

CRISIS OF FAITH

Storyline Book One (1933-1935)



INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE MAIN STRAIN AND THE PRECOLONIAL STRAIN REVEAL THE MAIN GOAL OF THE OPERATION. WE MUST NOT FORGET THAT A
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HEAVY GEAR



CRISIS OF FAITH

Storyline Book One (1933-1935)

1 Winter TN 1933 — 1 Autumn TN 1935

"In those days, the planet was readying for war. Alliances were made and revolutions broke out, but no one saw the larger events, already in motion. We were so concerned with our own petty, local problems that we had closed our eyes to the immensity of what faced us... or to the wonders occurring right under our noses.

"There are times I wish we could be so innocent again."

— Nicosia Renault

Storyline Book One: Crisis of Faith traces the events on Terra Nova from TN 1933 through TN 1935. The planet lurches toward a global conflict and the words of Terranovans themselves betray their machinations and true intentions. Dramatic events that were only hinted at in previous books start to take form with world-shaking consequences. Letters, private conversations, journal entries and official reports expose the true face of history, from the deadly secrets of master spies to the fears of those caught up in a conflict beyond their control.

Terra Nova grows older and more mature, but at the cost of the precious innocence and peace won at the end of the War of the Alliance.

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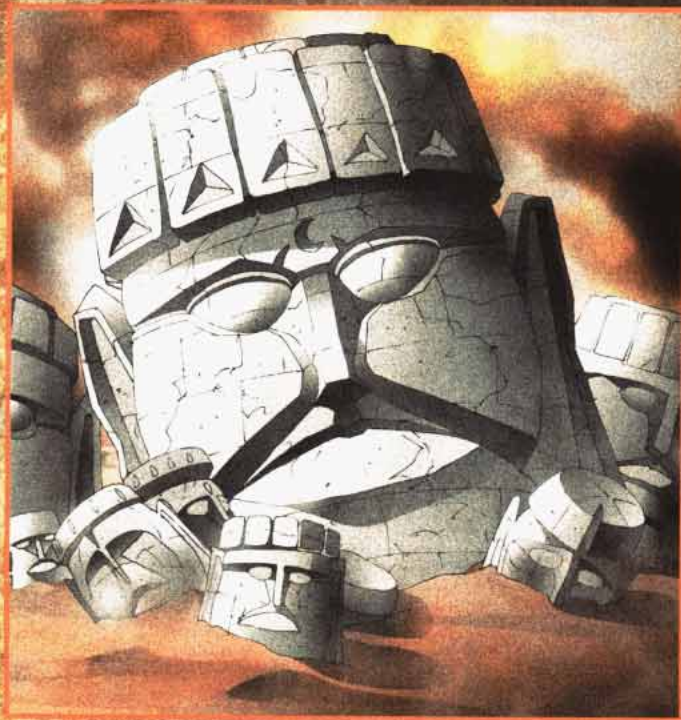
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HEAVY GEAR

Storyline Book One: Crisis of Faith



01•WI•33 - 01•AU•35

"We must ask ourselves if, when our children look back on our actions, they will hold their heads up high or hang them in shame. Our decisions will be their legacy.

"Mamoud guide our choices."

— Victoria Edden-Smythe, Grand Marshal of the CNCS.

Credits

Produced by Dream Pod 9

Dedication

Dedicated to Activision and most especially to the Heavy Gear Computer Game team. Thanks for the fantastic work.

Legal

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Timeline

TN 1933

► **20 TO 23 WINTER 1933:** Operation Jungle Drums: SIU-Alpha investigates thefts of uranium on the Republican border and discovers the underground base of GREL revolutionary Colonel Proust. Orbital bombing destroys the base and Proust flees to the Badlands.

► **18 SPRING 1933:** The Peace River faction of the Badlands Revolutionary Front purchases explosives from the Forzi cartel.

► **SUMMER 1933:** Adrianna Xing, the self-proclaimed "Apostle of Mamoud" travels from Bangweulu to Massada. She attracts many followers along the way. On the night of 40 to 41 Summer, she is set upon by unidentified attackers piloting stealth Gears. They are repelled by the Norlight troops sent to protect pilgrimage routes.

► **2 SUMMER 1933:** The Prophet's Shield begins an investigation into the faith and beliefs of Northern Guard Gear trainer Katryne Sanz, after receiving information from someone close to her. The investigation eventually comes to include several of her students as well.

► **18 SUMMER 1933:** Oliver Masao, Patriarch of the Eastern Sun Emirates, announces that he will name as heir his last living blood-relative. This extends the "Mothers' Massacre" to his entire family — and hence much of the Eastern aristocracy. Massive bloodshed ensues in the halls of power.

► **22 SUMMER 1933:** Thanks to a contact in the Southern embassy, Paxton board-member Fidel Jacobi learns of the BRF's purchase of explosives. He chooses not to act in hopes of using terror to win the upcoming elections.



Summer 1933: The Apostle Travels to Massada



► **34 SUMMER 1933:** A large bomb planted by the BRF explodes in the Ebert Paxton MegaPlaza in Peace River, killing police and civilians. Fidel Jacobi quickly uses this to attack Paxton President Simosa.

► **2 AUTUMN 1933:** On the eve of the Paxton elections, Fidel Jacobi is murdered. Evidence uncovered by Paxton Security later points to an execution by the BRF.

► **3 AUTUMN 1933:** With Jacobi dead, Paxton CEO Gerald Simosa sees his allies reelected and his position secured.

► **7 AUTUMN 1933:** Nneka Boash, eldest son of Emir Armann Boash of Bangweuleu, attempts to usurp his father's title with the support of Patriarchal troops. Palace guards loyal to the emir and the forces of Dratha Ethene, the other local emir, defend the city. In the process, both emirs break ties with the Patriarch.

► **12 AUTUMN 1933:** Katryne Sanz, on suspension from the Northern Guard, leaves for Khayr ad-Din.

► **20 AUTUMN 1933:** Northern Guard Lieutenant Jennifer Brockton, stationed aboard the NCS-19 Vigilance is captured during an operation in the Western Desert. Although her commander reports her Killed In Action, several of her crewmates refuse to give up hope.

► **25 AUTUMN 1933:** SIU commander Aristide Lazarus recruits Duelist Yang Jownz for a special operation. Lazarus believes Northern Guard Intelligence Service Colonel Sonya Gerti is interested in Adrianna Xing and wants to know why. Jownz travels to Massada to find Xing.

Timeline

TN 1934

► **WINTER TO SPRING 1934:** Colonel Proust recruits troops for an invasion campaign aimed at the small Republican Liberation Movement. Notably, he calls on GREs from Port Arthur.

► **34 WINTER 1934:** Unidentified commandos raid the Hades bio-warfare complex in Bethany, SR. During the attack, a virulent, semi-lethal agent codenamed Dove is released into the city. The attackers are later tentatively identified as being from the Humanist Alliance.

► **42 WINTER 1934:** Republican Prime Minister Louis Philippe deRouen, convinced that the Hades attack was the result of a Humanist agent in the Republic, makes the hunt for this "mole" the top priority for both Military Intelligence and SRID.

► **SPRING 1934:** Aaron Logan, taipan of the Mekong Development Corporation, begins secret negotiations with UMF Treasurer Yves Banderas.

In orbit of Poseidon, secret refurbishing continues on the Republican Gateship Illustrious. The station commander comes under political investigation for his doubts about the project, which operates outside the provisions of the Joint Terranovan Space Initiative agreed upon after the War of the Alliance.

► **18 SPRING 1934:** In a duel broadcast across Terra Nova, Antoni "Solitaire" Mor defeats Lash and once again becomes champion of the Khayr ad-Din dueling circuit.



Spring 1934: Illustrious Prepares Herself



► **SUMMER 1934:** NCS-19 Vigilance fights a long battle with the Republican landship RLS-27 Draco and its escort vessels. During the battle, Jennifer Brockton is rescued.

The Yang Dancers, famous Kabuki artists, perform in Port Oasis. Under the cover of dance, Kitani Yang and her cabal of spies gather information on the Order of the Falcon for their patron, Mekong Speaker Miyako Sogabe.

► **3 TO 8 SUMMER 1934:** Colonel Proust's forces conquer the RLM and re-baptize it the New Human Republic, a GREL-based principality.

► **5 SUMMER 1934:** Solitaire, Nicosa Renault and Katryne Sanz meet in Khayr ad-Din. They discuss an undisclosed plan for the region in case of a war.

► **19 SUMMER 1934:** The BRF in Lance Point shoots down a Légion Noire troop transport, killing all hands. Republican retaliation begins almost immediately.

► **22 SUMMER 1934:** BRF commander Ernesto Jaxon releases a manifesto in Lance Point, calling for a Republican military withdrawal from the city and issuing a death threat to local collaborators.

► **33 SUMMER 1934:** BRF guerrillas enter Lance Point and a running street battle ensues. SNS reporter Amanda Hess is killed while covering the story.

► **24 AUTUMN 1934:** Carmen Melfas interviews Second Follower Thor Hutchison for the Valeria Times.

Timeline

TN 1935

► **1 WINTER 1935:** CNCS Grand Marshal Victoria Edden-Smythe, UMF Treasurer Yves Banderas and Taipan Aaron Logan partake in a covert meeting in Ashington, UMF. Logan presents evidence that the Mekong Dominion might not be interested in fighting an all-out war with the North.

► **7 WINTER 1935:** Colonel Proust's former follower Soldier Roskiman flees into the Great White Desert with his lover, Zaya. Proust issues a reward for their capture and sends his troops after them.

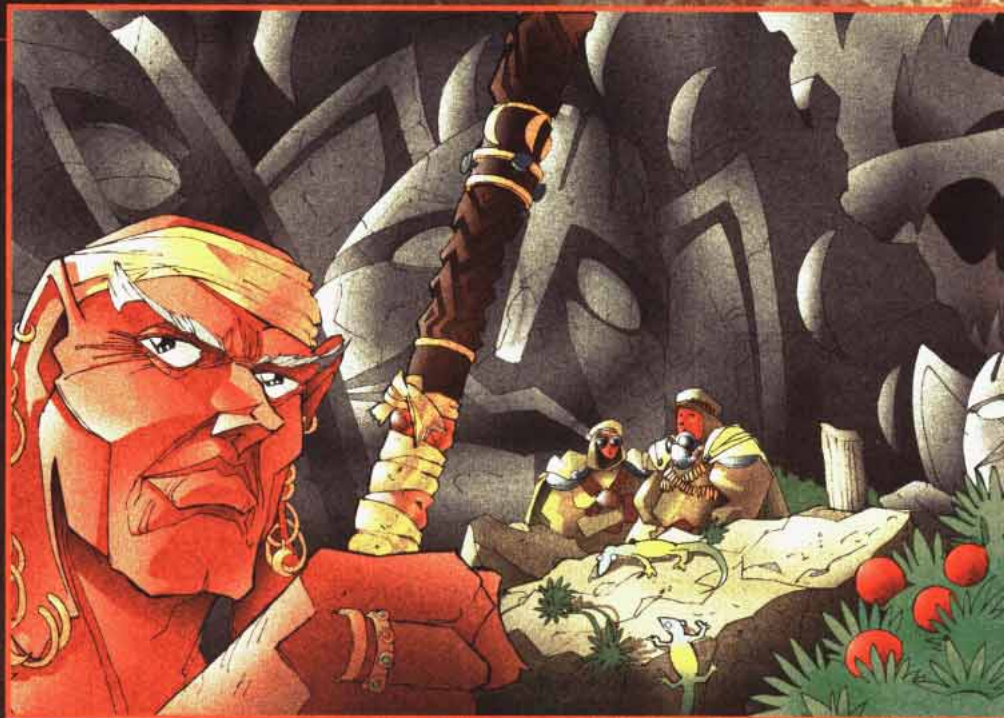
► **22 WINTER 1935:** A report to the CNCS Inner Council supports Taipan Logan's contention of divisions within the Allied Southern Territories.

► **41 WINTER 1935:** Emir Alexis Thoras, ruler of Okavango and a third cousin to Patriarch Masao, is killed as part of the battle for Patriarchal succession.

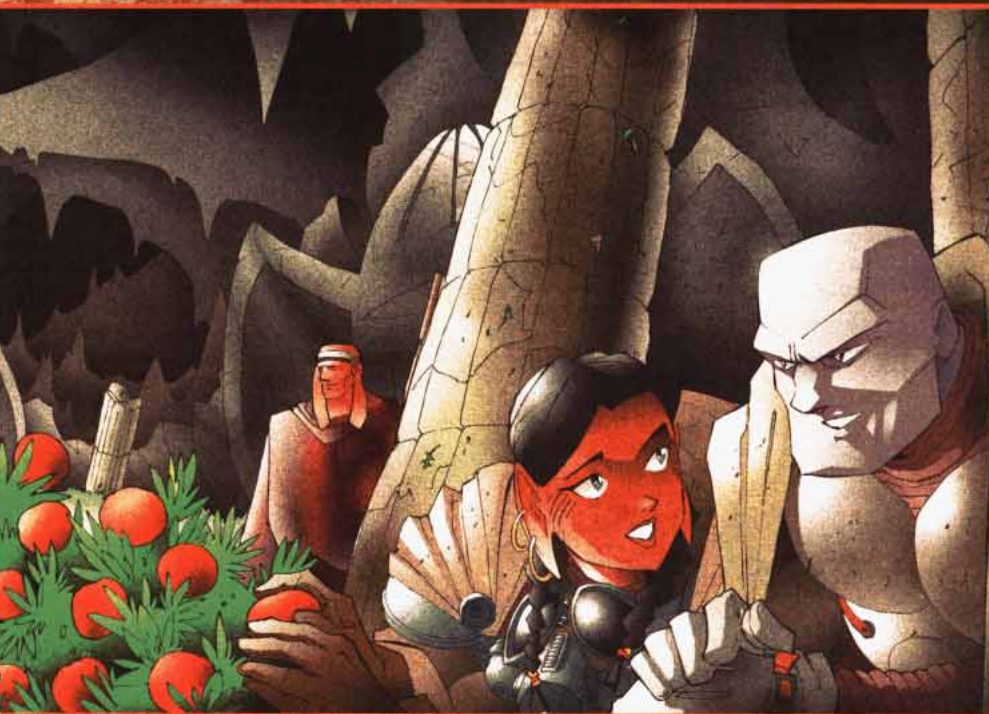
► **SPRING 1935:** In pursuit of Roskiman and Zaya, Proust's forces come into conflict with the Desert Wolves.

► **6 SPRING 1935:** Returning from exile, Rafael Bhervo, the child emir of Okavango, reenters his city-state and declares its independence from the ESE. Fighting begins almost immediately.

► **9 SPRING 1935:** Humanist officials begin discussion of a plan to establish a "security zone" within the Eastern rebel territories along their borders after battles spill over into the Alliance.



Winter 1935: Welcome to the Godwell Valley



► **16 SPRING 1935:** The Norlight Blue Angels regiment, defending Massada, fights off a superior MILICIA force near the holy city.

► **18 SPRING 1935:** SIU-Alpha member Lussian Salban defects from the MILICIA during an operation in Okavango.

► **SUMMER 1935:** Under orders from Prophet's Shield head Maya Fajil, members of the Order of Dorothea report on the growing number of Apostate Revisionists (followers of Adrianna Xing) in Sorrento. Throughout this period, their number swells as Xing preaches in Massada.

► **10 TO 15 SUMMER 1935:** Secret meetings take place in Oxford, Humanist Alliance, between Lord Chancellors Farzahn Hemami and Kenichi Tanaka, Illuminatus Anastapulos, Prime Minister deRouen and Emir Nigel Shirow. They discuss the possibility of limiting the scope of the Eastern rebellions and eventually decide upon the "Oxford Agreement."

► **33 TO 40 SUMMER 1935:** ESE Lord Chancellor Kenichi Tanaka and Fort Henry Proconsul Lang Regina exchange a series of confidential letters about the worsening state of world affairs.

► **35 SUMMER 1935:** CNCS announces it withdrawal from the Joint Terranovan Space Initiative and its plan to unilaterally refurbish and expand its Gateship fleet.

► **1 AUTUMN 1935:** Day of Peace ceremonies in Sorrento feature the global telecast of Thor Hutchison's speech, during which he is to present an award to Colonel Neel Garner Fulan, commander of the Blue Angels.



Tears

Peace River, 01•AU•35



For the first time in cycles, Nicosa allowed herself to cry. The tears rolled down her cheeks and blurred her vision; she barely saw her digital wall clock change from 35:59 to 00:00, the date changing to 2 Autumn 1935. That this horrible day was over was cold comfort — a long night was about to begin.

"Trideo: off," she whispered once she had composed herself. SNS reporter Fionna Galo was cut off in mid-sentence; she had been offering yet another analysis of the day's "tragedy." Nicosa walked out onto her balcony to get some air.

A dry desert wind was sweeping across the Karaq Wastes, making for a pleasant evening in Peace River. From her apartments in the First Terrace of the city's habitat core, Nicosa could see people milling about Longchamps Park. She saw lights on in most homes — no one could sleep knowing the news. People in the streets seemed confused and ill at ease. Some people huddled in groups, couples holding onto each other for some measure of comfort. Others walked alone, desperately trying to get their minds off what had happened.

The odd silence was shattered by the roar of *Dragonfly* hoppers overhead. The sleek craft dropped from the airfield above the core, and raced at low altitude toward the Prospects, Peace River's

toughest neighborhood. Their red and blue flashing lights and bold markings identified them as Peace Officer Corps craft. Nicosa knew immediately that a riot had started, confusion and frustration exploding into violence.

It only made sense, of course. It had been almost twenty cycles since Terra Nova had fought off the invaders. Those two decades had been filled with promise and hope. Sure, other battles had happened and forces had clashed in the Badlands, but despite their own troubles, Riverans had gotten used to living in peace. Now all that was over — it had to be.

Nicosa went back inside. Sitting down at her desk, she powered up her personal workstation. She had worked so hard to avoid this, playing one faction against another in order to keep everyone too busy to stage an all out war. Now a single death had sealed the planet's fate — she had to find out why.

Somewhere in the background, someone was pulling the strings. But manipulation always left signs, it was just a matter of finding the patterns of influence. For that you needed information, and luckily Nicosa Renault had access to a lot of data.

She opened the first document and began to read...

Jungle Drums

Top Secret • tango/tango/12

To: *Commandant A. Lazarus, Commander, SIU*
From: *Major J. Augusta, Field Commander, SIU-Alpha*
Date: *24•WI•33*
Re: *Operation: Jungle Drums*

Commandant,

I can only call our operation a partial success. We were able to uncover the origin of the attacks on the uranium shipments from the Ogadog Hills on the Republican border and discovered that Northern commandos were not at all involved. As we had discussed, the profile of the attacks did not show the precision of Northern special forces. Rather a group of GREL supersoldiers left over from the War of the Alliance were responsible.

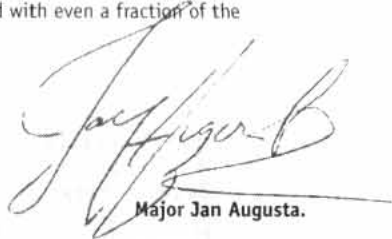
Sergents Salban and Muna-Habib were able to extract significant intelligence from the GRELs when they allowed themselves to be captured. By doing so they uncovered the location of the supersoldiers' secret base within a dried out section of the MacAllen Network and learned their motivations. The GRELs were led by a megalomaniacal member of the command-class (or Jan-class) of GRELs calling himself Colonel Proust. This Proust claimed he had been betrayed by his human masters and was seeking revenge upon them and the entire



planet. He had been stealing fissionable materials as a way toward that revenge. Proust was aided by a cabal of other GRELs, including at least one Morgana-class commando and a Mordred-class shocktrooper, and had gathered a large number of local mercenaries to his cause. I estimate his total armed force at almost 500 men, including two dozen military vehicles, among them a Northern *Kodiak* heavy assault Gear.

Proust's base and forces were destroyed when the rest of SIU-Alpha (myself, Sergeants Petite and Vernon, and Sous-Caporal Sez) engineered the rescue of our comrades and then followed orders by calling down orbital bombardment on the underground facility. This brought tons of rock crashing down upon the renegades' heads. I cannot guarantee, however, that Proust himself (or his cabal) were killed during the bombardment. As we learned during the war, GRELs are dangerous enemies and I think it wise to keep the file on this one open for the time being — especially if he escaped with even a fraction of the uranium he had stolen from us.

Complete report attached.



Major Jan Augusta.

official report

Covert Encounter



ASI Surveillance Report: (ID# 42-76A-09-1821933)

Date: 18 Spring 1933

Location: Boras Hamlet, Karaq Wastes

Subject: Weapons sale between agents of Forzi cartel and Peace River BRF

01:32 • Three-vehicle convoy arrives and unloads five people. Photo augmentation reveals known BRF associates Francis Marz and Gordana Yul among party. Other members unidentified — could include BRF leader Sundra Gabriel. Three enter designated building at 01:37, two others remain on guard.

01:55 • Two Longrunner trucks arrive and disembark six people. Four are armed with assault rifles or SMGs. Two have holstered sidearms. Photo analysis identifies Vanessa Forzi-Polo and Dayvid Bogdanov, known middle members of Forzi smuggling cartel. Along with two guards, they enter building at 02:06.

02:08 • Thermal imaging and laser microphones record discussion between Forzi-Polo and Marz (see attached transcript A3). Discussion settles on a price for six cases of "merchandise." Discussion lasts until 02:25.

02:31 • All parties emerge from building and head toward lead Longrunner. One armored case is removed from truck and opened.

02:34 • Photo augmentation reveals no markings on case, although shape and form match known standard ordnance transport case for Northern Guard, Norlight Armed Forces and United Mercantile Federation Army.

02:35 • Bogdanov removes a package from the case and passes it to Marz, who examines it carefully. Photo augmentation reveals marking on package consistent with C57-type military grade demolition charges. Serial number reads as 14/321-76-990-ABN, matching shipment reported stolen from UMFA base near Canterbury.

02:38 • Yul takes package and opens it, submitting a sample to a chemical analysis dataglove. Photo augmentation does not reveal results, but Yul seems satisfied. Test ends at 02:41.

02:45 • Small package removed from BRF transport and handed to Forzi-Polo, who examines it at 02:49. Photo augmentation reveals AST dinar bills — estimated total of 100,000 dinars.

02:51 • Six cases of explosives unloaded from Longrunner onto BRF trucks. Transfer ends at 03:04.

03:11 • Both parties leave the area.

Ogadog Hills Orbital Bombing

SIU Intel Photo

Ogadog Hills Bombing (SIU intel photo): Photo of Gabriel-class kinetic kill projectiles striking valley in Ogadog Hills. Projectiles launched from Southern Republican Army (Space Defense Corps) launch platforms B/A-99-18 and B/A-21-09 in timed simultaneous strike. Simultaneous strikes used to maximize damage to underground and valley facilities of GREL Soldier Proust.

Deceased

Northern Guard Identity Papers — Capt. Czeshin, Esthel (deceased). Include with personal effects to be transferred to Czeshin family members. Update central records to reflect transfer of property as per Deceased Service Protocol.



4-WI-33

Armed Forces News

Orbital Strike

Fort Henry Military Review

Members of the Western Frontier Protectorate Army's satellite observation corps confirmed evidence of an orbital bombardment last season, near the Southern Republican border in the late evening of 23 Winter. Independent sources confirm a heavy artillery strike in the Ogadog Hills in the foothills of the Saragossa Range, near the border towns of Tijuana and Abebba. WFPA officials refused to comment, but other sources reported damage consistent with Gabriel-class kinetic kill projectiles. Although no confirmation of the origin of the projectiles has been released, the lack of full-alert response from local military installations makes the Southern Republic the most likely source. Many observers support the theory of an unscheduled weapon test.

Norlight Foreign Minister Ethan Scope released a statement in Valeria condemning the Republic's use of orbital weapons without issuing the proper warning as outlined in the 1918 Terranovan Global Weapons Agreement. Scope called the test "more evidence of Port Oasis' complete lack of regard for international agreements and the concerns of any and all foreigners." Scope then pointed out that the projectiles struck a mountain range outside the Republic and near several small Badlands communities. "They obviously do not care one whit for the locals."



A Hero Remembered

Captain Esthel Czeshin was buried with full military honors in Torres Military Cemetery in Valeria yesterday. A recipient of two Northern Stars for her bravery during the War of the Alliance, Captain Czeshin was a respected Gear commando leader in the Northern Guard's famous 33rd regiment: the *Roving Guns*. Czeshin led a *Guns* section against CEF troops during the war, cutting off enemy supply lines and was promoted to the command of the regiment's 3rd company in 1923. According to Northern Guard sources, Czeshin died on the 21st of an undiagnosed brain aneurysm while stationed in the Barrington Basin with the rest of the 33rd. Her funeral was attended by most members of the Guard's high command, including Grand Marshal Edden-Smythe, and featured a full honor guard. Czeshin was eulogized by her commanding officer, Colonel Selene Münschtradler.

Colonel Münschtradler spoke at length about Czeshin's bravery in battle and her close relationship to the soldiers she led. This point was made evident by the emotion clearly seen on the faces of the hardened troops of 3rd company. In perhaps the most touching moment of the ceremony, Ranger Gordon Algiers, Czeshin's aide-de-camp, presented the Norlight regimental flag that had draped the Captain's coffin to her husband, Alfrid, a history professor in Kenema. She also leaves behind Bridgit, their young daughter.

Covert Sources



Personal Recorder Log: Montroyal, Etien • Assistant Ambassador, Peace River

Date: 22 Summer 1933

Location: Jacobi residence, Peace River Executive Tower

timetag: 23:31:07

VOICE 1: *Why thank you, Ambassador. (voiceident: Jacobi, Fidel. Director Paxton Arms. Confirmed.)*

MONTROYAL: *This report should answer a few questions about the BRF, Jacobi. Among other things, the mystery about where they get their weapons has been answered by some of our agents.*

JACOBI: *That'll be good to know when we clean up that little problem.*

MONTROYAL: *I'm not sure the problem is going to remain little much longer. We've got the BRF hooking up with the Forzi cartel out of Wounded Knee. Those smugglers have their fingers all over the North and South and can get their hands on a lot of hardware. Military hardware.*

JACOBI: *Then I will just have to deal with them when the time comes.*

MONTROYAL: *We might be able to help there as well. The Forzi are tied into the Rostov family in Port Oasis. I might be able to get some SRID resources to help you shut them down.*

JACOBI: *Excellent. That will be very useful after the election, when I'm finally in charge.*

MONTROYAL: *You're holding evidence that the BRF is planning something very big, you realize. I doubt they'll wait for after the election to use those explosives. In fact, my instincts tell me they'll most likely want to make a statement before executives go to the polls.*

JACOBI: *You're so small minded, Ambassador, especially for a Republican. Every bomb before the election is another vote for me — the more incompetent Simosa seems, the better.*

MONTROYAL: *And it doesn't bother you to sacrifice a few more lives to this cause?*

JACOBI: *Come now, Ambassador. That's how these games are played. This sentimentality surprises me coming from a Republican — I thought only Northerners were that foolish.*

MONTROYAL: *I'm simply disturbed that you would be so brazen with your machinations. That exposes you to dangers, don't you think?*

JACOBI: *You are very naive, Ambassador. I have nothing to worry about.*

timetag: 23:54:27

Shattered Peace



Special Weapons Operations Squad Transcript • Property of POC/SWOS

Peace Officer Corps : *official document – DO NOT DISTRIBUTE*

Date: 34•SU•33

Start Time: 24:39:07

Location: Ebert Paxton MegaPlaza, South Wing, Level C

Unit: SWOS, Team 3 — Demolitions/Bomb Disposal

LIEUTENANT FOX (UNIT LEADER): *Okay, she should be right behind here.*

OFFICER MARX: *Got it, Lew. Looks like a beaut. She's wedged behind one of the disposal units... not sure how we're going to get to it.*

OFFICER NGOC: *Oh boy. You're not kidding, those barf-boys are really getting good at this. [ref: barf: colloq. for BFR, Badlands Revolutionary Front] Looks like a standard shielded box, maybe 50 by 50 centimeters and 5 or 10 deep. If it's got pressure sensors, it'll blow the second we try to move the disposal bin.*

FOX: *HQ? Team 3 here. We have located the bomb. Secure the entire wing and bring in the drones.*

POC HQ COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER (VIA RADIO): *Roger, Team 3. Proceed with preliminaries; wing sweep in progress.*

FOX: *Roger. Okay, boys let's see what we can find out. Marx?*

MARX: *Chem sniffer is picking up a bunch of residue on the left here — looks like they stuffed the components in after they placed the box itself. That should mean we can get them out.*

FOX: *I don't like "should" Marx. I like "can." Ngoc?*

NGOC: *The wall tiles on this side should — I mean, won't give us too much trouble if we want to get at the bomb this way, but I don't recommend it. If these guys are paying attention, they'll have rigged out more shock detectors around likely approaches.*

FOX: *Agreed. Okay Marx, we're going in the way they did. The plastic case should dissolve with standard acid. Let's get to work getting it off so we can see what's inside.*

MARX: *Got it. [pause: 71 seconds] What the hell? The plastic's reacting with the acid—*

FOX: *Hell! The case is part of the —*

Transcript Ends.

official report/transcript

Slaughterhouses

Bomb Blast

SNS VidNews, Peace River

The Paxton Arms executive election campaign was swept from the headlines yesterday when a terrorist bomb leveled much of the south wing of the Ebert Paxton MegaPlaza in Peace River. The explosive device was discovered by MegaPlaza security and evacuation was already under way when the device detonated. Thirty-seven people are confirmed dead in the aftermath, with 60 more wounded. Among the dead are eight Peace Officers, including the three bomb-disposal experts who had been trying to deactivate the device when it exploded.

The Badlands Revolutionary Front (BRF) claimed responsibility for the bombing a mere half-hour after the tragedy. In a recorded statement delivered to the press, BRF cell-leader Sundra Gabriel called the bombing "a wake-up call to all those who would live off the profits of Paxton slave masters." In a joint press conference soon thereafter, Paxton Head Executive Officer Milani DuBeau-Slovenski and POC Marshal Terri Chen announced that a state of emergency was being called throughout the city-state. Paxton Security Forces and POC Officers will be cooperating in a large-scale search and investigation designed to apprehend Gabriel and her accomplices.

Sundra Gabriel remains at large.



Desert Ambush

SNS VidNews, Prince Gable

The remnants of a once-mighty trading caravan were discovered in the wake of a sandstorm in Andruston County, on the fringe of the Great White Desert, last week. The caravan, counting sixty people, was traveling through the desert when the storm hit. Investigators say that the caravan fell victim to attackers.

"It was the goddamn Sand Riders," said Marta Voness, one of the three survivors found by locals in the wreckage. "They came out of the storm and started picking us off with guns and then with knives. I hid in the back of one of the trucks with my two kids, but everyone else was cut to pieces by those savages." The bodies found among the caravan vehicles seem to confirm Voness' story, many displaying gruesome wounds. The concentrations of corrosive white sand adrift in the storm seem to confirm that only the Sand Riders — ill-understood primitive raiders inhabiting the White Desert — could be responsible.

"This activity is somewhat atypical of the Riders," said anthropologist Isaac Langmuir, reached for comment in Temple Heights. "This sort of brutality is usually reserved for travelers approaching their holy grounds, which I have identified as laying further west. Perhaps another clan has claimed the territory in Andruston."

Jacobi on the Offensive

News Report

Peace River Reporter
Election 33 Special
Vid Edition Available
40 Summer 1933



The run-up to the Executive Caste election, scheduled for 3 Autumn, continued today with a speech by Fidel Jacobi, member of the Board of Directors up for reelection and leader of the powerful Jacobi faction. Jacobi himself is virtually guaranteed reelection and is trying to bring his two allies Maria Lopez and Henrich Bos to the Board with him. They face stiff competition from incumbents Francis Marx and Cho Rojang, executives known for their support of Paxton CEO Gerald Simosa. If Jacobi can sweep these elections he will likely become the new President and CEO.

In the interest of public understanding, we present an excerpt from Fidel Jacobi's speech to the Erbert Club.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the time has come for a change. We sit here, in this fine institution, in the most powerful city-state in the Badlands. Our corporation has a literally global clientele, but we nevertheless find ourselves strangled by foolish promises and contradictions. We must dispense with them.

"President Simosa would have us believe that Paxton Arms must be responsible for all the equatorial region, that we have a sacred duty to protect the smallest hamlet from whatever danger presents itself. I am the first to admit that, in a perfect world, this would be a laudable idea. But we do not live in a perfect world.

"We live sandwiched between two bickering giants, either of which has the ability to annihilate us in one fell swoop. We survive, we thrive, because of our internal strength and our ability to tap into a valuable market. We can thrive from the war that is coming as long as we are pragmatic — we must keep our house in order and prepare for the storm to come.

"President Simosa seems unable to deal with the terrorist threat in our midst and is all too willing to sacrifice lives and resources patrolling the deep desert and antagonizing our clients. If we continue with this policy we will become another casualty, another footnote in the war record.

"We must change and we must do it now! Thank you all."

(text abridged for space)

Settled Accounts

PAXSEC • Clearance Alpha/Red

Personal Recorder 23-A/4: DuBeau-Slovenski, Milani
date/time: 02•AU•33/35:49:44
idents: M. DuBeau-Slovenski; F. Jacobi

FJ: *What the hell do you want with me, DuBeau? I've got a campaign to win.*

MDS: *ASI report forty-two dash seventy-six A dash oh-nine dash eighteen two nineteen thirty-three.*

FJ: *Excuse me?*

MDS: *You received ASI surveillance report forty-two dash seventy-six A dash oh-nine dash eighteen two nineteen thirty-three from an official in the Southern embassy on the 22nd of the last season.*

FJ: *Wha— What are you talking about?*

MDS: *That report told you that Sundra Gabriel and her killers were amassing an explosive arsenal. You knew this would be used in a terrorist attack and chose to do nothing about it.*

FJ: *You have been taking too many stimulants, my dear. I'm afraid they've all gone to your pretty little head.*



MDS: *As a result of your little power games, several dozen Riverans are dead including civilians and members of the Peace Officer Corps. You have then proceeded to use these deaths to advance your campaign position.*

FJ: *Just because you can't track down this Gabriel woman, don't go creating little conspiracies to cover your own tracks and protect your owner. Gerald should really keep you on a tighter leash.*

MDS: *To capitalize on the deaths of POC officers and common Riverans completely disqualifies you to lead this city and this corporation. By your actions, you've forfeited your rights.*

FJ: *Oh, please. Don't try to be tough with me, little girl. I don't scare nearly as easily as you might think, and I'm not about to fall under the sway of your dubious charms. You are a nice little showpiece for Gerald and I just might keep you around once he's gone, but don't try to debate me.*

MDS: *I have my evidence. There's no debate.*

FJ: *So why don't you take me to the board? You'd be laughed out of the—*

SOUND: *phht - phht -phht >sound id - 98.7%: 3 shots from silenced 6mm pistol<*

MDS: *Because I don't need to, worm. Case closed.*

Jacobi on the Offensive

Offices of F. Jacobi

(Treasury Directorate security camera): Video feed
stills 02•AU•33 — 35:49:44, 35:53:11/ 35:53:59.
Classified PAXSEC eyes only by order of M. DuBeau-Slovenski.

GPN Live Feed

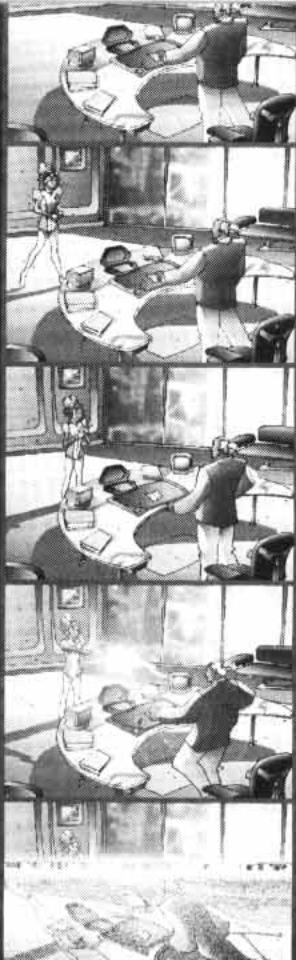
CFD Fidel Jacobi at the Ergert Club

PAXSEC Photo

HED Milani DuBeau-Slovenski



02 • AU • 33



Treasury Directorate security camera

Recruitment Drive

Nicosa's Notes

These posters appeared overnight in the GREL neighborhoods of Port Arthur carrying the words of Colonel Proust, a leader of GREL revolutionaries. This Proust character seems to have captured the supersoldiers' imagination and loyalty. He could be very dangerous — or very useful.

His involvement with the SIU operation code-named Jungle Drums means the Republic has probably already identified him as a threat, but I'm not sure about the Arthuriens or the North. My sources in Port Arthur claim that he is well known by most GRELS, but the human authorities are still not sure what to make of him. I can only assume that this call to nation-building will be taken as a threat.

I do wonder about any connection with Jan Mayen. Proust's talk of "counting the seconds until we die" makes me think he might have ties to the fertility research going on there. I hear the Humanists are helping the Mayen GRELS in their work — I'm not sure that's a good thing.

propaganda

02-20

A GREL FUTURE

Brothers and Sisters our time has come. We Jans, Minervas, Isabellas, Mordreds, Isaacs, Morganas, Kassandras and Maxwells, we have been cast out by those beneath us like so much genetic garbage. They made us to fight their dirty little wars, to bleed and die to make them great. They took away our future with a slice of their gene recombimer by making us sterile. When their stupidity lost the war, they abandoned us to wither away. Our old enemies spit in our faces, our old masters mock us, and we sit and take it, counting the seconds until we die.

No longer! It is long past time we found our own place and showed the fools who run our lives that we know what is best. Today we begin to take our destiny back; today we carve out a nation for ourselves. We stand together now and forever!

The only things we stand to lose are our chains!

Colonel Proust

A Matter of Psychology

Profile/Secret

Colonel Arthur,

As requested, please find attached some psychological profile notes on the GREL revolutionary Soldier Proust. Please note that information on Proust is sketchy at best.

Proust seems to be in the throws of the megalomaniacal strain evident in many of the Jan-class (leader) supersoldiers. Most GREL classes exhibit similar psychological dysfunction linked to their tasks. Proust himself, however, seems to be victim of an especially acute case.

Records show that Proust disappeared during the disastrous landing at Baja and apparently went underground. He seems to have spent his time developing a small army. His adoption of the rank of Colonel (outranking all other GREs) seems to indicate a sense of superiority over his fellow supersoldiers and certainly over humans. His manifesto — recently posted in GREL neighborhoods in Port Arthur — shows signs of a messianic complex. Proust sees himself as the savior of his kind, whom he identifies as an oppressed but inherently superior people. This conviction makes him extremely dangerous because all acts are justified given his “mission,” but he may also suffer from overconfidence. He may dismiss “mere humans” as ineffective.

— Captain Elena Marx, Arthurian Intelligence Bureau



Propaganda photo of “Colonel” Proust delivered into GREL neighborhoods of Port Arthur. Proust appears before a Northern Kodiak heavy assault Gear. ▶

1 Soldier Roskiman



1 Hernando Dapez ▶



Terror on the Move



Report from Northern Guard Intelligence Service

ID: D343-23-A/1811934

To: Col. Franco Golan, Operations

From: Maj. Bianka Samyels, Satellite Analysis

Date: 18•WI•34

Re: *Movements of Draco escort group
and 2nd Légion Noire regiment*

Colonel,

Satellite tracking confirms that the *RLS-27 Draco* is heading from her stop on the Republican border WSW of Westphalia around the Little Westridge Range and toward Lance Point.

Above-decks crew operations and troop deployment seem to confirm the transport of at least a full infantry company of fresh troops, most probably part of the 2nd Légion Noire regiment (a.k.a. *The Damned*).

This would mesh with the reports of other elements of the regiment moving toward Lance Point to reinforce the MILICIA auxiliary of the Légion already stationed there. Given terrain conditions around Lance Point, the *Draco* will likely not be able to bring its weapons to bear on rebel positions, but it should act as a serious deterrent.

Whether the *Draco* will remain in Lance Point or rejoin the Chamberlain Group in the Western Desert after dropping its passengers remains somewhat unclear. The *Draco's* post within the Chamberlain Group has not been filled by another vessel, however, so a return to standard duty within a season or two seems likely.

Satellite observation of Lance Point itself seems to indicate that the local troops are expecting their reinforcements to stay for a prolonged time. Construction of barracks, vehicle hangars and an expansion to what we believe to be the field hospital, would confirm our analysis. This would suggest that the rest of the Légion's 2nd regiment will arrive within the next season. Enhanced imagery has also revealed the construction of a larger airstrip attached to the MILICIA base, so I would expect air transport for the rest of the regiment.

Sincerely,

Major Bianka Samyels

CC: Colonel Sanya Gerti, Badlands Bureau

Terror on the Move

Satellite imaging

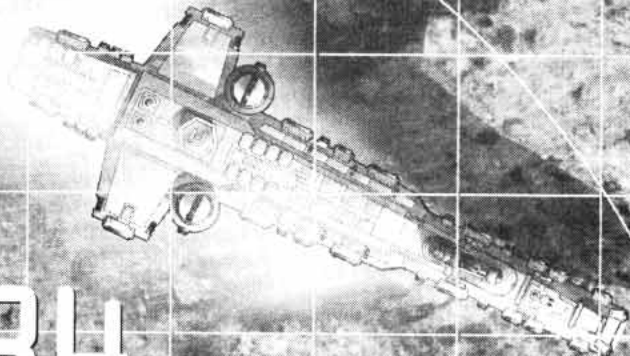
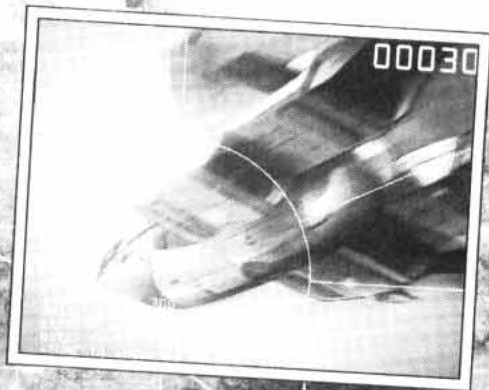
RLS-27 Draco moves through the Western Desert, cutting ESE through an ancient river valley to avoid a mountain outcropping. The vessel is bound for Lance Point in the Westridge area and is carrying troops from the 2nd Légion Noire regiment of the Southern Republican Army. This reinforcement of Republican troops in Lance Point may cause a retaliation by the Badlands Revolutionary Front or the Arthurian Korps.

Intelligence Service

F-45 Walfish moving on intercept course with Draco.

Murène photo

Comm. R. Murène, CRA.



WI-34

Solitaire Wins Big

OrbiViz Sports; Khayr ad-Din



In a spectacular one-on-one victory over reigning champion Lash, Duelist Antoni "Solitaire" Mor reclaimed his throne as the champion of the Khayr ad-Din circuit last night. Before a sell-out crowd at the Web Arena in Khayr ad-Din and an estimated trideo audience of 4.5 million viewers, Lash and Solitaire put everything on the line for the sake of their titles.

Sports fans will remember that Lash had unseated Solitaire in 1931 and that the Badlander had been considered out of the running until 1933, when his performance took an abrupt turn for the better. Since then, Solitaire has been cutting a swath through all comers, and most observers thought a fight to the finish with Lash was unavoidable. By Winter of this cycle, Solitaire had built up a strong enough standing to finally challenge Lash and the date was set for a match of champions.

The battle itself was to be a simple one-on-one fight, each Duelist aiming to incapacitate the other, although the Web Arena was laced with traps and obstacles to make the duel more exciting. The battle was neither slow to start nor boring to watch — both Solitaire and Lash were in top shape and the match was a flurry of action from the get-go.

The two contestants were placed at opposite ends of the arena and raced toward each other, avoiding traps and dangers like true masters of the sport. Solitaire took the first shots, trying to peg Lash at range before she could bring her deadly whip into play. Soon enough, however, her acrobatic dodges lured him into close combat and the fight truly began. Solitaire suffered several heavy shocks before he could respond by causing severe damage with a well-placed spike gun shot.

The battle continued on this tack, Solitaire deflecting shots and taking minor damage, and striking only when he could have major impact. The battle ended when Lash's own whip system was overloaded after a rocket barrage from her opponent. In a dramatic finale, Solitaire raised his spike gun and seemed ready to finish her off with a deadly shot though the Gear's sensor eye (and hence the pilot's skull), but instead simply pushed the machine over so it fell on its back in a heap.

Solitaire is now the recognized champion of the circuit, while Lash is recovering in a private clinic.

Solitaire Wins Big

OrbiViz Sports

In his opening strike, Solitaire suffered several hits from Lash's haywire whip before striking at her V-engine with his spike gun. Lash would be severely hampered by the loss of power resulting from this hit. This made the critical difference because it largely took away her speed advantage over Solitaire.

Stars of the Battle

Lash, alias unknown versus Antoni "Solitaire" Mor



LD-SP-34

Katryne and Solitaire

Personal Recorder Log

Location: SandStone Bar, Khayr ad-Din

Present: Antoni Mor (a.k.a. Solitaire), Katryne Sanz

ANTONI MOR: *I'm not sure what you want with me.*

NICOSA RENAULT: *I only wish you to meet someone, Mr. Mor. Nothing ominous, I assure you.*

AM: *So who am I supposed to meet?*

KATRYNE SANZ: *That would be me, I suppose.*

NR: *Allow me to introduce Katryne Sanz. Northern trainer, former Khayr ad-Din champion, and the mentor to some of the best —*

AM: *I know who she is. A pleasure.*

KS: *Likewise, Solitaire. Likewise. Congratulations on your victory over Lash, by the way.*

AM: *Thank you. But I have to ask, just why did you want to meet me?*

KS: *Nicosa and I have been discussing a plan to help deal with the coming chaos, something to help keep this area free from the hell that's about to engulf the planet. I'm trying to organize some key people, but I need your help.*



AM: *Forgive me, but you sound like my mother-in-law...*

NR: *Be that as it may, Mr. Mor, I think you might be interested in our proposal. In fact your family might be intrigued as well.*

AM: *I'm listening.*

KS: *Well, you know the maglevs will be cut once a war starts. Neither side can risk keeping them open.*

AM: *And this is supposed to be relevant to me? I honestly don't use the maglev very much at all.*

KS: *I know, but what if we could keep the maglev open from here to the Westridge Range? What if we could protect it and keep ourselves out of the worst of the conflicts?*

AM: *That's a lot of "what ifs."*

NR: *Yes, but it is possible, Mr. Mor. But we will need some help from people who would be willing to defend the maglev and help keep it open. People that you know very well...*

tape deleted

Wolf Calls

Western Desert, 01•SU•34

Antoni,

I hope this letter finds you well. I know that the two of us have not always, if ever, been friends. When I entered your father's life he had already made the unpardonable mistake of pushing you away because of the painful memories of your mother. A chasm of resentment already separated the two of you before I ever laid eyes upon Mahmet.

Looking back all these cycles, however, I know I cannot lay all the blame on others. So concerned was I to see your father regain his enjoyment of life, that I did little or nothing to heal the gap between you two. I told myself that his healing process would naturally re-forge your bond with him, but it was easier to have you away and have him concentrate on me and our child, Davood. That you stayed away from us as much as possible was a dull pain which I found simpler to ignore than to remedy.

Only when Mahmet had died — sacrificing himself to save us all — did I realize what a fool I had been. I remember looking across the funeral pyre at you, standing boldly apart from the rest of the clan. I longed to call out to you, because I knew we needed each other. Family is what binds us all and keeps us strong, and Davood could not stand without you and neither could I. But by then it was too late, I knew you would leave us and eventually you did.

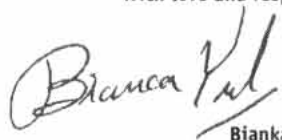


I was thrilled to learn that Davood and you had reestablished contact and become the friends that you should always have been. It would do my heart an infinite good if we could reconcile as you and your brother have. I make no pretense of replacing your mother in your heart, but I do know that we share a bond as Wolves and as the family of Mahmet Mor.

I also think the Wolves need you. These are trying times for us, with Northern and Southern troops moving through our lands, Sand Riders emerging from the Great White Desert and desert warlords doing battle around us. I fear we will be sorely tested in the cycles to come and I think you could make all the difference.

Please consider my offer,

With love and respect,


Bianka Yul

Legion Flight Down

Top Secret

ID: L545-51-X/2221934

To: Col. Franco Golan, Operations

From: Col. Sonya Gerti, Badlands Bureau

Date: 21 Summer 34

Re: BRF attack on 2nd Légion Noire regiment

Frank,

My people confirm that the Badlands Revolutionary Front has upped the ante in response to the 2nd Légion Noire regiment (*The Damned*) having moved into Lance Point. As you know, over the last few cycles, the BRF has gone from a ragtag group of rovers with political aspirations to a dangerous and effective, cell-based guerrilla operation. Their leader, Ernesto Jaxon, has inspired a wide variety of desert rebels to take up his banner and he has apparently obtained a secure source of weaponry. I've been unable to get a secure fix on where Jaxon is getting his arms, but he seems to be dealing with at least two smuggling cartels.

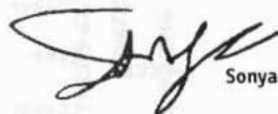
Sources on the ground confirm that a *Bacchus* air transport carrying almost an entire compagnie from the 2nd bataillon was shot down on the 19th, most likely thanks to a Dolmen-class infantry anti-aircraft missile system. The craft went down in the mountains overlooking Lance Point and all hands were apparently lost.



I cannot envisage Commandant Mikashi of the 2nd taking the loss of so many troops sitting down. I think we are about to see a new escalation that will make the last Lance Point revolt seem like a cakewalk. It might be well to get some of our people in place, if for no other reason than to keep the Légion occupied there.

Jaxon's choice to strike is a dangerous one, but I can understand it. With the 2nd already coming in, he could have either gone further underground or started the conflict before his enemies were ready. He chose the bolder of the two options. That shows a certain reckless courage, but I think it also shows a confidence in his resources. His supply lines are more secure now than during the first revolt and I think he can hold his own for at least a season or two in city-fighting.

I think he might also be trying to force us into action. Because he knows instability in Lance Point is in our interest, he may well hope that we will come to his aid in dislodging the Légion. I vote that we let ourselves be used. By giving him some intel and some weapons we can take away from our enemies a secure petroleum source and tie up two or more elite units — all without losing a single Northern life. Seems more than fair to me.


Sonya

Freedom for Lance Point

BRF Manifesto

FREEDOM NOW

Let us be clear. The occupying forces of the Allied Southern Territories will no longer be accepted in Lance Point. They serve to reinforce an oppressive regime whose only goal is to extract profit for itself at the cost of its subjects' lives. The escalation in Southern military might has left the free citizens of Lance Point with no choice but to answer blood with blood.

We of the Badlands Revolutionary Front do hereby demand the removal of all occupiers from our lands and give fair warning to all those who would aid and abet them: your crimes will not be forgotten.

We name here as enemies Commandants Henri Mikashi of the 2nd Legion Noire regiment and Commandant Giyom Nazier of the 11th MILICIA regiment (Legion Noire Auxiliary). Even if you are but puppets of an oppressive regime, we will take whatever steps are necessary to remove you.

We name here as criminals Samuel Nanga, Chairman of the Lance Point Consortium, and all other members of the directing board of the consortium: Tara Monet, Yves Distan, Reginald Foss, Olga Petrovsky and Carmen Bonaventura. You have collaborated with and reaped profit from the occupation, and your lives are now forfeit.

The other executives, managers and employees of the Consortium still have time to show their true allegiances, however. In the battles to come, we will remember those who stand with us. The Revolution welcomes all those tired of oppression.

Those charged with corporate security, take special care. You have become the lapdogs of foreign masters and will surely be used as cannon fodder by them. Join us now and find a new way or we will have no choice but to consider you the enemy as well.

Freedom for Lance Point!

Freedom for us all!

Ernesto Jaxon
Ernesto Jaxon

Blood on the Sands

SNS Live Telecast

33 Summer 1934

Amanda Hess reporting live

We are coming to you live from the Badlands community of Lance Point, just east of the Westridge Range, where guerrilla fighting continues between Southern military units and the nationalist forces of the Badlands Revolutionary Front. We entered the city with the guerrilla forces last night and vicious house-to-house fighting has not ceased since then. According to Maya, the commander of the BRF unit that brought us here, the rebels have been able to push out the Southern soldiers from the west of the city, but the occupiers remain heavily entrenched in the east. Two hours ago, shelling began to dislodge the guerrillas from their new territories and much of the city around us is now in ruins.

The civilian casualties are difficult to estimate, but they must be astronomical. Seventy-five thousand souls call Lance Point home, and I fear the dead can already be counted in the hundreds. We have already stumbled upon a housing development completely flattened by artillery fire and more are surely to come.

...



We're running for cover now. Maya's unit seems to have come across some Southerners who refuse to be moved. We're in a building now, but Maya and her troops are continuing across the street into the next complex. We're going to follow them now — oh no!

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm s- sorry, but we've just seen Maya and her fellows gunned down. It looks like an attack helicopter, a *Titan* I believe, strafed them as they were in the open. Here it comes again... wait it's not alone. There are at least three of the craft and one seems to be landing.

It's disgorging troops, it looks like a small escouade of Southern forces — Légion Noire I believe. They're securing the area, I believe — my god, they're finishing them off. I'm trying to get a better picture... wait they've seen us!

Go, get out of here! Go! Go! G—

Ladies and gentlemen, this is Francis Guerringer at the SNS broadcast center. We seem to have lost all contact with Amanda Hess in Lance Point. We can only hope that she and her crew are safe and sound. More on this story as it develops.

Legion Flight Down

Salvage Photo

Salvage crews report no survivors in the crash of Flight X19 north of Lance Point. Damage is consistent with an infantry-launched anti-aircraft missile of the type recently acquired by the BRF. Retaliation by the Republican troops in Lance Point is to be expected.

Titan

BRF troops flight in Lance Point

Intelligence Service Photo File

BRF leader Ernesto Jaxon.



53-SU-34

In Conversation

Second Follower Thor Hutchison

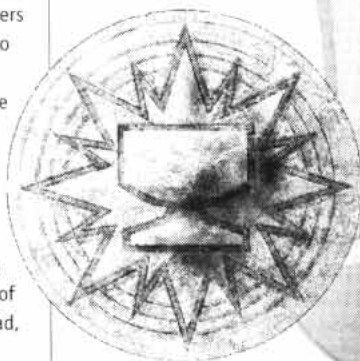
Valeria Times: 24 Autumn 1934

by Carmen Melfas

I met Second Follower Thor Hutchison at a small monastery outside Sorrento. The home of the Meritrean Order, the stone building stood on one of the many small hills that dot the Irrian Plain. The sisters and brothers of the order welcomed me and never questioned the trideo recorder gear I had with me, even though Meritreans do not believe in electronic media. The brother who greeted me showed me to one of the prayer rooms at the top of the monastery.

There, standing in the ochre light coursing through the stained glass windows in each corner, was Thor Hutchison. It goes against my journalistic impartiality, but I had dreaded this moment. I had been less than flattering of the Second Follower in several reports and I was fully prepared to suffer a withering stare from a gruff giant of a man, clad in the finest accouterments of his religious station. Instead, I saw a simple person — tall certainly, but no more so than my own brother — and clad only in a monk's cloak, prayer beads slipping between his fingers as he looked south. When he turned to face me, his single eye seemed almost paternal.

Second Follower Thor Hutchison ▶





It took me a second to say anything and he was the one who spoke first. "Carmen, I'm glad you could come. Please have a seat." Usually, using my given name when you don't know me is a sure way to get me mad, but from his mouth it sounded right. Sort of like my uncle or grandfather. His voice was gravely, but not as harsh as I had remembered from all his broadcast sermons.

We moved to the simple wooden table in the middle of the room and began.

Carmen Melfas: *Reverend, how did you come to be Second Follower? Many of the events leading to your elevation are part of the public record, but it is difficult for those of us outside the church to understand why someone would decide to become the leader of his faith.*

Thor Hutchison: *The choice was only partially mine, Carmen. I can only say that it was a calling that I felt deep within myself. As a young priest I saw the harm we were doing to ourselves in Petropolis — pollution, hatred and greed were killing the common people in the name of oil. I was frustrated, even angry, and I felt powerless. What could I, a lone, simple man, do against the injustices that were plaguing the entire nation?*

It was then that I realized I wasn't alone.

CM: *Because Mamoud was with you?*

TH: *Well yes, of course, but I was actually referring to the community as a whole. There were hundreds of thousands of us living in Petropolis without*

much hope and future. But together, cooperating, we could make changes. It was that bond between myself and my congregation and between that congregation and the rest of the city that showed me once and for all that the Gentle Word was at work. All of us — priests, monks and lay people — were bonded by our faith in the Prophet and our conviction that change was necessary. That was what allowed us to succeed and it was the realization that I could help harness the good will of the common people that started me on a course toward my current position as Second Follower of the Revisionist Church.

CM: *You speak of the reforms made in Petropolis as a religious — a Revisionist — victory, but there were many other people involved in their implementation. Labor unions and non-Revisionists played major roles as well, I believe.*

TH: *Yes, certainly they did. Like us, they had been wanting change for many cycles, but had not been able to create any movement for reform. This problem stemmed, I think, from their isolation. Unions thought only of the rights of industrial workers, while the few Jerusalemite preachers thought only of their small congregations. It was the larger Revisionist sense of community — of the whole city-state as an enlarged congregation — that allowed us to mobilize the various forces of change. I, for one, was very pleased to have the aid of other denominations and of the labor movement, and was quite proud that our initiatives were able to liberate and channel their potential.*

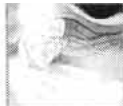
CM: So now you find yourself as Second Follower of Mamoud and according to some, the most powerful man in the North—

TH: I have never made that claim, Carmen. My power within the church has been granted to me by the faithful and any sway I have outside its confines is due only to the confidence some others put in my judgment and counsel.

CM: Be that as it may, Reverend, your “enlarged congregation” is now the entire Norlight Confederacy and perhaps the entire CNCS. You do not seem to have shirked such a large responsibility. You are a frequent visitor to Valeria, leaders of all stripes seek out your opinion, and you have used your weekly trideo addresses to comment on political as well as religious issues. As your critics point out, we already have a political leadership; why do you feel compelled to give your opinion on so many traditionally secular issues?

TH: Well the first reason is quite simply because it is asked for. When a member of my congregation asks for advice, I think it behooves me to give it. It doesn't matter if that person is a farmer from Smolensk or President Adjanni. But I do think that the church has an obligation to present its thinking on the issues facing our confederation and our world, even were it not sought out by the political leadership.

We have a variety of leaders because a free and moral society cannot be guided from a single point of view. I have a great deal of respect for President Adjanni personally, but she must make her decisions based



largely on political considerations. Will regulating immoral Hermes 72 programming cost her votes in an upcoming by-election? Will it break up her governing coalition? Chief Justice Stark and other judicial leaders are similarly bound by a legal point of view. They are forced to reject moral policies because they contravene legal precedents. Despite the best intentions of our secular leaders, morality must always be a somewhat secondary concern for them.

These limits are all necessary, of course. Without them we would rapidly end up in a dictatorship or the farcical parody of democracy that reigns in the Southern Republic. But these restrained points of view need to be completed by a moral perspective. Because I have dedicated my life to my faith, I can provide such an outlook and I feel it is my duty to do so.

CM: What about people who do not take your advice?

TH: That is certainly their right. I understand that there are times that the President may feel that she has no choice but to weight political implications more heavily than moral ones. That is the nature of our system and I accept that; President Adjanni is a strongly ethical woman and we have a very positive relationship. However, in the hypothetical situation of someone who consistently ignores the moral implications of his actions, I believe these actions would come back and haunt him. The Norlight Confederacy and the North as a whole both take right and wrong seriously and political opportunists are rarely tolerated for long.



CM: You mentioned the Southern Republic. You have been highly critical of Port Oasis over most of your career and your rhetoric seems to have been increasing over the last few seasons. Recently, you called Republican Prime Minister Louis Philippe deRouen “the epitome of a leader without a conscience, a man guided only by his love of power and hatred of others.”

There are now skirmishes between Northern and Southern troops going on almost constantly in the Badlands. In such a tense political climate, is it really wise to make such a direct attack on the Southern Republic’s most beloved public figure?

TH: How can it be unwise to point out what is obvious to all who care to look? Our sons and daughters are dying trying to keep us safe from this man’s ambition and it becomes suddenly unwise to speak of the danger he represents? It is my duty to be a voice for what is right and when I see evil — yes, evil — rear its head I cannot remain silent. Workers who only wish to be free to enjoy the fruits of their labor are being cut down in the sands of the Badlands as we speak, all because of this man and the corrupt culture he represents.

(Ed. Note: Reverend Hutchison is referring to the second Lance Point revolt and its bloody suppression. See “Tears for Lance Point” in the Features section.)

CM: But don’t your words increase the chances of a war? There are rumors that a treaty could soon put an end to the worst of the violence in Basal

and the other areas of unrest in the Eastern Sun Emirates. Wouldn’t a less harsh tone open the way for a negotiated settlement to our differences with the South?

TH: You are working on a false assumption, Carmen. Your question implies that the fanatical forces of Eastern Patriarch Masao, a man who makes deRouen seem like a schoolboy, and the occupying Republican forces will be permanently held back by a treaty. If the history of the South shows us anything, it is that treaties are very easy to violate. You also seem to be assuming that the Republic and the East can be treated in the same way — this is just not the case. In Basal and the rest of the ESE there are many people on the ground who wish to build something new and just; many of them are even Revisionists and they have organized into a viable alternative under the banner of Emir Shirow. In the Republic, the population is fervently behind their nation’s agenda of warfare and bloodshed. Those few who are not are crushed without hesitation.

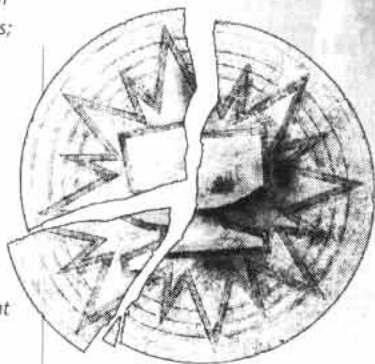
War is an aberration, an affront to the Gentle Word that should be eliminated from this world. But standing by and letting others suffer because we refuse to act is an even graver offense. Those who argue for careful words and propose negotiations like to point out that no state of war exists between North and South, that no Southern troops have yet landed on our territory. This is a typically political outlook that considers only the fate of those who can vote in the next election.

While we wait and ponder whether we have the courage to stand up to an obvious threat, the few Republicans who want freedom die in hidden cells; in the Badlands, farmers and ranchers are slaughtered just because they get in the way. Next will come the larger communities and our own Badlands protectorates; maybe even Massada itself. At that time we will have no choice but to go to war and we will already have the blood of thousands on our hands. I ask you, is it not better to make a show of strength now and force the enemy to back down?

CM: *Speaking of the evils of the South, we have all heard the stories of Port Oasis' enemies vanishing overnight. By making these comments you are most likely making yourself a target for any number of unpleasant reprisals. Does this concern you?*

TH: *I am not a martyr, Carmen. I am certainly concerned that someone would wish me harm simply because I point out truths for all to see. But I am not afraid of the Republic. I unfortunately have many enemies, but I will not back down. I know the Gentle Word protects me.*

Carmen Melfas is the top political reporter in the Norlight Confederacy. Her syndicated print column is read by millions and her coverage of the halls of power can be seen regularly on the NorStar Hermes 72 network. She is also the head of Melfas Productions, a well-respected independent news production house.



Desert Dispatches

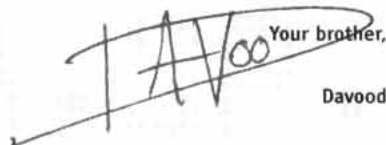
Wolf Call Revisited

Antoni,

News is no longer good from home. The GREL Proust has set his eyes upon our lands and started to move forces around the edge of the White Desert toward the Crag. His moves seem to have also upset the Sand Riders, who have also come to strike at our lands for old slights and imagined infractions. I fear that we are going to war even before the polar foals.

The Northerners and Southerners make matters worse, of course. I fear they will take advantage of our weakness to move into these lands again and "secure" them. The clan is committed to preventing this, but things look somewhat bleak. I have heard that Proust is looking for a pair of fugitives in the region and I hope to find them and hopefully gain an advantage over the GREL, but we have yet to find any trace of the two.

Your letter to mother meant a great deal to her (and to me) so I hope you will forgive my repeating her plea. The Wolves need to stand together now and I ask that you join us.

 Your brother,
Davood



Wanted for Treason

Soldier Roskiman & Zaya Poldona
Traitors Against the NHR
50,000 mark reward
Dead or Alive

These two fugitives are dangerous traitors to the cause of the New Human Republic. They have fled into the desert, hoping to escape the justice of Colonel Proust. Any and all help in capturing or eliminating these criminals will be rewarded by the Colonel.

Be warned that Soldier Roskiman and Zaya Poldona are dangerous opponents, skilled in the ways of warfare and desert survival. Colonel Proust demands absolute proof of their destination, capture or execution for a full reward to be given.

The fugitives may seek shelter with any one of the local tribal bands or rover gangs. A lesser reward will be granted those who can determine this location, so that the armed might of the NHR can bring Roskiman and Zaya to justice.

Old Soldiers Never Die

Strathclyde, 33 Summer 1935

Regina,

I have the distinct impression that the planet itself is holding its breath.

I sit here, digital scramblers and white noise generators keeping my study private. I am confident that at least three different people are trying to look over my shoulder. Surely some of your colleagues in Northern intelligence have me under surveillance — they would be fools not to. Some agent of Masao's or another must also be nearby. The Patriarch himself is a bloodthirsty madman and I fear he is plunging his people into ruin, but he is not one to be underestimated. Yesterday he announced that the left eye of his second cousin Elana Masao Barjhal had been delivered to him as part of the "Mothers' Massacre" he arranged among his heirs in my honor. He kindly had the trophy passed on to me. The man is a menace, I tell you. A menace.

I know of course, that my own staff is surely not beyond the reach of my enemies. My personal doubts about Orsat — the woman who now leads the Légion Noire — have only been confirmed by her actions over the last few cycles. I have no doubt that she has agents among those who live under my roof and I can but hope I will see the danger when she decides to strike.



And yet no one seems ready to act. Across the globe people stare at each other down their gun barrels and wait for the other to flinch. Soon enough someone will make a wrong move.

I am growing old, Regina. Like all old soldiers I can't extract my thoughts from the past. Twenty cycles ago I was leading troops in a battle we feared could not be won; I saw men and women of the highest caliber reduced to blood and meat on a daily basis. I feared my whole world would be ground to dust. And yet, I long for those days now. For the clarity. We knew who the enemy was and why we were fighting.

Today, I see young faces in uniform about to be sacrificed on the altar of futile posturing. I cannot help but ask who my enemy is. You, the person with whom I worked to save my world? The most honorable woman I know? That cannot be. When I look at who will do the fighting, all I see are souls who will be wasted. The only enemies I can see are those sending another generation to the slaughter — powerful hungry politicians and priests who cannot see beyond their dogma.

There are surely others who feel as I do, but I fear they will all be forced into battle by their own honor or put to the sword by their taskmasters. On nights such as this I have little hope.

Kenichi Tanaka
Kenichi Tanaka

Old Soldiers Never Die

Fort Henry, 40 Summer 1935

Ken,

First off, don't give me that "old man" stuff. I'm older than you are. Save that for the kids.

Seriously, though, I know what you mean. It used to be so simple. The CEF was coming to blow us all to hell or enslave us and we had no choice but to fight back. We won at a terrible price, but it was the right thing to do. Now, we seem to be driving ourselves into a frenzy over matters that just can't be resolved on the battlefield.

I have to be honest with you, though. For many on this side of the Badlands, this fight *is* black and white. We look south and we see expansionist powers, decadent emirs and a real threat. We see a rebellion that we should support in the Emirates. We see workers being slaughtered in Lance Point. It becomes easy to think that a war is necessary.

Too easy. War and the "evil South" have become campaign platforms more than anything. Hutchison is trying to turn this into a holy crusade and too many people are falling into line. That overblown windbag Zucco is wrapping himself in the flag and his whole clan is following along like good little robots. They've never been especially religious, but now that it's convenient they're suddenly the bastions of Revisionism in the West.



I take my faith seriously. Getting married in Sorrento was one of the greatest moments in my life and I have no doubt that we had help from above at Baja — but I know a con when I see one. War with the South isn't going to save our souls and it isn't going to make us great. It drives me crazy that Victoria can't understand this. There used to be a time when I could temper her zeal, but she won't listen to me now. I haven't even seen her face to face in over two seasons. The only time we talk now is to make sure we don't visit the girls at the same time. Listen to me, now I'm the one lamenting my fate.

I think it's time to think big, to take action rather than just react to the deterioration around us. We were ready to take an impossible chance at Baja, I think we should do so again. We *know* who our enemies are; I think it's time we took the fight to them.

"To execute a dishonorable order is a manifestation of personal cowardice and an abdication of duty." Those are *your* words Kenichi. I think it's time we pooled our resources and showed the parasites that there's another way to live.

We have to be careful, of course. What I'm suggesting could be considered treason. Are you game?

 Reg

Portents

Peace River Airfield, 04•AU•35



"All this time, you were right under my nose." Milani DuBeau-Slovenski's voice carried well over the tarmac despite the roar of a jet transport taking off on the other landing strip.

"Well," said Nicosia, "it is always best to hide in plain sight."

For cycles, Nicosia had been sending Milani information about a whole slew of issues — usually polar intelligence operations — and Milani had been trying to find her. They lived maybe a kilometer apart the entire time.

"So why are you leaving now?"

"Because things have changed. With everything that just happened, I don't think Peace River is a safe place to be anymore."

"We can deal with a war, if it comes to that." Milani seemed convinced, but Nicosia suspected that was a front. Even Paxton Arms' fortress city might not survive a global conflict.

"There's something else going on, Milani. I haven't put my finger on it, but someone is pulling strings in the background and I think Peace River may be caught up in it all."

"How so?"

Nicosia handed her a large envelope. Inside were photographs, intelligence reports and several datadisks. "This should help you in the times to come, Milani."

Milani took a step forward and took the envelope, but irritation tinged her voice. "Don't dodge the question, Renault! How is Peace River caught up in all this?"

"I can't answer either of those questions yet. I still don't know anything for sure, but I'll try and get word to you when—"

"That's not good enough! If you think that this city is in danger, if you even suspect we're in for more bombings and killings, I want to know about it. This is my town, Renault. Answer me!"

Nicosia didn't speak. Nothing she could say would make a difference at this point. Milani wouldn't leave and she had no truths to tell her, at least not yet.

Milani turned her back on the "master spy" and walked off. She didn't have time for empty promises and enigmatic answers. She had more than enough on her plate as it was.



Hidden Arrival



Theories

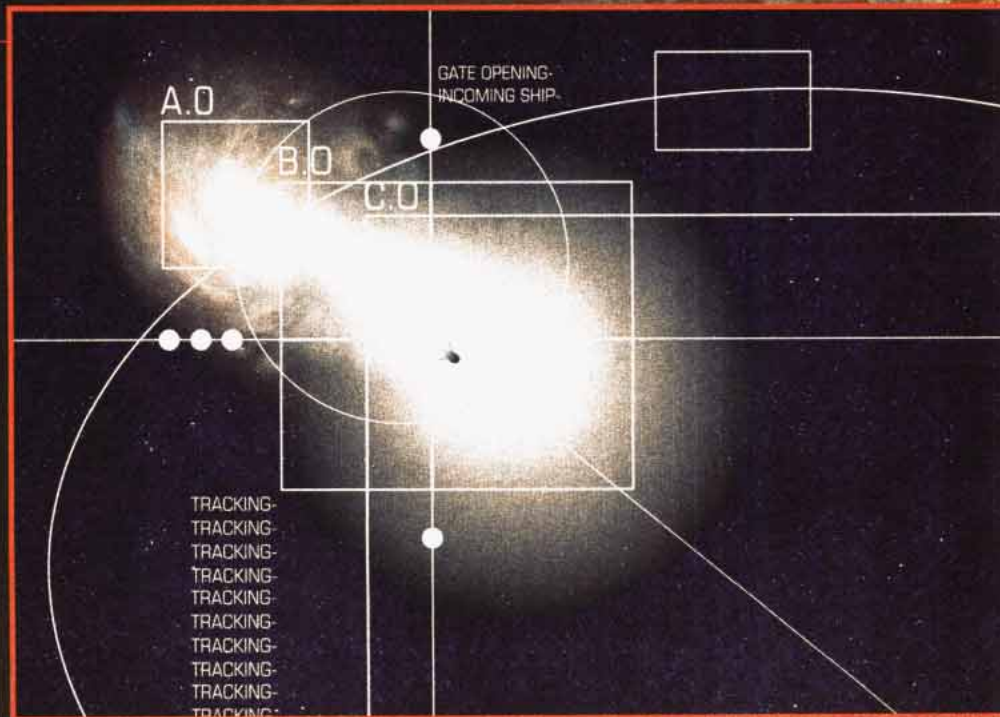
Professor Vovelle,

I have included here my extrapolative work based on your own Vovelle Corollary to Tannhauser's Principia Universalis. As you can see by the work in sections 8 through 13, I believe that your work opens up the possibility of a great deal more Tannhauser Anomalies than previously assumed. Theoretically, micro-anomalies existing on the subatomic scale would be possible within the limits established by Tannhauser's Ninth Axiom and expanded by your Corollary.

Of course, as far as I know, there exists no standard equipment able to detect anomalies on this scale (at least not in the vastness of space), but I have been giving thought to just such a device. Using the existing second-generation gatedrive design and pairing it with the sensor technology you helped develop during the war, it might be possible to identify points where such micro-anomalies would be likely (say 1 to 10% probability). These areas could then be bombarded with a classical gatedrive system, which would cause the opening of micro-gates (opening perhaps to one micron in width) that could be detected at close range.

I would greatly appreciate any thought you had on this subject. Who knows how many undiscovered gates may be lurking in the Helios system alone?

— Gawaïne Di Smit



Crash Landing



Salvage Report

We reached the asteroid's impact site on 12 Summer during a lull in the storms. We had to travel into the eastern White Desert with filter equipment to minimize damage from white sand ash. Nevertheless, we suffered several mechanical failures and three of our crew sustained exposure burns during the trip.

The impact crater was impressive, measuring over twenty meters in diameter. As we had hoped, it exposed several layers of the bedrock, giving us access to mineral veins usually inaccessible. While one team exploited these resources, my team went to recover any fragments from the asteroid. We hoped it might contain some rare metals or be of value to the scientific community (who might pay for fragments).

Our search revealed a distinct lack of fragments. Other than some concentrations of carbon residue, we found no trace of the object that had created the impact crater. While large portions of the object surely burnt up in the atmosphere, a large chunk must have survived to leave such a crater. The only logical conclusion is that the asteroid was taken by another scavenging party. The carbon residue might indicate a carbonaceous chondrite meteor. It could also be traces left from a heat shield, which would indicate that the "asteroid" was a military or commercial probe. Either way, someone beat us to it.

— Mauris Pol, Goreck Recoveries

Welcoming Committee



East Koreshi

It seems clear to me now that there are at least two distinct groups of Koreshi, the people more commonly known as Sand Riders. The main body of Riders seems to live somewhere deep in the inhospitable Great White Desert and emerge to trade along the western fringe of the desert, near the communities of Prince Gable and Fort Neil.

There is evidence, however, of another group of Riders operating in the eastern White Desert. Reports about this second group are sketchy at best, although I have had a chance to examine a few sites where they have been active. The Koreshi taboo on contact with outsiders seems to be extreme in the case of the "East Koreshi" (as I call them) because I have found no reports of trading. Rather I have examined the sites of three distinct attacks in which desert traders or travelers who ventured into the east of the Great White Desert were attacked and, I regret to say, slaughtered.

Experts on my team report that these East Koreshi seem to be using more sophisticated weaponry than is traditionally associated with their Western cousins. Indeed, automatic weapons and explosives seem to be part of their repertoire much more than the white-sand based armament of the main Koreshi people. I can only guess, but it is my feeling that this use of technology may be at the root of the cultural split between the two groups of Sand Riders.

— From the journal
of Doctor Isaac Langmuir



Dangerous Neighbors ▽



East versus West ▽

My theories of a powerful schism between the Eastern and Western Koreshi seems to be confirmed by our discovery of a battle site deep in the Great White Desert. Unusually calm winds have allowed us to travel further than ever before toward the center of the desert and we have uncovered traces of a large inter-Koreshi battle.

All the remains have been heavily eroded by the white sands so the size and age of the battle-site is somewhat hard to judge, but my best guess is that two Koreshi caravans came to battle here some time in the last three seasons. I am convinced that this battle pitted Eastern against Western Koreshi. The characteristic daggers and high-caliber rifles so common among the Western Sand Riders were interspersed on the battlefield with the corroded remains of several automatic weapons that could only come from the Eastern Riders.

Whatever caused the schism between these two desert people, it seems to be enough to justify a great deal of bloodshed. I would guess that many other battle sites are buried under the shifting sands.

— From the journal
of Doctor Isaac Langmuir

Travel Arrangements ▽

Letter Home

Rebecca,

I don't know what I've gotten myself into. I left home in Red Sands to try and find my own way and get out from under Mom and Dad, but I think I've bitten off more than I can chew. The trader I thought was leading this caravan ended up just being a front for a bandit named Valis Garrick. This guy is a dangerous son-of-a-barnaby and I've seen him shoot one guy already. He joined the caravan two days out of Red Sands and announced we were headed on a long trip.

We've been hitting every small community in the Western Desert for two seasons now. We've picked up people and equipment along the way, including some guy Garrick is really interested in. He joined up in a small town called Volun just on the east edge of the Great White Desert. I don't know who this guy is, but Garrick has been keeping him separated from the rest of us. I think he might be an army type.

We'll be in Peace River next season and I think I'll try and jump ship then. I hope the family is well.

— Franz



Warm Reception ▽



Police Report

The Winter 35 raid on a Badlands Revolutionary Front safehouse in the Prospects uncovered some troubling evidence. The Peace Officers leading the raid faced armed resistance from the terrorists and three of the offenders were killed. The five others are currently in custody and being interrogated.

A search of the small residence uncovered a large number of personal computers and several dozen sets of fake identity papers. The memory banks of all the computers had been erased (apparently by the terrorists when the raid began), but the various identity cards, passports, insurance cards, sector ids and other paraphernalia suggest the BRF was in the process of creating a large number of false cover identities.

Our experts say these documents were of a very high quality and the computer banks seem to suggest the BRF was placing data in municipal records to support these aliases. For all we know, the BRF could have dozens of agents operating in the city under false names.

— Peace Officer Corps
Confidential Report



Visitation

Mekong, 01•AU•35



Kitani woke to the sound of a gun being cocked.

Adrenaline rushed into her bloodstream and she was instantly awake — she also knew he had her cold. The intruder was standing right beside her low, wide bed. His silenced handgun was held at arm's length and pointed straight to her skull. She had no doubt he would squeeze a round off before she could roll out of the way. She didn't move, but kept looking for an opening.

Kitani's eyes slowly adjusted to the darkness and shapes took form about her. The colored masks that adorned her walls leered at her with familiar vulgarity. Her immobile assailant also took shape. At first all she saw was the weapon, a silenced Mekong-issue 9 millimeter pistol. Then she saw who was brandishing the gun and her heart sank. It was Paul Berthyo.

"Hello, Paul." She tried to keep her voice calm despite the situation. To do so, she concentrated on the time, so many cycles ago, when the two of them had been together. His touch, his laugh. It didn't really help much.

Paul said nothing, but his hand quavered for a split second. She might have had the time to strike, but instead she spoke.

"You're being used, Paul. I had no choice —"

"No choice, Kit? You set me up to die in Kenema and had one of your girls try to finish the job in Olduvai." He was obviously more than a little upset. His voice was hard and cold, barely containing a torrent of anger and hurt. "It took me two cycles to find your hand behind it, Kit. Well, it ends tonight."

"Your unit is serving Aaron Logan, Paul. Every move he makes is a stab at my taipan; I had to act." Aaron Logan was chairman of the Mekong Development Corporation and the chief rival of Miyako Sogabe, Speaker of the Mekong Dominion and Kitani Yang's patron. Kitani's espionage network had found Logan's paws in virtually every dirty game in the South — including Paul's special ops unit.

"Aaron Logan has nothing to do with this. I was acting for the MILICIA—"

"Logan has everything to do with this, Paul. He's been using you and your unit like pawns for cycles now. I have proof of that and of more."

"Oh, really?" He backed away, keeping his weapon trained on her but giving her room to move. "Show me your proof..."

Patriarch's Love

Address to the People of the East

From His Eminence Patriarch Oliver Masao

My dear subjects.

It saddens me to hear that the displays of love that have been so forthcoming from my concubines and wives have been disturbing to some of you and, most especially, to my esteemed advisor Lord Chancellor Tanaka.

I do understand your concern, however. The sight of my darlings fighting tooth and nail to ensure that their son or daughter is the last living heir to my throne can be very troubling for those with sensitive hearts. I have such a heart and I see the injustice of my decision to leave my throne only to my last surviving child. This has encouraged a scandalous round of behavior on the part of my paramours, one that does injustice to the name of Masao and the legacy of the *Eastern Sun*.

I have hence decided to change, to answer the righteous criticisms of Lord Tanaka and others and to take back my edict. Indeed, it was unconscionable of me to decide who would succeed me in such a limited and close-minded way.



Indeed, what about my many cousins, nephews and nieces? Do they not share the blood of Enri Masao that courses in my own veins? Do they not deserve the right of succession just as much as my own children? Lord Tanaka is right when he calls my previous actions barbaric, because in my selfishness I excluded those who had a legitimate claim to my throne. I intend to change this.

From this moment on, I pledge my throne to the last living blood descendant of Enri Masao. Our glorious founder showed no preference among his children and I see no reason to insist that only my children have claim to the throne — I am but a steward for the spirit of Masao and it is his word that guides me.

I can only hope that my many cousins will show the same enthusiasm for Enri's legacy that my own children, wives and concubines have over the last few cycles. Their vigor has been a true testimony of love for the East and respect for Lord Tanaka, to whom I have dedicated all my efforts.

May you live in peace.

Patriarch's Folly

Lords Three

Lord Chancellors of the AST (Network News Corps photo):
Kenichi Tanaka, Etienne Durocher and Farzad Hemami await Lord
Protector Molay to enter a Curia Select Committee meeting.

Masao's Legacy

His Glory Patriarch Oliver Masao (official likeness)

16 SU-33



Lords of Discord

Voice Recorder Log — Port Oasis

Curia Select Committee Meeting

>begin transcript<

ESE Lord Chancellor Kenichi Tanaka: *Lord Protector, the Masao problem has just gone to far. The man is completely insane! He has just plunged his entire extended family into a fratricidal slaughter that will probably destroy his entire nation.*

MD Lord Chancellor Etienne Durocher: *Kenichi, surely things are not so bad. Why would we be concerned what these Easterners do to themselves?*

Tanaka: *Listen you bloated fool! The same family has ruled that nation for 500 cycles. If he kills off all the Masaos, everyone that's left will scramble for power and plunge the entire nation in a bloodbath worse than anything we've ever seen. Not only that, but most of the emir families have married into the Masao clan at one point or another — the entire aristocracy could be destroyed.*

HA Lord Chancellor Farzhad Hemami: *I must agree with Lord Tanaka. Beyond the fact that my own wife is at risk in this folly, any sort of large-scale violence like this is sure to weaken our position vis-a-vis the North. I don't think we can afford that right now.*



Tanaka: *If you think Basal is a problem, Lord Protector, it will only get worse from here on in. The emirs have to know they are at risk now and those who hate Masao will see no reason to stay on board after this. I would think that at least one more emirate will side with Shirow before the cycle is out.*

Lord Protector Jacques Molay: *You expect me to have sympathy for these petty little princes, Tanaka? You've been spending too much time with them, I think. If Masao drives the emirs to kill each other, so much the better. Let them drown in their own blood as long as they do not challenge the Republic.*

Tanaka: *They will challenge us. Several emirs already think of Masao as a mouthpiece for the Republic. This will drive them into rebellion and resistance. It could create an opportunity for the North to create alliances in our backyard. This is a disaster in the making, for—*

Molay: *Enough! That is all.*

>end<

Contingencies and Plans



Personal Phone Log

Commandant Aristide Lazarus • Commander, Special Intervention Unit

Full Encode Activated

Source: Strathclyde, Lord Chancellor's Palace

>connect: Lord Chancellor Tanaka, Kenichi<

Lazarus: *Lazarus here, sir.*

Tanaka: *Commandant, I believe we are in agreement that something has to be done about the Eastern situation?*

Lazarus: *Yes, sir. Of course, sir.*

Tanaka: *And do we understand each other, Commandant, that any SIU activities in this matter must be undertaken in the strictest secrecy?*

Lazarus: *If those are your orders, sir. Information can be compartmentalized so that only you and I are aware of the full operation.*

Tanaka: *In that case I am making a formal request for SIU resources to undertake an operation.*

Lazarus: *That is well within your purview, sir. What resources are we talking about?*

Tanaka: *It is necessary to take decisive action at this time and I will need your best agents.*

Lazarus: *Team Alpha would be your best choice, sir. Major Augusta has a great deal of experience and the range of—*

Tanaka: *How loyal are your agents, Commandant?*

Lazarus: *Why do you ask, sir?*

Tanaka: *You haven't answered my question, Commandant. Do you trust your people?*

Lazarus: *Completely, sir. I trained and selected them myself, and they have all been tested in the most trying of circumstances. Team Alpha and Major Augusta are especially loyal. May I ask why you feel the need to question the loyalty of my men, sir?*

Tanaka: *Because I have in mind a dangerous operation involving—*

Lazarus: *One second sir, let me take an extra precaution then.*

>log deleted<

Long Way From Home



Southern MILICIA — Information Control Division

Personal Correspondence (#345-Jh/2/1211905; Corporal Yato, Samuel)

Status: *Not Approved — Do Not Forward*

Location: *Bangweuleu, Eastern Sun Emirates*

Dearest Kori,

I'm writing this quickly because I don't know when I will be able to write again. The rebellion in Basal has exploded here in Bangweuleu and we are being sent into the city to reestablish order. I hope we can.

I don't know all the details about what happened, but I hear that Prince Nneka, the son of the old emir of the city, held a coup last night. Apparently it didn't go as planned and his father and the city's other emir came out for the Basal rebellion in the process. Fighting broke out when Nneka used Patriarchal troops to push his claim and the palace guards sided with the reigning emirs. They tell us the fighting is all over the streets now, with most of the hardest fighting coming in the big covered bazaar.

Kori, I'm afraid I won't see the end of this. I've talked with people who served in Basal and both sides hate us there. I can only imagine it'll be the same thing here.

I don't really know how to say this, but if I don't make it back to you, I just need to tell you how I feel one last time. You mean everything in the world to me, Kori. Please, if something happens, keep an eye on my little brother Mek. My family doesn't have very much and without the money I send him, I'm afraid Mek will end up working for the Oyabun to make ends meet.

If I do make it back to Ngorongoro, I want you to marry me. I know my family doesn't have much to offer yours, so please tell your father that I'll forego any obligations on the part of your family. I just want to be with you.

I love you and my thoughts are with you always,

Sam B

Sam

Freedom for the East

SNS Telecast



Konnor Garysson Live on the Scene

We are coming to you live from Bangweuleu in the rapidly disintegrating Eastern Sun Emirates. After ten days of fighting, the troops of Patriarch Oliver Masao and the local MILICIA forces have fallen back from the city center, where they faced heavy opposition from a popular militia and the elite palace guard, allied by the prospect of a local rebellion. There is a sense of jubilation in the streets, as entire families emerge from pockmarked homes to enjoy a moment of freedom and peace. Everyone knows, however, that this peace cannot last. Everyone is familiar with the hell that life has become in the free city of Basal and the vise of Patriarchal power is sure to come down hard on this prosperous emirate. For now, however, Bangweuleu is free.

The great covered Bazaar that once dominated the city center is now a tattered ruin of its former self. Makeshift barricades and burnt-out hulks of armored personnel carriers now stand where lavish shops once sold fine carpets and spices. People move carefully about the great battlefield carefully, because of rumors the MILICIA may have laid antipersonnel mines during their retreat two days ago. Unexploded shells also litter some areas.

Nevertheless, signs of life surround us. Artisans have started to weave the new flag of the city and it now hangs from many buildings — often covering bullet holes or other damage. Children run through the streets, scampering here and there in a desperate effort to reclaim the streets that so recently were a battlezone. Over the last ten days, these young Easterners must have seen horrors that would leave many traumatized; and yet they play with utter abandon. They, and their city, will survive.

Talk is already underway about a formal alliance with Basal. Locals seem to hold Nigel Shirow, the Basalite emir, in high regard. His struggle for freedom from the Patriarch is now their own. Many say that Bangweuleu's sympathies have been with Basal since the beginning, but it took Prince Nneka's attempted coup against his father Emir Armann Boash to finally get the city to rebel outright. Rumors are flying that Nigel Shirow will arrive in the city in the following days, but the likelihood of a renewed Patriarchal offensive makes that a slim possibility at best.

Bangweuleu is free — only time will tell if it can remain so.

Konnor Garysson, reporting from Bangweuleu in the Eastern Sun Emirates.

Missing In Action



67th Northern Guard Regiment — Harvest Wind

Harvest of Truth; Wind of Change

Jason and Marcia Brockton

134 Haulman Ave

Marathon 911 NRZ

United Mercantile Federation

Norlight Confederacy Ship 19 Vigilance, 22•AU•33

Mr. and Mrs. Brockton,

It is my sad duty to report to you the loss of your daughter, Lieutenant Jennifer Brockton. A skilled pilot and a fine officer, Lt. Brockton had been under my command for the last three cycles and I had grown to depend on her strong spirit. The entire regiment shares your grief at the loss of a child and we hope that you can take some comfort in the fact that she died defending her comrades and her nation.

Lieutenant Brockton was lost to us during a long-range reconnaissance operation in the Western Desert. Her unit found a nest of Southern attack units and a battle ensued, during which her team held back the enemy despite an acute numerical disadvantage. Your daughter sacrificed herself to hold back the MILICIA Gears long enough for her troops to escape and she will be remembered for her heroism.

I regret to inform you that we were unable to recover your daughter's mortal remains, which were swallowed up by the desert sands. I have no doubt that she has rejoined the Gentle Spirit from which we are all born, however. Her personal effects have been packed and are currently awaiting shipment to you at the earliest possible time.

Included with her personal effects you will find a video log of the memorial held aboard the *Vigilance* in your daughter's honor. Given our long-term deployment in the Badlands, it will be difficult for myself or any of my crew to attend Lt. Brockton's funeral in Marathon. I hope you accept the video log as evidence of the strong sentiments felt by the regiment for your daughter.

Captain Golina Romanov from the Guard's Veteran Affairs branch in Marathon will be in touch with you shortly to arrange for Jennifer's military burial and to determine the disbursement of her benefits. Captain Romanov will be available to you in your time of need and my personal condolences go out to you and to Jennifer's siblings.

Sincerely,

Colonel Arthur Janus

Commanding Officer, 67th Regiment

Dissenting Opinions

NGIS Satellite Transmission

>encoded sigma bravo goliath<
>decode successful<
>sat link H72-124A established<
>message id/source: 243-76/ncs-19 vigilance<
>echo canterbury/valeria/ashington/timmins<
>message begins<

To: Major Dolores Ceritto, Northern Guard Intelligence Service
From: Senior Ranger Tanee Hanberg, 67th Northern Guard regiment

Major,

I have learned from various sources that you and Lt. Jennifer Brockton were friends. I am sure you have heard the news that Colonel Janus, our commanding officer, has reported her killed in action. As Duelist of the 67th, and as someone who respected Lt. Brockton, I have to speak out — I do not believe she is dead.

Listing her as KIA is irresponsible at best. I have talked to the members of her unit and they never saw her Gear destroyed as they retreated from MILICIA forces. I was part of the team sent to recover her remains and we found only the signs of a battle — no wreckage of her Gear, only some scorch marks and spent autocannon shells. It seems



clear to me that Lt. Brockton is missing in action, perhaps captured or wounded.

I cannot abide by leaving a comrade in arms behind without making every effort to find her and I hope you feel the same. Without the Colonel's knowledge I have recruited several people aboard the *Vigilance* to help me continue the search for Brockton, but we are leaving the region and my only hope is that you might have sources of your own that can keep on looking.

Major, I am on dangerous ground here, going behind the back of my commanding officer. Were the Colonel to find out about my actions, I don't think he would hesitate to bring me up on charges. But Brockton's life is worth the risk to my career. I hope you can help me.

Please respond on the same channel I am broadcasting — it is a secure channel I have set up with the help of a sympathetic comm officer.

Thank you.

>message ends<

>id confirmed<

Honor Bound

Satellite Audio Log

>connect from MILICIA SIU HQ, Marabou, SR, to 19th MILICIA Gear regiment HQ, Western Desert.<

>caller id: Lazarus, Com. Aristide; Jownz, Sous-Sergeant Yang<
>encoding defeated<

Yang Jownz: —owe you more than I can repay, sir. You know I am ready to serve.

Aristide Lazarus: I know, Yang. But I want to make clear that you can refuse this mission if you wish. This could be very dangerous.

YJ: Please, sir, I appreciate your warning. I will make my decision once I know what I am getting into.

AL: Do you know who Colonel Sonya Gerti is, Yang?

YJ: Gerti... Isn't she a Northern intelligence director?

AL: Yes, the NGIS director of operations for the Badlands, to be precise. Gerti is up to something and I need to find out what that is. I want your help on this.

YJ: My help? I'm not sure how I can—

AL: Don't underestimate yourself. I know I can trust you and that's key.



YJ: How so?

AL: Gerti has been slowly assassinating people across much of the Badlands over the last five cycles. I can't find any real link between her targets, other than about half of them lived under CEF occupation. I've only been able to tie a few into our intel networks. She must know something that I don't, but I don't want to tip off anyone else about this. My guess is she has uncovered one of SRID's own operations and that information could be very valuable to me in the cycles to come.

YJ: I understand, sir. What can I do?

AL: I have evidence that she targeted a Revisionist leader named Adrianna Xing. She came from Bangweuleu to Massada and was ambushed on the way, but made it nevertheless. I'd like you to investigate Xing, find out just why she's been targeted.

YJ: Yes, I've heard of this Xing woman. Can you arrange for a leave or some cover for my departure?

AL: I think a transfer to SIU can be arranged. So I take it you are in?

YJ: Was there ever any doubt, sir?

Snake in the Fold

file 5473-A-767/34

Most Secret/Tango 13

Date: 27 Autumn 1933, 19:45

Location: Conference Room Alpha-2, Brunei Building, Port Oasis, Southern Republic

Subject: Intelligence Steering Committee Meeting

Attending: Prefect A-M Trihn, Commander — Military Intelligence Branch

Sous-Prefect C. deBarre, Commander — Operations Division

Sous-Prefect F. Gawong, Commander — Analysis Division

Sous-Prefect J. Poloa, Commander — Infiltrateurs Division

Major L. C. Rousseau, Aide to Prefect Trihn

(00:23:41 deleted)

PREFECT TRIHN: Thank you, deBarre. Prefect Gawong, you mentioned you had some information to report beyond operations in Bangweuleu?

SOUS-PREFECT GAWONG: Yes, ma'am. Our contacts over at ASI passed along a report that I thought might be of interest to you, and to Sous-Prefect Poloa. There seems to be a divide between the commander and Duelist in a Northern Guard regiment aboard a landship.

TRIHN: Which vessel?



GAWONG: The NCS-19 Vigilance, the Captain is a certain Anshar. It's a Vortex-class that deploys in the Western desert. My sources indicate that the officers aboard are being watched by both Northern Guard and Norlight Armed Forces high command. The regiment aboard is commanded by a Colonel Arthur Janus, who supposedly has powerful connections in Valeria.

SOUS-PREFECT POLOA: Where's the opportunity?

GAWONG: Well the regiment has lost several troops to the MILICIA and some people at least seem anxious to get them back. It looks like a ripe target for your people, Poloa. ASI's contact in Timmins might also be able to help us — for enough dinars.

POLOA: I'll have to review the case in detail, but I think it's feasible.

TRIHN: Excellent. Poloa, get me a detailed plan for insertion and collection by the end of the week. Gawong, I want confirmation that we can use ASI resources on this — specifically, I want to access them without going through Salazar. That SRID bastard will swipe this operation right out from under us if he catches wind of it. DeBarre, your division will only be involved if strictly necessary — keep traces down to a minimum.

Okay everyone, dismissed.

official report/transcript

Outbreak

Bethany Under Quarantine

SNS DataNews

All travel to and from the Republican city-state of Bethany was canceled today as the Republican Ministry of Health imposed a strict quarantine on the city beginning at 03:30 this morning. The Ministry claims the quarantine is a preventative measure taken to isolate an outbreak of Terranovan Influenza. Reports from inside the city are scarce indeed, but rumors are spreading of whole neighborhoods being hospitalized or even killed by the disease.

Despite assurances that there is no reason for concern, the presence of heavily armed Republican troops in the city seems to indicate a serious problem. Some witnesses in the city — communicating with personal comm devices across the quarantine barricade — report fighting in the streets around the outskirts of the city and some reports claim that the emblems of the Saragossan People's Front for Independence (SPFI) have appeared as fresh graffiti.

SNS will keep you up-to-date as this breaking story develops and when new information becomes available.

Hannah Fein reporting.



Germ Warfare from Saragossa?

SNS DataNews

Sources within the Bethanite city police and the Public Interaction Unit of the Southern Republic Intelligence Directorate confirm that an investigation is underway looking into the connection between the quarantine of Bethany and the Saragossa People's Front for Independence (SPFI). Rumors of SPFI developing bacteriological weaponry have been floated around Republican counter-terrorist units for the last few cycles, and some feel Bethany has become a target.

SRID investigators are at a loss, however, to explain the choice of Bethany — a city known for its candy and cooking — as a choice for a terrorist attack. The dominant theory among those on the case is that Damien, leader of the SPFI, decided to strike at a city thought of as safe by most Republicans. If so, other peaceful municipalities around the league might well be targeted in the seasons to come, investigators fear.

The SPFI has yet to release any statement about the events in Bethany. The nationalist radicals have always been quick to claim responsibility in the past, so this may go to disprove the current theory. If so, investigators and the public are left to wonder who — if anyone — has attacked Bethany.

Falcons and Doves

Top Secret / Alpha-Bravo

To: *Sous-Prefect M. François, Bio-Warfare Corps*

From: *Professor P. Locarneau, Hades Complex*

Re: *Damage Assessment*

I have completed a preliminary review of the damage done to the labs and research of my team during last night's attack on the Hades complex by unidentified terrorists. It seems evident that my team's work was the main target of the attack: our lab was physically ransacked, many hard-copy records were destroyed and a real effort was made to destroy all electronic media. One of the attackers seems to have infected the computer system with a destructive virus. We believe we have the virus contained, but it will take several more days to clear the system and properly assess the damage. The backup research files, kept under lock and key, seem to be intact, however.

At best, the attack will only delay further research by a week or two. At worst, we will have lost between two and three seasons of work. Even in the latter case, however, nothing has been irretrievably lost. The release of the Dove variant of the Twin Falcon Contingent into the city of Bethany could actually prove to be a blessing because it can serve as a field test.

Professor P. Locarneau

Professor P. Locarneau



▶ **Disease in Bethany (SNS live feed):**
Moldan Peruz, a citizen of Bethany, receives treatment for Terranovan Influenza in a clinic outside the city. Peruz left the city just before the quarantine.

Inhumanities

Southern Republic Army

TOP SECRET/Hades

>full encode<

To: *Sous-Prefect M. François, Bio-Warfare Corps*

From: *Sous-Commandant Henri Doret, 54th Légion Noire Compagnie*

Re: *Personal Notes on Hades Complex Attack*

Sous-Prefect,

I felt it behooved me to add my own personal comment and analysis to the official report you have already received about the events of the 34th in Bethany. As you know, the Hades Complex buried beneath the local BioCerna plant was subject to a highly organized and well-executed commando operation apparently aimed at sabotaging and/or stealing the research underway.

I have no hard evidence as to the origin of the attackers and, like many I am sure, had assumed on the spot that I was dealing with Northern commandos. Indeed, the precision of the action seemed to indicate the trademark of a group such as the Norlight DAG or an equivalent unit. Looking back over the evidence, however, I think another hypothesis is possible.



The attack was preceded by a failure in the Hades security system — something that I am told stems from an unprecedented act of computer sabotage. Under the cover of a blind security system, the attackers then deployed their own sensor system in several parts of the complex — enabling them to keep track of our movements. We managed to get to the attackers before they had done much damage to the main labs and several quick firefights ensued as we tried to hem in the commandos. I was stunned to see some of my men — wearing composite armor — downed by a few shots. I later discovered they were hit by armor-piercing rounds designed to inject a fast-acting toxin.

When we had several of the commandos cornered in the main lab, one of the bio-weapon agents was released — by the attackers, I believe, because of the sabotage of the ventilation system which allowed the agent to be released in the city above. We were forced to fall back because of the release, but when an NBC team was sent in, they found several of the commandos dead. Autopsy has revealed that they all suffered catastrophic brain damage caused by a hypersonic emitter placed at the back of their skulls and woven into their combat uniforms.

From 1918 to 1922 I served in Oxford in the Humanist Alliance and the use of drug and psychological weapons strikes me as too Humanist to be a coincidence.

Hard Decisions



Most Secret/Alpha-G • Select Republican Security Committee Meeting

Prime Minister Louis Philippe deRouen: *You've all read through Sous-Commandant Doret's report on the Hades attack. Comments?*

Prefect Ange-Marie Trihn, Military Intelligence: *Doret's own impressions are interesting, but Humanist activity along these lines would be somewhat out of proportion with their previous activities. There would have to be a very compelling reason for them to take so dangerous an action, I think.*

Justinian Salazar, SRID: *Not necessarily. My people agree with Doret's analysis: this has their Insight and Regulatory Authority written all over it. HIRA has been undertaking action in the Republic for a while now and I don't think these people would hesitate to act against a target like Hades if they had reliable intelligence. My question is where they got this intel.*

Sous-Prefect François, Bio-Warfare Corps: *Forgive me for interrupting, but could HIRA have become aware of the Twin Falcon Contingent? They do seem to have targeted the Dove variant.*

deRouen: *That's a disturbing possibility.*

Trihn: *But security around that information has been very tight. I've seen to that personally and only a handful of people even know about the Contingent's existence, much less the details.*

deRouen: *Work on the assumption that the Contingent has become known. That would answer your question about motive and Salazar's about opportunity. Both of you: this is now your top priority. I want to know where the leak is and I want to know very quickly. Sous-Prefect François, I want the Contingency set up for full preparedness. We can no longer tolerate acts like this.*

Trihn: *I assume you are talking about a limited use of the Contingent, Prime Minister. If so, my office should definitely be involved in the deployment phase.*

deRouen: *A limited deployment would be best if it can solve our problems. I'm coming to think, however, that only a full-scale use of the Contingent is going to get us the results we need.*

François: *You do realize, sir, just what the implications of a full deployment would be? Lab tests estimate a 70%—*

deRouen: *I am well aware of that, Sous-Prefect.*

François: *Yes, sir, of course. But—*

Trihn: *I think you've said enough, Sous-Prefect. We have our orders.*

The High Frontier

coded transmission

Tritonis Station — Poseidon Orbit

To: *Sous-Prefect Antonia Marz, Deep Space Exploration Corps, Port Oasis*

From: *Commandant Rikar Maxwell, DSEC Tritonis Station*

Re: *Seasonal Report*

Work continues on schedule on the refurbishing of the Gateship *SRGS Illustrious*. The systems are now up to 35% efficiency and she should be ready for a system shakedown and test cruise towards Gate I by next Spring.

Security concerns continue to be our greatest stumbling block. The need to maintain secrecy on the plans for the *Illustrious'* work, as you known, limits the number of resources available to Tritonis Station and makes our work very slow. It would seem more logical to me to cooperate more fully with the Joint Space Initiative established after the war, but I will continue to execute my orders as they are given to me regardless of my personal reservations.

Technical report attached.



coded transmission

Tritonis Station — Poseidon Orbit

To: *Commandant Marianne Paul, Political Corps, Port Oasis*

From: *Lieutenant François Gautier, Political Officer, DSEC Tritonis Station*

Re: *Commandant Rikar Maxwell*

My concerns regarding Commandant Maxwell continue to grow. Although he seems to follow the letter of his orders and maintain security protocols as established by Military Intelligence Branch, his loose and informal command style communicates a certain laxity to his troops. He consistently defers to the civilian administrator, director Tomas of the Southern Republic Aerospace Directorate, even though the covert refurbishing of the *Illustrious* is clearly a military operation.

Maxwell's service in the joint North-South space operations during the War of the Alliance may have been distinguished, but it has left him with a dangerous sympathy for Northerners. I fear that without my eyes watching him, he would be tempted into treason.

Security report attached.

Sweet Betrayal



Transcript from Subdermal Mic on Designate Fayla

>LocTag: Red Lotus Brothel, Atsi, Mekong Dominion<

>DateTag: 14•SP•34; 35:12:30<

FAYLA: Mmm... Oh, my, honey, you're really tense... We'll have to do something about that...

>voiceident 99.7% Fayla Partho — ICP intel agent 2343-00-81<

CLIENT: Oooh... Oh yeah... Oh, now that's what I call hands. Just what I needed at the end of a long day...

>voiceident 91.7% Doctor Ernesto Poz — Body Sculptor, NuBod MTA<

>intelnote: NuBod MTA — confirmed target for covert funding from SRA Military Intelligence.<

FAYLA: I bet... You have to stop working so hard... Here, let me see what I can do about that stress...

CLIENT: Unhh... That feels... nice... really nice. Yeah, tell me 'bout stress... The things they make me do... 42 hours in a row, no less. Oh! Hot damn, that felt great! Can you do it again? <pause> Ooh, you're a doll... A real doll.

FAYLA: A doll, eh? Mmm... Can a doll do that? <pause> Or... that?

<pause> I don't think so <giggle>

CLIENT: Oh... OH!! Oh, that has got to be illegal! S'okay, s'okay, keep it up, I don't mind. After all the surgery I've just done, cutting up that Stinnes girl and gene splicing her hair and... Ah! Aaah... this is incredible! You're the best! <pause> Anyway, you probably don't want to hear about all this...

FAYLA: <giggles> S'okay, honey, you make conversation... Mmmm... I'm a little too... <soundident: failure> busy to talk. <giggles> Ready for the main course?

CLIENT: Sure am! A-anyway... Oh! S'gotta be the most ex- <ah> extensive sculptjob I've ever done... Turned her into someone else, really... Ah, crap, never mind conversation, c'm'here...

FAYLA: Mmmm... Ooh...

>transcript ends<

classified transcript

The Dance of Taipans

Eyes Only

>decode successful<
 >jasmine clearance acknowledged<
 >provenance: Yang, Kitani — transmit from Olduvai, MD<
 >time/date: 22:35:03/20•SP•34<
 >message begins<

Honored Taipan,

My visit to the home of Taipan Judyth Ramona in the outskirts of Olduvai proved most informative in my current assignment to understand the power games of Taipan Aaron Logan of the Mekong Development Corporation. You were quite correct to be concerned that Taipan Logan was expanding his operations to gain influence over smaller corporate houses.

In a computer search undertaken while my star performers appeared before the Taipan, I was able to uncover several pieces of personal correspondence between Taipans Ramona and Logan. It seems that Ramonair is seeking to gain preferential treatment from MDC and is willing to trade influence for such a lucrative market. Taipan Logan has apparently been able to bring connections to the Badlands transport network of the Forzi smuggling cartel to the negotiating table as well.



Ramonair is not of sufficient worth to warrant Logan's attention, unless he is aware of Taipan Ramona's dealings with Northern agents. These connections could be very valuable if Logan wishes to establish his own contacts North of the Badlands without going through the AST or by circumventing our own channels.

The prospect of Logan gaining a direct channel to the Northern halls of power concerns me. He has developed a very wide network of contacts and resources, and he may be able to push ICP out of the diplomatic game if he can get to key people in Lyonesse and Valeria. I suggest taking some concrete actions to maintain ties to the North, if for no other reason than to maintain surveillance on Logan.

The Dancers would be willing to arrange a tour of Northern capitals if you wished it. I'm sure we could gather intelligence useful in your endeavors.

Kitani Yang
 Your servant,
 Kitani Yang

>message ends<
 >delete<

The Falcon's Dance

Eyes Only

>decode successful<

>jasmine clearance acknowledged<

>provenance: Yang, Kitani — transmit from Port Oasis, SR<

>time/date: 30:41:12/30•SU•34<

>message begins<

Honored Taipan,

Our season-long engagement in Port Oasis has been successful in many different ways. The Dancers played to sell-out crowds at all our shows and we made several special appearances at private parties, including a show at the Prime Minister's residence on the 12th.

I'm happy to announce that Andalphus, one of my promising students, has made the acquaintance of Ashantite literary star Saskia Areliant, who had traveled to Port Oasis specifically to see us perform. The two have become very much attached and I think this is very promising move for Anda's career — and could be a useful source of information. In fact, Anda has already passed on a warning from Areliant that Lord Chancellor Durocher has his fingers in Ashanti. That such a disgusting and bloated man would have influence in a city of such beauty offends me greatly.



My inquiries in the heart of Republican power has led me to conclude that an old name is making a comeback to the scene of power: the Order of the Falcon. You may remember the order as a shadowy group involved in the early history of the Republic. Well, it seems to have reformed and is bringing together some of the most powerful men and women in the Republic.

The Order seems to be allied with an enigmatic figure called the "Dark Fox" and appears to be working to undermine Prime Minister deRouen. If they can destabilize the deRouen regime, it could well create an opportunity for our own agents and goals.

I recommend keeping our eyes open for an opportunity to meet this Dark Fox or to infiltrate the Order.

Kitani Yang
Your servant,
Kitani Yang

>message ends<

>delete<

Eastern Dance

Eyes Only

>decode successful<
 >jasmine clearance acknowledged<
 >provenance: Yang, Kitani — transmit from Skavara, ESE<
 >time/date: 01:19:32/02•AU•34<
 >message begins<

Honored Taipan,

The Dancers' tour of the Eastern Sun Emirates continues to go well. We perform to rave reviews and have been invited to the homes of several emirs. Of course we have taken the opportunity to collect some important data under the cover of our visits.

The rebellion led by Nigel Shirow and his cohorts in Bangweuleu continues to go well. Patriarch Masao seems to be more and more of a sore spot with the Eastern elite and with many of the nation's Republican keepers. Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the importance of heritage and tradition among the upper crust. Despite the Patriarch's depravity, Enri Masao's lineage seems to confer him an aura of authority and legitimacy among Easterners. He seems more likely to destroy himself than to be removed from power.



If you will forgive a personal digression, I have become concerned about Sibdra, the youngest of my dancers. Supremely gifted and stunningly beautiful, she is promising addition to our "special operations." She is also quite taken with Emirate life, however, and has been spending a great deal of time in the company of Manuel Jera Draho, a seductive young Skavaran noble. She says that she is gathering intelligence, but I suspect she may be exposing herself to heartbreak and threatening our own security. Any advice you could provide would be most welcome.

I would also warn you that Taipan Logan's influence seems to extend into Eastern lands as well. I have uncovered proof that he has visited the rebel lands in Bangweuleu on several occasions and that he has had dealings with several emirs. His Mekong Development Corporation has financed several lesser nobles trying to make a splash in Strathclyde. I can only assume that these rising emirs will be indebted to Logan when the time comes.

Your servant,
 Kitani Yang

>message ends<
 >delete<

Dancing on the Edge

Eyes Only

>decode successful<

>jasmine clearance acknowledged<

>provenance: Yang, Kitani — transmit from Skavara, ESE<

>time/date: 23:11:41/03•AU•34<

>message begins<

Honored Taipan,

It seems that my fears about Sibdra were not entirely founded. She has reported that Gavriel Draho, the Emir of Skavara, has been in discussion with Taipan Logan. Sibdra claims that Logan has mentioned connections with the North in his conversations with the emir. This would obviously confirm my suspicions about Taipan Logan's motives for gaining influence over Judyth Ramona. That he brought up the North with a powerful noble like Draho suggests that he has moved aggressively to extend contacts in the Arctic and has great plans to use them. I think it critical to uncover just what those plans are.

Kitani Yang

Your servant,

Kitani Yang

>message ends<

>delete<



I Ramona/r Taipan Judyth Ramona
(ICP Intel file photo)



I MDC Taipan Aaron Logan
(ICP Intel photo)

Kitani Yang
(Mekong Art Scene photo) ➤

Subterfuge & Spy Games

Clearance Secret — Bravo Green

To: *Sous-Commandant Didier Faux, Political Corps, Port Oasis*

From: *Lieutenant Saré Agincourt, Political Officer, RLS-27 Draco*

Date: *3 Autumn 1934*

Sous-Commandant,

Please find attached my full report on the events surrounding the suppression of the community of Plateau in the north of the Western Desert and the raid by Northern Guard forces against the *RLS-41 Eagle Star*, one of the *Draco's* escort vessels.

Our ship, the Khan-class landship *Draco*, and its escort of Raptor-class ships, was detached from our standard assignment in the Chamberlain battle-group to lead a drive into the desert north of Azov. Commandant Murène — who continues to show unfortunate signs of megalomania which, I fear, disqualify him for the admiralty — seemed to look at this opportunity to shine on his own. When we arrived in Azov, the *Eagle Star* was loaded with three dozen Northern prisoners who were destined to be dropped at a MILICIA advance base. Commandant Murène never gave these prisoners a second thought, assuming they were destined for exchange with MILICIA men languishing in Timmins. I was less convinced and kept my eyes upon these Northerners.



When the *Eagle Star's* fusion plant shut down during a foray north, troops from the enemy vessel *Vigilance* took advantage of the situation to arrange a raid and boarding action. Many of the *Eagle Star's* crewmembers were killed and many more were injured. Notably, the engineering crew (who could have identified the source of the problem) were utterly annihilated by Northern shock troops. The prisoners were also all freed.

By the time the *Draco* could provide succor to the beleaguered *Eagle Star*, much of the ship's crew was dead. Although the husk of the vessel was finally retaken, a duel and a bloody battle had to be fought to do so.

Looking at this chain of events, I wonder about the "convenient" breakdown on the *Eagle Star* and the readiness of Northern forces to take advantage of such an accident. The *Eagle Star* is not home to a great deal of secret technologies and I find it hard to understand the determination to raid the vessel, unless the Northerners were aware of the presence of prisoners. This leads to believe an enemy agent may have been aboard the *Eagle Star*. I find it most likely, in fact, that said agent was a member of the engineering crew. This would have given him (or her) the opportunity to disable the ship at just the right time and then help the invaders eliminate his or her co-workers.

Subterfuge & Spy Games



Clearance Secret — Bravo Green

(cont. from prev. page)

This dangerous breach in security aboard the *Eagle Star* had disastrous results for her crew and mission, but the situation could have been (or could still be) much worse. The enemy agent aboard the *Eagle Star* may not have been working alone. If my analysis is correct, then the plan depended on the *Eagle Star* being isolated from the *Draco* and other escorts while still being close to enemy vessels. Planning for the *Vigilance's* participation would have been a logistical nightmare unless the enemy had a source closer to the command structure of the landship group. I fear there may be a traitor aboard the *Draco*.

I have begun a complete review of shipboard security and personnel records to determine the identity of any such leak aboard the *Draco* or its other escorts, but I am only one officer. I would request assistance on this operation before any more lives are needlessly lost.

Respectfully,

Saré Agincourt

Northern prisoners freed from Eagle Star:

Austerman, Rg. Janyce
Brockton, Lt. Jennifer
Hanberg, Sen. Rg. Tanee
Kobleki, Sgt. Lance
Nathaniel, Rg. Tomas
Romanov, Lt. Guy
Sandoval, Rg. Kobi
Tannen, Lt. Yenri
Uwish, Sen. Sgt. Krys
Visser, Cpl. Samiel

Northern prisoners confirmed killed during escape:

Burnz, Rg. Bale
Meria, Cpl. Fionna
Vanton, Rg. Beau

end document

official report

Rebellion Spreads

Okavango In Flames

Network News Corps; *International Edition*
Victor Klahk *Reporting.*

The emirate of Okavango exploded in revolution last night when young Emir Rafael Bh Bravo entered the city and called for the end of Patriarchal rule. Bh Bravo, only 15 cycles of age, had been living in virtual exile for the last ten cycles and could return only with the death of his fellow emir and rival, Alexius Thoras. Thoras, a third cousin of Patriarch Oliver Masao, was the victim of an assassination generally thought to be tied to the Patriarch's pledge to cede the throne in Strathclyde to his last living relative.

Emir Bh Bravo rose to fame during his exile by touring the Emirates, leading a growing procession of children and mystics, and calling for renewal in the East. Rumor has it that the Emir was in Bangweuleu when that city rebelled against the Patriarch and that he may even have been tied to Adrianna Xing, the Revisionist mystic now preaching in Massada. Easterners of many stripes seem to see messianic overtones in Bh Bravo's plight and his call for rebellion has had powerful echoes even in Strathclyde, where Patriarch Masao is rumored to have entered a period of deep depression.



Fighting in Okavango began almost immediately as local rebels tried to put the loyal guard of Alexius Thoras to the knife. Troops loyal to the Patriarch and the Thoras family were not easily disposed of and at this time they still control much of the eastern half of the floating city of Okavango. The role of the Southern MILICIA troops and trainees stationed at the nearby Camp Blackwater aquatic warfare training facility remains unclear at this time.

Okavango is the third Eastern city-state to rebel, after Basal in 1931 and Bangweuleu in 1933. Several rural emirates seem to have fallen in line with the anti-Patriarchal movement as well, making the entire west of the ESE unstable. Whether the various rebel emirs and radicals can cooperate remains to be seen.

The reaction of the neighboring Humanist Alliance is also uncertain. Much of the Eastern-Humanist border is now plunged into chaos, with MILICIA, Patriarchal and rebel troops moving to and fro without any great concern for borders or diplomatic niceties. Rumor has it that skirmishes have been slipping into the Alliance for the last cycle and the fate of Okavango can only make matters worse.

Concerns and Solutions

Humanist Alliance Security Net

>Secure Connection<

>Full encoding<

Group: ForRel/ESE/Rebel/Options

Type: Information

Source: Humanist Alliance Protection Force: Border Defense Analysis

Struggles between Patriarchal and rebel forces along the ESE/HA border are definitely on the upswing. Last night featured three separate military incursions into the defensive border zone: one by rebel forces fleeing a MILICIA patrol, and two by both rebel and Patriarchal forces fighting running battles.

It is becoming clear that the Raleigh-Bangweuleu corridor is a hot zone of conflict and it is likely to be a transport nexus for rebel supply runs.

Regardless of which side in the Eastern "troubles" has a legitimate claim to power, the conflict itself constitutes a threat to national security. In the case of one side or another leading a determined cross-border raid, at their current strength, border defenders would be forced to fall back well into the Alliance before being reinforced.



Group: ForRel/ESE/Rebel/Options

Type: Opinion

Source: Preceptor Sten Malak, Humanist Insight and Regulatory Authority

This news from the Eastern border is worrisome indeed. It would be highly unfortunate if the Patriarch or some over-anxious MILICIA commander got it into their heads that the Alliance was somehow sheltering rebel forces — an invasion order would be too easy for such undisciplined minds to give in the heat of battle.

I recommend a preemptive extension of our own defensive perimeter several kilometers east and that we move HAPF forces into this new zone to secure the area. This will give us political ammunition to appease Republican minds (we are securing rebel lands) and allow us to strengthen our defenses against an eventual and ill-advised assault.

Such a large-scale operation would also allow us to send additional cells into Bangweuleu and other rebel regions to secure whatever connections we have already made.

internal memoranda

Treason



Southern MILICIA Special Intervention Unit

Transcript of Debriefing Testimony from Sergeant Alia Muna-Habib, SIU-Alpha

MILICIA Base Cimmaro, ESE, 19•SP•35

The third phase of SIU-Alpha's operation in Okavango was going according to plan. Sergeant Lussian Salban and myself had successfully used small water craft to infiltrate the floating city. The distractions created by Sergeant Petite and her team ensured that the guards were not paying attention to us and we entered the popular sections of town with relative ease.

Okavango is an artificial city that is supported by stilts and pontoons over the swamp. Our goal was to literally sink a part of the north of the city which was rumored to hold a command and control center for the local rebels. As ordered, we moved silently toward the northern sections of town, making sure to avoid being seen. I was carrying the explosive charges destined for the main support pontoon of the target artificial island and Sergeant Salban was charged with our defense and getting to the objective.

It took us almost twenty minutes to make it to the target area and I was happy to see we had successfully avoided the guards patrolling the city. Under a full blackout, we were able to move about

unseen with relative ease. We were in sight of the target when Sergeant Salban fell behind me. When I turned to ask him what was going on, he had already reached for his silenced sidearm. Weighed down by my packages I had little choice but to watch as he backed up and finally fled along a side alley.

In pursuing, I had to drop my charges, but I was still unable to catch up with him. He had been leading because he knew the streets of the city well and it showed. I lost track of him in a few minutes.

I was forced to acquire a swamp skimmer from a local marina. I decided against eliminating the owner, who was keeping an eye on the vehicle, and rather rendered him unconscious. My journey through the swamp was uneventful and I have come to believe that Salban did not inform his allies of my presence. Why he didn't do it is unknown to me, although he may have felt a last tinge of loyalty to the SIU.

It was only after I returned to base that we discovered his encrypted letter explaining his defection to the rebel cause.

The Price of Freedom

Good-Byes

My friends,

I regret that we must part like this, but I have long known that this days must come. I was born in the East and fled to the Badlands because of the barbarity of its rulers. Now that the call of freedom has gone out throughout the ESE, I can no longer stay away. My place is with my people in their time of liberation.

It saddens me that this makes me a traitor in your eyes. It has been my pleasure to serve with you all and I remain proud of my actions over the last cycles. But the AST is part of what has kept the East in bondage and to spend even another day in uniform would be a betrayal of my true self.

I hope you can find it in your hearts to remember me fondly, I know I will do the same for you. I hope we can meet again after this is all decided. I pray we do not meet before.

Lussian



SR Intelligence Directorate

Special Order 12/345/AS

Execution Order for Salban, Lussian.

Target Details: A former Sergeant in the MILICIA's SIU, Salban is an expert Gear pilot and is trained in combat techniques. He has committed treason and defected to the Basalite-led rebellion in his native Eastern Sun Emirates.

Directives: Agents coming into contact with Salban are authorized to execute him with extreme prejudice, save if doing so compromises another mission. In that case, the agent should immediately communicate with the directorate for further orders.

Do not report any sighting of Salban to the SIU or any other MILICIA source. Keep all communications internal to the Directorate. The treason of Salban may have inspired other foreign-born members of the SIU to join him or to cover for him. Any and all documentary evidence recovered from Salban should be sealed and handed over to the Directorate. Again, no MILICIA personnel are cleared to handle or even know of such documentation.

correspondence & execution order

Secret Encounter

Most Secret — Eyes Only

voice recorder log

Covert Meeting: Oxford, Humanist Alliance

Louis Philippe deRouen: *I must admit, Emir Shirow, that I grow tired of your little rebellion. It is becoming a drain on our resources and I am beginning to think that it might be better to simply help Patriarch Masao finish you off.*

Nigel Shirow: *That's the type of thinking that drove us to rebellion in the first place, deRouen. If you treat the East as a vassal to abuse, do not be surprised when the servant rises up to stab the master...*

LPD: *Your rhetoric needs work, Shirow. I am only talking about bare facts, a concept that seems to be well beyond you at this point. You have perhaps been spending a little too much time with that deluded child king in Okavango—*

Farzhad Hemami: *Gentlemen, please. We are here to discuss solutions, not to sling insults. I thought it self-evident that it was in all our interests to limit the scope of this conflict. Emir Shirow, I doubt you would want to see Republican troops deployed in large numbers into Basal, Bangweuleu, Okavango or any other rebel territories.*



NS: *That would just be a quick way to spread the rebellion elsewhere. This is a movement that cannot be contained by sheer force.*

Kenichi Tanaka: *Perhaps not, Nigel, but even an unsuccessful deployment of the SRA into your territory would cost your people dearly. Are you willing to make the hard decisions necessary to save your own people's lives, Emir?*

NS: *Of course, but not at the cost of their freedom.*

FH: *All we ask, Emir is that you not invite the Republic's enemies into the Antarctic. If you can abide by that, I think a case can be made for the rebellions being purely internal matters.*

NS: *The MILICIA aids the Patriarch, serving as support units for his raids on my positions. Their actions cost me lives. I have little choice but to turn North, Mister Hemami.*

KT: *That situation can change, Nigel.*

>end log<

Oxford Analysis



International Consumer Products — Intelligence Analysis

(covert transcript — full encode)

To: *Speaker Miyako Sogabe*

From: *Kai Tenuro, ICP Intelligence*

Date: 11•SU•35

Honored Taipan,

Our sources in Perth indicate that Humanist Lord Chancellor Hemami may have mediated some form of agreement between Eastern rebel Emir Shirow and the Republican state. While our information is somewhat sketchy, he seems to have created an agreement that will limit the scope of the conflict and Republican involvement therein.

In all likelihood, Shirow will have to cut ties he has established with the North and this can create an opportunity for us. Our policy of covert support for rebel forces could be escalated to make Shirow and his allies truly dependent on the Dominion (and ICP in particular). If the rebellions eventually fade we will nonetheless have helped destabilize the East, creating diplomatic opportunities for ourselves. If Shirow somehow survives the cycles of conflict, he will clearly be in our debt.

There is a certain urgency to my suggestion, however. I cannot imagine that Shirow will completely cut his Northern contacts. There is an inherent Republican interest in seeing the ESE stable and quiet and I think that this agreement can only be a temporary respite. Shirow and the deRouen will surely use the time to strengthen their respective positions and take care of other affairs. If we are to act, we must do it soon.

In parting I would also point out that none of our sources mention any other rebel leaders involved in this meeting. Given that Lord Chancellor Hemami is surely interested in keeping the peace in the regions close to the Humanist Alliance, he must have come to the conclusion that Shirow holds sway over the other Eastern rebels. Our own sources seem to concur on this, at least Emirs Boash and Ethene of Bangweuleu. Young Emir Bhervo of Okavango, however, seems to have a mind of his own. He may resist any agreements that further strengthen Shirow's hold over the "Free East."

Your servant,

Kai Tenuro

official report

Changes in the East

Oxford, Humanist Alliance

Oxford Negotiations (HIRA surveillance photo): Illuminatus Salvador Anastapulos in discussion with Republican Prime Minister Louís Philippe deRouen and Emir Nigel Shirow of Basal. The three speak into recorders agreed upon by all for review purposes. Records are scheduled for destruction to ensure security. Log copies already forwarded to HIRA central computer records.

SIU records

Sergeant Salban, Lussian (SIU file photo) — AWOL ▼

▼ Sergeant Muna-Habib, Alia (SIU file photo)



classified transcript

11-SU-35

Devil's Agreement

Most Secret — Eyes Only

voice recorder log

Covert Meeting: Oxford, Humanist Alliance

15•SU•35

Farzhad Hemami: Alright, let's see if we can all finally agree on the following points.

Emir Shirow, you agree to maintain your rebellion against Patriarch Masao as a strictly internal matter to the Eastern Sun Emirates and Allied Southern Territories. This means, specifically, that you will, a) break off any contact and supply coming from the CNCS or other foreign powers, b) refuse to target any and all Republican personnel or resources within the ESE and c) guarantee that rebel forces will not operate outside of the current borders of the Eastern Sun Emirates.

Prime Minister deRouen, Lord Chancellor Tanaka, you both agree that in return the Curia and Estates General will treat the rebellions as matters to be settled by the ESE and its people. Specifically, you agree to a) not deploy any Republican Army troops into rebel or contested territories, and b) limit MILICIA activities to border defense and securing strategic targets against foreign threats.

Is that agreeable?



Nigel Shirow: It is to me. Prime Minister?

Louis Philippe deRouen: As long as you don't make us vulnerable, Emir, I believe we can coexist.

FH: Now, gentlemen, we come to the sticky issue of the others who are involved in this rebellion, but who are not around this table. I refer specifically to Lord Protector Molay and Emir Bhervo of Okavango. Molay has staunchly refused to consider peace with Emir Shirow and young Bhervo seems so caught up in messianic pretensions that I wonder if political agreements will have any effect on him.

Gentlemen, are you willing to control these men on these issues?

NS: I think Bhervo can be handled. He seeks freedom and justice just like I do — as long as the Republic stays out of our affairs, he can be handled. I'm less sure about Molay.

LPD: I will handle Molay. Once and for all...

classified transcript

A Lover's Kiss

Mekong, 02•AU•35



The grouping wasn't as tight as she might have wanted, but Kitani Yang's shot hit true — right into Paul Berthyo's torso. He grabbed at his chest, red ichor flowing freely between his fingers. The pained and shocked expression on his face just before he collapsed was perfect.

Not fifteen minutes later, Paul's body was being wrapped in white linens and a plastic body bag while Kitani opened an encrypted channel to Miyako Sogabe, her patron. "Yes, Taipan Logan's agent has been eliminated."

"This must have been painful for you, Kitani." Sogabe wore the responsibilities of power heavily and had never been completely comfortable with intrigues. "I know what he meant to you."

"Somewhat, Taipan. But my duty has always comes first — and he was here to kill me."

"Your diligence is appreciated as always, Kitani." Sogabe hesitated for a second, the shell of the cold taipan breaking for a moment. "Keep your guard up. I think Logan isn't quite done with you."

"Of course, Taipan. Thank you." Kitani cut the comm line and looked rapidly at the encryption message. The protocol was one of the best at her disposal and it had registered decoding only at the receiving

end. According to Paul, it was also one of the protocols Aaron Logan's experts had cracked.

She turned to look at Paul's immobile form. Two of her trusted assistants — Teki and Lia — were tying the body bag closed. His face was still exposed, quiet and immobile. Kitani knelt before him and kissed him softly on the lips — even this close, she almost didn't feel his shallow breath.

"Dispose of the body as usual." The Yang Dancers — performers, spies and occasional killers — had a well-established routine for dealing with the remains of intruders and targets. They were dumped in the jungle, to be devoured by animals. Paul could make his way to safety from there.

After Teki and Lia had dragged Paul out of her chambers, Kitani sat on the bed and allowed herself a moment of emotion. She wondered between quiet sobs whether she would ever see Paul Berthyo again. Logan and Sogabe both thought him dead now. He could find a life somewhere else, free of his old obligations. If he was smart he would vanish completely and forever.

She lifted a hand to her mouth, imagining she could still feel his lips.



Memories

TN 1890s

Neel Garner Fulan and I were always best friends. That's the Norlight way, after all. When we were just kids in Livingstone, our parents made us bond twins. That created a link between us that would last our whole lives... even after everything that has happened, I still feel that connection now. I guess a lot of people think I shouldn't, but I just can't put away my feelings.

Neel and I were inseparable until our twenties, when we both found we needed direction in our lives. I went on pilgrimage to Massada and ended up joining the church there. Neel joined the Norlight Armed Forces and looked for direction in uniform. I traveled to the North every once in a while and Neel made pilgrimages to Massada every few cycles, so we still saw each other, but nowhere near as often as we would have liked.

I became a teaching priest in the *Massadan Church* and eventually an advisor to Dreven Capac, the First Follower in those days. Neel became a war hero. He stopped an Earth advance into the NLC during the War of the Alliance and became commander of the Blue Angels, one of the most respected regiments in the North. It seemed our lives were going to keep us apart forever.

It might have been better if they had.

— From the memoirs
of Sister Melissa Noble.



Together Again ▽



TN 1929

In 1929 fate (and some effort on my part) brought us together. People in the North were worried that Massada would be targeted by the South and started insisting that forces be sent to protect the City of Peace. I arranged that Neel's regiment be given the task.

I don't think people can really understand how beautiful Massada was in those days. The ancient architecture of the Old City seemed to breathe tranquillity and I hoped it would have an effect on Neel. In his letters he had told me about some of his religious doubts, especially about the increasing dogmatism of the church in Sorrento. He had found a mentor in a monk named Sister Delyah, but the leadership of the church was making him doubt the Gentle Prophet. I hoped the pacifism of Massada would show him his faith was still strong. I wish I had been right.

Of course, I also wanted to see him. I have to admit a certain selfish desire to have him close to me. At the time I thought all I wanted was the unique, intimate friendship of a bond-twin. Looking back, I know I was already in love.

— From the memoirs
of Sister Melissa Noble.

Memories

TN 1933

Things were not easy for Neel. He was a soldier stationed in a holy city that abhorred violence and weaponry. A lot of the locals thought it was scandalous for his troops to be anywhere near Massada and many pilgrims felt the same way. Pilgrimage was a big problem, because ensuring the security of the city meant searching the hundreds of people coming from across the desert every day. There were more than a few tense situations, but to his credit Neel kept his troops in line.

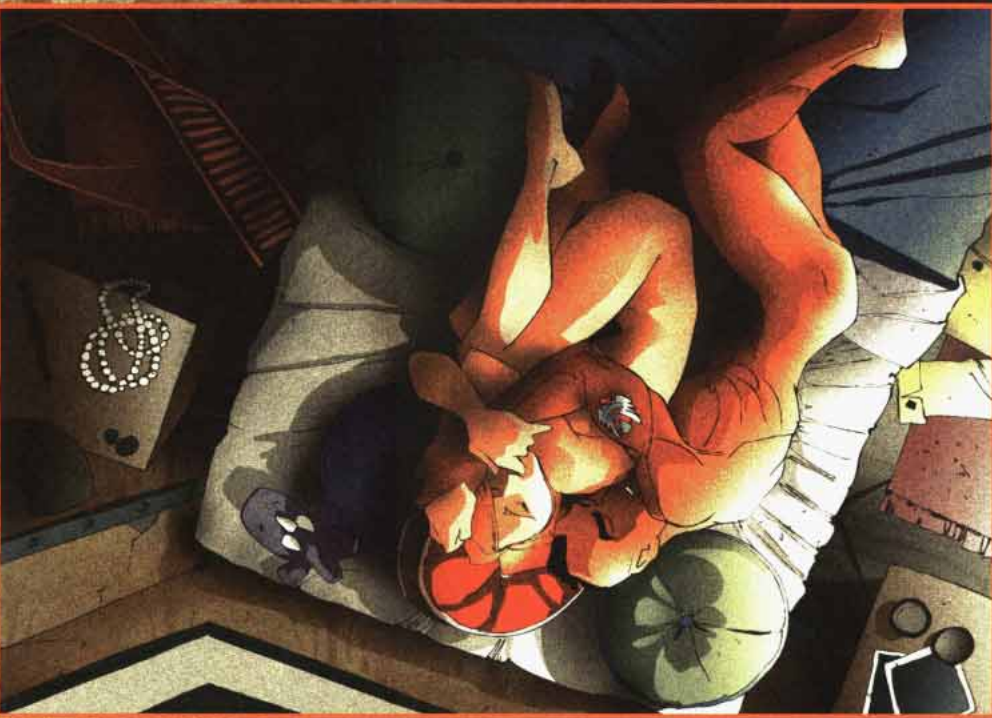
On a personal level, I could have made things easier than I did. My own feelings began to scare me — Neel and I had been very comfortable at a distance and when I realized that we could become lovers as well as friends, I got nervous. Around 1933 Luther Klingmann, one of Neel's pilots, started courting me and I responded. He was cute and sweet, but I think I did it just to stave off dealing with my feelings for Neel.

It was only later that I realized how much that must have hurt. He was never afraid of loving me and my relationship with Luther probably felt like a slap in the face.

— From the memoirs
of Sister Melissa Noble.



Two Against the Storm ▽



TN 1934

It took me until the end of 1933 to be honest about my feelings. It took us that long to finally be happy. Those were very good days, while they lasted.

Our relationship was unlike any other I have had before or since. We were passionate, relaxed and friendly all at the same time. One minute we would be rolling around in the throes of desire and the next moment we would be laughing out loud. It was wonderful. I discovered that Neel had a romantic streak and he constantly surprised me with touching gifts and gestures. He wrote me poetry and took me to places in my city I didn't even now existed.

I got to meet Sister Delyah during this time too. Once when we traveled North together to see our parents and once when she came to Massada. She struck me as a wise woman, but something always bothered me about her. There was some dark streak in her. It would be too late by the time I recognized just what that darkness was.

— From the memoirs
of Sister Melissa Noble.

Memories



TN 1935

As everyone knows by now, things came to a head in 1935. When the cycle started, I thought Neel and I were going to get married, maybe have children. By the end of the cycle I was crying over his grave, watched by the NorPol officers assigned to keep an eye on me.

I knew things were getting more and more difficult for Neel. Southern MILICIA troops were moving into the Karaq Wastes in ever-larger numbers and he was really afraid an attack on Massada was not far off. Locals were getting increasingly resentful of having armed troops in the city and bandits were becoming a constant danger.

At the height of everything, Neel led his troops to victory against a superior MILICIA force that was advancing on Massada. Up North he became a hero again, but locally his (undeserved) reputation as a warmonger got worse. He had a lot of trouble dealing with that. He had laid the life of his men on the line to defend this city and the citizens treated him like dirt.

— From the memoirs
of Sister Melissa Noble.



Shattered Lives



TN 1935

Everything fell apart in the Summer. Neel got news from Sorrento that Delyah had been kicked out of the church. A shadowy group of demagogues called the Prophet's Shield held a great deal of power back then and they apparently thought Delyah was "theologically incorrect." Two days later, Neel got a call telling him that Delyah had committed suicide. She had hanged herself in her small quarters in Sorrento rather than give up the life of a monk.

Neel was crushed. I had never seen him like that. He went from long periods of morose depression to explosions of anger. I suddenly found myself afraid of the most gentle man I had ever known. He wouldn't talk to me, no matter what I tried.

When he was called back to Sorrento so that Second Follower Hutchison could present him with a medal, I tried to stop him from going. He was all torn up inside and I knew going North would be disastrous. When I came to him and told him how I felt, he shut me out completely. When I insisted, he hit me across the face. I was stunned and frightened. I couldn't understand how the man I loved — who loved me — could hurt me like that. So I let him go North.

I never saw him again.

— From the memoirs
of Sister Melissa Noble.



Might and Right

Sorrento, 33•SP•35



After an hour, they turned off the spotlight, but blue and red blotches continued to dance in Delyah's field of vision. It took her several minutes before she could see clearly, and recognize the panel before her. She had known this day would come; it still wasn't easy.

"Sister Delyah Vargas of the Peregrine Order of Cantara, do you know what this proceeding is about?" Delyah knew who was speaking, even if she couldn't yet make out her face. It was Mother Maya Fajil, the leader of the Prophet's Shield.

Fajil didn't wait for a reply. "Judge Stoller, if you would."

"Sister Delyah," Johannus Stoller's voice was gravelly with age and hate. His presence only made matters worse. "You are accused of spreading subversive messages to your students, creating dissent in the church and threatening their very souls."

"I was not aware that personal responsibility was subversive." Arguing with them was useless, of course. But they would expect some sort of resistance and Delyah knew not to disappoint them.

"Responsibility is something you seem to know little about, Sister." Fajil was speaking again, not content to let another take the limelight. "As a teacher and monk, it is your responsibility to guide the

faithful to the path of salvation. To show them reverence for the Prophet and his Follower. Not to cloud their minds with doubts and questions."

"Mamoud asked many questions, Reverend Mother—"

"You know nothing of Mamoud!" Ah, a sore spot. "You denigrate the Prophet, calling attention to supposed flaws in his character and his teachings. This alone justifies your sentence."

"I only use his life as an example for my lessons." Time to give them what they wanted. "This was a technique used by Second Follower Jubair himself—"

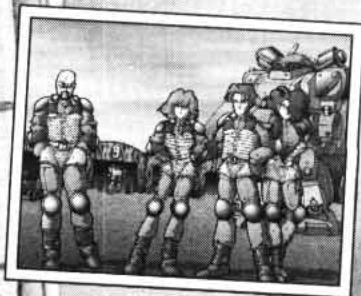
"Jubair was a fool!" Stoller was almost frothing at the mouth now. Ramesh Jubair had been Second Follower for much of the nineteenth century and had had little time for hard-liners like Stoller. "Under his tutelage the faithful learned to question themselves, to doubt their teachers and to plunge into indecision. You keep that unholy tradition alive with your ways and we are going to put an end to that tonight!"

"Yes, Sister," said Fajil with obvious satisfaction. "I feel it is safe to say that your teaching days are over. It remains to be seen if any other penalties are in order. For that we will have to examine the facts."

Victims of Faith

Family Snapshot

Dueling Trainees, 1928 (personal photograph): Photo discovered in search of Sanz apartment. Subjects are Rg. Cornice Dafnae (NG), Lt. Naed Stamens (UMFA) and fugitives Danghen and Maena Jarak. All under investigation.



Under Suspicion

Sgt. Sanz, Katryne (Norpress montage) ►

Ranger Cornice Dafnae (Northern Guard id photo) ▼

▼ Saddik "The Spider" Jahmoon (NGIS file photo)



private photo

42.SP.33

Faith and Betrayal

The Prophet's Shield

*Father Jozuah Sammiel
Society for Charitable Action
16 Armistice Circle
Valeria 745 HAS*

Father Jozuah,

It pains me to write these words, but your address to the club two evenings ago has moved me to act. You told us — members of the Prophet's Shield — that our faith and our nation were on the cusp of a great challenge. You rightfully warned us about the threats posed by the Southern aggressors who mass on our borders and of the faithless in our midst. But it was your last point, about the need for those of us who have Mamoud in our hearts to examine our own lives for signs of corruption, that struck home. As you so eloquently said, we must "be ever-vigilant for the creeping tendrils of cowardice, corruption and misplaced sentimentality, all of which hamper the Gentle Word."

I have spent the last two nights examining my own life for signs of failure and I have — unfortunately — found some. In the last two cycles I have come to share my life with Katryne Sanz, a sergeant in the Northern Guard. Katryne has become very well known in certain circles as the best trainer of Gear pilots in the CNCS. She has been responsible for several decorated heroes and many of the top Duelists in

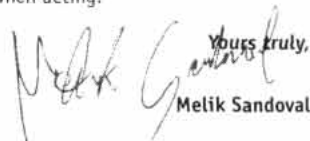


our forces. I fear, however, that she is a less-than-ideal influence on these young minds.

Katryne is a Revisionist, but not a dedicated one. She has confided in me a profound doubt as to the righteousness of her duty, even calling it "preparing the young for the slaughter." The recent desertion of two top students — the twins Maena and Danghen Jarak — may be weighing heavily upon her soul, but Katryne has confided that she understands the Jaraks' flight from duty. She even seems to admire their decision to hide from the horrors of war — despite the threat posed to our nation by our enemies.

My feelings for Katryne are profound and to pass along my concerns to you pains me greatly, but I cannot allow myself weakness at such a critical time. I truly believe that Katryne is a patriot, but she is in the midst of a bout of serious doubt that could well taint our most promising soldiers.

I leave this matter in your hands, but I plead that you keep Katryne's proven war record in mind when acting.

Yours truly,

Melik Sandoval

Teacher and Student

Phone Log

DATE: 26•SU•33

TIME: 29:32:54 AMT

CORNICE DAFNAE: *Cornice, here.*

KATRYNE SANZ: *Dafnae? It's Katryne.*

CD: *Katryne? It's great to hear from you. Where are you?*

KS: *I'm still in Valeria, but this isn't a social call...*

CD: *So what's up?*

KS: *I'm being placed under investigation, Dafnae. They're taking the training program away from me.*

CD: *What?! They can't do that to you! I'll see if I can get back to Valeria and —*

KS: *No. Whatever you do, don't do that. If you come to my defense, they'll just come after to you too. I'm calling to warn you, not to recruit your help. I'm being put up for investigation because I'm accused of being a bad influence on my students. Seems I'm not a good enough patriot. In other words I'm not—*

CD: *—a good enough Revisionist. Prophet Wept, what a load of crap. Just*



because you don't toe the line of that self-inflated jerk in Sorrento doesn't mean you're not a Revisionist.

KS: *I know that and so do you, but that doesn't matter now. Keep talk like that to yourself because I'll bet all my students will be under investigation soon. What with Danghen and Maena on the run and all. Just be careful, Dafnae, they'll use people close to you. That's what they did to me.*

CD: *What do you mean?*

KS: *You remember I told about a man named Melik?*

CD: *You mean your boyfriend, yeah I... you're kidding! He sold you out?*

KS: *Careless pillow talk, of all things. I've always had a knack for ending up with the wrong man.*

CD: *Yeah, tell me about it. I still wonder about Danghen...*

KS: *Dafnae, listen to me carefully. I don't know if you've heard from Danghen and Maena, but if they need to find me, tell them I'm going home. You know what I mean? (pause) Dafnae?*

CD: *Yeah, I know what you mean.*

Homeward Bound

Valeria, 07•AU•33

Father Sammiel,

I feel it necessary to bring to your attention the ramifications of the current investigation into the training practices of Sergeant Katryne Sanz. It is my feeling that this entire investigation is a destructive process that will most likely cost the Northern Guard one of its best trainers and may even cost us the loyalty of many of our best pilots. Except for her brief time in Khayr ad-Din a few cycles ago, Sgt. Sanz has spent the last ten cycles training pilots in Valeria and Red Sands. She has shaped an entire generation of elite pilots and Duelists, teaching them the skills they need on the battlefield and the codes by which they must live their lives. It has been my pleasure to have several of her students under my command.

By placing Sgt. Sanz on suspension, the Guard has gone a long way toward alienating these fine soldiers. As you well know, tensions with the South are on the rise and we may soon need all the soldiers we can get. To push aside a fine trainer and an entire corps of elite pilots at this time is to do a grave disservice to the armed forces and the CNCS as a whole. I urge you to call off the dawgs and reinstate Sgt. Sanz before it is too late.

Colonel Stacey Diggs, CO, 7th Gear Regiment — Cat's Paws



Journey to Massada

The Apostle of Mamoud

Adrianna Xing (NGIS intel photo): Known as the Apostle of Mamoud, Xing claims visions of the Gentle Prophet. She has arrived in Massada to begin preaching. She has a growing entourage and has friends within the Norlight forces in the holy city. Mark for Operation: Hawk.

Black Cats

▼ HACS-01LG-STH Black Cat Schematics (Hyperion Works/Shaan Mechanics promo): Two squads of Black Cats are now permanently attached to the NGIS badlands HQ in Timmins. They are used by SOT-11 and SOT-12.

Col. Sonya Gerti, NGIS (file photo) ▶



▲ Old City of Massada
(Badlands Traveler Magazine)

41.SU.33

Pilgrimage

Words of Faith



"And in the summer of the one-thousand nine-hundred and thirty-third year of our arrival, the Apostle of the Prophet made her way from the East to the holy city of Massada. She was tall and beautiful, her facial tattoos mimicking the scars of the Gentle Prophet Mamoud who had appeared to her and set her on her holy mission to reform the world.

"She set out from Bangweuleu, scorned and hated by the emirs, prefects and chancellors of her native land, but loved by the people. Many had heard of her and thought her to be a charlatan or a thief. Adrianna Xing was a liar they said — until they met her. Her kind eye and holy voice convinced them, and many fell to their knees and wept with joy as the chains of cynicism and despair were lifted from their souls.

"She left the lush jungles of her home with but a small band of faithful, but their number swelled with every step toward the holy city. More and more travelers heard her word and draped supplicants on their bodies, dedicating their lives to her vision.

"But some tried to stop her travels. In the night came bandits and killers, wishing to profit from the misery of pilgrims. But many of these people were converted as well and those who were not could not stand against the righteous.

"One night, with the cold desert winds blowing sand into the eyes of all, soldiers came to kill the Apostle. They arrived in tall black war-machines, fast, deadly and nearly invisible to the eyes of man or machine. Their first attack killed many and the survivors feared that Adrianna would be taken from them long before she reached to holy city.

"But a miracle occurred. Other soldiers arrived to defend the Apostle, and the winds were their allies. The blowing sand cleared and the invisible war machines were revealed and driven away.

"These soldiers thought luck was on their side, but it was truly the work of the Gentle Prophet protecting His Aspostle. She had to arrive in the city of peace to spread the word of the new incarnation and the Prophet was with her.

"Such is how Adrianna Xing, Apostle of Mamoud, arrived in the city of Massada."

Stray Drops

Stephan Maz, Apostate Preacher in Sorrento

Black Cats, Black Ops

NGIS Intel Sat 09/A/123

>sat trans #4131933/235:

prov: 5° 58'12" N, 40° 03'11" E — Karaq Wastes<

>routing: sat uplink from NGIS/SOT-12 to Col. Gerti NGIS Regional Command, Timmins<

>full encoding — top secret<

Colonel Gerti:

Operation unsuccessful. Repeat: unsuccessful.

Special Operations Team-12 faced opposition from NAF forces deployed to guard target designate Xing. One HACS-01LG-STH Black Cat (ID:9009) lost to defenders during attack. Self-destruct successful. Lieutenant Potters KIA.

Retreat ordered as per your no-reveal protocol.

Captain Reuters.

>trans ends<



>sat trans #4131933/236:

prov: NGIS Regional Command, Timmins<

>routing: sat uplink from Gerti, Sonya at NGIS Regional Command to NGIS/SOT-12 at 5° 58'12" N, 40° 03'11" E — Karaq Wastes<

>full encoding — top secret<

Captain Reuters:

Operation is scrapped. Attempt no reacquisition of targets and avoid further contact. Initiate full recovery of remains of Lt. Potters and HACS-01LG-STH/9009. All remains must be destroyed or recovered to prevent possibilities of identification. Limited lethal action against non-target scavengers is authorized to contain intelligence.

Initiate NNet and computer purge as per Operation: Hawk protocols. Destroy all records. File no reports.

Gerti out.

>trans ends<

GREL Ascendant

Confederated Northern City-States

Ministry of Defense

*The Rise of the New Human Republic in the Western Desert
A Report to Inner Council from Minister of Defense Lliam
Spencer
19 Summer 1934*

Members of the Inner Council,

Reports from the NGIS, satellite imagery and independent information gathering now all confirm that a coup has occurred in the Badlands principality once known as the Republican Liberation Movement. Comprising the four communities of Briktamone, Elevation, Gisleburg and Aspenpic in the Western Desert, the RLM was set up by a warlord named Hernando Dapez.

Dapez and his fellow leaders were overthrown after a violent conflict lasting from the 3rd to the 8th of this season. The attacking force was a large mercenary or rover band including somewhere between 200 and 500 troops and several dozen armored vehicles.

This invading force is worrisome because it included upwards of thirty GREL supersoldiers and is led by a GREL. This Jan-class supersoldier, calling himself Colonel Proust, has declared himself



Commander of the principality, which has been renamed the New Human Republic.

The name of Proust has come up in some Southern and Arthurian documents starting in early 1933. The Arthurians seem concerned that he is recruiting GRELS to his cause in Port Arthur, and the presence of so many supersoldiers in the NHR now seems to confirm this.

From this principality, it is possible Proust could launch attacks on other towns on the fringe of the Great White Desert, perhaps reaching as far as Lance Point or Prince Gable were he so inclined. The NHR also provides some significant industrial assets — including the Aspenpic Nuclear Processing Center — that could help build a significant armed force.

It is also possible that the creation of the New Human Republic will act as a siren's song for disenfranchised GRELS, just as the creation of Jan Mayen did in the 1920s. Proust's force of supersoldiers could grow exponentially in the next few cycles. This would make the NHR an even more explosive force.

I recommend striking up a relationship with this Proust before Port Oasis does so.

Shadow Diplomacy

Top Secret/Alpha

Transcript of Covert Diplomatic Meeting

Location: Ashington, UMF

Date: 01 Winter 1935

Attending: Yves Banderas, UMF Treasurer; Victoria Edden-Smythe, CNCS Grand Marshal; Aaron Logan, Mekong Development Corporation Taipan.

>discretion devices overridden<

>estimated clear-time 00:04:30<

YB: Taipan Aaron Logan, Grand Marshal Victoria Edden-Smythe.

AL: A pleasure, Grand Marshal. I've long wanted to meet the heroine of Ashington.

VES: That was a long time ago, Mister Logan. We're here to discuss more current events, I believe.

AL: That we are, that we are.

YB: Yes, let's get things started, shall we? To be frank, we all know that a war is coming. At this point, I see no way to avoid it. Questions remain open, however, about who will have the initiative and how long it will last. Many of us have spent the last two decades trying to stop a war, but apparently to no avail.



VES: Perhaps Mister Logan can tell us why no form of moral argument has been able to put a stop to Southern aggression...

AL: But Grand Marshal, the aggression you speak of is not actually Southern; more precisely, it is Republican. And despite what Port Oasis would have you think, the South and the Southern Republic are not synonymous.

VES: Politically, even culturally, perhaps. But on the battlefield the Republic dictates policy for the entire South. I know it and so do you.

AL: Port Oasis rules because it knows how to make use of our resources, Marshal. Raw materials, advanced electronics and many other components of their military machine come from Dominion factories — were those factories to stop producing, they would be in a great deal of trouble.

VES: Are you suggestion a rebellion, Mister Logan?

AL: I am stating, Grand Marshal, that the Mekong Dominion put an end to the St. Vincent's War two centuries ago because the bloodshed did not suit its interests. I see no reason why a war would suit our interests now. I propose a —

>signal lost<

Official Corroboration

Confederated Northern City-States

Foreign Ministry

Conflicts of Interest in the Mekong-Republican Axis

A Report to the Inner Council from Deputy Minister Arelle

Montserat

22 Winter 1935

Members of the Inner Council,

The link between Mekong and Port Oasis has historically been the most important axis in the political, military and economic construct of the Allied Southern Territories. It was the Dominion's peaceful entry into the AST that allowed the Republic to roll its invasion force into the Humanist Alliance and Eastern Sun Emirates in 1670 and the economic clout of the Dominion makes it by far the most critical of the so-called "vassal states" of the AST.

There are signs, however, that the taipans of the Dominion may realize the advantages of their alliance are not altogether reciprocal. While the AST provides the merchant houses of the Dominion with a literally captive audience, they have not been able to reap as much profit as they might wish. Indeed, Republican corporations are still given significant advantages, especially on Republican soil. The tenure of Prime Minister Louis Philippe deRouen has seen an intensification of



political and economic resources placed at the disposal of major Republican (and not Dominionite) corporations. This policy undercuts the very reason the Mekong Dominion has supported the AST: profit.

Economic analysis and intelligence work both corroborate an increasing dissatisfaction with the status quo at the highest levels in Mekong. There is now ample evidence that the rebel forces in Bangweuleu and Basal (ESE) are using weapons manufactured in the Dominion. We also have evidence of Dominionite military advisors on the ground in rebel territories. Economically, the Dominion has been making significant efforts to penetrate key Republican sectors, either through aboveboard means or through shadowy industrial espionage. That the Republic has thus far limited Dominion influence can only add to frustration in Mekong.

There exists, therefore, a real diplomatic opportunity for us. With its profits shrinking within the AST, the Dominion could conceivably be open to opportunities *without* the AST. For now, covert diplomacy and intelligence exchanges might well be feasible.

Any public break with Port Oasis would have to be supported militarily, of course.

March on Massada

SNS DataNews

In a joint declaration today, CNCS Grand Marshal Victoria Edden-Smythe and Norlight President Kathē Adjanni announced a large increase in the number of Norlight troops defending Massada. This announcement came a scant 52 hours after a battle between Norlight and Southern MILICIA troops along a pilgrimage route to the holy city, a conflict Marshal Edden-Smythe characterized as a "brutal act of aggression against the wellspring of our faith."

The 18th Norlight regiment — the *Blue Angels* — were confronted on the 16th with the presence of an entire MILICIA brigade moving through the Karaq Wastes between Peace River and Massada, along a popular pilgrimage route. The *Angels'* commander, Colonel Neel Garner Fulan, ordered his troops to stand firm against the Southern advance. When the leading edge of the Southern unit encountered the Norlight defenders, a brief standoff ensued. When neither side would back down, a firefight erupted, claiming the lives of at least twenty Norlight soldiers and as many MILICIAn, according to official sources. The MILICIA unit then withdrew despite the advantage of numbers.

President Adjanni informed the press that the 2nd brigade of the Norlight Armed Forces' 1st Division is being sent to Massada and will arrive there starting on the 21st. Support for this action has been almost universal in the North, but dissenting voices have come from Massada



itself. Sister Melissa Noble, spokesperson for First Follower Dreven Capac on the issue, voiced support for the actions but warned that "we must be careful not to turn this city of peace into an armed camp." Not surprisingly, Port Oasis was quick to condemn the action, calling it "yet more evidence that the North has its eyes set on global domination."

On a related note, Colonel Fulan has been recalled to the NLC to meet personally with President Adjanni, NAF Marshal Pietr Paulk and Second Follower Thor Hutchison. Rumors are flying that Fulan may see promotion to brigadier and be placed in command of all troops in Massada.

Colonel Fulan is perhaps best remembered as a hero of the War of the Alliance. At the time a major in the *Angels*, Fulan participated in the devastating Battle of Church Pass in 1915. During this battle, the *Angels* were all that stood between a CEF attack force and the communities of the Clearwater region. The Norlight regiment suffered 75% casualties during the battle, but was able to repel its enemies despite their superior manpower. Major Fulan's 3rd company played a key role in the battle by bogging down the leading hovertank group of the CEF forces. Fulan was awarded the coveted Order of the Griffin and promoted to colonel for his actions.

Space Initiative

Northern Guard Space Service Goes Solo

SNS DataNews

CNCS Grand Marshal Victoria Edden-Smythe announced today that the Confederated Northern City-States is withdrawing support for the Joint Terranovan Space Initiative (JTSI) in order to focus its resources on its own, independent space program. Edden-Smythe told the press that "overwhelming evidence of unilateral Republican action involving gate-capable vessels leaves us with very little choice but to act on our own as well."

The Northern Guard Space Service, the CNCS military's space exploration and defense corps, will take the lead in all future CNCS space-based efforts. The three active Northern Gateships — UMFGS Marcus Pohlo, UMFGS Laban Emuros and NGS Leviathan — have been transferred to NGSS authority, as have their docking stations in the Helios system. Grand Marshal Edden-Smythe refused to comment about possibilities of activating the two Tannhauser gates of the Helios system, but assured the audience that all precautions were being maintained in case of a second invasion attempt through one or both of these gates.

The Joint Terranovan Space Initiative was established in 1919 in the wake of the unsuccessful Earth invasion of Terra Nova. At the time, leaders from across the planet pledged their full support for an



international space program aimed at refurbishing and expanding the mothballed Terranovan Gateship fleet. The importance of securing the Helios system against a second invasion and of reestablishing contact with other human worlds seemed to be a priority on a global scale.

Valeria and Port Oasis both pledged billions of marks/dinars, countless man-hours and industrial resources to this unified effort. The JTSI steering committee was set up to guide this process and included prominent political, military and scientific leaders. It soon became obvious, however, that the JTSI was destined to become yet another victim of global conflicts.

As North-South relations have soured, global cooperation in space has fallen to the wayside. The JTSI steering committee became yet another venue for diplomatic conflict and has been trapped in a deadlock for the last four cycles. Each side has accused the other of acting unilaterally and against JTSI protocols, and today's announcement by Edden-Smythe seems to have put the last nail in JTSI's coffin.

Southern officials refused to comment.

Apostle of the New Day

Words of Faith



"Four-hundred and fifty cycles ago, Mamoud came to us all and showed us the way. Abandoned by our home planet, we were busying ourselves with bloody wars and civil strife. The Prophet showed us a new way and told us to lay our hatreds aside and build a new life on a new world. We listened.

"His Gentle Word spread and peace came in its wake. Wars ended and the faithful gathered here in Massada, in Sorrento in the North and many other centers of light. But Mamoud chose to leave us, so that we could carry his Word in our memories and make our own choices. We have not chosen wisely.

"Most of our world has ignored His truths altogether, preferring to worship nations or profit margins. Our folly has cost millions of lives. Great storms have come and we have ignored them. Plague has ravaged our planet and we have ignored it. Fire has rained from the sky and we have ignored it. Will it take the death of all before anyone understands that we must change our ways?

"Mamoud appeared to me and set me on the right path — I too was a sinner and have found a better way. We can all do the same, but we must have the courage to leave behind that which guides us to hate, to kill, to sin. Community and family are critical to us all and

Mamoud knows this, but too often we shield our hate for others in our love for our brothers.

"The constructs of city-states, leagues and confederations serve only to give us new people to hate. Armies, police and peacekeepers only justify the bloodshed that leads us toward destruction.

"We must find a new way before it is too late. Mamoud loves us all, we must do the same."

"This is the time of great change and transformation for us all, and a new light will come to guide us soon. Mamoud has told me that a new manifestation of the Spirit, a new prophet, will walk the sands in the cycles to come. The prophet will guide us to our future, a land of peace and love.

"We must be ready for this day. We must clear our hearts of hatred and violence, of nations and confederations. We must dedicate ourselves to the Gentle Way and join together in prayer rather than in war. Only then will we receive the guidance we so desperately need.

"The new day is coming. Are you ready?"

— Adrianna Xing in the Square of Revelations, Massada.

The Apostle's Flock

Dorothean Order

Reverend Mother,

When you first asked me to look into the Apostate Revisionists in Sorrento, I was a little taken aback. Certainly, I thought to myself, you could not concern yourself with such a small band of marginals. All I knew was that they based themselves on the teachings of an Eastern prophetess who claimed visions of Mamoud. While the theological implications of such a vision might be great, I thought your interest in this micro-sect to be odd. I now know how wrong I was — I have seen the great beauty and sensed the creeping danger of this new sect of Revisionists.

As you surely know, when I first took this task the Apostates numbered only a scant dozen in Sorrento. Living together on a farm near Pandos Hamlet, they seemed of little concern. Two cycles ago, however, their leader Adrianna Xing made her way from the Eastern Sun Emirates to Massada and began to preach in the Old City. I have heard she has had an electrifying effect in the holy city and I have seen the aftershocks here. Indeed, pilgrims returning from Massada brought her word with them and the number of Apostates has swollen. There are now over one hundred people in the local Apostate commune, spread over eight neighboring farmsteads in Pandos.



It is hard not to be enthralled by the beauty of Apostate life. We live surrounded by imposing monuments of faith, but when I was welcomed into the Pandos commune house I was stunned. The finest embroidery I have ever seen covered the walls, the glowing face of Mamoud shining down upon the room. Scenes from the Khodaverdia seemed to come to life around me, the parables of Mamoud captured in colored thread, hand-mixed paints and other media. The Apostates themselves speak eloquently of their faith, their confidence in Mamoud's guidance and are inquisitive about other perspectives. I have no doubt that their faith is true.

But they are troubling as well. The Apostates speak of abandoning the violent constructs of our life, putting aside nation and city-state in favor of a peaceful existence in line with the Prophet. They question the righteousness of our national cause and wonder whether draping the Confederacy in our faith does not do Mamoud disservice. I fear that their views could be manipulated by foreigners who might turn their distrust into motivation for treason.

I have learned to respect and love these people, but I cannot trust them.

Brother Kosaba Gon, Pilgrim Order of Dorothea

Retribution

Sorrento, 42•SU•35



"Let me make this clear, Reverend Fajil. Your days at the head of the Prophet's Shield are over."

Second Follower Hutchison stared at Maya Fajil for several long minutes, making sure his message was getting through to her. He noticed anger, disappointment and dismay fighting across her face.

"Your eminence," she finally managed to blurt out. "Why?"

"Because the Shield is not your plaything." He carefully attached his green cloak while he spoke. "You have been using your position to purge your own enemies, those who threaten not the church, not the faith, but your own petty fantasies of power."

Just like you did, she thought, but did not say. "I have only been looking out for your best interests."

"My interests have nothing to do with this, Fajil. We are talking about the future of the entire church. There are difficult times coming and I cannot abide you exposing the church to dangers.

"You have been exposing us to ridicule and investigation by purging prominent thinkers and monks. You cannot just strip them of their positions without people noticing, for Mamoud's sake. Damage

control on the suicide of Sister Delyah alone has taken all our resources."

"But she was a threat to us, Second Follower."

"A threat to you, Reverend Mother. I may not have always agreed with her, but Delyah never publicly challenged my leadership and her teachings were well under control." He took a breath and adjusted his supplicants before continuing. "You are the one whose teachings I cannot tolerate."

"What?"

"Do not lie to me, Reverend Mother. You are a member of the Divine Prophet sect and we both know it. You have been purging those who recognize that Mamoud was a Prophet, not a God." He took a step closer. "How long before you try to purge me, Fajil? The Divine Prophet is a heresy and I will have none of it among my allies.

"After the Day of Peace ceremonies I will discuss this matter with the rest of the Shield. I recommend you choose a nice, isolated monastery to continue your religious life. I want you out of my sight."

Maya Fajil left quietly, knowing Hutchison's mind was set. She also knew, however, that this wasn't over...



Day of Peace

SNS Newscast

1 Autumn 1935

Welcome to SNS InfoNet's live multi-track, multimedia coverage of this cycle's massive Day of Peace ceremonies in Sorrento. With tensions seeming to burst out across Terra Nova over the last cycle, it comes as no surprise that millions have come to the heart Northern Revisionism to mark this holiest of days. The Day of Peace commemorates the deaths of both the Gentle Prophet Mamoud Khodaverdi in 1507 and that of his companion Nathani Reiss twenty cycles later. This solemn holiday is traditionally a time for reflection and self-improvement among Revisionists, and it seems that many have come to Sorrento to find guidance in these trying times.

As he has done since he rose to the position of Second Follower, Reverend Thor Hutchison will be addressing his flock and advising them today. Thanks to the Hermes 72 satellite network, his words will be carried to virtually every corner of the globe and even to the resource and scientific stations elsewhere in the Helios system. A variety of luminaries have come to hear Hutchison's words, including many who will have the honor of standing on the dais of the great Church of the Third Miracle from which the Second Follower will speak.

Hutchison is also expected to use his speech to give praise to the Northern troops defending the Holy city of Massada. Colonel Neel Garner Fulan, commander of the Blue Angels regiment stationed in Massada, has traveled from the Badlands for just this purpose.



Arrivals at Gayras Rise



Video Image 1:

◀ Victoria Edden-Smythe and Anton Marshall

Victoria Edden-Smythe, the Grand Marshal of the CNCS has just entered, accompanied by a bodyguard. Two of her daughters are rumored to be in attendance, but her wife Lang Regina is nowhere to be seen.



Video Image 2:

◀ Eveanna Ritche

Following behind Grand Marshal Edden-Smythe comes Reverend Eveanna Ritche, the host of the popular Religious trideo show *The Light of Truth*. Reverend Ritche is a controversial figure because of the use of faith-healing on her show, but remains in good standing in the church.



Video Image 3:

◀ Winston Stark

Chief Justice Winston Stark has just entered the main hall. As the official head of the CNCS, his presence here emphasizes the importance of the church in the North as a whole. Next to Stark is General Valentin Gorky, commander of the Norlight First Division.



Video Image 4:

◀ Stoller

Following behind Chief Justice Stark comes retired judge Johannus Stoller, a long-time supporter of Second Follower Hutchison, accompanied by Colonel Alexander Dänte, commander of the 7th Norlight Gear regiment.



Video Image 5:

◀ Garner Fulan

Here comes Colonel Garner Fulan, being escorted by his commander-in-chief, Marshal Pietr Paulk of the Norlight Armed Forces. Colonel Garner Fulan will be receiving special recognition today for his efforts in defending Massada.



Video Image 6:

◀ Kathë Adjanni

Norlight President Kathë Adjanni is now entering the Church's main hall. Sh will take her place on the dais soon. Adjanni is heading into an election next cycle and her party's relationship with the Church is bound to be important at the polls.

The Second Follower

SNS Newscast

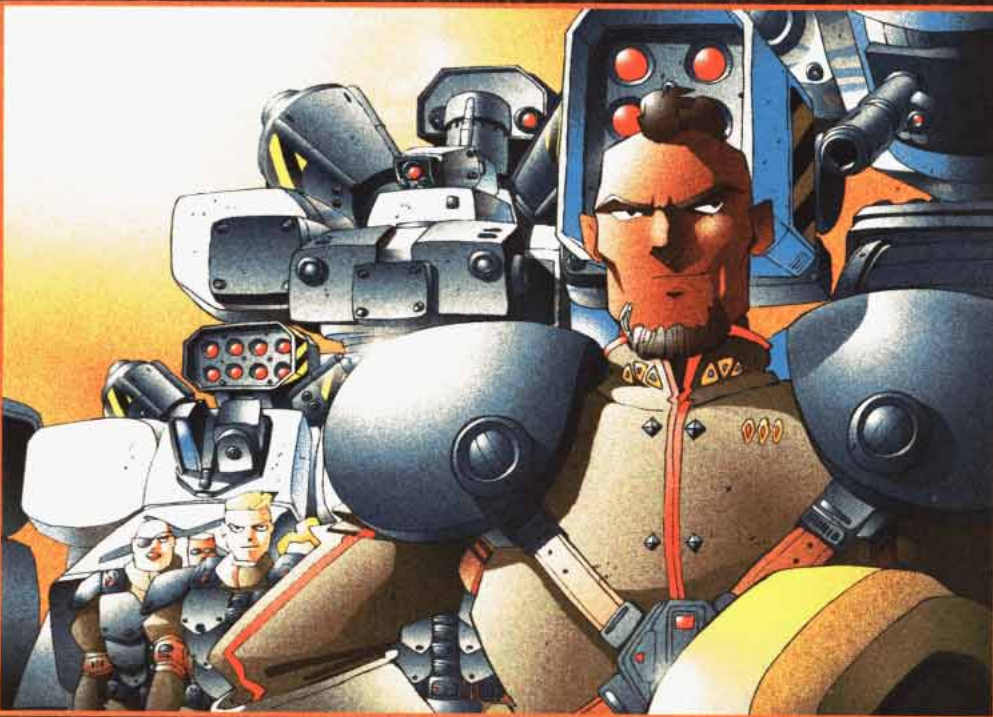
Reverend Thor Hutchison became Second Follower of Mamoud, the leader of the Sorrento Revisionist Church, in 1899 after having gained wide recognition for leading a drive for social reform in the Norlight city-state of Petropolis. Since his elevation to leadership, Hutchison has been a tireless crusader for religious and social reforms in the Norlight Confederacy and the North as a whole. Over the last 35 cycles, the Sorrento Church, which was once considered a confused and peripheral body, has become the most central social phenomenon in the North. Hutchison's radio broadcasts during the War of the Alliance are widely believed to be responsible for the fighting spirit of Northerners during the cycles of conflict.

Hutchison's so-called New Fundamentalism has been widely criticized by non-Revisionists, who see it as a form of religious chauvinism. Southern experts have never hesitated to use Hutchison as a target for their propaganda attacks and intelligence experts theorize that the Second Follower could well be a target for attack as times become tenser. Needless to say, security at today's event will be tight.

Hutchison will be addressing his flock from the historical dais of the Church of the Third Miracle. This wide stone surface includes the foundation of the first church built on Gayras Rise soon after Mamoud and Nathani left for Massada. According to Revisionist doctrine, the circular center stone marks the exact spot where Mamoud, delirious and wounded, received his revelation from the Gentle Spirit. Reverend Hutchison's lectern stands on that holy stone.



Hero of Massada



SNS newscast

Reverend Hutchison is scheduled to begin today's ceremony with a special recognition for Colonel Neel Garner Fulan, commander of the Blue Angels. The Colonel, who last Spring led his troops to victory over superior Southern forces threatening Massada and other pilgrimage sites, will be given a special set of prayer beads and a token of peregrination known as the Hero's Sword. The string of gold beads signifies the blessing of Sorrento, while the small gold sword is a special symbol reserved for heroic soldiers and only granted by the Second Follower. While this is not an official military award, it is considered the greatest honor a Norlight soldier can receive.

The soldier who will be so honored has known heroism before. As a major in the Blue Angels, Neel Garner Fulan helped hold off a CEF advance into the NLC in 1915 at Church Pass. The Angels suffered massive casualties during the battle, but repelled a far superior force. Garner Fulan was promoted to colonel and given command soon after this terrible victory.

The regiment itself has a long and proud tradition. One of the units of the venerated Norlight First Division, the unit was originally a part of the Army of Peace raised in the 1510s to defend Revisionists in the Irrian Plain and beyond. The Blue Angels were only transferred from the 1st in 1929 when they were selected to enforce the Northern protectorate over Massada. They have been stationed there ever since, only recently gaining support from the division's elite second brigade.

Live Coverage

Video Image 1:

Reverend Hutchison has just entered onto the dais and is ready to begin his address to the faithful. We now cut live to the Church of the Third Miracle, where the Second Follower's speech will be captured on eight trideo cams and broadcast across the planet.



Video Image 2:

"Brothers and Sisters, today we mark the Day of Peace, most solemn of our high holidays. We are gathered here at the very spot where the Prophet understood His purpose, so that we might understand our own. So that we might glean but an inkling of his enlightenment."



Video Image 3:

"Today is a day for remembrance and examination. Today is the day when we mark the passing of the holiest men to walk this or any planet. Today is a day we try to measure ourselves against their example."



Video Image 4:

"Not many of us can stand such a comparison. To do so we must find in ourselves that sacred ember, that holiest of whispers that carries the Gentle Word to our very centers. We must close out the distractions of the material world and look into our souls and take an honest measure of it."



Video Image 5:

"That is a tall order, but there are those among us who can stand proudly before their Prophet. There are those whose heroism, faith, duty and self-sacrifice place them in tune with the Gentle Word in a way few of us can achieve, but to which we all strive."



Video Image 6:

"Today we honor just such a man, a hero of wars past and to come. A soldier who has risked his life to defend the innocent victims of tyranny and terror. The commander of the Blue Angels, Colonel Neel Garner Fulan."



Live Coverage



Video Image 7:

◀ “Colonel, it is my pleasure to present you with a symbol of your church’s appreciation for your selfless acts of bravery in the face of danger. Neel Garner Fulan, I present you with — What— Of course.”



Video Image 8:

◀ Garner Fulan has a gun! We’re trying to get a clearer picture of what is happening on the dais. Garner Fulan seems to be saying something, but the microphone won’t pick it up —



Video Image 9:

◀ Second Follower Hutchison has been shot! Where’s the security? The Second Follower is stumbling... get me a closer shot, for Mamoud’s sake. Move in, I said—



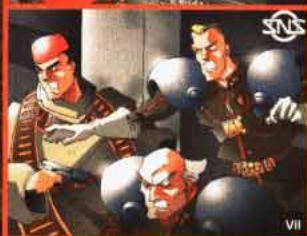
Video Image 10:

◀ Sweet Prophet! Cut back out!



Video Image 11:

◀ Reverend Hutchison doesn’t seem to be moving. Garner Fulan is hit, now. What took the guards so long? The Second Follower is bleeding profusely. Where are the medical personnel, for Mamoud’s sake?



Video Image 12:

◀ Garner Fulan seems to be seriously wounded as well. Chaos has erupted on the dais. We can’t get a picture of the Second Follower, ladies and gentlemen. Get in closer. I think he may be dead...

