my own security detachment.”

Turning to Colonel Kalinkov, the General said,

“Petri, you will be lead the remaining forces. Take charge of the column and make your way to Lima. I am counting on you to get that armor and the remaining personnel there. There will be constant air support for you just as long as we have fuel, ammunition and aircraft. I promise you that.

“Does everyone understand? Good, carry on.”

As the General and his own security detachment left the alternate command post and made their way towards their designated aircraft, the General noticed the rapid flashing of massed mortar fire and small arms fire lighting up the very early morning night sky around him. Though the front lines were several thousand meters away, the flashing recalled to his memory the dream, no the nightmare, he had on so many occasions almost a year ago. The dream of a constant flashing, lighting up the night sky. In that respect the dream and this reality were similar, but this reality was definitely not that dream. The flashing was not nearly as frequent and the sound was wrong. In that nightmare the flashing made for one perpetual light show, lighting up the surrounding landscape as if though it were day, with only a minor flickering effect, so numerous were the guns firings. In that dream the sound was clearly that of a constant, almost incomprehensible, deafening artillery attack, large artillery along a front that measured in the scores of miles. Here, the light was more of a constant strobe of light, with dark periods in between and the sound was an almost continuous, hollow and muted *THUDDING* of many, many mortar tubes being fired.

“Well, this mortar fire may not be heavy artillery, but it will certainly kill all of us here unless we hurry. Still, I wonder what the meaning of that other dream is ... if it has any meaning at all,” thought the General as he hurried along.

He would find out soon enough.

**March 13, 03:57**

**Presidential Situation and Planning Center**

**The Kremlin, Moscow, Russia**

“Mr. President, reports are sparse and communications with all of our facilities in Siberia are out, but here is what we know.

“Approximately three hours ago we received a transmission from one of our AWACS aircraft to the east of Moscow indicating that they had just received a relayed transmission from fighter aircraft stationed in the Urals who had received the message from other aircraft further to their east. The

original transmission was received on a secure frequency normally used by our defensive CAP aircraft throughout the Rodina, including those in Siberia. Let me read the printed dictation of that transmission.

*"Any Russian Federation aircraft on this frequency, this is an emergency transmission relayed from CINCSIB, I repeat this is an emergency transmission relayed from CINCSIB. OPLAN Zebra has been executed. I repeat OPLAN Zebra executed. Heavy fighting at Gavank. Other facilities reporting .... [rest of transmission garbled]"*

"Mr. President, that was all of the transmission that was relayed."

President Vladimir Putin took only a moment to consider the report. Looking around the room at his hastily gathered security council, he asked.

"Someone quickly fill me in on the essence of OPLAN Zebra."

The Defense Minister responded.

"Mr. President, OPLAN Zebra is a contingency plan that General Andrei Nosik, the Commander in Chief of our defense forces in Siberia, set in motion. It was based on his continuing concerns regarding the numbers and disposition of Indian and Chinese workers ..."

The President interrupted testily.

"Yes, yes. We are all aware of the General's concerns. They have been voiced to us over and over again and right now I do not have the time or the demeanor to listen to them again. Just let me know the essence of this plan."

Winning at the impatience of his President, the Defense Minister continued.

"Basically, Zebra calls for a rapid withdrawal of the General's command headquarters in the event his position was in danger of being over-run by an attack of the Indian workers at Gavank. The overall operation calls for similar withdrawals at the other facilities so that Russian Siberian Defense forces can regroup and then counterattack."

The President turned to the Commander in Chief of the Russian Army.

"General, what are your thoughts regarding this. What is your understanding of its disposition?"

Without hesitation the General replied.

"Mr. President, we had urged against it and refused the funding as a result of this administration's policy to allow no overt military operations by our Security Forces in the region that would either destabilize or threaten the Economic Development treaty. Apparently the General implemented it on his own with whatever resources he could scrape together."

The President, never in a good mood so early in the morning, was growing fouler.

"Am I completely surrounded by people who have a capacity to only state the obvious? General, I am aware of this administration's policies. I am asking you what the current disposition is. What is the likelihood that this has happened, that Chinese and Indian workers have attacked our Security Forces causing General Nosik to implement this plan of his?"

Again, the general responded to his President without hesitation, and with complete professionalism, in spite of the rebuke.

"Mr. President, we have not been able to confirm this report directly. Even though this is the case, given our inability to communicate with any of the facilities in Siberia over the last several hours, including those forces stationed at the capitol, I believe there is an increasing likelihood that it has occurred. I would recommend that we begin to ..."

As the General got to this point in his reply, the President's Chief of Staff interrupted him.

"Excuse me General, but Mr. President, I have just been informed that WNN is carrying a live broadcast of an important announcement by the Governor of Siberia."

Motioning to an aide, the Chief of Staff indicated that he should turn the announcement on.

"Please, everyone hold for a moment while we watch this on the screen."

As the screen at the front of the room came to life, an image of the Siberian Governor appeared sitting at his desk in his office. There was a banner along the top of the screen indicating that the program was a special, breaking WNN report. As the sound became audible, the Siberian Governor was already speaking.

*"... and so, on this date, March 13, the Parliament of Siberia has voted unanimously to declare independence from the Russian Federation. We bid our friends in Russia a profound thanks for our efforts together over the last decades. We trust that we can continue in friendship as we go forward.*

*"We have press and diplomatic packages available. The official diplomatic packages have already shipped by courier to the major nations of the world, including Moscow and including the United Nations, documenting how we propose Siberian independence and sovereignty move forward.*

*"There will be announcements from Beijing, New Delhi, Tehran and Tokyo this morning recognizing our independence. We expect announcements later in the day from other areas of the world, including Argentina, Malaysia, Singapore, and Greece.*

*"As to the disposition of the current Siberian Economic Development Treaty, we will propose a staged transition over the next two years where the hard currency is shared between ourselves and the Russian Federation. This would start at 80% to the Russian Federation and 20% to Siberia, transitioning every eight months by 20% such that at the end of two years, the percentages reverse to*

*80% to Siberia and 20% to the Russian Federation. These percentages would then remain in place for a twenty-year period, or until such time as the treaty is dissolved by the participating parties ...”*

President Vladimir Putin could not believe his ears. The treachery was appalling, the ruination of his own carefully laid plans for Russian neutrality in the current war and the resulting prosperity while the world languished burned him to the core. It was clear that China and India had carefully prepared this day for several years. The whole world had anticipated what the Chinese and her allies would attempt something spectacular on the second anniversary of their attack on America.

“Well, now we here in Russia are experiencing it ourselves,” the President thought.

“Just like they did in attacking the Americans,” thought the President.

“I should have listened to Weisskopf when I had the chance.

“Turn that damned thing off!

“Call the parliament into emergency session and schedule an address by me to them for early this afternoon. I want articles of war prepared and discussed.

“General, you must confirm or dispel the reports of these military attacks, however you have to do it, and have it done in the next hour. Report back to me directly.”

Turning to his Chief of Staff and his Foreign Minister, the President continued, “Get a draft statement put together that the Russian Federation categorically rejects Siberian independence and that the fool in Siberia has twenty-four hours to retract. Get that communiqué transmitted this morning

“Also, get the President of the United States, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the Chancellor of Germany, the President of the European Union and the President of Brazil on a secure communication line for me, in that order. If China, India and the Islamics want war...it is war we shall give them, such a war as they have never conceived.”

President Putin would find out soon enough that speaking such words was going to be much easier than turning them into reality. In fact, he would find that it was going to be far more difficult and far more costly than he could possibly imagine, for his nation and for himself personally.

**March 15, 08:25**

### **Situation Room**

#### **The White House, Washington DC**

Bill Hendrickson, the National Security Advisor to the President of the United States, completed his briefing to the National Security team with these words.

“Based on everything that the Russians have shared with us, and based on our own intelligence sources and those of our allies as I have described them, the Russians are looking at a situation very comparable to the German Operation “Barbarosa” launched against them in the spring of 1941.

“That is to say, they have been taken completely by surprise and have lost significant assets all across Siberia, both tactical and strategic assets, including many of their deployed ICBM's across the Siberian frontier. Although many of these were destroyed by Russian forces defending them, we have to deal with the reality that the Chinese have undoubtedly increased the size of their nuclear option significantly as a result of the last two days fighting.

“When it come to the number of Chinese and Indian troops involved, our best estimates indicate that in addition to the two to three hundred thousands troops the Chinese and Indians already have in Siberia, there are many hundreds of thousands more troops pouring across the borders into Siberia as we speak. They appear to be developing a large pincer movement against retreating Russian forces. We expect that within two weeks the CAS forces will cross the Siberian frontier into Russia proper. Within four to six weeks more, the Chinese and Indians force will be approaching the Ural mountain range from the East. The Russians have that long to develop their defenses.”

President Weisskopf took this in. He had to ask the pointed question.

“Bill, in light of all this, what is our best determination, will the Russians go nuclear?”

Hendrickson had given considerable thought to this since news of the Siberian declaration of independence and the resulting fighting between Russian troops on the one side and Siberian, Chinese and Indian troops on the other had been announced. He had consulted the top strategic thinkers within the U.S. think tanks and war colleges and had spoken with several allies, particularly the United Kingdom, Israel and France, who had significant nuclear arsenals of their own. They had all agreed on one thing, the Russians could go nuclear at any time ... they certainly would go nuclear if the Chinese broke through the Urals.

“Mr. President, our best estimate, or forecast, is that the Russian command authority would almost certainly utilize their strategic deterrent, their long-range nuclear weapons, if the Chinese and Indian forces break through the defenses in the Urals. They may employ tactical assets before that, as enemy forces approach their positions ... it will depend on the strength and depth of the Russian positions and the composition of the enemy. It will also depend on the numbers and capabilities of the Chinese systems. The Chinese have not threatened us with such resources to date because I honestly believe that they are not concerned about unilateral or pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons by us first. They may do so with the Russians because they, like ourselves, will be uncertain what the Russians

are going to do, how they are going to respond. This is the consensus of both our own strategists as well as those of our major allies”

President Weisskopf considered all of this. Everyone of them in this room had been anticipating, and preparing for another “*anniversary special*” from the Chinese like last year on American soil. Apparently, the Chinese and their allies had arranged something completely different this year, but something equally audacious and threatening in overall strategic terms.

“I tried to warn Puten ... I wish he would have listened ... I’ll bet he wishes he would have listened now,” mused the President as he turned to his Secretary of State.

“Fred, I spoke to Puten yesterday. I want to speak to him again today. Our own hands are full, but perhaps we can get a battery or two of our AEGIS Theater ABM assets prepared to deploy around Moscow and other sensitive areas to help augment their own systems. In addition, if we can get the EU to commit significant forces to Russia’s aid, perhaps we can forestall the use of nuclear weapons.”

Before Fred Reissinger could answer, John Bowers, the Vice President interjected.

“Mr. President, pardon my interruption, but would it be possible to hold on the offer of AEGIS technology? Russia has stood by while the rest of us have gone through hell in this war. I am certain, that short of this invasion, they would probably continue to do so. I believe our developing alliance with them is one of convenience and we should be reluctant to place such technology in their hands.”

The President listened intently, and then responded.

“John, your concerns and suggestions are duly noted. We are facing a scenario that could get completely out of hand quickly. While I have no doubts as to who would win a full scale nuclear exchange pitting ourselves, Russia, the UK, France and Israel against the CAS and the GIR, the resulting victory would be so horrific that I must seek victory conventionally if at all possible. Those enemy nations have hundreds and hundreds of weapons between them.

“Make no mistake, if they attack us in such a fashion, we will respond overwhelmingly. I am afraid if Russia and China get into it, that there is very little hope for it not to quickly extend to us. My hope is to avoid that eventuality. The Chinese must know that the Russians are protected and that use of these weapons against them will be completely one sided.

“I have no intention of giving this technology to the Russians. I am thinking more along the lines of deploying our own people and equipment to operate the weapons. That would be an ironclad part of the agreement. The Russians would give only the final fire authorization.”

John replied.

“My concern is not so much China as it is Russia. I know the Chinese will not use their weapons first in the current circumstances. They have no reason to, they are progressing on all fronts without them. My concern is that the Russians will unilaterally use them to break up the huge CAS advance and that this action will cause the Chinese, Indians and GIR to respond with everything they have in the hopes of overwhelming the Russian defenses. In such a scenario, it would actually be better for the Russians to be more vulnerable than less.”

Heads around the table were nodding as the President reflected upon his Vice President’s words. Turning, the President faced Admiral Crowler, his Secretary of Defense.

“George, what do you think?”

Admiral Crowler, who had been very involved with the development of the theater ballistic missile defense capability of the AEGIS system while he served as the Chief of Naval Operations, gave a very direct and to the point response to his President.

“Mr. President, I have to concur with the Vice President. With the magnitude of the conventional forces coming at them, the Russians will be more apt to use their nuclear weapons first if they feel their shield is solid.”

The President concurred.

“I have to agree as well. Are there any feelings to the contrary?”

After pausing a few seconds to give others time to voice a dissenting opinion, and upon receiving none, the President continued.

“Okay, so be it, No AEGIS systems at this time for the Russians. Thanks for the input John.

“Fred, still get me in touch with Puten this morning as soon as possible. We will discuss other support efforts that are more conventionally oriented, perhaps consider a couple of J-STAR aircraft and their crews and support elements as force multipliers to help blunt the CAS onslaught if the communications to Russian equipment can be worked out. If not, we may have to divert some equipment of our own. I will also propose and explore the EU support with Puten and begin working that at the highest levels. Fred, you will need to be prepared with your staff,” and turning to the Secretary of Defense, the President continued, “and George you will need to prepare your people to work out the details with the Russian and EU staffs to implement it once agreement is reached.”

**March 21, 16:07**  
**COSTIND Headquarters**  
**Beijing, China**

General Hunbaio reviewed the information he had just received over the secure telecommunications channel from Mongolia. The entire communiqué provided information that was both exciting and disconcerting at the same time. Next to his nation's development of strategic nuclear arms, the LRASD weaponry and the Anti-Ballistic missile defense, this information dealt with what the General considered the fourth most important military research and development program his nation had embarked upon in the last twenty years.

The good news was that final field tests at the research facility and range located in the vast wastes of Mongolia had proven successful. The bad news was that an American enemy agent had been discovered who had access to the development program and test results and it was not known what, if anything, the agent had been able to communicate. They would have to assume that he had been able to communicate everything he knew.

"And to think I took that traitor under my own arm and promoted him," thought the General.

Dr. Li Zedong had been the Director of quality assurance on the program. His background and allegiance had been thoroughly checked out.

"Or so we thought," reflected Hunbaio.

"Li Zedong's roots went right back to the organizer and founder of the people's revolution. He was a great-grandson of the Mao. How could he betray his people and heritage? When and where had the Americans gotten to him?"

As he asked himself this question, the General already knew the answer. It had to have occurred while Li was attending the prestigious Ivy League college in America. Nothing else made sense. He had come home and played his part to the tee, climbing the ladder within the party and within Hunbaio's own R&D organization. For the last ten years, Li had capably overseen the QA efforts of several highly sensitive projects within COSTIND, the Chinese national science and technology development effort for the Chinese military over which General Hunbaio presided. Just before the start of the war, Dr. Zedong's career progress had culminated in his being promoted to head the QA effort for this very project, and he had done an admirable job.

When discovered two weeks ago gathering and recording highly sensitive information for which he did not have a need to know, the Dr. had immediately activated a small cyanide capsule ingeniously built into his college graduation ring which had injected the poison into his blood stream and caused his death within a few minutes. Upon analysis, there was little doubt that the device, along with three others found in the Dr.'s other possessions, had come from America.

"Well, no true spy is ever obvious," thought the General as he contemplated the potential harm to the new program. "It would be foolish to think that the Americans have not had any success in infiltrating us. We certainly have infiltrated them."

"Besides, even if the Americans know about it, there is now very little they can do. They have already invested their billions and fielded their systems, it will not be possible for them to undo all of that development and deployment any time soon ... and it will not be possible for them to counter what we have developed with any presently known technology. It will take them months to determine the major characteristics of the *ta shih* system and much longer to discover all of its capabilities.

"... and they will only learn those capabilities as they lose their vaunted stealth aircraft."

General Hunbaio's prognosis was based on his knowledge of the entire process that had led up to the recent successful test of the new Chinese stealth detection system. It was an advanced hybrid system, tied together and controlled by the latest supercomputing technology based on the most advanced micro-circuitry.

"It was amazing what a rapid boost in research and development we got at COSTIND during all of those years when our factories produced the tens of millions of personal computers for the west," thought the General.

"We benefited richly as their computing, memory and micro-technologies continued to advance, and continued to be outsourced to our manufacturing plants...and then as the Americans actually outsourced the development of that technology to our labs to save even more money. Well, they aren't saving money anymore, and they are losing far more than their highly valued dollars. Not only did we benefit from their technology...we took it and ran with it ourselves to develop even more advanced systems to our own purposes.

"What fools the west had been...and how wise we have been," he concluded to himself as he continued to reflect on the magnitude of what they had developed.

The *ta shih* system consisted of sophisticated passive electronic sensing equipment coupled to the latest bi-static and multi-static radar technologies which were proving more and more capable of detecting and tracking American stealth aircraft...but were not proving capable of acquiring and then achieving a strong lock on the later models. So, although the older stealth aircraft, like the American F-117A stealth fighter, could be acquired and locked on with just the passive electronic sensing and

static radar technology, the newer and more exotic stealth aircraft, like the B-2 bomber, the JSF, the F-22 and particularly the SR-77 and HR-7 reconnaissance aircraft required something more. And that's where the most important component of the *ta shih* system came in, the component it was named for.

This integral and most remarkable development in the new Chinese stealth detection system was a *ta shih* scalar radar, which was a combined electro-gravitational field emitter and detector based on the revolutionary physics of scalar electromagnetism. The scalar radar device could detect and track scalar waves generated by objects as they flew through the air and interacted with the various electrical, magnetic and gravitational fields they encountered. Since conventional stealth technology was based on vector field principles, the scalar detectors would simply side-step the American technology. Based on the latest test by the Chinese research and development team in Mongolia, the General was convinced that they were now prepared to produce these detectors for battlefield use.

Basing their work on initial theories established in the United States and Russia in the 1980s, the Chinese researched, developed and perfected magnetic pole and field technology over a twenty-five year period to the point of practical application in this area. By utilizing exceptionally strong magnetic poles to enfold energy and then coupling that with strong magnetic fields from powerful superconducting magnets, spacetime in specified regions could be ever so slightly bent and altered to allow enough of a vertical projection of the scalar wave so that it could be detected.

In order for the system to work properly, it had to prevent the detection of superfluous "normal" radiation that might otherwise impede detection. This was accomplished by encasing and shielding the superconducting magnets and poles associated with the system in an advanced, grounded Faraday cage. By doing this any superfluous waves generated by other radiation was grounded in the shield, while scalar waves readily penetrated it undiminished. In other words, the Faraday cage striped away the ordinary waves, allowing only the scalar waves to penetrate for detection.

In essence, the *ta shih* system became the ultimate detector for any body moving through spacetime. But it had been tuned specifically for detecting aircraft and missiles in general, and stealth aircraft in particular. The range of the scalar wave detection component of the system was limited when compared to normal radar systems, so the hybrid system used the longer range detection capabilities of the passive electrical sensing, bi-static radar and multi-static radar as a trigger. Once a likely stealth target was detected by those systems, the scalar wave detector could then be focused and tuned on those targets to effect definitive identification, acquisition and targeting.

The entire system was digitally tied to miniaturized, high speed super computers with significant arrayed processing capabilities, which analyzed the detected scalar waves in conjunction with the electronic intercepts and radar data to determine, with a great degree of accuracy, what type of stealth aircraft was involved. The system then controlled the intercept of the target with whatever weapons system was slaved to it. These systems could be anything from ZU-23 anti-aircraft guns up to and including the new KS-3 anti-ballistic missile systems.

The testing in the Mongolian high deserts had proven the system's effectiveness using all of these various weapon types against all models and types of stealth technology the Americans were known or thought to be using. This included radar reflection shape technology, radar absorbing structural technology, coatings...and even the newer, more exotic ionization fields and special electronic charging systems that the Americans were employing on their newer aircraft.

"No, now there will simply be no place for them to hide," surmised the General.

"Anytime they approach our forces, we shall shine the light of *ta shih* on them and illuminate them as the daylight illuminates the earth."

**March 21, that same time**

**COSTIND Headquarters**

**Beijing, China**

Now General Hunbaio reflected back to the earlier days of his own long standing involvement with the program. Back to the days when the initial theories utilizing passive electronic detection, bi-static and multi-static radar detection had been advanced in the early 1990's. From there they had progressed to the point where rudimentary systems for those technologies had been developed by late 1998. The earliest systems was unwieldy and unsuited for the control of anything but directed anti-aircraft projectile fire and older anti-aircraft missile technology at the time.

Then, an opportunity had presented itself when the United States announced its intention of using air power to force Serbia to bend to international pressure regarding its Kosovo province in late 1998 and early 1999. The Chinese had secretly contacted the Serbs and gained permission to conduct live-fire, combat tests of the rudimentary system during the resulting conflict. The systems were slaved to Serbian SA-3 anti-aircraft missiles for the tests. The General himself had flown to Belgrade with a hand-picked team and witnessed the precision and apparent invulnerability of the U.S. led air assault. He had personally supervised the installation of those initial stealth detection systems and then monitored their use throughout the entire eleven week allied bombing campaign.

Over two dozen missiles were fired in the first few weeks of the war at contacts identified by the equipment as American F-117 stealth fighters. In those first weeks there were no hits, but they did



achieve several close intercepts. The Americans must have been concerned with those intercepts because they started flying their stealth fighters at higher altitudes to avoid them. Then, on March 28, 1999, there had been success that had rocked the world's military analysts.

On that night, an F-117 stealth fighter was detected at a 5,000 meter altitude in an attack profile over Serbia. Three SA-3 missiles had been launched and one of them set off its proximity fuse and exploded just a few meters below and to the left of the aircraft. The force of the explosion and the resulting shrapnel damaged the aircraft so severely that it crashed into a farmer's field. For the first time a vaunted American stealth aircraft had been downed in combat...and the Chinese were the ones who accomplished it. The General would never forget the adulation and excitement. He would never forget his own feelings as he contemplated the shock and surprise the Americans must have felt.

Although the pilot ejected safely and was successfully rescued by a massive U.S. and NATO search and rescue effort, the stealth aircraft had come down in the farmer's field relatively intact. Then, to the amazement of the Serbs and the Chinese, and later to the amazement of the American high command itself, local American forces had not destroyed the aircraft wreckage as it lay there in the field. Unbelievably, an absolute intelligence coup had been left in that farmer's field and the Chinese and Serbs took full advantage of it.

As he contemplated this, the General side tracked for a moment in his thoughts.

"Funny how the American press never asked about the pilot of that aircraft," the General mused.

"He was not the pilot whose name was stenciled on the aircraft itself and the Americans did not use their amazing rescue mission they had mounted for any PR purposes."

The General had found those two pieces of information particularly odd given the American president who had been in power at the time. Utterly predictable and easily handled by the Chinese intelligence services, that President had always made abject use of any operation that he could to make himself look good. That he had not done so with this particular event had been a topic of much discussion and analysis in the People's Republic of China intelligence circles.

Ultimately Chinese intelligence had concluded that the reason the pilot's name and story were never forthcoming was because the pilot himself had not been American. The PRC came to the determination that the Americans had allowed German pilots to be trained in the use of their aircraft and then used in the air over Serbia. Since Germany occupied over half of the air base near Alamogordo, New Mexico where the F-117's were based, and where several wings of German Tornado and RF-4E reconnaissance aircraft were also based for training purposes... at one of the most sensitive American air bases in the country...it would have been easy for this cross training to occur had it been found to be advantageous and so ordered by that particular administration. In the war in Kosovo, such a circumstance would have been very "politically correct" to help ensure German support. That particular American President and his entire administration had been caught up in political correctness to the point that they most definitely would have allowed such an operational initiative to become reality, irrespective of the security and intelligence risks, if they thought it would buy them something...in this case that German support in Europe.

This conclusion was supported all the more in Hunbaio's mind as a result of his other successes with the Americans at the time. It had been his idea to have a beautiful Chinese woman, who was a Colonel in the Chinese intelligence services, pose as the head of the People's Republic commercial aircraft industry and visit Washington, DC, on multiple occasions during those years on what were deemed trade missions. As a result, she had been able to gain direct access to the American President and his top economic advisors.

The American President's weaknesses in this regard were well known. After the meetings with the beautiful Chinese "*executive*" in the White House, the President had ordered the transfer of all reviews of dual-use technology away from the U.S. Defense Department to the much less secure Commerce Department to "speed up the process and cut through red tape". What had resulted was the transfer of significant aircraft, missile and rocket staging technology to the People's Republic that was directly applied to military research and development applications under COSTIND. It was a tremendous coup for the People's Republic in general and for Hunbaio personally. It had continued unabated for almost eight years.

But all of that had been in addition to the matter at hand at the time in Serbia. The General knew that what had really mattered at the time was the fact that the Chinese equipment had locked on to and downed an American stealth fighter. It also mattered that the wreckage had been recovered so surprisingly intact.

The Serbs had gathered that wreckage that night and into the next day. By previous agreement, the Serbs allowed the Chinese technicians to pour over the wreckage and analyze it first and to retain up to two hundred pounds of the wreckage material of their choice. The resulting data had been an intelligence and technological bonanza for the Chinese. It was also materiel that the Serbs would make good use of over the next several months as several other interested nations also would be given the opportunity to review and analyze the wreckage...of course at a significant cost in terms of hard capitol and future commitments.

But General Hunbaio and his nation had been the ones to benefit the most. Having obtained the desired amount of physical material, the Chinese had prepared a detailed analysis and report and were prepared to ship the data along with the physical materiel back to China in early May. Apparently the American CIA had gotten wind of the Chinese involvement and convinced the American government to act. On May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1999, the United States had used the much more advanced B-2 stealth bomber, which was impervious to the level of the technology the Chinese employed to bring down the F-117 stealth fighter, and dropped several large, guided munitions on the Chinese embassy where the data and materiel was located, destroying it and killing several of the General's best people.

To the American's chagrin, the data had previously been electronically transferred in a raw and preliminary form, which allowed the detailed reports to be reconstructed. In addition, thirty-three pounds of the most valuable stealth wreckage material was recovered from the ruins of the embassy and shipped back to China. But the General's personnel were much more difficult to replace, both technically and emotionally.

In the end, the press had never known the real reasons behind that strike on the Chinese embassy or the intricacies and import of the F-117 incident. Although the two governments never formally or informally discussed it, neither side had ever forgotten it.

From that day on, the General had vowed to bring the stealth detection program to fruition until he could reliably acquire and shoot down any American stealth aircraft. It had taken several years of testing, additional espionage work and significant technological breakthroughs in research and development to accomplish it. Now, the technology appeared well tuned to all of the various stealth materiel the Americans employed and the various methods that were utilizing to try and shield it. The COSTIND engineers had done their duty and the PRC now had the infrastructure in place to continue the development so as to counter the sure American response. What was left was to get the weapons system produced on a massive scale and end the Americans advantage in this area once and for all, like they had already accomplished on the high seas.

**April 2, 03:07 local time**

**145,000 feet over Eastern Siberia**

**Approaching Mongolia**

The approach had come in right over the North Pole. Taking off out of Alaska, separation from the SR-77 Pervador aircraft south of the Arctic Circle at the southern edge of the ice cap on the Asian side and final refueling before ingress just north of the Siberian coast. Now it was time to turn to the south east, kick the PDW engines of his HR-7 Thunder Dart in and scream across Mongolia before turning back towards the Arctic Ocean and a refuel before heading "to the house".

Colonel Mendenhall had made many reconnaissance flights over enemy territory in the last two years. From China to India to portions of the Mid-East, there was not a place on earth America's high-altitude, high-performance, exotic stealth reconnaissance aircraft could not penetrate with impunity. The need for them to do so had become even more pronounced as a result of the "space wars" that were continuing in this conflict where each side was regularly downing the other's reconnaissance satellites. So more pilots were trained to fly the SR-77 and HR-7 combo and the program was extended to both the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Air Force.

Still, "Mac" Mendenhall was the most experienced hyper-velocity reconnaissance pilot America had. He was now also a squadron leader and had been given the lead role in developing the training program for newer pilots. In fact, this mission was to be his last combat operation so he could focus more on that training. If the truth be known, his superiors had hoped he would assign one of his other pilots to this flight, but "Mac" was simply not able to turn down such an important mission.

There were also dangers. The most critical of these were the latest KS-2+ missiles the Chinese had employed on the mainland two years ago, and which they were proliferating to all of their allies as a result of the war. But, although the Chinese had surprised him and his superiors with their ability to reach the altitudes he operated at, they had rarely had enough notification to come close to a physical intercept at the speeds of the HR-7 aircraft, and they had never been able to get a solid "lock-on" to the stealthy aircraft's airframe.

On one occasion, when the Chinese had made first use of the KS-2+ missiles, they had actually achieved a lock-on, but that had been a thermal lock based on Mac's ignition of his afterburners at the time after being surprised that the missiles had reached his altitude. America had since learned that those missile's seeker heads and the software behind them were not capable of a solid lock-on based upon radar. Since that time, the NRO and other military reconnaissance pilots flying these aircraft had remained much more cool and no aircraft had been lost.

"There are rumors through intelligence channels of an even more advanced missile," Mendenhall thought as he approached his next navigation point, "I'll have to keep that in mind."

Today the mission was taking the Colonel back over enemy held territory on the mainland of Asia, over Chinese owned Mongolia. The mission profile called for the flight to pass within forty kilometers of a research facility on the high plains of central Mongolia and to capture thermal and electro-magnetic readings across the spectrum as well as visual imagery of the facility. This data

would be transferred directly to higher altitude drone aircraft operating over the Arctic Ocean which would in turn relay the data to an AWACS aircraft operating near the pole. From there the data would be transferred back to the States and received in real time back at the NRO headquarters in Chantilly, VA and at the situation room in the White House.

“Concern for what is going on at that research facility looks like it reaches all the way to the top of the food chain,” thought the Colonel as he prepared to activate his sensor package.

**April 2, 03:10 local time**

***Ta Shih* Enhanced KS-3 Missile Battery**

**PRC COSTIND Research Facility, Central Mongolia**

Captain Hu Ziyang recognized the approach profile of the incoming enemy aircraft. He had dealt with them before. In fact, it was as a result of those earlier encounters that he had been promoted and assigned the task of protecting this critical research facility from enemy air attack. His standard radar was registering the intermittent, hyper-velocity contact typical of an American high-altitude, hyper-velocity stealth mission. Other than the intermittent contact though, that equipment was unable to lock-on. If the approach profile came close enough, he knew he could launch his un-enhanced KS-2+ and newer KS-3 missiles and hope for an infra-red intercept, but that was literally a long shot. But tonight, the Captain knew he would not have to rely on that.

“No, tonight, my elusive American friend, we are going to bring you down hard,” thought the Captain as he waited for the intermittent contact to come within range of his *ta shih* sensors.

As the contact came within 200km, the Captain ordered his two enhanced KS-3 batteries to activate their *ta shih* detectors and within two seconds he had his answer.

“Captain, the system has identified the aircraft as an American stealth reconnaissance aircraft closing on a bearing of 282 degrees, altitude 45,000 meters, speed mach 4.2 We have a solid lock.”

**April 2, 03:11 local time**

**160,000 feet over Central Mongolia**

**Approaching PRC COSTIND Research Facility**

“Mac” Mendenhall had already activated his sensor package and was just beginning his turn. The data was already being recorded, encrypted and communicated in bursts to the circling drone aircraft that were flying at an altitude almost twice that of his own well to his north over the Arctic Ocean. At the speed of light, they were transmitting the mission data back to North America, the NRO and the White House.

Mac had also noticed the various conventional radar bands that were trying to get a lock on his aircraft and was flying secure in the knowledge that they could not do so. He knew that at any moment the Chinese would launch their high performance missiles at him in an effort to get an infra-red intercept, but he also knew how to handle that and avoid the lock-on if he simply kept his cool.

What Mac hadn’t noticed, because his equipment had no way of sensing it, was that the Chinese *ta shih* detectors associated with the two enhanced KS-3 missile sites had already locked on to him. When their missile launches were monitored by his aircraft, it came as no particular surprise to him. What would come as a surprise to the Colonel, and to every American who was monitoring the engagement, or who would later see the data, was what followed those missile launches.

**MISSILE LAUNCH, MISSILE LAUNCH, MISSILE LAUNCH**

The flashing of the red warning light and the accompanying incessant words in his headset, though of no great surprise, did get the adrenaline flowing and cause the Colonel to focus on his defensive systems while the sensor package continued its automated sequence of recording, encrypting and broadcasting.

Within thirty seconds all of that changed as both surprise and immediate, mortal danger overshadowed past experiences and as the Colonel’s training kicked in to compensate.

The KS-3 missile was a significant enhancement over its KS-2+ forerunner. Capable of engaging targets at up to 70,000 meters in altitude (210,000+ feet), and capable of a maximum speed of Mach 10, the KS-3 missile was designed to intercept incoming ballistic missiles. In the conventional mode, using normal radar, the missile had a maximum range of 500 km (over 300 miles). In the *ta shih* enhanced mode, all of its performance criteria remained the same, except for the range. Since the current *ta shih* detectors only had a range of 200 km the stealth directed range was limited to that distance.

As Mac Mendenhall approached at mach 4.2 and closed to within 175 km of the facility he realized that the four missiles rising to meet him were accelerating more quickly and to higher speeds than anything he had experienced before. Quicker and faster than anything he had ever been briefed on. When those same missiles passed through 130,000 feet and showed no deceleration at all, but continued to accelerate past mach 7, Mac knew he was in trouble, and he knew that he was facing a radically more dangerous Chinese threat. Every instinct told him, and he wasted no time responding.

“Hightower, Hightower. Aborting approach and performing an emergency egress to vector ...”

Those words were the last words Colonel Mac Mendenahall would ever utter. At that instant, as he concentrated fully on his egress and defensive measures, and just as the Colonel desperately activated his ejection module, two missiles slammed into his aircraft at a speed in excess of mach 8 resulting in a massive explosion and a total disintegration of Mac's aircraft.

**April 2, 03:15 local time**

***Ta Shih* Enhanced KS-3 Missile Battery**

**PRC COSTIND Research Facility, Central Mongolia**

It was over. The Captain could scarcely believe it.

Where there had been a solid return from the approaching and then rapidly turning American reconnaissance aircraft, there had appeared the plotted tracks of the missiles converging, a brief expansion of the contact return ... and now nothing. The system stated simply.

**CONTACT DESTROYED**

The American had really had no chance. Had he immediately turned to egress at maximum thrust the moment his own systems detected the KS-3 missile launches he might have gotten away. But, clearly the American thought that these missiles, although faster, would not be able to lock on to him, or even reach him since he was flying at a higher altitude than the KS-2+ missiles were capable. So, he had flown on, and in so doing, he had sealed his own fate.

Two of the missiles had struck right after one another as the American accelerated to mach 5.3 and turned away. There had appeared to be a separation of some type just before impact that could have been an ejection of some sort, but the expanding explosion had engulfed it all. Nothing of any measurable size coming out of that explosion had been detected by the sensors, either the *ta shih* or conventional radar.

"And no wonder," thought Captain Hu, "any debris or ejection module, hitting the air stream at mach five would be pulverized into nothing but the smallest of fragment, metal, plastic ... or flesh."

**April 8, 18:37 local time**

**U.S.S. Tarawa Flight Deck**

**Off the Coast of Sydney, Australia**

Captain Simmons had seen a lot of death and destruction over the last several months, more than he would have dreamed possible. As the allies retreated across Australia and finally been confined to the southeast corner of the continent immediately surrounding Sidney and Melbourne, he had dealt out his share of that death and destruction on the advancing hordes of Chinese, Indonesian and Indian soldiers. In the process Billy had two helicopters shot out from under him and lost three rear-seaters.

As many combat veterans experience, Billy had become reluctant to get to know those he flew and fought with too well ... the pain of the loss just keeps on mounting, the personal sacrifice, though hidden, just keeps on building. Still, that personal sacrifices was not enough. The collective sacrifices of all of the allied forces and the Australian civilian population were not enough ... in fact, they had been woefully inadequate in the face of what they were fighting.

Billy had watched first hundreds of thousands and then several million Australian civilians herded like cattle in advance of the enemy onslaught, terrorized by the rumors and accounts of what was happening to their countrymen and their property falling under the CAS and GIR rule. There was little doubt that the accounts were true ... the world had seen abject evidence of it on WNN and other networks over and over again. But none of what Billy had personally witnessed up to this point compared to what he was witnessing now.

The enemy numbers were overwhelming. A breach had occurred and spread on three fronts. Melbourne had fallen almost three weeks earlier with great destruction and a tremendous loss of life. Billy could scarcely bear to think about what his eyes had witnessed, the death and misery of so many women and children. There had been a resulting huge influx of civilian refugees into the Sydney area, many of them injured, most all of them completely possession-less except what they had been able to carry on their backs.

Now, Sidney was imminently threatened in a similar manner, except that it would be far worse.

"Now there's no place left for them to run," Billy said to himself.

Allied forces were now embroiled in an overall evacuation effort that made Dunkirk in World War II pale in comparison. Operation Plan NZ-AUTUMN was in full gear and one and one half million Australian, American, United Kingdom, Canadian, Brazilian and other allied troops were being withdrawn in the face of an enemy force that had swelled to over four million front line combatants. In the face of those numbers, over five million Australian citizens also desperately wanted out.

"But most of those will never make it," Billy realized as he contemplated the horror that would ensue in those final hours.

"It'll be a miracle if most of the allied military forces get out, much less the civ's," he thought."

Seeing to it that such a miracle occurred was what Billy and all of his compatriots were focused on twenty-four hours a day.

The Allied naval force off of Australia had grown to be the largest naval force the allies were employing anywhere in the world. The U.S. now had a large deck carrier force of four carriers in the waters between New Zealand and Australia, the U.S.S. *Shanksville* having arrived in theater within the last week with her battle group. That total force was shielded by no less than six Aegis cruisers and fourteen Arleigh Burke Aegis destroyers, complimented by eight attack submarines. Each carrier carried an air wing consisting of 24 F/A-18E Super Hornets, 18 F/A-18F two-seater Super Hornets, 12 F/A-35C Joint Strike Fighters, 10 HV-22 ASW Ospreys, 4 E/A-18 EW Growlers, 4 E2C AEW Hawkeyes and 4 SH-60F Seahawk aircraft. Over three hundred aircraft on the large carrier task force alone that was defending the sea lanes and trying to hold back the advancing enemy forces. The ground based air component of the allied efforts had dwindled to less than one hundred aircraft as the large enemy forces came closer and as those aircraft that could still take off and land from increasingly threatened airfields were forced to retreat to New Zealand so they could fight another day.

Closer in to the coast, the allies were employing seven Sea Control Carriers to augment defensive duties and to punish the advancing enemy further. Two Tarawa class and two Wasp class were employing air wings of 8 AH-1Z Super Cobra, 4 AV-22 Osprey, 4 EC-22 Ospreys for AWACS, and 18 A/F-35B VTOL Joint Strike Fighters in the Sea Control mode. The HMS *Illustrious* and the completely repaired HMS *Ocean* were both employing mixed, sea control air wings for the United Kingdom, eighteen aircraft on the *Illustrious* and twelve on the *Ocean*. Finally, the newly commissioned HMCS *White Horse*, the Canadians new carrier was also operating close to the Australian coast with an air wing of 10 Joint Strike Fighters and 8 ASW helicopters.

With all of the escort ships, with the support, replenishment, ammunition and other logistical ships and the naval amphibious ships, the allies had well over 250 military vessels operating off of Australia in support of the evacuation. Added to this were the over 1000 Australian and New Zealand commercial and private vessels that had volunteered to help evacuate the beleaguered continent.

As he climbed out of the cockpit and as he and his companion made their way across the flight deck towards a debriefing and then a quick four hours of sleep, Captain Simmons contemplated the mission he had just completed.

"All ordinance expended, almost all of our fuel ... seeing Terry and Mike go down in that fire ball ... Lord God Almighty, when will it end? Will it ever end?" he thought.

"... and the poor civilians."

Billy had been operating about thirty five miles inland just to the west of the Great Divide Range, where the front lines of battle were now located. The suburbs of Sydney were being hit and hit hard. Seeing the homes and business of civilians going up in flames while those very people ran to the east for their lives, into a more and more cramped space, had broken Billy's heart again and again ... and strengthened his resolve.

"These monsters must be stopped... this scene cannot, it *must not* come to my home in America," he had thought as flew over the scenes of destruction and engaged the advancing enemy.

"I pray to God that we can somehow stop it for these fine people here ... and if not, that enough of us can survive to one day come back here and set things aright, to retake these lands for their rightful owners," he completed.

As he formed those thoughts, and concentrated on avoiding enemy flak, the very idea of surviving was driven home to him as his wingmen, Terry and Mike had been killed in a blinding explosion to his right. Billy saw a nearby ZU-23 radar guided anti-aircraft emplacement that had remained passive until the American helicopters were right on top of it had been the cause of his friend's deaths. Billy had banked back around behind an oak covered hillock, locked up the target and destroyed it with his last Hellfire missile. Soon thereafter he had expended the last of his other munitions and broke off and returned to the Tarawa. He was grateful to return to the ship alive and well, but sorry he didn't have an endless supply of fuel, munitions ... and wing men ... so he could constantly take the fight to the enemy. He was driven to do so, as were so many of his compatriots, because he couldn't help but see his own family and friends in the people here in Australia whose world and very lives were falling apart in fiery destruction and death right before his eyes.

To the east of the mountains, the allies maintained air-superiority, so once Billie flew his AH-1Z across the mountain range he was in relative safety. But over the advancing battlefield the enemy was employing hundreds of older technology aircraft and scores of their newer ones to good effect in preventing the allies from dominating the air. In fact, the only place the allies were able to maintain total air dominance was immediately over the coast and over the fleets. From Billy's perspective, while the enemy was losing many aircraft, they seemed more than willing to do so because it was allowing their ground forces, which were nonetheless being terribly savaged by western standards, to continue to advance without being decimated to the point of stalling.

The naval situation was good here locally for the allies and this was what was allowing them to continue the evacuation in the face of the enemy advance. But there were some very serious issues. Indian and Chinese attack aircraft in the form of Backfire and Blinder bombers were a constant threat for cruise missile and especially LRASD, "Killer Whale", attacks. The recent arrival of the HMCS *White Horse* was a perfect example. That ship replaced the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force

Osumi class Amphibious Assault vessel, the JMSDF Motobu, when it was sunk three weeks ago by two LRASD weapons launched from a group of TU-22M Backfire bombers that penetrated the defensive zone in the western sector below Melbourne. The Japanese forces in exile were bravely taking up their part of the fight here in Australia and their sacrifices and efforts were an inspiration to all. But the sinking of one of their few remaining capital ships was a terrible blow. It had happened during the unbelievably hectic period of time surrounding the fall of Melbourne. Several escort ships, including a U.S. Burke class destroyer had been sunk in that same attack that day.

In addition, many "picket" destroyers and frigates were continuing to be sunk by similar attacks as the enemy continued to advance. The allies expected a mammoth air attack to accompany the final push by the enemy over the Great Divide Range. That push could occur at almost anytime. In addition, reconnaissance and intelligence reports indicated that the Chinese and Indians had increased their naval presence to the west of Melbourne and well north of Sidney. It was thought that the Chinese now had three separate task forces consisting of three Beijing Class carriers in each task force to the north and that the Indians had all four of their carriers to the west. It was apparent to everyone, that in addition to the major ground and air battle associated with the assault on Sydney, that a major sea battle was going to develop as well. Billy could only hope that they were prepared for it.

**April 10, 21:50 EDT**

**Trevor Residence**

**Nashua, New Hampshire**

Elizabeth could tell when her husband was concerned and this evening it seemed far worse than anything she had seen in years. He was moody, he was somber and he was pre-occupied ... traits he rarely displayed when they were together at home. It had been building for days and even the Annual Conference of their Church a few days ago had not dispelled it.

What was even more telling was that he had not shared it with her, which meant it was very bad.

Well, from long experience, whether dealing with ideas that had his mind pre-occupied, concerns over their daughter, concern over her or the occasional problem where his fretting was causing him to "go it alone", Elizabeth Trevor knew how to deftly raise the topic with him and draw him out. She also knew, from that same long experience, when to do so.

Now was the time.

"Joe," she said.

When he looked up from the papers he was intently studying, she continued.

"You know, I was told once," referring to a saying of Joe's that he had shared with her on so many occasions, "that a heavy load is more safely supported on two columns than it is on one alone."

For a moment his brow furrowed. He looked on the verge of saying that it was nothing she need concern herself over and he could handle it. Wisely, Elizabeth said no more, she just continued to look into his eyes conveying nothing more than her love for him and desire to be there for him. After a moment, the furrow disappeared, he sighed slightly and a smile slowly spread across his face. As he held his arm out and they clasped hands between their two recliner chairs he began.

"You're right honey ... and thanks for reminding me. Sometimes the hardest advise any of us have taking is our own.

"I do need to share this with you and get your advise and council. I should have done it several days ago. I had hoped that the church conference might convey an answer to me ... but I was so preoccupied that I am afraid I didn't listen too well."

Joseph Trevor stopped speaking for a moment. The weight bore down on him.

"How could I have been such a fool," he thought.

"How could I have been so easily taken in and taken advantage of," he continued in his mind.

Almost eight months ago Dr. Saundra Eleanor McPherson had approached him about using his own research to develop virtual modeling techniques using high speed and high capacity computers to perform the same functions he accomplished with physical data and advanced microscopies. The same techniques that had led to the discovery of the HRS that had led to his own Nobel prize. Dr. McPherson was brilliant and driven, but she and Joseph differed radically on philosophical and moral issue and he knew it. Still, in the hopes of pure scientific advancement, he had set that aside.

Last week he had discovered exactly what her intentions were with the methods he had allowed her to develop and it had hit him like a freight train.

"Honey, it's Saundra McPherson and this whole virtual modeling idea that she talked me into helping her develop."

Elizabeth didn't understand. She had traveled with Joseph regarding this. She had met Saundra and she had thought that despite the philosophical differences that an accord had been reached and that things were progressing nicely.

"I don't understand Joseph. I thought she was having great success and that it was going to lead right to where you hoped it would."

Now his shoulders slumped slightly as he responded.

“That’s just it . . . it is! All of that, and the success ends up to be the lure that she laid out there for me and I snapped it up and swallowed it whole. It is successful. The funding has paid off and will allow the technique to be proliferated into many fields of study.”

Elizabeth listened. As Joseph explained the good fortune, his countenance continued to fall.

“Then what could possibly be the matter?” she asked.

Joe could see that he was confusing her and that the time had come to open his heart and share the thing that had him so perplexed and so distraught.

“The matter is that she is going to use this technology that I have helped her to develop to further the study of fetal tissue . . . directly from aborted little babies . . . children of God!”

Elizabeth was shocked.

“Joseph, she can’t do that. It’s illegal. What on earth are you talking about?”

So Joseph explained it. He shared with his wife how a colleague had called him from the west coast and discreetly informed him regarding his own concerns and presumptions regarding some of the “side” work Dr. McPherson was involved in. That friend was an alumni of Stanford where Sandra worked, was very conservative, was pro-life and also set on the advisory board at the University that oversaw dispersal and oversight of donations to the University, himself having been a frequent large donor in years gone by.

The information his friend had provided had led Joseph to ultimately discover the trade, or communication of fetal tissue data that was going on between universities and research facilities in Europe and some researchers in America, where the physical tissue could not be had. When finding that Sandra was in the middle of this, and in fact was one of the principle facilitators here in America, it had become all too clear what she intended with the virtual modeling techniques for the research processes that he, Dr. Joseph Trevor had developed.

“Honey, she is going to use those techniques . . . my methods . . . to facilitate much more thorough and detailed studies of European fetal tissue. It will create a virtual business of that study here in the United States, deftly and completely circumventing the law!”

Now Elizabeth understood and she got up from the chair and took Joseph in her arms.

“What a horrible thing for her to do,” she thought realizing how Joseph was punishing himself for Sandra’s decision.

“Honey, you can’t hold yourself responsible. Sandra is the one making these decisions, not you. What she has done is a result of her own free agency. She will ultimately be accountable for it and in the mean time, her own methods will allow for other good research to be done that otherwise could not have occurred.

“God uses everything for His purposes in the end, you know this. The scriptures tell us that there must be opposition in all things to try us and to allow us to progress. That is what this is. Please listen to me and stop punishing yourself. Please put this in God’s hands.

“He also tells us that all things work for the good of them that love the Lord. Sweetheart, I know that you do and I know that it will work for the good.”

His wife’s voice and reassurance was exactly the balm that Joseph needed. It was if though a healing ointment had been spread across his soul. He could recognize the confirmation in his spirit of the truth of what she was saying and he accepted it. He would let events take their course and stop brow beating himself over something that had occurred due to the manipulations of another.

Oh, he was still not happy with Dr. McPherson in the least and he was determined to call her and give he a piece of his mind and then break off his relationship with her entirely. Then, he was going to call the U.S. Attorney General’s office and see if there was some loop hole or some provision in the law that could stop her from continuing with what he felt was her grizzly research.

But the course of history had already been set and there was nothing Joseph Trevor could do at this point to alter it. The research would proceed and it would produce results, consequences and a legacy in its own due time . . . and it was not far off either.

**April 14, 02:08 local time**

**145,000 ft. Over the Black Sea**

**145 miles off the Coast of Georgia**

This would be the first combat operational use of the HAHVIC. It was a device that had been developed especially for the SR-77 Pervador for use by American special forces when two to four operatives simply had to get somewhere in the world in the quickest time possible. The device had been rigorously tested in the American west and then over areas of the Pacific Ocean off the American west coast, but it had never been used in a combat zone and it was the first time that Captain Riley Adams had ever occupied one . . . and he’d been sitting in this one for well over six hours now.

“Oh well, things could be worse,” he thought. The device was fully pressurized and contained its own oxygen supply. It was also outfitted with a communications package, with drinking water and with a waste pouch and it had a lumbar supported and cushioned couch to sit in. All of those were comforts that Special Forces members like himself rarely had the luxury of, so he couldn’t complain.

But the thought of moving through space at a speed in excess of four times the speed of sound in one of these things was unnerving, especially when your speeding toward your enemy at that rate with no control except for computer calibrated trajectories. It wouldn't be until after he passed through 1000 feet that he would disembark from the capsule with his parasail and his weapons. Then the Captain would feel in control again. He knew that the Master Sergeant that was making the insertion with him felt the same way, in fact, if anything, the Master Sergeant would be even more antsy than Captain Adams. He also knew that they both would professionally do what had to be done to "Charlie Mike", and continue the mission.

HAHVIC stood for High Altitude, Hyper-velocity Insertion Capsule. It was a small, aerodynamically shaped flying wing made entirely of composite stealth material that could hold one man and his gear. Each SR-77 could carry up to four of the devices, two in each of its large instrumentation bays if needed. In this case, two HAHVIC's were being carried in two bays while the other two bays were devoted to a normal mix of reconnaissance and electronic warfare instrumentation. Conceptually, launched from a stealth reconnaissance aircraft at extremely high altitude and gliding down to low altitude before the operative exited the capsule at less than 1000 feet, the insertion would be wholly undetectable by any enemy force.

But that concept and theory had been shot full of holes just over a week ago with the loss of Mac Mendhall and his HR-7 Thunder Dart over Mongolia. The pilot and his RIO had been briefed along with the Captain and the Master Sergeant regarding the ramifications. Intelligence and the entire command chain was almost positive that the devices used in Mongolia were prototypes and could not possibly have been deployed yet on this side of the world.

"Almost positive are the operative words there," thought Riley Adams as he was informed over the communications channel that they were only sixty seconds from release.

"Of course those guys who are *almost positive* that it couldn't possibly be deployed here are not the ones strapped into this baby making the decent into Indian country.

"Oh well, that's why we get the big bucks, hah!" concluded Adams as he mentally counted down the seconds and did one final radio check with the sergeant.

"You ready Master Sergeant?"

The Master Sergeant, who was an eighteen year veteran and had been expecting one final check from his commanding officer, responded immediately.

"Yes sir, as ready as I can be...and ready to get down on the ground, Captain."

"I roger that. Well, here we go in three, two, one ... separation!"

Both men heard and felt the *CLICK* of separation and then the almost complete quiet associated with an un-powered, faster than sound transit through the high altitude air. Neither men saw the SR-77 that had released them bank to the left and back out over the Black Sea on its way to more friendly skies. Those skies were a long way away at this stage of the conflict and there was no margin for loitering to see how the special forces personnel fared.

Captain Riley and his Master Sergeant were now two American Special Forces personnel being inserted deep into enemy territory on the highly classified and critical mission that they had been assigned personally by the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Robert Ballard. They would ultimately exit their HAHVICs at low altitude and the insertion devices would then impact the water and sink beneath the waves of the Black Sea. After separation, the two operatives would parasail into the water two miles off of a remote portion of the Georgian coast. There they would use the small inflatable raft that the Master Sergeant carried and paddle to the designated spot on shore where they were scheduled to meet up with Captain Luke Hanson and his partisan force of resistance fighters.

Captain Hanson and his force had been mounting resistance efforts behind enemy lines in Turkey, the former Iraq, Armenia and now Georgia for over two years. Back then, Hanson, the commander of the security forces at the U.S. Air Force base at Incirlik, had been cut off while performing a diversion for retreating American forces when the air base had been overrun by GIR forces. His efforts behind enemy lines for all of this time were the things legends were made of and Riley Adams was anxious to meet and get to know the man.

"Well, I'll soon have that opportunity," thought Captain Adams as his parasail successfully deployed and he scanned the coastline and the water below him. He could see the Master Sergeant about fifty yards off to his left doing the same.

"Our orders are to take whatever time and whatever measures necessary to carry out this mission. And that's exactly what is going to happen," he thought.

**April 17, 09:18 MDT**

**Greyhound Bus Station**

**West Bannock Street, Boise, Idaho**

Geneva watched as her two sons prepared to get on the bus. They'd be leaving in less than fifteen minutes. She reflected back on both of their lives, their upbringing, the death of their father back in Chicago so many years ago, the feelings she had as both Leon and Greg had drifted into the gang culture and then the almost rapturous feelings that had come as her oldest, Leon, had pulled



himself up out of that environment and brought the whole family with him. Those had been glorious days of new friends and new opportunities as they had moved out west here to Boise, Idaho where Leon started college with a scholarship at Boise State University. Then the war had intervened and Leon and his friend, Billy Simmons, had joined the U.S. Marines together and gone off to fight. Alan, who was benefiting from the fine example of an older brother and who, thankfully, was mature enough to emulate it, had joined the local Home Guard unit and followed in his brother's footsteps.

Then had come the news of Leon's severe injury and the weeks waiting on word of his arrival back home. Then the months of waiting by his bed side in San Antonio, Texas until he had finally come out of the coma to discover he was a hero who had been awarded the medal of honor.

For Geneva, the tale Leon told of meeting his father while he was in that coma would stay with her until the day she died. It reaffirmed her faith and even now, brought tears to her eyes to think about it. Leon had described physical characteristics and mannerisms about his father that Geneva believed he couldn't possibly have remembered from his youth. They had spoken of it on many occasions and she had reviewed it in her mind over and over again. Geneva was sure that the tale would live in the family for generations, bolstering their faith.

"The kind of faith makes strong families," she thought as she contemplated it again.

Next to Leon's miraculous recovery itself, Geneva was certain that the story of his meeting with his father was the next most important thing to come out of Leon's whole ordeal. In fact, she was certain that his survival and the telling of that tale were fused together and, along with whatever else was in store for Leon's life, that it was a principle reason for his survival.

"Like the good Lord sending us all a message from over Jordan," she surmised.

"And it's a message I'm gonna spread ... and hold in my heart 'til I see you again, Jerome."

After Leon's release, he had been sent home with significant leave to ensure his complete recuperation and recovery. There was a promise from the military, from the President right on down that Leon would be able to stay stateside if he so desired to help in the immense and ongoing job of recruitment, and in January he had embarked on that assignment.

But he never became comfortable with it. He was bound and determined to get back into action and ultimately, despite her own misgivings, he had received his orders and now here he was shipping out to the west coast for deployment into the Pacific Theater of Operations somewhere.

... and Alan was going with him.

Leon and Alan had been thicker than thieves the last six months and as a result of that influence, Alan had decided to join the Marines and follow in the footsteps of his brother. He was now shipping out to the same Marine Recruit Training Depot in San Diego where Leon had done his basic training.

Geneva Campbell was a loving mother. She was the epitome of the great tradition of strong and loving mothers in the sub-culture that had produced her in America. Resolute, strong willed, strict and as unflinching as limestone when she had to be, but understanding and loving to her own and anyone who helped her own. No one came between Geneva Campbell and her sons ... no one. She was also a proud American and recognized the opportunity that was latent in the liberties and freedoms in America and that her traditional Christian faith and values made possible for anyone who would use those values to take advantage of the opportunity America offered.

She had passed these principles on to her sons, and like many parents, was gratified and somewhat surprised when she found that those teachings had taken root and born good fruit. Her sons had made good use of what she passed on and she was grateful beyond measure to her Maker for it ... and to her deceased husband, Jerome Campbell, even if he was not here physically to see it now. He had been a hard working, good man, husband and father.

As a result of Leon's experience, she knew that he knew ... and that he was proud of his sons.

"Oh, Jerome, we got lots to be grateful for now don't we?" she asked silently as she gave Alan a hug and gazed heavenward within his strong grasp.

"Just look at my young men!" she said out loud.

"So strong, so brave ... and headed so far away!"

"Momma, don't you worry yourself now. We're gonna be alright. Besides, those NCOs that slapped Leon around and finally made a man of him are about to find out what a real Campbell man is made of!" Alan said to try and comfort his mother as the two of them finished their embrace.

Geneva knew that this strong talk was Alan's way of masking his apprehension. Despite his experiences on the street in Chicago, despite his experiences in the Home Guard here in Idaho, Alan had never really been away from home. As Alan stepped back to make room for his brother, Leon slugged his younger brother in the arm before putting his arms around his mother.

"Listen to the little big man would you now," he said.

"You better listen up good on this bus ride bro, and maybe, just maybe I'll tell you the secret of how to get through the mess you've gotten yourself into. You have no idea ... and I'll tell you what, the recruiter sure didn't let you in on it either," he added with a laugh.

Turning his attention to his mother, Leon leaned back a little and looked into her eyes.

“Mom, we're countin' on you to hold down the fort here ... and to keep sending those letters. Never think for a minute that they are wasted, even if we can't write back as much as we would like. Those letters are like sweet water to a man dieing of thirst. They are like gold to a pauper.”

Then he squeezed her a little harder, leaned closer and whispered in her ear.

“God bless you mom. We're not nearly as tough as we let on.”

Then, as Geneva waived to them both, Leon and Alan Campbell both got on the bus with the other passengers. Two minutes later, as Alan looked out the window at his waiving mother, the bus driver got into the idling bus, closed the door, and they drove away.

## Chapter 25

*"If you dig deeply, there is no telling what truth you might discover ... but only if your heart and mind are willing to accept it." Unknown Colonial American Pastor*

**April 19, 15:31 EST**  
**WNN Corporate Office Suite**  
**New York City, USA**

David Krenshaw rapidly opened the package he had just received by special courier service from Europe. Inside he found the digital video disk he had been promised. He carefully took it out of its package, walked over his digital music and video center, and inserted the disk into his "special" video player which was located in a second stack of equipment below the equipment normally used for executive meetings held in his office. Walking back past the plush leather chairs in front of his desk, he retrieved the remote from a digitally locked safe drawer in his desk. As he did so, he touched the intercom button on his desk and spoke to his administrative assistant.

"Jackie, hold all of my calls and any interruptions for the next twenty minutes please."

She responded immediately.

"But Mr. Krenshaw, the President of ABS has already scheduled a call with you at three-forty five, that's only thirteen or fourteen minutes from now."

David appreciated his assistant's reminder. She had been with him for several years and knew that he was a stickler about his scheduling, particularly about never missing anything of the slightest importance. But he also knew she could handle either stalling, or rescheduling the call, however important it seemed. He simply had to make it clear to her.

"Yes, I know Jackie, but something critical has come up and I am absolutely not to be disturbed for the next thirty minutes. See if Thomas can either hold for a few minutes (and David relished the thought of the President of ABS holding on the line for him) or reschedule."

Jackie wasted no more of her bosses time.

"Yes sir Mr. Krenshaw, I'll take care of it."

Freed from any further disturbances or encumbrances, David sat down in his favorite chair to watch the video. He used the remote control he had retrieved to activate the special set of equipment. The controller had been programmed to respond only to his right index finger activation. Once activated, David carefully entered the thirty-two digit shipping code followed by his own twelve digit PIN. He got it right on the first attempt and the disk immediately activated and began to display on his 72" flat screen monitor that was the centerpiece of David's high-tech and very expensive executive video display and conferencing center.

Twenty-five minutes later, David turned off the equipment and began copying the video disk onto standard WNN video media. As the disk copied, he used the intercom again contact Jackie.

"Jackie, cancel the rest of my afternoon and have both the National and the World-Wide News producers meet me here in my office in the next five minutes, say right at four o'clock. I have just been informed of a breaking story that simply must make tonight's national and international news.

"As they say ... stop the presses."

As Jackie made the arrangements, David leaned back and muttered to himself.

"I can just here it now ...

"Another startling breakthrough by the leader in World Wide News, WNN, and the leading news executive on the planet, David Krenshaw!

"Connections and networking ... the world turns on connections and networking and I don't mean the World-Wide-Web."

**April 19, that same time**

**Four blocks away, direct line of sight**

**Top Floor Edmonds Mercantile Center, FBI Observation Room**

The entire leadership for the Joint Terrorism Task Force Team assigned to the WNN investigation was present as they monitored David Krenshaw's office activities this afternoon. The courier package had been monitored since it had left Hamburg, Germany and had triggered the increased interest and surveillance. The package itself had been held long enough in customs at JFK to make a complete copy of the contents, which had consisted only of the video disk, while the courier himself was held and a replacement used for the delivery. Now, using the latest laser technology, the latest phone tap technology and the latest micro-electronics, the team was privy to almost everything David was saying, or even muttering to himself, as well as the inputs he made on his controller.

Director Andy Syke, after his tremendous success with Manuel Mendoza and the entire Hector Ortiz affair, had been transferred at the direction of the Director of the FBI to become the Agent in Charge of the Krenshaw investigation. Agent Ludlow, who had masterminded and led the Operation Alvarez portion of the Hector Gonzalez affair and who had personally taken Hector Gonzalez into

custody, was serving as Director Syke's second in command of the investigation. The Director of the FBI, the Director of Homeland Security, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and the President of the United States were all very pleased with this arrangement and were hopeful of rapid progress in the case involving David Krenshaw. The case, involving such a prominent individual in the media and one so politically influential due to his position with the Council on International Relations, had to be handled delicately. The leadership who were aware of the operation felt that this team, with their success and handling of the Gonzalez affair, were just the ones to get the job done.

Director Syke spoke up as Krenshaw was heard addressing the producers in his office.

"Have we gotten any further with that copy of the video. From the audio in Krenshaw's office it's clearly something dealing with ongoing action in Australia?"

After conferring briefly by cell phone with one of the analysts who was working with the disk and after carefully reviewing Krenshaw's activation of the original on his equipment in his office, Ludlow responded.

"Well, we haven't broken the encryption yet, not even close. But we know that Krenshaw apparently used the shipping code as one part of the key, coupled with his own identification code to activate it. We are trying to determine what routine on the disk accepts this code so we can activate our own. The audio track we picked up from his office is going to help because we now know what the audio is supposed to sound like.

"Hopefully, that will help us figure out the encryption methodology used in the video. But it's going to take time."

As Syke took this in, one of the agents who was monitoring the conversation going on in Krenshaw's office interjected.

"Director Syke, Agent Ludlow, I don't think we're going to have to worry about what the video portrays. Apparently the producers at WNN have just determined, based on Krenshaw's direction, to go with the video, unedited, on the 5 PM news. In less than an hour we'll be able to see all of it."

As Andy took this in, he turned to Ludlow.

"Gerald, you stick it out here, I'm going back to the office. On the way, I'll get the Director on the line and recommend he advise the President and his National Security team to watch this broadcast. From the sounds of that tape, it's going to be critical."

**April 19, 17:01 EST**

**WNN Evening News**

**Lead Story, Special Report from Australia**

On millions of television sets and computer screens around America and all over the world, a somber faced David Krenshaw appeared announcing the lead story.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, this is David Krenshaw with WNN. Tonight's news leads with events from Australia. What you are about to see is graphic and represents the continued horror of the war raging around the globe. Viewer discretion is advised.

"We present it this evening unedited and in its entirety. I have personally made this decision as the Chief Executive Officer of WNN News because it is information we at WNN believe needs to be seen and heard by all of our viewers. This news is less than 24 hours old, comes directly from Sydney, Australia and it is not information that is being communicated or shared at this time by our elected officials to the public at large.

"We therefore, at WNN have elected to share it with you now."

With that opening statement, the view faded to a view of a harbor with dense clouds of smoke billowing from fires too numerous to count in a business district on the opposite side of the harbor from the camera's location. As the camera panned to the right, a bridge came into view which was instantly recognized as the Sydney Harbor Bridge ... except that the magnificent steel arch was broken about one-third of the way across from each of the beautiful, twin-tower supports and a mass of tangled steel hung down from each side. Fully one-third of the bridge was gone, evidently lying in the water as black smoke rose from the ruined ends of the bridge on each side. Panning back to the left, across the channel, the camera focused in on the fiercely burning ruins of the Sydney Opera House where it sat on its familiar spit of land jutting out into the harbor. The familiar Government House was completely destroyed and burning in the background, whose smoke was rising into the air to join the pall of smoke rising from the countless other fires behind it.

Zooming back out, and continuing to pan to the left, an entire squadron of SU-24 Fencer attack aircraft could be seen as they screeched deafeningly overhead and turned to wheel over Darling Point before turning back toward the harbor. To the right of the point, up near what many would recognize as Centennial Park, the Australian Stock exchange lay in a smoldering ruin, bombed out and burning.

The camera quickly came around to show the inlet to the harbor and the Pacific Ocean beyond it. The bay in that direction was thick with the wakes of many small craft and several larger vessels making for the harbor entrance and the open sea. It was upon these vessels that the SU-24 Fencer squadron focused its attention. No allied aircraft were seen in the immediate vicinity. Heavy anti-aircraft fire was rising from several of the vessels and the smoke from their firing and the paths of the

tracer shells could clearly be seen, the tracer fire stitching patterns in the air, reaching heavenward hoping to cross paths with the wildly twisting and turning aircraft that had just passed over. Several smoke trails, evidently left by weapons launched from the aircraft, trailed down into the water. Five of these ended in the smoking wreckage of small to medium sized boats, blown apart upon impact. Many human bodies clad in civilian and military clothing, some of them thrashing madly in the water, could be seen around the wrecked boats. Other smoke trails, along with the expanding radius of the wash produced by dropped bombs, ended in the water where they had missed their targets.

In the center of the remaining vessels was a larger ship. Its silhouette marked it as an Oliver Hazard Perry class guided missile frigate. It was numbered 06, the HMAS Newcastle, one of six such vessels that the Australian government had bought from the United States over the years to bolster their sea power. The Newcastle was the one of two of those vessels that had been license built in Australia and launched in the early 1990's. It was the newest of its class.

The frigate was heroically trying to escort the retreating smaller vessels out to sea to rendezvous with the shrinking protection of allied fleets further off the coast that were withdrawing. While the SU-24s turned and gained altitude for another pass, and while the camera recorded the events, two Standard missiles were launched from the frigate's single-arm MK 13 Mod. 4 launcher located forward on the ship. The first missile targeted the trailing SU-24 and struck it directly between its two brightly burning engines that were clearly operating in an after-burner mode. In the resulting explosion, that aircraft came completely apart and the burning, flying wreckage fell down like hail stones into the harbor in front of the retreating ships, making many splashes on the face of an otherwise calm harbor surface. The second anti-aircraft missile launched by the Newcastle was decayer away from its target by defensive chaff that the aircraft ejected and that missile exploded in the middle of it as the target SU-24 turned away and made good its escape.

Immediately after this occurred, approaching the frigate from the shoreline to the left and apparently launched from somewhere in the vicinity of the Observatory on the same side of the harbor, three large missiles were seen flying low to the harbor at astonishing speed. A buzzing sound was immediately heard across the water, mixed in with the other sounds of combat and a cloud of smoke arose from the aft end of the Newcastle above the helicopter hangar where the ship's single Phalanx CIWS attempted to engage the approaching missiles. On full auto mode, the CIWS engaged the lead missile ... and the stream of 20 mm depleted uranium bullets destroyed it in a blinding explosion that thundered across the harbor several hundred yards away from the vessel. The fire and debris from that explosion rained into the water in a stream of small geysers advancing on the ship, but that ended well short of it.

Like a robot, the Newcastle's CIWS mechanically jerked to a new firing position on a bearing to engage the next missile. Another buzzing noise from the ensuing firing sounded as once again a cloud of smoke erupted around it. But the other missile was too close. An instant before it reached the frigate, fire from the CIWS intercepted it and it exploded, but the missile's momentum carried the debris and explosion right into the forecabin of the ship and engulfed it with fire, causing immediate secondary explosions.

Then the third missile hit the frigate just below the 76 mm gun that was located amidships. That missile disappeared on that side of the ship, just below the gun. For a split second the audience, wrapped up in the drama, thought that perhaps the missile was somehow a dud. But that was a complete misconception. The missile penetrated into the magazine area well below the gun mount and detonated amongst the stored ammunition, causing a simultaneous catastrophic explosion that literally broke the back of the frigate. As horrified viewers watched, within seconds, the ship, amidst thick smoke and fierce fires, broke in two and the two different ends drifted rapidly apart, the momentum of the ship still carrying the larger, burning bow forward while the aft end skewed off to the starboard side.

The camera zoomed in on the bow end, where fires from the initial missile hit were raging from just forward of the missile mount all the way back past the superstructure, which was now canting off at an angle as that portion of the ship began to list. Behind the superstructure, more fire and smoke were pouring from the obscene maw of the rent in the ship where it had broken in two. The only place life was evident was well in front of the missile mount, far forward on the frigate where sailors were coming up from below decks through a hatch and rapidly diving overboard in an attempt to escape the doomed vessel. Within a few minutes, the forward two thirds of the ship rolled over and sank as the SU-24s returned and savaged the remaining smaller vessels.

As the camera zoomed back out, it focused on the horizon, well out to sea, where another, even larger drama was being played out. Well out on the horizon, an American Amphibious Assault ship was fighting for its life. It was the U.S.S. Tarawa.

Apparently the cameraman had an exceptionally good telephoto lens. From a distance of well over twenty miles, the picture zoomed in to where the Tarawa was clearly visible on the screen along with several other ship in the background and two smaller escorting warships in front of it. Streaming towards this formation were scores of smaller vessels, filled with soldiers and civilians that had escaped Sydney Harbor just before the final advance of the enemy.

Many contrails could be seen far above the ships, twisting, turning ... several of them ending in black puffs of smoke from destroyed aircraft. It was impossible to determine which nationalities those aircraft were from, but it was obvious that a fierce air battle was raging above the formation of ships. As the camera recorded it, two F/A-35B Joint Strike Fighters lifted off vertically from the Tarawa and rocketed into the sky, having just reloaded their armaments and fuel to contend with CAS and GIR aircraft over the formation.

Suddenly, streaming into the foreground of the picture several miles from the ships, more than thirty large jet aircraft came into view, their black exhaust trails clearly visible behind them as they approached the ships at high speed and at an altitude just feet above the wave tops. Most of the aircraft were TU-22M Backfire bombers, but several appeared to be TU-22 Blinder bombers as well. Later, close inspection of their weaving, bobbing approach would reveal them to be a mixture of Indian and Chinese naval strike aircraft.

Clearly visible underneath each aircraft were very long and very large cylindrical objects that resembled nothing short of huge torpedoes, the air launched version of the Chinese "Killer Whale" weapons. As they flew on, David Krenshaw interrupted the audio portion of the program.

"Ladies and gentlemen, what you are seeing is the first known video recording of an attack upon allied shipping by the new, air launched version of the so-called "Killer Whale" weapons that CAS and GIR forces employ. This variant has been used before, particularly in the Indian Ocean, when the U.S.S. Enterprise was attacked and sunk. Along with the other versions of these fearsome weapons, they have sunk many allied vessels, including at least three other American super aircraft carriers. Again, viewer caution and discretion is advised, what you are about to witness is graphic."

From the escort ships and from the Tarawa itself a tremendous volley of Standard, Sea-Sparrow and rolling-airframe missiles rose to meet the new threat, almost completely obscuring the ships in the resulting clouds of exhaust smoke. Just as the aircraft launched their deadly payload, the wall of missiles from the defending ships reached the aircraft and more than half of them dropped into the ocean as exploding, burning masses of twisted and ruined metal. Several of those explosions also destroyed the LRASD weapons that their aircraft had just launched. But twelve of the weapons cleared their launching aircraft and quickly dropped into the sea while the aircraft themselves turned away, seeking to avoid the next volley of missiles that had already been launched by the ships.

To the astonished gaze of those viewing the evening news program on WNN, the Killer Whale weapons traversed the distance to the nearest escorting ships at unbelievable speed. The electrical circuitry, memory and micro processors in several of these weapons selected a shallow run against the escorting vessels which made their wakes clearly visible to all watching. The other weapons disappeared from view, their circuitry selecting a deep attack profile against the Tarawa.

One of the escorting vessels was the DDG 109, U.S.S. Stump, a newer Block III Arleigh Burke class AEGIS destroyer that had deployed to Australia with the new aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. Shanksville. The Stump carried the new SUBT CIWS and was positioned out in front of the U.S.S. Tarawa precisely for the purpose of defending her and the other ships against "Killer Whale" attacks. As the shallow running weapons, whose blinding approach remained clearly visible to the camera, came near the Stump, first one and then two more huge explosions and water spouts erupted in front of her. Then several other similar eruptions were seen off to her port and starboard sides and between her and the Tarawa as the water from the first explosions fell back into the sea and as the four SUBT CIWS turrets the Stump carried efficiently accomplished the work they were designed for.

But it wasn't enough. One of the shallow running weapons targeting the other escort vessel and another targeting the Tarawa passed out of the Stump's engagement envelope and continued on towards their targets. First the modern Australian Anzac Frigate, the FF 157 Perth, was struck by the weapon targeting it. To the horror of those watching, that lithe, fast and clean-cut frigate literally disappeared in the resulting explosion which was briefly seen to visibly lift the Perth's mid section out of the water where it visibly sagged and broke before being obscured by the water, smoke, debris and fire of the conflagration.

The other shallow running weapon rapidly approached the Tarawa running less than twenty feet below the surface. It was engaged by ASW helicopters that were hovering near the Tarawa for the express purpose of engaging "Killer Whale" weapons that got past the Stump or otherwise came close to the large capitol ship. The Mk-50 Barracuda torpedoes these aircraft carried had been upgraded with the latest SUBT mod software for engaging LRASD weaponry and the two SH-60 Seahawk helicopters dropped two torpedoes each to counter the oncoming weapon. The first helicopter's interception was too late and the torpedoes simply missed the fast moving threat. The second two torpedoes, dropped by the Seahawk closest to the Tarawa were more successful. One of them detonated almost directly in the path of the Chinese weapon and collapsed its cavity only one hundred and fifty yards from the ship. Traveling at a speed of 500 knots when it hit the collapsing cavity, the LRASD tore itself apart and exploded. But, its momentum still carried it forward and the larger pieces of debris from the weapon covered the distance to the Tarawa in just over a second, impacting the side of the vessel and puncturing it in several places, causing the entire ship to roll over to port and starting fires below decks.

As the Tarawa righted itself, citizens of the allied nations all over the world breathed a collective sigh of relief at the apparent salvation of the big ship. But they were shocked back to reality ten seconds later after the Tarawa stabilized when the remaining three deep running weapons arrived. The defensive threat officers and sailors on the various ships in the fleet, including on board the Tarawa itself, had not suffered from any illusions regarding their safety. They had been faithfully tracking these other weapons by sonar and informing their superiors of their status as they approached the Tarawa from deep below the ship.

Just before those weapons arrived, urgent, terse orders were issued and four Marine aircraft lifted off of the flight deck of the Tarawa. One was an MV-22 Osprey transport aircraft that had only recently landed with a full load of evacuees. Another was a huge CH-53D Sea Stallion helicopter also fully loaded with evacuees. Finally, two AZ-1H Viper attack helicopters were ordered to lift off from their launch positions on the deck in an attempt to escape the looming destruction. Before any of them got fully away, three massive explosions shot up through the ship, exploding in gouts of flame and debris right up through the flight deck. The entire ship literally "bounded" several feet up in the water and then quickly settled back, dropping noticeably deeper before a huge, three-headed mushroom cloud of dense smoke engulfed the entire ship with all of the aircraft remaining on deck, its 1100 crew members, the 1800 embarked Marines, the almost 1000 evacuees that were crowded on deck and all four of the aircraft attempting to escape.

As a stunned world-wide audience watched, the MV-22 Osprey aircraft and the CH-53D heavy lift helicopter escaping the doomed Tarawa cleared the cloud of smoke and debris and haltingly flew off to the east, making their way away from the stricken ship and toward the Amphibious Dock Ship, the LPD 18, New Orleans, five miles to the east where they would disembark their passengers.

Of the two Super Cobra attack helicopters attempting to escape, one of them never cleared the smoke and debris, crashing instead back to the heaving and ruined deck of the Tarawa. The other Viper cart wheeled out of the smoke toward the camera and valiantly tried to right itself before slamming into the sea, its blades hitting the ocean first causing the entire aircraft to pitch violently into the sea where the helicopter disintegrated in a shower of water and debris. It would later be confirmed that Captain Billy Simmons was piloting that last AZ-1H and he would be listed as Missing in Action.

**April 19, 17:15 EST**

### **Situation Room**

#### **The White House, Washington, DC**

Once again, for the umpteenth time in this cataclysmic nightmare of a war, the President and his advisors sat in stunned shock. Oh, they had known about the horrific withdrawal from Sydney Harbor and the terrible losses associated with it, including the loss of the Tarawa where initial assessments indicated that as many as 2,900 lives had been lost. All of this had been reported to them the day before as the battle was occurring. All of it would later be termed, "The Battle of Sydney Harbor", and would mark another very low point in the war against the advancing GIR and CAS juggernaut.

But it had not gone all bad, despite the destruction they witnessed on the film.. What the film didn't show was that the advancing enemy forces had been punished terribly as they came past the Dividing Range into the city of Sydney. The film also didn't show that most of the allied military forces had escaped thanks to the monumentally heroic and tireless efforts of many commanders on the scene like those of Billy Simmons and the commander of the ill-fated Newcastle. In that sense, the withdrawal was miraculous because the rapidity of the final breakthrough had caught the allies off guard and they were forced to improvise under the harshest of conditions to complete the monumental evacuation several days ahead of schedule. In a feat that had no equal in the history of warfare, they had achieved their own victory of sorts in retreat by preserving the large allied forces to fight again.

But that would now be much more difficult to appreciate, and would take more time to do so, in the face of the graphic evidence of the allied forces in full flight and the destruction and punishment that they suffered in front of a world-wide audience. No amount of words or explanation would convince anyone at the time that what they were seeing with their own eyes was anything but what it was, a terrible defeat and abject retreat of allied forces ... not to mention the terrible consequences for the million of Australian citizens who had not been able to get away.

As the conversation rose in pitch during the vivid footage of the destruction of the Tarawa and immediately following it, the President interjected.

"Okay folks, I know this is very difficult, but I don't need to remind you of the importance of staying focused."

Quickly addressing the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, President Weisskopf added.

"George and General Stone, make sure that copies of this get over to the analysts as soon as possible. Unless I miss my mark, there's a treasure trove of information here on the enemy's weapons systems, their tactics and their disposition ... also regarding future planning on our own part to improve our own tactics. It makes me wonder why the enemy let this footage out.

"I mean, outside of the clear propaganda effort, there's just so much information contained here. What do you think got in their minds George?"

George Crowler, glad to divert his mind from the horror, responded as the view on the screen from the news report shifted back to the shoreline in Sydney harbor.

"Sir, I ... please pardon me ... I'm at a loss of words ... perhaps they feel the propaganda issue outweighs those considerations. We are going to suffer in the eyes of the world, and in our own eyes as a result of this. Or, maybe they calculated that we already knew enough about their weapons and so they had little to lose versus what they gain by showing our withdrawal in this manner.

"I'm just not sure what it is, but we will definitely have this footage analyzed in minute detail, particularly the "Killer Whale" attack on the Tarawa ..."

And here the Secretary of Defense again wavered as his voice broke and then paused for a moment, the graphic loss of so many of the lives of his countrymen was simply too much to take in without emotions coming to the fore. After a second, when he composed himself, he continued.

"... God rest all of their souls.

"Mr. President, there is no doubt that, that portion of this footage could be very valuable in assessing the effectiveness of the SUBT CIWS and improving it. On first glance, although the single destroyer was overwhelmed, I would say the system performed very well. If we'd had two SUBT CIWS armed vessels there, the outcome would have been entirely different."

The Vice President, John Bowers, interjected at this point.

"Secretary Crowler, how long before we have enough ships that are so armed to allow us to protect every capitol ship with two vessels?"

After brief consideration, the Secretary of Defense responded.

"We have four other vessels, all of them from the Shanksville battle group, there in the Theater now. We have all four of those covering the big carriers and only spared the one for the forces off Sydney. All of the new destroyers and frigates are coming equipped with SUBT CIWS. I expect in four to six months, depending on attrition rates, that we will have all of the carriers and all of the larger amphibious ships adequately protected."

John Bowers wanted to hurry because the WNN presentation was now focusing in on something happening on the beach next to Sydney harbor, and he certainly did not want to offend the sense of reverence that was settling over the group associated with the loss of the Tarawa ... he felt it himself and honored it. But he had to ask a final, penetrating question.

"But Admiral, just how effective is the SUBT CIWS against the type of attack profiles that actually destroyed the Tarawa?"

"From what we witnessed, the Stump and her new system performed admirably against the weapons attacking her head on, running shallow. But I believe those final weapons came from directly beneath the Tarawa which implies they dove very deep ... how does SUBT CIWS perform against that type of attack profile?"

The former Admiral knew exactly what the Vice President and former National Security Advisor was driving at. The developers knew of the deep attack profile. The one thing they agreed on was that unless another vessel armed with SUBT CIWS was in the very near vicinity of the targeted ship, that the only SUBT CIWS system capable of intercepting that attack profile by the LRASD was the SUBT CIWS located on the targeted ship itself.

... and in this case ... and for the next many months, in most cases, the capitol ships were not armed with any such weapon.

"Mr. Vice President, unless the targeted ship is armed with SUBT CIWS herself, or unless an escort that is armed with SUBT CIWS is in the immediate vicinity, it is unlikely that an intercept of that profile can be made."

**April 19, 17:20 EST**

**WNN Evening News**

**Special Report from Australia**

She had run out onto the beach from some sheltering scrub bush on the hillside leading up from the sand. She looked to be about five feet five inches tall, in her late twenties, shapely, and was pulling a young boy along while carrying another even younger child. The older child appeared to be six or seven years old and was carrying a small, stuffed Panda Bear, while the smaller, younger child whom the mother was carrying could not have been more than three. Up until recently, she had probably been the housewife of some aspiring young professional in the Sydney area. Now, her husband, and her former life were nowhere to be seen. Somewhere in the background, the monotonous sound of an amplified, flat Chinese accented voice was heard repeating something over and over again in English.

From the camera's vantage point the viewers could see an overturned raft on the shore that was the object of the young woman's attention. She was running directly toward it. When she reached it she briefly let go of her older son's hand and turned the rubber raft over and pushed it into the water. It floated well, appearing to have no leaks, and she rapidly put her younger child and then the boy that



she had been pulling along into the raft. Quickly climbing on board herself, she turned the front of the raft out to open water and then moved to the back of the raft and began frantically pulling a starter cord for the outboard engine that was attached there.

Apparently the young woman had waited in the brush for some time until she thought no Chinese patrols were near by, and until the horrible activity in the harbor died down. When it finally died down and the SU-24 aircraft had departed, the young woman had made her move. But she hadn't waited long enough.

As she continued to pull the cord, a patrol of eight Chinese soldiers was seen coming into the picture along the bluff overlooking the beach. All of them were armed with AK-74 assault rifles. Their officer yelled something to his men in Chinese and pointed towards the raft with the woman in it. As the camera zoomed in on them, half of the men immediately scrambled down a path that led to the shore. As they did so, the engine on the raft caught and started up. The scene was close enough to the camera that the sputtering of the outboard engine could be heard in the distance over the background noise of sporadic gun fire and the monotonous repeated message. When the engine started, the woman immediately moved the raft away from shore and began to build speed, moving as quickly out into the harbor as she could. She could be seen first urging, and then pushing her children down onto the floor of the raft, as she frantically tried to put as much distance between herself and the shore as possible.

As this was happening, the four Chinese soldiers advanced right up to the water's edge where the raft had been a few seconds earlier. Gesturing with their arms and their weapons, the microphone on the camera picked up the distant shouting of Chinese commands to stop and return to shore. The woman, unable to understand any Chinese, but comprehending exactly what the Chinese demanded, leaned down lower in the raft and began weaving it back and forth as it continued out into the harbor.

Looking to their platoon leader on the bluff for guidance, the four soldiers were instructed to stop the woman immediately by whatever means possible. Turning and raising their rifles to their shoulders, all four soldiers opened fire on the woman and her two children who were now almost 75 yards offshore. Dozens of bullets hit around the raft, kicking up water all around it and puncturing it in several places. The woman was hit at least three times and she slumped over the side of the raft and then slowly sank into the water. The raft, rapidly losing air and having lost all forward momentum, slowly folded in two and sank beneath the surface of the water without any sign of the two children. After a few seconds a child's stuffed Panda Bear rose to the surface and floated all alone there.

After waiting and watching a little while longer, the Chinese soldiers made their way back up to the bluff and joined their comrades to continue their patrol. With the silencing of the raft's engine, and in between the continuing sound of sporadic gun fire, the words:

**This has been a WNN Special News Presentation**

appeared on the screen, superimposed over the picture. As they did, and as the background image slowly faded from view, for a moment the words of the monotonous Chinese accented message could be clearly heard...they translated into the following:

*"The interim Governor of New South Wales greets all citizens. We seek no further conflict, only union under the umbrella of the Three Wisdoms. Please lay down your arms. Do not resist. Do not attempt to leave. All must work together for the collective good. You are in no danger and you will not be harmed, I repeat you will not be harmed."*

**April 20, 23:05 EST**

**"Up to Date" with Melvin Baker**

**WNN Late Night Talk**

Curt Johnson leaned into the camera as he spoke, having just received the perfect cue from the famous late-night talk show host after initial pleasantries had been exchanged.

"Mel, let me tell you, what we witnessed yesterday on that WNN Special News Report was an example of exactly what I have been talking about.

"We are embroiled in a cataclysmic war. It is going to take the collective efforts of us all to win this struggle and win the peace. We simply cannot expect to do that if the administration continues to withhold critical information regarding the conduct of this war from the American people.

"Under a Johnson-Crater administration the public would never have to be subject to the shock of such a revelation unless it was an equal shock to myself and my administration. That is because we would level with and inform the populace of such horrors immediately, instead of hoping to water down or somehow spin the events to our own advantage."

With practiced ease, the host of the show continued the interview. In his mind, it was noteworthy and very newsworthy that the opposition candidate was so willing to go after the popular President Weisskopf ... not to mention the clear indication that executives at WNN were very much behind the Johnson-Crater ticket.

So, irrespective of his own personal good feelings for the President and his intention to vote for him, the potential for advancement on the shirt-tails of David Krenshaw was just too much of an enticement to not go along with the scheduling of Johnson this evening, and the general outline of the interview that was giving him ample opportunity to state his case with only the most modest of tough questioning. Just the same, Baker did word the next question with more dramatic flair and more punctuation than either Johnson or the producer intended.

"Come now Curt, are you telling me that in your own capacity as the former head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency that you would immediately divulge potentially panic-causing or morale-destroying information in a political effort to somehow justify full disclosure. Wouldn't there be potential public safety and national security issues you would have to take into consideration?"

Curt Johnson was surprised at the turn in the questioning and at the tone in Baker's voice. It was not supposed to go this way.

"What I would do or advise as an appointed Federal official and what I would do as an elected servant of the people may differ Mel. I would certainly take into account the advice of those close to me, but what I am saying here is that my inclination would be to be open and forthright with the people about such critical issues. I do not believe the current administration has such an inclination."

Melvin Baker thought to himself that Curt Johnson had handled that fairly well, although he felt himself that President Weisskopf had in fact been as forthcoming and as open with the people of the United States, and the world for that matter, as possible during the course of the war. But, Baker was not willing to push the issue any further, so he moved to the next area that the producers had outlined.

"I am sure that there are those representing the current administration who might differ with that analysis, but that is the subject for another interview."

"Let me ask this. What are your views on the rumors and leaks we are hearing that the administration takes issue with WNN's decision to broadcast the information last night, and on the persistent idea that somehow WNN is obtaining information in this regard from avenues that are inappropriate or even potentially illegal?"

Curt breathed a sigh of relief. This was more like it.

"I view such reports of leaks as ridiculous and potentially dangerous. This administration has shown, through the course of the current crisis, and perhaps under cover of the crisis, a tendency to blatantly apply its own interpretation and view of the constitution to whatever situation arises. It is well known that my split occurred over just such an issue regarding the second amendment."

"Regardless of how popular it might seem at the time, regardless of how loud the chorus of cheering this administration gets from its own constituency and regardless of how willing most Americans may be to ignore such activities in the face of what they consider to be a greater threat, I believe this tendency of the current administration is reckless and dangerous in and of itself."

"Any view to silence the press at a time like this simply because you do not agree with it is something I lump in that same category."

Melvin Baker would not take issue with Johnson's comments regarding the leaks and rumors. But his comments regarding the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment issues hit a nerve with him, so he countered.

"But Curt, the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment issues you speak of seem to be working very well. Terrorist attacks are down. Citizen lives are being saved. Common citizens are patrolling their own streets and protecting their local infrastructure. The relief experienced by state and federal agencies have allowed them to concentrate much more on our borders and on fighting the war. There are, as you realize, many who believe that this condition is much closer to how the Constitution was intended."

"I must admit, in purely a ideological and technical sense, that those arguing for the President's perspective seem to have a point."

Curt's eye's flashed at this. It was a sore point for him and again Baker's tone was not what he had been led to expect. He silently cursed himself for harping on the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment issues and allowing the interview to be sidetracked. What he really wanted to focus on was the potential conflict the administration was moving towards with WNN and his developing ally, David Krenshaw. He and his running mate, Susan Crater, felt that there was significant political capital to be exploited there, particularly with Krenshaw's growing influence on the Council for International Relations.

So, Curt decided to back down a bit, all the while vowing that he would not soon forget what he considered to be Baker's ambush.

"Mel, you certainly have a point on the effectiveness of those measures in the current environment. But that environment will not always be present. In addition, let me add this. We live in a different world than that which existed at the founding of this nation. It is a more dangerous world, it is a world where communications are faster ... I personally do not believe, and there are many who agree with me, that we can rely on the original interpretation of things to be our irrefutable guide. The Constitution in my estimation is a living document and must be considered equally in light of current circumstances, using the principles to guide us. It should be viewed that way."

"But, let's focus on the events at hand. My main contention was in answer to your original question regarding issues relating to potential suppression of the press. The current administration is barking up the wrong tree if they try and make an issue of WNN's reporting in my opinion. As

horrific as the data in the news special was, it was information that the American public needed to see. It was information they had a right to see.”

**May 8, 11:35 local time**

**COSCO Headquarters Research Facility**

**Beijing, PRC**

Lu contemplated the task before him as he listened to the summation of the current strategic picture in what was now being termed the *Historical People's Struggle*.

With the fall of Australia a balance had been reached in the region while the CAS and GIR allies consolidated their gains and strove to defend that which they had just conquered and occupied. It was a daunting task with such a huge land mass and there were already many reports of armed resistance cropping up in the great Australian “outback”. But Lu was certain that between the Chinese, Indonesian and Indian masses that were now immigrating to the continent, that the relative few numbers of former Australians would quickly find themselves in a completely untenable situation. The current leadership believed this would be the case in no more than twenty-four months, with a requirement for relatively large numbers of military occupation until then.

In the mean time, America and her allies were gathering more and more strength around New Zealand, apparently dedicated to an eventual liberation of Australia. To that end they continued to gather more and more troops, more and more aircraft, more and more ships and massive amounts of supplies and materiel on both Islands.

... and this is where Lu Pham's task came in.

The principle thing preventing the Americans and their allies from moving to re-establish superiority in the waters off Australia with their more capable naval vessels and naval aircraft, indeed, one of the principle things that had driven them from those waters only two weeks ago were Lu Pham's “Killer Whale” LRASD weapons. It was critical in the overall planning for the next several months, both in the waters around New Zealand and in the even more audacious plans of the CAS high command, that this condition remain true. That the Americans be held off by the thought of great loss to themselves and their valuable capitol ships. In order to do this, the technology edge in this area would have to remain firmly on the side of China, India and the GIR.

But a new element had been introduced that could threaten that state of affairs.

As the briefing droned on, Lu revisited in his mind what he knew of the new American ship, the Arleigh Burke class destroyer caught on film, that had defended the hapless Tarawa.

“We now know that that single ship successfully intercepted six devices, all of which were running in the shallow, terminal attack configuration. All of them moving through the water on full rocket power. All of them destroyed before they could reach either that ship, or the Tarawa beyond it.

“Very impressive, much more so than most of our leaders care to contemplate at this point.”

Lu Pham knew that the deeper attack profiles had passed under or around the American defensive ship. But he also knew that this vessel had been too far away from the Tarawa to defend her in the terminal phase of those devices' attack, when they were coming up from directly beneath the target. Lu Pham surmised that had the American defensive ship been very close to the Tarawa, or had the Tarawa employed the same defensive weapon system carried on that destroyer, that the outcome may have been vastly different.

Lu knew also that the Americans would be aware of this as well.

“Which opens up the possibility that in the near future, all outcomes may be entirely different from those we have enjoyed to date,” Lu thought.

So this then defined the task at hand for Lu and his engineering team back in Tianjin. They simply must determine the nature of the new American defensive system and then develop the technology, the hardware and the procedures to defeat it.

As Lu stood to leave the briefing that had just finished and break for lunch before his next set of meetings, he was certain that he knew the basic nature of the American defensive system. Nothing else could explain its ability to intercept those fast moving Killer Whales with such efficiency. It had to be the initial production version of a system that he knew the Americans began developing back in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

“So now they have their own super-cavitating technology deployed,” Lu thought to himself as he walked out into the cool spring air.

“And they have fine tuned it to destroy our Killer Whales.”

Later that day in technical sessions addressing just these types of concerns, and then that night as he continued to theorize, calculate and formulate a strategy, Lu developed the kernel of a plan to counter the new American technology. In so doing, and in the days and weeks ahead, he would have to depend on others to estimate the American production capabilities in deploying these new weapons. Timing and numbers would be critical to \countering these systems in combat environments.

It was an estimate that the Chinese would significantly under-rate. That miscalculation would ultimately make a difference in a number of yet-to-be-fought sea battles. Battles that would be critical for America and her allies in their plans for the southwest Pacific and later for the central Pacific. But

in the tradition and teachings of Sun Tsu, those battles would conform to the Chinese strategy best described by the statement, "*all warfare is deception*" and would only be feints, as large and pivotal as they might otherwise seem.

In the critical, truly pivotal issues defined by the overall, audacious plan established by Jien Zenim for the latter phases of Hung-Lu-Dung, the difference, one way or another, would come from a wholly unexpected and unplanned for direction that would catch both adversaries by surprise.

### **May 8, that same time**

#### **Politburo Luncheon**

#### **New Politburo Facilities, Beijing, PRC**

The new hardened site for the Politburo facility was host to the executive council of that body today. The Chinese President was addressing the small, central leadership group for the entire Chinese politburo. The ten individuals sitting before him were all extremely capable, fiercely dedicated and they had all been handpicked by Zenim. Compromises that had been earlier forced upon him through alliances with various faction within the overall Chinese communist system had been overcome as a result of the success of his plans leading up to the current conflict and the unprecedented successes since the outbreak of hostilities with America. The influence, prestige and power that Jien personally accumulated as a result of those successes had ensured that there would be no more compromises.

"Mao himself never exerted such complete domination," Jien thought to himself as he prepared for the next part of his presentation.

"... or such accurate and successful foresight."

Jien Zenim did not think these thoughts in a boastful or vain glorious attempt to bolster confidence in himself. From his perspective, it was simply a statement of fact...facts he felt that history was already punctuating for him. Unlike most highly intelligent, charismatic, confident, manipulative, absolute tyrants, Jien knew he could and would make mistakes. He also felt certain that he had garnered more than enough political and ideological capital within the system he knew so well, to weather the turmoil from any conceivable mistake he might make at this stage of his planning. Even though he recognized that he might make the occasional mistake...he was just like all the other highly intelligent, charismatic, confident, manipulative, absolute tyrants in believing that ultimately, there was absolutely no possible way that he could fail in his overall designs.

Now addressing the Chinese leaders before him as they ate lunch in the very well apportioned and adorned executive luncheon suite over one hundred feet under ground, Jien began speaking.

"My friends, my purpose in addressing you this afternoon is simply to apprise you of the status of the current situation as regards operational plans for Hung-Lu-Dung.

"As you know, the first Phase of that plan was implemented last year on the anniversary of the start of our overall operations against America and her allies. Phase one unleashed our clandestine operatives throughout America in concert with our allies, who had already been weakening and undermining our enemy's ability to ramp their war mobilization to a full war-time footing.

"The first phase was, as you know, extremely successful and continues today.

"Phase two was the military expansion of our sphere of influence well out into the central Pacific ocean and to cover all of the Australia continent. As you know, we successfully completed this portion of the operation just two weeks ago with the final expulsion of hostile forces from the Sydney area. We and our allies are now in the process of consolidating those gains and continuing to settle our loyal citizens in those vast new lands.

"We started Phase Three of the plan with the liberation of Siberia and her vast resources

"Soon we will embark on the most important portion of Phase Three of the plan. It is the most ambitious portion and is what we all will bring the quickest end to the current hostilities. Although we have achieved all of our tactical goals that will allow for the long term viability of our system here in Asia, until we force the Americans to the negotiating table and until they recognize and accept the new world order brought about by the acceptance of the Three Wisdoms by the greater people's of Asia and those of the Mid East and Africa, there can be no peace. Simply stated, without acceptance on their part, the Americans and many of their South American and European allies will perpetually remain a threat to our long term viability. Therefore the importance of dealing with them now, while we are fully mobilized to do so. Therefore the importance of Phase Three of Hung-Lu-Dung."

As Jien Zenim continued with his presentation, he could see that all members of this elite, central group were in full agreement with what he had just said. He had little doubt that it would be any other way, but Jen had learned over several decades of hard experience to constantly place before his compatriots the focal issues of their cause and then read their reactions to it. In this case, as he had anticipated, there was 100% agreement and complete dedication. Jien knew it would have to be this way. What lay before them was not only capable of producing the most ambitious gains, it also held the risk for the most severe losses.

"When has it ever been any different throughout history?" Jien asked himself.

Answering himself he thought,

"It has never been any different."

He then continued his presentation.

"Our forces are now on the move in Siberia and are approaching the frontier separating the new nation from Russia proper. The Russian forces have not been able to adequately regroup or reinforce themselves to hope to stop our three pronged advance.

"There is a growing danger that the Russians will attempt to use their nuclear weapons to halt our advance either at the border or as those forces approach the Ural mountains. In an effort to forestall and prevent this, we have arranged both a communiqué and a demonstration. It will be a demonstration that will not be lost on the United States or their other allies.

"Our forces are also on the move elsewhere in Siberia to consolidate the rest of that nation and territories all the way to the Bearing Sea. In conjunction with those efforts, we are moving several army groups to the east and several large naval task forces are moving along the coast in support.

"In the central Pacific our forces are also on the move. We have the largest naval forces ever assembled by the People's Republic of China departing as we speak from the Yellow and Japan Sea to advance on the Central Pacific atoll of Midway. This force is significantly larger than that force holding the Americans at bay off of Australia and we believe that our enemies are wholly unaware of its composition or even presence. We have redoubled our anti-satellite efforts in support of this and are screening well in advance of the force for American submarines with picket vessels carrying our Killer Whale weapons.

"As you know, the efforts in the Pacific, aimed at New Zealand and at Midway, in conjunction with our efforts in eastern Siberia, are all aimed at one central, overriding goal. That goal is the ..."

**May 10, 04:35 local time**

**Personal Quarters**

**Central Command Headquarters, Tel Aviv, Israel**

The incessant buzzing brought him to a state of almost instant wakefulness, despite the deep sleep he had been experiencing. In an environment where all out war was possible at any time, and where feinting and skirmishing was going on continually, hesitation regarding ones readiness to fight was simply not an option if one had any hope or plan of survival.

Colonel Jess Simmons picked up the phone and answered.

"Simmons."

On the other end of the line, Jess instantly recognized the voice of his commanding officer.

"Jess, this is Donovan. Why don't you come over to my quarters pronto, I just received some news on that issue you've been wondering about."

*CLICK*

Jess hung up the phone. He didn't want to go. He could tell from the tenseness in his log time friend and mentor's voice that the news was not good, and he didn't think he could bear to hear it. But he had a duty, a duty to his wife and son to both hear it and to pass it on. It was a duty, like the one he owed this nation that he would not and could not shirk.

Three minutes later, after he knocked on the door, the General let him in and asked him to sit.

Jess refused the seat.

"I prefer to hear this standing General. What have you heard?"

General Donovan did not relish his own duty in this affair. He had known Jess for over fifteen years and knew his family well. His own son was a design engineer for Loral and was currently working on advanced guidance research and development. Although not in the armed forces, his plant had been the target of a terrorist attack eight months ago and the General remembered well his own anxieties waiting to hear word regarding his son. In that case the word had been positive. That wasn't the case here. He did not relish passing on the information he had come by, but like Colonel Simmons, the General understood his duty to his friend despite the difficulty of it.

"Jess, I just got a flash message from my friend and contact on Admiral Ryan's staff. He's been reviewing the reports from the Tarawa and talked to a number of eye witnesses. The official word on Billy is in, he's officially MIA, but it doesn't look very good.

"Apparently Billy was on deck at the time of the attack and was ordered to take off just before the explosions. I know you have seen the films. From everything we can gather, that last helicopter that went into the ocean was piloted by Billy. I'm sorry Jess ... I don't know what to say. Our forces were not able to remain in the area for long ... but the SAR team did not find him ... there were hundreds in the water ... they did everything they could."

Jess had expected this, but that expectation and his altogether weak and ineffectual efforts to prepare for it were eclipsed by the stone cold knowledge he was being presented with. He had somehow known it his gut when he viewed the film ... despite his assurances to Cindy to the contrary. His calls home had been necessarily brief, but given the circumstances General Donovan had arranged it ... now he would have to arrange one more.

Haltingly, with tears welling up in his eyes as he reflected on his son's last moments ... as he reflected on his son's entire life ... Jess made his request.

"General, I need to call Cindy. I don't want her to find out about this in the normal fashion."

The General had already anticipated this.

"I've already made sure that the Marines will hold off until they get the word. I've also already gotten approval for the call Jess. You can make it whenever you're ready."

Jess looked at his watch. It read 04:45.

"Give me a little while alone back in my quarters General. I'm going to need to somehow get myself together for this and there's only one person I can talk to right now to have a hope of doing that ... if I ever can. I'll meet you at oh six hundred to make the call. I want to speak to Cindy sometime later this morning. ... I pray that God will help me say what needs to be said."

General Donovan put his arm around his friend's shoulder and held him briefly. His heart and soul went out to him, but he knew Jess Simmons and he knew he would do what was necessary, both for his family and for his nation. Then, he followed him out of the room and patted his shoulder as Jess slowly made his way up the hall.

"God bless you and yours Colonel Jess Simmons," he said to himself as Jess turned the corner.

"My prayer is that you get back to see your wife yourself ... I believe it is going to require His help in making that possible for any of us."

**May 14, 19:16 PST**

### **Personal Study**

#### **Pacific Heights Subdivision, Palo Alto, California**

Finally, she was going to make use of what her own wits, good fortune, dedication and commitment had afforded her. Dr. Sandra Eleanor McPherson had finally received the attachment from Europe and downloaded it to her own workstation. It had taken her four weeks to get this email, four weeks of living hell with the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Commerce Department. Four weeks where everything ... her position at the University, her reputation, her livelihood and her very freedom had been in jeopardy. But now all of that was over.

All of those difficulties had not come as any surprise. After that last holier-than-thou, self-righteous call from Dr. Trevor, it was plain there would be serious trouble. He had as much as promised her to do all in his power to stop what she was doing and to contact whatever government officials necessary to do so. And he had.

The next day she had gotten two relevant calls, first from the Dean, and then from the Chancellor. Both of them expressed to her in no uncertain terms their shock and dismay over the calls they had received from governmental officials detailing the nature of Sandra's true work. Things had gone badly that day and well into the next with the school officials until her Department Head and mentor had been brought into the picture and he had defended her. But that did not clear up the issue or help her begin her new line of research, and it certainly did not help allay the governmental agencies that had suddenly taken an interest in what she was doing.

Her email access had been completely blocked as well as any internet access. Sandra did not know how it was accomplished, but that block had extended beyond her own university terminal and her personal computer at home. None of the access accounts, even the anonymous ones she had set up, would work from any terminal, on or off campus. It was frustrating and maddening. The government indicated it was only in effect until they had completed their investigation and determined what charges to file. Even if they never filed charges, Sandra knew that an investigation like this could be drawn out almost indefinitely.

Ultimately, as a result of the influence of her Department Head and in the face of what they viewed as the abject censorship of her internet access, the leadership at the University had sided with her and brought to bear their significant legal resource to fight for her. Their efforts on her behalf brought increasing support as word spread to other Universities and as the ACLU became involved.

But the government tenaciously held its ground. Apparently Dr. Trevor's world view on this issue was shared by the appointed governmental officials at the Department of Justice and the Department of Commerce, as well as the Federal Communications Commission that all became involved. They blocked every effort, even local and state court orders to restore her access, even after it became clear to all involved that Sandra had exploited a clear loop hole in the law and that her efforts in this regard were perfectly "legal".

The issue was a fast burner, even drawing the attention of the Democratic Presidential ticket of Johnson and Crater. Senator Susan Crater was particularly helpful to Sandra in getting fast track visibility to the issue at the Federal level. Finally, a Judge in the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit, which circuit had historically been very favorable to all abortion rights issues, issued an order ordering the governmental agencies to restore email and internet access and to allow the relevant attachments to go through. That court order was affirmed by a committee of judges on the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit. The government agencies backed down, but promised to appeal the ruling to the supreme court as soon as possible.

Upon hearing the good news of the court decision only two days ago, Sandra had made contact with her research friends in Europe and asked them to send copies of the data she required through several avenues, not trusting the government to completely step out of the picture and let the data get to her. It proved necessary that she do so.

As she suspected, the three emails sent directly to her with the attachments all had difficulties. One was stopped by a Federal server indicating that some form of a malicious virus had infected it and that the attachment had to be quarantined and deleted. Another of the three emails simply never arrived. The third was the worst. It apparently arrived safely with the attachment which Sandra immediately accessed to download over her home network to her research workstation. As she was doing so, the computer screen on both her home computer and the research station went completely blue, flashed three times and then displayed the message,

*"All your data and disk drives are belong to us. You are infected with a series virus."*

Sandra immediately tried to turn off her machine. She tried to use the "Begin Menu" to shut down and then she tried to apply the "control-alt-delete" keys to force a shut down. But nothing worked. Finally, in frustration, she simply pulled the power cord out of the wall and the computers turned off. But then they would not boot up again. She called a University technician who came and looked at the machines and determined that a new virus, which they immediately reported to the anti-virus vendors, the maker of the operating system, and to the Federal Government, had infected her machines through the email. They informed her that they would have to reformat both machines before she could use them, and it was likely that the Federal government would block US access for the email account that had sent the offending email.

Sandra had been devastated, and she was angry. She called the head of her department to inform him of what happened and to request his help in explaining this to their lawyer and filing suit against the government. But that's when her fortunes changed. She found that the additional measures she had taken to have the attachments delivered had worked. At least one of them had. One of the people, to whom she had requested her friends in Europe send the attachment, was the department head himself. When she called him, and before she could go into detail regarding her troubles, he informed her that he had just that afternoon received the attachment and had the data downloaded to his own workstation and burned onto one of the new high capacity DVD disks.

Now, here she was with the data downloaded to her workstation and the virtual modeling software loaded and prepared to accept the data and analyze it.

As she prepared to launch the program, she reflected on all that had transpired. It seemed that her entire life had been preparing her for this moment. Her childhood and upbringing. Her activism and schooling. Her love for Stephen and the heartbreak of losing him. Her commitment to AIDS research and the use of fetal tissue to advance that research. Her development of virtual modeling and her involvement with Dr. Trevor, irrespective of the hard feelings and bad ending to that involvement. To Sandra, all of that was secondary to the reality of her work and what she now felt was the very real prospect of a breakthrough that would save lives ... perhaps millions of lives while bringing to Sandra the gratification and recognition she craved.

She was honest enough with herself to recognize those cravings and needs. Still, she also honestly felt that she had them for the right reasons, a realistic chance to help so many others.

### **May 14, that same time**

#### **Master Bedroom**

#### **Trevor Residence , Nashua, New Hampshire**

It was after 10:00 PM and the Trevors were preparing to retire for the evening. Elizabeth had had a particularly grueling day at work and Joseph, despite extremely good progress at the lab, was continuing to fret and worry over his involvement with Sandra McPherson's research. Even though it had been her manipulations and her ideas that had led to it, and even though they had already discussed this and resolved it, Joseph just couldn't square himself with or accept the fact that his own research was providing her the opportunity to make progress in the field of fetal tissue research.

As was their habit and in keeping with their religious convictions, they knelt down beside their bed and prayed together every evening. They took turns vocalizing their prayers and tonight was Elizabeth's turn. Despite her own fatigue, she sensed the continued apprehension in her husband. It had not helped that yesterday they had found out that with all legal avenues exhausted, the federal government had abandoned all efforts to block Dr. McPherson's access to her email and the internet and that the fetal data was again flowing. Elizabeth knew that this was what was troubling Joseph the most, because they both knew that Dr. McPherson would soon apply the fruits of her efforts with Joseph to that very data ... perhaps as early as this very night. With all of this in mind, she bowed her head as she held her husband's hand and began to pray out loud.

"Father in Heaven, Joseph and I approach Thee this evening on bended knee with gratitude in our hearts for our continued blessings. We are grateful in this time of turmoil and conflict for our safety and for that of our daughter. We are grateful for our health and for the relative peace we enjoy in this land despite the conflicts raging all around us and despite those instances of violence and conflict amongst us. Preserve us Dear God, through Thy Hand.

"Father, we thank Thee for our knowledge of Thee and Thy Plan for our salvation through Thy Son, Jesus Christ. We thank Thee most especially for His sacrifice and the principles He taught that have guided us through our lives.

“We come before Thee now, seeking Thy continued blessings. Bless our leaders, the leaders of our nation in these terrible times, and the leaders of our church, to have Thy Spirit to guide and direct them. Bless us, if it be Thy will with continued freedom and liberty and with the strength to live our lives deserving of such blessings.

“Finally, Father, I ask Thee, in all humility, and on his behalf, to bless my husband Joseph. Please, please ease His mind over the issue of the research being conducted by Dr. McPherson wherein she obtained the knowledge and methods that Thou imparted to Joseph that led to such great discoveries regarding our physical nature and its tie to what we believe is our intellect, our spirit, and our soul. We know that this knowledge came from Thee Father, and we pray now that Thou wilt use it for good, even in the hands of such an one as Dr. McPherson.

“Bless her Father, to see the Light of Truth, that this knowledge from Thee will somehow guide her to Thee and Thy Truth. Bless Joseph to trust in Thy Arm over this issue so his mind might be eased, so he can place this burden on the capable shoulders of Thy Son and so he can continue his own work. Now, bless us to sleep well, safely and soundly if it by Thy will, in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ ... Amen.”

As Elizabeth finished the prayer and lifted her eyes to look over to her husband, she saw that he continued to bow his head for a few seconds. The feeling of peace and assurance that filled the room was almost palatable, it was a feeling that for a brief moment, surpassed all understanding.

When Joseph looked up, tears were streaming down his face. He reached over and hugged his wife as he whispered into her ear.

“Thank you Liz, thank you so much for your faith...I believe I will sleep well tonight.”

**May 14, 19:22 PST**

**Personal Study, that same moment**

**Pacific Heights Subdivision, Palo Alto, California**

Saundra pressed the “PROCESS” button.

The processor had to labor hard over this full size, data set for somewhat longer than any of the tests that Saundra had performed before. Instead of a mere thirty seconds, the computer labored through her algorithms for ninety-six seconds before flashing the COMPLETE message.

Barely able to contain herself, Saundra pressed the DISPLAY RESULTS button, requesting that the computer ANIMATE those results on her flat screen monitor.

And then, within a few more seconds, displayed in a detail never before beheld by the human eye, was an enhanced, atomic microscope of the fetal tissue samples she had received from Europe.

Saundra was amazed at the richness and the detail. She could already tell that her research efforts would be enhanced by orders of magnitude. There were the nerve paths and synaptic tissue of this particular sample that she had hoped would be revealed. She could already see a clear, new anomaly all along those synaptic paths and she picked a command to enhance and zoom in on one of them.

What she saw briefly confused her. There, teaming in their numbers by the thousands ... perhaps by the tens of thousands ... were unknown and apparently now dormant constructs of some type or another. Something clearly biological in nature but something entirely new to her research.

“Could it happen this fast?” she thought, “just like that?”

As thoughts of the magnificent breakthrough she had hoped for tumbled through her mind, she noticed that there was something vaguely familiar about these structures. For the moment it alluded her, but no, she was sure she had seen them before. They were somehow familiar to her, just not something she had ever considered or contemplated seeing here.

Then it hit her. It hit her deep in the pit of her stomach like a ton of bricks. A sickening feeling rose up in her esophagus until she could almost taste it and she felt she would retch from the poignancy of it. It constricted her throat and made it difficult for her to breathe, it dried out her mouth and made it almost impossible to speak.

“It’s not possible,” she feebly thought to herself.

Quickly checking the attachment, she reviewed the data four different times. It was clearly marked. It all checked out, over and over again. It had been sent from Germany and was the early neural tissue from a fetus just a few weeks old, like she requested.

Almost in a panic now, she picked up her phone and had it speed dial an international number. It was a direct number to the personal residence of one of the research team leaders she worked with in Germany. It was the team leader who had prepared and sent the data sample that she had requested after the lifting of the block on her email.

The phone rang once, twice, three times. She was afraid the answering machine would pick up when finally a sleepy voice came on the line.

“Hallo, Franz heir ... Wer ist da?”

For a second or two Saundra could still not speak, the shock of the recognition was still too fresh and she could not find the words.

“Hallo? Wer ist denn da?”

“Wass ist los mit Ihnen denn, wissen Sie nicht wie Frueh es ist?”



Only the obvious consternation and frustration in Franz's voice and the sure knowledge that he was about to attribute the call as some kind of a crank and hang up finally loosened Sandra's tongue and allowed her to speak.

"Franz ... this is ... this is Sandra in the, the United States."

Upon hearing Sandra's voice and its uncertain quality, Franz was filled with apprehension. He immediately slipped into English.

"Dr. McPherson? Why are you calling at this hour? Is everything ok? You don't sound well."

As Sandra continued to recover her voice, she assured Franz that she was fine and explained away the quality of her voice as a result of being tired. She certainly didn't want to reveal to Franz what she had seen, or cause him concern. She then proceeded to confirm with him his sending of the data and its specific labeling.

Everything checked out, but Sandra was still not satisfied.

"Franz I know this is going to sound strange, but can you send the sample again, like tonight?"

"Send it right now to my personal email addresses and please encode into the header something that only the two of us would know. Say, for example the name of that Gasthaus in Karlsruhe where we ate so many times three years ago and my favorite dish on their menu."

Franz was befuddled by the request but assumed that it had to have something to do with Sandra's difficulties with her own government. He assured her that he would immediately get up, encode and encrypt the file and then send it as she had requested.

Twenty minutes later a tone from Sandra's computer indicated that new email had been received. Sandra immediately checked her inbox and found the email from Franz, along with the attachment. She opened it and decoded it to find the name of Weinerwald in the header as the Gasthaus in Karlsruhe and the name of Haenchen Tirole as the cuisine that she had acquired such a taste for. She then loaded the data onto her workstation and reprocessed the data.

Before the night was through, she had reprocessed that data and the data from the earlier email seven different times and viewed them and compared them from every magnification and every angle possible. She applied all of the filters and enhancements she had built into the software to analyze the virtual microscopies she was receiving. All of them, every one, told her the same thing.

"It simply cannot be," she thought as she leaned back and closed her eyes in exhaustion.

No sooner had she closed them, than those eyes flew open again, her mind not willing to accept the implications of what she had seen. It was physically causing her to shake now, and mentally causing her entire world view and her position in her universe to falter and collapse around her.

Although at one level, the level where she was comfortable in her universe, she could not conceive of what she had experienced ... at a deeper level, where Sandra's ultimately pragmatic and honest core resided, she could not deny what her own eyes, and creation had told her.

No matter how she arranged it. No matter how she analyzed it. No matter what filters she applied and what spin she tried to arrange ... she knew that what she was seeing could not be faked and had not been tampered with, as much as she would prefer that to be the case. She was the only one she knew of with this particular expertise and she had guarded the capability well.

No, every time the sample data from the fetal tissue was run through the tool of her own creation, the painstakingly developed and tested virtual modeling system, the results were the same. There, in their tens of thousands up and down the synaptic paths of the neural fetal tissue were dormant but very real Human Reasoning Structures. The same structures that Joseph Trevor had discovered the year before. The structures that provided humans with the very essence of their humanity, their reasoning ability. Those structures now told her that the same capability resided in this fetus before it had been turned into a research sample.

"My God, they really *are* alive," she whispered to herself.

That realization seared into the very essence of her consciousness like a white-hot knife. That fiercely burning sensation, along with the exhaustion from the all-night research, caused Sandra to finally step back from her computer and drop onto her couch in a wracking and soul searching sleep.

Despite all else, Sandra McPherson, in her heart and soul, was an honest person who was committed to the truth as she saw it. She had now seen a truth, with her own eyes, one she had never contemplated before. As a result, she would now take up that truth just as seriously and pursue it just as rigorously as she had pursued the opposite position before this new revelation.

That is why, when Sandra McPherson awakened from the sleep which this truth and its impact had caused to come upon her, she would awaken a changed person with a new mission in life.

## Chapter 26

*"... and their hosts were as the sands on the sea shore." Biblical Prophet*

**June 12, 03:18 local time**

**Central Pacific Ocean**

**925 km WSW of Midway Atoll, Flag Bridge, PLAN 004 Sun Tsu**

Admiral Yao Hsu was once again steaming towards a violent confrontation with the U.S. Navy. As the overall task force commander for this critical phase of operation Hung-Lu-Dong, the Admiral knew full well that it called for an all out frontal attack against the strength of the U.S. Navy around Midway Atoll. It was an island that his superiors expected him to occupy, a task that the Admiral was expected to accomplish using the largest naval force that the People's Republic of China had committed to the seas in its history.

"... and once again, my action is but a feint in the overall scheme of things, regardless of the size of the force committed," thought the Admiral as he gazed out the window through the darkness and the sheets of rain sweeping across the deck from the squall they were passing through.

Midway Atoll was a position of obvious strategic importance to both sides. As an actual extension of the Hawaiian Islands situated halfway between the North American and the Asian continents, for the Americans, the atoll was a strategically important, central Pacific logistics and defense point that guarded the approaches to Hawaii and ultimately to the west coast of the United States itself. To the Chinese, it was a position from which attacks could be staged and planned against Hawaii, and from which the approaches towards the Asian mainland could be defended.

The attack on Midway Atoll was planned to be a two-pronged, joint CAS affair. From the west, Admiral Yao was advancing with the largest element that included two of China's larger carriers, including the latest, the Sun Tsu, where he maintained his task force command staff. Hsu's main assault task force also included three of the smaller, Beijing class conversion carriers, six of China's tactical assault vessels, ten of the large amphibious assault ships, eight Lanzhou class Aegis-like destroyers, eight LSM carriers and forty other modern destroyer and frigate escort vessels. Two hundred and fifty kilometers behind the main assault group was a large provisioning group consisting of two more Beijing class carriers, eight destroyer and frigates, and twenty-four oilers, ammunition ships, cargo and various other supply ships necessary for the ultimate occupation of Midway.

Admiral Yao was commanding over one hundred and ten PLAN vessels in his main Task Force and he was bringing over one hundred thousand Chinese troops crammed into the amphibious vessels and transports he had with him, not to mention the tens of thousands of Chinese sailors and aviators manning the ships. It was his intent to engage the Americans first, head-on and destroy them. Both their naval vessels and their forces on Midway.

Coming from due south of Midway Atoll was the other prong of the CAS attack. Four more carriers, two Chinese and two Indian, advancing with twenty Indian and Chinese escort vessels and another contingent of amphibious and transport ships. Most of the war vessels had been pulled away from duty around Australia as newly commissioned and shaken down vessels arrived from China and India to take their place. As planned, this southern task force was drawing off a large component of the American forces defending New Zealand who had to make sure that their bases and supplies on New Zealand were not flanked.

"A well thought out and executed plan," though Hsu.

"If this task force can engage and defeat the American forces in place around Midway, we will then turn south and drive a pincer onto the advancing American task force from New Zealand ... and then on to New Zealand itself!" concluded the Admiral as he set his jaw, nodded his head and turned to make his way to the combat information center.

When the Admiral and his aide entered the CIC and were recognized, he instructed everyone to carry on while he stopped briefly to contemplate the cool efficiency with which the personnel here went about their business. They did so in a very modern and sophisticated environment. From the operators sitting in front of their Multi-Function Displays monitoring the myriad varieties of sensing devices and weapons systems, to the duty officers standing behind them, observing and helping, to the higher ranking officers observing the overall large plasma screen war board which depicted the current disposition of forces. All of the equipment was the latest, most advanced technology. It was all shock hardened for combat and backed up in quintuplet to ensure battle efficiency and survival. All of the personnel were exquisitely trained and utterly committed to their nation's cause.

Not only did this equipment allow for the command and control of the 67,000 ton carrier, Sun Tsu, and its weapons systems ... it was also data linked to all of the other vessels in the task force capable of advanced, digital control. Those vessels included all of the Mao and Beijing class carriers, all of the Amphibious and Tactical Assault ships, all of the Hangzhou, Lanzhou, Shenyang, and Guangzhou destroyers, and the Ma'anshan class frigates.

That control extended to acquisition and targeting functions for virtually all of those ships' weapons systems, with digital control capable of being switched to a single designated lead vessel, or to a network of multiple vessels using sophisticated algorithms to establish primary, secondary and auxiliary lead or command control. All of this took into account numerous battle conditions including weather, threat level, threat axis and damage assessment. Many Chinese officers felt that their system was the equal, and in fact superior, to the vaunted American AEGIS system. A good number of those officer had personally seen the AEGIS system in action in training exercises the Americans had so foolishly allowed them to be a part of on those very AEGIS vessels back in the 1990s and early 2000s. Much had been observed, much had been learned. All of it had been put to good use and had gone into the innovation and technical progress that had resulted in China over the years. But in the last two years of all out war, it had advanced at a fevered pitch.

"And it had done so at great cost," thought the Admiral as he watched the personnel on the Sun Tsu go through their assigned tasks with a professionalism and coolness that belied the nature of the conditions they would soon be facing.

Those costs had included the initial large deck Chinese carrier, the PLAN Mao, which Admiral Yao had commanded and which had been destroyed in the Battle of the Southwest Pacific. There, as here, the Admiral's part had been of secondary consequence to the overall goals established by the party leaders and military high command back in Beijing. Despite the loss of the Mao, the Shanghai and most of their escorts in that battle, those goals had been achieved and the Americans had been driven back 1500 kilometers as a result of the losses they sustained in and around Guam at that time.

"So much equipment, so many men lost to the sea," thought the Admiral.

But the production capability of the People's Republic, and now the entire Coalition of Asian states, was outstripping the losses. Chinese and allied factories, already newer than most of their western counterparts and originally developed to feed the material desires of the west, had been quickly transformed into full war time mobilization. Many, many more such factories had been and were being built . . . all over Asia and the sub-continent, and in the island chains. They were now also being built in Western Australia and would soon be built in the newly vanquished eastern Australian.

For air operations, SU-35 fighter/bombers, J-10 fighters, improved versions of the TU-22M bomber, KS-2+ and the newer, anti-ballistic capable KS-3 missile systems and anti-satellite weaponry were being produced in tremendous quantities. For ground action new main battle tanks, multiple rocket launchers, trucks, vehicles and all of the varieties of weapons and ammunition were being produced by factories that only three years ago produced teddy bears, tennis shoes, automobiles and pick-up trucks for the people who were now the very object of the weaponry.

Perhaps most telling of all was the naval production which was allowing China and the CAS to project their rapidly developing power. The transformation of COCSO and now the Korean, Japanese and other commercial shipbuilding operations throughout Asia was allowing for the manufacture of naval vessels and their weaponry at astonishing rates. Beijing class carriers were sliding off the ways now at a rate of two every three months. The newer, big-deck carriers like the Sun Tsu upon which the Admiral now stood, were coming out at the rate of one every four months. The Amphibious Assault and Tactical Assault vessels were both being produced now at a rate of one every month, and the newer class destroyers were each being produced at a rate that exceeded one every month.

As impressive as those figures were regarding the production rate of the vessels themselves, the key to the CAS and the GIR success remained the production rate and the innovation of the LRASD weaponry, and now the newer KS-3 anti-ballistic missiles and *ta shih* detectors for acquiring and targeting America's stealth aircraft. All of the Admiral's major combatants carried the LRASD, Killer Whales. Several of the newer ships, including both Mao class carriers, two of the new Lanzhou and Shenyang destroyers and two of his Tactical assault vessels had been equipped with the latest KS-3 missiles and the *ta shih* system before they departed on this mission. The Admiral was hoping that the additional protection afforded by these systems would be enough to counter what he was sure would be massive American air attacks aimed at thwarting his mission and destroying his command.

But, as innovative and important as these last two systems were (the ABM missiles and the anti-stealth systems), the largest single contributor to the current and ongoing success in this war remained the LRASD weaponry. In that regard, Admiral Yao Hsu had met Admiral Lu Pham on numerous occasions. Although Lu Pham, in keeping with his Vietnamese heritage, was a slight man, there was an intensity in his eyes that could not be missed or ignored. Yao knew that the success that China and her allies had experienced must be credited to that man's genius. Nothing else that the Admiral could think of, and he had spent many long months and years contemplating it, would have allowed his nation's forces to meet and turn back the prowess of the U.S. Navy as they had done thus far.

"It's amazing that Pham and his comrades at COSTIND are keeping out in front of the Americans," thought the Admiral as he considered the technological battle that had been raging over those very weapons. Particularly as he considered the new variant that his vessels carried on this mission that even now allowed him to know much more about his enemy than he could otherwise have known. The reconnaissance variant that was coated in sonar absorbing material, dove deeper than any other LRASD or American submarine available. It carried advanced ELF and VLF

technology for communications and traded all of its rocket fuel for conventional fuel to enhance its range and loitering capabilities. Several of these devices were already out around Midway, communicating the size and disposition of American warships in the area back to the Admiral.

"No, it is little wonder that Lu Pham and COSTIND stay ahead of the Americans. We have planned and prepared for these events for many years, even decades ... and the Americans have only in the last two years recognized their vulnerability ... and they are having a difficult time coming to terms with it," surmised the Admiral as he finally walked down into the CIC towards the knot of officers which included the Captain of the Sun Tsu.

"Perhaps they will come to terms with it, and with us, after we take Midway from them and after the other, even more ambitious goals of Hung-Lu-Dong are realized further to the north."

**June 13, 16:18 local time**

**GIR 1<sup>st</sup> Army Group**

**65 Kilometers South of Kharkov, The Russian Federation**

General Talabari reviewed in his mind the current planning and operations for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> GIR army groups in Europe. This group, now numbering close to one million men, would continue moving north towards Kharkov and eventually Moscow. That movement would ultimately form a great pincer in conjunction with the larger Indian and Chinese forces now approaching the Ural mountains from the east. The Indians, numbering over one and one-half million near Magnitogorsk to the south and a growing Chinese force swelling to two million men approaching Tagil to the north.

In the end, it was planned that over six million GIR, Indian and Chinese men and all of their implements of war would converge on Moscow late this fall, just before winter set in. The General believed that it could be done, but he, along with all of the other commanders on both sides of the conflict were waiting for what they all believed would be the inevitable use of nuclear weapons by the Russians as they continued to lose ground. The general actually had expected it to occur earlier, but clearly, first the terse messages from Tehran, New Delhi, and Beijing to the effect that any use by Russia would be countered by all three nations, and then the demonstration that the Chinese had arranged had forestalled their use to date.

That demonstration had been ingenious and the General was still trying to discover how the Chinese had arranged it. Apparently, Chinese operatives had infiltrated, or more likely, bought their way into the Russian strategic force structure to the point of actually controlling some of the silos. Almost a month ago, immediately after the communiqué that Beijing had sent to Moscow regarding retaliation for the use of nuclear weapons, the Chinese had sent a second, back-channel message to both Moscow and Washington informing them to make sure they had reconnaissance and surveillance assets observing the Russian airspace at a particular time and place.

Twenty-two hours later, the Chinese operatives inside Russia seized one of the silos they had worked at for several years had launched two missiles at the advancing Chinese forces three hundred kilometers to the east of Tagil. The missiles arced into their ballistic trajectories, the warheads at their apogee reaching the fringes of space. Then, as each warhead released four re-entry vehicles (or RV's as they were referred to) separately targeting different portions of the Chinese advance, thirty-two anti-ballistic missiles (ABMs) had soared from the Chinese forces and successfully shot down all eight warheads, destroying them before those nuclear warheads could reach their targets and unleash the hell of nuclear fire upon them.

Washington and Moscow, who had indeed gotten surveillance and reconnaissance assets in place to observe the exchange, had been shocked into silence, even as they stood down from their highest levels of nuclear alert and readiness. In addition, within a few short hours WNN had also somehow received stunning images of the intercepts and broadcast them world-wide. The impact on public thinking and on planning within the military circles of the allied nations was still being felt. Talabari still wondered, as he was sure the Americans and Russians did, whether or not the warheads had been active, and whether or not the ABMs had been given data that would allow them to more easily intercept the incoming missiles.

"One thing was for sure," thought the General, "those missile's trajectories, speed and separation had not been *faked* and yet each of them had been successfully intercepted"

It was a fact that was not lost on anyone and it made the General all the more glad that each of his own advancing divisions included several batteries of the new Chinese KS-3 missiles and their launchers, as did all of the Indian and the Chinese forces. Given their performance over the Ural mountains last month, the General was satisfied that even when the Russians did go nuclear out of desperation, that most of his own forces and those of his allies would survive to finish the struggle.

"What I wouldn't have given to be a fly on the wall in the American's vaunted situation room underneath their "White House," mused the General as the topic of the briefing turned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> GIR Army group that had defeated both Albanian and Bulgarian armies and was now advancing further into Serbia and attacking Romania.

As that discussion progressed, the General couldn't help but think of the young man he had promoted to Colonel in May and transferred out of Russia and into Bulgaria to command one of the

spearhead battalions as it entered Romania. Abduhl Selim had first come to the General's direct attention when he had reviewed and approved the young Captain's award for the Order of the Imam for his role in quelling that nasty Russian riot almost a year ago. The young man had almost single handedly kept a bad situation from turning into a disaster that could have resulted in drastic impacts to the overall war plan. If the Russians had closed their borders and asked the transiting GIR forces to leave at that time, the entire current set of events would have been drastically altered, and not in favor of the GIR or its allies.

After the presentation of the medal, the General's staff had done a thorough study of the young man's exploits throughout the war. It had been a fascinating tale, one that the General felt was only exceeded by the story of the Imam's military exploits themselves. Such an individual as this young Selim deserved the chance for promotion. The fighting men would love it ... in fact they did love it because most of them saw in the Selim a regular individual like themselves who was making good. On top of that, his accomplishments under fire and his willingness to sacrifice for his own men made him a natural leader, one the common soldiers were more than willing to follow, and an individual, if he survived, whom Talabari would be proud to promote and mentor.

"Well, that will take whatever course Allah wills," thought the General as his attention turned back to other matters. Perhaps soon, the General would take the young Colonel on a trip to meet the Imam himself, just before Talabari returned to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> GIR Army groups and their Chinese, Algerian and Libyan allies surrounding Israel for preparations for the final push to the sea there.

In the mean time, the memory of the successful Chinese intercept of the Russian ballistic missiles and the likely reaction of Americans to it, once again filled his mind.

"The Americans, who thought they were so far ahead in ABM technology, and who must have been secure in their thinking that when the time came they could rely on their own missiles reaching targets while they themselves erected a shield against the missiles of others, must have literally soiled their pants! ... or at the least almost burst a capillary or two when they realized what had happened." ... and they very nearly had.

**June 15, 21:45 CST**  
**Ferguson Ranch**  
**Bowie, TX**

Cindy Simmons sat in her parents living room contemplating her life. She had asked for and received time off from work down at the aircraft plant so she could just get away. Her foreman and several layers of management above her sympathized with and understood her loss. They were more than willing to grant, and even to encourage her request. A couple of them knew first hand what she was going through. Although Billy was still officially listed as MIA, both Jess and those officers who had come to talk to her personally had made it clear that he was presumed dead.

Cindy did not want to believe it. She could not get out of her mind how proud she had been, or how good it had been when Billy had visited her prior to shipping out ... for the last time. He had come to Ft. Worth and visited her at her apartment near the plant. He had asked all about her work and told her how proud he was of her for what she was doing to support the war effort and in particular how much her specific efforts on the JSF meant to the Marines with whom he served. It had seemed like such a short visit at the time and it really had not been that very long ago.

Now he was gone, most probably to never return again.

"Oh," she thought, "if only we somehow knew for sure. If only we could lay him to rest here near to home."

She and Billy had spent one weekend up on the ranch near Montague and they had walked along Clear Creek where Billy had grown up hunting squirrels and rabbits with his dog. She could still almost here his answer, echoing faintly from far off in the woods along the creek, as she would call him home to dinner or to accomplish some chore. He had always come as quickly as he could, not wanting his mother to worry or have to wait needlessly. If only she could simply call him home now. If only he could hear her, surely he would hurry back again.

"But he sure loved that place," she continued in her mind. "Just like his father."

Now Cindy was here alone, at her parents ranch near Bowie, Texas, almost twenty miles from their own ranch over southeast of Montague. Her parents had gone into Bowie earlier in the evening and asked her to come along, but she had politely refused, preferring to be at her own childhood home, by herself. They understood and knew she needed more time alone so they did not press the issue. They would probably be back about 11 PM and so she still had another hour and fifteen minutes or so to reflect and to continue her grieving process.

As much as she wanted to hold out hope for her son's return, Jess had been painfully honest and direct in his last phone call...and she knew that it agonized him greatly to do so ... to have to recognize and communicate to her something that he himself did not want to be true. She loved Jess for that, and she was so frightened that she would some day receive similar word about him. Right now she did not know how she could ever handle that ... she was still not sure how she was going to handle or get past Billy's loss. But she knew that it was something she had to come to terms with ...

and it meant she was going to have to reach deep down into her faith, a faith in God she had come by early in life within the walls of this very house. That was a big part of the reason she would be spending the next two weeks here. She wanted to reaffirm and punctuate her faith in the face of Billy's tragedy and to be prepared in case another one followed.

One thing she knew, America's enemies were still on the advance and the war was far from over. So much ground had been lost, and was still being lost. Somehow it would all have to be made up, somehow it would have to be turned around. Cindy knew that the currency for turning it around were going to be great quantities of faith, hard work, commitment ... and ultimately lives. Lives like Billy's...and perhaps...no she didn't want to contemplate that right now.

There had already been so much horror...so many men and women in the service of the nation who would not be coming home...so many other men and women who had been killed or maimed right here in the United States by their enemies. The more she thought on this, the more her spirits were buttressed concerning her own need to strengthen herself and move forward ... and the more firm her conviction was that sacrifices like Billy's were something that were a dreadful necessity, however painful. There would be many more such sacrifices by countless other young men and women and by countless other families before all of their safety, liberty and way of life was once more secure. As this thought took hold, she realized that she would some day be proud of Billy's sacrifice, even if the pain never completely went away. She also realized that her commitment to helping in the effort to protect, defend and preserve their liberties was unflinching, it simply had to be.

Then the phone rang.

**June 15, that same time**

**Trevor Residence**

**Nashua, NH**

Brrrrrrrr

The muted sound of the phone ringing on the other end of the line sounded for the second time in Elizabeth's ear. She was sure she had dialed the number that her friend Cindy had given her correctly. She hoped there had not been some mistake.

Brrrrrrrr

"Come on, Cindy, pick it up," she said to herself

Brrr ...

In the middle of that fourth ring, Elizabeth heard the voice of her friend.

"Ferguson residence."

Elizabeth breathed a sigh of relief and answered.

"Cindy, this is Liz, it sounds like you got to your parents alright. I just wanted to call and make sure you were there safe and check up on you."

Elizabeth Trevor could still hear the pain in her friend's voice as she responded, but she could also detect a note of gratitude to be talking to a close friend.

"Thanks Liz.

"Yes, I got here alright and am finding comfort visiting with my folks. They are out right now so I've had some time alone ... and that's good too. It's been letting me reflect ..."

Elizabeth knew what her friend was reflecting on and decided to try to get Cindy's mind on other things, and to find a way to share with her the news of her own, in the hopes it would lift her spirits.

"Cindy, don't you worry. You take all the time you need. Just know that Joe and I are with you in spirit and are here for you no matter what. Anything you need, just ask it.

"My plans for travel are the same. I'll be flying out next Saturday and renting a car in Dallas for the drive over. Are you sure it's going to be alright with your parents?"

"Are you sure you're okay with it?"

Elizabeth hoped that Cindy was still comfortable with the plans they had made last week after Cindy had informed her that she would be staying with her folks. She felt Cindy could use the company of a friend as she grieved her son, and Elizabeth had convinced Joe that it was right.

Not that it had taken much convincing. Joe was as shocked and saddened by the news of Billy's apparent death as Elizabeth was. It was hard to believe that that tow-headed boy was gone. He had always been the apple of both of his parents' eye and there had been a few years, when the Trevors still lived in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area that they had held out hopes that Billy and their own daughter would some day get together.

Despite the fact that the former condition had never materialized, both families had remained close, especially Cindy and Elizabeth. For all of these reasons, Joe was quick to support his wife's plans for helping and comforting their old friends 100%.

"Liz, my folks are very comfortable with it and we are all looking forward to your visit. I am particularly looking forward to it and thank you and God for it. You are a true friend Liz, a girl couldn't find a better one."

Elizabeth rejoiced within herself at those words. That was exactly the sentiment she was hoping for, and it allowed her to gently move the conversation in the direction she had hoped.

“Oh, Cindy, thank you so much for that ... but I'm the one who should be grateful.

“... and I have some news I wanted to share with you.

“Do you remember our discussions about the essence of Joe's Nobel Prize and the Human Reasoning Structures he was led to discover and research?”

Cindy didn't need to even think, of course she knew.

“Of course Liz, the entire country, the entire free world knows about that.”

Elizabeth continued.

“Well, do you also remember the deal Joe struck with the researcher from California to develop a method to virtually model his research methodologies and the trepidation he felt when he discovered that she was using his work in her fetal tissue studies?”

Cindy had to think a moment on that one. In the midst of her own circumstances, it was not something she had at the very front of her mind. On reflection though, she did recall Elizabeth speaking of it and she remembered Elizabeth's and her own sorrow and disgust at Joe's research being used in such a way.

“Yes, Liz. I remember it. How could she lead Joe on like that and use his methods to advance such research?”

“But I also remember your faith in that matter and your willingness, once it had happened to leave it in God's hands. I know that must have been almost impossible for Joe, but it was a great example to me, I will tell you.”

Elizabeth, wasted no time in continuing. She felt like she was literally bursting at the seams to share what had recently happened, and she could think of no better person to share it with than Cindy. Joe had felt the same and agreed to it.

“Exactly Cindy.

“Well, you will never guess what has happened ...”

From there Elizabeth Trevor brought her good friend up to speed on the amazing set of circumstances that had been developing since Sandra McPherson's discovery of the Human Reasoning Structure within the fetal tissue she had examined on May 14<sup>th</sup>.

The next day, May 15<sup>th</sup>, exactly one month ago, Sandra had placed a telephone call to an at-first reluctant and distrustful Joseph Trevor. It had taken a second phone call and a transmission, first by email, and then a large set of data by file transfer protocol (FTP) before Joe's reluctance and distrust turned first to astonishment and then to utter excitement.

For the last four weeks, Joseph and Sandra, with help from Elizabeth, had worked many, many extra hours researching and detailing the existence of HRS within fetal tissue of all types. The samples came from Europe and Sandra processed them through her virtual modeling algorithms. It was a difficult task for Joseph, knowing what those physical samples in Europe represented, and wanting to end once and for all their harvest. But both he and Elizabeth saw the real potential in achieving just that as they established beyond doubt the reasoning capability of the child in the womb.

Sandra did most of the actual set-up and detailing, while Joseph analyzed the results and put together the logical thesis that would establish the premise, that the human embryo, even at the earliest stages of development, contained human reasoning structures underlying the DNA, which formed the basis for comprehension and awareness and intelligence. A level of intelligence that was clearly far beyond what modern social and medical science had ever been previously willing to accept.

Cindy recognized the implications immediately.

“Dear Lord, Liz, do you know what this has to mean?”

Elizabeth Trevor, her husband and even Sandra McPherson ... perhaps it was better said, especially Sandra McPherson, knew exactly what it meant. They had been laboring for the last several weeks to punctuate it and announce it to an unsuspecting world.

“We do Cindy, and you hit the nail on the head. It is Dear Lord. He has opened a door here and done it through a miraculous means that none of us could have ever foreseen or suspected.

“We plan to present detailed proof of all of this to the National Academy of Sciences, the American Medical Association and the entire world within the next three to four weeks. Isn't it just amazing how God's Hand works in all things?”

Cindy could see it clearly, not only in this astounding story, but also in what she and Jess were experiencing. It was amazing how God worked in people's lives ... even her own. Throughout this discussion, and even in her thoughts preceding Elizabeth's phone call, she could see, despite her pain and anxiety that would never really go away, that God had not forsaken her, that His hand was in the events of the day, all the way from the earth-shattering world-wide events, down to her very own, very personal ones. It was a knowledge and an understanding ... an entire way of thinking, that was about to be revitalized throughout much of America and the free world. It was an understanding and moral re-awakening they were all going to need to see them through the coming events.

**June 16, 19:31 local time**  
**Forward Observation Post**

**Allied Lines, Near Chiriqui Grande, Panama**

Hernando Rodríguez watched the sloping ground to his front. Using his special thermal vision equipment here in the hot and moist environment of central America, Hernando had finally grown use to the humidity and learned to ignore the sweat dripping from his face as he carried out his duties.

"At least the lenses on these optics don't sweat like we do," thought the Corporal as he observed several individuals moving up a trail towards the town he knew was over the rise to his front and left.

"I've got three individuals, range five hundred and fifty yards, moving up the small trail to our left towards town," Hernando reported to his platoon leader.

"They look like civilians, one young boy and two girls. I have a positive ID on non-combatants."

This evening, Hernando's duties included keeping watch well in advance of the new American position near the Panamanian coast here south and west of Chiriqui Grande.

Hernando knew he was living out one of the few positive campaigns of this war to date as American and allied forces pushed the joint Chinese and Panamanian forces south out of Nicaragua and Costa Rica. A decisive battle had been fought south of Managua in which the Chinese were finally stopped in their northward advance. As those large forces were held in place and as they wore themselves out on the well entrenched allied defenses that stretched from Granada on the north end of Lago de Nicaragua to the Pacific Ocean, a strong American force consisting of three infantry and two armored divisions had used the relatively safe waters of the Caribbean Sea to land near Colorado, Costa Rica and the mouth of the San Juan River.

That amphibious assault had been executed perfectly and without substantial sea or land based loss. Those forces, assisted by several air borne reserve battalions deploying directly from the United States, had pushed rapidly up the San Juan River to the southern end of Lago de Nicaragua, sweeping aside enemy garrison and defense units as they came. The Chinese and Panamanian main thrust on Managua, driving up the west coast of Nicaragua, had been enveloped by the movement.

Hernando remembered the general order for attack when the encircling forces got into position.

"How could anyone ever forget such an experience," he wondered. He knew he never would.

The enemy force had still been very substantial, numerically larger than the combined attacking allied forces. But they had been caught out of position, with many logistical supplies and support units mauled in their rear by the advancing American armor in that quarter. In addition, the Chinese units in particular were only supported by what provisions had been brought in-theater by a long and exposed supply line across the entire Pacific. Though the LRASD Killer Whale weaponry still made interdiction of that supply line difficult far out at sea, once that supply line approached closer in to Central America, things changed substantially in favor of the allies.

A growing number of American and other allied patrol and strike aircraft were being positioned at bases throughout El Salvador and Nicaragua for precisely this purpose. Specifically new P-8A Maritime Surveillance Aircraft, which was the jet powered replacement for the P-3C Orion, and specially configured B-1B bombers, operating in a maritime strike role, were finding and sinking more and more Chinese shipping in the eastern Pacific. Those aircraft were rolling off newly constructed American manufacturing lines, which were less and less hampered by terror attacks within the continental United States itself. As more and more of these aircraft, and the shorter range but more numerous F-15E and Joint Strike Aircraft were positioned in El Salvador and Nicaragua, the flow of supplies originating out of the far east was reduced to a trickle.

Hernando remembered many occasions witnessing the outbound and return flights of these aircraft, particularly the sleek B-1B bombers carrying so many ALCMs (Air Launched Cruise Missiles) underneath their fuselage on the outbound trips. On the return trips, if they had been successful, the pilots would wag their wings at friendly positions as they flew over. There were many occasions where a lot of "wing wagging" was going on, to exultant cheers from troops on the ground.

All of this had played into the encircling attack on the enemy thrust into Nicaragua.

The enemy had fought hard. Hernando counted it as major miracle that he had come through the many skirmishes and major battles that had followed, when so many men he had known had either been wounded or killed. Ultimately as air superiority and then air dominance was achieved, and as American M1-A2 Abrams tanks (themselves recently coming off new production lines in Ohio, Tennessee, Texas and Arizona) overcame enemy armor, a route and then a slaughter had ensued. Although many of the Panamanians surrendered, most of the Chinese would not. As their perimeter shrank, being aggressively pushed by allied forces on both sides, a large remaining contingent of over 10,000 Chinese soldiers had made a last-ditch, all-out attack in an effort to break out of the trap.

Although Hernando's unit had been on the peripheral of that attack, he had witnessed first-hand its ferocity and horror. The enemy push had carried through allied lines for over ten miles, over-running several positions where American and allied troops were butchered where they lay. The doomed Chinese counter attack broke through the first ring of encircling allied infantry and cavalry forces. But in so doing, the Chinese advance sealed its own fate as it was flanked by units like



Hernando's that closed the gap behind, while advancing Armor units met it head-on and swarming aircraft rained down fire from above. In the end, less than 200 Chinese troops survived, all wounded.

Thus was the northward advance of Chinese power in Central America thrown back.

Now, for the last three months, allied forces, principally American, had advanced through Costa Rica, retaking the capitol of San Jose in mid-May and reaching the Panamanian border just two weeks later near the first of June. At that point, Chinese and Panamanian reserve units had arrived in force and blunted the allied advance and ultimately halted it in a bloody stalemate on either sides of the slopes of Volcan Baru near the border of Panama and Costa Rica.

As that was occurring, Hernando and large numbers of veteran troops who had been given some R&R (Rest and Relaxation) were moved from their rear areas over to the east coast on the Caribbean Sea near Limon, Costa Rica. There a large armada of allied amphibious shipping met them, including two of the new Hampton Roads Class Sea Control Carriers that were now coming off American shipbuilding yards, several Aegis class destroyers, the large Brazilian carrier, the Sao Paulo, and her escorts. The troops had embarked on the numerous amphibious ships and sailed south where a forced landing had been made three days ago at Chiriqui Grande here in Panama.

It had not been an easy landing. Here, nearer to more Chinese and Panamanian assets and supplies, the air battle had been fierce and opposing fire had been heavy as the ships came closer to the harbor. As American aircraft from the carriers, and land based aircraft out of Costa Rica, Nicaragua and the United States pounded the enemy, the enemy countered with surprises of its own.

Over one dozen land launched Killer Whales were sent out towards the fleet from concealed mobile launchers along the coast. Escorting vessels, particular Halsey class frigates, that carried the reactive defenses against LRASD weaponry, were caught out of position. They had been stationed to the seaward side of the armada, particularly on the southern side, to protect against expected air launched and ship launched varieties of the weapon. Only two of these devices were successfully interdicted. Those particular two sensed and targeted the Sao Paulo which was further out to sea and in a position where her American and Brazilian escort's reactive defenses could work as designed. But, closer in to shore, three large amphibious assault vessels, three destroyers and one of the new Sea Control carriers were violently and suddenly sunk with a tremendous loss of life, in excess of nine thousand five hundred personnel.

It had been a critical and harsh blow, but not a fatal one to the allied landing plans as they pressed home the assault and as American aircraft used precision-guided weaponry to take out the land-based LRASD launchers. The actual shore-based defense fortification that the Chinese and Panamanians had prepared were incomplete and though the landing was opposed and the fighting fierce, allied forces ultimately defeated the defenders and established a significant beachhead that first day.

Now, two days later, Hernando was with his platoon near the Panamanian town of Bajo Boquete. That town would be his Division's objective at first light tomorrow morning after a night of scouting and surveillance. Intelligence indicated that enemy forces in strength, positioned in front of allied forces further to the north and west, were reacting quickly to this new force in their rear. They were expected to wheel around and try and break out of the developing trap to avoid another situation like the enemy had experienced in Nicaragua. In addition, more enemy troops, including two divisions of Venezuelan regulars, were advancing from the south in the vicinity of the Panamanian town of David.

It looked like all of these forces would converge in the vicinity of Bajo Boquete late tomorrow. Allied air would punish all of the enemy units as they progressed, but as Hernando had experienced over the last two days, this far south air dominance was not a guarantee and so the enemy could be expected to arrive in force. In addition, American armor would be pressing the enemy forces expected to retreat from the Volcan Baru area, reducing their numbers and effectiveness appreciably. But in any case, the allied forces Hernando was a part of would be acting as the anvil in the hammer-anvil scenario that was developing, just as they had planned to do.

So, as he watched, Hernando prepared himself emotionally for what he expected to be a terrible battle the next day. As he did so he prayed that he might survive to see his wife and young son back in Florida ... and that if not, that his parents and Maria's parents would take good care of his small family and teach his son, Felipe about him.

Unknown to Hernando, his prayer would be answered much sooner than he expected, in fact this very night, although not in a way he anticipated. As he was watching and praying in his forward position, a runner from his company commander was already hurrying toward him with new orders.

Corporal Hernando Rodriguez, soon to be Sergeant Hernando Rodriguez, was being urgently recalled to the United States in answer to his recent application to Army Ranger training. But those orders also had to do with the preparation for a specific new American campaign. It was to be a campaign that would require as many Cuban-born American soldiers as could be readily assembled, and Hernando was to be one of them.

**June 19, 09:15 local time**  
**Joint Session, Brazilian Parliament**  
**Brasilia, Brazil**

President Alfonzo Hermosa, who was now being called the “Panther of Brazil” in the press and by his own countrymen, looked into the hundreds of assembled face as he sat in his cushioned chair and prepared to deliver this special, state of the nation address.

It had been over two years ago that he had stood at this same podium and urged the lawmakers sitting before him to declare war on the People's Republic of China after the horrific impact of a large portion of the International Space Station in Rio de Janeiro. That impact had killed tens of thousands of Brazilians and had been the result of Red China's deliberate targeting of the civilian space station in its war with America. It had been something that President Hermosa could not explain away in an effort to avoid conflict. It had been something the Brazilian people would never forget ... or ever forgive, and something for which they demanded retribution.

Now, over two years later, he was invoking a special session of the parliament to update them on the overall strategic picture and on recent developments.

Many of those developments were good here locally. In addition to the success against Panamanian, Venezuelan and Chinese troops in Panama, the President could report that the Argentines spearhead which had broken through Brazilian defenses in March had finally been thrown back in southern Brazil. The Argentines had clearly been pushing towards Porto Alegre on the Atlantic coast to open up another COSAS base on the eastern coast of South America to compliment their efforts out of Venezuela. But that advance had been stopped 75 kilometers to the east of Santa Maria and had been thrown back at great cost to the west of Santa Maria all the way to the Argentine border. That had been over four weeks earlier.

Now, the President could report that Brazilian forces had broken through the Argentine defenses in two critical places. While large Brazilian forces had held down the center of the line at Sao Borja, large reserve forces near Posadas to the north and at de los Libres to the south had attacked and broken through. They were now in the process of enveloping the defending Argentine forces who were retreating in a route back towards Corrientes on the Parana River in Argentina.

Efforts in Venezuela had also progressed well, although without the major gains and breakthroughs. Brazilian and American special forces were making steady headway down the upper Orinoco River along the Columbian border towards Puerto Ayacucho where large Venezuelan forces were massing to try and cut them off. As this was occurring, a successful amphibious operation had been conducted just south of Trinidad and seven divisions of regular Brazilian forces augmented by Canadian and exiled Australian forces were now advancing up the lower Orinoco River towards Ciudad Guayana. The President was confident that the allied forces would ultimately join up there and cut off all of southern Venezuela and its natural recourses from enemy use.

But that was where any good news ended.

In Columbia itself, the capitol of Bogata had fallen and now COSAS and CAS forces controlled a line that extended along the northern Andes mountains, entering southern Columbia and becoming the Cordillera and Riental ranges extending north and east into Venezuela, circling up to the Caribbean Sea to the south of Caracas, through San Juan and to the coast at Barcelona. Everything to the north and west of that line up into Panama was now firmly in the hands of the enemy. In the fighting that had resulted in those boundaries, over 3,000 American and 20,000 Brazilian troops had been cut off and captured. Intelligence, what little there was, indicated that their fate was not good.

As in North Korea and elsewhere in the warfare, soldiers and officers who were thought to have any useful intelligence were led away and never heard from again. The rest of the troops were pressed into forced labor operations that few survived. The few escapees that made it out painted the same grim picture all over the world, and it was no different here in South America. Of course, the fate of any female troops who were captured was markedly worse.

Further abroad, two major disasters had occurred. The first had been in Australia where American, Canadian, Australian, English and Brazilian forces had been driven from that continent. The outcome could have been much worse but for the heroic and miraculous evacuation that had saved the bulk of remaining force to fight another day. Almost 100,000 Brazilian troops, out of an original force of over 150,000, were now being re-provisioned and trained in New Zealand for the defense of that Island fortress and an eventual offensive back into Australia.

The second had been the failure of the Brazilian expeditionary forces originating out of Nigeria in Africa to advance north and eastward far enough to put the desired pressure on GIR and Chinese forces continuing to besiege Israel. Nigeria, Ghana, the Ivory Coast and Gabon had all entered the war firmly on the side of the allies and offered their ports and their forces to ensure continued freedom and self determination in Africa. This was a welcome counter to the juggernaut of GIR nations, bolstered by hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops, that stretched from Morocco through Algeria to Tunisia, Libya, Chad, Sudan and Ethiopia.

To stand against those millions, the better part of them now gathering in Egypt to assault Israel, the allies had been able to field a mixed force of over 500,000 that had staged in Nigeria and then advanced into Chad near lake Chad. That force had included almost 200,000 Brazilian troops, 150,000 Nigerian troops and 50,000 troops from each of the Ivory Coast, Ghana and Gabon nations. Those forces had crossed Nigeria unopposed and entered Chad near Lake Chad, crossing the Chari River and attacking the capitol of Chad, N'Djamena. That city had fallen quickly and the force had advanced north and eastward quickly across the relatively flat savanna.

But as the force approached the more mountainous north eastern regions of the country in late April, they had been met by a combined GIR and Chinese force of over 750,000 troops that had been detached to halt their advance. The resulting battles between those two forces continued to this day. On two separate occasions, the flanks of the allied expeditionary force had been badly mauled, causing them to fall back. At the current time, American, English and Canadian forces numbering 200,000 were reinforcing the beleaguered expeditionary force and were preparing a counter-attack from their prepared positions around Abeche, Chad.

"So, to a certain extent, they have accomplished their mission because three quarters of a million troops had to be detached to stop them," thought the President as his introduction ended and has he stepped up to the podium.

"But we need those forces to break through and advance on the rear areas of the larger enemy forces surrounding Israel for them to have had the overall desired effect."

As President Alfonzo Hermosa placed his hands on either side of the podium and leaned into the microphone, he began to speak.

"My fellow countrymen. My fellow elected leaders. Today I bring you a report on the state of our nation in these trying times. They are times of war, war like we have never known before, and despite two former world wars, war like this earth has never known before.

"God grant that it will soon end in victory for liberty. But, as that has not yet occurred, it falls to me to report on the state of events as they relate to our nation and to our people. Let me start by announcing some very good news ..."

As the President spoke, little did he realize that over 2000 miles away, events were unfolding that would directly and permanently impact his life and the life of every member of parliament listening to him...events that would also introduce another new and dangerous escalation to the overall conflict.

### **June 19, that same time**

#### **30° East Latitude, 15° South Longitude**

#### **94 Class, PLAN 603 Ying, South Atlantic Ocean**

The third of the new Chinese ballistic missile submarines maintained a quiet, steady depth of 100 meters in the South Atlantic ocean with no headway, over 1600 kilometers off the Brazilian coast and over 3200 kilometers to the east of Brasilia, where President Hermosa was just starting his address. The first in the class, the PLAN 601 Zenim, had been destroyed by an American attack submarine in the South China Sea over a year ago. The second in class, PLAN 602, was currently operating in conjunction with the large CAS forces advancing on Midway.

Captain Xian Qian knew that his vessel, the Ying, was on as critical and as far reaching a mission as its sister ship. Here in the command spaces, he was going through the final launch sequence for ten of his twenty-four JL-3 intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Captain Xian knew that he had to "shoot and scoot", as the Americans would say, because the ballistic tracks of those missiles would lead any enemy acquisition radars or satellites, if the Americans had any up ... which the Captain had been assured they would not ... right back to this launch point. The Captain was sure, that with a successful fulfillment of his mission, that there would be an immediate and wide ranging search for his vessel.

This launch position had been chosen as the best trade off for distance to target and expected enemy response time. On one hand, the Chinese did not want the Brazilians to have sufficient warning time to be able to avoid the impact of the missiles. On the other hand, they wanted to provide Captain Xian with every reasonable opportunity to make good his escape with his highly trained crew and very critical military assets in the Ying.

"5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... Launch One, Launch One, Launch One," the missile launch officer announced loudly, but with professionalism.

The shudder of the resulting launch could be felt throughout the boat as the modified JL-3 missile cleared the vessels and rocketed towards the surface.

Within fifteen seconds a second missile was launched, then a third and fourth and so on until all ten had been launched and were in the air within two and a half minutes of the first launch.

"Make your depth 300 meters, course 78 degrees, all ahead full," ordered the Captain after the final missile had cleared the vessel.

As the Ying turned away and dove deeper into the depths of the Atlantic, the Captain held tightly to the stabilizing bar to either side of his Captain's chair and began counting off the seconds to himself and mentally tracking the progress of the missiles.

**June 19, 09:20 local time**  
**Joint Session, Brazilian Parliament**  
**Brasilia, Brazil**

With no warning, the head of President Hermosa's security detail rushed into the Parliament chambers and grabbed the President by the arm and began pulling him un-ceremoniously towards the exit as more security personnel fanned out around him, guns drawn.

There was immediate pandemonium in the chamber as the President's speech was so dramatically cut short and as elected officials stood and looked around them, wondering what was going on. Some began to shout questions as others began streaming towards the exits themselves. All of it was caught on film.

Just as the President's security detail reached the entrance immediately below and to the right of the podium, there was an immense shudder, followed by a tremendous explosion. Debris and smoke blasted into the chamber, blowing the doors from the opposite side of the room into the chamber along with the bodies and body parts of those who had been escaping in that direction. The pandemonium became terror as surviving legislators, their aides and officials scrambled away from the growing fire on that side of the building.

Ten seconds later, before the President's detail could get him out of the building, another blast occurred, this one not one hundred meters from the President himself. The resulting blast knocked down and dazed the entire detail, with several presidential aides and security personnel pinned under debris. The President himself was down and semi-conscious. He was just coming to his senses, trying to order his thoughts regarding the source and extent of the attack when the third missile struck only twenty feet from where he lay. The last thing President Hermosa saw in life was the rapid, almost instantaneous advance of a firewall resulting from the missile strike whose concussion had just exploded his ear drums. None of the President's detail survived.

For the next two minutes, every ten seconds, more blasts occurred in and all around the parliament building, laying the entire structure and surrounding buildings to waste. Combined with the 500 kilogram warhead of high explosives, the immense speed of the warheads created, through kinetic energy, a literal hell on earth that washed over the entire area.

In the end, only fifty survivors emerged from the complex, where only a few minutes earlier over 1000 legislators, military leaders, newsmen, administrative personnel and security personnel had been gathered to hear the state of the nation address.

**June 19, 19:30 EST**  
**Nation-Wide Address from the Oval Office**  
**The White House, Washington, DC**

"My fellow Americans, it is with great sadness that I address you this evening.

"Tonight we mark another causality in the terrible war that we are engaged in. It is a war against the most vile tyranny perhaps ever witnessed on the face of the earth. With velvet words our enemies attempt to hide and cover their horrid deeds where hundreds of millions are being robbed of their belongings, starved, enslaved and killed.

"Earlier today, our enemies struck again.

"During a speech to a joint session of his parliament, President Alfonso Hermosa was killed by an enemy missile attack on the Brazilian capitol of Brasilia. The attack targeted specifically the parliament complex during his speech. This was no coincidence or accident.

"The missiles were intercontinental ballistic missiles launched from an enemy submarine some 1000 miles off of Brazil's coast. All of us went through some very tense moment until those missiles impacted and revealed that they were conventional warheads of high explosive materiel. For a few moments, we had to presume that we were under nuclear attack. It was a very close thing and this is something I want to emphasize to each of our citizens and to the entire free world. Our enemies do not care the risks they take to inflict their tyranny on us all. It is something for which we must all be prepared and aware of in our continued fight.

"President Alfonso Hermosa was a patriot to his country and a friend to ours. He was a friend to liberty loving people everywhere and he will be sorely missed."

After the address, the President went immediately to the situation room where his entire national security team was gathered, short the Vice President, the Secretary of Defense and the head of FEMA. The executive leadership of the United States in all three branches was taking great pains to never be gathered in one place at one time. There were always enough leadership from the Senate, the House of Representatives, the Supreme Court and the Executive branch dispersed so they could pick up the pieces and continue should a decapitation strike like that executed against Brazil penetrate their defenses and succeed.

As the President sat down at the table, flanked on either side by close advisors, he opened the meeting, turning to his Secretary of State.

"Fred, give us brief rundown on conditions in Brazil."

Secretary of State Reissinger, who had been in touch with the American Ambassador to Brazil throughout the day, immediately proceeded.

"Mr. President, it is only by a miracle of circumstances that Ambassador Charles was not at the Brazilian parliament and himself a casualty. He indicates that the Vice President of Brazil, Henrietta Maldenado, has already been sworn in and is meeting with the military leadership this evening.

"For anyone not knowing this stalwart lady, the name Margaret Thatcher will probably inspire the closest match as to her capabilities and demeanor. The CAS and GIR have not done themselves any favors here. Brazil, if anything will be more committed and tenacious after this attack."

The President replied.

"Thanks Fred, please set up and schedule a conference call between myself and President Maldenado as soon as possible. I'll want to pass on our condolences and our unwavering support.

"Now, as to other issues, despite the advances and success we have had in Central America, and here on our own shores with our counter terrorism efforts...and in apparently holding the GIR at arms length around Israel, we continue to face mountains of bad news.

"General, please, once more, let's confirm these facts. We no longer have an advantage with stealth, we no longer have the advantage of having the only viable ballistic missile defense, our naval power continues to be largely negated and our advantage in space with satellites and surveillance remains virtually negated. Am I missing anything here?"

General Stone, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, paused briefly as he prepared to answer his commander in chief. The Chinese, with the massive infusion of cash and technology during the 1990's and early 2000's, and with the massive resources now available to them as a result of their conquests, had accomplished what no one would have believed possible. They had caught up with the United States in several critical areas, areas critical for the United States force projection and its ability to bring advanced technological weapons systems to bear against the massive numbers of the PLA.

"Mr. President, what you have stated is essentially true.

"The Chinese have developed a stealth acquisition and targeting capability and are deploying it around their critical infrastructure. We must assume, as they produce more of the devices and technology, that they will put them in the field and export them to their allies. We were made aware of this from one of our most valuable intelligence assets just before the device went operational. Director Ballard has already briefed us on all of that. Since that time, in several operations into the PRC with our stealth aircraft, we have lost several of them to this new system. One of our most capable HR-7, Thunder Darts conducting surveillance over the research facility itself, and two B-2 bombers a few days later trying to destroy that same facility.

"There is no doubt that they have an operational anti-stealth capability. We know from earlier efforts on their part and our experiences with it, that they have been pursuing this for some years.

"As to their anti-ballistic missile capabilities, the demonstration that the Chinese provided to the Russians, which we all monitored, speaks for itself. The Chinese ballistic missile defense rivals our own. In one key area they are ahead of us. Our platforms are sea-borne and stationary. There's are land-mobile. We must also assume that they either already have, or soon will have these systems available on their capitol ships.

"Finally, today's attack on Brazil punctuates the parity the Chinese have gained in space. Their ability to knock down our satellites, with the exception of two newer gyro-synchronous units watching the CONUS, were apt demonstrations of what they can do when we can't watch.

"In this case, even if we had watched, short of two or three AEGIS TBM units around Brasilia, we would not have been able to prevent it."

As General Stone said this, the National Security Advisor, Bill Hendrickson, interjected.

"Well, General, we would have at least given President Hermosa more time to exit the facility if we had been able to monitor the Atlantic with satellite surveillance, and why not put two or three TBM units there. We have considered offering it to the Russians, why not to all of our allies?"

Bill said this as he turned to the Secretary of State, Fred Reissinger, addressing the last point to him. That resulted in a fifteen minute discussion by the Security Council regarding this very point. In the end, it was decided to do exactly that. Every allied capitol that desired one would now receive three AEGIS TBM ground units, manned by American personnel, where immediate facility security would be provided by US forces and overall security would be provided by and coordinated by the host nation. In light of the new threat, they decided to offer the same thing to the defense of Moscow, reversing their earlier decision.

After reaching this decision, the President turned back to his NSA.

"Bill, what of the Chinese use of conventional ballistic missiles from their submarines? How long can they sustain such operations and will they do so with their land based weapons."

This question had provided Bill Hendrickson with a quandary. He had thought about it, analyzed it, talked it up amongst the military war college people, the think tanks and the NRO personnel all day.

"Mr. President, it was a surprise ... another surprise from the Chinese. We of course have converted and put to good use several of our own SSBNs, turning four older Ohio Class SSBNs into SSGNs using an insert that holds four cruise missiles for each former nuclear missile.

“This gives us an enormous amount of cruise missile from each vessel, but the cruise missiles are much slower and have less range than these ICBM’s.

“What the Chinese have done is convert actual ICBM’s into conventional attack missiles ... missiles with very long range, with very high accuracy and with hypersonic speeds. We have not considered this because of cost, and particularly now with the PRC TBM capability.

“Apparently the Chinese do not have the same concerns. We must assume that if they will do it with their submarine launched missiles, that they will do the same with their land launched ones. They are clearly attempting to use their assets to maximum effect with playing to our strength, which is of course our nuclear capability.”

As the President contemplated this reply, an aide entered the room and whispered something to the Director of Homeland Security, Stewart Langstrom, who in turn had a brief conversation with the Attorney General of the United States, Dean Byron Hull.

As they finished, Stewart addressed the group.

“WNN is being visited as we speak, David Krenshaw will be in custody within the hour.”

A somber group of faces greeted this news. All of them were happy to hear it. All of them were also concerned at how the news might be used by the political opposition at a time that was increasingly desperate for American and allied forces. All of them knew, from their briefings, that it had to be done. David Krenshaw was considered by this group as one of the most dangerous, most damaging and highly placed traitors in the history of the nation. Now that his personal connections to the Red Chinese were confirmed, his slant on the news and efforts in the CIR on behalf of his mentors in Red China had caused untold damage to the allied cause, and cost untold lives.

The President had ordered that the indictments against Krenshaw be unsealed, but that any actual evidence remain sealed until the trial itself. Many here at the table had opposed this because the indictment itself would reveal too much on how the data had been gathered, both technologically and from a human intelligence standpoint. But the President had been firm, sensing the political firestorm that might ensue if such a high profile figure, one who was courting very powerful national and international figures both politically and on the vaunted Council on International Relations, was whisked away and held essentially incognito under the various national security and counter terrorism acts currently in place, without any indication as to the charges and evidence against him.

Those acts allowed the President to arrest and hold any suspected terrorist or anyone who was viewed as a risk to national security in just such a fashion...and only the prosecutors and the judge were required to be privy to the charges and the testimony and the evidence. Not even the defense attorney, if the defendant could obtain one, was allowed access under those special circumstances.

President Weisskopf did not agree with those provisions of those Acts of Congress. They had been passed before his time in the wake of the 9-11 attacks and during the War on Terrorism that had followed. They were still in place, and although he had carried much influence in advancing legislation that was rooted in traditional American values and intent, he had not been able to dislodge those particular provisions of those acts. He had to admit, as much as he hated it, he had also found it necessary to approve their use against such enemies as Manuel Mendoza and Hector Ortiz. But those had been foreigners, living in this country. Spies whom the President considered should be summarily executed ... and if he had his way, they would be.

“But I will not approve those measures against U.S. citizens under anything but martial law conditions, even one so brazen as Krenshaw,” thought the President.

“We’ll hold him and we’ll apply a lot of the provisions that are appropriate. But release the grand jury indictments and allow his defense council some access.”

After looking around the room, he continued.

“This is great news and we should all stay up to date and informed. Dean and Stewart, are you going ahead with the press conference regarding this?”

The Attorney General and Director of the Department of Homeland Security both indicated that they were scheduled to be on the air at 10:30 PM Eastern Time, in time for the late local news from the Central to the Pacific Time Zones and in a broadcast that would be carried live on every major network, including WNN. Dean Byron Hull responded.

“All of the other network CEO’s are appalled at the overwhelming evidence in the indictment we have shown them and are cooperating. The WNN executives were standoffish at first, but after seeing the indictment they’ve come around. We’ll lay out a lot of the case in our press conference.”

Norm Weisskopf was satisfied. His one concern had been that WNN would continue to spin things after Krenshaw was taken into custody, that Krenshaw had somehow built up an entire team of enemy sympathizers within the network. Hopefully, it was turning out that this was not the case.

“Great. Get Mr. Krenshaw arraigned and held without bail as soon as possible. I want the government to go for the maximum penalty in this. David Krenshaw needs to be made an example of, justice calls for it and our enemies must see what becomes of their efforts in this regard.”

The maximum penalty under the anti-terror laws for the crimes of treason, abetting enemies and conspiracy during a time of war that Krenshaw was charged with was death.

“Now, General Stone, before we close and give Stewart time to complete his preparations for this evening's press conference, please lay out for everyone the current timing and disposition of our upcoming operations in the Caribbean ...”

**June 22, 23:52 local time**

**PLAN Amphibious Assault Ship Chongqing  
800 km West of Midway Atoll, Central Pacific Ocean**

Kao Pham once more prepared himself mentally and physically for combat. This would be his third major engagement, the first two having occurred off of Taiwan and off of Australia. Each of those experiences had provided a mad adrenaline rush, helping him perform his duty despite the fear and the terror at the death and destruction in modern combat. Each wave of an enemy attack produced the same results and Kao was amazed and thankful that he had survived to date. He had witnessed many of his comrades die as other ships were ravaged and sunk right before his eyes.

Kao was now a senior NCO and the team leader for an entire battery of KS-2+ AAW missiles onboard the Amphibious Assault ship to which he was assigned. The KS-2+ was a significant improvement over the original KS-2 missiles that his vessel had carried upon her commissioning and initial combat. But as significant and as advanced as those new KS-2+ missiles were, he was even more excited about the training he would receive and the alterations that would be made to the Chongqing when they next visited port. The ship would be receiving both the new anti-stealth, *ta shih*, acquisition and targeting systems, and the new KS-3 missiles and the associated electronics to control them. A full section of their AAW missiles, one fourth of the total, would now be the KS-3 ABM variety. This was great news as far as Kao was concerned and he could hardly wait to learn how to use and maintain the new technology.

“Besides, that visit will be in the Tianjin shipyards and perhaps I will have some liberty to visit Dad and Mom,” he thought as he monitored the activities of the four personnel under his direction.

Kao knew that several of the capitol vessels in this fleet already carried the *ta shih* detectors and KS-3 missiles. He knew specifically that both of the large deck carriers had been outfitted with the provisions for them during their construction, the COSTIND developers being far enough along with each at the time to include them during the initial build.

Kao was anxious to see them in operation and particularly thankful for the added protection they would offer the entire fleet. He had seen what American technology was capable of and he wanted as much defense against it as possible. These new systems offered a significant boost to what stood between him, his ship and his comrades and the weapons of the enemy vessels and aircraft.

“And we will not have long to wait for the Americans to start that destruction,” thought Kao.

“Soon, it will start,” he thought as he glanced at his watch and prepared for his own forces' assault. It was 23:59:53. Zero hour for the attack was 00:00:00.

## Chapter 27

# The Battle for Midway Atoll and the Invasion of Alaska

**June 23, 00:12 local time**

**Bomb Shelter Facility Z-23B**

**7<sup>th</sup> Marine Division, Midway Atoll**

To call Midway an "Island" is really a misnomer. It's actually an atoll consisting of two major islands, Sand Island and Eastern Island, within its sheltering coral reef, on the south side of the lagoon. Sand Island, the larger of the two is about a mile and a half long and one mile wide. Eastern Island, is about a mile and a quarter long and three quarters of a mile wide. All told there are only two and a half square miles of livable space on the two islands combined. Not a very large place, but as World War II demonstrated, and now as World War III was demonstrating again, a very critical strategic location in the Pacific Ocean over which great battles had been, and now would be fought.

Leon had just settled into his position in the bomb shelter facility when the impacts began. They had received very little notice, only three or four minutes before the attack. He knew that there were many personnel who probably didn't get to their shelters in time and then there were those who were on duty in their prepared positions who had to weather the storm there.

Patriot missile batteries and the single land-based TBM Aegis site on the islands provided a measure of relief, acting as a second line of defense behind the two TBM provisioned Aegis cruisers that were stationed with the fleet protecting the two islands. Still, with the hundreds of missiles the Chinese had launched, more than 50% of them got through ... and the follow-on second wave of missiles were barely touched by the few remain missiles in the TBM and Aegis vertical launch cells.

The pounding went on for what seemed like an eternity. Leon could hear the explosions above him, he could *feel* the impacts through the structures around him. On numerous occasions he felt the impact through his feet, the reverberations seeming to bounce off the rock beneath him to reflect back up into the facility. What Leon didn't know at the time was that those impacts were coming from numerous ICBM missiles that had been converted to conventional munitions that were raining down with the other ballistic and cruise missile assault on the island.

Those missiles had specifically targeted the older bunkers that the Americans had built on the islands in years past. Tonight, there were very few Americans taking refuge in those bunkers. Leon didn't know it yet, but the efforts ordered by General Atkins that so many of the Marines and GI's had literally cursed while they fulfilled them, had saved hundreds of lives ... perhaps thousands. The General, already a veteran of several other campaigns in the Pacific and recently promoted to command the land based defenses of Midway, had learned his lessons well. He knew that the Chinese had already "zeroed in" the location of most American facilities over the years leading up to the war. He had no intention of letting them take advantage of that information.

Upon taking command, he had ordered the entire contingent of fifteen thousand ground based combat troops (an extremely tight fit on the two islands) to immediately put in motion his plans for constructing new bomb shelters, command and control and even storage facilities for both Sand and Eastern Islands. Although not all of them had been completed, and quite a few personnel had been forced to take refuge in, or fulfill their assignments in older facilities ... enough had been completed to house the majority of off duty personnel where they would be preserved to help defend Midway should the Chinese get through the defenses surrounding the atoll.

Later that morning they would all see how effective the General's foresight had been in the twisted and smoldering wreckage of those older facilities, and in the high casualty rates coming out of them. The remarks and attitude regarding General Atkins, from his lowliest foot soldiers through to his entire command staff were elevated to a level of profound respect, almost reverence, for those soldiers fighting on Midway... regardless of what exact words were used in expressing it.

But not all facilities could be relocated or rebuilt. The main airfield, many of the above ground facilities that serviced it and most of the defensive positions, were well known to the Chinese, irrespective of earlier intelligence. Bunker busting ICBM warheads made of hardened metal and very little physical explosive were raining down on the airfield and those positions. Their impact were like miniature meteorites and the resulting energy transfers as those warheads penetrated rock, concrete and steel, were massive. From the horrendous sound to the massive reverberations that were being transferred through the walls of the facilities where other personnel had taken refuge, and being transferred through the ground itself, everyone knew that Midway was taking a beating.

"Well, I can sure see the difference between the Indians and the Chinese on how they assault an Island," Leon thought as he sat there with his comrades.

"The Indians took their time over weeks to build up to the assault, where the Chinese are definitely into shock warfare," he concluded.

And he was right.



The Chinese had timed their assault to allow for the massive missile attack leading up through the very early morning hours. There was a planned thirty minute lull in the bombardment at 0300 hours in the hopes of drawing the American repair crews and new shifts out to repair the damage, and it worked perfectly. The resulting death and destruction of the next barrage made significant inroads into the lives saved by General Atkins construction efforts. Many personnel were caught in the open as both missiles and aircraft broke through American defenses in the follow-on attack.

**June 23, 02:58 local time**

**58 Miles off Midway Atoll**

**Combat Information Center, U.S.S. George Washington**

Admiral Larsen was the commander of all naval forces tasked with the defense of Midway. He commanded a formidable task force, but he knew he also faced a very formidable enemy, as this morning was already demonstrating.

"One thing we can thank our lucky stars for," thought the Admiral, "is that the SUBT CIWS have been deployed in this task force."

The U.S.S. George Washington was the first carrier to be retrofitted with the system. Similarly, the U.S.S. Bataan was the first Amphibious assault ship to be so retrofitted. Along with the George Washington and the Bataan, the Admiral also had several Aegis class destroyers that mounted the SUBT CIWS. All told, the Admiral had a total of seven vessels mounting the new weapons system and he hoped and prayed it would be enough.

Along with the U.S.S. George Washington battle group, the Admiral had the U.S.S. Theodore Roosevelt battle group and two Amphibious assault ships that had been converted to the role of Sea Control carriers. One of these was the U.S.S. Bataan and the other was the U.S.S. Wasp. Each of his large carriers were carrying an air wing that was comprised of a slightly different mix than those on the carriers that were defending New Zealand. His air wings consisted of a higher number of FA-18/F aircraft capable of either air superiority or attack and maritime strike roles. The Admiral expected to apply them with extreme prejudice if he got the chance...and he would get that chance.

The sea control carriers, on the other hand, carried more aircraft with which to defend the fleet, and the admiral planned to use them in that role, providing CAPs as part of the inner ring. Comprising air wings of 4 AV-22 Osprey, 2 E-22C Osprey AWACS aircraft and 18 A/F-35B VTOL Joint Strike Fighters, the Admiral felt he could maintain a very strong inner ring CAP of between fifteen and twenty aircraft at all time. The larger carriers would provide the barrier CAP missions necessary.

All told, when combined with the ASW helicopters deployed on many of his escorts, the Admiral's order of battle consisted of over 172 combat aircraft suitable for air defense and strike roles and over 75 aircraft for support and ASW warfare. In addition, he was supported by the over 100 U.S. Air Force aircraft at Henderson Field on Midway itself. There, he had a mixture of F-22, F-15C, F-15E, F-35A and Air Force AEW, ECM and refueling aircraft.

The large displays in the CIC were being fed by both the Navy's multiple E-2C Hawkeye and the new vertical takeoff E-22C AWACS. The Air Force's E-3 Sentry aircraft currently monitoring the air space over and around Midway Atoll was also feeding into the system. These aircraft were directing the air defenses which were now up in the air over the battle groups and the island, and that were stationed out along the principle threat axis represented by the attacking missile tracks.

"I hope and pray it is enough," the Admiral thought as he watched the threat "board" displayed on the largest screen at the front of the room. There, he could plainly see the diminishing number of vampire returns emanating from off to their west. Although many of the lower speed and lower level cruise missiles had come in from several directions, and although the ICBM tracks were clearly from greater distances, the shorter range ballistic missiles were easily tracked, with fair precision, back to their launch points. Those points were clustered in two principle areas a good four hundred miles further to their west and southwest. His air defense aircraft were up along both of those lines. His strike packages were just launching now to seek them out. But he knew he could very likely expect company of his own behind these missile barrages.

Turning to address the commander of the George Washington, the Admiral said, "Captain Bastian, what is the latest on the operational status of the SUBT CIWS on the George Washington?"

"Green board, ready for action sir," the Captain replied.

"Good, between the George Washington, the Bataan and the Burke's, we're going to have to be ready to ward off a heavy Killer Whale attack at some point. The tide of this entire battle, and perhaps the war is going to turn on that."

As the Admiral watched the radar returns indicate many new bogeys approaching from the west behind the last missiles, he was not yet aware that he was entirely correct in his assumptions regarding the battle for Midway, but incorrect regarding the overall war effort.

The overall war would hinge on other, even more significant developments taking shape well over two thousand miles to his north.

## **June 23, that same time**

### **100 Kilometers Northeast of Uelkat**

#### **Eastern Siberia near the Bering Strait**

"The weather in this forsaken country is cold even in the middle of summer," thought General Wu Tsing as he entered the command facility that had been set up near a small inlet along the Gulf of Anadyr. With a howling wind of over 40 knots, a temperature in the mid thirties and thick cloud cover that was spitting sleet and snow, the current weather system was exactly what the operation needed for cover. The forecasters were expecting heavier showers later in the day that would continue through the next several days, both here and moving east over the Bering Strait into western Alaska.

"The cold, clouds and snow may be uncomfortable, but it is exactly what we have hoped for ... and as cold as it may get, it cannot begin to cool the fire that is burning within our forces," General Wu concluded to himself as his intelligence officer started the meeting.

The General and his forces were poised in eastern Siberia to strike to their east. They were there as a direct result of the Siberian Economic Development Treaty that the Russian Federation had signed with the Coalition of Asian States well over three years earlier.

One of the largest Chinese work sites resulting from the treaty had been a rich Coal and Iron Ore deposit to the west of Markovo in a remote area of eastern Siberia. The deposits were huge, but access was extremely limited. Russian and Chinese engineers devised a plan to build a large railway and superhighway directly to the area to allow for the traffic into the site required to transport the materiel away from the facility and back to China in the quantities envisioned.

It had been a difficult project from the start.

The plans called for a four lane highway and a two line railway to run from the port facilities at Magadan eastward to Yamsk and then northward along the Kolyma Mountains to Gizhiga on the Gulf of Shelekhov. From there the road would make its way through the extremely rugged wilderness around the Omolon and Fenskina Rivers, using tunnels, steep grades, and huge excavations to reach the final destination of Markovo.

It had also been an ambitious project.

When complete, it would be one of the longest superhighways in the world. It would definitely be the most remote. Over 1000 miles through steep mountains, forests, rugged coasts and along wild rivers that experienced the coldest winter weather on the planet. Twenty thousand Chinese workers were brought in to complete the work which the Russians estimated would take over five years.

When the war with the United States began only a year after work had begun, progress on the project had been made halfway up the rugged Siberian coast to Gizhiga, further than anyone would have estimated. By the time Siberia declared its independence in March of this year and fighting broke out in the western part of the country between Russian and Chinese forces, the Chinese workers had surprised everyone by being within 80 kilometers of Markovo.

There had been some set backs during the recent fighting. Russian units operating off of the Kamchatka peninsula had destroyed a number of bridges and tunnels along the roadway in late April before Chinese forces defeated the Russians at Petropavlovsk. With that defeat, the repairs had quickly been made and the road completed to the work site. Iron Ore and Coal production was increased immediately to full capacity and tremendous volumes of the raw resources began to be trucked and trained back to the port at Magadan. From there it was loaded onto COSCO cargo ships and transported across the Sea of Okhotsk to Manchuria and the Chinese mainland.

But the long railway and highway had never been intended for natural resources. It had been a nice bonus to actually find a rich deposit of Ore and Coal there in the eastern Siberian wilderness, a bonus the Chinese were exploiting to the max. But, some form of deposit would have been announced in any case to warrant building the roadway that was to serve an even more critical purpose in the overall Chinese war plans...the movement of large military forces into far eastern Siberia...right up against the Bering Strait across from Alaska for the invasion of the United States of America, and more particularly, for the capture of the vast American oil reserves in the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge and at Prudhoe Bay.

This is what made the General so confident and bolstered the morale of the large forces under his command. They had followed their high command's instructions precisely according to the direction of the Politburo and Jien Zenim. They had completed the railway and highway and had painstakingly and secretly moved men and materiel in tremendous quantities to Markovo. They had staged them there in large, deep granite caves in the mountains which had been excavated during the mining operations as the roadway was being built.

Although the initial mining operations and the road building had been closely watched by the United States, the military buildup that followed had gone entirely unobserved as a result of the successful satellite warfare the Chinese waged against the Americans. The few satellites that were launched now had very short lives and they were directed at other areas thought to be more critical.

As a result of this, the most critical time for maintaining the operational security came when moving the massive force further to the east towards Alaska. The closer they came to the Bering

Strait, the more chance for discovery by American aircraft patrolling the far eastern portions of Siberia to ensure there was no danger to the continental United States lurking there.

In order to make sure the Americans did not discover the very plan that they were patrolling against, the Chinese had to implement the last portion of their grand strategy carefully and with significant deception. The road and railway had been extended down the Anadyr River and to the northeast of Uelkat onto the Chukchi Peninsula, to the location where the General was now located.

During that extension and the troop movements that had followed, there had been many air raid warnings as American aircraft extended their patrols from both Elmendorf Air Force base near Anchorage and Eielson Air Force Base near Fairbanks out across the Bering Straits and over the Chukchi Peninsula in Siberia. As a result of careful Chinese planning and deceptions, none of those patrols had ventured far enough to the west to discover the large forces massing near Uelkat.

This was accomplished through well planned engagements and feints as more Chinese fighter aircraft were moved into the area. These aircraft began to challenge the American incursions. But they did it with patience and in a manner that matched what their intelligence had informed them was what the Americans expected to see. Intelligence wanted to ensure that the intercepts were carefully scripted as a back-water, non-important area of operations. That intelligence had been accurate. The Chinese showed the Americans exactly what they expected to see and no more.

In the ensuing engagements, the more modern SU-33 and J-10 aircraft were held back. The Chinese used only the older, vintage J-7 and F-1 aircraft to challenge the Americans. These engagements invariably resulted in lopsided American victories with the Chinese aircraft scurrying back to the west out of fuel range of the Americans, as they were expected to do. The Americans duly noted the increased Chinese air patrols, but reported that there was no need for concern because the enemy was at the end of their fuel range and must be coming from much further away.

But all of that was changing this morning. Here and along the roadway back towards Markovo over 750,000 Chinese troops and their equipment were now poised, along with over six hundred high performance combat aircraft and five hundred transport aircraft. They were finally prepared to cross the Bering Strait onto the continental United States...a feat no invading army had been able to do since the British had burned Washington, including the original White House, in the War of 1812.

Tsing contemplated all of this in the first few moments of the briefing as he watched the threat displays in his command center facility fifty feet below the ground near Uelkat. What those boards showed him was an advancing line of over one hundred high performance SU-33, J-10 and F-5 aircraft now engaging an American patrol of six F-15 aircraft over the Bering Strait, well to the west of Nome, Alaska. The Americans were being swept aside.

Six more American aircraft that had escaped the ballistic missile barrage that pounded Eielson Air Base were advancing rapidly towards the scene of the lopsided fight. But as the personnel in the command facility watched, they began to turn away and vector to the south and east before engaging. Pointing to the clear indication of this on the display, the General got everyone's attention.

"Do you see how the follow-on American aircraft are turning away comrades?"

"They see the futility of trying to prevent what is currently happening and they are wisely trying to save those resources to fight us later, when they can better consolidate their efforts."

As the personnel nodded and the intelligence officer continued the briefing, their attention was turned to the rapid advance of the next wave of ballistic missiles now well in front of the fighter sweep. That second ballistic missile barrage, like the one currently going on against Midway, was a mixture of hundreds of shorter range ballistic missile mixed in with over two dozen conventionally armed ICBM's fired from their bases in Mongolia and Tibet. Those missiles were targeting the runways and infrastructure at both Elmendorf and Eielson Air Force bases, and all of the major infrastructure and airfields around Nome and the Seward Peninsula.

Behind the initial fighter sweep were over two hundred attack aircraft streaking toward military and infrastructure targets in Nome and all along the Seward Peninsula and the western Alaskan coast as far east as the Yukon River where its flow turned south near Koyukuk. Behind these attack aircraft and escorted by yet more Chinese fighter aircraft, were over four hundred transport aircraft and helicopters of all types progressing towards their landing zones. The largest portion of these would be landing in and around Nome. But a sizable portion would be landing at Koyuk on the coast of the Norton Sound and then making their way by helicopter to Koyukuk to secure that position on the Yukon River. All in all over fifty thousand Chinese troops were involved in the initial assault.

At this point, the sound of the intelligence officer's voice interrupted the General's thoughts.

"General, all reports indicate that the Americans have been caught totally by surprise.

"Their civilian leadership and their military leadership are focusing on our advance on Midway.

"Local forces in western Alaska are clearly unaware of and unprepared for the extent of our assault. We expect to achieve all of today's objectives on or ahead of schedule."

**June 23, 03:25 local time**

**Alternate Command Facility, Elmendorf Air Force Base**

**Anchorage, Alaska**

The American Air Force General slammed his hand down on the table... *WHAM.*

Putting his face within inches of the Captain in charge of the surviving communications facilities, he raised his voice several decibel levels.

"I don't care what you have to do, Captain. You get me a communication link back to the world and you *DO IT NOW!* Set up a relay if you have to with the remaining aircraft we have in the air...or use the commercial aircraft out of the Anchorage. I don't care how you do it, but I want to be talking directly to NORCOMM CINC inside of the next thirty minutes.

*"DO YOU UNDERTSAND ME?"*

Lt. General Paul Stokes was emotionally involved...in fact, he was *very* emotionally involved. He knew it, his gathering staff knew it and he didn't have the time or the inclination to eliminate the emotion from his voice at the moment. There was simply too much happening and too much at stake.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Air Force command was a shambles. Every runway had been holed...several times. Most critical facilities had been hit, some of them, like the Headquarters facility, had been completely destroyed in an instant, and many aircraft had been destroyed in place. The Major General who was the overall commander of the 11<sup>th</sup> Air Force was dead, along with many of the Air Wing commanders and other leadership. Lt. General Stokes, the deputy commander was now in charge and he simply had to get word of the full extent of the tragedy back to the NORCOMM and the Pentagon.

"Oh, they'll be figuring it out for themselves from those initial reports that went out before communications were cut off," he thought.

"But they have no idea of the full extent of things."

General Stokes, however, did have a good idea of the full extent of things.

The four ready alert birds that had gotten off the ground before the airfield had been shut down were now flying a beefed up escort for the single E-3 Sentry early warning radar and communications aircraft that was in the air. That Sentry had made a quick retreat back towards Anchorage when it was clear how overwhelming the attack coming out of Siberia was. The ballistic tracks had heralded the attack, but they were followed very quickly by the many, many bandits that the Sentry had observed, thirty of which had been vectoring directly towards the Sentry itself.

All six of the F-15 patrol aircraft the E-3 had been controlling over the Bering Strait had been shot down in the first five minutes of the battle as they valiantly placed themselves between the attacking enemy and the E-3 aircraft in order to buy the time for the E-3 to retreat back to the east. Their fight had resulted in shooting down eleven enemy aircraft, sacrificing themselves in the process. The Sentry had not picked up any emergency transponders from those six aircraft.

The follow-on six F-16 aircraft out of Eielson Air Base had turned away when they were ordered to provide cover for the E-3. Those six aircraft, along with the four ready alert F-15s from Elmendorf attempted to create a strong barrier CAP between the Sentry and the Chinese who were going about their business all along the western coast and along the Seward Peninsula.

Whenever the E-3 tried to push its radar coverage further west, to get a better look at the Nome area, the enemy immediately dispatched twenty or more aircraft to intercept and a lopsided dogfight ensued. That had happened twice and each time the Sentry and its escorts had been forced to retreat, not being able to afford the loss of more fighters which would risk the loss of the E-3 itself. Already two of the F-16 aircraft and one of the F-15s had been lost.

Now, following Lt. General Stokes' orders, the E-3 was holding station halfway between Anchorage and Nome with its seven remaining escorts positioned between itself and the enemy at what was thought to be the extent of the enemy's fuel range. For now, General Stokes was content to allow the E-3 to provide a good picture of the enemy's furthest line of advance. But he knew that as soon as the Chinese could land and refuel aircraft on this side of the Straits, that they would push their own air coverage ever further towards Anchorage.

The two attempts that the Sentry and its accompanying fighters had made to get a closer look at Nome had been sufficient to show the General that the Chinese were embarked on a full scale invasion of western Alaska. The many fast moving aircraft and the hundreds of larger, slower moving transport aircraft could only mean one thing, a huge air assault was occurring with thousands of Chinese troops, perhaps tens of thousands, who were landing and occupying American soil.

The General had already spoken briefly with the commanding General of all ground forces in Alaska and with the Governor. A full mobilization of the entire Alaskan National Guard and every able-bodied individual had been ordered and was being announced on the Emergency Broadcast System, along with a complete military emergency declaration for the entire state. The Governor and the land force commander were trying to contact their Canadian counterparts over in the Yukon and Northwest Territory provinces of Canada to apprise them of the situation and to try and begin planning some form of joint, coordinated mobilization.

The U.S. Army had a total of two divisions of regular Army and National Guard troops in Alaska most of them deployed in a position to protect the oil reserves. But General Stokes, based on what he had seen, was convinced that it was going to take many, many more divisions to halt the Chinese incursion and then throw it back across the Bering Straits into Siberia. The Alaskan Governor had ultimately arranged a conference call to Washington using an un-secure land line so General Stokes could report his assessment, but before it could go through, the line had gone dead.

Now General Stokes and the Governor and other high ranking political and military leaders in Alaska were trying to patch communication avenue together to get the word out. Stokes had convinced them all that this was the first phase in an even larger invasion across the Bering Strait and that it was going to take a massive mobilization here in Alaska and throughout the United States and Canada to contain it. Those conclusions simply had to get back to NORCOMM, the Pentagon and to the White House as quickly as possible.

### **June 23, that same time**

#### **Urkut Residence**

#### **Nome, Alaska**

Unknown to Lt. General Stokes and the other 11<sup>th</sup> Air Force officers struggling to rebuild communications in Anchorage, a very complete and compelling report of what was happening in western Alaska had already been viewed by hundreds of thousands of Americans in the lower forty-eight states, and it had been viewed in real time. It would ultimately be viewed by millions and it would have the very effect that Stokes was hoping to create on the political and military leadership of the United States, and upon the people.

Stacey Urkut was a fifty-seven year old widow living outside of Nome on social security and on the savings she and her late husband had been able to stash away from twenty-five years of married life and his career in fishing. It wasn't much, but it allowed her to live comfortably here in her native homeland in a cabin located on a mountainside on the Seward peninsula near Nome.

At a little after midnight, Stacey had been jolted awake by a terrible rattling of her entire house. At first she had thought that there had been an earthquake and she had immediately gotten out of bed and frantically thrown on some clothing to escape outside. While she was in the process of doing that, there was a tremendous explosion in the distance, followed in quick succession by three more.

"What on earth?" she had asked herself as she went to the window and pulled up the heavy winter shades and looked outside.

What greeted her eyes was a cloudy, very early morning in the land of the midnight sun. The cloud ceiling was fairly low, but looking towards the coast she could see a tremendous fire and pillar of black smoke rising into those clouds from the petroleum storage facilities on the outskirts of Nome. As she watched, she saw a brief streak of light in the clouds and a trail of smoke plummeting out of the clouds at blinding speed. The smoke trail pointed like an arrow into the center of town in the vicinity of town hall. It hit with a bright flash and she first saw ... and then heard and felt the resulting explosion as its concussion was transferred to her through the air, and through the ground.

While she continued watching in horror, other streaks flashed in the clouds and trails of smoke rained down on and around Nome, each resulting in a similar bright flash and explosion. Soon the sound was like continuous claps of thunder, building to a rolling wave of rumblings, punctuated by the tremendous crashes and rattling of hits closer to her home.

Stacey wasted no more time. She had a feeling she knew exactly what was happening. She went and got her digital camera and began to take pictures through her window of what she was witnessing. While she did so, she turned her personal computer on and waited for it to boot up. When it did, she quickly went through the practiced motions of dialing up to the internet and then logging on to her favorite site on the web, the Independent Republic.

On Independent Republic, which was a conservative news and discussion forum site, Stacey was known as Orka107. She had been a member of the web site for over seven years and had followed every major news story that had been reported on it. The discussions, or "threads" as they were called, allowed users of the forum to look at, analyze, and discuss breaking news and the events of the day from every conceivable angle, posting their thoughts and comments individually to each thread. With over 250,000 registered users on the Independent Republic, all of whom were eager to read and analyze the breaking news of the day, the site had developed into a literal information treasure trove whose members kept a window to Independent Republic active on their computer at their homes, in their offices, and on their laptops virtually all day long.

As a result of so many registered users and the even greater numbers of unregistered users (called "lurkers" on Independent Republic), all being online at any one time, a good number of the breaking news stories on the forum were in essence eyewitness, live accounts of events as they occurred. Many of these eyewitness reports were often posted before the major news services were even aware of their existence.

Stacey remembered several threads that she had personally been involved with where Independent Republic users had been on hand when very notable events had occurred, reporting on

them as they happened. She remembered how caught up she and tens of thousands of others had been when reading about the Klamath Basin Water Crisis throughout the summer of 2001, or the horrific eyewitness accounts of the horrible attacks on the morning of September, 11<sup>th</sup> of 2001, or the many eyewitness accounts of the Chinese attacks on America and the terror attacks within America that had occurred since. All of these, and many more, had been reported as they happened by users of Independent Republic. Stacey had never imagined that she would one day be making such a report herself, but today was the day and she was being thrust into that role by events beyond her control. But she knew from those other experiences exactly what she needed to do.

JT Sampson, the respected conservative editor and owner of the online SierraLines news service, also knew what he had to do as he read the initial accounts being posted by the user named Orka107. He had good relations with many of the users of Independent Republic, and had used their eyewitness reports on many occasions to develop his own breaking news. The courtesy extended both ways as many of JT's subscribers, who were also registered users of Independent Republic, or "IR" as it was known by its users, would post JT's editorials and breaking stories back on Independent Republic for analysis and discussion. Upon reading Orka107's first thread, he called for all of his workers to hold the presses (so to speak) and began reformatting the main page to his SierraLines site.

As that happened, Stacey Urkut continued to do exactly what she had seen done in the past. She continued making the eyewitness accounts that JT and so many others were already reading. They were vivid and emotional on-scene reports, complete with color pictures that she was uploading from her digital camera, of what she saw...and those reports continued to flow from her keyboard as the very early morning hours progressed in Alaska.

Her reports would ultimately do more to arouse the American populace against the Chinese invasion than any other effort the American government or press would make. For over three hours, as the land line she was using miraculously held, her threads were picked up in the Breaking News section of the Independent Republic and viewed by more and more peoples. Those initial thousands became first tens of thousands, then hundreds of thousands, and ultimately millions as the vivid JPEG images and riveting written accounts that accompanied them were emailed to the entire address books of everyone who was seeing them. The major media outlets began picking up the story but were unable to use their normal means to make reports. Their only alternative was to use the materiel being posted on the Independent Republic and then comment on it.

Ultimately the event would be recorded as the single most viewed story in the history of world-wide internet media, so quickly did word of it travel by email and by phone that summer morning.

Stacey recorded the massive missile barrage directed at Nome and its infrastructure, the hundreds of missile impacts and the resulting damage and fierce fires. From her vantage point well up on one the mountain overlooking Nome, she also recorded the follow-on, high performance attack aircraft as they swooped in unopposed at low altitude to bomb and strafe Nome's small airport, the police station and many other facilities. The obvious carnage and destruction was appalling, but it was also engrossing and compelling and few of those watching could away.

Users of Independent Republic discussed the lack of air cover over the Bering Strait and how this could have occurred. Immediately, many theories sprung up in the ad-hoc think tank that the Independent Republic had become over the years. These theories were always wide ranging...and in this case they ranged from a world-wide plot involving the American government to allow the United States to be over-run, to reports of perceived ineptitude of the current administration supposedly witnessed by the continuing string of military set backs, to the actual truth that a normally sufficient combat air patrol had been overcome by the overwhelming numbers of a massive Chinese surprise attack which had been masked by the lack of satellite coverage and the weather.

Whatever the reasons, more and more Americans were turning off the initial reports of the attack that were appearing on network TV and the radio, and turning on their computers as the emails and phone calls raced around the nation. There, on their computer screens, they watched in real time the horrific, world-shattering events unfold as Orka107 reported it on the Independent Republic web site the fateful morning of June 23<sup>rd</sup>...America was being invaded, and everything had changed again!

The owner of Independent Republic, Rob Jamison, himself having seen the initial reports on his forum-and himself a veteran-recognized immediately the significance of the reports and spent the morning valiantly working to ensure that the site could keep up with the tremendous growth in volume without crashing. He also answered the many phone calls coming in from news services asking him to share copyright or at least allow reprints of the data appearing on the Independent Republic. Within thirty minutes, Jamison had to stop answering the phone because the calls became too numerous and because his servers were in danger of overloading. He simply had to devote his full time and energies to keeping his system up and running.

Ultimately only one set of threads was allowed to run on Independent Republic that morning. All other stories, all other threads, all other services were put on hold and all traffic and resources were routed entirely to the several threads that Orka107 posted. It allowed the site to weather the bandwidth storm and it ultimately allowed the literally millions of Americans to watch the destruction and then the invasion of Nome, Alaska by the Chinese as it happened.

JT Sampson, having completely revamped his main page within the first fifteen minutes, mirrored all of the reports onto his news service site as the exclusive front page story, crediting Orka107 and the Independent Republic. Hundreds of thousands of more viewers saw the story there and they too passed it on to their friends and relatives who in turn passed it on to their friends and relatives in a cyber chain that spanned the continent ... and ultimately the free world.

Finally, towards 3 AM in Nome, the final comments from Orka107 were posted that morning. The last pictures she uploaded showed hundreds and hundreds of parachutes dropping out of the clouds into and around Nome...some of them landing uncomfortably close to Stacey's own cabin. Seeing this, many individuals posting on IR frantically told her to hurry and make her escape.

Those last images also showed dozens and dozens of transport helicopters hovering over and landing in the town and many attack helicopters, some of them strafing groups of individuals who were firing rifles at them, others launching massive multiple rocket attacks on unseen targets. As these last images of actual fighting between American citizens and Chinese invaders appeared in the final thread that she posted that morning, Orka107's last comments accompanied them.

*"Well my fellow cybIR friends, this will be my last thread and last post. There's no time for more and as you can see, I have to be going.*

*"It's really happened. As you can see from all of my pictures and comments this morning, and against all odds, the United States of America has been invaded. Tears are streaming down my cheeks as I write this. There are no words to adequately describe how this feels.*

*"Just for the record, let me say this so my friends here on IR can all know who I really am. At times likes these, psuedo-names aren't important anymore. My real name is Stacey Urkut. I am a native American woman who is 57 years old. The area around Nome has been home to me and my family for my entire life and for generations before me.*

*"I may be older ... I may be a woman ... but I was taught by my father a long time ago about freedom and about faith ... the same freedom so many have taken for granted for so long ... the same faith that so many have lost. Perhaps I took those teachings for granted myself ... I don't really know and there's no sense fretting over it now.*

*"You see, the time for talking is past. The time for senseless squabbling and worrying over meaningless issues like which mindless sitcom is the best or whose fashion reflects the best "look" of the current day ... all of that is past. For us here in Alaska, all that is left is to fight ... for our lives, for our homes and for our liberty.*

*"You know, there was something else I was taught by my father and uncles ... and that was how to shoot. Several of you have known me here on IR for years. You have seen my threads on the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment threads of the old Winchester Model 1892 44-40 that my father left me and my dear husband, Tony, some time ago when my father died. Well, Tony is gone now too and I guess it's time to get that old 44-40 down from its place over the fireplace, get the shells Tony stored in the closet and step outside and try to make my way over to my nephew's trapping cabin. Please pray for me and don't hold it against me if along the way I use my Winchester to engage in very brief, very animated and very direct conversations with any of these Chinese visitors I happen to run across along the way.*

*"Farewell my friends, remember us all in your thoughts and prayers*

**June 23, 8:32 EST**

**Situation Room, The White House**

**Washington, DC**

President Weisskopf and his staff were silent as they too read the last comments Stacey Urkut posted on the Independent Republic that morning. The President's Chief of Staff had been contacted by his own wife one hour into the crisis while the technicians at the White House and the Pentagon were trying to re-establish communications with the 11<sup>th</sup> Air Force in Anchorage. Apparently the Chief of Staff's wife had gotten an email from her mother, who had received a phone call from a close friend who had in turn received a bulk email from a brother. And so it went.

The result had been that the Chief of Staff had entered the Situation Room and quickly displayed the appropriate thread on the screen. For the last two hours, interspersed with continuing situation reports regarding both the Midway and Alaska situations from his military, National Security and Homeland Security advisors, the President and much of his cabinet had watched and read the reports coming directly from Nome over the internet.

"That's one courageous woman," the President commented after a few seconds.

"Whatever else happens, I want to make sure she is awarded a Medal of Freedom for her reports and actions this day ... and God willing, I'd like to meet her after this is all over and find out how those *conversations* went.

"But, my God! How did the Chinese pull this off without our knowing something! Admiral Crowler, what is going on up there with the 11<sup>th</sup> Air Force?"

Secretary of Defense Crowler looked down for a moment, and then responded.

“Mr. President, without satellite coverage and with the Chinese anti-stealth capabilities, we have had to pick and choose very carefully where and when we utilize those very expensive and very important resources. It doesn't help one iota in the current circumstances ... but it is still the truth.

“General Layton maintained what we all perceived as a very strong CAP up over the Bering Strait twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. Clearly, the Chinese have hidden a massive build-up in eastern Siberia from us, one we did not expect given all of their other offensives, particularly the one currently directed at Midway.

“When they came, we weren't ready for it.

“Now, General Layton is dead, the CAP was swept from the sky and Lt. General Stokes has got his hands full. That's the best I can report now of the cuff, Mr. President.”

The President was sobered by those comments. He had not known until this moment that General Layton had been confirmed dead.

“Thanks, George, I was not aware that General Layton's death had been confirmed. Please pass my personal condolences on to his wife and family. We've been caught with our pants down and we're going to have to be more vigilant and maintain stronger security everywhere.”

Turning his attention to the entire group, the President then continued.

“Alright folks, we have these two new monumental threats to face and we are going to have to quickly find a way to contain them and turn them around. Let's start with the latest info that we have from the commanders in the field. Secretary Crowler, General Stone, what else do we have?”

The Secretary of Defense looked over briefly and expectantly to General Jeremy Stone, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who quickly nodded back to him.

“Mr. President, I'll let Jeremy fill us in on the latest communications. General Stone, go ahead.”

The General placed both of his hands on the surface in front of him and then looked around the table. When coming to and meeting the President's gaze, he took a deep breath and began.

“Well, the action is continuing in both places. We have now been able to get relayed transmissions from Alaska, and we are in direct communication with Midway Atoll.

“The Chinese are making two major offensive pushes to the east. As you know, one of them is at Midway Atoll that we have been expecting for some time. The other in western Alaska, as Secretary Crowler just mentioned, has taken us by surprise.

“Both represent, of course, critical threats to us. Midway would give the Chinese a strong position to defend against our approaches towards their massive gains throughout the Pacific and Asia. It also would give them an ideal place from which to attack and perhaps invade Hawaii.

“Alaska is an even greater threat if what we believe is happening is actually occurring. From the pictures and reports from this woman in Nome, and based on the initial assessment from General Stokes in Anchorage, I believe we are facing that greater threat ... a massive invasion of Alaska that can have but one aim, and that is the capture or destruction of our oil reserves in the Arctic.”

With this statement, several of the cabinet members moaned or otherwise made disconcerting noises around the table. As the General continued to pause, discussions began to pick up amongst the various cabinet members. The President interrupted it all by raising his hand, palm forward, and indicating that everyone should give him their attention.

Turning to his Chief of Staff, the President said, “Talbot, get the Secretary of Energy over here as quickly as possible.”

Then, turning back to the General, the President continued.

“I am not sure of the exact numbers as of today, but in our efforts over the last three and one half years to become energy independent, I believe that the North Slope Reserves in the ANWR and around Prudhoe Bay make up about 20% of our current oil production. We've been able to lower the totals because of the increases we have made elsewhere, like in the new oil production off of the Pacific Coast and in our substantial increases in domestic Nuclear Power as a result of the Nuclear Regulatory legislation we got passed.

“Talbot, make sure that Secretary Collier brings those figures with him along with a complete estimate of production rates, forecasts and any other data related to overall production and consumption rates of oil.

“Okay General, please continue, we'll review our oil situation when Secretary Collier gets here.”

The General continued, going into detail regarding the current force structure in Alaska and around Midway Atoll. From the latest reports, the assault on Midway was continuing. An initial cruise missile attack launched by Chinese strike aircraft against Admiral Larsen's combined naval task force off Midway had succeeded in sinking two frigates, one Burke destroyer and damaging the U.S.S. Wasp and one of the Sea Control carriers operating with the Admiral's Task Force.

“The hit on the Wasp was not mortal, but it produced many casualties and its flight operations are currently on hold until repairs can be made...but she is not in danger of sinking and they feel she will hold station just fine and be flight operational within ten to twelve hours.”

The U.S. counter strike sent out against the Chinese task force had not fared well. The Chinese had apparently held back the majority of their air superiority fighters and met the U.S. Naval aircraft over 100 miles to the east of the Chinese main force. The resulting dog fight had caused many of the



A/F-18F aircraft to eject their attack stores into the sea so they could defend themselves. As a result, the attack had not been able to be pressed home against the Chinese fleet. Fifteen American aircraft had been lost in the fighting along with over thirty Chinese fighters. As of last report, the two forces were continuing to probe for each other's exact location so they could launch more effective strikes.

In Alaska, not much more could be said than what they had already seen. General Stokes was requesting immediate reinforcement, both for his air forces and his ground security forces. Fighter wings and bomber wings from Seattle, Idaho, Montana and from North Dakota were already in the air over Canada en route to Elmendorf and Eielson Air Bases. Military and commercial air transport aircraft were already staging to fly reserve troops up to Alaska based on the major call ups that the President had just signed in the last hour.

The President would be making a national address to the nation at noon and there would be more call ups announced then, along with a clear explanation of the gravity of the situation.

At the conclusion of General Stone's remarks, the President asked.

"Jeremy, straight up...in Alaska...can we stop them?"

The General, as the President knew he would, responded directly, forthrightly and to the point.

"Stop them? Yes, Mr. President, we can stop them, and we will stop them.

"...but my guess is that it will be somewhere around Fairbanks, or perhaps even Anchorage.

Depending on how well the enemy has planned and what type of transport he is bringing into Alaska, I think there is little chance that we can amass enough forces in time to save Prudhoe Bay or the ANWR oil facilities.

"Personally, I do not think we can count on this enemy not planning all of this very well in advance. I believe now that our oil is, and always has been, their main goal. They just masked it from us extremely well. We will do everything in our power to protect that oil and its production facilities, or to deny it to the enemy."

**June 23, 12:37 local time**

**TU-22M Reconnaissance Regiment**

**250 miles Southwest of Midway Atoll**

Colonel Win Chang checked his instrumentation and his heading. He was the commander of this entire regiment of TU-22M Backfire strike aircraft...except today they had no weapons whatsoever to *strike* with. Particularly no LRASD devices.

Each of his thirty-six aircraft had been loaded up with the most advanced detection and ECM equipment his nation had to offer and they had also been loaded up with extra fuel. In place of real weapons, they had all carried extra fuel stores which they had ejected from their aircraft as they passed the general area of the two Chinese fleets. They also carried very convincing decoy Yakhont missiles that would draw American missile fire.

Only a few minutes earlier, one of the aircraft in the northern most formation had detected the telltale signs of American transmissions and Aegis radar signatures. The Colonel had communicated to the entire Regiment what their orders would be for the final phase of today's mission. The entire Regiment turned to the north. Based on the triangulation he had received from the surveillance version of the LRASD devices that had been seeded in the waters around Midway by the Chinese fleet, the Colonel had a fair idea where the main American formations had to be located.

The Colonel had already rejected two earlier Aegis radar detections by his aircraft as decoys. He was convinced that those two readings were nothing more than the Americans trying to draw him and his comrades into attacking smaller Surface Action Groups (SAG) that the surveillance units had already located. But the Colonel was committed to not wasting the LRASD devices and Yakhont missiles from the other Chinese forces on decoys today.

"No my American friends, that hole in the water to the north where we are getting the least Aegis signature is where I believe you are, and now we are going to put that premise to the test."

The Colonel's plan called for thirty of his thirty-six aircraft to go to afterburner and attain their top speed of just under Mach-2. They would then approach the potential location of the American fleet at high altitude and with all of their countermeasures active. With full counter measures and with their high speed, the Colonel was hoping he would find the Americans and be able to conclusively report their position back to the Chinese fleet and to the other six aircraft that would not be taking part in the mock frontal assault on the Americans. At the same time, when he found the Americans all thirty of his aircraft would launch their decoys, thereby capturing the full attention of the American task force.

It was time to go to full afterburner ... now!

While all of this was happening, the other six aircraft had already gone to extremely low altitude, less than 100 feet above the waves, and were circling the perceived American position towards specific coordinates on their digital terrain maps.

**June 23, five minute later**  
**CIC, U.S.S. George Washington**  
**100 miles West of Midway Atoll**

"I have multiple bandits to our south approaching at high speed and high altitude. They just went active with counter measures. Vectoring Reaper Flights One and Two to intercept."

Upon hearing the report from the air defensive officer on the E-2C aircraft to the south, the Captain of the George Washington took it in calmly, but the calm was an outward expression born of long experience and years of training. He and the entire Task Force had been expecting the attack at any time ... but nothing wrenched your gut like the hard cold reality of having it happen.

"Launch the ready alert birds.

"CAG, get me more birds on the deck and ready to go.

"Commander, inform Admiral Larsen and ask him join us here."

As Captain Bastian was issuing orders, the officer in the E-2C spoke again through the speakers.

"I have multiple separations, I repeat, multiple separations from the bandits.

"Vampire, vampire, vampire! Count now up to thirty-seven and climbing."

Bastian, who had been a consummate student of the after action reports of the other engagements with the Chinese throughout the war, quickly issued more orders.

"Overseer-3, continue to vector Reaper One and Two at the enemy aircraft. I repeat, have them go to afterburner and engage those aircraft and drop as many of them as possible. Have both outer ring and inner ring missile defenses go to auto free fire.

"Stay on your toes people, this is where they normally start throwing those Killer Whales at us. Make sure every threat axis is covered by Doppler radar right down to the waves. I don't want any other aircraft penetrating at low levels anywhere close to this task force!"

The Captain was wise in his preparations and he was correct in his assumptions. This was the time that the Chinese normally pressed home their LRASD attacks with either low flying aircraft or with surface units that had launched an earlier, coordinated attack.

But today, there were no low flying aircraft. The TU-22M simply did not have the range to carry the heavy LRASD all the way to Midway Atoll, perform an attack and then return to base, the nearest of which was far to the west at Wake Island.

Just the same, Captain Bastian was right. This *was* the time the Chinese always pressed home their LRASD attacks on American fleets...and today would be no different.

**June 23, 12:37 that same time**  
**TU-22M Reconnaissance Aircraft**  
**150 miles west of Midway Atoll**

As soon as Colonel Chang's aircraft had picked up definite readings indicating the American main task force, they communicated the location of that grouping to the six lower altitude aircraft by digital, encrypted data link. They also communicated it back to the main Chinese fleet.

The six lower level aircraft were anywhere from fifty to seventy five miles out from the outer ring of escort vessels that were protecting the main American task force. Each one had come within one to two miles of the specific coordinates they had been ordered to proceed towards. After receiving the location of the American task force, each aircraft's electronics officer quickly programmed that location into a special encryption and translation algorithm that communicated the information to three small devices each aircraft was carrying under its fuselage. Once the information was downloaded into these devices, each device was released from the aircraft at three second intervals as the aircraft circled the position they had been sent to. After this was accomplished, the aircraft turned away to return to base.

Each device dropped by the aircraft deployed a small parachute and quickly dropped the 100 feet into the water. Upon landing in the water, each deployed a ten meter long, thin antennae into the ocean and transmitted the coordinates of the American task force in a low power transmission that was detectable no further than three miles from the transmitting device.

In each of the six positions where these TU-22M aircraft had dropped transmission devices, eight loitering LRASD devices picked up the transmissions, processed the data and turned on their conventional propulsion. They then dove to a five hundred meter depth and proceeded toward the projected intercept points for the American task force between fifty and seventy-five miles away. Quickly reaching their cruising speed of fifty knots, forty-eight LRASD devices were inbound to the American task force.

**June 23, ten minutes later**  
**CIC, U.S.S. George Washington**  
**100 miles West of Midway Atoll**

Admiral Larsen was perplexed by the seemingly ineffective and disjointed nature of the Chinese attack. Something just wasn't right. Turing to the Captain of the George Washington, he motioned for him to follow and they stepped outside of the CIC

"Ken, let's talk for just a minute.

"What do you make of what we just witnessed over the last ten minutes?"

Ken Bastian, relieved that none of the sixty cruise missiles that the enemy had launched had reached his ship, and particularly relieved that there had been no coordinated Killer Whale attack, took a minute to digest the Admiral's question.

"Well, Admiral, I believe it was an attack that was poorly executed by the enemy. I kept waiting for the other shoe to fall ... but it never did"

Nodding, the Admiral responded.

"Exactly Ken, the other shoe never did fall. Why?"

"When have you known, or read in the course of this war of the Chinese conducting such a miserable attack? Do you honestly believe that in an operation like this they would be so inept?"

The Captain, who had read every after action report of every sea battle during the course of the war knew the answer.

"The answer is that they never have Admiral. I can't explain it.

"All of those cruise missiles they fired were duds ... every one. They did not travel more than ten miles before each and every one of them dropped into the ocean and those Backfires turned tail and ran...and I am glad they did. We downed sixteen of those TU-22M's without loss.

"So, although I can't explain it, I'm grateful it turned out that way."

The Admiral appreciated the Captain's relief, but he sensed ... no, he *knew* that something was wrong. Then it started to come to him.

"But Ken, what if that was exactly what was supposed to happen?"

"What if those were not real cruise missiles and that whole thing was not a real attack...what then? What does that tell you?"

Both men stared at each other for a second with dawning realization.

"Well, it would mean that they meant for our attention to be focused on those TU-22Ms and the missiles they were launching at us, while they ..."

... and then the Captain rushed back into the CIC with the Admiral hard on his heels.

As they came into the room, the Admiral began issuing orders.

"Captain, Commander, I want all of the SUBT CIWS capable vessels to quickly close up tight around the George Washington, the Wasp, the Roosevelt and the Bataan. Formation Charlie. Get the Perry's and the Ospreys in position. We can expect a Killer Whale attack at any time."

"Maintain General quarters and threat condition Zebra on all vessels."

### **June 23, twenty-five minutes later**

#### **U.S. Naval Task Force**

#### **100 miles West of Midway Atoll**

It took a good twenty-five minutes for the SUBT CIWS capable Burke destroyers in the formations to dash over to the capitol ships and surround them according to their new orders. Within that circle of capitol ships, the Washington and the Bataan, with their own SUBT CIWS were on the major threat axis while the Roosevelt and the Wasp were shielded by them and two "goal tender" SUBT CIWS capable Burke destroyers also positioned within the inner circle. The four capitol ships were all running approximately one quarter of a mile apart while the ring of destroyers set up another half mile beyond that. Outside of that, the four Halsey frigates in the formation were setting up to run along both of the major threat axis and evenly spaced between the two. HV-22 Osprey aircraft roamed the area out near the Halsey frigates, some flying close to the waves, others at higher altitudes watching the surface of the Ocean for the signs of the approach of rocket powered LRASD weapons.

Just as the formation was completing its moves, the threat rang out from the co-pilot of an Osprey aircraft not six miles outside of the circle of defending Burke destroyers.

"Contact, contact, contact. Fast mover coming in at 273 degrees, speed accelerating past 200 knots! ... Now another ... and another."

Suddenly, throughout the combat information centers on board all of the ships in the task force, the same dreaded sounds, the same clear indication became apparent, Killer Whale devices were coming at the ships from six separate azimuths, and they were coming hard.

Many of the Osprey aircraft were not in position to intercept the Chinese weapons. Three of the aircraft did make successful intercept with their specially configured and reprogrammed Mk-50 torpedoes. In one tragic engagement, an Osprey swooped fairly low and dropped its weapon directly in front of a Killer Whale that was running fairly close to the surface. Upon impact of the Mk-50 with the water, somehow the mammoth warhead on the Chinese weapon exploded and the blast and rising water reached out and impacted the tail of the Osprey before it could completely clear the blast radius. The impact damaged the tail severely and the aircraft flew on for several hundred yards with the entire tail assembly canted at a slight but noticeable angle to the left of the aircraft. Then the tail simply fell off the stricken aircraft which plunged into the ocean, killing all on board.

Now, forty-five Chinese weapons were penetrating the ring of four Halsey Class frigates surrounding the task force. Only two were in a position to intercept any of the devices, and only one

of those had its towed, reactive explosive system fully deployed. That frigate was positioned in front of half of one of the Chinese LRASD groups and exploded four of the weapons in a awesome cascade of four powerful explosions that severed the remainder of the towed defensive cable. The second FFG in position to intercept any devices was able to detonate two more Killer Whales before being struck itself by a third, which hit it forward, directly under its missile launcher. The impact detonated the missile magazine and the entire forward portion of the FFG was blown off causing the frigate to immediately slow in the water and settle quickly by its now a jagged and ruined bow. Within ten minutes that vessel would sink with the loss of over 150 personnel.

At this point, throughout the task force, cries of "Vampire, vampire, vampire" rang out from controllers in AWACS aircraft, from fighters in the CAP, and from the Combat Information Centers of the various ships. Upon determining the American task force position, the Chinese had executed another cruise missile attack and now over eighty Yahkont and Sunburn missiles were approaching.

But thirty-nine LRASD weapons also remained and were now approaching the inner circle of escorts, and this is where the latest advances in American technology paid off.

Five of the escorts in the inner ring were Arleigh Burke destroyers that had been retrofitted to the latest Block III designation, which, among other things, included the new SUBT CIWS system. Three of these vessels had been evenly distributed about the circle, particularly running in a line to protect the U.S.S. Theodore Roosevelt and the damaged U.S.S. Wasp, both of which did not themselves have the SUBT CIWS system. Within the inner circle itself, the Roosevelt was running abreast of the Bataan (which did have the system) and the Wasp was running abreast of the George Washington. In between both was another of the Block III Burkes, serving as a "goal tender".

As the devices approached the inner circle, they chose their targets. Twenty-four of the remaining devices chose the larger ships in the inner circle to attack. Eight each on the larger carriers and four each on the smaller, Sea Control carriers. All of these had already gone deep to their attack depth of 800 meters from which they would rise at a steep angles to attack the capitol ships from underneath. The other fifteen devices chose various escorts running in the inner ring.

At the command of Admiral Larsen, the AEGIS system which could now control all of the standard anti-aircraft missiles on the various ships as well as the newer SUBT CIWS systems, was turned on to full-automatic, free-fire mode ... or "God" mode as it was known in the fleet. As the missiles screamed in at low level and as the Killer Whales thundered towards their targets from beneath the surface, the AEGIS system began to methodically pick off missiles and Killer Whales.

The robotic like firings of the SUBT CIWS began to take effect on the advancing sub surface weapons while entire magazines of vertical launch cells were emptied at oncoming missiles. First one, then two, three, four, and five Killer Whales were destroyed with deadly precision and with telling, tremendous, geyser-like detonations that raised tons of water into the air around and through the inner circle. At the same time, first a Spruance class destroyer and then an Aegis cruiser were impacted by Chinese sub-surface weapons, breaking both of their backs and dooming both ships.

The Aegis cruiser, having just emptied more than half of its AAW missiles at approaching cruise missiles, was much more top-heavy than the Spruance destroyer. Its ends severed cleanly and they both folded high into the air and then slipped beneath the waves in a matter of only fifty seconds. Over 300 sailors were lost. The Spruance destroyer did not break entirely apart but it settled into the water and took twenty-five minutes to sink with a loss of 125 personnel.

With six Aegis destroyers and two remaining Aegis cruisers, the American task force still had over 900 missiles to fire at the approaching Chinese cruise missiles, not to mention the total of 64 Sea Sparrow and 128 RAM missiles on the carriers. Nonetheless, the Russian engineers that had designed the Yahkont and Sunburn missiles, and the Chinese developers who had license built them and improved them, had built every conceivable bit of technology into them to avoid the capabilities of the American Aegis system. From low level, supersonic flight, to the latest ECM technology to high speed "jinks" in their flight pattern as the approached the American ships, these missiles were sophisticated and hard to hit and were designed specifically to penetrate Aegis defenses and hit American carriers. And they were designed well.

Still, the overwhelming number of anti-aircraft missiles the U.S. warships were able to launch, and the fact that the Americans had "bunched" their ships fairly close together for this engagement, told on the outcome. Only twelve of eighty missiles got through the Aegis ring. Seven of these were downed by a combination of Phalanx CIWS and RAM missile systems on the targeted ships. Five missiles did impact on U.S. ships in the heat of the battle. Another Halsey FFG was hit and went dead in the water, smoke pouring from a large rent right at the waterline amidships that killed thirty-three. The single Block IIA Burke Destroyer in the formation was hit by two missiles above the water line rendering its bridge a mass of tangled, smoldering and ruined steel and its helicopter hanger blown into a worthless pile of fiercely burning wreckage. Ninety-five more personnel were killed.

The last two missiles penetrated the inner ring and impacted on the U.S.S. Theodore Roosevelt. One missile punching a hole in the side of the big carrier just forward of and below the starboard, forward elevator and the other penetrating the flight deck and exploding in the hangar spaces toward the aft portion of the ship. Smoke billowed out of the penetrations as secondary explosions went off,

particularly in the hangar spaces where several aircraft were being worked on. Large fire containment doors already in place as a result of the Zebra condition contained the fires in the hangar and the carrier continued on, losing no headway but having to shut down all air operations. The explosions and resulting fires snuffed out the lives of over two hundred American sailors.

As this was happening, the last seven LRASD weapons targeting escorts were destroyed and the capital ships inside of the ring began to deal with the twenty-four devices rising from the deep. The sixteen available SUBT CIWS turrets available on the two carriers and the two destroyers performed perfectly. Very quickly, sixteen of the twenty-four weapons were destroyed without causing any damage to any of the vessels. But eight weapons barreled on. Four of these were destroyed as they targeted the Washington and the Roosevelt. One of those targeting the Roosevelt was destroyed a mere one hundred feet short of the stern of the vessel. The resulting explosion did not penetrate the thick steel underneath the ship, but it did buckle several of the large, lower plates on the carrier, and warped one of her propeller shafts. She slowed significantly as a result.

Three more devices were destroyed by the U.S.S. Bataan and its "goal keeper" as they rose in a terminal attack phase against the big Amphibious ship turned Sea Control Carrier. Significant damage was reported as the last weapon, knocked off course by the detonation of the two in front of it, veered off course and actually broached the surface of the water seventy-five feet off the starboard side of the ship and exploded there. The blast killed ten men on deck and caused a secondary explosion in the hangar spaces through the elevator opening on that side. That fire burned for over an hour, destroying three F-35C aircraft and two helicopters and killing twenty personnel.

The very last device came up beneath the already damaged Wasp. Despite all efforts, this device was not intercepted and punched right through the stern docking well and exploded there. The aft portion of the hangar deck was destroyed and the aft flight deck was actually lifted and broken by the force of the explosion. Luckily, because the majority of the force of the explosion was expended in the already open and floodable docking well, the ship was in no immediate danger of sinking. But large fires burned out of control and there was a significant loss of life, over 400 all told.

**June 23, 14:00 local time**  
**CIC, U.S.S. George Washington**  
**100 miles West of Midway Atoll**

The attack was over. No more incoming enemy devices. Time to count the cost and move on. "Time to *Charlie Mike* as the grunts say," thought Admiral Larsen as he rolled over in his mind the reports that were still pouring in.

The United States Navy had lost three escort ships, one of them a very critical Aegis cruiser. They had suffered severe damage to a Sea Control carrier another frigate and an Aegis destroyer, and suffered moderate damage to the Theodore Roosevelt. Significant losses to be sure, but far removed from the horrendous catastrophes that such large Killer Whale attacks had produced in the past.

With over 1350 personnel known killed at the present time, the positive aspects of the engagement were hard to see at the moment for most individuals, but Admiral Larsen was one who grasped them immediately, and saw that his ability to strike back had not been significantly compromised. He still had two super carriers that would be capable of launching full strike packages within the hour, he still had several destroyers and two cruisers capable of launching major cruise missile attacks and he had an island full of aircraft capable of attacking the Chinese as well.

Of great import was another recent development. During the battle, one of the Global Surveyor surveillance aircraft had located the Chinese fleet and communicated its exact position back to American forces on Midway and here in the waters west of the island. It was still shadowing the force and had not been detected. The Admiral was anxious to take advantage of that information.

He had already ordered a large strike at sea package to be prepared on board both the George Washington and the Roosevelt and he ordered those strike packages to be launched as soon as possible. In addition, his staff had coordinated with the Air Fore commander on Midway and a large strike force had already launched from the island. Over 200 American aircraft were going to be visiting the Chinese and they would be accompanied by a cruise missile strike from his ships that would number close to two hundred missiles as well.

"The Chinese have no idea what they have created here today with the losses they have inflicted on us," thought the Admiral as he monitored the preparation of the strike.

"But they're going to find out, they are surely going to find out."

**June 23, 15:52 local time**  
**Admiral's Cabin, PLAN Sun Tsu**  
**500 miles West Southwest of Midway Atoll**

Yao Hsu read the reports on his computer screen as he took a few moments to wash his face and freshen up. He had been up for over thirty-six hours straight and was very tired. He hoped to be able to catch a few hours sleep now as surveillance revealed to them the damage they had inflicted on the Americans and as they prepared for their next attack.

Over the last hour, four aircraft had attempted to penetrate the American Task Force defenses which had turned to the northeast trailing heavy smoke. Although none of those aircraft had gotten near enough to positively identify the remaining American ships and thus discover their current disposition and capabilities, the Admiral was convinced from the digital images he had seen that his attack had damaged them severely. He believed this because of the number of LRASD weapons he had been able to maneuver close enough to attack them, and because of the amount of smoke they were trailing and that still hung in the air at the site of the attack.

Nonetheless, that the Americans were still capable of continuing operations was clear due to the fact that none of his surveillance aircraft had been able to get close enough to make a positive count. The Americans still had far too many patrol and defensive aircraft in the air. Three of his surveillance aircraft would not be returning. This left enough doubt in Yao's mind to keep him very wary. He would not underestimate the Americans...except that he already had.

With his UNREP group approaching, Hsu had given orders much earlier in the day to split his forces and send one group after the remaining American vessels and have the larger group now focus on the island itself. He was in the group that would track down and kill the remaining American naval vessels. He was bringing the Sun Tsu, three of the Beijing Class carriers, four Tactical Assault ships, six destroyers and eight frigates with him. The other large deck carrier, the Zenim, and the other two Beijing class carriers would proceed on with the bulk of the fleet including the rest of the Tactical Assault ships, the escorts, the many Amphibious ships and the provisioning vessels towards a major assault on Midway Atoll tomorrow morning.

The Admiral hoped to catch the American vessels before that, perhaps late today if things went as he hoped. He had a large CAP consisting of over thirty SU-33 aircraft up at all times, his LRASD devices had been reloaded on the decks of each ship and he knew where his enemy was. He was ready to track them down and eliminate them. The strike packages were being prepared on all four carriers and as soon as it was complete he would order the launch. In the mean time, he was hoping to get some sleep.

It was a hope the Admiral would not realize.

**June 23, 15:58 local time**

**Admiral's Cabin, PLAN Sun Tsu**

**500 miles West Southwest of Midway Atoll**

Admiral Hsu had no sooner closed his eyes and fallen into a deep sleep than the electronic buzzer went off next to his bed and the simulated klaxon sound began sounding throughout the ship calling the personnel to battle stations.

The Admiral jerked up in his bunk to a sitting position, grabbed the hand set and spoke.

"This is Admiral Yao, what is it?"

His chief of staff immediately answered.

"Admiral, I am on the bridge. One of our CAP aircraft just shot down one of the American high-flying, prop driven surveillance aircraft twenty-three miles to our northwest. We are also detecting many approaching aircraft and missiles.

"The Captain has ordered the entire fleet to the highest threat condition and asks if you will please come to the bridge immediately."

As the Admiral rapidly got up and made his way towards the bridge, American aircraft and missiles rapidly made their way towards his formation.

The thirty SU-33 aircraft that were flying a formidable CAP for the Chinese task force were met by a joint command of over fifty American air superiority fighters, F-18E and F-15C aircraft, loaded with AMRAAM and AIM-9X missiles. As a huge dogfight developed, another one hundred and fifty American aircraft approached and began launching missiles from altitudes between seven thousand and fifteen thousand feet. Far below them, nearly two hundred ship and air-launched Tomahawk cruise missiles approached on the deck, a mere fifty feet above the water.

The first missiles launched by the aircraft were the American HARM, high speed, anti-radar missiles. These approached at speeds in excess of Mach-2 and began impacting before the Admiral ever reached the bridge. Although the impacts were not huge explosions, the Admiral could still feel the four impacts that hit his flagship... and he knew full well what those impacts meant.

"Report," he ordered as he stepped onto the bridge.

The Captain of the Sun Tsu, who had vehemently disagreed with the Admiral's decision to split the force earlier in the day, and who was just preparing to make his way to the Combat Information Center on the ship, indicated that the duty officer should deliver the report to the Admiral.

"Sir, the Americans are approaching in force. Our CAP is engaging a much larger contingent of American aircraft and they are currently involved in a major dogfight well to our east.

"More American attack aircraft have launched high speed missiles at us. Over 100 missiles were launched and we successfully downed fifty-eight of them. The other forty-two have impacted our vessels and severely hampered our radar acquisition and guidance. We have reverted to back-up

systems, but another eighty-five American missiles were just launched. These are slower, cruise missiles.”

The duty officer stopped for just a moment and listened to the earphone lodged in his ear.

“Hold one moment Admiral,” he said, and then continued.

“Sir, we are now picking up many more missiles, approaching at very low levels twenty-five miles to our southeast. They appear to be more American cruise missiles. The count is now up to over ninety in that group.”

The Admiral took all of this in and knew that they were in desperate trouble. He glanced over at the Captain and saw the accusatory fire burning in his eyes. He noted that something would have to be done about this man's clear impertinence after the engagement, but it would clearly have to wait.

“Captain, accompany me to the Combat Information Center where we will wage this battle.”

### **June 23, 16:03 local time**

#### **Combat Information Center. PLAN Sun Tsu 500 miles West Southwest of Midway Atoll**

Admiral Yao Hsu and the Captain arrived in the Combat Information Center just in time to see the wave of bright green “Vs” on the main board begin impacting the escort vessels in their task force. Two large group of vampires, as the enemy missiles were universally known, were spread out on fronts over two miles wide and several missiles deep and they were now entering the formation. All told, over two hundred and fifty cruise missiles had been launched at the Chinese task force.

Chinese anti-air missile defenses, severely hampered by the earlier anti-radar missile attack and by the heavy jamming coming from no less than four E/A-18 Growler aircraft accompanying the American strike, were able to account for only thirty-five of the attacking cruise missiles. This left over two hundred and twenty missiles approaching the close in weapons systems of the Chinese task force. It was a number that completely saturated the Chinese defenses.

Now, survival for the various Chinese ships depended entirely on the number of missiles targeting each vessel. There were eight capitol ships, six large destroyers and eight frigates in the formation. The Sun Tsu was targeted by over forty cruise missiles. Two of the Beijing class carriers were targeted by twenty-five missiles each. Some how the third Beijing class carrier was targeted by only eight missiles. Each of the Tactical Assault ships were targeted by twenty-three, nineteen, twenty-one and six missiles respectively. A total of 167 missiles targeting the capitol ships. Each of the destroyers were targeted by no less than eight missiles and each frigate had between two and six missiles targeting them.

The results were catastrophic for the Chinese task force.

Admiral Yao Hsu and the Captain died together in the Combat Information Center of the Sun Tsu. After three jolting hits that almost knocked them off their feet, the Captain glared angrily at the Admiral right up until the end when one of the Tomahawk missiles penetrated directly into those spaces and exploded, killing every man there. In all, twenty-seven missiles impacted the Sun Tsu, setting off many secondary explosions above and below decks as the weapons on the strike package that was being prepared were set off. The Sun Tsu was left a wrecked, fiercely burning, smoking and holed hulk that would sink within thirty minutes of the last impact with tremendous loss of life.

In the end, when the American aircraft turned away, all of the Chinese ships had been hit and many were burning and settling in the water. One of the Beijing carriers was relatively unharmed and continued to recover surviving Chinese aircraft and launch new SU-33s to maintain some vigil over the ruined task force.

That carrier, one of the Tactical Assault vessels, two destroyers and three frigates were the only vessels that were capable of sailing away from the scene of the massacre. Those ships began making their best speed to the west, seeking out cloud cover, leaving thousands of Chinese sailors in the water to fend for themselves. Three Chinese carriers, three large Tactical Assault ships, six destroyers and five frigates would sink before the sun set, taking over 20,000 Chinese sailors with them.

### **June 24, 06:45 local time**

#### **Midway Atoll, Defensive Perimeter 7<sup>th</sup> Marine Division, Sand Island**

Leon sat in his concrete reinforced and armored position on Sand Island looking out to sea.

He hoped he wouldn't see anything untoward out there. After his experiences on Diego Garcia, seeing enemy ships out there on the horizon near an island he was defending was something he hoped never to witness again. He knew what it would mean. It would mean that his own naval forces and air forces had been driven from the area and he certainly didn't want that to happen.

And so far, here on Midway Atoll, it hadn't.

But today was another day and they had been told to expect imminent enemy action. So far those predictions had been right on the money. Already this morning one wave of Chinese aircraft had broken through American air defenses and bombed the runway and some of the storage and repair installations near the air field. Dark smoke was still rising from over that way.

One flight of those sleek, camouflage gray enemy aircraft had come in just over tree top level and at high speed, right over Leon's position. He and his security personnel and a number of the other Marines with them had stepped out of their emplacement and opened fire. From off to his left, a stinger-missile team had launched their missile and brought one of the aircraft down. Unfortunately, that aircraft had gone into a flat spin after being hit by the missile and had crashed into a company of Marines in an adjoining position, killing fifteen good soldiers and horribly burning eight more.

Now, they had just been warned that another missile attack was coming in and Leon hunkered down to prepare for the impacts. When they came, it was much worse than the day before when he had been much safer in the bomb shelter. The noise, the overpressure and the jolting were all orders of magnitude greater. One near miss dug a hole ten feet deep into the ground one hundred feet from Leon's position and showered their position with dirt, debris and worse. The position over there, with five more good Marines in it, not greatly different from Leon's position, had simply vanished from the face of the earth except for the smoldering hole, the dirt, the debris and the coppery smelling pieces of flesh that came raining down.

After the barrage ended, the Captain came around and spoke to each position in hushed tones.

"Okay, men, stay hunkered down.

"The enemy is out there. G2 says that they are making a run for the island and that they have massive numbers of transports full of battle hardened troops. Our fly boys and our navy boys are meeting them now. If they get past them, it'll be our turn.

"Stay on your toes . . . stay ready!"

As the sun climbed higher, Leon looked again out to sea. This time, way off to the southwest, low on the horizon, he could now see smoke . . . and lots of it, where there had been none before. He could not see the masts or the silhouettes of the ships, but he knew they were out there, and a lot of them. There was a big battle going on out there away over the horizon, probably more than fifty miles away. He felt a chill go up and down his spine. If the airfield had been sufficiently damaged and if the Navy was taking a beating, he might be fighting Chinese soldiers right here on Midway very soon.

But the ships never came in view. The smoke low to the horizon increased, hung there for about three hours and then slowly dissipated. Before it did, there had been one more, much lighter missile barrage which caused them all to keep their heads down for a good fifteen or twenty minutes. After that . . . nothing. No more Chinese aircraft penetrated to the island or were seen.

The Marine 7<sup>th</sup> Division didn't know it at the time, but by noon of June 24th, the second battle for Midway Atoll was over and it ended with the same outcome as the first one in World War II.

The larger Chinese task force had made a run for the island, a disastrous run. No one knew why the Chinese task force commander had ordered the assault in the face of the catastrophic losses associated with Admiral Yao Hsu's group the day before, but he had. It would later be shown that he had received confirmation of Hsu's losses and that he must have known that the American naval task force had not been seriously damaged by Chinese attacks. But he ordered the assault on Midway anyway. For whatever reason, when it was all over, two more Beijing class carriers were sunk along with five large transports full of Chinese troops, two Tactical Assault ships, four supply ships, eight destroyers and twelve frigates. A horrendous 58,000 Chinese personnel were lost at sea.

One of the famous quotes that would forever be attached to the second battle of Midway was made by an American naval aviator as he returned to the U.S.S. George Washington and was asked by his air group commander for a battle assessment. He had simply responded.

"It was like shooting bobbing apples floating all alone in a tub."

For the Americans, there had also been more losses.

In the fighting on the 24<sup>th</sup> another Frigate and destroyer were sunk by loitering Killer Whale devices whose path that SAG crossed. Chinese aircraft not only wreaked some havoc on the island and its airfield, they also caught several transports on the far side of the island as they were making their way toward Midway with provisions. Defended by only one destroyer and one frigate, the Chinese focused on the transports and sunk two of them, along with the armor, provisions and other equipment they carried.

Then, after the bulk of the fighting was completed and the remaining Chinese forces had withdrawn, very early on the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup>, while fire fighting crews and repair crews continued to work feverishly on the U.S.S. Wasp, tragedy struck. At 03:21 a tremendous explosion rocked the ship. Whether it came from some internal source to the Wasp or as a result of undetected enemy action was never known. Within five minutes it was clear to the Captain of the ship what had to be done. He ordered "Abandon Ship" and the remaining personnel quickly made their way into life rafts or onto the waiting frigate and destroyer that were standing by to assist. At 05:45 the Wasp sunk and another three hundred personnel went down with her.



**June 26, 02:12 local time**

**Rendezvous Point Xia**

**1780 Kilometers Northwest of Midway Atoll**

The ships rendezvoused in the dark, quietly and with precision, despite events of the last few days. The remainder of Admiral Yao Hsu's task force and the remainder of the larger force that attacked the island, when combined, was still a potent group. One large Mao class carrier, two Beijing class carriers, six Amphibious Assault ships, two Tactical assault ships six destroyers, ten frigates and a multitude of smaller transports and supply ships had survived the mauling around Midway.

After several hours of running together while the commanders held a serious and direct conference, the force began to split apart again. Both Beijing class carriers, all five of the Amphibious Assault ships, both Tactical Assault ships, most of the other transports and supply ships, three destroyers and four frigates formed up and turned to the north.

The Zenim and the other vessels turned back to the west.

As Kao Pham stood on the deck of the PLAN Tactical Assault ship, Chongqing, and watched the large carrier, Zenim, and its escorts depart, a sense of the magnitude of the conflict he was involved with struck him. He had been so proud. Despite the losses he had witnessed before Midway, he had felt that the PLAN was invincible, that although there might be minor set backs and losses, that nothing, not even the vaunted U.S. Navy could stand in their way.

Now he knew better.

Off of Midway, in the final run in towards the island and almost within site of their objective, Koa Pham had witnessed death and destruction on a scale he had never conceived.

"So many bodies in the water," he thought as he took a final drag of the cigarette that he had been smoking while he thought about these things.

"Our ship had simply pushed them aside or crushed over them as we retreated, both the living and the dead," he concluded as he flicked the cigarette butt over the side.

Now, as he sped north with this smaller, but still powerful task force of the Chinese Navy, spirits began to lift. Once under way there had been a general announcement that they were going to assist in what would always be remembered as one of the greatest achievements of the People's Republic. They had been told that the action they had just been involved with was a grand feint, a grand deception and that the principle goals were in fact being achieved and that they were now to be a part of that.

This lifted Kao's spirits greatly, but as he made his way back inside the ship and towards his birth, he couldn't help but wonder what type of plans required a deception on such a horrific and terrible scale and just how many such "victories" his nation could sustain.

**June 26, 09:45 local time**

**PLA Northern Group, 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Armies**

**Field Command Headquarters, Nome, Alaska**

General Wu Tsing read the "eyes only" dispatch with mixed feelings.

Things off of Midway had gone badly. So many ships and personnel lost in such a short time. Admiral Yao Hsu dead, lost with his flagship. The materiel objective of that feint wholly unachieved. The worst single day defeat that the People's Republic of China had suffered in its entire history.

The Admiral had to agree with the assessment of his high command. Despite the losses, despite the numbers of casualties, the operation had been a success. The occupation of Midway Atoll had only been a secondary, though highly desirable, goal. The primary goal had been to distract the Americans so that this operation could make a successful beginning. In that, the attack on Midway had achieved stunning success.

"And now, with the additional naval resources coming this way and the additional troops and transports, that success will only be enhanced," thought the General as he once again reviewed those specific new components of his command.

The entire Seward Peninsula had been secured. Over 150,000 Chinese troops were now ashore here in Alaska and more were landing every hour. Significant number of ballistic missile launchers were arriving too, with which the General continued to harass and plague the U.S. airfields outside of Fairbanks and Anchorage. The buildup was going better than expected, he was ahead of schedule.

The remaining population in Nome and other small towns had been pacified. In some instances this had taken extreme measures as Chinese troops broke into every house and relieved the citizens of every firearm the soldiers could find. Many Americans would only give those firearms up to the occupiers after they had been killed and their cold fingers pried from around the stocks and trigger guards. The General and his advisors marveled at this because it occurred amongst all age groups, genders and ethnicities here, where they died quickly against overwhelming odds. Just the same, the population was relatively small and the Chinese occupation forces were growing rapidly.

Except for a few citizens in the towns and outside of some continued minor sniping from local hunters and trappers, and by a few of what the General had learned were called "Home Guard" units, there was no organized American resistance. That was true all the way over to the Yukon River

where Chinese forces were already making their initial advances to the east. He had established his furthest advance in strength at Kokrines along the Yukon River and had positioned an observation post, portable radar and anti-aircraft emplacement on Wolf mountain overlooking the entire Yukon Valley there. His engineers had indicated that a good spot for their first major inland airfield would be at Ruby, a few miles to the west of Kokrines.

The U.S. Air Force was beginning to push back as more of their F-15 and F-16 aircraft arrived from the lower American states and pushed at Tsing's combat patrols near the Kuskowim Mountains between Nome and Anchorage. But, with the capture of the small, undefended U.S. airfield at Cape Romanzov and the stationing of J-10 and SU-35 aircraft there ... and with the airfield extension here in Nome estimated to be completed by the 29<sup>th</sup> ... the General was certain he would be able to contain the American air force. Then, he could extend his own patrols by basing an entire wing of his best fighters right here in Nome along with AEW and refueling aircraft, and then later in Ruby. After that, he would push those American aircraft all the way back to Anchorage and Fairbanks ... and beyond.

"And that goal will be helped significantly by those two Beijing class carriers and their air wings when they arrive," thought the General.

"Once they get here, we'll station one here off of Nome and another further up the Norton Sound near Koyuk. That should allow them to be mutually supportive and that should further secure our airspace both here over Nome and out over the Yukon," the General concluded, quite pleased with himself and the current status of the overall operation.

The more General Wu Tsing thought about it, the more positive he became about his prospects. Alaska and Canada lay open before him. He felt that some of his enemy's most strategic resources at Prudhoe Bay and in the ANWR were easily within his grasp. The battle for Midway Atoll was now over, having accomplished its strategic objectives despite the losses ... and the battle for Alaska was just beginning, and from the General's perspective, it had gotten off to a most excellent start.

## Chapter 28

*"... fire on the Red Coats from behind every bush, from behind every tree." Colonial Militia Officer*

### July - September in Alaska

After the massive viewing on the Internet of the attack on Nome, Alaska by the Red Chinese, President Weisskopf's sobering address to the nation the afternoon of June 23<sup>rd</sup> galvanized an already sobered and fully mobilized America. That afternoon was the highest single day in history for signups for the Armed services, and the next day broke the record again. The United States, that already had over six million active duty personnel in the armed forces engaged in World War III, found those numbers growing rapidly. By the end of July, an additional million Americans had signed up for military service. Another two million older or otherwise not qualified individuals joined Home Guard Units all over the nation, bringing the Home Guard numbers up to almost ten million individuals.

Imminent American military plans in the Caribbean were put on hold as the forces that were being gathered for that operation, were rushed north to the defense of Alaska. In addition, as quickly as they could become trained and ready, the new combat enlistees were formed up, mixed in with seasoned NCOs and officers, and also sent north. Most of these new forces were focused in the Anchorage area to prepare the main defenses, although a full division, along with Canadian reserves were targeted at reinforcing the ANWR and Prudhoe Bay.

But it takes time to train, equip and supply sufficient forces to hold back the size of invasion the Chinese had unleashed, and time was something that Fairbanks, Alaska, Prudhoe Bay and the ANWR did not have. General Tsing pushed relentlessly forward along the Yukon River. By the first of July, his naval assets off of Nome had grown considerably and consisted of no less than four Beijing class carriers and many destroyer and frigate escorts. The airfield in Nome was completed to his satisfaction and hundreds of aircraft began ferrying into Alaska to contend with the growing numbers of American aircraft at Elmendorf and Eielson Air Force Bases. These former air bases were under relentless ballistic missile attack from Red Chinese launchers that were also being brought into Alaska and from the Tactical Assault Ships off of the Alaskan coast.

On July 10<sup>th</sup> three Aegis Burke destroyers and one Aegis cruiser arrived off of Anchorage and added significantly to the air defense of Elmendorf. From that day forward, air operations began to improve significantly around Anchorage and the numbers of American aircraft on that airfield began to grow steadily without the threat of constant destruction. But several hundred miles to the north, at Fairbanks, it was a different story.

Efforts to build a land based set of Aegis cells there were conducted in vain. The rain of Chinese ballistic missiles continued unabated and destroyed construction and repair efforts before they could make the progress necessary. Two Patriot missile batteries did help somewhat, but as Chinese forces in great strength continued to progress up the Yukon, and then turned southeast on the Tanama River towards Fairbanks, it became apparent that a general evacuation of Eielson Air Force Base and of Fairbanks itself would be required, or all of the men and materiel there would either be captured or destroyed in place. On July 21<sup>st</sup> the general evacuation order was given and a hurried evacuation occurred just in advance of the Chinese forces. On July 25<sup>th</sup>, Fairbanks, Alaska fell to the Chinese.

While this was happening, United States Army forces in the ANWR, at Prudhoe Bay and over towards Barrow, Alaska had been reinforced by air, but that air route now had to extend north through Canada and approach these areas from the east. By the time Fairbanks fell, the Chinese had completed a substantial airfield at Ruby, Alaska and their coverage to the north was sufficient to cut off any further reinforcements. In addition, their forces continued to advance further up the Yukon River to the vicinity of Stevens Village, Alaska where a vigorous defense by a mixture of Regular Army units, the Alaska National Guard and several thousand citizens organized into militia units called up by the Governor, temporarily halted the Chinese advance.

At that point, in late July, the three divisions that the Americans fielded along and to the north of the Brooks Range and along the pipeline at defensible positions, was faced by over twenty divisions of Chinese troops now pouring into the north from their staging areas in eastern Siberia. With strong airfields at Nome, Ruby, Cape Romanzof and Cape Newenham (which like Cape Romanzof was captured intact in June), the Chinese air force in the area exerted air superiority over an area ranging from Fairbanks, north to Prudhoe Bay and all points west of that line back to the Bering Straits.

Conditions for American citizens in these occupied areas became unbearable. To the surprise of General Tsing, only about 25% of the population was pacified, giving up and trying to maintain some semblance of life in the occupied territory. They were treated, for all intent and purposes, like indentured servants at best, but more commonly like chattel. What surprised the General was the resistance of the rest of the people. Initially he had thought he had suppressed them with brutal examples...what he now found was that many had fallen back into wilderness and outlying areas where they grouped together and began conducting insurgent operations.

Most of them were well armed and fought with their personal firearms, against all odds and to the death. Although the Chinese knew that Americans living in Alaska tended to be much more independent and self sustaining, this was not what he had personally envisioned or been briefed to expect. Apparently the Americans inhabiting Alaska were much more hearty and independent than the Chinese intelligence had been willing to give them credit for. Logistics issues to the front became an issue despite the overwhelming numbers of Chinese troops. Many truck drivers and supply depot maintainers fell victim to what the Americans called the Rule of 308 and Proposition 223. Although his forces ruthlessly hunted down, killed and made an example of any Americans sniping or attacking his forces, and although the General gave a general order allowing his commanders to use their own discretion in reprisals against the local population, rather than decreasing, the incidents increased with more and more American resistance fighters joining the small insurgent groups.

One of the most notorious of the resistance groups was headed by a figure that became known to Chinese intelligence as the Orka, a woman associated with the initial ad-hoc transmission of their assault on Nome to the American populace over the internet. This group's efforts had already taken on an almost legendary nature in the weeks after the invasion. Chinese forces were especially anxious to capture or kill and make an example of this particular resistance leader.

Several major incidents involving full convoys of Chinese supply materiel and entire patrols of Chinese troops were mauled in hit and run attacks by the Orka. The General's intelligence indicated that the group numbered no more than twenty individuals, that it operated in a complete "live off of the land" mode and that it was extremely familiar with the terrain from the Seward Peninsula all the way along the northern side of the Yukon River to Wolf Mountain. Apparently most of its members were what were termed "Native American Eskimos", people the Chinese had believed might even welcome them. In an effort to promote such an open-arms attitude, the Chinese were advertising reparations and significant bonuses to any Native American if they would turn on what the Chinese were calling their long-time "oppressors", the government of the United States. Apparently that ploy was not working according to intelligence projections either. In fact, the General's radar and anti-aircraft facilities on Wolf mountain had to be significantly reinforced after an incident where the radar and anti-air battery were crippled by one of the attacks from this group.

Despite this, the hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops continued in their advance. On August 4<sup>th</sup>, the Chinese broke through American defenses at a strategic pass near Ambler, Alaska and poured onto the Tundra north of the Brooks Range. The fall of Barrow, Alaska was imminent and Prudhoe Bay was sure to follow. America's Arctic Oil Reserves were now clearly about to fall into the hands of the Chinese, who at this point began going to great lengths to avoid their destruction.

In what later became one of the most controversial decisions of the Weisskopf administration during the war, it was decided on August 13<sup>th</sup> American forces would destroy American oil production facilities at Prudhoe Bay, in the ANWR, and at strategic pumping stations along the pipeline to the south of the Brooks Range to keep them from falling into the hands of the enemy. The most controversial part of the decision was the manner in which it was carried out.

In an apparent route, the American forces made a hasty and quick withdrawal from all defensive lines on the evening of August 15<sup>th</sup> and throughout the 16<sup>th</sup>. They retreated right past the oil production and storage facilities and left many of them completely intact. Although cautious at first, the Chinese rushed into the areas on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> and took control of them and began checking for sabotage while assessing requirement to put the facilities into production. To their surprise, they found the facilities largely intact and by the 19<sup>th</sup> had ferried more and more personnel, many of them very highly trained technicians, into the area to defend and then begin operating them.

Then, on the afternoon of August 20<sup>th</sup>, at four critical drilling and extraction sites around Prudhoe Bay, at eight similar places in the ANWR, and at six pumping stations along the pipeline, small, buried nuclear demolition devices were detonated by the Americans. The resulting explosions, completely destroyed all of the facilities, including the equipment, the drill holes themselves, the pipeline operations and well over ten thousand Chinese personnel in all.

This was the first military use of nuclear weapons in World War III... it would not be the last.

The Chinese upper command critically analyzed General Tsing's instant request for a nuclear counter strike on Anchorage and rejected it. Getting the oil for themselves would have been a significant bonus, but the principle goal for the operation was to occupy those Alaskan areas and stop the oil production for America and then keep it out of their hands. Those goals had been accomplished, and now enhanced by the American's own sabotage. General Tsing's request was denied and the Chinese troops were ordered to continue towards the goal of taking Anchorage and extending their control towards Dawson in the Klondike Region of the Yukon in Canada. By September 1<sup>st</sup>, the Chinese were turning south in an effort to completely eject U.S. forces from Alaska.

### **July - September in the lower 48 United States**

News of first the fall of Fairbanks and then the fall of Prudhoe Bay and the ANWR oil field hit Americans hard. The President announced to the nation what he had done on August 21<sup>st</sup> regarding the American sabotage and destruction of their own oil fields with demolition nuclear devices. The

opposition party, pushing for their own Presidential aspirations in November and having won their primaries with the full support of their party apparatus made a tremendous issue of this event.

Curt Johnson, and the former Senator, Susan Crater, made all of the talk show circuits. They attacked President Weisskopf on his decision to unilaterally utilize nuclear demolition packages to destroy the oil facilities and the pipeline after a hasty retreat. They indicated that this fit a pattern of escalation in the warfare that had already cost American greatly, citing how the initial escalation in space by the United States had, in their view, led to the loss of America's satellite advantage and the horrific tragedy with the Space Station impact in San Paulo, Brazil. They also attacked the Weisskopf administration on its recent arrest, incarceration and charges filed against David Krenshaw, the CNN executive who had given so much support to their own campaign. They demanded that the administration stop hiding behind current "anti-terror" laws and reveal more fully the exact nature of the evidence against Krenshaw or release him from "detention". Their veiled claims that the arrest was politically motivated came through loud and clear in their appearances as they prepared for what they viewed to be a now serious challenge for the Presidency in the imminent elections of November.

In the face of this, President Weisskopf remained undeterred and unruffled. He had not campaigned at all for the primaries held during the Spring and Summer and had won them all overwhelmingly. No other GOP contender entered any race. It was a unique circumstance in American political history. In addition, the President's response to the allegations was simply to refer all questions to his Attorney General. Attorney General Hull, in his turn referred the reporters to the grand jury indictment and billing. His standard response to the media went like this,

*"David Krenshaw is being tried as an American citizen under various anti-terror and trading with enemy provision in our current law. He is not in "detention", he is being held over for trial, without bail and has been indicted by a Grand Jury. You all have copies of that indictment. The evidence will be presented at trial and made available to the press where the American public will see the massive, overwhelming evidence against this man, who had the American people's trust and abused it to his own, and to our enemy's ends at the cost of American lives. The government will seek the maximum penalty allowed by law in this case. Thank you."*

The trial for David Krenshaw was scheduled to be held in early October.

While all of these momentous events were transpiring, another, ultimately equally momentous set of events was also progressing. Dr. Joseph Trevor, assisted by his wife Elizabeth (after her return from visiting and comforting Cindy Simmons) and in conjunction with the work and findings of Dr. Sandra McPherson, had painstakingly reviewed the initial findings of the National Academy of Sciences. As Joseph had expected, that body was reluctant to run with their initial findings and had asked for more detailed analysis, while starting a detailed study of their own.

Joseph sensed a stalling tactic and was determined to not allow that to happen. During July and August, he took a leave of absence and worked with his wife and Sandra to put together an iron-clad proof of the procedures and methodologies that had led McPherson to the discovery of the Human Reasoning Structures in her fetal samples from Europe. As much as he detested it, he worked with her as she acquired more virtual samples and built a rock solid case for their findings. For her part, Dr. McPherson was driven to prove that these structures in fact proved that the human fetus was, at the very earliest stages of development, endowed with the ability to reason and therefore categorically must not be subjected to "termination" according to the current abortion laws.

The President became aware of the study in late July and was intrigued by it, as well as troubled by what the implications implied that his nation had done, under the color of law, for several decades. His Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, herself a strong pro-life advocate, had recognized immediately the implications of Dr. Trevor's and Dr. McPherson's work and had brought the matter to the President's attention. The President issued a policy statement instructing the executive branch to support the study and the effort to reach a meaningful and provable conclusion if at all possible.

Susan Crater was very vocal in her own opposition to the President's new policy statement upon hearing of it. Having benefited from a political career that rode the wave of all of the social issues, and her pro-abortion stance particularly, she was incensed by what she termed as "voodoo-science" and actively campaigned on the issue against the President. Curt Johnson, himself pro-life, but willing to compromise on the issue in certain areas to try and attain consensus, was not as active as his running mate on this issue, choosing instead focus his remarks on the national security issues.

Ultimately, the National Academy of Sciences re-examined the issue at the President's request in the third week of August. On August 29<sup>th</sup> a short, to the point but very well documented finding was published. It stated, unequivocally what was obvious from the their own data, and from that amassed by Doctors Trevor and McPherson. The human fetus, at a very early stage in its development, was capable of rudimentary reasoning and was therefore a human, endowed with the ability to perceive and be aware of its surroundings and react intelligently thereto. The triggering mechanism was conception and from that point it must be considered an individual.

This finding reverberated around the nation...and around the world. It was destined to radically alter the view of the fetus, and turn honest, compassionate and thinking people everywhere back to an earlier day, when common sense dictated that a fetus was in fact a living, human baby. In an

unprecedented announcement, the new Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Thomas Clarendon, announced on September 7<sup>th</sup> that after review, the Supreme Court of the United States would re-open and re-hear the famous 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling based on this new evidence.

With all of these momentous occurrences, every day life in the United States, supplying the needs of the war effort, ground on. Factories, shipyards, production facilities, Nuclear Power Plants, research parks, agriculture, forestry, mining, additional petroleum drilling and processing and all of the other necessary elements for continued viability of the United States in these harsh times continued to be built up and come online at a rate that astonished the world. All of the new factories, machinery and facilities were ultra-modern, extremely efficient and built, defended and operated with pride. Production levels, particularly in the energy sector, surpassed not only requirements as they existed before the invasion of Alaska, but quickly rose to compensate for those losses as well.

Department of Homeland Security Home Guard units operating at the county level had now been engrained into American society. The awful specter of terror attacks drove the American consciousness to embrace and whole heartedly support the defense they provided. Terror attacks, which had been common place earlier, now were dropping off at a significant rate. Much of America had become an armed camp, but it was also a polite camp and the overall crime rates around the entire nation were drastically reduced as well.

America's borders continued to be rigorously controlled. Immigration policy had been revitalized to define what legal immigration consisted of, what commitments and promises were required of would-be citizens, what time frames would be applied in a trial mode for them and what was expected of them once they became citizens. Education regarding the history and meaning of American liberty and self-sufficiency, the English language, oaths to the Constitution, no social leeching, and the qualities of thrift and hard work were re-enthroned as the guiding principles. Regardless of perceived hardship or other political status, the conditions governing these principles had to be satisfied or citizenship would be denied. A significant sub-set of the same guidelines applied to any visa applications outside of temporary, vacation visas, which then were only permitted for individuals from proven friendly nations and only after a significant background check in conjunction with the nation's security apparatus.

The population in the detention camps in various parts of the country was decreasing. As the individuals were processed, those coming from non-aggressor nations who did not meet the new standards for citizenship application or visa application, or who did not pass background checks, were returned to their homelands. Those who did meet the requirements and who passed the background checks were released into the new programs and went about their life.

Those individuals from aggressor nations were detained. If they were known belligerents, they were held in strict confinement under maximum security and prosecuted for their crimes. If they were not known belligerents, they were simply held over and put to work, to be held until the end of the conflict when they would be returned to their homelands.

By the middle of September, the number of those being detained had dropped from a high of over 630,000 the prior year, down to under 500,000. It was expected that the number would drop below by another hundred thousand by the middle the next year and continue to decline thereafter. Despite the objection and legal wrangling of some organizations, the vast majority of Americans approved of the measures and the they had been implemented. As a result, very few politicians were willing to oppose or contradict the immigration or detention programs for fear of their political life.

### **July - September in the Pacific**

The Chinese, the Indians and the GIR (through its member state in Indonesia) continued to consolidate their vast gains in the Pacific. Although resistance in Australia continued, it had reduced significantly. The reason for this was the same as it had been in Japan and the Philippines. The CAS and the GIR were importing large populations into the conquered nations and literally transforming them. Former owners of lands, housing, factories or shops were displaced by new Chinese, Indian or Indonesian owners. The former inhabitant could either work for the new owners for a pittance, or they could starve. Little or no mercy was shown to those who voiced opposition to this...or their families...and in these nations, different than what was being experienced in Alaska, the inhabitants had largely been disarmed by their own governments long before the enemy invaders ever set foot on their lands. Most people simply had no means for effectual resistance.

In this way, the possibility for large scale resistance was remote to begin with, and it faded with each passing month as the numbers of those who would resist with whatever they had, became a smaller and smaller portion of the whole living in the occupied lands. In Australia, the effect was telling as the conquering nations demonstrated a direct willingness to turn the entire continent into a vast *lebensraum* for their populations, splitting up the continent into three autonomous regions that were immediately recognized and accepted into the CAS.

Now, along a vast line, stretching from Australia and Tasmania northward to Wake Island and then on up to Alaska, the high tide of the CAS and GIR was upon the world. To the west of that line, complete control was exerted by the CAS and the GIR nations. The new factories of all of the Asian

Tigers coupled with the vast manufacturing capabilities of China, created a huge war machine that showed no signs of slowing down, despite the recent horrendous losses around the American island of Midway. The economic condition became self sustaining as the agricultural, energy, military and textile needs of each area were met by the whole.

In terms of military manufacturing, the production rates for new systems was exceeding the loss rate, with the exception of the brief spike associated with those tremendous losses off of Midway. The export business to the various nations within the CAS and to the member states of the GIR was huge as KS-3, anti-stealth, anti-satellite, LRASD, fighters, naval vessels and all manner of armored vehicles were sent in copious numbers to the various theaters of operation throughout the Pacific, in Asia, in the Mid East, in Africa, in Europe, in Central and South America and now in North America.

For their part, the allies, principally the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and the governments in exile of Taiwan, Japan and Australia sought to contain the burgeoning beast that their enemies had become. The buildup in the Pacific for this containment now focused on three areas where men and materiel were gathering in large numbers and where the full extent of allied efforts were applied in defending those build ups until they were strong enough to go on the offensive and counter attack. Those areas included Midway Atoll, New Zealand and in the Samoan Islands.

### **July - September in Africa and The Middle East**

Warfare in Africa, outside of that directly associated with the Middle East lines around Israel, was relegated to the Allied attempt to put pressure on those very same lines. The large Brazilian expeditionary force that had embarked from Nigeria with several allied African nations, continued to be bogged down in Chad. Allied reinforcement forces consisting of American, Canadian and some British troops, served mostly to maintain those lines, and halted the lost ground resulting from the joint GIR and Chinese counter attacks.

Northern Africa was firmly in the hands of the GIR. No further allied attempt, particularly out of southern Europe was made to open up a front on the north African coast. The allies simply had their hands too full in other areas and were going to have to win victories in those areas before they could turn their attention back to North Africa. This made maritime transport across the Mediterranean very hazardous as GIR aircraft patrolling out of Libya, Morocco and other points along the north African coast, constantly harassed the convoys with cruise missiles and the increasing numbers of LRASD systems being exported to them from China and India.

The Middle East was dominated by the GIR. The Muslim world had been united under the great Imam, Hasan Sayeed. The only area of the Middle East not under GIR control remained right around Israel from the Sinai Peninsula on the south past the Golan Heights and into Lebanon on the north. From the Mediterranean on the west to a line approximately twenty-five kilometers along and to the east of the Jordan River in portions of Jordan. That condition could not continue to hold indefinitely as both sides had continued to mass more and more men and materiel in the area and as clashes grew more frequent and more violent.

General Talabari was almost prepared to unleash his overall plan for the defeat of the state of Israel and their American and English protectors. He had gathered not only a sufficient force to attack the teeth of the allied technology, but also a tremendous reserve to throw in as a second wave once the allied high technology war shots were exhausted. The General was planning on an Allied counter attack into the teeth of that second wave once they thought they had decimated the initial attack. It was a high stakes gamble, a poker game where the ante and bets would be measured in mounds of human bodies and rivers of human blood. By September 1<sup>st</sup>, General Talabari was preparing to travel to Damascus for the final planning stages before the great attack.

The General had one stopover to make in Georgia to meet with the commander of occupation forces there and where he intended to meet with the newly promoted Colonel, Abduhl Selim, who had distinguished himself again over the last several months in fighting in the underbelly of Europe. Talabari's plan was to then bring Selim to Damascus with him. There the young Colonel would receive a command in the reserve force that would ultimately deliver the coup de grace to Israel. It would also allow the General to mentor the Colonel further up the chain of command and present him directly to the Imam after that victory as one of the trusted inner circle to help maintain the peace in the great possessions of the GIR after the conflict was won.

But the General's plan presupposed the abject defeat of the allies in the region who were preparing for the monumental confrontation themselves, with anything but defeat on their mind. Americans like Colonel Jess Simmons and General Olson worked feverishly with their Israeli, British and other allied counterparts to develop a defense and counterattack strategy that would allow them to fight their way out of the box they were enclosed in, and in so doing defeat the massive GIR and Chinese forces that were surrounding them.

There wasn't an easy answer. The allied commanders decided that head to head, they were outnumbered by more than a two to one margin, and that if they reserves the GIR was bringing up were factored into the equation, that the margin was more like three to one. They severely

underestimated the GIR and Chinese reserves that were being amassed. With those reserves, the margin was going to actually be closer to four to one.

At the start of September, the GIR forces were constantly harassing and probing the allied lines. The regimental, divisional and Army Group commanders were awaiting the arrival of General Talabari and his final orders to implement the great attack. But when the final battle broke out, as is often the case in war, it would not start according to the grand designs that either side was busily and painstakingly putting into place. It would start as a result of one of those quirks of the battlefield that neither side can predict, but that often brings both sides together at a time and a place not planned for by either side, but to which both sides must conform simply because they are left with no other choice.

### **July - September in Europe**

Europe was in turmoil. Millions of refugees were streaming north and west away from the large GIR army group that was making gains in both Romania and Serbia. The principle European powers had finally amassed a force of almost three million men in that portion of Europe and set up strong defenses along the Carpathian Mountains and the Transylvanian Alps in Romania, and along a line of the Danube, the Sava and the Bosna Rivers in Serbia. It was at these defenses that the GIR forces were finally slowed and stopped in September, after all of Bulgaria, Albania, and parts of Romania and Serbia had already fallen to the GIR.

Further north, and even more critical situation was developing. German, Polish, Finnish and Swedish troops who had come to the aide of Russia had been defeated in the Urals and pushed back towards Moscow by the larger Chinese and Indian forces that were now pouring out of Siberia and through the Ural Mountains towards Moscow. To the west of the Urals both Perm, and Ufa fell to the joint Chinese/Indian advance despite Russian making the second battlefield use nuclear weapons in the war to halt them outside of Perm. But the effort failed as most missiles were shot down and due to brilliant maneuvering by CAS forces which avoided allied strikes to large troop concentrations. Within six weeks, the next line of defenses at the confluence of the Volga and Karma Rivers also fell as over four million Chinese and two million Indian troops amassed for the push on Moscow. Those forces were about to be joined by over a million and a half troops under the GIR banner that were advancing steadily from the south. This was the GIR Army group that had been circumventing the Black Sea and then turned north when hostilities initiated with Russia. The French, Italian, Spanish and German forces attempting to halt their advance had been routed at Volograd and again at Saratov.

Now, a great GIR and CAS pincer consisting of over seven million men and their equipment was closing on Gorkiy. Twice more the Russians had attempted to use tactical nuclear missiles to halt the advance, but the new Chinese KS-3 ballistic missile defense had proven too effective. Of over twenty missiles fired, only two had penetrated the Chinese defenses and exploded. As mentioned earlier, one of these had been on the outskirts of Perm, near Lysva, just to the west of the Urals. In that attack, one Russian medium range nuclear missile out of a flight of eight that had been launched from the vicinity of Kirov, had avoided interception and exploded two thousand feet over the battlefield. In the resulting explosion, due to the maneuvering and disposition of CAS forces, only 15,000 Chinese troops had been killed as well as 2,000 Russian soldiers who were too close to their enemies. Tragically, an even greater death toll had been inflicted on the civilian population, citizens of the very nation that had fired the missile.

The other detonation had occurred just before the battle of Saratov, when another Russian missile had penetrated the enemy ABM defenses and detonated upon an advancing division of GIR troops. There, over 20,000 GIR troops had perished, opening up a gap in the attacking GIR formations. Before Russian and other European forces could take advantage of it, the GIR reserve forces had filled their gap and continued relentlessly on and taken Saratov.

To date, neither the Chinese or the GIR had retaliated with nuclear weapons of their own. In a conference held in the spring in Mashhad in the former Iran, and in anticipation of this very stage of their Russian offensive, Jien Zenim, Hasan Sayeed and KP Narayannen had discussed in great detail the conditions warranting nuclear release by their forces. They had decided not to respond in kind as long as their forces were advancing and not decimated by any tactical attack. They made this decision in order to prevent a full scale exchange with the Russians aimed at their own homelands, which would ultimately involve the United States, England and France as well, and in a bid to prevent playing to that overwhelming strength that the west had. Instead, they decided to continue to use their greatest advantage, and that was simply an overwhelming number of men at arms streaming into Europe and around the rest of the world out of China, India and the Islamic countries, protected by their KS-3 systems that were now being massed produced in both China and India.

As September began, Europe had gathered over five million men, more than half of them Russian, to the defense of Moscow. Many of these were the armies that had been falling back in front of the advancing enemy. Over three million more were the reserve forces that the allied nations had rushed to the area after Gorkiy fell. Included in the mix were over 75,000 Americans who were operating the various high tech equipment, aircraft, Aegis missile batteries, and strategic defense lines along with their allies.



The Russians leadership had lobbied the allies for, and won the appointment of General Andrei Nosik to be in charge of all allied ground force in the defense of the Russian capitol. His brilliant fall back defenses in Siberia, in the Urals and then at Gorkiy, where he had commanded vastly outnumbered forces against overwhelming enemy forces had won him the respect and confidence of his superiors, and particularly the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. The Russian president now wished he had listened to General Nosik's requests while he commanded the Russian security forces in Siberia, before hostilities began, instead of the tired old general's in the Kremlin who had been advising him. As a result of not doing that, he was now faced with the imminent destruction of his capitol, and perhaps his nation. President Putin had tried every means at his disposal, short of a complete, all-out nuclear attack on Beijing, New Delhi and Tehran. He knew what such an attack would mean, but he had already decided, that if he were fated to be remembered as the person who lost the entire Rodina, it would not occur without his enemies experiencing a similar loss

### **July - September in Central and South America**

The fighting in Argentina and Venezuela had once again ground down to slugfests between those nations and Brazil. Brazilian troops had advanced into the north central part of Argentina with their spearhead clearly pointing south at Buenos Aires. But the Argentine resistance had become firm along the Parana River near the cities of Santa Fe and Parana, and the advance had ground to a halt. More and more men and equipment from both nations were being thrown into the maw of that battle as counter attacks raged back and forth.

The Brazilians made overtures to Uruguay in an effort to open another front to threaten the Argentine capitol, but to no avail. Despite overtures from Brasilia and Washington, DC, the Uruguay government remained firm in its insistence on neutrality. By the end of August, the new Brazilian President, Henrietta Maldonado, was faced with the momentous decision of considering marching her armies through Uruguay without their permission.

Further north, in Venezuela, the Chinese were able to bring in an additional 65,000 men on transports that, with the aide of LRASD weaponry, had run the American attack submarine blockade the U.S. Navy was maintaining off the Columbian and Panamanian west coasts. Twelve large transports were sunk, costing the Chinese almost 20,000 of their reinforcements. But the cost had been extreme to the Americans as nine Los Angeles class attack submarines were lost in the exchange. Despite this, thirty five large transports and their escorts and support vessels made it through to deliver those 65,000 troops into Columbia, who then advanced rapidly into Venezuela along the coastal mountains and to the north into the southern portions of Panama being held by the CSAS and their Chinese allies.

Further north, the situation was not as negative for the allies. American forces, supported by their allies, continued to advance in Panama. Despite large Chinese, Panamanian, and Venezuelan counter attacks, by the end of August the American led forces had advanced to within thirty miles of the Canal Zone. The American government was intent on not only recapturing the canal, but upon making an extended area around it into a new Canal Zone that would be considered from thenceforth not only an American protectorate, but officially an American territory. There was no intent of ever forgetting the mistakes of the past that had led to such a dire strategic situation that so adversely impacted America's ability to re-supply or move its forces between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Realizing America's intent, the Chinese forces currently defending the canal had very specific orders for its sabotage and demolition if and when the American forces broke through. In an operational plan reminiscent of the American's own, special forces and special demolition charges had already been set in place. The Panamanian government, who considered themselves the closest of Chinese allies, did not have the slightest idea as to what lengths the Chinese were willing to go to ensure that the Americans could not benefit from a re-opened Panama Canal.

### **September 2, 13:35 WST**

#### **Control Facility**

#### **Joint Services Firing Range, Central Nevada**

Captain Percy Thiebolt reviewed the latest results of the test exercise he was in charge of conducting and analyzing. The results were positive and beyond his expectations. The last pass of the new oversized stealth cruise missile and its munitions had proven 100% effective against infantry, 94% effective against soft vehicles and an astounding 87% effective against heavy armor.

"God knows we need this," thought the Captain as he wrote his initial assessment to his superiors, "now if its durability will be equally effective in the robust environment we've specified."

The new missile, to be designated the AGM-999 and code named Hail Storm, was a large cruise missile designed to be stealthy, with added enhancements that hopefully reduced its signature in the new anti-stealth environment that the Chinese had produced. In this regard, the capabilities were new and untested. They were based on projections and analysis of the Chinese anti-stealth emitters, not on hard facts. The allies had not captured any of those devices yet, so the capabilities of the AGM-999 would be based purely on what was projected from electronic emissions and capabilities of the enemy systems that had been observed through battlefield contact and after action reports.

The missile was also designed to be intelligent, with a loiter capability and sensor suite that rivaled much larger aircraft. New fuel enhancements, larger fuel capability and advances in micro-technologies had made this possible over the last four years since the beginning of the war.

Of even more import was the munitions the AGM-999 could carry and how they were activated. The munitions were small caliber, high density projectiles for the most part, but could be augmented with various types of bomblets and sub-munitions. All of these were carried in three pods in the oversized wasp shaped belly of the missile and all of them were fired completely electronically by 100% solid-state components. There were no moving parts.

This technology, although initially developed in Australia in the late 1990's and early 2000's, had been shared with the United States and ultimately perfected by joint studies. In the 2006 time frame, initial, prototype weapon systems had been tested, but these were rudimentary handguns and small machine guns that operated as proof of concept. The most advanced breakthroughs and developments had been completed here in the desert southwest of the United States during the long battle for Australia. The advanced state of the development and its readiness for combat production were still a complete secret from outside world.

Pure electronic firing and solid state components allowed for tremendous variance in rates of fire, angles of fire, muzzle velocity and almost any other ballistic characteristic associated with the munitions. The AGM-999, with all three of its pods filled with .177 caliber, depleted uranium pellets, carried an astonishing 30,000 rounds per missile that could be fired from the three "guns" at variable rates according to the type and density of the targets. All 30,000 rounds could be fired in a few seconds if desired, or they could be fired at varying rates at individual targets, or groups of targets with the appropriate dispersal patterns and angles of fire. The anti-personnel and anti-armor bomblets could be handled the same.

"But that might not be necessary", thought the Captain.

After much testing, Captain Thiebolt had determined that ten of the depleted uranium pellets, fired at hypervelocity speeds, were sufficient to penetrate the upper armor of a T-80 tank, the final pellet pushing through enough of the molten armor to the inside of the personnel compartment to kill everyone within it. Five pellets similarly targeted at the engine compartment would penetrate through and destroy the engine, stopping the tank in its tracks. In fact, the effectiveness against armor and personnel of the pellets themselves was so high, that Thiebolt was inclined to recommend cancellation of any further anti-armor or anti-personnel bomblet tests.

"These depleted uranium pellets, are doing just fine themselves," the Captain concluded to himself as he concluded the recommendation regarding the munitions packages. Turning to one of his staff, he gave orders.

"Sergeant, make sure these reports I have just uploaded to the server are not only delivered electronically, but also by secure pouch to the General and his staff.

"They'll want to act on this immediately.

... and the Captain was right. Based on his report and recommendations, and the follow-on recommendations made by his superiors, the missile air frames, which were already being produced, would be rushed into full production along with the solid state firing pods, the artificial intelligence components for sensing and guidance, and the enhanced Tomahawk missile engines that would power them. At a production rate of 100 missiles per week, the first four hundred missiles would all see action across the globe in the six weeks it would take to produce and deploy them.

**September 12, 19:59 EST**

**Interrogation Room 23B**

**Federal Detention Facility, Reston, VA**

As David Krenshaw walked out of the interrogation room that he had spent the last six hours in, he was flanked by two husky guards and the FBI agent that led the way. He was being taken, as usual, directly back to his cell.

Since he had been taken into custody in June, almost three months ago, David had only had one opportunity to speak to his wife ... that was in mid-July ... and only a single two-hour conference with his lawyer, which had occurred near the first of August. That conference had not boded well from David's perspective. Under the various provisions of the anti-terror legislation that had been passed, and under the older Emergency War Powers and Trading with the Enemy Acts, and based on the charges against him his lawyer explained that he was lucky to have had the one chance to meet.

"But what about my rights as a U.S. citizen?" David had exclaimed as his counsel recited the various provisions of those Acts under which David was being charged.

"David," his lawyer had replied, "given the provisions of these acts and given the charges against you, this could very easily be the only time we get to talk. In fact, we are lucky to have had even a single meeting. My understanding is that it was only as a result of the President's insistence that we are meeting at all, so he could point to you being provided access to your counsel, despite the current law. You're going to have to get control of your emotions right now and spend the time we do have as productively as possible if I am going to be able to do anything for you.

“Understand this, the Weisskopf Administration is out for blood ... and I am not using that term metaphorically. They intend to show that your actions cost American soldiers and other personnel their lives in a time of war. They intend to seek the death penalty, David, and based on the report from the Grand Jury, they have the evidence to push for it.”

That pronouncement had sobered David up and the remaining time had been spent answering questions and discussing exactly what his counsel wanted discussed. That had been almost six weeks ago and since that time David had not seen or heard from his lawyer again, despite his many requests to do so made to the Special Agent in Charge (SAC), Director Andy Syke.

But the FBI agent in charge, and his interrogators were not in a deal making mood. Oh, they held out to him some sliver of hope that he might avoid the death penalty if he would cooperate, but that was as far as they would go. This had incensed David, and he had resolved to take a tough stance and tell them nothing. But as days turned to weeks, and weeks to months, without any further improvement or progress ... David had ultimately given in. His tough act was only skin deep, as his interrogators and jailers sensed it would be. By the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, David freely signed a full confession and quickly began to tell the FBI personnel everything he could remember, dating from his involvement prior to the election of President Weisskopf, right up to when he was taken into custody.

Unknown to David, those revelations only served to strengthen the government's case against him, and as the full extent of his treason became apparent, it only hardened the resolve of those tasked with trying him to push forward for the death penalty. With the confession in hand, and with mounds of evidence available, the Attorney General was able to get a trial date established for the second week in October. David Krenshaw would not have to wait too much longer for his fate.

**September 28, 21:36EST**

### **Oval Office**

#### **The White House, Washington, DC**

The President watched as Curt Johnson entered the oval office and sat down. No one else was in the room, though the Secret Service tapes were rolling.

“Curt, thank you for coming by. I know it is out of the ordinary and I know you are very busy here with only a few more weeks left in your campaign.”

Curt Johnson was not in a mood for small talk.

“You're right Mr. President, so why don't we cut to the chase and get down to brass tacks. That campaign is still one, despite the odds, where I fully intend to unseat you as the President of this nation and return some sanity to world affairs.”

President Weisskopf considered this reply. It said a lot regarding what he had to present to Curt Johnson, why he had asked to meet with him here in the first place.

“Well, yes, Curt, I know you are serious about that, but it is precisely for that reason I have asked you here. There are serious things to discuss, and given our former relationship, I did not feel comfortable with anyone else sharing this data with you.

“You are aware of our case against David Krenshaw?”

Curt leaned back in his chair and gaped at the President.

“Am I aware of it? What kind of question is that? Of course I am aware of it ... and I am aware of your administrations manipulations in that regard as they reflect upon my candidacy.

“You guys are way out in right field here Mr. President. You have taken into custody a media mogul, one who has openly criticized your policies, one who is a leading figure on the Council of International Relations, and one who has counseled my campaign, the campaign of your opponent.

“I'd say from all appearances that you are trying to shut down honest dissent and debate on the issues, and it is apparent Mr. President ... apparent to me, to my campaign and to the public. It is an issue we are gaining traction with and one I will not back away from!”

The President had vowed he would not get emotionally involved in what he knew was going to be a difficult discussion. He was getting perilously close to breaking that vow.

“Curt, pardon my directness, but would you just shut the hell up for a minute and give me the opportunity to tell you why I asked you over here?”

“I didn't have to do this you know. My advisors insisted that I just let the information go public as the trial approached, but I couldn't do that. Despite what you may think of me, and despite our current differences, I believe you are an honest man, Curt. It's why I selected you to begin with and felt you were doing a good job up until the time we parted over fundamental issues regarding the second amendment and how it applies to honest citizens of this nation.

“But rehashing that argument is not why I asked you here today.

“Curt, David Krenshaw has signed a confession and come completely clean. He has been operating in this nation, since before my own election, at the instigation of, and for pay from the People's Republic of China in general, and for Jien Zenim specifically. I wanted you to know it ... and to be able to react to it before ...

Curt Johnson stood up, visibly shaking.

“What is this? You expect me to believe that?”

“You take a man into custody, hold him incognito for months, giving him only one chance to see his own lawyer ... and then you come up with this cock and bull story?”

“How strong a dose of *truth serum* did your people have to give him, Mr. President?”

The President tried to interject.

“Curt, it's not just the confession, it's the mounds of hard evidence ...”

But his opponent would have nothing to do with it.

“Well, I'm not buying it ... and I tell you what I am going to do Mr. President, I am going to thank you for this info and I am going run with it. Right to the press and right to the people.”

The President was resigned now to failing with the intent of this meeting. He had hoped that Curt, whom he still believed was a loyal American, would seek to find a way to work with the administration to find ways to avoid anything that would in any way benefit their enemies.

Now, too late, the President could see that his own advisors had been correct. Curt Johnson was too caught up in the campaign and in his own anger, to consider the truth of what the President had just communicated to him. The hard cold proof that the administration had would have to hit him full force in the side of the head before any significant dent could be made in Johnson's attitude or opinion.

“Curt, I'm sorry you see it that way. Let me just say this ... the proof we have is incontrovertible, you are only going to hurt yourself, the nation ...”

But Curt Johnson, already on his feet, was moving for the door.

“We're done, Mr. President. Time will tell what impact the shenanigans your administration is engaged in are going to have on the election ... but I can promise you, I believe they will be historic in nature given the gravity of the situation.”

As he slammed the Oval Office door behind him and as the President's advisors entered the room shaking their heads, Curt Johnson had no way of knowing that his last utterance had been more prophetic than he could have guessed possible.

**October 4, 23:35 local time**

**COSCO Research and Development Laboratories**

**Tianjin Shipyard Facility, The People Republic of China**

Admiral Lu Pham checked his figures again for the fifth time. It was painstaking work and the computers could churn out the calculations much quicker, but the Admiral had grown up in the old school of mental calculations and slide rules and still preferred, on anything critical that he was personally involved with, to check and recheck the figures himself. And the results kept coming out the same ... unsatisfactorily.

“Well, it's late and I am just going to burn myself out if I keep raking my mind over this now.

“I suppose it's time to bow to the inevitable this evening and apply the tried and true principle of critical thinking that lets my sub-conscious mind grapple with the problem while directing conscious thought elsewhere. I'm just going to have to sleep on it.” the Admiral thought.

“But by all accounts, that one weapon did breach the surface and rose in the air before exploding.

“There must be way to get them to do it within current design constraints! And to control it,” he concluded as he reflected on the intelligence reports he had received.

From loose lipped American sailors who wrote and emailed their friends and relatives, and from the American press who picked up the story, accounts of the Battle of Midway II, as it was being referred to, made reference to just such an event in conjunction with the damage sustained by the U.S.S. Bataan. That Sea Control Carrier had apparently sustained its worst damage when one of the LRASD devices somehow malfunctioned or was otherwise forced into the maneuver.

The report had immediately mystified and then intrigued Lu Pham, the principle architect of the LRASD weapons. The system had never been designed for such a maneuver, but if such maneuvers could be programmed into the weapons ... terminal maneuvers ... then that would be something. It could be something that could swing the technology back in favor of the PLAN and once again provide a lynch pin for the Chinese success in the Pacific against the U.S. Navy.

Their weight and speed was the major obstacle. A broach would have to occur at just the right angle, just the right speed to ensure that the weapon came out of the water in a stable fashion, out of range of the new American super-cavitating defensive weapons, but close enough to avoid the American Phalanx CIWS reaction time ... and shallow enough so as not to rise too high into the air. It would require a complete rework of the guidance algorithms and their artificial intelligence acquisition and decision matrices. It would also require the installation of control surfaces that could be deployed when the weapon became airborne.

But getting the current design to maintain stable, airborne flight was the first obstacle, and it was an obstacle the Admiral was still grappling with. As he documented his calculations and jotted down final notes, he had one more thought of where he might turn for additional thinking.

“Sung Hsu!” realized the Admiral, “He would be a natural for this type of problem.

“Perhaps I will call him tonight ... no, it will wait until the morning. I'll call him then, after I have had the chance to sleep on it.”

**October, 12, 18:55 EST**  
**Supreme Court of the United States**  
**Washington, DC**

Chief Justice Thomas Clarendon considered the amount of time that it had taken the court to arrive at this momentous decision. Many in the press, using their judicial analysts and experts, had predicted that it would take weeks, perhaps months, for the court to rule on this issue. They had been wrong. In fact, no one, including the justices themselves, would have dared contemplate or imagine a five-day hearing, analysis and ruling. But after only four full days of very strong opinions from lawyers representing both sides of the issue, and the compelling scientific evidence ...

“No, not just evidence,” thought the Chief Justice, “proof.”

... after those compelling scientific proofs associated with the Human Reasoning Structures and the testimony of Dr.'s Trevor and McPherson and so many others, the Justices had held a late-night conference together on the 11<sup>th</sup> and determined that they were each ready to render their decision the next day, today.

Now, October 12<sup>th</sup>, would be a date that would be remembered long into history. The opinions were in and had been tallied. There would be no dissenting opinion, the decision was unanimous and it would be earth shattering. *Roe V. Wade* would be overturned ... and not just overturned, it would be completely reversed in a way far beyond expectation.

Constitutionally, it was clear that the fetus, at a very early stage of development, was in fact human and capable of awareness and independent thought processes. It was therefore to be afforded protection under the constitution to *life*.

It was now left to Chief Justice Clarendon, the first black Chief Justice in the history of the United States and who himself had narrowly been nominated to the Supreme Court after a bitter, partisan process many years earlier, to announce the opinion of the court. He was prepared to do so and he had stayed up most of the night writing his own opinion, re-writing it, reflecting upon it and ultimately completing it in anticipation of this moment. He was now prepared to give it.

The cameras were set up by the hundreds. The press, the leaders of every major lobby group on both sides of the issue, agency heads, heads of governments from all over the free world, and tens of millions of citizens were now focused on what Chief Justice Clarendon would announce and say over the next few minutes. It was an event, despite the ongoing ravages of war and the immediate compelling issues associated with it, that had captured the attention and the imagination of most Americans, in deed, of most of the free world. All were spell bound as to how the Supreme Court of the United States would rule on this issue. When it came, it was astonishingly to the point and short.

“Ladies and gentlemen, the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States of America with regards to the matter now before the court, the re-hearing of the *Roe V. Wade* ruling originally decided in 1973 is as follows:

“The human fetus, as a result of scientific proofs regarding the Human Reasoning Structures and their existence within the fetus, has been shown scientifically to be a living, thinking human. Based on this new evidence, the court finds unanimously that no individual, has the right to willfully terminate or cause injury to that human growing and developing within the womb. *Roe V. Wade* is therefore unalterably over-turned based on this new evidence.

“Further, the court finds that the constitutional protection of *life* must be extended to the fetus, as it is extended to any other under-age child. The parent or other legal guardian shall be responsible for the health and welfare of that child like they would for any other.

“This is the unanimous legal finding and decision of this court, there is no dissenting opinion.

“Now, in addition to the official, legal decision this court has just made, let me take the unprecedented step of adding a few of my own comments as a purely personal note. I want to ensure that it is understood by all, that what I am about to say represents my own personal feelings and is not representative of any legal finding of this court. I do so because this ruling represents an unprecedented occurrence, and it speaks to an issue that has divided us as a free people, and stained our national consciousness for far too long.

“For the last many years, this nation, through its legal process, has embarked on a course where we ruled legally that innocent human life, as has been shown in the recent months, could be systematically killed. I stand before you today, as do we all, in abject shame for that decision and the holocaust it has now been shown to have produced. It is to the credit of every member of this court, regardless of what side of the issue that they had taken before, that when presented with this clear scientific evidence, every member ruled appropriately and quickly on what could only be the single legal ruling possible. No partisan political interpretation existed in this court today.

“Would to God that we had all listened to our heart and to our conscience long before today and used our common sense to have risen above the partisan politics of the era and so ruled much earlier. There is no telling what expertise, what significance, what developments, what future we have denied ourselves because of the death of all of these tens of millions who might otherwise have lived to endow and bless us with their presence...with their life. Perhaps now, we will experience some of

those things we denied ourselves, and perhaps now, at long last, we will embrace and protect the life developing amongst us and somehow atone for our collective actions, albeit belatedly.

“Thank you, that completes the courts ruling and my own remarks.”

### **October 13-16, 18:55 EST**

#### **Across the United States**

#### **After the Supreme Court Ruling**

All over the nation the reaction came in on the ruling.

From the many Christians conservatives who had been working and praying for years for just such a ruling, to the libertarians who quickly proposed a new platform plank taking into consideration the right to life of the now proven, reasoning fetus, to those individuals whose financial and intellectual well being had been vested in the abortion industry and the philosophy that demanded that a fetus be considered nothing more than a mass of tissue, reaction varied from quiet acceptance to protests against the ruling and counter-protests to those protests.

Many in the leadership of the National Endowment for Woman (NEW) vowed that they would conduct nation-wide civil disobedience and continue the practice of abortion in clinics where any doctor and their staffs would stand firm. The American Civil Liberties Union vowed to support this attempt and to make what they termed a principled stand for the rights of women to continue to do with their bodies as they pleased, despite the overwhelming scientific evidence that another human body existed within them, a body that was living and thinking.

In the end, the civil disobedience and the protests fizzled. The vast majority of Americans, even the more liberally minded, accepted the scientific evidence at its face value, and distanced themselves strongly from the radical supporters of abortion. Now that the national consciousness was awake to the fact that living human babies, capable of thought and reason, had been killed by the millions, a revival of sorts began sweeping the nation. No more than a dozen doctors and their staffs across the nation responded to the calls by the NEW and the ALCU organizations. Those that did were subjected to massive counter protests organized in large part by the Independent Republic and other online internet organizations that immediately pointed out the location of these clinics and organized massive “save the children” protests.

Those “save the children” protests, organized by the Independent Republic Network, a confederation of Independent Republic chapters across the nation, caught the imagination of the American people and the rising revival spirit that was sweeping the nation. In every case, a handful of twenty or thirty protestors for abortion were confronted by thousands of protestors there to “save the children”. The few doctors who had entertained thoughts of continuing the practice in some type of twisted protest for the rights of woman, as they prepared to terminate the life of now proven reasoning babies, quickly saw that any attempt on their part to do so would not only lead to potential jail time... it would lead to financial ruin as well. As a result, with no doctors or their staffs willing to take up the cause, the civil disobedience ended within three days, before it ever actually got started.

Elizabeth Trevor sat in contemplative silence on the evening of October 16<sup>th</sup> as she and her husband, Joseph, prepared for bed. Dr. Joseph Trevor and his entire family had been subjected to intense media exposure as a result of the initial announcement regarding the HRS found in the fetal tissue and the fast track to the National Academy of Sciences and the Supreme Court. Elizabeth knew that the coverage had produced far more pressure and scrutiny than he had received in the run-up to his Nobel Prize due to the initial discovery of the Human Reasoning Structures.

“Joe, can you believe what’s happened? The change for the good?”

“I simply marvel that two and a half years ago you were led to discover those intricate, Godly structures at the root of our humanity ... and now look where it’s led, and by what means!”

Joseph laid down in bed next to his wife. They had just finished their evening prayers together, where they both had uttered heartfelt and humble thanksgiving for the events of the last week.

“No, I really can’t believe it ... and yet it is so.

“But honey, don’t pile the credit on me, you were right there in the mix of all of this. If it hadn’t been for your intuitive ... no, no, your inspired comments that turned my attention about the HRS towards the nervous system and the brain ... I am not sure I would have ever chanced upon the discoveries that I did.”

Elizabeth knew her husband too well. He was modest, but he was driven. There was no doubt in her mind that he would have ultimately ended up there in any case, with or without her input.

“Joe, you ended up there because it was where you were supposed to end up. Whether it had been my input, or some other, the Lord was behind this, I am certain of that. Just look at Sandra and the change this has wrought in her ... who would have believed it?”

There was no need to answer that question. Neither of them would have believed it unless they had witnessed it themselves. Both of them viewed the change wrought in Sandra McPherson as representative of the change they hoped, and believed they were seeing in their nation. With those thoughts in mind, they both reflected on it all as they drifted off to sleep.

**October 24, 03:55 local time**

**Federal Court**

**Annandale, Virginia**

“Ladies and gentlemen of the Jury,” the Judge enquired, “Have you reached a verdict?”

Standing up at the Judges request, the foreman of the jury, a middle aged and balding white gentlemen replied, “We have your honor.”

The Judge replied in the time honored phraseology typical of the American legal system, “How find you on the first count of Treason against the United States, with special circumstances?”

The foreman stood up a little taller, straight backed and stared evenly at the Judge, “Your honor, we find the defendant guilty as charged!”

The courtroom erupted into bedlam as reporters rushed out of the courtroom and immediately began talking into their cell phones, or microphones. The special circumstances condition, which indicated that his actions had led directly to the deaths of American personnel and/or citizens, carried with it only two possible sentences, life in prison without the possibility of parole, or death.

*BANG, BANG, BANG*

The Judge's gavel came crashing down, demanding and receiving an instant reprieve to the noise. “I *WILL* have order in this court. Bailiff, remove anyone from this chamber who does not sit down and become quiet within the next five seconds.”

The Judge then continued through the list of charges, to which the foreman of the jury answered the same on every count, “Guilty as charged.”

The trial of David Krenshaw had lasted for just ten days. In that time the Government had produced an avalanche of evidence...witnesses, the defendants own testimony and several declassified electronic intercepts and surveillance images that firmly established that David Krenshaw, President of WNN Worldwide News and a leading member of the Council on International Relations, had consorted with the enemy and provided materiel, data and intelligence assistance to them as they waged unrestricted warfare on the United States of America and her citizens.

The evidence was overwhelming. The defense argument that much of the data was privileged or protected by 1<sup>st</sup> amendment rights was ineffective in the face of the defendant's own sworn and written testimony. It was clear to all, in the court room and out, that David Krenshaw, for several years, had sold his country and his fellow citizens out for his own materiel, professional and political ambitions, and that he had done so both before and after the onset of hostilities. The final charge of conspiracy to influence the political process was terribly damaging to the opposition party.

The defense lawyer, and the political mechanism that surrounded Curt Johnson and the former Senator Crater, tried to make the case that the current administration was deliberately pursuing a path with David Krenshaw's prosecution that itself was motivated by political gain. But the President's continuing refusal to so much as campaign for either his party's nomination or the eminent national election belied their arguments. No one, outside of those closest to Krenshaw and those close to the opposition ticket, was buying it, in the court room or out. Curt Johnson's own insistence on pursuing this path, long after the evidence dictated otherwise, was his own undoing.

In the end, David Krenshaw was found guilty on all counts. His sentencing hearing was put off until late November, but the overwhelming majority of American citizens, feeling deeply the betrayal of this media figurehead that so many of them had come to trust, were in favor of the maximum penalty. The Administration was pushing for that penalty, and this particular Judge was known for being extremely hard on crime.

The Attorney General of the United States said it best, a week later in an interview.

“Mr. Krenshaw rose to some of the highest positions possible in our free and moral society. As a result of his love for himself, his ambition, his commitment to enemies of this nation and his corruption ... as a result of his perusal of all of these things above his commitment to his fellow citizens and the liberty that availed him of the very opportunities he enjoyed ... he threw it all away.

“And not only did he throw it all away for himself ... his actions led to the deaths of countless American service personnel and citizens. For all of these reasons, David Krenshaw, as great a traitor as this nation has ever known ... and it has known a few, has been given the guilty sentence he so richly deserves and it is this administration's absolute hope, that he will be sentenced to die for those crimes. An ignoble and dishonorable end to an ignoble, dishonorable, and traitorous life.

“I would to God that we could bring forward evidence and proof for all of those who have so abjectly sold out our nation and led it to the precarious and dangerous circumstance we are currently in, where so many of our people and servants have died defending this Republic. If we could, we would, and they would receive the same treatment as Mr. Krenshaw. As it is, we do have the evidence of Mr. Krenshaw deeds and it has been presented and ruled upon by a jury of his peers according to the Constitution. We shall now await the sentencing along with the rest of the nation.”

As Americans shook their heads in disbelief and contempt, and went on their way, it was clear that the name of David Krenshaw, a man that had benefited so much from the liberty that America afforded, would eclipse the name of Benedict Arnold as the greatest traitor in the nation's history.

# **DRAGON'S FURY**

**WORLD WAR  
AGAINST AMERICA  
AND THE WEST**

## **YEAR FIVE**



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**November 3, 10:34 local time**  
**Executive Ruling Counsel Conference**  
**Politburo, Beijing, China**

Jien Zenim reflected on the last four years as he reviewed the American election returns.

As was the case four years ago, the elections were not going as he had hoped, or planned. The difference this time was that the results were not unexpected. Despite his planning and hopes, the American President, Norm Weisskopf, had performed admirably as an opponent and had rallied his people. It was not surprising that he was winning so handily, much more handily even than before when he had defeated the wife of the former President.

"Ah for those days again," thought Zenim, "when a corrupt and weak administration in America had been so easily influenced and turned to our purposes."

"But the 1990's are gone, and in truth, they have given rise to the current state of world affairs. Affairs that are coming closer and closer to the realization of our goals."

Looking to his aide and beckoning for some more of the English Earl Grey tea that President Jien Zenim enjoyed, he asked his chief of staff for an update on the returns.

"r. President, we are understandably several hours behind the American tallies, but at last count it was clear that Weisskopf will win in a landslide.

"n fact, unless trends dramatically reverse themselves, President Weisskopf seems destined to win all fifty states and every one of their electoral votes. It will be a first in their history."

Jien Zenim thanked his chief of staff and indicated that he had heard enough.

Clearly, the trial and impending sentencing of that lackey Krenshaw had pushed the American public completely over the edge politically, as if they hadn't been close enough already. The Chinese President had no allusions. Using David Krenshaw as he had done had always contained the inherent risk that the weak man would be caught and would cave into pressure ... as he had done. But the benefits over the last few years had outweighed the risks, as evidenced by the success of Zenim's master plan in confederation with the Indians and the Islamics. People like Krenshaw and the other decadent and naïve people in America that the Chinese had co-opted over the years by the thousands were ultimately and entirely expendable, Zenim would shed no tears over their ilk. They were simply tools and means to an end, to be discarded or disposed of when they had fulfilled their usefulness.

"How did Lenin put it?" the President asked himself, "Yes, that's it, that's it entirely, *useful idiots*. Useful idiots and nothing more."

Turing to the other members of the executive counsel on the politburo, Zenim simply announced.

"Well, it seems we are destined to continue facing this Weisskopf for a little while longer.

"He is definitely a worthy adversary, but his re-election will not amount to anything of serious consequence. Our forces and our allies continue to push forward. That is the harsh reality with which he and his allied leaders must deal, and ultimately come to grips with.

"Despite the minor set backs we are experiencing in Central America near the Panama canal, and the great sacrifice near Midway Atoll, those forces have done their duty. The object of that duty now lies within our grasp. Over the next weeks we will see America's puppet regime in Israel fall and be decimated, we will see the Russian capitol fall and all of Europe will be at our feet, and we will see the consolidation of all of North America's most strategic oil reserves and the fall of the entire American state of Alaska. Those are defeats that will break the will and the back of the enemy ... they will have no choice but to sue for peace ... and it will be peace on the terms we have worked for, for so long."

"So, let the American President have his day, it shall be followed by many long nights."

As he stopped speaking and began to sip his tea while he observed the various members of the executive counsel, the Chinese President had no idea that several thousand miles away, in an area already long occupied by his allied forces, an event was about to occur that would pull one of the lynchpins out of his carefully laid plans which to date had been so successful.

**November 6, 15:22 local time**  
**Occupation Commander's Luncheon**  
**Old Parliament Conference Facility, Tbilisi, Georgia**

General Talabari scanned the crowd of upturned faces he had just addressed. It had been a rousing reception, luncheon and speech. The commander of the occupation forces here in Georgia had specifically requested that the legendary and heroic General stay over an extra night and address his command staff. General Talabari had agreed and had also taken the opportunity to finally arrange for the young Colonel, Abduhl Selim, to leave his command in Romania and join him here and travel on with him to Damascus. But the trip had been delayed by meetings with the Imam in Tehran and by a desire for a final visit to the commanding general near Moscow before that great assault began. What had been initially planned for September, had slipped into November and the General was now anxious to be about the long awaited task of destroying Israel and her allies there defending her.

In that vein, it was also time for Colonel Abduhl Selim to take on the heavy responsibility of a major command in a major engagement and prove his worth. If it went as General Talabari expected, and as he had briefed the great Imam, then Colonel Selim would soon become General Selim and would be in the eye of the leading military, political and religious leaders of the entire GIR ... and he would be the ally of and beholden to General Talabari for it all.

But others had been privy to the General's travel plans, and they too had been forced to delay and change their plans as a result of the changes to the General's. Now, like the General, their plans were ready to implement here today, well before the General could implement his own.

As General Talabari stepped down from the podium, his security detail fanned out in front of him to hold back the crowd of officers who wanted to shake the hand of the great man. As was his custom, the General began to grasp the hands of a few of those well wishers as he passed through the crowd.

Cries of "*Allah Mak!*" and "*Allah Ahkbar!*" rang out as he passed by, grasping hands and speaking briefly with his well wishers.

One compelling hand reached out from the crowd to grasp the General's. The man offering it was flanked by two others, also reaching out to the general, but also blocking the security detail from interfering with the first. That first man was dressed as a full Colonel of the occupation forces.

The General turned to the man to take his hand. In the instant he grasped it, he looked into the eyes of the man standing there and recognition flooded into his mind as he attempted to pull his hand back. As he began to do so, the man shaking his hand mouthed the following words to the General.

"Allah Mak, General, God is great indeed. This is for Will!"

Captain Riley Adams, dark skinned and fluent in the Farsi and Arabic languages, knew that Talabari had recognized him, and that was exactly what he wanted. As soon as he saw that recognition in the General's eyes, Adams activated the small compressed air, dart gun hidden in his sleeve and there was the slightest, almost inaudible *psst* as the small dart, tipped with a powerful nerve agent, shot out from its concealed position and impacted the General under his outstretched arm. No one in the crowd, including the nearest security personnel, heard it, the noise of their approval of the General was simply too loud.

Adams let go of the General's hand and the General was immediately rendered speechless and began to slow in his step, turning his head slowly from side to side. The security personnel were just noticing that something might be wrong. As they did, Riley Adams and his two partisan compatriots pulled back into the crowd and were slowly making their way toward a nearby exit.

General Talabari took three steps, attempting to turn his head and say something to someone, to anyone to warn them, and then he collapsed. As he lay there on the floor, with a gathering crowd of security personnel and then medical personnel, all he could do was think.

"I knew this day would come," he thought, "The Americans would never forget such a betrayal."

He was slowly drifting away, thinking back on that day outside of Irbil, when he had been the assassin ... but the assassin of a close friend and compatriot. He remembered pointing the gun at CIA agent Will Peterson who was unsuspecting and had been acting under direct Presidential Order to interdict Hasan Sayeed that day, just as the world war was starting. He remembered firing that round into the back of Peterson's head and the course it had set him upon. It was a course that led right here, to Tbilisi, Georgia, laying on this floor slowly losing feeling in all of his appendages.

"Adams ... that was Adams," he thought. "How did he get here ... how did he know?"

"What was that he said, God is great ... it was for Will ... Will, a good soldier ..."

As the numbness spread into his torso and reached his heart, the General simply stopped breathing and died there while his attendants frantically tried to revive him.

As they did so, one of those next to him stood up and slowly scanned the crowd and the room. It was a crowd that was shocked into silence, looking around, wondering what terrible thing had come to pass. Colonel Abduhl Selim sensed what had happened. He did not believe this was natural. He was looking for anything odd, anyone moving quickly away. But his search was in vain. Riley Adams was too wise to call attention to himself. Their plan had worked without a flaw. They had moved slowly and naturally, and had already exited the building

...and before the surrounding area could be locked down, there were several diversionary explosions and the sound of small arms fire. The NCO that Adams had infiltrated the country with was doing his part with several more partisans. Adams and the two men who had helped him used that diversion to escape. Within ten minutes, all fighting had stopped completely.

Back in the parliament building General Talabari was dead, but his plans for the attack on Israel would survive him, as would his plans for Abduhl Selim. Both of those plans would be set in motion within two weeks of his death. The two sets of plans, one very large and far reaching in nature and the other much more individually oriented, would achieve astonishingly dissimilar results.

## Chapter 29

### The Battles of Anchorage, Israel, and Moscow

**November 11, 03:55 local time**

**Fall back Defensive Lines**

**American Forces , Palmer, Alaska**

Hernando Rodriguez sat in his position, keen, observant and prepared to meet the enemy. He was positioned on a wooded hillside, in a reinforced, prepared position, ready to confront an enemy he knew would be coming, and they would be coming soon.

To date, the Americans and their Canadian allies had not been able to stop the Chinese juggernaut here in Alaska. Nome, Fairbanks, Prudhoe Bay, and Barrow had all fallen under Chinese control. Hundreds of thousands of additional Chinese troops were pouring into the country across the Bering Sea at Nome each week, and both the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Air Force had not been able to break through and seriously impede that flow of enemy men and materiel.

Once the Chinese had consolidated there positions in the oil fields to the north, despite the destruction wrought there by U.S. nuclear demolition devices, they had turned their full attention south and east. Two weeks ago, Whitehorse had fallen as the Chinese continued moving up the Yukon River valley and established a firm foothold in the Yukon Territory of Canada. They had extended that foothold into the Northwest Territories and were now moving south there too.

With the rapid advancement, General Tsing had moved his center of operations to Fairbanks where his engineers had repaired the airbase there, out of which they were now operating combat air patrol and attack sorties

But the largest Chinese thrust had been reserved for the American buildup in Anchorage and its threat to their expansion. Anchorage, where Elmendorf Air Base and the United States Army were a continuing, growing presence and threat. Over three hundred thousand American troops and four hundred high performance aircraft had now gathered there to defend the capitol and the last hope for maintaining a strong American foothold in Alaska from which to counterattack the Chinese and win back lost ground. Twenty-two U.S Navy warships, including the carrier, the U.S.S. Theodore Roosevelt, were now positioned in and around Cooke inlet to assist in air defense and suppressive fire missions. The Chinese knew that this threat had to be addressed now, that the more time they waited, the harder it would be...and they were steamrolling towards Anchorage just as quickly as they could.

American planners had hoped to be able to use the wall of the Alaskan Range to hold the Chinese back, but the defensive lines near Cantwell had been over-run despite inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. The fall back positions at Curry where the Susitna River narrowed had fallen two days later, and now the Chinese advance forces were probing all around Palmer as they sought to bulldoze yet another American position ... Hernando's position.

Hernando had talked to some of the survivors of Cantwell. He knew what to expect. There would be a tremendous sustained artillery, air, and missile bombardment. That would be followed in short order, marching right behind that barrage, by hordes of Chinese troops...too many to kill with the amount of ammunition the defenders had at their disposal. Hernando remembered the description from one of the sergeants earlier this evening who had explained to them exactly what to expect.

"They'll come by waves of tens of thousands ...and they march right into direct fire while others probe the flanks.

"They pile up their own dead to fire from behind and then climb over the top and just keep coming, one pile of dead after another. I had heard stories about Chosin Reservoir in Korea, and this is exactly like that must have been.

"Just be ready, they'll be right behind the barrage. Take down as many as you can, and then withdraw in order, firing as you go. Do not expend all of your ammo before that order, you'll need it to cover your retreat."

Hernando new that the sergeant had related exactly what he had experienced ... but he and his compatriots, and their officers were dedicated to holding the line at all costs. Behind this position, the way to Anchorage would open. Defended, yes, but this was the best position for defense between here and Eklutna at the head of Cooke Inlet and at the door to Anchorage.

... as Hernando rolled these thoughts over in his mind, it started.

*SWOOSH ... WHAM!, WHAM! WHAM!*

The impacts came furiously, deafening, even with the ear protection he was wearing. It went on and on with the entire squad hunkered down in their bunker praying to avoid a direct hit.

After an hour of continuous, intense bombardment, Hernando began to notice an underlying, background noise, barely perceptible in the distance. Even as enemy aircraft engaged in vicious dogfights overhead with American F-15 and F-22 fighters, the noise of approaching mechanized infantry grew louder ... and intermingled with that sound, the sound of marching feet ... by the tens

of thousands ... no, by the hundreds of thousands that literally could be heard above the bombardment and above the mechanized vehicles that heralded them.

"Mother of God," Hernando uttered to himself, "How many of them can there be?"

He tried to look to his forward, using his night vision equipment but he was violently thrown to the back of the bunker by a near miss. As he shook off the effects of that concussion, he moved forward to his firing position again, urging his team members to do likewise, which they did with the practiced precision of professionals long used to combat.

What greeted them as they took up their positions was frightful. There, across the valley, coming over the far ridge, were hundreds and hundreds of Chinese infantry fighting vehicles, tanks and armored personnel carriers. Despite the fearful beating they were taking from American artillery and aircraft, they kept coming and the numbers were too great to hinder. Behind them, the ground was dark, literally moving with the enemy infantry.

... and then the Chinese yelled, and with a roar that drowned out all other sound, they charged from two kilometers away.

It was at this point that Hernando caught a glimpse of movement in the air, flying low over his position. When he looked up, he could just barely distinguish the form of extremely large cruise missiles, many cruise missiles, passing overhead. They were long, but they were only sleek on the front and tail ends. In the middle their wastes bulged as they sped low over the battlefield towards that onrushing mass of armor and men. They had been launched from over the Cooke Inlet some sixty miles away by ten refurbished B-52G's that had been brought out of mothballs over the last eight weeks specifically for this purpose.

Anti-aircraft missiles rose up from amongst the enemy as their *ta shih* detectors acquired contact with the missiles. Ground forces, seeing the approaching wave of American missiles began visually targeting them with small arms and other anti-aircraft fire. As the cruise missiles cleared Hernando's position a wall of missiles and tracer fire reached out towards the onrushing cruise missile barrage. As several explosions lit up the battlefield, many of the Chinese defensive missiles simply missed and passed right by the American missiles. A few were brought down by proximity explosions.

The bulk of the onrushing wave of American missiles approached the oncoming Chinese assault front unimpeded. Small bay doors opened on all of the lead cruise missiles and Hernando and his team members then witnessed the most awesome act of destruction ever perpetrated on any single battlefield in the course of this war, or any other in history. The electronic, sustained firing of hundreds of thousands of .177 caliber, depleted uranium pellets at hypervelocity speeds lit up the battlefield like the hand of God ... and the effects on the Chinese were the same.

From over fifty remaining AGM-999 missiles a literal hail storm of metal, on a front several miles wide, mowed into and across the attacking Chinese formations, leaving nothing but a gruesome tangled and grizzly mix of perforated IFV's and APC's, flesh-chopped up like so much hamburger, and immobile tanks...some of which continued to fire on the American positions. Those few, roughly twelve percent of the Chinese tanks, were no longer capable of movement, their engine compartments having been ruined by the impact of .177 depleted uranium pellets, just as the missiles had been programmed to do.

In less than forty seconds, the initial wave of Chinese troops, numbering more than one hundred thousand men, five hundred APC's and IFV's and over three hundred tanks, had been stopped dead ... literally dead, outside of Palmer, Alaska.

Ten minutes later, the slaughter was repeated as the second wave of Chinese troops and their equipment rushed into the same killing fields, and were assaulted by another wave of AGM-999 missiles that broke and destroyed another eighty thousand Chinese troops and their equipment. It was too much for any army to withstand without breaking. Although the full Chinese assault included more than five hundred thousand troops, the outright killing of over one third of them in a period of less than a half an hour devastated the assault entirely, routing the remaining attack force who began to fall back in a mad rush in the direction from whence they had come.

Had General Tsing understood that the United States had expended all of their AGM-999 missiles available to them in Alaska in those two monumental attacks outside of Palmer, he might have pressed on and yet won the day. But he could not have known that, and he dared not risk his remaining troops. As reports filtered back to him, from the observation of follow-on troops who witnessed the carnage, and from the absolute silence in communications from those first two waves, the General had no choice but to call for an immediate and complete withdrawal back towards the Alaskan Range and Cantwell, where he hoped to regroup and resume the attack later.

But the American commanders were too wise to allow that. When their own observation posts reported the success of the AGM-999 attack and the utter destruction of the enemy, an immediate all out assault and counterattack was ordered. Hernando and his squad, along with over fifty thousand American soldiers began the counter offensive and harried the Chinese rear all the way to Cantwell where they overran their defenses before they could be prepared.

Over the space of the next eight days, the attack evolved and expanded to include over two hundred and fifty thousand American and Canadian troops. That counter offensive broke through the

Alaskan Range and carried all the way to Fairbanks, which was recaptured from the Chinese in vicious fighting on November 21st as General Tsing evacuated his command post and fell back down the Yukon Valley towards Ruby, Alaska.

He left behind over eighty thousand Chinese troops in Canada who were now completely cut off from their supply lines and from any hope of relief in the Yukon and Northwest Territories. It also left an emboldened American Army preparing to attack north towards the Brooks Range and the ANWR, and to the west towards the Chinese positions now solidifying around Wolf Mountain and its shoulder on the Yukon River ... an American Army at that point that was about to receive another influx of AGM-999, Hail Storm missiles for use in their continuing counter offensive against the Chinese.

### **November 14, 19:28 local time**

#### **Joint U.S. and IDF forward position**

#### **Landing Zone Zulu, East of Damascus, Syria**

Colonel Jess Simmons guided his Comanche helicopter in for a quick, flared landing, all of its ordinance expended. For the last two days it had been like this, flying out into a target rich environment, expending all of his ordinance, and then returning to load up again and start all over.

He was reminded of the letters and conversations he had with his son, Billy while he had been defending Australia, and well before he had been lost off of the coast when his ship, the Tarawa, had been sunk. In those correspondences and conversations, Billy had told him of much the same experience, flying his U.S. Marine, AH-1Z Viper attack helicopter out into a target rich environment, expending all of his ordinance over and over again at the oncoming masses of enemy.

"Except in that case, the enemy in Australia had been attacking, and now here we have them on the run," reflected the Colonel as he silently contemplated current conditions versus those of six months ago when Australia fell, and his son with it ... and he again mourned that loss.

"Dear God, please keep Billy in the palm of Your hand, wherever his body lies, and help Cindy and I understand and accept Thy will," he pled as he unbuckled and prepared to exit the aircraft.

As U.S. Forces unleashed their AGM-999, Hail Storm missiles on the Chinese in Alaska, allied forces here in Israel were prompted, prematurely to do the same. A few hours after the attack in Alaska, and just hours before the late General Talabari's attack order could be implemented on November 13<sup>th</sup>, an argument between a Jordanian farmer and a roving Israeli patrol attracted the attention of a company size detachment of Syrian troops moving up towards their jump-off positions for the GIR major offensive planned for very early the next morning.

The Syrians attacked the much smaller group of Israelis and the Israelis called in air and additional ground support. Within thirty minutes a major battle was developing and support aircraft saw and witnessed the imminent GIR buildup. In a flash of inspiration, and in order to preempt the GIR attack, General Olsen recognized the GIR intentions and ordered the immediate implementation of the allied counterattack plan, which was set to spearhead right through the area in question. This committed the American, British and Israeli forces to a counter attack along a line that ran from east the Sea of Galilee up to the Golan heights.

Two waves of forty AGM-999 missiles each were immediately used to open up a gaping hole in the GIR defensive lines, which also decimated their forming attack formations. Over two hundred thousand enemy personnel were killed in a space of less than an hour. Many more were severely injured and disabled in their prepared positions. The resulting rent in GIR lines allowed the allied counter attack to pour through into the fiercely contested ground between Damascus and the Golan heights, where they were met by the huge reserves that General Talabari had gathered to meet the ultimately anticipated allied counter-attack. But that plan had contemplated the allies expending most of their high tech weaponry against the initial line of GIR forces, and then breaking out to contend on equal terms the larger, reserve GIR forces.

But the joint allied armies that had broken through the shattered GIR forces arrived with all of their high tech weaponry intact, thanks to the AGM-999 onslaught which chewed through the GIR lines. The sophisticated allied weaponry that General Talabari had hoped would be exhausted when the allies met the large reserve forces were still plentiful. Just the same, the GIR reserve forces were much larger than the allies had expected and they were prepared and eager to fight.

Led by an inspired and hard fighting Army group consisting of over twelve divisions, whose command had passed to the young Abduhl Selim when the other senior officers were all killed or disabled, the battle raged for over three days as GIR forces contested the allied push towards Damascus. But the superior acquisition, targeting and munitions technology enjoyed by the allies took its toll. Ultimately, when allied air superiority was achieved over the battle field early the third day, what had been a slow, grueling advance on the allies part became a breakthrough on the afternoon of the 15<sup>th</sup>. U.S., United Kingdom and Israeli forces pushed GIR forces back to, and then through Damascus where the fighting became a bitter, street to street conflict. General Olsen ordered the bulk of the allied forces to cut-off and bypass Damascus and prepare to assault defensive positions where the bulk of the GIR forces had fallen back to and east of the city.

This was because a general order had been given by the GIR high command for all other GIR forces in the area to fall back towards the defensive lines to the east of Damascus, while a sizable contingent was left in Damascus to draw the allies into an urban warfare scenario in the city. As the allies bypassed the city according to General Olsen's orders, the leading elements ran headlong into a large GIR force falling back from Lebanon. There were no more AGM-999 missiles available to stop these forces, which punched through the leading elements of the allied force and reinforced the GIR defensive positions. This developed into a confrontation east of Damascus on the night of November 17<sup>th</sup>, pitting superior allied artillery, close air support and armor against the larger numbers of GIR equipment and personnel, who were digging in and preparing for battle.

The last thirty AGM-999 missiles available in the Israeli theater to the allies, which had been held back as a reserve, were used late on the 15<sup>th</sup> to crush and destroy a counter offensive that GIR and Chinese forces had made along the Suez Canal. That enemy attack had utilized a direct assault into the higher fire power of the allied forces who were operating behind well prepared positions. After two days of violent struggle, the massive GIR numbers had broken through the Israeli and British defenses on the 15<sup>th</sup> and were in the process moving towards Gaza. This became a critical situation, with the danger of the allied offensive to the north and east being completely enveloped. The allies quickly made the decision to deploy the last of the AGM-999 missiles to halt that advance. Thinking, as a result of their breakthrough and steady advance on the 15<sup>th</sup>, that the allies were powerless to stop them, the GIR force were utterly devastated by those thirty missiles and their deadly Hail Storm munitions late that day. Another 200,000 GIR and Chinese forces pouring across the Sinai were destroyed and their follow on columns were forced into a state of confusion and disorder by the carnage. Reserve IDF divisions out of Israel and reinforcement American divisions from south of the Dead Sea, successfully halted the GIR counterattack. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup>, allied forces to the south were very close to pushing the enemy back to the Suez canal.

As night fell on Damascus on November 17<sup>th</sup>, Colonel Simmons rested and contemplated the horrific fighting of the last five days that had accompanied the successful "break out" that allied forces had achieved. The carnage was incredible, the fighting had been fierce, but the Colonel was now secure in the knowledge, along with the other allied commanders, that the siege of Israel had been broken. The allies were finally in a position to take the offensive in the Mid East, albeit against a still large, determined, and resourceful foe.

**November 19, 9:28 local time**

**Russian High Command**

**HQ Command Facility, Defense of Moscow**

News of the tremendous allied victories in Alaska and around Israel had been received with much celebration and joy in Moscow. It instilled hope to the defending forces in the midst of the current crisis. They all now knew that the juggernaut that had been the GIR and CAS forces could be thrown back, and with tremendous loss. It helped to know, that the Americans had been able to deliver over eighty of their vaunted new weapon, the AGM-999, Hail Storm, missiles to Russia, flown in on the venerable B-52 bombers.

But, as others celebrated, General Andrei Nosik and his staff planned. He knew that here the AGM-999 capabilities would not take his enemy by surprise. He knew that the enemy had now had the time to analyze and understand the new threat and was bound to prepare for it. He would not underestimate them, not after being driven several thousand miles west by their armies, right here to the gates of Moscow.

No, he had to wisely apply his assets. He was still vastly outnumbered and at great risk. He also had to convince the Americans to let him use those AGM-999 missiles in the defense of his homeland as he saw fit. And he had a plan...it was a bold one, and also a risky one. But, under the circumstance the General viewed anything else as an even greater risk, and he wanted to maximize his ability to apply those deadly weapons the Americans had developed. He was sure that he had come up with a methodology to do just that and, based on his long experience with the Chinese, he was committing his entire defense plan to the surmise that the Chinese would respond to the new American threat accordingly in their assault on Moscow.

He was also thankful for the weather. An early winter storm had gripped the city and surrounding countryside in its clutches for the last three days with snow and bitter cold. That bad weather had allowed him to execute the initial stages of his plan under its cover. Now that weather pattern was forecast to break late this evening and he expected the enemy to attack very soon. From everything he had seen, very soon now he was going to find out if he was correct in his assumptions.

**November 20, 00:01 local time**

**Forward Russian Positions**

**Defense of Moscow**

Late that night the weather did clear, and the temperature fell. By midnight, under a dead calm, the temperature had dropped well below zero Celsius, and down into the low teens Fahrenheit. Very

early that morning, the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, when the enemy attack came, it came from artillery and missile launchers by the thousands on a twenty-five mile front to the east of Moscow, and on a fifteen mile front to the south. It was a bombardment and barrage, the likes of which had not been seen before in the history of war. Off to the east and south, the night sky literally lit up, brighter than during the day, and stayed lit, with a pulsating, reverberating kind of light that simply would not go away. Short seconds later, the entire terrain in front of, along and behind the allied lines also lit up ... with thousands and thousands of explosions. Deep, earth-penetrating blasts that shook the earth for miles, ground-level blasts and airbursts that racked the prepared defenses with shrapnel from above.

Electronically observing it from his deeply buried forward command post, General Andrei Nosik realized with a start and with perspiration beginning to run down his face that the memory of his dream had come fresh into his mind. Except this time, it was not a dream plaguing his sleep, it was harsh reality. For over two and a half years he had been filled with strong feelings of foreboding from that dream since he had first experienced in Siberia. He had done everything in his power to prepare his forces and his superiors for what that dream forebode ... and now, despite his every effort, here he was living it out.

He recognized the incessant flashing lights from his dream as the flash of this artillery and missile barrage ... and it was directed at his forces ... directed at him. Like in the dream, it went on and on, a constant reverberating light, but unlike the dream the constant roar of the explosions, although not completely audible, was rumbling through the structure all around him, conveyed through the earth ... reaching out, searching...wanting to destroy him and his forces.

And, like in the dream, he had already seen the masses streaming to the east to escape the tide of death and destruction. All across the *Rodina*, from Volgograd to Moscow to his own home city of St. Petersburg, millions of people, Russian people...refugees...streaming to the west by foot, on roads, following rivers, across country...any way they could. And no one to help them. In the past, it was at this point that he always woke up...in a cold sweat, shaking. Now, the cold sweat was continuing, and the shaking was all around him...but he was not waking up from this dream, it was harsh reality, and he was experiencing it...living it out.

They all knew what was coming next, and they had prepared as best they could for it. After over eight hours of incessant pounding, at 08:20 the enemy attacked, rolling in behind another barrage.

As that barrage lifted, from all across that front, not massed as they had been in Alaska, or cramped into static defensive positions as they had been in Israel, the enemy advanced, roaring with a yell that could be heard over the den of combat for miles. It was the most massive single assault in the history of mankind, over three million men and their materiel in the initial assault wave alone, all across the front. Too dispersed for the AGM-999 missiles to halt all along those two fronts...and now too close to the allied forces for nuclear weapons to be used.

"Perhaps that is where this leads," thought the General, "a final '*how I shall grapple with thee*', and then death to both sides."

But the General's plan now began to be executed. The largest barrage of cruise missiles in the history of warfare was now unleashed by Russia and her allies against the attacking force of the CAS and the GIR. They were not the unbelievably effective AGM-999 missiles of the Americans, but they were every other variety of land attack cruise missile available to the allies, from Russian, German, French, British and limited American stocks...and the enemy had to presume that they were the more deadly missiles. They came streaming across the battlefield by the hundreds, and then by the thousands. Anti-aircraft missiles rose in their thousands from the Chinese, Indian and GIR assaulting divisions and were very effective at knocking them out of the air in burning, crashing, exploding debris that impacted on both sides of the engagement. But with so many cruise missiles, hundreds and hundreds exploded amongst the enemy, making perceptible dents in their offensive, and even more importantly, channeling that offensive where General Nosik wanted it to go.

Andrei was implementing a plan that was meant to herd the masses of attacking enemy into two major channels, one here to the east of Moscow, and another to the south. Those channels represented two natural river drainages from which the enemy could approach Moscow. They were channels where he knew the enemy had severely damaged his forward and secondary lines of defense with their artillery and missile barrage and would pour through towards the city unimpeded. He knew this because in those positions, the lines had been vacated late last night under the cover of the inclement winter weather before the barrage began. Those defending forces had fallen back to the outer suburbs of Moscow proper and were waiting there now, the final defense if his plan failed, and a strong counter attack force if it succeeded.

On the enemy came, fierce defenses being waged against them in the areas not intentionally open to their advance. Along those lines approaching the channels to the right and left, the bulk of the massive conventional cruise missile barrage had been and were being expended. Chinese and GIR forces were rolling up against those lines and in some cases, invariably penetrating them because of the vastness of their numbers and the damage that had been done to those lines by the enemy barrage. In those cases, the General was hoping that his secondary lines and his reserves would be enough to

contain them and channel them into what they had to believe were their major breakthroughs along the two channels the General had prepared.

And it was working. Like flowing water seeks the easiest course, the advancing enemy hordes began to flow and then pour through the paths of least resistance.

By 11 AM, along those two channels, each no more than two miles wide, hundreds and hundreds of thousands of enemy troops were massed and approaching Moscow rapidly, almost unimpeded. To the east over one million, two hundred thousand Chinese and Indian troops were gathered in that channel on a two mile front and extending back over eight miles to the rear. To the south, over seven hundred thousand GIR troops had been funneled into a channel comprising a one and a half mile front and extending back almost nine miles. Each of these vast armies had over fifteen hundred APCs and IFV's and over six hundred main battle tanks. They were forces that would absolutely crush and pulverize the Russian capitol if they were able to reach it, and that was the risk General Kosik took.

Now, flying up the valleys, low to the ground, flying well under the massive aerial dogfights above the battlefield, came the eighty American AGM-999, Hail Storm missiles. There would be no second wave of missiles this day, all missiles available were being expended in this great gamble to halt the enemy offensive at the very door of Moscow.

To the east, fifty American missiles, carrying over 1,500,000 depleted uranium pellets assaulted the attacking enemy forces. Very few of them were intercepted by Chinese missiles as most of those defensive missiles were continuing to intercept the much greater numbers of conventional cruise missiles attacking the flanks of the enemy columns. Across that two mile front, the American missiles laid down a wall of hail and hell over three miles deep. Not enough to destroy the entire column by far, but more than enough to halt it, jamming it up against the absolute destruction to its front. Over 400,000 enemy soldiers and their equipment were destroyed in the space of less than ten minutes.

A virtual repeat of the same occurred to the south. There, the thirty American missiles laid down a complete suppressive wall all across the one and a half mile front and back into the enemy columns over two miles, killing and destroying another 280,000 of the enemy and creating a massive log-jam as the enemy to the rear ran up against the total destruction to their front.

It was the most massive destruction of men and materiel in the history of warfare and in the history of mankind...but it did not entirely halt or turn this battle. The enemy was simply too numerous and was still pressing forward with over a million men in their initial wave across the battlefield, and another three million in a secondary wave that would attack late that afternoon.

But the allied forces were not waiting for that.

As soon as the massive destruction to the front of those two channels was observed, General Nosik gave the order for his counter attack. Over one million allied troops and their own armor, fell in on the flanks of the two channels that had been created in their own lines. The forces that had been pulled back the night before then attacked all along the front of those same channels. The Chinese, Indian and GIR troops that had been channeled into those areas were now surrounded and being fired on from well planned and executed overlapping and mutually supporting firing positions.

It was a battle of epic proportions, literally millions of men and materiel engaged at one time in the killing fields to the east and south of Moscow. It was also turning into a slaughter of biblical proportions as the initial assault waves of the enemy forces were surrounded and on the verge of annihilation late that afternoon. That is when the second wave of the enemy attacked.

That attack was accompanied by an artillery and missile barrage almost as massive as the first. The CAS and GIR commanders had determined to let those barrages fall all across the front, and in particularly right on top of where the initial wave was still engaged with allied forces. It was the enemy's version of "*letting God sort it out*" and it worked to great effect. The portion of the enemy first assault wave captured in the two channels, now given up as a lost cause by their own commanders, was savaged and further destroyed by that barrage, but the allied forces out in the open fighting them were also terribly damaged.

General Nosik called up the last of his own reserves as the battle see-awed back and forth across over forty miles of front. It went on and on, first for days, and then for weeks. Casualties were massive, unheard of...literally numbering in the millions. In spite of the cold, disease broke out in ravaging waves as the dead remains of the unburied were scattered across the field of battle.

On the eighth of December, the Chinese and their allies made a massive feint to the north, and then punched directly into the city of Moscow from the east, penetrating over five miles into the city and coming within two miles of the Kremlin. The government had been evacuated two months earlier to St. Petersburg, but the possibility of losing the Kremlin was like a shot of adrenaline to the Russian morale, their troops fighting like mad men. Initial allied thoughts of abandoning the city and withdrawing to the east were rejected by the Russian high command.

The savagery of the resulting street to street fighting was unparalleled as the battle raged for days close to the historic seat of government. More reserves and volunteers were rushed in from throughout Europe. The intense fighting saved the Kremlin from capture, but much of it was destroyed in the artillery, armor, and air battles that accompanied the fighting. Ultimately, by December 14<sup>th</sup>, enemy forces were driven from the capitol in a massive counter attack of over one and



a half million men made possible by the arrival of over 450,000 French, Polish, Czechoslovakian and Finnish troops that were immediately thrown into the offensive.

During the fourth week of December, just before Christmas, enemy troops were conducting a general withdrawal to the east back towards Gorkiy and to the south towards Tambov where they intended to take up defensive positions. They carried with them the remains of several of the downed U.S. AGM-999 missiles that were to be rushed back to points far to the east and south for analysis. CAS and GIR engineers and planners were anxious to come up with new defenses and strategies for countering these weapons that had cost them so much, and halted and turned back the major offensive operations of their nations right at their zenith. Those defenses would not be long in coming.

For their part, the allies in Russia were content to snipe at their enemy's flanks during their withdrawal and keep close watch upon them. Allied forces were simply too spent to cope with the Russian winter while conducting a continuing offensive to push their enemies further to the east and south. They would have to first regroup and re-provision themselves with weapons, aircraft and ammunition of all types, including more AGM-999 missiles, before they could sustain further major offensive operations. Both sides had worn themselves out in the fighting around Moscow where over two and one half million military personnel had died, and another four million had been wounded in the course of six weeks of the most intense fighting the world had ever known...and those figures did not begin to account for the horrendous, unimaginable civilian casualties. It would take the entire next year to bury the dead and clean up the debris of war around Moscow.

Those same conditions would hold true in Israel and north of Anchorage, Alaska where service personnel and citizens would be finding small pieces of debris for years to come. In the three epic battles, Anchorage, Israel and Moscow, millions had died on both sides and millions more had been wounded. Over the space of six weeks, these pivotal battles had been fought and decided in three vastly separate places on the earth's surface. Their outcome would ultimately be pointed to as the pivotal moment in the history of all mankind. But as monumental as the battles were, the fighting and carnage was far from over and the ultimate outcome of the war was far from decided.

### **December 22, 02:20 Local Time**

#### **125 miles West of Juneau, Alaska**

#### **The Gulf of Alaska, The Pacific Ocean**

The four ships made their way northward, a convoy carrying men and supplies up to Anchorage for the war effort. There were two older naval transports, a newer Whidbey Island amphibious ship packed with men and supplies, and a single Arleigh Burke class Aegis destroyer outfitted with the new SUBT CIWS system.

As they progressed, they were constantly monitored by an E-3 Sentry aircraft out of Elmendorf Air Base and an E-2C AEW naval aircraft off of the Theodore Roosevelt. CAP aircraft from the base and carrier were in the air at all times. Further offshore, three Los Angeles class attack submarines, also outfitted with SUBT CIWS, monitored the approaches to Anchorage, and the inside passage.

With the recent victory near Anchorage and the continuing counter attack into the interior of Alaska, the commanders of the ships thought they were relatively safe... but they were wrong.

Suddenly, on the threat boards on the Aegis destroyer, the U.S.S. O'Kane, and aboard the U.S.S. Rushmore, warnings sounded and sonar operators picked up the unmistakable sound of rocket engines in the water resulting from the rapid approach of Killer Whales. It was quickly apparent that six were approaching, one for each of the transports, and two each for the O'Kane and the Rushmore.

The Captain of the O'Kane, had positioned himself perfectly to handle any attack from seaward, exactly from where these weapons were closing on his position. The Rushmore was directly to his left and only two hundred yards away. The transports were in a tight formation, behind the Rushmore, well within range of the destroyers SUBT CIWS. Though concerned upon receiving the reports of the enemy Killer Whale weapons, the captain knew he had the best defense possible and was confident his SUBT CIWS turrets would destroy the enemy weapons...but he was wrong again.

Eight hundred yards out from the O'Kane, just as the weapons were coming into effective SUBT CIWS range, the two weapons targeting the Burke class destroyer broached the surface, rising twenty feet into the air, continuing to approach the warship, but now increasing their speed to 700 knots. The forward Phalanx CIWS was immediately activated, but it took it over two seconds to power up, lock on and engage the first target. In that time the two weapons had closed over six hundred yards and were beginning to angle down towards the ship's waterline, only a second away from impact.

The Phalanx fired a one second burst which impacted and exploded the first weapons an instant before it impacted the ship. Then the second weapon impacted and dove halfway through the vessel before exploding below the bridge. The combined energy of both weapons wreaked horrific damage on the vessel and rolled it completely over on its side, where it capsized before being struck a glancing blow by a third weapon. That final glancing blow and explosion only hastened the O'Kane's sinking three minutes later.

Each of the older transports, now helpless against the weapons approaching them, were devastated by terrific explosions and loss of life. Both of them quickly settled into the cold waters of the Gulf of Alaska as the massive rents the weapons had opened up in them opened the ships to the sea and they both also sank.

The U.S.S. Rushmore was more fortunate. The two weapons attacking her flew through the wreckage of the O'Kane and one of them impacted that ship as it rolled over, causing that weapon to explode above her side. The second weapon continued on in towards the Rushmore, but was engaged by its Phalanx CIWS and one of its RAM missile launchers. These defenses intercepted the target, but not until it was close enough to the ship that the explosion and debris impacted the side of the vessel and caused significant damage and a substantial loss of life amongst the sailors and marines there. But unlike the other ships in the convoy, the Rushmore was not ripped open to the sea.

For over three hours helicopters from the Rushmore and others arriving from Juneau picked up survivors. Damage control crews extinguished the fires and made emergency repairs on the Rushmore. In the end over fifteen hundred American lives were lost, and another, new and perilous threat was revealed. Lu Pham and his engineers had opened another chapter in the sea war.

**December 24, 21:00 EDT**

**Presidential Christmas Address, The Oval Office**

**The White House, Washington, DC**

President Weisskopf looked directly into the camera. He knew he was looking out at well over two hundred million Americans this Christmas Eve. He hoped that what he had to say would be conveyed to the heart and soul of America to prepare the nation for the long road ahead.

"My fellow Americans. I greet you this Christmas Eve with the traditional spirit of the season, a spirit of brotherhood and joy, despite the monumental crisis that we face as a nation and as a people.

"Despite the travail, we have much to be grateful and thankful for this Christmas Eve my fellow Americans. Despite the best efforts of our enemies, and make no mistake, those efforts are directed at us with hate and ire...but despite those efforts, we still live in freedom and relative peace, and we are still the most prosperous nation on the face of the earth, one the entire free world now looks to for leadership and example.

"And around the world we are providing that example. Tonight I will speak to you of three monumental victories we have recently achieved. You may already have heard something of them.

"For over three years, our world has witnessed an outbreak of tyranny and war on a scale never before experienced. We have been set back on our heels for that entire time, riding from one major disappointment to another as we strove to hold out against the evil rising out of China, India, and the Greater Islamic Republic. Never has the world experienced an Axis of pure unmitigated terror and evil as has been perpetrated by the confederation of these nations. Scores of millions are dead, hundreds of millions are injured and experiencing unspeakable horror, *billions* have been subjugated.

Never before has so much of the world been brought under the domination and subjugation of such tyranny. From west of the Ural mountain in Russia stretching east across the Bering Straits into Alaska, from the Arctic Ocean across all of Asia and covering the entire continent of Australia. Across an increasing portion of the underbelly of Europe and all but the slightest slice of the Mid-East. Stretching over half of Africa and including large segments of Central and South America.

"My fellow citizens, at this zenith of their growth, these powers have brought into subjugation almost three fourths of the world's population, almost four billion souls.

"I do not mean to belabor this on this Holy evening where we honor the Prince of Peace. Indeed it is an evening that should be full of rest and contentment. But, in so much of our world, there is none.

"But, here, in America, we still have a measure of peace unknown to most of the world, despite the attacks and terror on our own soil. It is my intent, it is my unalterable commitment to see that the peace that we enjoy holds, and to see that it spreads abroad over the world to overshadow and extinguish the evil rule of tyrants that have waged war upon the peaceful nations of the earth. I know from my own experiences that this is a shared commitment I have with all of you, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for that knowledge through you acts of compassion, patriotism, hard work and commitment. We must continue in that course and take heart from recent events.

"Now we have more reason to hope, a great hope that we can in fact begin extinguishing the darkness and the tyranny ... and we have it for two principle reasons. Let me speak to you somewhat about the first, which is the less important of the two, as important and necessary as they both are. The first reason is simply this...we have turned back what I consider to be the High Tide of these evil, aggressor regimes. Their evil, their hate, their compulsion and force of arms washed up hard against allied forces right here on our own soil in Alaska. It crashed hard against our own forces and those of our allies in Israel, the last free bastion in the Middle East ... and it crashed up mightily and with perhaps the greatest force against the gates of Moscow.

"My fellow citizens, in all three cases that evil tide crashed against the will, the bravery, the morality, and the liberty of free peoples...and it broke. In horrific circumstances and battles that no sane person ever wants to experience, the massed forces of tyranny...forces many times larger than

the combined might of our own and those who fought with us...forces that for the last three years have raged up and down in the world, seemingly unstoppable and unbeatable ... those forces crashed up against the forces of liberty and they were defeated...and they were defeated decisively.

"Make no mistake. This war is far from over. The *millions* who have died throwing this wretched tide back from its zenith at Anchorage, Israel and Moscow give us mute evidence at to what lies before us. The forces of evil will not go away quietly...they will rage on and fight hard to hold onto the lands and people they are exploiting, torturing, raping and pillaging. But, just as they found in these three places at the end of this year, they will ultimately be defeated decisively and absolutely.

"In closing, let me share with you exactly why the enemy will be defeated. It goes to that second reason for hope that I referred to...it goes to the basic differences between ourselves and our enemies. It is the difference between free choice and compulsion, morality and immorality, good and evil.

"What I am about to say may offend some, but it is the unvarnished truth, a truth that we have wandered away from over the course of many decades. That truth is this: our freedom is founded upon free choice and morality. Both are critical, both are absolute. This is something the founders of our Republic recognized, and I believe that they were inspired by God to do so. Yes, I said...*they were inspired by God*. I am not afraid to say that in these desperate times...and I hope that Americans of faith and goodwill will never be afraid to say those words again, ascribing our success as a people and a nation to where it rightly belongs. As an example of this, let me share with you my favorite quote from the founding fathers of this nation, a quote that strikes to the heart of what has made us strong. It is from John Adams and it goes like this.

*"We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other."*

"Adams said that in October of 1798. He knew what he was talking about. The religion he spoke of was a frame of mind that recognized that our unalienable rights derive from God and that the people are the true stewards of the conditions that would allow for the equitable exercise of those rights. Police aren't the steward, armies aren't the steward, *government* is not the steward. We are. And we *must* choose good and moral lives, of our own free will, if we are to remain free.

"That morality, that goodness is rooted in religious principles, those time honored and time proven principles of doing unto others as you would have them do to you, of loving one another as you yourself love, of not tolerating evil, of trying to help others...of faith in God. My fellow Americans, this moral foundation is the great strength that holds our institutions of liberty together. We dare not forget it, regardless of what religious persuasion we embrace...even if we choose to embrace no particular religious persuasion.

"To forget it puts us on the path to losing our liberty...and in our day, we have come perilously close to doing just that. As a prosperous and successful people many abandoned those principles and the moral compass. The result in our day, as surely as the Civil War was the result of Americans of a by-gone era turning their back on those same principles, has seen us all placed in great peril.

"Over decades, we allowed ourselves to become morally indolent and subject to greed and immorality that placed us in the gravest danger this nation has ever faced. The external threat has only been an outgrowth of a more sinister internal disease. That inner disease culminated in its most direct manifestation when we, through our legal manipulations, permitted for decades the most atrocious holocaust the world has ever known. We destroyed over two generations of our most innocent and most precious humanity...our unborn. In our arrogance we called it legal and a free choice.

"Happily, thankfully, I believe we as a people have come to our collective senses. Providence has shown us the path and allowed us one last opportunity to throw off the sickness that had beset us. Thank God, my fellow Americans that we have risen to that occasion. Thank God we have firmly placed that horror behind us, and as a people turned back to the source and well spring of our liberty...our own free will choice to be moral and to extend that morality to all of the innocent.

"I stand before you this evening and say that our successes on the field of battle over the last few weeks are tied directly, inexorably to the earlier decision by our people, through our Constitutional processes, to reverse the greatest blot and stain that has ever existed on our national consciousness. Our founders taught us that among the unalienable rights that we all enjoy, that the first is the right to life. As a people, as a nation, we have remembered that benign truth. Let us never forget it again, let us never lose our morality in such a horrific way, because in our morality, we find our liberty.

"Therefore, acting in the capacity vested in me by the people as the President of these United States, I call on all Americans to observe tomorrow, December 25<sup>th</sup>, as a National Day of Prayer, Recompense, Thanksgiving and Atonement. May we always remember and hallow the monumental battles and sacrifices that have taken place this November and December near Anchorage, in Israel and on the outskirts of Moscow where the physical forces of evil were dealt such stunning blows.

"As much as we must remember those victories, let us remember even more the date of October 12<sup>th</sup>, Columbus day, a true day of self discovery, when an even more important focal point in the

history of our nation and our people was reached. Through the Supreme Court ruling of that day, the legal sanction of the evil growing in our own hearts was dealt an even more stunning blow.

“As a result. I now believe that Providence is once again smiling down on us and we can go forward in this monumental struggle with the inner strength necessary to prevail.

“Merry Christmas my fellow Americans, may God bless you all, and may He continue to bless America in these hours of our greatest peril. Goodnight.”

## Chapter 30

“... “Whether in chains or in laurels, liberty knows nothing but victories.” – Douglas McArthur

**March 21, 21:50 EST**

**Death Row**

**Federal Detention Facility, Reston, VA**

He couldn't get the words out of his mind, even though it had been more than five months.

*“Mr. Krenshaw rose to some of the highest positions possible in our free and moral society. As a result of his love for himself, his ambition, his commitment to enemies of this nation and his corruption ... as a result of his perusal of all of these things above his commitment to his fellow citizens and the liberty that availed him of the very opportunities he enjoyed ... he threw it all away.*

*“And not only did he throw it all away for himself ... his actions led to the deaths of countless American service personnel and citizens. For all of these reasons, David Krenshaw, as great a traitor as this nation has ever known ... and it has known a few, has been given the guilty sentence he so richly deserves and it is this administration's absolute hope, that he will be sentenced to die for those crimes. An ignoble and dishonorable end to an ignoble, dishonorable, and traitorous life.”*

When he'd heard those words, the enormity of his situation had finally struck home, deep into his heart and soul. Even more so than the words *“Guilty as charged,”* uttered by the foreman of the jury on that fateful day in October of last year. For some reason those words spoken by the Attorney General of the United States at a news conference after the announcement of the guilty verdict had finally made clear to him the full extent of his situation. Up until then, he had held out hope that somehow, someday, his allies and his wealth would retrieve him from the nightmare.

But they hadn't.

As much as he contemplated those words of the Attorney General, there were still other words, uttered a few weeks later, that were emblazoned even deeper in his mind. . .and they came back to him now. If the Attorney General's words had finally awakened him to the awful state of his circumstances, those later words punctuated with utter finality the consequences. They were the words of the judge at his sentencing hearing in late December.

*“Mr. Krenshaw, it is never easy or tasteful to sit in judgment of someone's life or liberty. But in this case the task has been rendered more palatable as a result of your heinous deeds. Your treasonous crimes caused or abetted the deaths of possibly tens of thousands of your countrymen, and helped lead this entire nation to as precarious a precipice as it has ever stood upon in its long history.*

*“If ever there were a reason for maintaining and administering the death penalty, this is it. Therefore, Mr. David Krenshaw, on Counts 1, 2, 3 and 6 the Court sentences you to death by lethal injection on March 21<sup>st</sup> of next year.*

*“On Count, 4 and 5, the Court sentences you to 20 years in federal prison on each count, the sentence on each count to run consecutively. That's a total of 40 years, but the death sentence I have just imposed renders moot any further explanation of the terms of these sentences.*

*“The Court also imposes upon you for each of the six counts a fine of \$1.5 million for the aggregate sum of \$9 million to be paid by your estate.*

*“The Court accepts the government's recommendation with respect to restitution, and orders restitution in the amount of \$40 million to be paid by your estate and maintained in trust for the expected civil suits that will arise out of your guilty verdict.*

*“These are the sentences that are imposed upon you by this court in accordance with the laws of the United States. They are a fair and just sentence that are commensurate with the nature and gravity of your crimes. I only wish to God that the victims of your crimes had been treated as fairly.*

*“We shall rise above the deeds of individuals of your ilk, Mr. Krenshaw, and your allies. Make no mistake about it, in the end, we will be triumphant. Let this sentence, and its swift execution, be a warning and testimonial to all enemies and traitors amongst us or in foreign places, American justice will not be denied...it will be served.”*

The finality of that sentence had been punctuated by the swift appeals process that was a result of the wartime conditions. Two appeals had been made. The last had gone to the Supreme Court only yesterday, and the high court had refused to even hear it. Now, here he sat, just over thirty minutes before the sentence was to be executed, and there was no one left to turn to. . .he was, in the end, alone.

His wife had divorced him less than two weeks after the trial and conviction, claiming ignorance (which was absolutely true), and demanding a generous support settlement from whatever remained of his estate. As beautiful as she was, as attached to him and his career as she had apparently been. . .despite the many years. . .now she was gone and did not so much as even send him a letter.

After being taken into custody, despite his efforts through back channels with his lawyer, he had never heard from or been contacted in any way by the agents of Jien Zenim, his great mentor. As much as he had done for the man, as supportive as he had been of what he still believed were the

man's long term views...never mind the fact that millions of dollars had been paid to him for that support...Zenim and his agents had not come to his aid, had not retrieved him from this hell.

He had been stripped of his vaunted position on the Council on International Relations, the CIR, and the people within those ranks, despite significant movement towards his line of reasoning regarding current world conditions, were also distancing themselves from him as quickly as they could. The prestige and power of that influential body derived from influential politicians from both sides of the aisle, leading media executives like himself, and leaders from every part of society all dedicated to their own vision of world governance. He had harbored such great hopes of directing all of that power and influence in support of Zenim's vision. And considering the numerous setbacks to American interests precipitated by the current administration's efforts to thwart Zenim, he had thought he was on the verge of realizing that goal. But that was before his arrest and trial. Now all of them were both unwilling and powerless to help him.

Finally, his former co-workers at WNN, had all distanced themselves from him as rapidly as possible. The place where he had risen to his pinnacle of influence and wealth was now a vacuum to him. None of them had talked to him, none of them had visited him...none of them *wanted* to. Despite all he had done for the individuals he had considered loyal to him, he found that the loyalty was only skin deep...in fact, no deeper than what loyalty he held for them. Now, to a person, they justifiably claimed that their former support of his ideas and policies had been purely innocent, and that they had been completely ignorant of his involvement with the enemies of America.

"They're all backpedaling. They're all abandoning my sinking ship, every one of them," he thought as he sat up on his cot and turned towards the small table holding his last meal.

David Krenshaw knew in his heart that, if the roles were reversed, he, too, would be abandoning this particular sinking ship. So it was hard for him to cast too many aspersions towards his former associates. He was at least honest enough with himself to recognize that truth about himself. But that knowledge did not lend any comfort to him...he was the one here in this cell.

In an effort to try to afford some measure of comfort in his last hours, a priest had been made available to him. But David's complete lack of remorse or repentance had left the priest no room to provide absolution. David had heatedly communicated to the priest that he was convinced that God, if he were even willing to admit His existence, was the one who had caused David to fall from his position of wealth and influence...had in fact turned His back on David.

In the end, despite his recognition of the awful conditions he found himself in, David was unwilling to feel, let alone accept, any responsibility for his own actions. It was all someone else's fault. It would always be someone else's fault to the very end.

Like so many totally irredeemable and depraved individuals, David was only interested in his own perspective and what was in it for him. Now, even when there was nothing left in it for him but the sharp end of a needle, everyone else was to blame...even, in David's mind, God.

He got up and stepped to the small table to eat. He tried not to view it as a last meal...tried to look upon it as nothing more than a late dinner. In an effort to maintain that perspective, he had even told his guards to select the dish for him when he had been given the opportunity for a last request...whatever they thought appropriate. Now, as he sat down he found that his efforts to treat the meal as any other dinner would also be denied him.

While removing the stainless steel cover from the plate holding the food, he smelled the entrée briefly before he saw it. Looking down, the recognition and the finality of this last meal...and the reasons for it...flooded his mind and he began to sob.

Chow Mein.

**March 21, 22:26 EST**

**Execution Chamber**

**Federal Detention Facility, Reston, VA**

Director Andy Syke, along with approximately twenty other individuals in the witnessing room, watched the small entourage as it made its way down the hall to his left and to the door of the small room with the single bed and medical equipment in it. Like the hallway, that room was separated from the witness room by a row of thick glass windows. Audio was channeled into the room through a speaker system built into the walls.

As he watched, Andy could see the warden, a priest, the doctor, and four prison officers...and there was David Krenshaw, supported between two of the officers, sobbing uncontrollably, being carried along, his feet dragging, his body limp as he was unable or unwilling to support himself.

"What a miserable excuse for a person," the Director thought.

The Director and FBI Agent in Charge (AIC) of the investigation and apprehension of Krenshaw had suspected all along that at his core, Krenshaw was cowardly and totally self-serving, not at all dedicated to the ideology of the cause that had bought and paid for him over the years. Now Sykes was himself witnessing the obvious verification of that suspicion.

Andy turned to Attorney General Hull, who was seated next to him and who had made a point of being present at the execution on behalf of the administration.

“Mr. Attorney General, in all my years I don’t believe I have ever seen such a miserable excuse for a human being. It almost makes one pity him.”

Dean Hull turned to the AIC who had been so instrumental in bringing Krenshaw to justice.

“Andy, you are right, Krenshaw is pitiful...but I have no doubts that his current *pain* is only because he was caught and is finally having to face the consequences of his actions.

“We can never afford to forget how many good, honorable Americans are dead because of the actions of that totally depraved and traitorous excuse of a human being. He was wholly without remorse throughout the time he was committing these crimes and throughout his trial. I cannot pity him in the least, and though I do not relish what we are about to witness, I am nonetheless gratified that such an individual as this will now have to account for the damage he has caused.”

Andy Syke agreed with the Attorney General and was anxious to punctuate that agreement.

“Well, I agree whole-heartedly with that. Perhaps pity was not a good word choice. We surely can’t afford to show him an ounce of it, irrespective of how sad an excuse for a person he is, and irrespective of what he looks like at this minute.

“One thing is for sure: he and his handlers did not show us any pity, nor would they have wasted it on us in the future if Krenshaw had been allowed to continue his agenda. Irrespective of his own weaknesses, our enemies used Krenshaw effectively against us, and I, for one, am glad he is soon to be permanently out of play. I just hope that any more like him are deterred by this administration of justice, or that we find them soon and administer a similar form of justice to them.”

The Attorney General nodded as Krenshaw was physically picked up and placed on the bed.

“Well said, Director, well said. Here we go.”

At this point Krenshaw, who had been limp and had required help from the guards, began to resist, kicking and flailing his arms and legs wildly in an effort to get off the bed. His incoherent yells and screams could be heard from the other room. The four large guards, one handling each appendage, held him firmly in place despite the struggle while the attending doctor fastened the restraints around his arms, legs, body and head.

Finally Krenshaw was completely restrained. The only indication of his continued struggle was his red face, and a few very restricted movements around the arm and leg restraints. He no longer yelled and an almost eerie, calm settled over the room.

Upon a nod from the warden, the doctor placed an IV tube into Krenshaw’s exposed arm and attached it to a drip that was wheeled over next to the bed. A small delay ensued as everyone waited for almost thirty seconds until the appointed time. At precisely 10:30 PM, after the warden had the exact time recorded, he nodded again to the doctor who then turned to the medical equipment and activated the drip, allowing the lethal fluid to begin flowing into David Krenshaw’s veins.

Within twenty seconds Krenshaw’s further struggling stopped. His eyes remained open and he continued to move his eyeballs around wildly for another minute as the drug continued to take effect. Then his eyes closed and he appeared to drift into a deep sleep. About two minutes later, his entire body experienced two quick spasms, followed by his breath coming short and very quickly for a few seconds. Then he lay completely still.

At precisely 10:36 PM the attending doctor examined him once more. When he was finished, he turned and looked to the warden and the witnesses and pronounced David Krenshaw officially dead.

As Andy Sykes and the Attorney General rose to leave the room, Andy distinctly heard the Attorney General, who himself had been a U.S. Army Ranger when younger, whisper:  
*“Sic Semper Tyrannis.”*

### **April 3, 02:37 EDT**

#### **Isolated Training Area**

#### **Eglin Air Force Base, Florida**

The two rotors were still turning as the eight man team came down the ramp out of the tail end of the modified Osprey aircraft and quickly made their way into the forest next to the small clearing. No sooner had they cleared the back ramp of the aircraft than the Osprey canted its rotors slightly forward, leaned that way and took off, leaving the men to their own devices.

None of the eight wore uniforms or any identifying insignia. All eight of them were using the latest generation night vision equipment and carrying MP5SD submachine guns and other equipment on their backs. They communicated through miniature radios that were fitted to small ear-pieces lodged in each of their right ears and to small microphones that wrapped around their face, positioned near their mouths. All of them were fluent in Spanish.

Despite the lack of official uniforms, if ever captured with the equipment that they carried, that equipment itself would identify who they fought for, whether they were personally identified or not. For this reason, most of their high-tech equipment, except for their miniature and very powerful digital radio, would be cached in a specific area about two miles from their landing zone for later use after they had met up with their point of contact (POC) on the ground. That contact was a long-time partisan and CIA operative who had been working for the United States government for many years.

The meeting with their POC and the expeditious caching of their equipment was what the soldiers were practicing this early morning in the Florida woods.

They had been practicing and training for the various aspects of their operation for over eight weeks. Eight grueling weeks of 14 to 16 hour days covering every conceivable aspect of their mission. From the insertion and meeting of their POC, to the caching, to every alternative for accomplishing their mission in advance of the major U.S. military operation that would follow. Tonight was the last practice run at the insertion. Four days from now, on April 7<sup>th</sup>, the practice would become reality.

Sergeant Hernando Rodriguez considered all of this as he led the team into the trees. Once completely under cover of the trees and in their shadows, Hernando used hand signals and instructed the others to quickly kneel down and take up defensive positions from which they could observe the small clearing they had just left, and from which they could watch for the signal indicating that their contact had seen them and all was safe.

After the intense fighting in Alaska over the last several months, Hernando had welcomed the call back to the lower forty-eight states. He knew it meant that he would be picking up where he had left off before being called north with so many others to fight the Red Chinese invasion across the Bering Strait in June of last year. That invasion had been spectacularly successful for the Chinese and ominous for America and her allies. Nome had fallen, Fairbanks had fallen, Prudhoe Bay and the American north slope oil fields had fallen, and then been destroyed by the Americans themselves using nuclear demolition devices. It had all finally been stopped right at the outskirts of Anchorage with the use of the new Hail Storm missiles that American forces had employed.

Although the Chinese had not been completely defeated in Alaska to date, they had now fallen back to a strong defensive position well to the east of Nome, which they continued to occupy. American and Canadian forces were now building up for the upcoming offensive in the spring. More AGM-999 Hail Storm missiles were being produced and stockpiled as rapidly as possible for use in that big attack that would hopefully eject the Chinese from North America for good.

Hernando had been called back south just ten weeks earlier, before the big offensive could begin. After an all too short two week leave to visit his wife and son in Miami, he had returned to Eglin Air Force Base to prepare for this mission with the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Operations Detachment-Delta (SFOD-D) that he had been assigned to and training with before the fighting began in Alaska.

Along with the allied offensive in Alaska, the United States and its allies were also on the offensive in Israel, where American, British, and Israeli forces had used masterful strategy to advance well beyond Damascus on the north, and had retaken the Egyptian capital of Cairo and the Nile River valley in the west.

Similarly, near Moscow, Russian, European and American forces were going on the offensive this spring as well. As a result of all of this, allied prospects had dramatically shifted for the good, as they were moving forward, pushing back the Greater Islamic Republic (GIR) and Coalition of Asian States (CAS) forces in these critical areas around the globe. This included Hernando's upcoming operation where the U.S. leadership was now directing more resources and energies back towards what was viewed as unfinished business in the Caribbean.

The long-awaited move against Cuba was now in the final stages of preparation, and a critical part of its overall success would hinge on the success of this covert mission in which Hernando would take part, and in which he would personally play such a pivotal role. The invasion of Cuba was slated for April 14<sup>th</sup>, and its prospect of success would directly correlate with the successful completion of Hernando's mission starting on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Those parameters provided for the quickest victory with the least resistance.

Hernando was proud to have been selected for this pivotal role in the overall operation. Having successfully made the transition from the Ranger Regiment to the Delta Force, he was certain that the best of the best would be able to get the job done for the nation. He thanked God and his parents for his upbringing that had put him in such a position. He prayed he would do well, that he would make his wife and son, his parents, his superiors, his nation, and his God proud of him.

...and his prayers would soon be answered.

**April 5, 14:45 local time**

**Presidential Residence**

**Havana, Cuba**

Fifteen year old Ernesto Contrerez shut down his personal computer where he had been reviewing the latest data available to him on the war, and got up from his desk. He walked out of his personal, finely adorned bedroom into the large living room of the central air-conditioned mansion to watch his satellite TV in the hopes of catching a WNN report. As he did so, he reflected again on his position in Cuban society. At times like this, it never ceased to amaze him that he lived in such opulence, while so many of his countrymen lived in such poor conditions...even squalor.

His father lived with him here in this wing of the Presidential residence as they had done for several years. His father drew a fine wage from the state for just assenting to whatever it wanted with



respect to Ernesto. The two of them often found themselves trotted out before the local and international press, and displayed as a shining example of what the state and its glorious leader could accomplish for the individual.

But now in his twenties, Ernesto had formed definite opinions of his own in that regard. Like any young person, he was prone to question those in authority over him, particularly his parents, and he had a lot of questions for both his biological father and for the individual who acted as his father in fact, his *Padre*. Ernesto knew that the Cuban dictator viewed himself as the father of the entire nation, but he made sure that he kept both Ernesto and his father close to him in particular.

But these questions and thoughts were not something he dared raise openly with either his own father or his *Padre*. If nothing else, years of living in near proximity to the mechanisms of the state apparatus had taught him at an early age what he could safely explore openly and what he couldn't...and the questions he had regarding his own position in society, and how that society provided for him and for his countrymen, were definitely off limits.

In the end, Ernesto knew that his biological father was utterly bought and paid for by, and at the beck and call of, the leader of their nation and its apparatus. His dad had found himself in the right place at the right time over when events concerning Ernesto had unfolded on the international stage, and he had immediately moved to take advantage of them by being the absolute lackey of the state and demanding complete custody of Ernesto.

"I'm not sure that he had any viable choice," thought Ernesto as he reflected on those events.

"Not to have done so would have probably meant his death."

But as Ernesto thought about that, his recollection was drawn back to another individual, and the very real death that individual had experienced. His mother had died smuggling Ernesto out of Cuba in 1999 when he was only six years old.

"She had *given* her life for me on those waters and she had done so freely," Ernesto reflected, "and she had done it in an effort to deliver me out of this hellhole to what she was sure would be a better way of life, a life she felt God had led her to risk everything to obtain for her son."

Now, years later, Ernesto had never forgotten his mother, or her faith, even though his father and El Macho himself were sure that they had obliterated any capitalist or other American tendencies left over from those few months Ernesto had spent in America.

But they were wrong, utterly and completely wrong. Ernesto, while at the focal point of that international incident between Cuba and America, had not forgotten the experiences. He was, to this day, constantly comparing what he was being told by the state with what he had experienced in America...and what he was being told by the state was coming up very short. He thought back on it again as he sat down in the soft, deep cushions of the couch and turned on the television.

"So much freedom...how could they all be so free?" he thought.

"I can still remember it.

"So much love from my aunt, uncle and cousins. So much prayer to God on my behalf...prayers said openly and without fear.

"So much care from those who saved me from the sea. So much love from so many others--and they helped me in spite of their state apparatus at the time...and not to garner favors from it."

...and the food and material wealth those people had, he still marveled when he thought on it.

"So much to eat and so many comforts for everyone! How could it be...how could so many of them have such positive outlooks, even when their own government at the time was doing all it could to kiss up to El Macho?"

In his heart, Ernesto knew why.

"It is because they are truly free," he whispered to himself.

And so Ernesto had not forgotten. At first, upon being delivered back to Cuba, he had been too young to recognize the significance of those memories. He had nonetheless locked them away in a quiet, secret place within his mind.

As first the months, and then the years passed, he pulled them out to examine them often, sometimes late at night, sometimes when he pretended to be listening to his tutors and handlers, sometimes when he was taken to the estates out in the country to hunt or fish. He would review them over and over in his own mind, determined not to forget his mother or his relatives, or the things he had seen, heard and experienced in America. Now he had developed his own opinions about what it all really meant.

At the time of his mother's death, and his brief stay in America, the experience was a whirlwind, and he was so young. There was little time to reflect upon the deeper meaning of it all. Now he was older, and after considering the conditions around him from what he considered to be a much more mature and informed perspective, and after comparing them to the memories emblazoned in his heart and in his mind, those opinions had crystallized. He believed he understood why his mother was willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice to get him to the shores of America. And now he wanted, perhaps more than anything else, to repay her for that sacrifice.

Despite the inherent dangers of harboring such opinions, and the greater dangers of ever expressing them openly, Ernesto knew that life in Cuba was a lie. It was a lie that was being fed to the entire world to justify that which could not be justified...to support a decadent and perverse system.

It was a lie that to this day sullied the memory, the faith, and the sacrifice of his mother. It could not be allowed to stand, and Ernesto, emboldened by the determination and ideals of youth...and by his own faith in that same God his mother had relied upon...was resolved that he was going to do something about it, do something to turn it around and expose the truth.

...and he already knew who he could count on to help him accomplish it.

**April 8, 14:45 local time**

### **COSTIND Headquarters Facility**

#### **Beijing, China**

Admiral Lu Pham was genuinely gratified at the report he had just delivered to General Hunbaio, the head of the Chinese Commission of Science, Technology and Industry, and to Chin Zhongbaio, a ranking member of the Politburo and President of the Chinese Ocean-going Ship Company.

Lu had known both men for a long time now, ever since they had brought him from Vietnam to China to resurrect the supercavitating models and projections he had developed back in the 1970s as a young officer in the service of the fledgling North Vietnamese Navy. The Chinese had given him all the resource and authority required to bring those old models and designs into full, modernized production and had rejoiced with him when they had ultimately been successfully used to surprise the U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet over three years ago, at the onset of the World War they were now embroiled in. As a result, naval warfare and the historically U.S. advantages were drastically altered.

Despite that victory, and the others that followed, Lu had never underestimated the Americans. They had quickly developed their own defenses to what Lu had wrought. But their initial efforts had been ineffective in countering the LRASD weapons, or "Killer Whales,:" as they were now called.

"Until last summer," thought Lu.

That is when the Americans, with the advent of their SUB-CIWS, Submerged-threat Close In Weapons Systems, had very nearly overcome the Chinese edge.

Those new defensive weapons continued to be a very real concern for Lu and his engineers and developers...and for the entire Chinese military leadership. The Americans had drastically reduced the effectiveness of the supercavitating weapons by employing underwater supercavitating defenses against them. So successful had these systems been in defending American ships, that they indeed threatened to turn the tide of the naval warfare drastically back in favor of the Americans late last year.

But with the deployment of the latest Batch 4C upgrades to the LRASD weaponry, the Chinese had once again vaulted to what they felt was a secure position. That upgrade had been successfully developed in China and tested in the Yellow Sea in the fall of last year, and then had seen its first combat use in December. That relatively minor engagement had proven a complete success when a U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke Aegis destroyer, equipped with the new American SUB CIWS, had been sunk along with two of the three transports it had been escorting. Had there been more weapons available at the time, the entire convoy would have been sunk. If enough weapons could be deployed, the destruction of those forces off Anchorage was still possible, which would allow the PRC forces in Alaska to stop the American offensive and maintain a strong foothold in North America.

But large scale deployment was still a problem. The Chinese Navy had literally taken prototypes and used them in combat before full scale production procedures and practices had been developed. There simply had not been very many weapons, outside of what their R&D facilities could manually put together, until full scale production could be instituted, and that time was now very near.

The new upgrade was capable of being retro-fitted to any of the various LRASD configurations, allowing the weapon to approach their targets at supercavitating speeds and then rise out of the water like a missile when approaching the American SUB CIWS effective range. Then, the sea-skimming missile, approaching in excess of 600 knots, would skim the sea and impact low on the vessel within a matter of seconds of taking flight. And it would accomplish this, as had been shown in the case of the sunken Burke destroyer, more quickly than the American missile defenses could react against it.

As a result of Lu's and his team's innovations, soon the Chinese would begin to retrofit and upgrade about half of the shallow attack, the deep attack, the air-launched, and the intelligent loiter configurations of the LRASD weapons currently in inventory to the new terminal, sea skimming attack capability. The upgrades would begin rolling out to the Pacific next month, then the Indian Ocean, followed by the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean.

It was the status of the weapons system themselves and their production roll-out schedule that Lu had just briefed his leadership on. They were very relieved to hear the positive report, and hopeful that the Allied offensives that were currently underway could be contained. These offensives were the allied follow up to the defeats that the CAS and the GIR had experienced late last year.

As he opened up his portion of the meeting for questions, Lu was secure in his own estimation that the CAS naval advantage, even if somewhat reduced, could now once again be firmly re-

established, allowing the Chinese and her allied forces to severely threaten and contain their enemy's offensives on the high seas.

**April 8, 18:37 local time**  
**COSTIND Headquarters Facility**  
**Beijing, China**

After the meeting, as he departed in his official state limousine for his ultimate report to Jien Zenim and the executive council of the Politburo, Chin Zhongbaio could not help but note that Lu had only indicated that these new innovations would allow the PRC to regain part of what it had lost with the advent of the American SUB CIWS weapons. He never indicated that a complete advantage over the Americans would be forthcoming.

"We will not enjoy the unmatched advantage we experienced for the last three years," he thought. "That complete advantage was precisely what allowed us to make the gains we enjoyed."

He mentally listed the nations and areas that had either surrendered to, or been defeated by, the CAS and come under their control as a direct result of China being able to negate the U.S. Naval advantage, and then drive the U.S. Navy east in the Pacific to Midway Atoll.

Japan, the Philippines, Formosa, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, Malaysia, New Guinea, Australia and many, many island chains. He mentally drew a line from the west of the Samoan Islands up south and then west of New Zealand and north to the vicinity of Midway Atoll, and then on up to the Alaskan Coast. All points to the west of that line were controlled and occupied by the Coalition of Asian States, principally China and India.

As a result of these tremendous gains, the list of nations who were official members of the CAS had continued to grow as more and more of them were officially pacified and brought into the coalition. China and India had been the initial members, followed by the entire GIR (which now included the entire Islamic world). Early on, Vietnam and Cambodia had joined, followed by the induction of first Japan and then the Philippines after their defeat and capitulation. Now Malaysia and New Guinea were official members and it was hoped that within the next eighteen months the entirety of the Australian continent, to be split up into three different *people's republics*, would also be sufficiently pacified to be inducted.

Chin knew that all of this was contingent on the PRC and the rest of the CAS holding their gains and keeping the Americans at bay. He hoped they would be able to do this. He knew that a continued massive influx of military personnel and civilians, particularly throughout mainland Asia, Japan, the Philippines, and Australia, would make it almost impossible for the Americans to ever roll back the clock, despite whatever gains, if any, they were able to make in the future.

"If the GIR forces in Europe, Africa and the Mid East can hold their ground, and if our own forces in Central and South America can continue to keep America and her allies tied up in those areas, then I know we shall prevail."

But Chin knew that those were going to be very tall orders for the GIR and the CAS, particularly now that America and her allies had the taste of victory in their mouths, and most particularly as the United States continued to churn out SUB CIWS equipped ships and the new AGM-999 Hail Storm missiles. This realization focused Chin on another key component that the PRC itself would have to focus on to assist with the overall CAS success.

"Our efforts within the United States are going to have to be stepped up. We have to curtail their production and break their spirit," he thought, and that was precisely how he would summarize his report to Jien Zenim and the executive council of the Politburo the next day.

**April 9, 23:37 local time**  
**35 km outside of Havana, Cuba**

Hernando Rodriguez considered what his point of contact had just shared with him. He had been in country for two days with his team. The insertion, caching of his weapons and contact with his POC had gone exactly as planned. Now, if the information he had just received was reliable, it would be a bonanza for American forces and allow him to completely and optimally fulfill his mission.

But the operation was risky.

Apparently, according to the POC, there was a relatively high level official in the Cuban government whom the point of contact had known for two decades and who regularly supplied data to him, which was then passed on to the CIA. That official had been hinting for the last five years that there was a potential to infiltrate the Cuban leader's direct, personal circle of influence. But that potential mole was so politically charged that the official had never been willing to be specific.

Until this week.

Now, the official had come forward and indicated that the potential mole wanted to contact the Americans and arrange for the capture or killing of the Cuban leader himself. What was more, the point of contact had determined who the mole was and the name was a shocker. The story of Ernesto Contrerez was something Hernando himself was personally familiar with. He remembered it almost as if it were yesterday. Hernando had been a teenager at the time and, being from the Little Havana

area, he had gone with his parents down to Ernesto's uncle's house to stand vigil on several occasions while Ernesto was staying there.

He had been there that fateful day when the INS, armed to the teeth like a bunch of Gestapo secret police, had stormed the house while their superiors continued negotiating with Ernesto's uncle's family for transfer of custody of Ernesto to the government so they could send him back to Cuba and his father. Hernando remembered the heavy handed tactics of those American officers-how they rifle butted their way into the house and held the family at gunpoint while absconding with Ernesto.

"I still can't believe any American administration, even one as corrupt and leftist as the one in Washington at that time, would send that little boy back to the tyranny of Cuba," Hernando thought.

But they had, and within a few months, the stories regarding Ernesto had faded from the public view, except within the Cuban community where his basic status was tracked through the Cuban grapevine as Ernesto was inducted into a life of propaganda and state-sponsored opulence.

"Now, here I am, contemplating contacting Ernesto to have him help my team capture the leader of Cuba and bring him to justice in America."

But Hernando was by now a wise and experienced combat soldier as well. One who had seen with his own eyes what the result could be if American forces were suckered in by an enemy ruse. He was concerned about the timing of Ernesto's desire. He was concerned about Ernesto's stability and commitment. It sounded too good to be true...just the sort of thing the secret police in Cuba would use to lure dissidents out into the open where they could be destroyed.

He'd have to call this one in to HQ using their encrypted and secure digital communications equipment tonight and then allow it to proceed through the proper channels. He wished he could do it this afternoon, but his orders were clear, even if time was becoming a more and more critical constraint. As he now saw it, there were two options: either take a chance on what appeared to be an almost perfect gift, or come up with another plan that would probably be equally dangerous.

Before calling in his report, he ended up sitting down with his second in command to pursue parallel options. He would work with three of the team members and pursue the planning necessary for utilizing the Ernesto Contrerez option. The other four team members would prepare another avenue for either capturing or neutralizing the Cuban leader before the invasion began.

Tonight he would propose to his superiors that they adopt this parallel approach as a part of the go forward plan. In this way, Hernando felt, after observing conditions here on the ground, that he could most productively and efficiently utilize his team to assure a successful mission.

**April 10, 9:12 EDT**

**Situation Room, the White House**

**Washington, D.C.**

The President was digitally conferenced into the meeting of his National Security team from Cincinnati. NORCOMM had made a very early morning call to the NSA, and the information from that call had quickly found its way to the President, who was on one of his ABE, visits in Ohio.

Those visits had started relatively early in the war when the terrorist attacks within the United States were at their height, and when allied military prospects were being dealt one terrible blow after another in the Pacific and the Mid East. Based on his wife Linda's suggestion, the President, the Vice President, the Director of Homeland Security, and the Attorney General began to make very public American Bolstering Effort (ABE) visits all over the nation. The effort had succeeded beyond expectation and continued to this day, despite the continued concerns of the Secret Service in terms of protecting the President and the other leaders.

Upon getting the information from Cuba, the President, at the suggestion of his National Security Advisor and with the full agreement of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had called for a meeting of the entire National Security Team to discuss the matter and arrive at a decision. The meeting was now being squeezed in before his scheduled appearance in downtown Cincinnati this morning, where he would make a speech and dedicate a new electronics packaging plant.

Addressing the assembled members of his National Security team, the President began.

"All right, every one of you has a folder containing the same information I am looking at. We have a decision to make and I believe we need to arrive at it quickly.

"Our advance Delta team in Cuba appears to have a significant opportunity that may allow for the capture of the Cuban leader. Today, in this meeting, we need to determine if it is worth the risk. General Stone, the Vice President and I have already conferred and we are of one mind. What is your take? Is this just too good to be true, or is it a viable option?"

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs had been contemplating this very question since early this morning when the information had become available to him. His own opinion was that the military had a job to do and they all knew the risks.

"Mr. President, the team leader over there is inclined to go for it and he has formulated a good fallback plan. We have granted him permission to prepare that plan and feel that the information is worth the risk. I will have to depend on others in State or in the CIA for an analysis of the young man,

Ernesto Contrerez, and his viability as a contact and concerning the possibility that his memories of our nation would lead him to this.

"I personally hope to God it is so. That would be a military, intelligence and PR bonanza all wrapped into one beautiful little package. I say we act on this and proceed."

Taking this in, the President then addressed his old friend, the Secretary of State.

"Fred, what are your thoughts?"

Fred Reissinger had his doubts. The set of circumstances was almost too good to be true. At the same time, he could see how Ernesto, despite the way the administration at the time had so roughly sent him back into the tyranny of Cuba, might well remember what he had seen and felt in Little Havana for all of those weeks back in 1999 and 2000.

"Mr. President, if this were to come off, it would be a diplomatic gold mine to use against our enemies and to influence more fence sitters. I agree with the General. I say we ask the team on the ground to use this boy to get the tyrant back here, where he can stand trial for his crimes."

Next, the President turned to the Director of the CIA, Robert Ballard, and to his National Security Advisor, Bill Hendrickson, who were sitting at the far end of the conference table.

"Well, Bob and Bill, the ball is in your court. What are your thoughts and recommendations?"

The CIA Director answered first.

"Mr. President, the government official with whom we have contact has been hinting at something like this for some time. We just were not aware of the specifics. I believe it is the real thing and that we should act on it.

"While it is true that such tactics are also used to draw our operatives out in the open, we feel that if this had been the case the information would have come to us some time ago in an effort to expose our current operative. Our recommendation is to give our team the green light and let their military command issue an execute order to them."

Bill Hendrickson, the president's National Security Advisor, took Director Ballard's last statement as his cue to speak.

"I concur, Mr. President. We are being presented with an excellent opportunity here, and if the man on the ground is comfortable with it and feels he is adequately covered with an alternate plan, I believe we should let him go for it."

The President paused for a few moments as he reflected on all of this. He remembered well the international incident and furor that had been caused by Ernesto's initial rescue, his stay in America with his relatives, and then the tragedy of the ruling that sent him back to Cuba, particularly the heavy-handed way in which that ruling was carried out.

He still cringed when he thought of officers sworn to protect and to serve, spiriting a young boy off at the point of a gun and returning that child to a life of tyranny. Well, now there was a chance to right that wrong while bringing justice to the criminal who had manipulated our own weak leaders at the time, and who had committed far worse acts of war against America since.

After a short pause, the President continued, "Any other comments on this matter?"

After a few more seconds during which there were no further responses, the President continued. "If not, then I am prepared to make a decision.

"General, you have permission to proceed. Give them the execute order. If Ernesto so desires, or if it is necessary to do so to protect him, have our people bring the boy back as well. Make sure they time the capture and in conjunction with our press briefing and with the invasion itself.

"It's time we cleaned up the entire mess that Cuba has represented for decades, and I believe that, with their dictator in chains awaiting trial for his terrorist crimes, the entire island will quickly celebrate the end of his regime and his control.

"There will be some hard days between now and then as we clean out his staunch supporters and adherents. But, based on everything I have heard and seen, I honestly believe that we will quickly see Cuba come around and enter the family of free nations once the regime is out of power.

"That is all."

**April 10, 22:50 EDT**

**Presidential Suite, the White House**

**Washington, D.C.**

Linda Weisskopf sat in the reading chair to the left of the bed and under the lamp, her copy of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* open in her lap. She was sleeping peacefully there when Norm came in and noticed her.

"How she loves Jane Austen," he thought as he marked the place and gently closed the book.

"She must have read *Pride and Prejudice* one hundred times in our married life," he thought.

"And when she finishes it, she'll read *Sense and Sensibility* again, too. Wonderful books...and a wonderful, dear woman. Thank God she has been with me all these years to help me through."

With these thoughts, the President, even though in his seventies, gently lifted her out of the chair and set her down in their bed. As he did so, her eyes fluttered open, became bright and looked into his.

"Hi there, handsome," she said.

“You be careful carrying me around...you’re not as spry as you used to be, even if you do keep working out and trying to fool yourself into thinking you are. How did your meeting go?”

The President sat down next to her and began to take his shoes off. As he did, he answered.

“Well, the operation will proceed in Cuba. The details are complete. The command staff is confident all the way up the line...including me...and our young men are champing at the bit.

“Let’s pray they can accomplish their mission successfully, and that it will have the desired impact. I know you will put in the good word with the Man upstairs to that effect, and that your communication with Him will probably have a lot more bearing than my own...but we’re doing the right thing and I honestly feel the tide has turned.

“Just lots of stormy water between here and that far, peaceful shore we’re trying to get to.”

Linda could hear the hope and confidence in her husband’s voice and she was so grateful for it. Grateful for him, for themselves, and most especially grateful that a glimmer of hope for her nation and the world was now shining.

She could also detect the weariness and fatigue in his voice.

He wasn’t as spry as he once was, and the pressure was wearing and telling on him. He hid it well from most, but he could not hide it from her.

“Norm, I am so grateful and I know you are the one who can captain this ship to that far shore. I know the good Lord is blessing you to see this through. But I have a concern.

“Now, I don’t want to sound like I am mothering you...but I am...just get enough rest. Listen to your body. You may be able to hide it from your advisors and those reporting to you, but you cannot hide it from me. I know how tired you are and I’m concerned.

“The Lord is using you. The nation needs you...I need you. Please don’t overdo it. What none of us need is for you to be down when we need you most. Promise me you’ll be more mindful, okay?”

Norm knew his wife was right. Like most men, even men in their seventies, he felt if he could just stay on his feet long enough he could take on all comers. But as a man of advanced years, and as a leader who had organized and carried out countless missions, he also knew that overstretching his logistical lines, even if they were his own personal ones, could lead to disaster for the overall mission.

“She would have been as good, if not better, a commander as I any day of the week,” he thought as he marveled at his wife’s natural insights.

She came by so many critical insights naturally when so many others had to learn them through the school of hard knocks and the great risks that went along with those hard knocks. And in this particular issue, she was right on the money. He was tired and fatigued, and he did need to step back a bit and allow some of his capable people to shoulder more of the load.

“Sweetheart, I promise. Just keep me pointed in the right direction, and through your council I’ll somehow find a way to stay on my feet.”

With that, he finished putting on his pajamas, climbed into bed next to her, and asked Linda to say a short prayer for the nation as he closed his eyes and listened to her sincere pleas.

*“Father, please continue to direct, and bless, our path as only You can, opening the doors that will lead us to victory over our enemies—those who would remove from man the blessings of liberty that are but a precious gift from You.*

*“Remind us to be humble, so that we might always seek to follow Your guidance, rather than relying on our own resources. For we know that our cause cannot succeed without Your Divine blessing and direction.*

*“Bless the men and women who are fighting. Bless those working here at home to support them...and, Father, bless the fathers and mothers.*

*“Encourage the fathers to be resolute, strong and virtuous—filled with integrity. Enable them to lead us down the path that You would have us travel, always looking to You as their unseen, but ever-present, compass.*

*“Bless this mission in Cuba that Norm has spoken of. May its success lead to peace and diminished need for conflict. We know that wars are a sad illustration of the fallen nature of man. But we also know that the preservation of God-given life and liberties sometimes renders them inevitable.*

*“Particularly now, Father, as our nation has recovered its senses regarding abortion, we pray that You would place it within the hearts of the mothers of this nation to provide their children—both those living, and those as yet unborn—with the unconditional love and nurturing that only a mother can provide...a love which is but a reflection of Thy own.*

*“In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

When she finished she heard Norm breathing evenly. She loved this man, had loved him for decades, and walked the path of life with him through thick and thin. She had faith in him and knew that his goodness, his own faith, his courage, his commitment to clear moral principle, and his determination would carry him through. After satisfying herself that he was sleeping soundly, she pulled the covers up a little more over them both, closed her eyes, and drifted off to sleep herself.

...and her prayer was repeated all over the nation in countless households, and all over the world in foxholes and tents. Be it through some form of spiritual contact guided by the Almighty, or by the

sense of mutual sharing resulting from the bond forged in difficulties—however it came about—similar thoughts and pleadings were echoed over and over again, rising to Heaven as a chorus.

Maria Rodriguez in Miami held her son tightly and prayed for the safety of her husband Hernando, whom she knew would soon see more combat. Not far away, Hernando's parents offered similar prayers for their son and his young family, thanking God for the success the nation was experiencing in the conflict. They prayed for those Providential blessings to continue, if America would just stay humble before Him.

Cindy Simmons felt it in the depths of her soul in Texas as she prepared for bed after having returned to work at the aircraft plant in Ft. Worth. Still mourning the loss of her only son, Billy, in the fighting off the coast of Australia, she now shouldered the added weight of concern for the welfare of her husband. Colonel Jess Simmons had returned to combat in the Mid East, his location and health unknown to her. But she had replenished her faith and strength at her family's ranch and as she prepared for bed in her lonely apartment, she had the same prayer in her heart that Linda Weisskopf had uttered hundreds of miles away.

In the Boston area, at her home in Nashua, New Hampshire, Elizabeth Trevor slept soundly next to her husband, Dr. Joseph Trevor. The two of them had knelt next to their bed only an hour earlier, and Elizabeth had uttered a remarkably similar prayer, seeking God's continued blessings on the nation and thanking Him for the miracle that had led to the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* and abortion practice in the United States, and asking Him for continued success in the war effort and a cessation of the conflict as soon as victory over tyranny had been achieved.

In Boise, Idaho, as Geneva Campbell was finishing the dishes and preparing for bed, she uttered a prayer in her heart for her two boys, Leon and Alan, who were both off fighting. She asked the good Lord to keep them in the protective shadow of His hand, and to use them as instruments to spread the liberty and morality that America had re-discovered by defeating the tyranny that would deny and destroy it. She asked that her husband, Jerome, would know of her love and the love of his boys up in the heavenly realm that she knew he now occupied.

...and in California, Sandra McPherson, a recently converted agnostic, in her own way offered up her thanks and the pleadings of her heart to God. Although she was not a biological mother, she had nonetheless found motherhood in the work she had recently and fiercely dedicated herself to. After decades of fetal research, using the bodies of the unborn to attempt to find her own answers to life, through the help of Dr. Trevor and his Human Reasoning Structures (HRS)...and she now recognized, through the guidance of God...she had discovered life itself and found her salvation in it.

Sandra prayed in the humility of her at-long-last discovered faith, that God would hasten the end of the conflict on victorious terms for the right. Maybe she could not be a biological mother at this point in life, but she was determined, with God's help, to be a mother to as many as she could of the unborn who would now live, no matter what circumstance into which they were born.

All over the nation, and throughout the free world, similar prayers, aspirations, hope and faith were being offered up by more and more men and woman who saw clearly that the path to victory and to peace was as much a path of morality and faith as it was of production and force of arms

...and those prayers were finding place, and impacting world events. But as with any large ship whose rudder can be turned to guide it through the mortal perils of the sea, the helm of history would only turn ever so slowly...and it would still lead through many deep swells, heavy squalls, and dangerous gales: Dangerous conditions that would otherwise damage or even sink the ship if the helm was not maintained with strength, commitment, dedication, faith, hope, and virtue.

**April 12, 12:30 local time**

**Outside the Presidential Residence**

**Havana, Cuba**

The motorcade was ready to leave and travel out into the countryside outside of Havana to one of the many Presidential estates that were maintained for the rest, relaxation, and recreation of the El Presidente. Four security cars, two in front and two in back, would protect the President's vehicle which would be carrying the President, Ernesto, and Ernesto's father. Each car carried three elite and well armed security personnel.

An observation helicopter and two attack helicopters would cover the motorcade, with the attack helicopters covering the procession from several thousand feet in the air, and the observation helicopter in advance looking for any danger. Each helicopter was equipped with the latest FLIR equipment and the most advanced weapons the Cubans could obtain.

Finally, a flight of four MiG-29 aircraft, outfitted with the latest radar and air-to-air missiles, would be loitering over the vicinity of the motorcade and the Presidential group at all times. They would be controlled by one of the new Chinese AEW aircraft the Cubans had acquired before the war. They would be backed up by eight more MiG-29 aircraft on ready alert, four each at two airfields.

This was standard security procedure for the Cuban president, and was well known to American intelligence forces who monitored the whereabouts of the Cuban leader at all times.

In this case though, thanks to Ernesto and his complicit government official, the Americans also knew the exact itinerary of the Presidential procession and were prepared to intercept it.

"I wonder if Felix has already gotten the Americans inside the Estate?" Ernesto wondered as the car left the walled-in Presidential Residence and passed by the security station there.

Ernesto and his father were sitting behind the glassed-off driver's compartment facing the rear of the car, and directly across from the President, who was sipping on a glass of wine as they traveled.

The President sat the wine goblet down in a holder that was built into the leather armrest he was using. While he did so, he caught Ernesto's father's eye, winked, and then addressed Ernesto.

"Ernesto, have grown up quickly. Soon we will make use of the military training you are receiving from your tutors. My young friend, you are destined to be a leader in our People's Paradise, and only the best training and equipment will be available to you.

"What do you think of that? Are you ready to actually handle the equipment that you have only played with in computer simulations to date?"

Ernesto knew by long experience not to give anything away in his eyes or facial expressions. He noticed his dad looking at him. A casual observer might have mistaken the look for pride, but Ernesto knew better. It was a look of craving...for the wealth that would accrue to him if his son did well.

Ernesto answered honestly, never betraying the hidden truth in the words he now directed at the President, using the familiar nickname he had given him and which the leader loved to hear.

"Padre, the lessons have been good and I know I have done well. I defeat most of the tutors and many of the military war gamers when they go up against me on the computer.

"I am anxious to put into practice what I have learned. I will make Cuba proud of me, and I know even you will be surprised at how well I conduct operations once I have been given the chance."

The President laughed out loud.

"Ha! See Armijo, your son has great *cajones*, as a future leader should have. He is sure of himself and unafraid. You should take some notes!

"Ernesto, I have no doubts that you will make us all proud and surprise us all with your capabilities. We will start next month, and see how you handle the heat."

#### **April 12, that same time**

##### **Presidential Estate**

##### **40 km outside of Havana, Cuba**

Hernando reviewed the plan in his mind.

His team of four was already here, inside the estate. His three men were all dressed as employees of the estate, just as the governmental official had indicated and provided for. Each was well armed, having retrieved their MP5s and other weapons last night and smuggled them into the estate with the help of the official and their point of contact and his men.

Several of those men, another eight to be exact, were also inside the estate with him, posing as workers as well. All of them also carried weapons beneath their work clothes and would be tasked with handling the internal, close-in security that was permanently stationed on the estate grounds.

The government official assured them that the guards at the external security posts protecting the entries into the estate were all in on the plan and would pose no threat. They would not make any moves to assist the *gringos*, but they would also not help the government teams. Their aim would be directed high, above the heads of the Americans and the others when the firing broke out, and they would not move to assist the inner security team or those arriving with the President.

Hernando and his team were to deal with the twelve security personnel arriving with the President. A tall order, but they had the element of surprise, training and the weapons to accomplish it.

He was very concerned about those two attack helicopters and the four MIGs overhead...but he had been assured by his superiors that the Cuban air assets would be handled by the U.S. Air Force when the time came. He simply had to broadcast the execute order as soon as the motorcade arrived. That would be in another twenty-five minutes if everything went according to plan.

"The government official, our point of contact and his men, those guards on the perimeter, and Ernesto are risking everything," Hernando thought as he continued to review the plan.

"*El Presidente* must like this kid...either that or we're being set up," he thought.

"We'll know soon enough...may God guide me back to Maria safely," he concluded as he set out the serving plates, preparing to join the other workers to greet the President when he arrived.

#### **April 12, 12:55 local time**

##### **Presidential Estate**

##### **40 km outside of Havana, Cuba**

Ernesto watched the security guards closely as they passed through the outer gates. He knew there were four guards at each of the three entry gates, and that their barracks nearby housed the others who were off duty. He also knew that these external guards would not interfere.

As the motorcade entered the estate, he watched the ornate and plush grounds pass by as they drove the full kilometer up to the main buildings. The estate itself covered over twelve hundred acres



and was well tended. The grounds boasted acres of fruit trees, flower gardens, fountains, wooded groves, and open spaces. There were also three stocked fish ponds and a rifle range, as well as full sized polo and soccer fields.

As they came closer, the motorcade left the asphalt main road and was now entering the circular, marble drive that led to the main building proper. The marble made for a very smooth ride for the cars in the motorcade, and Ernesto noticed that everything had gotten deathly quiet inside their car.

"It's just my nerves we've driven up these drives dozens of times and it's always this quiet."

The quiet was broken by the President himself.

"Look, Ernesto, they have all the servants out to greet us. Pretend you are the reviewing officer when we get out and let me know what you think. Don't go easy on them. Also, are you ready to fish now, or do you want to eat first?" the President asked as the motorcade began to come to a stop.

Then Ernesto saw a peculiar look pass over the President's face. He had no way of knowing that the President had a sixth sense that had served him well over the years. Ever since the Cuban Revolution, the President had developed a knack of knowing when danger was present, and he paid heed to the instinctual warnings as religiously as any pious church parishioner listened to his priest.

Leaning forward rapidly, the President rapped hard on the window and shouted, "'Manuel, pronto, get us out of here *now!*'"

The driver turned and saw the look on his President's face and needed no more. He turned the wheel sharply and stepped on the gas.

Then the firing started outside of the car.

As it did, and just as the President began to sit back, a look of understanding and then unadulterated hatred passed over his features as he glanced quickly at Ernesto and his father.

### **April 12, that same time**

#### **Presidential Estate**

#### **40 km outside of Havana, Cuba**

Hernando was just about to give the signal to attack when the Presidential limo suddenly turned its wheels sharply and accelerated, grazing the car in front of it as it fishtailed.

Disregarding the need for hand motions, Hernando first sent the execute signal to the other allied forces monitoring his communications, and then he sent a rally signal to the other four team members who were positioned outside the estate providing additional security.

He then shouted in Spanish to all of his team around him.

"*Disparen!*"

The eight Cubans who were working for the point of contact were positioned near each of the eight guards of the Cuban internal security detachment. They immediately drew their weapons from under their clothing and fired on their assigned targets.

Seven of those security personnel went down immediately, at which time they were dispatched by a second shot to the head. Those seven insurgents then began running from their various positions towards the main building to take up covering fire positions in support of the Delta team.

One of the security detachment, being in a position to see the Presidential limo make its sudden move, was alerted and prepared when the posing worker began to draw his weapon. He used his submachine gun and killed the rebel before his weapon could be drawn. This Cuban security guard now ran to the sound of gunfire to enter the firefight on the side of the Cuban security detachment arriving with the President.

Back at the main building, as his Cuban allies were cutting down most of the internal security detachment, Sergeant Rodriguez and his men went into action.

Two of his men dropped to the earth and immediately pulled compact Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) launchers from behind bushes where they had been hidden and opened fire at the leading and trailing security cars.

Both cars had already come to a complete stop, and the three personnel were trying to pile out of them when the small rockets, meant to destroy armored personnel carriers, hit the cars and detonated. The resulting explosions and infernos completely destroyed the two cars, killed four of the six personnel outright, and severely wounded the other two, who were thrown several yards away from the carnage where they lay unconscious.

At the same instant, the Presidential limo, which had clipped the security car in front of it and fishtailed halfway around, came out of the fishtail just in time to slam sideways into the wreckage of the leading security vehicle that had just been destroyed by one of the RPGs. Pushing the wreckage several feet, the limo stopped when its engine stalled and would not restart.

All of the occupants were thrown violently up against that side of the car. Ernesto's father was knocked unconscious when the President was thrown into him, knocking his head hard up against the leaded glass. The President was stunned and began to disengage himself from the unconscious man, only to find himself facing Ernesto, who was fully conscious and who had pulled out the six inch switchblade knife that the President himself had given him three years earlier on his birthday, and which the President allowed him to carry wherever he went.

Meanwhile, the firefight outside the car intensified. One of the Americans with an RPG was able to fire a second round and take out the security car that had been trailing directly behind the Presidential limo. That car had stopped and its occupants had gotten out and opened fire at the team member nearest Hernando, stitching him across the chest and in the legs, mortally wounding him.

The impact of the RPG on their car killed all three of the Cuban security guards, and set off another large explosion as the gas tank detonated, too.

This left the last Cuban security car and the single remaining internal guard, all of whom had now had several seconds to take up positions away from the last car and fire on their attackers. They were trying desperately to defend the Presidential limo which was still stalled next to the wrecked and burning lead car.

Before fire could be effectively brought to bear on them, these four men had killed four of their Cuban attackers and wounded the Delta team member who was carrying the last RPG. But then the firepower of Hernando and his last team member and the four remaining Cubans was too much.

Caught between the remaining Americans and the insurgents, the Cuban security personnel found themselves trapped in a deadly crossfire. With three of their number down, the last man raised his hands, threw down his weapon, and surrendered. The entire firefight had lasted only two minutes.

As Hernando organized his remaining men to cover the stalled limo and extract its passengers, he heard the unmistakable sound of rotors approaching rapidly from the west. Looking in that direction, he saw the all too recognizable silhouette of a HIND-D helicopter coming their way, its weapons pods filled with rockets and guns.

"I thought the Air Force was supposed to take care of those guys," he commented to no one in particular, as he began issuing orders for the remaining men to take cover.

At a distance of a half mile, puffs from around the larger pods, and small amounts of smoke from the right side of the chin of the helicopter, announced that rockets and machine gun fire were being directed at them.

"Those idiots are going to kill their own President!" Hernando screamed in frustration as the helicopter made its first pass, explosions resounding and buffeting them on either side.

As the helicopter passed over, Hernando's men exited from their cover and fired at it from underneath, hoping to disable or destroy it. But there was no visible effect on this flying tank, and the chopper began circling around for another pass.

Then, from well up in the clouds, a very bright light quickly fell and rocketed directly for the HIND. Impacting directly behind the rotor, an American AMRAMM missile literally blew off the blades of the helicopter, which then fell like a duck shot out of the air, impacting with a deafening explosion in the countryside, a little over a quarter mile on the other side of the estate wall to the east.

A cheer went up from the remaining fighters as they now surrounded the limo and demanded in Spanish for the occupants to give themselves up and exit.

There was a muffled response from inside, and two of the men rushed over and pried open the left passenger door. Once it was completely open and covered by three of the fighters, a befuddled and ruffled Cuban President exited the vehicle holding his left arm tightly, which was bleeding heavily from a deep wound running from just below the shoulder almost to the elbow.

Then Ernesto exited the vehicle, holding his knife to his side and smiling broadly. Guessing that he was the leader by his demeanor and the way he carried himself, Ernesto approached Sergeant Rodriguez and spoke to him.

"I present to you El Presidente. My name is Ernesto Contrerez."

Hernando could still see the younger Ernesto in this young man, remembering him from the evenings when he and his parents would stand vigil outside Ernesto's uncle's house in 1999. After having two men secure the Cuban President and tend to his wound, the Sergeant turned to Ernesto.

"Ernesto, I am Sergeant Hernando Rodriguez, U.S. Army.

"An aircraft will be here very soon to take the President away. We have been asked to bring you with us, my friend, back to your relatives in Miami.

"Will you come?"

Ernesto considered this, smiling broadly. He had dreamed of this day. Then, thinking of his father, and the opportunity that true freedom might afford him, he answered the American.

"If you will get my father out of the limo...be careful...he is injured...and bring him with us, I will go with you."

Hernando did not have to think twice about it. He ordered two of the Cubans to bring Ernesto's father out of the limo, rig up a litter, and carry him the three hundred yards to where they had set up their extraction point.

As they did so, Hernando saw that his other four team members had successfully entered the estate and were approaching from the north. He also noticed through the breaks in the clouds above them, that lazy circular contrail patterns were being drawn on the canvas of the sky by circling fighter aircraft, F-15C Eagles and other aircraft of the U.S. Air Force.

"Those fly boys did take care of business," he thought.

“I just love it when a plan comes together,” he said to his unwounded companion as he nodded his head upward, and pointed to the contrails above.

And then another sound came to them as they stood there near the main building on the estate. It came low over the hills and over the estate walls to the north. It was the sound of an approaching Special Forces Osprey aircraft, just like the one that had inserted Hernando and his team into Cuba on the 7<sup>th</sup>, only five days ago. Approaching rapidly, it flared overhead and then descended vertically to the ground at the designated landing zone.

Within three minutes everyone was on board, including Hernando, the rest of his team members, the now deposed Cuban leader, Ernesto and his father, and the body of the dead American.

After all of them were on board, the Osprey took off and within five minutes was well out over the Caribbean, escorted by no less than fifteen American fighter aircraft, flying towards the United States, where the Attorney General and Homeland Security officials were waiting to arrest and detain the Cuban President for his crimes against the people of the United States.

**April 14, 8:05 EST**

**White House Press Room**

**Washington, D.C.**

The room was abuzz as reporters from all of the major news services rushed to file their reports regarding the extraordinary press briefing the President had just held. It had been a complete surprise because there had been absolutely no leaks or indication to them what was happening.

This was not too surprising because, particularly after the conclusion of the David Krenshaw affair, the Weisskopf administration had proven extremely adept at keeping stories and events very close to its chest without any leaks at all. There were just remarkably few opportunities for the press to utilize “unnamed sources within the administration” to get a leg up on any major story before it was officially announced.

What was surprising and, what now had the full attention of the press, was the subject matter of today’s briefing. The headlines would almost all be phrased in similar language.

### **CUBAN PRESIDENT CAPTURED BY AMERICAN SPECIAL FORCES**

### **PROOF OF CUBAN COMPLICITY IN U.S. TERROR ATTACKS LEADS TO CUBAN LEADER CAPTURE AND HOLD OVER FOR TRIAL**

### **U.S. FORCES INVADE CUBA**

The President had laid out in no uncertain terms that the United States viewed it as its right to apprehend and try anyone who was shown to be directly involved with, or behind, the types of attacks the Cuban leader had funded and helped plan on citizens of the United States. The case against the Cuban leader was ironclad in this regard. It was based on evidence gathered through the capture of Hector Ortiz and his associates, and the breaking up of their terrorist front company. That evidence included direct testimony, taped conversations, and direct money trails back to Cuban accounts.

The military part of the operation had commenced very early that morning, long before sunrise, and was proceeding as planned. In fact, the telling thing about the military operation was the much lighter than expected resistance. There was some heavy fighting in a number of places, but it was sporadic and concentrated only in the units that were most loyal to the communist regime.

Many landings associated with the ongoing invasion, both Amphibious and Air Assault, had been completely unopposed. The heaviest fighting was occurring between Cubans themselves, in the streets, at military bases, and around the Presidential facilities.

The principle reason for the internal fighting was that pictures of the Cuban President in shackles and standing before a U.S. magistrate, the same pictures that had been shared with the press and were also being broadcast to Cubans. This was being facilitated by powerful transmitters in southern Florida, and by using television stations in Cuba which had already been captured by either American forces or by Cuban insurgents.

The pictures were encouraging many Cubans to finally rise up, certain that their dictator’s power was finally broken, and that the regime would fall quickly with American forces pouring in while the remaining communist leaders were confused and clawing at one another’s throats.

There were American casualties, and it was expected that the number would mount over several weeks of hard fighting. But it was clear on the first day, from the outset, that the fighting would relatively quickly convert to a mop-up operation once the centers of resistance had been crushed.

Therefore, this morning’s announcement was unabashedly upbeat and extremely positive.

The President took several questions, the first of which was from JT Samson of SierraLines, who had been alerted to the news conference the day before and who was able to arrive in Washington to

attend it from his home in Nevada. JT had asked about the case against the Cuban President and how the international community might view apprehending a head of state on his own soil.

The President had responded directly.

“JT, we would never think of apprehending a citizen of another country, much less a head of state, in peacetime for non-terror or non-war related crimes.

“But this head of state, an absolute dictator I might add, has waged war on our people and has been the source of funding, and planning terror operations that have killed Americans by the thousands. By his own actions he has declared war on our nation and we are responding accordingly.

“As one of my predecessors stated, creating what has become known as the Bush Doctrine that has been followed by this administration in the prosecution of this war...*if you are not with us, you are with the terrorists.*

“This individual has been deeply in bed *with* terrorists who have wreaked havoc on our nation and killed thousands of our citizens. There is not a rock on this earth we would allow him or his ilk to hide under. The case against him is solid and unimpeachable. It will be proven in a court of law, using our own system which is the fairest, most impartial, and freest legal system in the world.

“We apologize to no one for apprehending and bringing to justice such an individual, and will go after any others on whom we have such evidence.”

This answer and the overall news of the conflict in Cuba, and the reasons for it, were being received very positively by the public. Allied nations understood and respected it. Some neutral nations protested...and enemy nations took note.

As the day wore on, the apparent success in Cuba was being attributed by many as an answer to the very prayers that they had been voicing to Heaven on behalf of the American cause, and that of her allies. As time wore on, those prayers seemed to be answered as the operation proved to be a resounding and quick victory and would lead to other important success in the Caribbean.

Unknown to the press, unknown to the individuals praying for success, and unknown to the President, events of the near future would sorely test and try their faith and courage.

## Chapter 31

*“Brave men who work while others sleep, who dare while others fly—they build a nation’s pillars deep, and lift them to the sky” – Ralph Waldo Emerson*

**April 18, 15:48 local time**

**Ruling Cleric Chamber**

**Islamic Leadership Complex, Tehran, GIR**

The meeting went on and on, as they always do. All of the Grand Ayatollahs, or Ayatollah Ol Osams, would be heard in full, along with the principle Mujtahids and a few of the Mullahs. All of the speakers had a lot on their mind, which translated into long discourses about every aspect of life in the Greater Islamic Republic, from the spiritual state of the people, to the encroachment of modern conveniences and technologies, to political affairs and finally, the current military situation.

Of significant import to everyone in attendance were the briefings on the current state of the three American and western offenses now taking place in Europe south of Moscow, in the Mid East, east of Damascus, and in central Alaska. In all three areas, Western allied forces capitalizing on their victories of last fall, were now advancing against GIR, Indian, and Chinese forces.

In addition to those briefings, however, were the myriad of other concerns that dealt with running a nation that had grown to the extent that the GIR had over the last four years. Numerous civil, religious, political and economic matters, indispensable to managing a vast people and geography, were raised with this group of men and had to be resolved by them.

As he listened, and irrespective of the length of the meeting and the drawn nature of parts of it, Hasan did take it all in...every bit of it. It was his *mission*, it was his *calling*, to listen to all of it, and in the end to pass judgment and give direction...but, as he did so, he also allowed his mind to wander somewhat. In this case, it was pondering the fate of General Jabal Talabari.

“He is sorely missed,” the great spiritual, military, and political leader of the Greater Islamic Republic thought to himself. “...not only as a brilliant strategist, but as a friend. According to Allah’s will, he was taken from us...and as much as I am sorry for it, in the end he reaped what he sowed.

“Allah provided him to us...and Allah allowed him to be taken from us in a like manner. Surely Allah’s will and infinite wisdom are often a mystery to us...but I can see His hand in Jabal’s untimely death and I accept it, knowing more avenues will be opened for our ultimate triumph in this conflict with western infidels. Then, and only then, can we ultimately turn our eyes to the east.

“But that is for another time,” thought Sayeed. “Now a permanent replacement for Jabal must be put in place...a stronger, more permanent and stable leader than the interim individual we have now. Someone like Jabal, who can anticipate the enemy, particularly the Americans, and throw back this offensive they have managed to conduct around Israel, and in so doing, give strength and faith to our allies who are experiencing similar American offensive operations this spring.”

In that moment, as he contemplated the matter during the overall meeting of the leaders of the great Islamic faith and Republic, the answer came to him regarding who the new overall commander of GIR forces in the Middle East and Europe should be. Allah was telling him to promote General Mahdavi Ardakani to that position.

Ardakani was a name that was already well known to all members of the leadership council...the military in particular. He was also much respected by the political and religious leaders as well. That knowledge and respect had resulted from his daring air campaigns and his great success in the war effort. He was also known to have complete and unwavering faith in the leadership, particularly Hasan Sayeed. Such passion for the cause, ability to implement its holy objectives, and resolute loyalty to its leadership, were absolute prerequisites in the person who would fill this vital position.

The General had pulled off and successfully implemented the planning for the first major victory against American forces in the air assault on their airbase at Incirlik, Turkey. He had done so in a manner that had taken the Americans completely by surprise, coordinating massive numbers of GIR aircraft from many different locations under the eyes of the American satellites.

That particular strategic success had been a respected achievement that many in the GIR now took for granted. Ever since the Chinese had successfully waged a satellite war against the West and fought them to a draw in that particular arena, many of these leaders had forgotten how great an advantage the Americans and the West had held. The successful Chinese satellite offensive had essentially deprived both sides of satellite surveillance, and leveled the playing field to the advantage of the GIR and the CAS and their numeric superiority.

But that more level playing field had not been in place when Ardakani had engineered his initial victory. It had been a stunning and surprising victory which had deprived the Americans of their vaunted air superiority over the skies of the so-called Kurdistan Republic. In so doing, Mahdavi Ardakani had shown his ability to overcome great odds, to mask his planning and movement from the

ever-watchful eyes of the American satellites, to be willing to suffer tremendous losses in the stubborn accomplishment of his goal, and to work successfully in a combined arms atmosphere.

The perfect coordination of Ardakani's air attacks against the Americans with the GIR ground force who attacked the Kurds at the time, had made the great victory over the United States and its surrogate forces in the northern areas of the former nation of Iraq possible. That victory had in turn allowed Hasan Sayeed to personally intercede and negotiate with the Kurds to bring that territory within the fold of the GIR.

No, Sayeed knew full well that the success against Incirlik had opened the door for the complete ascendancy of the Greater Islamic Republic. It had resulted in great respect and recognition for the GIR from around the world as unexpected victors over the United States, and the instrument of their shaming. Many Islamic nations had changed their stance regarding their eventual union with the GIR as a result of that single battle...all of which had ultimately led to a major war as the United States sought to re-exert its control in the region. In attempting to contain the GIR, they had played into the greater plan orchestrated by Jien Zenim of the People's Republic of China.

"How had Zenim put it?" thought Sayeed as he contemplated those events.

"Yes, indeed, Wheels within Wheels."

In the course of the war, General Ardakani had continued to show his abilities throughout the campaign in Saudi Arabia, Africa, Turkey, and into portions of Europe where he commanded all GIR air assets in those regions during the prosecutions of Sayeed's Holy War being waged against the unfaithful and the infidels. He had been one of Jabal Talabari's closest and most trusted confidants, and Jabal had continually referred to him as a very capable and loyal general, worthy of much more of Sayeed's attention than Ardakani himself had ever sought.

But, despite their knowledge of, and respect for, Ardakani, most of the military and political leadership felt that the natural successor to Talabari should be a ground force commander. In fact the interim commander was Talabari's former executive officer, General Ishmael Abin. A career professional, Abin had risen through the ranks over many years as first a field commander, and then a ranking staff member of first Iran's, and then the GIR's, large armies. As a result, he was well positioned politically with many on the leadership council for what both he and they viewed as an almost foregone conclusion that his interim advancement would be made permanent.

But Abin would find that he and his political supporters were all mistaken in that conclusion.

Abin was, in fact, a purely a political general, lacking the respect of the rank and file troops who served under him. And considering that he was also the source of endless intrigue and maneuvering by the command staff directly under him, an ineffective picture of political gamesmanship not well suited for the dangers and rigors of battle had taken shape in Sayeed's mind.

This picture left a bad taste in Sayeed's mouth. That type of leadership would not lead GIR forces to the victory that Hasan knew Allah expected of them. In fact, those qualities would be the very things that would keep Abin from ever being the type of innovative and direct leader that Sayeed required to contain the west's latest advance, and then ultimately push it back.

No, Abin would not be the man. Clearly, the position must go to Ardakani, who had the combat leadership skills and the respect of the soldiers who would be serving under him. In addition, Ardakani would respect Sayeed's own considerable battlefield experience rather than being intimidated by it...and he would listen to his Mahdi, as opposed to simply giving lip service to him.

Realizing this, Sayeed experienced another moment of certain intuitive knowledge and enlightenment regarding what one of those initial suggestions or recommendations would be: a recommendation for someone to fill a role on Ardakani's staff, the young Abduhl Selim. Selim's commission to Brigadier General had been approved a few short weeks ago by this very council.

"Twenty-two years of age and already a Brigadier General," thought Sayeed.

"It's amazing, like something you might read in an ancient history book...and his brilliant military advancement even eclipses my own. Allah be praised and bless us with many more of this young man's ilk," concluded Hasan as he reflected on the young man's unfolding legend. Abduhl would make an excellent staff officer whose ground force experience would greatly compliment Ardakani's strategic brilliance, and would do so in a manner not fettered with all of the politics, intrigue, or bias that the older generals would bring to the position.

As these convictions solidified in his heart, and as Sayeed uttered a prayer of thanksgiving for the direction he felt Allah had given him, he noticed that the discussion regarding the advisability of bringing in more Chinese technicians to assist in the set-up and operation of more *ta shih* detectors throughout the GIR had reached a point requiring his input. Just now the members of the council were turning to him to seek his advice and counsel on the matter.

"My brothers, I have spoken with General Hunbaio and President Zenim himself on this issue. They are well aware of our concerns regarding the potential influence of their technicians and their lifestyle on our people.

"But the fact is, we must have these systems set up and operating throughout our territory for our own self-defense. It is vital from that standpoint that we do so, and we must have some measure of

trust in our own people and their commitment to the faith, particularly at this juncture where Allah has granted us such great success in uniting all of Islam throughout the world.

“If we cannot have faith in our people to insulate themselves from the corrosive influence of these Chinese technicians. . . and I might add that their potential influence is much less worrisome than the influence we experienced when western technicians infested our lands. . . then we will tacitly admit our failure as their spiritual leaders. We will show by our own lack of faith, not only in them, but in our ability to teach them, that we ourselves have failed.”

As Hasan spoke, the vast majority of the leadership council nodded their heads in agreement to the obvious wisdom of their leader’s words. Once again, he cut through the political and religious bickering and positioning of so many on the council and got to the heart of the matter in such a way that the final decision was obvious to all. There would be no dissent or argument with their Mahdi.

“So,” he continued, “we will allow these foreigners inside our borders and the detector systems will be installed along with the newer missiles.

“For those with any lingering concerns about lasting impact, you may lay those concerns aside. I have received firm assurances from President Zenim that after the initial deployment, a training facility will be established outside of Tehran, where Chinese personnel will instruct our technicians in the full operational capabilities of the entire system, and the need for the Chinese technicians to travel about amongst our people will be phased out. They will be restricted after that date to the training facility and areas immediately around it, where we can better control this issue.

“In addition, we will begin license building the detectors and the missiles within the year such that we can quickly become self-sufficient not only in the maintenance of the defensive systems, but in its production as well. At that point, we will be in a position to phase out any long term involvement for Chinese technicians at the training facility as well.”

Having summed up the matter, Sayeed addressed his Foreign Minister and spoke to him directly.

“Minister Ujman, at the conclusion of our meetings have your diplomatic staff arrange the appropriate communiqués to expedite treaties with the People’s Republic of China to this effect.

“Now, let’s turn to the next agenda item. It is one where I beg your indulgence as I am compelled to become personally involved at the outset of the discussion.

“I have received direct guidance from Allah on the matter of General Talabari’s permanent replacement. General Abin will not be confirmed as the Commander in Chief of our forces in the Mid East and European areas of operation. I know this will be a disappointment to some of you who are advocating that he become the permanent Commander in Chief, but Allah’s will has been made clear to me in this regard. That position will go to one of Allah’s choosing, and we must set aside personal preferences and accede to his will.”

Turning to his own executive assistant, he said so that all could hear, “Ashmil, send an executive communication over my personal signature to General Mahdavi Ardakani summoning him here to Tehran to meet with me personally and with the executive council.”

As a number of the leadership council nodded in satisfaction and others whispered in surprise, Hasan Sayeed turned back to the assembled leadership council and concluded the matter.

“General Ardakani is to be promoted to Commander in Chief of our military operations in both the Mid Eastern and European Theaters. I expect each of you to hold this information in the strictest confidence until General Ardakani can be informed, and until the official announcement is made.

“I also expect you each to give him your full, unqualified support in the difficult task he has at hand of first containing the current western offensive, and then driving it back.

“In the meantime, General Abin will continue fulfilling his interim duties until General Ardakani determines how Abin can best serve in the new command. That is all on this matter. Let us move on to the next item on the agenda.”

**May 2, 10:25 local time**

**35 miles Northwest of Ruby, Alaska**

**On the northeast flank of Wolf Mountain**

The *thumping* was more distant now, muted and slowly moving further and further off to the west like some freak storm that had moved across the landscape from east to west. In these climes a storm moving in that particular manner, from east to west, was a rare meteorological event. But the military operations that heralded the almost continuous thunder-like thumping in this locale over the last four days was a very much longed for and welcomed event, and it had been progressively coming closer and closer during the last three weeks as the American offensive against the Chinese had progressed in this general direction.

Stacey Urkut—or the Orka, as she was known—and her fifteen compatriots, were situated in a large, concealed cave on the northeast side of Wolf Mountain. As the war front had moved their way, they had been forced to take up this position in order to remain out of sight of the large numbers of Chinese troops retreating to the west, and to keep from being inadvertently targeted by the American forces that were pushing them in that direction.

“Particularly from being targeted by those new missiles our boys are using,” thought Stacey. “Anyone targeted by those babies ends up as mincemeat,” she thought as her nephew came back to the HQ section of the cave to provide a reconnaissance report.

“Aunt Stacey, Danny made contact with an American patrol an hour ago a couple of miles to our south, near the old Forest Service road on the shoulder of the mountain over there. Apparently they have been briefed to be on the lookout for our group in particular.

“When their lieutenant heard that Danny was a part of the Orka group, he got on the line to a captain, who called up a colonel. That officer, a Colonel Kensington, is en route here to see you right now. They told us to watch for a Black Hawk helicopter escorted by at least two Apaches. They should be here in less than ten minutes.”

Stacey’s mind went into high gear as she took this in.

“Coming to see me?” she thought. The unlikelihood of this, at least in her own mind, invoked her more cautious side, which, on numerous occasions, had served them well...indeed, had been an almost pivotal factor...in their fights against the Chinese.

“Ted, now why on earth would a colonel in the U.S. Army who presently involved in a huge fight the Chinese be interested in spending time with me? And why, of all times, now?”

“Are you absolutely sure of this? Are you sure this isn’t some type of trick to draw us out? Did they absolutely require any specific information or intelligence?” she asked.

Ted respected his aunt’s concerns. He knew her instincts to be uncannily accurate, and he understood her reluctance to immediately jump on the information he had just shared with her. It would have been completely out of character for her to have unquestioningly run out into the open to meet whomever was coming. But he had been there himself when the word had.

“When Danny contacted me about this, I went and met the lieutenant myself, Aunt Stacey. It’s no trick. They told me that I was to inform you that the Colonel would be making an immediate visit and to have your command staff ready...I guess he thinks we are a little larger than we actually are.”

At that comment all of them smiled, the Chinese had been under the same mistaken impression.

“Well, we do have a great knowledge of the lay of the land, and we can point to where the Chinese will set up their defenses...but I imagine they have their own people telling that too.

“So, still, why me?” she asked as she made her way to the entrance of the cave.

As they stepped outside of the entrance which was sheltered by steep cliffs and completely obscured by thick forest and underbrush, the oncoming presence of Colonel Kensington was announced in dramatic fashion. A flight of four F-35 Joint Strike Fighters made a low, thunderous pass. At the same time, numerous contrails of higher level fighters could be seen at higher altitude.

“Colonel Kensington must be an important spoke in this wheel to warrant all of that protection,”

Stacey commented as they witnessed the awesome display of American power unfolding before them.

Seeing this demonstration of power almost immediately took Stacey and several of those standing with her back in time to when the Chinese had first attacked and then invaded America across the Bering Straits last year. They would have all liked to have seen a display of such power back then to combat and halt the invasion that had cost so many American lives.

Stacey remembered the assault on Nome, Alaska, her home. She had witnessed it with her own eyes, and she had been able to report on it in real time to an astonished America using the Independent Republic website on her internet connection before it went down. Those reports had ultimately been seen by millions and had made their way quickly to the White House situation room itself.

After that internet connection had gone down, Stacey had narrowly escaped the Chinese helicopter landings and advances as she made her way into the wilderness to the east and north where her native Americans and relatives lived and still embraced their families’ ancient historical traditions. She had always kept close to them and knew how they would react to this overt invasion from Asia.

Despite her fifty-seven years, she had been in excellent health and driven by a love for liberty and outrage at the attacks on her homeland. Before the Chinese were aware such movements had even been organized, she had gathered, organized, and led a band of resistance fighters against the Chinese.

It was a resistance effort that had been maintained under the harshest of conditions during the Chinese occupation, as the Chinese made every effort to hunt down and eradicate any and all who opposed them and did not accede to their rule. Stacey became well known amongst her followers, and ultimately amongst the Chinese. Her small group, mostly acting alone, but sometimes operating with other groups, particularly remnants of the Home Guard units in the area, wreaked fair havoc on the Chinese rear areas.

The Chinese responded by systematically destroying any resistance fighters they could corner, by cruelly and publicly executing any they captured, and by conducting large reprisal massacres of citizens in an attempt to reign in the resistance. But this only served to stiffen the resolve of those brave Americans, and the resistance doubled its efforts and continued to grow.

News of the exploits of these American resistance fighters, and particularly of the Orka, made its way to the “outside” and the lower forty-eight states as America frantically first prepared, and then actually deployed, large forces to counter the Chinese offensive and attempt to drive it back.



Unknown to Stacey, it was the result of her initial reports, and her continued resistance that brought the Colonel to the side of Wolf Mountain this morning. His interest in Stacey and her group was not only a matter of current military import—it was an issue of Executive Order.

**May 2, 10:34 local time**

**35 miles Northwest of Ruby, Alaska**

**500 feet above the northeast flank of Wolf Mountain**

Colonel Sanfred Kensington looked down into the empty clearing below the Black Hawk helicopter he had requisitioned for this mission. In addition to the crew of the Black Hawk, which included two door gunners, he had two liaison officers and a security team of four personnel with him.

Two Longbow Apache helicopters had taken up covering positions just to the north and south of the clearing as the Black Hawk approached from the northeast. Several F-35, Joint Strike Fighters were providing mid-level CAP while six F-15C fighters were covering higher altitudes.

Turning to the pilot he asked, “Well, Captain, where are they? Is this the right place?”

Although the Captain didn’t appreciate being questioned about whether he had piloted his aircraft to the right place, he understood that the Colonel was involved in a critical mission by order of the President, and that it was occurring during a critical phase of the offensive. In addition, it was a colonel that was asking, and not just any colonel either. Colonel Kensington was *the* point of the sword during the ongoing offensive against the Chinese, and his actions under fire had earned the respect of every man serving under his command.

“Colonel, our Apaches have members of the resistance group under observation using their thermal sensors. They are well back in the trees and now moving towards the clearing. You’ll see them in just a few seconds, sir.”

As the Black Hawk continued to descend towards the small clearing, which was over two hundred yards from the entrance to the cave that the resistance fighters had been using, three members of Stacey’s group did appear at the tree line and helped guide the helicopter to a safe landing.

While the security personnel fanned out in front of him, the Colonel exited the Black Hawk, stooping until he was well clear of the rotors. Coming towards him out of the trees, he saw a group of five persons, one of them clearly an older female whom he presumed was Stacy Urkut.

Approaching them, the Colonel offered his hand. “Stacey? My name is Colonel Kensington.”

Stacey nodded and gave the Colonel a surprisingly firm handshake. The Colonel continued.

“Mrs. Urkut, I am here on the express order of the President of the United States. You may not be aware of it, but your description and reporting during the opening hours of the invasion of Alaska at Nome last year, and your activities since that time, have attracted the attention and admiration, and rekindled the hopes, of all Americans.

“The President has instructed me to offer you immediate transport to Anchorage, and from there back to Washington, D.C. He wants to meet personally with you to extend the nation’s thanks for the heroic and patriotic heroism under fire that you and your compatriots have shown here.”

Stacey took a step back in stunned disbelief.

The President of the United States...Norm Weisskopf, wanted to meet with her and extend *his* thanks? It was almost impossible to comprehend as she responded.

“Colonel, I don’t know what to say. I owe the President and all of you thanks...we all do. We have been hoping and praying for your arrival and now here you are wanting to thank me?”

“I don’t know if I can accept such an offer. I have a group here that I’m working real well with and we still have a lot to do.”

The Colonel had only been here for a couple of minutes, but he was already seeing how this woman had been able to accomplish all that she had.

“Stacey, if I may call you by your first name, we have anticipated all of that. Two of my men here, Lieutenant Colonel Haverson and Sergeant Major Buehler, will work with your people and help organize and liaison their activities to maximum benefit for the ongoing offensive.”

Stacey interrupted, “Excuse me, Colonel, for interrupting, but I’d best make something clear right now. This is not any kind of a large group. There are fifteen of us. Never have been more than twenty-five. We’ve operated with a number of other small groups of similar or smaller size...but this is no company or battalion of individuals you are talking about here.”

Now it was the Colonel’s turn to be momentarily stunned. His own intelligence had indicated that there were several hundred individuals associated with this group alone, and that information was based predominantly on intercepts of Chinese traffic regarding their efforts to destroy them.

Despite the surprise, the Colonel barely missed a beat.

“That is all the more reason to acknowledge what you have accomplished...and with so few. Believe me, when word gets back to the command staff and the President, this additional information will serve to *underscore* your successes. It is also all the more reason for Lt. Colonel Haverson and Sgt. Major Buehler to learn more of your extremely efficient operations and then coordinate them, and their underlying strategies, with our forces.

"Mrs. Urkut, I know all of this is sudden, but I've got an anxious Captain back in that Black Hawk who is eager to take off, and we have these two fine officers here, and their support, who I promise you are all very capable soldiers. What do you say?"

Ted had been listening to the exchange and, despite experiencing feelings of inadequacy in the presence of the Colonel, he interjected, "Excuse me, Colonel...but Aunt Stacey, you ought to go with these folks. Not only do you deserve the honor of allowing the President to extend his appreciation for what you've done, but every American needs to know what's happened here and understand the hope we've rekindled—that *you* helped us rekindle—while we've been fighting these Chinese bastards."

The Colonel decided that his liking for Stacey Urkut's nephew was also growing by the minute...and he smiled at the comments. He wondered how many of the others in the group were "family." He marveled at their bravery and their accomplishments and was impressed with the nephew's encouragement of his aunt...and Colonel Henry Kensington was coming away with the distinct impression that what this young man had just said weighed more heavily with Stacey Urkut than all of words he had spoken, or the express order of the President himself.

...and he was right.

"Alright, Ted, you're right. I'll go. I'll tell our story, but that story has very little to do with me. Also, I respect greatly the office of the President and the man who is occupying it right now, so I guess I'd better not miss an appointment with him."

Turning to the others who had accompanied them out of the cave, and who had been listening attentively, she addressed them, with just a hint of tears beginning to glisten in her weary eyes.

"You guys take care, and make sure you keep these Army personnel safe and in line. There's a lot of country out there and you know it better than anyone else...and it's still crawling with chinks."

Then, her mind made up, she simply said. "Colonel, we'd best not keep your captain waiting."

**May 5, 19:50 local time**

**Outside of Mein Café**

**Beijing, China**

Chiang Pham was as happy as she had ever been at any time in her life. Despite the war and the hardships it was causing, despite the separation from her family since she had taken the computer analyst job here in Beijing, despite her concerns for her brother who was at sea...evenings like tonight somehow made it all worth it. Particularly evenings spent with Hua Jianying, whom she considered her best friend, and her suitor.

She had been seeing Hua for well over eight months now, and every day with him was like a new journey of discovery. They had spoken seriously of marriage several times in the last six weeks and had become officially engaged the day before yesterday. Their marriage date would be in the fall, in October if their families concurred, as Chiang was sure they would.

Tonight, over dinner, they had planned a trip to Tianjin to meet Chiang's parents, Lu and Song Pham, in order to officially announce their intentions. Chiang called her mother and father the night of their engagement to let them know in an informal manner between daughter and parents.

Chiang had already met Hua's parents here in Beijing and enjoyed their company immensely, particularly their warm acceptance of her despite her Vietnamese heritage. That heritage was something that caused many people to almost immediately look down upon her, as a result of an intercultural rejection of her heritage. This immediate personal rejection by people who knew nothing about her had come as a shock to her youthful and protected innocence when she first came to Beijing. But it was also something that she had never seen or felt a hint of with Hua or his family.

However, many of those who initially rejected her, soon found themselves reversing their stance once they found out who she was...or, more correctly, who her father was.

Her father, Lu Pham, was a People's hero and the inventor and perfecter of the *Killer Whale* weapon system which had so thoroughly defeated and embarrassed the U.S. Navy. Lu Pham was a name that everyone recognized and respected. When most people found out who her father was...and she always let them find this out on their own, never being one to brandish her father's name about...their attitudes invariably changed dramatically for the positive.

"Transparent, hypocrites," she thought to herself.

Chiang was always sadly amused by the change of heart, and the reason for it. Although she worked with some of those who had been initially negative towards her, she never forgot their initial and unwarranted condescension, and she vowed never to allow herself to trust any of those whose original opinion of her was based on other than her own personal character.

But none of that mattered when she was with Hua, her handsome suitor and a financial forecaster for the National Party Congress and himself a member of the Communist Party.

Hua's father had served in the Party Congress for over thirty years, and Hua was a rising political star himself within the party. He planned to campaign for the National People's Congress next year, and with his father's and his own party connections, he had no doubt that he would be elected. He ultimately hoped to be the youngest mayor of Beijing in the city's history...a position from which others had vaulted onto the stage of national and international prominence.

All of this fit very well into Chiang's plans for herself. She had made steady advancement in her programming analyst position for COSTIND, working on algorithms that were a secondary, backup system for the guidance of the *ta shih* anti-stealth system being employed by the People's Republic. In a little over two years she had advanced from an Analyst I position to Analyst III and had two younger programmers working under her supervision. She hoped one day to become a senior technical manager at COSTIND and continue to use her analytical skills on behalf of the People's Republic.

As she stared steadfastly up into Hua's eyes, standing there on the sidewalk in front of *Mein Café*, she could see their future reflected in those beautiful dark eyes—and in the smile he shared with her as they waited for the driver that Hua's father had allowed them to use this evening. It was a future that she was excited to share in detail with her family—it was all she had ever dreamed of and hoped for. She was sure that her mother and father, and her brother, would all share in her happiness.

**May 6, 08:40 local time**

**Staging Area, 7<sup>th</sup> Marine Division**

**Midway Atoll**

Leon was ecstatic.

"We're finally going to move off these islands!" he thought as the commanding general prepared to address them.

The rumor had been circulating for weeks. After almost a year on the islands, and a little over ten months since the tremendous battle to hold the island had been fought against the Chinese, apparently America was going to go on the offensive in this part of the world, too.

Where they were going was not known. Could it be "North, to Alaska"? Many of the soldiers surmised it would be and they would sing out the words, in tune with the famous Johnny Horton song.

Would they be going to New Zealand to prepare for the anticipated invasion of Australia? Many of them, including Leon, longed for that prospect, figuring that the retaking of Australia would be where the bulk of the action would be occurring.

Could it be elsewhere? None of the rank and file knew.

...but Sergeant Leon Campbell was looking forward to their new orders, wherever they might lead them, and irrespective of his own preferences.

Leon was something of a legend amongst his peers. A Medal of Honor recipient from earlier in the war, his exploits and actions under fire on the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean were well known to all. The fact that he had volunteered to come back into combat when everyone knew that he could have had his pick of plush recruitment jobs back in the states was something not lost on the soldiers here, particularly the other Marines of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division. His example and commitment to "fight his nation's battles," wherever they might be, was an encouragement and inspiration to them all.

This is not to say that Leon did not have his own preferences. He was hoping that the orders would send them to New Zealand to fight in Australia. His best friend, Billy Simmons, had been lost there when Sydney fell. Billy's body, along with thousands of others, had never been recovered.

To his family and friends, Billy was presumed dead, killed in action, there off the coast of Australia when a Killer Whale device had struck his amphibious assault ship. Billy's AH-1Z Viper attack helicopter had been one of the last aircraft to get off the deck of the doomed ship before it was hit, and Leon had seen the pictures of that very helicopter as it had emerged from the smoke surrounding the ship...and as it cart wheeled directly into the ocean.

"No one could have survived that crash," Leon thought.

As Leon was having these thoughts, the intelligence officer for the division got the attention of the officers and senior NCOs who were attending the briefing.

"Okay, men, the General has asked me to brief you on the upcoming operation before he speaks to you. I can't announce at this point what our objective is. That will be announced to your Company commanders once we embark...but I can say this.

"We are going to embark and arrive on station more quickly than any other large attack operation has in the history of combat. If you will all closely watch the following short video, you will understand why."

After making this statement, which got all of their attention, the Colonel had the lights dimmed, and a digital projector near the back of the large room began displaying a video clip on the far wall. What they all saw was astounding. It was something new and, as combat veterans and as Marines, they all recognized the import of it immediately.

The video lasted a good five minutes. There was absolute quiet in the room as these combat veterans watched the display of America's latest technological innovations as they would be applied to the fight. When it was over, the intelligence officer continued.

"What you have just seen is classified top secret and cannot leave this room. It has been shown to help you prepare your individual units for the operation, entitled Operation Lightning Bolt, which will begin in five days.

"I'll now turn the time over to General Atkins who will complete the briefing."

General Atkins approached the small podium. He could feel an almost palpable electric charge in the air. These Marines were ready to go on the offensive. They had taken the worst the enemy could deliver and they all sensed that now was the time for America to strike back.

And the general knew that America and her allies were striking back. Operations in Alaska and around Israel were going better than expected...and ahead of schedule. Now, here in the Pacific, the first part of a two-pronged offensive against the Coalition of Asian States in the Pacific would begin...and the troops of the 7<sup>th</sup> Marine Division were going to be the ones to kick it off.

"Gentlemen, I know you are all tired of waiting, so I am going to make this brief. It's time. We are going to strike where the enemy least expects it, and we are going to it with devastating effect!"

Immediate cheers filled the room, but quieted as the general held up his hands for silence.

"Each of your company commanders has a package indicating what your orders are as regards deployment in Operation Lightning Bolt, and preparation will begin tomorrow in anticipation of the arrival of the transportation you have just been privileged to review.

"Each of you should be prepared, as should the personnel whom you command, for this historic and critical mission. We will be supported by the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Navy as they escort us to the objective and then provide air cover and support while we secure that objective. The Navy is using a new and unique method of pre-positioning materiel in theater which will augment and support our activities once we've attained our objective.

"Although that final objective is not mentioned in the orders being distributed to your company commanders, the nature of your role and the equipment you will require is spelled out in detail.

"Final mission planning and prep will occur en route, including secure video conferencing between separate units as we travel towards the objective. This will include a live feed from our Commander in Chief, President Weisskopf. That is all."

**May 12, 07:40 local time**

**The White House Situation Room**

**Washington, D.C.**

Norm Weisskopf considered the import of Operation Lightning Bolt as he watched the real time display on the screen at the far end of the room. He had given the final execute orders less than twelve hours ago, after the troops had all embarked and staged off to the west of Midway Atoll.

This operation was much different than the large offensive operations currently being conducted in Alaska and the Mid East...and different from the operation about to kick off in Europe to the south and east of Moscow.

In fact, this operation was meant to dovetail with the European Operation which was sure to attract significant attention from both the GIR and CAS high commands.

"And that is exactly what we want," thought the President.

"We're going to deliver a little Sun Tsu of our own."

But operations in the Mid-East and Europe were traditional offensive operations involving hundreds and hundreds of thousands of troops and their materiel, and the long lead time staging required to make those large operations possible. At least those types of lead times had traditionally been required. Operation Lightning Bolt was aimed not only at the CAS, it was aimed at breaking that mold and allowing large numbers of allied troops to very swiftly appear in the most unexpected places with all of their equipment and support.

This revolutionary operation and its import were readily apparent with but a glance at the real time images being displayed on the far wall of the situation room...and those remarkable images had everyone's rapt attention. Displayed on that wall were eight flights of four aircraft flying in formation less than 100 feet above the wave tops in the Western Pacific Ocean. They were simply the largest aircraft ever seen in any military operation.

Oh, several of those in the room had seen these aircraft as they were developed, manufactured, and tested...but seeing so many of them now in an actual operation was awe inspiring and simply dumbfounding. Propelled by four very large and very advanced turboprop engines on each wing, the transport aircraft were over three hundred feet long, and had a wing span that was in excess of five hundred feet! Each aircraft's body was easily fifty feet in diameter, flattened on the bottom to allow for water takeoffs and landings. They could also land on unimproved landing fields like a C-17, as long as there was sufficient clearance for their tremendous size.

As they watched, the picture zoomed out and revealed several escort aircraft flying along with these behemoths. It was then that the true size of the aircraft became apparent. A flight of four F-22 Raptor aircraft appeared as little more than a group of flies when compared to the monstrous transports they were escorting. To the left of the entire flight, and flying somewhat above them, a flight of four tanker aircraft could be seen coming into view. Despite the large size of the KC-10 tankers, the large C-90A transport aircraft easily dwarfed them, making them seem small and almost insignificant in comparison.

The President marveled at the coordination...it had every appearance and trapping of a very large and complicated naval transport operation, except it was flying in the air at well over 350 knots.

“And though the tankers look small and insignificant when compared to these super-transport,” thought the President, “In fact they are the life blood of the entire operation, just like a group of UNREP ships is to a naval operation.”

The pictures they were watching were being taken from well over one thousand feet above the aircraft, which continued flying less than one hundred feet above the surface of the ocean. What the pictures didn't show, but what something everyone in the room was well aware of, were the over two hundred other supporting aircraft that were escorting and supporting the entire operation: the largest single grouping of F-22 fighters in history and an equal number of F-15C and F-15E aircraft.

The President knew that the entire flight would be joined in a few moments, as they neared their destination, by Naval aircraft off of the USS Shanksville, which had been able to clandestinely position itself two hundred miles from the objective of Operation Lightning Bolt. The Shanksville was being escorted by the largest group of SUB CIWS equipped vessels yet assembled, and was also itself equipped with the Anti-Killer Whale being deployed by the U.S. Navy.

In addition, all four of the recently launched Alaska Class SSTN nuclear powered amphibious assault and transport submarines, which were carrying the remainder of the Task Forces supplies, were stationed offshore from the objective as well. They were being escorted by the U.S.S. Jimmy Carter and the U.S.S. Connecticut, which were both still impervious to Killer Whale detection.

Although the SSTNs were capable of self-defense and equally quiet, the two Sea Wolf class, with their larger weapons load, their proven track record regarding the LRASD devices and their remarkable speed, would provide the most capable defense possible for these new underwater behemoths in America's growing arsenal, being dutifully stockpiled in the defense of liberty.

This first combat deployment of the SSTN class involved every ship of that class that had been built to date. Still undetected and now just off the objective, the design had achieved the intended level of stealth and quiet despite their mammoth underwater displacement of over 40,000 tons!

This awesome show of force amazed the President, despite his involvement in its planning and production over the last three years. The development of these two systems, one airborne, the other a subsurface naval system, had been two of America's most closely guarded secrets as the war progressed, and in face of the almost constant barrage of bad news.

The entire concept of “Rapid Deployment” had been studied for years at the Pentagon and within the prestigious U.S. military war colleges. Things had come a long way from the very traditional methods of World War II and the Korean War. Beginning in the Vietnam War, large numbers of men were moved by jet airliner aircraft, allowing them to arrive quickly in theater. But the problem remained of having them meet up expeditiously with their heavy equipment. Faster transport vessels were designed and built which doubled the speed and capacity of older ships. Still, time requirements were viewed as too great for the literal mountains of heavy materiel required for a large, modern army.

Pre-deployment and staging philosophies were developed and instituted in the 1980s, which significantly improved the situation. Mountains of materiel were strategically placed around the globe by the U.S. Military at defensible bases calculated to be near any conceivable major trouble spots. But the strategic positioning still did not reduce the time requirements to anything approaching the “rapid” deployment desired and envisioned. In 1991, Operation Desert Storm, an operation which the President himself had led and with which he had therefore been intimately familiar, had still required six months to build the necessary force and logistical support to allow for the defeat of the Iraqi armies that had invaded Kuwait, and were positioned in southern Iraq.

Twelve years later, in 2003, when the United States again fought Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom, logistics, technology, and operations had improved to the point where a smaller force could be more rapidly deployed to accomplish the larger mission of invading all of Iraq, and occupying it while supporting the Iraqi people in the election of a regime that everyone had hoped would prove friendly to the West. Despite the improvements, that buildup had required over four months.

Many of those newer pre-deployment methodologies had been dealt devastating blows at the beginning of World War III by resourceful and committed GIR and CAS forces who overran many of the pre-positioned staging areas, and who developed weaponry that had countered the critical advantages of nuclear powered aircraft carriers and submarines upon which the ability to execute those rapid deployment philosophies had rested.

So the war colleges had gone back to the drawing board, and within two years had perfected concepts that had already been under consideration when hostilities broke out. Those concepts had coalesced into operational plans and equipment had been developed or modified to support them. America's new production lines began to address the issue in top secret factories built in remote areas of the intermountain west and the desert southwest. The culmination of these efforts was what was being witnessed for the first time with Operation Lightning Bolt.

Thirty-two massive C-90A transports were carrying the entire task force very rapidly towards their objective. Four massive Alaska class SSTNs were already onsite and represented a pre-positioned staging area themselves. This massive movement of men and materiel would not be accomplished in a time frame measured in months...it would be accomplished in hours and days.

Now, as the large aircraft approached the U.S.S. Shanksville rendezvous point, the President tuned into the latest verbiage of the ongoing briefing. This portion of the briefing was being given in preparation for the President's own address to the entire task force in just a few minutes at the conclusion of remarks by the National Security Advisor, Bill Hendrickson, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Jeremy Stone.

"Each aircraft can carry a combination of over two million pounds of men and materiel. That equates to sixteen main battle tanks, or twenty infantry fighting vehicles, or close to two thousand troops and their personnel equipment. They can also carry F-35C Joint Strike Fighters or AH1Z Viper attack helicopters in a special stowed configuration. Up to eight of either of those aircraft will fit into one of those transports along with the people and equipment to support them. Those aircraft can then be unloaded and made operational within twenty minutes.

"The United States Marine Corps now has forty-eight of these aircraft in its inventory and many more in the pipeline. Operation Lightning Bolt will be employing forty of them. As you can see on the monitor, thirty-two of those are involved in the initial effort to move the entire 7<sup>th</sup> Marine Division and its supporting commands, augmented by sixteen F-35Cs and sixteen AH-1Zs, onto the objective. They will be on that objective within the next hour.

"Elements of the escorting aircraft, both U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy off of the U.S.S. Shanksville, will begin a massive attack in the next ten minutes to prepare the objective for landing and to suppress any and all enemy air or missiles defense.

"We believe the surprise will be total, and the shock overwhelming to the 100,000 personnel that are deployed by the enemy in and around this objective.

"Let me remind you that what we are witnessing is an unprecedented event in the history of warfare. In the next hour, over thirty thousand troops and their equipment will be landing far in the enemy's rear, near the pivotal city of Magadan on the Sea of Okhotsk. This city is the logistical control point for all of the enemy forces in far eastern Asia and Alaska. In essence we will set up a large pincer operation against an enemy force of over one million Chinese and their equipment, positioned between our advance in Alaska and their rear at Magadan."

At this point, Hendrickson turned to General Stone, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"General Stone will now give a short briefing of the overall military ramifications of this operation. General?"

General Stone wasted no time and jumped right in. He knew the President was scheduled to go on the air in just a few minutes and he wasn't about to delay the Presidential address.

"Thanks, Bill. Folks, as the National Security Advisor has indicated, this operation is historic, both in its execution and its implications.

"In short, we have planned for our forces to engage the enemy first in Alaska and then on the Asia mainland near Magadan. While the attack at Magadan proceeds up the enemy's logistical supply line, we expect our Alaskan offensive to push the Chinese back across the Bering Strait.

"When this happens, we anticipate a complete victory in eastern Asia in a relatively short time frame as those forces are cut off from all hope of outside support or intervention. Their only recourse will be to either surrender, or face total destruction in place.

"And this is where things get exciting. Along with that victory will come the development of a staging area for ultimate attacks on Japan, Korea and mainland China from the North. This will represent a situation which the enemy will not be able to ignore and one that will allow for the exertion of equal pressure by our forces advancing out of New Zealand next month.

"We expect the buildup in eastern Asia that will make all of this possible to occur very quickly. Another eight C-90A aircraft are four hours behind this initial wave. Over the next twenty-four hours, as we set up the rotation, eight aircraft will be arriving every four hours until our force is brought up to the planned level of two hundred and fifty thousand and all of their equipment within five more days.

"That's a brief description of where we are headed with this."

When General Stone turned the time back over to Bill Hendrickson, the National Security Advisor listened briefly to his ear phone and then turned to the President.

"Mr. President, they're indicating that we're two minutes from your address. The time is yours."

As the cameras focused on the opposite end of the table, where the President was sitting flanked by a United States flag on one side and the Seal of the Presidency on the other, President Norm Weisskopf prepared to speak.

**May 13, that same time**

**Flight 4A, C-90A**

**350 Miles Southeast of Magadan**

With the presentation by the President about to begin, Leon Campbell, like tens of thousands of other American service personnel, prepared to listen attentively. They all had the utmost respect for the "old man," both because of his own service record, and more importantly, because of the way he had led them and the nation since the outbreak of hostilities. As Leon thought about this, he also looked with anticipation to the upcoming operation and what it would mean for him.

He had put in his transfer request some time ago and his company commander had informed him just yesterday that the transfer had been approved. After Magadan had been taken and secured, and as follow-on forces pushed north, Sergeant Leon Campbell would be traveling far to the south to New Zealand. Of necessity, his path in getting there would be a circuitous route, one that would take a good week or more for him to make. Magadan was well behind what was currently perceived as the Chinese front lines...but that was what this operation was really all about, to show the Chinese that traditional front line advantage no longer applied when it came to fighting the United States.

"Well," he thought. "That'll take care of itself. My road to New Zealand and the South Pacific lies through Magadan. Better listen up to the President now, though. Here he comes."

In the White House situation room, at command facilities from the Pentagon, to Hawaii, to Alaska and in the air to the southeast of Magadan, the image of the President of the United States appeared on countless monitors and screens.

"My fellow compatriots and defenders of American liberty. Today we embark on a new phase of this war. No more will we allow ourselves to be manipulated at the discretion of a merciless and tyrannical group of nations and their leaders who have pushed us to the very brink of extinction.

"We showed last fall, and are showing again this spring, what we can do against these enemies when we apply the new and unparalleled edge we have developed in traditional warfare methodologies. That edge includes our moral underpinnings, our level of training, the innovation that individual liberty allows our equipment to benefit from, and our absolute commitment to that liberty. As a result of this, we are now steadily pushing the enemy back on several fronts.

"But the road is long and the path difficult. The enemy is numerous and well entrenched. The traditional route, while achievable, will take us far too long and will cost far too many lives, both the lives of our own people as well as those of the many innocent civilians throughout the world who have come under the rule of these diabolical monsters.

"Today, you represent the cutting edge of new methodologies and practices. You represent America's asymmetrical response to the enemy's warfare of terror, hate, lies, and genocide.

"Because of the bravery, commitment, virtue, and liberty you represent, we are going to hit the enemy behind their lines...we are going to show them that old rules no longer apply, that we can bring unimaginable and irresistible force to bear whenever, and wherever we chose. For the Chinese, that demonstration begins today. For our other enemies, similar demonstrations will come soon.

"Know that we, your leaders, support you and are with you in this. We have all faced grave danger and violence in this affair...both our forces abroad and our people here at home. This White House from which I speak had to be rebuilt as a result of that very type of destruction, and the blood of patriots who died bravely for their country stains this ground as well.

"As General Patton said in World War II...*it is not your job to die for your country; it is your job to make sure that those other SOB's die for their country.* We intend to demonstrate today that the enemy can expect to do exactly that, and that they can expect to do it in unimaginable numbers.

"We will force them to *die in unimaginable numbers* until there is not so much as one of them left who will be willing to so much raise their hand in support of the ideologies and national purpose that their sick and perverted leaders have directed them towards."

When the President made this statement, his inflection rose and no one listening could miss the steel or determination in his voice. Spontaneous cheers arose in several places around the globe, including the situation room and within those transports that were carrying the personnel who intended to put the President's statement into bold and immediate action.

Raising his voice over the din, but not to dissuade the emotion, the President concluded.

"Godspeed to each and every one of you. The thoughts and prayers of your countrymen go with you in this struggle...particularly today as you firmly plant the banner of liberty on the continent of Asia, the home ground of our enemies."

### **May 13, that same time**

#### **CIC, U.S.S. Shanksville**

#### **125 Miles south of Magadan, Sea of Okhotsk**

Admiral Darcy watched the display in the Combat Information Center as the initial waves of aircraft from the Shanksville and from Task Force Lightning Bolt began hitting their targets.

By all accounts, resistance in the air was light and there had been very few launches of anti-aircraft missiles in response. Surprise seemed to be complete and initial concerns about high attrition rates now seemed as if they would not materialize.

"Thank God," the Admiral thought as he considered this.

"No doubt we will lose several aviators today, but those losses could have been much, much worse. It appears that our intelligence and psy-ops efforts have paid off."

Those efforts had indeed paid off for the United States. In a reversal of what the Chinese had applied last year over and around the Bering Strait, the Americans had intentionally underplayed their hand regarding Magadan and their access to it.

For months, the chain of Kuril Islands, which protected entry into the Sea of Okhotsk from the Pacific Ocean, had been harassed by American forces. Both U.S. Navy surface and subsurface forces had sporadically fired Tomahawk cruise missiles at various radar and monitoring stations along those islands. No point of the chain was focused on, just a general harassment from both U.S. Navy vessels and from Navy and Air Force aircraft.

Whenever the Chinese made a foray with their forces against these attacks, the Americans beat a hasty retreat, never committing anywhere near enough forces to consider waging a pitched battle against the Chinese. Follow-up reconnaissance missions had shown a definite trend on the part of the Chinese over those months to take the attacks less and less seriously.

The enemy's cavalier attitude had all paid off perfectly yesterday as the Shanksville battle group transited a narrow strait into the Sea of Okhotsk south of the Island of Lopatka. That transit had occurred within a few hours of one of the harassing attacks which had taken out the radar and monitoring equipment in that area and also sunk two Chinese patrol boats well to the west. U.S. intelligence had determined that those two ships were tasked with patrolling that strait and its approaches over the next two days.

"Now months of effort and planning are coming together with this assault...but it hasn't been without cost," thought the Admiral.

One Los Angeles class attack submarine lost, one Arleigh Burke class Aegis destroyer severely damaged, six B1-B bombers, and five HR-7 aircraft and their crews lost in the exchange.

"God rest their souls...God grant that their sacrifices will have been worth it," concluded the Admiral as he returned his attention to the displays his personnel were monitoring and updating so they could communicate effectively with the forces that were now engaging the enemy.

In addition to the attacks on Magadan, three smaller air strikes and one SAG force were prosecuting strikes at sea against Chinese shipping. Several container ships and a full convoy of transports escorted by Chinese guided missiles destroyers were also under attack at the moment.

More ships, aircraft and their personnel were going directly into harm's way in order to ensure the success of Operation Lightning Bolt.

As at Magadan proper, with these attacks it appeared that surprise had been complete. Radio traffic monitored between those forces and their headquarters and support forces indicated that the Chinese were shocked at the level of force being applied here, so far from the front lines.

Those Chinese command and control groups had now clearly determined that this was no mere harassment or diversionary attack...this was the real thing.

### **May 13, one hour later**

#### **Magadan, Siberia**

The U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy attack aircraft continued to pound positions, but they were now on the peripheral of the target zones as the huge C-90A transports approached. Air superiority had been quickly achieved as only eight Chinese SU-33 aircraft had been in the air patrolling the skies over Magadan when they had been assaulted by over forty F-22, F-15 and U.S. Navy F-18F fighter aircraft. The resulting dogfight had been brief. All eight Chinese aircraft were downed at the cost of one F-15 fighter and one F-18.

With their more modern avionics, better stealth and newer electronics, no F-22s were destroyed. The remaining thirty-six U.S. aircraft took up rotating patrols as American troops assaulted the airfields that would soon be home to those very fighters patrolling overhead.

To accomplish the ground assault, Operation Lightning Bolt had more than twenty C-17 Globe Master aircraft accompanying the C-90A transports. These aircraft were raining down over five thousand paratroops to the two airfields located at Magadan.

Only twenty minutes after the initial alarms went out, parachutes had filled the sky and U.S. soldiers had begun to land. Along with the air strikes, soon heavy mortar and machine gun fire had quickly been directed at whatever Chinese troops were trying to assemble.

With their headquarters facilities, prepared positions and barracks already thoroughly decimated by close air support, the Chinese defenders on the ground were extremely hampered in organizing any large scale defense. Just the same, a few fierce pockets of resistance did develop, mainly centered around the few surviving armored personnel carriers, and light tanks—and in particular around two ZU-23 anti-aircraft units that survived the air assault.

Normally used to interdict medium to low level attack aircraft, the commander of Chinese air defense in that particular sector had wisely ordered the radar units in those vehicles turned off in order to save them. He then had them concealed in a nondescript warehouse and offered them to the young Captain who had taken charge of the ground defense for the base.

The Chinese captain employed those units very effectively. Establishing a defensive perimeter near the warehouse, he had the two ZU-23s and two accompanying infantry fighting vehicles remain concealed in the building while his ground troops retreated hastily in front of the American advance in that sector. This movement served to draw the American forces forward and then, just as American forces began approaching the warehouse, the captain ordered the concealed ZU-23's and IFVs to



attack. The ambush caught the two most forward American platoons by surprise and completely decimated both of them, killing twenty-three and severely wounding another seven soldiers.

Ultimately, one of the ZU-23s was destroyed by a LAW anti-armor unit attached to the Company that had lost those platoons. The second ZU-23 was destroyed by an F-15E Strike Eagle called in for close air support by the mortally wounded commander of the second ill-fated platoon.

Despite inflicting these losses, the Chinese defense of the airfield was futile. Outside of the ZU-23 and a couple of other pockets of resistance, the American troops rolled over both the military and civilian airfields and secured them for aircraft landings within an hour, well ahead of schedule.

As the drama of the doomed Chinese defense of the military airfield played itself out, the C-90A transports began to arrive on the sea shore outside of Magadan. Close air support aircraft and a battalion of American paratroopers (who themselves had landed a half hour earlier for just this purpose) secured the two major landing zones on adjacent beaches and ensured that no SAM or heavy caliber weapons were in a position to threaten the arriving transports.

The initial transports arrived at the two landing zones in two waves of eight aircraft each. The first wave at each landing zone comprised four aircraft with infantry load outs carrying almost eight thousand men. Those four aircraft were accompanied by two aircraft carrying armor, a total of thirty-two M1A1 Abrams tanks...and by two aircraft carrying mechanized infantry, a total of forty light armored vehicles (LAVs).

As each aircraft touched down in the water and powered up to a sliding halt on the undefended beaches, its nose swung upward like a C-5A Galaxy, and revealed two separate levels for the disembarking of troops and equipment. Those soldiers in the aircraft carrying infantry poured out from both levels, down ramps that extended onto the shore. Those aircraft carrying armor vehicles disgorged that armor and their crews from the lower level, while maintenance and support troops used the ramps from the upper level.

Outside of a few cases of small arms fire and one case of light machine gun fire which were quickly suppressed, there was no opposition. Within thirty minutes, following the pattern and training that had been drilled into them while they awaited the arrival of the aircraft on Midway Atoll, all of the troops and their equipment were on shore and utilizing their staging areas to move further inland.

An hour later the second wave of aircraft arrived at each landing zone and approached the positions for the disembarking of their troops and equipment. This wave had been prepared to loiter well offshore if resistance to the first wave warranted it. As it turned out, it did not.

In this wave, there would only be eight of the huge transports—two infantry loaded aircraft for each landing zone, with four more carrying armor and mechanized vehicles. The remaining two aircraft at each zone carried the invasion force's attack helicopters-AH1Z Vipers, and its F-35C VTOL fighter bomber attack aircraft.

The tragedy of the day occurred while these aircraft were just touching down and approaching the beach. Forty kilometers to the north of Magadan, a battery of Chinese short range ballistic missiles had launched direct fire onto the American beach areas. Four other such batteries had already been discovered and destroyed by American aircraft before they could fire. But this battery of sixteen missiles avoided detection and launched its missiles before American aircraft could respond.

The ballistic tracks were almost immediately noted by American AWACS aircraft that accompanied the task force, and seconds later by Aegis cruisers and destroyers in the Shanksville carrier battle group that were closer in to shore. Immediately the interception of the Chinese missiles was handed off to, and engaged by, the Theater Ballistic Missile defense missiles on the Aegis escorts.

But, although those escorts were much closer to Magadan than the Shanksville herself, they were still several miles off shore and the amount of time was just too short to successfully engage and defeat all sixteen missiles. If a Patriot missile battery had already been set up at either of the two captured airfields, then perhaps the tragedy could have been avoided. As it was, four of the missiles made it through the Aegis TBM defense and impacted at the eastern most landing zone.

There were several very anxious seconds as General Atkins and Admiral Darcy waited to see if the detonations were nuclear, biological, or chemical—or if they were standard high explosives. But there were no weapons of mass destruction employed by the Chinese on this day. They remained committed to their own high command policy decision made earlier in the war to not make unilateral use of their nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, and therefore not play to the American and Russian strength in this area. But the high explosive detonations were severe enough.

Three of the missiles exploded in or near the staging areas of the first wave of transports that had already landed, and where thousands of personnel were busily making their way with their materiel further inland. Over four hundred personnel and several light armored vehicles were destroyed in those blasts. More tragically, in a freak coincidence of timing, one of the missiles landed just offshore as the second wave of transports was approaching. That missile hit the right wing of one of the C-90A transports carrying F-35C aircraft for that landing zone.

The impact severed the wing, causing the aircraft to skew and dip into the water. As it did so, its own weight and momentum sheared the tail entirely off of the aircraft. The forward section, which

still contained a full wing and the sheared-off half of another, spun hard in the water as it dipped further, ripping off three of the four engines on the intact left wing.

The catastrophic opening of so many hydraulic, electric, and fuel lines while the aircraft's equipment was still operating resulted in a fire on the intact wing that rapidly spread towards the main body of the aircraft. It came to a halt in about twenty feet of water and began to settle to the bottom, as it burned. Personnel were pouring out of emergency access doors along both sides of the aircraft and out of the rent in the back of it.

Three large explosions occurred in the body of the aircraft as the fire reached fuel, ordnance, and other combustible material stored on board for the F-35Cs. These explosions resulted in a massive fireball within the body of the aircraft burning many men before they could get out.

On the lower deck, a large number of personnel were forced to make the horrific choice of either facing the intense fire, or staying where they were and succumbing to the rising water on that deck. Scores of personnel drowned as the rapidly rising water in that portion of the aircraft made their decision for them.

In the end, of the almost twelve hundred personnel on board that aircraft, only three hundred and eighty-two survived. All eight of the F-35C aircraft were completely destroyed. The wreck of that C-90A would remain there right off the beach for over a year as feverish logistical operations and enemy counter attacks made it impossible to conduct any large scale salvage effort.

The wreckage of that aircraft, and of the others that would later be added to it, would serve as a mute but stark message to American servicemen who fought in and around, or were processed through, Magadan over the next twelve long months. It would do the same for those who would see it through digital imagery. It was a message regarding the reality of the continued terrible sacrifice necessary to preserve freedom and overcome the commitment of a dedicated and ruthless enemy.

Those enemies were far from defeated and would prove, over and over again, that they were still capable of inflicting, and more than willing to wreak, death and destruction on American forces and those of her allies wherever they could be engaged in furtherance of their own aims and designs.

Later, as historians looked back upon it, it would be apparent that the American invasion of Magadan served to markedly increase the bloody tempo of the intense combat for the entire war. A veritable firestorm would ensue in and around Magadan as the Chinese contested America's foothold. And that firestorm would escalate around the globe through the remainder of the war.

The new and bloodier tenor of this war would be most evident on foreign shores like the one at Magadan, but it would also make itself felt in more periodic intense attacks on American soil directly, as future events would soon show.

**May 13, 09:45 local time**

**Executive Council Chambers**

**Politburo, Beijing, China**

Jien Zenim was extremely unhappy. The incessant ringing of his personal phone at a very early hour this morning was the certain tip-off to news and events that would place him and the entire executive committee of the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China on edge.

Jien couldn't stand unexpected disappointment, failure, or reversals to plans long laid.

The news today from the far east on the Sea of Okhotsk represented just that type of occurrence...and the entire leadership council knew it. Continuing to address them all, now that the initial briefing and information had been communicated to them, Jien's displeasure was evident in the berating of his subordinates who should have prevented such a disaster from occurring. As the President of the People's Republic of China and the leader of the largest, most militaristic and populous alliance the world had ever witnessed...and as the architect who had planned it all...Jien felt he was well within his rights to chastise those on whom he depended.

"By our own estimate, upwards of thirty thousand Americans materialize out of nowhere and attack, and then take the most strategic and the most critical logistics point for all of our forces operating in Alaska, and none of you can tell where the breakdown has occurred?"

"The dodging and political posturing I am hearing here this morning has NO PLACE in our discussions. We must know what the real conditions are in Magadan and how they came about.

"I am starting to believe that the problem exists right in this room...and if I cannot be persuaded that this is not the case, I will solve the problem myself, quickly and, I assure you, permanently."

Turning to the large screen projection on the far wall, where he knew several others who were joining the conference by secure video conferencing, President Zenim picked one of those participants, one he felt he could trust completely and who was among the most competent military minds in all of China, and addressed him.

"General Hunbaio, what do our research and development scientists tell us about the new method the Americans have utilized in this landing of theirs?"

The President hesitated for just a few seconds as he asked this question, long enough so he could look around the table and glare at several of those sitting with him in the conference room in Beijing.

Then he concluded, "Please share something definitive with us...as opposed to the hand wringing and excuses I have been witness to so far this morning."

General Hunbaio, the military commander and senior scientist at COSTIND, the Chinese defense industry research and development conglomerate, considered his feelings about this attack.

He was surprised by it...by the Americans' ability to produce so much new technologically advanced equipment so quickly, given the circumstances they had been subjected to. Almost four years ago virtually all of their major, heavy manufacturing had been cut off cold.

"All of that outsourcing, all of those factories...gone," thought the General as he tried to conceive of how he and his own nation would have reacted in similar circumstances.

Their energy dependency had also taken a heavy toll on their ability to fight back, as many of their energy sources had become unavailable to them at that same time. Many other segments of their economy, including most of their high tech, had also been outsourced to the Far East, China most predominant among them, and to India. The war had cut them off with swiftness as well.

"And we thought, with finality," reflected the General before beginning his response.

Yet, here we are, less than four years later, and somehow the Americans have produced an operation of this magnitude right here in Asia, far too close to the People's Republic.

It was amazing...but not altogether surprising to him. He had determined long ago not to take for granted or underestimate the will of the American people and their leaders...irrespective of the hype, and irrespective of the significant gains the PRC had made under certain American administrations. Not taking them for granted or believing the hype had allowed him to secure Lu Pham out of Vietnam so many years ago to develop the LRASD weaponry that had been so effective against the Americans to date. He determined in his own heart and mind that that same trait would serve him and his nation now as he sought for and found a way to counter this new development.

"Mr. President. The technology the Americans have employed is not new. You may remember that in the 1930s, the rich American, Howard Hughes, produced and flew a similar type aircraft. It was called the Spruce Goose, and it employed exactly the same principles of a large aircraft using the surface wave accompanying the passage of the aircraft to produce more lift under the aircraft.

"The Americans have studied this issue in a quest for a true rapid deployment of large forces

"With their operation in Magadan, they are announcing to us that they have deployed just such a force. I am sure they expect us to understand their message...that they could send a similar force towards Tianjin or any of our other ports, or those of our allied and pacified nations tomorrow.

"Given the one grainy picture I have been able to look at this morning, I would say that the design of the large, super transports the Americans have employed is a larger, newer version of a design one of their major aircraft companies came up with about eight or nine years ago.

"That design was a little smaller and had only two engines on each wing. But it was huge nonetheless and looked very similar to this aircraft. I believe the company called it the Pelican, but it was never chosen for military procurement or production and it has apparently remained on the drawing board...until now.

"My own opinion is that the Americans are presenting us with a wonderful opportunity in this. After the shock wears off, and after we develop effective strategies to deal with it, those large, relatively slow moving aircraft will prove to be coffins for many more American personnel. If we find them, they are much easier to destroy than a ship protected by aircraft, submarines and escort vessels.

"Clearly the key will be to determine where they are, and then make sure our defenses are prepared accordingly...perhaps we can prepare a rapid deployment counter force of our own for this...I am not sure yet, but we already have the best minds at COSTIND working on it.

"Now, Mr. President, if I may, we are also working on a plan and operation to interdict and destroy this current force off of Magadan. Admiral Lu Pham has some ideas in that regard using the LRASD devices and I believe we should move forward with a counter attack based on those plans as early as possible. Everyone here knows the success we have experienced as a result of the LRASD weaponry. The latest innovation which allows those weapons to be programmed with criteria so they can broach the service and become a missile has already proved successful. The Admiral is suggesting that we put on a major demonstration of this capability off of Magadan.

"I will brief you on those plans tomorrow. That is all I have at this time, Mr. President."

Jien Zenim knew that he could count on General Hunbaio and Admiral Lu Pham. They had not let him down in this entire affair...perhaps it was time to do something on the Executive Committee that would serve as a warning to several of the others.

The President also knew it was time to take the counteroffensive, and not only at Magadan.

"Excellent, General. Proceed with your planning as rapidly as possible. Please invite Admiral Lu to accompany you tomorrow for your briefing. I would like to meet with him and you personally before the briefing of the full executive committee."

Turning to the entire assembled committee, the President then continued. "In addition to this counterattack on the American forces at Magadan, I believe it is time that we issue the final execute order for our culminating operation in the United States. We cannot afford to allow conditions to continue, where the American morale is building as a result of their recent string of successes."

Addressing himself directly to the Chief of the People's Republic Intelligence Agency, the President continued. "General Zham, please ensure that the final approval and execute order for the operation next month is communicated to our operatives there in the United States. Keep us informed on the progress and as to any complications. Communicate our express wishes to the commander on the scene that the operation must be conducted at all hazards, where there is any significant chance for success. Successful completion of his mission is vital to our overall strategy. Make sure that you emphasize that fact to the entire chain of command."

## Chapter 32

*“I regret that I have but one life to give for my country.” – Nathan Hale*

**May 17, 09:48**

### **Offshore**

#### **Magadan, Siberia**

Landing and logistical operations at Magadan continued unabated. Every few hours, eight more C-90A aircraft landed, disgorging more and more men, materiel, weapons, and equipment.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Marine Division and follow-on units which were now comprising what was being called the 12<sup>th</sup> Army, had pushed well inland along the superhighway and rail system the Chinese had built for their own massive buildup a year earlier. There were simply no major Chinese units to stop them. The head of the Chinese snake was over 1,500 miles away, locked in mortal combat with allied troops around Nome, Alaska.

They dared not turn their back on those allied forces...and yet, they dared not allow the Americans in their rear to continue the buildup and advance out of Magadan. They were caught in a classic pincer, like the North Koreans of the 1950s when General Douglas McArthur had pulled off what had been thought to be an impossible American landing at Inchon, trapping the North Korean army far to the south as they advanced on Pusan.

Now the Americans had repeated the feat, using their new super-transport technology and their advanced rapid-deployment methodologies.

But the Chinese were about to respond.

Flying north over the Sea of Okhotsk, a Chinese air armada equal in size to that of the American one used to affect the landing, the largest single Chinese air attack in their history, was now approaching and about to engage the Americans.

400 SU-35 and SU-37 aircraft, 200 enhanced TU-22M+ bombers, 200 of the new J-10E fighters, 150 attack aircraft of several varieties and over 200 support aircraft were involved. By 9:48, over 100 of the leading aircraft in this vast air armada were approaching the American picket ships and the extents of American AEW and AWACS coverage at the edge of the American defense of Magadan.

What ensued was what American fighter pilots called a giant “fur ball,” a dogfight of massive proportions between American aircraft on patrol out of Magadan and from the U.S.S. Shanksville, and the Chinese fighters in the vanguard of their attack.

The fighting was ferocious as the Chinese, using their own high technology aircraft and benefiting from several years of combat experience, faced off against American fighters that, outside of the one squadron of F-22 Raptor fighters now based at Magadan, held little technological edge over their Chinese adversaries. In the training arena as well, after the years of combat the Chinese had experienced, what was once a clear American advantage had now nearly been negated.

At first, during the initial engagements, the dogfight went to the favor of the Chinese, with their vastly superior numbers coming to bear near the edge of the battle space, out near the U.S. picket ships and the edge of American AEW and AWACS coverage. That advantage allowed the as yet unmolested Chinese bomber aircraft to launch large numbers of LRASD weapons at those picket ships which began to take them out, one by one. By 10:15 AM, that line of picket destroyers and frigates had been reduced to a shambles and the Chinese continued to press on.

Now, as the moving dogfight approached closer to Magadan, the Chinese had to contend with more and more American aircraft and naval vessels in more defensible formations. And the American aircraft and ships fought ferociously to defend a contingent of ten C-90A aircraft that were still in the water, frantically unloading their supplies in an effort to finish and take off before the attack wave could arrive off of Magadan.

Soon, the Chinese fighter advantage and advance began to wane, particularly as the F-22 Raptor aircraft and Aegis vessels took their toll, fighting at a three or four to one ratio against the best the Chinese had, the J-10E and SU-37 aircraft.

By 10:45 AM, twenty miles out from Magadan, the Chinese offensive stalled and a dogfight of rough parity began to play out. Both sides lost more and more aircraft, the continued Chinese superior numbers now being offset by the capabilities of the F-22s. Both sides were many hours away from having any reinforcement aircraft arrive, but both sides had plenty of tanker aircraft in the air, and so the fight continued as first one side, and then the other, would make assaults on one another's tanker and command aircraft.

The Chinese attack aircraft tried again and again to break through the American air barricade to the beaches and to the newly installed American installations at the airfields and along the major highway. But they were foiled in the attempt by the few reserve aircraft the Americans held back to defend inland points against breakthroughs.

In the end, this scenario played to the Chinese advantage in attacking the C-90A aircraft and allied shipping near Magadan. The C-90s, with the fighting now so close, were unable to take off and they remained in the harbor, in deeper water, waiting for the victory that would allow them to depart.

But then, the remainder of the TU-22M+ aircraft came into play. As a result of the Americans having their hands full turning back the attack aircraft and employing the balance of their fighters against the Chinese fighters, these bombers were able to approach right up to the perimeter of the Chinese air advance and launch their LRASD weapons. A contingent of twenty-five aircraft, which carried the latest programming for the LRASD, defined the main thrust.

The Chinese knew in advance that the C-90s would be in the water, and that had accounted for the particular timing of the attack. Coast watchers that they had deployed all along the Kuril Islands had turned the tables on the Americans for this battle. As the Americans had used those islands to lull the Chinese into a false sense of security so the Shanksville battle group could transit them, the Chinese coast watchers had, over the last five days, held their peace until the appointed hour to reveal the exact timing and duration of C-90 flights.

As two groups of twenty Tu-22M+ aircraft approached on each flank of the American position, the twenty-five aircraft carrying the latest version of the Killer Whales made a supersonic dash up the middle, low to the water.

The American AEW aircraft vectored all the resource that they had towards the first two groups of twenty TU-22M+ aircraft which could simply not be ignored. All but ten of those Chinese aircraft were shot down, but not before eighteen launched LRASD weapons. While those weapons were streaking toward various American escort ships in the harbor, and as five of them detected and attacked two of the large SSTN transport submarines, the third group of twenty-five TU-22s arrived.

All of these aircraft were able to launch their Killer Whale devices which were programmed to place the highest priority on the parameters that the Chinese had calculated would detect and prosecute C-90 aircraft sitting in the water...and use the special attack profile that had been developed for them. The Chinese programming proved to be very accurate.

Only six of the LRASD weapons were intercepted by American defenses as they approached the big transport planes. All American personnel on shore and at sea could do was watch in horror as all ten C-90A aircraft were utterly destroyed by the large LRASD weapons which used a pop-up attack profile to come out of the water, rise completely above the aircraft and then crash down upon those aircraft from above as they sat motionless offshore.

By 11 AM it was over...there was now much more debris in the waters around Magadan for those transiting the staging area to look upon.

Luckily for the Americans, they had unloaded most of the men and materiel from the transports before the attack. But the loss of almost one-quarter of their total inventory of C-90A transports in one confrontation was a tremendous blow...not only to the total inventory of equipment, but in real terms to the rate of buildup that could be sustained at Magadan. That buildup would now be slowed by over 30% of what it had been.

In addition, the U.S. Navy had been hit hard, losing three Aegis destroyers, an Aegis cruiser, three frigates and one of the new SSTN transport subs. The two transport subs that had been attacked had used their SUB CIWS systems for defense. But one of them had been attacked simultaneously by three LRASD weapons that had overwhelmed its defenses. It along with all of its supplies which had yet to be unloaded, were a complete loss, lying broken and ruined on the floor of the Sea of Okhotsk.

One hundred and ten U.S. aircraft were destroyed, including forty-two F-16s, twenty-eight F-15s, twenty-three F-18Fs, four F-22 Raptors, all ten of the C-90s, two EA-18Cs, and one E-2C Hawkeye.

The loss of the SSTN, the C-90 transports, and of the vaunted F-22s would come as a shock to the American system, and once again demonstrate that in the face of overwhelming numbers, even the highest technology becomes vulnerable. That shock would reverberate throughout American think tanks and war colleges for months to come.

But the fight had also been very costly for the Chinese. Of the over 1,100 aircraft attacking the Americans, more than five hundred would not be coming home. Only seventy of the enhanced TU-22M+ bombers came away from the fight. Almost all of the SU-35s, half of the SU-37s and most importantly, a full 75% of the J-10 fighters were shot down, along with several tankers, three AWACS and over one hundred of the other attack aircraft.

Chinese production would be hard pressed—as would American production, to keep up with the losses that resulted from the second battle of Magadan—and it would not be the last. Over the next several months, a hot and expensive contest to see which side had the will, the fortitude and the resource to outlast the other in the battle over Magadan would continue.

**May 21, 03:27 local time**

**Approaching the Trans-Syrian Pipeline**

**85 Miles Northeast of Damascus, Syria, GIR**

Colonel Jess Simmons was very worried. In all the flying he had done and all of the combat he had seen, he had never been placed in a position where he was not in control of his aircraft.

Oh, he had taken fire, and even some damage, but his skills had been such, and the damage had been light enough, that he had never felt the slightest doubt about his ability to get his aircraft and his electronics and weapons officer back to base...until today.

The GIR was conducting a massive counterattack all up and down the line in this sector north and east of Damascus. Allied forces that had pushed well beyond Damascus and were approaching the Trans-Syrian pipeline were now experiencing a fierce enemy counterattack that had started yesterday, late in the day.

That attack had come precisely after the reserve AIM-999 Hail Storm missiles had been used to achieve the latest allied advances, and so there were no others available for use against the counteroffensive that the GIR was mounting at this time, and it would be at least another 24-48 hours before any could be spared from either the Syrian desert to the east, or Egypt to the south and west.

Realizing this, the allied command staff had recommended and approved the use of layered conventional forces, to absorb and then roll back the GIR counterattack, preparatory to AIM-999 strikes the day after tomorrow. Colonel Simmons and his flight of Comanche aircraft were an important part of that layered defense.

His command of those stealthy reconnaissance and attack helicopters was very adept at penetrating enemy lines, and determining the locations and the disposition of enemy forces on the ground, and then delivering critical attacks to those enemy forces to soften them up and prepare them for heavier attacks by either Apache helicopters, Multiple Launch Rocket Systems or aircraft of the U.S. Air Force. That air support could range anywhere from fast-moving attack aircraft providing close support, to more strategic attacks from B-2 Stealth bombers or even AIM-999 missiles.

...and softening up the enemy advance columns for that type of support is exactly what Colonel Simmons had been doing early this morning.

But the GIR had responded uncharacteristically quickly and in great strength with several squadrons of the new, GIR export version of the Chinese J-10 aircraft. Those light, very nimble, and highly advanced fighters were fighting the U.S. JSF and F-15 CAP to a standstill, and even penetrating the American CAP in several areas of the front in support of the advancing GIR armor and mechanized infantry.

It was just such a penetration that had caught Colonel Simmons' flight of four aircraft after a squadron GIR aircraft had disposed of, or driven off, the American fighters that were protecting them. On the first pass, these Chinese fighters severely mauled the American helicopters, shooting down two RAH-66s outright and severely damaging the Colonel's aircraft. That damage was severe enough that Jess knew he was not going to make it back to base...or even back to his own lines.

As the reality of the hopelessness of his position finally sank in with the failure of more and more systems, Colonel Simmons keyed his radio and reported to both his weapons officer and to the controlling command aircraft.

"Marty, get ready. We're going down.

"Night Watch Three, this is Dingo flight leader issuing an urgent Mayday. I say, Mayday, Mayday, Mayday...We are going down. Coordinates are..."

But the transmission was cut off in mid-sentence when total electrical power to the aircraft failed, and the Comanche went into an unstable flat spin. The Colonel tried to autorotate the aircraft to a semblance of a "soft" landing, but further control surface and circuitry failures made it impossible for him to regain control of his aircraft.

As the crew of the last healthy helicopter in Dingo flight looked on, Colonel Simmons' aircraft bounced once, and then rolled over on its side before slamming to earth again, its rotor shattering and the aircraft rolling over several times before coming to a smoldering stop against a rock outcropping.

The surviving helicopter had time to make one low level pass over the now heavily smoking wreckage and communicate its location before jinking hard to the left to avoid an enemy missile, and then desperately evading continued attacks as it made its way back toward friendly lines.

**May 20, 19:27, that same time**

**JSF Production Facility**

**Ft. Worth, Texas**

Cindy Simmons shuddered for just an instant as a cold tremor passed over her like the frigid wind from a Texas blue norther. It was something entirely unexpected, and something physically impossible to explain here in the large building housing the F-35C Joint Strike Fighter assembly line in north central Texas where Cindy found herself in the late Spring.

"Jess," she immediately thought.

She didn't understand it, but deep in her heart and soul she felt that something must have happened to Jess.

She was only an hour and a half into her shift. For just a moment she stopped work and just sat there...thinking...worrying. Finally, out of necessity, as the pressure of doing her part in producing these important tools for the defense of America and liberty bore down on her, she put the thought out of her mind and went back to work.

She did so with a prayer that the tremor had been just a physical thing, brought on by something in the air around her rather than some sort of ominous, instinctual premonition. She was all too familiar with the aching void that would forever exist within her since the loss of her son, Billy. And she hoped that she was now simply projecting that ache onto her longing to see Jess safely home. The thought of living the rest of her life with two such voids was unimaginable.

Somehow, deep inside, she knew that something was desperately wrong...and, no matter what she did, she could not entirely shake that gnawing instinctual knowledge. But she would just have to place it in God's hands. His will would be done, no matter her fears, wishes, or premonitions. So she slowly and deliberately closed her eyes, and shook her head, as if to deny such unpleasant thoughts any residence there, and continued—although absentminded and preoccupied—with her work.

Despite her strong faith and unyielding optimism, those unpleasant thoughts continued to plague her, no matter how hard she tried to banish them. Later that night—deep into the night—she would sob quietly into her pillow, praying that her husband, her best friend and love, would be brought home safely to her. But somehow a stubbornly intuitive part of her already knew that the Lord would not be answering this prayer in the way that she hoped He would.

**May 21, 03:29 local time**

**Back on the Ground**

**85 Miles Northeast of Damascus, Syria, GIR**

Chief Warrant Officer Marty Walker regained consciousness with a start. As he oriented himself and tried to gain his bearings, he realized that his head was pounding with a terrible, blinding headache, and he was lying on his side. The memory of how he came to be in this awkward and unnatural position in his Comanche helicopter came flooding back to him. Thick black smoke was entering his compartment rapidly and he realized he had to get out...now.

Normal operation of the canopy in this position, with the helicopter on its side, was impossible so Marty quickly kicked out the side window, which was now surreally situated over his head. As he reached with both hands to pull himself out of the smoking wreck, white hot pain shot up his left forearm, and he was unable to grasp anything with that hand. Looking at that arm and seeing the sharp warp between his wrist and elbow, he realized that his left arm was broken, and so he concentrated his efforts on pulling himself out of the wreckage using his right hand only.

After several very painful seconds and a tremendous exertion, Marty was able to free himself and slide down the side of the aircraft to the ground.

As soon as he was shakily standing on his own two feet, he quickly made his way to the front of the aircraft and the other crew station to check on his pilot, Colonel Jess Simmons.

It was worse than he had feared. The forward compartment was partially crushed and full of smoke, and the Colonel was clearly unconscious and hurt badly with blood running down his forehead. Pulling off the emergency access panel, the Chief Warrant Officer rapidly disengaged and then released that canopy section behind which the Colonel was trapped. He then began to unhook the Colonel's harness and began to pull his limp body out of the aircraft.

Walker knew he would have to exert pressure on his broken arm and use it to help pull if there was any chance of getting the Colonel out. Steeling himself for the pain, the Chief Warrant Officer began to pull, trying his best to ignore the blinding pain as he tried to save his friend.

As he pulled, sparks began igniting within the compartment and a fire started that spread rapidly. Painfully trying to pull the Colonel out of the wreckage, Marty encountered resistance, and quickly found that the Colonel's left leg was badly mangled in the wreckage and he was unable to pull it free. The fire was beginning to reach that appendage and the sickly smell of burning flesh mixed with the fuel, electrical fire, and other smells associated with the wreck of the aircraft.

Marty became desperate and knew that time was running out. He could not safely stay and work with the Colonel for more than a few seconds. Feverishly trying to disengage the Colonel's leg, he finally was able to use his good hand to bend a control panel back off of the leg and free it.

Using the good hand to pull at the leg, Marty discovered unnervingly, that the Colonel's damaged leg was almost completely severed half-way between the knee and hip. The bone had been cleanly broken by the impact with the control panel and only a large hunk of flesh behind the bone held the leg to his body. The same fire that had now severely singed Marty's good hand, had cauterized the Colonel's leg so the bleeding was not as severe as it otherwise would be. But Marty could tell that the Colonel's life now hung in the balance of what happened in the next few seconds.

Using all of his strength, and somehow ignoring what would otherwise be unbearable pain, Marty pulled Jess Simmons free of the aircraft and down to the ground, where Marty rolled them both away from the wreckage as quickly and as far away as possible. Before they had rolled over three times, there was a tremendous explosion that lifted them in the air, throwing them perhaps fifteen feet from the now fiercely burning hulk of their aircraft.

Marty Walker pulled his unconscious commanding officer into the rocks and made his way, slowly, painfully, to a depression near the top of the rock outcropping. From that vantage point he had a good view of the forward area of the battle where the enemy was advancing. It also allowed him to



activate his emergency radio beacon and make contact with the SAR units already airborne and looking for Colonel Simmons' wreckage.

**May 21, 03:42 local time**

**Forward Command Post, U.S. Forces**

**80 Miles Northeast of Damascus, Syria, GIR**

"Sir, we are in contact with Colonel Simmons' rear seater, Chief Warrant Officer Walker. He indicates that the Colonel is severely wounded but alive, and that there are a minimum of eight enemy armored personnel carriers or tanks approaching his position.

"He waved off the first SAR unit, which was going to have to abort anyway because we don't have air superiority in the area. He's requesting immediate close air support."

Colonel Kevin Martin, who had listened intently to the Lieutenant's update, scratched the two day stubble on his chin as he took the facts in and tried to visualize that sector of the battlefield and the available assets at his disposal.

American forces had slowed the enemy advance this morning, but they had not stopped it. Colonel Simmons' own flight of Comanche helicopters had represented the point of the sword in that regard, and a MLRS strike that they had called in moments before going down had severely mauled the forward elements of the enemy advance in this section of the battlefield.

"In fact, their calling in that strike probably saved them from capture or death to this moment," Colonel Martin thought. "If that strike had not occurred, the enemy would already have pushed well past Simmons' and Walker's location."

But that spot was now exactly where the enemy was focusing, and the efforts to rescue the two aviators were now serving to sharpen the enemy's focus.

Due to the instability of the air situation, the sector's JSTAR battlefield control aircraft, with its synthetic aperture radar and combat control capabilities, was well off to the southwest and was not in position to cover the downed aircrew, or the forward headquarters from which Colonel Martin operated for that matter...and these facts deeply concerned the Colonel.

"Okay, get on the line to HQ and request a priority air support package to assist in the extraction of these guys. Ask 'em to bring up the JSTAR aircraft to cover this entire section of the battlefield and request whatever CAP they have for the job.

"We need a heavy duty CAP to drive off the enemy aircraft and keep them off...and we need to sanitize the ground area of enemy armor and mechanized units. Have Walker operate as our on-the-ground forward air controller (FAC) to coordinate the support he needs to keep them from being captured or overrun, and to prepare the area for extraction."

**May 21, 03:59 local time**

**Forward Headquarters, GIR 7<sup>th</sup> Army**

**95 Miles Northeast of Damascus, Syria, GIR**

General Abduhl Selim considered the information coming in from the front. The Americans were focusing efforts on a non-critical portion of the forward portion of the battlefield, and that mystified him. That position was neither strategic nor very defensible. Why would they be focusing their efforts there?

"Go over it once more, Captain. I want to know the details of how this pitched battle developed."

The captain, a man ten years older than the general himself, but one who had come to respect the general's experience and his leadership just the same, reviewed for General Selim what they knew.

"General, we were ahead of schedule at 0230 hours when the Americans began interdicting our forward elements with attack helicopters protected by a strong CAP.

"Your order of 0245, committing the reserve air units, served to blunt this American effort, but did not fully contain it. Our forward progress was severely curtailed by a massive American missile strike at 0320. That strike was not an attack by their new missiles. It was an attack by short range ballistic missiles that we analyzed and determined to be from forward deployed American MLRS units off to our southwest.

"In fact, we were able to backtrack the missiles' trajectory and utilize SU-35 and SU-25 aircraft to locate and destroy two batteries of American MLRS units involved in that attack.

"Very soon after that attack, our fighter aircraft in that sector broke through the American air cover and savaged several flights of American attack helicopters, some of which had served as forward air control for the missile strike we had experienced only a few moments before.

"The pitched battle began to mount shortly thereafter as our forward units began advancing into the area where one of the American helicopters was downed. The force on force structure has escalated ever since, focusing around a minor outcropping of rock..."

The Captain leaned over the electronic map, checked his figures and then pointed to an otherwise nondescript portion of the map that had numerous green unit markers on it representing GIR forces, confronted by a smaller number of red markers representing American forces.

"...here. This is where the air and armor forces are converging on both sides."

Clearly, someone, or something, of great import to the Americans had gone down there. Something they felt was worth concentrating all of this firepower to protect or save.

“How can I use that against them?” the General asked himself.

“If I can but hold the Americans in place in this exposed position for enough time, perhaps...”

Looking at the map and the lay of the land, as well as the advancing units in that particular sector, the young general quickly saw a set of conditions he felt he could capitalize on.

“Captain, contact the commanders of these four armored battalions from the 73<sup>rd</sup> and the 27<sup>th</sup> mechanized infantry division here, that are now approaching the battle. I have new orders for them.

“In the meantime, contact General Abin and inform him of my intention to send another wing of J-10s and two wings of SU-35 aircraft here immediately.”

**May 21, 04:17 local time**

### **Rock Outcropping**

#### **85 Miles Northeast of Damascus, Syria, GIR**

Marty Walker surveyed the terrain and the conditions around him. Thus far he had been able to call in significant air and fire support on advancing GIR formations and avoid capture or death.

Those GIR units that had initially tried to capture him and the colonel had all been destroyed or dispersed by the support he had received, but the overall GIR advance had continued and had partially enveloped his position to either side. A few moments ago several American Bradley Fighting Vehicles had gotten to within two hundred yards in an attempt to rescue them, but they had then had to withdraw under intense enemy fire that had destroyed three and sent the others back to the west.

During the fighting there had been three SAR wave-offs, and one SAR helicopter had been shot down by enemy fire. From the fireball that had resulted off to his south and west, he knew there were no survivors. But he knew that the situation had gone beyond saving him or Colonel Simmons...although keeping Colonel Simmons out of enemy hands was something he had been directed to ensure at all costs, and something to which his command was willing to dedicate tremendous resource as well.

Now there was a pitched battle going on all around him. The enemy was pouring more and more men, materiel, and aircraft into this area of the battlefield, matching and trying to outdo American efforts. Based on what he was hearing over the radio, over twenty enemy aircraft had broken off from one of their large formations and attacked the U.S. JSTAR aircraft well off to the south.

Although all twenty of those enemy aircraft had been shot down, five of them had gotten close enough to the JSTAR to launch medium ranged radar-guided missiles at the large American aircraft and it had been hit and brought down, lost with all of its crew. It was a tremendous loss to allied forces—and it would prove to be a costly one.

Marty was amazed that he and the colonel were still alive. There had been a few very close calls involving tank fire, enemy air attacks and enemy missile attacks. Twice, enemy infantry, despite the supporting attacks by American aircraft, had very nearly overrun his position, and he had been forced on one of those occasions to use his service pistol to shoot and kill the last two attackers.

The colonel remained unconscious, but his condition had stabilized as a result of instructions Marty had received over his radio and the crude application of a tourniquet to his mangled leg. Every so often Marty loosened that tourniquet a little for a few moments in the hopes that some circulation would get down into the lower leg. But from the looks of the horrible wound, and the extent of the severed flesh, Marty doubted much blood was getting there or that the leg could be saved unless they got Colonel Simmons out of here very soon.

Now, a final attempt to reach their position and extract him and the colonel was about to be made by an entire company of M1-A1 Abrams tanks and a battalion of mechanized infantry. It was to be accompanied by the largest surge of American aircraft yet that would try to gain at least temporary air superiority over this section of the battlefield. If they did, a helicopter extraction would be attempted under the covering fire of the armor and the mechanized units. If not, then those units themselves would extract the two men from that outcropping of rock that was now serving as their fragile fortress.

**May 21, 04:32 local time**

### **Forward Headquarters, GIR 7<sup>th</sup> Army**

#### **95 Miles Northeast of Damascus, Syria, GIR**

The Americans were committing their strength just as Abduhl Selim had hoped. When it came to rescuing one of their own, they were very predictable. What he considered the foolish American resolve to rescue their own at all costs was something Selim had seen used against them on a smaller scale several times. He now intended to use it against them on an even larger scale.

Their major thrust was now underway, pointed towards that insignificant outcropping of rock...and that seemingly insignificant rock formation had their full attention. He had committed just enough forces there...actually large numbers of men and equipment...to hold their attention and convince them that they would have make an equal or larger commitment.

It had been a quick-witted and dicey decision. Too little force, and the Americans would accomplish their task too quickly and pull back away from the trap Selim planned for them. Too much force, and the Americans would realize they could not accomplish their objective and would withdraw from the trap as well. Abduhl believed he had timed and proportioned it just right.

Now, though, it looked like the American rescue effort, if indeed that was what it was, would be at least temporarily successful. It would only appear that way because the GIR forces in the area were using that initial degree of success as a lure. The GIR forces in that immediate area would intentionally appear not strong enough to stop them.

And that was just fine. As Selim hoped, it would serve to pull the Americans further in. For that very purpose the general had spent the last half hour rerouting and redirecting significant forward forces to the west of the outcropping to serve as his main thrust. With the destruction of the American battlefield control aircraft, despite the significant losses in achieving it, Abduhl was now confident he could pull off his overall plan successfully.

Turning to his chief of staff, the general issued the necessary orders.

“Have the 73<sup>rd</sup> and the 27<sup>th</sup> begin their advance now. Make sure they understand that our air forces and other committed units will be holding the enemy in place to their east, and that their main task is to completely envelope the partial envelopment we have already accomplished at the focal point...and to do it in strength.

“We will allow the 17<sup>th</sup>, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 51<sup>st</sup> divisions, which are advancing as a part of our 2<sup>nd</sup> echelon, to completely destroy any remaining resistance the Americans might care to offer.”

**May 21, 04:45 local time**

### **Rock Outcropping**

#### **85 Miles Northeast of Damascus, Syria, GIR**

For just a brief moment, Jess Simmons came to. He was very groggy and his pain was intense, but he realized he was being carried by several men and he could hear the sounds of a Black Hawk helicopter increasing the speed of its rotor as it prepared to take off. Above that noise, the sound of a pitched battle could be heard. The heavy *crack* of tank fire interspersing the sound of explosions, and automatic weapon fire seemed to be coming from all around...most of it very nearby.

Jess slowly opened his eyes and saw Marty’s shoulder above him. He realized that Marty was one of four soldiers that were carrying him on a stretcher...and his memory began to return.

The crash...they were down. But for how long? He saw Marty glance down at him, notice his open eyes, and smile at him.

“Hang in there, Colonel. We have some welcome visitors here and we’re about to get you on board this beautiful Black Hawk and get you the hell away from here. Just hang on!”

Marty stopped talking and turned away as they approached the waiting helicopter and passed the end of the stretcher he was carrying to a corpsman reaching out of the helicopter. As this was happening, Jess Simmons sighed and closed his eyes.

“So we survived the crash,” he thought...but then an intense pain on right side of his head, coupled with a terrible spasm in the thigh of his injured leg caused him to black out and lose consciousness once again.

As Marty and one of the other medics climbed into the aircraft, and as the door gunner fired a long burst of machine gun fire at a target somewhere to their right, the helicopter’s rotor rapidly gathered speed, and the sound of the jet engines pitched to a scream. Then, the Black Hawk tilted slightly forward and took off.

**May 21, that same time**

### **Forward Command Post, U.S. Forces**

#### **80 Miles Northeast of Damascus, Syria, GIR**

“They’ve got him! Sir, they’ve just taken off and are under a secure CAP making their way back to the rear. They indicate that Colonel Simmons’ condition is critical, but stabilized for the moment.

“Ground units are beginning to pull back, but report heavy fire coming from all sides and that their corridor for escape is rapidly shrinking and closing... .

As the Lieutenant said these words, Colonel Martin urgently held up his hand.

“Hold on a minute, Lieutenant. Everybody be quiet.”

As a few whispered comments circulated amongst the staff, the colonel became more insistent.

“I said, BE QUIET!

“Can you hear that... to our rear? Sounds like heavy engines and tracks.”

Then, from fewer than five hundred yards to their rear, as soon as the first GIR main battle tank in the column cleared the hill above the headquarters encampment, the unmistakably loud *CRACK* of that first GIR tank’s main gun was heard, followed by the almost instantaneous explosion of one of the fuel trucks situated a mere 100 feet from the command tent.

As the Colonel shouted, “Everybody out of the tent! We are under attack!” an entire barrage of fifteen 120mm main guns sounded from the advancing company of GIR T-90 tanks. They were

targeting the three M3 Bradley Fighting Vehicles and the four TOW missile-armed HMMVs tasked with providing security for the camp. They also were targeting the command and control vehicle version of the M3 and the tent it was parked next to...the command tent itself.

The resulting explosions destroyed two of the M3 IFVs and all four HMMVs outright. They severely damaged the command and control Bradley and also completely destroyed the command tent where Colonel Martin had just been listening to the briefing regarding the successful extraction of Simmons and Walker. Every person inside the command tent, including Colonel Martin, was killed before they had time to escape.

The troops caught in the American forward headquarters returned brave, but largely ineffective fire. Similarly, the surviving Bradley put up a heroic fight. But sixteen enemy T-90 tanks rolled into the camp and crushed every bit of that resistance, losing two of their number to the Bradley and having another tank disabled by ground fire from the troops.

The American headquarters facility was completely and utterly destroyed. With that destruction, the envelopment of over eight thousand forward American troops and their equipment was completed, and another rung in the rising ladder that was General Abduhl Selim's list of accomplishments was achieved. Around the Middle East, amongst GIR enlisted soldiers and officers alike...and spreading to the high command, Selim was now being referred to more and more often by his new nickname... the Mahdi's Young Lion.

**May 28, 09:35**

**Near the Lincoln Memorial**

**Washington, D.C.**

Johnny Chen knew he had to be particularly careful. His Chinese features were not overly apparent, but it was obvious that he was of Far Eastern descent and these days in America, that almost always garnered additional attention from both the authorities and from normal citizens who might otherwise be considered simple passersby. Given Johnny's current task, any attention was bad.

He simply did not want to be remembered by anyone who might see him around the national monuments today. It was too close to the date of the operation, but it was also a final reconnoiter that Johnny alone had to make.

In an effort to try to deflect any unwarranted or undesired attention, Johnny always had an "America – Love it or Leave it" sticker on his small Toyota pickup truck, which was now parked not far away. Also, he always went out of his way to find clothes that were made in America, and was always willing to talk about his loyalty to American-made products to anyone who would listen.

During his drive across America for this operation, he had had numerous conversations with individuals about the state of affairs in the world, particularly with those who mentioned his Far Eastern features. He always made it a point to leave them with the firm knowledge that Johnny Chen was a loyal American, who had been here many years, who had come from the Republic of China—from Free China—and who detested with a passion the Communist rulers of the mainland. By the time he and whomever he talked with parted company, he usually had them believing that here was one Chinaman who was willing to lay down his life for his country.

...and he was.

The only problem, of course, was that his country was in fact the People's Republic of China, and everything about the facts of his history was a lie...with the exception of his being here in America for many years.

Johnny was one operative that still had all the "sleeper" contacts and resources he needed for the operation he was about conduct. While it had been Johnny who had infiltrated Vandenberg Air Force Base in California and shot down that Titan IV B booster that was carrying a critical new American KH-12 satellite into orbit, he had done that job alone, and never been contacted to do another, being held in reserve.

But that reserve status was now ended. Johnny had already been in the Washington, D.C. area for ten days and had met with his team three times. They had reviewed each of the assignments and the positioning over and over. All of them had been to the area around the memorial for a personal look, and now Johnny was here today for one last look at the terrain where he and his team would play out their part in the operations three days from now, on Saturday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, during the big festivities.

Johnny knew that at least two other teams, maybe more, would be involved and that those teams were from at least one other nationality. He was relatively certain that long hidden and very important operatives like him from one or more of the Islamic nations would be involved, but he was totally compartmentalized in his own plans and had no contact with the other team or teams, and had no awareness of what their specific plans would be.

"Probably several different attempts will be made, ensuring that at least one of them will be successful," he thought as he strolled past the monument and onto the circular drive that surrounded the Lincoln Memorial and provided access to it.

Johnny knew that the Americans could not be allowed to savor their victories of last fall. The festivities on Saturday were meant to accomplish just that. For the Americans, the day was intended to

honor those victories, particularly the one in Alaska. To tell their people that they were back in charge and had the enemy backpedaling. For Johnny, Saturday would be directed at showing the Americans that no one was safe, that their victories were meaningless for their people here at home...that not even their heroes were secure. No not even here in their very capital.

He contemplated the impact on American morale that a successful mission would have as he walked down the sidewalk along the intersecting road that led to where Independence Avenue and Ohio Drive came together just south of the Memorial. At this point, across Ohio Drive, along the Potomac River, would be where he and his team would set up. There was a food vendor there...a friend, set well away from the immediate security zone of the festivities that would be occurring in front of the Lincoln Memorial. The food stand was on the sidewalk there that paralleled the street, leading to parking areas that served the Memorial and West Potomac Park.

Walking on the other side of the street past that food stand, he checked the fields of vision and fire one more time. Everything continued to look good and he was more certain than ever that if events on Saturday caused the action to flow his way as anticipated, he and his team would be in the perfect position to successfully fulfill their mission.

**May 29, 16:23**

### **Outside of the Oval Office**

#### **The White House, Washington, DC.**

Sitting just outside of the door to the Oval Office, Stacey Urkut marveled that she was actually here, about to talk personally to the President of the United States in his office.

From the battlefield encounter with Colonel Kensington, she had been flown to Anchorage on May 2<sup>nd</sup> and had been allowed a generous two days to get herself oriented to living back in civilization...and to get cleaned up, for which she had been extremely grateful. Then, she had spent almost an entire week working with intelligence officers and members of the command staff for the entire Alaskan theater, sharing with them what she knew and what she had experienced. It may not have seemed like a formal debriefing to her, but the military command in Alaska was very anxious...and very grateful...for the opportunity to debrief her.

On May 11<sup>th</sup> she was flown to Seattle, Washington, where an event in her honor was held and where she met the Governor of the State of Washington and the Vice President of the United States, John Bowers. From there, she and the Vice President had made their way across the United States where Stacey had the opportunity to speak at several rallies in cities from Los Angeles to Salt Lake City to Denver to Dallas to Atlanta, Chicago, Philadelphia and Baltimore.

For security reasons, the Vice President had traveled with her only so far as Dallas. Thereafter she was in the company of the Secretary of Defense, George Crowler, who had been as gracious an escort as the Vice President had been.

She had arrived in Washington, D.C., yesterday for her meeting with President Weisskopf. She was sitting outside his office now waiting for that meeting which would begin momentarily.

A young man, her escorting Secret Service agent, was sitting just across the hall from her. His name was Burt Stevens and he was the head of the President's Secret Service detail.

He had been very nice, and had engaged her about her experiences in Alaska as they had made their way from the entry area here to the Oval Office, and as they had sat here for the last three or four minutes. Coming from a military background himself, the agent had appreciated what Stacey had been through and had been very understanding, complementing her on a job well done.

The door to the office opened and the President's Chief of Staff came out, noticed Stacey and offered his hand to her.

"Mrs. Urkut, welcome to Washington, D.C. Welcome to the White House.

"The President is very anxious to meet you. Please, follow me. He is available now."

After shaking the Chief of Staff's hand warmly, Stacey followed him into the room.

And there it was. Just as you would see on TV, or in the history books. The large desk, the pictures, the windows with the views outside...and the President getting up from the desk and stepping across the room to greet her.

"Mrs. Urkut, it such a pleasure, and I must say, an honor to finally meet you."

The President met her halfway across the room between his desk and a grouping of couches and chairs where four other gentlemen were already seated. He shook her hand graciously and then offered to have her sit in that grouping of chairs.

"Mrs. Urkut, allow me to introduce these four gentlemen to you. I believe you already know George Crowler, the Secretary of Defense. This is Fred Reissinger, our Secretary of State and this is General Jeremy Stone, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff."

Turning to the fourth man, the President continued.

"And this is JT Sampson. You may be aware of his internet news site, SierraLines. Although it is somewhat out of the ordinary, because of his relationship to this administration, he is here today to listen report on this meeting to the American people. He will also, if you are willing, conduct an interview with you afterwards...to get the more personal side of your story to the American people.

“That is entirely up to you. Do not feel shy about refusing any press interview if you desire.”

Everyone in the room, including JT Sampson, chuckled at this.

“But I will personally vouch for JT. He has been the most honest, most thorough, and most understanding editor or news executive I have ever met...and he is a loyal American to boot.”

As the President introduced each of the gentlemen, they each stood and shook hands with Stacey, briefly expressing their gratitude to her and their thanks at meeting her.

Stacey recognized George Crowler immediately from her time traveling to Washington, D.C. She also recognized Secretary Reissinger from so many news reports over the last several years as the international scene became more unstable and strained. But she was not as well acquainted with the General, who preferred to stay in the background, working with the various chairmen of the military branches, executing the orders and policies of their commander in chief and his Secretary of Defense.

She was very familiar with JT Sampson. She had tracked the growth of his site on the internet from its early days, when he had personally run almost all of it with his wife, and when so many of his writers and editors had been just ordinary Americans trying to be involved. She was proud of JT, from his personal early involvement in issues, like the Klamath Basin Water Crisis, all the way through his tremendous rise as a news powerhouse during the election of President Weisskopf.

“Thank you, Mr. President, and all of you gentlemen. It is I who feel honored to be here in your presence. Thank you for inviting me...it is something I never expected, and certainly never sought.

“JT, I will be happy to give you that interview. I have admired you for several years as I lurked on the Independent Republic and heard about SierraLines. We were all riveted by your reporting and by reporting from members of the Independent Republic regarding the Klamath Basin Crisis in 2001.

“Thank you for that involvement and example.”

JT knew that his opportunity to engage Stacey Urkut in later conversation was now a certainty. He was grateful for the President’s direct invitation and the opportunity to have such an interview.

But he did not want to go into that now. This was the President’s show, so he responded simply.

“Mrs. Urkut, your example rises far above all of that. That is precisely why the President has us all sitting here today in the Oval Office.”

Thankful for the cue from JT, the President got to the heart of the meeting.

“Now, Mrs. Urkut...”

Stacey respectfully interrupted the President. “Mr. President, please feel free to call me Stacey.”

The President was grateful for permission to address her in such a manner.

“Thank you, Stacey, I was going to ask if that would be okay. As you can see we are all overjoyed to have you here with us today. I want you to know exactly why.

“For months we have prayed that this meeting would be able to take place...that both our own efforts from this office and our military and civic personnel, as well as those of you and so many other brave Americans there in Alaska would make it possible.

“And now those efforts and the help of Almighty God have opened the door and here we are.

“As you know, we are presenting you with the Medal of Freedom day after tomorrow. It is the highest non-military award we can bestow upon a citizen of this nation. Like the Medal of Honor, it is reserved for a very select few who rise above and beyond their call as citizens of our great Republic.

“And that call as a citizen is already a high calling. Higher in my estimation than in any other country because of the blessings of liberty we enjoy in this nation. That liberty places upon each of us great responsibility to be involved...to make sure that our voices are heard such that all of our liberty can be benefited thereby...and prolonged.

“Such liberty requires high moral caliber and fiber...and this is another great responsibility of our citizens. Without that moral fiber, we cannot remain free.

“So, the calling as a citizen of the United States of America is already a high one...and Stacey, you have shown all of us the epitome of not only answering that call...but rising far above it.

“Your reports from Nome, aired on the internet on the morning of June 23<sup>rd</sup> last year, caught the imagination of all Americans and riveted us to our chairs, or wherever else we were at the time.

“The invasion of America by foreign enemies, and the on-scene reporting of it in the face of grave danger will be remembered throughout our history like the ride of Paul Revere...because that is exactly what it became.

“We had already been at war for several years...and we had already been attacked brutally on our own soil...but now the enemy had come to claim that soil. It was something far too many thought could never happen.

“So despite our heightened awareness as a result of the war and so much carnage from continuing terror attacks...and despite the great lengths to which so many Americans had already gone to support the war effort...there was still a certain level of complacency. Your vivid images of that invasion and your messages that accompanied them amounted to a clarion call that brought home the final reality and brutality of our enemies to everyone.

“As the President, and on behalf of the people, I can only humbly thank you for your willingness to do so, and for your bravery in so doing.”

Stacey wanted to speak, and the President could tell that she would like to downplay what she was hearing, but the President pressed on.

“Please, Stacey, let me continue, because you are deserving of every word of praise I have uttered and more.

“After getting the message about the invasion of America out on the Independent Republic website, and after that message had been picked up by every major news service in this nation and the free world, you broadcasted right up to the moment that you either had to leave or face capture or worse from our enemies.

“For most, that would have been far more than enough...but not for Stacey Urkut.

“From there you went on, as 57 year old woman behind enemy lines, to form an effective resistance movement against the Chinese invasion. You accomplished this at continual mortal danger to yourself and your brave compatriots...and you took the battle to the enemy.

“I will tell you, Stacey, your story and that of your compatriots, which you have so articulately and straight forwardly shared as you traveled here to Washington, will go down in our history as being pivotal to the cause of liberty and freedom. As in the crossing of the Delaware River, as in the battle of Gettysburg, as in our victory on Guadalcanal in World War II...your efforts kept the enemy occupied and off balance so that our military had the time to prepare for the great victory that followed last fall.

“We all thought...and I must admit, as a former military man myself, I thought...that there must have been hundreds of you in your group alone. We read the intelligence reports. We marveled at the amounts of resource the enemy was committing...and like the enemy, we underestimated you and the will of your comrades in arms.

“I cannot tell you how stunned we were to hear that you had accomplished it with so few.

“May God bless you, Stacey...you are probably the most deserving person in the history of our nation to receive this award. If I could legally do so, I would award you the Medal of Honor.”

As the President finished, the other gentlemen in the room all nodded their heads in agreement...they were simply awed at what had happened in Alaska...what had set the stage and prepared the way for the successful defense of Anchorage, and the pushing back of the Chinese there in November, only six months ago.

There were tears in Stacey’s eyes. She could tell that this was no political posturing. The President was speaking from his heart.

“Mr. President, I do not know what to say. I only did what I felt compelled to do in the face of such aggression against our country and against my friends and neighbors.

“So many have died. So many have been hurt...have lost everything. I simply cannot accept, for myself only, the honors you bestow...”

As Stacey paused, everyone in the room felt the slightest stirrings of unease in the pit of their stomach. America needed her heroes...now more than ever...and Stacey Urkut was a hero to the nation. One the nation needed, just as they had needed Leon Campbell and others up to this point in the conflict. What would they do if Stacey Urkut simply would not accept?

As the President prepared to interject, Stacey relieved all of their anxiety.

“But I will accept it on behalf of all of those who fought with me. They are the true heroes...from young men barely 16 years of age, to old Native American council leaders in their seventies. Their stories are the ones that really need to be told...not a middle-aged woman’s like mine. I will also accept it on behalf of all of those who suffered so much through the Chinese occupation.

“I just pray for all Americans that our forces are victorious...very soon...and for all free people everywhere thereafter. We are trusting you, Mr. President, and these capable men and women around you...and our brave personnel in the field all over the world, to make sure that happens.

“I know now, from my travels, from seeing firsthand all across this nation how people have come together to face our enemies...that it also depends on each and every one of us. I am thankful for the opportunity to do my part whenever and wherever I can.”

**May 30, 22:50**

**Room 2312, Hyatt Hotel**

**Washington, D.C.**

Sitting in their room watching an old John Wayne/Jimmy Stewart movie, Joe and Elizabeth Trevor basked in one another’s presence.

So much had happened over the last several years and it had all served to draw them together. Their difficulties in having children...Joe’s dedication to his work and Elizabeth’s struggles to come to terms with that dedication during that time period: the events leading up to Joe’s first Nobel Award with the Human Reasoning Structures, or HRS as they were now well known; the war and Elizabeth’s close call with death at the hand of terrorists outside of the Raythone facility in Salem, New Hampshire; the excruciating events and feeling associated with working with Sandra McPherson, and what they had both viewed as her underhandedness in dealing with Joe’s methodologies and her use of it in furtherance of her quasi-legal fetal tissue studies; the unmitigated joy at how that very work had led to the discovery of the HRS in fetal tissue, and how it led to the overturn of abortion practice

in the United States with the pivotal Supreme Court decision last year; and how that had led to a Noble Prize for Sandra McPherson, who had experienced a dramatic change of heart, and who was now their close friend—and who was in fact just down the hall from them.

Through all of those experiences, Joe and Elizabeth's relationship had grown until now they could both say, without reservation, that they were of one heart and one mind. And they had been of one heart and mind in the decision to travel here to Washington, D.C. to watch the presentation of the Medal of Freedom to Stacey Urkut for her phenomenal activities in Alaska.

Reflecting on all of this and on the dramatic turn of events in the war effort, Elizabeth sat up from watching the movie and took her husband's hand in her own.

"Hon, isn't it phenomenal what is happening?" Elizabeth asked with excitement. "I mean, look at our own lives and the events we have been blessed to be a part of.

"It just seems like there is such a tremendous outpouring now and it's affecting so many people all over the world. Like we've turned a corner or passed through a critical juncture in all of this, and are actually making up ground.

"As the President said in his Christmas speech, the Hand of Providence, our Father in Heaven, is lending us His support now . While I have no doubts that there's still a lot of pain and anguish we are all going to experience..."

Speaking of pain and anguish immediately brought thoughts and feelings of her close friend, Cindy Simmons, and reminded her that not everything was rosy or would be considered a *tremendous outpouring* by those adversely affected.

Cindy Simmons had been planning to join them here for the presentation. It was going to be one of the biggest public events and celebrations in American history, certainly the largest since the beginning of the war. But Cindy had called a few days before they were scheduled to leave and informed them of Jess's critical injuries in the fighting in Syria and his serious condition.

"...Cindy's pain is just a little too close to not to recognize it...but still, we have to honor people like Mrs. Urkut in what she accomplished and our armed forces who achieved the victory in Alaska.

"Things like that need to be an example to us all, and help us through what Cindy is experiencing. I'm even more anxious to get down to Texas and help her prepare for Jess' homecoming as a result of this."

Joe listened to his wife. She was always close to the true spirit of things while he plodded along pragmatically and analytically in her wake. As a result, over the years, after they had been able to overcome some of the natural friction that such differing approaches created, they had discovered that they could compliment one another extremely well. Once they made the mental decision to focus on the complimentary nature of their differences instead of the potential friction...their relationship had matured naturally, allowing them to face trials together that otherwise might have torn them apart.

"Honey, I am excited too...and I look forward to tomorrow and then getting down to Texas for a few weeks to help Cindy. I hope we can be there when Jess gets home ...I can't wait to see his smiling face...and you know that guy will be smiling no matter what else.

"Who knows, we might just, as they say in Texas, stay a while, and help him get back in shape on his ranch. We can certainly afford it, and I can get the time off at work if necessary.

"In the meantime, scoot over a little and sit back so I can see John Wayne, would ya?"

**May 31, 11:53**

### **Presentation Stand**

#### **In front of the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C.**

The presentations and festivities had been under way for over an hour. Dignitaries from all around the country were speaking and extending their congratulations and thanks to the President, the armed forces, and to the guest of honor, Stacey Urkut. Other honored guests from all over the free world had made their way here...to honor and commemorate the victories of late last year and the offensive operations they had generated that were continuing that very day.

Over one million people were literally filling up the Constitutional Gardens that ran from the Lincoln Memorial to the Washington Monument, and The Mall that ran from there back to the Capitol building. An excellent sound system was strung up all along the way, all around the Reflecting Pool back beyond the Washington Monument, so that everyone could hear.

People were assembled at the Vietnam Memorial and around it, under the trees in between, around the World War II memorial, and as far away as the Jefferson Memorial where a special gathering area had been set up for overflow visitors. Video displays were set up for live feeds of the proceedings at all of these places, and throughout the wooded areas in between so everyone who was not in a direct line of sight...or was too far away...could watch the events.

People were picnicking with their families. The temperature was warm, but not oppressive for a late spring day in the nation's capitol. The press was broadcasting live to an excited and hungry nation. The good news was contagious and the viewing and listening audience for the event was expected to be one of the largest ever in the free world.

Security was tight.



The Secret Service was, of course, out in force surrounding the President close in to the presentation platform, and surveying all of the ground and air approaches thereto. The Park Service Police, augmented by the Capital police, were spread liberally throughout the crowd—almost six hundred officers present watching for any suspicious activity or movement in the crowd. There were over fifteen hundred National Guardsmen manning blockades, checkpoints and observation points in, and particularly around, the huge crowd. Over two thousand Marines were on alert.

Around the entire perimeter police and National Guard helicopters were patrolling from the air. Higher overhead, a combat air patrol of no fewer than sixteen F-22 Raptor aircraft surveilled the entire region. The ground-based Aegis Ballistic Defense missile batteries around the capitol were on their highest alert and, along the Potomac, no fewer than three Aegis vessels, one cruiser, and two destroyers augmented the ground-based missile defense.

The presentation to Stacey Urkut of the Medal of Freedom was supposed to occur promptly at noon. It was one of the principle highlights of the day. The President was about to approach the podium and make his own speech prior to presenting the award, after which time Stacey Urkut would speak to the entire nation, and the free world, herself.

Joe and Elizabeth Trevor and Saundra McPherson were seated fifteen rows back in front of the presentation stand in an area reserved for VIPs and special guests. That section extended fifty rows back and seated over two thousand special guests of note like the Trevors.

Saundra McPherson, sitting next to her friend Elizabeth Trevor, was proud to be here.

“Yes,” she thought, “Proud.”

It amazed her. Where a little over a year ago she had been totally cynical of her government in general, and particularly belligerent towards the Weisskopf administration, now she sat in rapt attention at the presentation of an award by this administration for efforts in a war that a year ago she would have called unnecessary at best, and self-inflicted at worst. But now all of that had changed.

The unexpected discovery of the Human Reasoning Structures in early fetal tissue from Europe that she was digitally modeling had literally changed her world and the world around her. It had altered her worldview, and opened up the opportunity for the patriotic fervor that she felt today...something she had never really felt before.

Once she knew, beyond doubt, that the fetus was a living, reasoning human, like most of America, she had stepped back in revulsion from what she had been doing. She was just surprised and ashamed that she had not realized it earlier, that it had taken an unmistakable and unarguable scientific proof to draw a conclusion that her own common sense should have told her long ago. She had already determined that she would spend the rest of her life making up for that mistake.

Now, here she was, with her friends the Trevors, and the President was beginning to address them as he prepared to present Stacey Urkut, a woman about Saundra’s own age, a medal for heroism and citizen involvement that went above and beyond her normal duty as a citizen.

“My fellow Americans, as other before me have indicated, we are gathered here today...”

**May 31, that same time**

**3 Miles Away in Quincy Park**

**Arlington, Virginia**

The equipment was now unloaded and set up, partially obscured by the three pickup trucks in which it had arrived. There, at the northeast corner of Quincy Park, those three pickup trucks were now parked in a triangular shape, right on the grass of the park as two of the drivers prepared to open up the end of the triangle and allow the *packages* to depart.

When they did, three ultralight aircraft throttled up and began rolling to the southwest.

All three aircraft were outfitted with very powerful engines that developed much more horsepower than normal ultra lights required. All three of the frames of these particular ultralights were made of very light, very strong, and very expensive composite material that allowed the aircraft to carry up to five times their normal weight. And each of them was carrying that full weight today.

Each small-framed pilot was on a no return mission in each aircraft, strapped to 500 pounds of heavy explosives encased in shrapnel of all types.

As all three gathered speed in the open park, the leader of the team, who was known in America as Sam Hennessee, but whose birth name was actually Sami al-Hinnasi, stood in the middle of the vacant ground between the trucks and silently bid them farewell.

“Go with God, Allah Ahkbar!”

**May 31, that same time**

**Driving North on Quincy**

**Approaching Washington Blvd., Arlington, Virginia**

Nate Thomlason caught movement out of the corner of his eye as he approached the intersection of Quincy Avenue and Washington Boulevard.

He had seen the three late model pickup trucks in his peripheral vision sitting in the park and figured they were just some local people enjoying the late spring weather by picnicking in the park. But the movement from between the trucks attracted his attention.

Slowing down and turning his head for a better look, he saw three ultra light airplanes lumber out from between the trucks that he realized now were further apart than he had thought. But it was those three ultralight aircraft that caught his attention.

“Those aren’t supposed to be here,” he said to himself.

“What in the world do those people think they’re doing?”

Thomlason was an off-duty member of the local Home Guard Unit here in this part of Arlington. Having been an active member of the Home Guard for over two years now, he made it his business to know the Homeland Security rules for the area. There was a flight restriction for all light aircraft this close to the D.C. area, and all ultralights had to fly at least six miles further out.

“They’re less than three miles from the Potomac River here,” he thought.

And then, as realization flooded into his mind, he voiced his thoughts out loud.

“My God, the big presentation over at the Lincoln Memorial!”

Nate always carried his communications gear with him in his vehicle, as well as his M-14 rifle. It was something that would have been unheard of four years ago, but it was a fact of life now.

As he came to a quick stop, Nate called in a report of the three ultralight aircraft, which were now lifting off from the grass, and asked for backup. He then grabbed his rifle and exited his vehicle.

**May 31, three minutes later**

**Private Garage on F street near 21st**

**Washington, D.C.**

At the appointed time, the large garage door opened and very quickly, three heavy-duty, armored, panel vans, labeled with official-looking Brinks Security logos drove out of the garage and separated. Two turned right on F Street and headed for 21<sup>st</sup>, while one turned left and headed for 23<sup>rd</sup>.

All three had additional armor on their sides and the latest armored glass on their windshields. It was a specially engineered glass that allowed those inside to shoot out through the windows, but would stop high velocity bullets from penetrating it. All three also carried four tons of high explosives.

The first two vans turned south on 21<sup>st</sup> and crossed Virginia Avenue, in full view of a platoon of National Guard soldiers who had a blockade set up across C street, on the far side of 21<sup>st</sup>.

The first van picked up speed and drove directly for the concrete roadblock that was designed to keep trucks from driving through the blockade and penetrating further into their perimeter. But this van had no intention of trying to get past the blockade. Its sole purpose was to destroy it.

The soldiers, who for an instant had been fooled by the official looking nature of the security van, now began shouting for the van to stop. As it crossed C Street towards them, they opened fire and people in the vicinity began to scream and scatter.

The fire was ineffective in stopping the heavily armored van, which ran headlong into the concrete barrier and then detonated with a deafening explosion that engulfed the entire squad of troops, several of the concrete barriers and a number of bystanders. The shock wave and blast severely damaged the structures along C Street and set off fires, while tossing around the people within its reach—and breaking them—like so many twigs.

The driver of the second van had held back to watch the effects of the explosion. He closed his eyes immediately before the blast and said a silent prayer to Allah. The blast passed over and shook the van terribly, but it did not destroy it. As the dust was hanging heavily in the air, the driver started forward to make use of the path that had just been blown in the security perimeter surrounding the presentation at the Lincoln Memorial that had just been so loudly and brutally interrupted.

**May 31, 11:58**

**Presentation Stand**

**In front of the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C.**

The explosion had been several hundred yards away from the ceremonies and no one in the immediate vicinity of the President or the crowd there had been injured...yet.

The President was just about to wrap up his remarks and present the Medal of Freedom to Stacey Urkut when he caught just the slightest out of place motion out along the diagonal that led from the Memorial over to the intersection of 21<sup>st</sup> and Constitution Avenue. When he turned his head in that direction to get a better view, the large truck bomb had gone off.

As the smoke and dust cloud was angrily billowing up, and as the President watched the rapid advance of the shockwave along the diagonal road, bedlam broke loose around the presentation stand.

Panic took hold of most of the people in the dignitary area and then in the large crowd behind it, a pandemonium that spread like wildfire and had people rushing madly to get away from the detonation. That mad rush, and others like it, would be the most lethal part of the attack.

Two Secret Service agents, one the head of the detail, Burt Stevens, rushed over to grab the President so they could protect him and guide him towards his armored limo which was parked a

hundred feet away from the presentation stand. Just as they reached for him, the shockwave from the bomb arrived and knocked them all to the ground. As his protectors got up off of him—they had covered him with their own bodies—the President quickly regained his feet and looked for his wife.

There she was, not fifteen feet away and just beginning to get up off the ground herself, her own Secret Service agent detail already standing protectively around her.

“Burt, you’ve got to get myself, the First Lady, the Secretary of Defense, and Mrs. Urkut away from here,” the President said. “What are you hearing?”

As the agents surrounded and protected them, and began to guide them all behind the presentation stand towards the limo and the rest of the security detail vehicles parked on the circular drive, the head of detail quickly responded to the President.

“Nothing yet, Mr. President, just lots of unanswered questions. We’ll know more momentarily, I am sure. Let’s just get you and the First Lady out of here.”

Before getting to the limo, the head of the President’s Secret Service detail received a report through his ear phone which caused him to immediately begin scanning the skies around them.

“Aircraft approaching...three of them.”

### **May 31, that same time**

#### **Secret Service Sniper and Stinger Team Position**

#### **Atop the Washington Monument, Washington, D.C.**

There were two expert marksmen operating as counter-snipers and a two-man team manning a Stinger missile launcher atop the Washington Monument. By the time the explosion at C and 21st Streets occurred, that Secret Service detail had already received the call about the potential threat of ultralight aircraft. That initial report, as it filtered to them there atop the monument, was simply of ultralight activity near Arlington, Virginia, in violation of airspace restrictions.

With the initial report, they had all hoped that the situation just represented errant citizens in violation of the flying regulations around the Capitol.

But with the tremendous explosion to the north and east of the Lincoln Memorial, and with the more detailed report now that there were in fact three ultralight aircraft approaching, all hopes of those types of simple explanations vanished. An assault was being made on the President of the United States, the man they were charged with protecting at all costs.

“There, at two o’clock, just coming over the Tidal Basin in front of the Jefferson Memorial!” one of the snipers exclaimed.

As the other sniper called in the location, and as the Stinger missile team prepared to target the aircraft, one of the members of that team noticed movement in his peripheral vision, and turned his head back towards Constitution Avenue and the White House.

“We’ve got another one, just crossing Constitution Avenue behind us!”

Both small aircraft were flying no more than a hundred feet off the ground and jinking wildly as they approached the Washington Monument. Both were flying at approximately 50 miles per hour.

The leader of the detail instructed the Stinger missile team to take the closer threat, the one behind them, which was now ascending and clearly making an attack on their position.

As this was occurring, a U.S. Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopter swooped in directly behind that aircraft and began pursuing it, firing an M-60 machine gun at the dodging target.

The agent holding the Stinger launcher was frustrated at the sudden appearance of the National Guard helicopter...and so was his equipment.

“I can’t get a lock...I’m oscillating between the ultralight and the chopper, but it wants to target the chopper...can’t you call that guy off?”

Flinching momentarily as another tremendous explosion resounded from the Lincoln Memorial area, the leader of the detail had only a split second to make his decision, it was a fateful one.

“The Guard will bring that guy down, switch to the second target. He’s going to be tough to bring down with a bullet until he gets closer.

“See if you can take him before he gets across the Tidal Pool.”

The Stinger team did as they were ordered, and quickly moved across the room, pivoted, got a clean lock on the approaching aircraft just as it crossed back over land...and over thousands of panicking citizens...and fired.

The stinger rocketed from the top of the Monument with a *WHOOSH*, leaving heavy smoke in its wake and momentarily blinding the agents on that side of the Monument. The missile quickly approached the ultralight, whose pilot saw it coming and immediately dove towards the crowd. Just before the missile impacted, some of the ill-fated members of the crowd below heard him yell, “Allah Ahkbar!” At that instant he detonated the package of explosives behind him and disappeared in a blinding flash, into which the Stinger missile dove, and also exploded.

Over 4,500 shards of metal, ball bearings, and other shrapnel were blasted at high velocity out of the explosion and into the crowd of people below, all of whom were now madly running from the intersection of Independence Avenue and Constitution. Scores were killed by the explosions. More still were killed by the crush and stampede of the crowd; hundreds more were injured.

At the same moment, another violent explosion occurred over towards the Lincoln Memorial as the third armored truck ignited. The pilot of the National Guard Black Hawk helicopter had no time to consider or worry about that third large explosion. His aircraft had already taken the other ultralight under fire and had wounded the pilot in his left thigh, causing the aircraft to begin to fly unstably as its pilot tried to maintain control of the aircraft. It became impossible for him to continue jinking to avoid the attacker behind him and he knew his fate was sealed.

The Black Hawk was now closing in for the kill from behind the ultralight aircraft which was only a hundred yards from the Washington Monument. Just as the gunner was preparing to take the final shots, the second terrorist pilot, finally realizing that he would never make it to his target, which had been the sniper team atop the Washington Monument all along, chose to detonate the explosives on his aircraft. In so doing at that particular instant, he unwittingly achieved his original purpose.

The explosion of the improvised destructive device threw shrapnel in all directions. Blown forward by the blast, hundreds of pieces impacted against the sides of the Washington Monument, a number of them finding their way into the observation post where the Secret Service agents were stationed. One of the agents was killed outright and another injured while below, the sky was raining shards of metal.

As the leader of the detail quickly checked for any sign of life from the dead agent, a crackling, wrenching noise in the air outside of his position drew his attention.

“My God,” was all he had time to whisper to himself.

The blast from the second ultralight also expanded to the rear, and threw shrapnel behind it...right into the path of the oncoming National Guard helicopter. As the pilot madly adjusted his collective and cyclic controls to avoid the blast by climbing over and around it, the shock wave struck the helicopter and jammed both his cyclic and stabilator control systems into position. It also severely damaged the tail rotor. At the same instant, shrapnel blasted through the compartment, killing the pilot and severely wounding the copilot.

With the aircraft locked into its current attitude, the tail rotor tearing itself apart, and the helicopter beginning to spin wildly, the Black Hawk impacted the side of the Washington Monument, five feet below the doomed Secret Service detail leader and the remainder of his team, who were mercifully, quickly incinerated by the fire and blast that raced through their observation deck.

...and there was still a third ultralight.

### **May 31, that same time**

#### **Near the Presentation Stand**

#### **The Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C.**

After the initial explosion, when the head of the President’s Secret Service detail received word of the approaching ultralight aircraft, another warning was quickly communicated.

Another truck was seen racing east on C Street towards the site of the initial explosion. This was followed almost immediately by yet another warning, a third armored security truck was approaching along 21<sup>st</sup> Street.

Burt Stevens informed the President, “Mr. President, we have to turn around and get out of here right now...more threats are appearing all around. Two more truck bombs are coming this way and will be here before we can make the limo.

“Follow me,” he urged as he led them away from the Memorial, to the south and west.

As he did so, two agents, who had retrieved a LAWS (Light Armor Weapon System) out of one of the armored Suburbans parked in the circular drive on the south side of the monument, ran to the northeast corner of the Lincoln Memorial and took up a firing position there.

Just as they got set up, there was a mad crackling of small arms fire and then another resounding explosion to their northeast, where another of the armored trucks set itself off against the last concrete blockade manned by National Guard troops, this one on Constitution Avenue.

The agents with the LAWS moved back behind the wall on the interior of the Memorial to avoid the worst of the shock wave, which blasted across the area, again knocking everyone in its path to the ground. When they returned to their position, they were greeted by the sight of an armored security van speeding madly out of the dust and debris, right down the diagonal road toward the Lincoln Memorial and the President’s retreating party.

There was no time to wonder; there was no time to waste; there was only time to react in defense of their President.

“Target acquired. FIRE!” shouted the agent as his partner prepared another round.

But a second missile would neither be necessary, nor possible. Just feet from the circular drive, the missile impacted the onrushing truck and there was a third violent explosion. The shock wave from this explosion was not contained by trees or buildings. The two agents at the northeast corner of the Lincoln Memorial were killed immediately by the overpressure. The individuals in the President’s party, now almost two hundred and fifty feet away and moving to the southwest down a slight incline away from the monument, were thrown down for a third time, this time much more violently.

As Burt Stevens got the President, who was now nursing a painfully dislocated shoulder, up—and as his comrades began carrying the First Lady, who had broken her leg, they were all briefly mesmerized by the final events at the Washington Monument, where the ultralight aircraft blew itself up in front of the pursuing National Guard helicopter, which then crashed into the Monument itself.

“Dear God,” the President uttered to himself. “It’s like the 3-15 attack, 9-11 all over again.”

### **May 31, that same time**

#### **Near the edge of the reflecting pool**

#### **In front of and below the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C.**

Between the time of the initial explosion and the helicopter crashing into the Washington Monument, no more than three minutes had passed. But, to those caught in the terror attack, those three minutes seemed like an eternity...and it wasn’t over yet.

Joe Trevor had thrown his wife to the ground while urging Sandra McPherson to get down herself...and he and Elizabeth had wisely stayed there, avoiding the deadly pandemonium of the large crowd. As Joe now lifted himself up off his wife, he saw that Sandra was nowhere to be seen.

Hundreds of people were laying scattered about on the concrete and asphalt areas above them immediately in front of the presentation stand and the Lincoln Memorial. None of them were moving.

Others had been violently thrown down the steps by the last truck bomb’s shock wave, towards where Joe and his wife had taken refuge against the ground. Luckily for Joe and Elizabeth, because they had gotten low to the ground there at the bottom of the steps near the end of the Reflecting Pool, and because they had stayed that way, they had been spared the worst of the last shock wave as it passed well above them in the air.

“Honey, we’ve got to get out of here,” Joe said to his wife who was just coming to her senses.

As Elizabeth kneeled next to his side, her hands clinging to his arm, Joe surveyed the situation.

To the east, tens of thousands of people who had fled in the direction of the Washington Monument were now scattering into the trees of West Potomac Park and the Constitution Gardens. To the west, there was carnage all around the Lincoln Memorial and Joe felt that they could probably expect more attacks in that area.

To the north, from where the initial explosions had come, Joe could find no sane reason to try to escape in that direction.

He looked to the south and west. About one hundred yards away he saw a group of individuals picking themselves up off the ground. Several of them were obviously armed and must be Secret Service agents or plain-clothed policemen. Then he recognized the President.

“Elizabeth, look! There’s the President’s team.”

For a moment he was tempted to run to them, seeking their help and the help of the agents. In fact, his wife, Elizabeth, was already standing and starting to find her voice so she could yell to them.

Wisely, Joe pulled her back down to the ground next to him.

“Honey, get down here! No way can we approach those agents and the President now. They’ll shoot anyone they don’t know who comes near him.

“We have to stay under cover and move away from here. Let’s move into those trees there on the other side of that sidewalk, and then move back towards the Washington Monument.”

Looking in that direction, Joe started for a moment when he saw soldiers approaching from the direction of the Washington Monument. Then he recognized them as National Guard and saw that they were stopping and rendering aid to other citizens.

“Look, there’s a group of National Guardsmen coming this way. Let’s see if we can reach them and point them towards the President’s party...maybe they can help.”

### **May 31, that same time**

#### **Coming out of the trees**

#### **Along the Reflecting Pool, Washington, D.C.**

Sandra McPherson had never been so frightened in her life. And understandably so.

Nothing she had ever experienced had prepared her for what was happening that morning in front of the Lincoln Memorial.

Despite Joe calling to her to stay down, she had fled blindly away from the explosions as group fear took hold and the crowd rushed away in a panic. She had narrowly avoided being trampled, and had seen many bodies being run over by the feet of tens of thousands as she rushed into the trees.

Now, several minutes, and several explosions later, she was a little more calm and she started wondering where Joe and Liz were, and what had become of them.

She also reflected on the horrific events she had just witnessed and survived.

Oh, she knew they were at war...and of late she had come to appreciate the importance, the utter necessity, of her nation prosecuting that war to the fullest extent. She also knew, as did every American, about the many attacks that had been conducted against her fellow citizens and against the infrastructure of her nation—but it had never happened close to her. And until last year and her own change of heart and attitude, deep inside she somehow believed that maybe America deserved what it

was getting because, in her worldview, somehow America was too rich, too well off, and therefore must be exploiting other nations.

That's what had been taught her in her public education—that's what had been taught directly to her in the universities. She had come to accept it...to believe it...until she had discovered firsthand the lie of abortion. And when that lie came tumbling down, the others were not far behind.

Still, having a change of heart in an ideological sense is something altogether different than having the cruel, harsh, bloody reality of it staring you straight in the face...or trying to kill you. She now understood for herself, beyond a theoretical, laboratory sense, what her enemies were all about...and that was about destroying her and as many of her countrymen as possible.

After the final detonations near the Lincoln Memorial and at the Washington Monument, Sandra stepped out into the open near the reflecting pool, about halfway between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument, on the Constitutional Garden, or north side of the pool. She saw some National Guard troops coming her way and was just raising her hand to wave to them.

That's when she noticed a loud buzzing noise coming through the tops of the trees. She looked up—and saw another ultralight aircraft bank over the tree line in front of her, and begin following the reflecting pool towards the Lincoln Memorial...on a path that would take it right over her. Transfixed, she could only stare as the small aircraft got closer and closer.

### **May 31, that same time**

#### **Flying low, Above the Reflecting Pool**

#### **Washington, D.C.**

Mohammed al-Hinnasi, the pilot of the third, and as yet unaccounted for, ultralight aircraft, guided his plane towards the Lincoln Memorial, looking for the President of the United States and his party...hunting them.

His brothers in the faith had accomplished their mission exactly the way his father had told them.

At 19 years of age, Mohammed was ready to sacrifice his life for Allah. He had been raised to prepare for this sacrifice. His father, since the time he was a boy here in America, had taught him to bide his time, to be patient, to be quiet and to observe...but never to forget who the Great Satan was...the great enabler of the persecutors of his people and the center for everything lewd and corrupt in the world. And he had internalized the message...learning, waiting...and now his time had come.

He had flown literally at tree-top level, his small landing wheels actually touching the highest leaves and branches at times.

Twice he had dipped into small clearings or openings in the trees to avoid police helicopters...and he had swung back to the west when his brothers attacked the Washington Monument and were spotted by that National Guard helicopter.

Now, he was certain that the other attacks he had heard and seen must have either killed the President, or flushed him from his cover.

And he was right.

As a number of National Guard troops took note of him from below, and began to raise their rifles to their shoulders to shoot at him, he observed that over beyond the tree line to his front and left was a group of individuals, several of them in dark suits carrying what had to be the distinctive submachine guns of the American Secret Service.

"Yes, there they are," he thought as he jinked his aircraft first left, and then right to avoid fire from the National Guard troops. And then he began to put pressure on the stick to steer his flying bomb in the direction of the President.

"Praise Allah!" he muttered to himself. "Accept me into the next life and shower upon me my reward of eternal bliss with my many virgins."

In that instant, his wish was granted...though not to the reward he desired.

A brilliant light and thunderous explosion ended all conscious thought for Mohammed al-Hinnasi as he and his small aircraft were hit by an AIM-9X missile fired by a F-22 Raptor that had moments before picked him up out of the ground clutter, tracked him, and then fired upon him as soon as a solid infrared lock-on was achieved.

Almost immediately after the explosion created by the air-to-air missile, an even larger one occurred as the explosives Mohammed was carrying also detonated and showered the entire area with shrapnel, pieces of the aircraft...and what remained of Mohammed.

Once again, many hundreds of citizens were maimed another hundred killed...including, tragically, Nobel Prize winner Sandra McPherson, who was still standing there transfixed, almost immediately below Mohammed's aircraft when it was hit by the missile and exploded.

### **May 31, 12:01**

#### **The Food Vendor Stand**

#### **Ohio Drive and Independence Avenue, Washington, D.C.**

Johnny and his people had watched the panicked crowd pass by after the explosions. At first a mad rush of thousands and thousands of uninjured people and the entire team had stood in the lee of

the stand, fearing that the stand may topple over on them and they all be trampled...then the torrent became a rush, and that became a steady flow with more and more of the passing people having been injured. Finally, after that last explosion over the reflecting pool, the flow had diminished to a trickle.

At the first sound of the attack, his entire team had all quickly knelt down and assembled their weapons, which had been hidden inside containers at the food stand and which were all made of synthetic materials to avoid detection. As they did so, they also clothed themselves in their official U.S. Park Police hats and light jackets which purposely matched the trousers that each of them wore.

In that first panic, no one questioned them as they prepared to do battle. In fact, once they saw the official-looking Park Police uniforms, many looked to them for direction and Johnny and his team very coolly and professionally directed them away from the carnage towards safety further to the south and west along the Potomac and along Ohio Drive.

Then, as the crowd thinned, the team fanned out around the stand, taking up their pre-planned cover positions behind individual trees, waiting.

It had been Lin Worthington who saw them first.

"There, two hundred yards out, just moving into the Park on the other side of the diagonal."

Johnny looked that way and...there they were. It was not exactly where they had expected the President's entourage to emerge...but it would do.

There looked to be five or six agents, the President, who was holding his arm close to his body, a woman being carried by two of the agents, another man, and another woman.

"I see them. Let them move close, and then on my command, Lin, you and I will concentrate our fire on the President. He's the tall older man in the suit holding his arm close to his body."

Turning to the three other team members, Johnny then continued.

"You three concentrate on the standing agents first, and then on the two holding the woman."

Taking their positions, they all waited on Johnny's command. As the President's group approached rapidly, but at an angle, they came nearer and nearer to what would be their closest approach to the Chinese team.

"Wait...wait...any second now.

"Oh! They've seen us. Open fire!"

### **May 31, that same time**

#### **West Potomac Park**

#### **Washington, D.C.**

There hadn't been any other attacks for several seconds. Not since the U.S. Air Force had taken out the ultralight over the reflecting pond.

Stacey Urkut took stock of the situation around her.

The head of the President's Secret Service detail was talking seriously and with animation into his mouthpiece and listening to replies through his earpiece. Stevens was arranging a pickup of the entire group by Marine One in a clearing only fifty yards in front of them. The Marine helicopter with an entire squad of Marines would be there in less than three minutes.

Stacey had been shocked by the attack and the violence right here in Washington, D.C. It had taken her several minutes to get her bearings, but when she did, she was not a middle-aged woman in the pretty pantsuit anymore. She had quickly reverted back to the Orka...she had been injected into the same type of environment here in Washington that she had lived through for months in Alaska.

Looking to her right, she made out several men standing in the trees over closer to the river, who appeared to be dressed in official uniforms of some type or another. Coming up next to Burt Stevens, she touched his arm and pointed them out.

"Those look like Park Police," Stevens said as he glanced that way.

"Maybe they can..."...but then he, too, noticed their posture...their stance...and he turned his head back quickly for a better look.

Stacey began to voice what they had both already realized, the tone of her voice now catching the President's attention along with one of the other agents.

"If those are our guys, why are they shielding themselves from us with those trees?"

"And why are they..."

Before Stacey could finish, Burt Stevens suddenly ran towards the President, shouting.

"Everybody down! We're coming under attack!"

Almost immediately several things happened at once.

The supersonic snaps of bullets began sounding all around the President and the group of people with him, followed instantly by the report of small arms fire from the Chinese.

Burt Stevens went down just as he reached his President in a brave, but vain effort to get to him before he could be harmed.

The President took a bullet to his shoulder which spun him around violently and he began to fall. Before he hit the ground, another one passed cleanly through his side.

A squad of National Guard troops came out of the trees to the northwest, saw what was happening and began to pour fire at the group that was attacking the President, catching the

President's party in an inadvertent crossfire which severely wounded the Secretary of Defense before he could find sufficient cover.

The two agents holding the First Lady dropped her and rushed towards the President, firing at their assailants as they came.

Another of the agents, lying in a prone position, began to provide accurate covering fire for those agents trying to reach the President.

Stacey Urkut and the last agent, who were closest to the President, also began running towards him—Stacey running to pick up the submachine gun dropped by Burt Stevens, and the other agent trying to reach his President and drag him to safety. As they did so, the sound of the approaching Marine One helicopter began to be heard over the sound of gunfire.

As the American fire took effect, first one, then a second of the Chinese attackers went down.

Johnny and Lin ignored the agents and National Guard soldiers who were firing at them and their other team members. They concentrated on peppering the ground around the fallen President, wanting to ensure that they fatally wounded him.

One of the Secret Service agents now dove in front of the President and took up a prone position in front of him firing back at Johnny and Lin. Johnny heard the hollow thud of a bullet impacting Lin but did not have the time to look over that way and see how badly he was hit.

He saw the impact of first one, and then another round from his weapon hit the agent lying on the ground, silencing that agent's return fire. Johnny now tried to quickly make his way several yards to the east to try to obtain a better angle of attack on the motionless President.

He did not notice Stacey Urkut, who had picked up the weapon lying on the ground from where Burt Stevens had dropped it, and who was now charging Johnny's position, firing as she came. He also did not notice that he was the last member of his team firing.

As he quickly found the position he was looking for, he took note of the Marine helicopter that was just settling to the ground to the east of the President, Marines pouring out of it as it did so. Pausing briefly to notice this also caused him to notice the individual charging him from his left side.

Quickly turning, he came face to face with a wild woman, screaming at the top of her lungs as she charged within ten feet of him. Before he could raise his own weapon, Stacey Urkut, the Orka, fired a three round burst directly into his face...and Johnny Chen dropped stone dead to the earth.

**May 31, 12:07**

**Near Marine One**

**West Potomac Park, Washington, D.C.**

Stacey wandered back over to the area where Marine One had landed. As she came closer she saw a Navy corpsman working on the President. Another one had just looked to the First Lady, and seeing that her injuries, though painful, were not fatal, he moved on to the Secretary of Defense.

Another Corpsman was feverishly working on Burt Stevens.

The Marines and the remaining Secret Service agents had set up an inner perimeter around the President and Marine One and the National Guard was busily establishing an outer security zone.

At her express and insisted request, two of the Marines had carried the First Lady gently over to her husband, who was lying flat on his back and continuing to bleed severely...though the Corpsman had successfully stemmed the flow from the shoulder wound.

But the wound to his side was bleeding profusely and proving impossible to stop...and there were two other bullet wounds. One was a deep flesh wound to the calf, the other was a frothy, bubbling chest wound, which had penetrated the President's left lung.

As Stacey stepped up, she watched as Linda Weisskopf held her husband's hand, and though suffering terribly herself from her broken leg which had yet to be set...she said a soft prayer.

"Dear God, please preserve Norm's life...help him hang on until he gets to facilities nearby.

"If it be Thy will dear God, help him recover and lead this nation to a sure and lasting victory over these monstrous and abominable foes."

...at this point Linda's voice broke, as she continued, exerting her own faith into the equation.

"...and if not, dear God, make us strong to carry on in his absence and receive this good man unto Yourself."

...and more quietly, in almost a whisper.

"...and help me to carry on somehow without him."

As Linda sobbed once and then somehow gained control, President Norm Weisskopf's eyes fluttered open and he lifted his head slightly, catching his wife's attention.

Speaking weakly, but in a steady voice, he comforted her while he gazed intently into her eyes.

"Sweetheart, it's going to be all right. This nation is going to prevail...and so will you. Don't worry for a minute about that."

Surprisingly, despite his severe condition, the President continued.

"You know, the dark cloud that has enveloped our nation for so many years has been broken...it's dispelling, just as George Washington foresaw.



“...and the bright light that has broken it into pieces has been the humbling we’ve experienced through adversity and the light of truth that has burned through that adversity, breaking through the darkness that had clouded so many hearts.

“I have seen it. There may be a hard road ahead, but I now know that this nation will persevere because it has the will to persevere, it has rediscovered its moral compass for guidance and it has the Hand of Providence for support.

“Sweetheart, I have not been a religious man...but I have known the truth in my heart and done my best to live according to it despite my failings.”

Looking more weary by the moment, the President made a valiant effort to squeeze Linda’s hand tightly...something she felt, but only as the slightest pressure.

The he said, “Don’t worry, darling, I’ve done my part.”

Stopping, the President closed his eyes as his wife’s tears ran down her cheek and dripped onto his ashen face.

The corpsman continued his work, but he, too, was captured by the emotion of the moment...the passing of a great man...and his own eyes glistened brightly.

Finally, President Norm Weisskopf, a hero to all Americans in the course of the war, and for many, many years before it...and a hero to freedom-loving people all over the world, summoned the will and strength to open his eyes and speak once more.

“God bless America, Linda...and thank God that I have seen its salvation. It is enough.”

Looking up at his dear wife of so many years, the President continued...fading now.

“You know, for so many years I wondered why that quote from the young Nathan Hale has always been one of my favorites. It wasn’t until this very moment that I understood why.”

More passionately now...almost desperately, his eyes cleared momentarily and he whispered.

“Oh Linda!...I’ll miss you so...but one day we’ll be reunited in peace and everlasting liberty.”

Finally, with a solitary tear rolling down his own cheek, his weak voice concluded.

“...always remember that...always...”

And with those words the President’s head fell back against the ground and he closed his eyes.

As several Marines quickly carried him and Mrs. Weisskopf onboard Marine One and the big helicopter quickly took off, the President’s lungs failed and he stopped breathing.

The brave and dedicated Naval Corpsman worked feverishly over him, trying to revive him. First, he used mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, and then, when the President’s heart also failed, he resorted to CPR. But all of the efforts by the Corpsman proved futile and the President of the United States died of his wounds before the helicopter ever reached Bethesda Naval Hospital.

## Chapter 33

*“An enemy hath done this” – Ezra Taft Benson*

### **June 1, throughout the day - Worldwide**

The news of the death of President Weisskopf spread like wildfire across the entire planet. Everyone, both friend and enemy alike, recognized that a bulwark of the defense of the free world had been brought down, and they all wondered exactly what impact his death, particularly at the hands of the enemy, would have on the overall conflict.

Friends and allies mourned and prepared for the worst. Enemies rejoiced and planned to follow up on what they perceived as a great advantage with more of the same, believing America must surely succumb now. But, despite their momentary success, they would once again misjudge and underestimate the character and firm resolve of the American people and allies in the overall affair.

### **In the United States:**

Vice President John Bowers, along with over 190 million other Americans, had been immediately aware of the attack as a result of seeing it graphically displayed on the TVs they were watching. The Vice President saw the President's attention drawn to the site of the impending first explosion and then watched his, and the crowd's, reaction to that explosion. The video had been wild and disjointed from that point on as cameramen were knocked to the earth—or worse—by blast and shock waves, and the pictures kept changing to whatever view the networks could make available.

All of America saw the graphic display of the crash of the Black Hawk helicopter into the Washington Monument obelisk. It became the video footage that epitomized the entire attack, being played over and over again, much like the footage of the airliners plunging into the World Trade Center on 9/11. But unlike the Twin Towers, the Washington Memorial did not fall.

The final firefight that took the President's life, other than as caught on some very vague pictures and video footage from a great distance, was not captured live on tape, so most of the nation learned of the President's death some time after it occurred. After numerous rumors regarding the President's fate had begun to circulate, an official announcement had been made late that afternoon by an emotional Presidential Chief of Staff from the White House Briefing Room.

But John Bower had benefited from the numerous secure communications he had with the Secret Service, the Military, and the Department of Homeland Security. He and his staff had followed the movements of the President as they retreated away from their assailants throughout the attack, even if they couldn't see the President's movements on TV. Ultimately those movements had brought the President right into the line of fire from Johnny Chin and his assailants, and John Bowers officially learned of the President's death within minutes of his last breath...

...and he literally felt the mantle pass to him upon realizing that the President, his good friend and mentor, was dead. He, John Bowers, was now the President of the United States. An office...and a calling...he had never sought. One he had only seriously contemplated from an almost war gaming standpoint throughout the course of the war, after President Weisskopf had requested, and he had accepted, his nomination to become the Vice President.

“Which vacancy was caused by these same animals, when they killed Alan Reeves,” thought Bowers as he continued to contemplate all that had occurred in such a short period of time.

Despite the analytical nature of the planning, *just in case*, he, along with everyone else, had thought that Norm Weisskopf would not be taken from them.

But now, President Weisskopf had been killed...and in a traumatic and brutally quick fashion. Now, all of wise preparations that had been made at the insistence of the President himself, and with the assent of Congress, had come into play.

After the President, the White House and the Congress itself had been attacked at the outset of the war, killing the Vice President and many members of Congress, the Continuation of Powers Acts had been proposed and enacted in Congress. Since that time, the Vice President's entourage always included the necessary personnel and legal authority to quickly swear him in as President in the event of a successful attempt on the President's life.

In fact, the entire line of succession to the Presidency, to the sixth person, who was the Secretary of Defense, traveled with just such an entourage at all times. No more than three of the people in the line of succession were permitted by law to be at any one event simultaneously. And all six of them were required to be situated in at least three different localities, separated by no less than three hundred miles each, at any time.

In this case, John Bowers was sworn in as the resident within five minutes of the official confirmation of the President's death. In a clear voice, he recited the Presidential Oath to a U.S. District Judge, one of six who now traveled with the successors at all times.

“I, John Bowers, do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, so help me God.”

As it turned out, and as had been the case on March 15th, one-third of the line of succession to the Presidency had been killed. Earlier it had been the Vice President and the Secretary of Defense. This time it was the President himself and, once again, the Secretary of Defense, because George Crowler died from his wounds early on the morning of June 1<sup>st</sup>.

Americans in general were reacting with shock and outrage to the attack, and particularly to the death of their beloved President. Since the times of George Washington, there had not been a President who was more widely accepted and revered by virtually all of the citizenry than Norm Weisskopf. In both cases, their leadership during military conflict and the perception that their unique capabilities contributed monumentally to the salvation of a people was what engendered their universal acceptance and respect. In George Washington's case, his providential leadership was called into play during the nation's traumatic "birth." In Norm Weisskopf's case, such leadership was needed in a battle for the preservation of the nation's founding principles and in defense of its people's very lives and freedoms. For both men, there had been no viable contender...against Norm Weisskopf, the principle contender had failed to garner even one electoral vote.

From opinions expressed in editorials, on call-in talk shows, over the internet, and in barbershops across the land, the outrage and anger were palatable. But after well over three years of war, the anger was not a blustering, or a passion-of-the-moment kind of anger. To those watching closely, it was more of a determined set to the jaw, a more deeply engrained resolve kind of an anger, one that grits its teeth and is determined to persevere, no matter the cost, no matter the length of time required.

And it was a mindset that was shared by the vast majority of the people and was now being reflected in the vast majority of the media outlets, who, through the course of the war and as a result of their own losses and betrayals, had adopted a much more American and liberty-oriented viewpoint...more similar in nature to the news media of World War II. JT Sampson's example and leadership in this area had proven indispensable to the change in nature, and this was particularly evident in his response to the President's death.

The result was becoming clear: America was drawing even closer together, becoming more united, more resolute and more determined as a result of the killing of their President. And in this way, the plans of America's enemies had not panned out, even if they didn't know it yet.

Despite the immediate loss, despite the slight hesitations and mistakes that necessarily accompany such an abrupt transfer of power, it was the additional unity, determination, and resolve that would figure most heavily into the course of future events as far as the United States was concerned—qualities that would be very much needed for the free world to persevere.

### **In China:**

When Jien Zenim received verification that the final phase of operation Hung-Lu-Dung had proven successful, and that President Weisskopf was dead, he was elated. As a part of his long-term planning, he had initially calculated that the President elect at the onset of hostilities must be the wife of the former President, or someone closely associated with that former administration. He had done all in his power to engineer it that way.

In much the same way as his manipulations of the American presidential administration of the 1990s had been one of the most enabling features of Zenim's plan, that later administration would have enabled him to usher in the final phases of his long-held beliefs and goals for China without drastic difficulties. The 1990s American administration was something that had been financed, cajoled, blackmailed, subverted, and used to the benefit of the PRC for all of its eight years. The resulting bonanzas that had accrued to China in technology, manufacturing, currency, and economy had ensured the furtherance of the final phases of Zenim's planning. He had engineered it that way.

But he had miscalculated. The new President had been a shock and surprise. Weisskopf had proven very resolute against the PRC. Norm Weisskopf had become the greatest impediment Jien Zenim had ever encountered in American leadership, and his election to the presidency had necessitated the addition of all phases of operational plan Hung-Lu-Dung as a follow-on to Operation Breath of Fire, the plan that had ambushed the Americans so completely off of Japan that March in the early days of the war, and had attacked their homeland so devastatingly at the same time.

Initially, Breath of Fire was supposed to have so disabled and so discouraged the Americans that the new Chinese-engineered administration and media in America would have quickly sued for an end to hostilities. The war would have ended rapidly, with an understanding between the PRC and the new American administration that a new world order had been established, giving rise to China's prominence in Asia and a new order in the Mid East. With their almost complete and foolish acceptance of the straw man argument that a service economy was better than an economy that actually produced something, the Americans would have hardly recognized that a declining America and a disjointed Europe would never truly be able to compete. But with Weisskopf and his administration in control in Washington, bolstering American resolve and spirit, Zenim's well-laid plan had been prevented from complete success.

Zenim hoped now, with the Weisskopf problem addressed and resolved once and for all, that China and the entire Coalition of Asian States, along with their powerful ally, the GIR, could find their

way back to the original path that would lead to a quick resolution of hostilities and the new understanding and order he still planned to implement.

Celebrations in Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and elsewhere throughout China and Chinese-held territory over the death of President Weisskopf were joyful, reminiscent of the celebrations in parts of the Arab world after the 911 attacks. The Chinese people believed that the Americans would lose heart and soon accept a new reality: that with their great and resolute leader now gone, and with clear indications that they faced a determined enemy capable of striking them within their homeland to this day, even after their success of the last few months, hostilities must cease.

But like their leaders, they would soon learn that this was not to be the case. Once again, they would underestimate the historical uniqueness of American resolve.

### **In India:**

President KP Narayannen had breathed a sigh of relief when he heard of President Weisskopf's death. He had not sought conflict with the Americans, had hoped it would not be necessary. Even during those initial attacks, when his allies and fellow members of the CAS, the Chinese, had attacked America, he had held back, not confronting the Americans directly. Instead, India had concentrated on Sri Lanka, areas along the Himalayas, Bangladesh, and parts of Burma...and with great success.

But he had known that conflict with the Americans at some point was inevitable. His nation was rising out of its Third World status, and not just for particular members of the old caste system. The material wealth being accrued by a larger and larger segment of the vast Indian population through its success in the Siberian Economic Development Pact, and through its own expansion, meant that the people needed even more room to expand. India, along with China and Indonesia, had set their collective eyes on conquering Australia...and to do that would mean removing the American influence from the Indian Ocean.

And that task had fallen to India and President Narayannen, who was under great internal pressure from his Foreign Minister, Rahmish Patel, whom the President by then had recognized as a mere lackey for the Chinese...but a powerful political lackey who had to be taken into account. He had ultimately approved of a plan to attack the Americans, and he had turned it over to his capable scientists and military planners. With America weakened already in the Pacific and Mid East, under full scale assault in both of those areas at the time, the Indians had struck, and struck hard.

In that July, the Indians had attacked the American 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet and U.S.S. Enterprise Carrier Battle Group in the Indian Ocean. It had been a multi-pronged effort and a vicious fight...and it had cost the Indians dearly. But thanks to the innovations of Indian technology coupled with the Chinese LRASD weapons, and the resulting airborne version of the LRASD, the Americans had been defeated on the sea and the U.S.S. Enterprise had been sunk along with most of its escorts.

That Indian victory had led to the attack on, and ultimate occupation of, the American base on the island of Diego Garcia after another vicious and costly fight. With that victory, American influence in the Indian Ocean had ended and American presence was now only rarely felt there through occasional submarine attacks and a few forays by some of their long range aircraft.

But those victories had also produced a very real and direct warning from President Weisskopf.

Weisskopf's Secretary of State, using back channel communication sources, had contacted the Indian President with a personal message from Weisskopf that was worded very straightforwardly. Gain, despite his death, the Indian President recalled the exact words, short and terse:

*"President Narayannen, you shall be held directly and personally responsible for the attack on the U.S.S. Enterprise and the deaths of so many Americans. You and your administration's rejection and betrayal of republican principles, and your alliance with abject tyranny, will ultimately be recognized as the war crimes and crimes against humanity that they are, so help me God."*

Again, President KP Narayannen breathed a sigh of relief. Weisskopf was dead; perhaps his personal vendetta had died with him.

"Surely the new American President, this Bowers, will be someone we can negotiate with, should it ever come to that," he thought.

### **In the Greater Islamic Republic:**

Hassan Sayeed had mixed emotions about the operation that had resulted in the killing of the American President.

Oh, he had gone along with it and looked forward to it, assigning two of his best teams...precious resources that had been reserved in America against just such contingencies. And they had succeeded.

But the advances that the young General, Abduhl Selim, had made in Syria, which had ultimately carried him right up to the foot of the Golan Heights and almost resulted in a major breakthrough into Israel itself, had now been reversed.

Employing those damnable and deadly new Hail Storm missiles of theirs, and using them in increasing abundance, the U.S. and Israeli forces had reversed those gains and pushed GIR forces back beyond Damascus once again, this time completely overrunning the Trans-Syrian pipeline and pushing as far north as the petroleum processing facilities in Homs.

If they were not contained soon, the Americans would be approaching the more critical facilities in Baniyas on the coast...

...and this is what gave rise to Sayeed's mixed emotions. He had urged that the GIR/CAS alliance focus the attacks within America on the more practical, more immediate military impact of attacking the plants that were assembling these Hail Storm missiles.

In the last two months, GIR and Chinese intelligence had identified the three major Hail Storm missile production plants within the United States. They were operating under tight and heavy security in California, in Texas, and in Ohio...but all three locations could be vulnerable to the major type of operation like the one that had been executed in Washington, D.C.

Sayeed understood, and had ultimately gone along with Jien Zenim because Zenim had correctly pointed out that mounting three major operations at once would be much more difficult and would require significantly more time to plan and organize.

Zenim felt that their alliance needed a major success now, and could not afford the time or risk that waiting to mount three operations would take.

This concern was principally founded in the realization that American Homeland Security and Home Guard efforts had been increasingly successful in thwarting and eliminating both Islamic and Chinese cells within America. The GIR/CAS alliance would have to pull out all the stops, using its most closely held and critical assets to mount the single major operation against the President.

And they had.

"What was it Zenim had said that had ultimately caused me to see Allah's wisdom in the attack on Weisskopf?" the great Imam thought.

Something along the lines of, "Perception is reality, particularly among the Americans. If they see us successfully conduct this operation, despite how badly it drains our reserves within America, they will presume we can do more...and this new presumption will occur on top of the major loss of morale and inspiration that will come about through the death of their leader."

And so Hassan Sayeed had gone along with the plan and used his own most valuable assets...and he had rejoiced with the success.

But with the very real reversals GIR forces were experiencing, he still wished there were fewer Hail Storm missiles available to the Americans and their allies...much fewer. And he couldn't help but think that anything they might have done to preemptively blunt America's new technological and battlefield advantage would have ultimately proved valuable. But Hassan Sayeed knew well that regrets represent the foundation of nothing constructive, so he banished any 'if only we had...' thoughts from his mind.

### **In Europe:**

The European nations, who were deeply embroiled in the conflict on two fronts, were also grief-stricken and demoralized by the loss of Norm Weisskopf...particularly England, France, and Germany, who were Europe's production and military powerhouses.

It was a dichotomy for those nations.

The French and Germans, before the war, and during its initial stages, when America and the United Kingdom were going it alone, had distanced themselves from the war in general and from America in particular. With shades of the same arguments that had been made during America's Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, those European powers had implied, at the start of military confrontations in Iraq, that many of the issues leading up to the war had been America's fault to begin with. They also argued that America's motives were not really motivated towards the freedom of the Islamic peoples, but more towards oil interests and establishing a geopolitical balance in the region.

Both of those arguments were stances that both Germany and France would later have to reverse, just had they had ultimately had to reverse them regarding Operation Iraqi Freedom, when conditions and the passage of time revealed to all the error of their position.

The English, and ultimately many of the Eastern European democracies, had stood resolutely with America. Later both Spain and Italy had done likewise. But France and Germany in particular had been reluctant, and even counterproductive to allied efforts to contain the GIR and China.

When the invasion of Turkey ensued after Syria announced its union with the GIR, Germany had finally responded. This was because the Syrian army had combined with GIR forces and invaded Turkey. In fulfilling its NATO obligations, Germany fought hard alongside American, Turkish and other allied forces. But the Germans had made it clear at the time that its commitment was not in a global context, and France had taken no action, militarily or diplomatically.

As conditions had deteriorated over the next eighteen months, and as terror attacks began to hit home on European soil in both Germany and France, attitudes changed. With the invasion of Europe by GIR forces after the Greeks had allied with the GIR to complete the defeat of Turkey, Europe had finally awakened fully to the imminent danger it faced. When GIR forces pushed deeply into Romania and the Balkans, Europe went into full war time mobilization to repel the attack.

Russia had not taken part in the conflict at all during this period. From the very beginning, they viewed themselves in an optimum situation to benefit from both sides' struggles. On one hand, they

entered into the Siberian Economic Development Treaty with China and India, opening that vast territory of Siberia up to exclusive exploitation by those nations in exchange for significant sums of hard capital. Ultimately that arrangement had been extended to the GIR as well.

On the other hand, Russia had continued to receive and respond to allied requests and commitments for infrastructure development and economic stimulus packages meant to ensure that the Russians did not enter into a military compact with the CAS and GIR. While extending these offers, Europe and America, who wanted above all to keep either CAS or GIR forces from threatening Europe from the east, had also warned of sanctions, boycotts and tariffs, should Russia continue to develop its economic relationships with the enemies of the west.

The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, had handled all of these diplomatic maneuverings deftly and with obvious negotiating skill. He used his Foreign and Economic Ministers to great advantage in playing both sides to Russia's benefit.

And the game had worked for a time...that is, until that March 18<sup>th</sup> two years after the initial attacks on America, when Siberia had declared its independence from the Russian Federation and had moved immediately to solidify a strong alliance with both the CAS and GIR.

That move had led to war, as the Chinese knew it must, and as they and their allies had planned. They were thus well prepared to conduct immediate military operations against the Russians.

Being quickly routed from the whole of Siberia, Russian forces soon found themselves facing masses of Chinese and Indian soldiers on their own borders. Those large armies then rolled over the Russian border into the motherland itself. Russia's attempt to stop these forces with nuclear weapons had been negated by the very capable and advanced mobile Ballistic Missile Defenses the Chinese had developed and deployed with their forces.

The Russian President, very late in the day, was reduced to seeking help for his nation's salvation from both America and Europe, the very nations he had scoffed at and taken advantage of. It had been a bitter pill for him, and one he was not entirely sure the allies were willing to extend.

But they had, and Vladimir Putin had been particularly impressed with Weisskopf's and America's treatment of him and his nation in their hour of need, despite issues of the past.

Before Russia was attacked, Weisskopf had been very direct in his warnings regarding Russia's ties with China. Putin had scoffed and taken lightly warnings of any potential Chinese Operation Barbarosa, referring back to World War II days when Russia had aligned itself with Nazi Germany and then had been betrayed by Nazi Germany in June of 1941.

Despite the scoffs, that is exactly what had occurred and America's financial and military assistance, along with that of Europe, had ultimately helped turn the tide of war against the Chinese, Indian and Islamic invaders, right on the very streets of Moscow.

Yes, Vladimir Putin and all of the European leaders would miss Norm Weisskopf. Putin considered him the best sort of friend and ally one could have, who, despite having had his advice and counsel turned away, stood willing to assist Mother Russia in her hour of need.

All of these leaders wondered what sort of President this John Bowers, who was an unknown quantity to most of them, would be and whether he could pick up the reins and continue to move the prosecution of the war forward, while maintaining the strength of the alliance of nations involved against the combined might of the CAS and GIR.

### **In South America:**

At the time the President of the United States was killed, the war in South America had evolved into a continual scene of bloody stalemate. In Colombia and Venezuela in the north, and along the Argentine and Brazilian borders in the south, the ebb of battle flowed back and forth, although some progress was being made in some areas in Argentina where Brazilian forces had penetrated.

Brazil and Colombia were the major allied combatants in South America, assisted by American and English forces who were fighting in special forces operations in Colombia, and in larger numbers in Central America, working their way south through Panama. Against this, the nations of Panama, Venezuela, and Argentina had formed the Coalition of South American States and allied themselves with the CAS and GIR. China had several hundred thousand troops fighting with the forces from these nations in Panama and in Colombia.

Although in the past six months troops from Ecuador, Paraguay, and Chile had joined in the fight against the CAS and GIR and their allies, the real driving force behind allied fighting in South America was Brazil. The other, smaller South American nations and their forces would have been too weak to stand against the combined weight of the Panamanian, Venezuelan, and Argentine forces, supported by the large numbers of Chinese.

The President of Brazil, Henrietta Maldenado, who had assumed the office of the Presidency after their beloved President Alfonzo Hermosa had been killed by a Chinese decapitation strike in June of last year, had considered herself a close friend of the American President.

Within a day of her taking the oath of office, President Weisskopf had called her himself and had spent over two hours on the phone with her, talking as one respected leader to another, taking her

immediately into his nation's confidence, committing America's unwavering support to winning the war, and ensuring the freedom and liberty of Brazil and all of South America.

Over the last year, she had developed a kinship with this older man. She was the president of the largest democratic republic in South America. He was the president of the largest democratic republic in North America, and the strongest one on earth.

In all of their conversations, in all of their meetings, he had never treated her as anything but an equal and her respect for, and trust in, him had grown accordingly...she had begun to look to him almost as a child would look to a father.

She had wept openly when news of his death had arrived, even as the leaders of the nations she was embroiled in combat with had rejoiced.

"He will be sorely missed," she thought as she contemplated the road ahead and prepared to address a special meeting of her own security and military advisors the day after Weisskopf's death.

"Ladies and gentlemen, as you all know, this earth has been deprived of a true defender of liberty, a true patriot, and a wonderfully good man.

"We know something of such loss as these same enemies deprived us of our own Panther of Brazil when they killed President Alfonzo Hermosa last year. On a personal note, even as President Weisskopf and his wonderful wife, Linda, sent their condolences and offered up their prayers on our behalf last year, we should now pray that Linda will be comforted and strengthened through this crisis, and that all Americans take heart in their hour of loss, and know that we here in Brazil will stand by them, just as they have stood by us.

"We cannot...we shall not be deterred. If Zenim and Sayeed and their allies think for a moment we shall be cowed or moved to entreat with them as a result of this heinous act...they have terribly miscalculated. And this error on judgment will represent another in a long series of miscalculations.

"Just as they miscalculated when they shot down the International Space Station and its wreckage crashed in Rio and killed so many of our countrymen, they are miscalculating now. They thought that because our country had taken a more social government path, that they could convince us to blame that horrible tragedy on America, whom they were fighting. They thought that we would blame the Americans and be more disposed to their motives and objectives...that we could be manipulated by them through the deaths of so many of our people.

"But they were wrong.

"They miscalculated then and our nation saw through their manipulations to those who were truly responsible...to them, and we declared war on them instead.

"And now they have miscalculated again.

"In this fight for liberty and for peace, we can never afford to lose sight of these facts in prosecuting this war. We can never afford to allow our people to lose sight of these facts either, though I have complete faith in them and their ability to see the truth of these matters.

"We will not rest, we will not be deterred, we will not stop until those leaders and those nations who caused that great destruction to our nation, and who continue to cause it today, are utterly defeated and every visage of their power is removed from any position of influence and destroyed."

**June 4, 09:48**

**Capitol Rotunda**

**Washington, D.C.**

The new Bowers administration announced on Monday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, that the President would lie in state in the Capitol Rotunda from 9 AM on June 4<sup>th</sup> through 9 PM on June 9<sup>th</sup>, twenty-four hours a day. The former First Lady had agreed late in the day of June 1<sup>st</sup>, while she was still in the hospital. The President would then be buried in Arlington National Cemetery in a nationally televised event on June 10<sup>th</sup>, with Linda Weisskopf in attendance in a wheelchair.

Now, a little over forty-five minutes after the taped-off path around the casket had been opened to the public, over two hundred thousand people were lined up to pay their final respects to the departed president. The line stretched out of the Capitol Building, across the street and down the mall, all the way to the damaged Washington Monument and looped around it halfway down the other side back towards the Capitol.

That number of two hundred thousand waiting in line to see Norm Weisskopf would remain constant, give or take fifteen to twenty thousand, for the entire five and one half day period, except on Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup>. That Saturday was when the presentation of the Medal of Freedom to Stacey Urkut had been rescheduled to take place...in front of the Lincoln Memorial, the presentation to be made by President John Bowers.

In all, well over three million people would come and pay their last respects to the President as he lay in state. They came in spite of the danger...many came as an act of defiance to the potential for danger and to show solidarity in the face of it. Husbands, wives, children, young men and women, wheelchair bound, grandparents, the feeble—every creed and color who loved and were loyal to the United States of America—they all came, and would have kept coming had the opportunity to do so lasted longer.

**June 6, 11:58**

**Presentation Stand**

**In front of the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C.**

The time corresponding to the attacks of the prior week came and went without incident. The presentations had proceeded as planned and there had been no further attacks as John Bowers began his speech regarding the presentation of the Medal of Freedom to Stacey Urkut to a crowd that was estimated to be in excess of one and a half million people.

President Bowers marveled at the monumental display of fortitude. His faith bolstered almost to the point of tears, the President began.

“My fellow Americans, we are gathered here this morning and afternoon to honor one of our own. Last week’s ceremony was meant to honor the heroic sacrifice, actions and bravery of an individual who stood against our enemies, against all odds...and fought back.

“Today we will continue with and complete the ceremony that was so brutally interrupted just last week. America will recognize and honor her heroes—Stacey Urkut deserves to be recognized—our nation deserves the honor of recognizing her heroism. We will not be intimidated as a people. We will stand firmly, and we will also honor the many more who have now sacrificed their all for our nation.

“Two thousand nine hundred and fifty three names were added to that hallowed list as a result of last week’s attack. Over eight thousand eight hundred more were injured.

“Our own president sacrificed his life...and it was a long and distinguished life of sacrifice and service. God rest his soul. God bless his dear wife and family.

“Linda Weisskopf has given me permission to share something with all of you...as a voice of comfort and strength to our citizens and our allies, as a word of warning to our enemies.

“In his final moments, the President had a number of things to say to his wife and those attending him. Much of it was personal, but these words that he spoke were intended to reach the ears of every American. He said the following, only moments before losing consciousness prior to his death.

*“There may be a hard road ahead, but I now know that this nation will persevere because it has the will to persevere; it has rediscovered its moral compass for guidance and it has the Hand of Providence for support.”*

“My fellow citizens, let this be our expression of faith...our rallying cry...WE SHALL PERSEVERE!

“We shall persevere because of the faith, the morality, the dedication, the liberty, the ingenuity born of that liberty and the resilience of this people. And we shall persevere because a just God rules in the heavens and will support the cause of liberty, as He has done in the past.

“We will persevere because there are literally millions of Stacey Urkuts out there, who, when faced with abject threats to their life and liberty, rise above those threats and somehow come off the winner...or contribute monumentally to the ultimate victory.”

Turning to Stacey, who stood with him on the stand, and as more than a million people cheered both her and the words of their new President, John Bowers continued.

“Stacey Urkut, on behalf of a grateful nation, and for gallantry and dedication and citizenship beyond the call of duty while fighting the Chinese invasion force in Alaska...and in confronting that same evil here last week when you personally confronted and killed the assailant who had shot the President, we present you with the Medal of Freedom.

“May you wear and display it proudly, and may your actions, your sacrifice, your bravery, your dedication and your faith, be a role model for all Americans, young and old, military or civilian, from the local government officials up to and including all of us who have been elected to represent the people on the national level.”

As Stacey Urkut accepted the award and approached the microphone to say a few words, almost two hundred million Americans all over the world watched her, as well as uncounted millions of others all across the free world.

**June 6, that same time**

**Various locations**

**America and the Free World, Off the coast of Liberia**

Alan Campbell listened via radio transmission to the President’s address and now as Stacey Urkut began her acceptance speech, he tried to contemplate how this middle-aged woman could have accomplished what had been attributed to her. Upon reading about, he had commented to his gunny, “You know, Sarge, I would have been hard pressed to do what this lady did. Can you imagine?”

The Sergeant, a twenty year veteran, had seen enough in his career to not discount anything.

“Campbell, the human spirit is capable of things we can’t even imagine. Given the circumstance and her upbringing...despite her age and physical conditioning...I can imagine it. I have seen some pretty unlikely people do some amazing things.”

Now, as Stacey spoke, and as he and his comrades waited off the African coast, in the latest U.S. Navy San Antonio class amphibious ship, Alan felt that he could hear those qualities in the woman’s



voice. Somehow, he knew that this woman had done all that had been attributed to her and probably a lot more. This in turn bolstered his own faith and confidence.

He was a U.S. Marine!, and he was about to go into combat for the first time in support of the allied buildup that would soon strike at the underbelly of the GIR defenses in Africa.

Those same defenses had mauled earlier Brazilian and English attempts to break through and gain access from across Africa to the upper Nile River in an attempt to position themselves to either advance on Egypt or cross the Red Sea onto the Arabian peninsula.

But now over two hundred thousand American troops were going to reinforce well over one million African, Brazilian and other allied troops who were forming up in Liberia to make the transit into the interior—a massive offensive that would try to surround GIR forces resisting the Israeli, British and American advance to the south out of Israel.

Alan was proud to be a part of this force. Proud to be assisting the downtrodden in Africa...yet, as most sane people are, he was also concerned about his first combat. How would he do? Would he support his brothers in arms? Would he survive? Would he be wounded like his own brother Leon?

“Momma, I just hope you are prayin’ for me back home,” he thought. “Technology has provided us the advantage more often than not, but prayers are our most powerful weapon.”

### **Outside of Montague, Texas**

Cindy Simmons, in the comfort of her ranch home outside of Montague, Texas, listened as Stacy Urkut continued her address. She was joined there by her good friend, Elizabeth Trevor, and her husband, Joe. The Trevors had arrived only a day earlier after completing their Washington debriefings, at the hands of the Park Service Police and the Secret Service, and after attending a memorial service for their friend, Sandra McPherson, who had been killed last week in the attacks.

Cindy had tried to convince her friend that she and Joe need not come, even though she had been looking forward to Liz’s visit. But Elizabeth and her husband would have nothing to do with Cindy’s arguments against their coming.

“It’s times like these when friends have to rely on each other, Cindy,” Liz had told her.

“You need us there...and now we need you as well.”

Cindy had been concerned that their place was at their own home, or the home of their daughter, Patricia. But Liz had come up with the idea of having Patricia take some time off from her schooling in Chicago and visit them all in Texas. Patricia was eager to spend some time with her parents after hearing of their traumatic experience.

“Pat would love to come home to Texas for a couple of weeks anyway, Cindy. She’s in between semesters and has the time, and there are a lot of people she knows down there in the DFW area.”

So the Trevors had arrived and they had all spent the evening talking, reminiscing, comforting one another and planning for the future.

Jess would soon be coming home, too.

Cindy had gotten the word just a few days ago. With the combat operations continuing, and intensifying, the days when relatives could fly over to the major hospitals in Europe and see their loved ones were over. He would be flown to the United States in two weeks and would be in a position to come to the Veterans Hospital in Dallas, so he could come directly home.

Cindy would meet him at the Joint Services Base in Ft. Worth, and the Trevors had decided that they would stay on with the Simmons through June and celebrate the 4th of July with them before they returned home to the Boston area.

All of this had been communicated and planned last evening, and Cindy was grateful for her friends’ willingness to support her and Jess during this time of need. She was also happy that she could be of comfort to them after their traumatic experience and the loss of their new-found friend.

Last night they had talked for some time about Sandra, and Cindy had marveled at the change that had taken place in the life of that woman...of her dedication to the unborn after discovering the truth and proof of their humanity. She would never forget the optimism and joy that Elizabeth had expressed, despite the grief at Sandra’s recent demise, as a part of her faith in the life hereafter.

“I believe that Sandra has been given the opportunity to administer to and take care of those spirits...the young children who were aborted,” she had said.

“She’s with them now and I believe that the comforting and ministering is mutual, perhaps even more for what those spirits can do for Sandra, and that God has brought them together.”

That discussion had been of great comfort to Cindy, even though Elizabeth had not necessarily intended it that way. It helped Cindy as she continued to cope with the loss of her son. Oh, she believed she would see him again in the hereafter...and she looked forward to it and wanted to be able to express joy at that anticipated reunion, just as the Trevors expressed their joy for Sandra’s...she just wasn’t quite there yet. She still had a little more grief to work through. She prayed she would be able to get through it soon...soon enough for it not to be any additional burden to Jess.

Just as this thought and prayer passed through her mind, she was brought back to Stacey Urkut’s remarks and the comments she was making at that particular moment.

*“So, Mr. President, I accept this award on behalf of all of those with whom I fought...on behalf of so many who were lost, who gave their lives in defense of our liberty and way of life. I include in that number our former President and Secretary of Defense, whom I had met and who had been so gracious to me, and who were such stalwart leaders and defenders of our nation.*

*“There are so many who have been lost...but they are really not lost to us. Our enemies underestimate our faith and its impact in our lives if they believe that the loss will demoralize us.*

*“On the contrary, we shall be even more dedicated, even more committed to defeating our enemies, whatever the price. The memory of our departed friends demands it. Their spirit lives on to comfort us with their dedication, their commitment and their love.*

*“In addition, in my faith, their very essence—their own individual spirits—live on in the hereafter, a hereafter we all must face some day. I look forward to facing it with head held high in God’s own time...it is not for me to choose that time. God’s timing is His own. But He promises us a joy-filled reunion with those good people who went before. And that is the promise to which we must hold fast.*

*“Truth be known, this promise was the only thing that really enabled me to do what I did in Alaska. I attribute it to my Maker and His will concerning me, and the life He has taught me to live...a life where I need not fear...where I know all things are in His hands and it is but for me to accept and follow His will to the best of my ability.*

*“Sometimes His will is difficult for us to comprehend, let alone accept...especially when we see the lives of good people being lost at the hand evil. But if we hold fast to the knowledge that He is in control, and that we need but look to Him for guidance and strength, we cannot help but prevail.*

*“Therefore, I accept, and I dedicate this Medal of Freedom to Him and to all of my comrades in Alaska and elsewhere who have sacrificed so much in defense of liberty...for liberty is a gift from Him that no man has the right to take from us. Not now...not ever.*

*“Thank you...God bless our nation...God bless you, Mr. President, and those you work with.”*

As Stacey Urkut moved to take her seat and the President turned the podium back over to the master of ceremonies...and as millions around the world cheered the words of integrity and commitment that had swelled their hearts...Cindy Simmons found tears flowing softly and silently down her cheeks.

With the fall of each teardrop...and as they fell faster, and then just as gradually abated...her grief over the loss of her son abated, as if in answer to prayer. Somehow, Stacey Urkut’s message had touched and healed her heart and allowed her to let go. Billy would always occupy a precious corner of her heart, but that corner was no longer cloaked in a heavy black veil. Cheeks glistening with moisture, Cindy Simmons looked heavenward and thanked God for the wonderful cleansing that Stacey Urkut’s words had brought. She found herself quietly whispering the familiar words, “The Lord works in wonderful and mysterious ways...”

Elizabeth and Joe held her, and one another, all of them touched by the poignancy of the moment, all of them feeling the miracle of what was happening.

### **In Havana, Cuba**

In Cuba, the telecast of the ceremony had been carried live on the local television broadcasting equipment that had survived the fighting. In addition, the U.S. occupation forces had set up monitors in many public buildings and in public parks wherever possible.

The turnout by the citizens of Cuba had been amazing.

It seemed to Sergeant Hernando Rodriguez that these people literally thirsted for liberty, despite the decades of communist rule which had held them in bondage. To the amazement of many Americans, but not coming as a surprise to the Cuban American community, the citizens of the island nation had been quick to throw off their communist leaders...from the highest offices, to the local commissars, and party leaders.

Oh, the hard line adherents to the ideology and the party structure had fought, and they had fought hard. But without the general support of the people, who were glad to see the old regime go, the party’s adherents’ prospects were hopeless.

By the first of May, major combat maneuvering by U.S. forces was complete and the large Cuban military units in their Army and Air Force had either been defeated, or had surrendered.

By the end of May, when the President was attacked and killed, most of the hard line, hold-out units had been rooted out and destroyed. With shades of the Iraqi operation in 2003, a Cuban “deck of cards” had been established and, by the end of May, thirty-seven of the fifty-two depicted on those cards had been captured or killed.

The attack on the President had resulted in some more heated firefights over the last week as the few remaining communist leaders tried to use that event to bolster their waning support and create a more general uprising against the Americans.

But their efforts failed.

Firstly, using the event to show themselves and try to fight was a military disaster of tremendous proportions. American firepower and logistics were so overpowering that these fights, though fierce,

were always brief and lopsided in their outcome. The hold-outs played into American hands by engaging them directly.

Secondly, the Cuban people, outside of a miniscule minority who had profited from the old system...and most of those had seen the handwriting on the wall and were unwilling to show any support...were wholly unwilling to support any resistance to the American rebuilding effort.

The Cuban people *wanted* Cuba to be rebuilt.

As far as Hernando could see, the communication efforts by the Cuban American community in Florida over the years had been more successful than any of them could have dreamed. The Cuban people held out a bright hope for liberty...and, when the opportunity was presented, they were grabbing it with both hands and with gusto.

"I should have sensed it, after what happened with Ernesto," thought Hernando. "What happened in the heart and mind of that boy was a microcosm and a precursor to what had happened to the entire country. We just didn't see it."

Now, after listening with satisfaction to Stacey Urkut's words, and as he saw that the Cuban people had listened to those words with as much, if not more, genuine comprehension, Hernando began to eagerly contemplate his return home to his family for an extended leave next month...to his wife, his child, and his parents.

His son, Felipe, was almost two years old! How amazing! He could not wait to see him again. This time he would have some real time to spend with him, to play with him and get to know him.

Maria, in their last phone call, had informed him that she was pregnant with their second child! He had wanted to cry for joy and shout out loud all at once...in fact, back in the barracks amongst his comrades, that was exactly what he had done.

He loved her so and was so grateful for her love, for her outlook on life and her innocence and purity. He would do all within his power to protect that gift...to protect their life together...to protect the liberty and opportunity for their growing family.

And his parents. What could he say? They were so proud of him...he could sense it in their letters and in the brief calls he had the opportunity to make. He sensed his Dad's pride when the two of them talked about their mutual experiences.

Hernando's dad had joined the local Home Guard Unit and pulled sentry duty four times a week. Nothing too exciting had happened, but he had called in several suspicious activities, and Hernando knew that whatever facilities his dad watched were being watched by a loyal and completely dedicated American. He was so proud of his dad...and he was proud of both of his parents for how they had raised him and taught him to appreciate the freedoms and opportunities he had in America.

Now, after seeing his original homeland liberated, he was certain that the people there would embrace those same liberties and opportunities. The anticipation filled him with joy and pride. He would have so much to share with all of his family.

### **In Boise, Idaho**

Geneva Campbell turned off the TV set.

"Such a contrast between this week and last week," she thought.

Last week she had been anticipating the types of feelings that she had experienced this week, only to have those expectations dashed by the violent attack on the President and the crowd.

Those attacks had punctuated the angst she felt about the war in general. She was not against the war. Far from it. She knew it had to be fought and she knew it had to be won at all costs...it was just that the potential cost to her was so great.

With two sons in the fight...her only two sons...she was constantly concerned for their safety.

Leon had already been severely wounded, and he had gone right back out as soon as he was fully recovered, turning down all attempts to offer him a plush and safe stateside job in recruiting.

Alan had followed in his brother's footsteps and joined the U.S. Marines as soon as he could, and was now on his way to who knows where to fight the enemy.

Both of them were full-blooded U.S. Marines and she was so proud of them. She knew she could petition for non-hazardous assignments for at least one of them since they were her only sons and since they both were destined for hot combat zones.

But she would not...she *could not* do that to them. Each of them was so dedicated to the country they had learned to love and the liberty and opportunity it afforded.

"And they know what that opportunity is all about," she reflected as she continued to bask in the warm after effects of the rousing speeches and patriotic ceremonies she had just witnessed.

"Leon got himself an education, pulled himself up by the bootstraps and brought us with him out of the ghettos in Chicago.

"I don't care what any of those race-baiting politicians or their lackeys say...what Leon accomplished could only happen in America. And that same opportunity is available to anyone who wants to break out of the dead end, destructive habits that otherwise would keep them down...and, in spite of the naysayers, carve out their own success, just like Leon did."

For that reason, Geneva Campbell and both of her boys had been ardent supporters of President Weisskopf and his policies. He did not play to the stereotypes or the special interests. His interest, clearly and unambiguously, had been in America, her people and her constitution.

"And it looks like this new President, this John Bowers is cut from the same mold," she thought.

From everything she could see, from everything she had heard, he was an individual who was committed to America and her people, with little or no political ambitions outside of simply doing the job his oath required of him, just as Norm Weisskopf had.

If this proved to be the case, Geneva was certain of one thing: she and both of her boys would be equally ardent in their support of President Bowers. And she was certain that the vast majority of Americans would be strong in their support as well.

The nation was at war. It had been attacked and seriously hurt. There was no time or room for politics and all of the maneuvering and games that went along with it. And the people knew it.

"Perhaps we will finally realize that there never was any room for it," she thought.

"Allowing such nonsense is what produced all of the problems and conditions that brought us to this point...to the possible defeat and destruction of our country and all we hold dear."

And America had indeed come frighteningly close to being defeated as the enemy had advanced on all fronts. Now, though things seemed to have turned in favor of her country, Geneva knew that the outcome was far from certain.

"Just like Norm Weisskopf said," she remembered. "There's a long road ahead."

That knowledge, that a long and arduous road still lay between the current set of circumstances and victory...between war and peace—a peace that would see her sons safely back home—led her to think once again of Alan and Leon and to turn her thoughts, her aspirations and the desires of her heart upward to heaven in a prayer to God that they both would be kept safe.

### **At the U.S. Marine Staging Area in New Zealand**

As his mother was having these thoughts, Leon Campbell was walking away from the area where he and his unit had gathered with so many others to listen to the live audio of the presentation ceremony back in Washington, D.C.

"What an inspiring presentation," he concluded as he contemplated the speeches and the events that had led up to them.

"If Stacey Urkut is any indication at all of what our people back home are becoming...then the enemy has already lost and just doesn't realize it yet."

Thinking about such things always caused him to look forward to the day when the war would end and when the world would be back at peace and he could get on with his life. But he wouldn't allow himself to dwell on such daydreams too long...there was just too much standing between now and then, and he knew that winning was not a foregone conclusion. The price in blood, in lives, and in sacrifice and hardship would be great.

He had finally arrived in New Zealand on June 2<sup>nd</sup> after navigating a circuitous route that led him to this staging area for the offensive back into Australia. That route had ultimately taken him all the way back to Midway Atoll by air, and then he endured an interminable wait as the Chinese counter-offensive against Magadan had everything in an uproar, causing delays as aircraft and ships were marshaled to evacuate the severely wounded and beef up defenses in anticipation of more attacks.

From Midway he had ultimately made his way to American Samoa, and had seen the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the Japanese governments in exile and the military forces they had been able to salvage from their earlier defeats. Those forces had been augmented by American and other allied advisors, personnel and equipment and now represented a formidable force of their own.

And they needed that force. The enemy had advanced as far as New Caledonia, the New Hebrides Islands, and the Loyalty Islands to the west. The front lines of combat on the sea were drawn even closer to the west, between those islands and Fiji, extending up through the Tasman Sea and the Coral Sea to the east of the Loyalty Islands, up to the east of Tarawa, the Marshall Islands and Wake Island, all of which were in enemy hands.

Fiji was under constant attack, and there was just not sufficient allied force in the region to adequately protect it while also protecting the staging areas in American Samoa and the even larger areas on New Zealand where Leon would spend significant amounts of time. Allied planners would not allow the CAS to take Fiji, and would resist at almost all costs any obvious invasion attempt, but they could not afford to defend its airspace on a full-time basis. So the attacks and the destruction there continued. And there were frequent air raid warnings and actual attacks in Samoa as well.

During the six days that Leon was on American Samoa, three air raid warnings, and one actual attack had occurred. That attack had consisted of fifteen Chinese bombers escorted by forty fighters. They had broken through allied air defenses to the west, over Western Samoa and attacked the capital of Apia, causing significant damage.

Allied defenses around Pago Pago were stronger and more layered, so the strikes on American Samoa had been thwarted. But the damage and destruction in Apia were real, and just too close for

comfort. Luckily, there was no significant impact in Pago Pago, where the major Republic of China, Japanese, and other united Pacific Island governments in exile were staging their forces.

Ultimately those forces would serve as one of the major thrusts into enemy territory, slated to work their way up the island chains from New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands, through the New Hebrides, the Solomons, and the Admiralty Islands towards an eventual liberation of their homes as they converged with the other prongs of what was envisioned to be the great Pacific offensive.

But the attacks out of New Caledonia and the New Hebrides were still too close and too frequent and they served as a constant reminder, to the people and the military forces gathering in the Samoan Islands, of the capability and proximity of the enemy.

Upon arriving in New Zealand, Leon had found that the attacks there were even more frequent than they were in Samoa. The attacks were also much larger as the Chinese, Indian, and GIR forces recognized that the greatest threat to their gains was located here, and they took measures to address it. As a result, the enemy committed larger air and naval forces to attacking allied forces gathering in New Zealand in the hopes of causing significant damage to those forces.

Those forces, comprised of American, British, Brazilian, and free Australian personnel, were clearly gathering for the attack on Australia. Already over three million allied men at arms had gathered on the two Islands of New Zealand, with the majority of them staging near Wellington on the northern island and around Christchurch on the southern island.

The supporting forces also represented the largest concentration of allied naval power in the world, including both of the United Kingdom's new Queen Elizabeth class large deck carriers and five American nuclear carriers, all of which were now outfitted with the SUB CIWS, protecting the islands. The United States also had eight of its Sea Control Carriers in the area, four of them the older Tarawa or Wasp class amphibious assault ships that were operating in a dual mode, and four of them the new Hampton Roads Class Sea Control ships which had been designed and built from the keel up for the sea control mission. The Canadians had both of their newer HMCS White Horse Class ships in attendance as well. All in all, seven large deck carriers and ten Sea Control carriers were operating off the coast of New Zealand with all of their escorts and the vast number of other ammunition, replenishment, oilers, and troop carriers that were gathering for the great invasion.

Once they were all assembled, those naval vessels, and the forces they would carry or protect, would make up the largest single invasion force in the history of warfare.

An equally large and impressive air armada was gathered in New Zealand. And it had to be massive because the CAS production lines throughout mainland China, India, and the former Asian Tigers were producing aircraft, weaponry, and ships at a phenomenal rate to throw into the maw of a battle anticipated to the south and east of their Australian conquest. It was all the massive allied air force could do to counter the increasing enemy numbers.

Finally, Leon had noticed the abundance of missile defense systems, and he was glad to see them...not just the standard SAM sights with AMRAAM, and Patriot batteries, but also many of the new land-based AEGIS cells that held theater anti-ballistic missiles.

"You gotta know that the Chinese and Indians are tempted to use their nuclear capability against what we are doing here," he thought.

"But with this many anti-ballistic missiles around, they dare not open that Pandora's box...at least I pray they won't."

### **Aboard the U.S.S Jimmy Carter off of Magadan**

The captain and crew of the U.S.S. Jimmy Carter had not been able to listen live to the broadcast of the presentation ceremony where President John Bowers awarded the Medal of Freedom to Stacey Urkut. Nor had they been able to hear Stacey's inspirational comments in reply. They had been beneath the waves involved in sea denial operations to any Chinese vessels, surface or sub surface, that tried to approach areas of Magadan and the continuing operations there.

And so far they had been completely successful.

When the Chinese had attacked the anchorage and the staging areas with their aircraft, and when they had unleashed the LRASD weapons, it had been the Jimmy Carter, and her sister boat, the U.S.S. Connecticut, which had killed four of six LRASD devices that were successfully intercepted in the attack on the C-90s. But that had not been anything close to enough. All ten C-90's and one of the four SSTNs had been destroyed and American operations had been seriously retarded.

But only for a short time.

America's rotation of C-90 aircraft that were replenishing and supplying new troops to the operations out of Magadan was adjusted to account for the losses. But there procedures and operations were also modified to combat the attack profile the Chinese had developed. They would not be caught by surprise like that again.

In addition, in order to make up for the loss of the C-90s, the three surviving SSTNs, which carried as much materiel as a large amphibious assault ship and had been scheduled to depart the area of operations, had made two extra trips back and forth to Midway Atoll to pick up men and materiel that had been originally slated for later C-90 flights.

In this way, though the buildup ramped up more slowly, America was still able to maintain its overall schedule at Magadan. A large number of troops and mountains of materiel were being garnered to trap the Chinese currently fighting in Alaska.

Now, as the SSTNs prepared to depart the area of operation for good, under escort from the U.S.S. Connecticut, Captain Simon Thompson prepared his boat for its next assignment.

That assignment would once again involve a mission using his embarked SEAL team under the command of Commander Barry Sheffield. Once again they would be secreted behind enemy lines for a critical intelligence gathering mission.

The Jimmy Carter was no stranger to such missions behind enemy lines. Through the course of the war, it was the boats of the Sea Wolf class that had somehow not been factored into the Chinese recognition profiles, so they had thus far escaped the deadly targeting of the LRASD weapons.

To date, no one could explain the Chinese lapse, but the Captain was understandably thankful for it, whatever the reason. The LA class boats and the newer (but smaller and less heavily armed) Virginia Class boats were all subject to the deadly algorithms of the Chinese Killer Whales. Somehow, in the Chinese intelligence bonanzas and victories of the 1990s when so much damaging information had been gathered by them—or given to them—the Sea Wolf class specifications and information had eluded them.

“They probably wrote it off as just three boats,” the Captain thought. “Figured that, in the overall scheme of what was coming, they would deal with us later. Well, it’s later and they still haven’t tagged a Sea Wolf—and we’ve certainly given a good account of ourselves.”

Two of the boats, the Connecticut and his boat, the Jimmy Carter, operated in the Pacific Theater of Operations, with one of them operating sometimes in the Indian Ocean. The third boat, the namesake of the class, the Sea Wolf, operated in the Atlantic and Mediterranean.

They were principally tasked with interdicting high value naval targets or disrupting the flow of oil by destroying as many large super tankers as they could find and target, as they made their way along the major sea lanes to India, China, Japan and Australia.

The Chinese knew of their mistake...they had surmised early on that the attacks occurring where no enemy combatant was accounted for had to be the work of the Sea Wolves. They were applying as much of their technical and scientific resource as possible to solving the problem, and there was continuous intense pressure on the CAS and GIR military to find and sink the Sea Wolves.

But they hadn’t been able to do that yet...despite some very close calls.

Simon Thompson could not count on two hands the number of times that God-awful sound of approaching LRASD weapons had enveloped his boat...and then passed on as the weapons failed to acquire the Jimmy Carter.

He was certain that, on at least two occasions, those weapons had passed not more than two hundred feet from his vessel.

Now they would be going into the very mouth of the dragon again. Pitting American ingenuity, training and will against the steel-hard will of their enemies.

And the Captain knew that sooner or later the Chinese or one of their allies would figure out the Sea Wolf riddle. And when they did, that knowledge was likely to be announced in the disappearance of one or more of the three vessels.

Thompson was thankful that the Jimmy Carter and both of the other boats had been rotated into dry dock and retrofitted with the SUB CIWS. He was also grateful that the new programming for the Mk-50 Barracuda torpedo was proving successful in intercepting oncoming Killer Whales. But he was under no illusion that such successes would last indefinitely. Once their enemies knew that they had a Sea Wolf sub on the run, they would launch everything they had at her and use all of their resources to track her down, overwhelm her defense and kill her.

It was against that eventual day that Captain Thompson prepared and trained his crew. They could never afford to become complacent. In combat, and against a resourceful enemy, complacency kills. When the time came, they would all have to be top notch and perform at 110% in order to survive. And their survival would not happen at the drop of a dime, or by accident. To survive against this foe, that meant right now, they had to continually sharpen their skills and procedures.

Speaking of now...the Captain had just been informed that they had received the transmission of the audio portion of the Medal of Freedom award ceremony that included the President’s speech and Stacey Urkut’s acceptance. The Captain was anxious for the crew to hear it, and he was anxious to hear it himself. They had all been deeply saddened by the death of President Weisskopf. For folks like him, in addition to his Commander in Chief and the ultimate command authority, the President had assumed almost a father-like role and had represented a paternal influence in his life...for much of his crew, the President’s role had been more reminiscent of that of a grandfather.

The President had not only embodied good leadership, as an individual deserving of great respect. He had also become someone they would all die for, or for whom they would go to the ends of the earth. This crew had done just that, by unquestioningly obeying his orders because of the trust and faith they all had in him. Somehow, for them and for most personnel in America’s armed services, during the course of the war their loyalty to the President had gone beyond just the constitutional

prerogative to obey his orders. It was something much more personal than that. It involved a personal loyalty to a man deserving of such.

But he was gone and now they had a new President. Every one of them looked forward to hearing directly from him as their new Commander in Chief. Every one of them, either consciously or in their sub-conscious, was waiting to see if John Bowers would prove worthy of wearing his mantle. Somehow, deep inside, they all knew that they needed such a leader for the rough road ahead.

As Commander Sheffield stood next to him there in the control room, Captain Thompson took the handset, clicked the transmit lever, and spoke to the crew.

“All hands, this is the Captain.

“Listen up. We have just received the audio from the event back in Washington that concluded three hours ago. It is of our new CINC, President John Bowers, and his presentation speech at that Medal of Freedom ceremony. It is also the acceptance speech of Stacey Urkut.

“We’re going to play it now. It will last about ten minutes and I ask everyone whose duties will allow it to listen carefully, and consider the message and words of our new President.

“Those whose duties prevent them from listening now, and other crew members who would like to listen to the message again later, can listen to the recording at any time from the ship’s files. Just see the XO or your section chief to arrange it.

“After the conclusion of the presentation, I will make a few comments about what was said and then talk about the orders we have just received for our next mission.

“Here’s the President of the United States...”

Over the ship’s intercom system, the President’s words began.

“My fellow Americans, we are gathered here this morning and afternoon to honor one of our own. Last week...”

**June 14, 05:23**

### **High Mountain Meadow off of Deep Creek**

#### **Near Ibapah, Utah**

Ever so slowly, the surreal light was giving way to shades of gray, that would in turn give way in the east to more golden colors preceding the dawn.

Slim loved this time of morning as he watched the horses up here in the high meadow on the upper reaches of Elk Creek (pronounced Elk “Crick” in these parts), surrounded by granite sentinels. They called the place he was camped in Sentinel Bowl, and it was one of his favorite places to tend horses in the late spring and early summer in western Utah, only a few miles from the Nevada line.

It was remote country, the closest town being the small town of Ibapah about fifteen miles to his north and west, population less than one hundred. To stumble upon any real civilization, you had to go five divides over and one hundred and fifty miles to the northeast, to the suburbs of Salt Lake City.

“And I reckon that’s just about far enough...maybe not even far enough,” thought Slim as he considered a place, the Salt Lake Valley, where something on the order of a million people lived.

Slim seldom, if ever, approached any such place. He’d been a cowboy for all of his life. He knew nothing different. He wanted nothing different. He pretty much enjoyed just being left alone to tend the animals and to associate...occasionally...with his other cowboy friends in a good game of poker, or a good meal of steak and potatoes.

There was those around him who said that life had passed him by...that he ought to get a little more into the modern era. But he had freely chosen the life he lived...the one he loved, and he did not regret it one iota. His wife was long since dead. His two kids visited him on occasion and he even got to hold the grandkids when they came by. But leave the life he loved? Not a chance.

Besides, he was still good at it...always had been. If you needed some horses tended or broken, or cattle herded...if you needed fences mended or built, or if you needed a corral, Slim was your man. When it came to livestock, he could tend ‘em, and he could mend ‘em. All over western Utah and eastern Nevada, from Elko and Ely down to Cedar City, Slim was known as a hardworking, totally reliable hand who liked nothing more than to work outdoors and keep to himself.

At sixty-eight, though his face was weathered, he had the physique, the lung capacity and the stamina of most “modern” men who hadn’t cracked fifty yet, so he figured that he was doing okay.

This morning he was tending McCalvery’s horses, and would be watching them all summer. He loved the Sentinel Bowl because it was high and it was remote...the air was clear, and here in the late spring the wind still blew cold and invigorating...and you had a view sketched by God’s hand.

Down below, the Deep Creek valley seemed to be swimming in the surreal light of a full moon that itself had not yet set. Hundreds of cattle were being tended down there by younger cowboys and, throughout the night, Slim would hear the night-herd song being sung by them as they lulled the cattle and kept them from getting restless. Slim loved that sound carried up here to him on the wind. It took him back to earlier days and the times he’d spent with other cowboys those many years ago.

Slim didn’t think too much about world events, but he and the other cowboys could not help but be impacted somewhat by them. Most of the really young cowboys, those younger than thirty, were off fighting. You couldn’t help but miss them.

Several of the others were enlisted in the local Home Guard Unit and took time off to stand another kind of watch... watching over the conveniences and infrastructure and necessities of modern man. As cowboys who had spent their lives watching over things, they were good at it.

In addition, there were large areas of Nevada, off further to the west, that were restricted ground for military training and testing. That was something that had been the case for many, many years and the installations there would normally produce occasional sounds that would drift over the ranges and reach them here. But now, with the world at war, those sounds were much more frequent and originated from areas now much closer to them.

Slim figured that those unsettling sounds were something to get used to, because all of that land was now constantly in use in the training of the large forces America was employing in this war, and in the testing of more and more systems to counter their enemies.

The way Slim figured it, if those sorry Chinese Communists, radical Islamics, or those Aztlan whackos, or whatever they were calling themselves these days, ever got through to him here in the mountains...he'd give them what for. He was still a crack shot with his Model 94, and he knew how to survive and move around in the wilderness.

Considering this, he did allow himself to contemplate one of the few modern events he had taken the time to witness in the last several years. That had been the Medal of Freedom ceremony after the killing of President Weiskopf.

He had held a deep respect for the former President, and had cast his ballot for him. Slim always voted, and he always voted for the man whom he felt could best do the job. He read the papers and he listened to the talk and he always made his mind up well in advance of any election. He might not be into a lot of the modern conveniences, but he didn't view voting as either modern or convenient...he figured it was a necessary part of being able to enjoy the free life of a cowboy.

Anyhow, he'd wanted to not only hear the new President, John Bowers...and he'd liked every bit of what he had heard...he wanted to hear Stacey Urkut speak. He felt an odd kinship to that woman whom he had never met. He figured, honestly and sincerely without any fanfare, that the way she had reacted to those Chinese runnin' dogs in Alaska was exactly the thing he would do here.

...and he'd liked everything she had said, too.

While he was contemplating all of this, and as the hour approached 5:30 AM, the pulsing, rumbling noises began.

It was way off in the west, but it was deep and it was getting louder. The very earth beneath his feet began to tremble ever so slightly in unison with the strange rumblings. As it got closer, the animals began to get disturbed and Slim got up to quiet them down.

Then the first rumbling was joined by another, and then another, until finally there were four distinct and separate pulses that were combining into one huge sound that was coming closer.

...and as it came, the very sky began to lighten with much more than the dawn. And the tremendous strobe light effect was coming from the west, not the east. This was no dawn light. This was a light of obvious unnatural origins.

The horses were rearing now and Slim could tell that down in the valley a regular stampede was in the making. Luckily, the ropes Slim had set out for this high meadow corral last evening were holding and all of the horses he was watching were contained.

But the great rumbling continued and the pulsating lights grew brighter.

Then, looking westward above the valley and across the Goshute Range, Slim saw the first...then the second, and third and fourth pulsing lights approaching...they were too bright to look at directly and Slim had to turn his head as they approached.

As the horses continued to rear behind him, Slim could do little more than stand there in transfixed awe and obliquely watch the spectacle as it approached and passed overhead.

"My God!" Slim thought. "We're launching something big into space...four of them at once."

All four lights were climbing very high, getting further away in the heavens even as they passed overhead. When Slim was once again able to look at them, he saw them all pass well above the feathery reach of some very high cirrus clouds as they continued onward...and upward.

He began to comprehend something of the distances and the speeds involved, and he realized that, although the four space craft and their payloads appeared relatively close together, they must be a significant distance apart.

As they got higher and higher into the atmosphere, their pulsating seemed to make them appear to be a slow, very bright twinkling, as if though they were surreally winking at him as they continued on. Slim watched in awe, not knowing that each of those pulses that were creating the deep rumblings were in fact miniature nuclear detonations against a specially designed shield which translated the force of the explosion into the nuclear pulse thrust that was taking the vessels into orbit.

Slowly the rumbling subsided and, as the horses began to settle down, the rapidly departing lights became little more than very bright strobing dots moving further and further off to the northeast in the heavens, as if to greet the dawn.

"Well," he said to himself, "you sure learn something new every day."



“I knew we had a lot of military exercises and training going on in Nevada, but I had no idea we were launching space ships from over there.”

...and outside of a very select few... which this morning had been added to by hundreds of other ranchers, cowboys, tourists and people otherwise out in the mountains and deserts of western Utah and eastern Nevada, neither did anyone else.

Oh, to be sure, on the western outskirts of Salt Lake City a number of early morning risers had seen the strobe light effect in the sky and felt the much diminished, rumblings. But those who did see it wrote it off as distant lightning over the mountains, and most just slept peacefully through it all.

Which was precisely the way the United States military high command and civilian command authority hoped it would turn out and remain for as long as possible. The new President himself had only learned of, and given final approval to, the plan the day after the Medal of Freedom ceremony in Washington, D.C.

But the launching into space of the four large spacecraft on June 14, using the latest American technology, a single stage to orbit (SSTO) technology soon to be officially dubbed the Orion nuclear pulse boosters, was a date that would later be marked by historians as a turning point in the war.

It would also be recorded as a date that marked a turning point in the history of mankind.

## Chapter 34

*"I shall always remain confident of the American people's ability to rise to any challenge." - Norman Schwarzkopf autobiography, 1992*

**June 22, 18:49**

### **Executive Council Chambers**

#### **Politburo, Beijing, China**

Slim and the other cowboys and ranchers in Utah and Nevada were not the only ones to take note of the spectacular American space launches. In addition to the American authorities monitoring the flights, Chinese personnel who had been scouting the perimeter of the Nevada test facilities, took note of what they saw and passed it on.

In addition, Chinese space monitoring stations in Mongolia and elsewhere within the occupied borders of Chinese territory, including the rebuilt facilities on the Island of Tarawa that the Chinese had retaken from the Americans, took note of the objects entering earth orbit from trajectories originating out of the continental United States.

That was why this meeting was being held. General Hunbaio was completing his briefing regarding what they knew of the launches and the objects being monitored in space.

"In summary, these launches represent unprecedented advancements for the Americans in heavy lift. The four lift vehicles that they utilized were much larger than anything the Americans have used before for satellite insertions, and they are clearly powered by nuclear pulse detonations, using small, specially designed nuclear explosions to provide this Single Stage to Orbit (SSTO) capability.

"This is not a new avenue of research. In the late 1940's and early 1950's the Americans studied SSTO technology extensively. If they have perfected it...and based upon this insertion into space we must assume they have...their lift capacity will greatly exceed the size and lift capability of the largest Russian craft, or any other...and the resulting advantage is cause for great concern.

"As a result, the Americans have successfully inserted these large payloads into geo-synchronous orbit above the United States, and they did so with a minimum amount of exposure over our territories. They are busily constructing a station of some type there as we speak."

One of the executive committee members, Minister Win Chu, the Minister of Transportation and an individual who commanded significant internal security and regulatory forces of his own, interjected at this point. His frustration at hearing that the Americans were maintaining any significant presence in space, even for a week, was obvious. It defined an intolerable situation.

"Then use every anti-satellite weapon at our disposal and destroy these craft where they stand."

The General respectfully waited for the Minister, who was a long time ally and trusted confidant of President Zenim, to finish.

"Minister Win, our initial attempts to intercept these craft with those very weapons as the they went into orbit above us proved unsuccessful.

"Our failed attacks strongly suggest that the Americans have perfected and armed these spacecraft with significant laser defenses. Our current analysis indicates that there must be nuclear reactors of considerable power generating capability on board each spacecraft.

"This explains their abilities both in terms of positioning the large payloads, and in warding off our kinetic energy interception efforts.

"Right now, all four of the craft have unloaded their payloads. And assembled them into a facility of some type...a large facility at this position."

Using his pointer, the general leaned over the table and identified a position in space above the United States on the table top display apparatus that was projected onto the screen being used in the presentation to the executive committee.

"From this position, it is difficult for our mainland or Pacific Island facilities to get a clear picture, either visually or electronically, of what the Americans are doing. The *ta shih* devices do not have the range to determine whether or not the Americans are using novel stealth material and technology in this venture...so we are unsure of the exact magnitude of this American space force.

"But, at this position they are still vulnerable to our attack.

"President, Minister Win, and other members of the Executive Committee, we have a proposal prepared that will describe how we can go about attacking the Americans at this location.

"I will now turn the time over to our newest member of the Committee and ask him to present that proposal to you. The operation is his brainchild. He is a People's Hero and the perfecter of the singular weapons that have allowed us to push the Americans out of Asia and the Western Pacific Ocean and keep them out.

"The People's Republic had made many technological advances during this conflict and in the years leading up to it, but Lu Pham's creation must be recognized as the advancement, above all others, that has reaped the most rewards.

“Admiral Lu, please brief the rest of the committee on the attack plans.”

**June 22, that same time**

**Executive Council Chambers**

**Politburo, Beijing, China**

Approaching the front of the council chambers, Lu Pham found it difficult to believe that he would be making such a presentation. He had been a member of the executive committee for less than a month, and he had thought he would sit in relative silence in such conferences for many years before counseling these others on matters of policy or state security.

The call for Lu Pham to serve in this capacity had come from Chin Zhongbaio, the Chairman of the Chinese Ocean-going Shipping Company (COSCO) and a member of the Executive Committee himself. That he, Lu Pham, would be tapped to be a Committee member had come as a complete shock to Lu, particularly after it was described to him that President Jien Zenim himself had made the request. He did not know the President personally and, though he had attended a few meetings that had included the president, Lu had never imagined that Jien Zenim had taken personal note of him.

But as shocking as the offer to become a member of the Executive Committee of the Chinese Politburo was, it was one he readily accepted. . .and due to the President's overwhelming influence on the committee as a whole, it was one that was approved without dissent.

Chairman Zhongbaio and General Hunbaio had done so much for Lu and his family over the last many years. Their guidance and affirmation had finally allowed him to realize decades-old dreams and to keep promises that were just as old. . .promises to his long-deceased parents.

Lu had recognized for some time that all of those efforts on his behalf had been a part of the larger plans engineered by Jien Zenim himself, plans that included the Three Wisdoms, whose principles ruled China and all of the CAS. . .and extended to the GIR as well. Well over sixty percent of the earth's population now lived under governmental systems that operated by those principles.

They were principles Lu himself had adopted, along with his entire family. The principles were straightforward and simple, and challenged their enemy's notion of individual sovereignty and self-promotion with the ultimate statement about the welfare of the many being the ultimate societal goal.

1. “All men and women are equal.”

2. “All share equally in the bounty of a working and industrious society.”

3. “One goal, one thought, one people for World peace.”

Lu knew that he owed most of his success, and the elevated and comfortable position of his family to Jien Zenim. So a call to serve which originated from the President himself. . .to serve with him. . .was a request which Lu Pham immediately and gratefully accepted.

These musings all flashed through Lu's mind as he approached the front of the room and the position just vacated by General Hunbaio. Taking the pointer from the table, and advancing to the computerized presentation apparatus, he addressed the entire committee.

“Mr. President and members of the Executive Committee, I am humbled and grateful to be standing here before you today.

“We have been presented a great technical and military challenge by the Americans. What they have accomplished is significant and there are many, many ways their accomplishment can be used to harm us, our allies, and our peoples if such advances are allowed to stand.

“We must not, and will not, allow them to stand.”

As Lu continued talking, President Jien Zenim and several of his closest confidants were pleased beyond measure at Lu Pham's opening remarks and with his positive attitude and demeanor.

It was a demeanor and an attitude that was much needed on this committee as a whole. As the president watched, he could see that Lu's enthusiasm was contagious.

“...and well it should be,” thought Zenim. “Lu has been successful in almost everything he has been involved in. From the Killer Whales to the recent efforts that are upsetting and slowing the American plans at Magadan.

“We will make good use of Lu Pham's can-do attitude on this council. . .we must embrace such optimism if we are to prevail. Putting Lu Pham in this position will infuse these older ministers with his spirit. . .and Lu himself will become another valuable and life-long ally in the process.”

Lu Pham continued.

“The Americans have presented us with monumental challenges in the past. . .and we have overcome them. Everyone thought that their vaunted AEGIS system, the one protecting their aircraft carriers, was unassailable. . .and yet we challenged and defeated it.

“We did so by exploiting the greatest weakness in that system and then saturating it with weapons of great speed and with sufficient numbers to overwhelm what defense they could muster.

“We have consistently kept up with and overcome their efforts to modify and upgrade their defenses and maintained that advantage.

“When was the last time an American aircraft carrier sailed with impunity within 500 miles or more of the Sea of Japan, the China Sea or anywhere near the Philippines?

“It has been years now.

“Let me give you two other examples.

“For years the Americans had their way in the skies over most nations who would dare oppose them. They used their stealth technology to fly with impunity through the sovereign airspace of those nations. They even did so at the beginning of this conflict.

“They do so no more.

“At the outset of this conflict, the Americans also used their satellite and GPS technology to great advantage against us and our allies. We won battles and lands from them only at great cost in numbers when facing this technology.

“They do not enjoy that advantage anymore either.

“In fact, it is their effort to reassert this type of dominance in space that we are facing, and, as with the other examples, we shall prevail here as well. And we will prevail by employing the same tactical philosophy with which we defeated their carrier battle groups, by using speed and overwhelming numbers.

“The Americans use defense in depth...layered defenses...as a means to ensure the capability of defending their high value targets. It is a good philosophy that has served them for many years. In the case of their carriers, it was a flawed defense, and in this case, it does not serve them at all.

“In space, they do not yet have layered defenses. They have a single defense that they have just implemented. As with AEGIS, we are going to cut through that defense and we are going to do it with speed and with numbers against which they cannot successfully defend.”

But Lu Pham was wrong...the U.S. had already developed layered defenses in space.

**June 25, 02:54**

### **Presidential Bedroom**

#### **The White House, Washington, D.C.**

The incessant buzzing in his ear awakened President John Bowers immediately. It was not the first time he had heard it, and it certainly wouldn't be the last...but at 2:50 in the morning?

“Well, it must not be too earth-shattering,” the President thought, “Otherwise they would be here in the room carrying Jane and me out of here.”

Rising quickly and taking as much care as possible not to awaken his sleeping wife, the President whispered an acknowledgement into the telephone handset by his bed and then rapidly dressed and exited the bedroom into the hall.

There he found the head of the graveyard detail of his Secret Service team accompanied by Bill Hendrickson, his National Security Advisor.

As they immediately made their way to the elevator that would take them deep below the White House to the situation room, Bill Hendrickson spoke to the President.

“Mr. President, it's started. The Chinese are going all-out to destroy Point Conception.”

**June 25, that same time**

### **Point Conception Station**

#### **Geosynchronous Orbit above North America**

Captain Bart Wynn surveyed the condition of his command, United States Space Station Point Conception. He quickly assessed its defenses against the developing Chinese attack from his commander's console in the CIC. The Chinese wanted to bring Conception down...and if he had any say in the matter, they would fail in that effort.

Captain Wynn had ridden up to orbit aboard one of the four new spacecraft America had developed for this mission. They were all true single stage to orbit vessels that utilized a large supply of miniature nuclear explosive devices to boost them into space. Two of the vessels, the United States Space Ship (USSS) Orion and the USSS Nebulae, designated as LSC-D (Laser-armed Space Corvette – Defense) 001 and LSC-D 002, were specifically designed for the mission of creating and controlling this space station at Point Conception. The other two, the USSS Gaspra and the USSS Ida, designated LSF-RX (Laser-armed Space Frigate – Recon and Exploration) 001 and LSF-RX 002, were larger, more heavily armed vessels, capable of larger payloads and had been designed for deep space assignments. All of them were reusable, shuttle-like craft that were capable of powered landings on the earth once they reentered Earth's atmosphere.

They were also quite capable of defending themselves in space, and the payloads that they had carried into space were even more capable in that regard, as the Chinese would discover shortly.

The two corvettes assigned to the station formed the command and communication modules of the USSS Conception, while the payloads they carried formed the primary defense and living modules. The corvettes were a semi-permanent part of the station and were not scheduled to return to earth for over two years, when they would be replaced by the next class of craft, which would be more capable and would take up permanent residence at the station.

The crews would be in place for their entire tour of space duty, scheduled to last here on the station from twelve to eighteen months. The way Captain Wynn looked at it, this was war and they

had a mission to perform here in geosynchronous orbit above America, and they would fulfill that mission at all costs.

The two frigates, the Gaspra and the Ida, after leaving portions of their payloads here to assist in the creation of Conception Station, had proceeded further into space. They did this by first using conventional rockets to achieve a desired thrust that carried them approximately twenty thousand miles beyond Conception Station, where they then deployed light sails that would allow them to reach their objective within the time constraints of their mission planning, just short of nine months later.

They would indeed be traveling much further out into space.

As a result, the crews' on the Gaspra and Ida had tours of duty that would last somewhat longer than the personnel working here at Conception Station, but they would rendezvous here on their way back to earth eighteen months from now, after a successful and monumental mission.

Their departure using conventional propulsion had been shielded by the positioning of the station and by their stealthy design characteristics which would keep prying Chinese or other enemy radar and thermal sensors from detecting them. Their exotic exterior material was of such a nature that radar and thermal energy signatures were either deflected or completely eliminated. Except when traveling by nuclear pulse thrust, which could be used at any time to augment their other propulsion capabilities, they would be invisible to their enemies.

It had been hoped that their departure and continued voyage had been kept a complete secret from their enemies...and they had been completely successful to date in realizing that hope.

But all of that was not material to the next few minutes, when the fate of the USSS Conception and its personnel, and the credibility of the engineers and designers who had developed it, would hang in the balance. The future of America's presence in space during the war, and, as would later be recognized, the ultimate outcome of the war itself would hang in the balance.

Captain Wynn absorbed the information coming into the CIC. He had long since understood the reason that experienced naval officers had been chosen to command United States Space Command (USSC) vessels.

The environment in which he was now operating was much less a flight deck, and more like the Combat Information Center of a major naval combatant. In fact, the CIC had been designed using the principles learned in modern naval war fighting. In this case, the vessel was in space, but he was being tasked with, and exercising, all of his naval command and leadership experience.

Each of the two corvettes carried two banks of new laser cannons called Laser Weapons Systems (LWS) that got their energy from the nuclear reactors that powered the craft and the station. Those reactors were the latest, most proficient, and most miniaturized designs that America had ever produced and were specifically designed to work with the environmental systems, the laser weaponry, the research systems and the communication and sensory systems that the corvettes carried.

In addition, each of the craft carried two kinetic energy weapons called Kinetic Energy Defense Systems (KEDS), which fired depleted uranium projectiles at hyper-velocity speeds. They used a derivative of the Hail Storm missile's solid state electronic fire controllers to propel those projectiles at a variable rate, depending on the engagement.

But those defenses were only a part of the station's defense capabilities. The defense module had included the provisions and equipment necessary to deploy the station's two primary defenses.

One of these was a bank of sixty-four Block V Standard missiles and the latest AEGIS radar and software modules to control them, specifically modified for space engagements. The entire system was known as SPAEGIS. The system, like its naval and land-based cousins, was designed to control all of the station's defenses, including those on the two craft that were now a part of the system.

Each of those Block V missiles had a miniature tactical nuclear warhead and a range of over 250 miles. They were intended for use against just the sort of attack the Chinese were staging: massed missiles and kinetic projectiles.

"They think they can attack and take down this station like they did the International Space Station three years ago," the Captain thought. "Well .... let 'em try it."

Captain Wynn's thoughts on the destruction of the International Space Station by the Chinese came from eyewitness experience. He had been the commander on the Space Station at the time of the Chinese attack, and if it weren't for the fact that the shuttle Discovery was docked with the Space Station at the time, and the crew evacuated by means of the shuttle just moments before the attack, he and everyone else on board would have been killed.

As it was, the hulk of the Station had fallen out of orbit to earth, impacting in Brazil, killing many thousands in Rio de Janeiro, and had resulted in Brazil declaring war against the Chinese.

Captain Wynn was confident that his defenses would prevent any repeat of that terrible episode. The nuclear warheads on the Block V Standard missiles would literally blow holes in the "shotgun" pattern of projectiles or missiles meant to take out Station Conception.

Then, once any targets, or "vampires" in colloquial naval jargon, had gotten past the missiles, the lasers and kinetic energy weapons on the two corvettes would target any "leakers" as they approached closer to the station. The Captain was quite confident in the Corvette capabilities as well. They had performed admirably against just such attacks as they made their way into orbit.

Any Chinese weapons that were able to get through those two layers of defense would then run hard up against the last defense, which had been carried aloft in the payload of the defense module.

This final defensive layer was a reactive mesh of fine but tremendously strong poly-carbon, called Poly-Carbon Reactive Mesh (PCRM), that was arrayed around the station in a harness. The harness holding it in place was flexible and had fifty remote controlled thrusters which could control the location and shape of the mesh depending on the attack profile. That mesh was also engineered to allow either missiles or projectiles to be fired out through it, but would use its carbon strength and explosive reaction to destroy or deflect any object attempting to penetrate it from the outside.

Finally, Captain Wynn knew that the structure of the station itself had been designed for battle. Air-tight, strengthened bulkheads, and thick dogged hatches would make "Condition Zebra" very effective, when all hatches were secured. A skeleton structure made of the hardest metals and composites, and an all steel exterior skin with thick armor covering critical spaces.

"These babies are not cheap or "light", but neither are aircraft carriers," thought the Captain.

"We aren't going to be caught in a defenseless position like we were on the ISS three years ago."

The time for the initial engagement of the Chinese attack had come. Their first wave of missiles and projectiles were coming into range.

"You may commence firing," the Captain ordered as weapons officers and their personnel began launching Block V missiles and preparing the lasers and kinetic weapons for engagement.

But while the Chinese were unaware of the exact nature of the specific weapons the Captain would employ against them, their planners had made allowances for many of the principles upon which those specific weapons operated.

### **June 25, that same time**

#### **275 miles away**

#### **Approaching Point Conception Station**

Two hundred Chinese anti-satellite missiles were approaching Point Conception. Each was loaded with high explosive warheads and each was traveling at orbital speed. They were coming at the American space station in five waves of forty missiles each. Each wave approaching simultaneously from slightly different angles of attack along the same threat axis, as much as orbital mechanics would allow.

Interspaced between the simultaneous waves of missiles, were clouds of thousands of heavy metal projectiles which had been released by other missiles after they had been inserted into orbit...over five thousand projectiles in each wave, and there were five waves targeting the station.

The Chinese had held very little back, just enough to counter any single satellite launches the Americans or their allies might attempt under cover of this battle. It was their intent, with the massive attack, to completely overwhelm the defenses and obliterate the American presence in space.

### **June 25, less than a minute later**

#### **240 miles away**

#### **Approaching Point Conception Station**

Station Conception targeted five Block Vs on each wave of Chinese missiles. They were programmed to detonate immediately in front of each wave. The station also targeted two Block Vs on each "cloud" of projectiles they had detected.

The first engagement against the missiles was successful for the Americans. Three waves of Chinese missiles suffered over 90% attrition and only two missiles from each of those groups continued inbound towards Conception. The other two attacks on Chinese missiles were less effective, allowing seven missiles from one group and five from the other to proceed on towards the station-and these missiles were relatively widely dispersed.

The engagement against the kinetic projectiles was more effective in percentages, knocking off course or vaporizing over 95% of the projectiles in each wave. But this still left five waves of several hundred projectiles still approaching the station in patterns that could destroy it or do it great harm.

At this point, a weakness in the American system became evident. The Chinese attack, due to its approach from the opposite rotational direction of the space station, was approaching at two times the orbital speed. This meant that quick order, the attack would come too close to the station for continued Block V missile engagements.

The American system had to analyze the effectiveness of the first attack before launching a second one. Precious seconds ticked off until solid information about the nature of the remaining Chinese threat was available and the system engaged the remaining vampires. The system had used thirty missiles for the first engagement; it now fired another twenty-six missiles, leaving only eight missiles in reserve.

This engagement individually targeted each of the remaining Chinese missiles and targeted the remaining dispersed clouds of projectiles with two missiles each.

**June 25, three minutes later****140 miles away****Approaching Point Conception Station**

More small nuclear explosions lit up space, this time much closer to the station.

Captain Wynn was concerned, as were his subordinates, but that concern was buried underneath the professionalism and effectiveness of their training. They performed their duties and tasks without pause and without waver. Their very lives depended on them not breaking their routine or wasting precious seconds.

SPAEGIS quickly informed the controllers in the CIC that two Chinese missiles somehow made their way through the nuclear fireballs set in their paths. The engagements of these missiles was immediately assigned to, and slaved to the lasers and kinetic projectiles on the two American corvettes attached to the station.

At this point, when Captain Wynn saw that only two missiles had gotten through his Block V missile defense, he issued some direct orders that modified the SPAEGIS defense parameters.

"Target the leaker missiles with one of the LWS systems from both the Nebulae and the Orion! Use the KEDS and other LWS from those corvettes to knock down the leaker projectiles.

"Do it NOW!"

The duty officers and operators quickly programmed the system to do as the Captain instructed.

There were less than twenty seconds remaining until missiles and projectiles would begin impacting Conception Station.

**June 25, three minutes later****Within twenty miles****Point Conception Station**

The lasers from the two corvettes performed effectively and quickly, destroying both of the remaining Chinese missiles.

But the remaining Chinese kinetic projectiles from all five waves were now approaching the station. They were greatly dispersed as a result of the Block V nuclear missile attacks and each had to be targeted individually, based on the threat that it posed. They still numbered over three hundred separate projectiles.

As they approached, they were now coalescing into a single, dispersed cloud of projectiles. The lasers and kinetic weapons aboard the two corvettes performed well against these objects, but there were just too many individual projectiles to destroy or deflect in such a short amount of time. One hundred and sixty-five of the projectiles made their way through the station's point defenses and now approached the PCRM defense.

That device had been deployed eight miles out from the station and had made a final adjustment after the final engagement of Block V missiles. There wasn't time to adjust to the effectiveness of the point defenses. One hundred and fifteen of the small projectiles were destroyed or deflected by their collision with the PCRM. Another twenty-six missed the PCRM altogether because they had been sufficiently deflected by prior action to cause them to miss the station entirely.

But twenty-four projectiles succeeded in making their way through every layer of the American defense. They either passed through holes left by projectiles that had impacted the mesh just prior to them, or they passed at angles that missed the PCRM, but still would impact the station.

Fourteen of these projectiles shredded the primary communications antennae on the communications module, destroying the high speed digital interface at the same time. Ten of the projectiles impacted the station along a line that stretched between the living and defense modules, penetrating those modules in seven places, and creating havoc in the secondary, alternate command center for the SPAEGIS system. Six personnel in that area were killed and another four were injured before they could be evacuated to air-tight, secure areas of the station. Another three personnel who were not on duty were killed in their bunks in the living module.

Backup communications with the Station were somewhat slower and more cumbersome, but Captain Wynn informed his superiors on earth that the station had survived and was still capable of putting up a fight and performing its mission.

It would be eight hours, requiring a four hour EVA by three personnel, before something approaching normal communications between the USSS Conception and its control facilities in Nevada, or the alternate facilities in California or Florida could be re-established. It would be two days before repairs were sufficiently far along in the alternate SPAEGIS command center that it could be manned without the need for space suit protection against the vacuum of space. Two cabins in the living module were beyond repair and were evacuated until more serious repair equipment and the necessary material could be launched into space.

That launch and re-supply would occur much sooner than originally planned, and it would be repeated many more times than had been planned. As was the case with American forces off

Magadan, the USSS Conception was in a position where the enemy they intended to use every means at their disposal in the effort to dislodge it.

### **June 25, early morning**

#### **News Stations throughout North America**

Radio and TV news outlets all over the country carried the dramatic footage of the engagement in space. The hundreds of bright flashes could not be missed by anyone who was awake at that hour and chanced to look outside. The brilliant flashes from small nuclear explosions lit up the sky across much of North America, much like a thunderstorm lights up the sky with its lightning flashes.

But these flashes were much, much further away, and there was no resounding *BOOM* or roll of thunder accompanying them.

Numerous calls to emergency 911 numbers in cities, counties, and states were vaguely answered as the operators and dispatchers themselves knew nothing of the event. Calls by state agencies to federal agencies for the most part suffered from the same lack of information and ignorance.

The Department of Homeland Security released an official statement at noon Eastern time regarding the matter. It represented the official government statement regarding the engagement. All of the major radio and TV networks picked it up, as well as the major internet news sites.

*“The numerous flashes in the skies over the United States this morning are the result of our forces establishing a defensive station in space over North America that our enemies are trying to destroy. The enemy has been unsuccessful in their attempts. We are confident that they will continue to be unsuccessful, although they will most certainly try again and the public may witness more displays similar to this morning’s.*

*“Pray for our service personnel, wherever they may be engaged. Thank you ”*

This announcement did much to allay the public's immediate fears and quelled some of the more frantic and hysterical speculation that was beginning to spread across the nation. But the statement and the event itself were also recognized by the vast majority of the people as representing a significant change in the nature of the warfare.

It was a change, despite its potential serious consequences, that most Americans welcomed.

America was taking the initiative in ways the enemy had not expected and that enemy was now being forced to react to American moves as opposed to the other way around.

### **June 26, late in the day**

#### **2500 miles west of the Japanese Coast**

#### **Control Room, USS Nevada, SSGN Trident Submarine**

The trajectories had been back-tracked from all of the launches of the Chinese anti-satellite weapons and their launch locations had been identified. Now America was going to respond. All of those launch coordinates were entered and the missiles were ready to launch.

It would be the first launch of these specially modified Trident missiles in anger. Sixteen of her twenty-four missiles would be launched. Each had ten independently guided warheads, MIRVs as they were known. One hundred and sixty devices were about to rain from the sky on launch sites throughout northeastern China and Mongolia.

Captain Lanier had arrived on site at the launch coordinates twenty minutes earlier.

Outside of his two Virginia Class SSN escorts, there were no other vessels or aircraft in the area, and he was a hole in the water. Or at least he would be until he made these missile launches. Then he would have to “shoot and scoot” the heck out of here.

He was confident that the Chinese were very capable of tracking the trajectories of his own missiles back to this spot, and he wanted to be long gone before any of their aircraft or ships equipped with Killer Whales arrived.

“You may launch the missiles when ready,” the Captain ordered.

At the appropriate moment, the first was launched and it was followed in quick succession by fifteen others. They all broke the surface of the sea, through the tops and bottoms of swells, with tremendous geysers of water marking their exit points. They quickly rose up through the low ceiling with increasing speed.

Soon, the missiles had risen high enough in the atmosphere for the CAS radar coverage out of Japan to take note of their passage and relay alarm throughout the Chinese military and political hierarchy. Before the final trajectories were calculated, Jien Zenim and every member of the politburo, wherever they were located, were being whisked by security personnel into hardened bunkers in their specific locations.

Once it was clear that the targets were military launch sites in Mongolia and northeast China, tensions lessened somewhat, but it would not be until impact verified that the payloads were non-nuclear that a Chinese nuclear retaliatory attack against mainland America would be stood down.

Before that happened, the Chinese KS-3 anti-ballistic missile defense system came into play. Having proven their success at intercepting Russian ballistic nuclear missiles over Russia in the previous year, the Chinese hierarchy had deployed these systems profusely around the Chinese capital



and around all critical war industry sites and military bases. They had full confidence that they would perform equally well against the Americans.

They were disappointed in that expectation.

American miniaturization technology had developed to the point that each MIRV warhead employed no less than ten very realistic and very accurate decoys. These decoys did not remain with the actual warhead itself as did their Russian counterparts. The American technology allowed the decoys themselves to independently target what otherwise would be considered legitimate locations. To the surprise of the Chinese defenders, instead of a maximum of one hundred and sixty expected targets from sixteen Trident tracks, they were faced with one thousand seven hundred and sixty.

This fact would reverberate throughout the Chinese defense and political leadership, particularly in COSTIND where General Hunbaio would be sorely pressed to respond, and to explain why this capability was not known beforehand.

The large numbers of re-entry vehicle warheads, even though less than 10% were actual, made the Chinese solution infinitely more difficult. Several critical minutes were lost in analysis of the attack patterns and the Chinese system almost became so involved with the analysis that no decision was made before impact.

Finally, with only a few seconds remaining before impact, when it became clear that virtually all of the anti-satellite launch sites were targeted by one group of threats, and that two other groups were exclusively targeting critical military manufacturing sites and critical economic infrastructure sites, the Chinese elected to focus on these four hundred threats.

Electronic commands were issued, and the Chinese began launching KS-3 anti-ballistic missiles.

The KS-3 missiles performed well given the time constraints, but they were wholly ineffective in preventing the almost complete destruction of China's anti-satellite launch facilities. Only thirty-five of the one hundred sixty actual warheads were destroyed. Another two hundred and fifty KS-3 missiles were wasted in intercepting harmless decoys.

The massive follow-on attack against the USSS Conception that was planned for the afternoon of June 26<sup>th</sup>, would not occur. All the Chinese could muster was a relatively weak attack that day, one that the remaining missiles on the Conception, coupled with the lasers and kinetic energy weapons on the two corvettes, was able to handle without further damage or loss of life.

**June 27, 23:11**

**National Security Agency**

**Washington, D.C.**

After the attack on the USSS Conception Space Station, Bill Hendrickson had spent over sixteen hours in continuous discussion and debate with his most talented analysts, and with those from the Defense Department as well. Ultimately it was determined what the extent of damage actually was on the Conception and what was needed to repair it. They also spent considerable time analyzing what it would take to ensure the continued ability for the Conception to defend herself in the face of the Chinese attack profiles, as well as how the Chinese might modify that profile to be more effective. With only eight Block V missiles remaining, the entire command chain knew that the Station would not be able to fend off another attack like the major one she had successfully defended against, much less any improvements the Chinese were certain to factor in.

As if to emphasize this, six of those eight remaining missiles were used to defend the Conception against the much smaller attack the Chinese mounted against the station on the afternoon of June 26<sup>th</sup>.

Several anxious minutes passed as the President and his senior military advisors watched and waited while that attack played itself out. Those moments were even more anxious than the attack of the 25<sup>th</sup> because everyone knew how vulnerable the station was, and how much depended on keeping Point Conception controlled and protected until the other American space mission returned.

Although the numbers of personnel involved were small, only forty-six on the Station and fifteen each on the outbound Space Frigates, the strategic import was immense.

“And the Chinese recognize it as much as we do.

“Thank God the Nevada's attack was successful,” the National Security Advisor said to himself as he wearily lifted his briefcase for a brief trip home.

“If they had pulled off another massive attack yesterday, we would have lost the Conception and everyone on board.

“Well, now we've done all we can to protect her and we have the process in place to keep it that way for as long as it takes.”

This had been accomplished with four more launches out of Nevada that very morning, the morning of June 27<sup>th</sup>...all four of the remaining corvettes in America's new spacecraft inventory, all of them designed to re-supply the Space Station and for self-defense. Once again that morning American space vehicles were observed climbing high into the heavens over eastern Nevada and western Utah.

All four had run the gauntlet of what was now only minor Chinese anti-satellite attacks and all four had rendezvoused with the Conception late in the day of June 27<sup>th</sup>. They carried the repair

material and the equipment necessary to allow the crew of the Conception to repair the major of damage she had suffered, or similar damage that she might suffer in the future.

In addition, they delivered another complete defense module loaded with another 64 Block V missiles, and replacement missiles to reload the original bank of 64 missiles, and then reload each bank one more time. These missiles were the last ones available to the United States until more could be manufactured, and since these were working prototypes, it would be at least two months before that manufacturing line was finished with the first production units.

"But if we want to keep Conception up in space, it's necessary," Hendrickson thought as he approached the guard station and prepared to exit the building.

Captain Wynn would now have an inventory of 256 Block V missiles for defending the station, along with four Corvettes arrayed around it. The other two Corvettes returned to earth for later missions. As a policy decision, based on the magnitude of the attacks the Chinese were willing to conduct, and once the production lines were producing them, the United States determined to not allow the stock of spare missiles in place at Conception Station fall below 128 missiles at any time.

Depending on the frequency and nature of the attacks, and depending on their effectiveness, that policy decision would require the United States to replenish the Space Station much more often than had been initially contemplated. It would mean America's production facilities, like the Skunk Works and other very sensitive and secret installations, were going to have to ramp up significantly to produce the missiles, the vessels and the material necessary.

"We're just going to have to, as they say out west, cowboy up," Hendrickson said to himself as the guard at the security station checked his identification.

"What's that you said, Mr. Hendrickson?" the guard asked.

"Oh, it's nothing, Jim," Hendrickson replied as the guard returned his ID and unlocked the gate.

"I was just talking to myself.

"We'll see you tomorrow," he said as he walked through the turnstile and reached for the door that led out into the secured parking facility.

"Okay. Good night, Mr. Hendrickson," the guard replied.

"Have a safe drive home."

**June 30, 19:00**

### **Secure CAS-GIR Conference line**

#### **Executive Conference Room, the Politburo, Beijing, China**

"Then we are agreed," said Jien Zenim to the other two leaders on the line with him.

"We will make the offer to the Americans and their allies July 2<sup>nd</sup> and give them four days to respond, offering a mutual cease fire across the board while they consider the offer."

Jien Zenim waited for the reply from Hasan Sayeed of the GIR and KP Narayannen of India. They had been on the line for three hours, discussing and going over Jien's dramatic initiative.

Basically it called for first an armistice, which would last no more than six months, and then a complete peace treaty which would lock in borders that would be recognized and respected by all nations signing the accord...including every major combatant currently involved in the conflict.

Jien was convinced, and now both Sayeed and Narayannen reflected that same conviction, that the three of them could easily bring all GIR and CAS countries into agreement with this. They were all also convinced that if the United States, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Israel, and Russia agreed, then they could bring all other nations who had been fighting for the allied cause into the fold as well.

And the terms, given the current position of military forces, were very conciliatory and generous from the CAS and GIR perspectives. It had taken Jien the better part of the three hours to convince particularly Sayeed that China and the GIR should give up some of its current hard-won gains.

The world map would reflect these changes and would depict the new world order that Jien felt was necessary if the CAS and the GIR were to maintain their predominance in Asia and the Mid East and parity with the United States and Europe.

In order to accomplish that, Jien was willing to lay all of the following on the table.

- Complete, orderly withdrawal of Chinese forces from Alaska, Panama, and South America.
- Complete withdrawal of Chinese, Indian and GIR forces from New Caledonia, Tarawa, the New Hebrides, the Loyalty, the Solomon and the Admiralty Islands in the Pacific.
- The sectioning of the Continent of Australia into four new nations, one Islamic, one Hindu, one Chinese and the entire southeastern corner to be returned to the exiled government of Australia.
- Recognition of Israeli borders that extend from the Golan Heights westward to the Mediterranean Sea on the north, from the Sea of Galilee down the Jordan River to the Dead Sea and from there to the Red Sea on the west, and including the entire Sinai Peninsula on the South, bordered by the Suez Canal.
- Withdrawal of all GIR forces from the Continent of Europe, granting the former European holdings of Turkey on the European continent to Greece.
- Withdrawal of all GIR and CAS forces from Russia, back to the Siberian border, recognizing the new nation of Siberia as an independent nation.

- The complete demilitarization of space.

- All other borders within occupied, defeated or allied nations would remain as they are, meaning that the GIR would encompass all of North Africa and all of the Middle East, including Turkey, except for the nation of Israel.

It would mean that Chinese and CAS influence would remain in effect, governing all of Korea, Japan, the Philippines, the new Chinese Province of Formosa, all of the China Sea, with the former nations of Thailand, Burma, Singapore, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka simply ceasing to exist, becoming a part of China, India or other CAS states.

The sea lanes from the Mid East, through the Indian Ocean and into the Pacific Region through the China Sea, would be surrounded and completely dominated by GIR and CAS nations.

All in all, these conditions represented the necessary strategic positioning for China, India, and the GIR to control commerce and regulate it in favor of the CAS and GIR alliance into the foreseeable future...and to establish them both as individually equal to either the United States or the European Union. Working together as an economic block, it would assure their ascendancy over both rivals.

But Sayeed and Narayannen had to agree for it to work, and Zenim believed they would.

It was Sayeed who spoke first.

“You are proposing much, President Jien,” the Grand Ayatollah and Imam said.

“The footholds we have in Europe are strong, as is the position on the Australian continent.

“Recognition of the Zionist state of Israel has always been a very sore point for us, particularly now that they control all of the Holy City of Jerusalem. I can hardly imagine the ruling Mullahs and other Ayatollahs of my faith agreeing to this last point in particular.”

Zenim had expected the most resistance from Sayeed. Sayeed was a man of sincere and absolutely committed faith. But he was also a man who considered himself God's mouthpiece to his people...in fact, if truth be known, God's mouthpiece to all of them...and one day that would surely become a monumental problem.

“Hasan, take this to Allah...he will see the wisdom in this and communicate it to you. Islam occupies all of its truly holy sites and for once, they exist under a united and faithful Islam with no western influence and no western corruption.

“Israel's and America's growth and influence will have been contained. The infidels will have been taught a lesson by a united Islam that they dare not challenge in the future.

“If you received direction from above and communicated it to your ruling counsels, I am sure they would not only understand, but would accept it.

“It is not for me to say...but I would ask that you consider it and then take it to the one you receive direction from.”

“Could it be true? Was Sayeed hearing an acknowledgement of Allah's existence and guidance from Zenim?” Sayeed asked himself when the Chinese President was finished talking.

As he considered the words, Hasan Sayeed was sure, that he had heard a bit of a patronizing tone in the Chinese leader's voice...and he did not like that at all. A discomfort bordering on disgust registered on Sayeed's face and Jien Zenim thought for a moment that he had pushed too hard.

But then Sayeed continued to reflect. Although his immediate, instinctual emotional reaction to the perceived patronizing tone was evident, Sayeed did not let it rule his thought process or his ultimate reaction. He was too disciplined by the years, by experience, and by his own faith for that. The GIR leader knew that Zenim had worked with him to make all of the things the Chinese leader had just spoken of a reality.

“Have we accomplished enough of the task for now?” he asked himself...and his God.

After a few more seconds, he came to his determination.

“I will think and pray over this. Perhaps it is enough. Perhaps we have made the gains that Allah would have us make at this time.”

In saying this, never for an instant would Hasan Sayeed concede his overriding and preeminent calling. And that was the unification of all of Islam...meaning, according to the Holy Koran...not just the unification of the current Islamic nations, which he had already accomplished, but the unification of the entire world under the holy banner of Islam.

**July 2, 21:15**

**Situation Room, The White House**

**Washington, D.C.**

By the morning of July 1<sup>st</sup>, the GIR and CAS leaders had come to their conclusion. Hasan Sayeed had agreed in principle with the proposal, but wanted to present it to his ruling clerics, mullahs, and other Ayatollahs before the plan was actually implemented.

The Indian president had gone along with the plan immediately. He saw it as an opportunity to extend an olive branch to the West and, more importantly, to reduce the wartime influence that Minister Patel was increasingly exerting.

With an armistice, followed by an eventual peace, KP Narayannen knew that his administration would be hailed as one of the strongest, most successful and most popular Indian administrations in the history of India as a nation.

So, with provision that the offer was preliminary, and would require fine tuning if the West accepted it in principle, the proposal for an armistice and the steps to a permanent peace were communicated to the United States.

President Bowers and a surprised Security Council were now reviewing that proposal. Bill Hendrickson, the National Security Advisor, was leading the discussion regarding the proposal and what the State Department analysts had been able to make of it.

“Mr. President, this first slide is an illustration of current conditions with respect to actual physical control throughout the Pacific and Asia.”

He pressed a button on the remote control, and the display on the screen brought up an image of the Pacific Ocean and Asia, from Alaska and the Hawaiian Islands, across all of Asia, the sub-continent and across the Middle East.

“As you can clearly see, from the western end of Alaska across the Pacific to New Zealand, and basically all points westward, the enemy is in control. We have made a very slight incursion at Magadan which is being fiercely contested.

“All of Asia and Australia are in enemy hands, as well as all major Island chains between them.

“Outside of Israel and areas to the north and east of Damascus and to the south towards Egypt, the entire Mid East is currently controlled by the enemy.

“Large areas of Europe, despite progress around Moscow, still lie in enemy hands, as does all of North Africa and all of East Africa.

“Large areas of Central and South America are also under enemy control as you can see.

“This next slide will show what the CAS and GIR have proposed as an armistice and ultimate peace plan for these same areas:

“In this slide, we see to what extent the enemy is willing to go to stop the fighting.

“They propose a complete withdrawal from Alaska and from many southwest Pacific Islands. They also propose a free Australian state on the southeast coast...the richest part of the continent.

“They are also proposing a withdrawal from all countries in Africa that are not GIR signatory states, withdrawing from all of Europe back to the Siberian and Turkish borders. Those are significant amounts of territory that would be returned without a fight.

“In exchange, as an overview, they are calling for our withdrawal from the Magadan area, for Greek annexation of the European portions of Turkey, and for our acceptance of all other acquisitions by the CAS and GIR armed forces.”

The new President, who had been in office only a month, but who had been involved in the war from the outset, wanted to hear from his closest advisors. Although the Vice President and Secretary of Defense offices had not been filled yet, those nominations were expected to be approved by Congress within the week. Both of those men were sitting in the room now with the President and already occupied very important roles within the government. So the President respectfully turned to Secretary of State, Fred Reissinger, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Jeremy Stone, for their input and comments.

“Fred, what are your thoughts on this proposal? I have to admit that I am quite surprised,” the President asked as he turned to Secretary Reissinger.

“I never expected this bunch to make anything that might be remotely viewed as a concession.”

The Secretary of State, who had been one of the closest advisors and friends of President Weisskopf, and who had come to trust and respect John Bowers since Norm Weisskopf had appointed him first as National Security Advisor, and then later nominated him as Vice president after the death of Alan Reeves, was also surprised by the proposal. He knew that there were several of their allies, particularly in Europe, who would be positively disposed towards such an armistice.

But he just couldn't countenance it himself.

“Mr. President, although some of the nations who make up our coalition will probably feel inclined to negotiate with our enemies over such a proposal, and although I am also personally quite surprised that such a proposal has been made...still, sir, I am abjectly and completely opposed to it.

“Despite their ceding lands that they now control back to us...what they are left with, diplomatically speaking, and I believe economically speaking as well, represents nothing short of an almost complete victory for them...and we would be giving that victory credibility and acceding to it by seriously considering it.”

As the Secretary of State paused for a moment to gather more thoughts, the President interjected.

“Fred, I am also personally dead set against any negotiation with these people.

“But, from an overall diplomatic standpoint, once they have had time to consider it...and it has gone to all of them, just like it has come to us...the question is, who will continue to stand with us against the CAS and GIR, and who will vacillate?”

“Today in this meeting, we must answer that question to our own satisfaction from a diplomatic and international standpoint.”

The Secretary of State replied. "Exactly, Mr. President...that is exactly the issue. I believe that our most staunch allies, and those from whom we receive the vast majority of our worldwide materiel and personnel support will solidly stand with us against this proposal.

"The United Kingdom, Israel, Germany, Brazil, Italy, certainly Russia and all of the eastern European countries...and all of the governments in exile...Australia, Japan, the Republic of China, Turkey, etc. They will all unite behind us and oppose anything short of an unconditional surrender on the part of the CAS and GIR.

"Having said that, we can probably expect France, Spain, the low countries of Europe, some of the Scandinavian countries and some of the African countries to want to give this type of proposal some traction...to negotiate some kind of an end to the war on the most favorable terms. Basically many of the countries who have opposed our foreign policies in the past and who have been relatively untouched by the fighting to date within their own borders."

The President considered this. What would happen to their coalition if France and Spain in particular, who were providing significant men and materiel to the fight in Europe, blanch and either made a separate peace or tried to reinvigorate the currently non-existent United Nations' influence? To date, the UN had been proven wholly ineffective in dealing with the global conflict because so many of its adherents were unwilling to either defy or face down the blatant actions of China and the GIR in particular, who themselves were signatory members.

This was because so many had showed themselves for what they were: actual allies in the effort to undermine and destroy true liberty in the world. They had used the wealth of the west in general, and of America in particular, as a means and end harmful and destructive to American ideals and the traditional American way of life...culminating in this very conflict.

John Bowers had come to the conclusion, just as President Weisskopf before him had done, that he was unalterably opposed to any re-invigoration of the UN in its former form to mediate or become officially involved in the resolution of the crisis. Its mostly empty corridors and meeting chambers could remain that way in perpetuity as far as he was concerned

"Do you believe, Fred, that any of the nations who would be inclined to negotiate about this, would seek a separate peace?"

Fred Reissinger had already considered this, trying to gauge the strength and intentions of the leaders of those nations.

"Mr. President, while I believe there will be pressure from within their political apparatus to do so-and that may manifest itself in some pretty large demonstrations... I don't think so.

"Doing so would place them in a quandary...a significant quandary. They would have Russia as a fully mobilized force on their eastern borders and they would have our coalition, also fully mobilized, on their western and southern borders.

"They might get a respite from our enemies for a season, but I believe that with the examples from Korea, Japan, Australia, Turkey, and Russia, that their leaders know in their hearts that any arrangement made with these nations, will ultimately turn to the destruction of those very countries trying to come to some accommodation with them.

"So, in answer to your question...no, I do not think that they will do any more than talk about negotiating as a means to try to gain some political leverage over us. When we respond with what I presume will be our categorical rejection of this proposal of turning over half the world to these despotic nations, they will come into line and hope to use their "show" to their own benefit later, if things don't go as we hope they will."

The President knew this would be the case...and he was sickened by it.

"Will they never learn?" he thought to himself.

With that distaste in mind and with the disgust apparent on his face, he turned to Jeremy Stone.

"Well, Jeremy, what are your thoughts?"

"Specifically, are we capable of winning this fight unconditionally...with or without some of the nations Secretary Reissinger just mentioned?"

The old general was a fighter...always had been. He was also a very effective leader as evidenced by the long line of successively responsible positions he had held within the military.

He had been reluctant to accept the President's request to be appointed Secretary of Defense. He viewed it as a political position-and he hated politics. But he appreciated and respected men like Norm Weisskopf and John Bowers who could operate in that arena and who could do so keeping their loyalty and oath to the Constitution intact...all the time, 24/7.

After sharing these thoughts very openly and frankly with John Bowers, he would never forget the words this relatively young man had spoken to him.

"General, that is precisely why I want you in this position. Like Admiral Crowler before you. You are a military man who exhibits exactly what you say you respect in Norm Weisskopf and myself. If I didn't think that, I would never have considered you."

That had iced the deal and General Stone had answered the call. He would be the Secretary of Defense, and like his good friend, the late Admiral Crowler, he would do a fine job of it for his country and according to his duty.

“Mr. President, I am convinced that if it were just the United Kingdom, Canada and Brazil who were allied with us, we would defeat these enemies. When you add to that a fully mobilized Russia and the grit, determination, and fighting spirit of Israel, the ultimate result is foregone. In those nations combined, we have the will, the technical capability, and the forces to get the job done.

“That job would be significantly more difficult if we had to rule out direct or unopposed access through the continents of Europe and Africa, but we would still accomplish the mission.

“Mr. President, we *must* get this job done. Now is the time to slay and dismember this dragon. If we allow the CAS and GIR to consolidate their gains and manufacturing capabilities in the vast areas that they have conquered-and would still hold after such a proposal-then we will face an even more difficult task in ten years, perhaps one where the ultimate outcome will be in serious doubt.

“Those are my thoughts, Mr. President.”

For another two hours, the President, offering only limited observations himself, continued to listen to everyone on the team. In the end, they were of one mind: the proposal that China had tendered on behalf of all of the CAS and GIR, could not be accepted-it would be flatly refused.

The President summed up everyone’s mindset in unambiguous terms.

“Thank you all for your input.

“I agree that we must flatly and utterly reject this proposal, in the strongest terms possible...unilaterally if necessary. We can never accept a peace that enslaves our conquered allies and friends and that leaves these monstrosities in place to plague the world at a later date. Band-Aid diplomacy never succeeds when the force with which you are reckoning is intent on eventually enslaving you. It merely postpones the gruesome inevitable. The cancer must be eradicated, not treated with temporary salves.

“Let me tell you what I think this proposal really means-it means we have these animals on the run. They are afraid. They are looking to retain as many of their gains as they possibly can now, before we ultimately take them back from them. I believe their own analysts are telling them that this is exactly what is going to occur, if this war is allowed to continue.

“They have been unable to dislodge us from either Magadan in Asia, or Point Conception in space, despite their best efforts-and they are not going to dislodge us from those places.

“Magadan will ultimately result in one of the largest defeats or surrenders in the history of the world. As you all know, all told we have estimated that there are four to six million enemy personnel stretched out between our forward positions to the north and east of Magadan and our forces in Alaska. Those CAS forces are cut off and their fate is sealed as long as we do not falter or waver.

“Point Conception and the deep space mission it has produced and is supporting, will be the most strategic issue in this entire conflict within another eighteen to twenty months. The enemy suspects this, but is wholly unaware of the details and the ultimate impact it will have...but again, success will only occur if we do not falter or waver.

“We are absolutely not going to falter or waver...not on this administration's watch.

“Aside from this consideration, elsewhere the enemy is losing personnel and materiel in tremendous proportions, wholly disproportionate to our own losses. I do not mean to discount our own losses because they have been costly...severe both abroad and here at home. But theirs are much more severe, even when you factor in the vast populations they have to pull from.

“Fred, make your contacts to our allies and explain our unambiguous position on this proposal. Between now and tomorrow night, I want scheduled discussions with Prime Minister Thatch, President Puten, President Maldonado, Prime Minister Schwarz, Prime Minister Suárez, Prime Minister Malroney, and Prime Minister Nitanyahu. Beyond that, I will make myself personally available to any of the other allied leaders who want to speak with me.

“Schedule it...and, oh, by the way, if the French President wants in on that schedule, please make sure to extend the offer and then arrange it.

“Beyond that, I want a direct response from all agreeable parties to be made jointly on July 4<sup>th</sup>, in the afternoon. As many of those leaders who can meet with me...let's say in Iceland if possible...should be prepared to stand with me as I read a joint statement. Others who cannot be there, I would like to see video conferenced in so all of the free world-and you can bet our enemies as well-will see our complete solidarity in the face of this callous and arrogant proposal.

“We want to demonstrate so they all can see this attempt by our enemies to end the conflict to their great advantage. They must all know, directly, unambiguously and forcefully that at this point nothing short of the unconditional surrender and the utter destruction as governing and ruling bodies of our enemies will suffice for us and our allies.”

**July 4, 13:30 Central Time**

**The Simmons' Lazy H Ranch**

**Outside of Montague, Texas**

Colonel Jess Simmons was finally home. He had been stateside for almost two weeks, and he was thankful to God in Heaven for it.

He had been convalescing, and it looked like he would continue to do so for many months to come, alternating his time between here at home and the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Dallas.

The doctors, miraculously, had been able to save his leg-but not its full functionality. He had little feeling in his knee, and even less in his ankle and his toes. Apparently the nerve damage had been severe enough that his ankle function would be severely constrained for life...very stiff. He would walk with a definite limp, not only from the stiff ankle, but also because that leg was now almost two inches shorter than the other. Too much bone and tissue had been damaged, and had been removed in the surgeries and the fight to save the leg.

At some point, the doctors indicated that the lost tissue and bone structure could be reconstructed with artificial material, but only by conducting several more serious operations and prolonged periods of therapy after each. Jess Simmons was determined to go through all of it. He wanted to be as physically whole as possible...for his wife...for the ranch...for his country.

Thinking of his family caused his heart to well up with so many profound and conflicting emotions. His love for Cindy, and his pride in how she had handled everything from his departure, to her involvement in the war effort and, most importantly, through the loss of their son. That love and pride washed over him...and it washed over the void he had after the loss of that only son, Billy.

He was thankful beyond measure that both he and his wife had been able to come to terms with that void...that their love for their son and their faith that they would see him again one day, had won out over their feelings of sorrow and grief and the desire to crawl into a cocoon made of that grief and be completely consumed by it.

They had shared with one another how the good Lord had touched each of their hearts and healed them over the loss of their son. How the destructive pain associated with that loss had been replaced with a natural sorrow at his absences, but also with the assurance of their eventual reunion.

Those stories, and their impact on the heart and soul, had united the Simmons and drawn them even closer as a couple in a natural and spiritual way, strengthening their love and bridging the long months of separation that the war had made necessary.

Those same stories would be shared over and over, in quiet moments, with one another, with their church family and with all of their good friends, for the rest of their lives.

Contemplating all of this as they finished their July 4<sup>th</sup> dinner, Jess Simmons looked up, down the table at those who were there with them, and felt inclined to say something.

"Cindy...honey," he began, catching her attention and that of the others at the table.

"Mom, Dad and Joe, Liz and Pat...I just want to thank each of you from the bottom of my heart.

"I want to thank you for being here...for taking time out of your own lives...and, Joe and Liz, for taking time during difficult personal trials of your own, to make time for us here.

"You are all an example and inspiration to me of Christ-like service and living. I could never thank you enough for that...or for your support during the long months...and years of my absence fighting in this war.

"It is especially meaningful on this date, when we celebrate the freedom we enjoy in this nation...the freedom whose preservation this war is all about.

"You are all true friends...and Cindy, you are my best friend...my eternal friend...thank you from the bottom of my heart...I am so proud of you...so thankful to you."

With that, Jess had to stop...he was on the verge of tears.

Jess's dad, Bud Simmons, who had always been a man of few words, replied simply.

"Son, I think I can speak for everyone here at this table when I say, thanks back to you. You are the epitome of everything you have just thanked us for...and we all know it."

Almost embarrassed by his own feelings and emotions, Bud Simons hastened to add.

"Now, someone turn on that TV over there and let's listen to the President."

### **July 4<sup>th</sup>, that same time**

#### **Outside the U.S. Embassy**

#### **Reykjavik, Iceland**

JT Sampson had flown with the press pool to Iceland. It had been a surprised and rushed trip brought on by a call from the administration's press secretary. That call had finally established for JT that his good association with the administration had survived the loss of President Weisskopf, whom JT had looked upon as a mentor, and from whose loss JT doubted he would ever fully recover.

Now, he and his associates, who were made up of two SierraLines employees who had traveled with him and four technicians who had been hired here in Iceland, were set up to make a live internet broadcast of the allied response to the CAS and GIR proposal for an armistice.

That broadcast was going to be picked up by several of the major cable networks and carried live on cable television as well. It was in fact the broadcast that the Simmons and Trevors would be watching back in Texas.

It was a momentous occasion. Rumors were flying wildly about a potential cessation of hostilities. JT had developed an instinct about public opinion, through his years of faithful news

reporting, and he believed that, although most Americans would welcome a cessation of hostilities, any such cessation now would leave a hollowness...as if an important job had been left unfinished.

JT was excited about being here to personally report on the response. Despite his success, despite his major news media executive status, JT still loved to personally do the on-scene reporting.

There were some who felt that this personal quirk of JT's was stymieing the full growth potential of SierraLines...but JT felt otherwise and was determined to run the leading Internet News organization as he saw fit...besides, the vast majority of shares were still in his and his wife's names.

So, until and unless someone acquired enough shares to challenge him, he would continue with his "quirk" and seek out the news stories that he felt best qualified to cover, while ensuring that his other reporters got an equal opportunity to do the same.

"This is JT Sampson with SierraLines here in Reykjavik, Iceland, reporting at the scene of the imminent announcement of the allied response to the unprecedented armistice proposal by the Coalition of Asian States and the Greater Islamic Republic.

"For security reasons, the location of the allied response to that proposal was not announced until the live feeds were set-up and the broadcast began just minutes ago.

"That proposal has been made public now for over twenty-four hours and has generated a tremendous amount of speculation. To this moment, it is unknown exactly how the allied leaders will respond to this proposal. The President of the United States is now approaching the podium.

"Ladies and Gentleman, the President of the United States."

John Bowers held in his hands the official response of the allied nations of the world to the CAS and GIR armistice proposal. The winds were causing the papers to rustle somewhat, but the clipboard to which they were attached held them down firmly.

A line of distinguished leaders from various nations flanked the President to either side, and several smaller video windows with other leaders appeared on the screen as he began to speak.

"Today I will respond on behalf of the free nations of the world directly to the armistice proposal by the Coalition of Asian States and the Greater Islamic Republic. The leaders of many of those responding nations have joined me here in Reykjavik, or by video conference from their capitals.

"You can see them each either standing here next to me on my right and left, or in the smaller video windows which should have appeared on your screens wherever you are watching.

"As such, I not only speak for the citizens of the United States of America, whom I personally represent, but I speak for all citizens of the free world who are embroiled in this conflict and whose leaders have agreed to this response.

"To be specific, those sovereign and free nations who have joined with us in this response include all of the following:

United States	Canada	Brazil	Italy	Peru
The UK	Israel	Germany	Denmark	Poland
Russia	Romania	Hungary	Austria	Norway
Czech Republic	Ecuador	Columbia	Honduras	Latvia
Netherlands	Ukraine	Lithuania	Liberia	Nigeria
South Africa	Iceland	Ivory Coast	Costa Rica	

"In addition, the following official governments in exile, whom we have been able to contact and arrange to have present here, and whose nations have been brutally conquered and occupied, have also joined us in this response:

Republic of China	Turkey	Oman	Malaysia
South Korea	Mongolia	Singapore	Thailand
Australia	Nepal	Kuwait	

"There are others, either conquered or coerced into making accommodations with their brutal antagonists, whom I am sure would also join with us if we could contact them.

"As it is, all of these free nations have joined us in our unequivocal, unflinching, and unwavering response to the Coalition of Asian States and the Greater Islamic Republic.

"...and this is our official response:

"To you, Jien Zenim, Hasan Sayeed and KP Narayannen, and to all of those who have allied themselves with you to make this vain, inglorious and infamous proposal, we say the following...

"NUTS!

"If you have any doubt as to our meaning, read up on your history of World War II, and pay special attention to the Battle of the Bulge.

"The answer is no!

"The only acceptable end to this conflict will occur upon your complete and unconditional surrender to allied forces.

"Until that time, there will be no negotiations, there will be no armistice, there will be no cessation of hostilities and there will be no accommodation with your murderous regimes.

"I trust we have made ourselves clear.



"In closing, to our occupied allies, to our personnel and citizens trapped behind enemy lines...and to the impoverished and trodden down people of these horrible regimes, we say the following, quoting the man, Norman Weisskopf, who will certainly go down in history as one of the greatest leaders in American history and one of the greatest friends to peace-loving and freedom-loving peoples in the history of the free world..."

*"Fight on.*

*"Do not despair. As surely as the sun rises in the east, we are coming. The time will arrive when like at Normandy on June 6th, 1944, you will look out and see the sea and the sky filled with the innumerable host of your comrades come to liberate the captive and put down the tyrant."*

"Let me add a few other words to that which I believe are relevant to our current situation. They are the words of the great American patriot, Patrick Henry,

*"We shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of Nations, who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, Sir, is not to the strong alone. It is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, we have no choice. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery!"*

"All American citizens and our allies should remember these sentiments and feelings as we move forward in this struggle. We should lean on and rely on one another...and we should lean on and rely on our faith in a just and merciful God.

"A wise individual once shared with me the following..."

*"Work like everything depends on you, but pray and live like everything depends on God, because in the end, it does.*

"Thank you, and may that just God bless our cause and our efforts. May He bless each of our free nations. And may we continue to look to Him for guidance, strength and wisdom in the days and weeks and months that lie ahead.

"Good day."

## **July 6th, 10:25 Eastern Time**

### **Meet the Nation**

#### **WNN Broadcast Studios, New York, New York**

The host of the weekly talk show was carefully guiding the interview with Bill Hendrickson, the National Security Advisor, towards its conclusion.

"Mr. Hendrickson, the coalition that the President enumerated in his Reykjavik speech is, as you have stated, very impressive. It is a continued reminder of the former President's capabilities in foreign relations, and a testament to the widespread support of the effort against the CAS and GIR.

"In spite of this, there were some very notable nations that were not listed by the President as rejecting the proposal from Coalition of Asian states and the greater Islamic Republic.

"France, Sweden, Mexico, Yugoslavia, Egypt, Chile, Spain...none of those names were included on the list of nations that responded so negatively to this peace proposition.

"How does the administration explain this?"

"I'll tell you, there is talk of a developing rift in the allied coalition against the CAS and GIR.

"For example, what impact would there be if France and Spain ceased their efforts in the fight...if Mexico became neutral or hostile?"

Bill Hendrickson always found it difficult to believe that people like this host still existed, even in the midst of this fight for the nation's survival-for this very host's survival-a fact that apparently had not yet occurred to him.

"Some people just are incapable of getting it," Hendrickson thought, "Even if they have been hit directly between the eyes by it, as everyone in this nation most certainly has been.

"There are always quibblers. There are always apologists. There are always those who are willing to fault America, no matter her noble aims, or the ignoble aims of her enemies," he reflected.

Anyone who made their living trying to tear down the efforts of those who defended the freedom of the country...who did all in their power to create a divisive stir during actual combat...had always been an enigma to Bill Hendrickson, he did not have an ounce of respect for them.

Yet, he was fiercely dedicated to this man's freedom to do so. He knew that this show reached millions of households. Because of that, he was anxious to represent the truth to those millions.

"Let me answer your question in a couple of ways.

"First, the proposal by the CAS and GIR was not a peace proposal in the least. It was a barely veiled attempt on their part to consolidate the conquered territory that they have already amassed, and to avoid our growing capability to defeat them on the field of battle."

The host interrupted, "Well, Mr. Hendrickson, it sure looked to me like they were willing to give up a lot of already conquered territory. I mean, look at the map. Vast stretches of the Pacific, their continued stubborn hold on western Alaska, the richest part of Australia, all of their advances in Europe, and all of Russia back to the Siberian frontier.

"I would not call that an effort to consolidate what they've gained, I'd call it a serious proposal."

The National Security Advisor let the host talk. He was not about to contribute to an atmosphere in which neither side could get its views across to the listening audience.

“Well, that is perhaps what they want us to think, but when you look at what they were willing give up, and compare that to what they were going to be keeping, the picture becomes very clear.

“From a strategic standpoint, from an economic standpoint, and from a military standpoint, they would have placed themselves in a very strong, almost unassailable position for decades to come.

“They were also asking us to accede to the conquest, occupation and assimilation of hundreds of millions of free people, who are our friends and allies.

“If we were willing to allow that, we would be tacitly admitting defeat and would live with that legacy hanging over us from now on. We could not, ethically, morally, or ideologically accede to such conditions and still call ourselves Americans.

“Now, here's the second way in which I shall respond to your question.

“It is clear to all of us who are analyzing these things that the CAS and GIR understand that the tide of battle turned against them late last fall and early this year. Our own production capabilities have been regenerated, despite their military and terrorist efforts to the contrary.

“Our dependencies on energy, agriculture and many other critical areas have been completely eliminated and we are once again a totally self-sufficient nation. Our enemies know this...those few nations who did not join us in the official response know this as well.

“This very proposal by the CAS and GIR, as the President has stated, is the clearest indication of their own knowledge of this. Our enemies are on the run, and we intend to keep them on the run until they wave the white flag...meaning, until they surrender unconditionally.”

With only a few seconds of broadcast time left, the host took the opportunity to end the interview and his weekly show.

“Thank you, Mr. Hendrickson.

“Ladies and gentlemen, you have been listening to Bill Hendrickson, the National Security Advisor to the President of the United States, discussing this week's allied rejection of the armistice proposal by the Coalition of Asian States and the Greater Islamic Republic.

“It was a momentous decision in response to a proposal many have been calling the last serious chance for peace for several more years.

“Please join us next week, here at the same time, when our guest will be...”

**July 6<sup>th</sup>, 20:52**

**Presidential Offices**

**Beijing, China**

Jien Zenim finished reading the entire transcript of the response the allied nations had officially sent back to him and the other leaders of the CAS and GIR. It was a very short document.

Oh, he had seen the video of the affair...of the new American President and his lackeys all lined up to refuse the offer Zenim and his compatriots had made. But he always waited to read the actual print of any diplomatic negotiations before he reached his final conclusions.

You never knew what might show up in the actual verbiage of the official printed documents.

In this case, his patience was in vain. The official document was in fact an exact transcript of what the President had said.

...and in this case, Zenim's final reaction was exactly the same as his initial one when he had seen John Bowers read it...

He cursed horribly...and long.

## Chapter 35

*“Where love is, God is.” – Leo Tolstoy*

**August 23, 19:07 local time**

**West of Kavacha**

**On the Kamchatka Peninsula**

Corporal Alan Campbell crouched lower in the ditch that he had taken shelter in with most of the rest of his platoon, hugging the ground as machine gun fire stitched back and forth along the top of the ditch...fire that was methodically seeking out the exposed portion of any Marine's body revealing itself above the crest of that small rise less than a foot above Alan's head.

The fighting was fierce and had been hotly contested from the moment of their landing six days ago near the town of Kavacha on the northern Kamchatka Peninsula. In those six days, Alan's Marine battalion, along with the rest of the allied landing force, had been able to advance only twelve miles to the west and had only penetrated eight miles inland.

While it was true that the beachhead itself was now relatively secure, that certainly had not been the case for the first three days when enemy fire had destroyed two of the large transports and had shot down several American aircraft.

Seeking to open up another front against the Chinese forces retreating from Alaska and ensure their defeat and capture en masse, and exploiting the advance of allied forces out of Magadan, the allies had landed over one hundred thousand troops here in the northern half of the Kamchatka Peninsula. The invasion force had been formed by combining several American, Canadian, and Central American commands. New North American recruits, battle hardened forces from Central America, where Panama City had fallen and the Canal Zone was once more in American hands, and combat experienced forces in Africa where the offensive into central Africa had gone better than expected, all made up the new allied Asian invasion force.

Alan's entire division had been transferred from Chad after a large battle in which they, along with two supporting crack Brazilian division, had routed five GIR divisions north east of Lake Chad.

After that victory, and as American, Brazilian, African and other allied forces continued deeper into Chad to threaten GIR forces in Libya and Sudan, Alan had been transported with the other Marines in his division back to Lagos, the Nigerian capital. There he and his comrades had quickly been loaded aboard several T-90A transports and taken away from the continent of Africa.

Using more new T-90A transports, all of the necessary forces had quickly been staged in the Aleutian Islands and then transported across the Bering Sea to the Kamchatka Peninsula. It was hoped that in so doing, and then in building that initial force to over one half million men, several things would be accomplished.

- 1) Any retreat to the south down the peninsula by the large enemy forces under relentless Allied assault in Alaska could be prevented;
- 2) The large enemy naval base at Petropavlovsk could be cut off and isolated;
- 3) This allied force would proceed to the north and combine with the even larger allied force now moving well to the north of Magadan, and present an invincible anvil upon which the Chinese Alaska invasion force would be hammered and destroyed.

“But it sure isn't workin' out that way yet,” thought Alan as enemy missiles screamed overhead.

Dense cloud cover had blanketed the area for two weeks prior to the invasion and American intelligence had failed to penetrate it to the south of Kavacha. Had intelligence been able to pierce those clouds, they would have witnessed the staging of large Chinese reserves to reinforce beleaguered Chinese troops in Alaska.

Without that knowledge, the American landing had come on shore just as three divisions of Chinese troops were passing through the area on their way north to reinforce their comrades fighting in Alaska. The collision of the American landing effort and these Chinese reserve forces was creating a nightmare for American and allied planners as the invasion force was bogged down by unexpectedly heavy, and mission threatening resistance.

Now, the long drainage ditch in which Alan found himself had filled up with hundreds and hundreds of Marines from several companies. As one of those companies provided suppressing fire from a multi-lane bridge to their east, and as American AZ-1H Viper attack helicopters and F-35C Joint Strike Fighters circled above to give support, Alan and the rest of the men in the ditch were ordered to rise up and charge the enemy positions that had them penned down.

The word was passed down that Alan's particular company had been ordered to lead the way.

At the given moment, Alan's company commander shouted, “All right men, here we go!”

“Up and over the top! Follow me!” he urged as he personally rose up to lead the attack...

...and was immediately thrown into the bottom of the ditch by the impact of several bullets that tore a bloody line across the upper half of his body.

Instantaneously energized by the graphic death of their commanding officer, the Marines spilled out of their makeshift bunker with an angry, deafening roar and charged across the hundred yards of open ground towards the grouping of buildings nestled against the foothills to their north. Other companies to their left and right joined in the assault as machine gun fire raked them, and mortar fire rained down upon them.

Alan was shocked at his calm.

The last six days represented the first really fierce combat he had been involved in. It was nothing like the rout they had inflicted on the GIR forces in Chad.

Men were falling dead and wounded all around him—right next to him—as he charged into the face of determined enemy resistance. He knew he should be frightened, but his long months of training and his determination to eliminate this pocket of enemy who were killing and maiming his friends, coupled with adrenaline pumping into his veins, took full control of his actions. Just as they were supposed to do.

Explosions riddled the building complex as the Viper helicopters ripped off volley after volley from their rocket pods. Larger bombs and missiles from the attack aircraft obscured the view, collapsing buildings and creating tremendous amounts of smoke and dust as the Marines approached.

The pall of smoke created by the damage of the air assault acted as a smoke screen for the Marines, severely inhibiting the enemy's ability to direct fire on their advance. Fewer and fewer Marines were falling as the wave of attackers ran into the smoke.

At this point, American air support moved their attacks further to the west of the buildings, targeting groups of enemy soldiers either firing in support of their forces in the buildings, or trying to organize counter attacks to the marines now approaching the complex of buildings itself.

The XO in Alan's company noticed a building thirty yards to the west of where Alan's platoon had just taken cover behind a cinderblock wall.

"Campbell!" he shouted, getting Alan's attention and that of several of the Marines with him.

"You are in charge of the 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon now. Both Lieutenant Brandt and Sergeant Fern are down. Take the platoon and clear out that building there to your west. Contact me when you have done so.

"Do it now!"

**August 23, 22:45 local time**

**West of Kavacha**

**On the Kamchatka Peninsula**

Darkness had descended on the Kamchatka Peninsula and the sounds of heavy fighting had moved well to the west and north as American forces took advantage of the breach they had made in enemy defenses late that afternoon. As those forces did so, Alan and his comrades were getting a much needed rest, taking shelter in the very buildings from which they had finally driven the Chinese.

There had been a short staff meeting where plans for the evening and the next day were sketched out and initial orders had been issued. Another meeting, slated for 03:30, would provide more detail. In the meantime, they had been ordered to secure their perimeter for the night and get some rest.

It looked as though, for the near term, Alan would be the de facto platoon leader. The lieutenant had died before he could be evacuated back to the landing zone and the sergeant, who had been severely wounded in the right hip and the groin, would be heading home. Until replacements could be brought up, Alan was now in charge of fourteen other Marines.

After issuing the necessary orders and performing a communications check with headquarters, Alan studied maps of the surrounding terrain and their initial objectives and orders. Then, before retiring for some rest, he pulled out the letter he had received from his brother, Leon, to read it once again. He got such comfort and strength reading about the experiences of his older brother, despite the many edits that appeared from the military censors who went through the mail.

Alan could understand that—the removal of any tidbit of information that might help the enemy was something he would gladly put up with. After seeing so many of his own killed—no, butchered would be a better term—Alan appreciated and respected the absolute need for operational security.

So, though the communications took many weeks—even months—to pass between them, and although there were sometimes significant portions of the wording blotted out...Alan was always listening for mail call to see if he had received anything from either Leon or his mother.

"I wonder what my bro will think of me being put in this position?" he thought.

"Whatever it is...it'll include some good advice, and I sure look forward to it."

The XO and one of the senior sergeants had already talked to him and he had welcomed and appreciated their input. He was surprised to learn that as a result of other injuries and death, all of the staff sergeants were already assigned to other platoons and could not be spared for his. Both the XO and Sergeant Myerwood had explained to him that his prior leadership and composure under fire had convinced them that he was the best Corporal in the company and therefore the one to fill the void.

While he was grateful for their confidence in him—and he eagerly took and applied their advice and counsel—there would be nothing like getting some personal advice from his older brother. Leon had always been a hero to Alan, long before the action on the Island of Diego Garcia that had led to

Leon's Medal of Honor. Throughout their lives Leon had provided leadership, kindness and friendship that Alan recognized was rare for older brothers in the best of circumstances...much less in the gang-infested projects where they had been raised by a God-fearing mother.

Tonight, before he finally nodded off to sleep, he wanted to review his brother's letter one more time before writing him and letting him know about his current circumstances and then asking what Leon thought...what his advice would be.

Alan had thought that his own combat experiences were fierce and harried. But Leon's letter had shown him know that it could be much worse.

Alan's mind kept going back to two parts of two separate letters from Leon, written a week apart, to which he now turned and began reviewing again.

"We've been at sea for ~~CENSORED~~ days. By the time you get this...I am sure we will be ashore, or will have died or been defeated trying.

"Apparently, and they either don't know and can't go into it...or they do know and for security reasons will not go into it...but apparently the battle at sea over here has been tougher than expected, not that anyone expected a cakewalk. The enemy still has too many of those Killer Whale weapons and no one is taking those suckers for granted...particularly when you on a transport ship.

"Regardless of how fast these new ~~CENSORED~~ ship designs are...regardless of how well protected by our own defenses on board and by the escorts traveling with us...I can tell you I will not be satisfied or happy until I have dry ground back under my feet.

"Just the same, I wish I could tell you, particularly after some of my experiences earlier in the war...how great it was to see so many American and allied ships off of ~~CENSORED~~, ~~CENSORED~~ and ~~CENSORED~~ of ships Alan...it was unbelievable. The living embodiment of President Weisskopf's famous speech after the March 15th attacks.

"And so there we went...off to kick the Chicoms and the radical ragheads out of ~~CENSORED~~, and win it back for freedom A big bunch of ships and escorts went with us towards our goal...another big bunch of ships and escorts towards other objectives. Several groups of carriers and their escorts out in front of us to sweep the seas clean of the Chinese and Indian navies.

"And seeing all of those new ships...all of those new carriers, large and small alike and their escorts...there was not one of us who doubted that the time for complete payback on the high seas had arrived. Got lots of ships and sailors to make up for...to make things right for.

"Well, we were supposed to make the transit in ~~CENSORED~~ days...but now it's been much longer. By the time you get this things will have resolved themselves.

"Isn't that the way life is?"

"Anyhow, they aren't resolved as I write this and each of us is anxious to get a crack at ~~CENSORED~~ and taking it back. We are worried sick over our comrades at sea...and worried about our own safety out here...images of those Chinese super torpedoes haunting our every mile forward.

"But forward we MUST go, little brother (snicker, snicker, snicker...and only snickering because I haven't had a 'little' brother for a long time...now you're a younger brother). There is no going back and as you know, there is no giving in or surrendering to these devils. They are committed to their cause—destroying us. I know you have seen enough by now to understand that. Never forget it.

"I'm glad President Bowers rejected the enemy's proposal. He saw right through them. Nice to see him spit in their eye. He said exactly what any of us out here fighting these animals already know. Nothing short of unconditional surrender is acceptable after what they have done.

"Oh well, I am dragging now...getting too philosophical. I'll write more when I can."

Reading those words the first time had given Alan cause for worry over his brother's safety. Along with everyone else, he knew that a man's life in a combat zone was always in peril...especially considering his own experiences as a Marine. That firsthand knowledge only heightened the concern, particularly for one's own kinfolk.

Reading the letter again, after his latest combat experiences and battlefield appointment to platoon leader carried additional poignancy for Alan. He longed to be able to sit with his brother...to speak of the pain, the butchery of warfare that he had witnessed and knew must continue until this enemy had been vanquished. He wanted to talk about the loss of good friends and how you cope with it, both in the short term and over the long haul.

Sergeant Meyrwood had been almost like an older brother to him...perhaps even a father figure. Now he was severely wounded and could die. The lieutenant was dead...a man Alan had looked up to and trusted with his own life. A man who had done so much for Alan ever since he had been assigned to this outfit after training. Now he was gone.

Alan knew that Leon had experienced all of this...which made the next part of Leon's letter even more apropos to Alan's current feelings.

"Well, Alan, it's ~~CENSORED~~ days later now.

"Sorry I didn't get this mailed sooner...but soon after I had finished the last portion of this letter...our task force moved into the waters off of ~~CENSORED~~ and we conducted a massive landing near there.

"How can I tell you what I am feeling?"

"I am here on ~~CENSORED~~ soil now and we are in the fight for our lives. I mean literally.

"It's more intense than anything that I have experienced to date...and that's saying a lot.

"Before our ~~CENSORED~~ ships went in, a fleet of ~~CENSORED~~ of the new large ~~CENSORED~~ transports went in ~~CENSORED~~ miles to our ~~CENSORED~~. The diversion worked...we were able to land...but just barely. I'll get to that in a moment.

"All of those aircraft, each with almost ~~CENSORED~~ personnel on board were lost. Destroyed...gone. None of them made it to shore. All of those folks are gone. It was a total disaster!

"My God...it's hard to take it in even now, six days later. Hard to comprehend.

"Apparently the Chinese believed our major plans included massive invasion using ~~CENSORED~~. They had shore launched versions of their Killer Whales positioned at each major landing area...in numbers. Supposedly a special configuration for ~~CENSORED~~. It was a slaughter...and I can't talk about it any more. I knew and trained on NZ with a lot of those people.

"Here, we came in conventionally and a lot of those weapons went ~~CENSORED~~ trying to ~~CENSORED~~. I saw ~~CENSORED~~ of them rise ~~CENSORED~~ less than a ~~CENSORED~~ from us, but our point defenses, both the ~~CENSORED~~ and the ~~CENSORED~~ took them down.

"~~CENSORED~~ - don't have that luxury.

"We still lost, ~~CENSORED~~, Alan. I saw them get hit by these monsters and go down...and they went down so fast! My God, bro...I can't describe it to you.

"Our ability to land here a little further to the ~~CENSORED~~ was purchased at great cost...in oceans of our brothers' and sisters' blood.

"But we went on in...into the fight of our lives. For ~~CENSORED~~ days we were penned down on the shore. I came in right behind the ~~CENSORED~~ wave, but then we couldn't land any of the additional personnel behind us because ~~CENSORED~~ couldn't get off the beaches.

"We couldn't achieve air superiority so the fighters had to duke it out right over us...the battle swaying first one way...and then another. When the enemy was in control, we were being bombed and strafed on the beach.

"All the while missiles were flying both ways. Some over our heads towards the ships at sea. Some right at us. Others, of our own, flying right back at the enemy.

"If you have ever read about D-Day and the experiences on Omaha Beach...that is how it must have been...except here it was even bigger and more prolonged. We weren't off the beach late in the day...or the next...or the next.

"So many of the people I have come to know and trust are gone...but we continue.

"I know momma was praying for me Alan...I can't explain it, but I could feel it. God kept me and the others alive on that beach until we finally fought and clawed our way off of it.

"That was ~~CENSORED~~ days ago and now we are fighting our way through ~~CENSORED~~...most of which are still destroyed and ruined from the initial fighting when the Chinese came through here pushing our forces out.

"I can imagine how Billy Simmons must have felt. There are so many refugees...except that now, after almost a year and a half of Chinese rule in this part of ~~CENSORED~~...and well over two years in other parts...well, the original ~~CENSORED~~ citizens are shockingly small in number, and in a pathetic state.

"Now, in the act of liberating a place where these monsters have been in power, what we already knew to be true, we now see - a horror show that would make Steven King turn away in fear.

"We are not just fighting the CAS and GIR soldiers here...we are also fighting the hundreds and hundreds of thousands of their civilians they have relocated to take these lands as their own.

"They are being distributed weapons and fighting as militias against us. Fodder to keep us penned down as their regular forces try to maneuver...and they don't mind at all using whatever original ~~CENSORED~~ citizens who are unlucky enough to be in their path as shields and pawns.

"I can understand why the ~~CENSORED~~ resistance groups we hear about in the mountains have been branded by the Chinese as such terrorists. There is no mercy or pity being shown on either side. It has been a literal battle for survival and until we landed, the original citizens here were losing it.

"Again my younger bro...I cannot begin to describe the scene of horrible images I am witness to. All you can do is push it down, grit your teeth and keep on fighting.

"There aren't many prisoners being taken on either side. Some of the Indians will give up...but the Chinese and the Muslims that have been moved in here are fighting to the death...like the stories you used to hear from World War II. Somehow, human life, to these people, is much more expendable, seems much less valuable, than it is to us. And, when you are fighting an enemy like that, they can sure use that kind of philosophy and culture to their advantage.

"Well, I'll write a little more later about word I have received from mom at home and to ask how things are with you. I hope to get this finally mailed off to you tomorrow.

"Right now, our short reprieve back at what you might call an R&R area is over and it's back to the front and the ~~CENSORED~~ mountain range."

Alan felt the same thrill he had experienced during the first reading of this part of the letter when he discovered that his brother had survived the landings on Australia.

All of them already knew about the disaster near New Castle on the Australian coast and until he had received and read through this letter...he had not known whether Leon had been one of those thousands who had died there.

But Leon's words about their mother's prayers rang true with Alan...because he had felt it too. At the time, he had not recognized it...but now, after reading and thinking on Leon's words again, he knew that his mother's faith had been with him too here in Asia on the Kamchatka Peninsula.

It also helped to read about Leon's determination in the face of much more appalling conditions, to continue to give his all...being further bolstered and strengthened in his resolve by the very hardship and difficulty he was experiencing.

If Leon could do it in Australia...Alan knew he could do it here on the Kamchatka Peninsula.  
...and he would.

**September 2, 01:17 local time**

**Task Force Commander's Conference Room**

**U.S.S. Shanksville, 650 Nautical Miles East of Brisbane**

Admiral Ben Ryan was relieved after hearing the latest intelligence assessment of the enemy location and disposition. After the last engagement the remnant of the large PLAN fleet had withdrawn north, deep into the Coral Sea to lick their wounds and to resupply themselves.

As the Commander in Chief of U.S. naval forces in the Pacific, or CINCPAC, Ryan would be spending the next four days reviewing ongoing plans for CTF 77, the large combined task force whose assignment was the protection of the allied forces that were conducting the continuing invasion of Australia. Admiral Styles, the commander of CTF 77 was working with Admiral Ryan, his commander, to further refine those plans based on the current situation.

And out here on the tip of the sword, as is often the case in warfare, those plans had changed somewhat as a result of the large engagement with the Chinese over the last forty-eight hours.

"And after that last missile and Killer Whale attack, saying that this is the tip of the sword as far as naval action is concerned is almost an understatement," the Admiral thought.

Now, here in the task force commander's conference room, surrounded by his staff and the other battle group commanders, along with two other members of Admiral Ryan's staff, Admiral Styles continued the discussion, picking up after the intelligence report.

"We can't allow the Chinese to regroup and resupply up there in the Coral Sea if we can help it.

"They hurt us yesterday...as each of you know...but we hurt them more and they have withdrawn. We need to follow up on this victory and do everything in our power to harass them and force them into a position where we can destroy them. This is no time to rest on our laurels.

"And we still have more than enough assets to accomplish that mission and ensure that the areas around the invasion anchorages remain secure."

The admiral said this because Combined Task Force (CTF) 77 consisted of several individual carrier strike groups and surface action groups. All of them had been in almost continuous fierce engagements with the Chinese for the last three weeks.

It had taken every bit of power that the CTF possessed to force the issue and push the Chinese north out of the waters of the Tasman Sea surrounding Sydney and southern Australia. Yesterday they had succeeded in pushing them completely into the Coral Sea, far to the north and east of Brisbane, against which the American carriers could now conduct air attacks.

At the start of the Australian invasion operations, CTF 77 had included six augmented American CSGs, a British Task force consisting of both of the United Kingdom's new full size carriers and a Canadian task force centered around their new White Horse sea control carrier. Each of the American carrier battle groups included a nuclear powered super carrier, one American sea control carrier, and all of the escorts necessary to defend them. Those escorts included one Ticonderoga class Aegis cruiser, three Arleigh Burke class Aegis destroyers, one of the new class DDX destroyer and two nuclear attack submarines...a mixture of advanced LA class boats and Virginia class boats.

To most effectively organize all of this...and to defend it...Admiral Styles had organized three American carrier task forces that included two of the augmented CBGs each, and a joint UK/Canadian task force which included all four of their carriers. The resulting powerful American forces included four carriers, two Aegis cruisers, six Aegis destroyers, and four other destroyers in each task force. All in all, the allies had sixteen carriers in the New Zealand area when the Australian offensive began.

Finally, the combined task force also included three SAGs centered around Aegis destroyers that had DDX destroyers and Halsey frigates accompanying them.

Altogether CBT 77 had represented the most formidable and monumental allied naval force at sea. Its defenses included a massive array of the most advanced missile, radar, sonar, CIWS, SUB CIWS and high performance aircraft technology on the planet.

Yet all of that had barely been enough to counter the massive air and naval forces the Chinese and other CAS and GIR nations were throwing against them.

In the last three weeks the Chinese had sunk one American super carrier, three U.S. sea control carriers, one of the full-deck British carriers, severely damaged another American super carrier, and

sunk several escort vessels from various allied nations. Two of the sea control carriers that had been sunk had gone down in the last forty-eight hours. Of the sixteen carriers CBT 77 had started the Australian operation with, five had been lost, one was damaged, and ten were still in the fight.

But the Chinese had fared much worse. They had thrown twelve of their Beijing class carriers and three of their full-deck Mao class carriers into the same fray...and had now withdrawn into the Coral Sea with only five Beijing class carriers left. A loss of ten carriers over that three week period.

And that did not begin to account for all of their losses.

Fifteen Chinese major surface combatant ships had also been sunk. Literally hundreds of land and carrier based aircraft had been shot down as they attempted to penetrate the American defense.

"No," Admiral Ryan thought as Admiral Styles continued, "we may be hurting...but they have been decimated.

"Jerry is right. If we can lure them into another major engagement...we just may break the back of their naval power here off of Australia."

And Admiral Styles was now formulating a plan to harass and push the Chinese into just such an engagement. Turning to CINCPAC, he started to lay it out.

"Admiral Ryan, by using the U.S.S. Connecticut and augmenting her with five of our attack submarines from CTF 77, that submarine force can make a rapid transit up to the south of New Guinea. Once there, I believe we can 'herd' the Chinese into a trap somewhere in the Coral Sea to the south of the Solomon Islands.

"Here's how I propose we do it," he said as he turned his attention to the entire group.

"...and I want a full discussion of the possible enemy response before we finalize the general plan and then send you off to develop the details to successfully pull this off."

Referring to a large display of the Australian Theater of Operations, the Commander of CTF 77 continued his discussion by pointing to that display.

"Now, we'll keep the Kitty Hawk and its entire group right here, to the northeast of Newcastle to continue covering the principle invasion anchorage, but close enough to ferry additional aircraft to this operation if necessary.

"The combined UK and Canadian task force will continue to protect the southern approaches to Sydney in the Tasman Sea off of Cape Howe.

"That's a total of four carriers covering our invasion forces."

Turning to the United Kingdom and Canadian task force commanders, Admiral Styles couldn't help but recognize and congratulate them on their part in the offensive to date...and to give them some commander's instructions regarding the upcoming operation.

"Admiral Weatherly, you and Admiral Tomlinson have done an outstanding job down there and we commend you for it. You will be tasked with covering our backs in this operation.

"Don't be surprised if the enemy tries to probe your position in strength to see if there is something they can exploit while we are up north. We are confident that the two of you will show them the error of their ways should they try.

"Just make sure you don't get the QE sucked into any premature major action down near Melbourne. We are not in a tactical position to secure Bass Strait and Tasmania at this time."

Addressing the rest of the group as a whole, the Admiral then continued. "Okay, as you can see, all of that will leave us with the Shanksville, the George Bush, and the Ronald Reagan and their battle groups, which include the Hampton Roads, the Essex, and the Makin Island, to act as the anvil against which our fast attack subs will drive the Chinese. I expect we can set that up here, in this area well to the south and west of Rennell Island.

"If we do this right, we can create a turkey shoot in the air against the Chinese...and then deal with their surface combatants at our leisure, creating a pincer between our subs to the west, and our large combined task force here to the east.

"That's a 10,000 foot view of the plan...now let's get down to some particulars."

## **THE BATTLE OF THE CORAL SEA: September 4-5**

**September 4, 04:07 local time**

**Combat Information Center**

**PLAN Carrier Zenim, 300 km NE of the Santa Cruz Islands**

Admiral Xi'n analyzed the developing situation reports with a critical and experienced eye.

From the reports he was receiving of submarine attacks to the west and air and missile attacks to the south, it was clear that the Americans were executing a masterful pincer movement. They were on the verge of sucking the remnant of the large PLAN fleet that had been protecting the eastern approach to Australia into a deadly trap...and Xi'n was going to have to allow it to happen, to a point.



It was a risk...both to the five Beijing class carriers and all of their escorts in the force to the south...as well as to his own force here north of the Santa Cruz Islands...a force he was certain the Americans and their allies were as yet unaware of.

The Admiral's powerful task force consisted of the fully repaired and refurbished Zenim and her sister ship, the Xia, accompanied by four of the new naval "strike-at-sea" upgrades to the PLAN Tactical Attack Ships, four of the Chinese latest phased array air defense destroyers, four of the anti-submarine and surface strike cousins of the air defense vessels, and three of China's latest nuclear attack submarines.

Although the Admiral was not entirely certain of the exact location of the Americans, he had twenty-four of the improved recon LRASD weapons moving towards their expected location and hoped he would soon be able to pinpoint it with more exactness.

Turning to the Captain of the Zenim, who had accompanied the Admiral from the bridge to the combat information center and who was standing with him monitoring his duty officers at their various stations, the Admiral inquired.

"Captain, what is the latest update on operations to locate the American fleet?"

After a brief animated conversation with one of the duty officers, who handed the Captain a printout of the latest sensor readings, the Captain responded.

"Admiral, we just received the latest information from the recon LRASD units and we believe that they have now penetrated the outer ring of picket ships in an American formation.

"Just minutes ago an American destroyer and a Los Angeles class attack submarine were detected and engaged by our recon LRASD units. From acoustic signatures relayed from the scene of the engagement, it is clear that the LA class submarine was sunk and the destroyer was damaged and limped away to the west where we can engage it separately at our leisure.

"Based on their programming, the other LRASD units continued on, inbound towards the south and east, towards where we believe they will locate the American formation. I am prepared to order our strike package to launch towards that location now...here, to the south and west of Rennell Island.

"It would be at the maximum range of our aircraft...but with refueling aircraft meeting the strike package on their way back, they will have plenty of margin...and we can communicate with them as to the exact location of the American force while they are en route.

The Admiral considered this carefully. A large strike at this range was a gamble, but every passing minute increased the risk of his task force being discovered by the Americans. With the engagement that just resulted in the sinking of the American submarine and the damaging of the destroyer, the American Admiral would now know that a potent threat of some sort was off to his north somewhere...and he would be anxious to investigate.

"Order the strike package launched as you have outlined, Captain, and then maintain a heavy CAP over this task force and position a strong barrier CAP to the south west per plan Sea Tiger.

"In addition, contact the reserve maritime strike squadrons on New Caledonia and Santa Isabel Islands and have them launch their aircraft in a second wave of attack once we engage the enemy.

"As soon as the American force is positively identified and located, I expect to see a first wave of seventy-two TAS launches of the new ballistic LRASD units. They should arrive either just prior to, or in conjunction with, our strike package.

"I'll be up on the command observation deck monitoring the launches. Carry on."

The Admiral was betting that the Americans must still be unaware of the presence and exact location of his task force. They simply had not had the time to determine it, since the engagement with their picket vessels. He wanted to get his strike package launched, his CAP in place and have those ballistic-assisted LRASD weapons launched before that particular circumstance changed.

The Admiral was correct in his assumption that the Americans had not had time to pinpoint the location of his task force in the time that had passed since the LA class submarine had been sunk and the Spruance class destroyer damaged. They didn't need to.

Admiral Styles of CTF 77 had been made aware of the location of the Chinese task force approaching from his north well before the engagement with the picket vessels and was already taking measures to address it.

### **September 4, 04:29 local time**

### **Bridge, U.S.S. Hampton Roads**

### **200 miles south of Rennell Island**

The U.S.S. Hampton Roads, designated as CVE 24, was the namesake of the Hampton Roads class of Sea Control Carriers that the United States was now producing in large numbers. She was the first dedicated sea control carrier built by America, as opposed to the conversion of large amphibious assault ships to that role prior to her launch. She was outfitted with the latest American technology for both air support, strike at sea, and defense.

She carried twenty-four Joint Strike Fighters, four E-22B, Osprey AEW aircraft, and four CV-22 Osprey patrol aircraft for long range, high endurance anti-submarine or anti-surface warfare. She also carried four Sea Hawk helicopters for shorter range anti-submarine duties. She also was outfitted with

both phased array and conventional radars and included her own Aegis system that could interface with all of her escort ships.

For self defense, she carried an Mk41 vertical launch group of forty cells which held thirty-two Standard missiles and thirty-two ADCAP Sea AMRAAM (called SAMRAAM) missiles. She also mounted two RAM launchers holding sixteen missiles each and four Phalanx CIWS. For sub surface defense, she was outfitted with four SUB-CIWS to defend against LRASD Killer Whales.

Fitted for the sea control role, with all of the air superiority and strike aircraft, she was capable of acting as either the center of a sea control task force of her own, or supplementing a larger nuclear carrier in an augmented CSG.

In this case, the Hampton Roads was operating in the capacity of the center of a sea control task force positioned to the north of the principle American naval force engaged in this large battle. The two large American carrier task forces further to the south and west were in the process of squeezing the remaining vessels of the Chinese task force that had been defending Australia between them and the submarines task force to the west. This was exactly according to Admiral Styles' overall plan. The Hampton Roads and its escorts were acting as a buffer force between the major American forces and anything the Chinese might throw at them from the north.

In addition to the picket destroyer and attack submarine that had been placed well out on the threat axis towards what was perceived as the most likely threat, the Hampton Road's group had a new air-defense variant of the DDX destroyer, a batch IIA Arleigh Burke Aegis destroyer and a Ticonderoga class Aegis cruiser as escorts. A very potent force indeed.

It was the pickets of the Hampton Roads buffer force that the Chinese recon LRASD units had attacked, and it was this task force that those same Chinese units were now in the process of discovering, twenty minutes later.

"Captain, our outer-ring Ospreys are picking up multiple enemy Killer Whale signatures approaching from the northeast...the count is up to twelve, from the same general bearing where the La Jolla was sunk.

"Closest range is now twenty-two miles."

Based on the earlier report from Admiral Styles of a large Chinese carrier task force off to their northeast, and based on the engagement twenty minutes ago with his outermost pickets, Captain Terrace Thurmond, who was in command of the Hampton Roads had expected this report.

As the task force commander he knew his role was to interdict attacks aimed at the major U.S. forces from this quarter, and to soak up any such attacks. His forces were about to do just that.

"Okay, these are probably an initial wave of their Killer Whales from that Chinese task force Admiral Styles warned us about.

"Have the entire group tighten up to a condition two sub-surface defense formation anticipating attack by the whales...but warn everyone to expect both aircraft and missile follow-on attacks.

"I want the barrier CAP pushed out another fifty miles in the direction of those Chinese carriers and launch the ready alert birds to beef up our inner ring CAP."

As the Captain turned to speak with his chief of staff, the duty officer overseeing the specialists who were monitoring the approach of the Chinese LRASD devices shouted.

"We've got an activation! Now another!"

"Enemy devices are going active across the board and are now approaching at high speed."

Captain Thurmond responded crisply and with efficiency born of long practice. Every American and allied sailor expected at one time or another to be under Killer Whale attack. The Hampton Roads had been under this threat since her initial shakedown cruise and had been under attack on several occasions since coming to the waters of the southwest Pacific, first off of New Zealand as the invasion of Australia was staged...and now in the waters off of Australia itself.

But in those other attacks the Hampton Roads had been a secondary target traveling in the company of one or more full-size, nuclear carriers. Today she would be the primary target.

"Place all SUB CIWS systems in the inner ring on full automatic and slave them into the task force defense system here on board the Hampton Roads.

"Continue monitoring airborne threats."

### **September 4, that same time**

#### **Combat Information Center, U.S.S. Shanksville**

#### **450 miles southwest of Rennell Island**

The pace of combat was becoming frantic. Admiral Styles was in the process of directing two separate strike at sea packages and two missile engagements against a Chinese task force to his west and now another to his northeast.

"In subjecting them to a pincer movement we have now been caught in one of their own making," he thought as contemplated the progress of the package already making its way towards the remnants of the task force with which the Chinese had been protecting their Australian conquest.

That package was the largest of the two...it had been the principle objective of the operation...and was directed against the five Beijing class carriers. It was approaching the Chinese

vessels in conjunction with a large cruise missile attack that had been launched by several of the escort vessels in the Admiral's main group.

"Give me a status on Cobra," the Admiral commanded as he now saw enemy missile designators on the main display, rising to intercept his own cruise missiles.

The Admiral's chief of staff, a Lieutenant Commander who was right on top of the latest intelligence, answered. "Sir, the enemy is fully aware of our attack and, as you can see, is firing missiles at our wave of attacking cruise missiles. We have over eighty missiles in that attack.

"In addition, Commander Hennigar, the strike leader, is indicating that enemy aircraft from a sizable enemy CAP are being vectored against his aircraft as we speak. He believes his escort is strong enough to allow the attack aircraft to get through and he has gone to full power to press the issue.

Pausing for just a moment, the Lieutenant Commander listened briefly but intently to the latest communication coming through the headset he was wearing.

"Okay, we're getting reports of a massive missile launch from the Chinese task force..."

"Looks like in addition to anti-air missiles there is also a large counter strike being launched from the Chinese as our aircraft are approaching."

The Admiral considered this report. He had over one hundred aircraft approaching that western Chinese task force and they would be in the thick of their attack in the next few minutes...right on the heels of the cruise missiles which were attacking now.

He knew that all of the ships in CTF 77 would be preparing to receive the missile attack that his chief of staff had just referenced. Barrier CAP would be moving into place, ships would be positioning themselves and the AEGIS system would be fully engaged. He knew that his task force was as prepared as it could be for just such an attack...particularly if the Chinese were not able to support that attack with aircraft...and he believed he'd caught them before they could do that.

So, Admiral Styles was relatively certain that he had caught the primary target of his operation perfectly within his pincer...exactly according to plan. But he was very concerned about the Hampton Roads group. She was hanging out there between him and that second large Chinese task force to the northeast and he felt that the Chinese were going to launch their largest attack from that quarter.

He felt like he had been maneuvered into throwing his strongest attack at those Beijing class carriers, only to learn that two of the larger carriers and their escorts were driving hard for his flank.

Luckily, with the Hampton Roads group positioned to the northeast for just such a contingency, that flank was not exposed. Captain Thurmond was a very capable naval officer and he would have his entire group alerted by now and preparing to receive whatever the Chinese could throw at him.

Nevertheless, Admiral Styles had a feeling that Thurmond was going to need help. Although he'd had to wait while his major attack finished launching, fueling and clearing the area, the Admiral had ordered a second strike package to be prepared to launch immediately after the first. He hoped he could hit that new Chinese task force before they could hit him.

"How about preparations for Python...where are we?"

Again, the Lieutenant Commander responded.

"Admiral, the tankers, AEW and EW aircraft are already airborne. The fighters are launching now and will be followed by the Super Hornets and the JSF attack aircraft.

"We expect them to be fueled, formed up, and on their way in the next fifteen minutes."

"Fifteen minutes?" thought the Admiral. That would seem like an eternity. Who knows what the Chinese from that new group will be doing in that time. Fifteen minutes is almost 200 miles for a strike group...or even further for supersonic missiles.

"Well, inform the captains of the Shanksville, the Bush and the Reagan to pull out all of the stops and have their air operations sped up if at all possible for Python.

"I believe we are going to have to..."

At that moment, Admiral Ben Ryan stepped into the CIC and motioned for Admiral Styles to step over to him for a confidential conversation.

"Look, Jerry, I know your hands are full. But I just got flash traffic from Pearl and decided you needed to hear this immediately. Later we'll brief the staffs.

"Intelligence is indicating that there is a high likelihood of the CAS using their tactical nukes against us here and against the invasion beachhead in the near future. They indicate that if we continue to press inland and if we are particularly successful in decisively defeating the PLAN in this battle, enemy local high command has been given the green light to plan and then execute an attack on us.

"Apparently, a highly placed informant got the word out, and the President wants us to take the threat seriously.

"He is working through State and through the CIA to deliver a back channel message to the Chinese, Indians, and the GIR that he hopes will lessen the threat. That message is apparently very straightforward and represents a new NCA strategy.

"Where President Weisskopf depended on our TBM to forestall and defeat any theater level engagements and would only launch in retaliation for a successful hit on our forces, or an attack against CONUS, President Bowers is taking a different stance.

"This is the text of his message:

*Any nuclear attack launched against any American or allied forces will result in a full scale nuclear attack against the enemy homeland in response.*

“He’s not beating around the bush, Jerry. That is the exact text of the message going to the Chinese and their allies. We need to plan and prepare accordingly.

“Hopefully the President’s message will have the desired effect. My guess is that the successful insertion of the new space station and its ability to defend itself and the continental United States has figured heavily into this new strategy. I’m told that within ninety days we are going to launch another station into geosynchronous orbit above us here in the southwest Pacific.

Admiral Styles was uneasy about the new nuclear policy...and not because he disagreed with it or thought it wrong. He did not let his unease show and he would faithfully follow the orders and directives of his commander in chief. He was certain, should things go well here in Australia and elsewhere for the western allies, that the Chinese and their allies would be more and more likely to turn to their WMDs. He understood exactly what the President was doing and he agreed with it.

“We have the advantage and we need to play to our own strengths,” he thought to himself.

Just the same, he did not relish being on the receiving end of a nuclear attack. That is what caused the unease. No one, not even the most courageous and resolute of military leaders, could face that possibility without a shudder.

“Ben, this means we’re going to have to reconfigure the positioning of the ships in the task force for a possible nuclear attack. Because of the greater separation between them, that will make us much more vulnerable to the conventional attacks we already know are coming. It’s a real catch 22.”

As Admiral Styles paused for a few seconds while he thought it out, Ben Ryan empathized with him. He had gone through this same thought process after receiving the message and while coming down to the CIC to discuss it with Styles. He was anxious to see if Jerry came to similar conclusions as he had in considering the trade-offs necessary for security of the task force in the current dual-threat circumstances. He was pleased when he heard what Admiral Styles came up with.

“Ben, here’s what I intend to do. I am going to place the TBM Aegis ships out further on the threat axis for those nuclear threats in a full nuclear defense posture. The inner ring will go to a sixty-five percent separation. Far enough to provide time for further separation in the event of a nuclear strike warning, but close enough to provide a reasonable conventional defense umbrella.

“I’ll have my chief of staff get to work immediately on this and we’ll implement it as soon as a workable plan is drawn up.

“It’s going to be tough to implement right in the middle of our ongoing strike at sea and defensive operations...but that’s why we get paid the big bucks,” Admiral Styles finished jokingly.

It wasn’t the exact solution Ben Ryan had come up with, but it was more than adequate and in some respects it was even better than what he would have proposed.

“Take some consolation that you will soon have that station up over you, Jerry. I can’t tell you how gratified I was to hear that it would be going up over the Australian Theater of Operations. A lot of lobbying went into that decision.

“The Israelis, the Russians and our own people in Alaska lobbied equally hard and long, particularly since it’ll be six more months before the next one goes up.

“But the next six months here in Australia are going to be pivotal and will set the stage for the future course of the war.”

Jerry Styles considered his superior’s words as he wrote out a message to his chief of staff and had an orderly take it to him.

“Well, I have to tell you, Ben, once that station is in place I will feel significantly better about our chances to stop any full-scale nuclear ballistic missile attack without taking some major hits.

“...with the proven effectiveness of the Chinese TBM...they may be tempted to try it anyway if they begin losing a lot of ground.

The Admiral paused just a moment...

“I’ll tell you something else, Ben. I like President Bowers...a lot. Lots of people were concerned about the size and fit of the shoes he had to fill, but I think he’s going to fit into them just fine.

“In fact, he may need to buy a larger pair at the rate he’s going before all is said and done.”

**September 4, 05:15 local time**

**Forward VLS Control Station, PLAN Amphibious Ship Chongqing**

**250 km NE of the Santa Cruz Islands**

The launch of the new tactical ballistic missiles, those with the Killer Whale acting as the terminal guidance and warhead, had gone off without a problem. All thirty-six missiles had been launched from the Chongqing and the teams responsible for the operation had completed the reloading process for the second wave of missiles whenever the commanders ordered it.

...and that order was not long in coming as a second wave was launched against the American task force to the southwest.

Kao Pham was particularly proud of these launches. They were the latest innovation of his father’s LRASD weapons...a new wrinkle for the Americans and their allies to have to contend with.

These LRASD weapons only carried the rocket fuel and rocket engines to be used for final guidance underwater. The huge ballistic missiles, which the Chongqing carried along with three of her sister ships, would provide the long-range delivery that the LRASDs normally depended upon for their own conventional fuel and propulsion. Not having to include the dual propulsion or the fuel for it had significantly reduced the size of the weapons and allowed them to be fitted as a final stage onto the large ballistic missiles.

“My father’s legend just grows and grows,” thought Kao.

“Designer and implementer of the weapons that pushed America’s aircraft carriers out of the western Pacific and which have been used to keep them at bay all across the world, Hero of the People’s Republic and now a member of the Politburo itself.

“As the Americans try to counter, my father always manages to stay one step ahead of them.”

As he thought this, his thoughts also turned to his sister, Chiang, who had pursued her own chosen field of study and had done very well.

“In fact,” Kao thought, “she too has contributed to the capabilities of the Chongqing.”

Her work was directly related to the algorithms the *ta shih* detectors used to engage the stealth aircraft the Americans employ. A fact for which Kao and every sailor on the Chongqing was grateful.

“I wonder if she’s actually going to marry that politician?” Kao asked himself as he thought about Chiang in far-away Beijing.

“When I met him on leave after they had announced their intentions, he seemed likable enough...and he seemed truly interested in Chiang,” he thought.

Koa had wondered if the interest was real...if perhaps his feelings were more a function of the influence that their father’s prominence might garner...particularly since he had become a member of the Politburo and the executive council. But now that he had met them, and spent several days with them, he was convinced that the attraction was genuine...and that it was clearly mutual.

“And then there’s me. I’m out here having the time of my life sailing around the world and learning about electronics myself...despite the dangers.

“Who knows...maybe I’ll go career when this is all over.”

Kao had been promoted to a section chief on the Chongqing. He oversaw all maintenance functions by enlisted personnel for an entire battery of VLS anti-air missiles located near the bow of the vessel. That included the missile reloading, the missile hatch functions, the readiness of the missiles and the maintenance and integrity of the launch tubes. Much of this was automated, but the equipment had to be maintained and kept in perfect working order for potential combat.

This meant that Koa, as section chief, not only had to have extensive knowledge of the machinery and its operation, he also had to understand and be able to assist in troubleshooting the software and electronic systems that drove it. He and his people had to understand how to repair the equipment or its controls...or to be able to operate portions of the system manually, if necessary, during combat operations.

It was more than achieving high marks on the readiness and maintenance charts, and it was more than competing for the highest sustainability rankings. It was a matter of life and death during combat and Koa understood it and was able to convey it to his men.

“While consistently hitting those high marks on the charts I might add,” he thought to himself as his communications light winked on brightly and the incessant chime of a call came through.

He spoke into the microphone. “Chief Pham.”

The duty officer over anti-air engagements in the combat information center responded.

“Chief, this is Lieutenant Wu. Your systems all look nominal, what is your estimation of their status for prolonged operations?”

“Uh-oh,” thought Koa. “Don’t like the sounds of that. The Americans must have located us.”

He did a final check and assessed the status and the operation of the equipment...equipment that he had become intimately familiar with over the last three and a half years.

“Lieutenant, everything is not only nominal, it’s in excellent shape.

“I don’t expect any down time on our account...even if we have to run through all of the missiles in our magazine.”

Koa, in his mind’s eye, could see the smile spread across the Lieutenant’s features.

“Great, Koa. Prepare for imminent action. We’ve located a large enemy strike about three hundred kilometers out and approaching.

“You’ll get the official order soon, but you might as well get your people ready now.

“Wu out.”

#### **September 4, 05:24 local time**

#### **Combat Information Center, U.S.S. Hampton Roads**

#### **190 miles south of Rennell Island**

Captain Thurmond counted the impact and losses from the initial LRASD attack as he prepared for the onslaught his sensors and barrier CAP now told him was approaching.

The reconnaissance version of the Chinese Killer Whales were not as sophisticated in their attack profile or capabilities as other variants...and the Captain was grateful for that. Against combatant and non-combatant vessels not equipped with the SUB CIWS defense, the normal, straight-on attack profile of the huge supercavitating weapons was still horrifically effective. And that was the exact profile that these long-range surveillance weapons used.

But against vessels equipped with the SUB CIWS, unless the enemy was able to overwhelm those defenses by sheer numbers, the straight-on attack mode could be effectively defeated. Each ship in Thurmond's task force was equipped with the SUB CIWS and those systems provided the edge in defending the task force against the sixteen Chinese devices that had located them.

Still, it had been a harrowing experience for the Hampton Roads and two of her escorts, and it had turned deadly for the third escort. The DDX air defense destroyer, the U.S.S. Townsend, had been severely damaged when one of the three Killer Whales attacking her had been destroyed only one hundred feet from her starboard side, near her fantail and rudder on that side.

The detonation had warped several bulkheads and jammed that rudder into a twenty-four degree cant, while buckling the screw shaft on that side as well. Twelve personnel had been killed and another eight injured in the explosion, flooding, and the fight to keep the ship afloat.

"Well, that crew had worked wonders in the last half hour and the Townsend was afloat, mildly maneuverable and still in the fight," the Captain said to himself.

"But how long will she or the rest of us be able to hold out?"

That answer would not be long in coming.

The Chinese had a wave of SU-37 and SU-34 aircraft that had battled their way through the Hampton Road's barrier CAP over one hundred miles to the north. Over thirty Chinese aircraft had broken through and were now approaching as the inner ring CAP of eight aircraft was vectored towards them. Thurmond knew that those eight aircraft would not be able to hold them all back.

As this stark realization began to coalesce, his air defense duty officer called out.

"Vampire! Vampire! Vampire!"

"Multiple ballistic tracks approaching...count is twenty and rising...now thirty...now forty!"

Ultimately the count went to seventy-one missiles as the Aegis system on all of the ships went into action, both against the incoming ballistic missile tracks and the approaching aircraft. Seventy-one rapidly approaching missiles coming up behind the thirty-two aircraft that were closer, but approaching more slowly.

As it was, the ballistic tracks were going to arrive just before the aircraft and the vertical launch cells of the three escort vessels and the Hampton Roads began emptying at those approaching missiles. Then they would be taking aim at the aircraft as they came into range and as the system rated threat levels, the value of the vessels targeted, and the time requirements for each intercept.

The Theater Ballistic defense capability of the Ticonderoga and Arleigh Burke Aegis vessels came into play first. While the incoming missiles were far out of range of the normal standard missiles, the two ships quickly launched all twenty-four of the combined TBM inventory and downed twenty of the ballistic missiles before any of the surviving Chinese weapons were even in range of the remaining American missiles.

With fifty ballistic missiles still inbound on very rapid ballistic tracks, Aegis set high priority on these targets as they flashed towards the American task force. But these missiles were coming faster than what the extended and medium range standard missiles, or the newer ADCAP SAMRAAM missiles were designed to intercept.

They were simply coming too fast for any type of assured intercepts.

But Captain Thurmond, his personnel and their equipment all tried just the same.

Between the Hampton Roads, the damaged Townsend and the Arleigh Burke and Ticonderoga vessels, which contained a total of three hundred and ninety-four missiles in their vertical launch tubes, over two hundred and fifty missiles were launched at the Chinese ballistic missiles...but only twenty-three of the remaining missiles were destroyed.

In that same time period, another one hundred missiles were launched at the approaching Chinese aircraft. Twenty-one of the thirty-two aircraft were destroyed, but seven of the destroyed aircraft launched their missiles before their destruction and all remaining eight attack aircraft were able to launch their cruise missiles as well...each aircraft launching two missiles each.

A total of thirty super-sonic cruise missiles were now also approaching them and except for the close in weapons system like the Phalanx CIWS and the RAM missiles, there were no Aegis missiles left to defend the task force.

As the cruise missiles rapidly approached, a strange thing happened that all of the defense officers on all of the American vessels noticed at the same moment. The ballistic missiles had some type of separation that dropped away from the oncoming ballistic tracks.

"Rapid change of aspect on ballistic vampires!" cried out the air defense duty officer on the Hampton Roads.

"We have a separation of some sort. The ballistic tracks have continued inbound.

"Those tracks are now going to pass over the task force at an altitude of five thousand feet!"

Captain Thurmond was immediately concerned about the potential for nuclear detonations over the task force, but he didn't have any weapons that could prevent it...and he didn't have time to worry either. The cruise missiles launched by the aircraft were now approaching...and they were coming in on courses that would impact his ships.

The close-in defenses performed well against the cruise missiles. Of the thirty approaching cruise missiles, twenty-one were shot down.

But nine missiles impacted the American vessels. One on the Townsend, two on the Arleigh Burke destroyer, and three each on the Ticonderoga cruiser and the Hampton Roads.

Given its already reduced state, the damage to the Townsend, was significant. It continued to make headway, but was trailing thick black smoke from a hole in its superstructure just above the waterline. The Arleigh Burke escort was moderately damaged, particularly to its rear VLS cells, which, fortunately, were all empty at the time of impact, minimizing the damage. It continued to make full headway and was capable of continuing the fight. The Ticonderoga cruiser was severely damaged with hits in its engineering spaces, the helicopter hangar spaces and to the forward gun mount and VLS cell. Both of its Phalanx CIWS were still operational as the big Aegis cruiser lost headway and was in the process of going dead in the water.

Just before the first of three cruise missiles impacted his ship, Captain Thurmond distinctly heard his ship surface defense officer make a surprising announcement.

"I've got multiple incoming supercavitating weapons!

"Five...ten...no, now over twenty devices. All on a bearing consistent with where those ballistic tracks separated. Now approaching at..."

KA-BLAM!

The cruise missile explosion stunned Captain Thurmond momentarily and knocked him off his feet. As he was helped back to his feet by his aide and others near him, the other two cruise missiles struck the Hampton Roads.

BLAM...BLAM!

The next two hits were not as close to the CIC, but rumbled heavily through the entire ship just the same, causing everyone in the CIC to grab on to something sturdy to keep themselves from falling again. But, aside from some minor cuts and bruises, everyone in the CIC was okay. As he prepared to issue orders to determine the extent of the damage and to organize efforts to resolve it, the Captain remembered the incoming Killer Whales.

"Get me the status on those Killer Whales! SUB CIWS weapons free—engage them now!"

As a result of the missile hits, the Hampton Roads lost the operation of one of its two elevators, took a hit just below the bridge that destroyed the ability to pilot the ship from those spaces, and had its flight deck holed toward the aft portion of the ship, also starting a fierce fire in the hangar spaces below. She continued on unabated, but smoke was pouring from the hits she took and her effectiveness was impacted...at a time when she would be needing everything she had.

As the Captain issued more orders, another warning came from the duty officer for air defense.

"We've got multiple inbound ballistic vampires again...ten, twenty...now over thirty.

"...now receiving AEW reports of inbound supersonic bandits consistent with TU-22M or Blackjack bombers.

"Many aircraft in two groups approaching from both the west and the northeast!

"Count is up to fifty aircraft in the western group and thirty-eight in the northeastern group."

For just a few seconds everything got deathly quiet in the CIC. With few anti-air missiles left, with only three ships able to operate their SUB CIWS against the onrushing onslaught, and with damage already sustained, every man in that room knew what these numbers meant.

All eyes were on Captain Thurmond. He didn't take long in replying, and when his reply came, it was defiant, direct and inspiring.

"Okay, time is short. Send this message as follows to CINC CTF 77 and to CINCPAC.

*"By God, we have drawn all of their strength onto us here at this location. The enemy has been fooled into directing their entire effort at TF 77.3 and are expending it at this time"*

Taking the com in his hand and opening a channel to all of the commanders in the task force, he spoke in a voice loud enough to be heard by every man in the combat information center.

"All right, everyone. We're facing an attack that must have been intended for all of CTF 77. The enemy believes that *we* are the entire combined task force. By fooling them, we've accomplished our mission...each and every one of you can be proud of that."

Knowing full well from the threat displays what the likely outcome of the current engagement was likely to be, but not varying in the slightest, Captain Thurmond completed his communication to all of the ships under his command.

"Now we must maintain that pride and give them hell!

"God bless and preserve each of you and your commands."

**September 4, 05:32 local time**

**E-22A Osprey over TF 77.3**

**190 miles south of Rennell Island**

Lieutenant Commander Joshua Morgan had just given a SITREP over secure communications to Admiral Styles about the fate of Task Force 77.3. The report had been to the point...but he couldn't keep his emotion out of it.

"Sir, the Hampton Roads, the Townsend, the Port Royal and the Decatur are all...dear God...they're gone, Admiral, destroyed and sunk.

"Each of them fought to the end, hit multiple times by cruise missiles they fought on and destroyed numerous Killer Whales around them....until they were taken out, one after the other, by Killer Whales or supersonic cruise missiles that got through to them.

"Currently, there are many men in the water, hundreds of them. What rescue operations we can mount are underway...but we need a lot more.

"We have this early warning aircraft, one HV-22 patrol and rescue aircraft, one F-35 from our inner ring CAP and two F-35s left from our barrier CAP currently returning to this position. Of the entire flight wing of the Hampton Roads...that's it.

Joshua could still scarcely believe what his own eyes had beheld. The intensity of the battle was scarcely imaginable, even to a combat veteran like himself. It had lasted barely a few minutes.

The remaining aircraft from the CAP had engaged the TU-22 and Blackjack bombers and their escorts. After their earlier engagement against the carrier-based aircraft from the Zenim and the Xia, there had been far too few American aircraft to overcome the Chinese numbers and so the sky had literally filled with cruise missiles. At the same time, another seventy-two Killer Whales were inserted into the water by their ballistic missile carriers only a few miles from the task force.

The first wave of Killer Whales, twenty-seven in number, swept in on the task force as the ships were fighting the scores of cruise missiles. The Port Royal, already dead in the water, took three more cruise missile hits before she was struck simultaneously by two Killer Whales.

Before the smoke from those explosions could clear, four more Killer Whales drove into that maelstrom and exploded, adding to the pall of smoke and debris. When all of that had cleared...the Port Royal was simply gone.

The Townsend and the Decatur suffered similar fates, each of them being attacked by many more LRASD weapons than their defenses could possibly handle...seven for the Townsend and eight for the Decatur. The Townsend had already been rendered a floating and defenseless wreck by the cruise missiles, but the Decatur went down fighting.

The Hampton Roads was able to heroically fight off the five Killer Whales that targeted her from that first wave. But the cruise missiles scored six additional hits on her, setting her ablaze from bow to stern and holing her in three places.

She was just going dead in the water when the last wave of seventy-two Killer Whales rushed in. A part of the Decatur was still afloat above the waves and attracted twelve weapons...but all of the rest, all fifty-seven of them targeted the Hampton Roads.

It was the most sustained Killer Whale attack on any allied vessel in the war and for over thirty-five seconds huge geysers, explosions and clouds of debris rose in the air every few seconds, as multiple hits occurred on what was left of the vessel under the developing pall of smoke.

As with the Port Royal, but coming as no surprise to the naval aviators who had watched her end, when that awful cloud of smoke drifted far enough away on the wind to allow them to view where their ship had been...the Hampton Roads was gone.

After conferring with his staff, Admiral Styles issued orders to Lieutenant Commander Morgan.

"Commander, you are to render whatever assistance you can to those in the water. Both your and the patrol aircraft are authorized to pick up as many survivors as you can carry and to leave whatever supplies you can.

"But under no circumstances are you to risk your aircraft or those whom you now command. This battle is far from over and your assets are valuable and must not be wasted.

"Am I clear on this?" the Admiral demanded.

Joshua Morgan was brought right back to the here and now by the command tone in the Admiral's voice.

"Aye aye, sir...Loud and clear."

Having achieved the desired result and hearing the discipline and confidence returning to the young officer's voice, the Admiral continued.

"Good. Then as soon as you must, return with the F-35s to this position and you will be taken on board the GWB.

"We have four other Ospreys coming that way with a large escort...but they are about two hours out. Make sure the people in the water understand and have them prepared to get the most critical personnel on those aircraft when they arrive.

"Tell them to hold on...vessels will try to be in the area within twelve hours."



As the Commander received his orders, he couldn't help but share one last thought with the Task Force commander while he had him on the horn.

"Admiral...you know Captain Thurmond was right."

Admiral Styles had two other ongoing battles to manage...but hearing the emotion and plea in the young man's voice, he decided to break communications protocol for a moment and respond.

"What do you mean son? How was the Captain right?"

Knowing he was possibly out of order...but not being able to help himself in wanting to bring some closure to the horror he had witnessed in the destruction of the task force, Morgan continued.

"Sir, he told us our task force should be proud, that we had accomplished our mission...that this huge attack was intended for the entire force and that we had won by taking it all upon ourselves."

The Admiral remembered Captain Thurmond's last words over the secure net...and he knew then, as he knew now, that Thurmond and this young Lieutenant Commander were right.

"Son...your Captain was right. You did accomplish the mission."

"Know that what your comrades purchased here today will lead to our ultimate victory...and that their loss will be avenged."

As he ended communication with Morgan, Styles thought to himself, "Sometimes the line between victory and defeat can be hard to ascertain, particularly depending on your reference point. Sometimes the successful accomplishment of a mission can bring as much personal and individual tragedy as a bitter defeat."

**September 4, 06:45 local time**

**Two Miles west of the PLAN Carrier Zenim**

**240 kilometers northeast of the Santa Cruz Islands**

Koa could see the silhouette of the Zenim off to his east, plowing through the waves in the pre-dawn light. Further to the north he observed the smoking Xia, which had been hit at least three times but had not lost headway and was still traveling in formation with the Zenim. With most of the damage occurring on her flight deck and the hangar spaces below it, the Xia was clearly unable to receive any of the aircraft that were now returning to the carriers from their attack on the Americans.

The Zenim, on the other hand, was feverishly conducting flight operations. Koa could see the planes landing...and lined up to land, approaching from the rear of the carrier. At the same time, she was launching other aircraft from positions near the bow as she continued to maintain a heavy combat air patrol over the retreating task force, while accounting for all of the returning aircraft as well.

And it was this task force that had been significantly reduced in numbers over what it had been less than two hours ago.

"Hang on, Jing," Koa said to the man next to him.

"The helicopters will be here soon. It's only a matter of time."

Until thirty minutes ago, Koa had not known Jing. He was a sailor who worked in the laundry facilities aboard the Chongqing who took his duty watch on the after deck around behind the bridge and superstructure. Koa rarely had opportunity to go there and, other than knowing that there were personnel who operated the vast laundry machines, he knew none of them personally.

Until now.

"Comrade, can you see the helicopters?" Jing asked.

"I can't see anything and I don't hear them. I don't know how much longer I can last. My head and eyes hurt and my arm is going numb."

Koa looked at the young man next to him...and he was young. Barely eighteen years of age. There was a dark laceration across his head that angled down over one eye...but had somehow resulted in the loss of vision in both. In addition, his shoulder appeared to be dislocated, on the side where his arm was going numb.

Jing was a new recruit who had come onboard less than three months earlier, during the last visit the Chongqing had made to their home port...when she had been upgraded with the latest sensors, software and weapons systems. It had been during that time that Kao had been able to spend so much time with his parents and had been able to meet his sister's fiancée.

Now here he was in the water in the Coral Sea, surrounded by dozens of other Chinese sailors, holding on to a large piece of wreckage from his ship, the Chongqing, which was now gone...along with so many of his friends.

Soon after Lieutenant Wu had informed him of the approaching engagement, the orders had come down to prepare for launch of their missiles. Within a few seconds the entire battery of vertical launch cells had been fired... and then reloaded and then all of them fired again.

Soon after that, there had been a violent wrenching in the ship as she took a direct hit from an American missile of some sort, followed by several other even more violent wrenchings that threw Koa and every man in his section to the deck, bouncing off whatever protrusions or hard edges they happened to be thrown against. Koa lost count of the times the deck shook and shuddered before he lost consciousness.

When he came to, it was dark in his spaces and the deck was canted at an angle to the port side and towards the aft portion of the ship. Smoke was seeping in and Koa rose to his knees and then to his feet, searching for the emergency lighting.

Finding it, he had switched it on only to discover that all but two of his men were either unconscious or dead. Over the next minute or two he and the other two had awakened and revived those they could. Within another few seconds they had determined who was able to exit their spaces to the open main deck above them.

Koa tried to get three of the men who had been injured badly and were unconscious, out onto the deck above. They had to be carried. After bringing one of them topside, there had been first one, and then another, tremendous explosion behind them, in the vicinity of one of the large tactical ballistic missile tubes right in front of the bridge. Those explosions knocked them all to the deck once again.

Rising to his feet, Koa looked back at the fire and smoke rising from the port side of the ship in that vicinity, and now noticed that the entire bridge was a mass of twisted and ruined metal...either on fire or heavily smoking.

The deck took on a much more pronounced slant to aft and the men looked to Koa for orders. There were no officers near and several sailors could be seen diving overboard.

Koa quickly assessed the situation and issued some orders.

"The ship is sinking....time to abandon ship!"

Looking at the cant of the deck where they stood and the distance to the water from the side railing, Koa continued.

"Too high to jump from here....move aft, towards the bridge....there, to where the ship is broken... not as far to the water surface there."

"Follow me."

The men needed no prodding and, as they made their way towards the center of the ship, they gathered more sailors who were coming topside from various hatchways that led below. Those who could speak spoke of mass confusion below and many too injured to get out.

Finally, they made their way to the port side amidships as water began lapping at the main deck. Arriving there, they saw a large piece of floating wreckage not more than five meters away from the ship that looked like it had plenty of room for the fifteen men with them to hold on to.

There was a horrendous ripping sound beneath them and it was clear the ship was breaking up.

"Okay, quickly, over the side. Swim to that wreckage there."

Turning to a group of three of his own section standing near him, he issued more orders.

"You three...help me with these two injured men and we'll float them over and place them on their backs on top of the wreckage .... there is just enough room for the two of them."

The men needed no more encouragement. Over the side they went, swimming to the wreckage and then helping as Koa and his three companions got the two injured men there.

Once there, Koa ordered them all to get on the side nearest the ship and begin kicking their feet to move themselves further away. Kicking for all they were worth, they began to move away from the ship, through the oil and other debris that littered the water. They had to push their way through several bodies and five other men, already in the water joined them as they continued on their way.

They had gone no more than forty meters when there was a violent explosion behind them...the largest they had experienced yet. A strong shock wave blasted across them. Thick acrid smoke engulfed them. Debris and hot metal impacted all around them. Several of the men screamed and one of those injured who was on the wreckage was blown off into the water, sinking beneath the waves. The sea caught fire around them and Koa yelled for them all to kick towards an open space of water another twenty meters to their right which was free of flames.

Ducking under the water several times and losing two more men to the flames, they finally made it and looked back in time to see the Chongqing, less than a hundred meters away, lift up high above them to fore and aft, completely broken in two and then slip beneath the waves, accompanied by a shrieking, grinding sound that was mixed with screams, breaking glass and falling metal. It was a sight and sound Koa would remember until the day he died...which seemed like it might occur any minute.

At that point, there were only eleven men holding to the wreckage, along with the single injured man left on top of it. Over the next twenty minutes, over twenty-five other men made their way to the wreckage that Koa and the others were holding to.

One of the last of these had been the injured Jing, who had been assisted there by two other men. They had swum right up to the area where Koa himself was holding on. Speaking over several sailors' reluctance, who believed there was no more room at their wreckage, Koa had been adamant.

"Quiet, all of you!"

"These are our comrades...our countrymen and our shipmates. We will take on all who come to us for help, just as we have made room for you others who joined us here.

"I am the ranking enlisted person here and we will maintain our discipline and our hope.

"Now, make room for these men. If we run out of space, then the most healthy will spell each other in five minute intervals...and I will be the first to do so."

But there had been no need to spell anyone. Over the next thirty minutes, another five men had succumbed to their injuries or fatigue and slipped beneath the waves, despite the best efforts of those around them who tried to hold them up.

In one terrible case, one man who sank beneath the waves grabbed onto his healthy comrade in a death grip and pulled him under with him. There was nothing anyone could do. Again, a gruesome vision that each of them would carry with them and remember for the rest of their lives.

As the ships of the task force moved off, leaving those in the water to their own devices...and leaving them nothing but hope for rescue, Koa began to plan on how to keep these men alive.

Already they had three men on top of the wreckage where there was really only room for two. They were rotating the injured, who needed time out of the water, into that third position.

Perhaps it was because of his loss of sight, perhaps it was because he simply desired it the most and was somehow attuned to it, but it was Jing who made the first pronouncement.

"Listen...off in that direction," he pointed.

"I hear a helicopter getting closer!"

All eyes looked in the direction Jing was pointing, hoping against hope that he was correct. Their hopes were rewarded as they saw a large Ka-50 helicopter, configured in the search and rescue role, approach them and then hover fifty feet over them.

The three most critically injured were winched up to the helicopter first and then it pivoted in the air, tilted its rotors slightly forward and flew off in the direction of the Zenim. It was soon replaced by another helicopter.

Over the next twenty minutes, using three helicopters shuttling between the wreckage and the Zenim, all of the men in Koa's group of survivors were plucked from the water and transported safely to friendly decks. Koa was the last to leave.

### **September 5, 17:30 local time**

#### **Task Force Commander's Cabin**

#### **PLAN Carrier Zenim, 650 km NNE of the Santa Cruz Islands**

The Chinese were withdrawing north, away from the Coral Sea and away from direct naval intervention of allied operations in support of their invasion of Australia.

Admiral X'in reviewed the last two days' action in his mind.

He believed he had delivered telling blows to the U.S. Navy in the area, but he would not fool himself. It was he who was withdrawing, not the Americans. As telling as his blows may have been and the complete destruction of an American task force could not be discounted-his own nation's losses had been heavier.

The Admiral discounted some of the boasts from the maritime strike force commanders regarding the size of the American task force that had been destroyed. Some of those reports filtering back to him indicated that multiple American carriers and at least eight support and escort vessels had been sunk...the sea wiped clean of a large American task force.

But the Admiral believed his own returning aircrews more. They indicated that there had been a single American carrier there with three escorts...and that the carrier was not one of the Nimitz or newer class super carriers. Instead, it had been one of the smaller Sea Control vessels.

"It's no wonder we wiped them out," thought the Admiral.

"That strike package had been meant to contend with a force four times as large as what they found...and even though we wiped out what we did find, we squandered a great opportunity, both in terms of surprise and in terms of the weapons we had available to be employed."

To the Admiral's credit, he had continued to try to press his advantage, even after the attack he had received from the main American force. That attack had sunk the Chongqing and three of his escorts and damaged the Xia.

Operating under his command, land-based maritime strike aircraft from New Caledonia and Santa Isabel Islands had found and attacked the principle American formation very late in the day of September 4<sup>th</sup> in conjunction with another TAS ballistic missile LRASD attack coordinated from his retiring vessels. The aircraft were from the same squadrons that had delivered such a decisive blow to the Hampton Roads Task Force.

But the American task force was much stronger than the smaller blocking force Admiral X'in's efforts had eliminated earlier that same day. What turned out to be three American super carriers and a damaged sea control carrier were capable of establishing an almost unbreakable barrier CAP between themselves and their foes...and they were capable of doing so on several threat axes.

Each arm of the Chinese attack that X'in had ordered had encountered barriers CAPs over two hundred miles out from the carriers, numbering in excess of fifty aircraft each. Before their long range cruise missiles could be launched, the majority of the aircraft had been shot down. Still, because of the significant escort that had traveled with the strike aircraft, sixteen TU-22M aircraft off of New Caledonia and ten Blackjack bombers off of the Santa Isabel Islands had gotten through and successfully launched over fifty cruise missiles at the Americans.

While this was occurring, another ballistic LRASD launch also came in, coordinated with the air attack. But the American task force contained several more DDX destroyers, Burke class Aegis destroyers and Ticonderoga class Aegis cruisers. This meant that there were more TBM standard missiles that could engage the attack...and this Chinese attack consisted of only forty-eight missiles, due to the loss of the Chongqing.

Only twelve of those LRASD devices landed and engaged the American fleet.

Results were unclear...but it appeared that at least one of the American carriers had been severely damaged and that the sea control carrier had possibly been sunk, along with three or four of the escort ships.

“And what did we trade for this?” the Admiral asked himself.

Of the five Beijing Class carriers and their eighteen escort and support vessels, only one carrier and five escorts had been able to break through the American submarine force after being badly mauled by the large strike forces off of the large American carrier force in the Coral Sea. That much-reduced Chinese force was now escaping westward over the top of the Gulf of Carpenteria, towards the Arafura Sea where they were moving under increasingly friendly and heavy air protection off of New Guinea and out of northern Australia.

“And this task force is escaping first north, and then west towards the Solomon Islands,” bemoaned the Admiral.

“Less one TAS and several escort vessels, and with a badly damaged Mao class carrier.”

The Admiral had already reported these results to his high command and had received tentative orders for provisioning and rebuilding an effective strike force. Later, he would plan a new counterattack that would challenge the Americans and their allies at a future date...but at a future place and time that was still wholly undetermined to the Admiral or his superiors.

It was still just too soon.

In the meantime, the allied landings and strengthening of their positions in the southeast portion of Australia around Sydney and along the coast towards Brisbane and Melbourne would continue, as would their steady advance inland.

“They’ll also undoubtedly move on New Caledonia and the New Hebrides Islands,” thought X’in, “now that we can no longer protect them from the sea and they are left hanging out there.”

As he rolled the tactical and strategic picture over in his mind, he began the first tentative planning towards the kernel of a plan that would lead to his next moves.

“Somewhere around the Solomons,” he said to himself.

“If we can get the promised help from the Indians and the improved Beijing and the new Mao class carrier groups down here in time...that’s where we’ll stop them.”

### **September 5, 18:00 local time**

#### **Task force Commander’s Cabin**

#### **U.S.S. Shanksville, 350 miles SE of Brisbane**

Admirals Jerry Styles and Ben Ryan conferred in Styles’ cabin as they prepared for the departure of Ryan, the CINCPAC.

He would be going back to New Zealand for two days to confer with the exiled heads of state and then on to Hawaii to prepare for the transfer of his command to his new replacement. From there, he would fly to Washington, D.C. to report directly to the CNO, the Secretary of Defense, and the President of the United States about the current situation in and around Australia and operations in the Coral Sea. He would then be assuming his new assignment, the role the new Secretary of Defense and the president had asked him to fill...that of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Operations around Australia and in the Coral Sea had turned out to be a victorious campaign to date, but they had also become an expensive campaign. In fact, it would prove to be the most expensive successful campaign of the war, in any theater of operation. Oh, there had been more expensive defeats that had been handed to America...like the one on March 15, that had kicked off the entire Pacific war. But this would be marked as the most expensive victory.

It was an expense that both Styles and Ryan felt personally. Terrance Thurmond had been a close friend of both men, and had been viewed as a rising star throughout the naval high command. He would be sorely missed as would his entire task force and the loyal personnel who had comprised it.

“When you add the Kitty Hawk, the British carrier and the Canadian carrier to what we have left here in the Coral Sea, we have six carriers still operational here off of Australia. Four super carriers, one large medium-sized carrier and one sea control carrier.

“As I see it, we should keep one of our super carriers, probably the Kitty Hawk, and the Canadian sea control carrier here off the invasion beachheads to support those operations,” Admiral Styles said as he pointed out the area on a small map laid out on the conference table.

“Then we can put a strong taskforce of two large super carriers, let’s say the Shanksville and the Reagan, here off of Brisbane to support our ground forces’ movement to the north and serve as a blocking force to anything the Chinese move into the Coral Sea in the near future.

“That leaves the Bush and the British carrier, the Queen Elizabeth, which we will place off of Melbourne to support our offensive down there and also act as a blocking force to the south.”

Thinking for just a moment, and then looking at the overall map, placing his right index finger first on the Alfasura Sea and then on the Solomon Islands, the Admiral then continued.

“Ben, I don’t believe it will be enough, particularly here to the north. That force off of Brisbane needs to be significantly larger because the Chinese still have heavy forces in the area.

“We don’t want to lose what we just won.

“That’s why I am requesting that you talk directly to the folks in D.C. on our behalf when you get there...and I am going to presume that you will support this request, Ben, to get at least another two, if not three, carrier battle groups here to us as quickly as possible.

“I’d like to see another CV-21 and a Hampton Roads class minimally, with a preference for a Nimitz class to augment those two.

Ben Ryan understood where his friend Jerry Styles was coming from. They had lost six sea control carriers and two super carriers in the last four weeks.

The Chinese had already shown that two super carriers, like those that would be stationed off of Brisbane, could be overwhelmed with enough Killer Whales, cruise missiles and attack aircraft. And the Chinese had shown a perfect willingness to commit whatever forces were necessary to do just that.

“You and I both know that if that main Chinese attack had fallen on this task force on the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup>, instead of just on Thurmond...then we could have been hurt badly.

“Thank God it didn’t turn out that way.

“The planning that put Thurmond there may be second guessed in the future...but I know...all of us here know...that it probably saved most of our lives.”

Still, the losses they took were horrendous by any measure, and they were losses that would be difficult, if not impossible, to sustain either here with existing vessels, or back home.

But the Chinese had lost even more and there was no way they could sustain the rate of attrition that was being inflicted upon them.

Admiral Ryan responded. “I’ve got your back, Jerry, and will support and pass on the recommendation just as you have stated it.

“But we have to find some way to slow this attrition down on our side and increase it to the Chinese and their allies.”

Seeing Jerry’s eyes flair at this statement, and understanding the reaction perfectly well, Ben Ryan pressed on while trying to soften what he had to say about the hard cold reality of their position.

“Look, I know we took down over twice the number of carriers and other major combatants, and that we drove these Chinese out of the area.

“But we still lost eight carriers ourselves, Jerry...and over a dozen major escort vessels. Those are losses we can’t afford to sustain.

“We can’t continue to trade off twenty thousand American or allied lives for forty thousand Chinese. We need those numbers to be more like no American lives for a hundred thousand Chinese...or something along those lines.”

Admiral Styles understood his commander...all of them wanted to end the American attrition and force the enemy to perform all of the heavy casualty counts.

But the enemy wasn’t cooperating.

“Ben, thanks for wording it that way. I know I now have the dubious distinction of having won the most costly naval victory in the history of the United States Navy. We drove off the biggest fleet we have ever encountered, and sent them packing, but we paid a horrible price to do it...we both have lost a lot of dear friends and valiant Americans.

“I guess it would be easy to let that fact ruin it all, you know? To somehow make the term *victory* turn into something hollow.

“But that would be true only if you fail to consider the alternative.

“Ben, I know you realize this, but that God-awful alternative—the one the Australians and so many others have had to experience—is something we are not going to allow to continue here in this theater...no second stage...no encore.”

Admiral Styles let the silence hang in the air for a moment between them. Once again, the thought came back to him:

*“Sometimes the line between victory and defeat can be hard to ascertain, particularly depending on your reference point. Sometimes the successful accomplishment of a mission can bring as much personal and individual tragedy as a bitter defeat.”*

To him, that thought was like the tune to an old song that you can’t get out of your head. Haunting...driving him to ensure that he and all of the commanders under him kept the right perspective, the right reference, so they would always see the defeat of this abject tyranny as victory.

He continued. “You get me those extra carriers, Ben...and their escorts. And you keep working with those folks at China Lake and the other weapons labs to keep getting us the best weapons... And speaking of weapons, when are we going to have our own offensive supercavitating devices?”

“We’ve been in this war for four full years and that’s yet to be produced. I keep hearing rumors and comments...but haven’t seen anything concrete yet.

“I don’t mean to minimize what those folks have done, it’s actually phenomenal and bordering on miraculous what they have come up with since the balloons went up and this thing got started.

“It would just be nice to throw something equally effective back at the Chinese and their allies.

“Anyhow, you just keep getting me that equipment and the boys willing to run it and fight it...and I will make sure that the Chinese and all of their allies are pushed completely the hell out of the southwest Pacific all the way back through the China Sea to Shanghai!”

Ben looked into his subordinate’s eyes...eyes that belonged to a long time friend and compatriot. Ryan knew that he was going to be in an important position to help Styles here in the Pacific...but he would also be concerned about every other theater of operation as well..

“Jerry, our own supercavitating weapons are well past the drawing board stage. I can’t go into it any further at this point, but you will hear something dramatic about it in the next few months.

“... and I’ll get those additional resources for you. I know that the Secretary of Defense, and the President all have complete confidence in you...I have complete confidence in you. I know you’ll use those resources to accomplish exactly what we have discussed in the manner you have explained.

“Now, I’ve got to be going...my aircraft is standing by and I don’t want to keep the folks back in Christchurch, Pearl, or D.C. waiting any longer than necessary.”

## Chapter 36

*"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice." - Isaiah 35:1*

**October 2, 19:07 Mean Time**

**Bridge of the USSS Gaspra**

**Approaching the Orbit of Mars**

Commander David Lewis, the commander of America's first deep space task force, and also the commander of the USSS Gaspra, one of the frigates in that task force, scanned the displays.

Things were going extremely well. They would be approaching the halfway point to their destination the week after next, a full six days ahead of the original schedule.

Crewed by six officers and twelve senior enlisted personnel, these spacecraft exemplified the finest qualities of American ingenuity, technology, and perseverance. Each vessel carried two of the same miniature nuclear reactors like those that powered the corvettes back at Point Conception. As was the case with those vessels, the reactors were used to power the electrical, environmental, laser weaponry, research, and sensory systems carried by the frigates.

But with two reactors, the frigates carried more powerful laser weaponry, communication system, and sensory devices than their corvette cousins. They were also capable of housing more personnel and affording a much larger cargo capacity. They had been designed with just that objective in mind and that capability constituted a large part of their current mission.

The crowning jewel of the American technological breakthroughs, in addition to the SSTO nuclear pulse boosting, and the one that allowed these ships to be effective voyagers within the vast distances required for solar system travel, was the long-range propulsion system that they employed. That propulsion system consisted of operational solar or light sails for each vessel.

As light particles travel in space, they exert pressure along the path they are traveling. Normally, that pressure cannot be felt or even measured without very sophisticated instrumentation. But if the light source is powerful enough and the sails are adjusted appropriately, and if the surface area upon which the light pressure is being exerted is large enough and has relatively little mass...then all of that pressure cumulatively builds up to a point where it represents a force capable of propelling spacecraft.

The sails of the Gaspra and Ida covered many hundreds of square miles and were made of high-tech polymer material so light as to amount to the barest wisp of a presence. The sails easily folded up into a relatively small storage area mounted on the exterior of each vessel. Departing the Conception, the sails had been deployed in front of the vessels and properly aligned to maximize the pressure from solar radiation. The lasers on the vessels had been properly calibrated with divergent optics to provide additional thrust, and the vessels began to pick up speed in a slow, constant acceleration.

Once the Gaspra and Ida had come under light sail propulsion, they had slowly and steadily increased their velocity through a constant, but slight, acceleration until they were traveling at great speed. Several months at the phenomenal velocity they attained would allow the frigates to cover the distance to their objective...a distance in excess of 187 million miles.

Without such propulsion, the travel time for the two frigates would be measured in years and would be dependent principally upon gravitational and orbital mechanics and the narrow windows of opportunity associated with them. Although with light sails the craft also depended upon orbital mechanics, this method of propulsion afforded the task force much more latitude and flexibility.

The Gaspra and Ida had reached optimum velocity some weeks ago, and would now maintain it until they reached a point where the frigates would unfurl and stow the forward light sails and then deploy their aft sails in a configuration such that their lasers, calibrated by their computer system to the proper focus and intensity, would be used to slowly brake them until they arrived at their objective. Once arriving at the objective area, they would use conventional retro-rockets to maneuver.

"Current velocity and status, Lieutenant?" the Commander asked the duty officer.

The young man quickly answered.

"Remaining steady at 68,405.5 knots sir. All systems are well within nominal tolerance."

Satisfied, the commander responded as he turned away.

"Excellent, keep me posted on any changes or anomalies."

As he made his way towards his cabin, Commander Lewis looked at his watch and saw that it would soon be time to confer with the commander of the other vessel, the USSS Ida. As he considered the various items on the agenda for their regular evening conference, he thought about the irony, or the coincidence...though he personally doubted that it really was a coincidence at all...that had put the two of them out here on this long and critical expedition.

Commander David Lewis of the Gaspra, was the task force commander, and Commander Floyd Clark of the Ida, was the second in command. The entire affair had already been dubbed in unofficial circles as the second great Lewis and Clark expedition.

And, reflecting on the historical parallels, Lewis knew that it was just that...a great undertaking. Just as those early explorers had ventured into a vast and unyielding North American wilderness on behalf of their nation in the early 1800s, this expedition had set forth into the vast and unyielding wilderness of space, the true last frontier.

If anything, this time, well over two centuries later, the expedition was much more critical and urgent for the nation's survival than the first had been. For while that first expedition had contained all of the various aspects of exploration, a relatively small company, potential impact on commerce, trail-blazing and geopolitical intrigue that this expedition carried, it had not been undertaken during a bloody world war where the literal survival of the nation might hinge on the outcome.

"Those men had followed a river of water...we are following a stream of light," thought the commander as he entered his small cabin and made the request through the communications duty officer to call Clark and patch the video conference through to him, here in his personal quarters.

After a few minutes, there was a soft chime and the handsome dark features of Floyd Clark, a longtime friend and associate of David Lewis, appeared on the screen.

"Hey, David. You're a couple of minutes early. Something come up?"

Lewis looked at his friend and thought of the two long and intense years they and their crews had spent training for this mission. Astronauts, Naval Officers, and close friends, they both knew how much was riding on what they were doing out here passing the orbit of Mars, further than any human had ever ventured into space before.

Though their non-military protocol and bearing in the evening review meetings might suggest otherwise, David knew that they were both focused on the importance and success of their mission. They both knew, along with all of the crew...that above all else this was a military mission.

"Nope, F.L., nothing out of the ordinary. Just thought I would get into the meeting and review the parameters and catch up on what has happened on the *Ida* today.

"Right now all of our systems on the *Gaspra* are nominal; and it looks like we are still a good six days ahead of schedule. That additional solar activity we were briefed on is really paying off.

"As you know, earlier in the day we experienced some fluctuations in particle diffusion on the sail and had to request the system to perform a normal recalibration on one of our lasers.

"That turned out fine and took only a few moments and, as I said, everything is nominal now.

"Outside of that, anything out of the ordinary with you?"

Floyd Langley Clark, known to his friends as F.L., respected and trusted his commanding officer, David Lewis. He knew that the former President, President Weisskopf, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and the Chief of Naval Operations had all been involved directly with the final decision on the command of this task force. As far as he was concerned they had chosen wisely. Over the last two years Floyd had seen for himself the quick wit, the analytical prowess and the unbelievable astute mind that David Lewis exhibited in action, and he was proud to be serving under him.

"We did have a scrubber act up earlier in the day, but specialist Powers was able to repair it without having to use any of our extra units.

"Outside of that, and our matching your momentary velocity fluctuation as you recalibrated the one laser, everything has been by the books.

"Pretty standard I would say...in fact too standard. Maybe it's time we have another drill."

Commander Lewis smiled broadly at this and Clark knew that the two of them were thinking on the same wave length.

"Exactly what I was thinking, commander.

"Let's say tomorrow morning at oh-two-thirty-five. What shall it be? Fire, enemy action, collision avoidance, major system failure...I'll let you make the call."

This was one of the things Clark liked most about Lewis. He knew how to foster his command and let them take an idea and make the most of it...and thereby learn the most from it.

"How about a problem that involves a combination of critical issues?"

"What do you think of a system failure coupled with collision avoidance...maybe the need to avoid a small meteorite or debris field in the midst of a couple of laser propulsion failures.

"We could have the *Gaspra* discover the debris in our path and then, in the middle of the avoidance maneuver, have the *Ida* suffer the failure."

Lewis felt good about the plan Clark was proposing. He knew very well that the crew needed to be kept at the top of their game, not only to prepare for the potential reality of such experiences here in space, where there was no one but themselves to look to for assistance, but also for the time when they arrived back in Earth orbit.

He was certain when that time came and they were back in orbit ready to exercise the final portions of their mission, that both vessels would be tested to the max in combat. Commander Lewis knew that both crews had to be honed to a fine edge to prepare for that eventuality.

"I like it, Floyd. I like it a lot.

"Let's get it programmed.

"You and your XO handle the system failure and I'll get Roger to work with me on simulating the debris field.



“We’ll make it an unannounced exercise.

“Let’s get back together at 2200 hours, all four of us, and see where we’re at.”

**October 20, 23:25 local time**

**Gregory Range, South of Cape York Peninsula**

**Muri clan enclave, Queensland, Australia**

The last few years had been the most momentous, the most dangerous and the most event-ridden of any of the clan’s collective memory. That memory, passed from father to son, from mother to daughter and from dreamer to dreamer, stretched back to the great *Jukurrpa*, or creation, when the ancestral spirits had arisen from beneath the earth and had given form to the earth, to the mountains, the valleys, the plains, the lakes, the streams and the very stones.

The Europeans had come in the late 1700s and had slowly, but unrelentingly, pushed the original inhabitants of the land aside. Such had been the policy until, beginning in the 1960s, the hearts of the Australian people, as they called themselves, had softened and the same rights and privileges accorded the newcomers by their society began to be extended to the original inhabitants, the aborigine peoples.

But the two century takeover, and then reconciliation, by the Europeans paled in comparison to what the Asians had done in the last two to three years.

The new Chinese and Indian inhabitants, like their armies that had swept all before them, had no tolerance or compassion for anyone other than themselves. They had come to fill the land with their own kind, at the expense of all others, European, aborigine, Islander, or any other.

And that is exactly what they had implemented.

It was a simple but ruthless plan: either the former inhabitants served them, or they perished.

The Caucasian and well-to-do Islander Australians were at least given the opportunity to serve the newcomers and have some measure of life and livelihood. The aborigines, from the Muris here in what used to be called northern Queensland, to the Kooni in South Wales, the Nungah, Warlpiri and others, were hardly even regarded as human by the invaders.

Like most of the others, the Muri had chosen to flee to the mountains and the wilderness areas. A few had tried, along with other Australian citizens, to resist.

That resistance continued in many areas of the island continent and invariably led to harsh retribution by CAS military units and citizens alike...many times taking out their vengeance on unsuspecting aborigine communities that had tried to do nothing more than move out of the way.

Nabalco was a recognized leader in the entire Muri clan. Traditionally the aborigine people did not have a fixed social or religious culture. They had banded together as necessary, with the central societal structure being the family. Elder members of the various families were accorded more respect and deference and usually carried more weight in decision-making. Most groups would generally come to some conclusion based on what the majority of the older individuals had to say.

They were all influenced by dreamers, who were believed to have special access to their ancestors and whose dreams carried significant weight, although there were no official social leadership positions, nor a religion, in the strict definition of those terms. This was simply the traditional lifestyle of the earlier hunter-gatherer aborigine culture.

But two hundred years of dominant European culture had changed that somewhat.

Now the clans had those who represented their interests. Even though great effort had been taken by the Australian government to integrate the aborigine peoples into society as full citizens, there were still legal and homeland issues that had to be resolved and many aborigines desired to live together—some even practiced the old ways in the more remote regions of the continent.

In seeking those to represent them, the clans had turned most often to educated and loyal people of their own. Nabalco was not only an adult of great stature and bearing, one who had fathered and raised five children with his wife, Ulura...he was also educated in the best Australian schools, having graduated in engineering at Brisbane, and having done his masters work in legal affairs.

Despite his impressive education, he had never forgotten his people or the old ways...and he had passed them on to his children. All of them spoke fluently the dialect of Pama-nyungan that was peculiar to the Muri people.

For this reason most of the Muri people trusted Nabalco. They had done so before the great conflagration and onslaught of the Asians...and they trusted him now.

He had led them to this remote area of the Gregory Mountains and they had established themselves, several hundred of them with their families and a few refugees, living the old life and avoiding the new enemy. Nabalco had used the common knowledge of many and had taught the rest, so that they gave off very little heat or other infrared signature of their existence.

When scouts observed Asian military or civilian activity anywhere close to them, the people simply vanished, taking preselected routes to the north into several separate safe locations deeper into the Cape York Peninsula.

The clan found itself in just such a situation this evening. Nabalco was preparing everyone to leave and make their way to the places of safety that they had used several times before.

“The Chinese and Indians are much more active along the major Charter Tower-Cloncurry road, and even the minor wilderness tracks of late.

“You don’t have to travel but a few miles to the south to hear their motors and see their aircraft. Military traveling to the east, civilian traffic to the west.

“We’ve all heard the rumors and seen the couriers and scouts that have passed through. We’ve welcomed several of our Kuni and Nungah brothers who were spreading the word. The Amis have landed and taken Sydney, and then moved up to Brisbane and down to Melbourne. They now control almost all of Victoria and New South Wales, and they are pushing the Chinese, Indians and Indonesians into Queensland.

“There’s a strong rumor that they have made an amphibious and airborne landing near Rockhampton and are now pushing into the Great Artesian towards Emerald. A large number of U.S. Marines and returning Australian forces are in this group, and the Asians are fighting them fiercely.

“All of that bears on the decision we have to make this evening.

“Chinese and Indian activity in our own area is at the highest levels since the takeover.

“All of you know this.

“I have seen it, my brothers and sisters. It is only a matter of time before our large clan here is discovered and treated very badly. I believe we must all move to the places of safety that we have used in the past...and that we should stay there until the conflict resolves itself one way or another, communicating regularly with runners.

“It will mean we are much smaller in numbers and more vulnerable individually...both to the elements of our mother earth and to the enemy, should they discover us.

“But I believe it is unlikely that they will discover us, because the Cape is an area off their beaten path and one they have shown no interest in colonizing to this point. As they defend what they have already taken, it is not likely that they will infiltrate the more remote areas.

“These are my own thoughts and feelings. I know Ulura and my sons agree with me, but it is now left open for discussion and a decision of the entire clan.”

The discussion continued long into the night, into the early morning hours. Many respected men and women spoke. All of them wanted to avoid direct confrontation with any military force, either from the recognized enemy of the CAS, or from the more friendly allied nations. They had seen too often the result of brushing up against military forces conducting combat operations.

Many of the family leaders were reluctant to separate into smaller groups, and wanted to have the entire group only split up to travel to a new more remote location where they could all again assemble. They felt more secure with their numbers, particularly given the sixty to seventy refugees, most of them white Australian citizens, who were just now getting acclimated to living in the wilderness. They feared having to live in smaller, more austere groups while supporting those refugees, particularly given the more dangerous circumstances they now faced, it having been over eight months since the last time they had briefly had to retreat to their enclaves.

Rightfully, it was pointed out to these individuals that there were no areas that had been scouted on the Cape to this point that were large enough to support them all as a single group. They were also reminded by others that the refugees had somehow all survived.

To challenge all of this speculation, one of the older and very much respected Muri woman rose in the circle to speak. “But, my brothers and sisters, there were also fewer refugees when we made that move eight months ago. Many of the newer refugees are wholly unprepared for the more difficult living that a small camp will impose upon them.

“And besides, the circumstances were much different.

“Eight months ago we left because the Asians were widening the major highway to the south, and because of construction activity. We knew that change would be only for a short duration.

“This time we have no idea what the duration will be—and it is likely that the fighting will spread to this region. Any group too close to that fighting, or caught up in it, is unlikely to be able to support itself or avoid being overwhelmed.

“I believe we must find a larger place, much further north on the Cape and all go there.”

The very first hint of lightening lit up the sky when Nabalco prepared to stand and address what had just been said. As he did so, his wife of thirty years gently put her hand on his knee and put just enough pressure there to let him know that he should remain seated.

Thus it was Ulura who stood up to address what the older Muri woman had said.

“Noongi, there would be much wisdom in what you have proposed if we had the time to carry it out...if we had the time to send scouts to find this new place that you speak of, and *then* had the time to devise travel routes to it so that we could all safely come there without notice.

“But there is no longer the time for all of that. We do not know the place and we do not know the route to take to get there.

“We would have to travel in much larger groups which would attract the attention of our enemies and the devices they carry on their airplanes.

“No, I believe we must do as Nabalco has indicated. Let us split up, as we have done before, into our twenty different small groups and make our way to the places we already know are there. Traveling there using the well-planned and well-concealed routes we have already determined.

“If there is any concern for extra refugees, then I say we here in Nabalco’s group will take those you are concerned about with our group, in addition to the ones we already have.

“But it is time to decide. We must rest this day and then be gone with the next night.”

When Ulura set down, there was a reflective quiet in the assembled group of families...and then, one by one, the various heads of the family groups made it known what they would do.

Fourteen groups would do as Nabalco indicated and make their way to their individual areas of safety. Six groups, over 120 individuals, would travel together to the south and search for a larger place that could accommodate them all.

Several of the less capable or disabled refugees were passed from that larger group to several of the smaller ones. Nabalco’s group received four of these refugees in addition to the three they already had taken in. They took them in gladly and prepared them to support themselves, meeting afterwards to arrange the assignments necessary to see them all through to their place of refuge.

The journey would not be easy. Three of the refugees were young children without parents. Two had been adopted by one family and the third, one of the new ones, would now be adopted by another. Another of the new refugees was from the Brisbane area, and had been afflicted with some form of a mental condition that rendered him as senseless as a young child...having lost some of the most basic adult interaction skills. He was also physically disabled and could do little more than hobble slowly, using a cane to support himself.

Nabalco was worried about that one...he would be a severe strain on the group and its ability to reach each evening’s travel goal while moving to the new location.

The other two new refugees were both very soft and well-to-do women, who were extremely unacquainted with wilderness living. They seemed willing enough, but both Ulura and Nabalco knew that the rigors of the upcoming trip and then the condition of their remote camp would try these women’s good intentions to the breaking point.

It was definitely not a good time to be learning how to *camp*.

By seven o’clock that morning, all the decisions had been made and each group made its way to their various concealed huts to sleep through the day. They would all be leaving an hour after sundown to make their way to the north.

Most of them slept fitfully. Numerous times planes could be heard in the distance to the south, some prop-driven making their way to the west, but as the day went on, more and more of them were military jet aircraft flying in formation to the east—Chinese and Indian aircraft of all types.

...and while he slept, Nabalco the dreamer, saw in his dreams a foreboding storm wave breaking over the land...over this very spot...devouring and destroying all in its path as it traveled slowly from southeast to northwest.

# **DRAGON'S FURY**

**WORLD WAR  
AGAINST AMERICA  
AND THE WEST**

## **YEAR SIX**



**J E F F  
H E A D**

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**November 12, 11:38 local time**  
**Incirlik Air Force Base**  
**Near Adana, Turkey**

1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant Dave Johnson and Security Force Superintendent (SFS) Nick Jackson, of the 159<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Squadron of the Louisiana Air National Guard, waited impatiently, along with their commanding officer, Colonel Lee Bowman, for the upcoming meeting. All three of them had arrived here at the new operations center just moments ago in an up-armored M998 HMMV escorted by two of the new M1117A Armored Security Vehicles (ASV), which had been designated ASV+ to distinguish them from the earlier ASV models.

Watching now as the M117As and the M998 took up their positions in a mutually defensive, blocking formation on the new tarmac, the 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant couldn't help but think to himself, "The ASV+ sure is a great upgrade to the original M1117. Putting a larger turret on them so they could hold that 25mm chain gun, *and* a TOW missile launcher in addition to the M2 50 and the M19 grenade launcher has really added the kind of firepower we need.

"It's good seeing them there...just makes a guy feel...well, just more secure. Now, if we could just get that AAW variant.

Turning to Nick Jackson, and knowing that Colonel Bowman was hearing every word of what he was saying, the 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant commented out loud, "Chief, when are we going to get the air-defense variety of the M1117As we've been promised? It sure would be nice to have a couple of them hanging out here with us as well, don't you think?"

Before the chief could respond, Colonel Bowman, taking the hint, responded for him.

"Chief, explain to the 1<sup>st</sup>-shirt here that we're being adequately watched over. We have four Navy Hornets above us, four Patriot batteries up and functioning, and four HUMRAAMs all making sure the boogey man stays away."

Then, turning to the 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant and looking directly at him while continuing to address the Chief, Bowman continued, "But let him know, Chief Jackson, that the air defense M1117s are being unloaded in Adana tomorrow and we'll have them by the end of the week."

As he finished, the Colonel winked, and then strolled over to the group of individuals where the colonels who commanded the Rangers and the Turkish forces stood.

Chief Jackson wasn't long in responding for himself as the Colonel walked away.

"Well, Dave, you heard the man...sounds like we're in good shape, and those units will be here before you know it."

Johnson was glad to hear it...and appreciated the manner in which the Colonel and his Chief had delivered the message. All of them, Johnson, Jackson and Bowman, along with almost their entire squadron, had trained together as a National Guard unit and had known each other for many years. Their last duty assignment had been in Cuba where the 159<sup>th</sup> had set up security arrangements at one of the large Cuban air bases right after it had been taken.

Nevertheless, with their sterling combat record and with the current offensive in the Mid East, the 159<sup>th</sup> had been pulled out of Cuba so other, less experienced squadrons could use the more peaceful assignment there as a place to learn...while the 159<sup>th</sup> was assigned to the task force with the critical combat mission of invading the underbelly of Turkey and taking and holding Incirlik Air Base.

Now they had been on the ground here in Turkey for less than a week, firming up the security situation around the newly reconquered base as the front lines pushed deeper to the north and east into Turkey. All three men were anxious to conduct this meeting and get some very useful pointers from the special guest who was about to pay them a visit.

As they waited, Johnson believed the current security situation at Incirlik was well under control, but he would never underestimate the enemy, or allow his people to overplay their own hand. They still had a regiment of U.S. Army Rangers and an entire battalion of Turkish forces augmenting the perimeter security at the base, guarding against a possible GIR counterattack and break through allied front lines that were now over fifty miles to the north and to the east. Such a counterattack was still a definite possibility, and allied forces at Incirlik and Adana had to continue to guard against it.

As its first order of business, the 159<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Squadron had been assigned to handle all of the inner ring security at Incirlik. And that was what these three men were focused upon. Ultimately they would be responsible for the security of the entire base, once the overall tactical situation calmed down further and allowed their forces to accomplish that mission by themselves.

For the time being, they were still experiencing enough GIR air attacks and persistent small arms attacks from groups of GIR soldiers and local Islamic partisans to warrant the additional allied forces. Those GIR ground forces had either gone to ground or been bypassed in the general allied offensive that had landed near Adana and then captured Incirlik three weeks ago. With time, those enemy attacks were decreasing in both number and intensity as the enemy groups were identified, prosecuted and either captured or destroyed.

The base itself, and its rapidly ongoing repair, was serving as a model of Joint Operations effectiveness in the ongoing allied offensive. Marine and Air Force engineers, and civil contractors were getting the runways, hangars and control facilities rapidly into working order. The Navy was bringing in more than sufficient fuel and other supplies by ship and was providing air defense over the base from both TBM Aegis ships and carrier aircraft until air operations were possible from the base itself. American, British and other allied intelligence operations were providing a very clear picture of the current overall tactical and strategic picture. And, as he had already covered in his mind, Johnson knew that Army and his own Air Force security personnel, augmented by returning Turkish forces, had local security concerns well in hand.

But, despite their confidence in the current intelligence and security situation, there was nothing like firsthand experience to augment their perceptions and preparedness. The man they were about to meet represented the epitome of firsthand experience for this entire area over the last few years, not only for Incirlik, but all the way across Turkey and into Armenia and Georgia, when dealing with GIR military forces. He had been doing so, with the barest resources for four years, behind enemy lines.

Amongst American security forces, particularly U.S. Air Force security squadrons, the name of Captain Luke Hanson was something of a legend in this conflict. And David Johnson, Nick Jackson and their commanding officer, Colonel Lee Bowman, all would be meeting that legend today.

In fact, that meeting would occur in just a few moments as all three men saw that the Black Hawk helicopter carrying Hanson had just landed about a hundred yards away.

**November 12, 11:41 local time**

**Incirlik Air Force Base**

**Near Adana, Turkey**

Luke Hanson soaked up the memories as the helicopter flared to a gently descending hover before touching down, allowing him to exit the aircraft with the intelligence and security personnel who had escorted him here.

It was hard to believe he was back at Incirlik, standing on this ground where so many of his friends had died, and where he and a few others had escaped alive...almost four years earlier.

So much had happened in the intervening years as he fought the GIR behind enemy lines. All of those guerilla and partisan experiences had finally culminated almost a year ago with the successful covert operation directed at GIR General Talabari in Tbilisi, Georgia, when the U.S. CIA operative, Riley Adams, had successfully eliminated the famous GIR general.

That success had been followed by the amazing allied victories later that fall in Alaska, Israel and near Moscow, and then the great breakthrough in Syria into Saudi Arabia and the former Iraq late this summer. Those later breakthroughs had eased pressure on his own partisan forces in Georgia as the enemy armies in those areas, seeing that they were about to be cut off entirely on the Turkish peninsula, streamed to the east to try to thwart the allied advances.

The vast reduction in GRI forces in his area had allowed Hanson to successfully carry out the mission he had been given last month and to make his way south, to meet up with the American, British and Turkish at the beachhead here. That meeting was occurring today, here near Adana, where the allies, using American C-90A transports, huge SSTN amphibious assault submarines, a massive allied naval task force and a plentiful supply of Hail Storm missiles had forced their way ashore. The U.S. and its allies were now pouring more men and materiel into a massive pincer on the GIR forces, which were trying to defend their holdings in Turkey and keep American forces out of central Iran.

Reflecting on all that he had experienced in the fighting of the past years leading to this moment, those few months back at the start were still indelibly etched in his memory. Those weeks saw him transform from a regular army officer into a guerilla fighter who built a force of partisans to combat the conquering GIR forces in this part of the world.

Through it all, he had not forgotten his home back in Nebraska, and now, at long last, he was going to be returning there.

But he had one last assignment to fulfill before doing so, and he was looking forward to it. He was here to brief the new security forces on the defense of his old base here at Incirlik, helping them understand how the GIR had been able to defeat and then over-run them with their massive forces.

And from that understanding he was hoping to convey to them how they could prevent it from happening in the future.

Approaching the group, he saw a full-bird U.S. Air Force Colonel, flanked by a U.S. Army Ranger Colonel and a Turkish Colonel, step forward. The Air Force Colonel addressed him as they warmly shook hands.

“Captain Hanson, I’m Colonel Lee Bowman, commanding the 159<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Squadron.

“Let me be the first to welcome you back to Incirlik, you’ve been away far too long.”

After shaking hands, the Colonel made the introductions to the other two Colonels, to SFS Jackson, and to 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant David Johnson. Then, just before moving indoors, he halted the entire group and made another announcement.

“Before we proceed with the briefing, Captain, let me just add this so that everyone can be sure to keep their schedules straight.

“You are going to be involved in a special awards ceremony here tomorrow afternoon, before your departure, which will be repeated in Washington, D.C., when you return stateside.

“That ceremony will include the presentation of a Silver Star, and an advancement in rank.

“So let me be the first to personally congratulate you, Lieutenant Colonel Hanson. Well done !”

Luke Hanson really didn’t know what to say as all of those present shook his hand again and slapped him on the back, wishing him the best. All of this was news to him and came as quite a shock.

Looking around, he caught site of the ASV+ vehicles standing vigil, and he had to stare at them.

“Colonel,” he said, as everyone turned their gaze towards the M1117As he was looking at.

“May I?”

Colonel Bowman understood very well why Hanson was captivated with the new Armored Security Vehicles. They represented a firepower capability that was a far cry from the capabilities of the V-150 security vehicles that would have been in place here at Incirlik when the base had been overrun and upon which Hanson and his own forces would have had to depend.

“1<sup>st</sup>-shirt, why don’t you explain all the finer point of the ASV+ to the Lieutenant Colonel?”

David Johnson gladly complied. “My pleasure, sir.”

As the two of them walked over to the nearest vehicle, Johnson found that for the moment, there was very little to say. The mood just wasn’t right for discussion or explanation at this point. Hanson could very well see for himself the strength of this vehicle. As they got close, the vehicle commander climbed out and greeted them both with a friendly smile and a warm handshake.

When Hanson reached the vehicle, he climbed up onto its large front tire and then onto its armored side and stood up on the deck surrounding the turret. He leaned over and thoughtfully touched the 25mm gun barrel and put his other hand up on the TOW missile launcher while observing the .50 caliber machine gun and 40mm grenade launcher barrels that also protruded from the turret.

Standing up to his full height, Hanson slowly turned and surveyed the view from where he stood.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant could see the faraway look in his eyes, and knew that Lee Hanson was recalling the fight that had taken place near here when he had been in charge of the security at Incirlik and had faced overwhelming odds.

“It’s a fine piece of equipment, Colonel. I’m sure you guys would have made the most of them in the fight back then.”

Hanson was brought back to the present by the 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant’s comments. Looking down, he smiled as he imagined what he could have done with three or four of these babies.

“1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant...you’re right. It is a fine piece of equipment, and we would have made the best of them. They would not have turned the tide in that battle...there were far too many GIR tanks and aircraft for that, but we surely would have sold this base at a much stiffer price. I just hope we’ve learned in the intervening years to never underestimate the capabilities of our enemies.”

And for that, the 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant had a most definitive answer.

As Hanson climbed down from the vehicle and they began walking back to the operations building to start the briefing, 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant David Johnson put his arm on Hanson’s shoulder and replied, “Lieutenant Colonel Hanson, we *have* learned that lesson, over and over again...and I believe you are going to be pleasantly surprised at just how well we have learned it.”

## **November 21, 17:16 local time**

### **Anadyr Mountain Range**

#### **North of the Kamchatka Peninsula**

Sergeant Alan Campbell took stock of his current situation and position. He and his lead platoon were perched at an altitude of over 6,000 feet on a divide that looked down a barren slope into the next drainage. It was snowing and visibility was poor.

Progress had been slow and costly. The Chinese were not about to relinquish any of their positions without a heavy fight, though they were surrounded and cut off. In the three months since Alan had landed further south on the Kamchatka Peninsula and started north, they had been toiling against the elements and fighting the Chinese hard for every inch of ground, facing increasingly cold and blustery weather, facing mass attacks and charges by the Chinese.

But they had made progress, and in all areas.

American forces had pushed up from Magadan despite the massive Chinese air and sea effort to close that logistics point and cut it off. Some of the fiercest prolonged fighting of the war, on the sea, on the ground and in the air had occurred there...and it was still going on. Despite that prolonged Chinese effort, the allied 12<sup>th</sup> Army that had been assembled in Magadan and had been sent north and east toward the Bering Strait, was now less that eighty miles to Alan’s south and west.

The force of which Alan was a part, which had landed on the north central Kamchatka Peninsula and moved north, had gained the high ground in the Anadyr Mountains and pushed the Chinese who were trying to retreat down the Kamchatka, back over those mountains here. Other Chinese forces clung feverishly to the most direct route through those mountains, the superhighway and rail line they

had built to make their invasion of Alaska possible...but the joint allied command had circumvented that roadway and had marched overland through the steep mountains to penetrate the range here, where Alan was now positioned.

From this position, they would be able to encircle the Chinese who were defending the roadway and not only pincer them...but also push on towards the major forces that had been trapped by the American crossing of the Bering Strait.

In that area too, the allies had made progress, albeit against more begrudging and fierce opposition by the Chinese. The crossing had been extremely costly, as the Chinese knew it was coming and were prepared for it. But it had been made, and the Chinese had been driven completely out of North America, with the final Chinese organized forces surrendering north of Nome on October 27<sup>th</sup>, a day that would be long remembered and celebrated in American history.

"We sure celebrated the news of it here," thought Alan as he spotted through his infrared scope. "And we weren't even involved in the action.

"I bet just about every American celebrated that date when they heard of it. I'd love to know how Leon celebrated it over in the land down under."

Thinking of the land down under made Alan wish he were there...it had to be something approaching warm down there as opposed to this cold...and it wasn't even officially winter yet!

Just then Alan spotted movement, a good nine hundred or more yards out, down the slope, moving in his direction.

He checked his scope and made sure it was properly calibrated.

There! One, two, three...many figures now coming out of the fog and clouds that hung close to the mountains here.

"Heads up, men...we've got company coming up the slope," Alan informed his squad, causing them all to sit up and take more careful note from their firing positions.

"Keep your heads down and prepare your positions!"

Alan knew that the rest of the platoon was positioned just below him and he was ready to send a runner over to the LT to apprise him of the situation. The rest of the company was headed this way and if a fight was going to be made, Alan was grateful that he held the high ground.

Just as he thought about dispatching the runner, he noticed the leading figure in the approaching group of soldiers stop—over eight hundred yards out—and aim some sort of scoped device up towards the ridge line where Alan and his men were positioned.

"Get ready, men...prepare to fire..."

"No!...hold that...do not fire...hold your fire!"

Alan had seen the flash of light from the device the leading soldier held and he recognized it as the identification sign they were supposed to flash to friendly forces.

"Corporal Lindsey, get over to the LT right now and let him know that it looks like we have some friendly forces headed up out of the next drainage...make sure he understands that. They are to our forward and moving this way and they have flashed a proper ID code.

"Ask him for instructions."

Alan was not taking any chances. He flashed the recognition signal back, and then yelled for the approaching soldiers to hold their position until he got some indication of what to do.

The soldiers below him did as he said and a tense pause ensued.

The lieutenant contacted his captain who passed the word back to make contact by sending a few men forward, making sure they were covered.

The lieutenant brought the entire platoon up to the ridge and set up effective covering fire positions, with good overlapping fields of fire. Only then did he send Alan and two privates down to make contact with the advancing group.

As Alan got closer, he hoped that these people really were friendly forces. Hidden by a depression in the slope, and by the clouds, he now noticed as he approached within one hundred yards of the men how many of them there were. Stretching around the corner of the hill and then all the way down into the valley below was a line of several hundred soldiers.

As he got closer, a Captain came forward past his point men, smiling, and reached out to shake his hand, while an individual several soldiers back took a picture.

"Sergeant, I'm Captain Beasley of the Alaska Army National Guard.

"Which way to China?"

Alan Campbell's face broke into a wide grin at the question as he clasped the Captain's hand and shook it vigorously...ending in a warm embrace and a slap on the back as the camera clicked the picture. That picture of American forces linking up in the Anadyr Mountains to the west of the Bering Strait would become as famous as the picture of the American and Russian soldiers shaking hands as they met in Germany in World War II.

For Alan and all of the other Americans, it meant the beginning of the end of their successful campaign in the cold eastern reaches of the Asian continent...something they all looked forward to with anticipation. It would be an end that would spell the ultimate and complete encirclement of almost four million remaining Chinese soldiers in this theater of operations.



Many of the Chinese would fight to the end, and the final surrender would not occur until their numbers had been vastly reduced by Hail Storm missiles, American infantry and armor attacks, and by the elements. That surrender would occur near their last holdout, along the highway they had built to funnel their armies toward Alaska the prior year. It would occur once the sub-zero winter conditions near the Arctic Circle, coupled with the continuing, relentless American attacks and the Chinese lack of fuel and supplies would dictate the absolute futility of their position and the necessity of their unconditional surrender.

**December 4, 21:05 local time**

**Near the Little Zab River**

**North of Kirkuk in the former Iraq**

General Abduhl Selim had gotten the great Imam to approve all of his plans. He was a little surprised by the approval...but was glad that the Imam was giving him full military leeway in this area that used to be a part of central and northern Iraq.

He had called for the abandonment of Baghdad because it was indefensible against the Americans and their allies. His large forces could hold onto the terrain around Kirkuk and in the mountains to the north, south and east of it...or so he believed.

Ever since his own grand and successful counterattack against the Americans in Syria, his reputation and the esteem and trust that the soldiers held for him had continued to grow. Ultimately that counterattack had failed, but not because of the young general. No, it had failed because older, less capable generals had not held the flanks as they should have.

His southern flank had failed and then folded, and it had taken all of his skill and intuition as a soldier and a leader to achieve a strong fighting withdrawal. But he had accomplished the dignified retreat and saved most of his command after inflicting severe punishment on his enemies.

"I could feel a breakthrough in my grasp," the young general reflected.

"Just thirty kilometers and we would have taken the Golan Heights with all of Israel at our feet."

But it had not turned out that way, and for whatever reason Allah had willed it otherwise.

Since that time they had been forced into one fighting withdrawal after another all across Syria and into Iran. At least in his sectors they had been fighting withdrawals. In other areas further to the south, the withdrawal had turned into a rout...and then a major allied breakthrough as the Americans and the Israelis broke across the former Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and into what had been southern Iraq, threatening and then entering the southwest corner of what had been called Iran before the great Hasan Sayeed had united them all into the Greater Islamic Republic.

There the eastward advance of the enemy had been halted as fierce, fanatical fighting broke out, where the Americans and Israelis were attacked by the GIR military, the militias and the local population. Reports indicated that the carnage was horrendous, but the advance eastward into the GIR had been halted and the enemy had turned north.

That northward turn is what had ultimately concerned Abduhl.

He was covering central and northern areas of the former Iraq, stretching up into Turkey where an avenue had to be kept open for the GIR armies there in Turkey and northward through Armenia and Georgia into the southern parts of the Russian confederation to return and consolidate their defenses here and further east in the mountains.

But it had not worked out that way either.

The Americans and returning Turkish soldiers had landed with amazing swiftness in southern Turkey, bypassing many of Abduhl's defenses along the Syrian-Iraqi border and surprising the GIR commanders in Turkey. It was Abduhl's first experience with the new American T-90 transport and SSTN submarine technology, and it was something he would not forget or fail to factor in to future contingencies. But now those American forces had pushed deep into Turkey and were cutting off many of the returning GIR forces and threatening the western elements of his own.

Abduhl knew he was being forced to withdraw his forces and whatever GIR forces could escape out of Turkey.

"Either we withdraw them, or become enveloped," he thought as he analyzed the situation.

And having his own carefully positioned forces become undermined was not something the young general was going to allow to happen. That is why he had asked for and received permission from the Imam to evacuate Baghdad and pull back into the mountains into a more defensible position.

Sayeed had carefully considered Selim's plans, made a number of comments that were very relevant to tactical situation, and then approved them. He had also given Selim further assurance.

"Hold out there along the borders, in the mountains around Lake Azerbaijan.

"Stop the Americans and their allies there, and I will raise an army of God to come to your assistance and once more drive them back."

Abduhl Selim believed that the Imam, Hasan Sayeed could do just that. Particularly after hearing how the people had fought alongside the Army to halt the incursion near Ahvas. If the Mahdi had the time, he could bring to bear millions of faithful committed to Allah and to Jihad and drive the infidels back out of their lands.

...and perhaps he could do a similar deed here in the mountains...perhaps he could mobilize the people to work with his forces here...to help thwart the Americans and their allies...to fool them into spending their precious Hail Storm missiles.

"Ahkim, contact the divisional commanders.

"I either want them here by 2300 hours, or I want them conferenced in. No excuses. Let them know that it is according to my express orders. We have much to discuss."

**December 9, 23:42 local time**

### **Indian Embassy**

#### **Krasnoyarsk, Siberia**

Ambassador Buhendra Gavanker locked his desk drawer, turned off and secured his computer, and prepared to go home after another long day conducting the diplomatic duties of his office as the Ambassador of India to Siberia. It had been a long, sixteen-hour day, just like most of his days dealing with the many diplomatic, economic and military issues that were constantly arising.

Sometimes he knew that his wife and children wondered why he had moved them up here to Siberia to be near him when he rarely saw them more than a couple of hours most days. But just having them here, being able to look into the kids' rooms before he went to sleep himself, being able to lay next to his wife...all of that made the pressures and stress bearable...much more so than having them thousands of miles away.

It had taken him a good nine months to call for his family's relocation to Krasnoyarsk, the new capital of Siberia. By that time the fighting had moved much further off to the west, as the Russians continued to fight to preserve Siberia. It was a fight that was ultimately carried into the heart of Russia itself, and right to the gates of Moscow.

By that time, Buhendra had considered the areas all around the capital safe. During that period he had also felt that it was surely only a matter of time before the western nations conceded and a diplomatic solution to the world war could be achieved because, at the time, the CAS and their allies, the GIR, were victorious on all fronts.

But much had transpired since that time, in the over twenty months since he had been appointed to this role on the eve of Siberian independence, and since he had brought his family here nine months later...over a year ago.

"Siberia itself has changed," he thought as he walked out of his office and past the guard station. "The politicians here are just like everywhere else...perhaps they have learned too well. It wasn't six months before they started trading land and resources for recognition...and personal favors."

To begin with, Siberia had officially stretched from the Ob and Irtysh rivers in the west, to the Pacific Ocean. From the Arctic Ocean in the north, to the border of China and Mongolia in the south. A massive land area, numbering almost forty million inhabitants and a wealth in natural resources that had barely been tapped, despite the several years of the Siberian Economic Development Treaty that had preceded Siberian independence.

Under that treaty, enacted between the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, and India, Siberia had been opened up to economic resource exploration and development by the vast numbers of workers that India and China could mobilize, as Russia benefited from the hard currency those nations could then pay for the resources they discovered and developed.

The pact had held during the outbreak of hostilities between America and the GIR, and then as the entire CAS, including India, had entered the fight against the United States. Russia played both ends against the middle, stayed out of the fight and prospered immensely.

For two and a half years.

Then Siberia had declared its independence and was immediately recognized by China and India. Russia, seeing how they had been used and taken advantage of, had immediately declared war and joined the fight on the side of the western Allies, on the side of the United States.

But Russia, like America and all of the others arrayed against China, India and the GIR, had continued to be pushed back. Right out of Asia, right out of the western Pacific Ocean, right out of the Middle East, and right out of all of Australia.

It was during this time that Siberia had begun to be partitioned. First, all of the far eastern provinces and areas, from the Lena River system, across the Cherskiy Mountains to the Bering Strait had been sold to China. In return, the Chinese had paid over one hundred billion yuan in hard currency and agreed to provide for the perpetual defense of Siberia.

Within three months of the great *Siberian Purchase* as the Chinese were calling it, a buffer zone was created by mutual agreement that extended from the Ob and Irtysh rivers to the Yenisey River. This region was to remain an official part of Siberia, but was to be autonomous and administered jointly by India and China in two distinct "regions."

What this meant was that many hundreds of thousands of Indian and Chinese immigrants were moved into their respective regions. Ultimately, millions would be moved in and when those populations reached the appropriate percentages, it was clear that the autonomous regions would "vote" to become a part of their mother nations.

Over the ensuing months it became clear what these two actions represented, beyond the obvious fact of adding territory to the nations of China and India. As CAS and GIR armies poured across Europe right to the gates of Moscow and crossed the Bering Strait into North America, right up to the doorstep of Anchorage, Alaska, it became clear that China and India also had intended these two vast regions to be staging areas for their further military conquests.

And they had.

By that point, Buhpendra had marveled at the progress and felt that the war was all but over...that surely Russia, the United States and their allies must sue for peace.

But he had been wrong.

In the last year, the Americans and Russians had used new high technology innovations and an indomitable will to somehow rally their forces, stand their ground and then force the CAS and GIR armies back. Now it was the GIR and CAS forces themselves who were suffering great setbacks.

Now there were occasional air raid warnings in the Siberian capital. No bombs or missiles had fallen yet, but the very fact that the warnings were being broadcast and that the citizens, including Buhpendra's family, were drilling to take shelter, sent shivers down the Ambassador's spine. It would only be a matter of time before the "exercises" became real.

Based on Buhpendra's own intelligence briefings, which he believed that Foreign Minister Patel—a political animal if there ever was one—was doctoring to appear much more positive than they actually were, Buhpendra knew that the military situation was worsening.

Such thoughts about the kinds of political intrigue that individuals like Patel seemed to spawn never failed to remind him of his old friend, Russian General Andrei Nosik. That Russian General's forces had provided security to the work project Buhpendra had managed for India during the days of the Siberian Economic Treaty, before the outbreak of hostilities.

"Now there was a man who did not have a political bone in his body," Gavanker thought, reminiscing about his old friend.

During their many months working together, Andrei had taught Buhpendra how to read between the lines of the contemptible politicians' statements, and how to form friendships and alliances with those who could give a more accurate picture of what was going on.

Buhpendra had put that knowledge to good use since Andrei and his forces were driven out of Siberia. He had read between the lines...and he had friends who could tap into less formal lines of communication that provided a clearer picture of the overall diplomatic and military situation. As a result, the Ambassador knew that the Americans were pressing into Asia in the east, and the Russians were threatening the Ural mountain regions in the west.

"Perhaps it is time to consider a quiet move back to Madras for Eshy and the boys," he thought.

...and he immediately rejected the idea.

"With Patel looking over my shoulder, and having to ask him for the permission and the funds to accomplish such a move, there would be no hope in keeping it quiet," he thought. "...and then it would breed consequences of its own."

"Perhaps I can find a way to speak discreetly with the President," he opined to himself, knowing that KP Narayannen would arrange for his family's safe and unfettered travel back to India if he knew that Buhpendra was concerned for his family's safety and if they were in imminent danger.

Failing that, Buhpendra Gavanker would not just sit back and wait for the worst. He would prepare a way to ensure his family's safety, while doing what he considered to be his duty to his nation...however he had to go about it.

### **December 9, that same time**

#### **Field Marshall's Command Headquarters**

#### **Kazan, Russia**

The briefing was going just as he liked them. Punctual, to the point and with absolutely no hint of what the Americans would call brown-nosing.

Field Marshall Andrei Kosik was not the type of General who led from the rear, or who would ever be comfortable sitting in the plush offices of the Kremlin—and since the destruction of the Kremlin in last year's fighting it wouldn't be possible anyway—rubbing shoulders with political officers and issuing orders that were as much based on how one could advance his career, or impress the President, as they were based on what was best for the Rodina. He had made his feelings in that regard very clear to President Putin when he had been selected to lead all Russian ground forces in the war against their enemies in the CAS and the GIR.

So here he was, less than fifty miles behind the front lines, working directly with the generals leading the Russian army groups...many of whom would rather be much further behind the lines...and with the generals leading the divisions within those army groups. Planning with the roar of mechanized units in the background and the screech of jet aircraft passing overhead. In an environment where the accountability and responsibility of the decisions made could not only be appreciated, they could be felt and heard...right down to the tips of your boots.

Catching the eye of the American Colonel, who was here as an advisor and as a liaison between the Russian high command and the small but very powerful American light division that was traveling with the central army group, the Russian 23<sup>rd</sup> Army, the General spoke.

“Colonel Evans, please brief the command staff on the current disposition of your American Hail Storm missiles and the new Patriot batteries your forces have with them.

“Also, if you please, what is the status and planning for getting an American space station platform up over eastern Russia?”

“I am interested in the capabilities of the lasers we know are operating from those platforms against Chinese, Indian, or GIR ballistic missiles. The Patriots are great...but they are not a seamless defense. I am hoping that the laser capabilities of those platforms are as effective in the atmosphere as our observers have indicated they are in space.”

Colonel Barry Evans had been handpicked for this assignment by the Chief of the U.S. Army, and he had been interviewed by the President of the United States at the time, Norm Weisskopf, immediately before departing for Russia. He had completed his doctorate in advanced Russian studies, held a Masters degree in orbital mechanics and had graduated at the top of his class in mechanical engineering...at West Point.

Bright, engaging, and a natural leader, he was also a proven combat officer who was an expert marksman, and who proudly wore the ribbons and emblems of a qualified and combat-experienced Ranger paratrooper. He had joined General Nosik’s staff immediately after the great victory near Moscow last year. He had seen Nosik’s brilliant leadership as the Russian and European armies, gratefully assisted by America’s single high-technology, joint services division, pushed the Chinese and Indian masses east towards the Urals, and the GIR armies south towards the Black Sea.

Evans knew that the Field Marshall understood and greatly appreciated the advantage that the American Hail Storm missiles afforded his joint command, and he understood that Nosik also was very capable of making the best use of them. He had seen it over and over again, knowing that the Russian pushed for a higher allotment of the missiles to his effort, but knowing that he would make masterful use of whatever resource he did have.

“Field Marshall, we have just received two hundred of the Block 3 Hail Storm missiles.

“They have a 60 kilometer longer range, are capable of 25% more loiter time over the target area, have enhanced active stealth capabilities, and are now capable of varying their own fire rate and munitions muzzle velocity based on over five hundred pre-programmed target profiles as opposed to the eighty target profiles of Block 2 missiles.

“Three new Patriot Block VIA missile batteries and kits for five upgrades to the Block VIA standard have just arrived here in Kazan in the last thirty-six hours, flown in by Globe Master transports. This will allow us to complete upgrades to all existing batteries and will give us a total of twenty-four batteries for the Russian theater of operations—enough to cover your entire eastern and southern front—but only enough for single-layer coverage in that wide an area.

“If we want depth, we have to look at major and secondary threat axis, and defend accordingly.

“For more area coverage, we are now completing and manning three land-based AEGIS VLS cells around Kazan, although the sites for these missiles are fixed compared to the Patriot batteries.

“They are the latest upgrade and they provide very adequate coverage out to Theater range...of course their effectiveness is greater at closer ranges, and particularly if the area targeted by the enemy is not more than twenty degrees off the azimuth of the location of the battery.

“These three cells now mean that Kazan, Kirov, Gorkiy and Saratov are all covered, in addition to the Moscow coverage already in place. Between these point locations and the Patriot batteries, your forces are now amongst the best defended against ballistic missile attack—certainly the equal of any of our other allies—and in many cases, better defended than many of our own forces.”

The Colonel intentionally stopped at this point, knowing that he was not authorized or in a position to go into the Field Marshall’s other request...hoping that the good news he had just shared would generate conversation and planning that would help him avoid those questions.

But the Field Marshall did not ask questions only to see them go unanswered.

“This is excellent news, Colonel, and you will have to pass our appreciation on to your superiors...particularly your new President, who has impressed us all in a very short time.

“Now please cover the timing and planning for the laser-armed space station and the capabilities of its laser systems as regards atmospheric interception of ballistic missiles.”

Andrei Nosik knew that the Colonel did not want to respond...that he did not want to be placed in a situation in which his options were either to disappoint his hosts, with whom he was doing his best to help defeat the common enemy...or to fudge and see if he could get around what undoubtedly were strict orders regarding information about America’s new secret weapons.

“Field Marshall, you know that I cannot go into specific details on what little I do know of the space stations, their scheduling and their weapons capability. I do not have the “need to know” for a lot of it...and I am constrained on the rest.

“You also know that I will help you in any way I possibly can to enhance your efforts against our enemies. So I can say this:

“America’s National Command Authority, our President, has made it very clear, and very public, that its first order of business is defeating the Chinese gains in the Pacific and bringing direct pressure against the Dragon from that quarter.

“As we clear the sea lanes and increase direct operations against mainland China, they will respond. That will relieve pressure in other areas and weaken the enemy so that our allied forces can exploit those opportunities in their area of operations.

“It is likely that the next station will go up over the Pacific... though there are good arguments for positioning over southern Europe or the Mediterranean. I’m certain that your government will make the case diplomatically through the U.S. State Department... and through your own military channels.

“Since I represent one of those channels, I will relay your preference and its reasoning.”

Again the Colonel stopped, pausing in the hopes that Nosik would have had enough... and again the Field Marshall would not let him off the hook.

“And what of the laser capability?”

Smiling now because he knew that he would have to find a way to walk the tightrope... and knowing that the Field Marshall understood this and wanted him to do so, the Colonel continued.

“I cannot share with you the exact performance parameters of the weapons on the Conception station or the new Southern Star station that has been announced to now be operating over Australia.

“I do not know the parameters myself and believe that the numbers of those individuals who do know them is relatively small... and very well compartmentalized.

“However, I do have some expertise in the area myself and I can share with you my own conjecture. The laser capabilities will be based upon the power source, the beam wavelength, and the atmospheric conditions at the time of the shoot.

“Without a truly massive power supply—something probably larger than would fit on a station the size of those in orbit, it is not likely that those lasers will have sufficient strength to reach deep into the atmosphere and destroy hardened warheads... particularly if there is any cloud cover at all.

“As a result, short of some technological breakthrough in miniaturization that I am unaware of—which is always possible in circumstances like this—I doubt that the current stations are going to be capable of helping us much with ballistic missile attacks here on the ground.

“Now those lasers can be quite effective against long-range ballistic tracks that actually reach near orbital altitudes. In that case, or in self-defense where missiles are entering space to attack them, they probably have effective ranges measured in the many hundreds of miles.

“That is the best information I can share with you regarding the topic. I believe that the Block 3 Hail Storm missiles and our latest Patriot batteries coupled with the AEGIS sites are going to be much more effective for you.”

Andrei Nosik knew that the Colonel was right, but believed he could make use of the Space Stations just the same... although not in the way that either Colonel Evans or the Chinese and their allies might envision.

Sun Tsu would best appreciate what Andrei Nosik was considering, and Andrei found that very ironic... and very satisfying.

**December 16, 09:29 EDT**

**Situation Room, the White House**

**Washington, D.C.**

The Vice President was increasingly confident in the executive team that the President had assembled over the last few months.

Fred Reisinger respected the quiet, resolute and effective job John Bowers had done as the National Security Advisor to President Weisskopf. His regard for Bowers grew as he observed him. Bowers had, at first reluctantly, but very capably, filled the shoes of Alan Reeves as Weisskopf’s Vice President after Reeves had been killed in the initial Chinese attacks.

But the esteem and respect he held for Bowers were climbing to their highest levels as a result of how the young President was now conducting the nation’s affairs in the absence of Norm Weisskopf. Reisinger knew that the new President’s conduct of the war and his adroit hand at the nation’s helm increasingly inspired those in the administration as well as on both sides of the aisle in Congress.

After the tragic death of his friend and President at the hands of their enemies, Fred Reisinger had seriously considered informing the new President that he would serve out his term until January, and then retire as soon after that date as the President could find a replacement. But before he could find the time alone with the President to deliver that message, John Bowers had come to him and asked him to serve as his own Vice President.

In the midst of the ongoing crisis, with the country still in desperate need of firm and unshakable leadership—and Fred himself being a 110% loyal American patriot—there had been no way Fred Reisinger could refuse. Like almost all of the soldiers who were fighting, Fred found that he was in this thing for the duration, and he willingly acceded to the President’s request.

Now, as this special meeting of both the international and Homeland Security teams continued into its third hour, where he and several others were joining the meeting by secure video conference,

Fred was once again glad to be surrounded by people of such high caliber, all committed to a calling higher than themselves.

*"Who more than self their country loved,"* were the words that came to his mind.

The President was speaking.

"I can't emphasize to you how critical it is to maintain the gains that we have achieved of late.

"The victories have been expensive... but we knew they would be. There are those who will count the expense and indicate that we should have accepted the Chinese offer in July after all.

"But every person sitting in this room knows that the cost of such an acceptance would have been far higher than what we are paying now. It is a price in terms of trust and faith, in terms of our way of life and in terms of history that this administration was, and continues to be, unwilling to pay.

"...and in the long run it would have been much more expensive in terms of lives when these rabid enemies came at us again after they were good and rested and in a geo-political and economic position that would have been almost unassailable.

"So we must persevere and continue. And I have to say that we are making good progress. If we can keep it up...if we can maintain it...in another eighteen months or so we will be in a position from which I believe we can dictate the unconditional surrender of our enemies...and they will accept it.

"Jeremy, fill us all in on the latest regarding our second space station launch and in terms of our efforts in space."

Jeremy Stone was an old war horse. He had been a soldier all of his adult life. He viewed his current position as Secretary of Defense as a political position...as a necessary evil. It was necessary because he was irrevocably committed to his nation's foundational premise that the nation's military was always to be under civil command authority. He viewed it as an evil because of the politics that necessarily came along with that premise.

But he was a good soldier and he supported his President completely. He supported his judgment; he supported his maturity; he supported his instincts...his honor and his integrity. He knew that John Bowers was open to good counsel and that he sought it in his decision-making. And he knew he, Jeremy Stone, could impart some of that counsel to the President.

Knowing this—not in a vainglorious manner, but simply in understanding the applicability and need for his own experience—Jeremy had agreed to serve as Secretary of Defense. That acceptance had then opened the door for Admiral Ben Ryan to be promoted to the post of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, which he had just vacated.

"Mr. President, the launch and assembly have gone according to schedule, but not without opposition. The Chinese continue to try to bring both the USSS Conception and the USSS Southern Star down, launching considerable attacks at them both. But they have failed in their attempts, and the Southern Star is on station and keeping a watchful eye over the entire Australian theater of operations.

"As long as the Chinese continue to use their kinetic weapons, launched from ground, and as long as they use long-range missiles as they have done, we feel confident that both stations will weather the storm. An added benefit is that the Chinese are expending substantial resources and effort, which they would otherwise apply somewhere else.

"They know that these stations are returning to us the tremendous advantage of having space-based surveillance where they do not. Our advantage is not yet as widespread as it was prior to the war...but we'll get there. And each new piece of information that we obtain is making a huge difference in our opportunities for success.

"It's just too bad that we are still five months out from the next launch, and then three more before the one after that. But that is the way it is. Anything we launch that does not have the level of defense that these craft have is going to be most likely shot down before it can arrive on station and perform whatever function we establish for it.

"But regret is a useless emotion..." the Secretary observed in a tone bordering on pensiveness.

The President took Secretary Stone's brief pause as an opportunity to interject.

"What about the decision as to where the next station will be? Fill everyone here in on that."

The new Secretary of Defense was happy to address this in front of the entire group. There was a political aspect to this that he wanted to encourage, and he felt that he could accomplish that here.

"Well, Mr. President, the decision has boiled down to two principle contenders for our attention: one over the central Pacific where we can obtain oblique coverage all the way to the Philippines and Japanese Islands, and the other over the Eastern Mediterranean, where we can obliquely cover Moscow to Tehran and down into North Africa.

"There are significant diplomatic and political efforts being exerted to influence the decision. State will have to be involved...but I see those as our two most advantageous choices."

The President caught the inference and felt he knew where Stone was going with it.

"Jeremy, explain to the group what the most important military consideration is for the location of this next station in terms of prosecuting the war effort?"

The old General silently thanked God that the President had responded in this way...it was exactly what he hoped for and it allowed him to cut through to the heart of the matter.

“Mr. President, China is by far the greatest threat to our forces and our nation. Putting that bird over the Pacific is what will help us hurt and push back the Chinese the most.”

There was no pause. There was no equivocation.

“Then that probably makes the decision for us. Short of something more compelling, the next station will go up over the Pacific,” the President responded, without hesitation.

“Anyone have a different take than the one the Secretary of Defense has just shared?”

“Other opinions? Fred? ... Sam?”

The President knew that Fred Reissinger and the new Secretary of State, Sam Loper, might have diplomatic reasons to consider a different alternative and he wanted to make sure that they had a chance to air them.

In fact, Fred Reissinger, as the former Secretary of State, could think of several reasons that allies, particularly Russia, Israel and perhaps the United Kingdom, would give for parking a station over the eastern Mediterranean, and they were based on more than diplomatic concerns.

Speaking from his secure location at Camp David, the Vice President addressed the meeting. “Mr. President, the liberation of Turkey on Sayeed’s doorstep would occur more surely and quickly if a station were located there...and the Russian offensive against the Chinese would benefit greatly.”

Seeing Sam Loper, the new Secretary of State, sitting near the National Security Advisor, Fred asked, “Sam, what do you think?”

Sam had been Fred Reissinger’s recommendation when the President had asked him who he thought should replace him. After meeting with Sam and reviewing his background, the President had come to the same conclusion. Loper had a distinguished career of over twenty-three years working within the State Department, spending well over half of that time in the field, particularly in eastern European nations and the nations of the Mid East.

“Mr. President, Russia, Israel, and the exiled government of Turkey...which by the way has taken up offices in Adana in the last five days...along with several of our European allies, notably Germany...have all contacted us directly over this issue. They are all expressing their strong desire to have our next space station positioned over the eastern Mediterranean.

“They all feel that the result of having such a strategic military advantage in the area, coupled with our Hail Storm missile technology and our growing naval advantage, would result in a much more rapid defeat the Greater Islamic Republic.

“In Russia’s case, they feel that a breakthrough in the Urals would accomplish the same thing we are seeking to do in the Pacific...with much the same results.

“They feel that that if we can continue to make gains in Australia using the most recent station, and then make some gains in the central Pacific with our growing allied strength there until the next station is positioned, we will quickly reach a point with either the GIR defeated, or a Russian breakthrough into Siberia, where the CAS has to fight against our vastly superior forces on both their eastern and western borders.”

The President carefully considered this alternative. He had requested that all scenarios be played out in the war colleges to determine whether a U.S. focus on China would end the war more quickly and with less loss of life...or whether a focused effort on the GIR or Siberia would make the desired outcome occur more quickly.

“Jeremy, do you and Ben have anything to say to these comments from our allies in Europe and the Mid East, and the requests and recommendations they are making?”

Ben Ryan, who had only a few days earlier arrived in Washington after making a smooth transition of CINCPAC to his successor, indicated he did have something to say.

“Mr. President, Mr. Vice President, and Mr. Secretary of State...with all due respect to our allies. As dangerous as the cumulative power of the GIR is, and as dangerous as India’s masses and technical capabilities are, it is clear that the Chinese are our most serious adversary.

“We simply must apply maximum pressure against the Chinese while we continue our efforts in the Mid East, in Africa, in Central and South America and in helping our allies in Europe. The best place to do that is in the Pacific with the triple axis approach we are conducting.

“The greater threat we pose to the Chinese, the more resources they will be forced to turn towards us and the less they will be able to export to their allies. Make no mistake—despite the capabilities and resources of the GIR and India, the most serious technological threats are represented by what they are receiving in the way of exports and license builds from the Chinese.

“We see this over and over again on the battlefield...on land, in the air, and on the sea.

“I cannot emphasize enough, from a military perspective, how critical it is to maintain the pressure on the Chinese in the Pacific...to keep them from having the time or the resources to further consolidate their holdings or develop counters to the advantages we are bringing to bear.

“Those are my thoughts.”

Jeremy Stone had listened to his subordinate and friend carefully. He was content to let the words Ben Ryan had spoken pretty much stand for him as well. A few well spoken word, sometimes created the greatest impact. So he simply added his own closing comments to Ben’s well-chosen words.

“Mr. President, I concur with Ben. He has summed up our wisest choice, and he has done so very succinctly.

“The GIR and India are capable of putting up stiff fights against us. China has already shown that, if we give her the time, if we allow her to build her resources, if we do not keep increasing pressure on her—she is still capable of defeating us.

“I agree that the best place that either we or our allies can apply the pressure is in the Pacific.”

The President did not take long to consider the alternatives. He was determined and felt that America must press the advantage against their principle antagonists, the Chinese, without pause.

“Jeremy and Ben, I agree.

“Proceed with the necessary orders and planning to put this next bird up over the central Pacific.

“Fred, work with Sam to explain this delicate, difficult decision to our allies and then make the firm commitment to them that the fourth one will go up over the eastern Med. This assignment requires your time and wise attention. Our allies need to fully understand our reasoning here.

“In fact, unless I miss my guess, by that time, they will probably be asking us to advance the location out over southern Siberia, Arabia or the Indian Ocean. I believe our allies will make those kinds of gains in any case.

The President then turned to his National Security Advisor, Bill Hendrickson.

“Bill, I know you’ve been working heavily with Secretary Stone’s people and with NASA. Please give us a briefing about how L&C II is proceeding.”

By L&C II, the President was referring to the new acronym that had been universally adopted by both the national and military leadership for the deep space mission out beyond Mars, the Lewis and Clark Expedition II.

“Mr. President, the mission is now eight days ahead of schedule in terms of the initial flight time. They are well over halfway to their objective and are now well beyond the orbit of Mars.

“We expect that they will be on station by mid-February, and will then spend two to three months gathering material, testing it and then preparing for their return trip to earth.

“At that point, if their return voyage goes as well as the outbound trip, we can expect them back at Point Conception with their cargo by early autumn of next year. Once there, after another six to eight weeks of final calibration and material forming, they should be able to begin the planned...”

As the National Security Advisor continued, a number of the people in attendance couldn’t help but notice that discussions of this nature seemed so surreal. Despite the fact that they had planned for, worked for and had visions of this day for several years, now that it was actually happening it almost seemed like a dream. The perfecting of the laser technology, the miniaturization of the powerful nuclear plants, the nuclear pulse SSTO boosting, and particularly the light sail propulsion—all developed under the tightest iron clad secrecy—had been topics for science fiction novels to this point in history. Now it had become scientific reality. It was a large concept to swallow, and it served to make them all extremely proud of the American scientific community.

John Bowers was amazed by the achievement, and he saw a visionary potential for it beyond the current circumstances. Without them realizing what his full intentions were at this point, he was already working with the budgetary and oversight committees in Congress, the scientific and business communities, and with NASA to develop the groundwork that would bring that vision to fruition.

Norm Weisskopf had wisely embraced this bold, expensive, and risky scheme as an avenue to end the war more quickly and convincingly. Now John Bowers was going to take the ball the former President had handed him and not only make sure that the critical and paramount military goal was achieved...he was also going to make sure that the United States continued to use the proven technology to press further outward into space after the war.

As far as he was concerned, it was well past time that America and the free world push on towards the full scientific and economic development of space. He felt inspired to move towards establishing a permanent presence on the moon, and then on Mars and Phobos—perhaps one day even on the distant Galilean satellites.

It was inspiration...planning and dreaming on a grand scale.

“But it is inspiration whose realization must wait on the more pressing issues that lie before us,” he thought as Bill Hendrickson continued.

“Everything in its turn. We can perhaps plan and prepare to one degree or another for some of these far reaching goals now...but we will not begin to accomplish them until we rid the world of these rogue regimes and the hell they have created here on earth.

“...and when we do, perhaps then we can gaze outward and begin to move in that direction with the other sovereign, independent, free constitutional Republics.”

Those thoughts crystallized the President’s thinking...and his commitment. In a flash of enlightenment, he understood what he had to do, and how he was going to go about doing it.

At the end of Bill Hendrickson’s briefing, the meeting was opened for discussion. It was an upbeat discussion, full of optimism and hope...full of a spirit of accomplishment and an almost boundless horizon for American ingenuity.



The President bided his time during the discussion, listening to all of the comments and recommendations. Most of the participants were already aware of the President's basic position regarding the space program, not only for the war effort, but his general longer-term desires.

But the plans were no longer general in nature. The President had made an epoch decision in the course of this meeting, one that would entail a monumental goal and challenge to the American people...indeed, to all of the free peoples of the world.

President Bowers decided to share it with the members of his security council.

He motioned to get everyone's attention.

"This has been a great discussion...stimulating and enlightening. With our freedoms, with our faith and the support of Providence, there is nothing worthwhile we can't accomplish.

"Let me just outline to you another decision I have been seriously contemplating during this morning's meeting, in addition to the one regarding the placement of the next space station.

"It is a decision that would couple our ultimate victory in this conflict with even more far-reaching effects afterwards.

"The decision that I am contemplating as the President of the United States is this.

"At the conclusion of this war, I want us to seriously consider and move towards committing our nation to a far-reaching goal in space research and exploration that will establish a basic identity, purpose and challenge for our people. After this war is won, and in conjunction with the research, development and manufacturing efforts we will have made to win it, we will then proceed to not only maintain those efforts, we will use a large portion of the mobilization of our production, manpower and technology infrastructure to accelerate them.

"I know that during the reconstruction and rebuilding efforts that we will be expending on behalf of our allies and other people of the world, this will be a monumental effort, but as a nation I feel we should make the firm commitment to have a permanent, manned installation on the moon within five years of the end of hostilities, followed by a permanent manned installation on Mars five years later. By permanent I mean something more than just habitable but dependant on re-supply from Earth. By permanent I mean installations that are self-sustaining in terms of basic air, water and food supply.

"I see the decade following this war as a decade in which mankind, led by the free and principled leadership of the United States, moves out into the solar system...to the asteroids and the Saturn and Jupiter systems to develop the wealth of information and resources that lie there waiting for us.

"I believe it is another of America's manifest destinies...that our solar system, and space in general, beckon to us just as the great American west beckoned more than two centuries ago.

"Americans have always been a people who yearn to discover what God has created...what is simply out there *waiting to be discovered*...and to *use* those discoveries for the benefit of all mankind. That is one of the noble characteristics that has separated us from other civilizations. I believe that, once we have defeated the evil that is represented by our adversaries in this war, it is incumbent upon us to use the technological advances that we have obtained in our war efforts in a more historically positive and constructive way.

"By committing ourselves to this enterprise we will take the will and the drive with which we are prosecuting this war effort and further apply it towards expanding into space. In so doing, I believe we shall see miraculous strides forward in our lifetimes...and our grandchildren will inherit the stars.

"Such an enterprise will allow us, along with our allies, to extend the true free market that we establish amongst freedom and peace loving nations here on earth, and advance it into space.

"Some might claim that I am putting the cart before the horse by envisioning such achievements even before we have been victorious in this war effort. But I want all of you to know that what I am envisioning is evidence of two things: my confidence that we and our allies will eventually prevail, and my belief that we will use our uniquely American ingenuity and goodness to turn the scientific components of a once horrific global situation into promise for the future of all mankind.

"This administration, if nothing else, will be marked by two great accomplishments.

"First and foremost, we shall focus all of our energies towards bringing this war to a successful and victorious conclusion...and we shall achieve this goal. This has been the most horrific and widespread war in mankind's history. In winning it...in completing the work begun by Norm Weisskopf, we will make the world safe again for liberty and republican governments everywhere.

"Second, following that triumph, and utilizing the capabilities associated with achieving it, we will initiate mankind's drive into space, with America's principled leadership and example pointing the way in what will be an unprecedented, historic, and tremendously positive effort that will serve to further unite the free nations of the earth.

"Our current efforts in space are rightly meant to lead us to victory over our enemies' tyrannical regimes. Regimes who would destroy all peace, who would eradicate all freedom and who would forever extinguish the ability to achieve any worthwhile prosperity based on the enduring values of individual liberty, responsibility, and freedom governed by individual moral restraint.

"...and our efforts *shall* accomplish that aim, which will end with the eradication of those regimes and their abettors from the face of the earth.

“As we proceed down that path, I wanted you to know exactly what my long term view includes. In addition to winning the war and helping to rebuild all that has been lost...it will most definitely include the commitments I have shared with you here at the end of our meeting. Please keep those commitments in mind as we move forward. We will discuss them with greater frequency, and in more and more detail as we progress towards victory, and as circumstance warrant it.

“Again, I thank each of you for your part in this meeting.”

## Chapter 37

*"A man, Sir, should keep his friendships in constant repair." - Samuel Johnson*

### Christmas Day - Brasilia, Brazil

Maldonado picked up the extension, surprised at the unannounced and unscheduled call from John Bowers, the President of the United States. She hoped that nothing had gone terribly wrong in the war effort. In the few seconds before the call, her advisors had not alluded to anything of that sort...at least nothing that current intelligence was aware of.

But you never knew.

"Yes, this is Henrietta Maldonado, Mr. President. It is a pleasant surprise to hear from you.

"Well, thank you very much, Mr. President. Merry Christmas to you as well.

"It is wonderful to speak to you, and I will convey those wishes and thoughts on to my entire cabinet and the people of Brazil.

"Yes.

"That is correct, Mr. President, and thank you for making mention of it. We take a great pride in our troops and their accomplishments in the foreign deployments we have made outside of South America, in Africa, and in Australia as well.

"It is.

"Yes, things are going well here on the continent also. Not as quickly as we would like in Argentina after the latest influx of Chinese troops, but ahead of our projections.

"Thank you.

"You know, I must say that, in addition to the overwhelming numbers you are providing in Australia and in Africa and elsewhere in the world, your efforts in Panama, now that the Canal Zone is once again in American hands, have truly bolstered us. The ability to now place much more pressure on the enemy from the north in Colombia and your special forces' achievements in Venezuela have been nothing short of extraordinary.

"Oh, no need, Mr. President.

"Believe me, those sentiments come directly from the field, Mr. President and are conveyed through me. Please pass them on to your own military leaders and particularly those in Panama, Colombia and Venezuela.

"Yes, I understand. I will.

"Before we finish, I must also convey to you the thanks of all of the Brazilian people for you, your government's, and your people's generosity to our people here in Brazil. The food, the equipment, the weaponry, and the technical assistance in rebuilding and improving areas torn by this war have been God-sent...and we thank you all for being the instrument in His hands.

"Why thank you, John. God bless you and your people as well.

"Once again, Merry Christmas.

"Goodbye."

As she hung up the phone, she was amazed at the time that the President of the United States had taken with her personally.

There at the end, he had addressed her by name, as a friend—as an equal partner in this fight. There was a unique combination of strength, warmth and humility in his demeanor. And she would never forget the effect it had on her. It was a trait that apparently Norm Weiskopf had either passed on, or had sought in his Vice President, and Henrietta was comforted that John Bowers possessed a genuine warmth and thoughtfulness just as innately as his remarkable predecessor.

...and, thinking now on its impact on her, she decided to pass it on. Picking up the phone she had just used, she contacted her own Chief of Staff.

"Alfonso, please schedule three calls for this morning.

"I know they are not on my schedule, but I am asking you to put them there. About fifteen minutes each.

"I want to speak to the Presidents of Peru, Chile, and Ecuador this morning."

### Christmas Day, Presidential Retreat - outside of Moscow

Vladimir Putin thought back on the call he had received from John Bowers as he played with his grandchildren in this warm, comfortable and secure retreat deep in the forest outside of Moscow. The call had been unscheduled and unannounced...but not entirely unexpected.

"The Americans are very sentimental about such things during this season," the President thought, "and well they should be.

"Their faith has sustained them throughout their history, and has helped sustain others.

"Despite the years of mistrust, antipathy and 'cold' warfare...that faith is helping to sustain us during this conflict as well."

And he had to admit, since Communism had been overthrown, the traditional feelings of goodwill and faith at this time of year, so long suppressed by the Communist party...had blossomed again and were very evident all over Russia.

"In fact, if anything, the sentimentality here is even stronger," he reflected. "We never reached a point before this war began where the season was as commercialized as in the United States."

Just the same, the call had been pleasing, even refreshing, at a time when the rigors and concerns of all-out war still completely occupied him, as the leader of the Russian Federation.

In Putin's eyes, John Bowers was shaping up to be a very capable leader. He had great vitality due to his relative youth, and he as was driven as Weisskopf had been, and that was saying a lot.

As he reflected on the call, he was amazed at how friendly and how personable the President had come across to him. The call had, in fact, been a personal one...not laden with the usual formal speech of diplomacy or negotiations.

And yet, Putin realized that John Bowers had accomplished some important diplomacy and negotiating during the call. He had reaffirmed America's intentions with respect to their space station deployment—intentions that were not aligned with what the Russian Federation had desired. He had reassured the Russian President regarding America's unwavering support for the Rodina, promising specific quantities of troops, weapons systems, food, agricultural equipment, and technical assistance.

"And he had done it all with a call that I will always remember as a wish for me and my own family to enjoy a 'Merry Christmas'...amazing!" concluded the Russian President.

And as it had done with Henrietta Maldonado, the call inspired Vladimyr Putin to make several calls of his own...to pass on the faith, cheer, friendship and support from one allied leader to another.

### **Christmas Day, The Oval Office - Washington, D.C.**

After a day of contacting all of the major allied leaders and extending them the heartfelt feelings and wishes of the season, and then bolstering them with the firm assurances of America's support—the President prepared to make his most important address, to the American people.

Through most of his life, he had never thought of himself as much of a public speaker. Oh, he could issue the orders and directives necessary to fulfill whatever goals his superiors in the military or civilian life had outlined for him. And he was strong at developing and implementing the plans necessary to accomplish those directives.

But, until he had been appointed into high public office, he had not been required to speak in front of large numbers of people.

Then, starting with his appointment as the National Security Advisor to President Weisskopf, all of that had changed. He had tried to avoid public appearances as much as possible, but with world conditions degrading, the responsibilities of his office increasingly required him to articulate the administration's positions on national security via television, radio, and at public events.

As Vice President, his spoken words were increasingly in demand, particularly as America had suffered so many setbacks in the early years of the war. In addition, President Weisskopf's plan for using the leadership to rally the morale of the American people continued to this day, in the face of persistent enemy attacks.

While John Bowers was still a rather reluctant public speaker, believing that he lacked a natural flair for it, reality belied his own feelings on the matter. He was inspiring in his sincerity while communicating his thoughts and his goals in a compelling, heartfelt manner. If asked how he so smoothly transitioned from a *behind-the-scenes* man into an *in-the-public-view* man, he would simply state that somehow God had filled in the gaps and given his thoughts voice, and that accounted for it.

And perhaps it had.

Either way, as the cameras came on, and the President looked into the one directly in front of his desk, he knew he was looking into the heart and soul of America and of free people everywhere as he started his Christmas speech.

"Good evening my fellow Americans, and good evening to all of our friends and allies watching throughout the world.

"Merry Christmas to each of you, and a particular wish for a Merry Christmas to all of our military service personnel stationed throughout the world on this special day. For all of us, no matter what our role, I trust that, even in the current hardships of war that we all face, the spirit of the Christmas season abides with all. That the great example of selflessness, sharing, giving, healing, unity, perseverance, and sacrifice fills your hearts as it does my own, and that of my family.

"Tonight I bring you a message based upon those traditional and foundational Christmas principles. It is a message filled with hope and progress in this war, and one filled with the promise of a bright future that we can now glimpse on the far horizon.

"Though the dark clouds and rough seas still make the journey perilous, I am confident that we are steadily progressing toward the light along the horizon dispelling the storms of these past years.

"Let me share with you why I believe this.

"Tonight, except for a few miles just north of the juncture of the Isthmus of Panama and South America, all of Central America had been freed of the tyranny of Chinese and CAS forces. Although

the locks have been destroyed by the retreating Chinese forces, the Panama Canal is once again firmly in American hands, and it will remain that way perpetually.

"Tonight I can say to you that the Caribbean has been cleared of enemy forces. Cuba has been completely pacified, her people freed from dictatorial oppression, and her leaders brought to American justice. Along with other prominent terrorist leaders who have already been captured and sentenced in American military tribunals, those leaders will have their sentences carried out on January 1st of the coming year, less than a week away. All other Chinese and other enemy forces and facilities in the Bahamas have long since been defeated and occupied by American forces.

"In South America the war effort is progressing favorably. Venezuela has been completely cut off from resupply or reinforcement by our air, land and sea forces. Venezuelan, Chinese and remaining Panamanian forces there are now confined to rough terrain and dense jungle areas along the northeastern coast. American, Colombian, and Brazilian forces have them surrounded there. In Colombia, enemy forces are fractured, but continue fighting fiercely in pockets in the densely forested highlands, but they are without hope of assistance from either CAS or CASAS forces.

"The only area of South America where enemy forces continue to maintain any advantage is in Argentina. Brazilian and other allied South American forces have been thwarted from making headway there since the Chinese shifted their major South American focus to that region. Over eight hundred thousand Chinese troops, some from northern sections of the continent and others who arrived there in Chinese convoys and aircraft, reinforced and bolstered Argentine forces to the point of stopping Brazilian, Ecuadorian, and Peruvian advances, and in many areas, throwing them back.

"Tonight I am announcing the formation of a large American expeditionary force to assist the Brazilians in defeating the last vestiges of Chinese power and tyranny in Argentina. We will continue to assist our freedom loving friends and allies in South America until that task is accomplished, and their lands are free of this blight that threatens the peace, prosperity, and liberty of all people.

"In Africa, the three-year aim of allied forces of driving a pincer at the underside of GIR and Chinese forces that have been assaulting Israel from Egypt has finally been realized. Using a coalition of free African states, coupled with Brazilian, American, and English forces, we have broken through enemy defense forces in Chad and driven hard up under the principle GIR forces in Egypt. At the same time, joint Israeli, American, and English forces have broken through enemy defenses in the Sinai and have now retaken the Suez Canal and crossed over into Egypt. Five days ago these two allied forces met and joined together one hundred miles south of Cairo on the Nile River, successfully splitting enemy forces in the area. At this hour, GIR forces are in retreat across the western desert of Egypt toward Libya, while Chinese forces are retreating to the south towards Ethiopia.

"In Asia, the Chinese invasion of Alaska has been repulsed and Chinese forces in far eastern Siberia have now been defeated. It has been a costly campaign and we still must deal with the entire southern two-thirds of the Kamchatka Peninsula. At Magadan, where a large portion of our forces staged, though Chinese attacks are continuing there on a frequent basis, the tide of battle has turned. The original purpose of our invasion of Magadan has been realized. Now the large forces that have steadily built up there, coupled with those pouring out of Alaska, will focus on consolidating the strong foothold we have established on the mainland of Asia. Once that consolidation is accomplished, we will extend our foothold to the east to threaten the Chinese homeland directly. It will be a threat the Chinese cannot ignore.

"My fellow Americans, tonight I am proud to be able to announce that in Australia, allied forces from America, England, Australia, and the many exiled nations of the Pacific and Asia are making steady, hard-fought progress against monumental numbers of Chinese and Indian forces. We are liberating the continent, but it is not an easy fight, and it is not yet accomplished. Enemy military forces are being bolstered by a tenacious citizens' militia comprised of millions of Indian and Chinese immigrants who have been given land in the area, brutally displacing the former and rightful inhabitants. The further north and eastward we push, the more difficult the battles become as those inhabitants occupying the land for two to three years now consider it their own.

"Well, that land is not their own. And we say to these people that they will have to relinquish it and lay down their arms or be treated as enemy combatants. Despite their resistance, with our space-based surveillance, and with a plentiful supply of Hail Storm missiles coming off of our production lines, along with all of the other implements of modern warfare, we are steadily pushing the enemy back. As of tonight, the line of advance extends from Townsville on the northwestern coast, across the Dividing range to Hughenden, from there on a line south across the Great Artesian Basin and to the west of the Grey Range to the Darling River in New South Wales and from there, following the Darling River to the coast, where our forces have just finished liberating Ardelaid in South Australia. Over 20% of Australia is once again free. The day will come when all of Australia will be freed from the oppressive yoke of tyranny.

"In Europe, hard fought progress is also being made. European Union armies, assisted by our own forces, have driven the GIR out of the Balkans and are now fighting fiercely along the western borders of Greece against Greek and GIR forces. All of central Europe has been liberated all the way to the Ural mountains where Russian, European and American forces are preparing for a great

offensive against that natural defensive barrier that Chinese and Indian troops have strengthened into what they are calling the Ural line. They will soon find that such a static defense, manned by the forces of oppression, cannot hold against the forces of liberty.

“Other Russian and European forces have pushed to the south, pushing GIR forces, who are retreating to the south in an effort to link up with their forces in the Middle East. Our allies are now about to break through GIR defenses in Georgia and threaten GIR Turkey from the north.

“In the Middle East, American, Israeli, and English forces have defeated GIR armed forces in Syria and Saudi Arabia, cutting off the southern Arabian Peninsula and penetrating deeply into the former Iraq. American and exiled Turkish forces have established a strong foothold in Turkey around Adana and have progressed to the north and east of there, entering Iraq on the north near Mosul. GIR forces have retreated from Baghdad and now allied forces from the south and American forces from the north have linked up there in the former Iraqi capital where many of the citizens have welcomed us, and are looking forward to the institutions of a democratic republic being once again established amongst them. Our forces are now facing stiff resistance in the mountainous northeastern Iraq all the way down to the Persian Gulf along all approaches into the heart of the GIR, the former Iran.

“My fellow citizens, these are all tremendous gains and have all been made in the year that has passed since the great military victories at Anchorage, Moscow, and in Israel. The actual gains in Australia have been made over the last four months.

“I must add that all of this is also occurring only a little more than a year since the miraculous moral victory that we experienced here at home, when nation’s turned away from the culture of death that had reigned for decades and re-embraced life and the moral foundations of our heritage.

“At that time, President Weisskopf urged America to remember the more important moral victory because it lays the groundwork for all other victories and gives them meaning. I have memorized a portion of his words from that speech and would like to recite them to you this evening. I believe that they should be written on every American’s heart and soul.

*“Let us remember the date of October 12<sup>th</sup>, Columbus Day, a true day of discovery, a day of self discovery, when an even more important focal point in the history of our nation and our people was reached. Through the Supreme Court ruling of that day, the legal sanction of the evil growing in our own hearts was dealt an even more stunning blow.*

*“As a result. I am compelled to believe that Providence is once again smiling on these United States, and that we are now not only in a position to physically go forward in this monumental struggle...we are prepared to do so in our own hearts.*

“What our great, late President Norm Weisskopf said at the time was true. His words were true when he uttered them, and they will remain true eternally. That is the nature of truth. Despite what others might believe, time and circumstance do not erode its meaning, significance, impact and value. If anything, they serve to reiterate them.

“Those words Norm Weisskopf spoke have turned out to be prophetic when considered in light of what has happened in the ensuing twelve months. Our continued knowledge and acceptance of those truths have reflected in our actions and in our success. Here we are, a year later, and all of our gains bode very well for our cause and give reason for great hope. Hopes for similar gains over the next year’s time. Hopes for a brighter world for tomorrow, of that thin line we now see on the horizon breaking forth with bright sunlight upon the entire world...the light of peace, truth, and liberty.

“Let us use that hope, that commitment to truth, to fuel our drive towards the light. Let us always remember that our gains have come at great cost. Hundreds of thousands of allied military personnel are dead along with uncounted numbers of civilians. Even though they have been greatly diminished, there are continuing acts of terror inside of America. One of those cowardly terrorist acts killed our beloved president and members of his cabinet right here in Washington, D.C.

“But, in the face of this, and as a result of our hopes, Americans and allied peoples all over the world are making the sacrifices necessary and enduring these hardships with a will. The hearts and souls of free peoples everywhere have been tested, tried, and purified in the forge of the unrelenting opposition of an enemy committed to the destruction of our liberty, our way of life, and our very lives.

“Their wicked crusade has caused us to look deep within ourselves and tap the strength and faith existing in our innermost being. And now that we’ve returned to those roots, there is no end to the good we can accomplish once we have defeated this monstrous evil.

“Let us go forward, secure in the knowledge of our standing with one another and before God. We are fighting for the right; we are fighting for liberty; we are fighting for moral compassion and the unalienable rights of all mankind.

“And we shall prevail, so help us God.

“Merry Christmas to you all, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.”

**January 1, 06:42 CDT**

**The Lazy H Ranch**

**Outside of Montague, Texas**

It was a cold morning in north-central Texas. The temperature was hovering around twenty degrees, and the wind was out of the north under cloudy skies that reflected the few lights shining in the town of Montague, eight miles to the southwest. There were occasional flakes of snow in the air, and the forecast called for light snow later in the morning.

Jess Simmons was loving it.

He had left Cindy asleep in the bed and gotten up at 4:30 AM to come and take a look at the tractor. "Taking a look" had turned into a complete check-up and rundown of its operating condition. By 6:15 he had gotten the beast started and warming her up while he did a few daily chores.

His leg was feeling great, despite the limp.

He wondered if Cindy was up yet, whether the rumbling of the old Case tractor here in the barn had awakened her.

"If I know her, she was up by six and will have breakfast for me before I can get this thing out of the barn and into the fields," he thought as he prepared to climb up on the tractor.

Sure enough, as he drove the tractor out of the barn and started down the gravel road to the fields they owned on the south side of their property, as he passed the house, a light appeared in the doorway as Cindy opened the door and waved him in.

Jess left the tractor idling and climbed down off of it. It was a little awkward for him with his leg, but he was able to get down from the Case safely. He had been practicing for over a week, looking forward to the day he would take the tractor out and get some of the necessary work done to maintain his fields through the winter.

Today was that day... but not until after he had eaten a hearty breakfast prepared by Cindy.

"Oh man, what's that I smell?" he asked, as he walked through the door and caught a whiff of the aroma coming out of the kitchen.

"Smells like thick sausage gravy over homemade biscuits."

Cindy already had the places set and the food on the table when he walked into the kitchen.

"Biscuits and gravy with some scrambled eggs and orange juice, to be exact," she said with a warm morning smile, as he sat down.

After a blessing on the food, which Jess asked Cindy to say, he dug right in.

"It must be twenty degrees out there this morning, so this is really hitting the spot, sweetheart."

Cindy ate her own food and watched as her husband literally devoured his. She was happy to see him applying himself to working on the ranch. The war had kept him away for a long time, and there had been some doubt at first as to how much he would be able to do. But he had always loved ranch work and he was determined to be able to mind his own "place."

She would have liked him to take a little more time, but knew him well enough to know that he would push the envelope as soon as he felt he was ready. He always had; it was one of the qualities that had made him such a successful National Guard officer--the ability to know when you were prepared to push the limit, and then to be able to do it successfully.

And apparently today was the day he was prepared to push the envelope here on the ranch.

Thinking about his service caused her to remember something she had wanted to ask him.

"Jess, did you finish that letter to Abraham?"

Cindy was referring to General Abraham Eshkol of the IDF. He had worked with Jess extensively when Jess had served in Israel, first as an advisor to the IDF, and then, later, when he was on active duty there. They had become close friends and the Eshkols had provided a second home to Jess whenever he was on leave in the area.

In the course of the warfare, Abraham had been promoted from Colonel to General and was now fighting with American and other allied forces in the former Iraq. Jess had received a letter from Abraham last week and had mentioned to Cindy that it was important that he reply soon.

Cindy knew how he felt. She had recently sent a lengthy response to Elizabeth Trevor, letting her and her husband Joe know how Jess was doing and again thanking them for the six weeks they had spent here at the Lazy H. They had been a tremendous help to both Cindy and Jess in preparing for Jess's return, and then assisting as he rehabilitated to a point where he could get around on his own.

"Not yet, honey. Later today or maybe tomorrow morning after turning over that stubble field, depending on how well the Case works... and how well my leg holds up.

"I owe him a detailed report on my condition... and I also owe one to Marty and to General Donovan. I may even mention working on the tractor today.

"I also want to respond to the SITREP Abraham gave me about what is going on over there in the Middle East, and let him know how much faith we have in what they are doing over there."

Jess became quiet and contemplative for a moment.

General Abraham Ishkol had conveyed to him the success they had experienced since Jess had been seriously wounded and transported back to the United States. Knowing that operational security

was paramount, and realizing that anything of any tactical or strategic importance would be edited out, Abraham had still been able to convey the essence of the situation.

Like anyone else, Jess worried over the safety of his friend. But he also understood the risks of military life, and particularly of combat. He had experienced them himself for several years, culminating when he was shot down and severely wounded. He and Cindy had both also experienced it in the most poignant way possible with the loss of their son, Billy.

As Jess now knew, from his friend's letter, from other reports he had received from General Andrew Donovan not long after the start of the battle that had injured Jess, the leading elements of the GIR counterattack had punched completely through American and Israeli defenses. That breakthrough had carried GIR forces all the way past Damascus to the very foot of the Golan Heights where Jess had spent so much time. In that position, the GIR forces had endangered the entire northern portion of allied operations in the area and were threatening to break through into Israel itself.

Then, one flank of the GIR forces had collapsed under pressure from US forces that had maneuvered northward, along the coast of Lebanon, and attacked GIR forces just south of Homs. That battle had resulted in the failure of the entire GIR counterattack. With the major forces that had penetrated through Damascus in danger of being encircled, all of the GIR forces had fallen back rapidly to their original positions before the counterattack had started.

And allied forces had then pushed them back much further beyond those positions.

Using a vastly replenished supply of Hail Storm missiles and with all available reserves being thrown into the battle, allied forces repulsed GIR forces all along the front. They quickly penetrated into the former Iraq, and well into Saudi Arabia. What had looked like a potential defeat had been turned into a successful offensive of tremendous proportions. And it had been turned around in the space of a few short weeks.

Now things had slowed down. After initial success in southern Iran, Allied forces were being held firmly there by reinforced GIR armies and a belligerent population. In the mountainous regions of the northeastern portions of Iraq, the same young general who had masterminded the GIR counterattack in Syria, General Abduhl Selim, was conducting effective defensive operations. Abraham and the other allied commanders in that area were having a tough time rooting him out.

"They have a lot of fighting and hardship to go through before they crack that GIR egg...but with our forces on the borders of Iran, at least victory there is in sight now."

Cindy reached across the table and put her hand on her husband's arm.

"Jess, those capable men and the good Lord are going to see to it that all of that happens. Both of us have complete faith in that.

"Right now, I'm just grateful you're home safe.

"Our family has given everything we have," she said with her eyes welling up, the memories of Billy forever intertwined with any mention of the war.

"And I can honestly say that...if presented with the same conditions again...despite the loss and heartache, I know we would do nothing differently. But I'm glad you're home and that you're rehabilitating here where I can keep an eye on you.

"No offense to Andrew Donovan, Abraham, Marty and the others, but the Simmons have borne a heavy price. What we need for you now is the healing that comes from the tender loving care that you are getting here at home, and from the therapy you are receiving every minute you work on that old Case tractor."

As Jess lifted the last forkful of biscuits and gravy to his mouth, he stared into his wife's moist eyes. In his mind he thanked God and his lucky stars for this wonderful woman, who had suffered so much and who came through it all strong and dedicated.

"Honey...I can think of no place I would rather be than right here with you.

"I want you to know...I believe you know that it's always been that way, even when I was called away. It's that way even if I feel that I should be back over there doing my part.

"I know I can't and I have accepted it...and I am grateful to have you here...taking care of me.

"It's the same with Andrew, Abraham and Marty. They all look forward to the time that they can each be back home with their own families, and I pray God will grant them each that opportunity soon, so they can feel the great joy and contentment that I feel.

"But, right now," he said as he chewed and swallowed that last bite of breakfast, and then stood up and hurriedly washed it down with the last of his orange juice, "the Case and that southern stubble field are in need of my attention, and I can't keep them waiting any longer."

As Cindy smiled and shook her head, she started picking up the dishes. With a smile on his face which radiated his love for her and the excitement he felt about getting back on the tractor, Jess gave her a warm hug and then opened the door and went out into the warmth of the Texas cold.



**January 5, 22:55 local time**  
**Secure Housing Unit, COSTIND Conversion Operations**  
**Pham Residence, Tianjin, China**

The family gathering was somber as Lu Pham, his wife, Song, their daughter Chiang, and their new son-in-law, Hua Jianying, reflected on the latest news about Kao.

After being rescued by the Chinese helicopter, Kao and the men from the Chongqing had been safely bought aboard the Zenim as it retreated north and westward, past the Solomon Islands. While in the infirmary there, Kao had developed a pulmonary infection, falling gravely ill. The pneumonia only worsened his serious condition attributable to the oily water he had swallowed and the burns he had suffered both on the ship and later while in the water.

As a member of the Politburo and the executive council, Lu had been able to access the latest information...had even spoken with Admiral Xia about his son and received word back that his condition had worsened and that he had been airlifted to the best medical facilities the Chinese had within distance of the aircraft carrier at the time, in Rabaul.

Since that time, the information had been no better. The doctors considered Kao too sick to be transported, otherwise he would already be back in Beijing receiving the best care available in all of China and its holdings.

"Well," Lu said to the entire family as they sat around the low table in the family room of their home, "I have received permission to make a trip to Rabaul, and Song can come with me if we feel it's necessary. I will be conducting official state business in New Guinea and at various other locations on the return trip.

"We wanted to talk about this, discuss it together, and see what you and Hua think, Chiang."

Chiang held her husband's hand and considered it. But before she could make a comment, her mother, Song, spoke up.

"Chiang, before you and Hua share your thoughts, I want to make sure you know how I feel."

Lu immediately interjected, "Song, I'm sorry...I took it for granted that everyone would...please, go ahead and forgive me for being presumptuous."

Song reached over and took Lu's hand while looking at him. She knew he had a lot on his mind and was under intense pressure...more so in his role in the Politburo where he was expected to continue overseeing and managing the technical side of weapons development, but also on the political side, an area that he had always avoided...even disdained. Now, of necessity, he had to deal with it and he had to do so deftly.

"It's all right, Lu. I meant nothing by this. I know you understand and it is easy to take things for granted. I do it all the time. I just want to make sure Chiang and Hua know how I feel."

She then turned back to her daughter and son-in-law.

"Chiang...Hua, your father tends to be positive about things. He has always been an optimist.

"Coupled with his drive to produce the expected results, it is his optimism that has made him successful...not only as an engineer, but as a hero of our adopted homeland, of your homeland, Hua. It is also helping him in his role in the politburo...although I constantly tell him that he must remain careful because not all leaders are like him...some will use his positive attitude against him.

"Nevertheless, he is being very optimistic about Kao now. The fact is, your brother...Hua, your brother-in-law, is very near death.

"I have prevailed on your father to seek and to obtain permission for this trip. I could not bear him dying there, so far away, alone. I want to be with him.

"If, as your father hopes, he recovers...then we will be there to help him through. If not, then we will be there in his last moments to comfort him and to give him the dignity of being surrounded by those he loves as he dies. Then, afterwards, we will bring him home."

As Song said this, she found she could not go on. A vision of her wonderfully handsome son, who had been so full of life, who would make a special and precious husband and father, suddenly eclipsed all else in her consciousness. The thought of life without him was too much to bear and contemplate...and so she broke off talking and the entire room was silent for a few moments.

Chiang broke that silence.

"Mother and father, I only wish I could go with you!"

Turning to Hua, she looked at him imploringly.

"Hua, do you think I should put in a request at work...would they approve it?"

"Would there be any negative repercussions?"

Hua had come to love and respect this entire family that had made China their home and done so much for his nation. He was impressed with Lu's achievements and recognized him as a People's hero...not because of the association and opportunities it might open to him, but because he genuinely revered what Lu had accomplished. He respected Kao and knew of the upbringing he must have had to be so willing to fight for China, his adopted home.

Most of all, he was in love with Chiang...this marvelously talented and beautiful woman who was as driven as her father.

Letting go of her hand, he used his other hand to gently place his finger under her chin and raise it up so she was looking at him. He had never seen her like this...and it touched his heart to see her emotions and love for her family.

"Chiang, of course you should put in a request.

"I know you do not consider such things....and I know that you would not seek favor or advancement as a result of such things...and I know that you eschew anyone who would use their position to seek favor or advancement. But I promise you, with your father being a Hero of the People's Republic, and with his recent advancement not only onto the Politburo, but onto the Executive Council at the express request of the President... there will not be a problem.

"My guess is your supervisors and their managers will jump at the chance to make sure your schedule is arranged so that you can make this trip as easy as possible. They probably will suggest that you make sure your father knows who it was that approved the trip.

"If I could come with you I would, but unfortunately the campaign for mayor here in Beijing will not wait, and the selection will come in March, whether I am here or not.

"From what your mother is saying, you may well find yourself over in that part of the world until that time. My only regret will be that we are so far apart for so long."

Chiang threw her arms around Hua and hugged him, smiling at her parents as she did so.

"Father, Mother, would you mind? Can I come with you?"

Song's answer was immediate. "Of course you can, Chiang. I know that your brother will be helped by your being there. It will brighten up his mood considerably and we all know that a person's mental attitude is an important part of their health."

Lu was a little slower in responding. After a few seconds, Chiang's smile faded a little, expecting that there was some obstacle.

"Chiang, I too want you to be there. I know it will help Kao. But I have some reservations. The area is near the combat zone. Australia has been invaded by the Americans and their allies, and there is a great battle raging there now.

"Rabaul is a critical staging area for our forces in defending Australia, and in defending approaches to our homeland from the southwest Pacific.

"There will be danger and I think we should carefully consider it before making that decision. I have a hard enough time accepting your mother on this trip because of the danger. But, as you know, she is headstrong and has insisted."

Smiling now, Chiang quickly responded to her father. "And I am my mother's daughter, father...and just as headstrong. Just ask Hua."

Hua lowered his eyes sheepishly, smiling while shaking his head in agreement with the obvious.

And Lu knew his daughter...and also knew when he had been soundly defeated and over-ridden.

"All right, all right!" he said, raising his hands in a mock attempt to ward off a fictional attack. "I had to point out the dangers. But I know we all are willing to take the risks.

"Besides, we will be accompanied by an elite, combined arms security brigade whom the President informs me are the absolute best in the business. We will have aircraft, troops, and even a specially outfitted destroyer at our disposal.

"I'll meet with the executive committee tomorrow and will finalize the travel schedule then."

**January 14, 20:12 MDT**

**Boise International Airport**

**Boise, Idaho**

Geneva Campbell was a little worried because Alan's plane was now more than twelve minutes late...but she was not overly concerned. A few minutes late was not at all unusual from what the others who were also waiting on the plane had said.

"I've waited months and months to see my son," she told one woman who waiting for her husband. "I suppose I can wait another few minutes."

Several of the others, when they discovered that she was waiting for a Marine who had been serving in Siberia, thanked her for her son's service to the country. They also thanked her for raising her son in such a fashion that he would want to serve.

One older gentleman, upon hearing that Alan was in the Corps, came over and sat with Geneva while she waited. It seemed he was a veteran, a Marine himself, who had served his first tour of duty in Vietnam in 1972, and had served his last one during Desert Storm in 1991.

So it was, when Alan came walking off the aircraft, wearing his dress uniform, there were applause from the people standing there waiting for him...first from the few Geneva had been able to talk to, and then spreading to almost everyone in that section of the concourse. Somewhat unsettled by all of the attention, Alan walked up to his mother and gave her a big hug.

When he was finished, the older gentleman got his attention and shook his hand.

"Sergeant, I want to thank you on behalf of myself and my family, for your service to our Republic...to our nation and our freedoms.

"From this old gunny, all I can say is, *Semper Fi!*"

Alan knew immediately that he was talking to another Marine. He introduced himself as Master Gunnery Sergeant Jason Gwinn and, as others shook his hand and voiced their thanks, Alan and his mother waited while the old gunnery sergeant met his wife and then made introductions.

The four of them then walked down the concourse together discussing their families, the progress of the war and the conditions in America. All of them agreed that the overall experience had brought everyone together as Americans like no other event in their memory, despite the hardships and sacrifices...or perhaps because of them. One example of this was that there were very few, if any, hyphenated Americans now...just Americans. If someone tried to identify themselves as such, they were almost universally corrected with a simple, "*You mean American, don't you?*"

Alan had not considered himself an "*African-American*" since he couldn't remember when. Whites, blacks, browns, reds, and every other variety of citizen were working together as Americans in this conflict, fighting together...dying together. There just wasn't time or inclination for the vast majority of Americans to worry about such things when they were fighting for their very survival.

"And that means there never really was any time to worry about it," Alan realized as the conversation continued.

When the Gunny heard that Alan's brother was Leon Campbell, he stopped in the middle of the hallway and again shook both Alan's and Geneva's hands. He knew all about Leon's exploits and his citation. He made a point of knowing all of the Marine Corps Medal of Honor winners and had not put the Campbells' names together here in Boise, Idaho, until Alan mentioned it.

"I can't tell you what a pleasure it is to meet the brother and mother of a Medal of Honor winner...and to see the younger brother following in his brother's footsteps," he said.

"God bless you. God bless you all."

As the four of them exited the terminal building, they parted as the best of newfound friends and shared addresses and phone numbers. The gunny lived only about twenty-five miles away in a small town where he and his wife had retired.

"We live up on the bench on the north side of town," he told them.

"A beautiful rural American town, rooted in agriculture with its values rooted firmly in God's green earth, where they live the parable of the harvest every day...you reap what you sow. One day when you get married and start having kids, think about it...great place to raise a family."

"In the meantime, Alan, you, your mother, your brother Leon, and any family or friends are welcome out at our place anytime. I know Melba will cook you up a fine meal...and we can go out in my pasture, that runs clear up against the butte, and shoot my .50 cal. rifle and talk about old times."

Both Geneva and Alan thanked Jason Gwinn graciously and indicated they would take him up on his invitation at least once while Alan was on leave...and more often after the war. Alan was certain that Leon would want to meet Gunny as well.

All of it was almost overwhelming. As they got into the car, Alan spoke to his mother across the car. "What a neat thing, Mom, to come home to a spontaneous welcome like this.

"When I walked off the plane, I thought you must have arranged all of that."

Geneva smiled, knowing how it seemed, but also grateful for the people who had so spontaneously responded to her son's homecoming. It was like something you read about, but never really expect to happen to you.

After they had gotten into the car and as they were putting on their seatbelts, she responded, "I know. I was worried when your plane was late and started asking some of the people waiting if all of this was normal...if I should be concerned.

"They were all so nice and began to get excited when they heard that one of our boys was coming home on leave on that flight. Then I began to worry about what you would think of all of the attention, that it might be embarrassing.

"But, Alan, all of those folks, all on their own, were anxious to welcome you home. To welcome anyone home who has been fighting in this war.

"...and the Gwinns were sure special, weren't they? I believe you have found a friend for life."

Leaving the airport, they got onto Interstate Highway 84, and traveled west towards the expressway connector that led towards downtown Boise and their home off of Orchard Avenue.

Alan sat in contemplation for most of the ten minute ride, thinking about his experiences, about his home and conditions here in America and the realities he had witnessed in Africa and Siberia. As they exited the freeway, he tried to articulate his feelings as best he could to his mother.

"Mom, you know, over the last year I have learned a lot...seen a lot. I thought I had made some big changes in the years preceding my war experience, what with us moving here to Idaho from the ghetto in Chicago and all.

"But now I realize that all of that was just setting the stage.

"We are so lucky...so blessed in this country, Mom! I don't think there's another place on this planet, where a family could do what we did. Where there is so much opportunity if people will just make the effort to work hard and pursue it. They got to just look past all of that bickering and social squabbling...all of those people trying to keep others penned up in stereotypes, buying their votes.

"I'll tell you this, Mom. Ain't none of that on the battlefield...and from what I can see, there's not much of it here at home anymore either."

Geneva cherished the change she had seen in her sons over the last few years associated with their move to Idaho...but particularly since they both had gone into the Marines, been trained, and been out in the world.

"Alan, your Papa, he knew these things all along. He used to talk in much the same way you are now, expressing many of the same thoughts...you're more like him than you know.

"Anyhow, he would get into some real heated discussions, and even into some trouble with the local politicians and leaders, back there in Chicago.

"That's why I was so touched by the experiences Leon had when he was coming out of that coma. I know he saw Jerome, your father, there in Heaven, or whatever place Leon was visiting while he was unconscious. I know he is there waiting for each of us.

"I know he would be proud of you both, Alan.

"As terrible and dangerous as this war has been, it has brought most Americans to the point where they are looking past all of that previous foolishness and looking instead at what they can become with the freedoms we enjoy...and how they can help others. As much as I look forward to the end of this war, to when you boys can be safe back home and starting families of your own...and as much as I ache over the terrible losses, I am grateful for the change in the people and I am grateful that we are beating these monsters who would take it all away from everyone on the planet."

Alan was surprised at the length of his mother's statement and the passion with which she spoke...and he was proud of her. She embodied the principles they were talking about and she had tried her best to pass them on to her sons. It was clear to him now, more than ever, that both his Mom and Dad were solid-people and great Americans, and he was so proud to be their son.

"Well, I have to tell you, Mom, we've still got a long and hard fight ahead of us. Those people have been indoctrinated in what it is they believe and they fight us tooth and nail. But we are winning, Mom, and pushing them back.

"I believe that, as soon as they finally realize that we are not going to make peace, that we are taking this all the way to Beijing...and as soon as the large portions of the people in the nations that they are subjugating to make their machine work, as well as citizens of their own countries...realize that that God-awful machine is vulnerable and breaking down, I believe we are going to have a lot of help finishing these tyrants off.

"We've just got one heck of a long road, a long difficult march, before we get there.

"But enough of all of this philosophy and war talk...let's move on to what's really important.

"What's for supper?"

## **February 11, 02:05, local time**

### **124 Kilometers South of Vladivostok**

#### **The Sea of Japan**

The large convoy was moving north, towards the petroleum terminals and docks at Vladivostok. Five supertankers, eight large container ships and six smaller transports escorted by two Ma'anshan frigates, a Lanzhou class destroyer, and a Hangzhou class destroyer.

The frigates and the Lanzhou destroyer had been upgraded to the latest sonar, radar and defensive weapons suite that the Chinese offered and they were formidable vessels for escort duty. Both destroyers were outfitted with four LRASD weapons each, suited for use against any enemy submarines that might penetrate the defensive formation they were using to defend the tankers, container vessels, and transports they were shepherding.

The formation was sixteen kilometers across, between escorting vessels on each corner, with the merchant vessels in a tighter formation in the middle that was four kilometers across. The entire group was under constant air coverage from patrol craft operating out of Vladivostok.

Suddenly, without warning, the Hangzhou destroyer blew up in a huge and terrible explosion that ripped vertically across its midsection and literally tore the entire ship in two. Within seconds, the other leading escort, one of the Ma'anshan frigates, also exploded with deafening *VABOOM!* that echoed across the entire formation.

Warning messages were immediately communicated to all vessels and aircraft...though none of them needed the official messages to understand that they were under attack on this clear night. The light, smoke, and debris from the explosions were visible to all. One Badger patrol aircraft saw the first two explosions clearly from twenty thousand feet at a distance of over forty kilometers.

Within another ten seconds more horrific explosions cascaded through the formation of ships being escorted. Each of the tankers blew up. Three of the container ships and two of the cargo vessels all exploded in a similar fashion. The worst explosions were aboard the tankers as their huge cargoes of petroleum products were complete ignited by the initial detonations that assaulted them.

From above, an SU-24 Fencer maritime patrol aircraft was in a position to see the assault on the inner group of merchant vessels before the wave of explosions engulfed them. Later, they reported seeing what appeared to be the slightest hint of several underwater streaks approaching the vessels,

becoming more apparent and more resolute as they approached the ships, culminating in the tremendous explosions that racked the vessels. The streaks were coming at the formation of ships from over one hundred and eighty degrees to their front.

Within ten minutes the attack was over except for the continued blaring of the warning klaxons from those vessels that had not been hit. There had been no hint of any approaching weapons on the sonar of any of the escorting ships. Outside of the report from the single patrol aircraft, there had been no visible sighting of the impending disaster.

The ships scattered and completed their journey into Vladivostok during the rest of the early morning hours, the last two ships limping into port near noon, having been damaged from the proximity of the explosions of two of the tankers and the debris that had rained down upon them.

Chinese naval analysts immediately began to pore over the data from the surviving ships, the eyewitness reports and the data from patrol aircraft that had been over the scene. Within twenty-four hours, they had reached an initial conclusion and passed the report on to COSTIND and to the higher level officials who had gotten word of the attack and were demanding answers.

### **February 13, 17:36, local time**

#### **Captain's Quarters, USS Jimmy Carter**

#### **400 miles west of Hakodate, Japan**

The Chinese analysts had come to the conclusion that America had finally employed some sort of offensive, supercavitating weapon of their own, and they had been right. The propulsion system and the material that the weapon was either made out of, or coated with, was a mystery to the Chinese. But the signs of the rapid approach and the terrible explosions were clear evidence.

Captain Simon Thompson was sitting in his cabin, completing the final after action report for the attack he had conducted on that large Chinese convoy. It had been successful beyond his hopes or imagination. For once, there had been no return fire. The devices had worked as advertised and had left little trail of their approach.

"Even if the Chinese had shot down the azimuth of what little trail those weapons left," he thought, "they would have come up completely empty-handed.

"I'll bet they figured they were attacked by three or more boats...and that they have no idea from what distance the attacks had occurred."

But Captain Thompson knew all of those things.

America's newest naval weapons system, the submarine-launched Mk-77, had just received its baptism of fire and it had operated almost completely flawlessly.

Thompson had released eighteen of the weapons. Only one of them had failed to operate and had sunk to the bottom of the Sea of Japan. The other seventeen had performed flawlessly.

Programmable from aboard ship either before launch, or after launch as long as the control wiring remained attached, the long, sleek supercavitating torpedoes were stealthy, capable of loiter, and capable of making their attacks from almost anywhere on the compass. And, with the new synthetic fuel products that had been developed specifically for them, in either conventional or rocket-propelled mode they left very little evidence of their presence.

"That is, until just before they strike home," thought the Captain as he continued to type in the details of the attack.

Running towards their target at an extreme depth, up to one thousand five hundred feet, or loitering at that same depth, the weapons attacked at a steep angle from beneath. That angle was programmable, but since the trail of the weapon would become visible after the weapon passed through a depth of fifty feet, the designers presumed that most attacks would utilize a deep approach.

Which is exactly what Captain Thompson had ordered.

Their warheads were a wonder. The plastic explosive packed into the warhead kept the weight down but was capable of producing the equivalent of up to three-quarters of a ton of TNT. The yield and certain characteristics of how the explosion penetrated the side of the target vessel were also programmable and could be adjusted for maximum effect against various types of targets.

The maximum range was over one hundred and twenty miles, but that was also variable depending on the loiter time, the target acquisition, and approach parameters that could be programmed into the microelectronic brain of each weapon. Under full rocket power, the weapon had a range of almost twenty miles and could reach speeds in excess of five hundred knots.

The Jimmy Carter had fired these weapons from a range of more than seventy miles. The Chinese never saw or heard the Jimmy Carter, and she had been well off the azimuth of any of the terminal attack bearings of any of the devices.

"...and we fired them right out of our standard tubes," the Captain emphasized to himself.

"Just a little longer than an ADCAP Mk-48, about the same weight...but a lot meaner looking and a whole lot more wallop," he concluded as he finished the report.

His final statement, after a summary, was adamant and to the point.

"In closing, the initial combat test of the Mk-77 Supercavitating Weapons Systems (SCWS) has been an unqualified success.

“It is the recommendation of this command that we outfit all Sea Wolf, Virginia, and remaining LA Class boats with a full offensive complement of these weapons.

“The Alaska class SSTNs and the Ohio class SSGNs should also carry a reduced number of these weapons for self-defense purposes against either surface or submerged threats.”

### **March 4, 18:47 Mean Time**

#### **Bridge of the USSS Gaspra**

##### **In orbit around Ceres, The Asteroid Belt**

David Lewis watched as his team brought another piece of the asteroid up into orbit and secured it to the train he was building. That team consisted of six specialists working with the Frigate’s lander and the mining and cabling equipment that had been brought into space for just this purpose.

They had arrived in orbit around Ceres, the largest asteroid in the asteroid belt, almost two weeks earlier and had immediately set about their task with a will. This forty-ton rock was the third that the team operating off of the Gaspra had cut out of the massive hulk of Ceres which was a little less than a third the size of Earth’s moon. The team operating off of the USSS *Ida*, Floyd Clark’s vessel, was a little behind the Gaspra operation and was completing its second excavation during this shift.

The material, carbonaceous chondrite, was dark and rocky in appearance. The same substance that made up most meteorites. Because of this, Ceres was classified as a special Class M asteroid. The special nature of its composition is what had brought them here for this mission. Ceres’ material had registered on the spectro-analyzers from Earth as harder and less porous than other forms of carbonaceous chondrite, which made it an excellent choice for their purposes. Over the next six weeks they would cut out forty of these rocks and place them in chains in space for transport to Earth.

Commander Lewis had his communications specialist contact Commander Clark on the *Ida* once he saw that the rock was finally secured in position in the chain.

“F.L., this is Lewis. We have number four in position and I am going to have my team start the preparatory work for cutting out number five on this shift. What’s keeping you guys?”

“We’re going to be two up on you in another few days if you’re not careful. Over.”

It didn’t take very long for Clark’s witty response to be communicated back to the Gaspra.

“I roger that, Gaspra. What can I say? Some folks prefer fast and loose...others like slow and steady. We’ll finish number three today. Each and every one of them will be within tolerance of composition and mass. We’ll keep it that way and finish on schedule. Over.”

Commander Lewis responded.

“OK...We have four of the same...and I prefer a team that is fast and steady. That’s us.

“All chatter aside, I want to finish ahead of schedule if I can so we can have plenty of time for our visit to Pallas inbound. It’s a little further out of the way than your secondary objective, Vesta.

“So, we’ll target a departure date of Gaspra on April 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> if things continue to proceed this well. If we get approval, we’ll have to alter the mission plan accordingly.

“We’ll plan on keeping the same inbound rendezvous point and schedule in accordance with the current plan. That means we’ll meet just inside of the orbit of Mars.

“Come up with an altered communication plan to conform with that objective ASAP. Over.”

Clark knew that Lewis was excited about the prospect of more exploration; it was in his nature, and he wanted to get as much benefit out of the mission as possible while they were out here.

But Clark also had a feeling that the Joint Chiefs and the NCA would want to get those rocks back into Earth orbit as soon as possible.

“Wilco, Commander. We’ll get the altered plan to you by 0900 hours tomorrow.

“But, if I may, you might find that command wants us to expedite things and cut out the secondary targets altogether if we have enough rocks and any extra time.

“Satellite photos of Australia and the latest SITREP show things proceeding faster than expected there. We’ve punched through Chinese lines in the Channel Country and are driving on Alice Springs. It looks like a large force of Chinese has been cut off on the Cape York Peninsula.

“If we have that kind of success elsewhere, they may want to move the timetable for our operation up. If they do, they’ll order us home quicker and forgo the secondary research objectives.

“Just the same, we’ll get that plan to you as advertised. Over.”

“I read you loud and clear,” Lewis replied. “At least we’ll give them the option...they can decide from there. I’ll look for your plan around 0900 tomorrow, Gaspra, out.”

### **April 15, 11:20 Local Time**

#### **Executive Council Chambers**

##### **Politburo, Beijing, China**

President Jien Zemin expected good news. They needed good news. He demanded good news on behalf of himself and his nation. And today was the day he expected COSTIND to deliver.

“General Hunbaio, please proceed with your report.”

General Hunbaio was aware of his leader’s discomfort and expectations...and he was painfully aware of the reasons for it. Lately, from near earth space, to the oceans, and on land, Chinese fortunes,

and those of her allies had been faring badly. After so many years of success...after so much territory won...it was hard to take the setbacks and reversals. Hard militarily and hard politically.

Ultimately, if the setbacks were not arrested, they would lead to doubts, and doubts would lead to questioning, questioning would lead to disaffection, and disaffection would lead to unrest and rebellion. Chinese leaders had walked a razor's edge in modern times since the cultural revolution. It was the same razor's edge that imperial Chinese leaders had been forced to walk for many millennia.

Now Jien Zemin saw that the edge was much too close for comfort. He was depending on Hunbaio and Lu Pham, to come up with something to counter the Americans so he could dictate the pace and the flavor of this conflict and its ultimate outcome.

For four years the Chinese had done precisely that. Everything had gone as Jien and his inner cadre had planned and predicted in the war effort. But everyone in this room knew that over the last year they had lost their initiative and were reacting defensively to their enemy's initiatives.

Hunbaio knew that this was unacceptable, both militarily and politically, and he knew that something extraordinary was required. Something that could challenge the new technologies and advantages that the Americans were coming up with. Something to once again throw them off balance so China could regain the initiative, pass it on to their allies and retake all that had been lost.

And General Hunbaio believed that he had just the information that the President was looking for. "Mr. President, I have some extremely good news. We have completed the final atmospheric testing of our new Dragon Spirit prototype craft, in the Altyn Tagh region near Lenghu. This is a very secret and very remote facility employing our highest technology and most advanced defensive systems. The nearest thing it could be compared to is the Americans skunk works in Nevada.

"Initial feedback on the tests indicates that the six prototypes were completely successful in all of their operational tests within the atmosphere, exceeding expectations in several critical areas, including particle weapon tests, maneuverability, and electronic warfare.

"Beginning in May, they will be tested in space, using special SSTO orbits that keep them well clear of the American space stations for the time being, although at that point their existence will become obvious to the Americans and their allies.

"Production builds have already begun in anticipation of a successful battery of space-based tests. This decision was made on my own authority, Mr. President, with input from Admiral Lu Pham and Sung Hsu, a leading manufacturing technologist who has spent years working with Admiral Lu.

"It became clear from their input that, barring any unforeseen catastrophic problems, we would be able to retrofit any minor adjustments to the units of the initial production run after analyzing and adjusting the design as required based on the atmospheric and space-based tests.

"I am happy to say, that based on the atmospheric tests we have just completed, there will be no alterations required. We expect to be able to produce five of these craft per month beginning in April."

Jien Zemin was ecstatic. This was precisely the type of report he had hoped for. He also respected and appreciated Hunbaio's initiative and risk in ordering the production runs. Success in the testing put him, and the program, in a position to make a tremendous difference in a shorter period of time, probably saving many weeks, if not months, on the schedule.

"This is excellent news, General. I commend you for own initiative..."

As he said this, Zenim turned and faced the video conference screen directly, speaking to Lu Pham who was attending the meeting from facilities in Rabaul.

"...and the use of your very capable employees...and I am speaking of you Admiral Lu...regarding the production schedule, Now, here is my directive.

"We shall not perform the initial space-based tests using the hyperbolic orbits you have described. The reasons for deleting these tests are not technical; they are political and they are military, and they are well worth the risk we shall take in doing so.

"Our sources in the United Kingdom and Russia indicate that the next American space station will be launched into orbit over the central Pacific in early to mid-May. Its presence there will be completely unacceptable. They have damaged us significantly in Australia with their Southern Star station. A similar presence over the central Pacific will allow them to accelerate their operations there.

"I am ordering you, General, to work directly with the PLA and see to it that the space-based test of Dragon's Spirit in May is a combat test. Intercept the new American station after it is launched.

"Plan immediate follow on missions against the Southern Star and Conception stations. I want them brought down, and I want their destruction to be as visible over Australia and America.

"In addition, I want production rates doubled by June so that it is we, the People's Republic of China, who exert complete control over space by July of this year and on into the foreseeable future.

"We shall see how the American leaders and those of their allies enjoy defeat and helplessness in space, just as they have sought to exert those same conditions on us.

"They shall soon find that we are not helpless...no, not helpless or defeated at all."

**May 21, 21:50 WST**

**800 yards outside of the outer perimeter fence**

**US Air Force Space and Missile Range, Central Nevada**

Lee Phillips was one of those Chinese-Americans who barely looked the part. Outside of slightly higher cheekbones and dark hair, he did not display any of the racial characteristics, particularly about the eyes, that would identify him as being of Chinese descent.

But that did not matter in the least. He was a third-generation Chinese-American who had been recruited into the services of the PRC intelligence apparatus by one of his cousins when he had traveled to mainland China in the mid 1990s as a young, aspiring engineering technician. While there, he worked for a large computer manufacturer that was setting up operations in the PRC at the time. It had not taken too much outlay of funds or entertainment by Chinese intelligence at the time to seal the deal. And it became apparent over the next several months that Lee was a “natural.” Between that time and 2004, Lee’s meteoric advancement within his firm in China had landed him so many stock options and resulting wealth that he had been able to return to America and retire at the ripe old age of 32 years old, well before the onset of hostilities, exactly as planned.

He had brought his new Chinese wife with him, herself a colonel in the Chinese intelligence apparatus, back to the West Coast of America, and they had played the role of American urban yuppies to a tee. Living 80 miles southeast of Sacramento in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in their multi-million dollar chateau, the couple had gathered data and transmitted it back to their masters in Beijing, either by courier or by secure, encrypted satellite transmission, while those devices were still available. That data had included critical information for the Chinese planners regarding the American mobilization effort and the computer technology advancements the Americans were making during the early stages of the war.

Once the satellites had been destroyed, Lee, his wife, and his entire team had been viewed as too strategic an asset to risk, and so their active work had ceased. They had not been activated even for the monumental operation the year before in Washington, D.C., when the American president, Norm Weisskopf, had been killed while presenting the Medal of Freedom to Stacy Urkut, an American woman who had been a hero of the American resistance of the Chinese invasion of Alaska.

That operation in Washington, D.C., had been a costly joint Chinese and Arab venture in which all of the operatives had been killed. It had nonetheless been successful in its immediate and primary goal of assassinating the strong-willed and insightful American leader who had led the United States through the darkest days of World War III.

But strategically the operation had failed miserably. China’s enemies in general, and the American’s in particular, had not been demoralized by it. To the contrary, they had rallied around the new President, John Bowers, who was turning out to be as strong a leader as Weisskopf had been.

“Where do they get these people?” Lee asked himself as he monitored communications and continued to watch through his night vision equipment the prominent rise in elevation, some 25 miles distant, behind which he knew the American space launch facilities were located.

“Bowers has not only energized the people past the death of Weisskopf, he has redoubled their efforts militarily in the field and pushed the American efforts successfully into space.

“Well, perhaps after tonight we can put a stop to that,” he muttered as he considered the other operatives he had working with him tonight.

Ten miles to his north and west, atop a ridgeline, he had his principal communications team. Upon seeing the flash of the launch, and its continued strobe-like effect made by the nuclear pulse technology employed by the Americans, Lee would wait until the spacecraft cleared that distant rise. He would then use his miniature transmitter to send an encrypted burst message to his communication team on the ridgeline behind him. That message would travel in a very short and tightly focused, line-of-sight beam to his people on the ridge, who would in turn transmit news of the launch using their sophisticated short-wave radio so that listening stations directly on the West Coast could then transmit the message on to China.

Two other Chinese-Americans who were operating the sophisticated 10-meter radio accompanied by a three-man Latino security team were located on that ridgeline at over 8,000 feet. The two Chinese operatives there had been in America for over 10 years themselves and had been assigned to him by Beijing after the onset of hostilities. They had helped him in various low-risk operations when he was gathering information during the early days of the war.

The three Latinos were very experienced in security operations. Each of them had been members of the military in their homelands of Nicaragua and Panama before “immigrating” to America across the southern border of the United States as a part of Hector Ortiz’s FTA smuggling operation.

Lee had met Hector only once, and had been impressed by the man who had created the largest Mexican NAFTA trucking company and ultimately established that company’s U.S. headquarters in Dallas, Texas. The entire operation had been nothing more than a very sophisticated front company for bringing Aztlan operatives and weapons into the United States for use in helping bring down *El Norte*. Hector had created unbelievable chaos and carnage across much of western America by using



his operatives to attack malls, infrastructure, manufacturing plants, and other facilities after the onset of hostilities against the mainland United States in that fateful March.

“Well, ultimately Hector was caught, tried and executed, along with most of his leaders and personnel,” Lee contemplated as he continued to think about his five team members up on the ridge.

“But the fall of his organization added to my own. Those three guys are good and are just what we need for this evening.”

Since coming onboard with Lee’s group, the Latinos had posed as immigrant workers at his chateau, using the time in training for field operations like the one tonight.

With a Stinger anti-aircraft launcher and four missiles, a LAWS anti-armor launcher and an M60 machine gun, he felt his team would certainly be able to hold out long enough to successfully transmit the required message when the time came.

And he was right.

**May 21, 22:02 WST**

**U.S Air Force Security north-central monitoring post**

**Outside the US Air Force Space and Missile Range , Central Nevada**

“I’ve got a contact Chief...no, wait...now it’s gone,” Specialist First Class Logan said as the rising sound of the approaching craft continued outside of their camouflaged position.

“Funny, but it was a clear read...just too short to pinpoint.”

As Chief Miller contemplated a reply that befitted any false alarms at this particular stage of the launch, Logan excitedly announced, “Now another contact! Definite transmission, 10-meter band, coordinates Delta-Bravo 23.5, Victor-Echo 55.”

The Chief wasted no time. All thoughts of any snide comment disappeared with this definite contact so close to the perimeter of the base. He immediately contacted the quick reaction team and reported the contact.

Three miles to the west, a heavily armed Kiowa helicopter and an Air Force Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft had been spooled up for the last half-hour in the event of any security need. Upon getting word of the transmission, these aircraft immediately lifted off and sped towards the coordinates on the ridgeline where Lee Phillips team was located.

The Kiowa was armed with a 25mm chain gun and a pod of direct fire missiles. Its detection and self-protection electronics were state of the art...and it soon found it needed them.

Eight hundred yards in front of the Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft, which itself was armed with a 40mm cannon mounted in a pod of the left side of the aircraft, a door-mounted .50 caliber machine gun on the right side, and carrying 18 heavily-armed Air Force security personnel, the Kiowa helicopter instantly detected the launch of a Stinger missile that was targeting it.

The small wasp-like helicopter made an unbelievably sharp turning ascent to the south, while dropping several bright flares to decoy the infrared, heat-seeking missile.

As this occurred, the Osprey began targeting the firing position of the Stinger missiles with its 40mm cannon. The third burst silenced the Stinger missile launcher and killed the Latino who manned it, but not before another missile was launched just as the Kiowa turned back towards the fight, having successfully eluded the first missile.

The second missile slammed into the side of the faired cowling covering the Kiowa’s engine, just below the main rotor and blew the helicopter out of the air. The main rotor itself came completely apart and spun off wildly in one direction while the burning hulk of the helicopter plunged to the ground and exploded.

With the onset of combat, the commander of the reaction team inside the Osprey called for reinforcements. Another reaction team had been dispatched and now approached the back side of the ridge. The first team’s Osprey landed approximately one thousand feet below the ridgeline and two thousand yards distant, and immediately came under fire from the M60 machine gun and LAWS that Lee’s personnel had set up on the ridge.

Desperately trying to buy time so they could disengage, Lee’s two remaining Latino personnel continued to provide covering fire while the two Chinese operatives packed up their shortwave radio and retreated to the opposite side of the ridge. As they began to make their way down the slope on that side, they saw the second U.S. Air Force reaction team approaching.

Unseen by the Americans, who were deploying and focusing on the reports coming in from the first reaction team regarding the location of the enemy firing positions, the two Chinese split up, shielded themselves from the advancing Americans using rock outcroppings, and took opposite paths along the ridgeline to try and evade capture.

Ultimately, the American reaction teams completely surrounded the two remaining Latinos in Lee’s team and killed both of them. In the exchange, two Americans were seriously wounded, along with the loss of the Kiowa and its two pilots.

Three hours later, one of the Chinese was located with infrared detection gear hiding in a crevice along the lower end of the ridge. As American personnel approached, he killed himself.

Lee and the other radio operator successfully evaded capture, having completed their mission of alerting the Chinese armed forces of the launch of the latest American mission into space.

**May 22, 02:15 local**

**PLA Space Launch Facilities**

**Central Mongolia**

The Colonel looked up from the display that he had just completed reviewing and addressed the commanding general.

“General, we have received a launch and attack authorization code from Beijing. Intelligence indicates a successful launch by the Americans of three nuclear pulse SSTO craft 15 minutes ago.

“Our eight Dragon Spirit craft are fueled and ready to launch. I will need your final review and approval to execute the orders.”

General Hsua’ba reviewed the information from the communications officer on his screen—the same information that the flight operations officer had just referred to. It was all as Colonel Zo had indicated. The time for launching and testing of the Dragon Spirit aircraft had arrived.

“You have my approval, Colonel. Order an immediate launch of our spacecraft and an intercept of the American space station according to our plan and based on this latest information.

“As soon as the spacecraft obtain orbit, have the mission commander, Colonel Le’dung, contact me for a final status report and any resulting command instructions.

“Inform the entire strategic missile forces assigned to this mission to begin their attack as soon as the American station comes within range and continue that attack throughout the engagement.

“Also, contact General Shaun at the Altyn Tagh facility and have him hold his four remaining aircraft in a ready condition. Indicate that those aircraft must launch within five minutes of my order.”

The General reflected on this momentous occasion. Although he had been concerned about General Hunbaio’s orders to make the space debut of these craft a combat mission, he understood full well the reasoning behind it. It was paramount that the Americans have no advance warning of the Dragon Spirit craft, and that their initial deployment occurs under the cover of China’s normal, and to date ineffectual, missile and kinetic energy attacks against American launches.

“Who knows?” the general mused. “Perhaps this time those attacks will prove effective and the Dragon Spirit attack can proceed immediately to the American Southern Star station.”

Either way, the General knew that confusion and surprise would reign amongst the Americans once they realized the true nature of the threat against them. It was clear to the General and to the entire chain of command, up to and including the entire Politburo and Jien Zemin himself, that it was paramount that this new American foray into space over the central Pacific be stopped, and their station over Australia be destroyed in this first combat mission of the Dragon Spirit spacecraft.

The General’s attention was attracted to the bright and simultaneous ignitions of four heavy-lift Chinese boosters on the displays at four different launch pads on the base. Although the digital display screens made them appear much closer together, the General and the entire staff in the operations center knew that each launch pad was separated from the other by over two kilometers.

Dual solid-fuel rocket engines, complimented by dual liquid-fuel motors, all working in concert in an SSTO configuration, would lift their payloads into orbit. In this case, the mammoth, heavy-lift vehicles would each carry a flight of two Dragon Spirit craft into orbit.

As the lift vehicles thundered up into the dark sky, the General anxiously awaited the successful insertion into orbit of the craft, and then the communication with the mission commander.

**May 22, ten minutes later**

**PLA Space Craft DS-001**

**Over Eastern Mongolia**

Colonel Le’dung reviewed the status of the spacecraft under his command as he prepared to contact General Hsua’ba back on earth. The status was good—all of his vessels had been inserted into orbit perfectly and were now in the prearranged formation that would allow them to join in the missile and kinetic energy attack on the American space station that had already begun.

The Colonel was proud of his nation’s achievement, and proud to have been given command of this initial manned combat mission against the Americans in space using the Dragon Spirit spacecraft.

And what wonderful spacecraft they were.

Each craft under his command contained a crew of four. A flight commander who also served as the pilot, a co-pilot who also operated defensive electronics systems, a weapons officer who operated the craft’s offensive weaponry, and a flight engineer who also served as a communications officer.

Each of the craft was 28 meters long and shaped in a single, flat airfoil design with two small vertical stabilizers, and a raised, faired crew compartment along the upper centerline of the craft that had space for two tandem seats that were positioned back-to-back with a small crew mess, bathroom, and sleeping quarters in between. They were coated with a continuous layer of polycarbon material on the bottom and across the front of their rounded noses for thermal protection during re-entry. The Chinese viewed that material as a pronounced improvement over the earlier American’s tiled carbon-

carbon material. The Chinese material was applied in a single sheet while being engineered to dynamically respond to the extreme heat of re-entry in such a fashion as to fully protect the spacecraft while making any thermal expansion seams and joints unnecessary.

The craft were powered by two compact nuclear fusion engines, which would allow the craft to operate either in space or as airborne aircraft once they re-entered the earth's atmosphere. Although not strong enough to lift the space craft into orbit, the two fusion engines did allow for significant maneuverability and speed within the vacuum of space. They also allowed the craft to attain a Mach six speed within the atmosphere once their orbital velocity had bled off.

The Chinese designers and the pilots and personnel who operated them also considered the weaponry the spacecraft carried to be the most advanced on earth. Two charged particle weapon booms, or cannons, were mounted in each airfoil, one on each side of the crew stations. They retracted into the upper surface of the craft for protection during orbital insertion and during re-entry. Each was capable of providing lethal, non-refracted energy bursts that were effective against non-hardened targets in space at ranges in excess of five hundred kilometers, and against hardened targets at ranges approaching two hundred kilometers.

In addition, each craft had two retractable, self-stabilizing 40 millimeter cannons for close-in fighting and eight prototype, long-range anti-aircraft missiles mounted in fully enclosed stations along the top of the airfoil. Those missiles were the latest innovation in the Chinese inventory, and had been designed specifically to be a standard part of the Dragon Spirit weapons load-out. They had been engineered to be able to operate either in space or within the atmosphere in keeping with the Dragon Spirit's mission profile. Each missile carried a 50 kilogram warhead, had a range in excess of 300 kilometers, and was capable of infrared, radar or stealth targeting.

In the stealth targeting role, the prototype missiles themselves carried an initial prototype version of a micro *ta shih* stealth acquisition and targeting system. The *ta shih* system consisted of sophisticated passive electronic sensing equipment coupled to the latest bi-static radar, multi-static radar, and a revolutionary scalar system that were programmed into the missile's targeting circuitry. The entire system had been discovered by Chinese scientists several years earlier and then developed to the point where they were capable of acquiring and targeting American stealth aircraft. Two years ago the system had gone into production deployment and had proven very effective. It had given a significant boost to the war fighting capabilities of Chinese forces and their allies to whom the technology had been sold and licensed.

...and it had come at a time when the overall war effort of the Chinese had peaked and then ebbed. The system was proving to be a significant bright spot that was preventing the defeats and losses the CAS was currently experiencing from turning into total disaster.

The advent of the micro version of the *ta shih* system represented a breakthrough in miniaturization for the Chinese that would soon become standard issue on most Chinese aircraft as they were mass produced and retrofitted to older missile systems, or incorporated into new designs.

"Perhaps as we mass produce this particular system and deploy it into frontline, offensive use, it will help us turn the tide of war back in our favor," the Colonel thought.

"The first test of that hypothesis is going to come in a very short time," he continued to himself.

At that moment he received the "green light" from his communications officer indicating that it was now possible to contact General Hsua'ba. As he prepared to do so, and as he considered the awesome firepower and technology at his disposal, the Colonel couldn't help but have a final thought.

"In their own words... the Americans will never know what hit them."

## Chapter 38

*“Not gold, but only man can make a people great and strong; men who for truth and honor's sake, stand fast and suffer long.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson*

**May 23, 23:32 local time**

**Inside the main cave**

**Muri Redoubt, Central Cape York Peninsula**

It had been seven months since the small group of Muris led by Nabalco and his wife Ulura had come to this hidden spot from the Gregory Mountains. The twenty-seven people of his company had swelled to over forty souls since that time, but it had not been without severe troubles and difficulties.

As he had foreseen, back in the fall, the fighting between the western forces led by the Americans against the Chinese, Indian and Muslim forces that had occupied Australia had spread to the northwest and overrun the Gregory Mountains. The very spot the clan had been using for sanctuary during much of the war had been engulfed by several pitched battles as the western allies slowly pushed the Asian forces back in that area.

“We would have all either died or been captured and mistreated by the Chinese and Indians had we stayed,” Nabalco thought as he reflected on all that had occurred.

As a leader in the clan and as a “dreamer”, he had experienced several visions regarding his people. Invariably, when he had these very vivid experiences, the dreams came true, and what they were experiencing now was no exception. He had seen the battles spread to engulf the Gregory Mountains rendering their former hiding places unsafe. He had urged the clan to split up into much smaller groups and move to safety in the north, each group moving toward small enclaves that had already been prepared and to which routes of escape had already been planned.

Although all of the groups had moved, six of them had elected to do so together, hoping to find another larger hiding place somewhere in the wilds of the Cape York peninsula.

That particular effort had failed and led to disaster.

As the Chinese and Indians were pushed back, a substantial portion of them were cut off by the American, Australian and other western allies' advance. Over 250,000 enemy troops and almost as many Asian civilians who had been brought in to settle this portion of Australia but who were now escaping to the west had become bottled up just north of the Gregory Mountains. Just as the Muris had done before them, they began moving further north in the hopes of escaping destruction. Their commanders sought the protective umbrella of Indian and Chinese air cover on the northern half of the peninsula as they came closer to their bases in New Guinea and on the islands to the north of Australia that they still controlled. They hoped to either be reinforced and start an offensive against the Americans' flank...or be evacuated.

As this large force moved to the north through the lands to which the Muri had fled, they had discovered the larger grouping of Muris and slaughtered most of them, taking captive those they desired or felt were capable of toiling mercilessly for them as they moved to the north.

The western allies were not taking lightly the presence of this large enemy force on their flank. As a result, Nabalco thanked the heavens that his clan was not directly in the path of the Asians. The Americans were bombing their enemies and hounding them relentlessly...wanting to force them to surrender or to annihilate them in order to remove the threat. Anything close to the Chinese or Indian forces was apt to draw the advanced missiles from which the Americans produced their Hail Storms, or to draw fire from their other precision weaponry.

Despite that precision, if you were an aborigine or other refugee in hiding near an enemy camp and they moved in your direction, those weapons ...or those of the enemy...would not distinguish between you and a actual enemy intended target.

The Cape York peninsula had thus turned into a major battlefield in the war and many of the Muris had been forced to flee their smaller sanctuaries in order to get out of the way of the fighting when they could...and to inflict casualties on the enemy when they could not, in an effort to separate themselves or do as much damage as possible before dying or being captured.

Some had found other safe places or joined with other groups who already had. That is why Nabalco's group had grown to its current size, and this was a concern for Nabalco. Educated in engineering and having been fully integrated into the Australian society before the war, Nabalco understood the capabilities of modern military forces. He knew that the larger his group became, the more likely they would be discovered.

As he contemplated these issues, he noticed that “Tex”, one of the original non-aborigine refugees his group had taken with them away from the Gregory Mountains, had hobbled across the cavern to the small fire and sat next to it.

“Tex, isn't it a little late? Don't you have watch very early in the morning?” Nabalco asked.

Tex turned to look at Nabalco. His understanding and his ability to communicate and move about had improved dramatically over the last four or five months. When he had first come to the clan he could barely speak intelligently, and he could hardly walk due to the stiffness in, and damage to, his left knee and ankle, and because he was missing half of his foot on that leg. In addition, his right hand was horribly misshapen, the thumb having somehow healed completely out of joint while the index finger had clearly been badly broken and then healed that way too. Several times during their escape deeper into the Cape York Peninsula, Tex had literally had to be carried to where they were going.

But, as time passed, particularly in the first two relatively peaceful months, understanding began creeping back into his mind and his vocabulary and his pronunciation improved. This led to the reason he was called "Tex" by the members of the group. His accent sounded like a western cowboy, and the name had been a natural.

Ulura had looked closely at Tex's leg, foot and hand. She had some skill in medical treatment and there were others amongst the group who could help. For the missing portions of the foot, there was nothing that could be done. Heating and soaking the joints in the leg, soaked in various herbal potions, and then exercising them, had eased the stiffness somewhat in Tex's walking, but his movement was still labored and, depending on the terrain, certainly not sure.

They had fared better with the right hand.

After closely examining it and with the concurrence of a former emergency medical technician who was a part of the group, they had re-broken the index finger and set it. It appeared to be healing nicely. The ligaments and tendons around the thumb had already healed in the out of joint position before Tex came to them, so getting it back into joint had been very difficult. Eventually, through therapy and through staged pressure the thumb had been coaxed back into its normal place, but it was unlikely that he would ever have full use of it. The best that could be said was that it at least could function in a near normal fashion.

Amidst all of this Nabalco had been impressed with the attitude and drive of this young man. He was clearly not Australian, but he had been raised well. He wanted to carry his own weight and he had volunteered, as best as he was able to communicate it, to begin doing work around the camp, up to and including taking his turn on watch.

"Mr. Nabalco, sir, I've already slept four hours this evening and my dreams were troubled...so I got up to tend the fire before going out to look at the stars before my watch."

Nabalco considered the young man's words...and he was a young man, probably in his early to mid twenties...and asked him about his dreams.

"Tex, what troubled you about your dreams? Tell me what you experienced."

A look of frustration crossed Tex's face and he looked at the dirt before responding.

"That's just it...I can't remember my dreams any more than I can remember anything about myself. They were just troubling."

As Tex stopped speaking and tossed small twigs into the fire, Nabalco considered his comments. It was not unusual for an individual to forget his dreams, but this young man was troubled by so many things...his injuries, his identity...he certainly didn't need more weighing him down.

As he got up and approached Tex, and as he considered his own thoughts, Nabalco decided that they both could benefit from the night air and clear skies.

"Well, Tex, why don't we both walk out under the stars...perhaps we can find some form of answer or comfort for you...and for me, too."

**May 24, 00:07 local time**

**Outside the main cave**

**Muri Redoubt, Central Cape York Peninsula**

The stars were beautiful as Nabalco and Tex sat near a cliff and looked into the night sky. The air was clear, only a few clouds drifted overhead. The major fighting was seventy miles or more away to the east. Distant flashes could be seen along the horizon in that direction from time to time, but they did not disturb the solitude there where Nabalco sat with his refugee friend.

They had been watching the night sky for twenty minutes and Nabalco was content to let the young man quietly look at the stars and use the quiet, the beauty, and the majesty to help heal his immediate worries. He knew it was good medicine for the soul. Nabalco was applying the same medication, meditating with the backdrop of that majesty providing the foundation for deeper thoughts, and hopefully enlightenment.

As they watched, Tex began humming a tune to himself. It was one Nabalco had never heard Tex hum before, and did not recognize it.

"What's that song you're humming Tex?" he asked in a whisper.

For a moment Nabalco was sorry he had asked because Tex immediately stopped and did not answer right away.

"I don't know, sir. It just came to my mind. I think I can remember a few of the words...something like,"

"Oh the stars shine bright, each and every night ..."

Suddenly, far to the south, well above the horizon, a bright flash lit up the sky. Both Tex and Nabalco averted their eyes from the brief intensity, which cast shadows across the landscape.

It was followed by other similar flashes and stabs of red and blue light...crossing each other...reaching out. Interspersed in the beams were what appeared to be smaller lights moving with great speed, also crossing each other's path. Deep rumbling like thunder soon began to be heard coming from the cloudless sky to the south, forming a backdrop to the light show going on above.

The display went on for some moments. Both men...along with millions of others across Australia...were captivated by it. On several occasions there were clear detonations, brief flashes of bright light mixed with orange and reddish hues. These flashes were not as bright as the initial, larger flashes, but clearly they told of man-made objects meeting very violent ends.

Finally, there were fewer and fewer stabbing beams of light and detonations. Just as it seemed that the display was over, there was one final detonation.

And this one did not go out. It remained visible as it moved across the sky, finally appearing to catch fire as it arced over towards earth...leaving the unmistakable track of a larger object entering earth's atmosphere and breaking up as it did so.

"This is not good news I fear," said Nabalco.

He had heard stories of the American exploits in space. From his infrequent communications regarding news reports on the progress of the war, to stories told by passing refugees or allied scouts, he had heard of America's success in launch of two space stations into orbit. One of those, the Southern Star he believed they called it, was over Australia. There had been reports of the imminent launch of a third one over the Pacific Ocean.

"Tex, I am afraid we are witnessing war in space. Apparently the Chinese are attacking an American space station orbiting over Australia...and by the way those pieces are falling to earth, I am afraid they have succeeded in severely damaging or destroying it.

"The way those pieces are falling to earth seems so familiar somehow."

Tex was watching in silence, listening to Nabalco. At the mention of the pieces falling to earth being familiar, a memory flashed into Tex's mind. It was just a brief thought and it was over quickly, but he remembered seeing the same type of thing himself...years earlier...and a name.

"Yea," he said slowly as the thought was verbalized, "It's just like the Columbia falling to earth."

Nabalco quickly looked at Tex.

"Yes Tex, that's exactly it. It is just like the shuttle Columbia disaster. It's amazing that you remember that...can you remember any more?"

Sadly, Tex shook his head. It had just been a brief flash of a memory...outside watching the sky when it occurred. Just like tonight, but in the morning with...with...he just couldn't remember who he had been with. But he did remember seeing those bright, fiery pieces entering the earth's atmosphere, just like these...except he was sure that there were a lot more pieces in this instance.

"No...no, I just remembered for a second seeing those pieces falling to earth while I was outside watching the stars. And the name...nothing more."

**May 26, 09:30 local time**

**Headquarters, 15<sup>th</sup> MEU**

**U.S. Marines Corps, Brisbane, Australia**

Colonel Warmont considered Master Sergeant Campbell as he prepared to issue new orders.

The Master Sergeant, a certified American hero, whose latest enlistment had expired four months ago, had immediately "re-upped" at that time with no request for any intervening leave. Despite his status, and despite the resulting option that he had to return home at almost any time he chose, Leon Campbell had instead elected to remain in the war zone and was clearly in this fight to the end. The Colonel had a tremendous amount of respect for that and what it said about the young man.

Campbell had been attached to the Colonel's staff as a special "operative" within a month of the Colonel's arrival in Australia after the successful flanking invasion into Brisbane, north of Sydney. Those operations had gone very well, but they had also been intense and bloody. The Chinese, Indian and GIR forces that were occupying Australia, along with the massive influx of their citizens who were settling it, had proven resourceful and tough in resisting the three MEUs and other allied forces that had invaded. If for no other reason, they had shown it with their massive numbers and their willingness to spend those numbers in massive human wave assaults on his and other allied positions.

"When you couple that strength and resourcefulness with some of their technological innovations and weapons systems, you are left with a very dangerous foe," the Colonel reflected.

Campbell's attachment to the Colonel's staff had had been the result of upper command's approval of a special request by the Master Sergeant to search for a fellow Marine whom Campbell felt somehow was still alive although the official record indicated that he was presumed dead. The Colonel felt that the Master Sergeant's request, after intense combat in Brisbane, had been granted by his superiors in the hopes it would keep the hero out of harm's way so he could survive the war.

The Colonel himself would not have countenanced such a special "mission". Campbell was too valuable as a combat veteran, despite his notoriety and previous, unquestioned heroic service, to not

be stationed at the front where he could be most useful in fighting the enemy and helping to save other American lives as a result of that very experience. In addition, though the Sergeant was personally dedicated to finding his fellow Marine, it was also clear that he would follow orders without question and had no qualms about being in the line of fire.

But, orders were orders, and the Colonel had accommodated the Master Sergeant...all the while maneuvering so that he would ultimately be in a position to issue new orders to Campbell.

Now that time had come.

But before he issued the orders the Colonel couldn't help but reflect on the circumstances surrounding the Master Sergeant's quest. The Colonel had taken some interest in the case, had come to understand that the fellow Marine for whom Campbell was searching was a Captain Billy Simmons, a friend of Master Sergeant Campbell with whom he had entered service at the outbreak of hostilities. Simmons had apparently died fighting the Chinese as they pushed allied forces completely out of Australia. The Colonel had watched the film of the crash of the Captain's AH-1Z Viper helicopter after it took off from the deck of the doomed U.S.S. Tarawa.

"I can't see how anyone could have survived that crash," the Colonel thought again to himself as Campbell stood at attention in front of his desk.

All of this flowed through the Colonel's mind as he returned the Maser Sergeant's crisp salute.

"Master Sergeant Leon Campbell reporting as ordered, sir!"

After allowing Campbell to hold his salute for an instant more, the Colonel responded, "As you were, Master Sergeant Campbell. Please have a seat. Make yourself comfortable."

As Campbell sat down, the Colonel continued.

"Well, Master Sergeant, how has your search progressed, any success?"

Leon reflected upon his efforts of the past few months briefly before responding. Colonel Warmont had been very patient with him, and very understanding. This was only the fourth status report he had been requested to give since being attached to the Colonel's staff over four months ago.

"Colonel, first let me thank you for your help in this endeavor. It means a lot to me, and I know it means a lot to other Marines and service personnel. The entire search has been a testament to our nation's commitment to not leave its people behind if there is any chance of finding them.

"Having said that, although I have had a few leads, nothing has really panned out.

"Apparently, outside of those already captured, we were forced to leave behind a relatively large number of other personnel in the retreat, perhaps as many as seven hundred. Some were fighting and cut off...and I know what that can be like. Others were wounded or otherwise injured.

"What became of those people varies. Many were later captured, some died fighting, and some took up with the local population and became refugees. A few took to the woods on their own.

"In my own efforts, I have been able to identify thirty-three personnel and update their specific disposition. Of those, ten died before our return, fourteen are apparently still in captivity amongst our enemies, and nine have been found alive and are being debriefed before returning home.

"But specifically regarding Captain Simmons, I have found nothing definitive."

The Colonel considered the report.

"Well, Master Sergeant, you have done a good job, and a thorough one. I am sorry you have not been able to find more definitive information regarding Captain Simmons...I know the two of you were close before the war and kept track of each other during it. I mourn his apparent loss, but applaud your efforts on his behalf...and on behalf of his parents and loved ones.

"Perhaps some day, because of your efforts, or due to events we can't foresee at this time, more information regarding his ultimate fate will become available.

"Now, the time has come to move on. I have new orders for you.

"You are being assigned to a large combined task force that will be penetrating the Cape York Peninsula and either defeating, destroying, or otherwise driving enemy forces from that area.

"We have an entire Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) forming there now, along with elements of several U.S. Army Divisions and a combined force of Australian, Philippine, and Japanese forces.

"It's going to be a major effort in that sector while our other offensives continue to proceed into the interior and along the southern coast. We just cannot allow the large enemy force that has retreated onto Cape York to retain a position behind us on that flank. As we proceed to the east in the interior such a force would present a very real danger to our entire operations in northern and central Australia. To that end command has requested as many seasoned veterans as we can muster to be assigned to the force – men who are capable of working and fighting in the dense foliage and rough terrain for which that the inhospitable area is known. And that is where you come in Master Sergeant.

"I have requested and received permission for you to be in the vanguard, path-finding elements of that force, in command of a group of scouts and snipers who will be assigned directly to the Regimental Commander who is spearheading the advance.

"Are you up to that challenge, Master Sergeant?"

Leon did not have to think about his response. His training, his disposition, and his commitment to his nation and its freedom left but one clear, unequivocal answer.

"Yes sir! When do I mount up, sir?"

**May 29, 09:30 EST**

**Situation Room**

**The White House, Washington, DC**

The President of the United States, John Bowers, soberly scanned the faces of his National Security Council. This was a meeting that combined both of the sub-councils of that group that had been formed by the late and former President Weisskopf at the outbreak of the war. Those two sub-councils were the National and the International groups.

Several members sat on both councils, while others were involved with the specific areas where their own agencies and responsibilities were more focused. In this instance, due to the nature of the threat and the potential impact to both the CONUS and American and allied activities in the rest of the world, the President had felt it necessary to convene both groups together.

“Okay everyone, I have asked Bill to brief us on the extent of the damage we have suffered in the recent attacks and where we stand right now.

“I know that there are various departmental and agency responsibilities associated with aspects of the attacks and their impact...and that any number of individuals on this council could render the briefing. However, in talking with the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Directors of Homeland Security and the CIA and others, we all felt that the National Security Advisor would be able to provide the best overview without requiring several briefings.

“We will break down into specific departmental and agency discussions after the briefing.

“Bill, go ahead.”

Bill Hendrickson surveyed the grim faces of those gathered around the long conference table in the situation room. The principle members of the cabinet and other agencies represented on the full National Security Council were sitting at the table, and their aides were behind them along the wall.

The topic was the ferocious attacks the Chinese had mounted on the just launched USSS Admiralty space station that had been slated for positioning over the western Pacific Ocean, and the ensuing attack against the USSS Southern Star over Australia. After those attacks it was feared that the action would move rapidly against the USSS Conception over the Continental United States.

The news was not good...but it was better than it might have been. Hendrickson began.

“Quite frankly, ladies and gentlemen, what I have to tell you today is a message of bad news...but it is not as bad as it might otherwise have been...and mingled in with the decidedly bad news are the seeds of future success.

“As you know, at approximately 0300 hours on May 22, the Chinese commenced an attack against the launch vehicles that comprised the USSS Admiralty space station group. This occurred after the launch of the station and its accompanying space craft. That launch had been observed by a group of enemy operatives who had infiltrated the launch range in Nevada. Although our security forces at the base were able to discover, interdict and destroy this group, they did not do so before the enemy had communicated the time of launch by short-wave radio.

“We are convinced that this communication is what allowed the enemy to coordinate their ensuing attack. That attack was made by a total of twelve spacecraft that had been launched from China with what is obviously their own SSTO configuration.

“The attack was coordinated with a large wave of missiles and kinetic weapons against which the USSS Admiralty was in the process of defending itself. Though these types of attacks cannot be taken lightly, in the past, our space station groups have been able to rather handily defeat them. They were in the process of defeating this one as well, but we now know that the Chinese were using the attack to distract the Admiralty group and mask the approach of the manned Chinese spacecraft.

“...and the Chinese succeeded in that purpose.

“They launched eight spacecraft initially against the Admiralty and they came in behind the wave of ground-launched kinetic weapons and missiles. These spacecraft were highly maneuverable and launched their own long-range missiles at the Admiralty. While the Admiralty was engaging the ground-launched and space-launched missiles and the ground-launched kinetic weapons, the Chinese spacecraft engaged our forces with their primary weapons. These were some type of directed energy weapons with which they began targeting our spacecraft at a range of several hundred miles.

“As the range closed, the effectiveness of these weapons became more and more telling. While our people were staving off the kinetic weapons and missiles, these craft approached to within three hundred miles where their energy beams began to burn through the structure of our own craft.

“Soon after that point, our own lasers began to damage their craft, and our own missiles began to destroy the Chinese craft. But by that time the enemy had come closer and were attacking from fairly widely divergent directions and there simply was not enough time to defeat them all. In the end, the Chinese penetrated to close range and pressed their attack with what appeared to be self-stabilizing 30 or 40mm cannons. Once they came that close, they were to near for our nuclear tipped missiles to be employed. The few remaining undamaged lasers on the Admiralty simply could not destroy them all before the Admiralty group itself succumbed and was completely destroyed.”

“Completely destroyed?” asked the Secretary of State.



“Were there no survivors?”

Bill glanced down for just a moment before answering, but then looked up and soberly addressed the United States Secretary of State's question while speaking to the entire group.

“No, Mr. Secretary, there were no survivors. But, the Chinese attack did not end there.

“During the attack on the Admiralty group, our forces were able to destroy four of the Chinese craft. The remaining four Chinese craft were then tracked by land and sea-based systems, and ultimately by the USSS Southern Star as they made their way to the south, towards Australia. En route, they were joined by four more similar spacecraft that the Chinese launched. The entire reconstituted wing of eight spacecraft then proceeded to attack our Southern Star Space Station.

“Again, this attack was accompanied by a massive wave of kinetic weapons and missiles which the Southern Star had to deal with. Behind this attack came the eight Chinese craft.

“Using secure data links, our people over Australia had observed and listened in to the earlier attack against the Admiralty and they had time to prepare themselves accordingly. The Southern Star had quickly developed a plan to target the Chinese craft earlier with some of their nuclear tipped missiles while using the remainder to counter the ground-launched attacks. This plan proved more effective. They also had come up with a plan for close-in defense that included new fields of fire for the lasers that took into account the manned, maneuvering spacecraft. This too proved more effective.

“In the end, all eight of the Chinese spacecraft were destroyed. Tragically, although seven of the personnel onboard the Southern Star were able to evacuate into one of the corvettes and detach themselves safely from the rest of the station, the station itself was severally damaged. A final attack by the last remaining Chinese craft ended with that craft impacting the Southern Star itself. The force of that impact forced the incapacitated Southern Star into an erratic and highly unstable orbit. While there is some question as to whether the space station would have been able to remain aloft after the attack in any case, the impact of this final attack sealed its fate.

“Early that morning, at 00:27 hours, the USSS Southern Star entered the earth's atmosphere at a steep angle and began to break up. What was left of it after the heat of re-entry and its own breakup crashed into the Indian Ocean to the west of the Australian coast.”

As Bill Hendrickson paused a moment to see if there were any comments, the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Ben Ryan, interrupted at this point.

“Bill, excuse me for perhaps getting ahead here, but I know we were able to get a fix on the launch locations of the Chinese spacecraft. The Admiralty and the Southern Star, along with other assets, got a fairly good fix on the first group of enemy spacecraft as they came after the Admiralty, and then on the second group as they joined in to attack the Southern Star. From that data I know we determined the location of two primary launch facilities, as well as information regarding the manufacturing locations of these new spacecraft.

“Could you brief the rest of the group on the outcome of our operations against those facilities?”

Bill Hendrickson had planned to give this briefing later in the meeting, anticipating a long discussion on the attack itself. But he already had the associated information loaded into his hand-held computer and could quickly move his own time table forward.

“Admiral, I have that information right here if you will give me a second.”

Utilizing the hand-held computer, he quickly reviewed the pertinent information.

“Using the Admiralty, the Southern Star, certain ground and sea-based assets and NRO assets, and using some very high value and critical HUMINT assets inside China, we were able to narrow the launch facilities down to the two locations. The Chinese are manufacturing and using prototypes from one of those locations and are starting up full production manufacturing facilities at three other locations on the mainland.

“After receiving National Command Authority, the Joint Chiefs ordered immediate cruise missile strikes on all of those locations. The U.S. Air Force and U.S Navy participated in the attacks the next day. Afterwards, we used NRO assets in the form of three SR-77 aircraft, to attempt a battle damage assessment.

“Sadly, we discovered that the attack had caused very little damage to the two launch facilities, and only moderate damage to the three manufacturing facilities that the Chinese were ramping up. In finding this out, we lost two of the SR-77 aircraft. The launch facilities are very heavily defended by the latest Chinese anti-aircraft, anti-missile, anti-stealth, and anti-ballistic missile defenses. The manufacturing facilities were not as heavily defended but the imagery we did obtain during the BDA indicates that they were beefing up those defenses even as we were attacking them.

“A second, more major coordinated operation against the facilities was conducted yesterday utilizing two dozen of our conventional ballistic missiles and over one hundred of our best cruise missiles. Three of our new prototype unmanned, hypervelocity recon aircraft went in right behind the attacks and were able to do a fairly comprehensive BDA.

“We are confident that we moderately damaged the launch facilities, and severally damaged the new manufacturing facilities. In fact, two of those manufacturing facilities were completely destroyed...but we are also quite sure that the prototype manufacturing facilities and the launch facilities are not out of commission and the Chinese are strengthening their defenses.”

This information was new to most of the participants in the meeting. Outside of the direct chain of command associated with the missions which included the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Advisor and the President, the others were unaware of the most recent attempts to destroy the Chinese facilities that were producing the new Chinese spacecraft.

As Bill Hendrickson again paused, several voices were raised to make points regarding the attacks and to raise concerns.

In the midst of this, the President caught the gaze of Talbot Johnson, his Chief of Staff and nodded his head. At that gesture, Johnson held up his hands and quieted the various conversations that were growing in volume in the conference room.

"Listen everyone, this is a critical issue...but we also have several other critical issues to discuss this morning so we have to get through this quickly.

"Mr. President, did you have some direction at this point?"

The President stood up and paced back and forth behind his chair before responding.

"Yes, thank you, Talbot.

"As regards this issue, I can categorically state we are determined to continue to attack and ultimately destroy the Chinese bases and facilities associated with these new spacecraft...and to re-establish our presence in space over Australia, the Pacific and elsewhere.

"There are significant plans underway to accomplish this, both in terms of launching new, stronger space station groups and in terms of using assets already in space."

The President turned to the individual who represented the newest position that had been added to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. During the preceding eighteen months, as the United States had contemplated its planned activities in space, and the breadth of those activities, a new command had been created, The United States Space Command. At that time, General Laramie Wilson had been selected by the President to lead that command in a top secret meeting that had involved all of the other Joint Chiefs, the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Advisor and the President. The Vice President had also been apprised of the appointment. It had been a temporary, one-year appointment and Wilson had served in secret, bringing in various general officers and senior level officers to serve with him. After the launch of the Point Conception Space Station and the Lewis and Clark II expedition, the appointment had been placed before congress which had quickly approved the creation of the new service and the appointment of its chief. After several briefings, the congress had recognized the necessity for the new military service because of the strategic nature of its responsibilities, because of the expected rapid growth of that command and because of the critical nature of its ultimate interface to all other earth-based commands.

For himself, General Wilson had risen through the ranks in the Air Force, where he had started as a pilot with the Strategic Air Command and risen to command first Carswell Air Force Base in Texas, and then later Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho. When major hostilities broke out the General had requested a combat command. His request was granted and he was given the command of all U.S. Air Force equipment and personnel in Central America. Two years later, as fighting raged throughout Central and South America, the General's area of responsibility had been expanded to include all of South America.

His planning and leadership had proven exemplary and upon the recommendation of the prior Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Chief of the U.S. Air Forces, he had been selected by President Weiskopf as the primary candidate for the head of the USSC. President Bowers had made it official and named him to the spot and then seen him confirmed by Congress in that position.

Now, as the President turned to him for the briefing that he had been asked specifically to prepare for the military and civilian leadership of his nation, the General contemplated the importance of what was transpiring. In addition to the newer, heavy corvettes and frigates that the United States would be launching into space from both their Nevada range and the new facilities that had been completed at Vandenberg Air Base on the west coast, the General couldn't help but contemplate the imminent return of the USSS Gaspra and the USSS Ida from the asteroid belt.

"General Wilson," the President stated, "would you proceed with your briefing regarding plans for Operation Dominant Oversight and Operation Heavenly Hammer?"

**June 2, 21:39, local time**

**Presidential Retreat**

**Mysore, India**

As President KP Narayannen waited for the meeting to start, he contemplated the events that had led him to this place and this time. He never expected thing to go as they had, and yet here he was.

He had to admit to himself that much of his discomfort was a result of his own choices. Although it had gone against his better judgment, he had been caught up in the allures of power and influence and had willingly set himself and his nation on the course that had led to war.

Throughout the 1980's and 1990's India had been walking a tightrope...forced to deal with powers with which she did not feel particular affinity as a result of a desire to keep powerful adversaries at bay, particularly in Pakistan. This had led to the Americans, who were seeking to use

the Pakistani's as a balance against Iran, to funnel more and more materiel and technology into Pakistan... a totalitarian state that was strong in its militant Islamic leanings.

"Why hadn't the Americans seen back then that we here in India, with our republic and freedom, were a much better fit for their strategic goals in this region?" the President asked himself.

But such questions were moot now.

Despite some attempts by the United States at normalization during the "War on Terror", the Indians had also been courted first by the Russians and then by the Chinese... and these efforts were not mere flirtations, they were substantive and major economic and diplomatic proposals which the Indians could not ignore. The promise of prosperity and power, economic power, had swung the pendulum towards the Chinese in 2004 as joint economic summits produced joint statements by both nations regarding their intent to use their large, cheap labor pools to their mutual advantage.

With the creation of the Siberian Economic Development Treaty and the triad of Russia, Indian and Chinese exclusivity in that endeavor... the real stage had been set.

America had responded with tough economic measures and the Chinese and Indians had ultimately created the Coalition of Asian States, which expanded economic ties to formal military alliances and war had ensued.

Narayannen had not relished the thought of war with America... had thought he could steer India away from direct confrontation and allow China to do all of the heavy lifting. But he had been wrong.

China had delivered a devastating blow to the Americans that March and as the fortunes of war went well... more and more pressure was placed on India to secure the southern front in the Indian Ocean and to eliminate the American presence there, particularly on the island of Diego Garcia.

Using Chinese technology, augmented by Indian engineering and planning, the Indians had used their own two carriers and their ample air force to fight a successful campaign against the U.S. 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet that led to the capture Diego Garcia and driving the Americans out of the area.

Later, a successful Indian, Chinese and Greater Islamic Republic invasion of Australia had occurred which ultimately led to the occupation and pacification of that entire continent.

During those days, although the Indian President continued to harbor secret misgivings, the temptations of power and basking in the glory of victory were almost impossible to resist... and KP Narayannen knew that he had reveled in their success, and relished their growing influence. He had almost reached the point where he believed that there would never be any negative consequence to him personally or his nation as a whole.

Particularly as Siberia declared independence and the Indians and Chinese helped them to expel the Russians from their borders. Then, as the Chinese successfully invaded North America and took the American oil fields north of the arctic circle, it appeared as though either a negotiated settlement to the war, or the actual defeat of the Americans was imminent.

But then had come the devastating defeats near Anchorage, outside of Tel Aviv, and at the southeastern gates and suburbs of Moscow. And what defeats they had been!

The allies had employed new technology in their so-called Hail Storm missiles and had continued to improve them and add to them in the eighteen months since. Their own version of supercavitating torpedoes were now deployed, not to mention their continually improving efforts in space which had played such a pivotal role in the ongoing fight more recently.

Despite the recent downing of two of the American space stations by new Chinese spacecraft, the war effort was not going well. CAS forces were being pushed back on almost all fronts where they were in direct contact with the enemy. In Australia, allied forces had cut off a large force on the Cape York Peninsula and had pushed CAS and GIR forces back in the interior to near Alice Springs.

In the Mid East, Allied forces pushing north out of the Sudan had joined together in Egypt with forces emanating out of Israel and were now pushing to the west towards Libya and to the south along the Nile towards Ethiopia. Allied forces had also cleared all of Israel, Syria, and Lebanon of GIR and CAS forces, pushing far to the north into Turkey where they had been joined by Russian, European and American forces sweeping down from the north. The heart of the GIR, the former nation of Iran, was being invaded on two fronts, and the last he had heard, the oil refinery city of Abadan had been taken on the coast and Ahvaz, to the north, had fallen only three days later. The allies had been stalled on the northern border of Iran by fierce resistance, but were now advancing up the Dex Revier valley in the south in a push through the mountains towards Qom.

The situation was equally grim in Central and South America and in Africa. What had appeared to be almost certain victory had been turned into the prospect of a slow and methodical defeat over the last eighteen months and the Indian President now felt that old feeling in the pit of his gut, the feeling that created such anxiety and foreboding. It was a feeling that implied a sense of doom for his country, for his plans, and for him personally.

A note he received three weeks earlier through back channels had not helped. It was from Fred Reissinger, who was now the Vice President. It had been short and direct.

*"President Narayannen, America has not forgotten the promise that our late President Weisskopf made to you regarding your actions in the Indian Ocean. You shall yet be held personally accountable by the United States when you are finally brought to justice."*

KP Narayannen believed Fred Reissinger. He had met the man on several occasions and knew that the statesman meant exactly what he said. The Americans had not forgotten.

The only hope that the Indian President saw lay in the desperate course of action he would be embarking on today. He had called this very private and very secret meeting of his most trusted advisors and leaders in the government for just that purpose. He knew he had to be extremely careful, but he also knew he had to act if he had any hope of avoiding the retribution he was now certain would ultimately be visited on his nation...and upon him personally.

"Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for responding to my request so quickly and so discreetly.

"I know each of you share my concerns concerning the direction the war effort has taken and the potential future it bodes for our nation. Out of that concern, we are meeting today to develop a course of action that will spare us the destruction we may otherwise face as a people.

"In that regard, let me be direct. The Americans and their allies are winning...and they are winning decisively. I am convinced that it is now only a matter of time before the fighting and devastation they are wreaking on distant places are visited upon us here.

"We must remain very discreet, and we must move forward cautiously and with great care. But I believe it is time we face up to reality and reach out to the Americans in an effort to shorten this war and avoid the worst for our people and ourselves!"

## **June 2, that same time**

### **Presidential Retreat**

#### **Mysore, India**

Ambassador Buhendra Gavanker had been in Mysore less than a day, having arrived yesterday afternoon. What would normally have been a magnificent opportunity to enjoy one of India's most historic sites, was replaced by cruel necessity with the strict business at hand, which was being conducted in absolute secrecy. There would be no enjoyable or leisurely tours of the Maharajah's palace while he was here, and he would be leaving to return to Siberia tomorrow morning.

Upon arrival at the presidential retreat, Gavanker had been surprised at first by the absence of his direct supervisor, the Foreign Minister, Rahmish Patel. As last evening's dinner and informal gatherings had progressed and as Buhendra met and conversed with the others who had been invited to the conference, he came to the conclusion that he was not surprised at all by Patel's absence. Everyone in attendance were individuals like Buhendra, who felt growing anxiety with the war effort against the west, and who had been cultivated in those very views by the President himself. The Foreign Minister definitely did not fit that profile...and would be alarmed if he were aware of the meeting bringing together so many leaders who harbored what Patel would consider disloyal views.

Outside of the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Finance, every other member of the President's cabinet and many of their deputies were also in attendance. This included a few, like Buhendra, who were subordinates to some of the missing ministers.

Since his appointment as the Ambassador to Siberia, Buhendra had worked with his typical commitment and energy, giving his best for the nation. Over time, KP Narayannen, had become more and more personally involved with Buhendra's assignment and activities, which Buhendra surmised was due to the critical nature of India's economic and security agreement with Siberia. At first it had surprised the ambassador, feeling somewhat uncomfortable that his direct chain of command, Rahmish Patel, was not involved in all instances. But as time progressed Buhendra found himself coming to like the President personally, and agreeing with the views he articulated.

"Besides," he thought, "the President supported me and won my loyalty and trust naturally."

Buhendra knew that the President found a strong affinity in the practicality and technical expertise that Buhendra had, and that he had found a powerful ally and friend in the President.

...and now he knew why.

"This sets things in a whole new light," he thought.

"The risks and the potential consequences of what the President is proposing will increase by orders of magnitude and I certainly hope that everyone here appreciates that fact and is as completely committed to what it will require as I am.

As Buhendra contemplated this, the President began going from person to person in the meeting and asking them specifically what their thoughts and intentions were regarding what he had proposed regarding opening up direct communications with the west.

Most of the department heads, agency leaders, ministers and ambassadors in the room agreed with the President emphatically.

One of the people, the Deputy Minister of Finance, Raj Tajil, voiced some trepidation.

"Mr. President, while I agree in principle that the war effort is going badly and that there is significant potential for risk to the nation as the western allies come closer...isn't your suggestion that we negotiate terms with the enemy bordering on sedition, or even worse?"

Buhendra watched the President's face closely as this question and challenge was issued.

He had to admit that Narayannen didn't flinch or show any sign of anger or impatience with Tajil or his question. On the contrary, he responded directly to it.

“Raj, that’s a fair question.

“There would certainly be many in government service who are wholly committed to this effort, some for personal advancement reasons, some for ideological and political reasons, and some out of a commitment to our national pride, who would agree that the very thought of negotiating with our enemies and suing for peace, would in fact be seditious.

“Clearly, I don’t agree with that premise. We are elected by our people, and some of you have been appointed by those of us who are, and our duty is to their well being, their freedom, and the survival of our nation, its government and way of life.

I believe, as President of our Republic, that this course of action is in line with those goals.”

The Deputy Finance Minister nodded his head, but then added.

“Then, Mr. President, why hold these meetings in such secrecy? Why not debate them in the true spirit of our form of government in the open so that we can come to a conclusion that represents the desire of the majority of those who represent the people?”

Again the President did not waiver, did not reveal any frustration, angst or anger.

“The answer to that question, Raj, given the nature of the situation, the nature of our allies and their forms of government, and the nature of some of those in our own government who would abjectly oppose us... is self evident.”

As the others in the room took their turns in responding to the President’s request for their views, only one or two more voiced any concern about what the president was proposing.

Buhpendra was surprised that these protests had been voiced...or allowed. He wondered how they could successfully go about the tasks they were discussing with such dissent amongst them.

When it came Buhpendra’s turn, he answered without hesitation.

“Mr. President, as one who has been involved in an official governmental administrative capacity only since the creation of the Siberian Economic Development Pact, and having observed the types of impact that particular pact and the eventual independence of Siberia has had on our nation, I can only say the following...

“The economic benefit of the pact, even while the Russians were our partners, has been substantial. As a nation our economy has benefited tremendously through that pact. Of course, with the independence of Siberia, our profit margin has increased, but we have also had to significantly increase our costs for security and the war effort as that new front was opened up.

“It seems to me that the governmental forms of the western allies much more nearly match our own and the principles upon which our republic rests. While I know it is true that the Americans played the Pakistanis off against the Iranians without contemplating how much that pushed us towards their own enemies at the time... first Russia and then China... I believe the war has changed all of that. I believe the Americans want this war brought to a speedy and successful completion... I know the Russians do... and I believe they will be very willing to open a dialog with us to lead in that direction.

“In short, I fully support seeking a direct dialogue with the west, and particularly before the ravages of their technological war machine are unleashed on our nation directly. The sooner and more sincerely we do this in my estimation, the better.”

That portion of the meeting went on for another thirty-five minutes as everyone had ample opportunity to express their thoughts while they finished eating the fine meal of chicken curry over which the discussion had been held. Then the meeting was adjourned for one hour for each of the participants to return to their room and freshen up if they so desired.

When they resumed the meeting a little more than an hour later, Buhpendra’s concerns about the dissent were answered in a very direct way. He and the others in attendance could not help but notice as the meeting reconvened that Raj and the other two attendees who had voiced strong negativity and resistance regarding the purpose of the meeting were no longer present with the rest of them.

All three of them were simply gone, without fanfare or discussion, and Buhpendra and the others would never see any of them again.

**June 16, 03:45 local time**

**Fortified Observation Post 28**

**Elevation 3450 Meters, Kum Mountain, the former Iran**

Utilizing his new Chinese infrared viewing scope, Izza had been watching the valley below for more than two hours... and had seen nothing.

Even in June, at this elevation at night, it was quite cold.

But that was alright. Izza had on a heavy wool jacket and a good, warm wrap to keep his head warm. Besides, he was a defender of Allah and the road that climbed through the pass below, and then down the other side, led to the holy city of Qom, over two hundred and fifty kilometers to the north and east, and one of the holiest cities in all of Islam, surpassed only by Mecca and Medina.

“I wonder if our brothers have been successful in defending those holiest of cities against the faithless,” Izza asked himself as he momentarily lowered the monacle scope from his right eye.

Then, thinking back on his own assignment this night, the cold air, and the importance of his duties, he continued to himself.

“Well, if defending such a place as this and keeping the infidels at bay is not enough to keep one warm...then nothing is.”

Hearing movement in the bunker behind him, he quickly lifted the device back up to his eye and continued to scan up and down the valley through the slit in the bunker.

“Izza!” his sergeant whispered from the firing position to the left, “keep your eyes open!”

“The Captain says that our air defense units are picking up incoming stealth missiles.

“The last area intelligence indicated that American, British and Israeli forces were massing and preparing for an assault, and we lost communications with observation post 32 across the valley.

“Could be a simple communications hitch...but I don’t think we should count on it. Besides...”

Before the sergeant could finish his sentence, there was a sickening and mushy “THUD” and the sentence ended. It didn’t trail off...it just stopped.

Turning his head slightly, Izza saw the sergeant’s lifeless-and now headless-body flying backwards, blood and gore spread across the back wall above the entrance. The corpse landed with the torso hanging outside the position into the aisle behind them, while his legs stretched forward into the position, both boots pointing up, and the left leg twitching uncontrollably.

That’s when Izza noticed the warm liquid and small pieces of skull and brain on his face.

Before he could raise his hand to wipe it off...or utter a cry of alarm to the two men manning the communications equipment in the back of the bunker...there was another sickening “THUD”.

Izza never heard that one...and he never saw the flash of light that entered the bunker right through the slit where he had been stationed that exploded with a deafening roar.

### **June 16, that same time**

#### **SAS Sniper Team, 1.6 kilometers to the West**

##### **Near the Dez River Pass, the former Iran**

“Good shooting old boy...I should probably say, old boys, since both of you were spot on.

“Perkins, call it in and then let’s be off before any observant mullah or other ragheads note our position and bring something unsavory down on top of us.”

After he had finished speaking, Sergeant Tony Mallory waited for his personnel to transmit the short communication signal indicating a successful completion of their mission. When that was done, he led the four-man team through the rocks and back away from the military crest of the hill, up over the actual ridgeline, and into a prepared position where they would be protected from what was to come, and where they could await their next assignment.

Within the four-man team, Mallory and another member of the team provided security with their assault rifles, and also carried the communications equipment. The sniper used the latest American Barretts design, a .50 caliber sniper rifle that also housed a target designating laser for the fourth member of the team. That sergeant carried a “Quick Strike” shoulder-fired, hypervelocity missile that had a target selector switch that allowed the missile to home in on the laser designator provided by the sniper. The selector also allowed for infrared or dead site targeting.

In the most recent engagement, the missile had used the laser designator to track right through the slit in the enemy bunker and destroy everything inside after the sniper had eliminated those manning the firing and observation positions.

With the last engagement against Izza’s position, the team had completed their sweep to destroy three fortified enemy observation posts. Now, unless they had missed one, the avenue was open for the allied mechanized divisions, preceded by a small volley of the latest Hail-Storm missiles, to assault the major defenses the enemy had prepared less than two kilometers up the road, at the top of the pass.

Mallory shooed his team under the rock outcropping facing away from the high mountain valley of the pass, with a, “Come on troopers, time to snuggle in, all safe for the night.”

As he did so, and as he went to ground and got under cover, a flight of twelve missiles snaked up the valley on the other side of the ridgeline and began to wreak havoc and destruction on the enemy.

### **June 18, 17:22, local time**

#### **Secure Command Bunker**

##### **The Eastern Outskirts of Tehran, The former Iran**

Hasan al-Askari Sayeed had just finished conferring personally with General Abdul Selim, his young Tiger of Islam. He was not happy with the content of the conversation, or what it would mean to the Greater Islamic Republic and his continued faithful dream of a world united under Islam.

The western Allies were advancing rapidly on Tehran.

Selim had performed brilliantly in his defense of the Tabriz gap between the Caspian Sea and the Azerbaijan Sea. His twelve divisions had held up almost forty allied divisions for two weeks as Russian, European Union and supporting American forces assailed his positions.

Sayeed had thought that the young General would be successful and was in the act of thanking Allah for the great victories the General was winning when news of the allied breakthrough at the Dez River Pass had been reported to him. Thirty divisions of American, British and Israeli troops had

broken through the pass and had quickly advanced on and attacked Qom yesterday. It was immediately clear to Sayeed, and to Selim, that Qom would fall.

Selim's forces were ordered into a fighting withdrawal towards Tehran in an effort to keep the forces under Selim's command from being surrounded, and to allow time to get as many in Tehran as possible to join with Selim's forces in defense of the city.

But it was now clear that Selim and his forces were not going to make it to Tehran in time.

Surprisingly, in Qom and elsewhere, many citizens were now going over to, and joining the infidels, abandoning the true faith for the hope of the freedoms and secular allurements the westerners, and particularly the Americans, promised.

"A free society," Sayeed muttered to himself.

"Free to do what...sin, to profane Allah and his ways?"

Regardless of the reasons, many of the students and their families and many of the more liberal clerics were apparently jumping at the opportunity to align themselves with the invaders.

The great Imam and Ayatollah never considered for a moment the possibility that the many freedom protests that had occurred in Iran itself in the 1990's and early 2000's before his meteoric rise to power had simply faded undercover rather than been extinguished. He never considered the help he had received from the Chinese and the impact it had had on those who might otherwise have opposed him. Many opposition leaders simply ceased to exist, but others, and their followers, had never been stamped out, and they had bided their time patiently, realizing that, with the success of Sayeed over the last several years, any attempt at resistance or insurgency would be doomed to fail.

But now that the Americans and their allies had broken into the hear of the Greater Islamic Republic itself...the opportunity for resistance to Sayeed and his pure version of Islam had arrived. That message of resistance to Sayeed and acceptance of the western invaders was finding very fertile ground in the hearts and minds of more people than Sayeed would have ever imagined.

And many of these knew the deeper secret, that Medina and Mecca had already fallen. Their faith was shaken, their future was completely unsure...and they had lost their zeal and their commitment...doubting themselves and their religious tenets.

Despite the fact that he would not countenance the reasoning and betrayal of his own people, Hassan Sayeed knew the dark secret too...and he was deeply troubled by it.

"Am I to be tested like father Abraham then...who was told to take his only son into the desert and to sacrifice him on the altar," he asked himself.

"Oh Allah, where are you?"

"How could you forsake all of us?"

"How could you forsake *me*?"

Medina had fallen in a rather uninspiring fashion. Though Sayeed was terribly upset by the actions of his forces in that area who had retreated past the city in front of the enemy onslaught...and then been destroyed when they were caught in the open by several waves of the damnable American Hail-Storm missiles...he was thankful that the city had been preserved for the faith.

But the story of the fall of Mecca haunted him.

Over one hundred thousand GIR troops, consisting of infantry, mechanized, and armor units supported by limited air support, with all of their equipment, and plenty of ammunition had retreated into the city on June 4<sup>th</sup>. The population had completely supported the GIR forces, with many faithful within the city joining the ranks to fight in defense of the holy city.

U.S. and U.K. forces had surrounded the city and cut off all access to it by the morning of June 6<sup>th</sup>. They had set up checkpoints on all major access roads and ringed the city with men and steel. Within two days, they had dug in and the defenders were completely cut-off with no hope for support or relief. Outside of divine assistance, it was clear that the western forces would be content to simply starve the defenders and inhabitants out.

That was when things had gone even more terribly wrong.

During the mid-afternoon of June 6<sup>th</sup>, the Americans sent a unilateral peace and cease-fire delegation of ten personnel into the city under a white flag. They indicated that they came to negotiate some way to keep from damaging or destroying the holy city and to save as many lives as possible.

They were admitted into the city by the defenders.

The delegation included a General of the United States Marines, the provisional head of the new Arabian government-appointed by the Americans, two senior career diplomats-one from the U.K. and one from the U.S., two translators, and a team of four Marines for security.

The delegation had the power to offer a complete ceasefire, food and medical supplies for all in need and an honorable handling of the GIR forces who were being asked to surrender unconditionally.

The entire team had been taken to the central part of the city and admitted into a large outer courtyard at a mosque there. Two of the security detail had accompanied the peace representatives and translators into the courtyard and the other two members of the security team had stayed outside with their vehicles. A delegation of the city leaders and military leaders of the GIR forces met the U.S. General and the diplomats within the courtyard and negotiations began.

The GIR leaders made their position clear, swiftly and brutally. First, the American signal battalion on the outskirts of the city had lost contact with the delegation.

Then, allied airborne surveillance had picked up a brief exchange of automatic weapons fire, first within the courtyard and then outside, next to the vehicles.

One of the marines near the vehicles tried to give a brief report.

"We are under attack..."

This was followed by more automatic weapons fire and then a few seconds of silence. After that, of a sudden, there was a horrendous uproar and wild celebration. Literally tens of thousands of weapons were fired into the air. The celebrations turned into an orgy...and orgy of mutilation.

All ten members of the delegation were decapitated, their eyes gouged out and replaced by horse dung. The bodies were literally torn limb from limb...and then, in a manner reminiscent of a similar occurrence in the town of Fallujah, Iraq, during operation Iraqi Freedom in the spring of 2004, the mutilated body parts were hung from bridges and light posts around the central portion of the city.

The heads were placed in one of the allies' vehicles and sent careening out of the city towards the allied lines. The entire thing was captured live on a television broadcast within Mecca and then picked up by allied forces...including one enterprising WNN crew that snuck some of its personnel into a restricted area just behind allied lines.

Within hours, the whole world had witnessed the orgy of mutilation in Mecca.

Major General Lender, who commanded the United States Marine surrounding the city, had wasted no time in coming up with a plan to deal directly and harshly with the atrocity, and the defenders in the city.

America had learned from its experiences and horrors of this war, she had learned from Fallujah of Operation Iraqi Freedom, she had learned from 9-11 and from the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole, she had learned from the initial World trade Center bombing in the early 1990's, she had learned from Beirut and from countless other terrorist and extremist attacks.

There would be no further attempt at negotiations with terrorists or their Jihad cousins. America and her allies knew from harsh experience that this enemy respected but one thing.

The official request for retaliation and pacification literally flew up the channels to the White House where President John Bowers reviewed the request the afternoon it arrived, consulted with the entire National Security Council that evening, and then approved it...with no alterations.

The next day, all allied sniper teams and probing forces were withdrawn to the perimeter.

An ultimatum was issued at 12:00 noon the next day, June 7<sup>th</sup>.

The GIR forces and those who supported them within Mecca had 24 hours to do the following:

- 1) *Anyone non-combatant desiring to leave the city could leave on a main road and be processed through the checkpoints. Non-combatants were defined as women and children, where males under the age of 13 were defined as children, and males over the age of 65 were also included. No weapons would be permitted. Anyone known to be a leader or collaborator of terror, jihad or GIR official-regardless of age or gender-would be detained.*
- 2) *Any male combatant between the ages of 13 and 65 who wanted to surrender was directed to one of four separate gathering points outside the city. The surrender was unconditional and combatants would be subject to indefinite detention and intense interrogation.*
- 3) *Anyone seen with a weapon would be killed on sight.*
- 4) *The blood of any non-combatants who were either forced to stay, or who decided of their own accord to stay, would be on the hands of the combatants who elected to fight.*
- 5) *After 24 hours, the city would be reduced and destroyed.*

Most of the combatants and their families did not believe the Americans and British would follow through with these threats...and if they did, they presumed that there would be a harsh house to house, door to door, urban struggle for the city where they could severally bleed the allies and obtain for themselves their paradise through Jihad.

Sayed himself believed this would be the case...and longed for the films of the Americans taking terrible casualties in the holy city. Films he would use to enrage Muslims everywhere.

All of them were terribly mistaken.

Over 200,000 civilians in the city chose to follow allied directions. They came in long lines and convoys all that day and throughout the night, most with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

At the same time, more than 25,000 combatants surrendered...not wanting to fight in a cause that was doomed, no matter how gallant the religious respective.

But in the end, over 75,000 combatants and an estimated 65,000 civilians remained in the city and around the holy shrines, fortifying them all for the expected ground assault...that never came.

With no more talk, with no more fanfare, at noon on June 8<sup>th</sup>, the bombing began.

Waves of B-52H bombers performed the most intensive bombing raids since the Vietnam War... all concentrated on the one, city. Wave after wave, the bombers came throughout the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of June...non-stop.

Interspersed in with the ARC LITE bombing was the use of dozens of newly developed MOAB II area demolition bombs. Mammoth 60,000 pound bombs that were delivered by specially



configured C-17 Globe Master transports, dubbed B-17 IIs. Each of those behemoths was capable of completely reducing entire city blocks. They were known as poor man's mini-non-nukes.

By the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup>, first hundreds...and then thousands of inhabitants and combatants began exiting the ruined city. Any who came out with weapons in their hands, or who otherwise attempted to fight were immediately shot down and killed.

Soon, all who came out were unarmed and nonbelligerent.

By the afternoon on the 9<sup>th</sup>, no major structure was left standing in the city. By noon on the 10<sup>th</sup>, when the bombing campaign ended, not one stone was standing left upon another within Mecca.

An eerie silence fell across the face of the countryside in and around the remains of the city. There was not so much as a moan coming from the ruins. .

That afternoon, allied scout, EOD and medic teams entered the city. Over a two day period, fewer than 500 injured were pulled from the mounds of rubble. By the 14<sup>th</sup> of June, all rescue and recovery efforts ceased. The allies did not intend to rebuild Mecca...they intended to send a message.

Over one hundred U.S. Army D-9 caterpillar bulldozers then appeared on the perimeter around the city and converged on it. They literally covered over the smoldering debris and smoothed it out in three days time. A flat, desolate landscape then occupied the ground where once Mecca stood. All debris, all ruined or discarded weapons-all bodies-had been buried there.

Atop this soil the allies sprinkled salt and then soaked the ground in swine fat. Around the perimeter, and interspersed every five hundred yards within, the following metal signs were erected:

*Here stood Mecca, until it was occupied by barbarians, terrorists and desecrators  
and those who harbored them, who then committed atrocities against the United  
States of America and the United Kingdom and their allies.*

*Now there is nothing here but a desolation of pig-fat and salt.*

*Let the fate of this once great city be a clear message to all those who would  
desecrate that which is holy and who would consider committing similar atrocities  
against United States or United Kingdom forces, personnel or civilians.*

*To the innocent we allowed to escape we say-De Oppresso Libre!  
To the barbarians who died here we say-Sic Simper Tyranis!*

Sayeed could still see those signs in his mind's eye. He could not help but mourn the loss of the city and could also not help but wonder how he could motivate the faithful to keep on fighting...to find strength in praying five times a day to such a place, a place that was now nothing more than a smoking, smoldering, desecrated wasteland.

For the first time in his life his faith wavered...and it shook him to the core.

Then...a piercing pain in his side and heart...an all consuming pain that filled him first with rage...and then with strength.

He would have to leave Tehran...but he knew where he would go, and he knew to what the rest of his life would be devoted.

In many ways, it would be devoted to the same goal to which he had dedicated himself for the last many years. But now the fight to unite the world under the banner of Islam would have to take on a new form, and it could only do that after he had reconstituted his strength in some area of the world not yet assailed so devastatingly by his enemies, where he could rebuild the faith and the institutions that would soon be lost to him here.

## Chapter 39

*“There is no chance, no destiny, no fate, can circumvent or hinder or control the firm resolve of a determined soul” – Ella Wilcox*

**July 2, 14:55, Local Time**

**Large Inner Courtyard, Principle Hamadan Mosque**

**Hamadan, Greater Islamic Republic**

Hamadan was a smaller city in the northwestern part of the former Iran that was strategically out of the way and off the beaten path. As Allied forces passed to the North of it in their pursuit of the GIR Armies that had, until recently, been successfully holding back the Allied onslaught near Tabriz, Hamadan had not been directly attacked. As the allied breakthrough to the east of Qom threatened Tehran from a different axis, and as that same breakthrough threatened the envelopment and destruction of the GIR armies in Tabriz headed by the young General Selim, Selim's forces had been forced to rapidly fall back towards Tehran, with the allied forces fast on their heels.

As the large allied offensive and GIR retreat occurred to the north, Hamadan experienced relatively light bombing and shelling of its local GIR garrison by allied peripheral forces as they passed. The same type of thing was occurring with many cities throughout the former Iraq and Iran.

Now, in several of these bypassed cities, with apparently little allied presence, the local garrisons and those still faithful to Hassan Sayeed's vision were gathering and preparing to fight. The local clerics were whipping them up into a frenzy because of what had occurred at Mecca in June.

One of those clerics, who had amassed his own personal militia of over twenty thousand well provisioned men, was the Ayatollah Sheik Aman Saldi. He was relatively young, but fiercely loyal to Hassan Sayeed, and wholly committed to resisting and defeating any infidels coming within his reach, and punishing any of his own who betrayed the faith and consorted with the enemy. On this day, he was speaking to ten thousand of his own followers, and a large number of local citizens and members of the local garrison that had gathered within the walls of the holy mosque in Hamadan to hear him.

“My brothers, the Americans and their running dogs, in their arrogance, have made yet another fatal mistake. Similar to their actions six and seven years ago in Iraq during their so-called Operation Iraqi Freedom, they have bypassed many tens of thousands of the faithful, falsely believing that we will be overly impressed with their technology and the swiftness of their advance, and that we will sit idly by while they continue to attack, oppress and kill our brothers and sisters of faith and defile Allah.

“They have their automons in the air above us to watch over and contain us. Just look above yourselves now and you are sure to see them. Their incessant buzzing is heard night and day. They think that these flies will deter us and frighten us into inaction.

“But they could not be more wrong.

“I say to you, to those faithful gathered here this day, to all of those within the sound of my voice, or who will hear of it later... we are now behind the enemy lines, and we will wage Jihad upon them and their supply lines until the head of their military snake is left toothless in the center of our land. Then, we shall sever that head and stomp it to death!”

The cheering was wild. The militia and local garrison fired incessantly into the air. They knew that the local television crews, who were filming the event, would beam the images of this defiant gathering to the world. They hoped and believed that other faithful followers of Allah and the great Imam Sayeed would see it and take heart...and rise up behind the allied armies.

...but it was *they* could not have been more wrong.

It was true, the allies, and particularly the Americans, had left unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in place in an operation to watch over the bypassed cities and forces. The Americans named this operation *Ruthless Sentinel*.

With this operation, as had been the case with the surrounding of and destruction of Mecca, the Americans and their allies had learned well from their experiences in Iraq in 2003 and 2004, and from their experiences in the years of warfare that had ensued. They had modified their operational plans, adjusted their thinking and prepared procedures and scenarios accordingly. The UAVs were not just there to watch over the potential belligerents and provide surveillance. As the operational name implied, those UAVs were meant to do much more, and they were equipped to do so.

The latest Predator IV UAV design had been tested and deployed to the battlefield by the United States only a few months earlier. They were now being mass produced by the thousands in new American wartime manufacturing plants. They were extremely capable aircraft in terms of performance, endurance, and armament, and could be remotely controlled from either land-based or airborne command centers hundreds of miles away. Each controller was capable of remotely controlling twelve to fifteen aircraft.

...and at this moment there were literally hundreds of aircraft hovering over the bypassed areas of the former Iran alone.

This particularly large gathering in Hamadan was quickly observed by a nearby Predator IV. The information regarding its size, location and disposition was then relayed to the controllers and on up the chain of command. Quickly, the buzzing over Hamadan increased dramatically as first dozens, and then scores of Predator IV aircraft were quickly diverted to fly high over the city, monitoring the mosque and those gathered there, and standing ready.

As the intent of the gathering became clear and as the militants and regular GIR army troops began responding to Saldi's rhetoric by firing into the air...orders were issued to the Predators and it began to rain in Hamadan.

...a rain of death.

Each of the Predator IVs was equipped with a miniature version of the Hail Storm weapon system that had been so successfully deployed by the Americans on special cruise missiles against CAS and GIR armies to date. In the cruise missile form, it was a system that had been very instrumental in helping turn the tide of war a year and a half earlier. On the Predator IV, the smaller Hail Storm system was designed to ensure that the tides of war, once turned, remained that way behind the front lines. In order to do so, it comprised several hundred .177 caliber, depleted Uranium pellets that could be quickly and accurately targeted on people, vehicles or installations using its solid state, electronic firing system.

Seventy-five of these aircraft now attacked in a coordinated fashion, guided by six different controllers located in ground-based command centers and on airborne command aircraft up to two hundred miles away. They targeted the deadly ordinance of their aircraft on the gathering of militants, the regular army garrison, the supporting citizens, and upon Saldi himself, who was speaking from a podium at the front of the crowd at the mosque in Hamadan.

The attack's duration spanned all of eight seconds, eight *powerful and significant* seconds.

To those on the ground, in the middle of the target area, the only indication of attack had been a sudden and dramatic increase in the buzzing sound from overhead. That sound had reached a crescendo as the high velocity projectiles reached the ground and decimated the gathering.

Those in attendance never stood a chance.

Those on the peripheral of the gathering, who were standing back from the crowd and were thus outside the kill zone, were spared death, but not the horror. As soon as their brains could register and comprehend the carnage that their eyes were witnessing, they screamed wildly and incoherently, and then ran madly away from the mayhem they had witnessed in the large courtyard.

On television screens throughout the Arab world, where the broadcast was being carried live, and on allied monitors from the aircraft above, one moment the defiant figure of Saldi was standing at the podium enraging his followers...and the next moment splinters of wood and plastic and unrecognizable pieces of Saldi himself were literally flying through the air as a veritable wave of hypervelocity projectiles swept over the stand where he and his lieutenants were positioned and across the crowd immediately in front of the stand. Not one solitary soul was left alive on the stand or amongst the hundreds gathered directly in front of it.

Within those eight potent seconds, the entire gathering had been broken, dashed, and utterly destroyed. Over twelve thousand potential Jihadists had suffered their martyrdom without ever being able to attack the "infidels". Instead, the allies had destroyed them first without losing a single life.

There would be no insurgent uprising whatsoever arising out of Hamadan...and after two or three more examples were made of similar gatherings...there would be very, very few insurgent uprisings anywhere in the Arab world.

For that matter, as the Predator IVs were deployed in numbers elsewhere around the world, there would be very few insurgent uprisings anywhere else either.

### **July 3, 22:47, Local Time**

#### **Improvised Landing Field**

#### **100 km west of Tehran, GIR**

Abduhl Selim was known by his friends and his enemies to be very wise for his years. All of the men under his command knew this...and, along with his fierceness, his dedication and his uncanny ability to survive and inflict damage on his enemies, his wisdom was one of the reasons the men under him so willingly followed him.

Now that wisdom was telling him what he should do.

A direct, secret communiqué from the great Imam himself indicated that Selim should gather his most trusted and capable subordinates and a personal security force made up of a battalion of his most loyal troops and leave. The communiqué had been in the form of a direct order and the General was busily preparing his staff and security force to do exactly what their leader required of them.

But before he left, he wanted to address all of the men...both those who would be going and those who would stay and continue the fight here. He arranged for his words to be carried to his forces using a narrow, low-powered frequency, and using the latest scrambling equipment available.

As tens of thousands of weary GIR soldiers listened, General Selim began.

“My brothers, and I call you brothers because that is exactly what you are...brothers in arms and brothers in the faith.

“Side by side we have fought a good fight. We have inflicted significant damage and casualties on a technologically superior foe. Your achievements and fierceness will be written about, spoken about and revered for its greatness generations to come by the faithful everywhere.

“Now the time has come for us to part paths.

“I have been ordered to the side of our great Imam and Mahdi where he shall continue the fight to the east, while you continue here.

“I will not mince words...it will be difficult for us all.

“You here who stay and those who command you have the difficult task of choosing to fight a disciplined withdrawal to Tehran, under less and less friendly air cover, and more and more assaults from the sky by the Americans and their allies...and their devastating weapons. Or, you may choose to simply melt away, back to your families and homes to see what the future holds.

“It is my wish that as many of you live to a ripe old age as possible. I say this as a young man myself, one who has not always acted as though he wished to see old age (and here, many of the troops laughed to themselves, knowing their General for who he was)...as most of you are all too aware. But I also say it as one who has served proudly at your side. As of this date, it is my firm conviction that nothing further will be served by your slaughter here to the west of Tehran.

“Each of you and each of your units will have to decide for yourselves what you shall do.

“You all know what has occurred at Mecca, at Qom, and just two days ago at Hamadan.

“It is my express order, and it is being circulated now amongst your commanding officers, that all of you who wish to fight on in the defense of Tehran form up by 0500 hours to do so. By prior communication, units wishing to fight are already in position providing flank security for this army. Just the same, none of you should forget or be lax in your perimeter patrols or defenses. Just listen to your senior sergeants and to your officers regarding how you form up. They already have their orders.

“All who wish to return to your homes should also form up in groups of no more than five, and begin your journey by 0500 as well. Orders pertaining to this have been issued as well. If stopped at enemy check points or by enemy forces...do not resist them. If interrogated, you must not reveal critical information. Simply remain firm in your insistence that your only wish is to return home to your wives and children. Remember that at this time to resist is to die, and to die in a manner, as the Americans have already shown, that will deny you any Jihad rights in the hereafter. Who would be fool enough to allow the Americans to take from us that eternal reward?

“Now, I say to you all...Allah Akbar!

“May Allah the merciful be with each of you.

“That is all.”

The stunned soldiers responded positively to their General and to their officers. Fully 70% of the army melted away to the north and east, into the rugged terrain where the allies had not encircled their forces and where the greatest available amount of remaining GIR air coverage remained.

The other 30% of the army provided security and diversionary fighting while their comrades departed. Those fighting forces then fell back towards Tehran. But what had been to that point a disciplined retreat, before long turned into a headlong route. By July 7th, allied forces would be on the outskirts of Tehran, where they would surround the city and issue the same ultimatums that were now becoming commonplace for any belligerent city that was a strategic military goal for allied forces.

Given what the General had allowed outside of Tehran, given the examples that had already been set-particularly at Mecca, and given the growing number of Iranians who were standing up for their own freedom...the outcome would never be in question. GIR forces defending the city, already faced with significant internal upheaval within Tehran, would surrender unconditionally and be taken into custody and allied forces would enter the city by the middle of the month with little opposition.

Thus was reduced the largest remaining GIR military force in eastern Iran, the heart of the GIR, and thus fell Tehran, the capitol of the GIR.

The large airlift of General Selim's command staff and security battalion, protected by the best remaining SU-35 and imported J-10 fighter squadrons the GIR had, flew to a secret rendezvous with Hassan Sayeed's entourage on July 4th.

But when they arrived, Hassan Sayeed discovered that General Selim was not with them.

By that time, he and four other personnel from his staff who, like himself, were native to Turkmenistan, had made their way across the hills and mountains to the north of Tehran and had taken up with a band of nomadic sheep herders in the area. On July 5th the young General looked like nothing more than a relatively young herder, and his “Uncles” looked like the other older tenders of the large sheep herd belonging to that group.

They moved slowly...parodying the nomadic life that had continued on in this terrain despite the war and despite whoever was in power in Tehran. It was while traveling with this group that, some months later in early November, Abduhl Selim was recognized by a young fifteen-year-old sheep herder from another wandering tribe as both groups attempted to unobtrusively cross into Turkmenistan near an American checkpoint.

Despite his relative isolation, the fifteen-year-old had come to idolize Selim during the course of the war, and, upon recognizing him, he began yelling, "Allah is great! Allah is great! We are blessed to be in the company of the Tiger of Islam."

An alert American junior intelligence officer at the checkpoint, who spoke the language fluently, recognized what the young man was saying before he was quickly hushed by his elders. Noticing the rapidity and manner in which the young man had been silenced, the officer became even more suspicious and ordered an entire platoon of US Army Rangers to surround the herdsmen, detain them, and attempt to individually identify them.

Thus Abduhl Selim, the young Tiger of Islam, and favorite General of the Imam Hassan Sayeed, was taken into custody by U.S. forces without a shot being fired.

But by that time, so much more had transpired.

**July 4, 09:30, EST**

### **Press Room**

#### **The White House, Washington, DC**

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to make a brief statement, after which I will be happy to take a few of your questions."

John Bowers scanned the audience in front of him. This was only his second official press conference of the year, though he had spoken impromptu to the press on numerous other occasions, and though he had made numerous public speeches which the press had covered. He recognized the major Washington, D.C. correspondents of all of the major news media, and many of the foreign correspondents from countries that were major allies of the United States.

What made this press conference different was that for the first time, there were correspondents here from some of the nations that had now been liberated in the Mid-East, including Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, as well as press from Australia and areas of Africa and South America where the fighting was ongoing.

"On this celebration of independence here in the United States, I am grateful, despite the horrors and sorrows of a continued world war, to be able to speak about the progress we are making.

"The war effort continues unabated throughout the world and our forces are on the move and the enemy is being pushed back in every major theater of operation in which we are engaged.

"This does not mean that there are not setbacks and that the enemy has given in...quite to the contrary, they are becoming desperate and are fighting hard. We witnessed how hard they are fighting and to what extents they are willing to go in May with the heavy fighting in space over the Pacific Ocean and over Australia where we suffered significant losses.

"We are witnessing the continued fierceness of the enemy in Australia and in eastern Asia as our forces continue the push towards China. We are seeing very difficult fighting in the Pacific, South America, parts of Africa and in remaining pockets in the Middle East.

"Having said that, I can report the following very positive developments:

"Our forces have defeated all major GIR armies on the Arabian Peninsula. Outside of small pockets of resistance in Yemen, all of Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula has been liberated."

At this announcement there was a spontaneous cheer from the gathered press corps.

"Please, let me continue. There is more.

"In Iran, though the fighting is still hard and far from finished, we are witnessing a marvelous outpouring from many Iranian citizens who favor the individual freedom which espouses a much more moderate and tolerant interpretation of their Islamic faith than what their leaders and the militants have been pursuing. We're talking about tens of thousands of people who are taking active measures to support our efforts. They are doing it at great risk. The adherents of Hassan Sayeed's vision of compulsion and world conquest are rapidly falling apart within the borders of their own nation. Within the next two to three days, our forces will be on the outskirts of Tehran, and we expect Tehran to fall within weeks."

At this statement of the imminent fall of the capital of one of the major enemy belligerent nations, there was more spontaneous cheering and clapping in the press room.

And in this case the cheering was not just occurring at the press conference. Listeners in the free nations all over the world and in many of those areas liberated by allied forces also cheered wherever they happened to be watching...in their homes, in their places of work, in pubs, and on the street.

The President calmly waited to allow the spontaneous outpouring at such good news to run on for a few seconds...then he continued.

"Please...please, I understand that good hearted people and those of reason who love liberty and morality are happy to hear this...but I MUST reiterate. There is much hard fighting ahead of us. The GIR is widespread and there is every reason to believe that Hassan Sayeed will seek sanctuary in, and continue to direct his forces from, one of the nations that we have yet to reach.

"We still have three very effective, very numerous and very committed enemies to defeat...but we are making steady and significant progress.

“Let me now take just a moment and address a couple of issues that have been raised in the press and by others who have sought to question the morality and the effectiveness of our progress. I am referring to the defeat of the GIR forces and those who harbored them at Mecca, and of the successful interdiction of and pre-emptive defeat of the uprising in Iran at the city of Hamadan.

“I shall speak of the battle and victory at Mecca first.

“I do not believe there are many people who have access to news coverage who did not see the absolute atrocities committed against our peace delegation at Mecca. As you all know, on June 6th ten members of a peace delegation that we had sent to the city in an attempt to negotiate an honorable and safe surrender of the surrounded GIR forces who had retreated into the city, were slaughtered and then mutilated in a most horrific way.

“The United States of America has learned from almost thirty years experience that those who commit such atrocities can be dealt with in but one way. It is either complete, unconditional surrender...and quickly...or death. Our experience has been...and this is something we had to relearn, for you see, our grandparents from World War II learned the same lesson with the fanatical Japanese and Nazis...that through unmitigated and direct confrontation of such barbarians, ultimately far more lives are saved and the conflict shortened.

“This is the essence of what Harry Truman understood and decided in World War II when nuclear bombs were used to end that war. It is the same decision we undertook at Mecca, but we did not have to use nuclear weapons to do so.

“Therefore, after the attempt at normal and honorable negotiations, where our representatives were massacred and mutilated, on June 6th our forces made a direct and unambiguous call and communication to the well-provisioned and large enemy forces within Mecca, calling for them and the citizens to surrender militarily and come out of the city. Many of the citizens and a surprising number of the military forces chose to heed that call.

“Over 75,000 GIR forces and 60,000 civilians chose not to. They paid for that choice.

“We bombed the entire city to rubble and did not lose a single U.S. or allied soldier in the process. While the intensive bombing campaign continued, almost 10,000 more soldiers and an equal number of civilians escaped the city under our terms. The rest all died there and the battle ended on June 10th. Fewer than five hundred survivors were pulled from the rubble.

“In order to have accomplished the same thing through an assault on the city, we estimated that many, many fewer GIR forces or their civilian adherents would have survived and that allied casualties could have numbered several thousand. We were not willing and we shall not be willing in the future to pay such a price when other alternatives are available to us.

“As a result, we have conducted the same type of operation, albeit on a smaller scale, in two other cities, both located in Iran. The result has been that the enemy has become much more willing to offer their unconditional surrender with far fewer allied casualties.

“So, let these operations be a warning and a clear message to our enemies in the future. We shall try honorable negotiations to bring about your unconditional surrender...but we shall not tolerate ever again any Jihad, martyrdom syndrome, banzai or suicide attacks. We shall utterly destroy you in place to bring about your abject, complete and unconditional surrender before allowing you to satiate yourself in American or allied blood.”

As the President paused to continue...there was significant clapping and cheering, but there were also many hands held high by reporters and calls for the President to answer questions.

“Mr. President! Mr. President!”

But John Bowers was not ready to open the meeting to questions yet.

“Before we open this up for some questions, let me cover the last point I want to make.

“This has to do with an operation we are conducting in all belligerent nations behind our advancing front lines. It is an enemy combatant and insurrection pacification program that has its philosophical roots in the same principles that drove our operation in Mecca and others like it.

“Basically, it is this. We fill the air with remote-controlled, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that have tremendous loiter capability, tremendous surveillance capability and that are armed with a miniature version of our Hail Storm system. When I say fill the air, I mean aircraft numbering in the hundreds over each major area of offensive operations in each theater of operation.

“Whenever a gathering of ten or more potential enemy belligerents is observed, our people check the gathering for several criteria that indicate to us that the individuals are part of an active resistance, or that they are about to form one. If they are, without warning we take such gatherings out.

“The operation has been very successful. We have operated against groups of enemy belligerents, insurgents and terrorists numbering anywhere from ten to over ten thousand.

“As most of you know, two days ago in Hamadan, Iran, we engaged a major portion of the local militia under the command of Ayatollah Sheik Aman Saldi. Saldi was one of the leading figures within Iran that our forces were looking to either apprehend or neutralize.

“When it became apparent that the gathering was belligerent and that Saldi was present at a meeting whose purpose was to galvanize the armed militia and regular GIR forces into action against our forces, we acted. More than 12,000 personnel were eliminated, including Saldi himself.

“As was the case with Mecca, let these types of events be a clear and unmistakable message to our enemies: *We have the power, we have the technology, we have the means, and we have the will to utterly destroy your ability to resist and your will to resist, including the ability and will of those who would support you or give you sanctuary.*”

“Now, I will be pleased to take a few of your questions.”

**July 4, 09:42, EST**

**Press Room**

**The White House, Washington, DC**

Hands immediately shot up all over the room as the President opened up the meeting for questions from the gathered press. President Bowers scanned the room, looking at the various news agencies represented and decided he would take what would most likely be the most divisive question first. For that, he pointed towards an older journalist, a woman who worked for CBC who had been known for years to be confrontational toward any administration considered to be conservative.

Raising his voice above the din, the president called on her.

“Leslie, please.”

Surprised to be called on so quickly by the President and knowing that he was expecting a difficult question from her, Leslie Dahl did everything in her power to not disappoint him.

“Mr. President, thank you for taking my question...and I would like a follow up as well, please.”

“You have indicated that the destruction of Mecca was purely a military operation that was targeted at destroying the military capabilities of the enemy gathered there.

“If that was so, why not just ring the place with steel and wait or starve the enemy out?”

“Why did they have to die, and why was it done in such a way that almost ensured the destruction of the most holy site in the Islamic world?”

The President did not need to pause or think about his answer...he already knew it.

“Leslie, I believe I have already explained this adequately. It was a military operation because our military forces had surrounded a large and capable GIR army that was well-provisioned and itching to draw us into a fight. We attempted to negotiate. They massacred and mutilated our negotiating team. We gave them every opportunity to surrender and avoid death. They refused...they died...and we won a significant victory.

“It is true that the operation destroyed holy shrines of Islam located within the city. But that destruction cannot be laid at the feet of American forces. When a barbaric enemy perpetrates inhuman atrocities against our people-people whose aim was peace-and then seeks refuge within a holy building, it is they who are desecrating the building, not us. It is our duty to seek them out, no matter where they find haven, in order to prevent further sadistic, merciless loss of human life. The fact that they hide behind the walls of holy sites after perpetrating acts that are the antithesis of holy is simply evidence of their incomparable cowardice and hypocrisy.

“And they paid a terrible price for that mistake.”

Leslie Dahl was chagrined by the President's answer and how he had turned the tables on her. In frustration, before she could get to her well rehearsed "follow-up", she blurted out.

“But what about all of the innocent civilians who also died there...and what of the desecration of that place with the fat from pigs?”

The President, who had expected such questions and who had been mentally prepared to answer them directly from the moment he had made the decisions, answered her immediately.

“I'll take that as your follow-up.

“Most of the citizens who stayed behind with these troops were anything but innocent, Leslie. They were abetting, supporting and harboring enemies of this nation who wanted to kill as many of our boys as possible. I view any such “civilians” as enemies in this war and worthy of our targeting. They must come to know that to take such actions against the United States of America is going to mean that they are going to pay a terrible price and many of them are going to die.

“As to any non-enemy combatants or sympathizers who were held against their will in the city...all I can say is this.

“Blame the enemy troops and belligerents. That blood is on their hands.

“Finally, regarding the pig fat, I have no problem using the thinking and culture of these extremists and animals against them...and will do so in the future, as often as the opportunity presents itself. That can be done without besmirching the faith of others of that culture because, quite frankly, reasonable Muslims will not put themselves in a position to be on the receiving end of our ire.”

As the President finished, Leslie tried to say more, but she was drowned out by a chorus of other journalists seeking to have their questions answered.

Picking out a foreign journalist, the President motioned toward them.

“Let's see...Imene, from liberated Turkey.

“Welcome, it's good to see you here and good to see that a free press has been re-established in your country. Go ahead.”

Imene was glad to be there too. The trip to America as the lead correspondent for the Turkish Times would have been considered a significant accomplishment at any time...but it was a particularly momentous accomplishment now, following his nation's liberation.

"Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to present my question and for the sentiment.

"No one appreciates the free press, or the great responsibility a free press has to be impartial, and focused on accuracy and legitimacy, more than those of us in Turkey who have been liberated from under the stiff, heavy boots of oppression.

"My question is this: How quickly do U.S. analysts feel that the former Iran will fall completely, and do you expect that that fall will realistically end Hassan Sayeed's power?"

The president chuckled to himself as Imene got that second question in there.

"Well, Imene, I can see that you are not missing a beat regarding your abilities as a free journalist. Your knack of turning one question into two, without even asking for the follow-up, ranks right up there with the best we in this country have to offer.

"But, seriously, I will answer both questions as best I can.

"We expect to surround Tehran in the next few days and are hoping it falls quickly. Once that occurs, the fall of the rest of Iran is going to depend on how quickly we can move to the east.

"At the current rate of advance, it will take a few short weeks...but there is always the potential for set backs and delays, either due to enemy action, unforeseen logistical issues or natural conditions such as the weather.

"Beyond that general statement, I will not discuss any specifics of the ongoing operations.

"Regarding Hassan Sayeed's capabilities, we are not going to underestimate him. The result of the last time the world underestimated this man has been almost five years of the bloodiest fighting and repression in history. He has hundreds of millions of Islamic people yet to his east all the way to Indonesia who have not been pacified. My guess is that more than a few of those still believe in his misbegotten vision and will welcome him with open arms, should he be able to arrive there.

"If that proves to be true, as he coordinates his planning with India and Red China from those locations, he will still pose a very dangerous and mortal threat to us and to our allies. We will respond accordingly first to prevent that if we can, then to defeat it if we cannot.

"Thank you for your question, Imene, and all of our best to you, and God bless you in the rebuilding of your nation.

"Next question?"

Again hands shot up all over the room and voices rang out.

"JT, what's on your mind?"

Several of the more liberal journalists in the room could barely contain their frustration as the President called on JT Samson, the owner and chief editor of SierraLines, the largest and most influential online news source on the Internet.

Since the days of the late President Weisskopf's campaign, JT had enjoyed a close and trusted relationship with both the Weisskopf administration and now the Bower administration following President Weisskopf's death. Many of the more liberal journalists complained constantly about the apparent favoritism, but their dissatisfaction did not deter the White House in the least.

"Well, Mr. President, I wanted to ask about the current situation and condition in space.

"Is it true that the Chinese have developed and deployed their own single stage to orbit militarized spacecraft? And have those Chinese space craft engaged and defeated some of our own in battle in space over the Pacific and Australia?"

Despite the good relationship the administration had with SierraLines and its owner, the President and his staff knew that JT Samson was a proficient journalist and that he was capable of digging deep for stories. When doing so, he rarely pulled his punches or sought to soften the direct questions associated with rooting out every ounce of information he could regarding those stories.

This was one of those times.

Although not able to deny the obvious battles that had occurred in space, to date the administration had not divulged any more information regarding those battles other than the fact that certain vessels had been lost. That JT Samson was using many heretofore unknown specifics in his question meant that his sources were very good indeed. Whatever JT's sources, they had leaked classified information that the administration did not want China to become aware of their knowing.

"JT, you know that I will not comment regarding the specifics of any ongoing operations."

JT was not deterred by the President's non-answer and did not hesitate to press the issue.

"But Mr. President, the actions I am referring to happened weeks ago and are not ongoing. Have the Chinese deployed their own SSTO militarized space craft?"

John Bowers knew that JT was aware of more than the official story, yet he could neither deny nor confirm the specifics to which JT was alluding. National security reasons and counter intelligence issues forbade him from discussing them in detail in this forum so that the Chinese would remain in the dark regarding how much the United States knew.

"JT, in answer to your questions, I can only say the following.



“Since we deployed our space stations over the United States and Australia, the Chinese and their allies have made every effort that was technologically available to them to attack and destroy them.

“As we have expanded our operations in space, they have continued to make these attempts, and as a consequence, the environment in space has become very dangerous.

“As we have announced in the past, in late May our Southern Star station was destroyed in combat by enemy forces...beyond that statement, I cannot give you any more details at this moment.

“Next question please.”

And so it went. For the next hour the President continued to answer questions regarding the current military, economic and political landscape. Everyone agreed that the President was as open and as forthright as possible. He was not above some sparring with those who either had an agenda or were contentious, as he displayed early on with Leslie Dahl...and he was very good at defending himself against such adversarial behavior.

Near the end, the President called for the last question.

“Okay, this will be the last question...there, in the far right corner. It’s Rob Jamison isn’t it?”

Rob Jamison was the owner and manager of the largest online town hall and source for conservative internet activism on the web. His site, the Independent Republic, had been around since 1997 and had earned its attention by living up to and implementing its conservative/constitutional charter through online and protest activism against the liberal administration in America at the time.

Because of the hundreds of thousands of registered users, and even more non-registered participants, the Independent Republic forum was able to beat the mainstream media to the punch in many instances regarding reporting on current events. As a result, the Independent Republic was able to quickly react by amassing protesters, or supporters, that numbered anywhere from a few local individuals to thousands of participants.

That capability had been particularly noteworthy during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003-2004 when the site had partnered with other online sources and conservative talk radio show hosts to organize very large, very patriotic and very successful Support the Troop Rallies all across the nation. This had been done to answer the emergence of some leftist anti-war rallies that had started to appear as the invasion of Iraq had begun. The Support the Troop Rallies had completely eclipsed the anti-war rallies in terms of individual attendance, in terms of numbers of rallies, in terms of the frequency of rallies, and in terms of the heartfelt, all-American feeling and pride that was exhibited.

Those rallies had carried over into the outbreak of World War III when first the Greater Islamic Republic and later North Korea, China and India had allied together and made war on America. Throughout the dark days of those first four years, the Independent Republic and supporting organizations had maintained Support our Troop rallies all across the country.

...and they continued to organize and hold them to this day.

The site had really broken the mold in mainstream, real time news reporting when one of its registered members had witnessed and reported on the Chinese invasion of Alaska as it happened two years earlier. From Nome, using her personal computer, Stacey Urkut had provided a vivid and stunning report of the enemy aircraft and paratroopers invading Alaska before she had literally had to flee for her life. Tens of millions of viewers had gotten word of the report, up to and including the White House, before official military reports had come in, and certainly hours before the mainstream media had been aware of the event. For several hours the people were riveted to their computer screens reading what Stacey wrote and thus living the experience with her.

Stacey Urkut had gone on to be a leader in the resistance against the Chinese in Alaska and had ultimately been awarded the Medal of Freedom by the President himself. Rob Jamison and his Independent Republic had gone on to grow exponentially to the point that they themselves were asked to attend major press briefings at the express request of the White House who readily embraced this grassroots, unfiltered (meaning without the spin and interpretation of the mainstream commentators) news source for the people.

All of this went through the internet web site owner and former Navy veteran’s mind as he asked his question from his own wheel chair.

“Mr. President, I can’t tell you how good it is to be here today. Thank you, sir, for your service to our republic, both in the uniformed services and as our President. Believe me when I say this, and know that I speak for all of those who are registered at my own site, you are doing a marvelous job.

“Now, let me just ask this.

“Mr. President, I cannot help but note that the military actions our forces have been ordered to take both in Mecca and other cities, and in the *Ruthless Sentinel* pacification operations we are conducting, have occurred exclusively in the theater where we are fighting Islamic fundamentalists.

“Given our destruction of their most holy city, and given the direct action we are being forced to take against large masses of Islamic Jihad fighters, is our fight in that theater against these nations, or is the fight against fundamental Islam?”

The President was not surprised by this question. It was similar in nature and substance to Dahl’s earlier question.

It was more direct though, and it was a direct question he had fully expected much earlier. In either case, John Bowers was glad to answer and glad that Rob Jamison had been the one to ask it.

It was a question that he had been forced to come to terms with himself long ago, before the current conflict ever began. His coming to terms with it had started when he had first heard of the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut in the early 1980's. It had come to full maturity later when he served in Kuwait and Iraq during the Desert Storm conflict. All of those experiences had created in him a determination to fight this particular brand of tyranny with all that he had. And that was exactly how he viewed it, a repressive and tyrannical ideology hiding behind religion, and he was convinced that that view had now been proven right time and time again in the current conflict.

"Rob, thank you for that question. Many Americans have wondered about this very thing as we have fought these enemies and their allies, has expressed itself very directly.

"This fight is against the enemies of liberty, whatever they choose to call themselves.

"In this case, we have extremists who have hijacked an entire religion for their own perverted and misbegotten reasons. They have applied their own warped interpretation of Jihad and the rewards for it. They have seduced entire nations and peoples with their self-serving lies and dogma.

"To anyone of the Islamic or Muslim faith who believes that their faith compels them to randomly kill innocent peoples simply because they fear a different lifestyle and influence, or compels them to practice abject tyranny over their own people simply because they are afraid that their adherents may use their own free will to choose another path, I say to you now, your time has come.

"Your stain upon the world of rational thought, free will, liberty, virtue, honor and integrity has run its course and will soon come to an utter and complete end.

"Your reward, unless you turn from such ideology and altogether quit it and divorce yourselves from it, will be your utter ruination and destruction...not some perverted and obscene hope for seventy-two innocent virgins for you to ravage."

The President leaned towards the sea of reporters and journalists in front of him...and then looked directly into the camera with sincere, but serious reflection. He continued.

"What an obscene thought and view of heaven.

"These are the extreme and radical beliefs of tyranny that we fight, just as we fought the incarnation of similar tenants in Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, Communist Russia, North Korea and so on. Just as we fight them in Red China and their so-called Coalition of Asian States today.

"This *radical* Islam is a "religion" that does not allow for the existence of other religions, except as they are willing to accept, and live under, Islamic law and acknowledge Islamic superiority, both of which infer humiliating consequences, at the very least, and genocide at the worst. It is a "religion" whose god dictates that the world must eventually be "united" under Islam by force of arms. And, if the murder, sometimes in the most torturous way imaginable, of millions of innocents is required, then such killing is to be considered a calling by these *radicals*.

"I know that all Islamics do not feel this way about their faith...do not derive these radical and tyrannical interpretations from their own scriptures. To those rational and peaceful Islamic people we have always said, *join with us and help us rid you of this stain*.

"We say today, *join with us and open up your lands to the blessings of peace and free will*.

"Events right now in the former Iraq and Iran are showing us that more and more of these people are willing to do this very thing.

"We will help those peoples who desire to practice their faith in peace and tolerance to do so, but we shall never again accept such tyrannical and evil ideologies foisted as religion. Americans are a tolerant and patient people...but such notions have exhausted both our patience and our tolerance...and we shall not be taken in again.

"Yes, we have freedom of religion...but that means the peaceful exercise of faith while allowing others the same privilege without compulsion. When any so-called faith crosses the line as I have just mentioned...it is no longer religion, irrespective of what label its adherents try to place upon it. At that point it has become nothing more than totalitarianism and shall be treated as such.

"On this July 4th, when we celebrate our own independence and the principles upon which it is founded, and the hard fight that led to its realization, let us steel ourselves to the completion of today's fight. On this July 4th when we continue the selfsame struggle of so long ago, let us commit ourselves and let us fulfill our critical role in this pivotal moment in history...a role that demands that we stand up for freedom and liberty, and that we stand boldly and tall.

"In case anyone has misunderstood, the fight we are embroiled in is against abject tyranny. It is exactly what this war is all about. It is a struggle against the tyranny and the oppression of these radical Islamics of the Greater Islamic Republic who have perverted, distorted and wrested faith into something obscene that threatens the free will, free expressions and liberty of all. In the same way, the political ideology of the members of the Coalition of Asian States threatens those same principles. There is the same threat, my fellow Americans and citizens of the free world, a dual threat that has allied together to assail freedom from both a perverted religious and a perverted political standpoint.

"But they both shall fail...they shall be defeated.

“Rob...all of you gathered here in the White House Press Room, and by extension, anyone within the sound of my voice...that is what the operations at Mecca and Hamadan were really all about. Let the enemy have no doubt about our resolve or our determination. We shall not fail, we shall not deter, we shall not falter or retreat from our sworn duty and this our solemn conviction.

“With the help of Providence, we shall go forward with these measures...and any others that save American and allied lives and prosecute the war effort to a successful and victorious conclusion while giving the enemy every opportunity to surrender unconditionally. We shall do so until those enemies either do surrender unconditionally, or until we have utterly and completely annihilated them.

“There is no other option or course.

“Thank you,” the President said as he stepped away from the podium and exited the press room.

**July 12, 19:12, local time**

**Jianying Household**

**Beijing, China**

Hua and Chiang Jianying were together on one of those rare occasions when they were both at home relatively early and could enjoy one another's company and relax either watching a good movie, listen to music together, talk, read, or otherwise wind down from their respective jobs.

Hua was continuing in his position as a member of the Party Congress in the People's Republic of China. Events of late were keeping that body extremely busy as they addressed, with growing frustration, the consequences and results of the setbacks in the war effort. Fourteen and sixteen hour days were becoming quite common. More rationing of almost every conceivable item, curfews, lights out, crackdowns on any dissident activity...all of these and many more policies were being instituted as allied forces pressed closer towards China from the northeast, from the east and from the south.

Those forces might still be thousands of kilometers away, but there was no denying that they were edging closer...and the impact of their growing proximity was being felt more and more often. Cruise missile attacks were now fairly commonplace as the Americans used their capitol ships, their submarines, and their long-range aircraft to launch them at critical Chinese infrastructure and manufacturing capabilities. Despite the relative success of Chinese air defenses, the increasing frequency of the attacks was beginning to affect the people's vigor and absolute commitment to the war effort. Hua and the rest of the Party Congress were under increasing pressure from the president and politburo to ensure that the people's commitment was maintained and did not waiver.

For her part, Chiang was directly involved in the defense of the nation as she worked as a Program Manager for COSTIND, the Chinese Commission of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense, managing several programmers and analysts as they sought to improve the capabilities of the anti-stealth fire control system for the *ta shih* system. Her earlier efforts in developing and analyzing the system had been so successful that it had led to her promotion to Program Manager. She was extremely gratified with that promotion because she knew that, despite the fact that her father was Lu Pham, a Hero of the People's Republic and a member of the Executive Council on the Politburo, her promotion and success were based much more on her successful work with the programs that controlled *ta shih* than they were a result of who her father was.

As they sat on their plush pillows and listened to romantic music, Chiang asked her husband.

“Hua, can our forces continue to hold back the Americans and their allies?”

It was a question on many minds these days. After years of unparalleled success with a string of one major victory after another, in the last year and a half the Chinese people now found themselves hearing less and less of victory and more and more propaganda. The implications were clear to most Chinese, even if they weren't in a position like Hua and Chiang where they were privy to more details of the worsening strategic situation.

“Chiang, the American ability to rebound and build a revitalized capacity in manufacturing and technology has taken most of our planners by surprise. It's actually astounding, the rapidity with which they have been able to rebound, given where we had them several years ago.

“On the other hand, we still have this advantage in numbers and our technology is ahead of them in some areas and at parity with them in the others.

“Ultimately, my love, despite the huge army and naval forces that are arrayed against one another all over the globe, I believe the outcome will be decided in space. It involves such a small number of personnel...but the communications, the surveillance, and the power projection capabilities are enormous for whoever controls it.

“Remember how we defeated the American's in space four years ago? Well, since then we had fought them to a standstill, up until last year. But they surprised us and jumped back ahead last year by launching and maintaining those space stations. Now, with the advent of our Dragon Spirit spacecraft, we hurt them in space again...it's like a roller coaster ride.

“...and it's not over either. It's going to be a tough battle, both in terms of technological progress and in terms of actual combat.

"I honestly think our overall ability to halt the Americans in Australia and in Asia will ultimately depend on the outcome of that fight. Yes, we'll be doing more with space forces and you may be sure that Americans are doing the same.

"In the meantime, a lot of fighting continues down here on earth...all over...and the impact of that fighting is no less traumatic for those involved, or for their families."

And that was something to which Hua knew Chiang could relate personally and directly. Her own brother, Kao, had been severally wounded as a result of battles at sea in the South Pacific and then his condition had worsened as a result of infections that had set in during his hospitalization.

The seriousness of his condition had led the entire Pham family to travel to Rabaul and visit Koa five months ago. Chiang had traveled, fully supported by her husband, with her father, Lu Pham and her mother, Song, to the rear areas of the war zone where Kao was in the hospital. He had been too ill to move to better facilities in China and so the family had visited him there, hoping that an extended visit would lift his spirits and allow him the strength to overcome his injuries and the infection.

As a member of the Executive Council, Lu Pham had been accorded an entire brigade of elite forces for security for him and his family. A specially configured Type 52D, phased array destroyer and its entire surface action group was made available to them in Rabaul, along with the transport and fighter aircraft that had brought them there and defended them. All of this to ensure their security and to allow them every means for a safe escape should the situation become untenable.

Although there had been several air raid warnings, and two cruise missile attacks while they were there, none of the danger had been near the hospital or the facilities where they had stayed through February and into March.

Koa had recognized them when they arrived and his spirits had soared. He was able to tell them of his experiences, his comrades and his commitment to the fight. His stories inspired them all.

But one thing he could not do was fight off the effect of his injuries and the infection raging throughout his body. After several days of what appeared to be improvement associated with his improved spirit, he began to succumb again to his condition. The family had stayed by his side, faithfully keeping vigil in shifts.

Ultimately, Koa Pham had died from his injuries and infection in the hospital in Rabaul in early March. His family had taken his body back to Beijing for burial, mourning him, but intensely proud of his sacrifice and all the more committed to the cause of their nation.

**July 30, 01:15, local time**

**High Geosynchronous Orbit**

**Point Solitude, Opposite Asia, Earth**

While the officers on the command deck ensured that they had attained stable orbit at Point Solitude, Commander David Lewis considered the historic nature of the voyage that his command had just completed. From Earth, out beyond the planet Mars to the Asteroid belt and back, he had successfully commanded the small task force which was comprised of the USSS Gaspra and the USSS Ida with a combined compliment of thirty-six officers and enlisted men.

It had been a voyage that smacked more of science fiction than of reality...and yet it had been all too real. In fact, it was a reality that David Lewis knew was apt to make a significant difference in the war effort now...and probably in the overall direction that a free mankind would take following the successful completion of the war.

Now, at the completion of the epic voyage, here he was, making a top secret return to Earth orbit.

Turning to his communications officer, Lewis issued the long anticipated order.

"Lieutenant, park her here in stable orbit and get command on the communications net.

David again considered that what he was witnessing was more akin to something from a sci-fi movie of his youth than what he had anticipated experiencing in today's military when he had started his career many years ago. As he waited, after a brief second or two of hazy fuzz, a clear picture of Admiral Hightower materialized on their flat panel, plasma display.

"Admiral, this is Commander Lewis reporting in, sir.

"We have successfully arrived on station in Earth orbit per our orders. Both vessels have successfully harvested an entire load of cargo and are awaiting further orders."

The Admiral remained quiet for just an instant before responding to Lewis.

"Understood, Commander.

"Let me break protocol for just a moment to say that it's great to see you, Dave. You look good.

"Now, as you are aware from the communications you have received, we are embroiled in quite a situation down here. You will receive more concerning the latest situation report in a special encrypted, eyes-only communication later today.

"In the meantime, begin processing the cargo per your original orders.

"In order to assist you in that endeavor, two corvettes, the USSS Millport and the USSS Stearns will rendezvous with you at 0900 hours with the hardware needed for preparation of the ordinance.

"I know its short notice, David, and I know you and your crews were hoping for a well deserved leave, but you and Floyd are going to need to be prepared for action with whatever ordinance you can

produce within the next seventy-two hours. Orders to that effect will be issued within the next few hours, so consider this a heads-up.

“We’ll contact you after the arrival of the Millport and Stearns and begin putting together the operational plan, which will include both of those vessels in your augmented task force.”

After another brief pause, the Admiral finished.

“Is all of that clear?”

Lewis had experienced conflicting emotions as the Admiral had talked. He felt a definite letdown when it became clear to him that the long-awaited R&R would not be forthcoming. They had all looked forward to their relief crews coming onboard to take over for them in processing the cargo into the ordinance that the allied forces would require, while they took leave earth-side.

But that letdown had been short-lived as the Admiral had continued speaking. It had been replaced almost immediately by the excitement of impending action with his command. It was clear that the need for the vessels and their special ordinance was imminent, and although the Commander wondered just how much ordinance they could possibly prepare in such a short time, he looked forward to retaining command of not only the two original vessels in his task force, but the two new corvettes as well for the operation and the attack that he was sure would follow.

He knew that Lieutenant Commander Clark and everyone on both vessels would feel the same.

“Yes, sir, those orders are clear, and we will fulfill our mission, whatever it may be.

“...and if I may say so, it’s good to see you and this beautiful blue orb again too.

“Lewis, clear.”

**July 30, 23:55, local time**

**High Geosynchronous Orbit**

**Point Solitude, Opposite Asia, Earth**

The Millport and the Stearns had both arrived exactly as the Admiral had indicated and brought the necessary hardware with them for the preparation of their ordinance, the special carbonaceous chondrite projectiles they were fabricating. That hardware included special heat shielding to assist in maintaining the projectiles’ integrity through re-entry, and special penetrators for the hardened warheads to assist them in impacting their targets.

But that was not all the two vessels brought. In addition, they brought several upgrades of hardware, software and firmware for the command and control, targeting, guidance, weapons and communications systems of the Gaspra and the Ida. Those upgrades represented the latest technology from America’s Military Space Command research, development and manufacturing facilities for the most current upgrades being used on the latest space vessels that were being launched into space.

All of those upgrades were being feverishly installed and tested as the entire task force prepared for battle. In a little more than forty-eight hours they would depart Point Solitude and make their way towards the position that had been identified as the initiation point for their attack. They expected resistance and, to that end, another two corvettes would join them en route, while two more frigates like their own...but newer...would create a diversion to draw off most of any enemy response.

If the work on the special ordinance continued at the present rate, the task force would have a total of twelve devices ready to deploy against the Chinese. This was about 5% of what they had expected to process altogether, a complete procedure which they had expected to accomplish in over three months time. Now they were being ordered into immediate combat after only three days with only one twentieth of what they had expected to ultimately have available.

The current operation called for using six of the twelve projectiles and retaining six as a reserve for alternate targets, or in case a target was somehow missed...or, more ominously, in case either the Ida or the Gaspra were lost before they could fulfill their mission.

**August 3, 12:17, local time**

**Dragon Spirit Manufacturing Facilities**

**Northern Manchuria, The People’s Republic of China**

The early afternoon was hot and muggy, with a temperature at 38 degrees Celsius, and with a crystal clear sky, despite the humidity.

The modern facility was a wonder of automation and modern manufacturing principles and capabilities. It had been designed to be protected against air attack of all types, being in a sheltered valley, with both conventional and *ta shih*, anti-stealth missile emplacements all around the valley and extending out for many miles in concentric circular installations around the facility.

The production rate of Dragon Spirit spacecraft at this facility had increased to the point where one new vessel per day was now being produced. It was the darling of Chinese spacecraft production when compared to the other three facilities where between one aircraft every one and a half days to one aircraft every three days were being produced across northern China and into southern Mongolia.

The Americans had already made three attempts to attack and destroy this particular facility using cruise missiles, stealth aircraft, hypervelocity aircraft, and even conventionally armed intercontinental ballistic missiles. In every case, the Chinese air defense systems had performed well

and in only one case had any damage been inflicted. That had occurred during the ICBM attack when one of those missiles had gotten through the defenses and completely destroyed the production staging building several weeks ago.

That damage had hampered production for over a week, but had not stopped it. Now, after supplies had been adequately re-provisioned and after defenses had been correspondingly beefed up, the facility was operating at full production and setting the pace for the other facilities.

Now the facility and its defenses had been placed on the highest level of alert.

Early this morning American spacecraft had been picked up approaching from the west to east, coming in over Russia. A formation of two American spacecraft was detected, and, except for a reserve of four spacecraft, all available Dragons Spirit vessels had been launched to intercept.

The high command of the People's Republic was not happy with this development because they had been marshaling a large force of Dragon Spirit spacecraft to attack and overwhelm the American Space Station orbiting over the United States. After downing the newly launched station over the Pacific and the station over Australia, Jien Zemin had ordered all resource dedicated to downing the station over the continental United States. He wanted to do this before any new stations could be launched and as a demonstration to America that their newfound space dominance was at an end.

But the Americans had an operation of their own squarely aimed at spoiling those Chinese plans.

It was clear that the Americans were sending their own message, boldly entering the space directly over the PRC in an orbit clearly meant to attack the Chinese space manufacturing and launch facilities themselves. Though the Chinese had built significant reflective surfaces as anti-laser protection into their principle facilities, they could not risk allowing the Americans unfettered access to the space over the facilities for fear of them burning through the Chinese defenses or using other weaponry to damage or destroy the Chinese production and launch facilities.

The battle had taken place high over eastern China. The two heavy American space frigates had successfully fought their way through Chinese missiles and kinetic weapons and then battled the twelve Dragon Spirit craft sent up to intercept them. It had been a tough fight with eight Dragon Spirit craft being destroyed in the fray. Ultimately, only four hours earlier, the Chinese craft had finally overwhelmed the two American vessels and destroyed one of them. The other had been able to retreat and escape off to the north. The Chinese technicians on the ground and crews in space had cheered their victory as their surviving spacecraft returned to earth to be re-provisioned.

But now the tables were turning.

A few minutes ago an even larger force of six American spacecraft had been detected approaching from far to the west. The four remaining Dragon Spirit craft were being hastily launched and Chinese missile and kinetic weaponry were preparing to attack the new American threat.

### **August 3, that same time**

#### **Command Deck**

#### **USSS Gaspra, Well to the east of Japan**

"We have multiple small vampire tracks now rising out of central Mongolia and central China, sir. Expected interception of the first wave will be in less than five minutes."

David Lewis knew that these missile launches contained two types of Chinese weapons, high explosive warheads and kinetic weaponry.

"Okay, Bill," he responded to his defensive weapons officer, "Have Ida slave the launch of their SPAEGIS missiles with ours to form a wall against the first wave of missiles and put the lasers in automatic defense mode.

"Send the corvettes forward to be in a position to intercept any Chinese spacecraft."

The first wave of American missiles were launched by the two frigates and they closed on a trajectory that would spread them out in front of the oncoming Chinese weapons.

Despite the urgent calls coming over the comm. frequency between the American vessels, the defense against kinetic weaponry was becoming old hat for the Americans. But it was still not taken for granted. It was just a fact that the American defensive systems had proven very capable of intercepting the "clouds" of Chinese kinetic weapons launched at them.

Still, if they missed, people would die and vessels would be damaged or destroyed...and, either way, it took time and concentration to order, launch, monitor and make the intercepts, and time was a commodity that was precious in dealing with the imminent and fast pace of space warfare.

On this occasion, when the appropriate moment arrived, eight blindingly bright detonations several hundred miles in front of and well below the American formation blossomed. It happened just moments after the oncoming Chinese missiles had released their hundreds of kinetic weapons. The defense worked perfectly. No kinetic projectiles got through the nuclear shield that the Ida and Gaspra established in front of their formation.

But then, coming in at high speed a few seconds behind the kinetic weapons, over three dozen Chinese missiles with high explosive warheads approached the American formation.

By that time, the four American corvettes had accelerated out in front of, and slightly below, the two frigates and all four began engaging the Chinese missiles with their own lasers as the *Ida* and *Gaspra* did the same.

The American laser barrage destroyed all but three of the Chinese missiles, all of which came in targeting the *USSS Stearns*. Close in weapons on the *Stearns* accounted for two of these missiles, but the last one penetrated and hit the *Stearns* towards its aft end, ripping into the engineering spaces and into the engine itself before exploding.

The concussion from the explosion and the resulting rapid decompression killed two American personnel in the engineering spaces and the craft was left adrift in space because its engine was severely damaged. The *Stearns* had to shut down its primary propulsion and go into auxiliary power to maintain life support, communications and defenses.

By this time, the four Chinese *Dragon Spirit* spacecraft arrived on the scene, fighting fiercely to get past the remaining three corvettes and attack the frigates.

They were foiled in their attempts.

All four were destroyed by the combined firepower of the two frigates and three corvettes. In the exchange another corvette was moderately damaged and the resulting forces knocked it out of the orbit necessary to remain with the rest of the formation as they hurtled towards their firing positions. That damaged corvette was able to alter its orbit so as to eventually take up an orbit coincident with that of the *USSS Stearns* and provide it with more defensive firepower.

Proceeding with only minor, ground-based hindrance after this engagement, at precisely 12:32, the *Gaspra* and the *Ida* reached their initial firing positions just to the east of Japan high over the Pacific Ocean and launched two of their weapons each at the People's Republic of China.

Thus began the first orbital bombardment of earth in history.

### **August 3, four minutes later**

#### **Dragon Spirit Manufacturing Facilities**

#### **Northern Manchuria, The People's Republic of China**

Outside the facility, klaxons were sounding. Wu Xin was completing final repairs and tests for the analog sensors that provided measurements of atmospheric conditions to the backup power generators for the inner ring defense systems for the facility.

Wu had been called out moments before as one of those sensors had begun acting erratically.

"Of all times for there to be an anomaly," he thought, "right in the middle of an attack.

"The entire system was supposed to have been given routine maintenance just last week."

What Wu found was that this array of sensors had not been properly grounded and therefore what was known as a "floating ground" problem was causing the problem. Wu had quickly tied the sensor array to the proper ground using some spare cable he had brought with him. It was a temporary fix which would later require the installation of properly insulated and gauged cable, but this impromptu band-aid was something that would work well enough for the moment.

There was not time to perform an exhaustive test and after a brief check with his multi-meter, and an affirmative reply from the command center that the problem had been corrected, Wu immediately started back to his hardened bunker.

As he parked next to the facility and stepped out of the vehicle towards its entrance, he noticed several of the missiles in the secondary defense ring launch to intercept an incoming enemy missile.

Completely absorbed by the site, he only had the quickest impression of a distant, but very fast moving bright object approaching the facility from a high angle trajectory from the west.

He glanced up just in time to see one of the just launched Chinese missiles impact the object, which Wu now recognized as a much larger object than had been his fleeting impression, and to see the explosion from that impact have absolutely no effect whatsoever on the incoming enemy projectile, warhead, or whatever it was.

As the object came on at unbelievable speed, Wu had no time to form another mortal thought.

In that instant, there was a blinding quick approach of the brightly-glowing, ten-ton carbonaceous chondrite projectile. Its heat shield had worked perfectly. Very little of the object had burned off during re-entry. Now its penetrators worked equally flawlessly.

The object, impacting at many times the speed of sound, penetrated hundreds of feet into the earth. As dirt and rock slowed its passage in a time span that measured only hundredths of a second, the object exchanged its speed and mass for energy...tremendous amounts of energy. The resulting explosion vaporized the entire facility and a good part of the valley where it was located.

Wu Xin simply ceased to exist...as did all of the other workers.

The impact reached well beyond the fifteen levels that extended below the ground in what had been engineered to be a hardened facility against American conventional penetrator weapons.

But those Chinese engineers had not contemplated a ten ton penetrator coming down from orbit.

A large mushroom cloud, one that could be seen for many kilometers, began to form and rise over the site immediately after impact. The impact itself reverberated through the Chinese bedrock and was felt physically by people on the street as far away as Beijing. It was recorded by seismic

monitoring equipment as far away as New Delhi, India and Anchorage, Alaska, as well as throughout the western Pacific wherever such monitoring equipment was located.

The shock wave radiated out from the location of the impact and destroyed concrete buildings in the valley up to two kilometers away, and masonry buildings for up to four. Not only was every living soul in the manufacturing facility vaporized, but hundreds of people within those four kilometers were also killed or severely injured.

Similar events transpired in quick succession at all three other Chinese Dragon Spirit production facilities and one of the launch facilities for the spacecraft.

For some reason, either due to faulty targeting, or more likely due to a projectile whose internal structure was flawed, one of the incoming orbital projectiles missed the second Chinese launch facility by over ten kilometers. A large mushroom cloud rose from that impact as well, but it was over a relative lightly inhabited area, causing very few casualties, and no significant military damage.

But, if the personnel at that facility thought they had been spared...and the commander of the facility thought just that for a few minutes...they were sadly mistaken.

Within two minutes, the American weaponry officer on board the *Ida* who had launched the errant projectile, recognized from the computer analysis that the trajectory of that projectile would miss its intended target. One of the reserve projectiles was launched at the remaining launch facility, impacting a few moments later with the same results the other facilities had experienced.

In a period of less than fifteen minutes, the entire research, production and operational launch facilities for the new Chinese Dragon Spirit military space craft were vaporized. Not only were the facilities destroyed, but even more importantly to both China and the United States (although for exactly the opposite reasons), most of the brilliant engineers, technicians, military commanders, and planners associated with the program were killed as well.

**August 5, 02:44 WST**

### **US Air Force Space and Missile Range**

#### **Central Nevada, United States of America**

Within twenty-four hours of the devastating attack on the Chinese space facilities, the United States launched two new frigates and two new corvettes in SSTO flight profiles. The new craft would form the core for the new USSS Southern Star space station over Australia.

The Southern Star would remain there through the rest of the war despite the best efforts of the CAS and GIR to bring her down.

The USSS *Gaspra* and the USSS *Ida* returned to Point Solitude immediately after the attacks and began processing the remainder of their special, shielded and hardened projectiles for further use in the war effort...but it was the relief crews for both vessels that would do the processing.

At long last Commander Lewis and Lieutenant Commander Clark and their crews go their leave.

After the relief crews arrived, and while Lewis and Clark and their compatriots were waiting to depart for Earth, they listened to a message to all of the surviving crews of those ships involved in the attack. That message was delivered by the President of the United States in a special closed circuit communication regarding the success of the mission that was broadcast live from the Oval Office.

"Folks," he said, "Yesterday each of you made history with your attack operation from space."

"But more than that, you demonstrated to our enemies that our commitment to victory is unshakable. You helped show them to what lengths we will go to ensure victory and secure the blessings of liberty and freedom for ourselves, and anyone else on this earth who seeks it.

"All I can say is thanks for a job well done. Your comrades and your countrymen salute you.

"God bless you each for your parts in this...and God rest the souls of those brave ones who fell yesterday in this operation. I can assure you their sacrifice was not in vain."

**August 15, 08:44 WST**

### **Campbell Residence**

#### **Orchard Avenue, Boise, Idaho**

Geneva Campbell was grateful for her Saturdays. They gave her a chance to really get some major things accomplished around the house, as opposed to only having the time to pick at various projects after work each day throughout the rest of the week.

Over the last couple of years she found that she could make the most significant progress if she used her time during the week to prepare for her Saturday work schedule. As a result, she now found that she was sometimes able to complete several major tasks on any given Saturday, and this gave her a great sense of accomplishment, and prepared her for Sundays when she would go to church and then visit the sick and needy people in the various hospitals and nursing homes near her.

She found, through all of this, that keeping herself busy throughout the week and then trying to serve others each Sunday really helped her to pass the time without having to worry too much about her sons. Both of them, Leon and Alan, were still away fighting in the war, Leon somewhere in Australia and Alan now somewhere in eastern Asia.



Today her major task was to go out and finish harvesting the abundance of tomatoes and green beans growing in her garden. She would harvest this morning, clean the produce and put away what she would use in the immediate future in the early afternoon, and then later this afternoon she would do her canning so she could store in her pantry what she couldn't use in the near term.

In addition, she always made a practice of taking at least ten percent of what she canned and either giving it to the local homeless shelter or in some other way donating it to the needy.

She planned to do that on Sunday.

"The good Lord said in the Bible in the book of Malachi, chapter three verse eight, that we was robbin' Him if we didn't bring in our tithes...and there ain't no way I'm gonna rob God," she thought.

The way she figured it, Jesus himself had said that we should share and give to the poor.

"...and then that's exactly what He did when he was here on this earth."

Geneva felt that by freely and charitably giving of her own excess to those in need, she was not only doing what Jesus would do if He were here, and therefore trying to be more like Him, but she was also fulfilling the commission on tithing that Malachi had prescribed.

And, now, she was just about ready to go out and start.

"But I've still got another ten minutes or so before nine o'clock," she thought.

"That's enough time to read Alan's letter just one more time before I go outside."

Geneva had received the letter in the mail yesterday and had completely read it through twice last night before she went to bed. It was a wonderful letter. She was so proud of both of her sons for their dedication to the country...and particularly proud of Alan because of what he had written in this letter.

As she read it again, she got to the particular part of the letter that brought her the greatest joy and caused her eyes to brim.

"Mom, I haven't shared this with you yet, but for some reason I figured as we prepare to move out (and I can't tell you either where we are, or where we are moving out to) for our next mission, that it'd be a good time to let you know.

"I know it's gonna make you happy, Momma, and I want you to know that I'm happy too.

"About two months ago, while we were involved in a major firefight over near the coast, two friends in my squad were badly wounded. We did everything we could for the both of them, Mom, but one of them died before the med-evac helicopter ever got there.

"It was the other one, my friend named Lonnie that I wanted to tell you about.

"He's a good kid, Momma...I mean a really good kid.

"I have never seen him smoke, drink, cuss, tell bad jokes, go to the girly places, or do anything mean or spiteful. Sometimes, with the pressure of combat, with friends dying all around you...it's easy to escape into some of those things, to sort of get away from it all. There's a lot of guys out here who do those things, and I'm not real proud to admit to you, Momma, that sometimes I have too.

"But that's all behind me now, Momma, and here's why.

"You see, this little ol' Lonnie never did those things...and I mean it when I say he is a little guy, Mom. Someone you would never expect to see out here. When I first joined the squad and saw his size, I was surprised he had been able to make it through Marine boot camp let alone the later training that put him into the type of work (which I can't go into) that our squad does.

"But he did.

"Even though he's a little pipsqueak in size, and even though he is soft spoken and pretty reserved, I have found that he is physically wiry and tough on the outside, and that he's one of the biggest guys I know in terms of inner strength.

"He's not afraid at all of doing whatever he has to do in any combat situation we have faced...or in doing any of the work around camp that needs to be done. He never complains and it's been amazing and a great example to me.

"I've really come to like and respect Lonnie, Mom.

"Anyhow, he told me one time that his own Mom and Dad had taught him about some young warriors from another time in ancient history. He called them *stripling warriors* who had fought for liberty in their time. He told me how his folks had taught him that the Lord protected those warriors and watched over them as long as they were true to Him, and that the good Lord would do the same for him if he would be as true to God as he could be.

"Lonnie believed his folks. He read about those stripling warriors to me from a book that he carries around with him. That book documented the story and the struggles they had.

"Mom, just before their first major battle, this is what that history says about them:

*Now they had never fought, yet they did not fear death; and they thought more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their own lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them. And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it.'*

"Mom, I have to tell you, from the bottom of my heart, when Lonnie read that to me, I thought of you. I couldn't help but think of all your prayers for Leon and me. I couldn't help but remember your great faith in God and in Jesus. I couldn't help but say to myself... *I do not doubt my mothers knew it!*

“Mom...when I thought of those things, I felt a great swelling in my heart and I wanted to have that same faith that these young men had...that Lonnie has...that I know you and Leon have.”

At this point, Geneva began to cry, just like she had done the night before when she got to this point in the letter. She had always prayed not only for the physical safety of her boys, but even more so for their spiritual safety. Because safety in this world is one thing, but knowing that there is an eternal life awaiting you on the other side is all that really matters. And a mother who does not know that her son will inherit that eternal life is a mother with a deep and abiding concern...especially when her son finds himself in a life and death situation day after day.

This letter represented a literal answer to her prayers.

Leon had found God before ever going off to war and was always willing to witness to others of it...in his own way...on the battlefield or off. Geneva was convinced that it was Leon's faith that had allowed him a glimpse of his own father in the afterlife while he was in a coma after sustaining severe injuries in the Indian Ocean on the Island of Diego Garcia, almost exactly four years ago.

For his actions there, Leon had received the Medal of Honor. When he recovered from his injuries, despite the Marines' desire to use him and his notoriety to help recruit others, Leon would have none of it. As soon as he was able, he had requested to go back into combat, and the United States Marines had granted that request.

His letters often made reference to his faith in God, particularly as he was now searching for his good friend, Billy Simmons, who had been lost in Australia and was presumed dead.

But Alan had never quite gotten to the point of having faith in God. Geneva had always thought that Alan believed there was a God...but that he'd never made the leap to actually coming to know Him and putting his trust and faith in Him.

He was not what Geneva considered a *bad* boy, even though he had made his share of mistakes, and done his share of wrong.

“We all have,” thought Geneva as she considered Alan.

“But the good Lord Jesus has given us a way to overcome those wrongs through His own sacrifice and example. The way to make better people out of ourselves in this life is through having faith in Him, accepting Him and following Him, which at the same time prepares us for the life hereafter with Him and all of our loved ones who do the same.”

It had always been her fondest desire for Alan that he would find that path, and embrace it. From what followed in his letter, now she knew that he had.

“Mom, I spoke to Lonnie about all of this, about his faith and the faith of these young warriors...and he told me that I could have that same faith. He told me that if I came to Jesus and accepted Him and His gospel, I could repent and be a changed man, putting all of my mistakes behind me...and looking forward to a future where I was improving and becoming a better person.

“I know that this is stuff you and Leon have told me in the past, Momma. I suppose Daddy told me the same thing when I was very young before he died. It's just that somehow, someway, here in this place it finally took hold, and I *wanted* Jesus' help, to know Him and come to trust Him.”

Geneva thanked God for this young man, Lonnie, whom Alan had met and befriended. She thanked Him for the good parents who had raised him to be such a good example and to be willing to witness to her son. She vowed, someday, to find and to thank Lonnie's parents personally.

“Anyhow, Momma, two months ago, I accepted Jesus into my life and I joined and became a part of the body of Christ in His church. Lonnie himself baptized me in a little stream, and a whole bunch of our company attended and looked on.

“I have to tell you, Momma, there were some streaked cheeks on a lot of those old grizzled Marines' faces...even if most of them were not believers themselves.

“You can't go through what we have gone through without giving a lot of consideration to life, and the hereafter...I don't care who you are. When you see someone make that change, whether you are ready to make it yourself or not, well, in this environment, it means a lot to most of them.

“I know it meant something for a number of the men in our company when I did.

“Anyway, while he was lying there wounded, waiting for the helicopter, I was real concerned about Lonnie. He'd been shot through the shoulder and had taken another round through his side. He was bleeding a lot and the three of us who were working on him thought he was not going to make it.

“As he lay there, I was helping the medic by holding my palm over one of Lonnie's wounds to try to compress it and stop the bleeding. I was crying while I was doing it when Lonnie looked up at me and...and he started comforting me!

“He told me that I shouldn't worry about Him, that it was all in God's hands and he wasn't afraid of God's will in the matter. He told me I could use my faith to help him, and asked me to pray for him and his family. He then asked me if his friend Trevor was around.

“Well Trevor is another one of the believers in our squad, and a good friend of Lonnie's. But Trevor was out on our perimeter providing security. So I sent the other Marine who was there with us to get him, and to relieve him, because Lonnie was asking for him.

“When Trevor got there a few minutes later, Lonnie asked him if he would bless him before the helicopter got there. Trevor told him he would and then, while the medic made room for him, he took a little vile out of one of his pockets and then put a drop of some oil that was in there on Lonnie's head.

“Momma, I don't know how to tell you what happened after that. It was so beautiful, and so surreal in that environment. Trevor said a prayer out loud...and gave a blessing to Lonnie. He did it in the name of Jesus, Momma, and he promised Lonnie that God was watching out for him and that it wasn't his time yet and that, if he had faith, God would heal him and he'd make it home to his family.

“What impressed me most was that I knew that Lonnie was okay with it either way. He had faith in God's will, Momma, and was willing to come or go however the Lord wanted it.

“When it finally got there, Lonnie was carried off in the helo. We've since heard that his injuries are severe enough that he'll be going home soon to Ely, Nevada...but he's going to make it and ultimately have a full recovery.

“Trevor and I have had a lot of talks since. I go to a service every Sunday with him, when our duties allow. I am growing in my new faith in Jesus, Momma, and I know it's that same faith you have. I also know it was your upbringing that has made all of this possible for me, that put me in a position to understand and accept it.

“Thank you so much, Momma. It is a debt of gratitude and honor I can never repay except by passing it on...and that's just what I am going to do.

“I know it may sound hard to believe, but out here in this place, fighting this war, with what I have found here I have to say that I have never been happier.”

And that was where Geneva chose to stop and put the letter away. For her, it was the most wonderful place imaginable to stop because she could truly *feel* what Alan was experiencing. Now, across the thousands of miles, in addition to their love, their mutual faith built a bridge across it all.

It was a strong bridge, a bridge that would withstand whatever winds blew against it...and Geneva had never been happier for, or with, her son, Alan.

After putting the letter away, she walked to the front door to go out into the garden that was located on the side of the house and do the work she had planned. As she reached for the door, before she could turn the handle and go out into the yard, the doorbell rang.

Since she was already reaching for the door handle anyway, she quickly opened the door and found, there on her doorstep, two immaculately dressed United States Marine officers.

“Mrs. Geneva Campbell?” asked one of them.

When Geneva nodded, the realization of who these men were and why they were likely on her doorstep began to reflect on her face and in her eyes. As it did so, the second Marine officer took his hat off and held it over his breast and said,

“Mrs. Campbell, we're with the United States Marine Corps.

“May we please come in?”

## Chapter 40

*“Stay well - Stay safe - Stay armed - Yorktown” – Matthew Riley*

**September 20, 10:48, Local Time**

**Ambassador's Office**

**Indian Embassy, Omsk, Siberia**

Buhpendra Gavanker had been back in Siberia for over a week. His time was filled with the duties of a full ambassador to a close ally nation. There were diplomatic issues, economic issues, military issues and cultural issues to address that kept him very busy, particularly after an absence of several weeks due to his trip to India.

He considered the city that he had returned to, where he now lived and worked. Years ago the Russians had designated Novosibirsk as the capitol of Siberia, taking it away from its traditional home in Omsk. But when Siberia had declared its independence from Russia, and the Indians and Chinese had backed the new Siberian government with over 500,000 men, one of the first official acts of the new government had been to move the capitol back to Omsk.

To begin with, while the move and transition to the new capital was taking place over the first twelve to eighteen months of independence, the Indian government had established its embassy in the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk. The Gavanker family had moved there to be with Buhpendra while he settled into his very busy schedule as the new ambassador. The relocation had not been easy for the family. There were many, many times when the father and husband of the home would simply not get home until long after everyone else had gone to bed, if at all. Despite his necessary absences, Buhpendra made up for his long periods away by spending genuinely quality time with his family when he was able to be with them.

As the seat of government settled in and became permanent in Omsk, the Indian embassy had naturally been moved there. Buhpendra had coordinated the entire move with his own government and with the Siberians...as well as with the Chinese, who seemed to be intent on having what Buhpendra considered to be undue influence in, and access to, almost everything in which he was involved. That move of the embassy had also necessitated a move for the entire Gavanker family. It was a move for which they had come to be thankful, over the last eight to ten months.

Buhpendra, while still working long days, had seemed to find more time to be home with the family...almost every night they could eat as a family and enjoy time together before bed time. But, ever since the meeting in Mysore, that had all changed again. Now his schedule was extremely hectic once again, similar to the earlier times of separation when he served in Krasnoyarsk.

As he contemplated the moves and his schedule, and as he considered the momentous events in Siberia over the last two years...and the even more momentous events that were soon coming, he thought to himself, “Can this genie ever be put back in the bottle?”

The very question he just posed to himself only served to show him again how difficult it was going to be for him to stop almost incessantly focusing on the import and potential consequences of his Indian trip and the meetings in Mysore. The strain of living with the knowledge of President KP Narayannen's plan to make direct overtures to the western allies and the probable consequences of that plan were constantly weighing heavy on Buhpendra's mind.

Oh, make no mistake, the Ambassador to India agreed with the plan. He had always had trepidation about the overall war plan they had been involved for the last five years... not to mention his nation's precarious alliance with China...but he had also understood the reasons for both. Now, with the war fairing badly, those trepidations, and a desire to preserve his country, took precedence.

“I wonder sometimes,” he thought to himself as he signed a number of requisitions, “If the war effort had continued with all of the victories, would I have even entertained such a plan as this?”

Gavanker was honest enough with himself to know that he wouldn't have. He also knew that his President also would never have considered such a notion either.

“KP is acting as much out of self preservation as he is for the nation,” Buhpendra thought.

“He is hoping that a successful break with China and alignment with America will help him escape the war crimes trials and an injection.”

But all of that speculation was pointless now. What was important now was the hard cold reality of the plan and their commitment to it. Gavanker knew that it was too late to turn back, and he knew that the timetable for implementing the actual contacts was fast approaching.

Buhpendra's part would begin day after tomorrow, the same day that back channel contact with the Americans would be made. Because of his former relationship to the Russian General Andrei Nosik, who was now a Field Martial, Gavanker would be making the contact with the Russians.

The contact would be initiated by secure, encrypted, and scrambled communications across Siberia, over the Urals, and into Russia. Buhpendra was relying on his former knowledge of Russian

frequencies when he had worked together with Nosik who commanded the Russian security forces that protected the coal site in Gavank, Siberia, where Buhpendra had directed the Indian operation.

He hoped that the Russians were monitoring these frequencies. Buhpendra had taken several of his deputies, several ranking cabinet members within the Siberian government, the head of Indian Security forces defending the diplomatic team within the country and the deputy head of Siberian defense forces in on the plan. They were all extremely dedicated and knew their parts in initiating this communiqué and in developing the plan once contact with the Russians had been made.

The plan Gavanker would implement in Siberia was very similar to the plan that the Indian President would implement within India to contact the Americans. Both Buhpendra and the President were staking everything, up to and including their own lives and the lives of their families, on a successful contact with the Americans and the Russians in order to devise and execute India's next move ... in order to plan for India's exit from the CAS and its capitulation to the western allies.

It was a high stakes game...and the stakes would ultimately pay off for only one of the two men.

**September 21, 06:55, CST**

**Near the northern property line**

**Lazy-H Ranch, Outside of Montague, Texas**

It was warm in Texas. A high pressure system that had enveloped the state for the last several weeks had slowly moved to the east, but not so far that conditions had changed too much. Outside of a few morning low clouds, the skies were fair, the winds light...and the temperatures remained warm.

Here in north central Texas, as was almost always the case this time of year, and outside of those times when colder, dry air came barreling down from the north, it was also humid. Moisture from the Gulf of Mexico was perpetually funneled up across the entire eastern half of the state when these conditions were in place, and that moisture hung in the air on these early mornings in the bottomlands. You could almost see it...you could certainly feel it.

"Must be in the mid-eighties already," thought Jess Simmons as he continued to work the fields with his new John Deere tractor.

"Probably be over one hundred again today."

But that wasn't too bad. Jess had grown up working in Texas fields like these. He knew that before too long, probably in early October, a norther would come down and push the warm humid air clear down into Mexico, heralding the advent of autumn, when temperatures would moderate down to the seventies in the day and the cool fifties at night. He always looked forward to that time of the year.

He'd been home from the war over a year now, and he was about as healed as he was going to get from the injuries he had sustained while fighting in Syria.

His head injuries had completely healed, or so it seemed. No more throbbing and aching...no more sudden headaches. The doctors had worked miracles.

"...and so did the faith and love of Cindy and so many others," he thought.

His leg was a different matter. It was a miracle in itself that he had not lost it...and the doctors had brought his function and use of that leg very far along.

But, even after all of the operations and therapy, his left leg was still an inch shorter than his right, and his knee and ankle were difficult to bend more than fifty percent of normal.

The result was that Jess was forced to walk with a perpetual limp. Oh, it was not nearly as bad as it had been a year ago...and he was able to get around quite well. But it was noticeable, and he was certainly not capable of some of the harder work that he otherwise was used to doing, and would be doing out here on the ranch if he could.

"I'll just have to learn to live with it," he continued as the tractor reached the edge of the field.

"... and be grateful that I can even get out here and work at all on the place and enjoy the beauty of the timbered hills and the Clear Creek Valley up here near its source."

Thinking about the scenery there overlooking the valley caused him to reflect on the great void in his and Cindy's life. Their lost son, Billy, who had loved this country as much as his father and who had spent countless hours exploring it, hunting on it and fishing in the creek.

He remembered breaking the news to his dear wife Cindy...and how it had felt to deprive her of a hope that their son was still alive and breathing, somewhere. There were times he regretted having to dash her hopes...there were times he felt guilty about it...there were times to this day where he held out some hope himself...but he could not deny the cold reality of what he saw and what that told him as a professional...which was what he had ultimately felt compelled to share with his wife.

"Thank you, dear God, for Cindy," he muttered in silent prayer as the thought of her pain rested heavily in his mind. "I don't know how I could have gotten through the loss of Billy, or my own rehabilitation, without her. Even during the unbelievable heartache and mourning she went through, she was always there, never missing a beat..."

"Dear Lord, how has she been able to do it?"

Jess Simmons was sincere in his prayer and question to God. He could hardly fathom her ability to help until he remembered a scripture from his childhood.

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."*

...and he knew. He knew that Cindy was only following the example that the God Himself had set... in the midst of grief, in the midst of loss... He gave.

...and so was Cindy...and he knew that her example had helped him to do the same thing  
 "...she's my own very special angel, sent down from Heaven."

### **September 21, that same time**

#### **The kitchen at the ranch house**

#### **Lazy-H Ranch, Outside of Montague, Texas**

Bacon was sizzling and its fragrance was filling the air. There were biscuits in the oven and a bowl of fresh made gravy was warming on one of the burners.

"All I have to do is get the eggs fried, the juice out and the table set, so I'd better call Jess in," Cindy thought as she reviewed the country breakfast she was preparing.

She walked over into the foyer where their dual CB (Citizens Band) / SSB (Single Side Band) radio was mounted to the wall and turned the CB radio to channel 14.

"Comanche, this is the home lodge. Do you copy?"

After a few seconds, during which Cindy could imagine Jess hearing the call and reaching up to grab the mic and keying the transmitter, the response came back.

"Home lodge, you've got the Comanche. What's up babe?"

"Well, if you're close to the south side of the field and start back right now, you can get here at about the perfect time to get a warm breakfast.

"What's it going to be?"

Jess didn't have to think...long years told him that unless there was something really pressing and important, the best thing to do was not to let the meal go cold.

"I'm on my way...see you in about ten minutes.

"Comanche clear."

Cindy smiled, knowing that if something important had been afoot, he'd have let her know. As it was, he was going to arrive at just the right time.

"Home Lodge clear," she responded.

For just a brief moment, she almost keyed up her mic and made another call...but then realized her mistake and put it in its cradle and started back to the kitchen.

As she did, she thought, "No more calls to Billy the Kid."

As always, when she thought of him, she was saddened.

"Will it always be like this?" she wondered to herself.

"She would often forget for an instant that he was gone and wonder how he would look, what he would think or say...how he would be feeling, what he would be doing...what he *was* doing?"

Somehow she knew that the feelings would subside and be less poignant over time. Not that the hurt of missing him would ever really go away...she couldn't imagine that, but that the realization of his goodness and what that meant to her in her faith, would allow her to accept God's will for him...that He had called Billy home, and that they would be together again.

"Oh, what comfort that brings...I don't know how I could handle it without knowing that," she thought as she set the orange juice pitcher on the table and began putting out their two place settings.

"It's just without his body...without a grave we can visit, there's just not the closure we need.

"Please, dear Lord...hear my prayer," she prayed.

"Let us, in Your will, find closure and the Peace you have promised," she concluded.

Completing the short prayer, she stopped and briefly listened to the feelings in her heart...to the spirit of things and what she knew was the Holy Ghost...and she knew that somehow, someday, she and Jess would find the closure they sought.

She had no idea how soon or what form it would take.

As she experienced these feelings, she was just putting the eggs on the plates and setting the bacon, biscuits, and the bowl of warm gravy on the table in the breakfast room. When she heard the familiar swing of the front door, she knew that Jess was home for breakfast, and she rushed to meet him so she could share the experience with him.

### **September 22, 04:30 local time**

#### **Communications Station**

#### **Control room, USS Jimmy Carter, SSN 23**

Captain Thompson listened as his comm officer related what their sensors were picking up.

"Okay, let's start from the beginning and rehash this one more time. You are telling me that the UAV has picked up a signal from the Indian mainland on the old microwave channels we had set up with the Indian navy during exercises back in 2003?"

The Lieutenant responded in the affirmative and then went back over what he had already explained to his captain. He was glad to do so, to check his figures and his translations one more time. But they came up with the same conclusion.

"Yes, sir, that is exactly what I am telling you.

“Our UR-23 001 has picked up a signal from the Indian mainland that is being transmitted using protocols and security encryption that is in keeping with the 2003 naval exercises.

“Sir, they are telling us that they want to make official contact with the United States or other allied officers or representatives capable of negotiating with them.”

The Captain needed to verify the supposed location from which the transmission was emanating.

“Once more, tell me about the encryption and the access codes regarding the message.”

“Sir, the encryption matches our procedures for that period, the access and priority codes indicate it is a flash message from the head of the Indian government, sir, from the President of India.”

The Captain considered the ramifications.

He was in enemy waters captaining a vessel that the entire enemy force structure would literally do almost anything to find, prosecute and destroy. Of his full load of weapons, he had less than half left to him, consisting of:

8 Mk-77 SCWS supercavitating torpedoes

8 Mk-48 ADCAPs advanced conventional torpedoes

7 Tomahawk SLCMs land attack cruise missiles.

It was entirely possible that the enemy had gotten some wind of his current patrol within the Indian Ocean and was trying to lure him into revealing his location.

On the other hand, if this communication was genuine, it had the potential of being huge.

“Okay, put together the following communication via the global surveyor network to CINCPAC.

Have it read as follows:

*“JC received comm from Indian government using 2003 joint exercise protocols indicating it is from the Indian President's office.*

*“They want to open negotiations with any American representative possible.*

*“Please advise.”*

That was a long message, but the Captain needed to transmit the essence of the communication to CINCPAC so the proper decision could be made.

### **September 22, 1 minute later**

#### **85,000 ft over the Indian Ocean**

The high-flying Global Surveyor III reconnaissance and communication aircraft received the compressed, encrypted burst of data from the Jimmy Carter's own UR-23 UAV and transmitted it on.

Capable of loitering in a lazy figure eight pattern over and area for two weeks or more, these latest generation aircraft were the highest flying, most stealthy, most enduring and most advanced UAVs yet produced. Their ultra-efficient engines, their ultra-light and strong composite construction, their tremendous wingspan and the relatively large payload capacity made them well suited for the missions they performed.

In this case, this URGS III, was part of a network of such aircraft that the United States kept up at all times over the Pacific and southern and eastern Indian Oceans to facilitate communications.

The USS Jimmy Carter had been assigned to a patrol area for its mission that would keep its own UR-23 UAV within range of this particular Global Surveyor if the need arose for communication.

Now the message was being conveyed through a network of six different URGS aircraft, interspersed with ground stations where possible, and back to CINCPAC headquarters in Hawaii.

Within five minutes the entire message had been received and decoded. It was brought to the attention of CINCPAC himself by his deputy commander who was on duty at that particular time.

From there, it was communicated via satellite uplink, using the Point Conception Space Station, to Washington, DC and the White House, where the President's National Security Advisor read it twenty minutes later. . .less than an hour after it had been transmitted.

Less than an hour later, a video conference was arranged which included the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and CINCPAC.

### **September 22, two hours later**

#### **The White House Situation Room**

##### **Washington, DC**

President John Bowers bowed his head and uttered a silent prayer as the digital plasma displays went black and as the other attendees left the room as he had requested. For a moment he was left alone with his secret service detail, and he bowed his head.

“Dear God in Heaven, please let this be a true opportunity to shorten this horrific conflict and the suffering it has caused. . .please help us restore peace and liberty to this shattered and broken world.”

The State Department personnel were already making their contacts. . .new war plans would be detailed, reviewed, critiqued and then detailed again in the Pentagon and the war colleges. . .hundreds of thousands of American personnel would soon be on the move. . .intelligence assets in very dangerous places behind enemy lines would be contacted and given orders. . .allies would make their plans. . .and somewhere off the coast of India, a valiant American Captain would take his vessel

deeper into harms way for more direct contacts with a former aggressor and belligerent nation in the hopes of making the marked difference in answer to the very prayer that the President had just uttered.

**October 12, 02:50 local time**

**Command Post outside Presidential Residence**

**New Delhi, India**

Rahmish Patel, along with the Defense Minister, monitored the command frequency as the special internal security battalion made its way into the Presidential compound. What started as a scuffle at the gate, turned into a hot firefight as the Indian forces under the Defense Minister's command made their way across the courtyard under fire from the Presidential security force.

There were just too many personnel in the special security battalion and they had been specifically trained for this mission...to battle a smaller contingent of Indian troops who would be loyal to the constitutionally elected president. The surprise of Indian troops under the Defense Minister's command assaulting the Presidential compound in such numbers was telling on the Presidential security detail which, though highly trained was much smaller, and those forces under the command of the Defense Minister, who was following the dictates of his political and ideological leader, Rahmish Patel, soon entered the presidential residence itself.

There, on the lower floor, another fierce firefight ensued.

"That fool," thought Patel.

"Did he really think that all of his treachery and treason would go unnoticed?"

"Did he really think that the Indian people and their true leaders would allow him to take the gains of a decade and turn them over to our enemies in a day?...a week?...or a month?"

"Well, now, President KP Narayannen...or should I say, the former President...will pay for his high treason with his life."

Turning to the Chinese liaison officer at his side, and catching the attention of the Defense Minister who nodded grimly, the Indian Foreign Minister, issued the fateful directive.

"Colonel Chian, you may deploy your troops into the Presidential residences and either capture or kill former President KP Narayannen and those in league with him.

"...and, if you are in agreement, please pass the execute order for our joint Operation Mongoose on to your superiors."

**October 12, that same time**

**100 Meters beneath the Presidential Residence**

**Secure Command and Control Facility, New Delhi, India**

KP Narayannen had been listening to the progress of the battle raging above him as he feverishly issued orders to those military forces still loyal to him in the New Delhi area and in those regions of the country where his carefully crafted plans were being carried out this morning.

The problem was, of course, that powerful individuals, agencies and forces within his government and military were not standing idly by. They apparently had plans of their own, and those plans were clearly aimed at thwarting what the Indian President was trying to accomplish.

"They are too late to stop it," he said to himself as he approved and then ordered transmitted the official declaration severing the alliance with the Coalition of Asian States and declaring India's official capitulation to, and cooperation with, American, British and Australian forces.

Within seconds the communications officer in the command bunker notified the president that the transmission had been effectively jammed by powerful electronic warfare equipment both on the ground near the facility and in the air over it.

"Keep trying to circumvent the jamming", the President indicated.

"How about the land line transmission?"

"Was it able to get out?"

The communications officer responded by letting the President know that the land line communication had indeed successfully been sent to all points to the south and west of New Delhi, but that the lines to the north and east were down and not responding.

As this was occurring, the head of the Presidential security detail rushed into the room.

"Mr. President, we must leave now and get you out through the emergency access tunnel.

"The traitors have been joined by a large contingent of Chinese Special Forces and they are now overrunning our positions. It will only be a short time before..."

There were several prolonged bursts of automatic weapons fire down the hall from the control room in which the President was sitting. Almost immediately, three more members of the Presidential security detail backed into the room, firing as they did so.

Two of them were knocked off their feet by bursts of automatic weapons fire from outside the room as the President and his Chief of Staff were hustled towards the back of the room towards an already opened, armored door that led to the emergency tunnel.

The President, his Chief of Staff and two senior level cabinet members hurried through the armored door with the chief of the security detail. As they did so, three large concussion grenades



bounced into the room and exploded with thunderous roars. Except for those already through the door, everyone else in the room was stunned into submission by the blasts.

As several Indian and Chinese Special Forces personnel rushed into the room, the armored doors of the access tunnel clicked shut and sealed themselves. It would take plasma welders over two hours to cut through those doors and follow the President and his remaining personnel.

By the time that was accomplished, KP Narayannen and those with him would have long since reached the end of the tunnel and stepped out into what they hoped would be friendly forces and a quick flight away from New Delhi to those more friendly and loyal places to the south and west.

Instead, they stepped out of the tunnel right into the hands of Rahmish Patel, who had personally joined a second combined Indian and Chinese Special Forces team after they had secured the exit to the tunnel from the President's forces that had been guarding it.

Upon seeing the President and his remaining team members apprehended, and once he was assured that all of them had been disarmed, Patel addressed KP Narayannen.

"Mr. Narayannen, you are under arrest for treason against the people of India."

Turning to the commander of the Indian contingent of Special Forces that were now covering the President and those with him, Rahmish continued.

"Captain, please take these prisoners away and hold them each in solitary confinement where they will await a swift and speedy public trial."

## **October 12**

### **Along the Siwalik Range, Along the Brahmaputra River And on the Coast near Cochin, India**

As KP Narayannen was taken into custody in New Delhi by Rahmish Patel and those forces loyal to him, the fateful plans that the Indian President had made were playing themselves out...along with the plans of the forces that were committed to countering them.

To the north of New Delhi, along highways that the Chinese had built right up to the borders of India, and that the Indians themselves had then constructed through the major river valleys that penetrated the Siwalik Mountain Range, hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops were entering India. Through huge tunnels, across wide bridges and along the superhighways that had been constructed to facilitate the immense trade that had been going on ever since the creation of the Coalition of Asian States five years earlier, division after division of Chinese troops, tanks and mechanized vehicles now traveled at high speed.

Those highways had also been built with foresight, looking forward towards military logistics and transportation. That foresight was paying off now as Indian forces loyal to Rahmish Patel and the CAS facilitated the blitzkrieg invasion of India by the Chinese, who were converging on and being funneled along the both Sutlej and Ganges River into the interior of India. Their aim was to forestall and checkmate the capitulation and cooperation plans that KP Narayannen and those loyal to him had worked out with the western allies.

In addition to the incursions along the Ganges and the Sutlej Rivers, the Chinese were also making a massive incursion into the eastern part of the nation, in the Arunachal Pradesh along the Brahmaputra River. In these areas, Indian troops loyal to the war effort and the alliance of the CAS also facilitated the blitzkrieg entry of several hundred thousand Chinese troops into India in a pincer movement aimed at the heart of the subcontinent.

Within ten days, the numbers of Chinese troops massed in many separate locations along the borders in these two areas and entering into India along the routes indicated would swell to a force of over ten million. The Americans used three of their orbital bombardment inventory from the Lewis and Clark II expedition to attempt to thwart this Chinese buildup and incursions...but although upwards of three hundred and fifty thousand personnel were killed or wounded by these orbital attacks, the Chinese had dispersed their troop strength enough to keep the attacks from seriously challenging or stopping the massive infusion of forces into India.

While all of this was occurring, an initial allied force of over four hundred thousand American, British, Canadian, and Brazilian troops was landing to the north and south of the Indian seaport and major naval base of Cochin. The allied troops were being flown on to the beaches by the largest air armada in history, centered around the largest contingent of American C-90B transport aircraft ever assembled...much larger than the original C-90 force that landed American troops in Siberia almost eighteen months before. The air assault force was itself being supported by the largest combined submarine force ever assembled. These forces consisted of two of the three American Sea Wolf class nuclear attack submarines, twelve Virginia class American nuclear attack submarines, two of the Ohio class SSGN nuclear cruise missile submarines, ten Alaska Class SSTN amphibious assault and transport submarines, and four of the new Olympic Class SSCVN aircraft carrying submarines.

This was the combat debut of the Olympic class, which was a major revision of the huge Alaska class design, carrying twenty four VTOL F-35 aircraft, four E-22C VTOL AEW aircraft, six S-22C VTOL ASW aircraft and up to ten UR UAV aircraft. In addition the SSCVN submarines were fully outfitted with a full array of torpedoes, including the Mk-77 supercavitating torpedoes, along with a

total of forty-eight vertical launch tubes accommodating anti-air missiles and other missiles up to and including the AGM-999 Hail Storm cruise missiles and the latest American Tomahawk SLCMs.

This fleet of submarines was in place to provide the air cover and precision air and fire support necessary for the allied troops who were landing around Cochin and who would then be advancing to the north and east to confront the oncoming Chinese forces. In that role, the allies were receiving major support from friendly Indian forces in the area who had been gathering there under the auspice of future combined armed operations being prepared to reinforce the Indian operation in Australia.

The two Indian carrier battle groups, three entire wings of Indian attack and air superiority fighters and twelve divisions of armor and mechanized infantry were in place to support the American, British and Australian landings. All of the leaders of these forces were loyal to President KP Narayannen and his effort to make peace with the west and avoid the total destruction of India that he felt sure awaited his nation if they attempted to resist the west to the bitter end.

What KP Narayannen and his allies had not considered was the depth or breadth of the warfare that would result from the attempt as the Chinese rushed in millions of men to thwart the allied effort of opening up another major front against them on mainland Asia. One of the largest and bloodiest campaigns of the entire war would ensue on the sub-continent and it would not just be a war of army against army...it would be a horrific civil war pitting family against family, father against son, hamlet against hamlet, caste against caste, and belief systems and ideologies against themselves.

...and it would not be limited to the sub-continent.

### **October 12, throughout the day**

#### **Ambassador's Office**

#### **Indian Embassy, Omsk, Siberia**

Ambassador Buhpendra Gavanker paced anxiously in his office, monitoring the day's events in India, and here in Siberia in his own area of responsibility. His chief of staff came in regularly with reports and updates and he listened to both the UHF and VHF radio consoles which had been installed on his desk. They were monitoring all of the relevant Indian, Siberian and Chinese frequencies, as well as the frequencies that had been communicated to him by the Russians as a part of the plan.

He was also watching specially installed video monitors of the Omsk International Airport, the two Siberian Army barracks, the three Indian Army and security forces barracks, and the Chinese barracks across town near their own embassy. If there was to be trouble, it would probably start there.

He was very concerned about his wife and children. If things went as well as could be expected, they would not be exposed to too great a danger as friendly forces occupied Omsk and the surrounding countryside. If things went badly, it was likely that all of them would be dead by tomorrow morning...and in all probability, their deaths would not be easy.

"Is there anything more I could have done?" he asked himself as the report he had been waiting for was broadcast over the radio.

"Badger flight now entering Omsk International Airport airspace and requesting clearance for immediate approach and landing."

That communication let him know several things. First, he knew that the air corridors he and his compatriots had prepared for the incursion of Russian aircraft into Siberia broadcasting Indian IFF signals had worked. Second, it let him know that the element of surprise was still in his favor, despite the momentous activities going on to the south in India and the heightened levels of alert and security Indian and Chinese forces were now on worldwide.

"It helps, I suppose, that we have the contacts and level of commitment from so many critical players, both militarily and diplomatically," he thought.

Buhpendra was extremely humble in his analysis...the principle player was Buhpendra himself. It was Buhpendra's efforts, and the high respect and esteem in which he was held, that had allowed for the development of the entire Siberian part of the operation. That respect and esteem was shared not only amongst the Indians themselves, but also amongst the Siberians. And none of that even began to speak to the one factor that made the entire thing even remotely possible overall. That critical factor was something else that Buhpendra brought to the table himself and was what gave hope for peace to the area and a real possibility for eventual permanency to Siberia independence.

...and that was Buhpendra Gavanker's personal relationship with Field Marshal Andrei Nosik.

Nosik had been a rising star in the Russian military for several years...ever since his assignment to Siberia as a Colonel in charge of the security forces protecting the Indian petroleum and low sulfur coking operations, and the nearby Chinese cobaltite site after the signing of the Siberian Economic Development treaty. Throughout the war, as a result of his leadership abilities, Nosik's star had risen from Colonel to General and then to Field Marshall.

That star had recently climbed another notch when Nosik had been promoted to be the highest ranking officer for the Russian Army, and in charge of world-wide ground operations. In effect, he was now the American equivalent of the Chief of the Army in the American Joint Chiefs of Staff, and this made for an opportunity in Siberia that neither he nor Buhpendra and the Indian government, intent on reaching an agreement with the west, could afford to pass up.

So, when the Russians heard the communication out of Siberia on their old frequencies, and when that communication had found its way to Andrei Nosik's attention, things had progressed rapidly. The plans were swift in their making, and bold in their scope. Buhpendra knew that Nosik hoped, with the successful implementation of the Badger plan, in one audacious move to break the bloody stalemate that had developed to the west in the Ural Mountains. There, massive concentrations of UAR and CAS troops were proving immovable as they held back the relentless attempts by Russian and European forces, with significant American technological help, to break across those ranges and into Siberia proper, and ever closer to China and India from the north and west.

"I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall in his office when he received my reply to his question proving my personal authenticity," Buhpendra thought to himself as he reflected upon the events that had led them to this point.

*"Share with us a personal experience in an immediate and direct communication that would only be privy to the Field Marshal and Dr. Gavanker, indeed!"*

"I can only hope that some of his superiors were in attendance to hear of his overindulgence with Vodka on that evening in March when he and I celebrated our first year in Siberia in his office," Buhpendra continued to himself.

After the reviews and promotions we both received from our superiors that week we deserved to indulge ourselves somewhat. But the description of his dancing around his office and onto his desk in his red Long Johns to Tchaikovsky should have raised a few eyebrows and made for a few laughs at the good Field Marshal's expense.

"...and it worked well enough. There were no more questions about authenticity after that."

And with the whole, brilliantly planned operation posing as first a strategic withdrawal from the Urals, with Indian authentication at the highest levels, and then with authenticated communications of a vast Russian breakthrough and wild retreat, apparently the storyline was working.

"Nosik is nothing short of a military mastermind. Such a simple plan...and yet so outlandish!"

As the ambassador completed his thoughts, he saw what he had been waiting for dropping from the cloud cover over the Omsk International Airport.

First, a flight of four SU-37 aircraft roared down from the clouds and over the field. They were painted in standard Indian colors, but they were not in the Indian inventory. They were brand new Russian aircraft, and part of the air armada that was descending on Omsk as a part of operation Badger. Buhpendra knew that there were many escort aircraft above the airport...as many as eighty now converging here to give cover and support to the operations that would soon commence.

Then, he saw the first one drop out of the clouds. Buhpendra could not have imagined that such a large aircraft could exist...and yet, here it came, one of the American T-90B transport aircraft...and then another, and another, and finally the fourth and last. All of them landing on the main runway and then taxiing to prearranged spots on the tarmac and disgorging so much equipment and so many men.

Now...there was movement from the Chinese barracks and one of the Siberian and one of the Indian barracks. Armored personnel carriers exiting the bases only to be taken under fire by Badger Operation-friendly forces already stationed there. Firefights were developing at all three places, but the Chinese were quickly gaining the upper hand in their area as tanks and attack helicopter joined in the fight to quell those resisting their desire to exit their base and speed over to the airport.

A huge, bright flash obliterated the leading elements of the Chinese armored column and then video from that area was lost.

Buhpendra's phone was now ringing incessantly...but he let it ring. Unless informed by his chief of staff of specific, planned communications, he would not answer the phone anymore this day.

His thoughts turned to his family and he hoped for their safety in the bunker forty kilometers to the north where they were located with Special Forces guarding them and access to air evacuation should it become necessary. All of the plans were in place and now all they could do was wait, hope and pray as the drama unfolded.

Buhpendra knew that there would be surprises, failures and disappointments. That was the nature of such operations...both militarily and politically. Rarely, if ever, did everything go exactly as planned. He could only hope that the successes and achievements of this day would outweigh the failures and disappointments and that his family and he would come safely through it.

Whatever the outcome, Buhpendra knew that the final contest and battle were now irrevocably joined in Siberia. He and his comrades would at the very least, despite any mortal fate, be comforted in the fact that they had dared against all odds and at great risk to achieve great things. At the very best, they would hasten the day that this part of the world and their own peoples enjoyed the blessings and tranquility of peace and prosperity together, and they would live to see it and tell about it.

They had aspired to worthy and good goals, and they had not shirked or avoided the opportunity fulfill them, irrespective of the risk involved...and they had done so at a time when just such risks and daring exploits on behalf of their peoples and their eventual liberty were desperately called for.

**October 13, 06:50 local time**

**Politburo Executive Committee Meeting**

**Secret Hardened Facility, 100 km North of Beijing**

"Order! We will have order in this room or I will have those who are unable to restrain themselves forcibly removed! I promise each and every one of you, at this stage, in this crisis, any members of this body who are required to be removed in such a fashion will not be returning...not to this committee, not to the Politburo, not to their homes.

"I hope I have made myself clear."

As Jien Zemin completed his all too real threat and glared at the entire assembly, Lu Pham glanced around the room at the other members of the executive committee. Lu was actually glad that Jien was willing to use his power and authority in this particular manner to restore order as the news of the disasters in India and Siberia was relayed to them. Lu believed such sternness was necessary.

Lu was no stranger to bad news...even after all of the years of achievement here in the People's Republic of China he remembered well his younger years. Bad news had been the norm in those days in North Vietnam. One defeat after another...one failure after another had beset the north in their long struggle against the Americans. But in the end, it had been the Americans who had left Vietnam and the North who had emerged victorious. Lu had no doubts that if the people gathered in this room, and by projection, if the forces that they represented and led, were able to muster the steel and the will, then history would repeat itself, even with the disturbing news that they had received this morning.

Lu Pham listened as Jien Zenim, now having achieved the order that he desired, continued on.

"I want to know how this could have happened. Clearly there has been treachery at the highest levels...certainly within the Indian government, and perhaps within our own.

"I have instructed our intelligence services to use whatever means necessary to root out those involved and then to pursue them with all diligence...even those who may have escaped us for the time being. An abject example must be made...no matter how long it takes, no matter where it leads.

"I am instructing our research and development teams, and Lu Pham, this is directed principally at you, to redouble our efforts on systems that can counter our enemies, particularly the Americans.

"Their orbital bombardment is proving monumentally difficult to overcome, even with the tremendous numeric advantage of our forces. Their new supercavitating weapons seem to be the equal of, or better than, our own. Their active stealth capabilities are rendering our *ta shih* systems less and less effective. What must we do to regain the advantage? Lu, do you have any news in this regard?"

Lu was surprised to have been pulled so early into a direct conversational and presentation role in the meeting. Despite this, Lu stood with confidence where he was, turned to the majority of the executive counsel, and spoke.

"Mr. President, my comrades. It is true that the Americans are fielding more and more technologically advanced weaponry, and that they are doing it with surprising speed. But we are not defeated yet, nor shall we be as long as there is breath left in my body.

"Before speaking to some of our own technological breakthroughs and advances, I would like to address this very point...our spirit and our will. As most of you know, I worked in my early years on projects for what was then the North Vietnamese government. Despite whatever bad news we may have heard today, I tell you now it is nothing compared to the bad news we received in North Vietnam during the late 1960's and early 1970's on a daily basis...in fact, right up until we were victorious.

"In those days, the Americans literally bombed us to the negotiating table and they took away everything from those negotiations that they desired. We signed treaties indicating that they had, in effect, won the war...but their victory in 1972 was a hollow one. They wanted anything that they could point to as victory so they could withdraw. So, we gave it to them, and they did.

"But why did they want to withdraw? Why were they so desperate for any *victory*?"

"I can tell you why. It was because we bled them. For every man they lost, we lost twenty or more, over a million to their fifty thousand. But we were willing to lose them in order to win the war...and in the end...we did.

"We must have the strength and the will to persevere in the same way today.

"You all know the history. Two years after their so-called victory, we simply ignored the treaty and invaded. The Americans did not have the will or the stomach for the fight. Their citizenry had had enough. The *anti-war* segment of their society was now calling the shots. There would have been more protests, and maybe even riots in the streets, had America chosen to re-open old war wounds by returning and making certain that the treaty terms were met. The potential protestors and rioters were our staunchest allies, in that respect. So America sat by and watched us do what we had promised by treaty not to do. And they abandoned their equipment, they abandoned their honor and they abandoned their friends and allies...and we emerged victorious.

"We can have the same spirit and the same will today. We can instill it into those who work with and for us. If we succeed in doing that...then all of our technological wonders will be icing on the cake and they will hasten our ultimate victory."

The members of the executive committee were mesmerized by Lu's presentation and his attitude and demeanor. They took heart from it and Jien Zenim stood back and watched it happen, watched as this foreigner, who had meant so much to their successes in the past, now helped him turn what almost any other leader would define as an unmitigated disaster into a rallying point.

The technology that Lu described was hopeful, particularly the hidden particle beam research facilities and the ground based batteries that were about to be employed. But Jien Zemin recognized that of all the military leaders in this room, and of all the political leaders as well-excepting perhaps himself, Lu Pham more fully embodied the spirit and fundamental principles of the greatest Chinese war leader of all time, Sun Tsu, than anyone else in the room.

...and he was describing that philosophy in no uncertain terms. In fact, he was explaining it in layman's terms, to the entire Executive Committee of the Politburo of the People's Republic of China at a time when they needed it the most.

**October 20, 01:21**

### **Overlooking CAS Position**

#### **Promontory Point, North Central York Peninsula, Australia**

Leon Campbell watched through his sixth generation night vision goggles as the enemy encampment...and it was a large one...slept.

His goggles included an independent power source mounted in his helmet that allowed the goggles to function. They worked night or day, automatically adjusting to the light conditions, and they had digital readouts in a miniature heads-up display that was automatically generated in each goggle in such a way so as to appear as a single readout to the user.

Based on that display, which was tied into his regimental net, Leon could see that the enemy did not sleep blindly. They were not incompetent and they were not inexperienced in the least. They had set up both physical and electronic sentries that extended out more than a mile, around the perimeter of their camp. They had roving patrols that extended out several miles beyond that, including a large one that frequented this very promontory.

Even though the enemy was clearly very experienced, the American Marine Master Sergeant and this squad could be considered extremely experienced as well. Leon had no doubt that his squad of Marines could fight the Chinese platoon-sized patrol to a standstill and defeat it, particularly with the type of support that they could call in. But he also knew that such an action would defeat the principle goal of the mission upon which he was embarked...to find, and mark for attack, the heavy concentrations of enemy forces.

Ruining that goal was something Leon was not going to allow to happen.

With this encampment, he knew that they had discovered what he considered to be the mother lode of enemy forces remaining on the peninsula and so there would be no effort to engage the enemy platoon. In fact, he had done and would do all in his power to avoid such a fire fight.

After more than four months of continuous fighting, the large allied task force to which Leon had been attached in late May had succeeded in pushing the enemy forces on the York Peninsula back to the very northern tip of the peninsula. There had been several major battles and many small skirmishes in the process. The small fire fights generally consisted of brief, very violent confrontations in thick foliage where allied and enemy patrols or medium sized maneuvering forces ran across each other. The larger battles had occurred as allied forces bottled up large segments of enemy forces, or as enemy forces attempted to counter attack and lure allied forces into traps laid by a very crafty Chinese commander in chief on the Peninsula.

Though heavy losses had been inflicted on the enemy, allied losses were also heavier than expected and the enemy had not been either maneuvered into, or caught in, a position where a final decisive blow could be delivered.

It had not been an easy task and Leon now had several more close friends who would never be returning home alive. The enemy was determined, and seemed to be becoming more determined, as they were pushed further and further to the north, particularly of late.

At this juncture, both sides were suffering from a decided lack of airborne reconnaissance. This had been particularly true for the allies after the loss of the first Southern Star station over Australia. In addition to that loss, as they pushed the enemy slowly and bloodily further and further north, the enemy had benefited from significant access to more and more air cover from New Guinea and other islands to the north where the allies had not yet penetrated. This allowed them to engage allied air power and particularly to interdict any Global Surveyor or other UAVs that the allies tried to launch for reconnaissance purposes.

But the situation had represented a doubled-edged sword because enemy forces suffered from the same disadvantage.

But now things were beginning to change. With the new Southern Star Space Station, space based coverage was once again in place. In addition, no more than twenty miles behind the front lines, the allies massed significant Marine F/A-35 aircraft whose vertical take-off and landing ability

allowed them to be right there over the battlefield in significant numbers whenever needed, or to interdict enemy air assaults as they came in support of enemy ground action.

Within a hundred miles of the front, new airfields had been constructed and more conventional allied fighter and attack aircraft were also available.

Still, there was significant enemy threat from the air and this required that some reconnaissance be obtained in what Leon called *the old fashioned way*. And that meant boots on the ground...boots like Leon's and his squad here on this promontory.

"And tonight we have hit the jackpot", Leon thought to himself as he surveyed the enemy encampment from his concealed position.

There was significant armor massed to the right, three hundred meters from the small stream that ran through the camp. They had anti-air missile batteries stationed around three corners of the camp, facing toward the major threat axis...towards allied forces, with another two batteries to the rear at the last corner and in the center. There were three large bivouac areas for troops and a large motor pool. What clearly looked to be a fuel and supply depot and then the defensive positions.

"These guys plan on being here a while...like they plan on defending this spot", Leon continued.

"Great...let them prepare their defenses, that will be all the better for our purposes. There must be seventy-five or eighty thousand troops in that valley alone."

Leon did not hesitate for a moment, or act with any trepidation. This was particularly true after the heartbreaking news of his own brother's death had been delivered to him two weeks ago.

This encampment was the enemy, a large enemy force positioned on the flank of ongoing allied operations in the interior...operations that were going very well indeed, having pushed the Indian and Chinese forces well beyond Alice Springs, but which would be threatened if the enemy were allowed to maintain any foothold whatsoever in position here on the York Peninsula. This enemy encampment also represented the local embodiment of the very real forces of evil that had taken two of the three people Leon had been closest to away from him, and had caused similar anguish for millions of others of innocents throughout the world.

No, there was no question, they must be destroyed...as many of them as possible.

And Leon and his squad had it within their power to facilitate just that very thing.

Finally, some of the highest impact weapons available to the allies had been approved for release on the York peninsula. With a force of thirty of the new ADCAP Air-launched and Sea-launched Hail Storm cruise missiles now at the task force's disposal, Leon knew that the entire valley over there would be a killing field, and that not one allied soldier would be lost in the exchange if everything went as planned...of course assuming that he and his team were able to remain undetected.

Leon had every intention of doing both...accomplishing his mission by rendering that valley over there essentially lifeless, and remaining undetected in the process.

"Gunny, on my order, prepare to transmit each of the coordinates I gave you and their description. Then have the Lance Corporal and his team hold the laser designators on the money.

"I'm going to make one last visual scan of the area."

As he scanned the area from west to east, Leon came to the end of the encampment and what he knew were the outer electronic sensor devices and human sentries that the enemy had deployed. He panned another three hundred meters west and then suddenly swept his field of view back to the east.

There...about two hundred and fifty meters beyond the enemy's outer perimeter, but well within range of their sensors if they happened to detect their presence was a group of unidentified people. In a large overgrown hollow, Leon's sensors picked them up. From this angle, he could just make out their heat signatures and could now see why they had gone undetected by the enemy. They were in the shelter of a low ridge of small hillocks which were overgrown with brush with what appeared to be large dark areas, or caves, at the bottom.

Leon could just make out the forms of two of the individuals, facing the enemy encampment just below the ridge line and well concealed in brush...but in a position to watch the enemy.

"Gunny, before you transmit the coordinates, contact HQ and ask them if we have a force of twenty-five or thirty people within three hundred yards of the west side of the enemy encampment we have been preparing to target."

The grizzled old Gunnery Sergeant responded immediately to Leon's request.

"Roger that...I'll ask."

A few seconds later, the answer came back.

"That's a flat negatory on the friendly force near the enemy MS...we're it."

By the time the answer came through, Leon had figured out in all probability who those people were, and what they were doing there so close to the enemy.

"Well then, I'll bet that bunch must be another one of those civilian refugee groups we've seen the past few months in here.

"About half the time, they seem to get caught up in the fighting, or just get in the way of those animals down there...or sometimes caught in the crossfire.

"Ask HQ if they want us to make an attempt to warn or extract those people."

**October 20, 02:32**

**Two hundred fifty meters east of the CAS Position**

**At the Low Ridge Line, North Central York Peninsula, Australia**

Nabalco and Tex continued to watch the Chinese and Indian encampment to their west. As they did so, Nabalco continued to berate himself for getting the group caught in this position.

"How could I have been so stupid?" he muttered silently as he contemplated the events.

Two days before, it had become apparent that a very large enemy force was moving into their area. They had moved from one prepared position of concealment to another in front of the group and just barely avoided detection. Just last evening they had made their way into the caves that were heavily concealed by brush and undergrowth at the bottom of the depression they now occupied.

Now that it was clear that the enemy planned to stay for some time, Nabalco knew it was only a matter of time before the caves and the entire group was discovered. He could not risk that, and so he was prepared now to take the risk of leaving the area entirely under the cover of darkness.

But he was concerned about the electronic sensors and patrols the Chinese were sending out.

"Like I said, how could I have been so stupid?"

This time he was a little too loud and Tex heard him.

"Stupid? You have to be kidding me.

"It's nothing short of a miracle that we are even alive, Nabalco. Please don't let the moment dull your edge...we need you sharp if we are going to get out of this."

Nabalco knew that Tex was right...but he was too humble to admit it.

Just the same, he was about to thank the young man when he heard a warning whistle.

"Tex, you stay here and watch them over there...I'll go and see what's happening."

As Nabalco carefully made his way down the slight rise, he saw the reason for the whistle and he thought for just an instant that all was lost. There were two soldiers with assault rifles and night vision gear amongst his people. Then, as he got closer, he was able to make out the uniforms...Americans!

As he walked up to them, a large Negro American soldier addressed him.

"Are you the one they call Nabalco? If you are, then please listen to me.

"My name is Gunnery Sergeant Gaffney and this is Corporal Thomas, U.S. Marines.

"We have to get you and your people out of here as quickly as we can. Within the next two hours, this entire valley is going to be destroyed along with everything in it."

**October 20, 04:12**

**Overlooking CAS Position**

**Near the Promontory, North Central York Peninsula, Australia**

As the two Marines led the twenty-eight civilians carefully up the slope to their concealed position, the Chinese platoon approached from the southeast around a rock outcropping that jutted all the way to the top of the promontory. As they rounded the outcropping, they became visible to Leon and he immediately alerted two of his number who were not occupied with lazing target positions, and also contacted Gunnery Sergeant Gaffney and Lance Corporal Thomas.

Seconds after Gaffney got the information and began to spread it amongst the civilians, twelve of whom were also armed...the point man on the Chinese platoon spotted the refugees and held his fist up in the classic stop sign for military personnel on patrol.

As the Chinese quickly and efficiently spread out into an assault line, Gaffney herded the civilians into a makeshift defensive position and began positioning the armed refugees for best effect.

Firing broke out between the two groups as the Chinese advanced. Leon and the two corporals he had selected to assist waited patiently until the Chinese moved into their overlapping fields of fire from above...and then opened up on them in a murderous barrage that took the Chinese completely by surprise. Before the Chinese captain in charge knew what was happening, six of his sixteen men were down. He ordered an orderly withdrawal to a less exposed position so he could regroup.

Amongst the civilians, the Chinese fire had already had telling effect. Five civilians were down...one of them Nabalco, who had been seriously wounded through the throat and Lance Corporal Thomas, who was fatally wounded as he turned back a charge of three Chinese who approached closest to the refugees' position.

Before the Chinese could regroup, the fighting was momentarily interrupted as numerous bright flashes and then trails of light erupted from the forward portions of the enemy encampment as Chinese surface to air missiles lifted off to intercept incoming American aircraft and missiles.

But it was too late.

As the Chinese missiles rose...eighteen stealthy American Hail Storm missiles came screaming low over the promontory. They were supported by a dozen higher flying American and British F/A-35 aircraft flying anti-radiation roles against the enemy air defense batteries. Before the Hail Storm missiles finished clearing the promontory, twenty high-speed HARM missiles were launched targeting the radar and *ta shih* sights amongst the enemy encampment with devastating effect.

Two American aircraft and three Hail Storm missiles were downed by the enemy missiles before the remaining fifteen Hail Storm missiles delivered several million deadly hypervelocity projectiles amongst and all around the enemy encampment, shredding all vegetation, all flesh, all soft-shelled vehicles and all armor within the horrendous radius of their targeting. Numerous secondary explosions marked the spot where ammunition or ordnance on various vehicles exploded.

There were some defensive fortifications and hardened areas within and around the camp that were in the process of being constructed. Within the walls and under the cover of some of these structures there was the possibility of survival from the Hail Storm missiles. But the attack occurred with such surprise and rapidity, that unless personnel were already positioned or housed in those structures, there had been no time to gain access to them. Outside of this, the destruction by the Hail Storm attack was complete and devastating.

It was then that the coup d'état was administered in order to ensure complete victory. The final projectile, a small one that had been made for just this sort of precise and limited role, came in from space and impacted in the middle of the camp.

The resulting explosion, crater and shock wave destroyed everything that was left from the Hail Storm attack. No structure, no fortification and no hardened shelter could withstand it. The back of organized CAS resistance on the York Peninsula had been broken.

During the several minutes that the devastating attack took place, culminating in the high wind and shock wave washing over the distant promontory, the Chinese Captain sensed the hopelessness of his own position, now without any hope of support from what he had considered to this moment to be a very strong mother force. So he took the wise opportunity to retreat his platoon back around the rock outcropping, laying down effective cover fire as they did. He and his soldiers had seen enough...they would seek no further contact with the Americans or their allies this night, or at any other time during the two days it would take them to reach a sheltered area on the coast and arrange transport off of the continent of Australia.

**October 20, 04:21**

### **Overlooking the destroyed CAS Position**

#### **On the Promontory, North Central York Peninsula, Australia**

Leon surveyed the destruction of the enemy encampment below. Smoke rose everywhere amongst the ruins and he saw no movement. Perhaps there were some survivors down there, but he couldn't see any from this vantage point, and the recovery operation would be a task for other allied forces tomorrow and through the next few days.

Right now, he had the task of solidifying his position, identifying the refugees that Gaffney was bringing in and buttoning things up for their extraction sometime tomorrow morning.

There had been casualties. Lance Corporal Thompson was dead along with three of the refugees...including their leader who had bled to death while one of the female civilians, clearly emotionally attached to him, had ministered to him and tried to save him. There were also two wounded. Leon had sent his own corpsman that way as soon as he could...but it was too late for either Thomas or Nabalco. He was able to help the two wounded civilians.

Now, as the refugees finally reached the top of the promontory and Leon's position, he briefly eyed each one of them as they approached. Most of them appeared to be aborigine tribesmen of some sort, with a few mixed Caucasian and other race refugees. Thomas was being carried by Gaffney and each of the three dead refugees was also being carried by his compatriots, who were also helping the corpsman with two wounded civilians. Nabalco's body was in a makeshift stretcher and there were four of the refugees carrying him reverently. The woman, whom Leon would later come to know as Ulura, Nabalco's wife, was chanting an aborigine dream chant as she walked. Leon saw the motion of one of those carrying Nabalco as he reached forward and put his hand on the woman's shoulder, attempting in some small way to console her while he helped carry the stretcher with his other hand.

It was then that Leon noticed that this refugee was another Caucasian, that he had blond hair, that he was about six feet tall. Leon also noticed his gate...it was clearly impeded, the guy had either been born with a disability, or he had been injured somehow...though it was still dark and Leon could not see him well, there was something familiar about the way he walked.

Moving forward, Leon waited by the side of the trail as the entire group began to pass by. When those carrying the stretcher approached, Leon issued an order.

"Watson, Peterson, come over here and take over for these folks carrying this stretcher...I'd like to speak with some of these people a moment."

As the two corporals responded, Leon asked the stretcher bearers to set the stretcher down and then he asked them all to step aside, off of the trail for a moment.

"I know you are all shocked and dismayed at the moment and I am so sorry for your loss. But I need to ask you how you came to be down there near the Chinese and Indian encampment.

"If we had not seen you there, you would have experienced the same fate as the enemy."

Leon's request was greeted by silence.

"Come on, we're your friends. Surely one of you can let us know how you came to be there."



The refugees looked at one another briefly, and then Ulura stepped forward and began to speak.

"We had been avoiding the Chinese and Indians as best we could for months. We have seen the results of not doing so and did not want end up like those others, either enslaved or butchered.

"My husband, Nabalco...he led us the entire time and we thought we were in a safe place until this large group the enemy came on us two or three days ago and we...we just couldn't..."

Ulura broke down at this point and the Caucasian refugee, an individual the others called Tex, put his arm around her. As he did so, he turned his face towards Leon and spoke.

"Look, Master Sergeant...can't you see she is mourning?"

"Can't you just let us mourn the loss of our friend until tomorrow morning? Believe me, we've been trying to avoid these people as much as you have been trying to destroy them. We would..."

Leon, shocked at the recognition of the voice, broke in...

"Mister, how did you know my rank? ...and my God, Billy, can that be you?"

Turning and catching the Gunnery Sergeant's attention, Leon ordered.

"Gunny, get me a light over here...on the double!"

Gunnery Sergeant Gaffney did his best to dissuade his Master Sergeant from any type of light whatsoever on that high hill.

"MS, it'll be daylight in a little over an hour or so. Can't a light wait until then?"

But Leon would not be deterred.

"Gunny, get a light. Use one of our soft, map reader lights and then we'll go into the hooch we set up in the brush...but bring a light and bring it now."

The Gunny...and just about every other Marine in Australia knew of Leon's quest, of his search for his friend and fellow Marine. At the insistence in the Master Sergeant's voice, the possibility of the fulfillment of that quest captured the moment for everyone in Leon's squad and every one of them, except for the three who were on guard duty on their perimeter, followed Leon and the five civilians.

Once surrounded by dense brush, Leon turned the light on and shined it just below Tex's face.

"My God, it is you! Billy...how did you get here...don't you recognize me?"

But there was no recognition, although a glimmer of understanding did show on his face.

"Master Sergeant, I can't say how I knew your rank...and why you are calling me that name?"

"I actually don't remember my name...everyone here calls me Tex because of my accent."

Leon reached forward and hugged his friend.

"I'm calling you that name because your name is Billy...Captain Billy Simmons, United States Marine Corps. And you sound that way and they call you *Tex* because you are a bonafide, certified Texan, right out of the great Lone Star State. Don't you remember?"

"You went down in your Comanche off the coast of Australia. You must have washed up on shore and be suffering from amnesia.

"You and I went to college together at Boise State University in Idaho. We enlisted. You visited me on leave when I was hospitalized in Washington, DC.

"Believe me when I tell you...your name is Billy Simmons and you have a Mom and a war-hero Dad who are going to be so happy that you are alive!"

Still holding his friend's shoulders, Leon turned towards the other members of his squad and caught the eye of a grinning Gunnery Sergeant Gaffney.

As Billy Simmons, still suffering from amnesia, and the other refugees looked on in awe and wonder, Leon issued a quick order.

"Gunny, get HQ on the horn...we need to report all of this. There's a whole lot of people who are going to be surprised and happy to hear this news...I can hardly believe it myself."

### **October 30, 10:43**

#### **Lazy-H Ranch**

#### **Outside of Montague, Texas**

Jess and Cindy watched the Marine sedan approach the house along the quarter mile gravel road that led to the house. It was a pleasant day and the visit, whatever purpose it had, was unexpected.

As the car got closer, Jess made a comment as he recognized the insignia on the vehicle.

"U.S. Marines...maybe they've found Billy's remains and we can bring him home."

The thought gave hope for closure to Cindy. She had finally accepted the reality of Billy's death...but closure was something she knew in her heart they both needed.

Today she was going to be pleasantly and joyously surprised.

As the car stopped in front of the house, Jess himself was shocked when his own former commanding officer, General Larry Donovan, emerged through the open black door.

"What in the world?" he said out loud.

It was at that point that Jess knew that this visit was going to be something much different than an ordinary sharing of information about your typical MIA.

...and from the tone in his voice, Cindy began to understand the same thing.

As the three officers approached the house, a Marine Colonel, a Marine Major General, and Brigadier General Larry Donovan of the U.S. Army, Jess walked out on the porch to greet them.

"Larry, what on earth are you doing here? I didn't even know you were stateside."

All three officers were smiling as Larry made the introductions.

"Jess, Cindy, I'm here on official business...some very gratifying official business.

"I was at the Pentagon for a briefing when some news came in. As soon as it was verified, the Chief of the Army and the Marine Corps asked the three of us specifically to share it with you.

"Here, Jess", General Donovan said handing Jess Simmons a very official looking memorandum printed on official U.S. Marine stationery, "read it for yourself."

Jess took the message, which was about a page in length, and quickly read it.

He almost dropped it to the floor, but regained his composure and with tears welling up in his eyes, he passed it to his wife Cindy.

As she quickly read it, Jess asked his friend.

"Larry, has this been verified?"

"Dear God, is it really true?"

By this time, Cindy had finished reading the note and as her husband put his arms around her and they began to cry into one another's shoulder, she heard her husband's long time friend answer.

"Yes, Jess...Cindy, it is true. It's been verified. Billy is alive."

Turning to the Marine General, General Donovan invited him to continue the discussion.

"General, why don't you and the Colonel continue and fill in some details for the Simmons."

The General took up the conversation.

"Thank you General Donovan, I'll be happy to. Colonel, you jump any time if you need to.

"Mr. And Mrs. Simmons, as you can imagine, your son was severely wounded in the crash of his Viper Helicopter, but he somehow washed up on the Australian shore. Many of his injuries were treated as he took up with refugees who had some medical personnel amongst them. That group of refugees were constantly moving in the interior of Australia to avoid enemy patrols and the newly established enemy civil authorities.

"In addition to his physical injuries, your son Billy, was also suffering from amnesia through the entire period. He simply did not know who he was, including knowledge of his military service.

"Thankfully, that has lessened somewhat since he was recovered...due in no small part to his Marine friend, Master Sergeant, Leon Campbell."

Jess looked up at mention of Leon's name.

"Leon...Leon is with him?"

The General nodded his head as he continued.

"It was Master Sergeant Leon Campbell who recognized him. His squad brought Billy in during a reconnaissance mission that turned into a heavy engagement with a much larger enemy force.

"That was over two weeks ago and Billy has gone through quite a bit of debriefing, medical evaluation, and recuperation since then...but now he's coming home to both of you within the week.

"Every now and then, we experience something like this from the Grand Designer upstairs that is perfectly to our liking. This is one of those times and I am so happy for your joy.

"I know I speak for the entire Marine Corps, for the Joint Chiefs, and by special direction, I can tell you I speak personally for the President of the United States when I tell you how grateful your entire nation is for your son's service...and now for his recovery.

"Mr. and Mrs. Simmons, this is the stuff that Marine legends are made of...and your son, and his friend Leon's efforts will go down as one of the major "Marine stories" for all future generations.

"It is also likely to be a story that has some legs within the civilian community as well, so don't be surprised if you get a call from the White House...and ultimately from the press too. But we will do all we can to shield you from the latter for as long as you desire, and as long as we can."

# **DRAGON'S FURY**

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## Chapter 41

*“No arsenal or no weapon in the arsenals of the world is so formidable as the will and moral courage of free men and women.” – Ronald Reagan*

**November 3, 13:20, Local Time**

**Heavily Fortified Command Bunker**

**The Muller Mountains, 35 km NW of Kualakurun, Indonesia**

Hasan Sayeed continued to monitor and command the armies of the Greater Islamic Republic from his state of the art and heavily protected command bunker here in the remote reaches of Indonesia. But, as a result of the fall of Tehran and most of the western nations comprising the Greater Islamic Republic, the amount of time requiring his direct attention had been greatly reduced and so he was also able to reflect, reorient and plan.

Located in a steep gorge on a tributary of the Kahayan River deep in the Muller Mountains, the bunker had literally been blasted out of the rock underneath peaks that reached heavenward almost 2300 meters, or 7,000 feet. With multiple redundant transmitters and receivers that operated on every bandwidth conceivable, with the actual hardware located in retractable, camouflaged positions all along the primary and secondary ridgelines, and with the latest encryptions, noise-blanking and frequency hopping technologies, it was felt that locating the exact source of his command post would be a very difficult task for their enemies.

“And I pray to Allah that is so”, thought the great Ayatollah.

Either way, it had long ago been decided that as soon as it even appeared that the enemy may be closing in on his position either electronically or physically, the great Mahdi would be moved to one of his several other fall back command centers that available to him throughout the hundreds of islands that made up Indonesia. With a largely Muslim and very dedicated population...it would be easy for the Islamic leader to melt away into the geography and the population and rise like a Phoenix to continue the battle for the faithful.

“The comfort of these facilities is a tribute to the hard work and commitment of the faithful in this area...and the exactness of the faithful officers and Mullahs who ensured it happened according to the dictates of Allah,” Sayeed thought as he began reading the intelligence reports out of Australia.

Sayeed kept close tabs on the progress of Allied forces on the island continent. They were the closest, and, coupled with their naval and air support units, the gravest threat to Sayeed's rebuilding effort here throughout Burma, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines where very sizable, and as yet very faithful Islamic communities continued to thrive.

“With the help of Allah, we shall return to the Holy Land one day and reclaim all that's been lost.

“When we do, there will be a terrible price paid by the infidels...yes, terrible indeed,” Hassan said to himself as he read how GIR and CAS forces were retreating westward from central Australia to prepared positions closer to the western and northern coasts...and closer to air and naval support.

“But as terrible a retribution as shall be paid by those infidels, it will pale in comparison to the one that will be paid by the unfaithful who have betrayed us.

“Oh ye of little faith, how ye shall mourn,” he concluded to himself as he thought back on the hundreds and hundreds of thousands of GIR citizens who had turned to the western armies as they penetrated into the borders of the former Iran with their irresistible technological. That would have been forgivable, and perhaps understandable under the circumstances, but what could not be forgiven was the way so many had accepted the infidels with open arms and then almost immediately began to collude with them to the detriment of the GIR, and more importantly as far as Sayeed was concerned, to the detriment of their holy faith.

As Sayeed contemplated what he considered to be this great betrayal, he could not help but think of his third wife, Lhidi, who turned sixteen years old back in August of this year. She had been so beautiful, and yet so proud and headstrong. She had been given to him by faithful parents from Islamabad and he had enjoyed the distractions and ministrations she provided him, and what he had felt were the growing trust and faith she was developing.

She had given him a son two years ago...collectively his fifth son from his three wives. She had seemed so proud of that child and Sayeed had hoped that the birth and duties of motherhood would dissuade Lhidi from some of her other tendencies.

Sayeed was not blind to the feelings of any of those around him and he had not been blind to Lhidi's. He knew that she had a propensity to desire the things of the west, particularly what the west considered as women's rights...and she had voiced those desire to him when they were alone.

Perhaps what had ultimately transpired had been his own fault because he had not been more forceful in his discouragement of her leanings and desires in that regard.

“I grew soft,” he said aloud to himself as he looked back on the events of the last year as they related to Lhidi when the western armies had finally succeeded in invading.

Whatever the reasons, he would never forget the shame, or the anger, when he discovered that Lhidi had been one of the betrayers. She had arranged with a select group of her bodyguards, three whom her family had been allowed to select from Islamabad, and defected to the western armies.

...and she had done it in such a way, with the issuance of her own public statements against him, against their efforts as a nation, and even the faith. It had hurt him personally, and her betrayal had hurt Allah's work even more...and it was something he would never forget, and never forgive.

His own respect and standing amongst the people had been noticeably and understandably diminished. He could just hear the whispers and the talk amongst those who did not understand how Allah deals with his chosen vessels.

*"If he cannot bridle or control even his youngest wife, how can he lead a nation in war?"*

Her defection and betrayal had been far from the first, but it had been personally the most devastating event imaginable to him. Her prior physical and passionate ministrations had turned to mental and emotional anguish for him which had distracted him from the task at hand at the most inopportune moment. And her defection and betrayal had certainly led to a flood of others.

Hassan Sayeed, in his pride and arrogance, and in his total acceptance of a faith whose very founder had established the pattern, could never imagine the reasons for Lhidi's behavior. He considered the fact that his other two wives remained faithful to him and Allah, was proof positive of the fact that his way, what he proclaimed as Allah's way, was more than good enough for all women.

He would never consider that what Lhidi felt as the betrayal of her own parents in treating their beloved daughter as property and as a pawn for their personal gain, and the betrayal of her religious leader, who had been so willing to take advantage of her sexually for his own gratification and against her will...in fact, her will had never even been considered in the matter...had led to Lhidi's actions at the first realistic opportunity she had to get away from the situation. He would also in fact be shocked if he could read the hearts of his second wife regarding the matter.

Sayeed, like so many others in his position, could not, and would not, see the obvious cause and effect relationship between his own behavior as it related to Lhidi, and the course Lhidi chose. All he could see was that Lhidi had dared to defy him and to defy what he considered to be the absolute tenet of his faith, and for that, she and any like her had earned his anger and vindictiveness. In fact, he vowed that she would pay with her very life.

"No, I swear before Allah that there will be a special place in hell...and even a foretaste of it on earth, reserved for all those who would betray Allah in such a way," he thought angrily as he contemplated the details of its torments.

"...and perhaps such conditions will be extended to the homelands of the infidels who have colluded with them as well, if Allah is willing.

"Yes...I am sure He is willing...and I know we have the means and that Allah will provide the right martyr teams with the appropriate levels of commitment. It is time...my mourning for Lhidi and all those who joined with her to strengthen the enemies of God is ended.

"It is time. I will issue a Fatwah to that effect this evening after prayers, and the word will go out to the faithful Ayatollahs, Mullahs and clerics.

"Perhaps in the coming months...surely in the coming year, Lhidi shall realize, all too late, the mortal mistake she has made...and perhaps she and all of the unfaithful like her, along with their infidel friends, shall witness a world-wide mourning and howling the likes of which have not been seen in a thousand years."

**November 17, 23:56, Local Time**

**Level 3, Row 189, Seat P, C-90BT Aircraft**

**150 ft over the Caribbean**

Sergeant Hernando Rodriguez reflected on the years of combat he had experienced. He had joined the Army in Florida during the preliminary battles of what would become World War III, when the U.S. was forced to re-enter Iraq and fight the Greater Islamic Republic, which had used a vote in Iraq to join the GIR as a pretext for forcing the Kurdish people into their ranks against their will. As America responded to that issue and re-entered Iraq, the North Koreans had invaded South Korea forcing the U.S. to engage in a major two-theater war. Then, as the United States mobilized to respond to that invasion and help South Korea, the Red Chinese, who had been pretending to mediate the crisis in Asia, conducted an horrific surprise attack against the United States.

That attack was made against the Carrier Battle Groups and transports and amphibious ships that were approaching South Korea as a relief force, and used new Chinese technology in the form of a very powerful, long-range supercavitating weapon. It had been terribly successful and had sunk two U.S. Carriers, two large Amphibious Assault ships, and many more escort, transport and amphibious ships. That engagement represented the worst loss in the history of the U.S. Navy, killing or injuring over thirty thousand American service personnel.

But that was not where the horror ended. While those attacks were being made, more surprise attacks, some of them pure terror attacks, were conducted simultaneously all across the United States by Chinese, Islamic and Aztlan forces and terror cells who had been gathering and preparing for years

within the United States itself. Those attacks killed tens of thousands of American citizens, including the Vice President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense when the White House had been destroyed in one of the attacks. The President, Norm Weisskopf, had himself narrowly escaped death.

So, when Hernando had joined during those initial days, he had no idea what his enlistment would really mean. He had thought in terms of a war similar to the actions that had been waged in Iraq twice before in Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom, or in terms of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. There had been no comprehension, either for Hernando or for most other Americans, what those initial battles in Iraq would lead to.

But now they all knew now.

"In essence, at this point, it means we fight until this thing is over...five years, seven years, then years...however long it takes," he thought as he sat in his barely padded seat in the C-90BT.

The C-90BT aircraft had been specially configured for the transport of large numbers of Americans troops. Thirty of the total fleet of one hundred and eighty had been modified in this manner. As such, outside of their own personal gear, or whatever gear they may need for assignments that some may already be aware of after their stateside leave, these aircraft were optimized for carrying up to twenty-five hundred troops at a time, either as follow on troop build-up missions during an operation, or, as was the case now, for carrying troops home for leave.

Hernando had fought in Central America, Alaska, Cuba and then in South America alongside Columbian, Brazilian and other allied troops. He was amazed that he was still alive after the many combat experiences he had lived through...and after so many of his friends and compatriots had been severely injured or killed.

Hernando had other friends who had been assigned to Europe, some to the Middle East and on into Iran and now India, others who had fought long and hard in Australia and the islands of the Pacific, and others who had been shipped to Siberia and were now deep in the heart of Asia. He heard from them every now and then, and the comments and feelings had become all too familiar.

*"We're in this to the end. If we let these animals off the hook without an absolute and complete victory, we will risk the life and liberty of all of our friends and loved ones and our very way of life."*

It was exactly the way Hernando felt and he wondered where his next assignment would be...after this long overdue leave.

He had fought with the Columbians and Brazilians for the last year, after his leave back to Florida had ended. He had earned that leave after the successful campaign in Cuba where the communist regime and dictator had been defeated by American forces. The dictator had been captured and put on trial.

Due to his duties, he had not seen that trial, but he had followed it faithfully through his wife's and his parent's letters. The old communist had tried to use a defense that posited that as the sovereign leader of a nation, he had only been acting within the capacity of his office in protecting Cuba. The American Attorney General and lawyers had literally torn his defense to shreds. The evidence clearly and unimpeachably showed that the Cuban leader had funded and planned massive terror attacks against the people of the United States. The testimony of several of those directly involved in the FTA Trucking Company that had used the NAFTA agreement to bring in hundreds of terrorists and their weapons and to plan these attacks had been the final nail in the coffin. The Cuban dictator had been found guilty and was executed by lethal injection.

But before the trial or eventual execution took place, his leave with Maria and his son and parents had been nothing short of wonderful. Maria was pregnant with their second child at the time, and in the intervening year, she had given birth to their second son, Jose. Oh how he loved her! What a grand life they had as citizens of the United States, despite the war, despite the attacks within America, despite the dangers. As he thought on their freedoms and the opportunities that resulted from them, he felt once again that great welling up in his bosom and the great commitment to protect their life, their liberties, and their hopes for the future with his very life.

His first son, Felipe, had been two years old when Hernando had returned home on leave. What a great time it had been playing with him, getting to really know him and having so many experiences together. At two years old, he was able to recognize and communicate with his Dad...Maria had done such an excellent job in raising him. And he would catch Maria beaming at him out of the corner of his eye when he would give Felipe horse rides on his back. How could he describe, even to himself, the pride and love he felt for his son and for his entire growing family?

Since he had been gone to South America, their second son, Jose had been born and was already over a year old! Felipe was approaching three and a half! He was so excited to see them.

...and he was so grateful to be going home to see them.

The fighting in South America had been hard, and it wasn't over yet. But the outcome was clear now. Supported by American air power, and in particular the Hail Storm missiles and Predator IV UAV systems, Columbia had been completely liberated and then the war had been taken to Venezuela. Despite having already cut off most Venezuelan forces, it had taken almost nine months of hard fighting on three fronts...American, Columbian, Central American, and Canadian troops from the north, American and Peruvian troops from the west and Brazilian, American and English troops

from the South...to defeat Venezuela and completely depose their so-called President, who had always proudly maintained that he was the bastard child of the Cuban dictator. He too had ultimately been captured and taken into custody, where similar charges of aiding and abetting and funding terrorist attacks against the United States proper and American civilians specifically were being brought against him. He had been extradited to the United States and would soon be standing trial there, just like his supposed father, and certainly with the same results.

Despite all of this, as Hernando reflected on it, and even with the technological advantage, fighting in the forest covered mountains had been extremely difficult and deadly.

In the end, Brazilian and Columbian troops, who were the most acclimated to the terrain, the climate and the cultures had proven extremely important and beneficial to the American, Canadian, English and other allied forces in the endeavor. Their insight and their ability to help with targeting and reconnaissance had ensured that the west's vast technological advantage was used against the remaining Panamanian, the Chinese, the Venezuelan and the Argentine forces to great effect.

Now, as Hernando and so many others were flying home on leave, the battle was being taken in earnest to Argentina. There in the southern parts of Brazil, a new American expeditionary force and many of the allied forces that had been fighting in the north, were finally making the difference. For almost three years, a see-saw campaign had taken place between mostly Brazilian and Argentine forces, raging in northern Argentina where the initial Argentine invasion of Brazil had been pushed back to. But over eight hundred thousand Chinese forces had reinforced the Argentines there in the last year while the heavy campaign was going on against Venezuela. They had done this in an effort to relief pressure on Venezuela and force the allies to send more men and materiel southward.

The joint Argentine/Chinese second invasion of Brazil had proceeded rapidly, once again advancing eastward towards Porto Alegre, Brazil on the Atlantic coast. This time, with so many Chinese troops in accompaniment, the enemy offensive had succeeded and had penetrated through to the coast. Porto Alegre had fallen, severing southern Brazil into two parts. The land and people that had been occupied by the Chinese and Argentines had been literally raped. The deadly events in Porto Alegre, after the enemy occupied the city and had been allowed by their officers to go completely out of control for seven days before they were finally reigned them in, would forever be known as the Rape of Alegre...and it would be an event that would impassion the Brazilian people and the allies to ensure that their enemies were never again able to threaten them in such a way.

And that was where the enemy success in Brazil had ended.

The Argentine and Chinese forces could not make effective use of the port. Allied naval power was far too strong and, along with U.S. Naval supercavitating weapons and air power, ensured that no COSAS, CAS or GIR naval power could come anywhere near their Atlantic outpost on the sea.. Argentine and Chinese forces, in army group strength, tried to expand their corridor to the sea, both to the north and south. But Brazilian forces, strengthened significantly by new recruits and the older national guard and reservists who were called up, stiffened and had held their own.

At the same time, American expeditionary forces joined by Canadian, and Peruvian forces, who had been freed up as a result of the victory in Venezuela, staged along the coast to the north of Porto Alegre in Florianopolis, while additional Brazilian, English, Columbian and Central American troops staged to the south in Rio Grande. By the time Hernando left South America, a two pronged counter offensive had already begun which was aimed at enveloping the Argentine and Chinese troops that had broken through to the coast. Those enemy troops were falling back to avoid certain annihilation.

"And well they should turn tail and run," thought Sergeant Rodriguez.

"They are out their dangling on a limb that is just begging to be cut off!"

As a result of all of this, the second invasion of Brazil was stopped and was now in the process of being thrown back...and this time there was every expectation that the allied offensive would not get bogged down in northern Argentina as it had before, but would finally be able to push all the way through to Buenos Aries, or until enemy forces surrendered unconditionally.

"And when that finally happens, and I hope and pray it is soon, enemy forces, and in particular Chinese forces, will have been completely cleared from all of the Americas," Rodriguez thought as he nestled his head back into his pillow and felt like, after having reviewed the whole thing in his mind that at last he would be able to get some sleep.

"North, Central and South America will finally be free of Chinese influence and meddling.

"We should never have let such a nation, whose government, ideology and culture is so alien and antithetical to our own, gain such power in our own backyard. It's been decades in coming...perhaps soon it will really be finished," he continued.

As the Sergeant drifted off to sleep, his thoughts turned to the things which naturally gave him the most happiness and contentment.

"Maybe soon, I'll be able to get back to a normal life where I can praise God, love my wife, raise my kids, and take care of my parents in freedom, and peace the way it was meant to be."

**November 25, 22:24, EST**  
**Thanksgiving Day, Weisskopf Residence**  
**2488 Shady Lane, Naples, Florida**

The festivities and meals were over, the kids and grandkids had all gone, and now Linda Weisskopf was alone preparing for bed. As was her routine, she was reading a one of her classic novels before retiring. As she was sitting up in bed this evening, she was trying to read *Little Women*.

...but she couldn't really get into it, so she put the book down on the nightstand beside her bed.

There had been so much to be grateful for today on this Thanksgiving. The war effort, after so much discouraging and downright bad news for so long, was finally looking more and more hopeful. Tens of millions of people in many different parts of the world from Australia, to the Middle East, to Africa, to South America, to Asia were being liberated. There had not been a major terror attack of any kind in the United States for over three months, though the terror alert level remained at Red.

"And it probably will, and should remain there until the war is over," thought the former First Lady as she contemplated it.

That level, while being costly, had all of the Federal, State and local agencies on their highest footing. As a result of the experiences thus far in the war, it had the American people on their highest level of alert as well.

"Though I honestly think at this point, the people would already be there with or without the official color scheme," she continued.

"Ever since that mall attack in Colorado, when the people themselves helped turn the tide with their own firearms, it has been apparent that the people themselves are the best front line deterrent in the fight against terror here at home.

"Norm saw it early and pushed both for the Home Guard legislation, which formed up common citizens, under their sheriffs, to watch their local infrastructure...and he pushed for the gun laws that allowed the lawful people in this nation to carry concealed or not and be in a position to defend themselves with their own firearms against these enemies at any time.

"How could we have forgotten our own heritage so completely and made ourselves so vulnerable," she wondered.

"Well, I don't think we are very vulnerable now...and I don't believe we will allow ourselves to become that way again for a long, long time.

"I pray never."

Sighing, she looked heavenward for a moment.

"Norm, it's been almost eighteen months, and I do remember.

"One day, in the good Lord's own time, we shall be reunited eternally, just like you said. I'm looking forward to that day...but still have some work to do I suppose."

As she considered this, she could not help but think to her regular calls and activities with Sandy Bowers, the wife of President John Bowers.

Sandy, until Norm had asked her husband, John, to be his Vice President after the death of Alan Reeves, had never really been in a position of high political visibility and all of the social activities that went along with it. She had done well as a line officer's wife in the military and when John was an appointed member of the President's cabinet, but that was nothing compared to the role she had come into when her husband became Vice President, and then in her current role as First Lady.

Oh, she was game, and viewed her role correctly, from the day she had become the Second Lady of the United States, until eighteen months ago when she had become the First Lady. She supported her husband, engaged in worthwhile programs and activities, and was very careful to not be drawn in by any detractors or journalistic traps.

But she was wholly not used to it, and had never sought, imagined or seen herself in the role before assuming it.

Despite all of that, Linda Weisskopf regarded Sandy Bowers as the one of the most congenial person she ever met, always open to offers of assistance or advice, and then applying it in her own way to the tasks she sought to accomplish.

"I really like that about her."

And the principle source for the advice Sandy was now receiving was Linda Weisskopf.

It was counsel that she viewed as a God-send to her personally. It had lifted her up and given her a purpose in her darkest hours.

Losing Norm, being there and watching the light go out of his eyes, watching him die after being attacked in front of the Lincoln Memorial, had been the most difficult thing Linda Weisskopf had ever experienced. It had not shaken her faith...but it had affected her. Within days she was experiencing something she knew that many military personnel experience after combat...delayed stress syndrome, and had been diagnosed with the same.

What she had experienced on that day had been combat. Quick, brutal, terribly bloody and violent. While it was happening there had been no time to think about it...but afterwards, after all of



the ceremony, after the healing and caring in the hospital for her own injuries...when she had finally gone home...to her own home...the stress and discouragement had begun to build.

The call from Sandy Bowers seeking help had given her purpose and a will.

"Perhaps Sandy planned it that way," she thought as that possible realization came to her mind.

"If she did, well then, God bless her for it and I hope she has benefited in any case."

Either way, Linda knew that spending several hours per week in the calls and activities with Sandy had been like a physical salvation to her...a balm on her inner wounds.

"Helping and serving others always works like that.

"It's what my parents taught me long ago, and it's something I have seen so many times in my own life. I guess when such traumatic experiences come along, the good Lord has to remind us of it.

"We find ourselves by losing ourselves in the service of God and His children."

And that was exactly the way Linda viewed her efforts in counseling Sandy...and in the other activities, programs, and events to which she committed herself.

She had discovered in so doing, that the good Lord, and her nation, had not forgotten her. To the contrary, they were eager for her involvement and input.

She loved it, and on this Thanksgiving evening, before she finally laid down and closed her eyes, the realization of the good it had done her touched her heart and filled her with gratitude.

"Thank you dear Lord for your mercies.

"Please let Norm know this night of my love, and help me to continue to help others as long as I am allowed to remain down here away from him."

**December 3, 07:50, EST**

**Trevor Residence**

**Nashua, New Hampshire**

"Hurry up honey, you know we have to be there at least two hours early to clear security."

Elizabeth Trevor was anxious to be going. She and Joseph were packed and ready to fly down to Texas to once again visit their close friends, the Simmons. With Billy coming home next week, they wanted to make sure they were able to get there in plenty of time to help Cindy and Jess have their place just they way they wanted for Billy's homecoming.

News of Billy's miraculous survival, the way he had been found by his Marine friend, Leon Campbell, himself a Medal of Honor recipient, and of Billy's continuing recovery from amnesia, was one of the things that had captured the imagination of people all over the country. They were literally talking about it in towns and cities, living rooms and kitchens, cafes and coffee shops, and in churches, synagogues, and cathedrals all over the country.

"You can almost see the anchors of the news programs and the hosts of the special news shows drooling in hopes of being the first to have either Billy or Leon on their shows," thought Elizabeth as she walked to the bedroom to see what was taking Joseph so long.

As she turned the corner to walk down the hall to the bedroom, she almost ran headlong into Joe coming the other way.

"Hey, watch where you're going there young lady," Joseph said as avoided the collision, caught her in his arms and twirled her around into the living room.

"...and if you're not especially careful...well, we might end up being even later, hehehe."

Elizabeth loved her husband and allowed him to twirl her around for a moment longer. He had always been such a good, faithful, Christian man. From their earliest times during his Physics undergraduate and Physiology graduate studies in Utah and Texas respectively, to that first job at Talbot Laboratories, to the later years working for the government on the Genome Project, Joseph Trevor had always had a deep and abiding love for God and his wife and family. It was that love and faith on both of their parts, that had helped them through the good times and the difficult times as well.

"Like the time there in Massachusetts when I got caught in the middle of that terror attack...now that was what I would call a difficult time," she thought.

"Joseph had come running and had shown such concern for my safety and such chagrin knowing that he had not been able to do anything to help when I was in the most danger."

After all of that, when Joe's star had risen as a result of the research into the sub-molecular Human Reasoning Structures (HRS) that he had discovered while researching the Genome and he won the Nobel Prize, the fame and all of the attention had not gone to his head. Instead, he had avoided it as much as possible and if anything, the experience had allowed he and Elizabeth to even grow closer. He was always willing and eager to seek her opinion on matters even related to the technical side of his work, anxious to discover and understand Elizabeth's feelings or intuition on the matter and then to try and somehow take them into account. By doing so, he had always included her and made her feel a part of what he was doing.

Later, after his Noble Prize, a little over three years ago, he had become involved with the research and development scheme that Sandra McPherson had proposed regarding the virtual modeling of his Human Reasoning Structures so their study and work associated with them could

become more widely spread and less costly. He had embarked on that path with all of the faith, trust, hard work and commitment he was known for, and he had been used.

It turned out McPherson was very pro-abortion, something the Trevors were unalterably against, and that she wanted to use Joe's discoveries and methodologies to more closely study human fetal tissue... a practice that was outlawed in the United States. But McPherson was a genius in computer modeling and she was using virtual models for her research, obtained from physical fetal tissue in Europe, where it was legal. So she had skirted the law and used Joe's material in a way he would never approve. He had tried everything, including his contacts within government to stop her.

"But the good Lord knew what He was doing," thought Elizabeth, "even when we did not."

Saundra had unexpectedly discovered the HRS within the fetal tissue... proving that the fetus, at an earlier time frame than anyone had thought possible, was capable of reason and therefore fully human. It had been a signal event in Saundra's life, for despite all that had happened, and despite her own belief system, she was an honest person and recognized the import of her discovery.

Joseph himself had also seen its import and had readily set aside their past differences to work with McPherson to verify and then publish the information.

During that entire process, as was his nature, Joseph included Elizabeth and the culmination of the process had literally changed the world. Based on the new, verifiable evidence, Roe v. Wade was overturned by the Supreme Court of the United States. Abortion became illegal, and with the announcement of the facts associated with the discovery, the absolute vast majority of Americans, well over 90% approved of the change, and changed their own lives accordingly.

"What a ride all of that has been," Elizabeth thought, "and what a man you are Joseph Trevor."

In addition to all of that, even after all of these years, Joseph Trevor's love and physical attraction towards her had not diminished, and that made her feel special too.

But there was a time and a place for everything, and after a few more seconds of dancing her around, just about the time when his hold on her became a little tighter and the look in his eyes was beginning to change, she knew it was time to let him know that now was not the time or the place... they had a plane to catch.

"Honey, I've loved the dance... and I love you too... but now that I've found you, it's time to go."

Joseph Trevor was not insistent on pursuing his physical feelings. He knew his wife, and he had played along waiting for her to tell him it was time to go. Mind you, if she had been willing to delay and actually entertain his advances... well then, who was he to stand in the way of his wife's desires. But he knew that it was more important right now to catch that plane, and be on time.

"Well, okay you big stick in the mud. Let's go catch that plane.

"I am looking so forward to seeing the Simmons and helping them prepare for Billy's return. I can tell you right now that their reunion is going to cause me to cry like a baby."

As they walked toward the door, Elizabeth thought for a minute and then asked.

"What was it you were doing back in there anyway that caused the delay in the first place?"

I know you didn't go to the bathroom, and I thought you were already ready."

With a twinkle in his eye that comes from knowing, loving and living with someone for over twenty-five years, Joseph answered.

"Waiting for you to come around that corner."

**December 7, 02:11, local time**

**Ground Based Particle Weapon Command Center**

**Mongolia**

Lu Pham had progressed in his role on the Executive Committee of the Politburo in the People's Republic of China. Ever since their last major meeting he had become one of President Jien Zenim's most trusted advisors and confidants, and not just in matters related to weapons research. It seemed that President Zemin needed him to step beyond his traditional endeavors of research and development, project management and deep involvement with the math and technology of his ideas, to a more direct command role in the implementation of the weapons and their use operationally.

That was exactly what he was involved with this morning.

He had three ground based particle weapon facilities spaced along the Chinese and Mongolian border areas now completely operational and ready to attack the Americans in space. These facilities were immensely powerful and used up a corresponding immense amount of energy. Lu was sure that they would be more than powerful enough to bring down the American craft and stations in space.

Lu knew that it was imperative that the Chinese do so.

"If the Americans still enjoyed their abject and total advantage in space as they had done at the onset of hostilities, then what we are about to do would never have been possible.

"They would have already seen our energy emissions from space and known what we were about to do and taken measures to eliminate it," he said out loud as his assistant stood by.

"They want it that way again, and that is something we simply cannot tolerate.

"Prepare units one and two to fire on their targets, hold unit three in reserve for defense."

Lu was sure that a defense would be necessary, he just wasn't sure how much or to what degree.

“Commence firing!”

The Americans had not attacked any CAS or GIR forces with their orbital bombardment weapons in several weeks. Everyone on the Executive Committee was hoping that Lu's efforts could eliminate the American presence in space before they could make any more attacks.

But that hope would prove to be futile.

**December 7, that same time**  
**High Geosynchronous Orbit**  
**Point Solitude, Opposite Asia**

What the Chinese were not aware of was that two other missions had already returned to earth orbit from the asteroids and had rendezvoused with the USSS Gaspra and the USSS Ida. There were now, at any one time, eight missions working the asteroids, either on station, or in transit either way. New materiel for orbital bombardment was arriving at the rate of another package every four weeks.

But the Chinese could not know this. Point Solitude where these returning vessels made their rendezvous and where they processed their material to form the desired orbital bombardment projectiles, was in the shadow of the earth as respects all of Asia all of the time. It was a position from which they could develop and launch their projectiles without the knowledge of the Chinese at all.

In addition to this, and of immediate interest to the Chinese, the United States had placed an orbital station over the Pacific Ocean and the other one back up over Australia. But the Americans had learned from the attack of the Dragon Spirit craft back in July that the Chinese possessed particle beam weaponry, and they had established new sensing and defense systems on the new vessels based on that experience. The new station over the Pacific had just become completely operational the week before, and it, would receive the attention of the Chinese first.

Particle beams are not visible to the human eye. When they are fired, they are also not susceptible to cloud cover or other atmospheric conditions the way a laser is.

When the Chinese fired their particle beam weaponry, a massive stream of charged particles rose heavenward at the speed of light. They passed through clouds, rain, dust particles, and the atmosphere cleanly as they were designed to do. They moved unerringly to their target, the new Admiralty Space Station over the Pacific.

That's when things changed.

Based on sensing equipment that had been set out along all of the major threat axis around the station, the American space craft and its crew sensed the particle beam simultaneously with its arrival. The automated defense system for the craft activated itself and, based on what the American knew of the Chinese technology, set up a field on the specially manufactured skin of the station that was, in effect, a reverse charge to those particles that were arriving with the Chinese attack.

Human reaction time was fast for the crew and a tribute to their training, but it was much, much slower than the automated, electronic defense. The human response was measured in seconds where the system defenses were measured in milliseconds.

The electronics systems officer, who served as the defense officer announced what his instruments were telling him and his section.

“Captain, we are under attack from an extremely high powered particle weapon originating near the Chinese Mongolian border.

“All readings are off the scale.”

Captain Cleverly glanced at the readings himself and then wasted no time in responding.

“Increase the defensive field effect to maximum and fire the secondary maneuvering system, put us on a course of 123 degrees, up angle 40 degrees.”

The particle beam was much more powerful than those carried by the Dragon Spirit craft. Much stronger even than the factor the Americans had built in case of ground attack.

“Captain, outer hull is heating up and in danger of breach at stations 37F and 39F. We need to get out of the path of this beam.”

The Captain had another idea.

“Rotate the station, spread out the effect evenly as we move.”

As the station began to move and to rotate, the Chinese technicians were able to tell, from the readings associated with the beam itself and its behavior, what the Americans were doing.

Lu Pham ordered all three systems to target the Australian station.

“Captain, we are now under attack from three, I repeat three, ground based weapons.

“Measurements just went off the scale in terms of power and heat. Breaches imminent all along the outer hull... I recommend we abandon ship.”

The Captain had to concur.

“Get a message off to USSPACOM as follows:

*Under attack from three powerful ground based, Chinese particle weapons. Shield marginally effective against one, failing against three. Abandoning the station. Electronic data follows.*

“Then sound abandon ship.”

**December 7, five minutes later**  
**US Space Command (USSPACOM)**  
**Honolulu, Hawaii**

The Captain in charge of the communications division reported to his commanding General, who this morning was acting as the current duty officer.

"General, we have the data from the Admiralty.

"She's gone sir, completely destroyed with major components falling back into Earth's atmosphere over the South Pacific as we speak.

"We believe that several of her crew were able to get to the escape pods and abandon ship. Those pods are programmed to reenter the earth's atmosphere and make parachute ocean landings.

"SAR teams are moving into position for recovery.

"We alerted the Southern Star who charged their field to the maximum and began moving and rotating their vessel before coming under attack.

"Currently they are still underway but have suffered extensive damage. They may be just able to get out of the line of enemy fire behind earth's shadow."

General Percifer listened soberly to the report.

He was upset because he had been assured by the intelligence services, including USSPACOM's own, that the particle beam sites in China had all been destroyed months ago. Of course, at the time, that meant the sites where the weaponry for the Dragon Spirit was being developed and tested.

"Obviously, the enemy had larger plans for their technology outside of what they showed us and which they chose not to share with us until this moment. But they sure are letting us see it now," he thought as he began asking for more information.

"Okay, what of the coordinates for these sites?

"Have they checked out?"

Another one of his staff, the Colonel coordinating operations at Point Solitude answered.

"Yes sir, the coordinates match the telemetry and the visuals received from both the Southern Star and the Admiralty. The folks at Point Solitude are simply waiting for the order to attack."

This was what the General wanted to hear. He had already received approval from Washington, both from the Joint Chiefs and from the White House, to place a priority on any request or need to attack enemy facilities that posed a threat to any of the US Space Stations.

"With one station down and another in danger of the same, I would say that these three sites represent a threat alright," he thought.

"Get Point Solitude on the horn for me and I will issue the orders immediately."

Turning to his Chief of Staff, he issued more orders.

"Have my entire staff in the control room conference room within the next ten minutes. I want every aspect of the attack and the assessment of its effectiveness reviewed by the entire staff."

**December 7, twelve minutes later**  
**Ground Based Particle Weapon Command Center**  
**Mongolia**

Lu Pham watched as the telemetry told the awful truth.

The Americans clearly had more of their orbital bombardment projectiles...many more. They also clearly had more stations in space in geosynchronous orbit, hiding in Earth's shadow and out of the line of fire of China's particle beam systems, from which they were launching these attacks. At this moment, a single large projectile was precisely targeting each of his installations, and there were two smaller projectiles behind each of the large ones.

"Those smaller ones are their insurance," he thought.

"I am sure they have gauged our capabilities and have applied a large factor to ensure success."

Considering the alternatives, which were growing fewer and fewer by the moment, Lu Pham made the decision as to how they would defend the installations against the attack.

"If we can somehow split the first one, there may be enough time to respond to the follow on projectiles...and it would take all three systems to potentially stop any one of the larger objects."

The next fifteen minutes would tell the story.

...and they did.

Lu ordered all of the sites to focus on the projectile targeting his most capable system, the one closest to the command facility and only 80 kilometers away.

Things went as Lu had anticipated.

With all three particle weapons focusing on the one large projectile, they were able to split it into two pieces while it was still high in the atmosphere, many miles above the earth.

Both pieces fell to earth in sparsely regions, and video cameras at the facility were trained towards their impact points and showed the tremendous explosions and mushroom clouds associated with those impacts. One of them hit earth only twenty-three kilometers away from the command

facility and the shock wave tore several of the cameras from their mounting hardware outside the building and knocked down a number of out buildings.

Lu did not notice that relatively minor damage because he was buried over 200 meters beneath the surface in a completely independently shock mounted facility, encased in rock.

With the split of the first major projectile, the three Chinese weapons had just a few seconds to focus on the two smaller objects approaching the main facility. By that time the first smaller object was only two miles above the facility and all three systems open fired on it. But it only lasted a few short seconds as the two other particle beam facilities targeted by the other large orbital bombardment projectiles were hit and went off line. Those facilities, and everyone working at them, had been completely annihilated by the large American projectiles targeting them.

Still, the main facility was successful in splitting the first small projectile when it was less than a mile overhead, it's pieces narrowly missing the facility itself. But by that time it was too late to target the last projectile.

Time had run out.

The glowing carbonaceous chondrite projectile that had been mined from the asteroid belt and launched from Point Solitude impacted squarely on the last remaining Chinese ground-based particle beam facility, creating a crater twenty meters deep and rendering anything within a two hundred meter radius a twisted, burning, smoking ruin. The overall facility was severally damaged and knocked off line, and would remain that way for at least two or three months had the Americans not recognized the probability, given the defense that main facility had put up, that the facility was not completely destroyed. Within ten minutes of the initial attack, a follow-on attack of two projectiles finished what the first attack had started. There would be no more particle beam attacks into space originating from ground stations in the PRC, or originating from any of its allies or their controlled territories..

Lu dreaded the report he would have to make to the Executive Committee, and to Jien Zemin in particular. At the very least, he knew that he could revel in the fact that another US Space Station had been destroyed, the Admiralty Station.

She proved to be the last Space Station lost to the Chinese in the course of the war.

### **Christmas and New Year in North America**

Throughout the United States and all of North America, the hopes of the people continued to rise as a longer and longer time period passed without a major terror or enemy attack within the continental United States and Canada.

The adoption of and implementation of the Home Guard program was a major reason why, along with the severe attrition that the enemy sleeper cells had experienced. The Home Guard Program across the United States through legislation and initiatives of the Homeland Security Department was one of the great legacies of President Norman Weisskopf. Under President Bowers, the program had continued growing unabated to become a mainstay of the defense of America against enemy infiltrators or terrorists, and it had worked well, despite the many, many attacks that had been conducted on America's soil. The Home Guard had interdicted, prevented and defeated attacks throughout the United States before they could ever get going in many cases, and helped defeat and lessen the impact of actual attacks in many others.

It had been so successful, that Canada had adopted a very similar program under the conservative administration that had been elected after the outbreak of hostilities. Within a year of the United States adopting its Home Guard program, the Canadians had adopted their own Home Front program.

Another great legacy of President Weisskopf had been the rapid rebuilding and growth of American manufacturing and revitalizing the American steel and energy industries necessary to sustain it. Opening up the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), the waters off the Pacific Coast, areas of Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and many others to petroleum, coal, solar, greater hydro and geothermal production had allowed America to make rapid progress in energy production and independence. Once multiple new nuclear power plants had started coming online, energy self sufficiency was assured. Within three years America was completely energy independent and exporting energy to her allies.

The most modern steel production processes and mills, automated through the latest American innovations in computer-aided technologies, using true expert and intelligent systems, allowed for continuing rapid buildup in wartime production. Allied nations and peoples were calling it the modern American miracle, and it was allowing America, once again, to assume the role as the arsenal for freedom and liberty that it had donned in earlier generations and crisis. As a result, modern manufacturing plants, putting out the latest tanks, aircraft, spacecraft, ships, missiles, trucks, rifles, ammunition, support equipment, clothing and the myriad computer chips and systems that controlled them and lent to them their high technology, cropped up all over the nation.

By this Christmas and New Year, this production miracle was producing a veritable avalanche of Army, Naval, Air Force and Space Command systems for the over fifteen million personnel the United States had under arms throughout the world...and this did not include the over ten million Home Guard personnel within the Continental United States. The American citizenry was mobilized

to support the effort to the max, and they were hardened to it as well. The rationing programs, similar to those used in World War II, for materiel critical to the war effort, were being willingly and gladly adopted by citizens who had seen far too many of their own wounded or killed to enemy action at home, and who all knew several military personnel who had experienced the same overseas.

Despite the anxieties, hardships and dangers presented by the war, Americans were upbeat and positive. Society had literally been transformed by the crisis. Instead of the numerous divisions socially, morally and culturally that had sprung up from the 1960's through the 1990's, that tended to divide the people and set them against one another, now the vast majority of the people were much more focused on the foundational and critical values essential to a truly free culture. These were values that took into consideration the great responsibility and accountability that freedom must require of its benefactors if it is to hold and maintain itself. As a result, there were no hyphenated-Americans anymore, everyone was considered an American, committed to the red, white and blue.

Abortion was now illegal, and the vast majority of Americans (polled in excess of 90%), after hearing of, reading and contemplating the meaning of the Human Reasoning Structures and their presence in the unborn, were solidly behind the reversal of *Roe v. Wade* that had taken place. Federal and State Laws had been passed recognizing and codifying this decision. The war effort had taken a dramatic turn for the better soon after the decision and the late President himself had spoken directly to the cause-effect relationship of those events in his Christmas address of that year when he said:

*"I stand before you this evening and say that my own personal conviction is that our successes on the field of battle over the last few weeks are tied directly, inexorably to the earlier decision by our people, through our Constitutional processes, to reverse the greatest blot and stain that has ever existed on our national consciousness. Our founders taught us that among the unalienable rights that we all enjoy, that the first is the right to life. As a people, as a nation, we have now remembered that simple and benign truth. Let us never forget it again, let us never lose our morality in such a horrific way, because in our morality, we find our freedom and liberty."*

Most Americans had agreed with that statement and were even more committed to it now.

Another great change that had carried through to the present time and was directly tied to the Home Guard program and the principles behind it, was the reaffirmation in the American psyche of the Second Amendment to the Constitution. As a result of the Firearms Restoration Act, throughout all fifty states and within the Federal Code, law-abiding American citizens were not infringing in their bearing of arms in their own defense. In fact, with a backdrop of unrestricted and total war and terror, Americans were encouraged to bear arms...at all times. And in so doing, to the consternation of the very few people who were still inclined to restrict gun rights, what had America experienced?

The trends and statistics were clear. With over four years of data to draw on, there had been a tremendous drop in violent crime across the board. From assault to robbery to rape to murder, all major categories of violent crime were down...way down. The old western adage, that, *an armed society is a polite society*, had been proven true now that so many were armed...over 120 million.

Finally, as a punctuation to all of this...God was back in the consciousness and day to day activities of most American citizens. Not by law or acclamation, but by the free choice desire of the people themselves. Never had church attendance been at such high rates. Never had charitable donations to churches been such a high percentage of citizens' disposable incomes. Despite the rigors and hardships of war, the common American citizen was now donating almost 10% of their pre-tax dollars to charitable causes...and many of the more religious, though they never demanded it, saw this as no accident. They viewed it as a part of God's law of tithing, that when adopted freely by the citizens themselves would prove to the benefit and blessing of the society as a whole.

In addition, prayer had been re-enthroned as a motivating and moving part of American culture...publicly. Laws that had been passed prohibiting public prayer in schools, at school events, at public and government events, had all been overturned. The true meaning and original intent of the founders regarding the first amendment to the Constitution had been re-discovered. The Constitution forbade the establishment of a state religion...but also allowed for no laws passed or instituted by Congress prohibiting any citizen from a free exercise of their religion, as long as they did not infringe on the rights of others. The uttering of prayer on the official programs at public events by those so inclined was no longer viewed as infringing on anyone. Those who did not believe were not forced to bow their heads, to stay where prayers were uttered, or to assent to the prayer. But the vast majority of the citizens, through the hardships, loss of life and destruction had learned that John Adams, words regarding the foundation of America was true:

*"We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other."*

All of these things made for a thankful people, full of gratitude. But that was not all, they had become a positive people, full of optimism for the future. Optimistic about the eventual triumph of right over wrong...and the very nature of the conflict bore stark witness to the basic truth that there were absolutes in this regard...the triumph of good or evil, liberty over compulsion, freedom over

tyranny, optimism over pessimism. Americans felt bright about their future...literally looking to the heavens for guidance and the future during the remainder of, and after the completion of the war.

...and this optimism and outlook, coupled with the continuing positive progress on the war front, caused it to be the greatest, grandest, most joyful, most grateful, and most heart warming Christmas and New Year's holidays that any citizen remember experiencing in their life time.

Many children enjoyed their first truly "wondrous" Christmas, and many parents were able to, for the first time since the fateful days when war broke out, provide a traditional American Christmas similar to the ones they "used to know". The New Year's celebration was equally gratifying, with the optimism and hope of the season, and the progressing events, in rich and evident supply.

### **Christmas and New Year in Central America**

Most of Central America, being historically grounded in Christianity, was grateful for the Christmas and New Year's season. The forces of tyranny, particularly the Red Chinese forces that had been in the area for so long, were now in the process of being completely defeated and removed. Panama was well on the road to republican government, and any vestige of the support that certain governmental officials and the more socialistic or Marxist elements in society, had been completely removed from the public arena by the people themselves. There was simply no traction left for them after the tremendous warfare that had swept over the region. Truth be told, many of them had been, as had happened with the leadership of Romania after the Iron Curtain fell, summarily executed.

Such attitudes were the norm across all of Central America. The enemy had been driven out, American help and support, as well as other allied help and support, were in abundance. People were looking forward to having an opportunity to establish republican forms of government for themselves.

One major exception remained, and that was Mexico.

Despite the successful actions of the U.S. military while conducting Operation Alvarez, when Red Chinese and Islamic sympathizers and operatives had been attacked and either killed or captured by American forces, Presidente Conejo of Mexico remained very aloof and non-committal to the allied cause. It was a source of continuing consternation to the American public in general, and to the Bowers administration specifically.

Mexican public opinion seemed to be split almost right down the middle regarding the issue. Significant perceived negative impact to Mexico had occurred as a result of America's response to the war in general and to the influx of terrorists and infiltrators across her borders specifically. Ever since America had militarized its borders soon after the initial attacks, the movement of illegal aliens across the southern border had been dramatically reduced. With a significant commitment of National Guard and regular Army rapid deployment forces, with the assignment of Home Guard units to as "buffer" zone that had been established...individuals and coyotes had found it almost impossible to cross unobserved and un-apprehended into the United States.

The drop in illegal immigration also meant a drop in hard currency flowing back into Mexico to the families and business of those laboring in America. On the northern side of the border in the United States, with full mobilization and with the stark realization of the horrors of war being played out on American soil with the attacks that had occurred, there was no shortage of American workers for American fields, factories and for any of the service industries where so many of the illegal aliens had worked before. Not only the politicians and the military leaders, but the American people themselves had at long last awakened to the dangers of allowing their borders to be wide open, and for the development of such a significant sub-culture, outside of the law, amongst them.

Many Mexicans were angry at this, feeling that their chance at the *American Dream* had been taken away from them by the Americans themselves. This element sided with Presidente Conejo in his actions and words against America. Their attitudes were growing increasingly belligerent and brazen. After a cessation of several years, Mexican border patrols, beholden to drug and other criminal concerns...and believing their actions to be supported by their own government, began to confront smaller INS and Home Guard units on the north side of the border. As had been the case in the late 1990's and the early 2000's, these confrontations escalated more and more into actual gunfire.

Many other citizens of Mexico recognized the wisdom of American actions in defending itself, securing and protecting its borders, and defeating the forces of tyranny on the American continents. This group held out for the promise of more legal immigration opportunity in America and were dedicated to working with the Americans to expand the legal immigration in keeping with the Bower administration promises. These promises held for an increase in immigration limits within the new constraints established early-on by the Weisskopf administration at the outset of hostilities. These clear constraints included:

- *A basic, tested understanding of the U.S. republican form of government.*
- *An Oath of allegiance to the United States.*
- *Three years legal living and productive working in the United States.*
- *No social welfare cases allowed as immigrant citizens.*
- *No "anchor baby" provision.*
- *Ability to conversationally speak, read and write English.*

*- No ties to terror, crime or enemies of the United States.*

Those Mexicans who supported the United States in its legal and defined immigration policy, were themselves becoming more and more outspoken against the element in their society who were becoming belligerent to the United States. They believed that such belligerence and hostility would drive an already aroused American citizenry to demand much tougher conditions for Mexicans desirous to work in the U.S. or to ban entry from Mexicans altogether. It was developing into a dangerous internal situation.

Then, during the week between Christmas and the New Year, it exploded in violence.

On December 28<sup>th</sup>, a group of over five hundred Mexican citizens, including scores of women and children, proclaiming that they were simply reaching out for the Christmas gift of living in the United States that so many of their citizens had acquired in the past, made a rush across the Arizona border, near its eastern boundary with New Mexico. More than half of them were armed and they were escorted by over one hundred heavily armed Mexican federal troops.

They cut through the border fencing, using explosives provided by the military, and violated the American border. Once across the border, the group ran up against a Home Guard unit of four individuals. Upon observing them, the American unit duly reported the incursion, which had also been spotted by a Predator III UAV providing border sentry duty. The Home Guard unit then used a bullhorn they had been issued and called on the Mexicans to halt and return across the border.

A brief, but intense fire-fight ensued when the leading Mexicans and several of their escorting troops opened fire on the four Americans. After a few minutes, all four Americans were killed, and then had their bodies mutilated in a horrific manner reminiscent of activities in the Mid East. This happened in full view of all of the Mexicans as they gathered around and literally ripped the American citizens limb from limb, some of the young children joining with their parents in taking part...all of which was also viewed by the Predator III and its monitoring military personnel.

Within a ten minutes, a single Predator IV aircraft, armed with the UAV version of the Hail Storm weapons system made a single pass over the invading Mexican killers. A quick reaction platoon arrived on the scene within thirty minutes and found all of the Mexicans dead...including all of the women and children.

The entire affair had also been observed by other Mexican nationals on the south side of the border, including one Mexican Federal patrol who took vivid digital pictures. Editing out the border crossing and the attack and mutilation of the four Home Guard personnel, the Mexican government, with Presidente Conejo full complicity and approval, created a propaganda piece and broadcast it across their nation. The effects were immediate and precipitous amongst that part of the population that supported their President in his defiance of America.

After the release of the Mexican propaganda piece, on December 30<sup>th</sup>, the Bowers administration released the detailed pictures of the entire action as filmed by the high flying Predator III aircraft. The differences between the films were clear, to the point of being able to readily tell where the Mexicans had edited their film. Amongst the more rational part of the Mexican population, the deceit and agenda of their own government was clear...and this realization led to precipitous results.

On January 2<sup>nd</sup>, precipitated by several large and contending demonstrations taking place across the nation to mark the incident after the New Year celebration, civil war erupted in Mexico.

### **Christmas and New Year in South America**

Heavy fighting still continued in Argentina, where massive COSAS and Chinese forces were fighting hard, but losing ground in their efforts against allied forces. Throughout the holiday period, while celebrations and thanksgiving went on further to the north in Columbia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile and northern Brazil, as a result of the end of hostilities in those areas, the fighting in Argentina remained fierce and protracted.

Henrietta Maldonado, the President of Brazil, proclaimed the entire week between Christmas and New Year as a "National Week of Prayer and Supplication". Specifically, she requested that the people and their leaders pray for allied forces fighting in Argentina, and for the war ravished countries throughout South America, and specifically to pray and supplicate God in Heaven for Brazil's sons and daughters who were in harm's way, or others who were suffering in any way as a result of the war.

Oh, in the mountains and in the rain forests, there still were smaller groups of enemy personnel. But most of these had been cut off completely and were merely looking for a way to conceal themselves and make their way towards the western coasts of the continent in the hopes of being picked up and ferried away from South America by COSAS or Chinese friendly forces.

On occasion, these units would either be discovered in their lairs, or they would reveal themselves through attacks in the outlying areas. Whenever this happened, it was not long until reaction forces were either inserted nearby, or local garrisons sortied to cut the enemy off. With American satellite coverage once again restored in this part of the world, and with the amazing reconnaissance and endurance capabilities of American UAVs...in most cases the enemy units either surrendered when confronted, or were annihilated if they chose to stand and fight.



## Christmas and New Year in Europe

As had been the case in the U.S., Europe enjoyed its first normal Christmas in several years.

The gratitude was most poignant in those areas that had been liberated from the grip of tyranny. Greece, Turkey, Romania, parts of Hungary, Albania and large sections of the Ukraine and Russia who had been overrun and occupied, some for several years, were now liberated. Most of the more southern sections of this area had been occupied by forces from the greater Islamic Republic who had brutally suppressed any Christian celebrations or observances. Large areas of Eastern Russia between Moscow and the Ural Mountains had been occupied by the Chinese and some Indian forces. They proved just as intolerant, brutal and merciless as the Islamic forces in their suppression of Christianity.

Once these areas were liberated by allied troops, as most of them had been in just the last year, the outpouring was tremendous. Allied forces, particularly American and English forces, received welcomes and parades that rivaled anything that had happened in World War II when allied troops liberated western Europe. Somehow, all of those who cherished freedom and looked forward to self determination, even the Muslims, atheists, agnostics and other non-Christians in these countries, knew that the arrival of allied forces meant that they would be free to worship...or not worship...as they pleased. They also recognized, that the foundation for their laws and living must now be based on free choice rooted in fundamental moral constraint, rather than coercion, tyranny and compulsion based on a ruling elite's vision of political, ideological or religious dogma.

As time went on, and as the wave of liberation continued to roll over occupied and aggressor nations, a recognition developed amongst the vast majority of people that a fundamental moral foundation based on Judeo-Christian values were proving to be the best foundation for freedom, peace and prosperity. These universal values included:

- *Love God with all thy heart, might, mind and soul.*
- *Love thy neighbor as thyself.*
- *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*
- *Lose yourself in the service of others to find yourself.*
- *All men are created equal.*
- *All mankind are endowed by God with unalienable rights.*
- *Self-improvement leads to the most effective service.*
- *Education, self-reliance and hard work improves one's self.*
- *Tolerance of other's morally based belief systems provides for domestic peace.*
- *Persuasion, long-suffering and reason are the best vehicles to change.*

As these principles and knowledge became more and more apparent-and this occurred naturally because of the trauma these populations and peoples experienced during the warfare pitting those very principles against their ideological opposites-other belief systems, long locked in the morass of intolerance, ignorance and compulsion, began to change...began to adopt the Judeo-Christian principles themselves in order to affect change, peace and prosperity amongst their own peoples.

It would not happen overnight, all of the principles would not be adopted at the same time, and there would be set backs and divisions...but the changes that began as nations were liberated by the armed forces of those nations allied to the United States of America were inexorable. There had been individual experiences with it since the American revolutionary period of 1776-1792 where the fundamental principles underlying American liberty had attempted to find firm root elsewhere. Examples such as during the French revolution, the changes to the English system of government brought about by American independence, the changes to western Europe and in the Pacific after World War II, and particularly during the era of what became known as the *Reagan Revolution* which led to the fall of the Iron Curtain and the dissolution of the Soviet Union were all notable. But future historians would almost universally agree that the time period surrounding Christmas and New Year of *this* year represented the point in time when the fundamental principles upon which American liberty were founded finally showed without doubt that they were beginning to take firm root universally throughout the world.

...and the people of Europe, in their Christmas and New Year's celebration, joyously heralded in the beginnings of this change. Despite this, it would be shown in future events-even as strife and war broke out in Mexico-that it would all still be tested by the horrors of war that would themselves yet be felt in many areas of the world, even as peace seemed to be breaking out so soundly in other areas. These celebrations were nonetheless the harbinger of the future...and somehow, the people of Europe instinctively knew it and marked it with their exuberance.

## Christmas and New Year in Africa

The devastation of war was nowhere more keenly felt than on the dark continent, which more and more was being referred to by the local inhabitants as the continent of death. While it was true that major combat operations had all but ceased there in Africa by New Years, yet the fallout and effects of war were most dramatically felt in this area of the world, where more than in any other area, the resources to recover and help those most effected by war's devastation simply did not exist in quantities to make a difference.

After helping to defeat enemy insurgencies and uprisings in several of the African nations along the southwestern coast, allied armies had twice staged along the Ivory Coast, in Liberia, Benin and Nigeria during the course of the long war. Their purpose each time was to penetrate into the interior in an effort to relieve beleaguered allied force in and around Israel. Once they were stalled and thrown back...the second time they were successful.

Although the large numbers of allied troops associated with these activities, and all of the logistical support that necessarily came along with them, provided for an economic influx into those specific areas, that condition was also a two-edged sword. Along with the devastation left behind by the earlier warfare, GIS and CAS forces conducted numerous raids and attacks trying to penetrate through to the staging areas of the allied forces. This resulted in sustained destruction to those nations.

As the allied armies marched northeast into the interior of Nigeria, Chad, Ethiopia, the Sudan, Libya and Egypt to battle Chinese and Islamic forces blocking their path, the destruction and damage from the resulting large conflicts were devastating to the impoverished people and their minimal infrastructure. It was a population and an infrastructure that had already been terribly punished by decades of civil strife and the blight of the Aides epidemic. The suffering experienced by these terribly downtrodden people as the tides of battle twice swept through their territories was appalling.

Like a swath across the continent, whole areas were depopulated by the terrible fighting and by the massive migration of the civilian population as refugees in front of it. Oft times, the people were simply caught up in the maelstrom, unable to move out of the way of the surging forces. From central Nigeria, across Niger, Chad, Sudan and into Libya, Egypt, and Ethiopia, over one hundred and twenty million souls had been displaced, and an estimated sixty million had died in central Africa alone.

The hardship the massive influx of refugees placed on the surrounding nations was almost as great as the warfare itself to the nations that had been directly in its path. Zaire, Cameroon, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania on the south and Algeria and Mali to the north and west, were all devastated by the tens of millions of refugees and resulting poverty, sickness and strife that accompanied them. Millions more died in that strife and the ensuing diseases and drought.

Allied soldiers from the United States, Brazil, England, Canada, and other nations who were a part of the offensive...and then later part of the relief efforts after the defeat of CAS and GIR forces on the continent, were moved to tears at the unrelenting poverty, sickness, disease and suffering they witnessed. As much as anything else, their own letters home and reports to their superiors resulted in the massive relief that was pouring into Africa. Churches, private charities, individuals and official governmental efforts earmarked large proportions for the budgets for the suffering in Africa.

And as always had been the case, the vast majority of this relief came from the United States. As was the case after World War II...and indeed after every major war...and as was the case during the terrible droughts, epidemics and civil wars of the past in Africa, the people's of those lands would remember, would be bolstered and inspired by, and would seek, in their own way to emulate, the generosity and actions of the bastion of liberty, prosperity and peace, the United States of America.

...and thus would the ideological and fundamental moral changes being felt in Europe and in other areas of the world begin to see their own beginnings in Africa as well.

### **Christmas and New Year in Middle East**

Outside of mainland Asia (including India) and Australia, and the areas of the Pacific and Indian Oceans surrounding them, the most recent major combat had been felt in the Middle East. Indeed, major combat operations were continuing in the region in far eastern parts of Iran, and just starting in Afghanistan. Even with the benefit of Hail Storm systems, Predator III and Predator IV aircraft and the latest American orbital space station, the USSS Caspian which had been positioned over the Caspian Sea, in the mountainous terrains of those nations, the fighting was still difficult.

In addition to the ongoing major combat, large areas of the liberated and conquered territories in Iraq, the former Iran, eastern Turkey, Syria and areas along the western shore of the Persian Gulf were still in the midst of pacification operations. Although those pacification operations were significantly smaller due to the Predator IV UAVs and due to larger and larger portions of the populations of the nations throwing off their leadership and accepting with open arms the western allied armies.

As stated, the continuation of what had become a global operation in conquered areas of enemy territory requiring pacification, Operation *Ruthless Sentinel*, was very helpful in this regard. Without risking allied lives, and in those areas that had either been passed over in major combat, or where insurgents felt that they could still challenge and snipe at allied forces, *Ruthless Sentinel* ably demonstrated the futility of such intentions. In a manner that either annihilated the opposition, or so cowed them and their supporters that normal pacification and reconstruction operations could be conducted more safely, the Hail Storm weapons of the ever-present Predator IV aircraft rained death and destruction on any significant gathering of insurgents.

But it didn't always work the way the allies planned, as it had in Hamadan. Some of the more dedicated and fanatic adherents to the brand of fundamental and radical Islam as taught by the Grand Ayatollah Ol Osam Hassan Sayeed...whom these individuals knew had escaped with a promise to return from the east and avenge their losses...learned their own lessons from the slaughter of

Hamadan and other places and fought on. In those cases, the insurgents would fain pacification in order to draw the allied forces closer to them into normal reconstruction and infrastructure building operations...and then they would strike.

In each instance, the insurgents were soundly defeated in the end...sometimes causing the allies to raise entire towns and villages in the resulting battles as they had been forced to do in Mecca. But each of those instances was preceded by a surprise attack from a population thought to have already been well on the road to pacification, thought to be working with allied forces, and scores of Americans, British, Canadian, German, Polish, French, Russian or other western allied nation personnel were killed at the outset.

One unintended consequence for the radicals resulting from these operations was that they further and further separated and isolated themselves from the growing portion of the population who were accepting and welcoming the freedom and change brought by the allies. As had been the case in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom, after sovereignty was turned over to the Iraqis in 2004, and before the rise of Hasan Sayeed, the more moderate Islamic peoples began to resent and view as enemies the insurgents who were causing such difficulties for them.

As soon as allied forces could recruit and train them, Iraqis, Syrians, Iranians and other local people were fighting the radicals themselves, and they were doing so with the same determination that the allies were, purging themselves of those who tried to infiltrate their ranks in a vain effort to upset the change, the peace, and the freedom that was the promise for so many people in these areas.

### **Christmas and New Year in Australia**

The continent down under was still embroiled in a bloody, horrific, and long lasting battle. Although CAS and GIR forces had been pushed well back, their numbers were constantly reinforced from what seemed to be inexhaustible numbers out of China, India, Indonesia, and other areas of the remaining GIR, and the as yet unaffected areas of the CAS nations. Tens of thousands of allied troops fell in the effort, millions of enemy military and civilian personnel were killed.

The initial invasion and occupation of the northwestern and western areas of the continent by CAS and GIR forces ultimately culminated in the complete subjugation of the continent. Now, the allies were slowly pushing the enemy forces back in Australia. That entire four year period had been a continual scene of warfare, bloodshed and conflict. Even during the more than two year period when no major allied forces were present on the mainland to contend with or hinder the enemy, small numbers of allied forces who had been cut off or otherwise left behind in the Australian interior maintained a valiant and bloody resistance. In this they fought alongside local Australian citizens and aborigines against enemy military forces and the growing presence of GIR and CAS civilian infrastructure that was being established throughout the continent.

Now, the tens of millions of GIR and CAS civilians that had been transplanted into Australia with a promise of free land and dominion fought alongside the several million strong military forces of their mother countries. They did this in an effort to maintain their presence within Australia and somehow halt the allied advance and push them back. Even with Hail Storm missile systems and the other technological advances, the allies were hard pressed to maintain their offensive and avoid going into defensive postures against the massed attacks directed at their formations.

From large naval forces to the North of Australia, protected by bases in New Guinea and in the surrounding and strategic island chains, CAS and GIR aircraft staged continual massive attacks against allied forward positions. They also staged deeper, daring raids targeting allied logistical supply and staging areas. The same thing occurred from enemy airfields in the western areas of the continent that were still under the umbrella of Indian and Chinese naval air forces operating in the more protected waters of the Indian Ocean.

The advent of the new American SSVN Olympus class aircraft-carrying nuclear submarines and the even newer SSCN Barney class arsenal submerged cruisers that escorted and supplemented them, would soon prove that the waters of the Indian Ocean were not as protected or safe for CAS and GIR shipping as they imagined. In fact, these submarines, when coupled with the Alaska class transport, and Virginia class attack submarines, would soon prove that no place along the coastlines, or within controlled waters of the enemy would any longer be safe for their naval operations.

But until then, the lengths to which the enemy would go in preventing the allied offensive from continuing were epitomized by the fact that the Chinese had utilized their most advanced and secret particle beam technology twice to prevent the Americans from establishing a Southern Star space presence over Australia. Even though their first effort had proven successful in destroying the Southern Star space station, the second effort had proven futile and opened them to attack by other American spacecraft and installations which destroyed the entire Chinese particle beam system.

While that event had severely hindered the enemy efforts and outlook in Australia, it had not ended them. Continuing massed frontal assaults on the ground and contention for control of the airspace over the front proceeded. The continued presence of enemy forces in the island chains to the north and east of Australia would allow the enemy to slow the allied offensive efforts, particularly in central and northern areas of the continent.

## Christmas and New Year in Asia

Except for a thrust into Siberia from Alaska that had linked up with the American landings at Magadan and then proceeded westward, and except for the new fighting in India and in Siberia, the landmass of Asia had remained impenetrable to the allied cause. But these incursions, and the footholds they were establishing for allied forces were proving very disconcerting and disturbing to the CAS and GIR leadership.

Allied plans projected a multiple pronged assault on Asia consisting of five thrusts. One would develop and proceed south from the Capitol of Siberia, hoping to force the enemy forces that were holding the allies back in the Ural mountains to retreat from those positions for fear of being flanked and out maneuvered. It was hoped that this would allow for the large Russian and European forces fighting in the Urals to achieve a breakthrough and open up a large offensive front into the heart of Asia from Europe proper.

A second thrust was to be located in India where allied forces had pushed up from their beachhead around Cochin towards Bangalore before meeting stiff and determined resistance from the massive numbers of Chinese troops pouring into the country. It was hoped, that by employing Hail Storm weapons and other advanced technology, that allied forces on the sub-continent could ultimately persevere and achieve positions from which to threaten China directly. They intended to do this exactly as the Chinese had entered India, but in reverse through the major river valleys that penetrated the Silwalik Mountain Range, along the Ganges and Sutlej Rivers, and through the Arunachal Pradesh along the Brahmaputra River.

The third spoke of the planned allied offensive was meant to originate out of Australia. Once enemy forces were defeated there, the allies hoped to consolidate their forces in the area and then follow the same general path that General Douglas Macarthur had taken in World War II to attack the Japanese. This would threaten the all-important sea lanes and oil conduits and divide the sub-continent and Malay peninsula from the eastern portions of Asia and China itself.

The fourth spoke of the attack would originate in the Pacific Ocean and follow a general line through the island chains similar to what Admiral Nimitz and the U.S. Marines had followed in World War II. The specific islands that would be attacked would differ from those in the second world war because the Chinese had occupied and fortified different islands themselves, but the idea of bypassing and island hopping would be applied using the same principles.

Finally, the Americans would continue with their fifth assault spoke from Magadan in Siberia. This thrust was already raising great concerns in China itself because it had been the first incursion into their mainland fortress, and because it still offered the allies the greatest chance of penetrating directly into China. In so doing, it would pose a direct threat to the rich and productive areas of Manchuria...and Manchuria was the gateway to Beijing itself.

Pitted against all of these plans by the allies were several critical factors that the CAS and GIR nations in Asia had developed in their own favor. The first was the depth to which Jien Zenim's Three Wisdoms had been accepted and adopted into the day to day living pattern by the citizens of the CAS.

1. "All men and women are equal."
2. "All share equally in the bounty of a working and industrious society."
3. "One goal, one thought, one people for World peace."

These social and communistic constructs had been so engrained into the people, and their success over the last several years at expanding their economies, expanding their national and geographic spheres of influence, and improving the quality of life of their citizens, had been so apparent, that the people as a whole had become wholly committed to them. They were as committed to the resulting lifestyle as any of the fundamental or radical Islamics were to their own belief systems...and perhaps more so. Similar to the Nazis of World War II, or the Japanese under the Emperor, the people of the various Asian nations were engrossed in their totalitarian way of life. It was a way of life that had been specifically designed and engineered around these very constructs so that the ideology would be more palatable to those very people whose culture represented thousands of years of subservience.

The second factor that was a positive influence on continuing CAS and GIR war efforts was the high technology innovations that had been, and were, being developed and deployed into the fight. Many of these innovations, particularly the varied applications of the super cavitating weapon technology, surprised the west and cost them dearly. This was especially true from the outset of hostilities through the following three or more years when the west was pushed back so drastically on every front. The ability to come up with new innovations continued to threaten the allied efforts at every turn as had been demonstrated by the development and use of the particle beam technology.

A third factor in favor of the CAS and GIR nations in Asia, and directly relevant to the effectiveness of the second factor, was the phenomenal manufacturing and production capability that had been developed. Centering on the already tremendous production and manufacturing capabilities of the Asian tigers and of China itself before the war, the CAS had expanded significantly on these capabilities in the intervening five years. Capitalizing on the tremendous amount of investment in manufacturing that the west had made in China and throughout Asia in general, and specifically from

the United States, with the coming of the war all of it had simply been nationalized by the invading and victorious CAS forces.

China, Japan, South Korea, India, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Malaysia had ample production capability to draw from, despite damage during the onset of hostilities. Most of that damage had been centered around Taipei in Taiwan and Seoul in Korea, with other significant damage during the short lived fighting for Japan. All of the damage however was quickly repaired by the industrious people, particularly as a result of the influx of Chinese peoples as masters and overlords into all of these nations.

Once consolidated, the processes that had made the Asian tiger what they were, were exported to other nations as they came under CAS and GIR rule. This meant the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Burma, Siberia (which was already benefiting from the Siberian Economic Development Treaty), western Australia, and New Guinea all become significant production houses in their own right, and all consolidated under one whole, the CAS and Jien Zenim.

The tremendous capacity of the manufacturing capabilities throughout Asia and the CAS/GIR sphere of influence literally kept pace with the growing American production power-house and technological development. This proved very advantageous for CAS forces as the allies progressed in their offensive operations because the manufacturing plants allowed for a tremendous number of high technology weapon systems and supplies to be constantly available to CAS forces and their GIR allies. In fact, the CAS had tremendous excess capacity and the production from those plants was being judiciously stored for reserve forces to be applied as added defense to any allied breakthrough, or as extra offensive capability for CAS or GIR counterattacks and breakthroughs.

A final factor, and one that was well known historically, was the tremendous numeric advantage that the Asian mainland held in manpower over all other continents and nations. It was one of the principle reasons why famous generals like Douglas MacArthur and others had always strongly counseled against any major land war on the mainland of Asia.

With China and India so tightly allied under the Three Wisdoms, two and a half billion people were available for the overall war effort from these two nations alone. Despite horrendous losses to date, and particularly as their forces were pushed back, the Chinese were fielding an armed force of over one hundred and twenty million men and women at arms. India had grown her CAS-loyal forces, despite the upheaval and fighting on the sub-continent itself, to over sixty-five million.

When the other CAS allies were added to this, Indonesia, Vietnam, Korea, and the remaining GIR forces from the Middle East, the western allies were facing a combined CAS/GIR force in Asia alone of over one hundred and ninety million men and women at arms. This huge force was backed up by a tremendously industrious population and outfitted with high technology weaponry that in many areas was close to parity to that of the allies.

All of these factors made for very serious obstacles to the planned allied offensive operations and represented great risks should any one of those planned axis of attack run into any significant difficulties. If CAS and GIR forces, in their numbers, were successful in achieving a flanking breakthrough during a counterattack on any extended allied thrust, the results could and would prove disastrous, with the risk of a slaughter defeat and slaughter of tremendous proportions.

The leadership of the CAS and GIR, particularly Jien Zenim and Hasan Sayeed, were well aware of this potential and were constantly reviewing, plotting and planning to exploit it wherever possible. Into this planning they included two new faces at the highest level of their planning and strategy sessions. One of these was the new acting President of India, Rahmish Patel, whom Jien Zemin had met with personally on several occasions. Zemin had to admit that Patel's cunning and ruthless nature was much more desirable than the former Indian President, KP Narayannen's tentative nature, who had proven himself a traitor, and who would pay a traitor's price for his sedition and treachery.

The other new face in the high level meetings was none other than Admiral Lu Pham, who Jien Zenim had elevated in position to Vice Premier of the Communist Party, and the first Vice President of the People's Republic of China. This had been accomplished through unanimous voting on the Executive Committee of the Politburo, and then by a large super-majority of the entire Politburo. As such, Lu Pham and his technological brilliance was now employed in the highest level discussions, planning and strategizing of the entire CAS and GIR war effort, which represented the fate of well over four billion of earth's inhabitants directly, and all of them by extension.

As the Christian Christmas holiday and New Year passed, and as America prepared to launch new space station facilities over the Ural Mountains and far eastern Siberia in support of their planned and ongoing offensives, the CAS and GIR leadership planned how they could counter both the offensives and the space based advantage. Since they now had no counter for America's space based efforts, they listened to Hasan Sayeed's plans and already issued fatwahs. They also listened to Lu Pham's ideas as to how they might counter allied technology through misdirection and other means...and then they prepared to implement those plans at the earliest possible dates.

...and their implementation would strain and rock the free world to its very core, and ensure the final disposition of the CAS, the GIR, their leaders, and so very many of their peoples.

## Chapter 42

*“The cries of the widows and the fatherless on our frontiers now require that blood from my hands. I look on their commands as next to divine, and I do not choose to disobey them. General, I would rather lose fifty men and my own life than not to empower myself to execute this piece of business. You be murderers, but I be an executioner.” – Colonel George Rogers Clark, St. Vincennes, 1779*

**January 4, 9:20, EDT**

**Situation Room**

**The White House, Washington DC**

As Admiral Ben Ryan, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, expertly wrapped up his briefing of the current military situation in Asia and the planned positioning of the new Space Stations in support of upcoming offensive operations, the President was anxious to get to the next piece of business.

“So, in summary, our current plans will place three more stations into orbit in the next week, the first to be over northwest Siberia, the second will be put in place over the Indian Ocean, and the third over the northern Pacific. With these stations in place, and given their new defensive systems and their own offensive capabilities, we will be in a position to support our upcoming offensives.

“First, we will begin our long awaited central Pacific campaign targeting Wake Island, Tarawa and then island hopping toward an eventual attack on Okinawa. The kick off is scheduled for January 11<sup>th</sup> when the invasion fleets sail from Midway Atoll, for a scheduled landing at Wake Island on January 16<sup>th</sup>. Our new USS Midway will provide overall strategic reconnaissance and fire support as necessary.

“That support will include the identification and destruction of any enemy naval assets that might discover or interdict our task force as it approaches the island. Any sub-surface threats are expected to be interdicted by sweeps in front of the task force by the USS Jimmy Carter and her two supporting Virginia class boats.

“Our operations in the Indian Ocean, targeting Diego Garcia will commence on January 18<sup>th</sup> with planned landings at Diego Garcia. That task force is already underway from New Zealand and will be under the eye of the new USS Guadalupe, which will perform similar support for the Indian Ocean task force as the Midway provides for the Wake Island force.

“In that instance, the USS Connecticut and its supporting attack boats will be in the vanguard.

“Now, if there are any questions or comments, I would be glad to entertain them and lead the discussion regarding them.”

For the next ten minutes several pertinent questions regarding the Admiral's presentation were discussed. At length, the President raised his hand and interjected.

“Ladies and gentlemen, we are short on time, so for just a moment I would like to review and discuss the situation in Mexico.

“I have a number of my own ideas resulting from earlier discussion with several of you, but I would like to come to a consensus regarding our own response.”

Via video conferencing, the Vice President, Fred Reissinger spoke up.

“Mr. President, I have worked this issue at length with the Mexican President and his Foreign Minister and his staff.

They are pushing for a return to the days before the war when Mexican citizens were able to come across the border at will and find work here in America. Despite our best efforts to explain to them that those days are over forever, they will not let go of the issue. There is no doubt that Presidente Conejo is still stinging from Operation Alvarez and the embarrassment it caused him.

“He and those in his military, finance and foreign ministries, which is where his own greatest support comes from, are actively working to undermine our position in the war. They are also working to blatantly incite their own citizens to violating our borders and causing incidents.

“We have friends in their interior ministry, in their agricultural ministry, in their internal security apparatus, their judiciary, something less than half of their federal legislature and in their business sector. While they are open in their support for our current war efforts and immigration policies, they are afraid of Conejo's control and influence of their own military.

“I am afraid at this point, as much as I am against giving up on that option, that something other than diplomacy is going to be required to resolve this issue.”

With this somber statement from Vice President Reissinger, who had worked for years in the State Department before being appointed Secretary of State under the Weisskopf administration, the entire room quieted and sat in a reflective mood for a few seconds.

It was the Director of Homeland Security, Stewart Langstrom, who spoke up first.

“Well, our southern border area is secure and it is manned in more than sufficient strength by Home Guard units, the INS Border Patrol, National Guard, and U.S. Army quick reaction units, to

curtail any illegal alien, drug smuggling or potential terror infiltrations. We have plenty of Predator II aircraft for surveillance backed up by Predator IV aircraft to target larger incursions that develop into full blown emergencies like the one that has precipitated the current crisis.

"Quite frankly, that is exactly what happened with the crisis that precipitated the current crisis... within a few minutes flying time a Predator IV ended the incursion.

"But, and I would ask Admiral Ryan to confirm this with the CINC of NORCOM, if it came to a major invasion at multiple points by components of the Mexican army or very large numbers of illegal aliens, I am afraid we would need more support."

Admiral Ryan responded quickly.

"No need to confirm Stew. I have reviewed this with the General on numerous occasions.

"We have a plan for a full military defense in depth. It was developed when the very real danger existed of large Chinese forces advancing through our defenses in Central America and into Mexico.

"Mr. President, it would require our devoting another three divisions of regular U.S. Army troops to the border area and committing several wings of U.S. Air Force fighters, attack aircraft and bombers, along with a plentiful supply of AGM-999 Hail Storm cruise missiles."

With this, the room grew quiet, waiting for the President. They didn't have to wait long.

"Fred, Director Langstrom, and Admiral Ryan, thank you for the input. I believe there is a real danger, and I believe it is important to address it quickly and resolutely."

Looking into the video conferencing lens, the President spoke to the Vice President.

"Fred, I'd like you, along with the Secretary of State, to personally deliver a message to Presidente Conejo. Let him know that we view the increasing incursions coupled with his attitude as a prelude to war and that our doctrine of preemption has already been solidly established. Let him know we will not hesitate to use that doctrine with Mexico.

"Let him know that his government has thirty days to use their own forces to cause a halt to all incursions, to begin utilizing the established legal immigration policies across our southern borders, and to visibly cease the incitement of his people and military forces against the United States.

"Otherwise, we will view their continued actions as a menace and clear and present danger to the United States and we will act to defend ourselves.

"Just that clear, Fred. Let the chips fall where they will.

"I will talk to Congress in private about this as you start your trip, and will then address them in open session the day of any actions we are forced to take."

The room was now even more quiet. Most had understood what the Vice President was alluding to when he, above all people, indicated that the diplomatic card was exhausted. They just couldn't have imagined it being addressed so directly, or so quickly against their neighbor to the south.

"Admiral Ryan, work with the other Joint Chiefs and draw up plans for this should the Presidente refuse. For what it's worth, Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott had the right ideas."

**January 11, 09:30 local time**

**Off the west coast of Midway Atoll**

**Central Pacific Ocean**

Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> class, Tinley, "Tin Man", Erickson was excited. When the opportunity for this new assignment came last year, while the USS Barney was still under construction, he had jumped at it. And he had not been alone either.

His mentor and good friend, Chief Petty Officer Debaul Ernest, also known as "Big Ern", had signed on to man the new USS Barney with him. The two of them had become friends over two years ago while serving in the southwest Pacific. Ultimately their friendship had brought them close enough that Chief Ernest had helped Erickson get through being Dear John'ed by his hot, Tampa girl friend. Six letters that she had sent him over a period of several months had somehow got mistakenly shipped to the wrong ship in the Mediterranean when they were supposed to have come to the guided missile destroyer he was serving on off the coast of New Zealand.

"They weren't even close," thought Erickson.

"How could they make that big of a mistake and send all of those letters to a supply ship in the Mediterranean like that?"

How or why didn't matter now. It had just been one of those things and by the time the letters caught up with him, the damage was already done. In the letters, Erickson's girl friend had kept asking and pleading with him to write back soon so he could help her understand and get past her developing feelings for someone else. Problem was, by the time the mail got straightened out, and all six letters were delivered to him, it was over. The last letter told him she'd decided to marry her new romance.

Ever since, with Big Ern's help, Erickson had devoted himself entirely to his duties, writing only to his parents and closest friends, and then only occasionally. He was dedicated to helping win this war, and then to making a new start for himself back home when he got there.

And that attitude had led directly to the USS Barney.

"What a miracle of a ship...or, boat I guess," Tinley thought as he considered the marvel he was now embarking on.

The USS Barney class had been named for a guided-missile destroyer that had been built in the 1960's and that had served with a distinguished record throughout the cold war. The original Barney was a part of the Charles F. Adams class of guided missile destroyers, the first ones that had been built from the keel up for that purpose. Commissioned in 1962, she saw action on her shakedown cruise helping with the blockade of Cuba during the Cuban missile crisis, where she served with distinction. She also was a veteran of distinguished combat service during the Vietnam conflict. After that conflict, she continued to serve until just before Operation Desert Storm when she was decommissioned in December of 1990.

Petty Officer Erickson made it his business to know everything he could about the namesake and history of the ships he served on. And he was now proud to be serving on this new, modern ship...even if it had meant his volunteering for the submarine services to do so, and even if it meant that they called their ships, boats.

The new USS Barney was much larger than the earlier Barney. Where the former DDG Barney had displaced something over 4,000 tons, the new SSCN Barney displaced almost 40,000 tons and was over six hundred feet in length. The boats were based on the earlier design that produced the Alaska class SSTN nuclear powered submersed amphibious assault ships. Using the four hundred foot long, ninety foot wide, level area in front of the conning tower, and a one hundred foot long level space behind it, that was common to all of the variants of the Alaska class, the Barney class had ample room for the myriad launch tubes in many blocks of VLS cells that comprised its main weaponry.

On the earlier Alaska class these vast level areas on the deck of the vessel allowed for loading ramps that led down into the bowels of the boat. Using those ramps, vehicles and troops could either be loaded into the vessel, or offloaded either onto RORO (Roll on Roll Off) capable docks, or onto landing craft, including landing craft air cushioned (LCAC). Each amphibious assault sub carried four LCACs in large well docks. Those four well docks, two on each side of the boat, were covered by smooth-fitting doors that were opened when the vessel surfaced.

The level deck spaces topside on the SSLHDN, the new designation for the Amphibious assault version of the Alaska class SSTN boats, vessels allowed for flight operations for their eight F-35 attack aircraft, eight MV-22 VTOL air assault aircraft and up to eight more helicopters for airborne assault. They also allowed for forty-eight VLS cells for anti-aircraft or surface to surface missiles for self defense. A tremendous advantage with these VLS tubes was that all of these cells could easily be reloaded from the vast spaces below decks were reloads were stored.

In addition, all of the Alaska class and all of the variations thereof carried a full load of torpedo weapons, including the latest Mk-48 ADCAP torpedoes, Mk-77 CWS torpedoes, and the latest sub launched Harpoon and Tomahawk missiles, not to mention six SUB CIWS systems for defense

They also incorporated the same stealthy acoustic and operating characteristics of the Sea Wolf class which had been successful throughout the war in avoiding enemy tracking and acquisition capabilities. Though the Chinese and their allies were getting closer and closer to acquiring a solid signature of the Sea Wolf boats, they still had not been successful.

Erickson knew that the first major modification to the Alaska class had been the Olympic class SSCVN nuclear class submarine aircraft carriers. Their modification of the Alaska design consisted of altering and filling up the first two levels of storage spaces beneath the topside decks with hangar and repair facilities for aircraft. The ramps from topside were replaced with elevators and thus the subs became nuclear powered aircraft carriers in their own right. They were similar in capability to the Hampton Roads Class Sea Control ships, except for the huge advantage of being able to travel underwater, and their more extensive missile launch capabilities.

Erickson had read reports of the Olympic combat debut off of Cochin, India, where the standard air wing of twenty-four VTOL F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) aircraft, four E-22C VTOL AEW aircraft, six S-22C VTOL ASW or SAR aircraft, and up to ten UR UAV reconnaissance and light strike aircraft had performed so admirably and effectively.

Like the Alaska class, the SSCVN class carried a total of forty-eight VLS cells in two twenty-four cell blocks. These could be loaded with a variety of weapons for self defense or attack, ranging from the latest mod block Standard missiles, to Quartet cells of Sea-RAM missiles, to vertical launch Harpoon and even Tomahawk and Hail Storm missiles. The latest AEGIS system was also installed with the phased array radars being mounted on the conning tower and an ingenious submerged capability to launch any of their VLS missiles, including the anti-air variety, at targets acquired through a miniature phased array system that could be launched from over 200 feet deep which then assembled itself into a towed radar platform upon breaching the surface.

"Those are sure capable vessels," the Petty officer thought to himself, "and all in all they are going to help change the entire complexion and course of this war."

"But those large amphibious assault subs and aircraft carrying subs needed a more capable and lethal escort than a few nuclear attack subs, and that's where we come in."

Seeing his friend, Chief Petty Officer Debaul Ernest approaching, a smile lit up Erickson's face.

"Hey, Big E," he called.

"How about we take a few laps after duty, you know, a friendly little foot race?"



The Chief Petty Officer smiled at his friend, and then replied.

“Only if you are itching so bad for a whoopin' you can't stand it anymore, Tin Man,” he said as he eased past Erickson in the passageway.

“Gotta get a readiness report up to the LT right now though. I'll see you at 1630 hours, short of some kind of an emergency or battle stations, and we'll go...what do you say, a couple of 400 meter warm ups and then one more for the foot race?”

Erickson laughed out loud and then answered good naturedly to the Chief's back.

“A whoopin' did you say? Chief, you know good and well that the only whoopin' that's going to happen in this foot race is the one you'll be taken on your Big Ern self.

“1630 hours it is.”

All of the talk got Erickson thinking about that other perk that he enjoyed on this vessel. With the double sized pressure hulls, joined at the very top and bottom of their curves and then surrounded by another outer pressure hull, all of these large class subs had ample room for a 200 meter track that ran around the perimeter of the larger storage space in the middle, widest decks of the boat. It was there that the Big Ern would meet Erickson when they got off duty.

“Duty,” he thought to himself as he went about his own responsibilities.

“We've got a duty to open up that can of whoop on our enemies and with this vessel, we're talking about the biggest, baddest can of whoop imaginable, short of one of our SSGNs unloading its full load of Tridents.”

Petty Officer Erickson knew, that with 480 launch tubes arranged in ten forty-eight VLS blocks, that the ships of the Barney class carried more offensive and defensive missiles capability and capacity than any ship that had ever been launched. They were the ultimate embodiment of earlier Arsenal Ship designs. Ranging from the smaller RAM missiles, to the standard air defense missiles (up to and including the latest Theater Ballistic Missile Defense weapons), to Tomahawk SLCMs, to the awesome Hail Storm AGM-999 missiles, the Barney class carried them all...and they carried in their holds up to three reloads for each tube for a total of 1840 missiles without replenishment.

He also knew, that with the latest AEGIS system installed on the boat, offering the same capabilities as that installed on the Olympic class, and with the resurgence of America's satellite capabilities, that the Barney class could deliver those missiles and their destructive payloads accurately against any enemy. With all of that capability, these ships could adequately protect carrier battle groups, or entire theaters of operation, from enemy aircraft, cruise missile, or ballistic missile attack. They would be used to escort carriers and /or amphibious assault ships and then protect beachheads with their weapons, providing defensive fire and this awesome offensive fire support up to several hundred miles inland.

“A big old can of whoop indeed,” he said to himself as he summed it all up to himself.

And a whoopin' was exactly what he, Big Ern, and everyone else on the thirteen ships of Task Force 56 expected to deliver real soon to the Chinese on Wake Island.

The task force was comprised of two Barney class SSCN vessels, two Olympic class SSCVN vessels, four Alaska class SSLHDN vessels, two Virginia class SSN vessels, and the vanguard group of the USS Jimmy Carter and two more Virginia class SSN vessels. Despite the combat debuts of the Alaska class and the Olympic class in other theaters, those debuts had been in mixed Task Forces of various submerged and surface action vessels. TF 56.1 would be the first all submersed invasion, carrier and fire-support task force in history and Erickson and his friend Ernest were excited and proud to be serving as a part of it.

...and those in leadership positions in the United States were all anxious too, from President John Bower, to Secretary of Defense, Jeremy Stone, to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Ben Ryan, right down to the Captain of the Barney. They were all eager to pull off this surprise attack against the Chinese at Wake Island on January 16<sup>th</sup> and observe its results. Those results would be critical for the final execution order for the next anxious attack two days later on January 18<sup>th</sup> by another completely submersible task force against Indian forces at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

**January 13, 08:10, EDT**

**Today in America Set**

**CBN Studios, New York City**

“Thank you. We're back this morning recounting the amazing story of survival of Marine Captain Billy Simmons and the story of the commitment and faithfulness of his close friend, Master Sergeant Leon Campbell.

“Captain Simmons, in our introduction before the break, we reviewed a special compilation of the essentials of your service in the Australian area, the fall back to Sidney, the defeat of U.S. and allied forces there and their fighting withdrawal, the videos of the loss of your ship and your desperate effort to get your aircraft off its deck climaxing in your crash into the ocean, and then what we know of your life in Australia culminating with your rescue.

“Right now, I'd just like to ask you...how's your memory? How much has come back to you?”

The young Captain, who was becoming used to these interviews, this being his third nationally televised one since returning stateside, and wearing his dress uniform, considered the question. It was not an entirely easy one to answer.

"Well, I can say that a lot of my memory has come back in the last few weeks, and I thank my parents, my friends, the doctors...and most of all I thank God for that.

"I am remembering more and more of my childhood, upbringing, my parents and our home life. I remember going off to college and joining the Marines and even meeting Leon there...but that part is still not complete...there are, uh, like missing parts.

"I remember a good deal of boot camp, I guess those NCOs leave an indelible impression."

At this comment Leon chuckled and the well known host, Kathy Curry, turned to him.

"You've got that *knowing* laugh Sergeant Campbell, do you have something specifically memorable about your boot camp training to add to the experience?"

"It is my understanding that the two of you went through that training together."

Leon, also wearing his dress uniform with his rank, service ribbons and awards, most notable amongst them being his Medal of Honor, turned towards Kathy Curry and the camera and replied.

"We did go through that training together.

"I was just thinking back to our initial drill instructor at the San Diego Marine Recruit Training Depot and the very indelible impression he left on us as we got off that bus."

Turning to his friend Billy, he asked, "Do you remember him, Billy, do you remember the first words out of his mouth?"

Billy didn't hesitate at all. His eyes lit up brightly and his smile broadened perceptively.

"You mean, *Drill Instructor Sergeant Matthews?*

"How could I forget? Let's see...I believe he said something like this, "I am Drill Instructor Sergeant Matthews. At *all* times, you *will* address me as "Sir." If you have a request or a statement to make to me, you *will* formulate it with the words *Drill Instructor Sergeant Matthews, Sir!*"

Billy shook his head as he continued to smile, relishing the memory now.

"Like I said Kathy, U.S. Marine NCOs have a way of leaving an impression...amnesia or not.

"My memories of those Drill Instructors were among the first to come back clearly once things started to return, and right after my memories of home which had started to return there in the outback of Australia...and yet, there is still a lot I can't remember.

"A lot of my actual experiences during the war are not really back in focus yet. There are brief ones, like some of the fighting in Australia, particularly around Alice Springs.

"I also remember being on the Tarawa and the orders for our departure from the waters around Sidney. But I can't personally remember, even with the help of those remarkable photographs and videos, anything about my take-off or crash.

"Now, the time in Australia, particularly after being taken in by Nabalco's people is a different matter. It is much clearer, right up to the time when Leon and his squad contacted us."

Billy hesitated, the emotion in his voice clear to millions who were watching and listening.

"Nabalco was as good a leader, as good a man, as I have ever met...he sacrificed his life for those he loved and for their freedom, even for those of us who were not of his clan.

"He took us in and made us a part of his clan.

"Lance Corporal Thomas, who was lost saving us was made of the same metal. I owe him my life, and I shall not, I cannot, ever forget those sacrifices.

"...even as I cannot forget the dedication and commitment of my good friend here, Leon Campbell. It's easy to see why a man like this was able to earn the Congressional Medal of Honor."

Leon was chagrined to be made an issue of, or to be singled out in such a manner. He replied quickly to deflect as much notice as he possibly could.

"Billy...let me tell you, and you know it is true from your own experiences, this medal is something I wear only to remember others...like Lance Corporal Thomas.

"You know what I mean. Other's died so I could get off that Island...I just did what I had to do."

As she listened, Kathy Curry realized that she was genuinely growing to like and revere these two young Americans.

She herself had been significantly altered by the war.

As she thought on this, and her own experiences and changes, she couldn't help but think to herself, "...and who wouldn't like these two," she thought.

"It's an all-American story. It resonates with people...even people like me, because each of us have been touched so deeply by this conflict. Every one of us personally know people who have been injured or killed. All of us have heard the explosions, seen the fire and destruction right here in our own towns and cities.

"I find myself being more and more grateful that things are finally turning around. I find myself much more emotionally attached to stories like this because I have had to relearn what it means to actual people because of its proximity to me.

"How could those of us in my profession been so foolish about something so intrinsic. How could I have been so foolish for all of those years," she asked herself.

“Well, that's the way things were...and this is the way things are. I am much more emotionally and personally affected by the events that I cover now than I ever would have dreamed possible then...not so *professionally detached* like I and every other major journalist, or anchor used to be.

“...and a big part of that is because of the dedication, commitment, and sacrifice so epitomized by these two young men...and really, epitomized by the miracle that our country has become.

“After all of the divisiveness of the late 80's, and during the 90's and early 2000's. After so many years of our foolish agendas...dear God it feels so good to be human again.”

Suddenly realizing that quite a few seconds of dead air time had passed as she thought about these things to herself...and that her cheeks were moist with tears, Kathy stammered a bit, rather unprofessionally perhaps, but not in the least ashamedly.

“Err...well Billy, Leon, excuse me. It's just that I...it's just that your stories...I mean...”

Leon quickly came to her rescue.

“No need to apologize, Kathy.

“We know exactly what you mean and where you are coming from...how these things can give us pause, believe me, I know.

“Having lost so many friends in this fighting...having lost my own brother...I know that the emotions are strong. Those type of emotions make the drive for freedom and liberty strong too. We cannot let those folks down whose sacred blood and honor has paid for what we enjoy

“Let me just share a quote from my mother, who is as sweet and Christian a woman as you will ever find...but who is also is rock solid and strong in her commitment. Here's what she said to me last week when I was home, for the first time since my brother's loss.

“I know she would not mind me sharing it. With tears in her eyes, this is what she told me.”

Leon pulled a small piece of paper out of his breast pocket and read it to the world.

*“Leon, your Dad and your brother are now in Heaven lookin' down on us. Their journey and their travails here are over...and you know we are going to miss them...I am going to miss them, son. But, just as sure as the sun is going to rise tomorrow, you also know we can't let them down...we just can't. We owe them too much and they are expecting good things of us...and we are going to be with them again if we do our best, hold to this truth, and never give up.”*

Leon, Billy and Kathy...and millions of others...all had tears in their eyes before he had finished. Then the Medal of Honor recipient continued.

“Actually, emotions and commitments like this are a real good thing, Kathy. I don't think there's a single person out there in your audience...at least I pray that there aren't folks like that anymore, who would hold it against you.

“I can promise you that the U.S. Marines don't...and that's a good bunch to have on your side.”

Regaining her composure, Kathy's face lit up at the thought that the U.S. Marines, as a whole, would think highly of her.

“Why thank you Leon, Billy, that is really a comfort and an honor to know.

“Billy, I understand in Australia they called you Tex, before they really knew who you were.

“I guess there are a few other things that can leave a lasting and indelible impression, like your upbringing in Texas.

“In that regard, Billy, what are your plans? I know you are headed back home for an extended stay after this interview.

“As we close this morning, what can you say to our audience about your future plans?

“...and how, Leon, do you suppose you are going to fit into those plans yourself?”

Billy, thoughtful at the prospect of an extended stay at home, and yet sure of himself when it came to his immediate future, calmly looked directly into the camera and replied.

“Kathy, I am grateful to be going home and spending time there in February and March...maybe longer, who knows?. I look forward to spending some time with my father...himself a decorated and also wounded war hero...and with my mother, who is as dedicated an American, and as fine a mother as you will find.

“Having said that, let me make this clear.

“I am a U.S. Marine and I will be in this fight to the finish. As soon as I am healthy enough, I will be going back out and staying out until this thing is settled and done.

“I owe it to Corporal Thomas, I owe it to Nabalco and his people...I owe it to my best friend, Leon, here, and I owe it to so many others, and to my God.

“We'll talk about future plans in my life...as to whether I make a career in Texas or with my Marines...only after this necessary business is completely finished.”

Leon Campbell, fairly beaming at his friend's patriotic reply, ended the interview with his own affirmation of the same points.

“Kathy, Billy has completely summed it up.

“I'll be back out there too for as long as it takes on behalf of so many who have given so much.

“But I will especially be there for my brother, Alan, and his memory.”

**January 14, 04:48, local time**  
**Easternmost Observation Post**  
**CAS Forces, Wake Island**

Twenty-three year old Specialist Thuan Nguyen carefully watched the Pacific Ocean to the East. He panned slowly from his right to his left, using his enhanced and magnified night vision gear. It was not a new task for him...it was routine...but it was one he took seriously.

As a Vietnamese soldier here on Wake Island with other, principally Chinese, CAS forces, he was aware of the historical disdain that some CAS allies held for him and his countrymen. He had heard about it all of his life, and had experienced it in fact. But he had been able to ignore it and not let it affect either his own actions, or his own well being.

He had his own views regarding it.

He was proud of his nation and its heritage. Despite the fact that up until the mid 1900's there had never really been an actual Vietnamese nation, he was proud of what had been accomplished since that time. He had been taught and indoctrinated all of his life about how his fathers had managed, at horrific cost, to outlast the Americans. After being fought to a standstill for eight or nine years, and losing every major engagement to the American military, and following the 1972 Paris Peace accords that the American President of that era had brutally bombed the North into signing, North Vietnamese forces had spent nearly two years regrouping and then violated the accords and invaded the South. Knowing full well that the Americans had reduced their numbers drastically and were continuing to do so, the North had literally dared the Americans to build back up. But due to inflated public opinion polls and the actions of a vocal minority of war protestors that were sympathizers with the North's communist goals, American politicians lost the will to fight and did not stand up to the North. Instead, they sped up their own withdrawal and ignored their own accords to support their southern allies. Thus the stage was set, through patience, horrific cost, and ultimate manipulation of the American press and politicians, for the North's communist revolution to triumph and bring about the uniting of his nation under communist rule.

That triumph ultimately lead to purges and executions, driving hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese to take to San Pans on the South China Sea to avoid the holocaust. Any of the South Vietnamese citizens who had too much western education or influence, or had any ties to the American military, were marked, and either had to flee, or face the work camps or death.

"Up until this war, no one, no other country has been able to really say anything like that. *We beat the Americans*," he mused as he continued his watch.

"Perhaps that is the real reason why so many of them have disdained us...they were just envious. Now they no longer have that excuse, and things have lightened up significantly."

"Maybe so," he continued to himself, "but even in this war, they have had to recognize that it was a patriot from Vietnam who helped them send the Americans and their allies reeling.

"The fact that we are sitting here on this island right now is proof enough of that."

...and CAS forces had been here, manning their vigil, in the hopes of pushing their envelope further to the east someday, for over three years now.

There were over ten thousand CAS personnel on, or around, the island now either on the ground or in the ships of the naval task force. With full air and naval support Thuan was certain that they could prevent the Americans and their allies from dislodging them.

All of this, and the reasons for it, was so obvious and clear to the young man.

The knowledge of why the war had progressed so positively for so long had allowed Thuan to patiently endure some of the early discrimination when he entered the service four years ago. It allowed him to maintain his composure now, when a clear knowledge of the contributions of Vietnamese in this conflict had become, more and more obvious.

Nguyen knew that with the example and rise in power of the most famous of those Vietnamese patriots, Lu Pham, most of the disdain and discrimination was over for good. Comrade Pham had not only labored for years with the Chinese to develop the weapons that had helped defeat and push the once-thought invincible Americans back in this war, he had then been named a Hero of The PRC and risen to be a leading member of the Politburo itself.

"In fact, if rumor can be believed, he is now a leading member of the Executive Committee of that body," Nguyen thought with a satisfied and knowing smile.

Then, the smile instantly faded as Thuan noticed something out of the ordinary in his peripheral vision. It was something on the edge of his view, far in the distance in the haze of the pre-dawn light...something moving that should not have been there.

Barely perceptible, yet...yes, there it was. Movement, and fairly rapid movement.

Low, just coming over that far horizon he could make out, small, thin specs approaching at high speed. If it had not been for the elevated position of his post, it would have been another twenty or more seconds before Thuan would have seen them.

"But surely the radar or other sensors must have noticed them," he thought as he began to speak into his lapel mounted microphone to report his sighting.

Before he could do so, air warning klaxons and sirens began blaring all around the island.

The island's main tracking stations and the sensors on aircraft far overhead were now also picking up the oncoming missiles.

"Post ZM reporting.

"Many incoming missiles, south southeast at 163 degrees."

As Nguyen listened to the confirmation and response to his report, and as CAS aircraft and anti-aircraft missiles screamed over his head to intercept the incoming barrage, he continued his watch, scanning back and forth across the horizon, and at the waters between himself and that horizon.

There!...something more...to the north of the missile stream, miles and miles to the east of his position, out there on the surface of the ocean, just in front of the horizon. The optics of his equipment allowed him to zoom in and then automatically optimized the picture and focused and sharpened the view, almost miraculously considering the distance.

He increased the zoom factor to the maximum of 75X.

There it was, a device moving along the top of the water. Some sort of object with what looked like antennae and dishes or some type of electronic equipment on it. Now, two or three hundred meters in front of that object, he saw the thinnest of objects just breaking the surface of the water. Really, it was the disturbance in the water itself that first drew his attention to it.

A mast, or periscope!

Now, a tower breaking the surface under it.

Then what must be a massive deck was also breaking the surface, very low to the water. Coincident with this, several hundred meters to the east and south of the first one, another...and another vessel broke the surface of the ocean. Several large submersible vessels were surfacing out there...just over twenty miles to his east in plain view of Wake Island.

"Post ZM reporting...twenty-two miles to the southeast at 135 degrees...I am observing several vessels breaching the surface."

The response to this message was much more tense and abbreviated than the last. Nguyen could feel the tension building in the command post.

Almost immediately, as he continued his observation, there were many more missile launches from each of the vessels...and then, from two of them, he noticed small silhouettes on the decks. Silhouettes of...what?

Aircraft.

Modern jet aircraft were appearing on the deck of several of those vessels and launching vertically into the air. Four, eight...now twelve aircraft rising up and swinging towards the island. As they did so, an even more massive barrage of missiles rose from that first ship and arced over rapidly towards the island.

Those American missiles, because Nguyen was certain that this must be an American force, began intercepting and obliterating the CAS aircraft and missiles that were rushing to defense of their positions on Wake Island. The CAS attack against the incoming American missiles was being, in turn, itself attacked by American anti-missiles.

The air was filled with hundreds of missiles and explosions between Nguyen and the vessels he was observing. A few American missiles and aircraft were being downed, but many more Chinese aircraft and missiles were falling, succumbing to the overwhelming numbers of missiles the Americans were putting into the air.

Now, even more American aircraft were coming over the horizon, merging with the first group as they came toward him.

"ZM here again...enemy aircraft being launched by the vessels...I repeat, we are now coming under attack by enemy air craft being launched in numbers by submersed vessels that have surfaced directly to our southeast

"Now...they are deploying what looks like air cushioned...."

Back in the hectic CAS command post, the communications teams heard...and felt...the many explosions that drowned out young Taun Nguyen's voice, and then rendered the radio frequency on which he had been speaking dead, filled with nothing but static.

...and it was a rolling barrage of explosions that maintained a relentless and deadly march across the island...towards them.

### **January 14, that same time**

#### **Combat Information Center, U.S.S. Barney**

#### **TF 56.1, Just East of Wake Island**

The information flow was getting thick now as reports came in more and more rapidly and were displayed on the various plasma screens as symbols, vectors, plots, or in textual format. Admiral Chelsea was content to let his staff, and that of Captain Dintz, the captain of the U.S.S. Barney, manage the tactical situation. That was their job.

His job as the commanding officer of the amphibious assault contingent of TF 56 which had been named TF 56.2, was to make any more strategic command decisions necessary for this part of

the assault, and to ensure that all vessels and personnel carried out the overall orders and planning as approved by the CINC of Task Force 56, Admiral Tanner.

...and at the moment, that part was going fine.

The overall situation was looking good. Not a slam-dunk by any stretch of the imagination, but initial reports regarding the effectiveness of their assault were very encouraging. Complete surprise had apparently been achieved by the submersed task force and the enemy had been knocked back on its heels. His two Virginia class attack subs were off to the northwest and southwest, protecting the approach to his vessels from any enemy submarines. Thus far, there had not been any.

The U.S.S. Jimmy Carter was off to the northwest, on the other side of the island, using the continued ability of the Sea Wolf class to infiltrate enemy waters so it could attack any enemy shipping of opportunity.

Here, his very capable arsenal ship, the U.S.S. Barney, was protecting the four SSLHDN Amphibious Assault vessels that were launching attack aircraft and the initial Marine assault to take Wake Island. The air cushioned craft and the helicopters and STOL assault aircraft that those vessels had launched were approaching the island right behind the attack aircraft and the massive barrage of cruise missiles that his vessel and the other vessels of the overall task force had launched.

Hail Storm missiles, anti-radiation missiles, anti-personnel missiles, anti-armor missiles, the new anti-stealth missiles, and bunker and hardened structure busting missiles of all types had been launched and were now impacting CAS forces on the island. All of those missiles combined the latest active and passive stealth measures to get past the enemy's radar and anti-stealth sensors, and in the case of the high speed anti-radiation and anti-stealth missiles, to target those systems specifically. In so doing they flew in the face of the enemy defenses to seek them out and destroy them.

Admiral Chelsey was positive that the pounding and destruction that enemy forces on Wake were taking would leave them open to the Marine assault his forces were throwing at the island. He had three waves of Marines he would launch this morning, over four thousand men. That would be followed up by C-90B landings this afternoon with another five thousand men and their equipment, who would remain on their ships, or rotate onto the island until the next operation further to the west. But that would not happen until the air space around the island had been declared safe for that landing.

Much further out to sea, two more Virginia class attack subs defended the flag portion of Task Force 56. That contingent which consisted of two SSCVN carriers and the task force's second escorting arsenal ship. The carriers had launched two aircraft strike packages a little earlier this morning. One of those strike packages was a strike at Wake Island itself. That strike would fill a dual role for his forces here. One part of that package had just arrived over his vessels to provide CAP for them. The other part was rolling in right behind the missile barrage with his own attack aircraft, significantly bolstering the overall air strike capability his four amphibious assault vessels delivered.

The other air attack the carriers had launched was a large Strike at Sea package at the enemy naval task force northwest of Wake Island. Satellite imagery from the new space station, the USSS Midway, which was now in position high over the northern Pacific, had shown the enemy vessels lingering in those waters some distance off Wake Island. That enemy task force consisted of what appeared to be four Aegis-like enemy guided missile destroyers and two of the Beijing class Carriers the Chinese employed. It was a potent force and an integral part of the enemy defense of the island.

...and it had to be eliminated.

The arsenal ship escorting the two carriers had launched over two-hundred cruise missiles at that enemy task force, which would arrive just in front of their Strike at Sea package.

"In fact, if everything has been coordinated and orchestrated properly, those missiles should be arriving there right about now, with the aircraft hot on their heels," thought the Admiral.

**January 14, 05:40, local time**

**PLAN 3201 Kunlun**

**Flagship, PLAN Task Force off Wake Island**

The speed, surprise and violence of the overall American attack had taken everyone defending the island by surprise. Hectic and tense radio transmissions abounded. Tempers were short and the frustration level was rising precipitously.

The island itself was taking a beating, and now a major attack was inbound for his task force.

"Who would have thought that an entire invasion task force could arrive from under the waves," the Admiral asked himself.

But that was just what the Americans had done, and Admiral Tsung had to admit to himself, even if he was not willing to convey it to his command yet, that Wake Island was in imminent danger of being lost. Once again they had been completely surprised, not only by the American presence, but by how they came to be there.

Yet, with his new, modern cruiser, the Kunlun, perhaps he could deliver a few surprises of his own. Admiral Tsung was committed to putting up as stiff a defense of the island as possible and see if his new capabilities would be enough to win the day.

"And that's exactly what we are going to find out," he thought.

“If I had four such vessels, I am confident I could completely repel these American missile attacks along with the sea and air assaults that are the main components of their invasion. Repelling those components of the attack would force them to completely withdraw in failure.”

When Admiral Tsung wished he had four of the new vessels, he was referring with great pride to the new Chinese heavy cruiser class that the Kunlun represented. Because of its similar signature, the Americans had already mistaken it for one of the guided missile destroyers they thought were escorting the two Beijing class carriers. But they had been.

The Kunlun displaced significantly more than those vessels, almost 10,000 tons versus the 7,200 tons for the guided missile destroyers. It integrated the latest Chinese Aegis-like, computerized defensive system into both its traditional weapon systems and its non-traditional systems. It carried the latest defensive and offensive missiles that the Chinese had to offer...and it carried them in greater numbers than any other Chinese vessel to date. It also carried the latest ship-borne version of the *ta shih* system for detecting enemy stealth technology.

But it's most important asset was entirely new to the PLAN, and was something the Jiangnan and Shanghai shipyards were now integrating into all new classes of Chinese naval combat vessels as rapidly as possible. It was a ship-borne version of the charged particle beam weapon that the Chinese had employed on their Dragon Spirit space craft and in the much more powerful versions on their ground based, space defense systems which had been located on the Mongolian border.

In ferocious battles that spanned the last few months, the Americans had defeated the Dragon Spirit craft and destroyed their production facilities. They had also destroyed the three space defense systems along the Mongolian border as well.

“But they missed our manufacturing in the shipyards,” the Admiral thought.

“So now it will be my turn to surprise the Americans with our own new capabilities here in the defense of Wake Island and our forces here.”

At the first sign of attack from the sea, the Admiral had ordered the Chinese task force to launch a full defensive air cover over Wake Island. After this was done, a moderate CAP had been left over the vessels as the entire force of eight ships now sped towards Wake Island to assist its defense and engage the enemy vessels there.

...and they sped right into the teeth of the American attack that the Admiral had just discovered was directed at them.

“Charged Particle System now active,” the weapons officer indicated to the Captain of the Kunlun as the enemy missiles came closer and closer to the engagement envelope.

“Set all systems to automatic, using template 34Z.

“Have all weapons system officers prepared for manual over-ride as necessary,” the Captain calmly replied as he ordered the use of an artificial intelligence template for the system that was geared towards American cruise missile attack, followed immediately by their attack aircraft.

The ship-borne version of the particle beam system was not as large or as powerful as the large land based systems that the Chinese had used in the earth-to-space engagements with the Americans. But it was still somewhat larger than that of the Dragon Spirit weapons that had been used in direct space combat against American space vessels in the summer of last year.

This limited its primary capability to being able to shoot a line of sight charged particle beam against hardened moving or stationary targets at a two hundred kilometer range. The targeting was slaved to the Chinese Aegis-like defensive system which consisted of the phased array radar system, the *ta shih* anti-stealth system, and a new, advanced optical acquisition system that used digital optics and infrared to track and target visual objects in the absence of any radar or stealth targeting data.

The Kunlun carried two charged particle weapons stations, one fore and the other aft. Both were directly behind the ship's twin gun mount fore and aft, 150mm dual purpose, automatic firing cannons.

When the Admiral had arrived with the ship ten days before, the flag for the task force had been immediately transferred to the Kunlun. Ever since, the Admiral had been busily integrating the new flagship and its capabilities into the overall task force through very vigorous training exercises. Those exercises included everything from defending against high flying ballistic missile and aircraft attacks, to countering potential orbital bombardment, to the more likely condition of defending in the face of an attack by low-flying cruise missile approaching at high speed just over their visual horizon.

...and now the training was being put to the test. The Admiral only wished that his forces had been given more time.

With over two hundred American missiles targeting his ships, and with thirty American aircraft carrying over a hundred more missiles, there were simply too many threats. Even factoring in the ample defensive systems of the other ships, and the fact that they were all integrated together with the Kunlun...it was just too much. The Chinese defenses, even with the particle beam capability, were overwhelmed, particularly on the ships furthest away from the Kunlun.

The Chinese CAP aircraft did help blunt the attack, but all six of those aircraft soon fell to the overwhelming American numbers.

Then the Kunlun began to tell on those overwhelming numbers. Missile after missile, and then several American aircraft fell to her charged particle fire. Electronic systems and the skin and

structure of the American missiles and aircraft heated up and melted, or vaporized, depending on how long the Chinese could hold a firm lock on their targets. Those missiles and aircraft simply exploded or otherwise fell tumbling from the sky.

Electronic emissions gathered from one of the two EW aircraft accompanying the American strike soon revealed the nature of the threat the Americans faced. Orders were quickly issued that changed the strategy away from boring in closer to the Chinese task force where the likelihood of being downed by the charged particle fire increased dramatically. Instead of following the original plan where they would launch their own missiles from close range behind the wall of the massive cruise missile barrage in front of them, the American pilots were ordered to launch their missiles at longer range and then to drop down to the deck and egress the area.

By the time the American aircraft finished launching their missiles and dropped to the deck to get away from line of sight fire from the Kunlun, the other three Chinese escorts and both Chinese carriers had been hit by multiple missile strikes. Two of the escorts and one of the carriers sank outright, going down with tremendous loss of life within ten to twenty minutes of the attack. The other damaged escort not too severely damaged and still capable of some defensive action from its aft mounted weapons systems while its damage control parties worked feverishly on getting the vessel back up to full speed and away from the site of the battle.

Due to damage along its deck, the remaining carrier, the Nantong, was unable to continue flight operations at the moment and the surviving aircraft she and her sister ship had launched earlier were ordered to attempt to land at Wake Island if possible. Only nine of those aircraft were able to land at there between American attacks later that morning. Despite the damage topside, the Nantong was capable of making steady headway under full power. Joining with the Kunlun and the remaining Type 52D guided missile destroyer, the three ships made a high speed run closer into the Island.

Protecting their flanks, were two Chinese fast attack nuclear submarines, which were also making their way closer to Wake Island for their pre-planned defense of the approaches to the island.

**January 14, 10:15, local time**

**Flag Conference Room, TF 56**

**U.S.S. Shafer, 120 Miles Southeast of Wake Island**

Admiral Tanner made a final review of the situation report and accompanying recommendations in his cabin on his flagship, the U.S.S. Shafer, before sending them. They would be transferred via secure satellite link back to CINCPAC in the next few minutes. From there, he knew they would be forwarded on to the Washington DC, the Joint Chiefs and to the POTUS.

Sustained combat, as was certainly to be expected, was ongoing on the island. But the enemy had somehow been better entrenched than had been expected and they had pinned down the first wave of Marines. It hadn't been until the second wave of Marines had come ashore from the four amphibious assault subs that any progress had been made toward dislodged them.

Now, at least over the eastern side of the island and the approaches to it, his forces were reinforcing and supporting their beachhead at will.

"Now, if we can somehow negate that new Chinese vessel and its cohorts on the west side of the island," he thought to himself, "then we should be able to approve the C-90B landings this evening and consolidate the island completely.

"But that was going to take some doing.

"So far, that ship and its particle beam weaponry, particularly under the umbrella of the remaining island defenses, has been a very tough nut to crack."

And that was what the main recommendations and requests that were going out in the Admiral's FLASH SITREP were all about.

The Admiral knew very well that strategic space assets were being amassed for attacks on the Chinese mainland and their command and control infrastructure there. Orbital bombardment material was tightly guarded and reserved for those missions. But he also knew that this attack had to succeed, and it had to succeed rapidly. There were too many other, soon-to-be-implemented operations that were depending on that success, and on his ground, air and sea forces taking control of and establishing a firm, unshakable presence here. That made the quick success of the invasion and the taking of Wake Island something of a strategic imperative itself.

...and Admiral Tanner was not in the least hesitant to make use of that fact.

As a result, the Admiral was comfortable that his request for a space based attack on the Chinese vessel would be approved. By analyzing the movement and characteristics of the Chinese ship based on the last two attacks against it, the Admiral was positive he could force the enemy into a movement pattern that would successfully allow it to be targeted from space. He was prepared to do just that as soon as approval was obtained. He would have to adequately prepare and protect his own forces from the results of that attack, but he felt he could easily do that here on the east side of the island.

Tanner reviewed his request from the SITREP communiqué once again.

*...THEREFORE CINC TF 56 REQUESTS CINCPAC OR NCA APPROVAL OF SPACE BASED ATTACK ON REMAINS OF CHINESE TASK FORCE WEST OF OBJECTIVE.*



*OPERATION TO BE PREPARED, PENDING APPROVAL, FOR 1600 HOURS LOCAL TIME EXECUTION. PLEASE ADVISE.*

"Well, that should do it," he thought as sent the message to the communications officer.

"They will know that I have the mission planned and ready, just waiting their approval."

What the Admiral didn't know was that the situation revolving around the new Chinese vessel, the cruiser, Kunlun, would resolve itself before his plan could be executed.

**January 14, 10:35, local time**

**Control Room**

**U.S.S. Jimmy Carter, 21 miles west of Wake Island**

The sounds of sustained underwater warfare had gone on all around them. It was not an uncommon occurrence. Throughout the war, from the very earliest days, even before open hostilities had been initiated, the Jimmy Carter had been at the center of action in the Pacific.

Now, here she was again in the thick of it all, and the entire crew, particularly those operating the various stations in the control room, wondered when her luck was going to finally run out.

She had run completely around the island to the south and avoided all contact, both of her own and by the enemy. Several hours ago, far to the north, she had picked up the sounds of battle. Impacts to vessels in the water and the unmistakable sound of distant ships sinking and breaking up.

Then, beginning less than an hour ago, things had literally blown up right around them.

They had been tracking what they knew to be one of their own Virginia class boats, the U.S.S. Zachary Taylor, as it approached the island from twenty thousand yards to their north. Out of nowhere had come the unmistakable sound of the firing and then that God-awful approach of a Chinese underwater Killer Whale device, a supercavitating weapon. The horrendous noise literally drowned out all else. Compelling in its attention, singular in its focus...coming to kill, and quickly.

The Zachary Taylor had boldly proceeded directly in towards that single oncoming weapon and used its own SUB CIWS to defeat it, destroying it less than eight hundred yards from impact. Then, having detected no enemy submarine or surface vessel, and correctly determining that the attacking device had been a variety that had been seeded into the waters to guard against the approach of American vessels, the Zachary Taylor had proceeded in further towards the island.

Simon Thompson had ordered the Jimmy Carter to quietly follow and also proceed in closer to the island, to the port side of the Zachary Taylor but several thousand yards behind it. He knew that the low powered underwater IFF that his boat emitted every sixty seconds would allow the Zachary Taylor to identify him in the same way he had identified them. It was emitted in a pre-programmed fashion sounding like various varieties of local transients, or aquatic life, in a predetermined pattern that other friendly vessels could decipher and recognize as specific to each individual American boat. Situated as they were behind and to the side of the Zachary Taylor, the Jimmy Carter's position would also be ideal to offer support, allowing him to independently targeting enemy vessels that he acquired.

Now, over an hour into the advance, the sea had suddenly filled once more, not with one, but with many enemy weapons.

From two separate azimuths in front of the other American vessel, six of the latest Chinese conventional torpedoes were suddenly launched.

The Zachary Taylor snapped off one Mk-48 ADCAP at its attacker on its starboard side, but did not have time to fire anything at the one to its port, which was less than three thousand yards directly in front of the Jimmy Carter. Instead, in a high speed maneuver, it turned further to starboard in an attempt to get past that enemy vessel.

As the Zachary Taylor maneuvered violently and valiantly to avoid the six torpedoes coming at it, it left a trail of sophisticated sound devices in its wake to confuse and defeat the Chinese weapons. This worked on three of the weapons, but the other three successfully bored through these defenses and relentlessly pursued the Zachary Taylor.

The SUB CIWS (Submarine Close in Weapons System) that all American submarines now carried was a very capable system against any inbound underwater threat. The Zachary Taylor now employed the two SUB CIWS weapons stations facing the oncoming torpedoes to good effect. The high speed, supercavitating projectiles fired by the system destroyed first one, and then a second of the remaining Chinese torpedoes.

Before the third torpedo could be targeted, that sound that struck fear into any American submariner, or any mariner for that matter, suddenly sounded once again in the waters near Wake Island. This time though it was three Chinese Killer Whales, which had been set up in conjunction with the position that the Chinese submarines had taken, that suddenly ignited in the water less than one thousand yards in front of and to either side of the Zachary Taylor.

The Zachary Taylor never stood a chance.

In a final effort to save the boat, the Captain broached the vessel at high speed. Just as the nose was coming out of the water, and after destroying two of the Chinese approaching supercavitating weapons at close quarters with their SUB CIWS, the final Chinese Killer Whale and the final Chinese conventional torpedo struck the Zachary Taylor almost simultaneously.

The explosions, coming on either side of the vessel, completely ripped the boat in half. The momentum of the submarine and the violence of the explosions thrust the front third of the boat completely clear of the water, and then that portion fell back into the ocean, lost all forward momentum and immediately began to settle. Twenty-one of the forty-five crewmen from that section, many of them badly wounded, managed to exit that part of the vessel before it completely slipped beneath the waves.

The lower two thirds of the boat never completely gained the surface of the water. Although its momentum carried the forward portion near the surface, that was the part most effected by the explosions of the enemy weapons, where the Zachary Taylor sustained the worst blast damage. As that after section reached its highest point of travel, only yards below the surface, and just as it began to turn over and sink, somehow twelve of the eighty-eight crew members in that section escaped the vessel and swam to the surface.

The Jimmy Carter saw none of this. But it heard it all.

Captain Thompson ordered his boat to open its outer doors during the loudest part of the engagement and then to a full stop and dead silence as the action continued. He and every man who heard the death of the Zachary Taylor cringed at the sounds, but then soberly and determinedly waited for a chance to mete out justice and death to their enemies. The enemy boat in front of them had slowed down and was creeping towards them as quietly as it could, while the other enemy sub maneuvered wildly to avoid the Zachary Taylor's Mk-48 ADCAP.

But the Zachary Taylor was not going to die alone on this day.

Its single Mk-48 ADCAP ran hard through all of the Chinese defensive efforts and caught up with the Chinese boat. Struck amidships and holed, the Chinese could not control the flooding. Waiting too long to blow its ballast tanks, the enemy sub never got above a depth of 50 meters, and then slowly began to sink to the bottom, giving its surviving crew members, which included the captain and the entire control room, several minutes to contemplate their fates. Soon after passing its crush depth of over 600 meters, it was heard imploding and breaking up by the crews of the Jimmy Carter and the second Chinese submarine which was coming closer and closer to the Jimmy Carter.

The second Chinese submarine would soon follow the fate of its companion.

When it had approached to within eight hundred yards of the Jimmy Carter, which remained dead in the water, listening passively to their enemy's approach, Captain Thompson ordered two Mk-48 ADCAP torpedoes fired through the already opened outer torpedo doors.

The Chinese did not have the time to even take a snap shot at the Jimmy Carter. It would not have helped them if they had. Immediately going to full power, the Chinese boat attempted to make a downward spiraling turn, knuckling its wake and dropping noise makers into it as it did so.

None of it helped.

Within a few short minutes, there were two more explosions and another Chinese submarine sank to the bottom with the loss of all hands. Holed twice, this one sank much faster than the first.

When he saw that the Chinese vessel did not have the time to mount even a snap shot at its position, Thompson ordered the Jimmy Carter to maintain its position and its dead quiet status. After a forty minutes of listening, the boat carefully continued its stealthy approach towards Wake Island.

Not knowing that they had now cleared all of the major Chinese underwater defenses, it took the Jimmy Carter another two hours to come in close to Wake Island. There, they finally discovered the Chinese surface ships that were helping with the defense of the island. Those ships consisted of none other than the cruiser, Kunlun, the damaged Chinese Beijing class carrier, the Nantong, and the Type 52D guided missile destroyer.

Upon discovering them, the Jimmy Carter carefully and stealthily spent the time necessary to maneuver in as close as possible to ensure kill shots on all three vessels.

From a range of five miles, Captain Simon Thompson, calmly fired four Mk-77 supercavitating weapons at the Chinese vessels and then quickly loaded all four of his tubes and fired again. He then rapidly egressed to the southwest at high speed. Those eight weapons wreaked horrific havoc on the remaining Chinese ships, utterly annihilating all three of them.

Struck by two of the weapons as it attempted to start a high speed turn, the Kunlun was torn into three pieces and rapidly went down with its captain and Admiral Tsung, the task force commander. Of the three hundred and eighty personnel on board, only fifty-two survived.

Hit by three of the four weapons targeting her, the already damaged Beijing class carrier simply rolled over amidst a tremendous cloud of smoke and debris and sank rapidly. Only two hundred oil soaked personnel, many of them badly injured, survived to either be picked up by the few remaining Chinese helicopters, or to swim towards and be washed ashore on Wake Island itself.

The Type 52D destroyer, which was furthest from the Jimmy Carter's attack, made a valiant effort to run directly towards the island and ground itself there, where its missiles could still help with the defense of the island. Although one of the multi-mode American supercavitating weapons was successfully defeated by the shallow water the ship was running in, the last Mk-77 followed its target right in towards shore and detonated against its aft section on the port side, breaking its back. Many of the crew survived and joined the ground forces on Wake Island.

The water was shallow enough where the Chinese guided missile destroyer went down that she did not sink completely, rather, they came to rest on the shallow ocean bed, the upper portions of their superstructures canted at unnatural angles and sticking grotesquely out of the water.

Pictures of that destroyed Chinese vessel would be aired throughout the allied world, and ultimately find their way to Beijing and the Politburo. They would be the banner photos depicting the defeat and surrender of CAS forces at Wake Island, which occurred less than twelve hours later. Those photos would also herald the beginning of the allied offensive into the conquered territory and holdings of the CAS in the central Pacific Ocean on the road to Japan and the Chinese mainland itself.

**January 27, 21:08, Local time**

**Presidential Offices**

**New Delhi, India**

Acting President Rahmish Patel reviewed the information he had received from the Director of the Indian Intelligence Bureau. It was a very sensitive document referencing the current defense and intelligence situation in Siberia, within India and in the Indian Ocean.

Patel was under a lot of pressure from Jien Zenim to get things under control on the sub-continent and in the other areas of influence that the Indian government had heretofore had responsibility for. The presence of huge numbers of Chinese troops only underscored the pressure. It was clear that if the Indians could not bring things under control themselves, then their Chinese allies were more than willing to do it for them.

“General, are you certain that this data represents the most up to date information?”

The acting President was already well known for his impatience, and his present demeanor was a clear indication that, for whatever reason, that patience had been exhausted.

“Yes, Mr. President, it represents the most up to date information we can get our hands on. The people over at the Multi Agency Center (MAC) regularly update their information from the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), from the Joint Intelligence Task Forces (JITF), from the Defense Image Processing and Analysis Center (DIPAC) and from our own Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). They then analyze all of this in conjunction with the latest information from the Chinese and the GIR intelligence agencies to come up with this report every twelve hours.

“The report you are holding was completed a little over an hour ago. It is the latest we have.”

As he reviewed what he was holding, he had to voice his disgust at what he was seeing.

“Well, General, the report is either flawed, or it is the most dismal intelligence report I have read.

“Well, which is it?”

General Singh knew that Patel was powerful, influential and smart. He also knew that he could be dangerous if provoked.

But the General knew his duty and he performed it.

“Mr. President, we do not control the events that make up the intelligence situation reports, nor can we. What we do is report them as accurately as possible.

“That is what you have in your hands.

“The report is not flawed, but it is a dismal report in the circumstance. It is also accurate and that gives us at least the power to respond from a position of knowledge.”

The President respected a clear and direct answer...despite his propensity to berate the messenger when he was at the end of his patience.

“Well, the old boy has some grit left in him,” the President thought, “Good.”

Turning to the summary of the situation in Siberia, the President spoke clearly to Singh.

“Well, then we shall start in Siberia.

“Ambassador Gavanker...or should I say, the traitor Gavanker, must be brought to justice.

“His treachery has put us all in a very desperate situation and he must be made an example of.

“Him and his entire family and any staff loyal to him. Do I make myself clear, General?”

“Put your best team on this.”

Singh nodded his understanding and made a few notes before responding.

“I do understand, Mr. President. We will send our best team in there and have them contact our operatives already in Siberia to arrange it as soon as it is practicable.

“Is there anything else?”

Patel thought about the executive summary for each area.

On the ground in India the Americans and their allies had been halted along a line from just south of Bombay, across to Bangalore and then south to the coast just north and east of Madras. Only the arrival of literally millions of Chinese troops had stopped the Americans and their technology machine. It had done so only because there were more Chinese personnel and equipment than the Americans could effectively destroy.

Now, the enemy was pouring more resources into the country at Cochin and Madras...and it was clear that they wanted to occupy Bombay and use it in a similar manner.

...and they may soon be able to do so based on what had happened on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>.

Diego Garcia had fallen to the Americans.

On the same day that the Indian military leadership had received a detailed report from the Chinese regarding the loss of Wake Island, the same thing had occurred at Diego Garcia. An entire American amphibious task force, supported by two carriers and numerous escorts had arrived off of Diego Garcia completely undetected.

“How will we ever overcome the events of that day?” the President asked himself as he reflected back on the events of just a little over a week ago.

“A completely submerged amphibious task force, carriers, escorts and all, arrives at of nowhere.

“Until I saw the actual reconnaissance pictures I could not believe it. I thought our own people were making up wild stories to cover their own deficiencies.”

But the Indian military had not been covering up. Ten thousand U.S. Marines came ashore from those behemoth submarines. Then, a few hours later, as soon as it was safe, as was the case at Wake Island, ten thousand more were landed on the island by those gargantuan, American C-90B transports.

Benefiting from the use of the awesome variety and firepower of the U.S. cruise missiles, and from the newly inserted space station over the Indian Ocean, the fighting was brief, but violent.

By 1900 hours that day, the island had been overrun. Over eight thousand Indian soldiers and personnel were killed. The United States lost almost nine hundred personnel. More importantly in the overall scheme of things, they had re-established themselves in the Indian Ocean where they could conduct naval operations throughout the region as they had done for so long before this conflict.

The strategic implications of the American presence at the base at Diego Garcia were not lost on Patel. He knew that it would be particularly useful to them for punishing and threatening the CAS forces still fighting to hold onto parts of western and northwestern Australia. It would also be of great benefit to them in the support of their ongoing invasion and operations on the sub-continent itself, and in wrenching control of the oil lanes from GIR and CAS hands.

“...and with their space station, there nothing we can do about it,” thought the President.

That was perhaps the most troubling thought of all.

The Americans were slowly but surely establishing themselves in an overall invulnerable position throughout near-earth space...watching over the various theaters where their space stations existed...raining down fire from above on targets of their choosing. Patel, Sayeed and even Zenim were powerless to halt or interdict it.

Then the President had a thought.

“If they can’t keep the Americans from targeting us, then perhaps we can pull in so close to them... embrace them so tightly...that their war shots will be just as apt to kill their own as us.”

Patel looked up and noticed that the General was still patiently waiting for more orders.

“Er...yes, General, there is something else.

“Have my chief of staff come in, and re-arrange your schedule for a general meeting of the entire cabinet. I would like you to brief them all on this same information. It shouldn’t take more than an hour or so to arrange the meeting...those who can attend directly and video feeds for the others.”

As the General stepped out of the room, the Indian President thought about how he could best implement what he was thinking. Clearly it was not a new thought...others had tried before.

But those others had not been Rahmish Patel.

As his Chief of Staff entered the spacious and ornate room, Patel stood up from behind his large desk and came around it to pace in the middle of the room. The Chief of Staff held back, in the entryway, waiting for the President addressed him.

“Mahj, arrange an emergency executive defense committee meeting. We’ll hold it in the conference room down the hall. Make sure those who are within immediate driving or walking distance are here personally. Bring the others in via live video feed.

“Tell them it is a matter of utmost importance and that General Singh will brief us on some critical intelligence and that I will make a statement.

“What time is it now?”

The Chief of Staff looked quickly at his watch and responded.

“It’s almost 9:30, sir.”

Patel thought about the people who would be attending and their likely schedules for a moment.

“Okay, convene the meeting at 10 PM and let them know that it will take no more than an hour, with a follow up meeting late tomorrow morning.

“You might as well schedule that one now too, Mingh. Make it for 10 AM and make sure everyone is aware and clears their schedules for two hours tomorrow.”

**January 27, 21:51, Local time**

**High Geosynchronous Orbit**

**USSS Guadalupe, Over the Indian Ocean**

“How certain are we of this information,” the Captain asked his communications officer who had just delivered the decoded and translated message.

“Sir, it all depends on whether the information we received from our Indian allies is accurate or not. Based on the nature of this message that the ELINT people intercepted and that the frequencies,

encryption keys and translators we received from the Indians just allowed us to decode and translate, it would seem that their information is very, very accurate.

"My own read, and the read of all of our ELINT people earth-side and here on board, is that we are looking at an actual, honest-to-God message from the Indian President's office.

"They will be having an hour-long high level meeting starting in the next ten minutes."

Captain Lewis rolled the information his communications officer had just given him over in his mind for another second or two. The he asked.

"What does our G2 say?"

The Lieutenant had already checked.

"G2 has been in contact with his counterparts in Diego Garcia and Cochin. He has also talked with G2 at USSC. All of them feel this is the real thing, sir."

David Lewis liked a junior officer who was on the ball...who had all of his ducks in a row. And this Lieutenant was clearly displaying that he had all of that right stuff, and more.

"Reminds me of myself," he thought before continuing.

"Okay, thanks, Lieutenant. Patch me into the orbital network and get me Captain Clark at the Point Solitude Complex."

While the Lieutenant did as he had been commanded, Captain Lewis, who had recently been promoted and given command of this station over the Indian Ocean, considered how pleased he was that it was Captain Floyd Clark he would be working with on this operation..

Clark was now in command of the Point Solitude Space Complex where asteroid material was being received regularly now and fashioned into projectiles.

When his communications officer motioned to him that contact had been established with Point Solitude, David Lewis keyed the microphone he was holding and spoke into it.

"Hello, F.L.?"

"This is Lewis on the Guadalupe and I have a rush order for you my friend."

**January 27, 22:48, Local time**

**Presidential Conference Room**

**New Delhi, India**

General Singh's presentation had gone well. Everyone recognized the import of the data and it had set the stage for the President's impassioned presentation outlining what he wanted his military planners to do. They had all listened as Patel had explained his plans for embracing the enemy forces.

He had just finished that presentation and was about to open the meeting up for questions and discussion when the double doors to the conference room flew open, banging hard against the interior walls, and the President's security detail came rushing into the room.

"Seated! Everyone remain seated.

"Mr. President, you must come with us now!"

Before Patel could respond, two burly security officers grabbed him by each arm and literally picked him up off the floor and rushed him out of the room. As the room erupted into pandemonium, with various agency heads and military leaders shouting questions and calling to their own security details who were also entering the room, the President asked the head of his detail.

"Rammi, what is this all about?"

The Colonel turned to the President as the team rushed through the front doors past many armed guards who had not been there when the President's meeting had started. They were guarding and lining the path to a waiting presidential executive helicopter, whose blades were already spinning.

"Mr. President, we've picked up an object coming in over the Himalayas. One projectile, sir, targeting New Delhi.

"It's coming in at orbital speed and will arrive here at almost any moment. Mr. President."

Rahmish Patel could only think of one thing to say.

"The Americans!"

The whine of the helicopter's turbines picked up, and its blades began turning faster and faster, as the security detail led the President to the open door on that side of the helicopter. While Patel was getting in, he put his hand out and held onto the door frame to steady himself.

He noticed that the darkness of the night was waning and giving way to...light! A growing light though it was not yet 11 PM. Rapidly, that light increased and the President's attention was drawn to the east and north...the source of the growing light.

There it was! A fiery mass coming directly at them almost too fast to comprehend.

The Colonel wasted no time.

"Mr. President, get in now!"

He shoved the President into the helicopter hard and then rapidly closed the door, motioning frantically for the pilot to take off.

Climbing rapidly and turning to the south and west, the officer piloting the executive helicopter tried to escape the oncoming horror with his President. Patel had been thrown to the floor by the

Colonel's shove, and then held on there as the helicopter frantically rose and turned. He had just gotten his hands up to the window sill and pulled himself up enough to look out.

What he saw took his breath away.

The landscape for miles around was lit up surreally, as bright as the middle of the day. Long shadows were being cast to the south and west by an impossibly bright light immediately behind the helicopter that Patel couldn't see from his position.

In that moment, as he watched, the intensity of the light increased tremendously in magnitude as the orbital bombardment projectile impacted behind them.

Patel's helicopter was no more than five hundred feet in the air and only a quarter of a mile away from the site of the impact, which produced a blast with the force of a small nuclear weapon.

The blast and shock wave from the impact caught up with the presidential helicopter at almost the same instant. First the shock wave swatted the President's helicopter from the air like it was no more than an agonizingly slow-moving fly being hit by a lightning-fast, stone-hard swatter. Then, less than two tenths of a second later, the blast incinerated the wreckage and everything in it before it ever reached the ground.

Before Patel's plan for embracing the Americans and their allies could be put into motion...or even communicated...the Americans had reached down from space and embraced him first.

## Chapter 43

*"We shall not tire, we shall not falter, we shall not fail."* – President George W. Bush, 2003

**March 23, 13:20, CST**

**The Main House**

**Lazy-H Ranch, Outside of Montague, Texas**

Billy was amazed. Everyone he could hope to be here, was here, as he was preparing to once again leave home and go into harm's way. Family and friends had come from all over the country to wish him well and see him off.

Besides his Mom and Dad, grandparents and uncles, aunts and cousins, their good friends, Joe and Liz Trevor, were here with their daughter, Patricia. Billy had known Patricia most of his life, although the Trevor family had moved away some years ago. Now, over the last two weeks, something of a romance had begun to develop between the two of them and Billy was somehow glad she was here to see him off.

"See me off," he thought

"A few short weeks ago that had seemed so improbable."

But a miracle of remembrance and healing had occurred after Billy got home and began walking through the woods and fields of his home. Those walks, the smell of the flowers, the hay, the sounds of the birds...particularly the meadow-larks...all of it had been like a salve to his heart and mind.

To his soul.

With his family and friend there to help them along, one day the memories had simply started flooding in, filling in the gaps, giving him his full identity back.

Speaking of friends, of course his best friend, Leon Campbell was here with him as well, and Leon had brought his Mom, Geneva, down from Boise, Idaho. She was a gem of a woman whom Billy had met while he was in school at Boise State University where he had first met Leon.

"God bless them for being here," Billy thought.

"I know that in their loss it has got to be especially hard for them, particularly for Mrs. Campbell, with Leon so set on going back out too."

Even though he knew it was hard for Leon's Mom, after losing Alan, Billy could understand Leon's desire to get back out there, in the thick of things fighting the enemy. He felt the same way, and would have it no other way.

Though things were going much better for the allies now, and progress was being made on all fronts, the enemy was resourceful and ruthless, as they had proven over and over again throughout this war. Until they were completely put down, they would remain dangerous and capable of causing terrible harm to American forces, or to America's people.

"You don't have to look to far, any place in this country, to know that's true too, thought Billy."

He and Leon had discussed it many times, it was one thing to be fighting these enemies overseas and living with the horror of combat and the sudden loss of friends and comrades. It was another thing entirely to hear of these enemy animals infiltrating into the United States itself and butchering innocent civilians there.

For that reason, if no other, Billy and Leon, and millions more like them from every walk of life, from every income bracket, from every social segment of society, were in the fight until it was over.

"Until we put these animals down, and everyone who supports and abets them.

"Just like the rabid dogs that they are," he thought to himself.

Billy had been raised in a good Christian home. He had been taught to love his neighbor, to turn the other cheek and to be kind to those that spitefully used him. He believed all of those things, he really did...and he wanted to emulate his Savior, Jesus Christ, and be like Him. But he also believed that there came a time when you had to sell what you had and buy a sword to defend your family, your freedoms...and in this case, your very religion...from those who would destroy all of them.

It was something Billy took no joy in doing. It was something he didn't *want* to do. It was something he *had* to do. He was almost as upset about being forced to take up his sword in his own and his family's defense against people who would enslave, kill, and destroy all he cherished...his very way of life...as he was at the carnage those enemies created. But, it was a necessary business, as distasteful and horrible as it was.

Billy was determined to wield the sword until it was finished so that his own future children, his mom and dad, and all of those he loved would not have to experience any more of the horror.

Now, that the meal was finished, the conversation was slowing down...the time had come.

Billy's Dad, Jess Simmons, stood up and everyone got quiet.

"Well, I guess it's that time. As much as none of us want the time to come...particularly Cindy and I, the time has sure enough come and Billy is going to have to be driven down to Ft. Worth.

“Billy, before you go...and I can say this to Leon as well...anyhow, Billy, we just want you to know we love you. Go with God, son.

“What you are doing is necessary. I know how you feel...exactly how you feel. I have seen it, felt it...been there. If the doctors would let me...if they would clear me...I would be right out there with you. As it is, I will have to settle to be with you boys in spirit and in faith and to do what I can here at home working with the intelligence, analyzing, and sharing what I have experienced and learned in my own campaigns.”

Turning to his wife, Cindy, Jess beckoned that she too stand...and she did.

“Cindy, would you like to say something?”

Cindy already had tears streaming down her cheeks. She took a handkerchief and wiped them away, and then she spoke softly.

“Oh, I guess so, Jess.

“Billy, you know we love you. You know we'll miss you. We're so glad to have *you* back...completely. Be safe and stay close to God. He'll watch over you.

“While I was working at the factory, building those airplanes...all I could think about was how each one of them was going to be used to protect boys like you and Leon here. I prayed over each one that I worked on...not that it would necessarily kill someone else's boys...because they are children of God too...but that it would be a tool in God's hands to protect liberty and freedom, particularly freedom to worship Him.

“...and, I must confess, that it would be a tool in His hands to maybe protect you, Billy, and your father...and God has answered those prayers.

“Now, look here, I've gone and said a lot more than I intended.

“Just know we love you and'll be looking forward to your return when this business is finished.”

When she finished, she stepped over and gave her son a big hug...and was soon joined by Jess who wrapped them both in his arms.

After they had finished with their own family goodbye, and tears were dried, everyone came up to shake hands with and hug Billy...and most of them also hugged Leon and thanked him for his service as well. Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces...friends...all of them took part in the farewell and all of them were touched and filled.

An awkward moment came when Patricia Trevor stood in front of Billy. Billy stuck his hand out to shake her hand and she grasped it...but did not shake it. She just looked at if for a second or two. Then, Billy, unable to hold himself back, reached out and hugged her tightly, and she hugged back.

All four parents watched, and cried, silently praying for a safe return so that the tender shoot that was developing here in their hearts, might have a future opportunity to grow and blossom.

Then it was time to go.

Billy, Leon, Jess and Grandpa Simmons all climbed into Jess's F-250, 4X4, crew cab pickup, rolled down the windows, and all of them waved as they drove away. The family members waved back as they drove down the drive, and those in the pickup, especially Billy, kept waving until they were out of sight and well on their way over to U.S. 287 for the trip down to Ft. Worth.

**April 3, 23:48, EST**

**Jessup Residence**

**1724 Ridgeline Rd., Henderson's Gap, Tennessee**

Sloan Jessup was up late. He'd been out surfing the internet, reading the latest news about the war on the CBN and WNN web sites. After he had reviewed today's news, he had surfed a few other web sites that interested him, and then he had purchased some things for his son and daughter, things that might bring them some joy and also teach them a thing or two about the true priorities of life. It was something he had been doing for them for years.

As he thought on his kids, one eighteen and the other almost twenty, he couldn't help but reflect on their mother, Judy, and their brief three years together from 1989 through 1992. The time seemed to flash through his mind in a few seconds. They had been so young then. Now, it had been seventeen years since the divorce, eighteen years since they had irrevocably separated...eighteen years of dedication on his part, trying to atone for his life before.

Earlier today, as he did every Sunday, Sloan had attended church services from 10 AM until noon. Every week he attended the 1<sup>st</sup> street Methodist church in Henderson's Gap and taught a Sunday School class there. He also helped with the youth program as a scout leader every Wednesday evening. He prided himself on having helped over fifty young men obtain their Eagle Scout award over the years.

Many members of the congregation, and other prominent people in the small town talked about Sloan all the time. His success with the Scouts was something that made the entire community proud. He was so consistent, so dedicated to his worship and to the scouting program, that the pastor, most of the congregation, and many people in the community considered him to be among the most faithful members of not only the Methodist church, but also of the entire community of Henderson's Gap.

But Sloan Jessup was not a Methodist or a Christian. He had not been either for many years.



Sloan had served in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division during the 1990-1991 Desert Shield and Desert Storm operations in Kuwait and Iraq. He had been there on the ground for over seventeen months, first preparing for, and then taking part in the combat operations against the Iraqis in Kuwait and Iraq. His particular unit had been inserted deep into Iraq as part of a blocking force and had remained there in Iraq for several months after combat operations had ceased.

It had been a great victory, one that had come much more easily than had been expected as the Iraqi forces had been bombed relentlessly, and then had, for the most part, either fled in panic or surrendered by the tens of thousands when American and allied forces attacked. As a result, there had been very little cost in lives to the American and allied armies.

For Sloan, who was a young man twenty-four years old at the time, though the physical cost due to combat had not been great, his other experiences there led to the greatest sacrifices he would make in his entire life. Ultimately, the decisions he made there led to the loss of his wife and children, the loss of his faith, and the sacrifice of all that he had been loyal to or held dear to that point in his life.

While providing security in southern Iraq, before allied troops pulled back into Kuwait, Sloan's company had also supplied humanitarian relief to the local citizens. In the course of his duties as a non-commissioned officer, Jessup had met and been befriended by a prominent Shiite cleric and his family in one of the towns. He had no idea that the leading Ayatollahs and mullahs in Iran had issued fatwas to that very effect, to find and befriend American soldiers whenever and wherever possible.

Despite regulations against that type of fraternization, Sloan had ultimately used his position and his duties to create opportunities to meet with the family in general, and the father in particular, under the pretext of giving them and their small town aide and counsel. Over a space of several weeks he had become very close to them and been influenced by them and their beliefs.

...and in the process, Sloan Jessup had been converted to the Shiite branch of Islam by that very influential cleric who would later rise in prominence within the GIR. It was a conversion that he had never doubted and from which he had never wavered in all of the long years since.

While surfing the internet tonight, he had briefly visited a site that he had been instructed to visit through his surfing of the internet the month before. It was Sloan's habit to surf the internet every Sunday night. He stayed on for no more than forty-five minutes each time. Once a month, he received a message instructing him to visit another site in the course of his other innocuous surfing. Every week he would visit that site and he would then memorize the single phrase that he ultimately found there. In reality, this was the real purpose of his internet activities.

Due to the instructions that had been given to him, he had never returned to any of those sites once a message had been delivered. Even if he had, he would have found that it did not matter. The small sites were developed with html and java programming code that tracked any visitors that happened to find them. That code was specifically looking for Sloan's tell-tail internet identification so his handlers would know that he was remaining true to the instructions that had been given to him. Once the code indicated to his handlers that Sloan had visited the site after the message had been posted the site was deleted. It's IP (Internet Protocol) address and its URL and the files that made up the site were deleted from the internet by early the next morning.

Each week, for many years, whether it had been through receiving faxes from a new number each week, then new email addresses each week, or finally, for the last fifteen years, through the use of the internet and the different sites he had been instructed to visit, Sloan Jessup had been faithful to his instructions. He had followed them with exactness in each of his visits, memorizing the short phrases and directions his handlers sent him and acting accordingly.

Mostly, the messages he received were nothing more than a new number, a new email address, or a new internet URL address for him to use until he received the next message.

Occasionally there was something more.

That had been the case in late 2001 after the 911 attacks. Oh, how he had rejoiced in those attacks. They had punctuated everything he himself had been living for and working towards. He had hoped that he would somehow get the chance to strike his own blow at that time against what he had come to believe was the decadence and immorality of his own nation's form of government, and the liberties it afforded to its citizens.

He had bought completely into the belief that control and strict discipline proscribed and administered by religious political leaders was the only way to avoid sin. He had come to believe that those Ayatollahs and Mullahs, in curtailing freedom of choice and in punishing severely the slightest variance from what they proclaimed as God's plan, were in fact acting for God.

In so doing, he had given his free will over to tyrants...and had given up his own soul as well.

After 911, when the messages started coming in instructing him to do specific things, he had felt that his almost ten years of faithfulness were about to be rewarded with a substantive mission of some sort. When he had been instructed over the course of four consecutive weeks to retrieve several vacuum packed bags containing a fine white powder, and to then store them all and keep them safe until otherwise directed, he was sure that an actual mission of some sort was in the offing. He was particularly convinced that this was the case when news reports of packages and envelopes of a similar white powder started showing up in Florida, the Washington, D.C. area, and other places

causing anthrax. He was certain that he was about to be used as part of a massive and even more deadly second wave of attacks.

But, although he had done as instructed and retrieved and stored those eight packages, no further orders specifically concerning them had been forthcoming. The silence was broken a few years later when he had been instructed to obtain eight more packages, this time containing a fine gray powder.

As with the white powder, he was instructed to carefully store them and await further instructions. Again, he had felt that a mission of some sort that would involve him personally was in the offing, particularly since so many attacks were already occurring on American soil. But once again, outside of the regular changes to the addresses and locations for his communications, no more specific orders regarding either set of packages had come. He had kept them ever since, wondering what their purpose was, wondering what his part would be in their use.

Now, tonight, another message had finally come that had nothing to do with a new internet address. It was a message to act...to make use of the packages he had kept for so long. The countdown had begun that Sloan had long dreamed of, that would allow him to atone for his earlier life...to atone for his earlier part in the attacks against Islam.

"Six weeks...over the next six weeks I will learn my part, and then I will enter into Allah's paradise and receive the martyrs reward," he thought.

Unknown to Sloan, the same message had gone out to nine other Islamic operatives who had been held in deep cover for all of these years. In all, ten operatives. Ten Christian converts who had stood the rigors and test of time and events.

Originally there had been twenty-four of them, all single, all living alone in various places throughout the United States, Canada, Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany. In the intervening years, six of those had died of wholly natural causes. Eight more, who had appeared to have wavered in the faith, had also died. But their deaths only *appeared* to be from natural causes. In reality, those deaths had been anything but natural, despite how they had looked and how they had been ruled.

Now, the last ten of the deepest cover operatives that the GIR had amongst their enemies...three in the United States, one in Canada, one in Great Britain, one in France, one in Italy, one in Germany, and two in Russia...had all been ordered to act simultaneously. There was nothing that could or would tie their actions together, other than the acts themselves. There would be only vague hints as to where their motivations lay, and they themselves would not survive the operation to be questioned.

### **May 9, 06:25, Local time**

#### **Politburo Executive Committee Meeting**

#### **Secret Hardened Facility, 100 km North of Beijing**

Even though he detested the need, Jien Zenim was grateful that he had had the foresight to begin holding the executive committee meetings in these secret hardened facilities. There were eighteen of them scattered around the nation and they rotated the meetings through them according to a random, computer-generated pattern that varied the location, the meeting time and the meeting duration.

Despite the inconvenience, the necessity had been proven in late January when the Americans had killed the acting President of India, Rahmish Patel, with a decapitation strike from space. That strike had killed the Indian President and many of his cabinet members and key advisors. Zenim knew, that such a strike, if brought down upon him, even here in this nuclear hardened facility, would most likely prove fatal to himself and everyone in the facility.

Because of that, a dozen newer facilities were being constructed around the nation. The new facilities were stronger, deeper, and much more self-contained and were designed to withstand the largest American orbital bombardment devices that had been seen to date. The Chinese President was anxious for these executive meetings to move to those locations. Each of those locations was a very tightly guarded state secret, with clearances set to the highest levels within the People's Republic security apparatus. They were so secret that the facilities were being constructed using slave labor that would be disposed of after completion to ensure that no one ever spoke of their existence or location.

As the various leaders droned on regarding the status of their particular areas of responsibilities...and each was a status that Jien was already aware of and had reviewed and edited...Zenim contemplated the worsening military situation.

At first, he had been shocked by the death of Patel and the resulting fall of his government. Then he had realized that it could actually represent a windfall for his own plans. The Chinese had already been prepared to step in and assist the Indian government to any degree necessary, up to an including full control of all governmental functions using Indian figureheads. Patel had been proving that he was unsuited in that role. Although he was dedicated to the CAS and Jien Zenim's vision for it, he was also far too independent and ambitious. His death had opened the door for Zenim to have the local Chinese military and political generals install individuals far more pliable to the Chinese will.

...and that was exactly what they had done.

But things had still not gone as Zenim would have liked. Irrespective of the vast numeric superiority enjoyed by CAS forces in India, the Americans and their allies had continued to advance. That advance had surged during the confusion resulting from the loss of the top of India's chain of

command. Once Chinese forces had stepped in and placed their own people in positions of authority, and as the large Chinese forces were better integrated into Indian forces, the advance slowed.

But it had not stopped.

At the present time the Americans and their allies had advanced to the point where they controlled all of India south of a line that ran from the southern suburbs of Bombay eastward along the Narmada River to its source and then southeast to the coast near Kharapur. It was clearly only a matter of time before both Bombay and Calcutta fell into allied hands completely. At that point, almost half of India would have fallen to the allies.

More and more Indian citizens were either surrendering to the allies, or they were streaming away from the fighting as refugees. The problem was, that most of those refugee convoys were doing all in their power to escape southward, past the front lines into allied controlled territory.

...and the subcontinent was not the only place where CAS and GIR fortunes were fairing badly.

Australia was on the verge of being completely cut-off by sea, stranding several million CAS and GIR military personnel and civilians there. The CAS and GIR military forces there were now constantly under allied air attack from the sea, even in those north and western areas of the country where staging had safely been accomplished in the past. Large concentrations of Chinese, Indian and GIR troops anywhere on the continent were almost immediately attacked by either orbital bombardment or by the deadly attacks of the American Hail Storm missiles. With more and more of the Indian Ocean coming under allied sea control, and with the two American space stations in place over Australia and the Indian Ocean, there was nothing that anyone could do about it. The outcome was inevitable, within a few months at the most, Australia would fall completely into allied hands.

In late February all remaining GIR forces in Iran had been completely over run by the Americans, the British, the Brazilian and their other allies. On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, the remaining GIR military and political apparatus in Iran surrendered to allied forces unconditionally and the date was designated as VG-Day by the allies to represent the defeat of the GIR, even though the knew Hasan Sayeed had escaped and was coordinating his forces in the Pacific from somewhere in Indonesia. Despite this fact, most western people had recognized the defeat of the major center of the GIR's influence and power as the death knell to the radical Islamic cause and celebrated it as such.

At the time, Jien Zenim had felt that the western allies were premature in their celebrations and that Sayeed would certainly come up with some plan to counter attack and regain his lost power.

But, within weeks, on March 28<sup>th</sup>, under the threat of orbital bombardment, laser attacks, and hail storm missile attacks, remaining GIR and CAS forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan surrendered, along with the surviving political leadership in those countries. It had been a shocking development to Zenim and to Sayeed, forfeiting what both leaders had hoped would be significant time and effort that the allies would have otherwise had to expend on attacking and conquering those nations.

"I suppose we are experiencing a taste of what the Americans and their allies experienced in early in this conflict as so many nations surrendered to us without a fight," Zenim thought.

"Well, if we have the time and if we can once again develop the appropriate technological innovations, it can happen again, despite these major setbacks."

After Afghanistan and Pakistan surrendered, allied forces immediately began occupying the strategic areas of both nations and subjecting the rest to their world-wide and very effective *Ruthless Sentinel* operation for pacified nations. In so doing, they minimized the amount of personnel necessary to occupy the nations and were able to concentrate on moving their large forces into position to continue the advance into India on a second front, and ultimately into China as well.

With the fall of Pakistan, all GIR military activity was now limited to Australia, the islands of the Pacific around Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia, and to the Malay Peninsula itself. There were still hundreds of millions of GIR citizens there with significant production capabilities.

"...and they still has millions of personnel who can fight," the Chinese President reflected.

Thinking about the GIR and its forces led the Zenim to thinking about Hassan Sayeed himself. He glanced at the large digital display screen which showed the various individuals attending the meeting by secure video conferencing. There, sitting in a executive chair, was the Islamic Mahdi.

"There he is, directing his portion of the fight from what must be a formidable and advanced headquarters of some type.

"The very fact that he was prepared to move himself and his staff to such a facility speaks volumes about the man and his resourcefulness, survivability, and planning.

"I may not know where he is, but I'm glad he's still a part of the fight, and didn't just disappear.

"He's a strong ally and I know he'll capably fight and impede the Americans on that southern front, while I concentrate on India, the approaches to Japan and on Siberia."

"Siberia," he thought.

"That vast northern, cold wilderness. So full of resources, so helpful to us... and so remote."

Zenim knew that its very remoteness was a two edged sword. It had helped the CAS when the Russian and American forces were so far removed from it. It hurt them now that those same enemies had invaded it. Siberia was providing his enemies, headed by the angry American Eagle and its sharp talons, and a vengeful Russian bear, avenues leading directly into China itself.

Airborne Russian forces, supported by American technology had landed in the capitol of Omsk, Siberia in October of last year. At the same time, a massive assault, supported by Hail Storm missiles and orbital bombardment had broken huge gap in CAS defenses in the Urals, behind an entire retreating and then surrendering Indian Corps.

Since that time, the Russians and their European allies, had driven across Siberia to Omsk and linked up with the airborne Russian forces there. All efforts by Chinese and Indian troops to flank those forces, or to block them, had been crushed by American support from space and by increasing numbers of Hail Storm missiles. Several of the attempts had been pressed home extremely well and had impeded and slowed the Russian advance, but nothing had been able to stop it.

Now, a formidable Russian and European force was cutting south from Omsk, clearly intent on invading Mongolia and ultimately intent of the invasion of China itself from the north.

The most critical offensive against Chinese forces was being waged from the eastern reaches of China where the Americans had established their beachhead. At that time they had completely flanked and cut-off Chinese forces that had invaded Alaska, advancing from their positions on the seacoast of Siberia northward into the staging and logistical areas of the Chinese force in Alaska.

After the defeat of those forces, the Americans had turned their interest westward, towards China. All along that path the Chinese had resisted heavily. Some of the most viscous and long lasting fighting of the war had occurred in this area. The proximity to Chinese airfields and missile emplacements meant that a steady stream of air and missile attacks harassed and punished the Americans. But, as had been the case in other areas, the Americans Hail Storm missiles technology and their orbital bombardment and laser capabilities was proving too much for the Chinese defenses.

Now, this deadly American dagger was poised on the Chinese border itself, pointing towards Manchuria and then Beijing itself. Although Chinese attack operations continued unabated, Zenim knew as he looked at the digital display depicting the most up to date strategic information on the far wall, that the conditions that the CAS was facing were becoming more and more critical.

Considering the overall situation, and when thinking of the actions that Sayeed had taken, it became clear to Zenim what he and everyone gathered here in this meeting was going to have to do.

"...actions similar to those Sayeed had taken," he thought as he made up his mind.

"The seat of government will have to be moved further to the west, in the interior where we can continue directing operations with the least threat of disruption and danger."

Interrupting the finance minister who was detailing for the group the increasingly dire economic situation as more and more requirements taxed their production capabilities and began to draw into the strategic reserve of the PRC, Jien Zenim addressed him.

"Pardon my intrusion Minister Chu, and thank you for the status. We can all see that our strategic reserve is being diminished across the board, but as a preparation for conditions like this was the very reason we created and maintained it.

"You may be seated."

Then, making his comments to the entire group, he continued.

"Now, let us all be very clear about this, we face dire circumstances and we are relying on our research and development to come up with solutions to the American orbital bombardment, Hail Storm missile and their new submerged task force capabilities. Those particular areas are giving the Americans and their allies a tremendous advantage, despite our own technological innovations.

"In a few minutes, Comrade Lu Pham will present to us the latest condition of our advances and what they can mean to us and how soon they will be available.

"Before we do that, I would like this entire group to consider the possibility of moving, with our entire staffs, further to the west. Specifically I am talking about the ten current facilities we have there, and the eight new facilities under construction there. In order to facilitate this, I intend to order all construction on other facilities to cease except for cosmetically completing those facilities to the point of fooling the future operations of the Americans and their allies.

"In fact, if we are wise, we may leak some information to them in order to test those facilities against the orbital bombardment the Americans surely plan for them. In this fashion we will be able to make whatever adjustments necessary to the actual facilities."

To his surprise, before he could continue, Jien Zenim found himself being interrupted.

Hassan Sayeed spoke up over the video conferencing link from his own command facility.

"Mr. President, excuse me for the interruption.

"I believe your idea is a good one. In order to facilitate it, we must buy time so we can develop and then implement plans that will first halt, and then throw back the oncoming enemy forces.

"I would like to give this entire body a briefing on a plan that I have ordered implemented that has the power to do this. It is a plan that will be conducted within the borders of our enemies...and not only within the United States, but within the borders of all of our major western enemies.

"It is an operation that will most surely give them pause in their advance...and potentially it will have the power to defeat them. It will strike fear and terror into their population, and may well destroy a majority of their populations."

As Hasan Sayeed made this pronouncement, the intake of breath from several in attendance was audible. The looks of incredulity on their faces was also very apparent.

After a brief pause, Sayeed continued.

“Yes, I said a majority of their populations

“In so doing, it will also paralyze their manufacturing, their economics, their transportation and every aspect of their societies.

“Without discussing the specific details regarding the operation itself or its exact timing, let me explain the basic nature and timing, which is imminent, so you can be prepared to take advantage of it.

“I will also ensure that our scientists make available to you and your scientists the measures you can use to protect yourselves and your people from any unintended harm that the operations may inadvertently cause your own people.”

**May 9, 23:00, Local time**

**Presidential Quarters**

**Secret Hardened Facility, 100 km North of Beijing**

As he prepared to retire for the night, Jien Zenim was amazed at the audacity of Sayeed's plan, particularly now that the two of them had spoken and he had be appraised of its finer points.

“It just might work,” he thought.

But they only had a week to prepare...and that was not nearly enough time to get as ready as they would otherwise like to do. The ramifications on their own population and leadership could be extreme if they weren't ready when the storm hit that this operation was sure to generate.

“But, still, I can understand Hasan's reluctance to speak of it earlier. The potential for leaks to the Americans was just too great.

“In fact, I am surprised that he gave us any warning. He must think that the operation, with the few details he has divulged, at this point is beyond being compromised.”

The more he thought about it, the more impressed he was...and the more concerned.

He was worried about what the allied response, particularly the American response would be.

He remained impressed as he thought about the preparation, the compartmentalization, and the control over long years. All of that was something he never would have believed the Islamic intelligence services capable of. In addition, the communication channels back to the clerics and mullahs throughout the Middle East who were prepared, on the signal of the attack to rouse the people to rise up in insurgency, was also impressive.

“Sayeed must have an especially effective...what would the Americans call it?

“Yes...an especially effective grapevine to pull this off without a leak,” he continued to himself.

Yet, as he thought about it, perhaps that aspect of it was not so surprising after all. His own intelligence services had reported to him at the time, that before 911, many more people on the Arab street were aware of the planned attacks than could be imagined. They may not have known the exact date, or the exact method, but they had definitely known something was coming.

Based on what Sayeed had told him today, clearly something like that was going on in the Arab and Islamic world with this attack too. Additionally, Sayeed wanted to coordinate the response even further by having the remaining GIR armies, the Indian armies and the Chinese armies coordinate an all-out attack against allied forces in conjunction with the upcoming operation...something planned to maximize the loss of moral the allied forces were sure to experience when they found out about the devastation of their homelands.

“Yes, if we time it right, and if it is effective enough, it just might work after all.”

Later, as the operation and its effectiveness unfolded, Jien Zenim would wish with all of his being that he had listened more to Lu Pham's objections to the plan during the meeting after Hasan Sayeed had finished. He especially would wish that he had listened to that part of him that registered his own concerns about supporting Sayeed's plan, and how the Americans might respond to *that*.

Instead, Zenim cast all doubt and concern aside and threw every bit of moral, political, and military support he could muster behind Sayeed's operation and the now developing CAS and GIR plans to take advantage of it.

**May 16, 12:00, CST**

**I-70 Bridge over the Mississippi River**

**St. Louis Missouri**

Sloan Jessup drove his late model SUV along the interstate, westbound over the Mississippi River. In the back, packed into a single oversized duffle bag, were thirty small, helium filled balloons. Each balloon was attached to small, light-weight device containing a tiny printed circuit board controlling a timer and a set of small louvered holes on the bottom of a small platform. Each small platform was covered with a heavy cellophane wrapping that was filled with a mixture of the white and gray powders that Sloan had brought with him.

The balloons and their attached devices were small enough that they all fit into the single duffle bag. All of the devices together weighed less than twenty-five pounds and would be easy for him to carry and climb with, which was exactly what he intended to do.

Sloan had carefully mixed the powders late this morning in his hotel room exactly as he had been instructed. He had then carefully filled the cellophane covered devices with the mixture according to the directions he had received and placed them in his car. The mixture included a special binding and acceleration agent that had caused the powders to merge at the molecular level and initiate rapid DNA alterations within the resulting cultures.

Unknown to him, several Iranian scientists had covertly obtained the necessary documentation and samples in Iraq and then continued the biological work of the Iraqis after 2001. By the time the GIR was formed, they had made significant progress towards developing a unprecedented biological binary-agent process. Using the Iraqi anthrax and other pathogens, the GIR scientists found a way to manipulate the DNA strands of the target cultures and apply the necessary agents to accelerate and bind them into something much more lethal. That process had matured to the point of producing the second set of packages that Sloan Jessup and the other Islamic sleeper agents in the west had received.

Soon after the dispersal of these pathogens, an American cruise missile attack had destroyed the main research site outside of Tehran, and killed most of the principle scientists the GIR had employed in the research and development effort. Most of their documentation was destroyed with them.

The GIR literally had this one opportunity to use their weapon against America and their allies.

Now that the agents had been combined, Sloan knew that he only had a matter of hours before his own contact with the powders would begin having an effect on him. After that, he only knew that his own end would come fairly quickly.

"The glory be to Allah," he thought as he stopped his car in the outside lane of westbound traffic.

As traffic piled up behind him, and as sought to get around, Sloan waved them by.

One of them pulled up next to him and a young black man asked,

"Hey there, need some help?"

Sloan concentrated on not showing his nervousness as he replied.

"Oh, no. But thank you.

"The car has just stalled and I believe it may be a vapor lock of some sort. I have a few tools and will just take a look, or wait until it can start again."

As that car drove off, Sloan walked to the front of the car and lifted the hood. He then went around to the passenger side of the vehicle and got the duffle bag out of the back and brought it to the front of the car where he stood, looking under the hood as if trying to fix the problem.

In reality, he was waiting.

More vehicles were held up in traffic behind him and the traffic jam began to grow. To those passing, it seemed like a middle aged man who knew what he was doing was trying to fix his stalled car in that outside lane.

Then, behind him, Sloan heard in the distance the sound he was waiting for. It was the sound of screeching brakes and a collision. Looking to the east he could see that about a quarter mile behind him a car that was attempting to get out of the stalled traffic lane had pulled in front of another car and caused a collision. That collision had caused a chain reaction that ended up blocking all lanes of traffic, just as they were supposed to do.

Now westbound traffic was being stopped completely by the major wreck and Jessup could see people getting out of their cars and rushing around to see if anyone was injured.

Sloan did not know who the others were who assisted him, or where they had come from. He just knew from the messages that he would be helped in some fashion and that he should wait until it occurred. Once it did, Sloan waited another minute or two while the traffic between him and the wreck cleared out. Soon all of the cars behind him had passed, and there were no cars between him and the major wreck behind him.

Upon seeing that his automobile was relatively alone, Sloan left his car and began climbing onto the railing and structure surrounding the support column next to which he had stopped. He had scouted the area yesterday to ensure that he could climb the support structure. In so doing, he found things exactly as they had been described to him.

Once he climbed to a certain level, he reached the access gate to a ladder that led him directly to the top of the column and the support cables that ran along the top. He had to use a large pair of bolt cutters to cut locks off of both the bottom and top access gates to this ladder, but with no one in the near vicinity and the duffle bag draped over his back, he easily accomplished that task.

Standing at the top of the structure, over one hundred and fifty feet above traffic and over three hundred feet above the Mississippi River, Sloan began to release his balloons, one ever twenty seconds as he had been instructed. As they were released from the bridge, each balloon floated lazily out over the river. With the wind eddies around the bridge and the normal gusts, a good deal of separation developed between each of the individual balloons.

All of the balloons and the devices they carried were generally being blown towards the downtown St. Louis area, and the suburbs beyond. As each device moved along in the air, rising

gradually as they went, they slowly began releasing their fine powdery mixture just about the time they crossed over the Mississippi shore.

The biological agent began to drift and settle to earth. Barely noticeable, it gently settled on homes, cars, streets, warehouses...and on the people along the path of each balloon.

### **May 16, that same time**

#### **I-70, East of Sloan Jessup's Vehicle**

##### **St. Louis Missouri**

Deputy Haggerty had his emergency lights on and was occasionally sounding his siren and blowing his horn as he approached the site of the wreck. He had been dispatched to the site of the wreck moments ago after a cell phone caller had reported it to the 9-11 dispatcher who, in turn, had routed it to the Highway Patrol.

Haggerty had already been approaching the bridge eastbound on I-70 and it was a simple matter of driving up to the wreck in the opposite lanes and then using one of the *Emergency Vehicle Only* crossovers near to the wreck to gain access to it.

"And I'll be able to do that in just a moment or two as long as I can navigate the rubber necking backup this wreck is causing," he thought as he approached the location of the wreck.

"This one right here should do," he said out loud to himself as he slowed his cruiser and turned into a crossover almost a half mile west of the wreck.

As he did so, he reported in.

"Dispatch, this is 33-17, now coming up on the scene of the accident."

The response was almost immediate.

"Dispatch copies 33-17, approaching the scene of the accident on the I-70 bridge."

As he proceeded eastbound in the westbound lanes, Haggerty saw a single car, with its hood up, parked in the outside lane a little less than a quarter of a mile from the wreck. He could not see anyone around the car.

"Dispatch, 33-70.

"Be advised, I have a single stalled automobile with no occupant, stopped in the outside lane of I-70 westbound. Between the state line and mile marker one."

After a brief pause of perhaps five seconds, the Highway Patrol dispatcher responded.

"Dispatch copies."

Haggerty pulled up to the wreck and stopped. He got out to appraise the situation and check for major injuries. Thankfully, there were none outside of some bruises and a few minor cuts and scrapes.

The three vehicles involved straddled all three lanes of traffic and were locking them all.

Haggerty told the drivers of the vehicles to wait just a moment, and he called in to dispatch again, this time using his lapel mounted microphone.

"Dispatch, 33-70. We have no injuries here. No ambulances or EMT required.

"We are going to need three wreckers. Have them approach using I-70 eastbound and then use the first crossover after the state line on the Missouri side and proceed eastbound in the westbound lanes to the scene of the accident."

After hearing that dispatch understood his requests, the deputy began to walk over to the first wrecked vehicle. Then he realized that he would need some more documentation, measuring devices, and flares from his vehicle and he turned back towards his cruise.

When he did so, he remembered the solitary vehicle with its hood up further down the road.

Looking that way, he could see that the stalled vehicle was still there...and then he noticed movement at the top of the support column on this side of the freeway in his peripheral vision. Looking closely, he saw a single individual on the very top of the column releasing what looked like balloons into the air.

Looking more closely, he could see that the man was releasing something more than balloons. There appeared to be some sort of platform suspended below each balloon. There was a line of several of them now stretching out in the air, over the Mississippi River, far out and away from the bridge towards...downtown St. Louis!

### **May 16, five minutes later**

#### **On the I-70 Bridge near the wreck**

##### **Over the Mississippi River, St. Louis Missouri**

After receiving a frantic call from Deputy Haggerty, the Sheriff's dispatch had relayed the basic information relating to the call, and then the call itself, directly to the St. Louis Regional Crisis Center for the Department of Homeland Security. The dispatcher there immediately advised her superior, the current duty officer, of the situation who immediately got on the radio with Haggerty.

Upon hearing the description of the objects the individual was releasing, and then hearing that the individual was releasing them in an orderly fashion, the duty officer immediately instructed Deputy Haggerty to use whatever means necessary, up to and including deadly force, to stop the individual from releasing any more objects.

After issuing those orders to the deputy, the duty officer requested that the Sheriff confirm the orders, and then the duty officer began coordinating other resources to address the crisis. This included reporting the situation up his chain of command to the National Crisis Center, talking to the duty watch at NORCOMM, and speaking with local and state agencies.

The Sheriff, who had had listened to the conversation, and respecting the duty officer's recognition of proper protocol, confirmed the orders to his Deputy.

Haggerty, who years earlier had qualified as a marksman in the United States Army as a Ranger, and who maintained that classification within the Sheriff's department even at his current age of forty-six, immediately drove his vehicle over to the stalled car. Upon getting there, he got a Bull Horn from the backseat of his cruiser, and then got out and went to the rear of the vehicle and opened the trunk.

From the trunk, he retrieved a special, law enforcement version of the Ruger Mini-14 rifle. The rifle differed from the stock Mini-14 in that it had a three-way selector switch that allowed for single shot, semi-automatic, or full automatic operation. It also differed because it had a special, longer and thicker tactical barrel on it. This heavier barrel allowed the Mini-14 to maintain better accuracy than the stock Mini-14. With a lighter, shorter barrel, the stock variety was known for heating up after several shots and becoming less accurate.

Grabbing several thirty round clips, Haggerty positioned himself for a clear shot of the perpetrator, who had just released another balloon. Feeling ready to confront the individual, Officer Haggerty turned on his Bull Horn and spoke.

"You there, on top of the support column.

"Immediately cease releasing those balloons. If you attempt to release another one, I will be forced to shoot to kill.

"Drop the duffle bag on top of the structure, keep your hands away from it, and start down the ladder, now!"

### **May 16, that same time**

#### **On top of the I-70 Bridge Support Column**

#### **Over the Mississippi River, St. Louis Missouri**

When deputy Haggerty spoke through the megaphone, Sloan immediately looked down and saw the officer and noticed the rifle.

Without having to think about, Jessup immediately dropped down on his stomach, laying prone on top of the structure. He knew in this position, that the officer could not see him and he would have another few minutes to release more balloons according to the pattern he had been instructed.

A loud ping on the side of the column near his feet sounded almost simultaneously with the crack of the deputy's rifle.

Then another shot...and another.

Sloan felt a tug on his back and realized that the top of the duffle bag was probably visible to the deputy. He carefully removed the bag, taking it off his shoulder and laid it out next to him. There was a neat hole through the upper back of the bag, but no balloons had been hit.

Sloan released another balloon over the side of the column.

A shot rang out almost immediately and the balloon simply disappeared as it was exploded by the high velocity round and its device fell to the freeway below, showering Haggerty and the opposite lanes of traffic with its deadly mix.

The sound of an approaching helicopter told Sloan that he had even less time than he had thought. Rather than risk the balloons being picked off one by one, Sloan made the decision to release them all at once.

Opening the mouth of the duffle bag completely, Sloan pulled the last nine devices from the bag and then pushed them all over the side of the column at the same time into the air.

Another shot rang out, than another and another. Three devices fell, each one a little further away from the interstate towards St Louis. Then the shots began to miss as wind current moved the devices around, making them harder to hit.

Before Haggerty stopped shooting, three more devices had been brought down over the Mississippi River...but three others escaped destruction and joined the other twenty one devices on their way to St. Louis. Several of them were already over the city, releasing their cargo.

A military helicopter pulled up near the column, with a sniper hanging over its side, strapped to the interior compartment. Another voice spoke through a megaphone and issued stern instructions for Jessup to either cease his activities, not move and lay prone, or to be shot dead on the spot.

Rather than comply, Sloan Jessup, convert to Islam and soldier for Allah, simply rolled off the column and fell, not to the waters of the Mississippi River which may have offered some chance for his survival, regardless of how small, but to the pavement of the Interstate Highway below.

As Deputy Haggerty, who himself was a walking dead man...he just didn't know it yet...watched the perpetrator bounce off several support beams and then hit the pavement, he knew immediately that there was no chance of survival.



He called the Sheriff's dispatch and reported that the standoff situation had ended and was now under control. The Sheriff himself, as well as the Crisis Control Center were both listening for any report coming from the scene. Upon hearing that the immediate situation had been resolved, the Sheriff thanked Haggerty and told him he had done a fine job.

But in reality, the situation was anything but under control, it had really only just begun. Over the next several weeks, the deadly situation triggered by the release of this substance by Sloan Jessup and his compatriots would rage completely out of control throughout the free world, and it would lead to the most horrific warfare ever fought by mankind.

**May 16, 18:45 EST**

**Air Force One**

**Over Madison, Wisconsin**

"Alright everybody, for right now, let's just stick to the basics of what we know."

President John Bowers was sitting in his office on Air Force One, having been whisked away by the Secret Service from an economic summit in Minneapolis two hours ago. He had his Chief of Staff, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Commerce, and the Secretary of the Housing and Urban Development with him, who were also seated with him in the office now.

There were twelve screens set into the wall across the room from the President's desk. All of those present in the room were facing these screens, eleven of which displayed the real time images of other members of the President's cabinet, high ranking members of the National Security Council, or other individuals critical to the discussion. These included the Vice President, the Secretary of Defense, the Director of Homeland Security, the Director of the FBI, the Director of the CIA, the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Director of the Center for Disease Control, the Attorney General, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CINCNORCOM (The Commander in Chief of NORCOM), and the Secretary of State.

The President did not know all of the details yet, but he knew the situation was serious. Instinctively he knew that his country was under a major attack and he was determined to first understand it, to then counter it and stop the damage and suffering...and then to pay back the enemies who perpetrated it. The purpose of this meeting was to make progress towards the first two goals.

As soon as he had a decent understanding of those first two, he would sit down with the key members of the National Security Counsel and the military and map out an attack plan.

Addressing the Director of the Homeland Security Department, the President spoke.

"Stewart, what do we know regarding the number of incidents?"

The Director of Homeland Security had been conducting his own emergency meetings for the last two hours. In those meetings he had talked significantly with the agencies from the State's affected, the Emergency Preparedness Office for the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, with NORCOM and with several ranking staff members from Health and Human Services.

"Mr. President, we can confirm three incidents here in the United States, with a possible fourth. The confirmed incidents occurred in St. Louis, New York City, and Philadelphia. The unconfirmed report is from San Francisco. Within the hour we have also confirmed a report from Toronto, Canada.

"From the reports we have pieced together, all of these incidents occurred in the separate places within twenty or thirty minutes of each other. There is no doubt it was a concerted effort. Each incident involves the spreading of a very light, airborne substance, delivered by various means.

"Each of the perpetrators was either killed, or committed suicide when approached.

"We are working with local authorities and the FBI at this point to try and identify these people and determine something about their background. None of them had any personal identification on them and for those who had cars, their license plates are a dead end. Either stolen or fabricated."

When Director Langstrom had stopped speaking, the President turned to the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Jill North.

"Secretary North, what is the latest on the symptoms and what we know of the material that these people attacked us with?"

Jill North had been a part of the Weisskopf administration. She had lived with the knowledge that such an attack was possible, even probable, since major hostilities in the Middle East began. She had been surprised, but thankful, that nothing had transpired to date. In the intervening years, she and her staff and the agencies under her, had taken the time to plan and prepare.

But, as symptoms of these incidents were beginning to display themselves and as the disease was spreading, she knew that she could not have been fully prepared for this.

"Mr. President, we are studying the substance. Samples are already in Atlanta and I will let the Director of the CDC address that particular question in just a moment.

"As to the symptoms that victims are displaying...it is extremely troubling and something we need to immediately take into consideration. We may not know at this point exactly what the substance is, but we do know that it is extremely contagious and that it proves to be fatal, very quickly.

"Our most direct example of this occurred with one of our first responders. In St. Louis, the Sheriff's deputy who responded to the incident there, and was personally instrumental in helping end

it, was exposed to a liberal dose of the substance. Within three hours of exposure, he began developing severe flu-like symptoms that led rapidly to severe hemorrhaging and the expulsion of bloody sputum. Most disturbing was a rapid swelling and severe pain in the lymph glands and then the appearance of sores in his mouth and on his skin that rapidly spread over his entire body, these sores rapidly filled with an opaque fluid and then turned into sharply raised pustules.

"This deputy died in great pain less than an hour ago. Several motorists and other officers that the Deputy came in contact with after the incident, and then several of the initial medical workers who dealt with him, have all come down with the same symptoms within the last two hours.

"We are treating all of them now in secure, environmentally controlled facilities. The entire episode, including all incidents are being treated as a class 3 contagion and we are following procedure to cordon off and quarantine areas. We have a major lock down on the city of St. Louis now, where hundreds of cases of these same symptoms have now been reported.

"We are experiencing similar conditions in all of the affected cities. Panic in those areas is becoming a very real concern as people are hearing of the disease and its symptoms, and as they observe official governmental efforts to cordon off areas. The result is that many are trying to leave those areas. The problem is that many of those trying to escape have already been infected."

Let me ask Dr. Slater to step in at this point and talk about the substance itself. Dr. Slater?

Dr. Ian Slater, a medical Doctor, held a PhD. from John Hopkins in the study of contagious pathogens. He had been working with Secretary North for several years to prepare for just this type of an outbreak. That work had included significant coordination and cooperation with the Department of Homeland Security, who coordinated the efforts with the states, and with NORCOMM.

"Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, we have an extremely serious situation on our hands.

"This substance is highly contagious and exhibits very dangerous and quick acting symptoms both in terms of its incubation period, but also in terms of its onset and maturity. In the end, those qualities may actually help us as its spread plays out...but right now, it is hurting us badly, as is evidenced by Secretary North's description of current conditions.

"The agent itself is rather complex. We are almost certain at this point that it is at least a binary agent...perhaps an agent with as many as three or four pathogens factored into it."

The President interrupted briefly at this point.

"Excuse me, Dr. Slater, but for the benefit of those who may not be aware, please explain what you mean when you say it is a binary agent."

The Doctor immediately understood the need to be a more basic in his explanation and complied.

"Certainly, Mr. President.

"A binary agent is one that is activated to its full potential when the two agents are combined. Standing alone, the two agents may or may not be dangerous, but when combined, their threat posed by them usually rises by several orders of magnitude.

"We believe that this is what we are dealing with here.

"We have already isolated *Bacillus anthracis* as one of the agents in this deadly mix. For those of you unaware of the significance of that statement, let me fill you in. *Bacillus anthracis* was the substance that was used in the anthrax attacks in the United States after 911.

"Our test have already indicated that this particular strain is of the same variety as that which was used in 2001. In other words, this substance comes from the same source as that used in 2001."

With this statement by Dr. Slater, several of the individuals in attendance immediately began asking questions, or making statements simultaneously. Several of the attendees literally shouted at the Dr. himself about the sensitive nature of the statement that he had just made.

The President considered the nature of the statement and the security clearances of everyone in attendance. He judged for himself that their clearances were adequate and that there was a definite need to know for everyone on the room, given circumstances. He judged that this warranted him making an important and startling revelation.

"Okay everyone, let's have some order.

"Everyone please be quiet so we can continue."

Once everyone settled down and order was restored, the President continued

"Alright, I am about to make a statement that must be considered by everyone in this meeting to be a Q Class Secret, Eyes Only and Ears Only. You are not to discuss it outside of this meeting, or any other meetings unless they deal specifically with this topic and specifically with the people you know are cleared for this information.

"For all intents in purposes, that only includes the people in this meeting unless you are otherwise informed in person by myself, the Vice President, the Director of Homeland Security, or the Secretary of Defense. I will now ask each of you directly, for the record, if this is clearly understood."

After querying each person regarding their understanding of the statement he had just made, and seeing that everyone had quieted and been sobered by the statement, the President continued.

"In 2001, following the 911 attacks, this nation was subjected to a biological attack by anthrax. It was a small attack and we wondered at the time why a more major attack was not forthcoming.

“The substance that was used was determined by the CDC and by military analysts at the time to be weapons grade material that had originated in our own labs several years earlier. We had given it to a sponsor state for use in their research operations with an agreement that precluded any further development or weaponizing without our express agreement and instruction.

“But the sponsor nation not only developed more of the material, they weaponized it and then attacked us with it after the 911 attacks by bin Laden.

“That nation was Iraq.”

With this revelation, the meeting again descended into chaotic discussions, shouted questions and statements. The President let it go on as a form of relief valve, but then reigned the meeting back in.

“Okay folks, get control of yourselves.

“Please stop the separate discussions and let me continue!

“This information was classified at the highest levels of our government. It was not relayed to the public. I was not a part of the administration at that time, but I can fully understand the need for the sensitivity.

“I can tell you this, the knowledge that I just shared with several of you, was a considerable part of the decision process to invade Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. That was because we knew that Hussein had this material, and we knew that it was the material that had been used to attack us. It was not until late 2002 that a direct link was made between the attack and the Iraqi government.

“This is extremely germane to the current discussion because our own intelligence agencies determined in 2005, while in Iraq, that the material had been moved into Iran before our attack on Iraq, in much the same way that Hussein moved his most modern aircraft into Iran in 1991 during Operation Desert storm.

“Ultimately, with the rise of the GIR, Hassan Sayeed took possession of all of the remaining inventory of that particular strain of anthrax that was used in the attack on America in late 2001.

“Now, in light of this information, Dr. Slater, if you would, please continue.”

Slater himself had not been aware of the complete story, he had just known that the material had originated in U.S. military labs and been transferred to Iraq during the period of time when the United States helped Iraq in an effort to balance the region against Iran and the Ayatollah Khomeini.

“Well, as I stated, this strain of anthrax has already been identified and we believe that there are at least two, maybe even three other substances included in the overall agent.

“The symptoms suggest the plague and small pox, but we are not entirely positive about that yet.

“In addition, as I stated, the incubation period and onset of symptoms and their maturity seem to be vastly accelerated through a DNA altering and acceleration process we are not familiar with.

“Apparently these unknown DNA altering accelerants are introduced to the pathogens. When they are mixed together under the right conditions, an extremely fast acting, extremely contagious, and an extremely lethal biological weapon, with the characteristics I have described, is the end result.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I cannot over emphasize the seriousness of this attack. As time goes on we will learn more about the substance, we will decode it, and we will find ways to defeat it. Right now, we must arrest its spread and that is going to take extraordinary efforts. I have to tell you, in my professional and considered opinion, that even with our best efforts, there are going to be a large number of fatalities in the infected areas...a very large number.”

The meeting was quiet as everyone absorbed the impact of Dr. Slater's statement. But the meeting had to go on and the President took the lead in getting the discussion back on track.

Turning to his Chief of Staff, Talbot Johnson

“Talbot, prepare Executive Order T2500 for my signature, declaring a National Emergency over this attack and that invokes all provisions of the Presidential Directives associated with National Emergency Operation *Barrier*. Make sure the wording implements Executive Orders 10990, 11001, 11003, 11004, 11005, 11049, and 11310 specific to this situation in the effected areas and any surrounding areas up to a two hundred miles radius. Ensure there are provisions to expand that radius as the situation warrants it.

“Have that Order ready for me to sign by 2000 hours including the removal of its temporary designation and logging it under its official national registry number.”

Responding to the questioning look from several of the attendees, the President addressed them.

“Folks, the Executive Order that I am directing Talbot to prepare will officially implement the quarantine orders and national emergency plan on the designated cities. Each of those areas, based on the orders of the CDC, the Department of Health, FEMA and Homeland Security are already being physically quarantined even as we speak.

“What this Executive Order will do, in addition to continuing, expanding and accelerating the quarantine operations, is that it will allow the government to take over all communications, all transportation, all emergency and hospital health services, and all emergency response in the impacted areas. We will use the current providers, but their actions, by law, will be directed and coordinated by the CDC, FEMA, and the Department of Homeland Security.

“Martial law will be declared, curfews will be instituted and strictly enforced...up to an including the use of deadly force. Local, State and Federal agencies will all work together in implementing this. The cordoned off areas will have the quarantine enforced in the same manner.

“Announcements over radio stations, TV stations, and in the local newspapers will be made immediately, by special edition if necessary. Vehicles and aircraft will announce the situation and provisions by loud speaker and mega-phone twenty-four hours a day.

“The National Guard and elements of the regular services from NORCOM will be called up to assist in the martial law, the curfews and the quarantine. They will provide security at power plants, government offices, banks, malls, shopping centers, and major food stores. Units operating in infected areas will wear full bio-gear and will be subjected to decontamination and chemical check and analysis before exiting. Even then, those units will reside in fully quarantined areas during off hours.

“Folks, this is not going to be easy. We’ve all drawn up plans regarding just this type of scenario. We all expected it sooner in this war, and perhaps, with the successes we have been having, thought that the danger of this may well have passed.

“Today we have found out that this is not so and now it is time to put our plans into effect.

“Dr. Slater, please let us all know the moment you have more information about what we are facing and how we can counter it. In the mean time, Jeremy, work with Ben to draw up a full response to this using our space based assets and our Tridents. I want to know who instigated it.

“I will address the nation tonight at 2200 hours.

“Are there any other comments or questions?”

The Secretary of Defense, Jeremy Stone, motioned with his hand, and upon being recognized by the President, he addressed the entire group.

“Just briefly, Mr. President.

“Before coming in to the meeting I was informed by the National Reconnaissance Office, by SPACOM, and by several of our other intelligence assets, that the CAS, particularly the People’s Republic of China, GIR forces, and numerous insurgency elements in already occupied lands are in the process of vast and imminent preparedness.

“I expect within twelve to twenty-four hours we are going to see a massive offensive directed against us across the board.

“In addition, I was just able to confirm reports of major uprising in many of the more fundamental towns and cities of Iraq, Syria, and Iran. There has been significant damage to infrastructure that had been repaired and there is significant loss of life amongst relief workers and some allied forces that have been isolated in the attacks.

“Given this, and given the positioning of enemy military forces engaged with our forces at the front, their generally weak defensive posturing, and their logistical situation, I find all of this extraordinary. I can’t believe that it is a coincidence that this is occurring at this time, in conjunction with these biological attacks.”

The President considered his good friend’s words. For many years, while John Bowers had himself been a junior officer in the military, Jeremy Stone had been a General Officer, ultimately rising to be the Chairman of the Army and then the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs...now he was John Bowers own choice for the Secretary of Defense. The President had tremendous respect for Stone’s military knowledge, his intuition and his wisdom.

“Have our forces deal harshly with the uprisings in Iraq, Iran and Syria, Jeremy. In areas where *Ruthless Sentinel* may have been suspended, re-institute it. Immediately. It is a shame that these radicals and fundamental Islamics have not learned their lesson. We will not risk allied lives to try and negotiate with or pacify them. Until they come to us from out of these particular towns and cities willing to submit themselves to abject unconditional surrender, have the Predator IVs and, if necessary, full-scale Hail Storm missile attacks do out talking and negotiating for us.

“Regarding the buildup of their forces at the front, I guess it could be a coincidence Jeremy...perhaps they want to simply try and overwhelm our space based and hail storm capabilities and make a breakthrough somewhere. In that case I would watch closely where they start their attacks, figuring that those attacks may just be diversions meant to soak up our orbital bombardment and Hail Storm missiles. Their principle targets would likely be elsewhere.

“Having said that, I tend to agree with you.

“I do not believe it is a coincidence that they would be gearing up for a global offensive within a few hours of this level of biological attack.

“Make sure our Theater Missile Defense capabilities are primed in all theaters. Our response is likely going to invoke the need for that protection. Make sure we do the same for the offshore and onshore AEGIS sites here in the CONUS, and make sure General Percifer with SPACOM has all of his ducks in a row for laser defense of the Continental United States and other theaters.”

## May 17-June 8

### The great Biological attack of World War III

In the United States, the advance of the disease was rapid. In several cases, infected people had already left the cordoned off areas before they could be stopped and the disease rapidly spread wherever they went. Major *hot spots* of disease infection developed around each of the initial sites and in the towns in between.

From San Francisco, the disease spread across the bay to Oakland and San Jose, it spread south to Santa Cruz and north to Santa Rosa, and then east to Sacramento, and the numerous smaller towns in between. It then progressed to Reno Nevada and Bend, Oregon and the areas immediately surrounding them before being arrested on the west coast.

In St. Louis, the spread of the disease was particularly horrific because the deliver mechanism spread it over such a large geographical area before it could be stopped. Major Missouri hot spots developed in the large metropolitan area of Kansas City, downstream in Cape Girardeau, and in Springfield. The disease also jumped the Mississippi River into East St. Louis, Illinois and down stream to Paducah, Kentucky.

In the New York City area, the number of infected people was the largest as the substance was released from several high rise buildings without being impeded at all. Hot spots developed at White Plains and on Long Island. The disease jumped the Hudson River quickly and took hold in Jersey City and in Newark, New Jersey. More hot spots developed as far out as Bridgeport, Connecticut and Paterson, New Jersey.

From Philadelphia, predictably, and perhaps as planned, the disease rapidly marched south towards the nations capitol. Wilmington, Delaware was infected, then Aberdeen, Maryland, and finally Baltimore, Maryland. A monumental effort was made all along the Patuxent River in Maryland to stop the spread before it reached Washington, D.C. The effort was successful, but not before numerous people had to be shot while attempting to cross the line between Maryland City and Laurel. From Philadelphia the disease also spread north to Trenton, New Jersey and into the interior of Pennsylvania, infecting Allentown, Reading, Lancaster, and York before being halted.

Road blocks were established further and further out from the infected areas in an attempt to ensure that anyone who could possibly have been infected were stopped before spreading the disease further. As Dr. Slater had suggested, the rapid incubation and onset of the disease ended up helping in this regard because people could not get as far before exhibiting signs of the disease.

To help in this, the executive order President Bowers signed, and which he explained in full in his address to the nation on the 16<sup>th</sup>, went into full effect on the 17<sup>th</sup>. By that afternoon all transportation was halted within three hundred miles of any infected areas, except for biologically protected law enforcement agency personnel, or other personnel working for government agencies directly involved with addressing the situation.

In those areas of the country infected by the disease, all commerce ceased and the negative economic impact grew to dangerous proportions. Commerce simply could not continue as heads of households, business owners, workers, and others gathered their own around them and sought to isolate themselves from others to prevent the spread of the disease. For the most part, and based on the advice of the government agencies, this meant staying at home and using the phone to call emergency numbers for food or medical care. But in all too many cases, and as time dragged on without complete help being available, massive numbers of deaths occurred in rioting, looting, stealing, murdering for food or medicine, and as people, in desperation tried to break through the barricades and defenses set up at the perimeter of the quarantined areas.

For those seeking help, and for those personnel guarding the other parts of the countryside that were not infected, it was a heartbreaking and gut wrenching business.

The entire attempt to contain the disease and then help those infected was a monumental effort, and as Hasan Sayeed had foreseen, and as Jien Zenim recognized, the effort required literally millions of personnel. To cordon off the areas effected and then administer help and aid to the roughly twenty million people living in those areas infected by the disease stretched the nation, despite its war footing, to its breaking point. The National Guard and military reserve were employed, Home Guard personnel were called up to unprecedented full-time duty, military leaves were canceled, units about to depart for foreign theaters were rerouted to help at home. America's ability to continue its ground and sea offensive against the CAS and GIR was negatively impacted.

But if Hasan Sayeed and Jien Zenim thought for an instant that this would impede an American response, they both were terribly mistaken, as future events would make clear.

The CDC did a heroic job of identifying the pathogens and how they were working together. In addition to the *Bacillus anthracis* anthrax that was identified that first day, based on the symptoms, it was quickly determined that *Variola major* – *hemorrhagic*, the most fatal version of small pox, and *Yersinia pestis*, commonly known as the Plague, had all been involved in the weapon that was employed against the United States and the rest of the free world.

Exactly what accelerants were used and what form of genetic alterations the enemy had made to these diseases would not be known for over a year. But within a week it was determined that the anthrax and plague could be prevented, and at certain stages of the incubation, treated, with the right antibiotics. Both were able to be completely prevented with the right vaccinations before infection.

The only treatment for the small pox, which was the most lethal ingredient to the mix, was for the person to either have been vaccinated beforehand, or for the individual to survive the disease itself. With the form of small pox deployed in the weapon, the mortality rate ended up being almost 90%.

In Toronto, the disease was almost completely restricted to the metropolitan area itself. One terrible exception was when a family of seven left the area before the quarantine could be adequately completed and drove the entire distance to Montreal. They were deathly sick when they arrived. First relatives, then friends, and then medical staff who tried to help them were infected before the outbreak there was recognized. Those people in turn infected more and more people and ultimately all of Montreal had to be cordoned off while the authorities fought the disease in both cities in Canada.

In Europe, large areas around London, Paris, and Rome were infected. In Germany the outbreak occurred in Mannheim but spread to Karlsruhe and Heidelberg before it could be stopped. In Russia, St. Petersburg and Moscow were hit hard. The English and French had very effective anti-biological warfare plans and agencies in place, as did Germany and were able to mitigate what would otherwise have been an even more horrible disaster. But in Russia, large areas of the countryside around the two major cities were infected before a sufficiently large and impenetrable perimeter could be established.

By the end of the first week in June, the worst of it was over. Spread of the disease had been halted and the rampage had run its course with those who had been infected. By that time, emergency and governmental personnel had established enough aide stations that were well enough supplied to feed those who remained. Vaccines and antibodies were finally available in sufficient supply so that the entire population could receive the appropriate doses if they so desired. Most chose to do so.

It would take another nine to twelve months before anything close to normal day to day living would be re-established. There was just too much damage, there had been too many deaths and there was just too much work to do to make it possible to return to *normal* any sooner. If indeed things would ever be *normal* again. But, by June 8<sup>th</sup>, the clean-up could at least begin.

The clean-up job itself proved to be as monumental a task, if not more so, than the effort to stop the spread of the disease, cordon off those areas infected and provide food and necessary, life-sustaining services to the victims within those areas until the disease could run its course. There were millions of dead bodies, animal and human, that had not been buried or otherwise properly disposed of. This in itself caused outbreaks of all manner of disease and other health concerns.

There were tons and tons of food that had gone bad. Most services had broken down or been destroyed in rioting and looting. There was wide spread property damage.

There were whole neighborhoods and small towns whose entire population had been wiped out.

As the workers went into these areas they saw the horrors for themselves, or were told of the unbelievable carnage that had existed while the disease ran its course. Collectively, a name began to develop for this period in the free world when so many were killed or injured by this act of war. It was called the *Great ThraxPox Plague of World War III*.

The numbers were staggering.

In the United States alone, over eight million people contracted the disease and just over seven million of those died. Another million died in the rioting, looting, murdering, hunger, thirst and in the other outbreaks of diseases associated with the effects of the attack. Over eight million Americans lost their lives in a single attack over a four week period.

Nothing like it had ever occurred in America before. Not even the great civil war, or as some called it, the war between the states, of 1861-1865 could compare. All of the wars the United States had been involved in its history combined, outside of this one, did not produce the horrible carnage that could remotely compare to this.

The impact to the national consciousness from such a wide spread catastrophe was deep and abiding. Entire histories, novels, series of novels, and large studies would be devoted to the attack and its impact for decades to come. The stories of the suffering and survival of the victims and those attempting to help them or prevent the spread of the plague would ultimately be spread down through generations. No one would have to utter it, it would be imbedded in the resulting psyche of the nation.

*Never, never forget! and Never, never again!*

In the rest of the world, the attack was even more horrific.

Over fifteen million people in those other nations died, a disproportionate number of those in Russia where emergency services and preparation were still not as advanced as in the western nations. Like in the United States, the effort to address the attack itself and then its aftermath was tremendous and taxing. Offensive operations were suspended and the allied nation held their ground, while they gathered information on the attack and the attackers, and prepared their response.

As it turned out, holding their ground was not so easily accomplished. The CAS and GIR armies came boiling out of their own defensive postures and attacked allied position relentlessly in India, Australia, in the islands of the Pacific, north of Manchuria and in Siberia north of Mongolia. In many

instances, despite orbital bombardment, Hail Storm missiles and conventional defenses, the overwhelming numbers of personnel and equipment being produced within the factories of the CAS and being drawn from strategic reserves, pushed the western allies back.

A significant bulge developed in the middle of the line in India. Under the onslaught of literally millions of Chinese and Indian troops, allied forces were driven into a hard fought and begrudging retreat. The allies finally thinned out the ranks of their attackers sufficiently to stiffen up and hold in the streets of Bangalore.

In Australia, the result of the counter attack was a halt in the allied advance. Perth, which had been liberated by the allies two months before, was again overrun by Indian and Chinese troops and armed civilians. The street to street fighting was intense. Before it ended around June 1<sup>st</sup> with the CAS forces retreating along the coast to the north, the city had been laid waste and was in ruins.

In Siberia a large pocket of Russian and European Union troops was flanked and then surrounded. Over half a million were caught in the pocket that was cut off as over a million allied personnel withdrew one hundred miles to the north into defensive positions and used air power to try and lend support to their surrounded comrades. No quarter was offered and none was requested. The entire Russian and European Army Group fought to the death, inflicting over two million casualties on the Chinese before they succumbed to the hordes of Chinese forces and equipment.

In Manchuria, a large, two million man Chinese force attacked into the teeth of American technology and firepower. But four hundred thousand had to give way before the two million and the Americans were pushed back sixty miles to the north of the border where they established adequate defensive lines to hold the Chinese at bay as orbital projectiles and large attacks of Hail Storm missiles prevented the Chinese from overrunning the American position.

During this time, SPACOM successfully launched and inserted two new space stations that would prove highly destructive to the Chinese. One was in orbit directly over northern Japan, the other was placed in orbit over the South China Sea. From those positions, the Americans were able to defend allied task forces anywhere in the western Pacific theater.

Though the Chinese launched hordes of missiles at the stations, they were unsuccessful in damaging or impeding their operations.

### **June 12, 21:20, Local Time**

#### **15 km north of the Heavily Fortified Command Bunker**

#### **Muller Mountains, 35 km Northwest of Kualakurun, Indonesia**

Major Riley Adams was once again doing what he knew best, and what he loved the most. Deep in Indian Country, as enemy territory was called by people in his line of work, he was scouting out and performing valuable reconnaissance and surveillance of a high value and important enemy target.

"...and in this case, it is a target that is about as high value as they come, and it is one I have watched before," he thought as he reflected back five and a half years to the moment when he and Tony Davis had been operating in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq.

"Tony had this same Sayeed, in his sights and was ready to pull the trigger when that traitor Talabari offed him and went over to the other side."

Those events had ultimately led to completion of Hasan Sayeed's rise to power and the complete formation of the Greater Islamic Republic. It had led to World War that had raged now for six years...and it had ultimately led to Adams himself getting the opportunity to administer justice and payback to Talabari in Tbilisi, Georgia.

"How many people could have been saved, how much suffering could have been spared had we just got this guy back then," the Major wondered?

"Maybe not all of it, because Jien Zenim and the Chinese were going to do their thing in either case...but it would have saved a lot and made the job of beating the Chinese a lot easier."

But now, after today's observations, Adams was sure that Sayeed was in this particular facility.

It looked innocuous enough from this distance. A simple entry into the mountain at the end of a single lane, mountain road. A very small guard detachment, no more than six men at that entrance at any one time and very few people going in and out.

But when you looked closer, you could see that the road itself was much more than a simple country lane here in the middle of the wilds of Indonesia. The drainage for the road was excellent.

After careful study it was clear that someone had spent a lot of time and dollars building that road and contouring and then re-vegetating the cuts through the hills. In addition, the culverts, bridges, and roadway support was first rate and professionally disguised to make them be hard to spot from the air.

Adams was looking at it from the vantage point of another mountain side, a vantage he himself had chosen to give him the clearest view possible of the road and the entry.

"The road alone has to be worth millions way out here.

"And it is uncharted, meaning it has been built in the course of this war after our satellite coverage was down."

Unless he had been made aware of it by a local villager whose family had disappeared while working on the project four years ago, Adams would never have found it.

This was the third such facility he had observed. His hopes had been high at the other two when he witnessed a lot of official looking activity. He had watched and watched and no one official had ever entered or exited the facilities on those other islands.

If it had been almost any other operative, they might have been fooled. But Adams and his single security NCO had been up close, within hearing distance, and had listened to the guards talk and joke amongst themselves.

They had all been far too at ease for the main man to have been in there, he thought.

But that's not the way it is here.

At this facility, there was very little fanfare. But when Adams had been close, he found that these people were all business. Not at ease whatsoever. They were strung as tight as a bow string.

Then today, his patience had finally been rewarded. After two and a half weeks of observing here, he had finally seen a small party come out of the entry and move up a trail on this side of the mountain. Four security personnel had accompanied the party directly while at least eight or ten others had fanned out into the brush both above and below the party for several hundred yards.

The communications link had also let him know that in conjunction with the exit from the facility of this party, a large flight of GIR aircraft, the most modern ones they had, had taken up a CAP position over the mountain.

"Thank goodness we have our station up over the South China Sea," he thought.

"There's so much more to see when you have a bird's eye view like that."

From a range of a little over two kilometers, he had used the optical and digital enhancement capabilities of his surveillance gear to enhance the image of those he was watching. Then he had taken a close look at each of the principle personnel in the party. It wasn't clear to him why they had exited the facility or what they were inspecting, perhaps there was a radar site or air duct up there.

But he did know that the third man he looked at was Sayeed.

He had reported it in with a simple phrase.

"Control, the Mullah is in the hole," which he followed with the exact GPS coordinates of the entry and the mountain itself, including a digital terrain model of the mountain.

Now, as he had been ordered to do, he had moved back to this more remote position to continue with his observations and reports until ordered to do otherwise.

Despite those orders, Adams knew that they had found the big bad dog of the GIR and he couldn't help but think that real soon, something would be along to put the rabid dog down.

And he was right.

**June 14, 12:00, EDT**

**Oval Office, The White House**

**Washington, DC**

President John Bowers looked very serious as he stared into the camera and started his address to the nation and to the world. It was a message meant as much for his enemies as it was for his friends, compatriots, allies and countrymen.

"My fellow American, allies, and friends.

"Tonight I speak not only to you, but to our enemies. In particular I want Jien Zenim and Hasan Sayeed and their fellow tyrants, henchmen and underlings to hear what I have to say and to understand the deadly seriousness with which I speak.

"In the middle of last month the United States and our allies were attacked mercilessly by our enemies who employed biological weapons of mass destruction. The death toll has been beyond imagination. Literally millions of our fellow citizens are dead and large areas of the country have been rendered idled and devastated.

"I will address more fully the specifics of our domestic response, our relief efforts and the progress we are making in each area at another time, with another talk to you my fellow Americans.

"Tonight I want to talk about our international...our military response to the enemies who attacked us in the dastardly and horrendous manner.

"Our enemies thought that such an attack would force us to negotiate. They thought that we would be cowed by such an attack. They feel, even at this late date, even after so much has transpired, that we are weak and we are soft.

"They have learned nothing and they could not be more wrong.

"A great occupant of this office said a number of years ago after a similar, but less horrific attack.

"*Today we pray, tomorrow we fight.*"

"Well, today I say to all within the sound of my voice, including the animals who perpetrated or supported this barbarity.

"Today we shall fight while we pray!

"I am issuing an ultimatum to the Coalition of Asian States and to the Greater Islamic Republic.

"Surrender now, today, this moment...or die.

"You must offer up your unilateral surrender within twenty-four hours or you and your people will face a retribution like none other this world has ever seen. Nuclear hell-fire and orbital



bombardment will commence starting tomorrow on your capitols, on your manufacturing centers, on your economic centers, on your armies and navies and on your persons.

“The United States is in the position to prevent you from attacking us in a like manner and we will use those land based, sea based and space based assets at our disposal to completely intercept and interdict any return fire or counter launches we observe.,

“You lie helpless and prostrate before us. I say again, after the loss of millions of our own, whose blood literally cry from the ground for our righteous retribution, surrender now, or die.

“In order to punctuate the reality of this ultimatum and the firmness of our commitment, I will now show you all a real time display of an attack we are making on the principle perpetrator of this horrible attack at this very moment.

“Enemies of American and liberty, watch and learn.”

The President turned to a black screen on the wall which lit up with a live video feed as he watched. The camera zoomed in on that display and the picture showed a lush, jungle-covered mountain with the following caption under it:

**Hassan Sayeed's Command Bunker  
The Muller Mountains near Kualakurun, Indonesia.**

The display centered on a large concrete reinforced, metal entry door set in the side of the mountain with a paved road leading to it. It was dark outside, but with the infrared imagery the audience could easily make out the guard post several hundred feet in front of the entrance.

Over the space of several seconds it became apparent that the landscape was lighting up in an unnatural way. It was occurring far too quickly and the hues of color were unnatural for a normal sun rise. Soon, the camera caught, in its upper left corner, the unbelievably fast approach of a tremendous meteor-like object...and that when the entry to the bunker slid open.

The entry door rose swiftly on its tracks as it was opened from inside. Before it was fully opened, a group of men was seen rapidly exiting the bunker, running towards a waiting, armored SUV that had just driven up. As they reached the SUV, and its doors were jerked opened for them to get inside, the display zoomed in on one of the individuals in particular.

That person had stopped, realizing it was much too late to run, and was now watching the approaching object that was heralding his own death.

The clear image of the High Ayatollah, Hasan Sayeed, filled the screen momentarily. A look of complete and utter disbelief filled his face, but his eyes burned with rage, and he raised his fist, defiantly to the heavens.

Suddenly, the picture went white with a blinding flash of light.

After several seconds of nothing but a bright white screen, the image slowly clarified itself. What it showed was the image of a glowing crater, roiling with flames and smoke. The lush vegetation, the metal entry door on the mountain side, and Hasan Sayeed standing next to his SUV peering into the heavens had all completely disappeared and were now nowhere to be seen.

Rising above the cauldron, marking the fiery tomb, was a fireball of flame, smoke and material, rapidly climbing upwards into the night sky in an expanding mushroom cloud.

As the cloud continued to rise, the image returned to the President who was now once again facing his audience in the Oval Office. With a look of complete determination on his face, he spoke a single, simple phrase..

“*Sic Simper Tyranis*...thus may it always be to tyrants.

“Remember Jien Zenim, you have until tomorrow.

“America and her allies shall rise up stronger as a people and as a nation.

“To the American people, and to all of our allies I say, God bless you all...and may God continue to bless the United States of America.”

## Chapter 44

*“True worth is in being, not seeming.” – Alice Cary*

**July 12, 02:14, local time**

**Executive Committee Conference Room**

**Hardened Bunker, Gongga Mountains, Near Litang, China**

Eight of the new hardened facilities had been completed in time to escape the American retribution. The entire Executive Committee had been dispersed to them before the onslaught.

Since June 15<sup>th</sup>, as the American President Bowers had promised, more and more of China's major manufacturing facilities, her political infrastructure, military bases, research and development facilities, shipyards, major highway bridges, power plants, major refineries, (particularly the new refineries that were processing synthetic petroleum products), airports, and any other major infrastructure was systematically destroyed by orbital bombardment or nuclear missiles strikes.

The orbital bombardment projectiles, except for the smaller ones with which the Americans attacked the smaller targets, were impervious to the anti-ballistic missile capabilities of the later generations of the Chinese KS-3 and KS-4 missiles. With respect to American ICBM (Intercontinental Ballistic Missile) attacks, the United States had become so adept at utilizing the non-nuclear versions of those missiles that the Chinese had been forced to attempt to intercept every incoming ICBM, not knowing which ones may at some time carry a nuclear warhead.

With the all-out onslaught, on many occasions, incoming tracts of twenty to forty warheads would be seen on radar attacking a target. Of those, only two or three would actually be nuclear armed warheads. The others would be either conventionally armed warheads, or small orbital bombardment projectiles coming in on the same trajectory. In almost all cases, Chinese ballistic missiles defenses were completely overwhelmed...and they invariably missed the one or two incoming American warheads that were nuclear.

The results were that more and more of China's infrastructure was being destroyed.

Those results also meant that larger and larger portions of the metropolitan areas containing critical manufacturing, shipbuilding, refineries, political leadership, infrastructure and military bases were being destroyed. Tens of millions of Chinese were dying and hundreds of millions displaced.

Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Hong Kong, Qingdao, Nanjing, Wenzhou, Fuzhou, Chongqing, Guiyang, Nanning, Chengdu, and Lanzhou had already been ruined and laid waste in this manner.

Lu Pham's beautiful daughter, Chiang, her aspiring political husband, Hua, and their new daughter, Lu Pham's only grandchild, were all killed in Beijing. They had been at home eating lunch together on June 15<sup>th</sup>, not far from where Hua worked in the National People's Congress. When the buildings housing the congress had been destroyed by American orbital bombardment, Hua, Chiang and their daughter had all been killed by the shock wave that washed over that section of the city.

Lu Pham's wife was only spared death in Tianjin because she was with him, protected for the time being in the hardened facilities.

The same thing was happening to the other leaders and their families all across the nation.

“...and yet we survive,” thought the PRC president.

“Despite the best efforts of the Americans, our leadership survives, tens of millions of our military personnel survive and fight on, and our strategic reserves and hidden manufacturing and research facilities survive.

“We planned well.

“We must give Lu Pham time.”

Lu Pham, the brilliant Vietnamese scientist who had provided so much technical expertise and leadership to the PRC, was now being called upon, along with his entire staff, to do the almost impossible: defend against the American orbital onslaught from space, destroy the American space stations that were becoming more and more numerous over every major theater of war, and wrest control of the seas once again from the overpowering presences of the United States Navy.

Pham had ongoing projects to address each of these areas...but none of them had borne fruit yet.

In that regard, Pham's research scientists had reported on their study and analysis of the orbital bombardment material the Americans were using. It proved conclusively that the material definitely came from the asteroid belts beyond Mars. The projectiles were made of the hard carbonaceous chondrite material that could only have originated there.

This definitive news, delivered by Lu Pham in this very meeting, had stunned most members of the executive committee into silence. The fact that the Americans had extended their operations out that far into space indicated that they probably already had installations on the moon and Mars, or that they would soon have bases there.

Addressing them, Jien Zenim upbraided them for flinching at the American achievements.

“So what?”

“We have achieved many startling technical breakthroughs ourselves and are capable of more.

“We must steel ourselves and continue to inspire our military leaders, our politburo and other political leaders, and our people.”

Zenim was surprised when an angry outburst interrupted him.

“How long must we listen to the fatal dreams and fantasies and blathering of this old fool?”

The outburst was coming from Director Lin Xin, the leader of the Council for Financial and Economic Health in the Politburo and someone Zenim had always felt was unalterably loyal to him.

“Lin, calm yourself.

“I would hardly categorize what we have achieved over the last six years as dreams and fantasies. We have united the entire western Pacific and all of Asia and the Middle East.”

Shocked to be interrupted twice in such a fashion, Jien Zenim was shouted down by Lin Xin.

“And where has it gotten us you ass?

“Tens of millions of our people are dead!

“Almost two hundred million of them have been displaced.

“I tell you all now, even if we could somehow find a way to stop the American attacks today, our economy would take twenty years to recover and half of our people would die of hunger and starvation before we could even begin to feed them.

“...and this old fool”, he said, pointing a shaking finger directly at the digital camera, “wants to use what little resource we have left to continue to fight a hopeless battle.

“Our dead...our precious dead, cannot be brought back.

“It is time we recognize the inevitable, end the reign of this madman who has led us all to destruction and sue for whatever peace we can obtain from the Americans and their allies.”

Zenim recognized that Xin had lost his wife and entire family in a strike at one of the nuclear hardened sites outside of Shanghai. He had hoped to be able to control Xin's obvious mourning and emotions and gradually bring him back into the fold. But what happened next told Zenim that such hopes and remedies were not going to be possible.

The men gathered in this meeting were not here by chance or for light or transient reasons. They had all proven their commitment and their loyalty to Jien Zenim over decades of dealings at every level of government. Most of their hands were stained with the blood of countless underlings, competitors and the many internal enemies who had challenged each of them and lost, or whom these men themselves had challenged and defeated.

But commitment and loyalty only go so far when the pressure becomes intolerable. In response to Xin's outburst, of the ten Executive Committee members present at the conference, three more agreed with Xin and called for the ouster of Zenim, followed by dialog with the Americans.

Jien Zenim used the control console on the arm of his leather chair to cause his screen to go blank for a moment so that he might regain his composure, address this issue of dissention, and not be seen by the others while he was doing so. His two most trusted confidants were here with him. Lu Pham, who now headed all Chinese military and scientific research and development, and Liu Liang, the head of internal security forces for all of the PRC.

Beckoning quickly to Liang, the President simply said.

“Take care of this...today.

“...all four of them. No later than tomorrow morning.”

Liang immediately left the room,

Zenim used his control console to reactivate his screen. He had only been off for a few seconds, but when the video feed was restored, Zenim was surprised to see all of the other participants sitting quietly, if somewhat impatiently, waiting for the meeting to proceed.

That is, all but one.

Only seven images of the other members of the Executive Committee were now being displayed where before there had been eight. One of those screens had gone completely blank and the loss of that image had nothing to do with Jien Zenim's control console.

Several of those in attendance began speaking.

“Where is Comrade Cheng?”

“Mr. President, we lost your display in the conference for a moment.”

“Does any of this matter? The entire Politburo is in disarray and it is time to resolve things.”

Jien Zenim simply held up his right hand, palm facing the camera recording his image.

“Comrades, I know that your frustrations are high, so I will forgive some of these outbursts for the time being. Our leadership council simply *cannot* fracture at this point.

“I am sure Comrade Cheng will join us momentarily. Apparently there has been some sort of a technical difficulty with the video feed. I am sure that as soon as the technicians have corrected it, he will rejoin us in the meeting.”

A small measure of calm was restored by these events and by the President's comment. The meeting continued, but it did not last long.

With dissension in the ranks on the verge of verbally and physically manifesting itself again at any moment, Jien Zenim quickly ended the meeting. He had hoped that he could make it last longer, that some type of resolution to their difficulties could be agreed upon, and that Comrade Cheng's

image would reappear. But the prospect for more open defiance and dissent was too great and the meeting ended without any of those things transpiring.

Cheng's absence, as one of those who still supported Zenim, left another pallor over the entire affair for the President.

Even though Jien Zenim had been wrong about Cheng rejoining the Executive Committee meeting, he would soon find out that he had been correct about why Cheng's video signal had failed. There had been a technical difficulty.

Twenty tons of carbonaceous chondrite material arriving at orbital speeds tended to create significant *technical difficulties*.

It also tended to curtail attendance at Executive Committee meetings... forever.

Carefully leaked information allowed the Chinese to successfully use their other, not-as-reinforced facilities as effective decoys to lure American orbital bombardment or nuclear missiles onto them. This not only drew the fire of the Americans, but it also identified weaknesses in China's own security and identified traitors to Jien Zenim's government.

But despite reports circulated of the deaths of various high-ranking members of the Executive Committee associated with these attacks, the Americans relentlessly continued their search for the specific locations of all Politburo and Executive Committee members in an effort to eradicate them.

Reports coming in later that day after the Executive Committee meeting was over would make it clear to each and every member of that committee that America's intelligence efforts and their growing space-based reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities had paid off. Comrade Cheng was dead. Using their latest super earth penetrating orbital projectiles the Americans could now destroy these new facilities at will, just as soon as they found them.

The message from the Americans to Zenim and all of the surviving members of the Executive Committee was clear.

*There is no place that you can hide. You will all ultimately be found and brought to justice.*

**August 5, 10:15, local time**

### **100 Nautical Miles West of Hawaii**

#### **U.S. Navy Testing and Proving grounds**

The dreadful sound of the approaching enemy Killer Whale filled the water. It was a sound that had literally terrorized the earth's oceans for almost six years. It was a sound that had heralded the destruction of thousands and thousands of ships, and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of allied personnel throughout the conflict.

It was also a sound that for well over half of the war, had caused the most powerful Navy the world had ever known, the United States Navy, to retreat and give place to the advancing CAS and GIR military juggernaut.

But now, all of that was ending. Due to more recent American military technological advances, the U.S. Navy had once again regained supremacy of the seas. With weapon systems that had been specifically designed for defending ships against Killer Whale attacks, the United States Navy and its allies had slowly, painfully, pushed the enemy forces back.

The allies had developed everything from enhanced programming for allied torpedoes, to the TRES (towed, reactive, explosive system) devices that were towed behind escort ships, to the SUB CIWS (sub-surface close in weapons systems) that fired streams of underwater hypervelocity projectiles, to supercavitating weapons of their own in the effort to defend allied shipping and defeat the Killer Whale weapons. Despite all of this, the enemy LRASD devices, these "*Killer Whales*", still struck and destroyed allied shipping far too often.

Every type of vessel from merchant vessels, to tankers, to destroyers, to AEGIS cruisers, to large amphibious assault ships, to aircraft carriers, to submarines were still being hit by the enemy weapons. Whenever that happened, except for the largest of ships, it was almost a given that the stricken ship would sink. In the few instances where that was not the case, a larger ship was put completely out of commission by both the terrible damage and the horrendous loss of life.

Now, while American orbital bombardment and missile barrages were laying waste to enemy lands, the United States Navy and the navies of its allies were still slowly advancing back across the Pacific Ocean. But the cost of that advance was still far too great in terms of the loss of personnel, vessels, and material. The enemy still had very long and extremely sharp teeth.

Something had to be done. The political leadership demanded it. The military leadership demanded it. The people of the free nations of the world demanded it.

Today, as this particular LRASD weapon approached the American submarine that lay just off its path, America's military weapon designers would find out if they had finally devised a solution that would answer the demands of the allied nations and finally, once and for all, defeat the Killer Whales.

This morning they would discover whether or not they had developed a foolproof, 100% reliable weapon to interdict and destroy these killers of the oceans.

The weapons officer in the control room of the USS Texas, the Virginia Class nuclear attack submarine conducting the test, informed his superior of the progress.

“Target, range 5400 yards and closing at a speed of 585 knots.

“Target now acquired. It will be in range in five, four, three, two, one, zero.

“Target in range and locked.”

The Captain of the USS Texas immediately gave the order that weapon system developers, flag officers, and political leaders throughout the United States and her allies had been waiting for, for well over 14 months of research and development.

“Engage the target.”

The weapons officer immediately selected the “Engage Target” option from the new fire control menu on his console and the system activated.

Through the water, at the speed of sound, a special sonic wave was produced by the USS Texas from a new weapons port on her forward starboard side, the side facing the oncoming LRASD weapon. That sonic wave was computer generated and controlled, and was very tightly focused on the approaching Killer Whale. It mimicked perfectly the sonar, acoustic, and transient signature of the USS Texas, and amplified it powerfully.

That amplification was modulated to grow rapidly in volume and presence so as to create all of the acoustic parameters coincident with the terminal phase of the approach of the weapon itself. This was done in such a way so as to fool the weapon into thinking it was actually within proximity striking range of the USS Texas.

Tests on captured Chinese weapons had conclusively proven that the Chinese developers had ingeniously built a capability for detecting and reacting to these acoustic signatures through the cavity created by the passage of the weapon. When the Chinese LRASD proximity detection system gauged that the weapon was going to miss its target, it immediately performed the necessary calculations and detonated the weapon's warhead at the closest approach to its target.

The new American system simulated these acoustic signatures in an effort to get the LRASD weapon to react to it. If the proximity effort failed, the American acoustic weapon was capable of producing sounds, at very high amplitude, that replicated the sounds of the approaching weapon's cavity collapsing as a result of contacting the intended target, which was a condition the Chinese developers also took into account.

In that case, the Chinese had designed their weapon's sensors to detect the collapse of the cavity associated with impact on the target and activate the LRASD detonation timer so as to explode the warhead well within the confines of the targeted vessel's hull.

If all of this failed, the American weapon was capable of focusing a much more intense and focused acoustic wave at the sensors on the LRASD. Computer simulations indicated that this increase in intensity invariably overloaded the acoustic brain of the weapon and caused it to lurch violently to the side, ripping itself apart in the resulting turbulence and trauma associated with the collapse of its cavity.

In this case, the first option succeeded. At a range of over 2000 yards, the weapon, thinking it was well within proximity range of its intended target, but that it was going to actually miss that target, exploded in the open ocean creating a huge bulge and then fountain of water on the ocean's surface, but otherwise not causing harm or damage to anyone or anything.

Over the next week, the USS Texas would conduct extensive tests using all four of the weapons ports that had been installed on the boat. Those tests would be conducted with similar live-fire exercises that simulated attacks from every angle, ranging from engagements of a single weapon at a time, up to as many as six weapons simultaneously approaching the boat from multiple angles.

Every phase of the new American defensive system would be tested, from stimulating proximity fusing, to causing contact detonation, to overload of the enemy LRASD system.

In all, thirty-seven captured LRASD devices would be launched toward the Texas during the week of testing. By the end of the week, the record of the USS Texas in defending itself against all of those attacks was perfect. All thirty-seven enemy devices were destroyed by the new MSWAD (Modulating Sonic Acoustical Wave Device) system.

The USS Texas immediately off-loaded all of the Naval and contract project management personnel who had observed and evaluated the testing. A few contractors remained on the boat to help operate and maintain the system and to train the crew in its use. The rest were soon in Hawaii filing their reports and their recommendations.

By August 13<sup>th</sup>, the USS Texas departed for her maiden assignment with the new defensive system. She was ordered to make flank speed across the Pacific Ocean to the Arafura Sea north of Australia where she would begin interdicting enemy shipping of all types. Soon thereafter, after a completely successful initial mission where she expended all of her weapons stores while destroying eight Killer Whales launched at her, she was ordered to take the fight into the heart of enemy waters. Her next assignment was to conduct offensive patrol operations in the heavily enemy infested waters of the Java Sea and then in the South China Sea itself.

While the USS Texas transited the Pacific Ocean towards her initial assignment, more MSWAD systems were being rushed to forward repair facilities throughout the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Although they had not envisioned the astounding level of success that the Texas experienced off of Hawaii, and later would demonstrate in the Arafura Sea in combat, the development contractors, the military and the political leadership of the United States had nonetheless anticipated a large measure of success. Because of this, full scale production had been ordered before the testing off of Hawaii even started, and now systems were en route to facilities where other submarines and surface vessels could be rapidly retrofitted with the new, life saving MSWAD systems.

The contractor supplied a large number of personnel to perform the initial training of the naval personnel onboard every vessel fitted with the system. These contract employees began their work as the systems were installed and continued it through the maiden voyage, the contractors themselves going into harm's way for the benefit of the nation.

When the systems and the contractors began to arrive in theater, a large backlog of vessels was already waiting for the work to begin. Within a matter of weeks, while the USS Texas was entering the Java Sea, more and more American and allied vessels were fitted with the system, and sent immediately into battle.

**October 24, 14:55, local time**

**Manila Bay**

**Luzon Island, The Philippines**

The bay was filled with transports of all types. Most of them were older variety military and commercial transports, tankers, cargo ships and container ships. There were also two Alaska class SSTNs and three large C-90B aircraft offloading men and material in the packed harbor.

During the last two months, the growing allied military machine had pushed in towards China on all fronts. Outside of the Chinese forces on the sub-continent, the remains of the shattered Indian political apparatus, along with what remained of its military, had surrendered on August 29<sup>th</sup>. That date was designated as VI-Day and the celebrations in every major allied city were long and joyous. The hope and anticipation of an ultimate VC-Day began to grow throughout the allied nations.

But over two million Chinese troops still fought on to the north in the mountainous Kashmir regions of India. Those Chinese forces were hemmed in by mountains to the north and allied forces to the east, west and south. The allied armies were content to serve as blocking forces by parlaying any major Chinese efforts to break out of the area, while American orbital bombardment and Hail Storm missile attacks destroyed each large concentration of Chinese troops wherever they were found.

Major hostilities ended in Australia on September 18<sup>th</sup> when the Chinese and Indonesian forces there attempted a major offensive near Halls Creek just off the Kimberley Plateau. A combined arms force of one division of American Marines, a brigade of British Highlanders, and elements of two divisions of the reconstituted Australian Army acted as a lure to pull the enemy forces into the trap.

Sensing that this may be their last opportunity to achieve a victory and push the allies back, the CAS and GIR forces had taken the bait. Eight small orbital bombardment projectiles and three Hail Storm missile barrages completely annihilated the Chinese and Indonesian formations and every piece of armor they had left to them before they ever reached the main allied forces.

Despite inflicting minor casualties on the allied scouting and probing forces who lured them into the killing fields, the result was a complete slaughter of the last major CAS and GIR force on the continent. Over eighty thousand enemy personnel lost their lives and over one hundred thousand more were either wounded or captured.

It would be months before all remaining pockets of enemy military personnel or armed enemy civilians were completely destroyed or captured in Australia. But with the engagement on September 18<sup>th</sup> the final nail was hammered in the coffin of CAS and GIR hopes for occupying and controlling the continent. Outside of those small engagements against scattered groups of enemy soldiers or civilians, Australia's long nightmare was over.

On October 6<sup>th</sup>, Indonesia surrendered unconditionally. Major fighting continued on many of the smaller islands and on New Guinea as allied forces rooted dedicated enemy forces out of the dense forests of the island's rough mountains. But the leaders of the last major belligerent Islamic nation, having seen the complete defeat of all other GIR nations, having witnessed personal strike against Hasan Sayeed and his command facilities, and having heard of the utter and ruthless defeat of all fundamental Islamic uprisings in allied occupied territory, wisely decided to take the United States and its allies up on the demand for an unconditional surrender.

The defeat of Indonesia was followed in quick order on October 12<sup>th</sup> by the surrender of all enemy forces occupying the Philippines, even before allied forces could arrive there. So fast and unexpected was the unilateral surrender in the Philippines that the allies could not stage or send any aircraft or vessels to the islands until October 19<sup>th</sup>. Since that date, the numbers of allied forces had been steadily growing on each of the major islands, and particularly around the capitol, Manila.

...and then the People's Republic showed the United States and her allies that there was still a terrible ferocity and viciousness left in the Chinese bite.

Lu Pham and his LRASD engineers had been informed about the new acoustic weapon the allies were employing with greater and greater effect through the Pacific and Indian Oceans. After

studying the issue, they determined that they would not be able to develop an immediate defense against the new American system, but they did make some suggestions on how the Chinese devices might be programmed and utilized to overwhelm it.

Today was the date when those ideas would be put to the test,

The PLAN had seeded literally thousands of the LRASD weapons within the approaches to the South China Sea, approaches to Taiwan, Korea, Japan and elsewhere at strategic bottlenecks, narrows and straits in the area.

These had all worked to good effect up until the time that the USS Texas had entered the South China Sea and begun destroying the packs of devices it ran across. The Texas had been followed by other Virginia class attack subs and two of the Sea Wolf class boats, the USS Connecticut and the USS Jimmy Carter, once it had been recognized that the Chinese had seeded them in all of the strategic approaches to the mainland.

But on this date, approximately eight hours earlier, programming had been completed by PLAN underwater specialists on a large group of forty-eight LRASD weapons that had been seeded in the Luzon Straits. Those weapons had then been launched towards the shipping in Manila harbor.

Because of the success of the USS Texas, and in an effort to make use of these devices before they were all lost, and to find a way to keep them from being lost, the Chinese had rearmed and reprogrammed this group to go up against the ample allied naval forces in and around Manila Harbor.

Within the group of forty-eight LRASD devices were eight devices that been modified to be pop-up air attack variants. These were evenly divided between four separate attack groups that would approach the Bay from different directions. Each attack would consist of two groups following one behind the other, with each group comprised of ten underwater and two air attack variants.

The first group in each attack was slated for any picket or guarding force positioned along its approach path. The second group would follow behind and off to one side in an effort to then penetrate through to the harbor. One approach was along the Bataan peninsula, the other swung further south around past Cape Calavite on the Island of Mindora and was timed to arrive at Manila Bay at the same time as the first attack.

The allies had defended each of these approaches to Manila Bay.

### **October 24, that same time**

#### **East of Bataan Peninsula**

#### **Luzon Island, the Philippines**

Acting in concert, fifty miles from the entrance to Manila Harbor, two Arleigh Burke class destroyers and an AEGIS class cruiser, the USS Monterey, were working with the new Virginia class attack sub, the USS Atlanta. The cruiser and the Atlanta had both already been outfitted with MSWAD, in addition to the SUB CIWS weapons they carried. Both destroyers carried SUB CIWS as well. They were positioned to be able to interdict any Chinese air, surface, or sub-surface attempts to get into Manila Harbor and attack the ongoing landing and supply operations there.

It was the Atlanta that sounded the first alarm.

Positioned fifteen hundred yards in front of the surface action group consisting of the destroyers and the cruiser, the Atlanta's sonar operator picked up the approach of the twelve LRASD devices first, while they were still operating under conventional power. News of the contact was transmitted to the AEGIS cruiser via a secure communications protocol over a line that trailed behind the sub to a small towed pod just below the surface. That pod had a single thin, but very stiff antennae, designed to noiselessly break the surface of the water so it could establish the communications link with the Task Force command ship, the AEGIS cruiser.

All of the American vessels immediately went to battle stations.

At almost the same moment, the lead LRASD unit acquired the Atlanta, communicated its presence to the other devices in its group, and all ten of the underwater attack variants of the LRASD devices activated their rocket engines for a simultaneous, multi-axis attack against the Atlanta.

The weapons officer on the Atlanta immediately apprised the Captain of the situation as other weapons officers on each ship in the task force did the same to their commanding officers.

"Incoming! Killer Whales, seven, eight...nine, no ten devices. Ten thousand yards and closing from multiple vectors."

The Captain of the Atlanta, showing no exterior display of emotion or concern, calmly replied.

"As soon as they are in range, engage the devices with both forward MSWAD stations.

"Ask the Monterey for support if they please."

At 2000 yards, the Atlanta began picking off the attacking Killer Whales two at a time. At five hundred yards, there were still four devices approaching and it looked like the limit for the number of attacking LRASD units a single Virginia class boat could handle had been found.

That's when the effect of the Monterey's MSWAD system came into play. While the Atlanta picked off two of the remaining devices, the Monterey got the other two as they came into range of her system. But those last two LRASD weapons exploded a mere two hundred feet from the Atlanta, causing significant structural and instrumentation damage. She was forced to surface.

And while doing so, she met her fate.

The last two devices, the ones designed to go airborne, lingered behind the wave of the ten devices that had already attacked. Those last two devices continued on towards the Atlanta using conventional power for twenty seconds...and then they activated off their own rocket engines.

At a distance of 2000 yards, they both broached the surface and began flying towards the spot where they would intercept the Atlanta, skimming just above the surface of the water at an altitude of no more than twenty feet.

Weapons officers throughout the group of ships had only seconds to warn of the new threat.

“Vampire, vampire, vampire!

“...two targets.”

The first one sensed the USS Monterey and altered its course towards her, rising to a height of one hundred feet. The second one continued toward that spot on the ocean where the Atlanta was surfacing, still skimming the surface of the ocean, no more than twenty feet above it.

The Monterey and the two Arleigh Burke destroyers, at a range of less than 3500 yards, acquired both LRASD weapons on their radar after they broached the surface. All three immediately fired two of the latest batch of Standard AAW missiles at each target. A total of six American missiles were attacking the Chinese devices as the AEGIS system prepared their CIWS systems to engage the missiles should the Standard missiles fail to intercept them.

But the Chinese devices had no intention of ever coming in range of the CIWS, or of ever even reaching their targets.

As soon as the electronic counter measure circuitry aboard each LRASD sensed the launch of the American AAW missiles, each LRASD device dove towards its target and exploded simultaneously. The first one exploded at a height of twenty feet above the surface, the second one did so just after it penetrated the water.

The explosions were not conventional, they were nuclear.

A light brighter than the sun lit up the sea, the islands, and the ridges on the Bataan Peninsula. The blast and shock wave from the air detonation reached out immediately and engulfed all three surface vessels which were completely destroyed, leaving no survivors. Terrible destruction and death were also caused on the Bataan Peninsula.

The USS Atlanta was no more than eight hundred yards from the underwater nuclear detonation when it went off. Her hull was immediately caved in by the force of the explosion like a tin can crushed by the impact of a sledge hammer. The boiling fireball from that second explosion rose in a huge mountain of water, steam, blast and debris from the wreck of the Atlanta, marking the death of the entire crew of that fine vessel.

While all of this was occurring, a similar episode played itself out beyond Cape Calavite and that approach to Manila Bay. There, two very capable British Type 45, Horizon class destroyers, accompanied by the HMS Artful, an Astute class attack submarine, were patrolling the ocean to interdict any enemy force trying to make a break for Manila Harbor and the anchorage there. All three of the vessels were outfitted with SUB CIWS but none of them were equipped with MSWAD.

They were engaged by the second arm of the Chinese LRASD attack in much the same manner that the first arm of the Chinese attack had engaged the American blocking force.

...and with the same results.

Within minutes, two more nuclear explosions obliterated all three of the British vessels. Those blasts also caused terrible damage on Mindora Island with a significant loss of life.

The path into Manila Harbor was open.

**October 23, 03:02, EST**

**Presidential Bedroom, the White House**

**Washington, DC**

Sandy listened to the one sided conversation as her husband sat up in bed and talked on the phone to the Secretary of Defense, Jeremy Stone.

The call had come through a few minutes earlier, when a Secret Service agent had awakened them so the President could take the call. From the tone of her husband's voice, and from the part of the conversation she was hearing, it was obviously a very tense moment that boded very bad news.

“You have got to be kidding me.

“How the hell could something like this happen, Jeremy?

“I thought we had found a sure-fire defense against those.

“Okay...yes, yes, I know., the enemy we are facing is still very resourceful and dangerous.

“Yea, I do.

“Alright, alright. I'll call an emergency National Security meeting for...let's see, 0430, and get Talbot to do whatever is necessary to ensure that everyone available is in attendance.

“Okay...good, we'll have an update at 0400. I'll make sure Vice President Reissinger and Bill Hendrickson are there if you'll get Ben Ryan and CINC PAC patched in.

“I'll talk to you then.”



The President had a splitting headache by the time he hung up the phone.

Sandy had sat up in bed with a concerned look on her face.

“Honey, is everything going to be okay?”

She knew that it wasn't, but wanted to give him an opportunity to share whatever he could with her. She was prepared to be a sounding board, a listening ear, a confidante...whatever it was that her husband needed at this especially difficult moment in time.

“It's very bad news, sweetheart.

“I had somehow hoped that we were past this type of thing...that the worst of it all was over.

“But apparently I was premature in my optimism. Even in defeat it seems as though Zenim is intent on taking as many of our people with them as possible.

“Our forces landing in Manila Harbor have just been hit by a Chinese nuclear attack.

“Apparently it came from the sea and involved those damnable supercavitating weapons that they have been using against us throughout the war.

“Tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands are dead in the harbor and particularly on shore there. Manila has been terribly damaged.”

Sandy gently took her husband's hand. She knew him well enough to sense, without another word being spoken between them, that the silent voices of those who perished were weighing heavily on his mind and burdening his heart.

# **DRAGON'S FURY**

**WORLD WAR  
AGAINST AMERICA  
AND THE WEST**

## **YEAR EIGHT**

### **THE FINAL YEAR**



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**November 12, 09:38, EST**

**Rodriguez Home**

**Little Havana, Florida**

Maria Rodriguez knew her husband was in Asia...but she didn't know exactly where.

...and she was okay with that. It was part of being the wife of a military man.

Her father-in-law had told her that he hoped that he was in China directly and hopefully, "taking it to those sorry ChiComm animals directly."

No matter where he was, she missed Hernando so much, and she worried about him constantly. But she had learned over several years to put the bulk of that worry in God's hands. She knew He was involved in all of this and that her faith and trust in Him, whatever the result, was of great help to her, to her sons...as young as they were...and to Hernando. She knew that although her husband was away from her, he was always within *His* vision. Maria regularly reminded herself that worry would serve no useful purpose except to erode faith, that her part in all of this was to earnestly pray for Hernando's safe return, and accept God's will, even if it did not coincide with her wishes.

"I have a good man, who loves his wife, his sons, his parents, and who loves the Lord.

"I could not ask for more," she thought to herself as she contemplated these things.

"He's been home several times during the course of this war, and if those precious visits end up being all I have to remember...well then, that will be more than many people have."

As it was, she was hoping to see him home soon for good.

It was obvious to her that the United States and her allies were on the verge of winning the war. Iran and India had already fallen. The leaders of those nations who had planned this horrific war were dead. China was being hemmed and closed in upon.

It could not be much longer now.

Taking one of her sons into each arm, she looked closely at Felipe and Jose.

They were such beautiful children. She could not imagine the horror of so many in America in Missouri, Pennsylvania, New York and California who had lost so much. Whose beautiful children had died due to the biological attack that summer...and the many who had died from the numerous terror attacks throughout the war.

Yes...she had much to be grateful for.

She thought she would go over to her in-laws and share these feelings with them this evening. She always enjoyed her visits there.

As she made her plans, she could not know, she would not know for several months, that Hernando was in fact fulfilling the wishes of his own father that very day. He had just crossed over the Manchurian frontier into China with his companions.

The front lines had already progressed well into China, over seventy-five miles, in fierce fighting. Word from the front was that there was no shortage of Chinese regular Army and militia who were willing to close with the allied forces now invading directly into their homeland, regardless of cost.

And that cost was a horrific butcher's bill for the Chinese. Orbital bombardment of staging areas literally slaughtered large regular Army groups before they could completely form and advance on the front. Hail Storm missile attacks annihilated the broken formations that were able to advance along with the large local militia that attempted to stand in the way of the allies.

Despite all of this, it seemed either to the front or on either flank that thousands of Chinese personnel invariably closed for direct combat with the vanguard of the offensive. American air support was overpowering, but here near their homeland, the Chinese, who had dispersed thousands of fighters and attack aircraft, were still making a fight of it. Air supremacy had not been achieved. In many cases, air superiority was denied the allies.

Hernando was subjected to air attack on several occasions they advanced into Manchuria.

Even though the Chinese were steadily losing ground, at this point, and in this particular vicinity on the direct road to Beijing, they were giving it up begrudgingly and soaking the landscape in blood. Though Hernando knew, along with everyone else in his company, that China's defeat was sealed-that it was only a matter of time, he also knew that a lot of American and other allied personnel in this area were going to spend their life's blood to make sure it happened.

Like his wife, he placed his trust in God, and prayed that he might live to see his family again.

**December 23, 05:06, local time**

**Two miles west of Hualien, Taiwan**

**Far Western Pacific Ocean**

Billy Simmons was amazed at the technological advances that his nation had made during his long stay in Australia. He had never conceived of going into battle, his attack helicopter and all, in a submarine. He had also never conceived of a submarine so large, or of an entire massive invasion force consisting of entirely submersed vessels.

Yet that was exactly what was occurring here today.

Irrespective of the update training he had received and the exercises that he had been a part of in disparaging for this operation, it was always something else again to actually be conducting the real thing. That was especially so in this case because of the major innovations that were now a part of American amphibious operations.

At 0500 hours the execute order had been given. His vessel immediately surfaced and began disgorging Marines into air cushioned landing craft. As that occurred, an elevator carried his AZ-1W Viper attack helicopter along with him and his crewmate (his backseater) up to the flight deck, which itself had just moments before appeared on the surface of the water.

As he lifted off from his vessel, along with four other attack helicopters, he saw numerous F-35 Joint Strike Fighters providing cover to them from high above. He knew that those aircraft had themselves been launched by six submersible carriers further out to sea. Continuing to climb, Billy could also see that the sea was full of U.S. Navy vessels all around him.

There were ten of the SSLHDN amphibious assault subs, putting forty large air cushioned landing craft into the sea at a time, filled with Marines and their equipment. Those vessels were also filling the air with helicopters and other aircraft. There were six SSCN, cruiser subs, which were filling the air with missile barrages targeting enemy positions and formations near the beach and further inland. The six SSCVN aircraft carrier subs were also filling the air with fighter and attack aircraft in support of the landing.

In addition, though he could not see them, Billy knew that sixteen fast attack subs were protecting the fleet all around them. In all, thirty eight vessels comprised this task force. Their target, Hualien, was fewer than two miles to his west, and he banked his Viper in that direction to attack enemy formations or fortifications that would contest the allied landing.

As he passed over the air-cushioned landing craft speeding towards shore from the Amphibious Assault vessels, Billy knew that historically, despite the most massive poundings imaginable, somehow enemy forces always managed to live through the bombardments to contest the landings.

Today would be no different. Some enemy forces did survive the orbital bombardment, the Hail Storm missile barrages, and the massive attacks of American attack aircraft, and land based bombers from afar. That part of the historical norm held. But the historical norm did not hold in the numbers of enemy forces surviving. In this case, it would not be many, and though the landings were opposed, the Americans were very quickly ahead of schedule.

Within four hours, eight massive C-90B aircraft landed just offshore, taxied up to the beach, and began disgorging more and more American and allied personnel and equipment..

### **December 23, that same time**

#### **In the mountains, 35 miles SE of Kaohsiung, Taiwan**

#### **Far Western Pacific Ocean**

President Chen Shu-bien looked out to sea from his sparse command center. There were sixteen such command centers spread through the mountainous regions of the Island and he had been moving between them for almost six years as his nation was ravished and raped by the Communist Chinese.

All of the more modern facilities had been found and destroyed. The Republic of China had known that, if there was a successful landing and occupation of their island by the communists, traditional warfare and resistance would ultimately be doomed.

Even though they had prepared for such traditional defenses, and fought hard using those plans, they had also planned for long term, more low-key resistance. The President had been leading that effort ever since the last major command facility had been found and destroyed.

That entire time, the free Chinese on Taiwan had suffered terribly. With every act of resistance, terrible retribution had been visited on the people. There had been many times when Chen himself had considered ending the struggle to save his people from the horror.

But each time he had reminded himself that the horror would not end. The Chinese were raping the Island, killing and replacing the former citizens while they brought in their own mainland citizens who were eager to occupy and make use of what the free Republic of China had established.

No, the horror would not have ended with our abdication, President Shu-bien thought.

The only thing that would have ended was hope.

And hope was something that Chen had held out which had allowed him and his compatriots to survive. Despite the overwhelming advantage of the enemy, despite so many brave and loyal patriots for Chinese freedom who had been tortured and killed, despite dissention from within when the times had been hardest...the resistance movement had survived and it had grown.

From these low-tech, barely above stone-age locations, planning had been accomplished and orders had gone out. In the long resistance on Taiwan, strong legs, unflinching loyalty, and endurance had replaced radios and other more modern forms of communication. Bare hands, ice-picks, small arms and any other tool available had replaced jet fighters, cruise missiles and tanks as weapons.

The willingness for his countrymen to suffer untold hardships and to fight with their bare hands if necessary had encouraged and bolstered Chen's hope. But those things alone did not establish his

hope. The communist numbers and ruthlessness were simply too great for that alone to nourish his hope all of these years.

What had given seed and root to his hope was his faith in the principles of liberty, and in the bastion of liberty that he knew was strong enough to someday carry the fight back to the monstrous Dragon that had arisen on the mainland.

...and that bastion was the United States of America.

Chen remembered President Weisskopf's words to his own people in the dark days, to those who were left behind as the United States armed forces were driven far to the east by the Chinese military machine. Back then, the American President, Norm Weisskopf, at that dark hour, sensing what the future would bring, committed his country and himself to that future. He had also addressed those words to all lovers of liberty everywhere, including America's allies.

...and President Chen Shu-bien had committed those words to his own memory and spoke of them constantly amongst his own forces. He did so to bolster them, to help them endure, to help them feed and hold on to their hope.

He recited those monumental words of President Weisskopf now, whispering them to himself this very morning, as he looked over the intervening hills and out to sea to his south and west.

*"I make a commitment before the citizens of America and before God. We will not rest, we will not stop, we will never, ever give up! If it takes us three years, or if it takes us ten years, our nation will overcome your dastardly and cowardly attack. We will produce aircraft carriers like the ones you sank by the dozens. We will produce technology to defeat whatever you may throw at us. We will produce weapons and methodologies that you will never conceive of in your closed, collective society.*

*"To our allies I say, stand with us.*

*"We may have been knocked to the ground, but you can count on us getting back up stronger than before, filled with a righteous indignation that we will pour out on our enemies.*

*"Stand with us.*

*"We will not forsake you. The United States of America makes a solemn commitment and promise to return to liberate any who fall under the blight that is now spreading. We shall return! There will be no iron curtains at the end of this fight. The governments currently prosecuting these invasions and this tyranny will cease to exist...every bit as much as the governments of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan ceased to exist after World War II.*

*"Stand with us.*

*"And we will stand with you to the end. If you choose not to, then all we ask is for you to stay out of the way. We will do this with, or without help.*

*"To our forces who are fighting on in Asia in the face of monumental odds. Who fight with the knowledge that our relief efforts have failed and that relief is far off, I say: "Fight on.*

*"Fight this enemy wherever you may find him and out of whatever circumstances you may find yourself. Take to the hills if you must, take to the streets, take to the night. They are the enemies of all we believe in and all we as a people stand for.*

*"Fight on.*

*"With your weapons, with your fists, with stones and clubs if you must. Fight with your words, fight with non-compliance, fight with your silence. Like an American hero from the Vietnam War, Rocky Versace. When they captured him and beat him and ultimately marched him off to execute him, he was singing "God bless America."*

*"Fight on.*

*"And never give up. We will make every effort to come for you soon, but if we cannot, do not despair. As surely as the sun rises in the east, we are coming. The time will arrive when like at Normandy on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944, you will look out and see the sea and the sky filled with the innumerable host of your comrades come to liberate the captive and put down the tyrant.*

*"To the American people I say, take heart! Yes, armies of tyranny and coercion are on the march in the Middle East and now ominously in Asia. Yes, many of our own have died at the hands of these tyrants. Yes, some of our friends will undoubtedly fall under the control of these tyrants, but our fathers and grandfathers faced the same threats. The fight for liberty has always been so tested. Like them, America will rise to the challenge and again be the vanguard for liberty for the world. We will liberate the captive and destroy the despot."*

President Weisskopf had been true to those words and to that commitment to his dying breath. The new American President, John Bowers, was also true to those words and commitment, as was attested to by this mighty armada which had almost magically appeared today off the coast of Taiwan.

...and President Chen Shu-bien had been true to the words and commitments as well.

Now, Chen saw over eighty huge American vessels offshore, disgorging hundreds of landing craft filled with so many troops, tanks and other equipment. He saw other ships filling the sky with American aircraft and missiles.

"So this is what the attacks of yesterday and last night were all about," he thought.

He now knew what the awesome display of American orbital bombardment and Hail Storm missile technology that had pounded and pulverized Communist Chinese positions yesterday and throughout the night meant. He wondered why it hadn't dawned on him at the time.

But now, this morning, he did know. With this American attack, just as Weisskopf had promised, he knew that the hour of his nation's liberation and salvation were at hand.

He turned to his aide and gave the execute order for the operation that had been planned for so long, but had awaited this day, the return of the Americans for its implementation. Even though millions of Republic of China citizens had suffered and died, many of the remaining millions would now rise up and use the arms and material that had been so carefully hoarded and laagered in the most massive urban uprising imaginable.

Over the next four weeks, millions of the citizens of the Republic of China would willingly put their lives and blood on the line alongside the Americans and their allies to purchase their own freedom. In so doing, the free people of Taiwan, would ensure that many, many more of the enemy would pay for their atrocities with their own lives and blood as they were driven off of Taiwan soil forever, and as liberty was extended across the straits to the mainland.

**February 8, 16:35, local time**

**USSS Weisskopf, High Geosynchronous Orbit**

**Over the South China Sea**

Designated as the SC-01, for Space-going Cruiser, she was the newest, largest, and most powerful American military space craft launched to date. Large and space worthy herself, she could take up position over any theater of war on earth as a space station and control the ground, the air, the sea, and near-earth space in the vicinity of that theater with her laser, charged particle, kinetic energy, missile, and electronic warfare weaponry.

She could also act as a controlling point for multiple other space craft. This included the weaponry on the Corvettes, Frigates and Destroyers the American SPACCOM (Space Command) had already launched, as well as the armaments and weaponry on any of America's space stations that were in range if necessary. Using the latest SPAEGIS systems, her offensive and defensive capabilities were simply unsurpassed by any other available asset.

Captain Floyd Clark thought it very fitting that this vessel had been named for the late President. He also found it fitting that the first deployment for the Weisskopf would serve to assist in the decisive defeat of the Chinese Evil Empire that the late President had dedicated himself to, and ultimately sacrificed his life for. Clark was also honored to serve as the commander of this marvelous vessel and its highly motivated and trained crew of ninety-five personnel.

He wished he had been able to get the vessel launched and operational early for the invasion of Taiwan, but that opportunity had already passed. As it was, he knew the Weisskopf would be decisively involved in the retaking of Japan and the invasion of China across the Formosa Straits to put more pressure on the failing Communist government in Beijing.

He was already providing support to the two arms of the pincer that was advancing on Beijing. One of those was a large and aggressive American force approaching Beijing from the northeast out of Manchuria.

"General Bennett is like a modern day Patton," Clark thought to himself as he considered the bull doggedness of his advance and the manner in which Bennett motivated and drove his forces.

"It's clear that if it is left to him, he'll be through Beijing long before the Russians get there.

"In this case, I don't believe that there's going to be any political forestalling or holding back of Bennett's forces as there was with Patton in World War II."

Clark knew this would be the case because he knew that John Bowers and his administration were most interested in ending this war as soon and as decisively as possible. He also knew that the United States, unlike conditions with Roosevelt towards the end of World War II, was not involved in any political negotiations to hand over liberated peoples to another despot or tyrannical regime.

"There aren't any," Clark said to himself, "and I don't think there will be any for a long time."

The other part of the pincer operation directed at Beijing was a Russian and European Union force, with American support, approaching from the northwest. That one was further away from the Chinese capital, but had succeeded in cutting completely across Mongolia and penetrating over two hundred miles into China from that direction.

Directed laser fire, particle beam fire, and the targeting and controlling of orbital bombardment from his old duty station at Point Solitude were all part of the support he was providing those operations. He was anxious to use the same awesome firepower to help open up a third front south of Shanghai so that the Chinese communist government's fall could be further hastened.

There was another hope he had.

Captain Clark held out the hope and desire, as did many American and other allied commanders, to be the officer who would command the fire mission that would destroy whatever command and control facility or bunker that housed the president of the People's Republic of China, Jien Zenim.

**March 23, 19:35, local time**  
**Observation deck, Sanyo Tower**  
**Tokyo, Japan**

There had been very few targets in the last two days for Leon's sniper position here high above the streets of the Japanese capitol.

After some stiff urban resistance on the streets and alleyways of the city, the fighting had seemed to melt away and now a surreal quiet had settled over the capitol.

Word had it that the commander of all Chinese forces on the island, beset by allied forces and their technology, powerless to stop American space power, and also beset by hordes of Japanese citizens, had surrendered unconditionally. Leon wouldn't believe that until it was official, and more importantly, until he had witnessed with his own eyes the lines of disarmed enemy prisoners.

Campbell had personally witnessed too many of his close friends, and heard of countless others, who were now dead or horribly wounded because they *believed* the enemy was either about to surrender, or already had done so, and had then momentarily let their guard down.

Still, he could believe it was possible while maintaining his guard at the very highest degree of preparedness and alertness. He could believe it might be so because of what he had seen over the last two weeks since they landed on Japan. There had been some Chinese resistance at first even though they had taken a merciless pounding before the landings. Apparently they had mobile reserves that had somehow avoided the attacks. These had created havoc further inland, away from the beaches.

Leon realized that havoc was a relative word. In this case, havoc meant that the allied advance had not gone unimpeded. In times gone by, the level of resistance encountered on this operation, would not have even been considered moderate. It was more like light resistance that was pointed at particular locations. The Chinese reserves, though they had fought hard at specific locales, had fallen victim to American technology and firepower. Any large concentrations in a position to be targeted by orbital bombardment had simply ceased to exist and the fighting over the last several days had devolved to sniping, roadside bombings and minor engagements.

Now this quiet.

Leon was sure that part of it was due to the Japanese civilians who had fought so hard themselves, charging into automatic weapons fire of the smaller Chinese squads and patrols and overwhelming them with their numbers. Many Japanese died that way, but they exacted their revenge on the Chinese soldiers they were able to overcome in this manner.

As the Chinese personnel fell back in what had become more and more of a rout, they were shown no mercy whatsoever by the Japanese civilians. Given the atrocities that he had heard of, and given the large pits of Japanese dead that he had seen himself in their advance...filled with thousands of Japanese bodies at every stage of decomposition, from skeletal remains to new bodies, Leon could understand the Japanese reaction. Just as soon as the Chinese boot was lifted even the slightest bit off their necks, the Japanese had attacked their failing captors.

"Those pits were just like something out of Nazi Germany," Leon thought.

"No, they were much worse than any of the pictures I ever saw in history books about the Nazis...and their atrocities were considered among the worst in history up until their time."

As the sun got lower to the horizon and the time for his relief approached, Leon found that he could finally consider the end of this conflict and his life beyond it.

Although he looked forward to contemplating that, to rolling it over in his mind like a gentle river running through fertile country, he would wait to do so until he was off duty and safely back at base.

To do otherwise would be to let down his guard, and Leon Campbell was not about to do that...even for a moment.

**May 8, 09:20, local time**  
**Main Bridge over the Bei Jian River**  
**Shaoguan, China**

Lu Pham walked briskly with his wife, pulling their rickshaw behind them, dressed as peasants who were leaving the city with the stream of refugees retreating in front of the American advance. He felt that their disguise was adequate, and he knew that with his personal security force of eight Vietnamese guards that he had personally brought to China, that he would be protected from any hoodlums that might otherwise prey on the refugees.

But it was not really the hoodlums that Lu Pham was afraid of.

He was much more concerned about the Chinese security forces that might recognize him.

For him, a hero of the People's Republic, a ranking member of the Politburo, and an Executive Committee member, to be found out here amongst the refugees, dressed like this, would be treated for what it was. Desertion and potential defection.

At this stage of the game there could be little doubt what the punishment would be, particularly for Song. Oh, they would perhaps use Song and the threat of her torture and death to control Lu, but

the ultimate outcome could not be in doubt, and that was because the ultimate outcome of this entire effort was no longer in doubt.

Lu had accepted it. He didn't exactly understand it, but he saw it and accepted it. He, his entire staff...no one...was going to stop the American military machine now. The Americans had successfully turned the tables and overcome their disadvantage and now turned it into an advantage so great that they could not be stopped.

The operation in Manila Harbor had worked flawlessly. Tens of thousands of Americans, their allies, and literally hundreds of thousands of Philippine citizens had been either killed or injured. A lot of the equipment and vessels the Americans were using for the occupation and pacification of the Philippines had been destroyed.

But in the end, it was only a drop in the bucket. More vessels and more of their huge transport aircraft had replaced the men and material within two to three weeks and things kept right on going. Although a few more successes with LRASD devices programmed to overwhelm the American MSWAD system had succeeded, never again would the Americans or their allies leave themselves subject to such massive casualties. They simply adjusted their own procedures and applied their own technology to avoid it...and then kept coming.

With dwindling funds...and personnel, the People's Republic simply did not have the capability to develop counters to the growing American technological edge.

"...and if we did, we would no longer have the capacity to manufacture them," Lu muttered as he walked along.

"What's that, Lu?" Song asked as she turned towards him.

"Shhh, do not address me by my name."

Speaking more quietly now, while looking around carefully to see if anyone had noticed, Lu answered his wife's question.

"It was nothing, I was just thinking as we walk along."

Song realized her mistake and why Lu had said what he did. He had told her of this before and she chided herself mentally and then assured Lu.

"I am sorry husband, I will not do it again."

At the end of the bridge, Lu and Song were directed to the right, to the south down a narrow lane that wound along the river. They continued to follow this path for some miles, the crowds of refugees thinning markedly as they turned toward the American advance.

After several kilometers, they turned to the left and followed a gravel road up into the foothills around the river, ultimately climbing into more mountainous terrain where the road turned into a trail. By that evening, after several turns onto different trails, and some steep climbs, exhausted and hungry, they arrived at their destination.

It was a simple cave that had been boarded up which provided a dry place out of the weather.

Within a few minutes, four of Lu's security personnel were in the structure with them, while the other four maintained a vigil surrounding it.

After a short meal and some water to drink, Song lay down and was soon asleep. Lu stayed up for some time, thinking about events and talking to his security personnel.

Lu Pham, hero of the People's Republic, member of the Executive Committee of the Politburo of China, life-long enemy of the United States...was going to defect.

The contacts had all already been made. An American special forces team would arrive tomorrow evening or, at the latest, early the next morning and take he and Song away.

Lu's had lost his son, his daughter, his grand-daughter, and most of his best friends, including Sung and Ming Hsu, who had been killed in a large American orbital attack on Tianjin. His accomplishments did not amount to much compared to that. No amount of acclaim for the political or military apparatus of the People's Republic could compensate for that loss.

This late in life, Lu realized that he had been trying to compensate for something that could not be compensated for, the loss of his parents to American forces during the Vietnam war. It had been the fuel that had driven him to accept the Chinese offer and work for them those many years. It had led to his great discoveries and accomplishments...but it had not brought back his parents

And now, it had led to the deaths of his beloved children and close friends...and they would not be coming back either.

Very late in life Lu finally learned that the thing he had been doing was not worth the sacrifice of his loved ones. Know, what he had done had not brought any peace, only more sorrow, an even deeper sorrow.

But he was going to try and do something about it, however late.

He recognized now that there was something intrinsic by which the west in general, and America in particular, was driven. It was something more than retribution, revenge, or even ideology. It was something almost spiritual that fueled them and gave them the incentive and drive necessary to persevere regardless of circumstance. It was deep and it had allowed America to return from a condition that he had been certain should have finished them off.

...and yet it had not.



Lu Pham was determined now, after all of his own losses, after all of his own experiences, to discover what it was that drove them.

If he could survive to do so.

**June 2, 09:20, local time**

**Special Hardened Bunker**

**Near Guilin, China**

President Jien Zenim was ready to depart this facility. Liu Liang had made all of the necessary arrangements and he and his staff would be safely departing in the next fifteen minutes.

Of the original twelve orbital bombardment facilities, only three remained. The others had all been found and destroyed by the Americans, one by one, with the Executive Committee members unlucky enough to have been in them when they were attacked.

Now, there were fewer Executive Committee members left than there were specially hardened facilities...and Jien Zenim did not know where the most important (excepting himself, of course) of those members was.

For almost a month now, Lu Pham had been missing. All efforts to find him had been futile. Jien was uneasy about it...but could not bring himself to believe that Lu Pham, after all that had been done for him, after his undying commitment, would intentionally desert the cause or his mentor.

The other surviving Executive Committee member that Jien was aware of was his new arch enemy, Lin Xin. Somehow, Lin Xin had successfully avoided Liu Liang's efforts to silence and destroy him. Though Liu swore that there was no possibility that Lin could have survived the latest attempt, Jien knew he was still alive.

He knew it because he had just received a communiqué from Lin requesting either a personal meeting with the President, or he President's physical location so a video conference could be arranged to discuss future planning.

At this point, Jien was not about to be lured into a trap like that. Jien would handle all of the *future planning* himself.

But a trap by Lin was now the least of Jien's worries.

It was clear that the Americans were going to find all of the special facilities, so there was no use waiting to be pulverized into dust by one of their orbital attacks. Jien knew that there were still plenty of innocuous places in China to hide and still enough loyal troops and forces to continue the fight. Plans had been made against just such conditions as this, and though Jien had never expected to have to implement them, he was content that he could go into the hinterlands like Mao himself, and re-establish a power base and return to eradicate the enemy and drive them from the mainland.

The Chinese people, in their great masses, who had benefited so much from Jien's guidance and planning, would not let him down.

Jien Zenim was certain of that...and Jien Zenim was wrong.

**July 14, 16:17, local time**

**Outside of the Provincial Capitol Building**

**Kunming, China**

Kunming is the Provincial capital of the Yunnan Province. As Chinese cities go, it is relatively small. But it is still a large city, having grown to over one and a half million people. Now, the influx of so many refugees trying to escape the fighting to the east had almost doubled the size of the city.

Kunming was relatively remote, located within four to five hundred kilometers of the Vietnam, Laos, and Burma frontiers, each of which contained many very remote areas, barely inhabited.

Much of its economy was based on the production of items more important to infrastructure, agriculture, and more civil related matters than military ones. Because of all of this, Kunming had escaped most of the destruction of war, and this made it a prime area for refugees to run to.

One of those refugees was President Jien Zenim.

He was operating out of a secure area of the Provincial capital facilities. The Yunnan governor was very loyal to Jien Zenim and was dedicated to using his provincial forces to help protect him.

But events were setting their own course.

Just this morning Liu Liang had indicated that the potential for unrest and insurrection in the city was high and that the President should consider moving his operations towards a remote village on the Burma border where he could continue to consolidate.

Jien Zenim had agreed.

His efforts here over the last few weeks seemed to be progressing nicely, despite the bad news to the east where most of Manchuria was under allied control and Beijing was about to fall.

The Three Gorges Dam had been captured intact by the allied and the PLA forces there to defend it if they could, or destroy it if they must, had simply surrendered and held the facilities until the Americans could arrive.

Even more disturbing was the now confirmed report that Lu Pham had defected to the Americans and had already been flown out of the country. No miracle technological answers to the continuing situation would be forthcoming.

All of this was disheartening, but Jien was certain that he could rise above it. Many of the PLA, COSTIND, Politburo and other agency refugees had been found and were coalescing here. They all looked to Jien Zenim to organize their efforts and strike back at the western aggressors pouring into the country from three directions. It would just take some time.

But with news of the potential of unrest amongst the masses, Jien knew he did not have the time.

The masses had always been the great unknown, the great wild card in Chinese politics. Zenim had learned over the course of decades that they were fickle and had to be guided...but they also had to be respected. There were just too many of them.

"Liu, has everything been prepared?" Jien asked as he and his chief of staff exited the building.

"As well as can be expected, sir.

"We have security along the path we are taking and they will contact us if there is any problem."

"Good, good," Zenim replied.

"Exactly how long should it take for us all to arrive at our destination?"

Liu Liang, who had planned their departure in great detail, down to every last turn on every street, did not have to do any calculations.

"Twenty minutes to the airstrip outside of the city. Two hours of low level flight.

"We should have you and the other leaders on the ground and in your meeting within three hours, Mr. President."

On the way out of town, Liu followed Jien Zenim's armored limo. There were security cars in front and behind. As the four vehicle motorcade approached a turn towards the four lane thoroughfare that would lead them out of the city, there was trouble.

"Mr. President," Jien Zenim heard Liu say in his ear phone.

"A large demonstration has spilled into the streets between us and the highway.

"We are going to divert to an alternate route."

Jien Zenim was not concerned. Liu was a professional and there was no doubt that the alternate route would get them safely to their destination. They always had...and they would today too.

At the next turn, the lead security car led while Jien Zenim's vehicle followed. But Liu's vehicle and the security car behind him did not make the turn. The trailing security car sped up and rapidly exited the area while Liu's car slowed to a stop at the intersection and watched.

Jien Zenim saw the large crowd spill into the street in front of the lead security vehicle. That car stopped as the entire street was blocked by hundreds and hundreds of people who were holding anti-government signs and shouting, repeating some chant that Jien Zenim could not make out.

Jien's car stopped directly behind the first car.

Looking back, Jien saw that more crowds had spilled into the street behind his vehicle and that Liu's car and the trailing security car were nowhere to be seen.

"Liu, Liu. We are surrounded and being hemmed in by a large crowd. We need assistance."

There was no response.

Suddenly, as the crowd approached the first car, all of the doors opened and the security guards came piling out. They were all well trained and veterans of China's special, elite forces. Jien Zenim expected them to raise their weapons and confront the crowd, firing on them if necessary.

But they didn't.

They ran, and to Zenim's surprise, the crowd opened up a corridor for them to pass through.

At that same moment, Jien's driver and personal guard exited his car in much the same manner and ran directly through the approaching crowd, who let them pass.

Jien Zenim, thinking he could reason with the crowd and sway and manipulate them, opened his door. That was when he heard the crowd's chant clearly.

"Kill Zenim, Kill Zenim!"

That's when it finally dawned on him what this was about...the need for the trip to Burma.

A thrown stone glanced off Zenim's temple, drawing blood, as he rapidly got back in the car and closed and locked the doors. Desperately, he looked through the safety glass separating him from the front seat and saw that there were no keys in the ignition. The driver had taken them with him.

The crowd reached the vehicle and began beating on it with sticks, rocks and anything hard they could lay their hands on. Quickly, that beating gave way to a violent rocking and within a few seconds the armored limo containing the President of the People's Republic of China, President Jien Zenim, was turned completely over onto its top. Gasoline from Molotov cocktails was liberally doused over the entire car and then lit.

As the burning pyre produced a column of thick black smoke, and as Jien Zenim was literally roasted alive before the armored limo's gas tank exploded, ending his life, the people surrounded the burning vehicle and continued their chant.

"Kill Zenim, kill Zenim!"

From a block away, back at the intersection, Liu Liang watched from his own armored limo. When Zenim's limo exploded, he transmitted two simple phrases, reporting to his new leader.

"Lin Xin, this is Liu. It is done."

**July 18, 20:00, local time**

**The Oval Office, The White House**

**Washington, DC**

President John Bowers could scarcely believe it was over.

Well, the major fighting was over...the hard task of keeping the peace and reconstituting world affairs still remained. But the President knew that he and the American people and their allies would be equal to that task.

The necessary paperwork had been signed by the lone surviving member of the Executive Committee of the People's Republic Politburo, Lin Xin. The unconditional surrender was in place and millions of allied soldiers were now pouring into China and other remaining enemy controlled lands.

...and it was time to announce it to a waiting, anxious and war weary nation. A nation that would surely erupt into celebration and cheering the likes of which had not been seen since V-J Day so many years ago, before John Bower had been born.

"My fellow Americans, free citizens of the world.

"Tonight I am here to make an announcement of utmost importance to us all. It is an announcement we have longed for, dreamed of, fought for, bled for, and that many of our citizens and military personnel have died for.

"Four days ago, Jien Zenim, the leader of the People's Republic of China and the principle architect for the horrific war we have been involved in was killed in Kunming, the capitol of the Yunnan Province where he had been hiding. Fittingly, he was killed by an uprising of his own people.

"Today, July 18<sup>th</sup>, the remaining government and military leaders of the People's Republic surrendered unconditionally to our forces, finally achieving our V-C day...Victory in China..

"My fellow Americans, the war is over.

"While it will take many years, to completely rebuild and reconstitute our own nation and the nations of those afflicted by this horrific war, particularly the enemy nations, we will carry out that duty in the same manner that we have gone about winning the military conflict.

"Our doctrine will be to stamp out the evils of totalitarianism, tyranny and abject compulsion. No government, no religion acting as government, and no ideology that endorses such tactics and beliefs will stand after this conflict. Our enemies will be reconstituted into Constitutional Republics where basic unalienable rights are recognized and protected by their governments.

"We have persevered in a horrible conflict, but we have accomplished a great work for ourselves, for our children and for our children's children. We will not abandon that work at this hour.

"The road forward will be long and it will be fraught with difficulty...but not as hard and not as difficult as the path we have just trod. We can look forward to brighter days, days filled with peace and hope because of the sacrifice and commitment of so many...indeed, of us all.

"I will not take more of your time. I will not further delay your well deserved celebration. More information regarding conditions and policies will be announced by the various agencies of government in the coming days.

"For now, let us celebrate this victory, this day that we have all longed for, worked for, and suffered for. God be praised that we have survived to see it...and God grant that we shall always be worthy of keeping this peace that He has helped us win.

"With His blessings, I know we shall.

"God bless you all, God bless the United States of America!

"Goodnight."

## Epilogue

John Bowers would finish his term as President and be re-elected to a second term by a landslide.

In addition to establishing the Bower Doctrine for reconstruction and reconstitution after the war, which called for the establishment of Constitutional republics in all defeated lands, the President fulfilled another promise he had made to his cabinet and the people. He turned the awesome research, development, production, and manufacturing capabilities of the United States outward to space.

Before the end of his second term, first permanent bases and then flourishing colonies were established on the moon, Mars and in the asteroid belt.

Later administrations would push that threshold even further. It would expand within ten years to Venus and the Jovian moons, and then out beyond Pluto as stations were established there. But John Bowers would be recognized as the father of Man's expansion into space, and he and Norm Weisskopf, would be remembered as two of the three or four greatest Presidents in American history.

In all of it, he would be supported and encouraged by his wife, Sandy, who would also go down in history as one of the greatest first ladies in American history.

Lu Pham and his wife Song were brought to the United States under the tightest of secrecy and security. After a debriefing that lasted well over two years, and after psychological evaluations indicated that he was sincere in his agreements, he and Song were given new names and relocated to the Houston, Texas area. He worked there for the last twenty years of his life as a chief research engineer for NASA, where his work and activities were, by agreement, kept under tight surveillance and security for the rest of his life.

Based on his theoretical research and the virtual models he created, which models were created using Sandra McPherson's virtual modeling methodologies, Lu proved that faster than light travel was theoretically possible. In so doing, he added so much to man's understanding of quantum physics that his name (his new name) became as renowned and revered as the name of Albert Einstein.

Fifteen years after his death, on a small Jovian moon, a material was discovered that allowed for Lu's theories to be put into practice, making the construction of the first Faster-than-Light (FTL) drive possible. The drive would be named after Lu Pham's new name, Perry Lee, and would be called the Lee Drive. It would allow mankind to finally truly reach for the stars.

Jess and Cindy Simmons, Joseph and Elizabeth Trevor, Hernando and Maria Rodriguez and their boys Felipe and Jose, Billy Simmons and his new sweetheart Patricia Trevor, Leon Campbell and the girl he would ultimately court and marry, Ruth Johnson, Leon's mother Geneva and most other Americans would live out their lives in peace and freedom. That did not mean they would be perfect or without any problems or troubles. Free choice goes hand in hand with liberty and free choice means people are free to make mistakes.

But to people who base their lives and their choices on fundamental moral principles, which principles are based on a faith in a loving and merciful God, mistakes represent opportunities. Such opportunities allow people to learn, to grow and to improve. Improvement through this process, as long as the moral foundation is maintained by the people, allow for those people to become something much more, and much better than what they otherwise might have been.

This was the great secret and ideal that Lu Pham (later Perry Lee) was searching for...and ultimately found amongst those he once perceived as his enemies.

In keeping with this, Medal of Honor winner Leon Campbell was captivated by his late, younger brother's final letter. Over a several month period, he searched for and found Alan's friend from the war, Lonnie Thompson, the one who had taught Alan on the battlefield about Jesus and been instrumental in Alan's conversion before his death. Leon arranged, along with his mother, Geneva, to meet Lonnie and his family and they all became best of friends.

Leon and his wife and mother ultimately joined the church that Alan had joined. He raised his children to have faith in Christ like his mother had, and like his brother developed and shared before his death. Many years later, amidst great honor and respect, Leon became one of the General Authorities of that church, traveling the world proclaiming his faith.

Hernando Rodriguez would ultimately become the Mayor of Miami, and then a U.S. Congressman. Maria made the work of her life her family and home. When her parents became old and infirm, she took them in and she and her family took care of them. Years later she would be named Woman and Mother of the Year.

The Rodriguez's son, Felipe, would follow in his father's political footsteps and one day he would become the Governor of the state of Florida. Their son, Jose, would follow in his father's military footsteps and join the United States Army. He would make a career of his service and ultimately rise to the rank of Major General before his retirement forty years later.

Billy Simmons and his wife Patricia would inherit his parent's Lazy H Ranch, where he would work the fields successfully and expand the ranch until it became one of the largest and most successful operations in all of north Texas. The Simmons would wisely invest their profits into

banking, auto sales, and other real estate until they became some of the wealthiest people in that part of the country...though you would never know it by looking at them.

Billy would never lose his love of taking fishing and hunting trips up and down Clear Creek...and he would teach it to his three sons and two daughters, who in turn would pass it along to most of the eighteen grandchildren the five of them would produce.

All of them would live by the simple motto that Billy and Patricia both adopted after they got married concerning their own parents,

*"If I can be half the person my parents were, and raise my kids to be twice the person I am, then I will have accomplished much good in this world."*

...and they did.

Buhpendra Gavanker became the first elected President of India after the Allied Coalition Occupation Authority once again established free elections there. His good friend, Field Marshall Andrei Nosik, would become the President of Russia at about the same time. Both of them would serve the maximum amount of time allowed by law and they would spend many years working together for the improvement of their respective peoples in peace and freedom.

Reconstruction and reconstitution of the war-torn countries took well over thirty years. It was completed using the Bowers Doctrine, and paid for (or paid back) from the income of the rebuilt nations themselves, as their free market economies kicked in to the solar-system wide free markets.

Every one of the affected nations adopted a Constitutional Republic form of government based as closely on the American model as possible, without exception and without opposition. Those governments all included a clear separation of federal powers and the recognition of unalienable rights for their citizens, including freedom of speech, freedom of religion (as long as the religious beliefs did not deny or advocate the denial of unalienable rights), the right to self and societal defense through bearing of arms, trial by jury of one's peers, and every other right found in the Bill of Rights in the United States Constitution.

The resulting peace and prosperity would hold, in the main, for almost eighty years. Around that time, the lessons learned, and the sacrifices made during the great eight year world war began to be forgotten. The third and fourth generations were too far removed, and those who had experienced it, and those who set at the feet of parents and grandparents who had experienced, all began to die off. A few years after that the same old tired ideologies of elitism, collectivism and absolutism-but with new space-aged names-began to take root among some nations and people, and invariably, those ideologies once again led to tyranny in none form or another..

When they finally did, it would cause the cycles of time to turn and the wheels of history to grind away the golden years of mankind's peaceful expansion into space, leading to yet another military conflict, one that would not play itself out on a world-wide stage alone....no, at that later date, it would play itself out on an interstellar stage.

But the telling of that tale is best left to a future day and time.

## Afterword

The Dragon's Fury novel is a fictional account of a possible World War arising out of current events. The epitaph or summary of that horrific war can best be stated as follows.

First, simply said, *the price of liberty is eternal vigilance.*

Second, free peoples will not pay the price of eternal vigilance for the moral underpinnings of their liberty and its defense against threats both external and internal, then ultimately and unavoidably *the tree of liberty must be watered from time to time with the blood of tyrants and patriots.*

Third, let the following table, that documents the potentially horrific price of the watering of the tree of liberty, attest to what is at stake in a modern, post-911 world unless we remain vigilant:

### WORLD WAR III CASUALTIES APPROXIMATE NUMBERS – DEAD AND WOUNDED

#### ALLIED CASUALTIES

	Military		Civilian	
	Dead	Wounded	Dead	Wounded
USA	3,510,500	4,765,500	9,750,500	14,250,500
Canada	875,000	1,650,500	1,060,000	1,985,500
UK	2,050,500	2,750,500	1,450,500	2,205,500
EU	2,950,500	4,950,500	5,200,500	7,100,500
Russia	6,505,500	9,240,500	14,960,500	18,350,500
Brazil	1,875,500	3,500,500	1,450,500	1,675,000
Australia	1,550,500	2,500,500	1,950,500	3,100,500
Japan	450,000	1,100,500	6,575,000	7,550,000
Israel	980,500	1,700,500	950,500	2,550,000
Taiwan	508,500	2,500,500	3,475,000	4,500,500
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>21,557,000</b>	<b>34,660,000</b>	<b>44,093,500</b>	<b>63,268,000</b>

#### CAS/GIR CASUALTIES

	Military		Civilian	
	Dead	Wounded	Dead	Wounded
China	49,510,500	85,570,500	75,500,500	98,350,000
India	41,460,000	72,450,500	63,250,000	84,350,500
GIR	25,350,000	41,200,500	42,500,500	55,540,500
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>116,320,500</b>	<b>169,221,500</b>	<b>181,251,000</b>	<b>238,241,000</b>

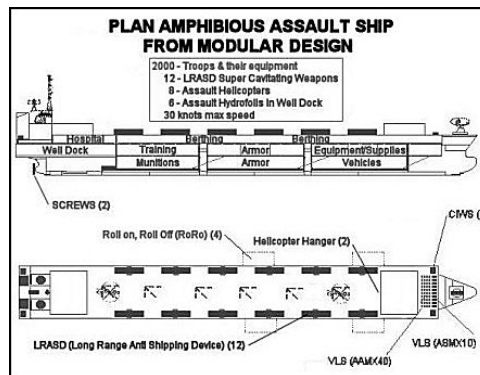
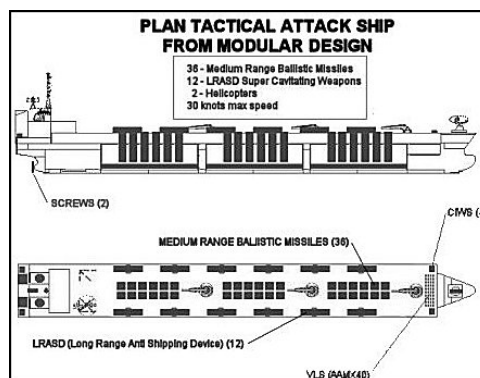
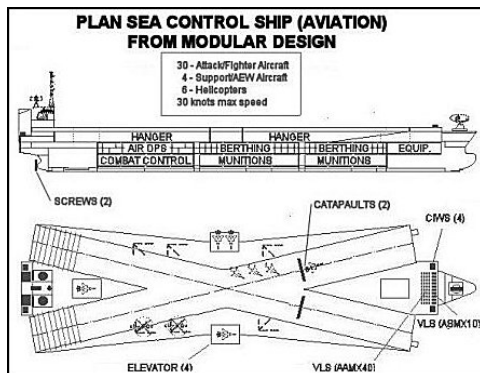
Finally, let the words of the ancient Greek philosopher, Sophocles, who spoke them over twenty-three centuries ago, provide historical perspective and reference to the truth of these principles:

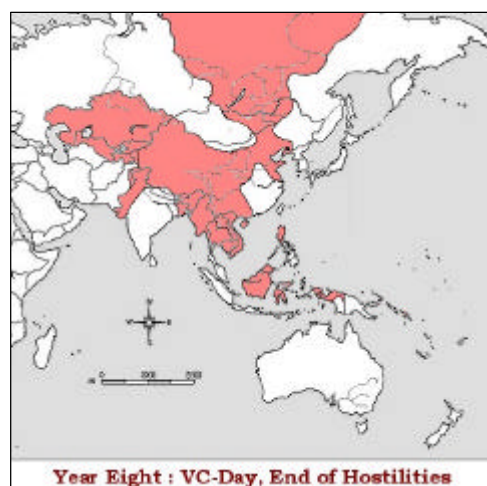
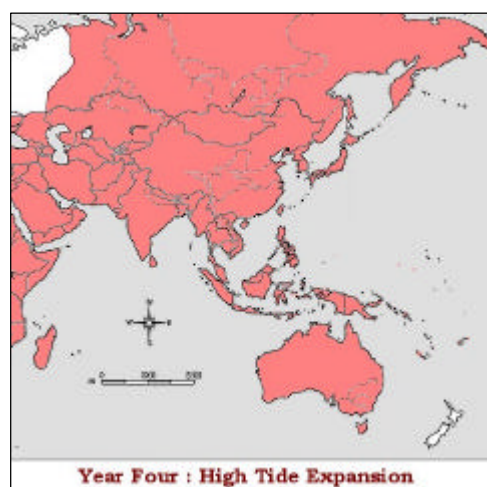
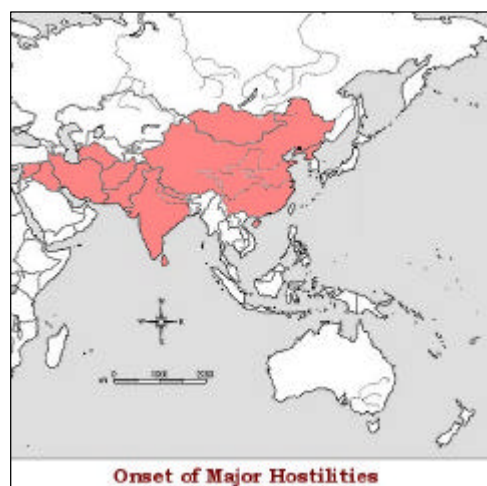
*Far-stretching, endless Time  
Brings forth all hidden things,  
And buries that which once did shine.*

*The firm resolve falters,  
The sacred oath is shattered;  
And let none say, "It cannot happen here."*

The End of the Dragon's Fury

# Illustrations







## Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

<b>TERM/ACRONYM</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
<b>AAW</b>	Anti-Aircraft Warfare
<b>Abrams</b>	Premier main battle tank designated M1A1.
<b>ABM</b>	Anti-Ballistic Missile
<b>ABS</b>	American Broadcasting System
<b>ADCAP</b>	Advanced Capability
<b>AEGIS</b>	Advanced phased array system for tracking & engaging air
<b>AH-64</b>	Most capable western attack helicopter called Apache.
<b>AIM-999</b>	Advanced, electronic firing cruise missile called Hail Storm
<b>ALCM</b>	Air Launched Cruise Missile
<b>ALRAAM</b>	Advanced Long Range Anti-Aircraft Missile
<b>AMRAAM</b>	Advanced Medium Range Air to Air Missile
<b>Apache</b>	Dangerous attack helicopter designated AH-64.
<b>APS</b>	Armored Personnel Carrier
<b>APSRON</b>	Afloat Pre-positioning Ship Squadron.
<b>ARCM</b>	Anti-Radiation Cruise Missile
<b>ASAT</b>	Anti-Satellite
<b>ASDS</b>	Advanced SEAL Delivery System
<b>ASROC</b>	Anti-Submarine Rocket assisted torpedo
<b>ASV</b>	Armored Security Vehicle designated M117A
<b>ASW</b>	Anti-Submarine Warfare
<b>ATO</b>	Asian Theater of Operations
<b>AV-8B+</b>	VTOL or STOL fighter-bomber used by U.S. Marines called
<b>Avenger</b>	AAW variant of HMMWV carrying Stinger missiles.
<b>AWACS</b>	Airborne warning and command aircraft
<b>B-1B</b>	Advanced supersonic, Long range bomber called Lancer or
<b>B-2</b>	Sub-sonic, long range stealth strike bomber called Spirit.
<b>Backfire</b>	Supersonic, long-range Russian strike aircraft, designated TU-
<b>Badger</b>	Subsonic, 1970's Russian strike aircraft export designated TU-
<b>Bandit</b>	Enemy Aircraft
<b>BATF</b>	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.
<b>BDA</b>	Bomb or Battle Damage Assessment
<b>Bear</b>	Prop-driven Russian strike/recon aircraft designated TU-142.
<b>BMD</b>	Ballistic Missile Defense
<b>BRITREP</b>	British Representative
<b>Buddy Stores</b>	Refueling tanks
<b>C-90A, B</b>	Huge surface-wave lift transport aircraft developed by the U.S.
<b>CANTFOR</b>	Canadian Task Force
<b>CAP</b>	Combat Air Patrol
<b>CAS</b>	Coalition of Asian States
<b>CBC</b>	Continental Broadcasting Company
<b>CBG</b>	Carrier Battle Group
<b>CBT</b>	Carrier Battle Task Force
<b>CENTCOM</b>	Central Command.
<b>CIA</b>	Central Intelligence Agency.
<b>CIC</b>	Combat Information Center
<b>CINC</b>	Commander in Chief
<b>CINCCENT</b>	Commander in Chief Central.
<b>CINCPAC</b>	Commander in Chief Pacific.
<b>CIR</b>	Council on International Relations
<b>CIWS</b>	Close in Weapons System

<b>CNO</b>	Chief of Naval Operations.
<b>CO</b>	Commanding Officer
<b>Comanche</b>	Advanced, stealthy recon/attack helicopter. RAH-66.
<b>Condition Zebra</b>	Watertight combat threat condition for naval vessels.
<b>CONUS</b>	Continental United States
<b>COSAS</b>	Coalition of South American States
<b>COSCO</b>	China Ocean-going Ship Company
<b>COSTIND</b>	Commission of Science, Technology & Industry for National
<b>CTF</b>	Combined Task Force
<b>CVN, CVX</b>	Nuclear Powered Aircraft Carrier, CVX is the latest generation
<b>DDG</b>	Guided Missile Destroyer
<b>DDH</b>	Large helicopter carrying destroyer
<b>DDX</b>	Advanced Guided Missiles Destroyer.
<b>DNC</b>	Democratic National Committee
<b>DOE</b>	Department of Energy.
<b>Dragon's Fury</b>	Chinese operation to ambush the U,S, 7th fleet.
<b>E-2C</b>	Naval Airborne Early Warning and Command aircraft called
<b>E-3</b>	Air Force warning and command aircraft called Sentry.
<b>Eagle</b>	High performance, supersonic fighter aircraft designated F-15C.
<b>ELINT</b>	Electronic Intelligence
<b>EMCOMM</b>	Electronic Emissions and Communications
<b>EMP</b>	Electromagnetic Pulse
<b>EMT</b>	Emergency Medical Technician
<b>ETO</b>	European Theater of Operations
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EW</b>	Electronic Warfare
<b>F/A-18E</b>	Modern, supersonic, naval fighter/attack aircraft called Super
<b>F/A-18F</b>	Two seat attack/strike/EW version of F/A-18E.
<b>F-15</b>	High performance, supersonic fighter aircraft called Eagle.
<b>F-15E</b>	Two-seat strike version of F-15C aircraft called Strike Eagle.
<b>F-16</b>	Highly maneuverable fighter/bomber called Falcon or Viper.
<b>F-22</b>	Advanced, stealthy, high performance fighter, the Raptor.
<b>F-35</b>	New fighter-bomber called Joint Strike Fighter. STOL & VTOL.
<b>Falcon</b>	Highly maneuverable fighter/bomber, F-16.
<b>FBC-7</b>	Long range strike aircraft.
<b>FBI</b>	Federal Bureau of Investigation.
<b>FEMA</b>	Federal Emergency Management Agency.
<b>Fencer</b>	Long Range Strike Aircraft called designated SU-24.
<b>FFG</b>	Guided Missiles Frigate
<b>Flanker</b>	Advanced Russian fighter/bomber exported, designated SU-30.
<b>Foxbat</b>	High speed, 1970's Russian export interceptor designated MIG-
<b>FTP</b>	File Transfer Protocol
<b>Fulcrum</b>	High performance Russian export fighter bomber designated
<b>GIR</b>	Greater Islamic Republic
<b>Global Sentinel</b>	High altitude, long endurance unmanned aerial vehicle.
<b>GOA</b>	Government Office of Accounting
<b>GPS</b>	Global Positioning System
<b>HAIL STORM</b>	Advanced, electronic firing cruise missile, AIM-999.
<b>HARM</b>	High-speed Anti-Radiation Missile
<b>Harrier</b>	VTOL/STOL fighter bomber used by U.S. Marines designated
<b>Hawkeye</b>	Naval Airborne Early Warning and Command aircraft designated
<b>HELLFIRE</b>	Laser guided anti-tank or surface missile.
<b>HGP</b>	Human Genome Project

<b>HMMWV</b>	High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle
<b>HR-7</b>	Hyper-velocity, exo-atmosphere surveillance aircraft. Thunder
<b>HUMRAMM</b>	AAW variant of HMMWV carrying ground-launched AMRAAM
<b>ICBM</b>	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (Nuclear)
<b>IDF</b>	Israeli Defense Force, or Indigenous Defense Fighter (ROC)
<b>IFF</b>	Identification Friend or Foe designator
<b>IFV</b>	Infantry Fighting Vehicle
<b>INS</b>	Immigration and Naturalization Service
<b>J-10</b>	Advanced fighter/interceptor/attack aircraft.
<b>JGI</b>	Joint Genome Institute.
<b>JH-7</b>	Long range interceptor aircraft.
<b>JMSDF</b>	Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force
<b>JSF</b>	Joint Strike Fighter.
<b>JSOW</b>	Joint Standoff Weapon
<b>JSTAR</b>	Battlefield management. aircraft w/synthetic aperture radar.
<b>KEDS</b>	Kinetic Energy Defense System (On board U.S. Space Ships)
<b>KFOR</b>	Korean Forces
<b>KS-2(+)</b>	Advanced surface to air missile, similar characteristics to Patriot.
<b>KS-3</b>	Advanced version of KS-2+ missile, TMD capable.
<b>KV</b>	Kill Vehicle
<b>Lancer</b>	Advanced supersonic, long-range bomber, the B-1B.
<b>LAWS</b>	Light Armor Weapon System
<b>LAX</b>	Los Angeles International Airport
<b>LCU</b>	Landing Craft Utility
<b>LRASD</b>	Long Range Anti-Shipping Device
<b>LWS</b>	Laser Weapon System (Aboard U.S. Space Ships)
<b>M1117A</b>	New generation Armored Security Vehicle.
<b>M1A1</b>	Premier main battle tank called Abrams.
<b>Mach</b>	Designation for the speed of sound
<b>MAD</b>	Mutually Assured Destruction
<b>Mk-77 SCWS</b>	New American Supercavitating Torpedo system
<b>MLRS</b>	Multiple Launch Rocket System
<b>MEB</b>	Marine Expeditionary Brigade.
<b>MEU</b>	Marine Expeditionary Unit.
<b>MFD, MFCD</b>	Multi Function Display, Multi Function Color Display
<b>MIG-25</b>	High speed, 1970's Russian exported interceptor called Foxbat.
<b>MIG-29</b>	High performance Russian export fighter bomber called
<b>MOS</b>	Military Occupational Specialty
<b>MPSRON</b>	Maritime Pre-positioning Ship Squadron.
<b>MSWAD</b>	Modulating Sonic Acoustical Wave Device
<b>MUAS</b>	Miniature Underwater All-aspect Surveillance Devices
<b>NAFTA</b>	North American Free Trade Agreement
<b>NAS</b>	National Academy of Sciences.
<b>NASA</b>	National Aeronautical and Space Administration
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NCA</b>	National Command Authority (President of the United States)
<b>NCO</b>	Non-Commissioned Officer in the military.
<b>NEW</b>	National Endowment for Women.
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization (Affiliated with the United
<b>NHGRI</b>	National Health Genome Research Institute.
<b>NIH</b>	National Institute of Health.
<b>NORAD</b>	North American Air Defense Command.
<b>NORCOM</b>	Northern Command.

<b>NRO</b>	National Reconnaissance Office.
<b>NSA</b>	National Security Advisor or Agency.
<b>OIC</b>	Officer in Charge
<b>OPLAN</b>	Operation Plan
<b>Orion</b>	Turbo prop ASW, Recon & strike aircraft designate P-3C.
<b>P-3C</b>	Turbo prop ASW, Recon & strike aircraft called Orion.
<b>Patriot Missile</b>	Land based, long range, anti-aircraft missile system.
<b>PCRM</b>	Poly-carbon Reactive Mesh defense for U.S. Space Ships
<b>PDWE</b>	Pulse Detonation Wave Engine
<b>Peacekeeper APC</b>	Highly exported APC armed with .50 cal. machine gun.
<b>Pervador</b>	Modern high speed, high altitude, surveillance aircraft, SR-77.
<b>Phoenix</b>	Long range air to air missile designated AIM-54.
<b>PKF</b>	Patriotic Kurdistan Front
<b>PLA</b>	People's Liberation Army.
<b>PLAN</b>	People's Liberation Army Navy
<b>POC</b>	Point of Contact
<b>PRC</b>	People's Republic of China.
<b>PTO</b>	Pacific Theater of Operations
<b>RAH-66</b>	Advanced, stealthy recon/attack helicopter called the
<b>RAM</b>	Rolling Airframe Missile
<b>Raptor</b>	Advanced, stealthy, air superiority fighter aircraft designated F-
<b>ROC</b>	Republic of China. (Taiwan)
<b>ROC(AF) (N)</b>	Republic of China Air Force or Navy
<b>RORO</b>	Roll On Roll Off transport ship
<b>RPG</b>	Rocket Propelled Grenade
<b>R&amp;R</b>	Rest and relaxation
<b>RTB</b>	Return to Base
<b>RV</b>	Re-entry Vehicle
<b>SAC</b>	Strategic Air Command or Special Agent in Charge
<b>SAG</b>	Surface Action Group
<b>Sea Flanker</b>	Naval version of the Russian SU-30 aircraft designated SU-33.
<b>Sea Sparrow</b>	Medium-range, ship-launched, radar-guided anti-aircraft missile.
<b>SEAL</b>	Sea, Air & Land Special Forces.
<b>SECDEF</b>	Secretary of Defense.
<b>Sentry</b>	Air Force warning and command aircraft designated E-3.
<b>SFOD-D</b>	Special Forces Operation Detachment - Delta
<b>SFS</b>	Security Force Superintendent
<b>Sidewinder</b>	Advanced all aspect short-range air to air missile, AIM-9X.
<b>SITREP</b>	Situation Report
<b>SLCM</b>	Submarine Launched Cruise Missile
<b>SPAEGIS</b>	Space-born version of the AEGIS weapon's system
<b>Spirit</b>	Stealthy, sub-sonic, long-range bomber designated B-2.
<b>SR-77</b>	New high speed, high altitude surveillance aircraft called
<b>SSBN</b>	Nuclear Powered Ballistic Missile Submarine carrying ICBM's.
<b>SSCN</b>	Large nuclear powered arsenal submarines.
<b>SSCVN</b>	Large nuclear powered aircraft carrier submarine.
<b>SSGN</b>	Nuclear Powered Guided Missile Submarine carrying SLCM's.
<b>SSLHDN</b>	Nuclear Powered Amphibious Assault Submarine
<b>SSN</b>	Nuclear powered attack submarine
<b>SSTN</b>	Large nuclear powered transport submarines.
<b>SSTO</b>	Single Stage to Orbit Space launch
<b>Standard Missile</b>	Long range U.S. anti-air missile. Advance used for TMD.
<b>Stinger missile</b>	Short range, all aspect, self-guided anti-air missile.

<b>STOL</b>	Short Take-off and Landing
<b>Strike Eagle</b>	Two-seat version of F-15C aircraft designated F-15E.
<b>SU-24</b>	Long Range Strike Aircraft called Fencer.
<b>SU-30</b>	Advanced Russian fighter/bomber export called Flanker.
<b>SU-33</b>	Naval version of the SU-30 aircraft, designated Sea Flanker.
<b>SU-35</b>	Two seat strike/radar suppression/EW version of SU-30 aircraft.
<b>SUBT CIWS</b>	Sub-surface Threat Close in Weapons System
<b>Super Hornet</b>	Modern, supersonic, naval fighter/attack aircraft designated F/A-
<b>SUV</b>	Sport Utility Vehicle
<b>SWAT</b>	Special Weapons and Tactics (Police)
<b>T-72</b>	1980's variety main battle tank employed by GIR and CAS.
<b>T-80</b>	1990's variety main battle tank employed by GIR and CAS.
<b>Tango</b>	Military term for a terrorist
<b>TAS</b>	Tactical Assault Ship.
<b>Ta shih</b>	Chinese anti-stealth sensor, acquisition and fire control system.
<b>TF</b>	Task Force
<b>Thunder Dart</b>	Hyper-velocity, exo-atmosphere surveillance aircraft designated
<b>Threat Condition</b>	Watertight combat threat condition for naval vessels.
<b>TMD</b>	Theater Missile Defense
<b>Top Dome</b>	Russian provided radar system for advanced surface vessels.
<b>Top Plate</b>	Russian radar system for advanced surface vessels.
<b>TOW</b>	Wire guided anti-tank missile
<b>TU-16</b>	Older, subsonic 1970's vintage Russian strike aircraft called
<b>TU-22M</b>	Supersonic, long-range Russian strike aircraft, exported, called
<b>TU-142</b>	Older, prop-driven Russian recon & ASW aircraft called Bear.
<b>UAE</b>	United Arab Emirates
<b>UAV</b>	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
<b>UEDF</b>	Unified European Defense Force
<b>USCGS</b>	United States Coast Guard Ship
<b>USFK</b>	United States Forces Korea
<b>V-150</b>	Highly exported APC armed with a 20mm cannon.
<b>VLF</b>	Very Low Frequency
<b>VLS</b>	Vertical Launch System
<b>VTOL</b>	Vertical Take-off and Landing
<b>WMD</b>	Weapons of Mass Destruction
<b>WNN</b>	World News Network
<b>XO</b>	Executive Officer

### About the Author



Jeff Head is a 50 year-old father of five children living in southwest Idaho. He and his wife of 28 years are also proud grandparents of five grandchildren, two grandsons and three granddaughters.

Mr. Head has worked as a designer, engineer, manager, director, and a consultant in the defense, nuclear power, and computer industries. Among other projects, he has worked on the A-7 attack aircraft, the Multiple Launch Rocket System, the San Onofre nuclear power project, and the Theater High Altitude Air Defense System.

While working as a director at the Structural Dynamics Research Corp., Mr. Head was involved in efforts at the Strategic Operations Division of Thiokol to improve operations in the years following the shuttle Challenger disaster. As a result of that effort, in 1992, Mr. Head was awarded a Vice President's award from Thiokol.

From 1995 through 2000, as a program manager and consultant, Mr. Head traveled overseas on behalf of U.S. firms to help establish product development operations in the Far East, India, and Eastern Europe.

Since September 2003, Mr. Head has worked for the Federal Government helping maintain and protect regional infrastructure in Idaho.

Mr. Head has also been involved in civic events including the "Klamath Basin Water Crisis" in Oregon in 2001. In August of 2002, Mr. Head accepted a "Person of the Year" award from the FreeRepublic web forum as a result of his involvement at Klamath Falls and his 9-11web site, "The Attack on America Site". In October of 2004, Mr. Head was awarded a "2004 Ronald Reagan Gold Medal Award", from the National Republican Congressional Committee, and in 2006 he received a Congressional Order of Merit award from the same organization.

Mr. Head is also active in his Church and involved with the Boy Scouts of America, having attended and helped with rafting trips, winter camps, and wilderness trips in the mountains of southwest Idaho.