

DRAGON'S FURY

VOLUME V

EAGLE'S TALONS

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Dedication

I must dedicate this final volume of the *Dragon's Fury* Series, to my World War II combat veteran father. He passed away on January 25th of this year, 2004. He was a hard working, all-American, faithful Christian man, husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather, and my dear friend. In his youth, he voluntarily signed up to defend his nation, its liberty and way of life while he served in combat in the US Navy in the Pacific Theater of Operation against the Empire of Japan. His teachings and upbringing, next to that of my Savior, Jesus Christ, have influenced my moral, political, spiritual and career thinking like no other and I cannot help but dedicate this work, which deals with all of those areas, to him after his passing. He was a great fan and supporter of this series and his insights and support made a great difference to the entire work. I only wish he could have read the last volume which he looked forward to. Dad, I will miss you so much. I am holding a copy of Volume Five in trust for you when we meet again.

I must also dedicate this final volume to my brother, Greg Head, who passed from this mortal existence on July 3rd, 2004, at the age of forty-nine years. He and I were close brothers being only 15 months

apart, he being the older. We went to the same High School, played on the same football team, hauled hay in the hot Texas summers together, served missions for our church at the same time, roomed at college together and shared so many things. We both had a great passion for the outdoors, particularly the American intermountain west, and we were both dedicated to the principles upon which the liberty and republic of the United States of America rests. He fought valiantly for life over a two and a half year period when he was expected to only live six months. I respected his stamina, his zest for life, his caring spirit and his desire to emulate his Savior, irrespective of difficulties or shortcoming. He also was a great fan of this series, and I look forward to handing him the final volume over there, across Jordan, one day in the future when we meet again.

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

Acknowledgments

As always, special thanks to my family for their faith in me. In particular, thanks to my dear wife of 26 years for her love and patience with this work and to my sons for their input and suggestions...and to my oldest daughter who has faithfully read all of the volumes and had faith in her Dad. In addition, once again, special thanks to my father, A. L. Head Jr., a combat veteran of World War II, for his support which were constant and unalterable until the day he died on January 25, 2004. And again, equal thanks to my mother, Georgia, whose Christ-like love and faith will always be an example and inspiration to me. Mom, may our entire family be comforted in the loss of both Dad and Greg, looking forward with a perfect brightness of hope to our eventual reunion with them and our Savior.

Once again, I cannot have a section on acknowledgements without personally thanking those who have collaborated with me.

Thanks to Joanie Fischer of Pennsylvania, for her tireless reviews, edits, faith, and encouragement.

Thanks to Chris Durkin of Pennsylvania, for his faithful edits, perseverance, and invaluable technical input on so many topics.

Thanks to Cory Emberson of California, for her edits and her faith and belief in this project.

Thanks to Matt Bracken of California, for his input as a former officer in the U.S. Navy Seals.

Thanks to Matthew Riley of Connecticut, who passed away this year on March 19, 2004, for his reviews and for his input. Rest in peace and God's speed, Matt, you will be missed.

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

Author's Note

Every effort has been made to make this concluding volume of the *Dragon's Fury* series, *Volume V: Eagles' Talons*, a standalone novel that can be purchased and read individually. In order to do this, in the introduction of characters and the story line, short paraphrasing of past activities have been included in an effort to bridge the volumes. I hope this will allow first-time readers enough flavor and background to enable them to enjoy Volume V without having to first read the other four volumes. At the same time, I have attempted to do this in such a way as to also allow those who have already read the first four volumes to pick up the tale with as much continuity and as little redundancy as possible.

Clearly, this remains an attempt to satisfy two conflicting interests. I believe I have struck a good balance. As in the past, I suppose that time, the experience of readers and their comments will tell whether my attempts have been successful or not. In either case, whether you are a new reader of the series, or whether you are returning for Volume V after having read the others, I hope that the read is an enjoyable, compelling and thought-provoking one for you

I say all of this with this comment and observation. The books are written as a series. Even though I am making every effort to allow the various volumes to be read as standalone novels, they were meant to be read as a series and I sincerely hope everyone who picks up one volume of the series and reads it, will be inspired to read them all.

DRAGON'S FURY

VOLUME V

EAGLE'S TALONS

HHHHH

Prologue

May 21, 2010, 21:50 WST

800 yards outside of the outer perimeter fence

US Air Force Space and Missile Range

Central Nevada

Lee Phillips was one of those Chinese-Americans who barely looked the part. Outside of slightly higher cheekbones and dark hair, he did not display any of the racial characteristics, particularly about the eyes, that would identify him as being of Chinese descent.

But that did not matter in the least. He was a third-generation Chinese-American who had been recruited into the services of the PRC intelligence apparatus by one of his cousins when he had traveled to mainland China in the mid 1990s as a young, aspiring engineering technician. While there, he worked for a large computer manufacturer that was setting up operations in the PRC at the time. It had not taken too much outlay of funds or entertainment by Chinese intelligence at the time to seal the deal. And it became apparent over the next several months that Lee was a “natural.” Between that time and 2004, Lee’s meteoric advancement within his firm in China had landed him so many stock options and resulting wealth that he had been able to return to America and retire at the ripe old age of 32 years old, well before the onset of hostilities, exactly as planned.

He had brought his new Chinese wife with him, herself a colonel in the Chinese intelligence apparatus, back to the West Coast of America, and they had played the role of American urban yuppies to a tee. Living 80 miles southeast of Sacramento in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in their multi-million dollar chateau, the couple had gathered data and transmitted it back to their masters in Beijing, either by courier or by secure, encrypted satellite transmission, while those devices were still available. That data had included critical information for the Chinese planners regarding the American mobilization effort and the computer technology advancements the Americans were making during the early stages of the war.

Once the satellites had been destroyed in the fighting, Lee, his wife, and his entire team had been viewed as too strategic an asset to risk, and so their active work had ceased for almost two years. They had not been activated even for the monumental operation the year before in Washington, D.C., when the American president at the time, Norm Weisskopf, had been attacked and killed while presenting the Medal of Freedom to Stacy Urkut, an American woman who had been a hero of the successful American resistance of the Chinese invasion of Alaska.

That operation in Washington, D.C., had been a costly joint Chinese and Arab venture in which all of the operatives had been killed. It had nonetheless been successful in its immediate and primary goal of assassinating the strong-willed and insightful American leader who had led the United States through the darkest days of World War III.

But strategically the operation had failed miserably. China's enemies in general, and the American's in particular, had not been demoralized by it at all. To the contrary, they had rallied around the new

American President, John Bowers, who was turning out to be at least as inspirational a leader as Weisskopf had been.

“Where do they get these people?” Lee asked himself as he monitored communications and continued to watch through his night vision equipment the prominent rise in elevation, some 25 miles distant, behind which he knew the American space launch facilities were located.

“Bowers has not only energized the people past the death of Weisskopf, he has redoubled their efforts militarily in the field and pushed the American efforts successfully into space.

“Well, perhaps after tonight we can put a stop to that,” he muttered as he considered the other operatives he had working with him tonight.

Ten miles to his north and west, atop a ridgeline, he had his principal communications team. Upon seeing the flash of the launch, and its continued strobe-like effect made by the nuclear pulse technology employed by the Americans, Lee would wait until the spacecraft cleared that distant rise. He would then use his miniature transmitter to send an encrypted burst message to his communication team on the ridgeline behind him. That message would travel in a very short and tightly focused, line-of-sight beam to his people on the ridge, who would in turn transmit news of the launch using their sophisticated short-wave radio so that listening stations directly on the West Coast could then transmit the message on to China.

Two other Chinese-Americans who were operating the sophisticated 10-meter radio accompanied by a three-man Latino security team were located on that ridgeline at over 8,000 feet. The two Chinese operatives there had been in America for over 10 years themselves and had been assigned to him by Beijing after the onset of hostilities. They had helped him in various low-risk operations when he was gathering information during the early days of the war.

The three Latinos were very experienced in security operations. Each of them had been members of the military in their homelands of Nicaragua and Panama before “immigrating” to America across the southern border of the United States as a part of Hector Ortiz’s FTA trucking/smuggling operation in the 1990s.

Lee had met Hector only once, and had been impressed by the man who had created the largest Mexican NAFTA trucking company and ultimately established that company’s U.S. headquarters in Dallas, Texas. The entire operation had been nothing more than a very sophisticated front company for bringing Aztlan operatives and weapons into the United States for use in helping bring down *El Norte*. Hector had created unbelievable chaos and carnage across much of western America by using his operatives to attack malls, infrastructure, manufacturing plants, and other facilities after the onset of hostilities against the mainland United States in March of 2006.

“Well, ultimately Hector was caught, tried and executed, along with most of his leaders and personnel,” Lee contemplated as he continued to think about his five team members up on the ridge.

“But the fall of his organization added to my own. Those three guys are good and are just what we need for this evening.”

Since coming onboard with Lee’s group, the Latinos had posed as immigrant workers at his chateau, using the time in training for field operations like the one tonight.

With a Stinger anti-aircraft launcher and four missiles, a LAWS anti-armor launcher and an M60

machine gun, he felt his team would certainly be able to hold out long enough to successfully transmit the required message when the time came.

And he was right.

May 21, 2010, 22:02 WST

U.S Air Force Security north-central monitoring post

Outside the US Air Force Space and Missile Range

Central Nevada

“I’ve got a contact Chief. . .no, wait. . .now it’s gone,” Specialist First Class Logan said as the rising sound of the approaching craft continued outside of their camouflaged position.

“Funny, but it was a clear read. . .just too short to pinpoint.”

As Chief Miller contemplated a reply that befitted any false alarms at this particular stage of the launch, Logan excitedly announced, “Now another contact! Definite transmission, 10-meter band, coordinates Delta-Bravo 23.5, Victor-Echo 55.”

The Chief wasted no time. All thoughts of any snide comment disappeared with this definite contact so close to the perimeter of the base. His training took over and he immediately contacted the North-Central facility quick reaction team and reported the contact.

Three miles to the west, a heavily armed Kiowa helicopter and an Air Force Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft had been spooled up for the last half-hour in the event of any security need. Upon getting word of the transmission, these aircraft immediately lifted off and sped towards the coordinates on the ridgeline where Lee Phillips team was located.

The Kiowa was armed with a 25mm chain gun and a pod of direct fire missiles. Its detection and self-protection electronics were state of the art. . .and it soon found it needed them.

Eight hundred yards in front of the Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft, which itself was armed with a 40mm cannon mounted in a pod of the left side of the aircraft, a door-mounted .50 caliber machine gun on the right side, and carrying 18 heavily-armed Air Force security personnel, the Kiowa helicopter instantly detected the launch of a Stinger missile that was targeting it.

The small wasp-like helicopter made an unbelievably sharp turning ascent to the south, while dropping several bright flares to decoy the infrared, heat-seeking missile.

As this occurred, the Osprey began targeting the firing position of the Stinger missiles with its 40mm cannon. The third burst silenced the Stinger missile launcher and killed the Latino who manned it, but not before another missile was launched just as the Kiowa turned back towards the fight, having successfully eluded the first missile.

The second missile slammed into the side of the faired cowling covering the Kiowa’s engine, just below the main rotor and blew the helicopter out of the air. The main rotor itself came completely apart and

spun off wildly in one direction while the burning hulk of the helicopter plunged to the ground and exploded.

With the onset of combat, the commander of the reaction team inside the Osprey called for reinforcements. Another reaction team had been dispatched and now approached the back side of the ridge. The first team's Osprey landed approximately one thousand feet below the ridgeline and two thousand yards distant, and immediately came under fire from the M60 machine gun and LAWS that Lee's personnel had set up on the ridge.

Desperately trying to buy time so they could disengage, Lee's two remaining Latino personnel continued to provide covering fire while the two Chinese operatives packed up their shortwave radio and retreated to the opposite side of the ridge. As they began to make their way down the slope on that side, they saw the second U.S. Air Force reaction team approaching.

Unseen by the Americans, who were deploying and focusing on the reports coming in from the first reaction team regarding the location of the enemy firing positions, the two Chinese split up, shielded themselves from the advancing Americans using rock outcroppings, and took opposite paths along the ridgeline to try and evade capture.

Ultimately, the American reaction teams completely surrounded the two remaining Latinos in Lee's team and killed both of them. In the exchange, two Americans were seriously wounded, along with the loss of the Kiowa and its two pilots.

Three hours later, one of the Chinese was located with infrared detection gear hiding in a crevice along the lower end of the ridge. As American personnel approached and demanded his surrender, he killed himself.

Lee and the other radio operator successfully evaded capture, having completed their mission of alerting the Chinese armed forces of the launch of the latest American mission into space.

May 22, 2010, 02:15 local

PLA Space Launch Facilities

Central Mongolia

The Colonel looked up from the display that he had just completed reviewing and addressed the commanding general.

"General, we have received a launch and attack authorization code from Beijing, sir. Intelligence reports indicate a successful launch by the Americans of three nuclear pulse SSTO craft just over...let me see...yes, just over 15 minutes ago.

"Our eight Dragon Spirit craft are fueled and ready to launch. I will need your final review and approval to execute the orders."

General Hsua'ba reviewed the information that was being displayed by the communications officer on his screen-the same information that the flight operations officer had just referred to. It was all as Colonel Zo had indicated. The much-anticipated time for launching and testing of the Dragon Spirit aircraft had

arrived.

“You have my approval, Colonel. Order an immediate launch of our spacecraft and an intercept of the American space station according to our plan and based on this latest information.

“As soon as the spacecraft obtain orbit, have the mission commander, Colonel Le’dung, contact me for a final status report and any resulting command instructions.

“Inform the entire strategic missile forces assigned to this mission to begin their attack as soon as the American station comes within range and continue that attack throughout the engagement.

“Also, contact General Shaun at the Altyn Tagh facility and have him hold his four Dragon Spirit aircraft in a ready standby condition. Indicate to him that those aircraft must be ready to launch within five minutes of my order.”

The General reflected on this momentous occasion. Although he had been concerned about General Hunbaio’s orders to make the space debut of these craft a combat mission, he understood full well the reasoning behind it. It was paramount that the Americans have no advance warning of the Dragon Spirit craft, and that their initial deployment occurs under the cover of China’s normal, and to date ineffectual, missile and kinetic energy attacks against American launches.

“Who knows?” the general mused. “Perhaps this time those attacks will prove effective and the Dragon Spirit attack can proceed immediately to the American Southern Star station.”

Either way, the General knew that confusion and surprise would reign amongst the Americans once they realized the true nature of the threat against them. It was clear to the General and to the entire chain of command, up to and including the entire Politburo and Jien Zemin himself, that it was paramount that this new American foray into space over the central Pacific be stopped, and their station over Australia be destroyed in this first combat mission of the Dragon Spirit spacecraft.

The General’s attention was attracted to the bright and simultaneous ignitions of four heavy-lift Chinese boosters on the displays at four different launch pads on the base. Although the digital display screens made them appear much closer together, the General and the entire staff in the operations center knew that each launch pad was separated from the other by over two kilometers.

Dual solid-fuel rocket engines, complimented by dual liquid-fuel motors, all working in concert in an SSTO configuration, would lift their payloads into orbit. In this case, the mammoth, heavy-lift vehicles would each carry a flight of two Dragon Spirit craft into orbit.

As the lift vehicles cleared the towers and thundered up into the dark sky, the General anxiously awaited the successful insertion into orbit of the craft, and then the communication with the mission commander.

May 22, 2010, ten minutes later

PLA Space Craft DS-001

Over Eastern Mongolia

Colonel Le’dung reviewed the status of the spacecraft under his command as he prepared to contact

General Hsua'ba back on earth. The status was good-all of his vessels had been inserted into orbit perfectly and were now in the prearranged formation that would allow them to join in the missile and kinetic energy attack on the American space station that had already begun.

The Colonel was proud of his nation's achievement, and proud to have been given command of this initial manned combat mission against the Americans in space using the Dragon Spirit spacecraft.

And what wonderful spacecraft they were.

Each of the eight craft under his command contained a crew of four. A flight commander who also served as the pilot, a co-pilot who also operated defensive electronics systems, a weapons officer who operated the craft's offensive weaponry, and a flight engineer who also served as a communications officer.

Each of the craft was 28 meters long and shaped in a single, flat airfoil design with two small vertical stabilizers, and a raised, faired crew compartment along the upper centerline of the craft that had space for two tandem seats that were positioned back-to-back with a small crew mess, bathroom, and sleeping quarters in between. They were coated with a continuous layer of polycarbon material on the bottom and across the front of their rounded noses for thermal protection during re-entry. The Chinese viewed that material as a pronounced improvement over the earlier American's tiled carbon-carbon material. The Chinese material was applied in a single sheet while being engineered to dynamically respond to the extreme heat of re-entry in such a fashion as to fully protect the spacecraft while making any thermal expansion seams and joints unnecessary.

The craft were powered by two compact nuclear fusion engines, would allow the craft to operate either in space or as airborne aircraft once they re-entered the earth's atmosphere. Although not strong enough to lift the space craft into orbit, the two fusion engines did allow for significant maneuverability and speed within the vacuum of space. They also allowed the craft to attain a Mach six speed within the atmosphere once their orbital velocity had bled off.

The Chinese designers and the pilots and personnel who operated them also considered the weaponry the spacecraft carried to be the most advanced on earth. Two charged particle weapon booms, or cannons, were mounted in each airfoil, one on each side of the crew stations. They retracted into the upper surface of the craft for protection during orbital insertion and during re-entry. Each was capable of providing lethal, non-refracted energy bursts that were effective against non-hardened targets in space at ranges in excess of five hundred kilometers, and against hardened targets at ranges approaching two hundred kilometers.

In addition, each craft had two retractable, self-stabilizing 40 millimeter cannons for close-in fighting and eight prototype, long-range anti-aircraft missiles mounted in fully enclosed stations along the top of the airfoil. Those missiles were the latest innovation in the Chinese inventory, and had been designed specifically to be a standard part of the Dragon Spirit weapons load-out. They had been engineered to be able to operate either in space or within the atmosphere in keeping with the Dragon Spirit's mission profile. Each missile carried a 50 kilogram warhead, had a range in excess of 300 kilometers, and was capable of infrared, radar or stealth targeting.

In the stealth targeting role, the prototype missiles themselves carried an initial prototype version of a micro *ta shih* stealth acquisition and targeting system. The *ta shih* system consisted of sophisticated passive electronic sensing equipment coupled to the latest bi-static radar, multi-static radar, and a revolutionary scalar system that were programmed into the missile's targeting circuitry. The entire system had been discovered by Chinese scientists several years earlier and then developed to the point where

they were capable of acquiring and targeting American stealth aircraft. Two years ago the system had gone into production deployment and had proven very effective. It had given a significant boost to the war fighting capabilities of Chinese forces and their allies to whom the technology had been sold and licensed.

...and it had come at a time when the overall war effort of the Chinese had peaked and then ebbed. The system was proving to be a significant bright spot that was preventing the defeats and losses the CAS was currently experiencing from turning into total disaster.

The advent of the micro version of the *ta shih* system represented a breakthrough in miniaturization for the Chinese that would soon become standard issue on most Chinese atmospheric aircraft as they were mass produced and retrofitted to older missile systems, or incorporated into new designs.

“Perhaps as we mass produce this particular system and deploy it into frontline, offensive use, it will help us turn the tide of war back in our favor,” the Colonel thought.

“The first test of that hypothesis is going to come in a very short time,” he continued to himself.

At that moment he received the “green light” from his communications officer indicating that it was now possible to contact General Hsua'ba. As he prepared to do so, and as he considered the awesome firepower and technology at his disposal, the Colonel couldn't help but have a final thought.

“In their own words...the Americans will never know what hit them.”

Chapter 1

“Not gold, but only man can make a people great and strong; men who for truth and honor's sake, stand fast and suffer long.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

May 23, 2010, 23:32 local time

Inside the main cave

Muri Redoubt

Central Cape York Peninsula

It had been seven months since the small group of Muris led by Nabalco and his wife Ulura had come to this hidden spot from the Gregory Mountains. The twenty-seven people of his company had swelled to over forty souls since that time, but it had not been without severe troubles and difficulties.

As he had foreseen, back in the fall, the fighting between the western forces led by the Americans against the Chinese, Indian and Muslim forces that had occupied Australia had spread to the northwest and overrun the Gregory Mountains. The very spot the clan had been using for sanctuary during much of the war had been engulfed as the enemy occupation forces and their civilian populations had been set upon by the allied military. In fact, several terrible pitched battles had occurred throughout the Gregory Mountains as the western allies slowly pushed the Asian forces back in that area.

“We would have all either died or been captured and mistreated by the Chinese and Indians had we stayed,” Nabalco thought as he reflected on all that had occurred.

As a leader in the clan and as a “dreamer”, he had experienced several visions regarding his people. Invariably, when he had these very vivid experiences, the dreams came true, and what they were experiencing now was no exception. He had seen the battles spread to engulf the Gregory Mountains rendering their former hiding places unsafe. He had urged the clan to split up into much smaller groups and move to safety in the north, each group moving toward small enclaves that had already been prepared and to which routes of escape had already been planned.

Although all of the groups had moved, six of them had elected to do so together, hoping to find another larger hiding place somewhere in the wilds of the Cape York peninsula.

That particular effort had failed and led to disaster.

As the Chinese and Indians were pushed back, a substantial portion of them were cut off by the American, Australian and other western allies' advance. Over 250,000 enemy troops and almost as many Asian civilians who had been brought in to settle this portion of Australia but who were now escaping to the west had become bottled up just north of the Gregory Mountains. Just as the Muris had done before them, they began moving further north in the hopes of escaping destruction. Their commanders hoped to come under the protective umbrella of Indian and Chinese air cover on the northern half of the peninsula as they came closer to their bases in New Guinea and on the islands to the north of Australia that they still controlled. They hoped to either be reinforced and start an offensive against the Americans' flank...or be evacuated.

As this large force moved to the north through the lands to which the Muri had fled, they had discovered the larger grouping of Muris and slaughtered most of them, taking captive those they desired or felt who were capable of toiling mercilessly for them as they moved to the north.

The western allies were not taking lightly the presence of this large enemy force on their flank. As a result, Nabalco thanked the heavens that his clan was not directly in the path of the Asians. The Americans were bombing their enemies and hounding them relentlessly...wanting to force them to surrender or to annihilate them in order to remove the threat. Anything close to the Chinese or Indian forces was apt to draw the advanced missiles from which the Americans produced their Hail Storms, or to draw fire from their other precision weaponry.

Despite that precision, if you were an aborigine or other refugee in hiding near an enemy camp and they moved in your direction, those weapons...or those of the enemy...would not distinguish between you and the intended target.

The Cape York peninsula had thus turned into a major battlefield in the war and many of the Muris had been forced to flee their smaller sanctuaries in order to get out of the way of the fighting when they could...and to inflict casualties on the enemy when they could not, in an effort to separate themselves or do as much damage as possible before dying or being captured.

Some had found other safe places or joined with other groups who already had. That is why Nabalco's group had grown to its current size, and this was a concern for Nabalco. Educated in engineering and having been fully integrated into the Australian society before the war, Nabalco understood the capabilities of modern military forces. He knew that the larger his group became, the more likely they would be discovered.

As he contemplated these issues, he noticed that “Tex”, one of the original non-aborigine refugees his group had taken with them away from the Gregory Mountains, had hobbled across the cavern to the small fire and sat next to it.

“Tex, isn’t it a little late for you this evening? Don’t you have watch very early in the morning?” Nabalco asked.

Tex turned to look at Nabalco. His understanding and his ability to communicate and move about had improved dramatically over the last four or five months. When he had first come to the clan he could barely speak intelligently, and he could hardly walk due to the stiffness in, and damage to, his left leg in the knee and ankle, and because he was missing half of his foot on that leg. In addition, his right hand was horribly misshapen, the thumb having somehow healed completely out of joint while the index finger had clearly been badly broken and then healed that way too. Several times during their escape deeper into the Cape York Peninsula, Tex had literally had to be carried to where they were going.

But, as time passed, particularly in the first two relatively peaceful months, understanding began creeping back into his mind and his vocabulary and his pronunciation improved. This led to the reason he was called “Tex” by the members of the group. He had a distinct Texas accent, and because he could not remember who he was, the name had been a natural.

Ulura had looked closely at Tex's leg, foot and hand. She had some skill in medical treatment and there were others amongst the group who could help. The injuries had looked to be no more than two years old. For the missing portions of the foot, there was nothing that could be done. Heating and soaking the joints in the leg, soaked in various herbal potions, and then exercising them, had eased the stiffness somewhat in Tex's walking, but his movement was still labored and, depending on the terrain, certainly not sure.

They had fared better with the right hand.

After closely examining it and with the concurrence of a former emergency medical technician who was a part of the group, they had re-broken the index finger and reset it. It appeared to be healing nicely. The ligaments and tendons around the thumb had already healed in the out of joint position before Tex came to them, so getting it back into joint had been very difficult. Eventually, through therapy and through staged pressure the thumb had been coaxed back into its normal place, but it was unlikely that he would ever have full use of it. The best that could be said was that it at least could function in a near normal fashion.

Amidst all of this Nabalco had been impressed with the attitude and drive of this young man. He was clearly not Australian, but he had been raised well. He wanted to carry his own weight and he had volunteered, as soon as he was able to communicate it and physically handle it, to begin doing work around the camp, up to and including taking his turn on watch near camp.

“Mr. Nabalco, sir, I've already slept four hours this evening and my dreams were troubled...so I got up to tend the fire before going out to look at the stars before my watch.”

Nabalco considered the young man's words...and he was a young man, probably in his early to mid twenties...and asked him about his dreams.

“Tex, what troubled you about your dreams? Tell me what you experienced.”

A look of frustration crossed Tex's face and he looked down at the dirt floor of the cave before responding.

“That's just it...I can't remember my dreams any more than I can remember anything about myself. They were just troubling.”

As Tex stopped speaking and tossed small twigs into the fire, Nabalco considered his comments. It was not unusual for an individual to forget his dreams, but this young man was troubled by so many things...his injuries, the current circumstances, his identity and origins...he certainly didn't need more weighing him down.

As he got up and approached Tex, and as he considered his own thoughts, Nabalco decided that they both could benefit from the night air and clear skies.

“Well, Tex, why don't we both walk out under the stars now...perhaps we can find some form of answer or comfort for you...and for me, too.”

May 24, 2010, 00:07 local time

Outside the main cave

Muri Redoubt

Central Cape York Peninsula

The stars were beautiful as Nabalco and Tex sat near a cliff and looked into the night sky. The air was clear, only a few clouds drifted overhead. The major fighting was seventy miles or more away to the east. Distant flashes could be seen along the horizon in that direction from time to time, but they did not disturb the solitude or the brightness of the stars there where Nabalco sat with his refugee friend.

They had been watching the night sky for twenty minutes and Nabalco was content to let the young man quietly look at the stars and use the quiet, the beauty, and the majesty to help heal his immediate worries. He knew it was good medicine for the soul. Nabalco was applying the same medication, meditating with the backdrop of that majesty providing the foundation for deeper thoughts, and hopefully enlightenment.

As they watched, Tex began humming a tune to himself. It was one Nabalco had never heard Tex hum before, and did not recognize it.

“What's that song you're humming Tex?” he asked in a whisper.

For a moment Nabalco was sorry he had asked because Tex immediately stopped and did not answer right away.

“I don't know, sir. It just came to my mind. I think I can remember a few of the words...something like,”

“Oh the stars shine bright, each and every night ...”

Suddenly, far to the south, but well above the horizon, a tremendously bright flash lit up the sky. Both

Tex and Nabalco averted their eyes from the brief intensity, which cast shadows across the landscape.

It was followed by other similar flashes and stabs of red and blue light...crossing each other...reaching out. Interspersed in the beams were what appeared to be smaller lights moving with great speed, also crossing each other's path. Deep rumbling sounds like thunder soon began to be heard coming from the cloudless sky to the south, forming a continual backdrop to the light show going on above.

The display went on for some moments. Both men...along with millions of others across Australia...were captivated by it. On several occasions there were clear detonations, brief flashes of bright light mixed with orange and reddish hues. These flashes were not as bright as the initial, larger flashes, but clearly they told of man-made objects meeting very violent ends.

Finally, there were fewer and fewer stabbing beams of light and detonations. Just as it seemed that the display was over, there was one final detonation. Not one of the larger, extremely intense flashes that had occurred early on, but still the largest of the smaller detonations they had seen thus far.

And this one did not go out. It remained visible as it moved across the sky, finally appearing to catch fire as it arced over towards earth...leaving the unmistakable track of a larger object entering earth's atmosphere and breaking up as it did so.

"This is not good news I fear," said Nabalco.

He had heard stories of the American exploits in space. From his infrequent communications regarding news reports on the progress of the war, to stories told by passing refugees or allied scouts, he had heard of America's success in launch of two space stations into orbit. One of those, the Southern Star he believed they called it, was over Australia. There had been reports of the imminent launch of a third one over the Pacific Ocean.

"Tex, I am afraid we are witnessing war in space. Apparently the Chinese are attacking an American space station orbiting over Australia...and by the way those pieces are falling to earth, I am afraid they have succeeded in severely damaging or destroying it.

"The way those pieces are falling to earth seems so familiar somehow."

Tex was watching in silence, listening to Nabalco. At the mention of the pieces falling to earth being familiar, a memory flashed into Tex's mind. It was just a brief thought and it was over quickly, but he remembered seeing the same type of thing himself...years earlier...and a name.

"Yea," he said slowly as the thought was verbalized, "It's just like the Columbia falling to earth."

Nabalco quickly looked at Tex.

"Yes Tex, that's exactly it. It is just like the shuttle Columbia disaster. It's amazing that you remember that...can you remember any more?"

Sadly, Tex shook his head. It had just been a brief flash of a memory...outside watching the sky when it occurred. Just like tonight, but in the morning with...with...he just couldn't remember who he had been with. But he did remember seeing those bright, fiery pieces entering the earth's atmosphere, just like these...except he was sure that there were a lot more pieces in this instance.

"No...no, I just remembered for a second seeing those pieces falling to earth while I was outside

watching the stars. And the name...nothing more.”

May 26, 2010, 09:30 local time

Headquarters, 15thMEU

U.S. Marines Corps

Brisbane, Australia

Colonel Warmont considered Master Sergeant Campbell as he prepared to issue new orders to him.

The Master Sergeant, a certified American hero, whose latest enlistment had expired four months ago, had immediately “re-upped” at that time with no request for any intervening leave. Despite his status, and despite the resulting option that he had to return home at almost any time he chose, Leon Campbell had instead elected to remain in the war zone and was clearly in this fight to the end. The Colonel had a tremendous amount of respect for that and what it said about the young man.

Campbell had been attached to the Colonel's staff as a special “operative” within a month of the Colonel's arrival in Australia after the successful flanking invasion into Brisbane, north of Sydney. Those operations had gone very well, but they had also been intense and bloody. The Chinese, Indian and GIR forces that were occupying Australia, along with the massive influx of their citizens who were settling it, had proven resourceful and tough in resisting the three MEUs and other allied forces that had invaded. If for no other reason, they had shown it with their massive numbers and their willingness to spend those numbers in massive human wave assaults on his and other allied positions.

“When you couple that strength and resourcefulness with some of their technological innovations and weapons systems, you are left with a very dangerous foe,” the Colonel reflected.

“A foe we will defeat only with our very best resources and personnel.”

Campbell's attachment to the Colonel's staff had had been the result of upper command's approval of a special request by the Master Sergeant to search for a fellow Marine whom Campbell felt somehow sure was still alive although the official record indicated that he was presumed dead. The Colonel felt that the Master Sergeant's request, after intense combat in liberating Brisbane, had been granted by his superiors in the hopes it would keep the hero out of harm's way so he could survive the war.

The Colonel himself would not have countenanced such a special “mission”. Campbell was too valuable as a combat veteran, despite his notoriety and previous, unquestioned heroic service, to not have stationed at the front where he could be most useful in fighting the enemy and helping to save other American lives as a result of that very experience. In addition, though the Sergeant was personally dedicated to finding his fellow Marine, it was also clear that he would follow orders without question and had no qualms about being in the line of fire.

But, orders were orders, and the Colonel had accommodated the Master Sergeant...all the while maneuvering so that he would ultimately be in a position to issue new orders to Campbell.

Now that time had come.

But before he issued the orders the Colonel couldn't help but reflect on the circumstances surrounding the Master Sergeant's quest. The Colonel had taken some interest in the case, had come to understand that the fellow Marine for whom Campbell was searching was a Captain Billy Simmons, a friend of Master Sergeant Campbell with whom he had entered service at the outbreak of hostilities in 2006. Simmons had apparently died fighting the Chinese as they pushed allied forces completely out of Australia in early 2008. The Colonel had watched the film of the crash of the Captain's AH-1Z Viper helicopter soon after it took off from the deck of the doomed U.S.S. Tarawa, in a desperate but vain effort to escape the fate of the Tarawa.

"I can't see how anyone could have survived that crash," the Colonel thought again to himself as Campbell stood at attention in front of his desk.

All of this flowed through the Colonel's mind as he returned the Master Sergeant's crisp salute.

"Master Sergeant Leon Campbell reporting as ordered, sir!"

After allowing Campbell to hold his salute for an instant more, the Colonel responded, "As you were, Master Sergeant Campbell. Please have a seat. Make yourself comfortable."

As Campbell sat down, the Colonel continued.

"Well, Master Sergeant, how has your search progressed, any success?"

Leon reflected upon his efforts of the past few months briefly before responding. Colonel Warmont had been very patient with him, and very understanding. This was only the fourth status report he had been requested to give since being attached to the Colonel's staff over four months ago.

"Colonel, first let me thank you for your help in this endeavor. It means a lot to me, and I know it means a lot to other Marines and service personnel. The entire search has been a testament to our nation's commitment to not leave its people behind if there is any way they can be found and recovered.

"Having said that, although I have had a few promising leads, nothing has really produced any definitive results.

"Apparently we were forced to leave behind a relatively large number of our personnel in the retreat, perhaps as many as six or seven hundred. Some were fighting and cut off...and I know what that can be like. Others were wounded or otherwise injured, others separated from their units in the fighting.

"What became of those people varies. Many were captured, some died fighting, and some took up with the local population and became refugees. A few took to the woods.

"In my own efforts, I have been able to identify thirty-three personnel and update their specific disposition. Of those, ten died before our return, fourteen are apparently still in captivity amongst our enemies, and nine have been found alive and are currently being debriefed and rehabilitated before returning home.

"But specifically regarding Captain Simmons, I have found nothing definitive."

The Colonel considered the report.

"Well, Master Sergeant, you have done a good job, and a thorough one. I am sorry you have not been

able to find more definitive information regarding Captain Simmons...I know the two of you were close before the war and kept track of each other during it. I mourn his apparent loss, but applaud your efforts on his behalf...and on behalf of his parents and loved ones.

“Perhaps some day, because of your efforts, or due to events we can’t foresee at this time, more information regarding his ultimate fate will become available.

“Now, the time has come to move on. I have new orders for you.

“You are being assigned to a large combined task force that has been given the task of penetrating the Cape York Peninsula and either defeating, destroying, or otherwise driving enemy forces from that area.

“We have an entire Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) forming there now, along with elements of several U.S. Army Divisions and a combined force of Australian, Philippine, and Japanese forces.

“It’s going to be a major effort in that sector while our other offensives continue to proceed into the interior and along the southern coast. We just cannot allow the large enemy force that has retreated onto Cape York to retain a position behind us on that flank. As we proceed to the east in the interior such a force would present a very real danger to our entire operations in northern and central Australia. To that end command has requested as many seasoned veterans as we can muster to be assigned to the force – men who are capable of working and fighting in the dense foliage and rough terrain for which that the inhospitable area is known. And that is where you come in Master Sergeant.

“I have requested and received permission for you to be in the vanguard, path-finding elements of that force, in command of a group of scouts and snipers who will be assigned directly to the Regimental Commander who is spearheading the advance.

“Are you up to that challenge, Master Sergeant?”

Leon did not have to think about his response. His training, his disposition, and his commitment to his nation and its freedom left but one clear, unequivocal answer.

“Yes sir!

“When do I mount up, sir?”

May 29, 2010, 09:30 EST

Situation Room

The White House

Washington, DC

The President of the United States, John Bowers, soberly scanned the faces of his National Security Council. This was a meeting that combined both of the sub-councils of that group that had been formed by the late and former President Weisskopf at the outbreak of the war. Those two sub-councils were the National and the International groups.

Several members sat on both councils, while others were involved with the specific areas where their own agencies and responsibilities were more focused. In this instance, due to the nature of the threat and the potential impact to both the CONUS and American and allied activities in the rest of the world, the President had felt it necessary to convene both groups together.

“Okay everyone, I have asked Bill to please brief us on the extent of the damage we have suffered in the recent attacks and where we stand right now.

“I know that there are various departmental and agency responsibilities associated with various aspects of the attacks and their impact...and that any number of individuals on this council could render the briefing. However, in talking with the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Directors of Homeland Security and the CIA and others, we all felt that the National Security Advisor would be able to provide the best overview without requiring several top level briefings.

“We will break down into specific departmental and agency discussions as required based on the overall briefing.

“Bill, go ahead.”

Bill Hendrickson surveyed the grim faces of those gathered around the long conference table in the situation room. The principle members of the cabinet and other agencies represented on the full National Security Council were sitting at the table. They had numerous aides sitting behind them along the wall.

The topic was the ferocious attacks the Chinese had mounted on the just launched USSS Admiralty space station that had been slated for positioning over the western Pacific Ocean, and the ensuing attack against the USSS Southern Star over Australia. During those attacks it had been feared that the action could have moved rapidly towards the USSS Conception Space Station over the Continental United States.

The news was not good...but it was better than it might have been. Hendrickson began.

“Quite frankly, ladies and gentlemen, what I have to tell you today is a message of bad news...but it is not as bad as it might otherwise have been...and mingled in with the decidedly bad news are the seeds of future success.

“As you know, at approximately 0300 hours on May 22, the Chinese commenced an attack against the launch vehicles that comprised the USSS Admiralty space station group. This occurred after the launch of the station and its accompanying space craft. That launch had been observed by a group of enemy operatives who had infiltrated the launch range in Nevada. Although our security forces at the base were able to discover, interdict and destroy this group, they did not do so before the enemy had communicated the time of launch by short-wave radio.

“We are convinced that this communication is what allowed the enemy to coordinate their ensuing attack. That attack was made by a total of twelve spacecraft that had been launched from China with what is obviously their own SSTO configuration.

“The attack was coordinated with a large wave of missiles and kinetic weapons against which the USSS Admiralty was in the process of defending itself. Though these types of attacks cannot be taken lightly, in the past, our space station groups have been able to rather handily defeat them. They were in the process of defeating this one as well, but we now know that the Chinese were using the attack to distract the Admiralty group and mask the approach of the manned Chinese spacecraft.

“...and the Chinese succeeded in that purpose.

“They launched eight spacecraft initially against the Admiralty and they came in behind the wave of ground-launched kinetic weapons and missiles. These spacecraft were highly maneuverable and launched their own long-range missiles at the Admiralty. While the Admiralty was engaging the ground-launched and space-launched missiles and the ground-launched kinetic weapons, the Chinese spacecraft engaged our forces with their primary weapons. These were some type of directed energy weapons which they began targeting on our spacecraft at a range of almost seven hundred miles.

“As the range closed, the effectiveness of these weapons became more and more telling. While our people were staving off the kinetic weapons and missiles, these craft were able to approach to within three hundred miles where their energy beams began to burn through the structure of our own craft.

“Soon after that point, our own lasers began to damage their craft, and our nuclear tipped missiles began to destroy the Chinese craft one by one. But by that time the enemy craft had come closer and were attacking from fairly widely divergent directions and there simply was not enough time to defeat them all. In the end, the Chinese penetrated to close range and pressed their attack with what appeared to be self-stabilizing 30 or 40mm cannons. Once they came that close, they were of course too near for our nuclear tipped missiles to be employed. The few remaining undamaged lasers on the Admiralty simply could not destroy them all before the Admiralty group itself succumbed and was completely destroyed.”

“Completely destroyed?” asked the Secretary of State.

“Were there no survivors?”

Bill glanced down for just a moment before answering, but then looked up and soberly addressed the United States Secretary of State's question while speaking to the entire group.

“No, Mr. Secretary, there were no survivors. But, let me continue, the Chinese attack did not end there.

“During the attack on the Admiralty group, our forces were able to destroy four of the Chinese craft. The remaining four Chinese craft were then tracked by land and sea-based systems, and ultimately by the USS Southern Star as they made their way to the south, towards Australia. En route, they were joined by four more similar spacecraft that the Chinese launched. The entire reconstituted wing of eight spacecraft then proceeded to launch a similar attack against our Southern Star Space Station.

“Again, this attack was accompanied by a massive wave of kinetic weapons and missiles which the Southern Star had to deal with. Behind this attack came the eight Chinese craft.

“Using secure data links, our people over Australia had observed and listened in to the earlier attack against the Admiralty and they had time to prepare themselves accordingly. The Southern Star had quickly developed a plan able to target the Chinese craft earlier with some of their nuclear tipped missiles while using the remainder to counter the ground-launched attacks. This plan proved much more effective. They also had come up with a plan for close-in defense that included new fields of fire for the lasers that took into account the manned, maneuvering spacecraft. This too proved much more effective.

“In the end, all eight of the Chinese spacecraft were destroyed. Tragically, although fifteen of the personnel onboard the Southern Star were able to evacuate into one of the corvettes and detach themselves safely from the rest of the station, the station itself was severely damaged. A final attack by the last remaining Chinese craft ended with that craft impacting the Southern Star itself. The force of that

impact forced the incapacitated Southern Star into an erratic and highly unstable orbit. While there is some question as to whether the space station would have been able to remain aloft after the attack in any case, the impact of this final attack sealed its fate.

“Early that morning, at 00:27 hours, the USSS Southern Star entered the earth's atmosphere at a steep angle and began to break up. What was left of it after the heat of re-entry and its own breakup crashed into the Indian Ocean to the west of the Australian coast a few minutes later.”

As Bill Hendrickson paused a moment to see if there were any comments, the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Ben Ryan, interrupted at this point.

“Bill, excuse me for perhaps getting ahead here, but I know we were able to get a fix on the launch locations of the Chinese spacecraft. The Admiralty and the Southern Star, along with other assets, got a fairly good fix on the first group of enemy spacecraft as they came after the Admiralty, and then on the second group as they joined in to attack the Southern Star. From that data I know we determined the location of two primary launch facilities, as well as information regarding the manufacturing locations of these new spacecraft.

“Could you brief the rest of the group on the outcome of our operations against those facilities?”

Bill Hendrickson had planned to give this briefing later in the meeting, anticipating a long discussion on the attack itself. But he already had the associated information loaded into his hand-held computer and could quickly move his own time table forward.

“Admiral, I have that information right here if you will give me a second.”

Utilizing the hand-held computer, he quickly displayed the pertinent information and then reviewed it for a moment.

“Using the Admiralty, the Southern Star, certain ground and sea-based assets and NRO assets, and using some very high value and critical HUMINT assets inside China, we were able to narrow the launch facilities down to the two locations. The Chinese are manufacturing and using prototypes from one of those locations and are starting up full production manufacturing facilities at three other locations on the mainland.

“After receiving National Command Authority, the Joint Chiefs ordered immediate cruise missile strikes on all of those locations. The U.S. Air Force and U.S Navy participated in the attacks the next day. Afterwards, we used NRO assets in the form of three SR-77 aircraft, to attempt a battle damage assessment.

“Sadly, we discovered that the attack had caused very little damage to the two launch facilities, and only moderate damage to the three manufacturing facilities that the Chinese were ramping up. In finding this out, we lost two of the SR-77 aircraft. The launch facilities are very heavily defended by the latest Chinese anti-aircraft, anti-missile, anti-stealth, and anti-ballistic missile defenses. The manufacturing facilities were not as heavily defended but the imagery we did obtain during the BDA indicates that they were beefing up those defenses even as we were attacking them.

“A second, more major coordinated operation against the facilities was conducted yesterday utilizing two dozen of our conventional ballistic missiles and over one hundred of our best cruise missiles. Three of our new prototype unmanned, hypervelocity recon aircraft went in right behind the attacks and were able to do a fairly comprehensive BDA.

“We are confident that we moderately damaged the launch facilities, and severally damaged the new manufacturing facilities. In fact, two of those manufacturing facilities were completely destroyed...but we are also quite sure that the prototype manufacturing facilities and the launch facilities are not out of commission and the Chinese are strengthening their defenses.”

This information was new to most of the participants in the meeting. Outside of the direct chain of command associated with the missions which included the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Advisor and the President, the others were unaware of the most recent attempts to destroy the Chinese facilities that were producing and operating the new Chinese spacecraft.

As Bill Hendrickson again paused, several voices were raised to make points regarding the attacks and to raise concerns.

In the midst of this, the President caught the gaze of Talbot Johnson, his Chief of Staff and nodded his head. At that gesture, Johnson held up his hands and quieted the various conversations that were growing in volume in the conference room.

“Listen everyone, this is a critical issue...but we also have several other critical issues to discuss this morning so we have to get through this quickly.

“Mr. President, did you have some direction at this point?”

The President stood up and paced back and forth just behind his chair for a few seconds before responding.

“Yes, thank you, Talbot.

“As regards this issue, I can categorically state we are determined to continue to attack and ultimately destroy the Chinese bases and facilities associated with these new spacecraft...and to re-establish our presence in space over Australia, the Pacific and elsewhere.

“There are significant plans underway to accomplish this, both in terms of launching new, stronger space station groups and in terms of using assets already in space.”

The President turned to the individual who represented the newest position that had been added to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. During the preceding eighteen months, as the United States had contemplated its planned activities in space, and the breadth of those activities, a new command had been created, The United States Space Command. At that time, General Laramie Wilson had been selected by the President to lead that command in a top secret meeting that had involved all of the other Joint Chiefs, the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Advisor and the President. The Vice President had also been apprised of the appointment. It had been a temporary, one-year appointment at the time and Wilson had served in secret, bringing in various general officers and senior level officers to serve with him. After the launch of the Point Conception Space Station and the Lewis and Clark II expedition, the appointment had been placed before congress which had quickly approved the creation of the new service and the appointment of its chief. After several briefings, the congress had recognized the necessity for the new military service because of the strategic nature of its responsibilities, because of the expected rapid growth of that command and because of the critical nature of its ultimate interface to all other earth-based commands.

For himself, General Wilson had risen through the ranks in the Air Force, where he had started as a pilot

with the Strategic Air Command and risen to command first Carswell Air Force Base in Texas, and then later Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho. When major hostilities broke out in late 2005 and 2006, the General had requested a combat command. His request was granted and he was given the command of all U.S. Air Force equipment and personnel in Central America. Two years later, as fighting raged throughout Central and South America, the General's area of responsibility had been expanded to include all of South America.

His planning and leadership had proven exemplary and noteworthy and upon the recommendation of the prior Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Chief of the U.S. Air Forces, he had been selected by President Weisskopf as the primary candidate for the head of the USSC. President Bowers had made it official and named him to the spot and then seen him confirmed by Congress in that position.

Now, as the President turned to him for the briefing that he had been asked specifically to prepare for the military and civilian leadership of his nation, the General contemplated the importance of what was transpiring. In addition to the newer, heavy corvettes and frigates that the United States would be launching into space from both their Nevada range and the new facilities that had been completed at Vandenberg Air Base on the west coast, the General couldn't help but contemplate the imminent return of the USSS Gaspra and the USSS Ida from the asteroid belt.

"General Wilson," the President stated, "would you proceed with your briefing regarding plans for Operation Dominant Oversight and Operation Heavenly Hammer?"

June 2, 2010, 21:39, local time

Presidential Retreat

Mysore, India

As President KP Narayannen waited for the meeting to start, he contemplated the events that had led him to this place and this time. He had never expected circumstances to develop as they had, and yet here he was.

He had to admit to himself that much of his discomfort was a result of his own choices. Although it had gone against his better judgment, he had been caught up in the allures of power and influence and had willingly set himself and his nation on the course that had led to war.

Throughout the 1980's and 1990's India had been walking a tightrope...forced to deal with powers with which she did not feel particular affinity as a result of a desire to keep powerful adversaries at bay, particularly in Pakistan. This had led to the Americans, who were seeking to use the Pakistani's as a balance against Iran, to funnel more and more materiel and technology into Pakistan...a totalitarian state that was strong in its militant Islamic leanings.

"Why hadn't the Americans seen back then that we here in India, with our republic and freedom, were a much better fit for their strategic goals in this region?" the President asked himself.

But such questions were moot now.

Despite some attempts by the United States at normalization during the "War on Terror", the Indians had also been courted first by the Russians and then by the Chinese...and these efforts were not mere

flirtations, they were substantive and major economic and diplomatic proposals which the Indians could not ignore. The promise of prosperity and power, economic power, had swung the pendulum towards the Chinese in 2004 as joint economic summits produced joint statements by both nations regarding their intent to use their large, cheap labor pools to dominate world economics by the end of that decade.

With the creation of the Siberian Economic Development Treaty in 2005 and the triad of Russia, Indian and Chinese exclusivity in that endeavor...the real stage had been set.

America had responded with tough economic measures and the Chinese and Indians had ultimately created the Coalition of Asian States, which expanded economic ties to formal military alliances and war had ensued.

Narayannen had not relished the thought of war with America...had thought he could steer India away from the direct confrontation and allow China to do all of the heavy lifting. But he had been wrong.

China had delivered a devastating blow to the Americans in March of 2006 and as the fortunes of war went well...more and more pressure was placed on India to secure the southern front in the Indian Ocean and to eliminate the American presence there, particularly on the island of Diego Garcia.

Using Chinese technology, augmented by Indian engineering and planning, the Indians had fought a successful campaign against the U.S. 5th Fleet and ultimately captured Diego Garcia at great cost and driven the Americans out of the area.

Later, a successful Indian, Chinese and Greater Islamic Republic invasion of Australia had occurred which ultimately led to the occupation and pacification of that entire continent.

During those days, although the Indian President continued to harbor secret misgivings, the temptations of power and basking in the glory of victory were almost impossible to turn down...and KP Narayannen knew that he had reveled in their success, and relished their growing influence. He had almost reached the point where he believed that there would never be any negative consequence to him personally or his nation as a whole.

Particularly as Siberia declared independence and the Indians and Chinese helped them to expel the Russians from their borders. Then, as the Chinese successfully invaded North America and took the American oil fields north of the arctic circle, it appeared as though either a negotiated settlement to the war, or the actual defeat of the Americans was imminent.

But then had come the devastating defeats near Anchorage, outside of Tel Aviv, and at the southeastern gates and suburbs of Moscow in late 2008. And what defeats they had been!

The allies had employed new technology in their so-called Hail Storm missiles and had continued to improve them and add to them in the eighteen months since. Their own version of supercavitating torpedoes were now deployed, not to mention their continually improving efforts in space which had played such a pivotal role in the ongoing fight more recently.

Despite the recent downing of two of the American space stations by new Chinese spacecraft, the war effort was not going well. CAS forces were being pushed back on almost all fronts where they were in direct contact with the enemy. In Australia, allied forces had cut off a large force on the Cape York Peninsula and had pushed CAS and GIR forces back in the interior to near Alice Springs.

In the Mid East, Allied forces pushing north out of the Sudan had joined together in Egypt with forces

emanating out of Israel and were now pushing to the west towards Libya and to the south along the Nile towards Ethiopia. Allied forces had also cleared all of Israel of GIR and CAS forces, pushing far to the north into Turkey where they had been joined by Russian, European and American forces sweeping down from the north. The heart of the GIR, the former nation of Iran, was being invaded on two fronts as the Indian President sat here, and last he had heard, the oil refinery city of Abadan had been taken on the coast and Ahvaz, to the north, had fallen only three days later. The allies had been stalled on the northern border of Iran by fierce resistance, but were now advancing up the Dex Revier valley in the south in a push through the mountains towards Qom.

The situation was equally grim in Central and South America and in Africa. What had appeared to be almost certain victory had been turned into the prospect of a slow and methodical defeat over the last eighteen months and the Indian President now felt that old feeling in the pit of his gut, the feeling that created such anxiety and foreboding. It was a feeling that implied a sense of doom for his country, for his plans, and for him personally.

A note he had received three weeks earlier through back channels had not helped. It had been from the former Secretary of State of the United States, Fred Reissinger, who was now the Vice President. It had been short and direct.

“President Narayannen, America has not forgotten the promise that our late President Weisskopf made to you regarding your actions in the Indian Ocean in 2007. You shall yet be held personally responsible by whatever administration is in power in the United States when you are finally brought to justice.”

KP Narayannen believed Fred Reissinger. He had met the man on several occasions and knew that the statesman meant exactly what he said. The Americans had not forgotten.

The only hope that the Indian President saw lay in the desperate course of action he would be embarking on today. He had called this very private and very secret meeting of his most trusted advisors and leaders in the government for just that purpose. He knew he had to be extremely careful, but he also knew he had to act if he had any hope of avoiding the retribution he was now certain would ultimately be visited on his nation...and upon him personally.

“Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for responding to my request so quickly and so discreetly.

“I know each of you share my concerns concerning the direction the war effort has taken and the potential future it bodes for our nation. Out of that concern, we are meeting today to develop and begin implementing a course of action that will spare us the destruction we may otherwise face as a people.

“In that regard, let me be very direct. The Americans and their allies are winning...and they are now winning decisively on almost all fronts. I am convinced that it is now only a matter of time before the fighting and devastation they are wreaking on our forces and those of our allies in distant places are visited upon us here.

“We must remain very discreet, and we must move forward cautiously and with great care. But I believe it is time we face up to reality and reach out to the Americans in an effort to shorten this war and avoid the worst for our people and ourselves!”

June 2, 2010, that same time

Presidential Retreat

Mysore, India

Ambassador Buhpendra Gavanker had been in Mysore less than a day, having arrived yesterday afternoon. What would normally have been a magnificent opportunity to enjoy one of India's most historic sites, was replaced by cruel necessity with the strict business at hand, which was being conducted in absolute secrecy. There would be no enjoyable or leisurely tours of the Maharajah's palace while he was here, and he would be leaving to return to Siberia tomorrow morning.

Upon arrival at the presidential retreat, Gavanker had been surprised at first by the absence of his direct supervisor, the Foreign Minister, Rahmish Patel. As last evening's dinner and informal gatherings had progressed and as Buhpendra met and conversed with the others who had been invited to the conference, he came to the conclusion that he was not surprised at all by Patel's absence. Everyone in attendance were individuals like Buhpendra, who felt growing anxiety with the war effort against the west, and who had been cultivated in those very views by the President himself. The Foreign Minister definitely did not fit that profile...and in fact would be very concerned if he were aware of such a meeting that brought together so many leaders in India who harbored what Patel would consider negative and even disloyal views.

Outside of the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Finance, every other member of the President's cabinet and many of their deputies were also in attendance. This included a few, like Buhpendra, who were subordinates to some of the missing ministers.

Since his appointment as the Ambassador to Siberia well over two years ago, Buhpendra had worked with his typical commitment and energy, giving his best for the nation. Over time, KP Narayannen, had become more and more personally involved with Buhpendra's assignment and activities, which Buhpendra surmised was due to the critical nature of India's economic and security agreement with Siberia. At first it had surprised the ambassador, feeling somewhat uncomfortable that his direct chain of command, Rahmish Patel, was not involved in all instances. But as time progressed and Buhpendra found himself coming to like the President personally, and agreeing with the views he articulated, Buhpendra concerns were allayed.

"Besides," he thought, "the President supported me in all of my requests and won my loyalty and trust naturally."

Buhpendra knew that the President found a strong affinity in the practicality and technical expertise that Buhpendra brought to the table, and that he had found a powerful ally and friend in the President.

...and now he knew why.

"This sets things in a whole new light," he thought.

"The risks and the potential consequences of what the President is proposing will increase by orders of magnitude and I certainly hope that everyone here appreciates that fact and is as completely committed to what it will require as I am.

As Buhpendra contemplated this, the President began going from person to person in the meeting and asking them specifically what their thoughts and intentions were regarding what he was proposing regarding the war effort, and in particular, regarding opening up direct communications with the west.

Most of the department heads, agency leaders, ministers and ambassadors in the room agreed with the President emphatically.

One of the people, the Deputy Minister of Finance, Raj Tajil, voiced some trepidation.

“Mr. President, while I agree in principle that the war effort is going badly and that there is developing a significant potential for risk to the nation as the allies come closer... isn’t your suggestion that we conspire to negotiate any terms with the enemy bordering on sedition, or even worse?”

Buhpendra watched the President's face closely as this question and challenge was issued.

He had to admit that Narayannen didn't flinch or show any sign of anger or impatience with Tajil or his question. On the contrary, he responded directly to it.

“Raj, that’s a fair question.

“There would certainly be many in government service who are wholly committed to this effort, some for personal advancement reasons, some for ideological and political reasons, and some out of a commitment to our national pride, who would agree that the very thought of negotiating with our enemies and suing for peace, would in fact be seditious.

“Clearly, I don’t agree with that premise. We are elected by our people, or some of you are appointed by those who were, and our duty is to their well being, their freedom, and the survival of our nation, its government and way of life.

I believe, as President of our Republic, that this course of action is precisely in line with those goals.”

The Deputy Finance Minister nodded his head, but then added.

“Then, Mr. President, why hold these meetings in such secrecy? Why not debate them in the true spirit of our form of government in the open so that we can come to a conclusion that represents the desire of the majority of those who represent the people...and, by extension, would represent the majority of those people themselves?”

Again the President did not waiver, did not reveal any frustration, angst or anger.

“The answer to that question, Raj, given the nature of the situation, the nature of our allies and their forms of government, and the nature of some of those in our own government who would abjectly oppose us...is self evident.”

As the others in the room took their turns in responding to the President's request for their views, only one or two more voiced any concern about what the president was proposing.

Buhpendra was surprised that these protests had been voiced...or allowed. He wondered how they could successfully go about the very tasks they were discussing with such dissent amongst their members.

When it came Buhpendra's turn, he answered without hesitation.

“Mr. President, as one who has been involved in an official governmental administrative capacity only since the creation of the Siberian Economic Development Pact, and having observed the types of impact

that particular pact and the eventual independence of Siberia has had on our nation, I can only say the following...

“The economic benefit of the pact, even while the Russians were our partners, has been substantial. As a nation our economy has benefited tremendously through that pact. Of course, with the independence of Siberia, our profit margin on the natural resource portion of all of this has increased, but we have also had to significantly increase our costs for security and the war effort as that new front was opened up.

“It seems to me that the governmental forms of the western allies much more nearly match our own and the principles upon which our republic rests. While I know it is true that the Americans played the Pakistanis off against the Iranians without contemplating how much that pushed us towards their own enemies at the time...first Russia and then China...I believe the war has changed all of that. I believe the Americans want this war brought to a speedy and successful completion...I know the Russians do...and I believe they will be very willing to open any communications with us that will help lead in that direction.

“In short, I am fully in support of seeking to open up a direct dialogue with the west, and particularly before the ravages of their technological war machine are unleashed on our nation directly. The sooner and more sincerely we do this in my estimation, the better.”

That portion of the meeting went on for another thirty-five minutes as everyone had ample opportunity to express their thoughts while they finished eating the fine meal of chicken curry over which the discussion had been held. Then the meeting was adjourned for one hour for each of the participants to return to their room and freshen up if they so desired.

When they resumed the meeting a little more than an hour later, Buhpendra's concerns about the dissent were answered in a very direct way. He and the others in attendance could not help but notice as the meeting reconvened that Raj and the other two attendees who had voiced strong negativity and resistance regarding the purpose of the meeting were no longer present with the rest of them.

All three of them were simply gone, without fanfare or discussion, and Buhpendra and the others would never see any of them again.

June 16, 2010, 03:45 local time

Fortified Observation Post 28

Elevation 3450 Meters

Kum Mountain, the former Iran

Utilizing his new Chinese infrared viewing scope, Abduhl had been watching the valley below for more than two hours...and had seen nothing.

Even in June, at this elevation at night, it was quite cold.

But that was alright. Abduhl had on a heavy wool jacket and a good, warm wrap to keep his head warm. Besides, he was a defender of Allah and the road that climbed through the pass below, and then down the other side, led to the holy city of Qom, over two hundred and fifty kilometers to the north and east, and one of the holiest cities in all of the Greater Islamic Republic, surpassed only by Mecca and

Medina.

“I wonder if our brothers have been successful in defending those holiest of cities against the faithless,” Abduhl asked himself as he momentarily lowered the monacle scope from his right eye.

Then, thinking back on his own assignment this night, the cold air, and the importance of his duties, he continued to himself.

“Well, if defending such a place as this and keeping the infidels at bay is not enough to keep one warm...then nothing is.”

Hearing movement in the bunker behind him, he quickly lifted the device back up to his eye and continued to scan up and down the valley through the slit in the bunker.

“Abduhl!” his sergeant said as he nestled into the firing position to the left of him, “make sure you keep your eyes open!”

“The Captain is indicating that our new air defense units are picking up possible incoming stealth missiles that could precede an enemy advance.

“The last area intelligence indicated that American, British and Israeli forces were massing at the base of the pass and preparing for a general assault, and now we have lost communications with observation post 32 across the valley.

“Could be a simple communications hitch...but I don’t think we should count on it. Besides...”

Before the sergeant could finish his sentence, there was a sickening and mushy "THUD" and the sentence ended. It didn’t trail off...it just stopped.

Turning his head slightly, Abduhl saw the sergeant's lifeless-and now headless-body flying backwards in the firing position, blood and gore spread across the back wall above the entrance. The corpse landed with the torso hanging outside the position into the aisle behind them, while his legs stretched forward into the position, both boots pointing up, and the left leg twitching uncontrollably.

That's when Abduhl noticed the warm liquid and small pieces of skull and brain on the left side of his face.

Before he could raise his hand to wipe it off...or utter the first cry of alarm to the two men manning the communications equipment in the back of the bunker...there was another sickening and mushy "THUD".

Abduhl never heard the last one...and he never saw or cared about the flash of light that entered the bunker right through the slit where Abduhl had been stationed two seconds later and exploded with a deafening roar.

June 16, 2010, that same time

SAS Sniper Team

1.6 kilometers to the West

Near the Dez River Pass, the former Iran

“Good shooting old boy...I should probably say, old boys, since both of you were spot on.

“Perkins, call it in and then let's be off before any observant mullah or other ragheads note our position and bring something unsavory down on top of us.”

After he had finished speaking, Master Sergeant Tony Mallery waited for his personnel to transmit the short communication signal indicating a successful completion of their mission. When that was complete, he led the four-man team through the rocks and back away from the military crest of the hill, up over the actual ridgeline, and into a prepared position where they would be protected from what was to come, and where they could await their next assignment.

Within the four-man team, Mallery and another member of the team provided security with their assault rifles, and also carried the communications equipment. The sniper used the latest American Barretts design, a .50 caliber sniper rifle that also housed a target designating laser for the fourth member of the team. That sergeant carried a "Quick Strike" shoulder-fired, hypervelocity missile that had a target selector switch that allowed the missile to home in on the laser designator provided by the sniper. That selector also allowed for infrared or dead site targeting.

In the most recent engagement, the missile had used the laser designator to track right through the slit in the enemy bunker and destroy everything inside after the sniper had eliminated those manning the firing and observation positions.

With the last engagement against Abduhl's position, the team had completed their sweep and had destroyed three fortified enemy observation posts. Now, unless they had missed one, the avenue was open for the allied mechanized divisions, preceded by a small volley of the latest Hail-Storm missiles, to assault the major defenses the enemy had prepared less than two kilometers up the road, at the top of the pass.

Mallery shooed his team under the rock outcropping facing away from the high mountain valley of the pass, with a, “Come on troopers, time to snuggle in, all safe for the night and await orders.”

As he did so, and as he went to ground and got under cover last, a flight of twelve missiles snaked its way up the valley on the other side of the ridgeline and began to wreak havoc and destruction on the enemy positions.

June 18, 2010, 17:22, local time

Secure Command Bunker

The Eastern Outskirts of Tehran

The former Iran

Hasan al-Askari Sayeed had just finished conferring personally with General Abdul Selim, his young Tiger of Islam. He was not happy with the content of the conversation, or what it would mean to the Greater Islamic Republic and his continued faithful dream of a world united under Islam.

The western Allies were advancing rapidly on Tehran.

Selim had performed brilliantly in his defense of the Tabriz gap between the Caspian Sea and the Azerbaijan Sea. His twelve divisions had held up almost forty allied divisions for two weeks as Russian, European Union and supporting American forces assailed his positions.

Sayeed had thought that the young General would be successful and was in the act of thanking Allah for the great victories the General was winning when news of the allied breakthrough at the Dez River Pass had been reported to him. Thirty divisions of American, British and Israeli troops had broken through the pass and had quickly advanced on and attacked Qom yesterday. It was immediately clear to Sayeed, and to Selim, that Qom was falling.

Selim's forces were ordered into a fighting withdrawal towards Tehran in an effort to keep the forces under Selim's command from being surrounded, and to allow time to get as many in Tehran as possible to join with Selim's forces in defense of the city.

But it was now clear that Selim and his forces were not going to make it to Tehran in time.

Surprisingly, in Qom and elsewhere, many citizens were going over to the infidels, abandoning the true faith for the hope of the freedoms and secular allurements the westerners, and particularly the Americans, promised.

"A free society," Sayeed muttered to himself.

"Free to do what...sin, to profane Allah and his ways?"

Regardless of the reasons, many of the students and their families and many of the more liberal clerics were apparently jumping at the opportunity to align themselves with the invaders.

The great Imam and Ayatollah never considered for a moment the possibility that the many freedom protests that had occurred in Iran itself in the 1990's and early 2000's before his meteoric rise to power had simply faded undercover rather than been extinguished. He never considered the help he had received from the Chinese and the impact it had had on those who might otherwise have opposed him. Many of those opposition leaders simply ceased to exist, either by his hand or by the hand of those supporting him.

But others, and their followers, had never been stamped out, and they had bided their time patiently, realizing that, with the success of Sayeed over the last five years, any attempt at resistance or insurgency would be doomed to failure.

But now that the Americans and their allies had broken into the former Iran, into the heart of the Greater Islamic Republic itself...the opportunity for resistance to what Sayeed had sold as pure and unadulterated Islam had arrived. That message of resistance to Sayeed and of acceptance of the western invaders was finding very fertile ground in the hearts and minds of many more people than Sayeed would have ever imagined.

And many of them knew the deepest secret that existed in the Greater Islamic Republic today...Medina and Mecca had already fallen. Their faith was shaken, their future was completely unsure...and they had lost their zeal and their commitment...doubting themselves and their religious tenets.

Despite the fact that he would not countenance the effectiveness or the reasoning of the insurgents, Hasan Sayeed knew the dark secret too...and he was deeply troubled by it.

“Am I to be tested like father Abraham then...who was forced to send one son into the desert and tempted to sacrifice another on the altar,” he asked himself.

“Oh Allah, where is your pavilion?

“How could you forsake all of us?

“How could you forsake *me* ?”

Medina had fallen in a rather normal and uninspiring fashion. Though Sayeed was terribly upset by the actions of his forces in that area who had retreated past the city in front of the enemy onslaught...and then been destroyed when they were caught in the open by several waves of the damnable American Hail-Storm missiles...he was thankful that the city had remained intact and been preserved for the faith.

But the story of the fall of Mecca haunted him.

Over one hundred thousand GIR forces, consisting of infantry, mechanized and armor units supported by limited air support, with all of their equipment, and plenty of ammunition had retreated into the city on June 4th. The population had fully and completely supported the GIR forces, with many faithful within the city who had made their pilgrimage there joining the ranks to fight in defense of the holy city.

U.S. and U.K forces had surrounded the city and cut off all retreat or access to or from it by the morning of June 6th. They had set up checkpoints on all major access roads and ringed the city with men and steel. Within two days, they had dug in and the defenders were completely cut-off with no hope for support or relief. Outside of divine assistance, it was clear that the western forces would be content to simply starve the defenders and inhabitants out.

That was when things had gone even more terribly wrong.

During the mid-afternoon of June 6th, the Americans sent a unilateral peace and cease-fire delegation of ten personnel into the city under a white flag. They indicated that they came to negotiate some way to keep from damaging or destroying the many holy shrines within the city and to save as many lives as possible.

They were admitted into the city by the defenders.

The delegation included a General of the United States Marines, the provisional head of the new Arabian government-appointed by the Americans, two senior career diplomats-one from the U.K. and one from the U.S., two translators thought to be CIA operatives and a team of four Marines to provide security.

The delegation had the power to offer a complete ceasefire, food and medical supplies for all in need and an honorable handling of the GIR forces who were expected to all surrender unconditionally.

The entire team had been taken to the central part of the city and admitted into a large outer courtyard at a mosque there. Two of the security detail had accompanied the peace representatives and translators into the courtyard and the other two members of the security team had stayed outside with the vehicles. A delegation of the city leaders and military leaders of the GIR forces met the U.S> General and the diplomats within the courtyard and negotiations began.

The GIR leaders made their position clear, swiftly and brutally. First, the American signal battalion on the outskirts of the city had lost contact with the delegation.

Then, allied airborne surveillance had picked up a brief exchange of automatic weapons fire, first within the courtyard and then outside, next to the vehicles.

One of the marines near the vehicles had the time to report into the mouthpiece of his communications set.

"We are under attack..."

This was followed by more automatic weapons fire and then a few seconds of silence. After that, of a sudden, there was a horrendous uproar and wild celebration. Literally tens of thousands of weapons were fired into the air. The celebrations turned into an orgy...and orgy of mutilation.

All ten members of the delegation were decapitated, their eyes gouged out and replaced by horse dung. The bodies were literally torn limb from limb...and then, in a manner reminiscent of a similar occurrence in the town of Fallujah, Iraq, during operation Iraqi Freedom in the spring of 2004, the mutilated body parts were hung from bridges and light posts around the central portion of the city.

The heads were placed in one of the allies' vehicles and sent careening out of the city towards the allied lines. The entire thing was captured live on a television broadcast within Mecca and then picked up by allied forces...including one enterprising WNN crew that snuck some of its personnel into a restricted area just behind allied lines.

Within hours, the whole world had witnessed the orgy of mutilation in Mecca.

Major General Lender, who commanded the United States Marine who had surrounded the city, had wasted no time in coming up with a plan to deal directly and harshly with the atrocity, and the defenders in the city.

America had learned from its experiences and horrors of this war, she had learned from Fallujah of Operation Iraqi Freedom, she had learned from 9-11 and from the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole, she had learned from the initial World trade Center bombing in the early 1990's, she had learned from Beirut and from countless other terrorist and extremist attacks.

There could and would be no negotiations with terrorists or their Jihad cousins in this war. America and her allies knew from harsh experience that those operating in such a fashion understood and respected but one thing.

The official request for retaliation and pacification literally flew up the channels to the White House where President John Bowers reviewed the request the afternoon it arrived, consulted with the entire National Security Council that evening, and then approved it...with no alterations.

The next day, all allied sniper teams and probing forces were withdrawn to the perimeter around Mecca.

An ultimatum was issued at 12:00 noon the next day, June 7th.

The GIR forces and those who supported them within Mecca had 24 hours to do the following:

- 1) Anyone desiring to leave the city who was a non-combatant could leave the city on the main roads and be processed through the checkpoints. Noncombatants were defined as women and children, where males under the age of 13 were defined as children, and males over the age of 65 were also included. No weapons would be permitted. Anyone known to be a leader or collaborator of terror, jihad or GIR official-regardless of age or gender-would be detained.
- 2) Any male combatant between the ages of 13 and 65 who wanted to surrender was directed to one of four separate gathering points outside the city. The surrender was unconditional and combatants would be subject to indefinite detention and intense interrogation.
- 3) Anyone seen with a weapon would be killed on sight.
- 4) The blood of any non-combatants who were either forced to stay, or who decided of their own accord to stay, would be on the hands of the combatants who elected to fight.
- 5) After 24 hours, the city would be reduced and destroyed.

Most of the combatants and their families did not believe the Americans and British would follow through with these threats...and if they did, they presumed that there would be a harsh house to house, door to door, urban struggle for the city where they could severally bleed the allies and obtain for themselves their paradise through Jihad.

Sayeed himself believed this would be the case...and longed for the films of the Americans taking terrible casualties in the holy city. Films he believed would be used to bolster and enrage Islamics everywhere.

All of them were terribly mistaken.

Over 200,000 civilians in the city chose to escape and to follow allied directions. They came in long lines and convoys all that day and throughout the night, most with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

At the same time, more than 25,000 combatants surrendered...not wanting to fight in a cause that was doomed, no matter how gallant the religious respective.

But in the end, over 75,000 combatants and an estimated 65,000 civilians remained in the city and around the holy shrines, fortifying them all for the expected ground assault...that never came.

With no more talk, with no more fanfare, at noon on June 8th, 2010, the bombing began.

Waves of B-52H bombers performed the most intensive bombing raids since the Vietnam War... all concentrated on the one, city. Wave after wave, the bombers came throughout the 8th, 9th and 10th of June...non-stop.

Interspersed in with the ARC LITE bombing was the use of dozens of newly developed MOAB II area demolition bombs. Mammoth 60,000 pound bombs that were delivered by specially configured C-17 Globe Master transports, dubbed B-17 IIs. Each of those behemoths was capable of completely reducing entire city blocks. They were known as poor man's mini-non-nukes and they had devastating effect.

By the morning of the 9th, first hundreds...and then thousands of inhabitants and combatants began exiting the ruined city. Any who came out with weapons in their hands, or who otherwise attempted to

fight were immediately shot down and killed.

Quickly enough, all who came out were unarmed and nonbelligerent.

By the afternoon on the 9th, no major structure was left standing in the city. By noon on the 10th, when the bombing campaign ended, not one stone was left upon another within Mecca.

An eerie silence fell across the face of the countryside in and around the holy city. There was not so much as a cry or a moan coming from the ruins. Heaven seemed to have answered the assault with a dead-calm.

That afternoon, allied scout, EOD and medic teams entered the city. Over a two day period, fewer than 500 injured were pulled from the mounds of rubble. By the 14th of June, all rescue and recovery efforts ceased. The allies did not intend to rebuild Mecca...they intended to send a message.

Over one hundred U.S. Army D-9 caterpillar bulldozers then appeared on the perimeter around the city and converged on it. They literally covered over the debris and smoothed it out in two days time. A flat, desolate landscape then occupied the ground where once Mecca stood. All debris, all ruined or discarded weapons-all bodies-had been buried there.

Atop this soil the allies liberally sprinkled salt and then soaked the ground in swine fat. Around the perimeter of the once great city, and interspersed every five hundred yards within, the following metal signs were erected:

Here stood Mecca, until it was occupied by barbarians, terrorists and desecrators and those who harbored them, who then committed atrocities against the United States of America and the United Kingdom and their allies.

Now there is nothing here but a desolation of pig-fat and salt.

Let the fate of this once great city be a clear message to all those who would desecrate that which is holy and who would consider committing similar atrocities against United States or United Kingdom forces, personnel or civilians.

To the innocent we allowed to escape we say-De Oppresso Libre!

To the barbarians who died here we say-Sic Simper Tyranis!

Sayeed could still see those signs in his mind's eye. He could not help but mourn the loss of the city and could also not help but wonder how he could motivate the faithful to keep on fighting...to find strength in praying five times a day to such a place, a place that was now nothing more than a smoking, smoldering wasteland.

For the first time in his life his faith wavered...and it shook him to the core.

Then...a piercing pain in his side and heart...an all consuming pain that filled him first with rage...and then with strength.

He would have to leave Tehran...but he knew where he would go, and he knew to what the rest of his life would be devoted.

In many ways, it would be devoted to the same goal he had dedicated himself to for the last many years. But now the fight to unite the world under the banner of Islam would have to take on a new form, and it could only do that after he had reconstituted his strength in some area of the world not yet assailed so devastatingly by his enemies, where he could rebuild the faith and the institutions that would soon be lost to him here.

Chapter 2

“There is no chance, no destiny, no fate, can circumvent or hinder or control the firm resolve of a determined soul” – Ella Wilcox

July 2, 2010, 14:55, Local Time

Large Inner Courtyard

Principle Hamadan Mosque

Hamadan, Greater Islamic Republic

Hamadan was a smaller city in the northwestern part of the former Iran that was strategically out of the way and off the beaten path. As Allied forces passed to the North of it in their pursuit of the GIR Armies that had, until recently, been successfully holding back the Allied onslaught near Tabriz, Hamadan had not been directly attacked. As the allied breakthrough to the east of Qom threatened Tehran from a different axis, and as that same breakthrough threatened the envelopment and destruction of the GIR armies in Tabriz headed by the young General Selim, Selim's forces had been forced to rapidly fall back towards Tehran, with the allied forces fast on their heels.

As the large allied offensive and GIR retreat occurred to the north, Hamadan experienced relatively light bombing and shelling of its local GIR garrison by allied peripheral forces as they passed. The same type of thing was occurring with many cities throughout the former Iraq and Iran.

Now, in several of these bypassed cities, with apparently little allied presence, the local garrisons and those still faithful to Hassan Sayeed's vision were gathering and preparing to fight. The local clerics were whipping them up into a frenzy despite, and in some cases because of, what had occurred at Mecca in

June.

One of those clerics, who had amassed his own personal militia of over twenty thousand well provisioned men, was the Ayatollah Sheik Aman Saldi. He was relatively young, but fiercely loyal to Hassan Sayeed, and wholly committed to resisting and defeating any infidels coming within his reach. On this day, he was speaking to ten thousand of his own followers, and a large number of local citizens and members of the local garrison that had gathered within the walls of the holy mosque in Hamadan to hear him.

“My brothers, the Americans and their running dogs, in their arrogance, have made yet another fatal mistake. Similar to their actions six and seven years ago in Iraq during their so-called Operation Iraqi Freedom, they have bypassed many tens of thousands of the faithful, falsely believing that we will be overly impressed with their technology and the swiftness of their advance, and that we will sit idly by while they continue to attack, oppress and kill our brothers and sisters of faith and defile Allah.

“They have their automons in the air above us to watch over and contain us. Just look above yourselves now and you are sure to see them. Their incessant buzzing is heard night and day. They think that these flies will deter us and frighten us into inaction.

“But they could not be more wrong.

“I say to you, to those faithful gathered here this day, to all of those within the sound of my voice, or who will hear of it later... we are now behind the enemy lines, and we will wage Jihad upon them and their supply lines until the head of their military snake is left toothless in the center of our land. Then, we shall sever that head and stomp it to death! ”

The cheering was wild. The militia and local garrison fired incessantly into the air. They knew that the local television crews, who were filming the event, would beam the images of this defiant gathering to the world. They hoped and believed that other faithful followers of Allah and the great Imam Sayeed would see it and take heart...and rise up behind the allied armies.

...but *they* could not have been more wrong.

It was true, the allies, and particularly the Americans, had left unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in place to watch over the bypassed cities and forces. The Americans named this operation *Ruthless Sentinel* .

With this operation, as had been the case with the surrounding of and destruction of Mecca, the Americans and their allies had learned well from their experiences in Iraq in 2003 and 2004, and from their experiences in the years of warfare that had ensued. They had modified their operational plans, adjusted their thinking and prepared procedures and scenarios accordingly. The UAVs were not just there to watch over the potential belligerents and provide surveillance. As the operational name implied, those UAVs were meant to do much more, and they were equipped to do so.

The latest Predator IV UAV design had been tested and deployed to the battlefield by the United States only a few months earlier. They were now being mass produced by the thousands in new American wartime manufacturing plants. They were extremely capable aircraft in terms of performance, endurance, and armament, and could be remotely controlled from either land-based or airborne command centers hundreds of miles away. Each controller was capable of remotely controlling twelve to fifteen aircraft.

...and at this moment there were literally hundreds of aircraft hovering over the bypassed areas of the former Iran alone.

This particularly large gathering in Hamadan was quickly observed by a nearby Predator IV. The information regarding its size, location and disposition was then relayed to the controllers and on up the chain of command. Quickly, the buzzing over Hamadan increased dramatically as first dozens, and then scores of Predator IV aircraft were quickly diverted to fly high over the city, monitoring the mosque and those gathered there, and standing ready.

As the intent of the gathering became clear and as the militants and regular GIR army troops began responding to Saldi's rhetoric by firing into the air...orders were issued to the Predators and it began to rain in Hamadan.

...a rain of death.

Each of the Predator IVs was equipped with a miniature version of the Hail Storm weapon system that had been so successfully deployed by the Americans on special cruise missiles against CAS and GIR armies to date. In the cruise missile form, it was a system that had been very instrumental in helping turn the tide of war a year and a half earlier. On the Predator IV, the smaller Hail Storm system was designed to ensure that the tides of war, once turned, remained that way behind the front lines. In order to do so, it comprised several hundred .177 caliber, depleted Uranium pellets that could be quickly and accurately targeted on people, vehicles or installations using its solid state, electronic firing system.

Seventy-three of these aircraft now attacked in a coordinated fashion, guided by six different controllers located in ground-based command centers and on airborne command aircraft up to two hundred miles away. They targeted the deadly ordinance of their aircraft on the gathering of militants, the regular army garrison, the supporting citizens, and upon Saldi himself, who was speaking from a podium at the front of the crowd at the mosque in Hamadan.

The attack's duration spanned all of eight seconds, eight *powerful and significant* seconds.

To those on the ground, in the middle of the target area, the only indication of attack had been a sudden and dramatic increase in the buzzing sound from overhead. That sound had reached a crescendo as the high velocity projectiles reached the ground and decimated the gathering.

Those in attendance never stood a chance.

Those on the peripheral of the gathering, who were standing back from the crowd and were thus outside the killing zone, were spared death, but not the horror. As soon as their brains could register and comprehend the carnage that their eyes were witnessing, they screamed wildly and incoherently, and then ran madly away from the mayhem they had witnessed in the large courtyard.

On television screens throughout the Arab world, where the broadcast was being carried live, and on allied monitors from the aircraft above, one moment the defiant figure of Saldi was standing at the podium enraging his followers...and the next moment splinters of wood and plastic and unrecognizable pieces of Saldi himself were literally flying through the air as a veritable wave of hypervelocity projectiles swept over the stand where he and his lieutenants were positioned and across the crowd immediately in front of the stand. Not one solitary soul was left alive on the stand or amongst the hundreds gathered directly in front of it.

Within those eight potent seconds, the entire gathering had been broken, dashed, and utterly destroyed. Over eight thousand potential Jihadists had suffered their martyrdom without ever being able to attack the allied infidels. Instead, the allies had attacked and destroyed them first without losing a single life.

There would be no uprising whatsoever arising out of Hamadan...and after two or three more examples were made of similar gatherings...there would be very, very few uprisings anywhere in the Arab world behind allied lines.

For that matter, as the Predator IVs were deployed in numbers elsewhere around the world behind enemy lines, there would be very few uprisings anywhere else either.

July 3, 2010, 22:47, Local Time

Improvised Landing Field

100 km west of Tehran, GIR

Abduhl Selim was known by his friends and his enemies to be very wise for his years. All of the men under his command knew this...and, along with his fierceness, his dedication and his uncanny ability to survive and inflict damage on his enemies, his wisdom was one of the reasons the men under him so willingly followed him.

Now that wisdom was telling him what he should do.

A direct, secret communiqué from the great Imam himself indicated that Selim should gather his most trusted and capable subordinates and a personal security force made up of a battalion of his most loyal troops and leave. The communiqué had been in the form of a direct order and the General was busily preparing his staff and security force to do exactly what their spiritual and military leader required of them.

But before he left, he wanted to address all of the men...both those who would be going and those who would stay and continue the fight here. He arranged for his words to be carried to his forces using a narrow, low-powered frequency, and using the latest scrambling equipment available.

As tens of thousands of weary GIR soldiers listened, General Selim began.

“My brothers, and I call you brothers because that is exactly what you are...brothers in arms and brothers in the faith.

“Side by side we have fought a good fight. We have inflicted significant damage and casualties on a numerically and technologically superior foe. Your achievements and fierceness will be written about, spoken about and revered for its greatness generations to come by the faithful everywhere.

“Now the time has come for us to part paths.

“I have been ordered to the side of our great Imam and Mahdi where he shall continue the fight to the east, while you continue here.

“I will not mince words...it will be difficult for us all.

“You here who stay and those who command you have the difficult task of choosing to fight a disciplined withdrawal to Tehran, under less and less friendly air cover, and more and more assaults from the sky by

the Americans and their allies...and their devastating weapons. Or, you may choose to simply melt away, back to your families and homes to see what the future holds.

“It is my wish that as many of you live to a ripe old age as possible. I say this as a young man myself, one who has not always acted as though he wished to see old age (and here, many of the troops laughed to themselves, knowing their General for who he was)...as most of you are all too aware. But I also say it as one who has served proudly at your side. As of this date, it is my firm conviction that nothing further will be served by your slaughter here to the west of Tehran.

“Each of you and each of your units will have to decide for yourselves what you shall do.

“You all know what has occurred at Mecca, at Qom and just two days ago at Hamadan.

“It is my express order, and it is being circulated now amongst your commanding officers, that all of you who wish to fight on in the defense of Tehran form up by 0500 hours to do so. By prior communication, units wishing to fight are already in position providing flank security for this army. Just the same, none of you should forget or be lax in your perimeter patrols or defenses. Just listen to your senior sergeants and to your officers regarding how you form up. They already have their orders.

“All who wish to return to your homes should also form up in groups of no more than five, and begin your journey by 0500 as well. Orders pertaining to this have been issued as well. If stopped at enemy check points or by enemy forces...do not resist them. If interrogated, you must not reveal critical information. Simply remain firm in your insistence that your only wish is to return home to your wives and children. Remember that at this time to resist is to die, and to die in a manner, as the Americans have already shown, that will deny you any Jihad rights in the hereafter. Who would be fool enough to allow the Americans to take from us that eternal reward?

“Now, I say to you all...Allah Ahkbar!

“May Allah the merciful be with each of you.

“That is all.”

The stunned soldiers responded positively to their General and to their officers. Fully 70% of the army melted away to the north and east, into the rugged terrain where the allies had not encircled their forces and where the greatest available amount of remaining GIR air coverage remained.

The other 30% of the army provided security and diversionary fighting while their comrades departed. Those fighting forces then fell back towards Tehran. But what had been to that point a disciplined retreat, before long turned into a headlong route. By July 7th, allied forces were on the outskirts of Tehran, where they surrounded the city and issued the same ultimatums that were now becoming commonplace for any belligerent city that was a strategic military goal for allied forces.

Given what the General had allowed outside of Tehran, given the examples that had already been set-particularly at Mecca, and given the growing number of Iranians who were standing up for their own freedom...the outcome was never in question. GIR forces defending the city, already faced with significant internal upheaval within Tehran, surrendered unconditionally, were taken into custody and allied forces entered the city by the middle of the month with little opposition.

Thus was reduced the largest remaining GIR military force in eastern Iran, the heart of the GIR, and thus fell Tehran, the capitol of the GIR.

The large airlift of General Selim's command staff and security battalion, protected by the best remaining SU-35 and imported J-10 fighter squadrons the GIR had, flew over Tehran on the morning of the 3rd and onto a secret rendezvous with Hassan Sayeed's entourage on July 4th.

But when they arrived, Hassan Sayeed discovered to his chagrin that General Selim was not with them.

By that time, he and four other personnel from his staff who, like himself, were native to Turkmenistan, had made their way across the hills and mountains to the north of Tehran and had taken up with a band of nomadic sheep herders in the area. On July 5th young General looked like nothing more than a relatively young herder, and his "Uncles" looked like the other older tenders of the large sheep herd belonging to that group.

They moved slowly...parodying the nomadic life that had continued on in this terrain despite the war and despite whoever was in power in Tehran. It was while traveling with this group that, some months later in early November, Abduhl Selim was recognized by a young fifteen-year-old sheep herder from another wandering tribe as both groups attempted to unobtrusively cross into Turkmenistan near an American checkpoint.

Despite his relative isolation, the fifteen-year-old had come to idolize Selim during the course of the war, and, upon recognizing him, he began yelling, "Allah is great! Allah is great! We are blessed to be in the company of the Tiger of Islam."

An alert American junior intelligence officer at the checkpoint, who spoke the language fluently, recognized what the young man was saying before he was quickly hushed by his elders. Noticing the rapidity and manner in which the young man had been silenced, the officer became even more suspicious and ordered an entire platoon of US Army Rangers to surround the herdsman, detain them, and attempt to individually identify them.

Thus Abduhl Selim, the young Tiger of Islam, and favorite General of the Imam Hassan Sayeed, was taken into custody by U.S. forces without a shot being fired.

But by that time, so much more had transpired.

July 4, 2010, 09:30, EST

Press Room

The White House

Washington, DC

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to make a brief statement, after which I will be happy to take a few of your questions."

John Bowers scanned the audience in front of him. This was only his second official press conference of the year, though he had spoken impromptu to the press on numerous other occasions, and though he had

made numerous public speeches which the press had covered. He recognized the major Washington, D.C. correspondents of all of the major news media, and many of the foreign correspondents from countries that were major allies of the United States.

What made this press conference different was that for the first time, there were correspondents here from some of the nations that had now been liberated in the Mid-East, including Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, as well as press from Australia and areas of Africa and South America where the fighting was ongoing.

“On this, the 234th celebration of independence here in the United States, I am grateful, despite the horrors and sorrows of a continued world wide conflagration, to be able to speak with you and speak about the progress we are making.

“The war effort continues unabated throughout the world and we are making significant progress. Our forces are on the move and the enemy is being pushed back in every major theater of operation in which we are engaged.

“This does not mean that there are not setbacks and that the enemy has given in...quite to the contrary, they are becoming desperate and are fighting hard. We witnessed how hard they are fighting and to what extents they are willing to go in May with the heavy fighting in space over the Pacific Ocean and over Australia where we suffered significant losses.

“We are witnessing the continued fierceness of the enemy in Australia and in the hard fighting that is continuing in eastern Asia as our forces continue the push towards China. We are seeing very difficult fighting in the Pacific, South America, parts of Africa and in remaining pockets in the Middle East.

“Having said that, I can report the following very positive developments:

“Our forces have defeated all major GIR armies on the Arabian Peninsula. Outside of small pockets of resistance in Oman and Yemen, all of Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula have been neutralized.”

At this announcement there was a spontaneous cheer from the gathered press corps.

“Please, let me continue. There is more.

“In Iran, though the fighting is still hard and far from finished, we are witnessing a marvelous outpouring from many Iranian citizens who favor the individual freedom which espouses a much more moderate and tolerant interpretation of their Islamic faith than what their leaders and the militants have been pursuing. We're talking about tens of thousands of people who are taking active measures to support our efforts. They are doing it at great risk. The adherents of Hassan Sayeed's vision of compulsion and world conquest are rapidly falling apart within the borders of their own nation. Within the next two to three days, our forces will be on the outskirts of Tehran.”

At this statement of the imminent fall of the capital of one of the major enemy belligerent nations, there was more spontaneous cheering and clapping in the press room.

And in this case the cheering was not just occurring at the press conference. Listeners in the free nations all over the world and in many of those areas liberated by allied forces also cheered wherever they happened to be watching...in their homes, in their places of work, in pubs, and on the street.

The President calmly waited to allow the spontaneous outpouring at such good news to run on for a few

seconds...then he continued.

“Please...please, I understand that good hearted people and those of reason who love liberty and morality are happy to hear this...but I MUST reiterate. There is much hard fighting ahead of us. The GIR is widespread and there is every reason to believe that Hassan Sayeed will seek sanctuary in, and continue to direct his forces from, one of the nations that we have yet to reach.

“We still have three very effective, very numerous and very committed enemies to defeat...but we are making steady and significant progress.

“Let me now take just a moment and address a couple of issues that have been raised in the press and by others who have sought to question the morality and the effectiveness of our progress. I am referring to the defeat of the GIR forces and those who harbored them at Mecca, and of the successful interdiction of and pre-emptive defeat of a potentially serious uprising behind our front lines in Iran at the city of Hamadan.

“I shall speak of the battle and victory at Mecca first.

“I do not believe there are many people who have access to news coverage who did not see the absolute atrocities committed against our peace delegation at Mecca. As you all know, on June 6th ten members of a peace delegation that we had sent to the city in an attempt to negotiate an honorable and safe surrender of the surrounded GIR forces who had retreated into the city, were slaughtered and then mutilated in a most horrific way.

“The United States of America has learned from almost thirty years experience that those who commit such atrocities can be dealt with in but one way. It is either complete, unconditional surrender...and quickly...or death. Our experience has been...and this is something we had to relearn, for you see, our grandparents from World War II learned the same lesson with the fanatical Japanese and Nazis...that through unmitigated and direct confrontation of such barbarians, ultimately far more lives are saved and the conflict shortened.

“This is the essence of what Harry Truman understood and decided in World War II when nuclear bombs were used to end that war. It is the same decision we undertook at Mecca, but we did not have to use nuclear weapons to do so.

“Therefore, after the attempt at normal and honorable negotiations, where our representatives were massacred and mutilated, on June 6th our forces made a direct and unambiguous call and communication to the well-provisioned and large enemy forces within Mecca, calling for them and the citizens to surrender militarily and come out of the city. Many of the citizens and a surprising number of the military forces chose to heed that call.

“Over 75,000 GIR forces and something over 60,000 civilians chose not to. They paid for that choice.

“We bombed the entire city to rubble and did not lose a single U.S. or allied soldier in the process. While the intensive bombing campaign continued, almost 10,000 more soldiers and an equal number of civilians escaped the city under our terms. The rest all died there and the battle ended on June 10th. Fewer than five hundred survivors were pulled from the rubble.

“In order to have accomplished the same thing through an assault on the city, we estimated that many, many fewer GIR forces or their civilian adherents would have survived and that allied casualties could have numbered several thousand. We were not willing and we shall not be willing in the future to pay

such a price when other alternatives are available to us.

“As a result, we have conducted the same type of operation, albeit on a smaller scale, in two other cities, both located in Iran. The result has been that the enemy has become much more willing to offer their unconditional surrender and our overall operations are proceeding faster and with fewer allied casualties.

“So, let these operations be a warning and a clear message to our enemies in the future. We shall try honorable negotiations to bring about your unconditional surrender...but we shall not tolerate ever again any Jihad, martyrdom syndrome, banzai or suicide attacks. We shall utterly destroy you in place to bring about your abject, complete and unconditional surrender before allowing you to satiate yourself in American or allied blood.”

As the President paused to continue...there was significant clapping and cheering, but there were also many hands held high by reporters and calls for the President to answer questions.

“Mr. President! Mr. President!”

But John Bowers was not ready to open the meeting to questions yet.

“Before we open this up for some questions, let me cover the last point I want to make.

“This has to do with an operation we are conducting in all belligerent nations behind our advancing front lines. It is an enemy combatant and insurrection suppression and pacification program that has its philosophical roots in the same principles that drove our operation in Mecca and others like it.

“Basically, it is this. We fill the air with remote-controlled, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that have tremendous loiter capability, tremendous surveillance capability and that are armed with a miniature version of our Hail Storm system. When I say fill the air, I mean aircraft numbering in the hundreds over each major area of offensive operations in each theater of operation.

“Whenever a gathering of five or more potential enemy belligerents is observed, our people check the gathering for several criteria that indicate to us that the individuals are part of an active resistance, or that they are about to form one. Without warning we take such gatherings out.

“The operation has been very successful. We have operated against groups of enemy belligerents, insurgents and terrorists numbering anywhere from five to over ten thousand.

“As most of you know, two days ago in Hamadan, Iran, we engaged a major portion of the local militia under the command of Ayatollah Sheik Aman Saldi. Saldi was one of the leading figures within Iran that our forces were looking to either apprehend or neutralize.

“When it became apparent that this gathering was belligerent and that Saldi was present and leading a meeting whose purpose was to galvanize this large force of armed militia and regular GIR forces into action against our logistic lines, we acted. Most of the 10,000 personnel at that meeting were eliminated, including Saldi himself.

“As was the case with Mecca, let these types of events be a clear and unmistakable message to our enemies: *We have the power, we have the technology, we have the means and we have the will to utterly destroy your ability to resist and your will to resist, including the ability and will of those who would support you or give you sanctuary.*

“Now, I will be pleased to take a few of your questions.”

July 4, 2010, 09:42, EST

Press Room

The White House

Washington, DC

Hands immediately shot up all over the room as the President opened up the meeting for questions from the gathered press. President Bowers scanned the room, looking at the various news agencies represented and decided he would take what would most likely be the most divisive question first. For that, he pointed towards an older journalist, a woman who worked for CBC who had been known for years to be very confrontational toward any administration that she considered to be conservative.

Raising his voice above the din, the president called on her.

“Leslie, please.”

Surprised to be called on so quickly by the President and knowing that he was expecting a difficult question from her, Leslie Dahl did everything in her power to not disappoint him.

“Mr. President, thank you for taking my question. . .and I would like a follow up as well, please.

“You have indicated that the destruction of Mecca was purely a military operation that was targeted at destroying the military capabilities of the enemy gathered there.

“If that was so, why not just ring the place with steel and wait or starve the enemy out?

“Why did they have to die, and why was it done in such a way that almost ensured the destruction of the most holy site in the Islamic world?”

The President did not need to pause or think about his answer. . .he already knew it.

“Leslie, I believe I have already explained this adequately. It was a military operation because our military forces had surrounded a large and capable GIR army that was well-provisioned and itching to draw us into a fight. We attempted to negotiate. They massacred and mutilated our negotiating team. We gave them every opportunity to surrender and avoid death. They refused. . .they died. . .and we won a significant victory.

“It is true that the operation destroyed holy shrines of Islam located within the city. But that destruction cannot be laid at the feet of American forces. When a barbaric enemy perpetrates inhuman atrocities against our people -- people whose aim was peace -- and then seeks refuge within a holy building, it is they who are desecrating the building, not us. It is our duty to seek them out, no matter where they find haven, in order to prevent further sadistic, merciless loss of human life. The fact that they hide behind the walls of holy sites after perpetrating acts that are the antithesis of holy is simply evidence of their

incomparable cowardice and hypocrisy.

“And they paid a terrible price for that mistake.”

Leslie Dahl was chagrined by the President's answer and how he had turned the tables on her. In frustration, before she could get to her well rehearsed "follow-up", she blurted out.

“But what about all of the innocent civilians who also died there...and what of the desecration of that place with the fat from pigs?”

The President, who had expected such questions and who had been mentally prepared to answer them directly from the moment he had made the decisions, answered her immediately.

“I'll take that as your follow-up.

“Most of the citizens who stayed behind with these troops were anything but innocent, Leslie. They were abetting, supporting and harboring enemies of this nation who wanted to kill as many of our boys as possible. I view any such “civilians” as enemies in this war and worthy of our targeting. They must come to know that to take such actions against the United States of America is going to mean that they are going to pay a terrible price and many of them are going to die.

“As to any non-enemy combatants or sympathizers who were held against their will in the city...all I can say is this.

“Blame the enemy troops and belligerents. That blood is on their hands.

“Finally, regarding the pig fat, I have no problem using the thinking and culture of these extremists and animals against them...and will do so in the future, as often as the opportunity presents itself. That can be done without besmirching the faith of others of a similar culture because, quite frankly, reasonable believers in Islam would not put themselves into a position to be on the receiving end of our ire.”

As the President finished, Leslie tried to say more, but she was drowned out by a chorus of other journalists seeking to have their questions answered.

Picking out a foreign journalist, the President motioned toward them.

“Let's see...Imene, from liberated Turkey.

“Welcome, it's good to see you here and good to see that a free press has been re-established in your country. Go ahead.”

Imene was glad to be there too. The trip to America as the lead correspondent for the Turkish Times would have been considered a significant accomplishment at any time...but it was a particularly momentous accomplishment now, following his nation's liberation.

“Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to present my question and for the sentiment.

“No one appreciates the free press, or the great responsibility a free press has to be impartial, and focused on accuracy and legitimacy, more than those of us in Turkey who have been liberated from under the stiff, heavy boots of oppression.

“My question is this: How quickly do U.S. analysts feel that the former Iran will fall completely, and do you expect that that fall will realistically end Hassan Sayeed's power?”

The president chuckled to himself as Imene got that second question in there.

“Well, Imene, I can see that you are not missing a beat regarding your abilities as a free journalist. Your knack of turning one question into two, without even asking for the follow-up, ranks right up there with the best we in this country have to offer.

“But, seriously, I will answer both questions as best I can.

“We expect to surround Tehran in the next few days and are hoping it falls quickly. Once that occurs, the fall of the rest of Iran is going to depend on how quickly we can move to the east.

“At the current rate of advance, it will take a few short weeks...but there is always the potential for set backs and delays, either due to enemy action, unforeseen logistical issues or natural conditions such as the weather.

“Beyond that general statement, I will not discuss any specifics of the ongoing operations.

“Regarding Hassan Sayeed's capabilities, we are not going to underestimate him. The result of the last time the world underestimated this man has been almost five years of the bloodiest fighting and repression in history. He has hundreds of millions of Islamic people yet to his east all the way to Indonesia and Malaysia who have not been pacified yet. My guess is that more than a few of those still believe in his misbegotten vision and will welcome him into their midst with open arms, should he be able to arrive there.

“If that proves to be true, as he coordinates his planning with India and Red China from those locations, he will still pose a very dangerous and mortal threat to us and to our allies. We will respond accordingly first to prevent that if we can, then to defeat it if we cannot.

“Thank you for your question, Imene, and all of our best to you, and God bless you in the rebuilding of your nation.

“Next question?”

Again hands shot up all over the room and voices rang out.

“JT, what's on your mind?”

Several of the more liberal journalists in the room could barely contain their frustration as the President called on JT Samson, the owner and chief editor of SierraLines, the largest and most influential online news source on the Internet.

Since the days of the late President Weisskopf's campaign back in 2004, JT had enjoyed a close and trusted relationship with both the Weisskopf administration and now the Bower administration following President Norm Weisskopf's death. Many of the more liberal journalists complained constantly about the apparent favoritism, but their dissatisfaction did not deter the White House in the least.

“Well, Mr. President, I wanted to ask about the current situation and condition in space.

“Is it true that the Chinese have developed and deployed their own single stage to orbit militarized spacecraft? And have those Chinese space craft engaged and defeated some of our own in battle in space over the Pacific and Australia?”

Despite the good relationship the administration had with SierraLines and its owner, the President and his staff knew that JT Samson was a proficient journalist and that he was capable of digging deep for news stories. When doing so, he rarely pulled his punches or sought to soften the direct questions associated with rooting out every ounce of information he could regarding those stories.

This was one of those times.

Although not able to deny the obvious battles that had occurred in space, to date the administration had not divulged any more information regarding those battles other than the fact that certain vessels had been lost. That JT Samson was using many heretofore unknown specifics in his question meant that his sources were very good indeed. Whatever JT’s sources, they had leaked classified information that the administration and the military did not want China to become aware of their knowing.

“JT, you know that I cannot and will not comment regarding the specifics of any ongoing operations.”

JT was not deterred by the President's non-answer and did not hesitate to press the issue.

“But Mr. President, the actions I am referring to happened weeks ago and are not ongoing. Have the Chinese deployed their own SSTO militarized space craft?”

John Bowers knew that JT was aware of more than the official story, yet he could neither deny nor confirm the specifics to which JT was alluding. National security reasons and counter intelligence issues forbade him from discussing them in detail in this forum so that the Chinese would remain in the dark regarding how much the United States knew.

“JT, in answer to your questions, I can only say the following.

“Since we deployed our space stations over the United States and Australia, the Chinese and their allies have made every effort that was technologically available to them to attack and destroy them.

“As we have expanded our operations in space, they have continued to make these attempts, and as a consequence, the environment in space has become very dangerous.

“As we have announced in the past, in late May our Southern Star station was destroyed in combat by enemy forces...beyond that statement, I cannot give you any more details at this moment.

“Next question please.”

And so it went. For the next hour the President continued to answer questions regarding the current military, economic and political landscape. Everyone agreed that the President was as open and as forthright as possible. He was not above some sparring with those who either had an agenda or were contentious, as he displayed early on with Leslie Dahl...and he was very good at defending himself against such adversarial behavior.

Near the end, the President called for the last question.

“Okay, this will be the last question...there, over in the far right corner. It's Rob Jamison isn't it?”

Rob Jamison was the owner and manager of the largest online town hall and source for conservative internet activism on the web. His site, the Independent Republic, had been around since the mid 1990's and had earned its first real attention by living up to and implementing its conservative/constitutional charter through online, email, mail, and protest activism against the liberal administration in America at the time.

Because of the tens of thousands of registered users, and hundreds of thousands of participants, the Independent Republic forum was able to beat the mainstream media in many instances regarding reporting on current events. As a result, depending on what the site's stance was with respect to the event in question, the Independent Republic was able to quickly react by amassing protesters, or supporters, that numbered anywhere from a few local individuals to thousands of participants.

That capability had been particularly noteworthy during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003-2004 when the site had partnered with other online sources and conservative talk radio show hosts to organize very large, very patriotic and very successful Support the Troop Rallies all across the nation. This had been done to answer the emergence of some leftist anti-war rallies that had started to appear as the invasion of Iraq had begun. The Support the Troop Rallies had completely eclipsed the anti-war rallies in terms of individual attendance, in terms of numbers of rallies, in terms of the frequency of rallies, and in terms of the heartfelt, all-American feeling and pride that was exhibited.

Those rallies had carried over into the outbreak of World War III when first the Greater Islamic Republic and later North Korea, China and India had allied together and made war on America. Throughout the dark days of late 2005 into 2009, the Independent Republic and supporting organizations had maintained Support our Troop rallies all across the country.

...and they continued to organize and hold them to this day.

The site had really broken the mold in mainstream, real time news reporting when one of its registered members had witnessed and reported on the Chinese invasion of Alaska as it happened two years earlier. From Nome, using her personal computer, Stacey Urkut had provided a vivid and stunning report of the enemy aircraft and paratroopers invading Alaska before she had literally had to flee for her life. Tens of millions of viewers had gotten word of the report, up to and including the White House, before official military reports had come in, and certainly hours before the mainstream media had been aware of the event. For several hours the people were riveted to their computer screens reading what Stacey wrote and thus living the experience with her.

Stacey Urkut had gone on to be a leader in the resistance against the Chinese in Alaska and had ultimately been awarded the Medal of Freedom by the President himself. Rob Jamison and his Independent Republic had gone on to grow exponentially to the point that they themselves were asked to attend major press briefings at the express request of the White House who readily embraced this grassroots, unfiltered (meaning without the spin and interpretation of the mainstream commentators) news source for the people.

All of this went through the internet web site owner and former Navy veteran's mind as he asked his question.

"Mr. President, I can't tell you how good it is to be here today. Thank you, sir, for your service to our republic, both in the uniformed services and as our President. Believe me when I say this, and know that I speak for all of those who are registered at my own site, you are doing a marvelous job.

“Now, let me just ask this.

“Mr. President, I cannot help but note that the military actions our forces have been ordered to take both in Mecca and other cities, and in the *Ruthless Sentinel* pacification operations we are conducting, have occurred exclusively in the theater of war where we are fighting Islamic fundamentalists.

“Given our destruction of their most holy city, and given the direct action we are being forced to take against large masses of Islamic Jihad fighters, is our fight in that theater against these nations, or is the fight against fundamental Islam?”

The President was not surprised by this question. It was similar in nature and substance to Dahl's earlier question.

It was more direct though, and it was a direct question he had fully expected much earlier. In either case, John Bowers was glad to answer and glad that Rob Jamison had been the one to ask it.

It was a question that he had been forced to come to terms with himself long ago, before the current conflict ever began. His coming to terms with it had started when he had first heard of the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut in the early 1980's. It had come to full maturity later when he served in Kuwait and Iraq during the Desert Storm conflict. All of those experiences had created in him a determination to fight this particular brand of tyranny with all that he had. And that was exactly how he viewed it, a repressive and tyrannical ideology hiding behind religion, and he was convinced that that view had now been proven right time and time again in the current conflict.

“Rob, thank you for that question. Many Americans have wondered about this very thing and in the course of this war, the answer to that question, as we have fought these enemies and their allies, has expressed itself very directly.

“This fight is against the enemies of freedom and liberty, whatever they choose to call themselves.

“In this case, we have extremists who have hijacked an entire religion for their own perverted and misbegotten reasons. They have applied their own warped interpretation of Jihad and the rewards for it. They have seduced entire nations and peoples with their self-serving lies and dogma.

“To anyone of the Islamic or Muslim faith who believes that their faith compels them to randomly kill innocent peoples simply because they fear a different lifestyle and influence, or compels them to abject compulsion and tyranny over their own people simply because they are afraid that their adherents may use their own free will to choose another path, I say to you now, your time has come.

“Your stain upon the world of rational thought, free will, liberty, virtue, honor and integrity has run its course and will soon come to an utter and complete end.

“Your reward, unless you turn from such ideology and altogether quit it and divorce yourselves from it, will be your utter ruination and destruction. . .not some perverted and obscene hope for seventy-two innocent virgins for you to ravage.”

The President leaned towards the sea of reporters and journalists in front of him . . . and then looked directly into the camera with sincere, but serious reflection. He continued.

“What an obscene thought and view of heaven.

“These are the extreme and radical beliefs of tyranny that we fight, just as we fought the incarnation of similar tenants in Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, Communist Russia, North Korea, Communist China, and so on. Just as we fight them in Red China and their so-called Coalition of Asian States today.

“This *radical* Islam is a “religion” that does not allow for the existence of other religions, except as they are willing to accept, and live under, Islamic law and acknowledge Islamic superiority, both of which infer humiliating consequences, at the very least, and genocide at the worst. It is a “religion” whose god dictates that the world must eventually be “united” under Islam by force of arms. And, if the murder, sometimes in the most torturous way imaginable, of millions of innocents is required, then such killing is to be considered a calling by these *radicals* .

“I know that all Islamics do not feel this way about their faith...do not derive these radical and tyrannical interpretations from their own scriptures. To those rational and peaceful Islamic people we have always said, *join with us and help us rid you of this stain* .

“We say today, *join with us and open up your lands and peoples to the blessings of peace and free will* .

“Events right now in the former Iraq and Iran are showing us that more and more of these people are doing just this.

“We will help those peoples who desire to practice their faith in peace and tolerance to do so, but we shall never again accept such tyrannical and evil ideologies foisted as religion. Americans are a tolerant and patient people...but such notions have exhausted both our patience and our tolerance...and we shall not be taken in again.

“Yes, we have freedom of religion...but that means the peaceful exercise of faith while allowing others the same privilege without compulsion. When any so-called faith crosses the line into the types of beliefs I have just mentioned...it is no longer religion, irrespective of what label its adherents try to place upon it. At that point it has become nothing more than totalitarianism and compulsion and shall be treated as such.

“On this July 4th, when we celebrate our own independence and the principles upon which it is founded, and the hard fight that led to its realization, let us steel ourselves to the completion of today's fight. On this July 4th when we continue the selfsame struggle of so long ago, let us commit ourselves and let us fulfill our critical role in this pivotal moment in history...a role that demands that we stand up for freedom and liberty, and that we stand boldly and tall.

“In case anyone has misunderstood, the fight we are embroiled in is against abject tyranny. It is exactly what this war is all about. It is a struggle against the tyranny and the oppression of these radical Islamics of the Greater Islamic Republic who have perverted, distorted and wrested faith into something obscene that threatens the free will, free expressions and liberty of all. In the same way, the political ideology of the members of the Coalition of Asian States threatens those same principles. Theirs is the same threat, my fellow Americans and citizens of the free world, a dual threat that has allied together to assail freedom from both a perverted religious and a perverted political standpoint.

“But they both shall fail...they shall be defeated.

“Rob...all of you gathered here in the White House Press Room, and by extension, anyone within the sound of my voice...that is what the operations at Mecca and Hamadan were really all about. Let the enemy have no doubt about our resolve or our determination. We shall not fail, we shall not deter, we shall not falter or retreat from our sworn duty and this our solemn conviction.

“With the help of Providence, we shall go forward using these same measures...and any others that save American and allied lives and prosecute the war effort through to a successful and victorious conclusion while giving the enemy every opportunity to surrender unconditionally. We shall do so until those enemies either do surrender unconditionally, or until we have utterly and completely annihilated them.

“There is no other option or course.

“Thank you all,” the President said as he stepped away from the podium.

As he did so, his press secretary stepped up to the microphone and simply said,

“That is all.

“This news conference is now over”

July 12, 2010, 19:12, local time

Jianying Household

Beijing, China

Hua and Chiang Jianying were together on one of those rare occasions when they were both at home relatively early and could enjoy one another's company and relax either watching a good DVD movie, listen to music together, talk, read, or otherwise wind down from their respective jobs, simply spending time together.

Hua was continuing in his position as a member of the Party Congress in the People's Republic of China. Events of late were keeping that body extremely busy as they addressed, with growing frustration, the consequences and results of the setbacks in the war effort. Fourteen and sixteen hour days were becoming quite common. More rationing of almost every conceivable item, curfews, lights out, crackdowns on any dissident activity...all of these and many more policies were being instituted as allied forces pressed closer towards China from the northeast, from the east and from the south.

Those forces might still be thousands of kilometers away, but there was no denying that they were edging closer...and the impact of their growing proximity was being felt more and more often. Cruise missile attacks were now fairly commonplace as the Americans used their capitol ships, their submarines, and their long-range aircraft to launch them at critical Chinese infrastructure and manufacturing capabilities. Despite the relative success of Chinese air defenses, the increasing frequency of the attacks was beginning to affect the people's vigor and absolute commitment to the war effort. Hua and the rest of the Party Congress were under increasing pressure from the president and politburo to ensure that the people's commitment was maintained and did not waiver.

For her part, Chiang was directly involved in the defense of the nation as she worked as a Program Manager for COSTIND, the Chinese Commission of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense, managing several programmers and analysts as they sought to improve the capabilities of the anti-stealth fire control system for the *ta shih* system. Her earlier efforts in developing and analyzing the

system had been so successful that it had led to her promotion to Program Manager. She was extremely gratified with that promotion because she knew that, despite the fact that her father was Lu Pham, a Hero of the People's Republic and a member of the Executive Council on the Politburo, her promotion and success were based much more on her successful work with the programs that controlled *ta shih* than they were a result of who her father was.

As they sat on their plush pillows and listened to some light, romantic music, Chiang asked her husband.

“Hua, can our forces continue to hold back the Americans and their allies?”

It was a question on many minds these days. After almost four years of unparalleled success with a string of one major victory after another, in the last year and a half the Chinese people now found themselves hearing less and less of victory and more and more propaganda. The implications were clear to most Chinese, even if they weren't in a position like Hua and Chiang where they were privy to more details of the worsening strategic situation.

“Chiang, the American ability to rebound and build a revitalized capacity in manufacturing and technology has taken most of our planners by surprise. It's actually astounding, the rapidity with which they have been able to rebound, given where we had them just three or four short years ago.

“On the other hand, we still have this advantage in numbers and our technology is ahead of them in some areas and at parity with them in the others.

“Ultimately, my love, despite the huge army and naval forces that are arrayed against one another all over the globe, I believe the outcome will be decided in space. It involves such a small number of personnel...but the communications, the surveillance, and the power projection capabilities are enormous for whoever controls it.

“Remember how we defeated the American's in space four years ago? Well, since then we had fought them to a standstill, up until last year. But they surprised us and jumped back ahead last year by launching and maintaining those space stations. Now, with the advent of our Dragon Spirit spacecraft, we hurt them in space again...it's like a roller coaster ride.

“...and it's not over either. It's going to be a tough battle, both in terms of technological progress and in terms of actual combat.

“I honestly think our overall ability to halt the Americans in Australia and in Asia will ultimately depend on the outcome of that fight. Yes, we'll be doing more with space forces and you may be sure that Americans are doing the same.

“In the meantime, a lot of fighting continues down here on earth...all over...and the impact of that fighting is no less traumatic for those involved, or for their families.”

And that was something to which Hua knew Chiang could relate personally and directly. Her own brother, Kao, had been severally wounded as a result of battles at sea in the South Pacific and then his condition had worsened as a result of infections that had set in during his hospitalization.

The seriousness of his condition had led the entire Pham family to travel to Rabaul and visit Kao five months ago. Chiang had traveled, fully supported by her husband, with her father, Lu Pham and her mother, Song, to the rear areas of the war zone where Kao was in the hospital. He had been too ill to move to better facilities back in China and so the family had visited him there, with the hope that an

extended visit would lift his spirits and allow him the strength to overcome his injuries and the infection.

As a member of the Executive Council, Lu Pham had been accorded an entire brigade of elite forces for security for him and his family. A specially configured Type 52D, phased array destroyer and its entire surface action group was made available to them in Rabaul, along with the transport and fighter aircraft that had brought them there and defended them. All of this to ensure their security and to allow them every means for a safe escape should the situation become untenable.

Although there had been several air raid warnings, and two cruise missile attacks while they were there, none of the danger had been near the hospital or the facilities where they had stayed through February and into March.

Koa had recognized them when they arrived and his spirits had soared. He was able to tell them of his experiences, his comrades and his commitment to the fight. He had actually inspired them all regarding the war effort.

But one thing he could not do was fight off the effect of his injuries and the infection raging throughout his body. After several days of what appeared to be improvement associated with his improved spirit, he began to succumb again to his condition. The family had stayed by his side, faithfully keeping vigil in shifts.

Ultimately, Koa Pham had died from his injuries and infection in the hospital in Rabaul in early March. His family had taken his body back to Beijing for burial, mourning him, but intensely proud of his sacrifice and all the more committed to the cause of their nation.

July 30, 2010, 01:15, local time

High Geosynchronous Orbit

Point Solitude, Opposite Asia

Earth

While the officers on the command deck ensured that they had attained stable orbit at Point Solitude, Commander David Lewis considered the historic nature of the voyage that his command had just completed. From Earth, out beyond the planet Mars to the Asteroid belt and back, he had successfully commanded the small task force which was comprised of the USSS Gaspra and the USSS Ida with a combined compliment of thirty-six officers and enlisted men.

It had been a voyage that smacked more of science fiction than of reality...and yet it had been all too real. In fact, it was a reality that David Lewis knew was apt to make a significant difference in the war effort now...and probably in the overall direction that a free mankind would take following the successful completion of the war.

Now, at the completion of the epic voyage, here he was, over a year after their top secret departure, making an equally top secret return to Earth orbit.

Turning to his communications officer, Lewis issued the long anticipated order.

“Lieutenant, park her here in stable orbit and bring up command on the communications monitor.

David again considered that what he was witnessing was more akin to something from a sci-fi movie of his youth than what he had anticipated experiencing in today's military when he had started his career many years ago. As he waited, after a brief second or two of hazy fuzz, a clear picture of Admiral Hightower materialized on their flat panel, plasma display.

“Admiral, this is Commander Lewis reporting in, sir.

“We have successfully arrived on station in Earth orbit per our orders. Both vessels have the successfully harvested their entire load of cargo and are awaiting further orders.”

The Admiral remained quiet for just an instant before responding to Lewis.

“Understood, Commander.

“Let me break protocol for just a moment to say that it is great to see you, David. You’re looking good.

“Now, as you are aware from the communications you have received, we are embroiled in quite a situation down here. You will receive more concerning the latest situation report in a special encrypted, eyes-only communication later today.

“In the meantime, you are to begin processing your cargo into the full compliment of ordinance as outlined in your original orders.

“In order to assist you in that endeavor, two corvettes, the USSS Millport and the USSS Stearns will rendezvous with you at 0900 hours with the hardware you require to finalize the preparation of the ordinance.

“I know its short notice, David, and I know you and your crews were hoping for a well deserved leave, but you and Floyd are going to need to be prepared for action with whatever ordinance you can produce within the next seventy-two hours. Orders to that effect will be issued within the next few hours, so consider this a heads-up.

“We'll contact you after the arrival of the Millport and Stearns and begin putting together the detailed operational plan, which will include both of those vessels in what will then be your augmented task force.”

After another brief pause, the Admiral finished.

“Is all of that clear? ”

Lewis had experienced conflicting emotions as the Admiral had talked. He felt a definite letdown when it became clear to him that the long-awaited leave would not be forthcoming. They had all looked forward to their relief crews coming onboard to take over for them in processing the cargo into the ordinance that the allied forces would require while the crews of the Gaspra and Ida all went earth-side for leave.

But that letdown had been short-lived as the Admiral had continued speaking. It had been replaced almost immediately by the excitement of impending action with his command. It was clear that the need for the vessels and their special ordinance was imminent, and although the Commander wondered just

how much ordinance they could possibly prepare in such a short time, he looked forward to retaining command of not only the two original vessels in his task force, but the two new corvettes as well for the operation and the attack that he was sure would follow.

He had faith that Lieutenant Commander Clark and the entire compliment of both vessels would feel the same.

“Yes, sir, those orders are clear, and we will proceed as directed and fulfill our mission, whatever it may be.

“...and if I may say so, it's good to see you and this beautiful blue orb again too.

“Lewis, clear.”

July 30, 2010, 23:55, local time

High Geosynchronous Orbit

Point Solitude, Opposite Asia

Earth

The Millport and the Stearns had both arrived exactly as the Admiral had indicated and brought the necessary hardware with them for the completion of the preparation of their ordinance, the special carbonaceous chondrite projectiles they were fabricating. That hardware included special heat shielding to assist in maintaining the projectiles' integrity through re-entry, and special penetrators for the hardened warheads to assist them in impacting their targets.

But that was not all the two vessels brought. In addition, they brought several upgrades of hardware, software and firmware for the command and control, targeting, guidance, weapons and communications systems of the Gaspra and the Ida. Those upgrades represented the latest technology from America's Military Space Command research, development and manufacturing facilities for the most current Mod upgrades being used on the latest space vessels that were being launched into space.

All of those upgrades were being feverishly installed and tested as the entire task force prepared for battle. In a little more than forty-eight hours they would depart Point Solitude and make their way towards the position that had been identified as the initiation point for their attack. They expected resistance and, to that end, another two corvettes would join them en route, while two more frigates like their own...but newer...would create a diversion in the hopes of drawing off most of any enemy response.

If the work on the special ordinance continued at the present rate, the task force would have a total of twelve devices ready to deploy against the Chinese. This was about 5% of what they had expected to process altogether, a complete procedure which they had expected to accomplish in over three months time. Now they were being ordered into immediate combat after only three days with only one twentieth of what they had expected to ultimately have available.

The current operation called for using six of the twelve projectiles and retaining six as a reserve in case of alternate targets being identified, or in case a target was somehow missed...or, more ominously, in case either the Ida or the Gaspra were lost before they could fulfill their mission.

August 3, 2010, 12:17, local time

Dragon Spirit Manufacturing Facilities

Northern Manchuria

The People's Republic of China

The early afternoon was hot and muggy, with a temperature at 38 degrees Celsius, and with a crystal clear sky, despite the humidity.

The modern facility was a wonder of automation and modern manufacturing principles and capabilities. It had been designed to be protected against air attack of all types, being in a sheltered valley, with both conventional and *ta shih*, anti-stealth missile emplacements all around the valley and extending out for many miles in concentric circular installations around the facility.

The production rate of Dragon Spirit spacecraft at this facility had increased to the point where one new vessel per day was now being produced. It was the darling of Chinese spacecraft production when compared to the other three facilities where between one aircraft every one and a half days to one aircraft every three days were being produced across northern China and into southern Mongolia.

The Americans had already made three attempts to attack and destroy this particular facility using cruise missiles, stealth aircraft, hypervelocity aircraft, and even conventionally armed intercontinental ballistic missiles. In every case, the Chinese air defense systems had performed well and in only one case had any damage been inflicted. That had occurred during the ICBM attack when one of those missiles had gotten through the defenses and completely destroyed the production staging building several weeks ago.

That damage had hampered production for over a week, but had not stopped it. Now, after supplies had been adequately re-provisioned and after defenses had been correspondingly beefed up, the facility was operating at full production and setting the pace for the other facilities.

Now the facility and its defenses had been placed on the highest level of alert.

Early this morning American spacecraft had been picked up approaching from the west to east, coming in over Russia. A formation of two American spacecraft was detected, and, except for a reserve of four spacecraft, all available Dragons Spirit vessels had been launched to intercept.

The high command of the People's Republic was not happy with this development because they had been marshaling a large force of Dragon Spirit spacecraft to attack and overwhelm the American Space Station orbiting over the United States. After downing the newly launched station over the Pacific and the station over Australia, Jien Zemin had ordered all resource dedicated to downing the station over the continental United States. He wanted to do this before any new stations could be launched and as a

forceful demonstration to America that their newfound space dominance was at an end.

But the Americans had not been sitting on their hands and this new threat of theirs was spoiling those Chinese plans.

It was clear that the Americans were sending their own message, boldly entering the space directly over the PRC in an orbit clearly meant to attack the Chinese space manufacturing and launch facilities themselves. Though the Chinese had built significant reflective surfaces as anti-laser protection into their principle facilities, they could not risk allowing the Americans unfettered access to the space over the facilities for fear of them burning through the Chinese defenses or using other weaponry to damage or destroy the Chinese production and launch facilities.

The battle had taken place high over eastern China. The two heavy American space frigates had successfully fought their way through Chinese missiles and kinetic weapons and then battled the twelve Dragon Spirit craft sent up to intercept them. It had been a tough fight with eight Dragon Spirit craft being destroyed in the fray. Ultimately, only four hours earlier, the Chinese craft had finally overwhelmed the two American vessels and destroyed them. The Chinese technicians on the ground and crews in space had cheered their victory as the remaining spacecraft returned to earth to be re-provisioned. The crews were all greeted as heroes.

But now the tables were turning.

A few minutes ago an even larger force of six American spacecraft had been detected approaching from far to the west. The four remaining Dragon Spirit craft were being hastily launched and Chinese missile and kinetic weaponry were preparing to attack the new American threat.

August 3, 2010, that same time

Command Deck

USSS Gaspra

Well to the east of Japan

“We have multiple small vampire tracks now rising out of central Mongolia and central China, sir. Expected interception of the first wave will be in less than five minutes.”

David Lewis knew that these missile launches contained two types of Chinese weapons, high explosive warheads and kinetic weaponry.

“Okay, Bill,” he responded to his defensive weapons officer, “Have Ida slave the launch of their SPAEGIS missiles with ours to form a wall against the first wave of missiles and put the lasers in automatic defense mode.

“Send the corvettes forward to be in a position to intercept any Chinese spacecraft.”

The first wave of American missiles were launched by the two frigates and they closed on a trajectory

that would spread them out in front of the oncoming Chinese weapons.

Despite the urgent calls coming over the comm. frequency between the American vessels, the defense against kinetic weaponry was becoming old hat for the Americans. But it was still not taken for granted. Although the American systems had proven very capable of intercepting the "clouds" of Chinese kinetic weapons, it was not a task taken lightly.

If they missed, people would die and vessels would be damaged or destroyed...and, either way, it took time and concentration to order, launch, monitor and make the intercepts, and time was a commodity that was precious indeed in dealing with the imminent and fast pace of space warfare.

On this occasion, when the appropriate moment arrived, eight blindingly bright detonations several hundred miles in front of and well below the American formation blossomed. It happened just moments after the oncoming Chinese missiles had released their hundreds of kinetic weapons. The defense worked perfectly. No kinetic projectiles got through the nuclear shield that the Ida and Gaspra established in front of their formation.

But then, coming in at high speed a few seconds behind the kinetic weapons, over three dozen Chinese missiles with high explosive warheads approached the American formation.

By that time, the four American corvettes had accelerated out in front of, and slightly below, the two frigates and all four began engaging the Chinese missiles with their own lasers as the Ida and Gaspra did the same.

The American laser barrage destroyed all but three of the Chinese missiles, all of which came in targeting the USSS Stearns. Close in weapons on the Stearns accounted for two of these missiles, but the last one penetrated and hit the Stearns towards its aft end, ripping into the engineering spaces and into the engine itself before exploding.

The concussion from the explosion and the resulting rapid decompression killed two American personnel in the engineering spaces and the craft was left adrift in space because its engine was severely damaged. The Stearns had to shut down its primary propulsion and go into auxiliary power to maintain life support, communications and defenses.

By this time, the four Chinese Dragon Spirit spacecraft arrived on the scene, fighting fiercely to get past the remaining three corvettes and attack the frigates.

They were foiled in their attempts.

All four were destroyed by the combined firepower of the two frigates and three corvettes. In the exchange another corvette was moderately damaged and the resulting forces knocked it out of the orbit necessary to remain with the rest of the formation as they hurtled towards their firing positions. That damaged corvette was able to alter its orbit so as to eventually take up an orbit coincident with that of the USSS Stearns and provide it with whatever defensive firepower it could muster in case of attack.

Proceeding with only minor, ground-based hindrance after this engagement, at precisely 12:32, the Gaspra and the Ida reached their initial firing positions just to the east of Japan high over the Pacific Ocean and launched two of their weapons each at the People's Republic of China.

Thus began the first orbital bombardment of earth in history.

August 3, 2010, four minutes later

Dragon Spirit Manufacturing Facilities

Northern Manchuria

The People's Republic of China

Outside the facility, klaxons were sounding. Wu Xin was completing final repairs and tests for the analog sensors that provided measurements of atmospheric conditions to the backup power generators for the inner ring defense systems for the facility.

Wu had been called out only moments before as one of those sensors had begun acting erratically.

“Of all times for there to be an anomaly,” he thought, “right in the middle of an attack.

“The entire system was supposed to have been routinely qualified just last week.”

What Wu found was that this array of sensors had not been properly grounded and therefore what was known as a "floating ground" problem was causing the problem. Wu had quickly tied the sensor array to the proper ground using some spare cable he had brought with him. It was a temporary fix which would later require the installation of properly insulated and gauged cable, but this impromptu band-aid was something that would work well enough for the moment.

There was not time to perform an exhaustive test and after a brief check with his multi-meter, and an affirmative reply from the command center that the problem had been corrected, Wu immediately started back to his hardened bunker in his electric maintenance cart.

As he parked the cart next to the facility and stepped out of the cart towards his entrance, he noticed several of the missiles on one of the secondary ring defenses launch to intercept what he knew must be an incoming enemy missile.

Completely absorbed by the site, he only had the quickest impression of a distant, but very fast moving bright object approaching the facility from a high angle trajectory from the west.

He glanced up just in time to see one of the just launched Chinese missiles impact the object, which Wu now recognized as a much larger object than had been his fleeting impression, and to see the explosion from that impact have absolutely no effect whatsoever on the incoming enemy projectile, warhead, or whatever it was.

As the object came on at unbelievable speed, Wu had no time to form another single thought in life.

In that instant, there was a blinding flash of the approach of the brightly-glowing, ten-ton carbonaceous chondrite projectile. Its heat shield had worked perfectly. Very little of the object had burned off during re-entry. Now its penetrators worked equally flawlessly,

The object, impacting at many times the speed of sound, penetrated hundreds of feet into the earth. As

dirt and rock slowed its passage in a time span that measured only hundredths of a second, the object exchanged its speed and mass for energy...tremendous amounts of energy. The resulting explosion vaporized the entire facility and a good part of the valley where it was located.

Wu Xin simply ceased to exist...as did all of the other workers.

The impact reached well beyond the fifteen levels that extended below the ground in what had been engineered to be a sufficiently hardened facility against attack by American conventional penetrator weapons.

But those Chinese engineers had not contemplated a ten ton penetrator coming down from orbit.

A large mushroom cloud, one that could be seen for many kilometers, began to form and rise over the site immediately after impact. The impact itself reverberated through the Chinese bedrock and was felt physically by people on the street as far away as Beijing. It was recorded by seismic monitoring equipment as far away as New Delhi, India and Anchorage, Alaska, as well as throughout the western Pacific wherever such monitoring equipment was located.

The shock wave radiated out from the location of the impact and destroyed concrete buildings in the valley up to three kilometers away, and masonry buildings for up to eight. Not only was every living soul in the manufacturing facility vaporized, but hundreds of people within five kilometers were also killed or severely injured.

Similar events transpired in quick succession at all three other Chinese Dragon Spirit production facilities and one of the launch facilities for the spacecraft.

For some reason, either due to faulty targeting, or more likely due to a projectile whose internal structure was flawed, one of the incoming orbital projectiles missed the second Chinese launch facility by over ten kilometers. A large mushroom cloud rose from that impact as well, but it was over a relative lightly inhabited area, causing very few casualties, and no significant military damage.

But, if the personnel at that facility thought they had been spared...and the commander of the facility thought just that for a few minutes...they were sadly mistaken.

Within two minutes, the American weaponry officer on board the Ida who had launched the errant projectile, recognized from the computer analysis that the trajectory of that projectile would miss its intended target. One of the reserve projectiles was immediately selected and targeted for the remaining launch facility.

Then it was on its way, impacting a few moments later with the same results as had been experienced at the other facilities targeted this day.

In a period of less than nine minutes, the entire research, production and operational launch facilities for the new Chinese Dragon Spirit military space craft were vaporized. Not only were the facilities destroyed, but even more importantly to both China and the United States (although for exactly the opposite reasons), most of the brilliant engineers, technicians, military commanders, and planners associated with the program were killed aswell.

August 5, 2010, 02:44 WST

US Air Force Space and Missile Range

Central Nevada

United States of America

Withintwenty-four hours of the devastating attack on the Chinese space facilities, the United States launched two new frigates and two new corvettes in SSTO flight profiles. The new craft would form the core for the new USSS Southern Star space station over Australia.

The Southern Star would remain there through the rest of the war despite the best efforts of the CAS and GIR to bring her down.

The USSS Gaspra and the USSS Ida returned to Point Solitude immediately after the attacks and began processing the remainder of their special, shielded and hardened projectiles for further use in the war effort...but it was the relief crews for both vessels that would do the processing.

At long last Commander Lewis and Lieutenant Commander Clark and their crews were getting a well deserved leave.

After the relief crews arrived, and while Lewis and Clark and their compatriots were waiting to depart for Earth, they listened to a message to all of the surviving crews of those ships involved in the attack. That message was delivered by the President of the United States in a special closed circuit communication regarding the success of the mission that was broadcast live from the Oval Office.

“Folks,” he said, “Yesterday each of you made history with your attack operation from space.”

“But more than that, what you accomplished yesterday demonstrated to our enemies that our commitment to victory is unshakable. You helped show them to what lengths we will go to ensure victory and secure the blessings of liberty and freedom for ourselves, and anyone on the face of this planet who seeks it.

“All I can say to each of you is thanks for a job well done. Your comrades and your countrymen salute you.

“God bless you each for your parts in this...and God rest the souls of those brave ones who fell yesterday in this operation. I can assure you their sacrifice was not in vain.”

August 15, 2010, 08:44 WST

Campbell Residence

Orchard Avenue

Boise, Idaho

Geneva Campbell was grateful for her Saturdays. They gave her a chance to really get some major things accomplished around the house, as opposed to only having the time to pick at various projects

after work each day throughout the rest of the week.

Over the last couple of years she found that she could make the most significant progress if she used her time during the week to prepare for her Saturday work schedule. As a result, she now found that she was sometimes able to complete several major tasks on any given Saturday, and this gave her a great sense of accomplishment, and prepared her for Sundays when she would go to church and then visit the sick and needy people in the various hospitals and nursing homes near her.

She found, through all of this, that keeping herself busy throughout the week and then trying to serve others each Sunday really helped her to pass the time without having to worry too much about her sons. Both of them, Leon and Alan, were still away fighting in the war, Leon somewhere in Australia and Alan now somewhere in eastern Asia.

Today her major task was to go out and finish harvesting the abundance of tomatoes and green beans growing in her garden. She would harvest this morning, clean the produce and put away what she would use in the immediate future in the early afternoon, and then later this afternoon she would do her canning so she could store in her pantry what she couldn't use in the near term.

In addition, she always made a practice of taking at least ten percent of what she canned and either giving it to the local homeless shelter or in some other way donating it to the needy.

She planned to do that on Sunday.

"The good Lord said in the Bible in the book of Malachi, chapter three verse eight, that we was robbin' Him if we didn't bring in our tithes. . .and there ain't no way I'm gonna rob God," she thought to herself.

The way she figured it, Jesus himself had said that we should share and give to the poor.

"...and then that's exactly what He did when he was here on this earth."

Geneva felt that by freely and charitably giving of her own excess to those in need, she was not only doing what Jesus would do if He were here, and therefore trying to be more like Him, but she was also fulfilling the commission on tithing that Malachi had prescribed.

And, now, she was just about ready to go out and start.

"But I've still got another ten minutes or so before nine o'clock," she thought.

"That's enough time to read Alan's letter just one more time before I go outside."

Geneva had received the letter in the mail yesterday and had completely read it through twice last night before she went to bed. It was a wonderful letter. She was so proud of both of her sons for their dedication to the country and to what was right. . .and particularly proud of Alan because of what he had written in this letter.

As she read it again, she got to the particular part of the letter that brought her the greatest joy and caused her eyes to brim.

"Mom, I haven't shared this with you yet, but for some reason I figured as we prepare to move out (and I can't tell you either where we are, or where we are moving out to) for our next mission, that it'd be a good time to let you know.

“I know it's gonna make you happy, Momma, and I want you to know that it has made me happy too.

“About two months ago, while we were involved in a major firefight over near the coast, two friends in my squad were badly wounded. We did everything we could for the both of them, Mom, but one of them died before the med-evac helicopter ever got there.

“It was the other one, my friend named Lonnie that I wanted to tell you about.

“He's a good kid, Momma...I mean a really good kid.

“I have never seen him smoke, drink, cuss, tell bad jokes, go to the girly places on leave, or do anything mean or spiteful. Sometimes, in the pressures of combat, with friends being hurt or dying all around you...it's easy to escape into some of those things, to sort of get away from it all. There's a lot of guys out here who do those things, and I'm not real proud to admit to you, Momma, that sometimes I have too.

“But that's all behind me now, Momma, and here's why.

“You see, this little ol' Lonnie never did those things...and I mean it when I say he is a little guy, Mom. Someone you would never expect to see out here. When I first joined the squad and saw his size, I was surprised he had been able to make it through Marine boot camp let alone the later training that put him into the type of work (which I can't go into) that our squad does.

“But he did.

“Even though he's a little pipsqueak in size, and even though he is soft spoken and pretty reserved, I have found that he is physically wiry and tough on the outside, and that he's one of the biggest guys I know in terms of inner strength .

“He's not afraid at all of doing whatever he has to do in any combat situation we have faced...or in doing any of the work around camp that needs to be done. He never complains and it's been amazing and a great example to me.

“I've really come to like and respect Lonnie, Mom.

“Anyhow, he told me one time that his own Mom and Dad had taught him about some young warriors from another time in ancient history. He called them *stripling warriors* who had fought for liberty in their time. He told me how his folks had taught him that the Lord protected those warriors and watched over them as long as they were true to Him, and that the good Lord would do the same for him if he would be as true to God as he could be.

“Lonnie believed his folks. He read about those stripling warriors to me from a book that he carries around with him wherever he goes over here. That book documented the story and the struggles they had.

“Mom, just before their first major battle, this is what that history says about them:

'Now they had never fought, yet they did not fear death; and they thought more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their own lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them. And they rehearsed unto me the words of their

mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it.'

“Mom, I have to tell you, from the bottom of my heart, when Lonnie read that to me, I thought of you. I couldn't help but think of all your prayers for Leon and me. I couldn't help but remember your great faith in God and in Jesus. I couldn't help but say to myself... *I do not doubt my mothers knew it!*

“Mom...when I thought of those things, I felt a great swelling in my heart and I wanted to have that same faith that these young men had...that Lonnie has...that I know you and Leon have.”

At this point, Geneva began to cry, just like she had done the night before when she got to this point in the letter. She had always prayed not only for the physical safety of her boys, but even more so for their spiritual safety. Because safety in this world is one thing, but knowing that there is an eternal life awaiting you on the other side is all that really matters. And a mother who does not know that her son will inherit that eternal life is a mother with a deep and abiding concern...especially when her son finds himself in a life and death situation day after day.

This letter represented a literal answer to her prayers.

Leon had found God before ever going off to war and was always willing to witness to others of it...in his own way...on the battlefield or off. Geneva was convinced that it was Leon's faith that had allowed him a glimpse of his own father in the afterlife while he was in a coma after sustaining severe injuries in the Indian Ocean on the Island of Diego Garcia in August of 2006, almost exactly four years ago.

For his actions there, Leon had received the Medal of Honor. When he recovered from his injuries, despite the Marines' desire to use him and his notoriety to help recruit others, Leon would have none of it. As soon as he was able, he had requested to go back into combat, and the United States Marines had granted that request.

His letters often made reference to his faith in God, particularly as he was now searching for his good friend, Billy Simmons, who had been lost in Australia and was presumed dead.

But Alan had never quite gotten to the point of having faith in God. Geneva had always thought that Alan believed there was a God...but that he'd never made the leap to actually coming to know Him and putting his trust and faith in Him.

He was not what Geneva considered a *bad* boy, even though he had made his share of mistakes, and done his share of wrong.

“We all have,” thought Geneva as she considered Alan.

“But the good Lord Jesus has given us a way to overcome those wrongs through His own sacrifice and example. The way to make better people out of ourselves in this life is through having faith in Him, accepting Him and following Him, which at the same time prepares us for the life hereafter with Him and all of our loved ones who do the same.”

It had always been her fondest desire for Alan that he would find that path, and embrace it. From what followed in his letter, now she knew that he had.

“Mom, I spoke to Lonnie about all of this, about his faith and the faith of these young warriors...and he told me that I could have that same faith. He told me that if I came to Jesus and accepted Him and His gospel, I could repent and be a changed man, putting all of my mistakes behind me...and looking

forward to a future where I was continually improving and becoming a better and better person.

“I know that this is stuff you and Leon have told me in the past, Momma. I suppose Daddy told me the same thing when I was very young before he died. It's just that somehow, someway, here in this place it finally took hold.”

Geneva thanked God for this young man, Lonnie, whom Alan had met and befriended. She thanked Him for the good parents who had raised that boy to be such a good example and to be willing to witness to her son. She vowed, someday, to find out who Lonnie was and to thank his parents personally.

“Anyhow, Momma, two months ago, I accepted Jesus into my life and I joined and became a part of the body of Christ in His church. Lonnie himself baptized me in a little stream, and a whole bunch of our company attended and looked on.

“I have to tell you, Momma, there were some streaked cheeks on a lot of those old grizzled Marines' faces...even if most of them were not believers themselves.

“You can't go through what we have gone through without giving a lot of consideration to life, and the life hereafter...I don't care who you are. When you see someone make that change, whether you are ready to make it yourself or not, well, in this environment, it means a lot to most of them.

“I know it meant something for a number of the men in our company when I did.

“Anyway, while he was lying there wounded, waiting for the helicopter, I was real concerned about Lonnie. He'd been shot through the shoulder and had taken another round through his side. He was bleeding a lot and the three of us who were working on him thought he was not going to make it.

“As he lay there, I was helping the medic by holding my palm over one of Lonnie's wounds to try to compress it and stop the bleeding. I was crying while I was doing it when Lonnie looked up at me and...and he started comforting me!

“He told me that I shouldn't worry about Him, that it was all in God's hands and he wasn't afraid of God's will in the matter. He told me I could use my faith to help him, and asked me to pray for him and his family. He then asked me if his friend Trevor was around.

“Well Trevor is another one of the believers in our squad, and a good friend of Lonnie's. But Trevor was out on our perimeter providing security. So I sent the other Marine who was there with us to get him, and to relieve him, because Lonnie was asking for him.

“When Trevor got there a few minutes later, Lonnie asked him if he would bless him before the helicopter got there. Trevor told him he would and then, while the medic made room for him, he took a little vile out of one of his pockets and then put a drop of some oil that was in there on Lonnie's head.

“Momma, I don't know how to tell you what happened after that. It was so beautiful, and so surreal in that environment. Trevor said a prayer out loud...and gave a blessing to Lonnie. He did it in the name of Jesus, Momma, and he promised Lonnie that God was watching out for him and that it wasn't his time to go yet and that, if he had faith in that, God would heal him and he'd make it back home to his family.

“What impressed me most was that I knew that Lonnie was okay with it either way. He had faith in God's will, Momma, and was willing to come or go however the Lord wanted it.

“When it finally got there, Lonnie was carried off in the helo. We've since heard that his injuries are severe enough that he'll be going home soon to Ely, Nevada...but he's going to make it and ultimately have a full recovery.

“Trevor and I have had a lot of talks since. I go to a service every Sunday with him, when our duties allow. I am growing in my new faith in Jesus, Momma, and I know it's that same faith you have. I also know it was your upbringing that has made all of this possible for me, that put me in a position to understand and accept it.

“Thank you so much, Momma. It is a debt of gratitude and honor I can never repay except by passing it on...and that's just what I am going to do.

“I know it may sound hard to believe, but out here in this place, fighting this war, with what I have found here I have to say that I have never been happier.”

And that was where Geneva chose to stop and put the letter away. For her, it was the most wonderful place imaginable to stop because she could truly *feel* what Alan was experiencing. Now, across the thousands of miles, in addition to the love that bridged that distance, their mutual faith also built a bridge.

It was a strong bridge, a bridge that would withstand whatever winds blew against it...and Geneva had never been happier for, or with, her son, Alan.

After putting the letter away, she walked to the front door to go out into the garden that was located on the side of the house and do the work she had planned. As she reached for the door, before she could turn the handle and go out into the yard, the doorbell rang.

Since she was already reaching for the door handle anyway, she quickly opened the door and found, there on her doorstep, two immaculately dressed United States Marine officers.

“Mrs. Geneva Campbell?” asked one of them.

When Geneva nodded, the realization of who these men were and why they were likely on her doorstep began to reflect on her face and in her eyes. As it did so, the second Marine officer took his hat off and held it over his breast and said,

“Mrs. Campbell, we're with the United States Marine Corps.

“May we please come in?”

Chapter 3

“Stay well - Stay safe - Stay armed - Yorktown” – Matthew Riley

Ambassador's Office

Indian Embassy

Omsk, Siberia

BuhpendraGavanker had been back in Siberia for over a week. His time was filled with the duties of a full ambassador to a close ally nation. There were diplomatic issues, economic issues, military issues and cultural issues to address that kept him very busy, particularly after an absence of several weeks due to his trip to India.

He considered the city that he had returned to, where he now lived and worked. Years ago the Russians had designated Novosibirsk as the capitol of Siberia, taking it away from its traditional home in Omsk. But when Siberia had surprised the world and declared its independence from Russia in March of 2008, and the Indians and Chinese had backed the new Siberian government with over 500,000 men, one of the first official acts of the new government had been to move the capitol back to Omsk.

To begin with, while the move and transition to the new capital was taking place over the first twelve to eighteen months of independence, the Indian government had established its embassy in the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk. The Gavanker family had moved there to be with Buhpendra while he settled into his very busy schedule as the new ambassador. The relocation had not been easy for the family. There were many, many times when the father and husband of the home would simply not get home until long after everyone else had gone to bed, if at all. Despite his necessary absences, Buhpendra made up for his long periods away by spending genuinely quality time with his family when he was able to be with them.

As the seat of government settled in and became permanent in Omsk, the Indian embassy had naturally been moved there. Buhpendra had coordinated the entire move with his own government and with the Siberians...as well as with the Chinese, who seemed to be intent on having what Buhpendra considered to be undue influence in, and access to, almost everything in which he was involved. That move of the embassy had also necessitated a move for the entire Gavanker family. It was a move for which they had come to be thankful, over the last eight to ten months.

Buhpendra, while still working long days, had seemed to find more time to be home with the family...almost every night they could eat as a family and enjoy time together before bed time. But, ever since the meeting in Mysore, that had all changed again. Now his schedule was extremely hectic once again, similar to the earlier times of separation when he served in Krasnoyarsk.

As he contemplated the moves and his schedule, and as he considered the momentous events in Siberia over the last two years...and the even more momentous events that were soon coming, he thought to himself, "Can this genie ever be put back in the bottle?"

The very question he just posed to himself only served to show him again how difficult it was going to be for him stop almost incessantly focusing on the import and potential consequences of his Indian trip and the meetings in Mysore. The strain of living with the knowledge of President KP Narayannen's plan to make direct overtures to the western allies and the probable consequences of that plan were constantly weighing heavy on Buhpendra's mind.

Oh, make no mistake, the Ambassador to India agreed with the plan. He had always had trepidation about the overall war plan with which they had been involved for the last five years ... not to mention his nation's precarious alliance with China...but he had also understood the reasons for both. Now, with the

war fairing badly, those trepidations, and a desire for the preservation of his country, took precedence.

“I really wonder sometimes,” he thought to himself as he signed a number of requisitions, “If the war effort had continued as before, with all of the victories, would I have even entertained such a plan as this?”

Gavanker was honest enough with himself to know that he wouldn’t have. He also knew that his President also would never have considered such a notion either.

“KP is acting as much out of a hope for self preservation as he is for the preservation of the nation,” Buhpendra thought.

“He is hoping that a successful break with China and alignment with America will help him escape the war crimes trials and an injection.”

But all of that speculation was pointless now. What was important now was the hard cold reality of the plan and their commitment to it. Gavanker knew that it was too late to turn around now, and he knew that the timetable for implementing the actual contacts was fast approaching.

Buhpendra's part would begin the day after tomorrow, on the same day that the back channel contact with the Americans would be made. Because of his close former relationship to the Russian General Andrei Nosik, who was now a Field Martial, Gavanker would be making the contact with the Russians.

The contact would be initiated by secure, encrypted and scrambled communications channels across Siberia, over the front lines in the Urals, and into Russia. Buhpendra was relying on his former knowledge of Russian frequencies when he had worked together with Nosik who commanded the Russian security forces that protected the coal site in Gavank, Siberia, where Buhpendra had directed the Indian operation.

He hoped that the Russians would still monitor these frequencies and respond to his inquiries. Buhpendra had taken several of his deputies, several ranking cabinet members within the Siberian government, the head of Indian Security forces defending the diplomatic team within the country and the deputy head of Siberian defense forces in on the plan. They were all extremely dedicated and knew their parts in initiating this communiqué and in developing the plan once contact with the Russians had been made.

The plan Gavanker would implement in Siberia was very similar to the plan that the Indian President would implement within India to contact the Americans. Both Buhpendra and the President were staking everything, up to and including their own lives and the lives of their families, on a successful contact with the Americans and the Russians in order to devise and execute India's next move ... in order to plan for India's exit from the CAS and its capitulation to the western allies.

It was a high stakes game...and the stakes would ultimately pay off, but for only one of the two men.

September 21, 2010, 06:55, CST

Near the northern property line

Lazy-H Ranch

Outside of Montague, Texas

It was still warm in Texas. A high pressure system that had enveloped the state for the last several weeks had slowly moved slightly to the east, but not so far that conditions had changed too much. Outside of a few morning low clouds, the skies were fair, the winds light...and the temperatures remained warm.

Here in north central Texas, as was almost always the case this time of year...or, outside of those times when colder, dry air came barreling down from the north...it was also humid. Moisture from the Gulf of Mexico was perpetually funneled up across the entire eastern half of the state when these conditions were in place, and that moisture hung in the air on these early mornings in the bottomlands. You could almost see it...you could certainly feel it.

"Must be in the mid-eighties already," thought Jess Simmons as he continued to work the fields with his new John Deere tractor.

"Probably be over one hundred again today."

But that wasn't too bad. Jess had grown up working in Texas fields like these. He knew that before too long, probably in early October, a norther would come down from the north and push the warm humid air clear down into Mexico, heralding the advent of autumn, when temperatures would moderate down into the seventies during the days and the cool fifties at night. He always looked forward to that time of the year.

He'd been home from the war over a year now, and he was about as healed as he was going to get from the injuries he had sustained while fighting in Syria.

His head injuries had completely healed, or so it seemed. No more throbbing and aching...no more sudden headaches. The doctors had worked miracles.

"...and so did the faith and love of Cindy and so many others," he thought.

His leg was a different matter. It was a miracle in itself that he had not lost it...and the doctors had brought his function and use of that leg very far along.

But, even after all of the operations and therapy, his left leg was still almost an inch shorter than his right, and his knee and ankle were difficult to bend much more than about fifty percent of what would be considered normal.

The result was that Jess was forced to walk with a perpetual limp. Oh, it was not nearly as bad as it had been a year ago...and he was able to get around quite well. But it was noticeable, and he was certainly not capable of some of the harder work that he otherwise was used to doing, and would be doing out here on the ranch if he could.

"I'll just have to learn to live with it," he continued to himself as the tractor reached the northern edge of the field.

"... and be grateful that I can even get out here and work at all on the place and enjoy the beauty of the timbered hills and the Clear Creek Valley up here near its source."

Thinking about the scenery there overlooking the valley caused him to reflect on the great void in his and Cindy's life. Their lost son, Billy, who had loved this country as much as his father and who had spent countless hours exploring it, hunting on it and fishing in the creek.

Over two and half years ago Billy had been lost when the AZ-1H Viper attack helicopter he had been piloting had gone down hard into the Pacific Ocean off the Australian coast. Having seen the video of that crash countless times...and having been an attack helicopter pilot himself, Jess knew that the chances of his son surviving that crash, especially since it had occurred out to sea as the allies were in a headlong retreat, were nil.

He remembered breaking the almost sure knowledge of that fact to his dear wife Cindy...and how it had felt to deprive her of a hope that their son was still alive and breathing, somewhere. There were times he regretted having to dash her hopes...there were times he felt guilty about it...there were times to this day where he held out some hope himself...but he could not deny the cold reality of what he saw and what that told him as a professional...which was what he had ultimately felt compelled to share with his wife.

"Thank you, dear God, for Cindy," he muttered in silent prayer as the thought of her pain rested heavily in his mind. "I don't know how I could have gotten through the loss of Billy, or my own rehabilitation, without her. Even during the unbelievable heartache and mourning she went through, she was always there, never missing a beat..."

"Dear Lord, how has she been able to do it?"

Jess Simmons was sincere in his prayer and question to God. He could hardly fathom her ability to help until he remembered a scripture from his childhood.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."

...and he knew. He knew that Cindy was only following the example that the God Himself had set...in the midst of grief, in the midst of loss...He gave.

...and so was Cindy...and he knew that her example had helped him to do the same thing

"...she's my own very special angel and heroine."

September 21, 2010, that same time

The kitchen at the ranch house

Lazy-H Ranch

Outside of Montague, Texas

Bacon was sizzling and its fragrance was filling the air. There were biscuits in the oven and a bowl of fresh made gravy was warming on one of the burners.

“All I have to do is get the eggs fried, the juice out and the table set, so I'd better call Jess in,” Cindy thought as she reviewed the country breakfast she was preparing.

She walked over into the foyer where their dual CB (Citizens Band) / SSB (Single Side Band) radio was mounted to the wall and turned the CB radio to channel 14.

“Comanche, this is the home lodge. Do you copy?”

After a few seconds, during which Cindy could imagine Jess hearing the call and reaching up to grab the mic and keying the transmitter, the response came back.

“Home lodge, you've got the Comanche. What's up babe?”

“Well, if you're close to the south side of the field and start back right now, you can get here at about the perfect time to get a warm breakfast.

“What's it going to be?”

Jess didn't have to think...long years told him that unless there was something really pressing and important, the best thing to do was not to let the meal go cold.

“I'm on my way...see you in about ten minutes.

“Comanche clear.”

Cindy smiled, knowing that if something important had been afoot, he'd have let her know. As it was, he was going to arrive at just the right time.

“Home Lodge clear,” she responded.

For just a brief moment, she almost keyed up her mic and made another call...but then realized her mistake and put it in its cradle and started back to the kitchen.

As she did, she thought, “No more calls to Billy the Kid.”

As always, when she thought of him, she was saddened.

“Will it always be like this?” she wondered to herself.

“She would often forget for an instant that he was gone and wonder how he would look, what he would think or say...how he would be feeling, what he would be doing...what he *was* doing?”

Somehow she knew it would be...but that the feelings would subside and be less poignant, even as they had become in the last year. Not that the hurt of missing him would ever really go away...she couldn't imagine that, but that the realization of his goodness and what that meant to her in her faith, would allow her to accept God's will for him...that He had called Billy home, and that they would be together again.

“Oh, what comfort that brings...I don't know how I could or would handle it without knowing that,” she thought to herself as she set the orange juice pitcher on the table and began putting out their two place settings.

“It's just without his body...without a grave we can visit and tend, there's just not the closure Jess and I need.

“Please, dear Lord...hear my prayer,” she prayed.

“Let us, in Your will, find closure and the Peace you have promised,” she concluded.

Completing the short prayer, she stopped and briefly listened to the feelings in her heart...to the spirit of things and what she knew was the Holy Ghost...and she knew that somehow, someday, she and Jess would find the closure they sought.

She had no idea how soon or what form it would take.

As she experienced these feelings, she was just putting the eggs on the plates and setting the bacon, biscuits, and the bowl of warm gravy on the table in the breakfast room. When she heard the familiar swing of the front door, she knew that Jess was home for breakfast, and she rushed to meet him so she could share the experience with him.

September 22, 2010, 04:30 local time

Communications Station

Control room

USS Jimmy Carter, SSN 23

Captain Simon Thompson listened as his communications officer related what their sensors were picking up.

“Okay, let's start from the beginning and rehash this one more time. You are telling me that the UAV has picked up a signal from the Indian mainland on the old microwave channels we had set up with the Indian navy during exercises back in 2003?”

The Lieutenant responded in the affirmative and then went back over what he had already explained to his captain. He was glad to do so, to check his figures and his translations one more time. But they came up with the same conclusion.

“Yes, sir, that is exactly what I am telling you.

“Our UR-23 001 has picked up a signal from the Indian mainland that is being transmitted using protocols and security encryption that is in keeping with the 2003 naval exercises.

“Sir, they are telling us that they want to make official contact with the United States or other allied officers or representatives capable of negotiating with them.”

The Captain needed to verify the supposed location from which the transmission was emanating.

“Once more, tell me about the encryption and the access codes regarding the message.”

“Sir, the encryption matches exactly our maneuvers and procedures for that period, the access and priority codes indicate it is a flash message from the head of the Indian government, sir, from the President of India.”

The Captain considered the ramifications.

He was in enemy waters captaining a vessel that the entire enemy force structure would literally do almost anything to find, prosecute and destroy. Of his full load of weapons, he had less than half left to him, consisting of:

8 Mk-77 SCWS supercavitating torpedoes

8 Mk-48 ADCAPs advanced conventional torpedoes

7 Tomahawk SLCMs land attack cruise missiles.

It was entirely possible that the enemy had gotten some wind of his current patrol within the Indian Ocean and was trying to lure him into revealing his location.

On the other hand, if this communication represented an actual contact with either the government of India, or any significant dissident or insurgent group within India, it had the potential of being huge.

“Okay, put together the following communication via the global surveyor network to CINCPAC. Have it read as follows:

“JC received comm from Indian government.

“The message is using 2003 joint exercise protocols and indicates it is from the Indian President's office.

“They want to open negotiations with any American representative possible.

“Please advise.”

That was a long message, but the Captain needed to transmit the essence of the communication to CINCPAC so the proper decision could be made.

September 22, 2010, 1 minute later

85,000 ft over the Indian Ocean

The high-flying Global Surveyor III reconnaissance and communication aircraft received the compressed, encrypted burst of data from the Jimmy Carter's own UR-23 UAV and transmitted it on.

Capable of loitering in a lazy figure eight pattern over an area for two weeks or more, these latest generation aircraft were the highest flying, most stealthy, most enduring and most advanced UAVs yet produced. Their ultra-efficient engines, their ultra-light and strong composite construction, their tremendous wingspan and the relatively large payload capacity made them well suited for the missions they performed.

In this case, this URGs III, was part of a network of such aircraft that the United States kept up at all times over the Pacific and southern and eastern Indian Oceans to facilitate communications.

The USS Jimmy Carter had been assigned to a patrol area for its mission that would keep its own UR-23 UAV within range of this particular Global Surveyor if the need arose for communication.

Now, with the need at hand, the message was being conveyed through a network of six different URGs aircraft, interspersed with ground stations where possible, and back to CINCPAC headquarters in Hawaii.

Within five minutes the entire message had been received and decoded. It was brought to the attention of CINCPAC himself within another few minutes by his deputy commander who was on duty at that particular time.

From there, it was communicated via satellite uplink, using the Point Conception Space Station, to Washington, DC and the White House, where the President's National Security Advisor read it twenty minutes later...less than an hour after it had been transmitted.

Less than an hour later, a video conference was arranged which included the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and CINCPAC.

September 22, 2010, two hours later

The White House Situation Room

Washington, DC

President John Bowers bowed his head and uttered a silent prayer as the digital plasma displays went black and as the other attendees left the room as he had requested. For a moment he was left alone with his secret service detail, and he bowed his head.

“Dear God in Heaven, please let this be a true opportunity to shorten this horrific conflict and all of the suffering that has gone along with it...please help us restore peace and liberty to this shattered and broken world.”

The State Department personnel were already making their contacts...new war plans would be detailed, reviewed, critiqued and then detailed again in the Pentagon and the war colleges...hundreds of thousands of American personnel would soon be on the move...intelligence assets in very dangerous places behind

enemy lines would be contacted and given their orders...allies would make their plans and moves...and somewhere off the coast of India, a valiant American Captain would take his vessel deeper into harms way to make more direct contacts with a former aggressor and belligerent nation in the hopes of making the marked difference in answer to the very prayer that the President had just uttered.

October 12, 2010, 02:50 local time

Command Post outside Presidential Residence

New Delhi, India

RahmishPatel, along with the Defense Minister, monitored the command frequency as the special internal security battalion made its way into the Presidential compound. What started as a scuffle at the gate, turned into a hot firefight as the Indian forces under the Defense Minister's command made their way across the courtyard under fire from the Presidential security force.

There were just too many personnel in the special security battalion and they had been specifically trained for this mission...to battle a smaller contingent of Indian troops who would be loyal to the constitutionally elected president. The surprise of Indian troops under the Defense Minister's command assaulting the Presidential compound in such numbers was telling on the Presidential security detail which, though highly trained was much smaller, and those forces under the command of the Defense Minister, who was following the dictates of his political and ideological leader, Rahmish Patel, soon entered the presidential residence itself.

There, on the lower floor, another fierce firefight ensued.

“That fool,” thought Patel.

“Did he really think that all of his treachery and treason would go unnoticed?”

“Did he really think that the Indian people and their true leaders would allow him to take the gains of a decade and turn them over to our enemies in a day?...a week?...or a month?”

“Well, now, President KP Narayannen...or should I say, the former President...will pay for his high treason with his life.”

Turning to the Chinese liaison officer at his side, and catching the attention of the Defense Minister who nodded grimly, the Indian Foreign Minister, issued the fateful directive.

“Colonel Chian, you may deploy your troops into the Presidential residences and either capture or kill former President KP Narayannen and those in league with him.

“...and, if you are in agreement, please pass the execute order for our joint Operation Mongoose on to your superiors.”

October 12, 2010, that same time

Secure Command and Control Facility

100 Meters beneath the Presidential Residence

New Delhi, India

KP Narayannen had been listening to the progress of the battle raging above him as he feverishly issued orders to those military forces still loyal to him in the New Delhi area and in those regions of the country where his carefully crafted plans were being carried out this morning.

The problem was, of course, that powerful individuals, agencies and forces within his government and military were not standing idly by. They apparently had plans of their own, and those plans were clearly aimed at thwarting what the Indian President was trying to accomplish.

“They are too late to stop it,” he said to himself as he approved and then ordered transmitted the official declaration severing the alliance with the Coalition of Asian States and declaring India's official capitulation to, and cooperation with, American, British and Australian forces.

Within seconds the communications officer in the command bunker notified the president that the transmission had been effectively jammed by powerful electronic warfare equipment both on the ground near the facility and in the air over it.

“Keep trying to circumvent the jamming”, the President indicated.

“How about the land line transmission?”

“Was it able to get out?”

The communications officer responded by letting the President know that the land line communication had indeed successfully been sent to all points to the south and west of New Delhi, but that the lines to the north and east were down and not responding.

As this was occurring, the head of the Presidential security detail rushed into the room.

“Mr. President, we must leave now and get you and your staff out through the emergency access tunnel.

“The traitors have been joined by a large contingent of Chinese Special Forces and they are now overrunning our positions above.

“It will only be a short time before...”

There were several prolonged bursts of automatic weapons fire down the hall from the control room in which the President was sitting. Almost immediately, three more members of the Presidential security detail backed into the room, firing as they did so.

Two of them were knocked off their feet by bursts of automatic weapons fire from outside the room as the President and his Chief of Staff were hustled towards the back of the room towards an already opened, armored door that led to the emergency tunnel.

The President, his Chief of Staff and two senior level cabinet members hurried through the armored door with the chief of the security detail. As they did so, three large concussion grenades bounced into the room and exploded with thunderous roars. Except for those already through the door and into the access tunnel, everyone else in the room was either knocked unconscious or stunned into submission by the blasts.

As several Indian and Chinese Special Forces personnel rushed into the room, the armored doors of the access tunnel clicked shut and sealed themselves. It would take plasma welders over two hours to cut through those doors and follow the President and his remaining personnel.

By the time that was accomplished, KP Narayannen and those with him would have long since reached the end of the tunnel and stepped out into what they hoped would be friendly forces and a quick flight away from New Delhi to those more friendly and loyal places to the south and west.

Instead, they stepped out of the tunnel right into the hands of Rahmish Patel, who had personally joined a second combined Indian and Chinese Special Forces team after they had secured the exit to the tunnel from the President's forces that had been guarding it.

Upon seeing the President and his remaining team members apprehended, and once he was assured that all of them had been disarmed, Patel addressed KP Narayannen.

“Mr. Narayannen, you are under arrest for treason against this nation and against the people of India.”

Turning to the commander of the Indian contingent of Special Forces that were now covering the President and those with him, Rahmish continued.

“Captain, please take these prisoners away and hold them each in solitary confinement where they will await a swift and speedy public trial.”

October 12, 2010

Along the Siwalik Range

Along the Brahmaputra River

And on the Coast near Cochin, India

As KP Narayannen was taken into custody in New Delhi by Rahmish Patel and those forces loyal to him, the fateful plans that the Indian President had made were playing themselves out...along with the plans of the forces that were committed to countering them.

To the north of New Delhi, along highways that the Chinese had built right up to the borders of India, and that the Indians themselves had then constructed through the major river valleys that penetrated the Silwalik Mountain Range, hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops were entering India. Through huge tunnels, across wide bridges and along the superhighways that had been constructed to facilitate the immense trade that had been going on ever since the creation of the Coalition of Asian States five years earlier, division after division of Chinese troops, tanks and mechanized vehicles now traveled at high speed.

Those highways had also been built with foresight, looking forward towards military logistics and transportation. That foresight was paying off now as Indian forces loyal to Rahmish Patel and the CAS facilitated the blitzkrieg invasion of India by the Chinese, who were converging on and being funneled along the both Sutlej and Ganges River into the interior of India. Their aim was to forestall and checkmate the capitulation and cooperation plans that KP Narayannen and those loyal to him had worked out with the western allies.

In addition to the incursions along the Ganges and the Sutlej Rivers, the Chinese were also making a massive incursion into the eastern part of the nation, in the Arunachal Pradesh along the Brahmaputra River. In these areas, Indian troops loyal to the war effort and the alliance of the CAS also facilitated the blitzkrieg entry of several hundred thousand Chinese troops into India in a pincer movement aimed at the heart of the subcontinent.

Within ten days, the numbers of Chinese troops massed in many separate locations along the borders in these two areas and entering into India along the routes indicated would swell to a force of over ten million. The Americans used two of their last three orbital bombardment inventory from the Lewis and Clark II expedition to attempt to thwart this Chinese buildup and incursions...but although upwards of two hundred thousand personnel were killed or wounded by these orbital attacks, the Chinese had dispersed their troop strength enough to keep the attacks from seriously challenging or stopping the massive infusion of forces into India.

While all of this was occurring, an initial allied force of over four hundred thousand American, British, Canadian, and Brazilian troops was landing to the north and south of the Indian seaport and major naval base of Cochin. The allied troops were being flown on to the beaches by the largest air armada in history, centered around the largest contingent of American C-90B transport aircraft ever assembled...much larger than the original C-90 force that landed American troops in Siberia almost eighteen months before. The air assault force was itself being supported by the largest combined submarine force ever assembled. These forces consisted of two of the three American Sea Wolf class nuclear attack submarines, twelve Virginia class American nuclear attack submarines, two of the Ohio class SSGN nuclear cruise missile submarines, ten Alaska Class SSTN nuclear transport submarines, and four of the new Olympic Class SSCVN nuclear aircraft carrying submarines.

This was the combat debut of the Olympic class, which was a major revision of the huge Alaska class design, carried twenty four VTOL F-24 aircraft, four E-22C VTOL AEW aircraft, six S-22C VTOL ASW aircraft and up to ten UR UAV aircraft. In addition the SSCVN submarines were fully outfitted with a full array of torpedoes, including the Mk-77 supercavitating torpedoes, along with a total of forty-eight vertical launch tubes that could accommodate anti-air missiles and other missiles up to and including the AGM-999 Hail Storm cruise missiles and the latest American Tomahawk SLCMs.

This fleet of submarines was in place to provide the logistical, air cover and precision air and fire support necessary for the allied troops who were landing around Cochin and who would then be advancing to the north and east to confront the oncoming Chinese forces. In that role, the allies were receiving major support from friendly Indian forces in the area who had been gathering there under the auspice of future

combined armed operations being prepared to reinforce the Indian operation in Australia.

Two Indian carrier battle groups, three entire wings of Indian attack and air superiority fighters and twelve divisions of armor and mechanized infantry were in place to support the American, British and Australian landings. All of the leaders of these forces were loyal to President KP Narayannen and his effort to make peace with the west and avoid the total destruction of India that he felt sure awaited his nation if they attempted to resist the west to the bitter end.

What KP Narayannen and his allies had not considered was the depth or breadth of the warfare that would result from the attempt as the Chinese rushed in millions of men to thwart the allied effort of opening up another major front against them on mainland Asia. One of the largest and bloodiest campaigns of the entire war would ensue on the sub-continent and it would not just be a war of army against army...it would be a horrific civil war pitting family against family, father against son, hamlet against hamlet, caste against caste, and belief systems and ideologies against themselves.

...and it would not be limited to the sub-continent.

October 12, 2010, throughout the day

Ambassador's Office

Indian Embassy

Omsk, Siberia

Ambassador Buhpendra Gavanker paced anxiously in his office, monitoring what he could of the day's events in India, and here in Siberia in his own area of responsibility. His chief of staff came in regularly with reports and updates and he listened to both the UHF and VHF radio consoles which had been installed on his desk. They were monitoring all of the relevant Indian, Siberian and Chinese frequencies, as well as the frequencies that had been communicated to him by the Russians as a part of the plan.

He was also watching specially installed video monitors of the Omsk International Airport, the two Siberian Army barracks, the three Indian Army and security forces barracks, and the Chinese barracks across town near their own embassy. If there was to be trouble, it would probably start there.

He was very concerned about his wife and children. If things went as well as could be expected, they would be exposed to great danger as the fighting commenced here in Omsk proper and in the surrounding countryside. If things went badly, it was likely that all of them would be dead by tomorrow morning...and in all probability, their deaths would not be easy.

"Is there anything more I could have done?" he asked himself as the report he had been waiting for was broadcast over the radio.

"Mongoose flight now entering Omsk International Airport airspace and requesting clearance for immediate approach and landing."

That communication let him know several things. First, he knew that the air corridors he and his compatriots had prepared for the incursion of Russian aircraft into Siberia broadcasting Indian IFF signals had worked. Second, it let him know that the element of surprise was still in his favor, despite the momentous activities going on to the south in India and the heightened levels of alert and security Indian and Chinese forces were now on worldwide.

“It helps, I suppose, that we have the contacts and level of commitment from so many critical players, both militarily and diplomatically,” he thought.

Buhpendra was being extremely meek in his analysis...the principle contact and player was Buhpendra himself. It was Buhpendra's efforts, and the high respect and esteem in which he was held, that had allowed for the development of the entire Siberian part of the operation. That respect and esteem was shared not only amongst the Indians themselves, but also amongst the Siberians. And none of that even began to speak to the one factor that made the entire thing even remotely possible overall. That critical factor was something else that Buhpendra brought to the table himself and was what gave hope for peace to the area and a real possibility for eventual permanency to Siberia independence.

...and that was Buhpendra Gavanker's personal relationship with Field Marshal Andrei Nosik.

Nosik had been a rising star in the Russian military for several years now...ever since his assignment to Siberia as a Colonel in charge of the security forces protecting the Indian petroleum and low sulfur coking operations and the nearby Chinese cobaltite site after the signing of the Siberian Economic Development treaty in 2005. Throughout the war, as a result of his fine leadership and ability to make the tough decisions at the right time and place, Nosik's star had risen from Colonel to General and then to Field Marshall.

That star had recently climbed another notch on the overall Russian military chain of command because Nosik had been recently promoted to be the highest ranking officer for the Russian Army, and in charge of world-wide ground operations. In effect, he was now the American equivalent of the Chief of the Army in the American Joint Chiefs of Staff, and this made for an opportunity in Siberia that neither he nor Buhpendra and the Indian government, intent on reaching an agreement with the west, could afford to pass up.

So, when the Russians had heard the communication out of Siberia on their old frequencies, and when that communication had ultimately found its way to Andrei Nosik's attention, things had progressed rapidly. The plans were swift in their making, and bold in their scope. Buhpendra knew that Nosik hoped, with the successful implementation of the Mongoose plan, in one audacious move to break the bloody stalemate that had developed to the west in the Ural Mountains. There, massive concentrations of UAR and CAS troops were proving immovable as they held back the relentless attempts by Russian and European forces, with significant American technological help, to break across those ranges and into Siberia proper, and ever closer to China and India from the north and west.

“I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall in his office when he received my reply to his question proving my personal authenticity,” Buhpendra thought to himself as he reflected upon the events that had led them to this point.

“Share with us a personal experience in an immediate and direct communication that would only be privy to the Field Marshal and Dr. Gavanker, indeed!

“I can only hope that some of his superiors were in attendance to hear of his overindulgence with Vodka on that evening in March four and a half years ago when he and I celebrated our first year in Siberia in his

office,” Buhpendra continued to himself.

After the reviews and promotions we both received from our superiors that week we deserved to indulge ourselves somewhat. But the description of his dancing around his office and onto his desk in his red Long Johns to Tchaikovsky should have raised a few eyebrows and made for a few laughs at the good Field Marshal's expense.

“...and apparently it worked well enough. There were no more questions regarding authenticity after that.”

And with the whole, brilliantly planned operation posing as first a strategic withdrawal from the Urals, with Indian authentication at the highest levels, and then with authenticated communications of a vast Russian breakthrough and wild retreat, apparently the storyline was working.

“Nosik is nothing short of a military mastermind. His is such a simple and direct plan...and yet so outlandish!”

As the ambassador completed his thoughts, he saw what he had been waiting for dropping from the cloud cover over the Omsk International Airport.

First, a flight of four SU-37 aircraft roared down from the clouds and over the field. They were painted in standard Indian colors, but they were not in the Indian inventory. They were brand new Russian aircraft, and part of the air armada that was descending on Omsk as a part of operation Mongoose. Buhpendra knew that there were many more escort aircraft above the airport...as many as eighty now converging here to give cover and support to the operations that would soon commence.

Then, he saw the first one drop out of the clouds. Buhpendra could not have imagined that such a large aircraft could exist...and yet, here it came, one of the vaunted American T-90B transport aircraft...and then another, and another, and finally the fourth and last. All of them landing on the main runway at the airport and then taxiing up to prearranged spots on the open tarmac and disgorging so much equipment and so many men.

Now...there was movement from the Chinese barracks and one of the Siberian and one of the Indian barracks. Armored personnel carriers exiting the bases only to be taken under fire by Mongoose Operation-friendly forces already stationed there. Firefights were developing at all three places, but the Chinese were quickly gaining the upper hand in their area as tanks and attack helicopter joined in the fight to quell those resisting their desire to exit their base and speed over to the airport.

A huge, bright flash obliterated the leading elements of the Chinese armored column and then video from that area was lost.

Buhpendra's phone was now ringing incessantly...but he let it ring. Unless brought specific word by his chief of staff regarding specific, planned communications, he would not answer the phone anymore this day.

His thoughts turned to his family and he hoped for their safety in the bunker forty kilometers to the north where they were located with Special Forces guarding them and access to air evacuation should it become necessary. All of the plans were in place and now all they could do was wait, hope and pray as the drama unfolded.

Buhpendra knew that there would be surprises, failures and disappointments. That was the nature of

such operations...both militarily and politically. Rarely, if ever, did everything go exactly as planned. He could only hope that the successes and achievements of this day would outweigh the failures and disappointments and that his family and he would come safely through it.

Whatever the outcome, Buhpendra knew that the final contest and battle were now irrevocably joined in Siberia. He and his comrades would at the very least, despite any mortal fate, be comforted in the fact that they had dared against all odds and at great risk to achieve great things. At the very best, they would hasten the day that this part of the world and their own peoples enjoyed the blessings and tranquility of peace and prosperity together, and they would live to see it and tell about it.

They had aspired to worthy and good goals, and they had not shirked or avoided the opportunity fulfill them, irrespective of the risk involved.

...and they had done so at a time when just such risks and daring exploits on behalf of their peoples and their eventual liberty were desperately needed and called for.

October 13, 2010, 06:50 local time

Politburo Executive Committee Meeting

Secret Hardened Facility

100 km North of Beijing

“Order! We will have order in this room or I will have those who are unable to restrain themselves forcibly removed! I promise each and every one of you, at this stage, in this crisis, any members of this body who are required to be removed in such a fashion will not be returning...not to this committee, not to the Politburo, not to their homes.

“I hope I have made myself clear.”

As Jien Zemin completed his all too real threat and glared at the entire assembly, Lu Pham glanced around the room at the other members of the executive committee. Lu was actually glad that Jien was willing to use his power and authority in this particular manner to restore order as the news of the disasters in India and Siberia was relayed to them. Lu believed such sternness was necessary.

Lu was no stranger to bad news...even after all of the years of achievement here in the People's Republic of China he remembered well his younger years. Bad news had been the norm in those early days in North Vietnam. One defeat after another...one failure after another had beset the north in their long struggle against the Americans. But in the end, it had been the Americans who had left Vietnam and the North who had emerged victorious. Lu had no doubts that if the people gathered in this room, and by projection, if the forces that they represented and led, were able to muster the steel and the will, then history would repeat itself, even with the disturbing news that they had received this morning.

Lu Pham listened as Jien Zenim, now having achieved the order and quiet that he desired, continued on.

“I want to know how this could have happened. Clearly there has been treachery at the highest levels...certainly within the Indian government, and perhaps within our own.

“I have instructed our intelligence services to use whatever means necessary to root out those involved and then to pursue them with all diligence...even those who may have escaped us for the time being. An abject example must be made of each one...no matter how long it takes, no matter where it leads.

“I am instructing our research and development teams, and Lu Pham, this is directed principally at you, to redouble our focus and efforts on technological systems that can counter our enemies, particularly the Americans.

“Their orbital bombardment is proving monumentally difficult to overcome, even with the tremendous numeric advantage of our forces. Their new supercavitating weapons seem to be the equal of, or better than, our own. Their active stealth capabilities are rendering our *ta shih* systems less and less effective. What must we do to regain the advantage? Lu, do you have any answer? Do you have any news for us in this area?”

Lu was surprised to have been pulled so early into a direct conversational and presentation role in the meeting. Despite this, Lu stood with confidence where he was, turned to the majority of the executive counsel, and spoke.

“Mr. President, my comrades. It is true that the Americans are fielding more and more technologically advanced weaponry, and that they are doing it with surprising speed. But we are not defeated yet, nor shall we be as long as there is breath left in my body.

“Before speaking to some of our own technological breakthroughs and advances, I would like to address this very point...our spirit and our will. As most of you know, I worked in my early years on projects for what was then the North Vietnamese government. Despite whatever bad news we may have heard today, I tell you now it is nothing compared to the bad news we received in North Vietnam during the late 1960's and early 1970's on a daily basis...in fact, right up until we were victorious.

“In those days, the Americans literally bombed us to the negotiating table and they took away everything from those negotiations that they desired. We signed treaties indicating that they had, in effect, won the war...but their victory in 1972 was a hollow one. They wanted anything that they could point to as victory so they could withdraw. So, we gave it to them, and they did.

“But why did they want to withdraw? Why were they so desperate for any *victory* ?

“I can tell you why. It was because we bled them. For every man they lost, we lost twenty or more, over a million to their fifty thousand. But we were willing to lose them in the fight in order to win the war...and in the end...we did.

“We must have the strength and the will to persevere in the same way today.

“You all know the history. Two years after their so-called victory, we simply ignored the treaty and invaded. The Americans did not have the will or the stomach for the fight. Their citizenry had had enough. The *anti-war* segment of their society was now calling the shots. There would have been more protests, and maybe even riots in the streets, had America chosen to re-open old war wounds by returning and making certain that the treaty terms were met. The potential protestors and rioters were our staunchest allies, in that respect. So America sat by and watched us do what we had promised by treaty not to do. And they abandoned their equipment, they abandoned their honor and they abandoned their friends and

allies...and we emerged victorious.

“We can have the same spirit and the same will today. We can instill it into those who work with and for us. If we succeed in doing that...then all of our technological wonders will be icing on the cake and they will hasten our ultimate victory.”

The members of the executive committee were mesmerized by Lu's presentation and his attitude and demeanor. They took heart from it and Jien Zenim stood back and watched it happen, watched as this foreigner, who had meant so much to their successes in the past, now helped him turn what almost any other leader would define as an unmitigated disaster into a rallying point.

The technology that Lu described was hopeful, particularly the hidden particle beam research facilities and the ground based batteries that were about to be employed. But Jien Zemin recognized that of all the military leaders in this room, and of all the political leaders as well-excepting perhaps himself, Lu Pham more fully embodied the spirit and fundamental principles of the greatest Chinese war leader of all time, Sun Tsu, than anyone else in the room.

...and he was his philosophy in no uncertain terms. In fact, he was explaining it in layman's terms, to the entire Executive Committee of the Politburo of the People's Republic of China at a time when they needed it the most.

October 20, 2010, 01:21

Promontory Point

Overlooking CAS Position

Far North Central York Peninsula, Australia

LeonCampbell watched through his sixth generation night vision goggles as the enemy encampment...and it was a large one...slept.

His goggles included an independent power source mounted in his helmet that allowed the goggles to function. They worked night or day, automatically adjusting to the light conditions, and they had digital readouts in a miniature heads-up display that was automatically generated in each goggle in such a way so as to appear as a single readout to the user.

Based on that display, which was tied into his regimental net, Leon could see that the enemy did not sleep blindly. They were not incompetent and they were not inexperienced in the least. They had set up both physical and electronic sentries that extended out more than a mile, around the perimeter of their camp. They had roving patrols that extended out several miles beyond that, including a large one that frequented this very promontory.

Even though the enemy was clearly very experienced, the American Marine Master Sergeant and this squad could be considered extremely experienced as well. Leon had no doubt that his squad of Marines could fight the Chinese platoon-sized patrol to a standstill and defeat it, particularly with the type of

support that they could call in. But he also knew that such an action would defeat the principle goal of the mission upon which he was embarked...to find, and mark for attack, the heavy concentrations of enemy forces.

Ruining the successful accomplishment of that goal was something Leon was not going to allow to happen.

With this encampment, he knew that they had discovered what he considered to be the mother lode of enemy forces remaining on the peninsula and so there would be no effort to engage the enemy platoon. In fact, he had done and would do all in his power to avoid such a fire fight.

After more than four months of continuous fighting, the large allied task force to which Leon had been attached in late May had succeeded in pushing the enemy forces on the York Peninsula back to the very northern tip of the peninsula. There had been several major battles and many small skirmishes in the process. The small fire fights generally consisted of brief, very violent confrontations in thick foliage where allied and enemy patrols or medium sized maneuvering forces ran across each other. The larger battles had occurred as allied forces bottled up large segments of enemy forces, or as enemy forces attempted to counter attack and lure allied forces into traps laid by a very crafty Chinese commander in chief on the Peninsula.

Though heavy losses had been inflicted on the enemy, allied losses were also heavier than expected and the enemy had not been either maneuvered into, or caught in, a position where a final decisive blow could be delivered.

It had not been an easy task and Leon now had several more close friends who would never be returning home alive. The enemy was determined, and seemed to be becoming more determined, as they were pushed further and further to the north, particularly of late.

At this juncture, both sides were suffering from a decided lack of airborne reconnaissance. This was particularly true for the allies since the Southern Star station had been taken down by the Chinese. In addition to that loss, as they pushed the enemy slowly and bloodily further and further north, the enemy had benefited from significant access to more and more air cover from New Guinea and other islands to the north where the allies had not yet penetrated. This allowed them to engage allied air power and particularly to interdict any Global Surveyor or other UAVs that the allies tried to launch for reconnaissance purposes.

But the situation represented a doubled-edged sword because enemy forces suffered from the same disadvantage. Allied air support, both ground support and air superiority, was located ever further north as the allies moved there. No more than twenty miles behind the front lines, the allies massed significant Marine F/A-24 aircraft whose vertical take-off and landing ability allowed them to be right there over the battlefield in significant numbers whenever needed, or to interdict enemy air assaults as they came in support of enemy ground action.

Within a hundred miles of the front, new airfields had been constructed and more conventional allied fighter and attack aircraft were also available.

All in all, it amounted to a stalemate in the air and this ensured that any reconnaissance was obtained in what Leon called *the old fashioned way*. And that meant boots on the ground...boots like Leon's and his squad here on this promontory.

“And tonight we have hit the jackpot”, Leon thought to himself as he surveyed the enemy encampment

from his concealed position.

There was significant armor over to the right, three hundred meters from the small stream running through the middle of the camp. They had anti-air missile batteries stationed in an umbrella around three corners of the camp, facing toward the major threat axis...towards allied forces, with another two batteries to the rear at the last corner and in the center. There were three large bivouac areas for troops and a large motor pool. What clearly looked to be a fuel and supply depot and then the defensive positions.

“These guys plan on being here a while...like maybe they actually plan on defending this spot”, Leon continued.

“Great...let them prepare their defenses, that will be all the better for our purposes. There must be seventy-five or eighty thousand troops in that valley alone.”

Leon did not hesitate for a moment, or act with any trepidation for what he was about to perform. This was particularly true after the heartbreaking news of his own brother's death had been delivered to him two weeks ago.

This encampment was the enemy, a large enemy force positioned on the flank of ongoing allied operations in the interior...operations that were going very well indeed, having pushed the Indian and Chinese forces well beyond Alice Springs, but which would be threatened if the enemy were allowed to maintain any foothold whatsoever in position here on the York Peninsula. This enemy encampment also represented the local embodiment of the very real forces of evil that had taken two of the three people Leon had been closest to away from him, and had caused similar anguish for millions of others of innocents throughout the world.

No, there was no question, they must be destroyed...as many of them as possible.

And Leon and his squad had it within their power to facilitate just that very thing.

Finally, some of the highest impact weapons available to the allies had been approved, procured and released for the fighting on the York peninsula. With a force of thirty of the new ADCAP Air-launched and Sea-launched Hail Storm cruise missiles now at the task force's disposal, Leon knew that the entire valley over there would be made into a killing field, and that not one allied soldier would be lost in the exchange if everything went as planned...of course assuming that he and his team were able to remain undetected.

Leon had every intention of doing both...accomplishing his mission by rendering that valley over there essentially lifeless, and remaining undetected in the process.

“Gunny, on my order, prepare to transmit each of the coordinates I gave you and their description. Then have the Lance Corporal and his team hold the laser designators on the money.

“I'm going to make one last visual sweep of the area.”

As he swept the area from west to east, Leon came to the end of the encampment and what he knew were the outer electronic sensor devices and human sentries that the enemy had on the perimeter of their base. He panned another three hundred meters west and then suddenly swept his field of view back to the east.

There...about two hundred and fifty meters beyond the enemy's outer perimeter, but well within range of

their sensors if they happened to detect their presence was a group of unidentified people. In a large overgrown hollow, Leon's sensors picked them up. From this angle, he could just make out their heat signatures and could now see why they had gone undetected by the enemy. They were in the shelter of a low ridge of small hillocks which were overgrown with brush with what appeared to be large dark areas, or caves, at the bottom.

Leon could just make out the forms of two of the individuals, facing the enemy encampment just below the ridge line and well concealed in brush...but in a position to watch the enemy.

“Gunny, before you transmit the coordinates, contact HQ and ask them if we have a force of twenty-five or thirty people within three hundred yards of the west side of the enemy encampment we have been preparing to target.”

The grizzled old Gunnery Sergeant responded immediately to Leon's request.

“Roger that...I'll ask.”

A few seconds later, the answer came back.

“That's a flat negatory on the friendly force near the enemy MS...we're it.”

By the time the answer came through, Leon had figured out in all probability who those people were, and what they were doing there so close to the enemy.

“Well then, I'll bet that bunch must be another one of those civilian refugee groups we've seen the past few months in here.

“About half the time, they seem to get caught up in the fighting, or just get in the way of those animals down there...or sometimes caught in the crossfire.

“Ask HQ if they want us to make an attempt to warn or extract those people.”

October 20, 2010, 02:32

At the Low Ridge Line

Two hundred fifty meters east of the CAS Position

Far North Central York Peninsula, Australia

Nabalcoand Tex continued to watch the Chinese and Indian encampment to their west. As they did so, Nabalco continued to berate himself mentally for getting the remnant of his group caught in this position.

“How could I have been so stupid?” he muttered silently to himself as he contemplated the events.

Two days before, it had become apparent that a very large enemy force was moving into their area.

They had moved from one prepared position of concealment to another in front of the group and just barely avoided detection. Just last evening they had made their way into the caves that were heavily concealed by brush and undergrowth at the bottom of the depression they now occupied.

Now that it was clear that the enemy planned to stay for some time, Nabalco knew it was only a matter of time before the caves and the entire group was discovered. He could not risk that, and so he was prepared now to take the risk of leaving the area entirely under the cover of darkness.

But he was concerned about the inevitable electronic sensors and the many patrols the Chinese and Indians were sending out.

“Like I said, how could I have been so stupid?”

This time he was a little too loud and Tex heard him.

“Stupid? You have to be kidding me.

“It's nothing short of a miracle and a tribute to your leadership that we are even alive, Nabalco. Please don't let the moment dull your edge...we need you sharp if we are going to get out of this.”

Nabalco knew that Tex was right...but he was too humble to admit it to the degree that Tex implied.

Just the same, he was about to thank the young man when he heard the distinctive warning whistle from below.

“Tex, you stay here and watch them over there...I'll go and see what's happening.”

As Nabalco carefully made his way down the slight rise, he saw the reason for the whistle and he thought for just an instant that all was lost. There were two soldiers with assault rifles and night vision gear already amongst his people. Then, as he got closer, he was able to make out the uniforms...Americans!

As he walked up to them, a large Negro American soldier addressed him.

“Are you the one they call Nabalco? If you are, and you're in charge of these people, then please listen to me.

“My name is Gunnery Sergeant Gaffney and this is Corporal Thomas, U.S. Marines.

“We have to get you and your people out of here as quickly as we can. Within the next two hours, this entire valley is going to be destroyed along with everything in it.”

October 20, 2010, 04:12

Near the Promontory

Overlooking CAS Position

Far North Central York Peninsula, Australia

As the two Marines led the twenty-eight civilians carefully up the slope to the concealed position that Leon and the other seven Marines occupied, the Chinese platoon approached from the southeast around a rock outcropping that jutted all the way to the top of the promontory. As they rounded the outcropping, they became visible to Leon and he immediately alerted two of his number who were not occupied with lazing target positions, and also contacted Gunnery Sergeant Gaffney and Lance Corporal Thomas.

Seconds after Gaffney got the information and began to spread it amongst the civilians, twelve of whom were also armed, and hurrying them toward a more defensible position... the point man on the Chinese platoon spotted the refugees and held his fist up in the classic stop sign for military personnel on patrol.

As the Chinese quickly and efficiently spread out into an assault line, Gaffney herded the civilians into a makeshift defensive position and began positioning the armed refugees for best effect.

Firing broke out between the two groups as the Chinese advanced. Leon and the two corporals he had selected to assist waited patiently until the Chinese moved into their overlapping fields of fire from above... and then opened fire upon them in a murderous barrage that took the Chinese completely by surprise. Before the Chinese captain in charge of the patrol knew what was happening, six of his sixteen men were down. He ordered an orderly, covering fire withdrawal to a less exposed position so he could regroup.

Amongst the civilians, the Chinese fire had already had telling effect. Five civilians were down... one of them Nabalco, who had been seriously wounded through the throat and Lance Corporal Thomas, who was fatally wounded as he turned back a charge of three Chinese who approached closest to the refugees' position.

Before the Chinese could regroup, the firing and fighting was momentarily interrupted as numerous bright flashes and then trails of light erupted from the forward portions of the enemy encampment as Chinese surface to air missiles lifted off to intercept incoming American aircraft and missiles.

But it was too late.

As the Chinese missiles rose... eighteen stealthy American Hail Storm missiles came screaming low over the promontory. They were supported by a dozen higher flying American and British F/A-24 aircraft flying anti-radiation roles against the enemy air defense batteries. Before the Hail Storm missiles finished clearing the promontory, twenty high-speed HARM missiles were launched targeting the radar and *ta shih* sights amongst the enemy encampment with devastating effect.

Two American aircraft and three Hail Storm missiles were downed by the enemy missiles before all hell broke loose in the valley as the remaining fifteen Hail Storm missiles delivered several million deadly hypervelocity projectiles amongst and all around the enemy encampment, shredding all vegetation, all flesh, all soft-shelled vehicles and all armor within the horrendous radius of their targeting. Numerous secondary explosions marked the spot where ammunition or ordinance on various vehicles exploded.

There were some defensive fortifications and hardened areas within and around the camp that were in the process of being constructed. Within the walls and under the cover of some of these structures there was the possibility of survival from the Hail Storm missiles. But the attack occurred with such surprise and rapidity, that unless personnel were already positioned or housed in those structures, there had been

no time to gain access to them. Outside of this, the destruction by the Hail Storm attack was complete and devastating.

It was then that the coup d'état was administered in order to ensure complete victory. The final orbital projectile, a small one that had been obtained for just this sort of precise and limited role, came in and impacted in the middle of the camp.

The resulting explosion, crater and shock wave destroyed everything that was left from the Hail Storm attack. No structure, no fortification and no hardened shelter could withstand it. The very back of organized CAS resistance on the York Peninsula, outside of a few scattered company sized groups, had been broken.

During the several minutes that the devastating attack took place, culminating in the high wind and shock wave washing over the distant promontory, the Chinese Captain sensed the hopelessness of his own position, now without any hope of support from what he had considered to this moment to be a very strong mother force. So he took the wise opportunity to retreat his platoon back around the rock outcropping, laying down effective cover fire as they did. He and his soldiers had seen enough...they would seek no further contact with the Americans or their allies this night, or at any other time during the two days it would take them to reach a sheltered area on the coast and arrange transport off of the continent of Australia.

October 20, 2010, 04:21

On the Promontory

Overlooking the destroyed CAS Position

Far North Central York Peninsula, Australia

Leon surveyed the destruction of the enemy encampment below through his goggles. Smoke rose everywhere amongst the ruins and he saw no movement. Perhaps there were some survivors down there, particularly in those unfinished fortifications and hardened areas, but he could not see any from this point, and the recovery operation would be a task for other allied forces tomorrow and through the next few days.

Right now, he had the task of solidifying his position, identifying the refugees that Gaffney was bringing in and buttoning things up for their extraction sometime tomorrow morning.

There had been casualties. Lance Corporal Thompson was dead along with three of the refugees...including their leader who had bled to death while one of the female civilians, clearly emotionally attached to him, had ministered to him and tried to save him. There were also two wounded. Leon had sent his own corpsman that way as soon as he could...but it was too late for either Thomas or Nabalco. He was able to help the two wounded civilians.

Now, as the refugees finally reached the top of the promontory and Leon's position, he briefly eyed each one of them as they approached. Most of them appeared to be aborigine tribesmen of some sort, with a

few mixed Caucasian and other race refugees. Thomas was being carried by Gaffney and each of the three dead refugees was also being carried by his compatriots, who were also helping the corpsman with two wounded civilians. Nabalco's body was in a makeshift stretcher and there were four of the refugees carrying him reverently. The woman, whom Leon would later come to know as Ulura, Nabalco's wife, was chanting an aborigine dream chant as she walked. Leon saw the motion one of those carrying Nabalco reach forward and put his hand on the woman's shoulder, attempting in some small way to console her while he continued carrying the stretcher with his other hand.

It was then that Leon noticed that this refugee was another Caucasian, that he had blond hair, that he was about six feet tall. Leon also noticed his gate...it was clearly impeded, the guy had either been born with a disability, or he had been injured somehow...though it was still dark and Leon could not see him well, there was something somehow familiar about the way he walked.

Moving forward, Leon waited by the side of the trail as the entire group began to pass by. When those carrying the stretcher approached, Leon issued an order.

“Watson, Peterson, come over here and take over for these folks carrying this stretcher...I'd like to speak with some of these people a moment.”

As the two corporals responded, Leon asked the stretcher bearers to set the stretcher down and then he asked them all to step aside, off of the trail for a moment.

“I know you are all shocked and dismayed at the moment and I am so sorry for your loss. But I needed to ask you how you came to be down there near the Chinese and Indian encampment.

“If we had not seen you there, you would have experienced the same fate as the enemy. We need to understand your disposition and your intentions.”

Leon's request was greeted by silence.

“Come on, we're your friends. Surely one of you can let us know how you came to be there.”

The refugees looked at one another briefly, and then Ulura stepped forward and began to speak.

“We had been avoiding the Chinese and Indians as best we could for months. We have seen the results of not being able to avoid them and we had no desire to end up like those others, either enslaved or butchered.

“My husband, Nabalco...he had led us the entire time and we thought we were in a good, safe place until this large group of Chinese and Indians came up on us two or three days ago and we...we just couldn't...”

Ulura broke down at this point and the Caucasian refugee, an individual the others called Tex, put his arm around her. As he did so, he turned his face towards Leon and spoke.

“Look, Master Sergeant...can't you see she is mourning?

“Can't you let us all just mourn the loss of our friend and leader until tomorrow morning? Believe me, we have been trying to avoid these people as much as you have been trying to destroy them. We would...”

Leon, shocked at the recognition of the voice, broke in...

“Mister, how did you know my rank? ...and my God, Billy, can that be you?”

Turning and catching the Gunnery Sergeant’s attention, Leon ordered.

“Gunny, get me a light over here...on the double!”

Gunnery Sergeant Gaffney did his best to dissuade his Master Sergeant from any type of light whatsoever on that high hill.

“MS, it’ll be daylight in a little over an hour or so. Can’t a light wait until then?”

But Leon would not be deterred.

“Gunny, get a light. Use one of our soft, map reader lights and then we’ll take into the hooch we set up in the brush...but bring a light and bring it now.”

The Gunny...and just about every other Marine in Australia knew of Leon's quest, of his search for his friend and fellow Marine. At the insistence in the Master Sergeant's voice, the possibility of the fulfillment of that quest captured the moment for everyone in Leon's squad and every one of them, except for the three who were on guard duty on their perimeter, followed Leon and the five civilians.

Once in the enclosed area surrounded by dense brush, Leon turned the light on and shined it just below Tex's face.

“My God, it is you! Billy...how did you get here...don't you recognize me?”

But there was no recognition in Billie's eyes, although a glimmer of understanding did begin to show on his face.

“Master Sergeant, I can't rightly say how I knew your rank...and I don’t know why you are calling me that name.

“I actually don't remember my own name...but everyone here in the group calls me Tex because of the accent in my voice.”

Leon reached forward and hugged his friend.

“I'm calling you that name because your name is Billy...Captain Billy Simmons, United States Marine Corps. And you sound that way and they call you *Tex* because you are a bonafide, certified Texan, right out of the great Lone Star State.

“Don’t you remember?”

“Captain Simmons, you went down in your Comanche over two and a half years ago off the coast of Australia. You must have washed up on shore and be suffering from amnesia.

“You and I went to college together at Boise State University in Idaho. We enlisted together and have kept in touch throughout the war. You visited me on leave when I was hospitalized in Washington, DC.

“Believe me when I tell you...your name is Billy Simmons and you have a Mom and a war-hero Dad

who are going to be so happy that you are alive!”

Still holding his friend’s shoulders, Leon turned towards the other members of his squad and caught the eye of a grinning Gunnery Sergeant Gaffney.

As Billy Simmons, still suffering from the effects of amnesia, and the other refugees looked on in awe and wonder, Leon issued a quick order.

“Gunny, get HQ on the horn...we need to report all of this. There's a whole lot of people who are going to be surprised and happy to hear this news...I can hardly believe it myself.”

October 30, 2010, 10:43

Lazy-H Ranch

Outside of Montague, Texas

Jess and Cindy watched the Marine sedan approach the house along the quarter mile of gravel road that led to the main highway. It was a pleasant day and the visit, whatever purpose it had, was unexpected.

As the car got closer, Jess couldn’t help but make a comment as he recognized the insignia on the vehicle.

“U.S. Marines...maybe they've found Billy's remains and we can bring him home.”

The thought gave hope for closure to Cindy. She had finally accepted the reality of Billy's death...but closure was something she knew in her heart they both needed.

Today she was going to be pleasantly and joyously surprised.

As the car stopped in front of the house, Jess himself was shocked when his own former commanding officer, General Larry Donovan, emerged through the open black door.

“What in the world?” he said out loud.

It was at that point that Jess knew that this visit was going to be something much different than an ordinary sharing of information about your typical MIA.

...and from the tone in his voice, Cindy began to understand the same thing.

As the three officers approached the house, a Marine Colonel, a Marine Major General, and Brigadier General Larry Donovan of the U.S. Army, Jess walked out on the porch to greet them.

“Larry, what on earth are you doing here?”

“I didn’t even know you were stateside.”

All three officers were smiling as Larry made the introductions.

“Jess, Cindy, I'm here on some official business...some very gratifying and heartwarming official business.

“I was at the Pentagon for a briefing when some news came in. As soon as it was verified, the Chief of the Army and the Marine Corps asked the three of us specifically to share it with you.

“Here, Jess”, General Donovan said handing Jess Simmons a very official looking memorandum printed on official U.S. Marine stationary, “read it for yourself.”

Jess took the message, which was about a page in length, and quickly read it.

He almost dropped it to the floor, but regained his composure and with tears welling up in his eyes, he passed it to his wife Cindy.

As she quickly read it, Jess asked his friend.

“Larry, has this been verified?

“Dear God, is it really true?”

By this time, Cindy had finished reading the note and as her husband put his arms around her and they began to cry into one another's shoulder, she heard her husband's long time friend answer.

“Yes, Jess...Cindy, it is true. It's been verified. Billy is alive.”

Turning to the Marine General, General Donovan invited him to continue the discussion.

“General, why don't you and the Colonel continue and fill in some details for the Simmons.”

The General took up the conversation.

“Thank you General Donovan, I will be happy to. Colonel, you jump in and set me straight at any time if you need to.

“Mr. And Mrs. Simmons, as you can imagine, your son was severely wounded in the crash of his Viper Helicopter, but he somehow washed up on the Australian shore. Many of his injuries were healed as he ultimately took in with some refugees who had some very good medical capabilities. That group of refugees were constantly moving in the bush in the interior of Australia to avoid enemy patrols and enemy civil authorities.

“In addition to his physical injuries, the Captain, your son Billy, was also suffering from amnesia through the entire time period. He simply did not know who he was, including any knowledge of his military service.

“Thankfully, that has lessened somewhat since he was recovered...due in no small part to his Marine friend, Master Sergeant, Leon Campbell.”

Jess looked up at mention of Leon's name.

“Leon...Leon is with him?”

The General nodded his head as he continued.

“It was Master Sergeant Leon Campbell who recognized him. His squad brought Billy in during a reconnaissance mission that turned into a heavy engagement with much larger enemy forces.

“That was over two weeks ago and Billy has gone through quite a bit of debriefing, medical treatment, evaluation and recuperation since then...but now he's coming home to you both, he should be stateside within the week.

“Every now and then, we experience something like this from the Grand Designer upstairs that is perfectly to our liking. This is one of those times and I am so happy for your joy.

“I know I speak for the entire Marine Corps, for the Joint Chiefs, and by special direction, I can tell you I speak personally for the President of the United States when I tell you how grateful your entire nation is for your son's service...and now for his recovery.

“Mr. And Mrs. Simmons, this is the stuff that Marine legends are made of...and your son, and his friend Leon's efforts on his behalf will go down in history as one of the major “Marine stories” for future generations.

“It is also likely to be a story that has some legs within the civilian community as well, so don't be surprised if you get a call from the White House...and ultimately from the press too. But we will do all we can to shield you from the latter for as long as you desire, and as long as we can.”

Chapter 4

“No arsenal or no weapon in the arsenals of the world is so formidable as the will and moral courage of free men and women.” – Ronald Reagan

November 2, 2010, 13:20, Local Time

Heavily Fortified Command Bunker

Deep in the Muller Mountains

35 km Northwest of Kualakurun, Indonesia

Hasan Sayeed continued to monitor and command the armies of the Greater Islamic Republic from his state of the art and heavily protected command bunker here in the remote reaches of Indonesia. But, as a result of the fall of Tehran and most of the western nations comprising the Greater Islamic Republic, the amount of time requiring his direct attention had been greatly reduced and so he was also able to reflect,

reorient and plan.

Located in a steep gorge on a tributary of the Kahayan River deep in the Muller Mountains, the bunker had literally been blasted out of the rock underneath peaks that reached heavenward almost 2300 meters, or 7,000 feet. With multiple redundant transmitters and receivers that operated on every bandwidth conceivable, with the actual hardware located in retractable, camouflaged positions all along the primary and secondary ridgelines, and with the latest encryptions, noise-blanking and frequency hopping technologies, it was felt that locating the exact source of his command post would be a very difficult task for their enemies.

“And I pray to Allah that is so”, thought the great Ayatollah.

“With their Fist of God weapons from space...should they ever locate even this heavily protected complex, I have no doubts that several strikes from above would either completely destroy us here...or they would bring the mountains down upon us so that we would be forever entombed in stone.”

For the very reasons Sayeed was contemplating, it had long ago been decided that as soon as it even appeared that the enemy may be closing in on his position either electronically or physically, the great Mahdi would be moved to one of his several other fall back command centers that available to him throughout the hundreds of islands that made up Indonesia. With a largely Muslim and very dedicated population...it would be easy for the Islamic leader to melt away into the geography and the population and rise like a Phoenix to continue the battle for the faithful.

“The comfort of these facilities is a tribute to the hard work and commitment of the faithful in this area...and the exactness of the faithful officers and Mullahs who ensured it happened according to the dictates of Allah,” Sayeed thought as he began reading the latest geo-political intelligence reports coming out of Australia.

Sayeed kept close tabs on the progress of Allied forces on the island continent. They were the closest, and, coupled with their naval and air support units, the gravest threat to Sayeed's rebuilding effort here throughout Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines where very sizable, and as yet very, very faithful Islamic communities continued to thrive.

“With the grace and help of Allah, we shall roll back into the Holy Land one day and reclaim all that has been lost.

“When we do, there will be a terrible price paid by the infidels...yes, terrible indeed,” Hassan said to himself as he read how GIR and CAS forces were retreating westward from central Australia to prepared positions closer to the western and northern coasts...and closer to air and naval support.

“But as terrible a retribution as shall be paid by those infidels, it will pale in comparison to the one that will be paid by the unfaithful who have betrayed us.

“Oh ye of little faith, how ye shall mourn,” he concluded to himself as he thought back on the hundreds and hundreds of thousands of GIR citizens who had turned to the western armies as they penetrated into the borders of the former Iran in numbers with their irresistible technological weapons and had unconditionally surrendered to them. That would have been forgivable, and perhaps understandable under the circumstances, but what could not be forgiven was the way so many had accepted the infidels with open arms and then almost immediately began to collude with them to the detriment of the GIR, and more importantly as far as Sayeed was concerned, to the detriment of their holy faith.

As Sayeed contemplated what he considered to be this great betrayal, he could not help but think of his third wife, Lhidi, who turned sixteen years old back in August of this year. She had been so beautiful, and yet so proud and headstrong. She had been given to him by faithful parents from Islamabad and he had enjoyed the distractions and ministrations she provided him, and what he had felt were the growing trust and faith she was developing.

She had given him a son two years ago...collectively his fifth son from his three wives. She had seemed so proud of that child and Sayeed had hoped that the birth and duties of motherhood would dissuade Lhidi from some of her tendencies.

Sayeed was not blind to the feelings of any of those around him and he had not been blind to Lhidi's. He knew that she had a propensity to desire the things of the west, particularly what the west considered as women's rights...and she had voiced those desire to him when they were alone.

Perhaps what had ultimately transpired had been his own fault because he had not been more forceful in his discouragement of her leanings and desires in that regard.

"I grew soft," he said aloud to himself as he looked back on the events of the last year as they related to Lhidi and the betrayal of so many when the western armies had finally succeeded in invading.

Whatever the reasons, he would never forget the shame and embarrassment, or the anger, when he discovered that Lhidi had been one of the betrayers. She had arranged with a select group of her bodyguards, three whom her family had been allowed to select from Islamabad, and defected to the western armies.

...and she had done it in such a way, with the issuance of her own public statements against him, against their efforts as a nation, and even the faith. It had hurt him personally, and her betrayal had hurt Allah's work even more...and it was something he would never forget, and never forgive.

His own respect and standing amongst the people had been noticeably and understandably diminished. He could just hear the whispers and the talk amongst those who did not understand how Allah deals with his chosen vessels.

"If he cannot bridle or control even his youngest wife, how can he lead a nation in war? "

Her defection and betrayal had been far from the first, but it had been personally the most devastating event imaginable to him. Her physical and passionate distractions had turned to mental and emotional anguish for him which had distracted him from the task at hand at the most inopportune moment. And her defection and betrayal had certainly led to a flood of others.

Hassan Sayeed, in his pride, arrogance and in his total acceptance of a faith whose very founder had established the pattern, could never imagine the reasons for Lhidi's behavior. He considered the fact that his other two wives remained with him, faithful to him and Allah, was proof positive of the fact that his way, what he proclaimed as Allah's way, was more than good enough for all women.

He would never consider that what Lhidi felt as the betrayal of her own parents in treating their beloved daughter as property and as a pawn for their personal gain, and the betrayal of her religious leader, who had been so willing to take advantage of her sexually for his own gratification and against her will...in fact, her will had never even been considered in the matter...had led to Lhidi's actions at the first realistic opportunity she had to get away from the situation. He would also in fact be shocked if he could read the hearts of his second wife regarding the matter.

Sayeed, like so many others in his position, could not, and would not, see the obvious cause and effect relationship between his own behavior as it related to Lhidi, and the course Lhidi chose. All he could see was that Lhidi had dared to defy him and to defy what he considered to be the absolute tenet of his faith, and for that, she and any like her had earned his anger and vindictiveness. In fact, he vowed that she would pay with her very life.

“No, I swear before Allah that there will be a special place in hell...and even a foretaste of it on earth, reserved for all those who would betray Allah in such a way,” he thought angrily as he contemplated the details of its torments.

“...and perhaps such conditions will be extended to the homelands of the infidels who have colluded with them as well, if Allah is willing.

“Yes...I am sure He is willing...and I know we have the means and that Allah will provide the right martyr teams with the appropriate levels of commitment. It is time...my mourning for Lhidi and all those who joined with her to strengthen the enemies of God is ended.

“It is time. I will issue a Fatwah to that effect this evening after prayers, and the word will go out to the faithful Ayatollahs, Mullahs and clerics.

“Perhaps in the coming months...surely in the coming year, Lhidi shall realize, all too late, the mortal mistake she has made...and perhaps she and all of the unfaithful like her, along with their infidel friends, shall witness a world-wide mourning and howling the likes of which have not been seen in a thousand years.”

November 17, 2010, 23:56, Local Time

Level 3, Row 189, Seat P, C-90BT Aircraft

150 ft over the Caribbean

SergeantHernando Rodriguez reflected on the last four and a half years of combat he had experienced. He had joined the Army in Florida during the preliminary battles of what would become World War III, when the U.S. was forced to re-enter Iraq and fight the Greater Islamic Republic, which had used a vote in Iraq to join the GIR as a pretext for forcing the Kurdish people into their ranks against their will. As America responded to that issue and re-entered Iraq, the North Koreans had invaded South Korea forcing the U.S. to engage in a major two-theater war. Then, as the United States mobilized to respond to that invasion and help the South Koreans, the Red Chinese, who had been pretending to mediate the crisis in Asia, conducted an horrific surprise attack against the United States on March 16th, 2006.

That attack was made against the Carrier Battle Groups and transports and amphibious ships that were approaching South Korea as a relief force, and used new Chinese technology in the form of a very powerful, long-range supercavitating weapon. It had been terribly successful and had sunk two U.S. Carriers, two large Amphibious Assault ships, and many more escort, transport and amphibious ships. That engagement represented the worst loss in the history of the U.S. Navy, killing or injuring over thirty thousand American service personnel.

But that was not where the horror of March 16, 2006 ended. While those attacks were being made, more surprise attacks, some of them pure terror attacks, were conducted simultaneously all across the United States by Chinese, Islamic and Aztlan forces and terror cells who had been gathering and

preparing for years within the United States itself. Those attacks killed tens of thousands of American citizens, including the Vice President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense when the White House had been destroyed in one of the attacks. The President, Norm Weisskopf, had himself narrowly escaped death in that particular attack that day.

So, when Hernando had joined during those initial days, he had no idea what his enlistment would really mean. He had thought in terms of a war similar to the actions that had been waged in Iraq twice before in Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom, or in terms of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. There had been no comprehension, either for Hernando or for most other Americans, what those initial battles in Iraq would lead to.

But now they all knew now.

“In essence, at this point, it means we fight until this thing is over...three years, five years...however long it takes,” he thought as he sat in his barely padded seat in the C-90BT.

The C-90BT aircraft had been specially configured for the transport of large numbers of Americans troops only. Thirty of the total fleet of one hundred and eighty had been modified in this manner. As such, outside of their own personal gear, or whatever gear they may need for assignments that some may already be aware of after their stateside leave, these aircraft were optimized for carrying up to twenty-five hundred troops at a time, either as follow on troop build-up missions during an operation, or, as was the case now, for carrying troops home for leave.

Hernando had fought in Central America, Alaska, Cuba and then in South America alongside Columbian, Brazilian and other allied troops. He was amazed that he was still alive after the many combat experiences he had lived through...and after so many of his friends and compatriots had been severely injured or killed.

Hernando had other friends who been assigned to Europe, some to the Middle East and on into Iran and now India, others who had fought long and hard in Australia and the islands of the Pacific, and others who had been shipped to Siberia and were now deep in the heart of Asia. He heard from different ones of them every now and then, and the comments and feelings had become all too familiar.

“We're in this to the end. If we let these animals off the hook without an absolute and complete victory, we will risk the life and liberty of all of our friends and loved ones and our very way of life.”

It was exactly the way Hernando felt and he wondered where his next assignment would be...after this long overdue leave.

He had fought with the Columbians and Brazilians for the last year, after his leave back to Florida had ended. He had earned that leave after the successful campaign in Cuba where the communist regime and dictator had been defeated by American forces. The dictator had been captured and put on trial.

Due to his duties, he had not seen that trial, but he had followed it faithfully through his wife's and his parent's letters. The old communist had tried to use a defense that posited that as the sovereign leader of a nation, he had only been acting within the capacity of his office in protecting Cuba. The American Attorney General and lawyers working for him had literally torn his defense to shreds. The evidence clearly and unimpeachably showed that the Cuban leader had funded and planned massive terror attacks against the people of the United States. The testimony of several of those directly involved in the FTA Trucking Company that had used the NAFTA agreement to bring in hundreds of terrorists and their

weapons and to plan these attacks had been the final nail in the coffin. The Cuban dictator had been found guilty and was executed by lethal injection.

But before the trial or eventual execution took place, his leave with Maria and his son and parents had been nothing short of wonderful. Maria was pregnant with their second child at the time, and in the intervening year, she had given birth to their second son, Jose. Oh how he loved her! What a grand life they had as citizens of the United States, despite the war, despite the attacks within America, despite the dangers. As he thought on their freedoms and the opportunities that resulted from them, he felt once again that great welling up in his bosom and the great commitment to protect their life, their liberties, and their hopes for the future with his very life.

His first son, Felipe, had been two years old when Hernando had returned home on leave. What a great time it had been playing with him, getting to really know him and having so many experiences together. At two years old, he was able to recognize and communicate with his Dad... Maria had done such an excellent job in raising him. And he would catch Maria beaming at him out of the corner of his eye when he would give Felipe horse rides on his back. How could he describe, even to himself, the pride and love he felt for his son and for his entire growing family?

Since he had been gone to South America, their second son, Jose had been born and was already over a year old! Felipe was approaching three and a half! He was so excited to see them.

...and he was so grateful to be going home to see them.

The fighting in South America had been hard, and it wasn't over yet. But the outcome was clear now. Supported by American air power, and in particular the Hail Storm missile and Predator IV UAV systems, Columbia had been completely liberated and then the war had been taken to Venezuela. Despite having already cut off most Venezuelan forces, it had taken almost nine months of hard fighting on three fronts... American, Columbian, Central American, and Canadian troops from the north, American and Peruvian troops from the west and Brazilian, American and English troops from the South... to defeat Venezuela. Even with the technological advantage, fighting in the forest covered mountains had been extremely difficult and deadly.

In the end, Brazilian and Columbian troops, who were the most acclimated to the terrain, the climate and the cultures had proven extremely important and beneficial to the American, Canadian, English and other allied forces in the endeavor. Their insight and their ability to help with targeting and reconnaissance had ensured that the west's vast technological advantage was used against the remaining Panamanian, the Chinese, the Venezuelan and the Argentine forces to great effect.

Now, as Hernando and so many others were flying home on leave, the battle was being taken in earnest to Argentina. There in the southern parts of Brazil, a new American expeditionary force and many of the allied forces that had been fighting in the north, were finally making the difference. For over two years, a see-saw campaign had taken place between mostly Brazilian and Argentine forces, raging in northern Argentina where the initial Argentine invasion of Brazil had been pushed back to. But over eight hundred thousand Chinese forces had reinforced the Argentines there in the last ten months while the heavy campaign was going on against Venezuela. They had done this in an effort to relief pressure on Venezuela and force the allies to send more men and materiel southward.

The joint Argentine/Chinese second invasion of Brazil had started in the summer of 2010 and proceeded rapidly, once again advancing eastward towards Porto Alegre, Brazil on the Atlantic coast. This time, with so many Chinese troops in accompaniment, the enemy offensive had succeeded and had penetrated through to the coast. Porto Alegre had fallen, severing southern Brazil into two parts. The land and

people that had been occupied by the Chinese and Argentines had been literally raped. The deadly events in Porto Alegre, after the enemy occupied the city and had been allowed by their officers to go completely out of control for seven days before they were finally reigned them in, would forever be known as the Rape of Alegre...and it would be an event that would impassion the Brazilian people and the allies to ensure that their enemies were never again in a position to threaten or harm them in such a way.

And that was where the enemy success in Brazil had ended.

The Argentine and Chinese forces could not make effective use of the port. Allied naval power was far too strong and, along with U.S. Naval supercavitating weapons and air power, ensured that no COSAS, CAS or GIR naval power could come anywhere near their Atlantic outpost on the sea.. Argentine and Chinese forces, in army group strength, tried to expand their corridor to the sea, both to the north and south. But Brazilian forces, strengthened significantly by new recruits and the older national guard and reservists who were called up, stiffened and had held their own.

At the same time, American expeditionary forces joined by Canadian, and Peruvian forces, who had been freed up as a result of the victory in Venezuela, staged along the coast to the north of Porto Alegre in Florianopolis, while additional Brazilian, English, Columbian and Central American troops staged to the south in Rio Grande. By the time Hernando left South America, a two pronged counter offensive had already begun which was aimed at enveloping the Argentine and Chinese troops that had broken through to the coast. Those enemy troops were falling back as rapidly as they could to avoid it and certain annihilation.

“And well they should turn tail and run,” thought Sergeant Rodriguez.

“They are out their dangling on a limb that is just begging to be cut off!”

As a result of all of this, the second invasion of Brazil was stopped and was now in the process of being thrown back...and this time there was every expectation that the allied offensive would not get bogged down in northern Argentina as it had done in 2008, but would finally be able to push all the way through to Buenos Aries, or until enemy forces surrendered unconditionally.

“And when that finally happens, and I hope and pray it is soon, enemy forces, and in particular Chinese forces, will have been completely cleared from all of the Americas,” Rodriguez thought as he nestled his head back into his pillow and felt like, after having reviewed the whole thing in his mind that at last he would be able to get some sleep.

“North, Central and South America will finally be completely free of Chinese influence, control and meddling.

“We should never have let such a nation, whose government, ideology and culture is so alien and antithetical to our own, gain such power in our own backyard. It's been decades in coming...perhaps soon it will really be finished,” he continued.

As the Sergeant drifted off to sleep, his thoughts turned to the things which naturally gave him the most happiness and contentment.

“Maybe soon, I'll be able to get back to a normal life where I can praise God, love my wife, raise my kids, and take care of my parents in freedom, and peace the way it was meant to be.”

November 25, 2010, 22:24, EST

Thanksgiving Day, Weisskopf Residence

2488 Shady Lane, Naples, Florida

The festivities and meals were over, the kids and grandkids had all gone, and now Linda Weisskopf was alone in her bedroom preparing for bed. As was her usual routine, she was reading a one of her classic novels before retiring. As she was there sitting up in bed this evening, she was trying to read *Little Women* .

...but she couldn't really get into it and so she put the book down on the nightstand beside her bed.

There had been so much to be grateful for today on this Thanksgiving. The war effort, after so much discouraging and downright bad news for so long, was finally looking more and more hopeful. Tens of millions of people in many different parts of the world from Australia, to the Middle East, to Africa, to South America, to Asia were being liberated. There had not been a major terror attack of any kind in the United States for over three months, though the terror alert level remained at Red.

"And it probably will, and should remain there until the war is over," thought the former First Lady as she contemplated it.

That level, while being costly, had all of the Federal, State and local agencies on their highest footing. As a result of the experiences thus far in the war, it had the American people on their highest level of alert as well.

"Though I honestly think at this point, the people would already be there with or without the official color scheme," she continued.

"Ever since that mall attack in Colorado in March of 2006, when the people themselves helped turn the tide with their own firearms, it has been apparent that the people themselves are the best front line in the fight against terror here at home.

"Norm saw it early and pushed both for the Home Guard legislation, which formed up common citizens, under their sheriffs, to watch their local infrastructure...and he pushed for the true common sense gun laws that allowed the lawful people in this nation to carry concealed or not-concealed and be in a position to defend themselves with their own firearms against these enemies at any time.

"How could we have forgotten our own heritage so completely and made ourselves so vulnerable," she wondered.

"Well, I don't think we are very vulnerable now...and I don't believe we will allow ourselves to become that way again for a long, long time.

"I pray never."

Sighing, she looked heavenward for a moment.

"Norm, it's been almost eighteen months, and I do remember.

“One day, in the good Lord's own time, we shall be reunited eternally, just like you said. I'm looking forward to that day...but still have some work to do I suppose.”

As she considered this, she could not help but think to her regular calls and activities with Sandy Bowers, the wife of President John Bowers.

Sandy, until Norm had asked her husband, John, to be his Vice President after the death of Alan Reeves, had never really been in a position of high political visibility and all of the social activities that went along with it. She had done well as a line officer's wife in the military and when John was an appointed member of the President's cabinet, but that was nothing compared to the role she had come into when her husband became Vice President, and still nothing compared to her current role as First Lady.

Oh, she was game, and viewed her role correctly, from the day she had become the Second Lady of the United States, until eighteen months ago when she had become the First Lady. She supported her husband, engaged in worthwhile programs and activities, and was very careful to not be drawn in by any detractors or journalistic traps.

But she was wholly not used to it, and had never sought, imagined or seen herself in the role before assuming it.

Despite all of that, Linda Weisskopf regarded Sandy Bowers as the one of the most congenial person she ever met, always open to offers of assistance or advise, and then applying it in her own way to the tasks she sought to accomplish.

“I really like that about her.”

And the principle source for the advice Sandy was now receiving was Linda Weisskopf.

It was counsel that she viewed as a God-send to her personally. It had lifted her up and given her a purpose in her darkest hours.

Losing Norm, being there and watching the light go out of his eyes, watching him die after being attacked in front of the Lincoln Memorial, had been the most difficult thing Linda Weisskopf had ever experienced. It had not shaken her faith...but it had affected her. Within days she was experiencing something she knew that many military personnel experience after combat...delayed stress syndrome, and had been diagnosed with the same.

What she had experienced on that day had been combat. Quick, brutal, terribly bloody and violent. While it was happening there had been no time to think about it...but afterwards, after all of the ceremony, after the healing and caring in the hospital for her own injuries...when she had finally gone home...to her own home...the stress and discouragement had begun to build.

The call from Sandy Bowers seeking help had been like a light in a dark room. It had given her purpose and a will.

“Perhaps Sandy planned it that way,” she thought as that possible realization came to her mind.

“If she did, well then, God bless her for it and I hope she has benefited in any case.”

Either way, Linda knew that spending several hours per week in the calls and activities with Sandy had been like salvation to her...a balm on her inner wounds.

“Helping and serving others always works like that.

“It's what my parents taught me long ago, and its something I have seen so many times in my own life. I guess when such traumatic experiences come along, the good Lord has to remind us of it.

“We find ourselves by losing ourselves in the service of God and His children.”

And that was exactly the way Linda viewed her efforts in counseling Sandy...and in the other activities, programs, and events to which she committed herself.

She had discovered in so doing, that the good Lord, and her nation, had not forgotten her. To the contrary, they ere eager for her involvement and input.

She loved it, and on this Thanksgiving evening, before she finally laid down and closed her eyes, the realization of the good it had done her touched her heart and filled her with gratitude.

“Thank you dear Lord for your mercies.

“Please let Norm know this night of my love, and help me to continue to help others as long as I am allowed to remain down here away from him.”

December 3, 2010, 07:50, EST

Trevor Residence

Nashua, New Hampshire

“Hurry up honey, you know we have to be at the airport at least two hours early so we have time to clear security.”

Elizabeth Trevor was anxious to be going. She and Joseph were packed and ready to fly down to Texas to once again visit their close friends, the Simmons. With Billy coming home next week, they wanted to make sure they were able to get there in plenty of time to help Cindy and Jess have their place just they way they wanted for Billy's homecoming.

News of Billy's miraculous survival, the way he had been found by his Marine friend, Leon Campbell, himself a Medal of Honor recipient, and of Billy's continuing recovery from amnesia, was one of the things that had captured the imagination of people all over the country. They were literally talking about it in towns and cities, living rooms and kitchens, cafes and coffee shops, and in churches, synagogues, and cathedrals all over the country.

“You can almost see the anchors of the news programs and the hosts of the special news shows drooling in hopes of being the first to have either Billy or Leon on their shows,”thought Elizabeth as she walked to the bedroom to see what was taking Joseph so long.

As she turned the corner to walk down the hall to the bedroom, she almost ran headlong into Joe

coming the other way.

“Hey, watch where you're going there young lady,” Joseph said as avoided the collision, caught her in his arms and twirled her around into the living room.

“...and if you're not especially careful...well, we might end up being even later, hehehe.”

Elizabeth loved her husband and allowed him to twirl her around for a moment longer. He had always been such a good, faithful, Christian man. From their earliest times during his Physics undergraduate and Physiology graduate studies in Utah and Texas respectively, to that first job at Talbot Laboratories, to the later years working for the government on the Genome Project, Joseph Trevor had always had a deep and abiding love for God and his wife and family. It was that love and faith on both of their parts, that had helped them both in the good times and through the inevitable difficult times as well.

“Like the time there in Massachusetts when I got caught in the middle of that terror attack...now that was what I would call a difficult time,” she thought.

“Joseph had come running and had shown such concern for my safety and such chagrin knowing that he had not been able to do anything to help when I was in the most danger.”

After all of that, when Joe's star had risen as a result of the research into the sub-molecular Human Reasoning Structures (HRS) that he had discovered while researching the Genome and he won the Nobel Prize, the fame and all of the attention had not gone to his head. Instead, he had avoided it as much as possible and if anything, the experience had allowed he and Elizabeth to even grow closer. He was always willing and eager to seek her opinion on matters even related to the technical side of his work, anxious to discover and understand Elizabeth's feelings or intuition on the matter and then to try and somehow take them into account. By doing so, he had always included her and made her feel a part of what he was doing.

Later, after his Noble Prize, a little over three years ago, he had become involved with the research and development scheme that SaundraMcPherson had proposed regarding the virtual modeling of his Human Reasoning Structures so their study and work associated with them could become more widely spread and less costly. He had embarked on that path with all of the faith, trust, hard work and commitment he was known for, and he had been used.

It turned out McPherson was very pro-abortion, something the Trevors were unalterably against, and that she wanted to use Joe's discoveries and methodologies to more closely study human fetal tissue...a practice that was outlawed in the United States at the time. But McPherson was a genius in computer modeling and she was using virtual models for her research, obtained from physical fetal tissue in Europe, where it was legal. So she had skirted the law and used Joe's material in a way he would never approve. He had tried everything in his power, including his not insubstantial contacts within government to get McPherson stopped.

“But the good Lord knew what he was doing,” thought Elizabeth, “Even when we did not.”

Saundra had unexpectedly discovered the HRS within the fetal tissue...proving that the fetus, at an earlier time frame than anyone had thought provably possible, was capable of reason and therefore fully human. It had been a signal event in Saundra's life, for despite all that had happened, and despite her own belief system,. She was an honest person and recognized the import of her discovery.

Joseph himself had also seen its import and had readily set aside their past differences to work with

McPherson to verify and then publish the information.

During that entire process, as was his nature, Joseph included Elizabeth and the culmination of the process had literally changed the world. Based on the new, verifiable evidence, Roe v. Wade was overturned by the Supreme Court of the United States. Abortion became illegal, and with the announcement of the facts associated with the discovery, the absolute vast majority of Americans, well over 90% approved of the change, and changed their own lives accordingly.

“What a ride all of that has been,” Elizabeth thought, “and what a man you are Joseph Trevor.”

In addition to all of that, even after all of these years, Joseph Trevor's love and physical attraction towards her had not diminished, and that made her feel good, and special too.

But there was a time and a place for everything, and after a few more seconds of dancing her around, just about the time when his hold on her became a little tighter and the look in his eyes was beginning to change, she knew it was time to let him know that now was not the time or the place...they had a plane to catch.

“Honey, I've loved the dance...and I love you too...but now that I've found you, it's time to go.”

Joseph Trevor was not insistent on pursuing his physical feelings. He knew his wife, and he had played along waiting for her to tell him it was time to go. Mind you, if she had been willing to delay and actually entertain his advances...well then, who was he to stand in the way of his wife's desires. But he knew that it was more important to her right now to catch that plane, and be on time they most assuredly would.

“Well, okay you big stick in the mud. Let's go catch that plane.

“I am looking so forward to seeing the Simmons and helping them prepare for Billy's return. I can tell you right now that their reunion is going to cause me to cry like a baby.”

As they walked toward the door, Elizabeth thought for a minute and then asked.

“What was it you were doing back in there anyway that caused the delay in the first place?

I know you didn't go to the bathroom, and I thought you were already ready when you walked back there.”

With a twinkle in his eye that comes from knowing, loving and living with someone for over twenty-five years, Joseph answered.

“Waiting for you to come around that corner.”

December 7, 2010, 02:11, local time

Ground Based Particle Weapon Command Center

Mongolia

Lu Pham had progressed in his role on the Executive Committee of the Politburo in the People's

Republic of China. Ever since their last major meeting he had become one of President Jien Zenim's most trusted advisors and confidants, and not just in matters related to weapons research. It seemed that President Zemin needed him to step beyond his traditional endeavors of research and development, project management and deep involvement with the math and technology of his ideas, to a more direct command role in the implementation of the weapons and their use operationally.

That was exactly what he was involved with this morning.

He had three ground based particle weapon facilities spaced along the Chinese and Mongolian border areas now completely operational and ready to attack the Americans in space. These facilities were immensely powerful and used up a corresponding immense amount of energy. Lu was sure that they would be more than powerful enough to attack the Americans in space and down their craft and stations.

Lu knew that it was imperative that the Chinese do so.

"If the Americans still enjoyed their abject and total advantage in space as they had done at the onset of hostilities in 2006, then what we are about to do would never have been possible.

"They would have seen our energy emissions from space and known what we were about and taken measures to eliminate them long before we reached this point," he said out loud as his assistant stood by.

"They want it that way again, and that is something we simply cannot tolerate.

"Prepare units one and two to fire on their targets as planned, hold unit three in reserve for defense."

Lu was sure that a defense would be necessary, he just wasn't sure how much or to what degree.

The Americans had not attacked any CAS or GIR forces with their orbital bombardment weapons in several weeks. Everyone on the Executive Committee was anticipating this operation and were hoping that Lu's efforts could eliminate the American presence in space entirely before any more was available.

But that hope would prove to be futile.

"Commence firing!"

December 7, 2010, that same time

High Geosynchronous Orbit

Point Solitude, Opposite Asia

What the Chinese were not aware of was that two other missions to the asteroid belts had already returned to earth orbit and had rendezvoused with the USSS Gaspra and the USSS Ida. There were now, at any one time, eight missions working the asteroid belts, either on station, or in transit either way. New materiel for orbital bombardment was arriving at the rate of another package every four weeks.

But the Chinese could not know this. Point Solitude where these returning vessels made their rendezvous and where they processed and cut up their material to form the desired orbital bombardment projectiles, was in the shadow of the earth as respects all of Asia all of the time. It was a position from which they

could develop and launch their projectiles without the knowledge of the Chinese at all.

In addition to this, and of immediate interest to the Chinese, the United States had placed an orbital station over the Pacific Ocean and another one back up over Australia. But the Americans had learned from the attack of the Dragon Spirit craft back in July that the Chinese possessed particle beam weaponry, and they had established new sensing and defense systems on the new vessels based on that experience. The new station over Australia had just become completely operational the week before, and it, would receive the attention of the Chinese first.

Particle beams are not visible to the human eye. When they are fired, they are also not susceptible to cloud cover or other atmospheric conditions the way a laser is.

When the Chinese fired their particle beam weaponry, a massive stream of charged particles rose heavenward at the speed of light. They passed through clouds, rain, dust particles, and the atmosphere cleanly as they were designed to do. They moved unerringly to their target, the new Southern Star Space Station over Australia.

That's when things changed.

Based on sensing equipment that had been set out along all of the major threat axis around the station, the American space craft and its crew sensed the particle beam simultaneously with its arrival. The automated defense system for the craft activated itself and, based on what the American knew of the Chinese technology, set up a field on the specially manufactured skin of the station that was, in effect, a reverse charge to those particles that were arriving with the Chinese attack.

Human reaction time was fast for the crew and a tribute to their training, but it was much, much slower than the automated, electronic defense. The human response was measured in seconds where the system defenses were measured in milliseconds.

The electronics systems officer, who served as the defense officer announced what his instruments were telling him and his section.

“Captain, we are under attack from an extremely high powered particle weapon originating near the Chinese Mongolian border.

“All readings are off the scale.”

Captain Cleverly glanced at the readings himself and then wasted no time in responding.

“Increase the defensive field effect to maximum and fire the secondary maneuvering system, put us on a course of 123 degrees, up angle 40 degrees.”

The particle beam was much more powerful than those carried by the Dragon Spirit craft. Much stronger even than the factor the Americans had built in case of ground attack.

“Captain, outer hull is heating up and in danger of breach at stations 37F and 39F. We need to get out of the path of this beam.”

The Captain had another idea.

“Rotate the station, spread out the effect evenly as we move.”

As the station began to move and to rotate, the Chinese technicians were able to tell, from the readings associated with the beam itself and its behavior, what the Americans were doing.

Lu Pham ordered all three systems to target the Australian station.

“Captain, we are now under attack from three, I repeat three, ground based weapons.

“Measurements just went off the scale in terms of power and heat. Breaches imminent all along the outer hull...I recommend we abandon ship.”

The Captain had to concur.

“Get a message off to USSPACOM as follows:

Under attack from three powerful ground based, Chinese particle weapons. Shield marginally effective against one, failing against three. Abandoning the station. Electronic data follows.

“Then sound abandon ship.”

December 7, 2010, five minutes later

US Space Command (USSPACOM)

Honolulu, Hawaii

The Captain in charge of the communications division reported to his commanding General, who this morning was acting as the current duty officer.

“General, we have the data from the Southern Star.

“She's gone sir, completely destroyed with major components falling back into Earth's atmosphere over the South Pacific as we speak.

“We believe that several of her crew were able to get to the escape pods and abandon ship. Those pods are programmed to reenter the earth's atmosphere and make parachute ocean landings as soon as their communications systems receive our signal.

“We will issue that signal just as soon as the SAR teams are in position for recovery.

“We alerted the Pacifica who charged their field to the maximum and began moving and rotating their vessel before coming under attack.

“Currently they are still underway but have suffered extensive damage. They may be just able to get out of the line of enemy fire behind earth's shadow.”

General Percifer listened soberly to the report.

He was upset because he had been assured by the intelligence services, including USSPACOM's own,

that the particle beam sites in China had all been destroyed months ago. Of course, at the time, that meant the sites where the weaponry for the Dragon Spirit was being developed and tested.

“Obviously, the enemy had larger plans for their technology outside of what they showed us and which they chose not to share with us until this moment. But they sure are letting us see it now,” he thought as he began asking for more information.

“Okay, what of the coordinates for these sites that we got from the Southern Star before she went down?”

“Have they checked out?”

Another one of his staff, the Colonel coordinating operations at Point Solitude answered.

“Yes sir, the coordinates match the telemetry and the visuals received from both the Southern Star and the Pacifica. The folks at Point Solitude are simply waiting for the order to attack.”

This was what the General wanted to hear. He had already received approval from Washington, both from the Joint Chiefs and from the White House, to place a priority on any request or need to attack enemy facilities that posed a threat to any of the US Space Stations.

“With one station down and another in danger of the same, I would say that these three sites represent a threat alright,” he thought.

“Get Point Solitude on the horn for me and I will issue the orders immediately.”

Turning to his Chief of Staff, he issued more orders.

“Have my entire staff in the control room conference room within the next ten minutes. I want every aspect of the attack and the assessment of its effectiveness reviewed by the entire staff.”

December 7, 2010, twelve minutes later

Ground Based Particle Weapon Command Center

Mongolia

Lu Pham watched as the telemetry told the awful truth.

The Americans clearly had more of their orbital bombardment projectiles...many more. They also clearly had more stations in space in geosynchronous orbit, hiding in Earth's shadow and out of the line of fire of China's particle beam systems, from which they were launching these attacks. At this moment, a single large projectile was precisely targeting each of his installations, and there were two smaller projectiles behind each of the large ones.

“Those smaller ones are their insurance,” he thought.

“I am sure they have gauged our capabilities and have applied a large enough factor to ensure their success.”

Considering the alternatives, which were growing fewer and fewer by the moment, Lu Pham made the decision as to how they would defend the installations against the attack.

“If we can somehow split the first one, there may be enough time to respond to the follow on projectiles...and it would take all three systems to potentially stop any one of the larger objects.”

The next fifteen minutes would tell the story.

...and they did.

Lu ordered all of the sites to focus on the projectile targeting his most capable system, the one closest to the command facility and only 80 kilometers away.

Things went as Lu had anticipated.

With all three particle weapons focusing on the one large projectile, they were able to split it into two pieces while it was still high in the atmosphere, many miles above the earth.

Both pieces fell to earth in uninhabited regions, and video cameras at the facility were trained towards their impact points and showed the tremendous explosions and mushroom clouds associated with those impacts. One of them hit earth only twenty-three kilometers away from the command facility and the shock wave tore several of the cameras from their mounting hardware outside the building and knocked down a number of out buildings.

Lu did not notice that relatively minor damage because he was buried over 200 meters beneath the surface in a completely independently shock mounted facility, encased in rock.

With the split of the first major projectile, the three Chinese weapons had just a few seconds to focus on the two smaller objects approaching the main facility. By that time the first smaller object was only two miles above the facility and all three systems open fired on it. But it only lasted a few short seconds as the two other particle beam facilities targeted by the other large orbital bombardment projectiles were hit and went off line. Those facilities, and everyone working at them, had been completely annihilated by the large American projectiles targeting them.

Still, the main facility was successful in splitting the first small projectile when it was less than a mile overhead, it's pieces narrowly missing the facility itself. But by that time it was too late to target the last projectile.

Time had run out.

The glowing carbonaceous chondrite projectile that had been mined from the asteroid belt and launched from Point Solitude impacted squarely on the last remaining Chinese ground-based particle beam facility, creating a crater twenty meters deep and rendering the entire facility a twisted, burning, smoking ruin, destroying the facility and everything associated with it within a two hundred meter radius.

There would be no more particle beam attacks into space originating from ground stations in the PRC, or originating from any of its allies or their controlled territories..

Lu dreaded the report he would have to make to the Executive Committee, and to Jien Zemin in particular. At the very least, he knew that he could revel in the fact that another two US Space Stations

had been destroyed. The Pacifica Station, even though it had narrowly escaped the line of fire into the earth's shadow, was so badly damaged that she completely and unexpectedly broke up within thirty minutes after crossing the horizon.

The entire crew was lost.

She proved to be the last Space Station lost to the Chinese in the course of the war.

Christmas 2010 and New Year 2011

In North America

Throughout the United States and all of North America, the hopes of the people continued to rise as a longer and longer time period passed without a major terror or enemy attack within the continental United States and Canada. The Home Guard program, was effective in defense efforts and consisted of local volunteer citizens who worked under the authority of their local sheriff's departments, and who watched over, guarded and protected critical local infrastructure. Usually working three four hour shifts a week, these individuals communicated and reported through a special dispatch system to their local sheriff's office on a communications network that was shared by, and escalated up through, the respective state's National Guard, the Department of Homeland Security and NORCOM (North American Command) to the U.S. military. All of these units throughout the country were trained and outfitted by the sheriff's department and local National Guard units using federal funds earmarked for that purpose.

Each individual in the Home Guard, by legislative act, had to pass a basic capability and background test which looked at criminal history, physical health and stature, involvement in any anti-American groups, any financial or personal vulnerabilities that an enemy might exploit against the individual, and their own personal availability and ability to commit to the program. Those found with no major issues that might preclude, prevent or hinder them from service, were admitted to the program and sworn in as any individual working for the armed services or other branches of the federal government, swearing or affirming their allegiance and dedication to upholding and defending the Constitution.

The training of these individuals consisted of small arms training, small group tactics, basic reconnaissance and scouting training, communications training, basic first-aid training, and specific law enforcement training applicable to their local assignment. This training was accomplished over a six week period, five times a week. Classes were held in the morning, afternoon or evening and lasted two hours. When complete, the volunteers had to pass a qualification test that covered all areas of their training before being certified into the Home Guard program. Re-certification was required on a yearly basis.

The outfitting of successful volunteers included infrared vision equipment, communications equipment (usually consisting of the latest hand-held transceivers), a special camouflage patterned uniform and an M-14 rifle with ammunition. All of the equipment was identical to that used by the National Guard units and therefore in good supply. The equipment was kept in the home, ready for instant use by the volunteer who could be called up while off duty and mobilized at anytime by the Sheriff's department to assist in addressing local emergency events, be the emergency caused by the enemy or by nature.

After six months of honorable duty, the equipment became the property of the volunteer, contingent on another year of honorable service. Other than this equipment, there was no compensation or pay for this service. In the environment existing within America by 2011, such service was considered a citizen's civil

duty and there was no shortage of volunteers throughout the nation to man these units in a 24X7 coverage of all of America's local infrastructure ranging from electrical sub-stations, to manufacturing plants, to irrigation ditches, to hospitals, to local power plants, dams, major highway interchanges, malls, other shopping centers, and any other conceivable target of America's enemies. And it was local people, truly, *We the People*, who were accomplishing it. The people who were most familiar with the local areas and their people, were the ones providing the service...and they were doing it under local, elected leadership.

The adoption of and implementation of this program across the United States through legislation and initiatives of the Homeland Security Department was one of the great legacies of President Norman Weisskopf. Under President Bowers, the program had continued growing unabated to become a mainstay of the defense of America against enemy infiltrators or terrorists, and it had worked well, despite the many, many attacks that had been conducted on America's soil. The Home Guard had interdicted, prevented and defeated attacks throughout the United States before they could ever get going in many cases, and helped defeat and lessen the impact of actual attacks in many others.

It had been so successful, that Canada had adopted a very similar program under the conservative administration that had been elected in short order after the outbreak of hostilities. Within a year of the United States adopting its Home Guard program, the Canadians had adopted their own Home Front program.

Another great legacy of President Weisskopf had been the rapid rebuilding and growth of American manufacturing and revitalizing the American steel and energy industries necessary to sustain it. Opening up the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), the waters off the Pacific Coast, areas of Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and many others to petroleum, coal, solar, greater hydro and geothermal production had allowed America to make rapid progress in energy production and independence. Once multiple new nuclear power plants had started coming online, energy self sufficiency was assured. By late 2007 America was completely energy independent and exporting energy to her allies.

The most modern steel production processes and mills, automated through the latest American innovations in computer-aided technologies, using true expert and intelligent systems, allowed for continuing rapid buildup in wartime production. Allied nations and peoples were calling it the modern American miracle, and it was allowing America, once again, to assume the role as the arsenal for freedom and liberty that it had donned in earlier generations and crisis. As a result, modern manufacturing plants, putting out the latest tanks, aircraft, spacecraft, ships, missiles, trucks, rifles, ammunition, support equipment, clothing and the myriad computer chips and systems that controlled them and lent to them their high technology, cropped up all over the nation.

By Christmas 2010 and New Year of 2011, this production miracle was producing a veritable avalanche of Army, Naval, Air Force and Space Command systems for the nearly ten million personnel the United States had under arms throughout the world...and this did not include the over seven million Home Guard personnel within the Continental United States. The American citizenry was mobilized to support the effort to the max, and they were hardened to it as well. The rationing programs, similar to those used in World War II, for materiel critical to the war effort, were being willingly and gladly adopted by citizens who had seen far too many of their own wounded or killed to enemy action at home, and who all knew several military personnel who had experienced the same overseas.

Despite the anxieties, hardships and dangers presented by the war, Americans were upbeat and positive. Society had literally been transformed by the crisis. Instead of the numerous divisions socially, morally and culturally that had sprung up from the 1960's through the 1990's, that tended to divide the people and set them against one another, now the vast majority of the people were much more focused on the

foundational and critical values essential to a truly free culture. These were values that took into consideration the great responsibility and accountability that freedom must require of its benefactors if it is to hold and maintain itself. As a result, there were no hyphenated-Americans anymore, everyone was considered an American, committed to the red, white and blue.

Abortion was now illegal, and the vast majority of Americans (polled in excess of 90%), after hearing of, reading and contemplating the meaning of the Human Reasoning Structures and their presence in the unborn, were solidly behind the reversal of Roe v. Wade that took place in October of 2008. Federal and State Laws had been passed recognizing and codifying this decision. The war effort had taken a dramatic turn for the better soon after the decision and the President himself had spoken directly to the cause-effect relationship of those events in his Christmas address of that year when he said:

"I stand before you this evening and say that my own personal conviction is that our successes on the field of battle over the last few weeks are tied directly, inexorably to the earlier decision by our people, through our Constitutional processes, to reverse the greatest blot and stain that has ever existed on our national consciousness. Our founders taught us that among the unalienable rights that we all enjoy, that the first is the right to life. As a people, as a nation, we have now remembered that simple and benign truth. Let us never forget it again, let us never lose our morality in such a horrific way, because in our morality, we find our freedom and liberty."

America, collectively, had agreed with that statement at the time, and they were even more committed to it now.

Another great change that had carried through to the present time and was directly tied to the Home Guard program and the principles behind it, was the reaffirmation in the American psyche of the Second Amendment to the Constitution. As a result of the Firearms Restoration Act of July of 2006, throughout all fifty states and within the Federal Code, law-abiding American citizens were not infringed in their bearing of arms in their own defense. In fact, with a backdrop of unrestricted and total war and terror, Americans were encouraged to bear arms...at all times. And in so doing, to the consternation of the very few people who were still inclined in 2011 to restrict gun rights, what had America experienced?

By 2011 the trends and statistics were clear. With three and one half years of data to draw on, there had been a tremendous drop in violent crime across the board. From assault to robbery to rape to murder, all major categories of violent crime were down...way down. The old western adage, that, *an armed society is a polite society*, had been proven true.

Finally, as a punctuation to all of this...God was back in the consciousness and day to day activities of most American citizens. Not by law or acclamation, but by the free choice desire of the people themselves. Never had church attendance been at such high rates. Never had charitable donations to churches been such a high percentage of citizens' disposable incomes. Despite the rigors and hardships of war, the common American citizen was now donating almost 10% of their pre-tax dollars to charitable causes...and many of the more religious, though the never demanded it, saw this as no accident. They viewed it as a part of God's law of tithing, that when adopted freely by the citizens themselves would prove to the benefit and blessing of the society as a whole that did so.

In addition, prayer had been re-enthroned as a motivating and moving part of American culture...publicly. Laws that had been passed prohibiting public prayer in schools, at school events, at public and government events, had all been overturned. The true meaning and original intent of the founders regarding the first amendment to the Constitution had been re-discovered. The Constitution forbade the establishment of a state religion...but also allowed for no laws passed or instituted by Congress prohibiting any citizen from a free exercise of their religion, as long as they did not infringe on

the rights of others. The uttering of prayer on the official programs at public events by those so inclined was no longer viewed as infringing on anyone. Those who did not believe were not forced to bow their heads, to stay where prayers were uttered, or to assent to the prayer. But the vast majority of the citizens, through the hardships, loss of life and destruction had learned that John Adams, words regarding the foundation of America was true:

“ We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.”

All of these things made for a thankful people, full of gratitude. But that was not all, they had become a positive people, full of optimism for the future. Optimistic about the eventual triumph of right over wrong...and the very nature of the conflict bore stark witness to the basic truth that there were absolutes in this regard...the triumph of good over evil, liberty over compulsion, freedom over tyranny, optimism over pessimism. Americans felt bright about their future...literally looking to the heavens for guidance and the future during the remainder of, and after the completion of the war.

...and this optimism and outlook, coupled with the continuing positive progress on the war front, caused it to be the greatest, grandest, most joyful, most grateful, and most heart warming Christmas and New Year's holidays in many years, since well before the war started.

Many children enjoyed their first truly "wondrous" Christmas, and many parents were able to, for the first time since the fateful days in March of 2006, provide a traditional American Christmas similar to the ones they "used to know". The New Year's celebration was equally gratifying and refreshing, with the optimism and hope of the season, and the progressing events, in rich and evident supply.

Christmas 2010 and New Year 2011

In Central America

Most of Central America, being historically grounded in Christianity, was grateful for the Christmas and New Year's season. The forces of tyranny, particularly the Red Chinese forces that had been in the area for so long, were now completely defeated and removed. Panama was well on the road to republican government, and any vestige of the support that certain governmental officials and the more socialistic, communistic or Marxist elements in society, had been completely removed from the public arena by the people themselves. There was simply no traction left for them after the tremendous warfare that had swept over the region. Truth be told, many of them had been, as had happened with the leadership of Romania after the Iron Curtain fell, summarily executed.

Such attitudes were the norm across all of Central America. The enemy had been driven out, American help and support, as well as other allied help and support, were in abundance. People were looking forward to having an opportunity to be free and establish republican forms of government for themselves.

One major exception remained, and that was Mexico.

Despite the successful actions of the U.S. military while conducting Operation Alvarez in November of 2007, when Red Chinese and Islamic sympathizers and operatives had been attacked and either killed or captured by American forces, Presidente Conejo of Mexico remained very aloof and non-committal to

the allied cause. It was a source of continuing consternation to the American public in general, and to the Bowers administration specifically.

Mexican public opinion seemed to be split almost right down the middle regarding the issue. Significant perceived negative impact to Mexico had occurred as a result of America's response to the war in general and to the influx of terrorists and infiltrators across her borders specifically. Ever since America had militarized its borders soon after the March 2006 attacks, the movement of illegal aliens across the southern border had been dramatically reduced. With a significant commitment of National Guard and regular Army rapid deployment forces, with the assignment of Home Guard units to assist the INS as the eyes and ears for those forces, and with a large force of UAV aircraft watching the "buffer" zone that had been established... individuals and coyotes had found it almost impossible to cross unobserved and unapprehended into the United States.

The drop in illegal immigration also meant a drop in hard currency flowing back into Mexico to the families and business of those laboring in America. On the northern side of the border in the United States, with a full mobilization effort and with the stark realization of the horrors of war being played out on American soil with the terror and enemy attacks that had occurred, there was no shortage of American workers for American fields, factories and for any of the service industries where so many of the illegal aliens had worked before. Not only the politicians and the military leaders, but the American people themselves had at long last awakened to the dangers of allowing their borders to be so wide open, and for the development of such a significant sub-culture, outside of the law, amongst them.

Many Mexicans were angry at this, feeling that their chance at the *American Dream* had been taken away from them by the Americans themselves. This element sides with Presidente Conejo in his actions and words against America. Their attitudes were growing increasingly belligerent, increasingly brazen. After a cessation of several years, Mexican border patrols, beholden to drug and other criminal concerns... and believing their actions to be supported by their own government, began to confront smaller INS and Home Guard units on the north side of the border. As had been the case on numerous occasions in the late 1990's and the early 2000's, these confrontations escalated more and more into actual gunfire.

Many other citizens of Mexico recognized the wisdom of American actions in defending itself, securing and protecting its borders, and defeating the forces of tyranny on the American continents. This group held out for the promise of more legal immigration opportunity in America and were dedicated to working with the Americans to expand the legal immigration in keeping with the Bower administration promises. These promises held for an increase in immigration limits within the new constraints established early-on by the Weisskopf administration at the outset of hostilities. These clear constraints included:

- A basic, tested understanding of the U.S. republican form of government.
- An Oath of allegiance to the United States.
- Three years legal living and productive working in the United States.
- No social welfare cases allowed as immigrant citizens.
- Ability to conversationally speak, read and write English.
- No ties to terror, crime or enemies of the United States.

Those Mexicans who supported the United States in its legal and defined immigration policy, were

themselves becoming more and more outspoken against the large element in their society who were becoming belligerent to the United States. They believed that such belligerence and hostility would drive an already aroused American citizenry to demand much tougher conditions for Mexicans desirous to become U.S. citizens or to ban entry from Mexico altogether. It was developing into a dangerous internal situation.

Then, during the week between Christmas and the New Year, it exploded in violence.

On December 28th, a group of over five hundred Mexican citizens, including scores of women and children, proclaiming that they were simply reaching out for the Christmas gift of living in the United States that so many of their citizens had acquired in the past, made a rush across the Arizona border, near its eastern boundary with New Mexico. More than half of them were armed and they were escorted by over one hundred heavily armed Mexican federal troops.

Once across the border, the group ran up against a Home Guard unit of four individuals. Upon observing them, the American unit duly reported the incursion, which had also been spotted by a Predator III UAV providing border sentry duty. The Home Guard unit then used a bullhorn they had been issued and called on the large group of Mexicans to halt and return to their homes across the border.

A brief, but intense fire-fight ensued when the leading Mexicans and several of their escorting troops opened fire on the four Americans. After a few minutes, all four Americans were killed, and then had their bodies violated in a most atrocious and horrific manner. This happened in full view of all of the Mexicans as they gathered around and literally ripped the American citizens limb from limb, some of the young children joining with their parents in taking part...all of which was also viewed by the Predator III and its monitoring military personnel.

Within a quarter hour, a single Predator IV aircraft, armed with the UAV version of the Hail Storm weapons system made a single pass over the invading Mexican killers. A quick reaction platoon arrived on the scene within thirty minutes and found only thirty-three of the Mexicans alive...seven troopers, ten civilian men, eight women and eight children.

The entire affair had also been observed by other Mexican nationals on the south side of the border, including one Mexican Federal patrol who took vivid digital pictures. Editing out the border crossing and the attack and mutilation of the four Home Guard personnel, the Mexican government, with Presidente Conejo full complicity and approval, created a propaganda piece and broadcast it across their nation. The effects were immediate and precipitous amongst that part of the population that supported their President in his defiance of America.

After the release of the Mexican propaganda piece, on December 30th, the Bowers administration released the detailed pictures of the entire action as filmed by the high flying Predator III aircraft. The differences between the films were clear, to the point of being able to readily tell where the Mexicans had edited their film. Amongst the more rational part of the Mexican population, the deceit and agenda of their own government was clear...and this realization led to equally immediate and precipitous results.

On January 2nd, 2011, precipitated by several large and contending demonstrations taking place across the nation to mark the incident after the New Year celebration, civil war erupted in Mexico.

Christmas 2010 and New Year 2011

In South America

Heavy fighting still continued in Argentina, where massive COSAS and Chinese forces were fighting hard, but losing ground in their efforts against allied forces. Throughout the holiday period, while celebrations and thanksgiving went on further to the north in Columbia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile and northern Brazil, as a result of the end of hostilities in those areas, the fighting in Argentina remained fierce and protracted.

Henrietta Maldonado, the President of Brazil, proclaimed the entire week between Christmas and New Year as a "National Week of Prayer and Supplication". Specifically, she requested that the people and their leaders pray for all allied forces fighting in Argentina, and for the people's of war ravished countries throughout South America, and specifically to pray and supplicate God in Heaven for Brazil's sons and daughters who were in harm's way, or who were suffering from displacement or injury resulting from the war.

Oh, in the mountains and in the rain forests, there still were smaller groups of enemy personnel. But most of these had been cut off completely and were merely looking for a way to conceal themselves and make their way towards the western coasts of the continent in the hopes of being picked up and ferried away from South America by COSAS or Chinese friendly forces.

On occasion, these units would either be discovered in their lairs, or they would reveal themselves through attacks in the outlying areas as they sought food, supplies and ammunition. Whenever this happened, it was not long until reaction forces were either inserted nearby, or local garrisons sortied to cut the enemy off. With American satellite coverage once again restored in this part of the world, and with the amazing reconnaissance and endurance capabilities of American UAVs...in most cases the enemy units either surrendered when confronted, or were annihilated if they chose to stand and fight.

Christmas 2010 and New Year 2011

In Europe

As had been the case in the United States, Europe enjoyed its first normal Christmas in several years.

The thanksgiving was most poignant in those areas that had been liberated from the grip of terror and tyranny. Greece, Turkey, Romania, parts of Hungary, Albania and large sections of the Ukraine and Russia who had been over run and occupied, some for several years, were now liberated. Most of the more southern sections of this area had been occupied by forces from the greater Islamic Republic who had brutally suppressed any Christian celebrations or observances. Large areas of Eastern Russia between Moscow and the Ural Mountains had been occupied by the Chinese and some Indian forces. They proved just as intolerant, brutal and merciless as the Islamic forces in their suppression of Christianity.

Once these areas were liberated by allied troops, as most of them had been in just the last year, the outpouring was tremendous. Allied forces, particularly American and English forces, received welcomes and parades that rivaled anything that had happened in World War II when allied troops liberated western Europe. Somehow, all of those who cherished freedom and looked forward to self determination, even the Muslims, atheists, agnostics and other non-Christians in these countries, knew that the arrival of allied forces meant that they would be free to worship...or not worship...as they

pleased. They also recognized, that the foundation for their laws and living would now be based on free choice rooted in fundamental moral constraint, rather than pure coercion, tyranny and compulsion based on a ruling elite's vision of the preferred political, ideological or religious dogma.

As time went on, and as the wave of liberation and liberty continued to roll over occupied and aggressor nations, a recognition developed amongst the vast majority of people that a fundamental moral foundation based on the Judeo-Christian values were proving, historically and in the course of this horrific war, to be the best foundation for freedom, peace and prosperity. Some of these universal values included:

Love God with all thy heart, might, mind and soul.

Love thy neighbor as thyself.

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Lose yourself in the service of others to find yourself.

All men are created equal.

All mankind endowed by God with unalienable rights.

Self-improvement leads to the most effective service.

Education, self-reliance and hard work improves one's self.

Tolerance of other's beliefs provides for domestic peace.

Persuasion, long-suffering and reason are vehicles to change.

As these principles and knowledge became more and more apparent-and this occurred naturally because of the trauma these populations and peoples experienced during the warfare pitting those very principles against their ideological opposites-other belief systems, long locked in the morass of intolerance, ignorance and compulsion, began to change...began to adopt the Judeo-Christian principles themselves in order to affect change, peace and prosperity amongst their own peoples.

It would not happen overnight, all of the principles would not be adopted at the same time, and there would be set backs and divisions...but the changes that began as nations were liberated by the armed forces of those nations allied to the United States of America were inexorable. There had been individual experiences with it since the American revolutionary period of 1776-1792 where the fundamental principles underlying American liberty had attempted to find firm root elsewhere. Examples such as during the French revolution, the changes to the English system of government brought about by American independence, the changes to western Europe and in the Pacific after World War II, and particularly during the era of what became known as the *Reagan Revolution* which led to the fall of the Iron Curtain and the dissolution of the Soviet Union were all notable. But future historians would note and almost universally agree that the time period surrounding Christmas of 2010 and New Year of 2011 represented the point in time when the fundamental principles upon which American liberty were founded finally showed without doubt that they were beginning to take firm root universally throughout the world.

...and the people of Europe, in their Christmas and New Year's celebration, joyously yet unknowingly heralded in the beginnings of this change. At that date it was still far from achieving anything remotely close to any universal proportions. Also, it would be shown in future events-even as strife and war broke

out in Mexico—that it was still to be tested by the horrors of war that would themselves yet be felt more universally, even in these areas where peace seemed to be breaking out so soundly. Still, the celebrations were nonetheless the harbinger of the future...and somehow, the people of Europe instinctively knew it and marked it with their exuberance.

Christmas 2010 and New Year 2011

In Africa

The devastation of war was perhaps nowhere more keenly felt than on the dark continent, which more and more was being referred to by the local inhabitants as the continent of death. While it was true that major combat operations had all but ceased there in Africa by New Year 2011, yet the fallout and leftover effects of war were most dramatically felt in this area of the world, where more than in any other area of the world, the resources to recover and help those most effected by war's devastation simply did not exist in the quantities to make a difference.

After helping to defeat enemy insurgencies and uprisings in several of the African nations along the southwestern coast in 2007, allied armies had twice staged along the Ivory Coast, in Liberia, Benin and Nigeria during the course of the long war. Their purpose each time was to penetrate into the interior in an effort to relieve beleaguered allied force in and around Israel. Once they were stalled and thrown back...the second time they were successful.

Although the large numbers of allied troops associated with these staging activities, and all of the logistical support that necessarily came along with them, provided for an economic influx into those specific areas, that condition was also a two-edged sword. Along with the devastation left behind by the earlier warfare, GIS and CAS forces conducted numerous raids and attacks trying to penetrate through to the staging areas of the allied forces. This resulted in more and sustained destruction to those nations.

As the allied armies marched northeast into the interior of Nigeria, Chad, Ethiopia, the Sudan, Libya and Egypt to battle Chinese and Islamic forces blocking their path, the destruction and damage from the resulting large, division sized and army group-sized conflicts were devastating to the impoverished people and their minimal infrastructure. It was a population and an infrastructure that had already been terribly punished by decades of civil strife and the blight of the Aides epidemic throughout the area. The suffering experienced by these terribly downtrodden people as the tides of battle twice swept through their territories was appalling.

Like a swath across the continent, whole areas were depopulated by the terrible fighting and by the massive migration of the civilian population as refugees in front of it. Oft times, the people were simply caught up in the maelstrom, unable to move out of the way of the surging forces. From central Nigeria, across Niger, Chad, Sudan and into Libya, Egypt, and Ethiopia, over one hundred and twenty million souls had been displaced, and an estimated fifty-five million had died there in central Africa alone.

The hardship the massive influx of refugees placed on the surrounding nations was almost as great as the warfare itself to the nations that had been directly in its path. Zaire, Cameroon, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania on the south and Algeria and Mali to the north and west, were all devastated by the tens of millions of refugees and resulting poverty, sickness and strife that accompanied them. Millions more died in that strife and the ensuing diseases and drought.

Allied soldiers from the United States, Brazil, England, Canada, and other nations who were a part of

the offensive...and then later part of the relief efforts after the defeat of CAS and GIR forces on the continent, were moved to tears at the unrelenting poverty, sickness, disease and suffering they witnessed. As much as anything else, their own letters home and reports to their superiors resulted in the massive relief that was pouring into Africa as 2010 closed and 2011 dawned. In addition to assistance already flowing to other parts of the world, private charities, churches, individuals and official governmental efforts earmarked large proportions for the tens of millions suffering in Africa

And as always had been the case, the vast majority of this relief came from the United States. As was the case after World War II...and indeed after every major war effort by the United States ...and as was the case during the terrible droughts, epidemics and civil wars of the past in Africa, the people's of those lands would remember, would be bolstered and inspired by, and would seek, in their own way to emulate, the generosity and actions of the bastion of liberty, prosperity and peace, the United States of America.

...and thus would the ideological and fundamental moral changes being felt in Europe and in other areas of the world begin to see their own infantile beginnings in Africa.

Christmas 2010 and New Year 2011

In the Middle East

Outside of mainland Asia (including India) and Australia, and the areas of the Pacific and Indian Oceans surrounding them, the most recent major combat had been felt in the Middle East. Indeed, major combat operations were continuing in the region in far eastern parts of Iran, and just staring in Afghanistan. Even with the benefit of Hail Storm systems, Predator III and Predator IV aircraft and the latest American orbital space station, the USSS Caspian which had been positioned over the Caspian Sea, in the mountainous terrains of those nations, the fighting was still difficult and slow going.

In addition to the ongoing major combat, large areas of the liberated and conquered territories in Iraq, the former Iran, eastern Turkey, Syria and areas along the western shore of the Persian Gulf were still in the midst of pacification operations. Although those pacification operations were significantly smaller than had been expected due to larger than anticipated portions of the populations of the belligerent and fundamental Islamic areas throwing off their leadership and accepting with open arms the western allied armies...still there were a number of major areas of insurgency requiring allied attention.

The continuation of what had become a global operation in conquered areas of enemy territory requiring pacification, Operation *Ruthless Sentinel* , was very helpful in this regard. Without risking allied lives, and in those areas that had either been passed over in major combat, or where insurgents felt that they could still challenge and snipe at allied forces, *Ruthless Sentinel* ably demonstrated the futility of such intentions. In a manner that either annihilated the opposition, or so cowed them and their supporters that normal pacification and reconstruction operations could be conducted more safely, the Hail Storm weapons of the ever-present Predator IV aircraft rained death and destruction on any significant gathering of insurgents.

But it didn't always work the way the allies planned, as it had in Hamadan in July of 2010. Some of the more dedicated and fanatic adherents to the brand of fundamental and radical Islam as taught by the Grand Ayatollah Ol Osam Hassan Sayeed...whom these individuals knew had escaped with a promise to return from the east and avenge their losses...learned their own lessons from the slaughter of Hamadan and a dozen other places and fought on. In those cases, the insurgents would fain pacification in order to

draw the allied forces closer to them into normal reconstruction and infrastructure building operations...and then they would strike.

In each instance, the insurgents were soundly defeated in the end...sometimes causing the allies to raise entire towns and villages in the resulting battles as they had been forced to do in Mecca. But each of those instances was preceded by a surprise attack from a population thought to have already been well on the road to pacification, thought to be working with allied forces, where scores of Americans, British, Canadian, German, Polish, French, Russian or other western allied nation personnel were killed at the outset.

One unintended consequence for the radicals resulting from these operations was that they further and further separated and isolated themselves from the growing portion of the population who were accepting and welcoming the freedom and change brought by the allies. As had been the case in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom, after sovereignty was turned over to the Iraqis in 2004, and before the rise of Hasan Sayeed in 2005, the more moderate Islamic peoples began to resent and view as enemies the insurgents who were causing such difficulties for them.

As soon as allied forces could recruit and train them, Iraqis, Syrians, Iranians and other local people were fighting the radicals themselves, and as hard as they allies were. And they were also purging themselves of those who tried to infiltrate their ranks in a vain effort to upset the change, the peace, and the freedom that was the promise for which so many people in these areas were striving.

Christmas 2010 and New Year 2011

In Australia

The continent down under was still embroiled in one of the bloodiest, most horrific, and long lasting battles in mankind's history. Although CAS and GIR forces had been pushed well back, their numbers were constantly reinforced from what seemed to be inexhaustible numbers out of China, India, Indonesia, and other pacified areas of the remaining GIR, and the as yet unaffected areas of the CAS nations. Tens of thousands of allied troops fell in the effort, millions of enemy military personnel were killed, and the number of civilian casualties was also reaching well into the millions.

The initial invasion and occupation of the northwestern and western areas of the continent in February of 2007 by CAS and GIR forces ultimately culminated in the complete subjugation of the continent by April of 2008. Now, in early 2011, the allies were slowly pushing the enemy forces back in Australia. That entire four year period had been a continual scene of warfare, bloodshed and conflict. Even during the more than two year period when no major allied forces were present on the mainland to contend with or hinder the enemy, small numbers of allied forces who had been cut off or otherwise left behind in the Australian interior maintained a valiant and bloody resistance. In this they fought alongside local Australian citizens and aborigines against enemy military forces and the growing presence of GIR and CAS civilian infrastructure that was being established throughout the continent. Billy Simmons had been caught up in those events.

Now, the tens of millions of GIR and CAS civilians that had been transplanted into Australia with a promise of free land and dominion fought alongside the several million strong military forces of their mother countries. They did this in an effort to maintain their presence within Australia and somehow halt the allied advance and push them back. Even with Hail Storm missile systems and the other technological advances, the allies were hard pressed to maintain their offensive and avoid going into defensive postures

against the massed attacks of both personnel and equipment directed at their formations.

From large naval forces to the North of Australia, protected by bases in New Guinea and in the surrounding and strategic island chains, CAS and GIR aircraft staged continual massive attacks against allied forward positions. They also staged deeper, daring raids targeting allied logistical supply and staging areas. The same thing occurred from enemy airfields in the western areas of the continent that were still under the umbrella of Indian and Chinese naval air forces operating in the more protected waters of the Indian Ocean.

The advent of the new American SSVN Olympus class aircraft-carrying nuclear submarines and the even newer SSCN Barney class arsenal submerged cruisers that escorted and supplemented them, would soon prove that the waters of the Indian Ocean were not as protected and safe for CAS and GIR shipping as they imagined. In fact, these submarines, when coupled with the Alaska class transport, and Virginia class attack submarines, would soon prove that no place along the coastlines, or within controlled waters of the entire holdings and landmass of the enemy would any longer be safe for their naval operations.

But until then, the lengths to which the enemy would go in preventing the allied offensive from continuing were epitomized by the fact that the Chinese had utilized their most advanced and secret particle beam technology twice to prevent the Americans from establishing a Southern Star space presence over Australia. Even though their last effort had proven successful in destroying a second Southern Star space station in October of 2010, the effort had ultimately proven futile when American spacecraft and installations far away from, and outside of, the Chinese reach had destroyed all of the particle beam weapons system that China possessed.

While that event had severely hindered the enemy efforts and outlook in Australia, it had not ended them. Continuing massed frontal assaults on the ground and contention for control of the airspace over the front would continue. The continued presence of enemy forces in the island chains to the north and east of Australia would allow the enemy to slow the allied offensive efforts, particularly in central and northern areas of the continent.

On January 1st, 2011, the Americans once again launched and successfully established a Southern Star space station presence over Australia. The reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities of that station, coupled with its new offensive capabilities from space, which would now be unhindered over Australia, would prove decisive in the coming year on the continent and in the areas surrounding it.

Christmas 2010 and New Year 2011

In Asia

Except for a thrust into Siberia from Alaska that had linked up with the American landings at Magadan and then proceeded westward, and except for the new fighting in India and in Siberia, the landmass of Asia had remained impenetrable to the allied cause. But these incursions, and the footholds they were establishing for allied forces were proving very disconcerting and disturbing to the CAS and GIR leadership.

Allied plans projected a multiple pronged assault on Asia consisting of five thrusts. One would develop and proceed south from the Capitol of Siberia, hoping to force the enemy forces that were holding the allies back in the Ural mountains to retreat from those positions for fear of being flanked and out

maneuvered. It was hoped that this would allow for the large Russian and European forces fighting in the Urals to achieve a breakthrough and open up a large offensive front into the heart of Asia from Europe proper.

A second thrust was to be located in India where allied forces had pushed up from their beachhead around Cochin towards Bangalore before meeting stiff and determined resistance from the massive numbers of Chinese troops pouring into the country. It was hoped, that by employing Hail Storm weapons and other advanced technology, that allied forces on the sub-continent could ultimately persevere and achieve positions from which to threaten China directly. They intended to do this exactly as the Chinese had entered India, but in reverse through the major river valleys that penetrated the Silwalik Mountain Range, along the Ganges and Sutlej Rivers, and through the Arunachal Pradesh along the Brahmaputra River.

The third spoke of the planned allied offensive was meant to originate out of Australia. Once enemy forces were defeated there, the allies hoped to consolidate their forces in the area and then follow the same general path that General Douglas Macarthur had taken in World War II to attack the Japanese. This would threaten the all-important sea lanes and oil conduits and divide the sub-continent and Malay peninsula from the eastern portions of Asia and China itself.

The fourth spoke of the attack would originate in the Pacific Ocean and follow a general line through the island chains similar to what Admiral Nimitz and the U.S. Marines had followed in World War II. The specific islands that would be attacked would differ from those in the second world war because the Chinese had occupied and fortified different islands themselves, but the idea of bypassing and island hopping would be developed using the same principles.

Finally, the Americans would continue with their fifth assault spoke from Magadan in Siberia. This thrust was already raising great concerns in China itself because it had been the first incursion into their mainland fortress, and because it still offered the allies the greatest chance of penetrating directly into China. In so doing, it would pose a direct threat to the rich and productive areas of Manchuria...and Manchuria was the gateway to Beijing itself. Although it had not yet penetrated as deeply towards China as the allies had hoped to date, that shortcoming could be traced directly to the effort the Chinese were expending in blunting the effort. In fact, in many ways, as a result of the Chinese forces being diverted to that end, opportunities would develop in other areas that would help in the success of the overall allied effort...but not without tremendous cost.

Pitted against all of these plans by the allies were several critical factors that the CAS and GIR nations in Asia had developed in their own favor. The first was the depth to which Jien Zenim's Three Wisdoms had been accepted and adopted into the day to day living pattern of the citizens of the CAS.

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

These social and communistic constructs had been so engrained into the people, and their success over the last several years at expanding their economies, expanding their national and geographic spheres of influence, and improving the quality of life of their citizens, had been so apparent, that the people as a whole had become wholly committed to them. They were as committed to the resulting lifestyle as any of the fundamental or radical Islamics were to their own belief systems...and perhaps more so. Similar to the Nazis of World War II, or the Japanese under the Emperor, the people of the various Asian nations

were engrossed in their totalitarian way of life. It was a way of life that had been specifically designed and engineered around these very constructs so that the ideology would be more palatable to those very people whose culture represented thousands of years of subservience.

The second factor that was a positive influence on continuing CAS and GIR war efforts was the high technology innovations that had been, and were, being developed and deployed into the fight. Many of these innovations, particularly the varied applications of the super cavitating weapon technology, surprised the west and cost them dearly. This was especially true from the outset of hostilities through the following two to three years when the west was pushed back so drastically on every front. The ability to come up with new innovations continued to threaten the allied efforts at every turn as had been demonstrated by the use of the particle beam technology against American assets in space.

A third factor in favor of the CAS and GIR nations in Asia, and directly relevant to the effectiveness of the second factor, was the phenomenal manufacturing and production capability that had been developed. Centering on the already tremendous production and manufacturing capabilities of the Asian tigers and of China itself before the war, the CAS had expanded significantly on these capabilities in the intervening five years. Capitalizing on the tremendous amount of investment in manufacturing that the west had made in China and throughout Asia in general, and specifically from the United States, with the coming of the war all of it had simply been nationalized by the invading and victorious CAS forces.

China, Japan, South Korea, India, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Malaysia had ample production capability to draw from, despite damage during the onset of hostilities. Most of that damage had been centered around Taipei in Taiwan and Seoul in Korea, with other significant damage during the short lived fighting for Japan. All of the damage however was quickly repaired by the industrious people, particularly as a result of the influx of Chinese peoples as masters and overlords into all of these nations.

Once consolidated, the processes that had made the Asian tiger what they were, were exported to other nations as they came under CAS and GIR rule. This meant the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Burma, Siberia (which was already benefiting from the Siberian Economic Development Treaty), western Australia, and New Guinea all become significant production houses in their own right, and all consolidated under one whole, the CAS and Jien Zenim.

The tremendous capacity of the manufacturing capabilities throughout Asia and the CAS/GIR sphere of influence literally kept pace with the growing American production power-house and technological development. This proved very advantageous for CAS forces as the allies progressed in their offensive operations because the manufacturing plants allowed for a tremendous number of high technology weapon systems and supplies to be constantly available to CAS forces and their GIR allies. In fact, the CAS had tremendous excess capacity and the production from those plants was being judiciously stored for reserve forces to be applied as added defense to any allied breakthrough, or as extra offensive capability for CAS or GIR counterattacks and breakthroughs.

A final factor, and one that was well know historically, was the tremendous numeric advantage that the Asian mainland held in manpower over all other continents and nations. It was one of the principle reasons why famous generals like Douglas Macarthur and others had always strongly counseled against any major land war on the mainland of Asia.

With China and India so tightly allied under the Three Wisdoms, two and a half billion people were available for the overall war effort from these two nations alone. By 2011, despite horrendous losses to date, and particularly as their forces were pushed back, the Chinese were fielding an armed force of over ninety million men and women at arms. India had grown her CAS-loyal forces, despite the upheaval and fighting on the sub-continent itself, to over forty-five million.

When the other CAS allies were added to this, Indonesia, Vietnam, Korea, and even Japan and the Philippines, including the remaining GIR forces from the Middle East, the western allies were facing a combined CAS/GIR force in Asia alone of over one hundred and seventy million men and women at arms. This huge force was backed up by a tremendously industrious population and outfitted with high technology weaponry that in many areas was close to parity to that of the allies.

All of these factors made for very serious obstacles to the planned allied offensive operations and represented great risks should any one of those planned axis of attack run into any significant difficulties. If CAS and GIR forces, in their numbers, were successful in achieving a flanking breakthrough during a counterattack on any extended allied thrust, the results could and would prove disastrous, with the risk of a slaughter and defeat of that particular allied operation of tremendous proportions.

The leadership of the CAS and GIR, particularly Jien Zenim and Hasan Sayeed, were well aware of this potential and were constantly reviewing, plotting and planning to exploit it wherever possible. Into this planning they included two new faces at the highest level of their planning and strategy sessions. One of these was the new acting President of India, Rahmish Patel, whom Jien Zemin had met with personally on several occasions. Zemin had to admit that Patel's cunning and ruthless nature was much more desirable to the CAS than the former Indian President, KP Narayannen's tentative nature, who had proven himself a traitor to the cause, and who would pay a traitor's price for his sedition and treachery.

The other new face in the high level meetings was none other than Admiral Lu Pham, who Jien Zenim had elevated in position to Vice Premier of the Communist Party, and the first Vice President of the People's Republic of China. This had been accomplished through unanimous voting on the Executive Committee of the Politburo, and then by a large super-majority of the entire Politburo. As such, Lu Pham and his technological brilliance was now employed in the highest level discussions, planning and strategizing of the entire CAS and GIR war effort, which represented the fate of well over four billion of earth's inhabitants directly, and all of them by extension.

As the Christian Christmas holiday and New Year passed, and as America prepared to launch new space station facilities over the central Pacific, over the Ural Mountains and far eastern Siberia in support of their planned and ongoing offensives, the CAS and GIR leadership planned how they could counter both the offensives and the space based advantage. Since they now had no counter for America's space based efforts, they listened to Hasan Sayeed's plans and already issued fatwahs. They also listened to Lu Pham's ideas as to how they might counter allied technology through misdirection and other means... and then they prepared to implement those plans at the earliest possible dates.

...and their implementation would strain and rock the free world to its very core, and ensure the final disposition of the CAS, the GIR, their leaders, and so very many of their peoples.

Chapter 5

“The cries of the widows and the fatherless on our frontiers now require that blood from my hands. I look on their commands as next to divine, and I do not choose to disobey them. General, I would rather lose fifty men and my own life than not to empower myself to execute this piece of business. You be murderers, but I be an executioner.” – Colonel George Rogers Clark, St. Vincennes, 1779

January 4, 2011, 9:20, EDT

Situation Room

The White House

Washington DC

As Admiral Ben Ryan, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, expertly wrapped up his briefing of the current military situation in Asia and the planned positioning of the new Space Stations in support of upcoming offensive operations, the President was anxious to get to the next piece of business.

“So, in summary, our current plans will place three more stations into orbit in the next week, the first to be over the central Pacific, the second to be over northwest Siberia and the final will be put in place over the Indian Ocean. With these three stations in place, and given their new defensive systems and their own offensive capabilities, we will be in a position to support our upcoming offensives.

“First, we will begin our long awaited central Pacific campaign targeting Wake Island, Tarawa and then island skipping toward an eventual attack on Okinawa. The kick off is scheduled for January 11th when the invasion fleets sail from Midway Island, for a scheduled landing at Wake Island on January 16th. Our new USS Midway will provide overall strategic reconnaissance and fire support as necessary.

“That support will include the identification and destruction of any enemy naval assets that might discover or interdict our task force as it approaches the island. Any sub-surface threats are expected to be interdicted by sweeps in front of the task force by the USS Jimmy Carter and her two supporting Virginia class boats.

“Our operations in the Indian Ocean, targeting Diego Garcia first, will commence on January 18th with landings at Diego Garcia. That task force is already underway from New Zealand and will be under the eye of the new USS Guadalupe, which will perform similar support for the Indian Ocean task force as the Midway provides for the Wake Island force.

“In that instance, the USS Connecticut and its supporting attack boats will be in the vanguard.

“Now, if there are any questions or comments, I would be glad to entertain them now and lead the discussion regarding them.”

For the next ten minutes several pertinent questions regarding the Admiral's presentation were discussed. At length, the President raised his hand and interjected.

“Ladies and gentlemen, we are short on time, so for just a moment I would like to review and discuss the situation in Mexico.

“I have a number of my own ideas resulting from earlier discussion with several of you, but I would like to come to an initial consensus regarding our own response.”

Via video conferencing, the Vice President, Fred Reissinger spoke up and addressed the gathering.

“Mr. President, I have worked this issue at length with the Mexican President and his Foreign Minister and his staff.

They are pushing for a return to the days before the war when Mexican citizens were able to come across the border at will and find work here in America. Despite our best efforts to explain to them that those days are over forever, they will not let go of the issue. There is no doubt that Presidente Conejo is still stinging from Operation Alvarez and the embarrassment it caused him.

“He and those in his military, finance and foreign ministries, which is where his own greatest support comes from, are actively working to undermine our position in the war. They are also working to blatantly influence and incite their own citizens to violating our borders and causing incidents.

“We have friends in their interior ministry, in their agricultural ministry, in their internal security apparatus, their judiciary, something less than half of their federal legislature and in their business sector. While they are open in their support for our current war efforts and immigration policies, they are afraid of Conejo's control and influence of their own military.

“I am afraid at this point, as much as I am against giving up on that option, that something other than diplomacy is going to be required to resolve this issue.”

With this somber statement from Vice President Reissinger, who had worked for years in the State Department before being appointed Secretary of State under the Weisskopf administration and then Vice President under John Bowers, the entire room quieted and sat in a reflective mood for a few seconds.

It was the Director of Homeland Security, Stewart Langstrom, who spoke up first.

“Well, our southern border area is secure and it is manned in more than sufficient strength by Home Guard units, the INS Border Patrol, National Guard, and U.S. Army quick reaction units, to curtail any illegal alien, drug smuggling or potential terror infiltrations. We have sufficient numbers of Predator II aircraft for surveillance and a handful of Predator IV aircraft to target larger incursions that develop into full blown emergencies like the one that has precipitated the current crisis.

“Quite frankly, we were lucky that one of those birds was so close to the incursion site...within fifteen minutes flying time. Any longer and the group could have easily dispersed and been much more difficult to track down entirely.

“But, and I would ask Admiral Ryan to confirm this with the CINC of NORCOM, if it came to a major invasion at multiple points by components of the Mexican army or very large numbers of illegal aliens, I am afraid we would need quite a bit more support.”

Admiral Ryan responded quickly.

“No need to confirm Stew. I have reviewed these contingencies with the General on numerous occasions.

“We have a plan for a full military defense in depth. It was developed when the very real danger existed of large Chinese forces advancing through our defenses in Central America and into Mexico.

“Mr. President, it would require our devoting another six to eight divisions of regular U.S. Army troops to the border area and committing several wings of U.S. Air Force fighters, attack aircraft and bombers, along with a plentiful supply of AGM-999 Hail Storm cruise missiles.”

With this statement, the room again grew quiet, waiting for the President to respond. They did not have

long to wait.

“Fred, Director Langstrom, and Admiral Ryan, thank you each for that input. It's pretty much what we already know.

“I believe there is a real danger, and I believe it is important to address it quickly and resolutely.”

Looking into the video conferencing lens, the President spoke to the Vice President.

“Fred, I'd like you, along with the Secretary of State, to personally deliver a message to Presidente Conejo. Let him know that we view the increasing incursions coupled with his attitude as a prelude to war and that our doctrine of preemption has already been solidly established. Let him know we will not hesitate, if we view a potential danger to the United States in the making, to use that doctrine with Mexico.

“Let him know that his government has thirty days to use their own forces to cause a halt to all incursions, to begin utilizing the established legal immigration policies across our southern borders, and to visibly and straight forwardly cease the incitement of his people and military forces against the United States.

“Otherwise, we will view their continued actions in this regard as a menace and clear and present danger to the United States and we will act to defend ourselves.

“Just that clear, Fred. Let the chips fall where they will.

“I will talk to Congress in private about this as you start your trip, and will then address them in open session the day of any actions we are forced to take.”

The room was now even more quiet. Most had understood what the Vice President was alluding to when he, above all people, indicated that the diplomatic card was exhausted. They just couldn't have imagined it addressed so directly, or so quickly against their neighbor to the south.

Admiral Ryan, work with the other Joint Chiefs and draw up plans for this should the Presidente continue on his present course. For what it's worth, I believe Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott had the right ideas.”

January 11, 2011, 09:30 local time

Off the west coast of Midway Island

Central Pacific Ocean

Petty Officer 3rdclass, Tinley, "Tin Man", Erickson was excited. When the opportunity for this new assignment came last year, while the USS Barney was still under construction, he had jumped at it. And he had not been alone either.

His mentor and good friend, Chief Petty Officer Debaul Ernest, also known as "Big Ern", had signed on to man the new USS Barney with him. The two of them had become friends over two years ago while serving in the southwest Pacific. Ultimately their friendship had brought them close enough that Chief

Ernest had helped Erickson get through being Dear John'ed by his hot, Tampa girl friend. Six letters that she had sent him over a period of several months had somehow got mistakenly shipped to the wrong ship in the Mediterranean when they were supposed to have come to the guided missile destroyer he was serving on off the coast of New Zealand.

"They weren't even close," thought Erickson.

"How could they make that big of a mistake and send all of those letters to a supply ship in the Mediterranean like that?"

How or why didn't matter now. It had just been one of those things and by the time the letters caught up with him, the damage was already done. In the letters, Erickson's girl friend had kept asking and pleading with him to write back soon so he could help her understand and get past her developing feelings for someone else. Problem was, by the time the mail got straightened out, and all six letters were delivered to him, it was over. The last letter told him how she'd decided to drop him and marry her new romance.

Ever since, with Big Ern's help, Erickson had devoted himself entirely to his duties, writing only to his parents and closest friends, and then only occasionally. He was dedicated to seeing his service to his nation through, to helping win this war, and then to making a new start for himself back home when he got there.

And that attitude had led directly to the USS Barney.

"What a miracle of a ship...or, boat I guess," Tinley thought as he considered the marvel he was now embarking on.

The USS Barney class had been named for a guided-missile destroyer that had been built in the 1960's and that had served with a distinguished record throughout the cold war. The original Barney was a part of the Charles F. Adams class of guided missile destroyers, the first ones that had been built from the keel up for that purpose. Commissioned in 1962, she saw action on her shakedown cruise helping with the blockade of Cuba during the Cuban missile crisis, where she served with distinction. She also was a veteran of distinguished combat service during the Vietnam conflict. After that conflict, she continued to serve until just before Operation Desert Storm when she was decommissioned in December of 1990.

Petty Officer Erickson made it his business to know everything he could about the namesake and history of the ships he served on. And he was now proud to be serving on this new, modern ship...even if it had meant his volunteering for the submarine services to do so, and even if it meant that they called their ships, boats.

The new USS Barney was much larger than the earlier Barney. Where the former DDG Barney had displaced something over 4,000 tons, the new SSCN Barney displaced almost 40,000 tons and was over six hundred feet in length. The boats were based on the earlier design that produced the Alaska class SSTN nuclear powered submersed amphibious assault ships. Using the four hundred foot long, ninety foot wide, level area in front of the conning tower, and a one hundred foot long level space behind it, that was common to all of the variants of the Alaska class, the Barney class had ample room for the myriad launch tubes in many blocks of VLS cells that comprised its main weaponry.

On the earlier Alaska class these vast level areas on the deck of the vessel allowed for loading ramps that led down into the bowels of the boat. Using those ramps, vehicles and troops could either be loaded into the vessel, or offloaded either onto RORO (Roll on Roll Off) capable docks, or onto landing craft of several different varieties, including air cushioned landing craft. Each amphibious assault sub carried four

air cushioned landing craft in large well docks. Those four well docks, two on each side of the boat, were covered by strong, smooth-fitting doors that could be opened when the vessel surfaced.

The level deck spaces topside on the SSLHDN vessels allowed for flight operations for their eight F-24 attack aircraft, eight MV-22 VTOL air assault aircraft and up to eight more helicopters for airborne assault. They also allowed for forty-eight VLS cells for anti-aircraft or surface to surface missiles for self defense. A tremendous advantage with these VLS tubes was that all of these cells could easily be reloaded from the vast spaces below decks where reloads were stored.

In addition, all of the Alaska class and all of the variations thereof carried a full load of torpedo weapons, including the latest Mk-48 ADCAP torpedoes, Mk-77 CWS torpedoes, and the latest sub launched Harpoon and Tomahawk missiles.

They also incorporated the same stealthy acoustic and operating characteristics of the Sea Wolf class which had been successful throughout the war in avoiding enemy tracking and acquisition capabilities. Though the Chinese and their allies were getting closer and closer to acquiring a solid signature of the Sea Wolf boats, they still had not been entirely successful.

Erickson knew that the first major modification to the Alaska class had been the Olympic class SSCVN nuclear class submarine aircraft carriers. Their modification of the Alaska design consisted of altering and filling up the first two levels of storage spaces beneath the topside decks with hangar and repair facilities for aircraft. The ramps from topside were replaced with elevators and thus the subs became nuclear powered aircraft carriers in their own right. They were similar in capability to the Hampton Roads Class Sea Control ships, except for the huge advantage of being able to travel underwater, and their more extensive missile launch capabilities.

Erickson had read reports of the Olympic combat debut off of India, where the standard air wing of twenty-four VTOL F-24 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) aircraft, four E-22C VTOL AEW aircraft, six S-22C VTOL ASW or SAR aircraft, and up to ten UR UAV reconnaissance and light strike aircraft had performed so admirably and effectively.

Like the Alaska class, the SSCVN class carried a total of forty-eight VLS cells in two twenty-four cell blocks. These could be loaded with a variety of weapons for self defense or attack, ranging from the latest mod block Standard missiles, to Quartet cells of Sea-RAM missiles, to vertical launch Harpoon and even Tomahawk and Hail Storm missiles. The latest AEGIS system was also installed with the phased array radars being mounted on the conning tower and an ingenious submerged capability to launch any of their VLS missiles, including the anti-air variety, at targets acquired through a miniature phased array system that could be launched from over 200 feet deep which then assembled itself into a towed radar platform upon breaching the surface.

“Those are sure capable vessels,” the Petty officer thought to himself, “and all in all they are going to help change the entire complexion and course of this war.”

“But those large amphibious assault subs and aircraft carrying subs needed a more capable and lethal escort than a few nuclear attack subs, and that's where we come in.”

Seeing his friend, Chief Petty Officer Debaul Ernest approaching, a large smile lit up Erickson's face.

“Hey, Big E,” he called.

“How about we take a few laps after duty, you know, a friendly little foot race?”

The Chief Petty Officer smiled at his friend, and then replied.

“Only if you are itching so bad for a whoopin' you can't stand it anymore, Tin Man,” he said as he eased past Erickson in the passageway.

“Gotta get a readiness report up to the LT right now though. I'll see you at 1630 hours, short of some kind of an emergency or battle stations, and we'll go...what do you say, a couple of 400 meter warm ups and then one more for the foot race?”

Erickson laughed out loud and then answered good naturedly to the Chief's back.

“A whoopin' did you say? Chief, you know good and well that the only whoopin' that's going to happen in this foot race is the one you'll be taken on your Big Ern self.

“1630 hours it is.”

All of the talk got Erickson thinking about that other perk that he enjoyed on this vessel. With the double sized pressure hulls, joined at the very top and bottom of their curves and then surrounded by another outer pressure hull, all of these large class subs had ample room for a 200 meter track that ran around the perimeter of the larger storage space in the middle, widest decks of the boat. It was there that the Big Ern would meet Erickson when they got off duty.

“Duty,” he thought to himself as he went about his own responsibilities.

“We've got a duty to open up that can of whoop on our enemies and with this vessel, we're talking about the biggest, baddest can of whoop imaginable, short of one of our SSGNs unloading its full load of Tridents.”

Petty Officer Erickson knew, that with 480 launch tubes arranged in ten forty-eight VLS blocks, that the ships of the Barney class carried more offensive and defensive missiles capability and capacity than any ship that had ever been launched. They were the ultimate embodiment of earlier Arsenal Ship designs. Ranging from the smaller RAM missiles, to the standard air defense missiles (up to and including the latest Theater Ballistic Missile Defense weapons), to Tomahawk SLCMs, to the awesome Hail Storm AGM-999 missiles, the Barney class carried them all...and they carried in their holds up to three reloads for each tube for a total possibility of 1840 missiles without replenishment.

He also knew, that with the latest AEGIS system installed on the boat, offering the same capabilities as that installed on the Olympic class, and with the resurgence of America's satellite capabilities, that the Barney class could deliver those missiles and their destructive payloads accurately against any enemy. With all of that capability, these ships could adequately protect carrier battle groups, or entire theaters of operation, from enemy aircraft, cruise missile, or ballistic missile attack. They would be used to escort carriers and /or amphibious assault ships and then protect beachheads with their weapons, providing defensive fire and this awesome offensive fire support up to several hundred miles inland.

“A big old can of whoop indeed,” he said to himself as he summed it all up to himself.

And a whoopin' was exactly what he, Big Ern, and everyone else on the thirteen ships of Task Force 56 expected to deliver real soon to the Chinese on Wake Island.

The task force was comprised of two Barney class SSCN vessels, two Olympic class SSCVN vessels,

four Alaska class SSLHDN vessels, two Virginia class SSN vessels, and the vanguard group of the USS Jimmy Carter and two more Virginia class SSN vessels. Despite the combat debuts of the Alaska class and the Olympic class in other theaters, those debuts had been in mixed Task Forces of various submerged and surface action vessels. TF 56.1 would be the first all submersed invasion, carrier and fire-support task force in history and Erickson and his friend Ernest were excited and proud to be serving as a part of it.

...and those in leadership positions in the Unites States were all anxious too, from President John Bower, to Secretary of Defense, Jeremy Stone, to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Ben Ryan, right down to the Captain of the Barney. They were all eager to pull off this surprise attack against the Chinese at Wake Island on January 16th and observe its results. Those results would be critical for the final execution order for the next anxious attack two days later on January 18th by another completely submersible task force against Indian forces at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

January 13, 2011, 08:10, EDT

Today in America Set

CBN Studios, New York City

“Thank you. We're back this morning recounting the amazing story of survival of Marine Captain Billy Simmons and the story of the commitment and faithfulness of his close friend, Master Sergeant Leon Campbell.

“Captain Simmons, in our introduction before the break, we reviewed a special compilation of the essentials of your service in the Australian area, the fall back to Sidney, the defeat of U.S. and allied forces their and their fighting withdrawal, the videos of the loss of your ship and your desperate effort to get your aircraft off its deck climaxing in your crash into the ocean, and then what we know of your life in Australia culminating with your rescue.

“Right now, I'd just like to ask you...how's your memory? How much has come back to you?”

The young Captain, who was becoming used to these interviews, this being his third nationally televised one since returning stateside, and wearing his dress uniform, considered the question. It was not an entirely easy one to answer.

“Well, I can say that a lot of my memory has come back in the last few weeks, and I thank my parents, my friends, the doctors...and most of all I thank God for that.

“I am remembering more and more of my childhood, upbringing, my parents and our home life. I remember going off to college and joining the Marines and even meeting Leon there...but that part is still not complete...there are, uh, like missing parts.

“I remember a good deal of my boot camp training...I guess Marines NCOs leave an indelible impression.”

At this comment Leon chuckled a bit and the well known host of the show, Kathy Curry, turned to him.

“You've got that *knowing* laugh Sergeant Campbell, do you have something specifically memorable

about your boot camp training to add to the experience?

“It is my understanding that the two of you went through that training together.”

Leon, also wearing his dress uniform with his rank, service ribbons and awards, most notable amongst them being his Medal of Honor, turned towards Kathy Curry and the camera and replied.

“We did go through that training together.

“I was just thinking back to our initial drill instructor at the San Diego Marine Recruit Training Depot and the very indelible impression he left on us as we got off that bus.”

Turning to his friend Billy, he asked, “Do you remember him, Billy, do you remember the first words out of his mouth?”

Billy didn't hesitate at all. His eyes lit up brightly and his smile broadened perceptively.

“You mean, *Drill Instructor Sergeant Matthews*?

“How could I forget? Let's see...I believe he said something like this, “I am Drill Instructor Sergeant Matthews. At *all* times, you *will* address me as “*Sir*.” If you have a request or a statement to make to me, you *will* formulate it with the words *Drill Instructor Sergeant Matthews, Sir!*”

Billy shook his head as he continued to smile, relishing the memory now.

“Like I said Kathy, U.S. Marine NCOs have a way of leaving an indelible impression...amnesia or no amnesia.

“My memories of those Drill Instructors were among the first to come back clearly once things started to return, and right after my memories of home which had started to return there in the outback of Australia...and yet, there is still a lot I can't remember.

“A lot of my actual experiences during the war are not really back in focus yet. There are brief ones, like some of the fighting in Australia, particularly around Alice Springs.

“I also remember being on the Tarawa and the orders for our departure from the waters around Sidney. But I can't remember, even with the help of those remarkable photographs and videos, anything about my take-off or crash.

“Now, the time in Australia, particularly after being taken in by Nabalco's people is a different matter. It is much clearer, right up to the time when Leon and his squad contacted us.”

Billy hesitated, the emotion on his face and in his voice clear to millions who were watching and listening.

“Nabalco was as good a leader, as good a man, as I have ever met...he sacrificed his life for those he loved and for their freedom, even for those of us who were not of his clan.

“He took us in and made us a part of his clan.

“Lance Corporal Thomas, who was lost saving us was made of the same metal. I owe him my life, and I shall not, I cannot, ever forget those sacrifices.

“...even as I cannot forget the dedication and commitment of my good friend here, Leon Campbell. It's easy to see why a man like this was able to earn the Congressional Medal of Honor.”

Leon was chagrined to be made an issue of, or to be singled out in such a manner. He replied quickly to deflect as much notice as he possibly could.

“Billy...let me tell you, and you know it is true from your own experiences, this medal is something I wear only to remember others...like Lance Corporal Thomas.

“You know what I mean. Other's died that I could get off that Island...I just did what I had to do.”

As she listened, Kathy Curry realized that she was genuinely growing to like and revere these two young Americans.

She herself had been significantly altered by the war.

As she thought on this, and her own experiences and changes, she couldn't help but think to herself, “...and who wouldn't like these two,” she thought.

“It's an all-American story. It resonates with people...even people like me, because each of us have been touched so deeply by this conflict. Every one of us personally know people who have been injured or killed. All of us have heard the explosions, seen the fire and destruction right here in our own towns and cities.

“I find myself being more and more grateful that things are finally turning around. I find myself much more emotionally attached to stories like this because I have had to relearn what it means to actual people because of its proximity to me.

“How could those of us in my profession been so foolish about something so intrinsic. How could I have been so foolish for all of those years,” she asked herself.

“Well, that's the way things were...and this is the way things are. I am much more emotionally and personally affected by the events that I cover now than I ever would have dreamed possible then...not so *professionally detached* like I and every other major media reporter, journalist, or anchor used to be.

“...and a big part of that is because of the dedication, commitment, and sacrifice so epitomized by these two young men...and really, epitomized by the miracle that our country has become.

“After all of the divisiveness of the late 80's, and during the 90's and early 2000's. After so many years of our foolish agendas...dear God it feels so good to be human again.”

Suddenly realizing that quite a few seconds of dead air time had passed as she thought about these things to herself...and that her cheeks were moist with tears, Kathy stammered a bit, rather unprofessionally perhaps, but not in the least ashamedly.

“Err...well Billy, Leon, excuse me. It's just that I...it's just that your stories...I mean...”

Leon quickly came to her rescue.

“No need to apologize, Kathy.

“We know exactly what you mean and where you are coming from...how these things can give us pause, believe me, I know.

“Having lost so many friends in this fighting...having lost my own brother...I know that the emotions are strong. Those type of emotions make the drive for freedom and liberty strong too. We cannot let those folks down whose sacred blood and honor has paid for what we enjoy

“Let me just share a quote from my mother, who is as sweet and Christian a woman as you will ever find...but who is also is rock solid and strong in her commitment. Here's what she said to me last week when I was home, for the first time since my brother's loss.

“I know she would not mind me sharing it. With tears in her eyes, this is what she told me.”

Leon pulled a small piece of paper out of his breast pocket and read it to Kathy...and to the world.

“Leon, your Dad and your brother are now in Heaven lookin' down on us. Their journey and their travails here are over...and you know we are going to miss them...I am going to miss them, son. But, just as sure as the sun is going to rise tomorrow, you also know we can't let them down...we just can't. We owe them too much and they are expecting good things of us...and we are going to be with them again if we do our best, hold to the truth, and never give up.”

Leon, Billy and Kathy...and millions of others...all had tears in their eyes before he had finished. Then the Medal of Honor recipient continued.

“Actually, emotions and commitments like this are a real good thing, Kathy. I don't think there's a single person out there in your audience...at least I pray that there aren't folks like that anymore, who would hold it against you.

“I can promise you that the United States Marines don't...and that's a pretty good bunch to have on your side.”

Regaining her composure, Kathy's face lit up at the thought that the U.S. Marines, as a whole, would think highly of her.

“Why thank you Leon, Billy, that is really a comfort and an honor to know.

“Billy, I understand in Australia they called you Tex, long before they ever really knew who you were.

“I guess there are a few other things that can leave a lasting and indelible impression, like your upbringing in Texas.

“In that regard, Billy, what are your plans? I know you are headed back home for an extended stay after this interview.

“As we close this morning, what can you say to our audience about your future plans?

“...and how, Leon, do you suppose you are going to fit into those plans yourself?”

Billy, thoughtful at the prospect of an extended stay at home, and yet sure of himself when it came to his

immediate future, calmly looked directly into the camera and replied.

“Kathy, I am grateful to be going home and spending time there in February and March...maybe longer, who knows?. I look forward to spending some time with my father...himself a decorated and also an injured war hero...and with my mother, who is as dedicated an American, and as fine a mother as you will find.

“Having said that, let me make this clear.

“I am a U.S. Marine and I will be in this fight to the finish. As soon as I am healthy enough, I will be going back out and staying out until this thing is settled and done.

“I owe it to Corporal Thomas, I owe it to Nabalco and his people...I owe it to my best friend, Leon, here, and I owe it to so many others, and to my God.

“We'll talk about future plans in my life...as to whether I make a career in Texas or with my Marines...only after this necessary business is completely finished.”

Leon Campbell, fairly beaming at his friend's patriotic reply, ended the interview with his own affirmation of the same points.

“Kathy, Billy has completely summed it up.

“I'll be back out there too for as long as it takes on behalf of so many who have given so much.

“But I will especially be there for my brother, Alan, and his memory.”

January 14, 2011, 04:48, local time

Easternmost Observation Post

CAS Forces, Wake Island

Twenty-three year old Specialist Thuan Nguyen carefully watched the Pacific Ocean to the East. He panned slowly from his right to his left, using his enhanced and magnified night vision gear. It was not a new task for him...it was routine...but it was one he took seriously.

As a Vietnamese soldier here on Wake Island with other, principally Chinese, CAS forces, he was aware of the historical disdain that some CAS allies held for him and his countrymen. He had heard about it all of his life, and had experienced it in fact. But he had been able to ignore it and not let it affect either his own actions, or his own well being.

He had his own views regarding it.

He was proud of his nation and its heritage. Despite the fact that up until the mid 1900's there had never really been an actual Vietnamese nation, he was proud of what had been accomplished since that time. He had been taught and indoctrinated all of his life about how his fathers had managed, at horrific cost, to outlast the Americans. After being fought to a standstill for eight or nine years, and losing every major engagement to the American military, and following the 1972 Paris Peace accords that the American

President of that era had brutally bombed the North into signing, North Vietnamese forces had spent nearly two years regrouping and then violated the accords and invaded the South. Knowing full well that the Americans had reduced their numbers drastically and were continuing to do so, the North had literally dared the Americans to build back up. But due to inflated public opinion polls and the actions of a vocal minority of war protestors that were sympathizers with the North's communist goals, American politicians lost the will to fight and did not stand up to the North. Instead, they sped up their own withdrawal and ignored their own accords to support their southern allies. Thus the stage was set, through patience, horrific cost, and ultimate manipulation of the American press and politicians, for the North's communist revolution to triumph and bring about the uniting of his nation under communist rule.

That triumph ultimately lead to purges and executions, driving hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese to take to San Pans on the South China Sea to avoid the holocaust. Any of the South Vietnamese citizens who had too much western education, had experienced too much western influence, or had any ties to the American military, were marked, and either had to flee, or face the work camps or death.

“Up until this war, no one, no other country has been able to really say anything like that. *We beat the Americans*,” he mused as he continued his watch.

“Perhaps that is the real reason why so many of them have disdained us...they were just envious. Now they no longer have that excuse, and things have lightened up significantly.”

“Maybe so,” he continued to himself, “but even in this war, they have had to recognize that it was a patriot from Vietnam who helped them send the Americans and their allies reeling.

“The fact that we are sitting here on this island right now is proof enough of that.”

...and CAS forces had been here, manning their vigil, in the hopes of pushing their envelope further to the east someday, for over three years now.

There were over ten thousand CAS personnel on, or around, the island now either on the ground or in the ships of the naval task force. With full air and naval support Thuan was certain that they could prevent the Americans and their allies from dislodging them.

All of this, and the reasons for it, was so obvious and clear to the young man.

The knowledge of why the war had progressed so positively for so long had allowed Thuan to patiently endure some of the early discrimination when he entered the service three years ago. It allowed him to maintain his composure now, when a clear knowledge of the contributions of Vietnamese in this conflict had become, more and more obvious.

Nguyen knew that with the example and rise in power of the most famous of those Vietnamese patriots, Lu Pham, most of the disdain and discrimination was over for good. Comrade Pham had not only labored for years with the Chinese to develop the weapons that had helped defeat and push the once-thought invincible Americans back in this war, he had then been named a Hero of The PRC and risen to be a leading member of the Politburo itself.

“In fact, if rumor can be believed, he is now a leading member of the Executive Committee of that body,” Nguyen thought with a satisfied and knowing smile.

Then, the smile instantly faded as Thuan noticed something out of the ordinary in his peripheral vision. It

was something on the edge of his view, far in the distance in the haze of the pre-dawn light...something moving that should not have been there.

Barely perceptible, yet...yes, there it was. Movement, and fairly rapid movement.

Low, just coming over that far horizon he could make out, small, thin specs approaching at high speed. If it had not been for the elevated position of his post, it would have been another twenty or more seconds before Thuan would have seen them.

“But surely the radar or other sensors must have noticed them,” he thought as he began to speak into his lapel mounted microphone to report his sighting.

Before he could do so, multiple air warning klaxons and sirens began blaring all around the island.

The island's main tracking stations and the sensors on aircraft far overhead were now also picking up the oncoming missiles.

“Post ZM reporting.

“Many incoming missiles, south southeast at 163 degrees.”

As Nguyen listened to the confirmation and response to his report, and as CAS aircraft and anti-aircraft missiles screamed over his head to intercept the incoming barrage, he continued his watch, scanning back and forth across the horizon in his area of responsibility, and at the waters between himself and that horizon.

There!...something more...to the north of the missile stream, miles and miles to the east of his position, out there on the surface of the ocean, just in front of the horizon. The optics of his equipment allowed him to zoom in and then automatically optimized the picture and focused and sharpened the view, almost miraculously considering the distance.

He increased the zoom factor to the maximum of 75X.

There it was, a device moving along the top of the water. Some sort of object with what looked like antennae and dishes or some type of electronic equipment on it. Now, two or three hundred meters in front of that object, he saw the thinnest of objects just breaking the surface of the water. Really, it was the disturbance in the water itself that first drew his attention to it.

A mast, or periscope!

Now, a tower breaking the surface under it.

Then what must be a massive deck was also breaking the surface, very low to the water. Coincident with this, several hundred meters to the east and south of the first one, another...and another vessel broke the surface of the ocean. Several large submersible vessels were surfacing out there...just over twenty miles to his east in plain view of Wake Island.

“Post ZM reporting...twenty-two miles to the southeast at 135 degrees...I am observing several vessels breaching the surface.”

The response to this message was much more tense and abbreviated than the last. Nguyen could feel the

tension building in the command post.

Almost immediately, as he continued his observation, which he trusted many of their own aircraft were being vectored towards, there were many more missile launches from each of the vessels...and then, from two of them, he noticed small silhouettes on the decks. Silhouettes of...what?

Aircraft.

Modern jet aircraft were appearing on the deck of several of those vessels and launching vertically into the air. Four, eight...now twelve aircraft rising up and swinging towards the island. As they did so, an even more massive barrage of missiles rose from that first ship and arced over rapidly towards the island.

Those American missiles, because Nguyen was certain that this must be an American force, began intercepting and obliterating the CAS aircraft and missiles that were rushing to defense of their positions on Wake Island. The CAS attack against the incoming American missiles was being, in turn, itself attacked by American anti-missiles.

The air was filled with hundreds of missiles and explosions between Nguyen and the vessels he was observing. American missiles and aircraft were being downed, but many more Chinese aircraft and missiles were falling, succumbing to the overwhelming numbers of missiles the Americans were putting into the air.

Now, even more American aircraft were coming over the horizon, merging with the first group as they came toward him.

“ZM here again...enemy aircraft being launched by the vessels....I repeat, we are now coming under attack by enemy air craft being launched in numbers by submersed vessels that have surfaced directly to our southeast

“Now...they are deploying what looks like air cushioned....”

Back in the hectic CAS command post, the communications teams heard...and felt...the many explosions that drowned out young Taun Nguyen's voice, and then rendered the radio frequency on which he had been speaking dead, filled with nothing but static.

...and it was a rolling barrage of explosions that maintained a relentless and deadly march across the island...towards them.

January 14, 2011, that same time

Combat Information Center, U.S.S. Barney

TF 56.1, Just East of Wake Island

The information flow was getting thick now as reports came in more and more rapidly and were displayed on the various plasma screens as symbols, vectors, plots, or in textual format. Admiral Chelsey was content to let his staff, and that of Captain Dintz, the captain of the U.S.S. Barney, manage the tactical situation. That was their job.

His job as the commanding officer of the amphibious assault contingent of TF 56 which had been named TF 56.2, was to make any more strategic command decisions necessary for this part of the assault, and to ensure that all vessels and personnel carried out the overall orders and planning as approved by the CINC of Task Force 56, Admiral Tanner.

...and at the moment, that part was going fine.

The overall situation was looking good. Not a slam-dunk by any stretch of the imagination, but initial reports regarding the effectiveness of their assault were very encouraging. Complete surprise had apparently been achieved by the submersed task force and the enemy had been knocked back on its heels. His two Virginia class attack subs were off to the northwest and southwest, protecting the approach to his vessels from any enemy submarines. Thus far, there had not been any.

The U.S.S. Jimmy Carter was off to the northwest, on the other side of the island, using the continued ability of the Sea Wolf class to infiltrate enemy waters so it could attack any enemy shipping of opportunity.

Here, his very capable arsenal ship, the U.S.S. Barney, was protecting the four SSLHDN Amphibious Assault vessels that were launching attack aircraft and the initial Marine assault to take Wake Island. The air cushioned craft and the helicopters and STOL assault aircraft that those vessels had launched were approaching the island right behind the attack aircraft and the massive barrage of cruise missiles that his vessel and the other vessels of the overall task force had launched.

Hail Storm missiles, anti-radiation missiles, anti-personnel missiles, anti-armor missiles, the new anti-stealth missiles, bunker and hardened structure busting missiles, and other offensive missiles of all types had been launched and were now impacting CAS forces on the island. All of those missiles combined the latest active and passive stealth measures to get past the enemy's radar and anti-stealth sensors, and in the case of the high speed anti-radiation and anti-stealth missiles, to target those systems specifically. In so doing they flew in the face of the enemy defenses directly in order to seek them out and destroy them.

Admiral Chelsey was positive that the pounding and destruction that enemy forces on Wake were taking would leave them open to the Marine assault his forces were throwing at the island. He had three waves of Marines he would launch this morning, over eight thousand men. That would be followed up by C-90B landings late this afternoon with another ten thousand men and their equipment, who would remain on their ships, or rotate onto the island until the next operation further to the west. But that could not happen until the air space around the island had been declared safe for that landing.

Much further out to sea, two more Virginia class attack subs defended the flag portion of Task Force 56. That contingent which consisted of two SSCVN carriers and the task force's second escorting arsenal ship protected by two more Virginia class attacks submarines. The carriers had launched two aircraft strike packages a little earlier this morning. One of those strike packages was a strike at Wake Island itself. That strike would fill a dual role for his forces here. One part of that package had just arrived over his vessels and was providing CAP for them. The other part was rolling in right behind the missile barrage with his own attack aircraft, significantly bolstering the overall air strike capability that his four amphibious assault vessels were able to deliver.

The other air attack the carriers had launched was a large Strike at Sea package at the enemy naval task force northwest of Wake Island. Satellite imagery from the new space station, the USSS Midway, which was now in position high over the central Pacific, had shown the enemy vessels lingering in those

waters some distance off Wake Island. That enemy task force consisted of what appeared to be six Aegis-like enemy guided missile destroyers and two of the Sea Control Carriers the Chinese employed. It was a potent force that was an integral part of the enemy defense of the island.

...and it had to be eliminated.

The arsenal ship escorting the two carriers had launched over two-hundred cruise missiles at that enemy task force, which would arrive just in front of their Strike at Sea package.

“In fact, if everything has been coordinated and orchestrated properly, those missiles should be arriving there right about now, with the aircraft hot on their heels,” thought the Admiral.

January 14, 2011, 05:40, local time

PLAN 3201 Kunlun

Flagship, PLAN Task Force off Wake Island

The speed, surprise and violence of the overall American attack had taken everyone defending the island by surprise. Hectic and tense radio transmissions abounded. Tempers were short and the frustration level was rising precipitously.

The island itself was taking a beating, and now a major attack was inbound for his task force.

“Who would have thought that an entire invasion task force could arrive from under the waves,” the Admiral asked himself.

But that was just what the Americans had done, and Admiral Tsung had to admit to himself, even if he was not willing to convey it to his command yet, that Wake Island was in imminent danger of being lost. Once again they had been completely surprised, not only by the American presence, but by how they came to be there.

Yet, with his new, modern cruiser, the Kunlun, perhaps he could deliver a few surprises of his own. Admiral Tsung was committed to putting up as stiff a defense of the island as possible and see if its new capabilities would be enough to win the day.

“And that's exactly what we are going to find out,” he thought.

“If I had four such vessels, I am confident I could completely repel these American missile attacks along with the sea and air assaults that are the main components of their invasion. Repelling those components of the attack would force them to completely withdraw in failure.”

When Admiral Tsung wished he had four of the new vessels, he was referring with great pride to the new Chinese heavy cruiser class that the Kunlun represented. Because of its similar signature, the Americans had already mistaken it for one of the six guided missile destroyers they thought were escorting the two Beijing class carriers. But that's where they had been mistaken and where the similarities stopped.

The Kunlun displaced significantly more than those vessels, almost 10,000 tons versus the 7,200 tons for

the guided missile destroyers. It integrated the latest Chinese Aegis-like, computerized defensive system into both its traditional weapon systems and its non-traditional systems. It carried the latest defensive and offensive missiles that the Chinese had to offer...and it carried them in greater numbers than any other Chinese vessel to date. It also carried the latest ship-borne version of the *ta shih* system for detecting enemy stealth technology.

But its most important asset was entirely new to the PLAN, and was something the Jiangnan and Shanghai shipyards were now integrating into all new classes of Chinese naval combat vessels as rapidly as possible. It was a ship-borne version of the charged particle beam weapon that the Chinese had developed and employed on their Dragon Spirit space craft and in much more powerful versions on their ground based, space defense systems along the Mongolian border.

In ferocious battles that spanned the last few months, the Americans had defeated the Dragon Spirit craft and destroyed their production facilities. They had also destroyed the three space defense systems along the Mongolian border as well.

"But they missed our manufacturing in the shipyards," the Admiral thought.

"So now it will be my turn to surprise the Americans with our own new capabilities here in the defense of Wake Island and our forces here."

At the first sign of attack from the sea, the Admiral had ordered the Chinese task force to launch a full defensive air cover over Wake Island. After this was done, a moderate CAP had been left over the vessels as the entire force of eight ships now sped towards Wake Island to assist its defense and engage the enemy vessels there.

...and they sped right into the teeth of the American attack that the Admiral had just discovered was directed at them.

"Charged Particle System now active," the weapons officer indicated to the Captain of the Kunlun as the enemy missiles came closer and closer to the engagement envelope.

"Set all systems to automatic, using template 34Z.

"Have all weapons system officers prepared for manual over-ride as necessary," the Captain calmly replied as he ordered the use of an artificial intelligence template for the system that was geared towards American cruise missile attack, followed immediately by their attack aircraft.

The ship-borne version of the particle beam system was not as large or as powerful as the large land based systems that the Chinese had used in the earth-to-space engagements with the Americans. It was closer to the size and capabilities of the Dragon Spirit weapons that had been used in direct space combat against American space vessels in the summer of last year.

This limited its primary capability to being able to shoot a line of sight charged particle beam against hardened moving or stationary targets at a two hundred kilometer range. The targeting was slaved to the Chinese Aegis-like defensive system which consisted of the phased array radar system, the *ta shih* anti-stealth system, and a new, advanced optical acquisition system that used digital optics and infrared to track and target visual objects in the absence of any radar or stealth targeting data.

The Kunlun carried two charged particle weapons stations, one fore and the other aft. Both were directly behind the ship's respective twin gun mount fore and aft, 150mm dual purpose, automatic firing

cannons.

When Admiral had arrived with the ship ten days before, the flag for the task force had been immediately transferred to the Kunlun. Ever since, the Admiral had been busily integrating the new flagship and its capabilities into the overall task force through very vigorous training exercises. Those exercises included everything from defending against from high flying ballistic missile and aircraft attacks, to countering potential orbital bombardment, to the more likely condition of defending in the face of an attack by low-flying cruise missile approaching at high speed just over their visual horizon.

...and now the training was being put to the test. The Admiral only wished that his forces had been given more time.

With over two hundred American missiles targeting his ships, and with thirty American aircraft carrying over a hundred more missiles, there were simply too many threats. Even factoring in the ample defensive systems of the other ships, and the fact that they were all integrated together with the Kunlun...it was just too much. The Chinese defenses, even with the particle beam capability, were overwhelmed, particularly on the ships furthest away from the Kunlun.

The Chinese CAP aircraft did help blunt the attack, but all six of those aircraft soon fell to the overwhelming American numbers.

Then the Kunlun began to tell on those overwhelming numbers. Missile after missile, and then several American aircraft fell to her charged particle fire. Electronic systems and the skin and structure of the American missiles and aircraft heated up and melted, or vaporized, depending on how long the Chinese could hold a firm lock on their targets. Those missiles and aircraft simply exploded or otherwise fell tumbling from the sky.

Electronic emissions gathered from one of the two EW aircraft accompanying the American strike soon revealed the nature of the threat the Americans faced. Orders were quickly issued that changed the strategy away from boring in closer to the Chinese task force where the likelihood of being downed by the charged particle fire increased dramatically. Instead of following the original plan where they would launch their own missiles from close range behind the wall of the massive cruise missile barrage in front of them, the American pilots were ordered to launch their missiles at longer range and then to drop down to the deck and egress the area.

Nonetheless, by the time these American aircraft had launched their missiles and dropped to the deck to get away from line of sight fire from the Kunlun, four Chinese escorts and both Chinese carriers had been hit by multiple missiles strikes. Three of the escorts and one of the carriers sank outright, going down with tremendous loss of life within ten to twenty minutes of the attack. The other damaged escort was left dead in the water, still capable of some defensive action from its aft mounted weapons systems while its damage control parties worked feverishly on getting the vessel under way and away from the site of the battle.

Due to severe damage all along its deck, the remaining carrier, the Nantong, was unable to continue flight operations and the surviving aircraft she and her sister ship had launched earlier were ordered to attempt to land at Wake Island if possible. Only nine of those aircraft were able to land at the Chinese base on Wake Island between American attacks later that morning. Despite the damage topside, the Nantong was capable of making steady headway under full power. Joining with the Kunlun and the remaining Type 52D guided missile destroyer, the three ships made a high speed run closer into the Island.

Protecting their flanks, were two Chinese fast attack nuclear submarines, which were also making their way closer to Wake Island for their pre-planned defense of the approaches to the island from the western side.

January 14, 2011, 10:15, local time

Flag Conference Room, TF 56

U.S.S. Shafer, 120 Miles Southeast of Wake Island

Admiral Tanner made a final review of the situation report and accompanying recommendations in his cabin on his flagship, the U.S.S. Shafer, before sending them. They would be transferred via secure satellite link back to CINCPAC in the next few minutes. From there, he knew they would be forwarded on to the Washington DC, the Joint Chiefs and to the POTUS.

Sustained combat, as was certainly to be expected, was ongoing on the island. But the enemy had somehow been better entrenched than had been expected and they had pinned down the first wave of Marines. It hadn't been until the third wave of Marines had come ashore from the four amphibious assault submersibles that any progress had been made toward dislodged them.

Now, at least over the eastern side of the island and the approaches to it, his forces had achieved air superiority and were reinforcing and supporting their beachhead at will.

"Now, if we can somehow negate that new Chinese vessel and its cohorts on the west side of the island," he thought to himself, "then we should be able to approve the C-90B landings this evening and consolidate the island completely.

"But that was going to take some doing.

"So far, that ship and its particle beam weaponry, particularly under the umbrella of the remaining island defenses, has been a very tough nut to crack."

And that was what the main recommendations and requests that were going out in the Admiral's FLASH SITREP were all about.

The Admiral knew very well that strategic space assets were being amassed for attacks on the Chinese mainland and their command and control infrastructure there. Orbital bombardment material was tightly guarded and reserved for those missions. But he also knew that this attack had to succeed, and it had to succeed rapidly. There were too many other, soon-to-be-implemented operations that were depending on that success, and on his ground, air and sea forces taking control of and establishing a firm, unshakable presence here. That made the quick success of the invasion and the taking of Wake Island something of a strategic imperative itself.

...and Admiral Tanner was not in the least hesitant to make use of that fact.

As a result, the Admiral was comfortable that his request for a space based attack on the Chinese vessel would be approved. By analyzing the movement and characteristics of the Chinese ship based on the last two attacks against it, the Admiral was positive he could force the enemy into a movement pattern that would successfully allow it to be targeted from space. He was prepared to do just that as soon as

approval was obtained. He would have to adequately prepare and protect his own forces from the results of that attack, but he felt that here on the east side of the island he would have no problem with that either.

Tanner reviewed his request from the SITREP communiqué once again.

...THEREFORE CINC TF 56 REQUESTS CINCPAC OR NCA APPROVAL OF SPACE BASED ATTACK ON REMAINS OF CHINESE TASK FORCE WEST OF OBJECTIVE. OPERATION TO BE PREPARED, PENDING APPROVAL, FOR 1600 HOURS LOCAL TIME EXECUTION. PLEASE ADVISE.

“Well, that should do it,” he thought as he processed the message at last and sent it to the communications officer.

“They will know good and well that I have the mission planned and ready to go, just waiting their approval.”

What the Admiral didn’t know was that the situation revolving around the new Chinese vessel, the cruiser, Kunlun, would resolve itself before his plan could be executed.

January 14, 2011, 10:35, local time

Control Room

U.S.S. Jimmy Carter, 21 miles west of Wake Island

The sounds of sustained underwater warfare had gone on all around them. It was not an uncommon occurrence for the Jimmy Carter and her crew. Throughout the war, from the very earliest days, even before open hostilities had been initiated, the Jimmy Carter had been at the center of action in the Pacific.

Now, here she was again in the thick of it all, and the entire crew, particularly those operating the various stations in the control room, wondered when her luck was going to finally run out.

She had run completely around the island to the south and avoided all contact, both of her own and by the enemy. Several hours ago, far to the north, she had picked up the sounds of battle. Impacts to vessels in the water and the unmistakable sound of distant ships sinking and breaking up.

Then, beginning less than an hour ago, things had literally blown up right around them.

They had been tracking what they knew to be one of their own Virginia class boats, the U.S.S. Zachary Taylor, as it approached the island from twenty thousand yards to their north. Out of nowhere had come the unmistakable sound of the firing and then that God-awful approach of a Chinese underwater Killer Whale device, a supercavitating weapon. The horrendous noise literally filled the water, drowning out all else. Compelling in its attention, singular in its focus...coming to kill, and doing so quickly.

The Zachary Taylor had boldly proceeded directly in towards that single oncoming weapon and used its own SUB CIWS to defeat it, destroying it less than eight hundred yards from impact. Then, having detected no enemy submarine or surface vessel, and correctly determining that the attacking device had been a variety that had been seeded into the waters to guard against the approach of American vessels,

the Zachary Taylor had proceeded in further towards the island.

Simon Thompson had ordered the Jimmy Carter to quietly follow and also proceed in closer to the island, to the port side of the Zachary Taylor but several thousand yards behind it. He knew that the low powered underwater IFF that his boat emitted every sixty seconds would allow the Zachary Taylor to identify him in the same way he had identified them. It was emitted in a pre-programmed fashion sounding like various varieties of local transients, or aquatic life, in a predetermined pattern that other friendly vessels could decipher and recognize as specific to each individual American boat. Situated as they were behind and to the side of the Zachary Taylor, the Jimmy Carter's position would also be ideal to offer support to the Zachary Taylor while allowing him the potential for independently targeting enemy vessels that he acquired.

Now, over an hour into the advance, the sea had suddenly filled once more, not with one, but with many enemy weapons.

From two separate azimuths in front of the other American vessel, three of the latest Chinese torpedoes were suddenly launched.

The Zachary Taylor snapped off one Mk-48 ADCAP at its attacker on its starboard side, but did not have time to fire anything at the one to its port, which was less than three thousand yards directly in front of the Jimmy Carter. Instead, in a high speed maneuver, it turned further to starboard in an attempt to get past that enemy vessel which itself had gone to high speed to avoid the Zachary Taylor's weapon.

As the Zachary Taylor maneuvered violently and valiantly to avoid the six torpedoes coming at it, it left a trail of sophisticated sound devices in its wake to confuse and defeat the Chinese weapons. This worked on three of the weapons, but the other three successfully bored through these defenses and relentlessly pursued the Zachary Taylor.

The SUB CIWS (Submarine Close in Weapons System) that all American submarines now carried was a very capable system against any inbound underwater threat. The Zachary Taylor now employed the two SUB CIWS weapons stations facing the oncoming torpedoes to good effect. The high speed, supercavitating projectiles fired by the system destroyed first one, and then a second of the remaining Chinese torpedoes.

Before the third torpedo could be targeted, that sound that struck fear into any American submariner, or any mariner for that matter, suddenly sounded once again in the waters near Wake Island. This time though it was three Chinese Killer Whales, which had been set up in conjunction with the position that the Chinese submarines had taken, that suddenly ignited in the water less than one thousand yards in front of and to either side of the Zachary Taylor.

The Zachary Taylor never stood a chance.

In a final effort to save the boat, the Captain broached the vessel at high speed. Just as the nose was coming out of the water, and after destroying two of the Chinese approaching supercavitating weapons at close quarters with their SUB CIWS, the final Chinese Killer Whale and the final Chinese conventional torpedo struck the Zachary Taylor almost simultaneously.

The explosions, coming on either side of the vessel, completely ripped the boat in half. The momentum of the submarine and the violence of the explosions thrust the front third of the boat completely clear of the water, and then that portion fell back into the ocean, lost all forward momentum and immediately began to settle. Twenty-one of the forty-five crewmen from that section, many of them badly wounded,

managed to exit that part of the vessel before it completely slipped beneath the waves.

The lower two thirds of the boat never completely gained the surface of the water. Although it's momentum carried the forward portion near the surface, that was the part most effected by the explosions of the enemy weapons, where the Zachary Taylor sustained the worst blast damage. As that after section reached its highest point of travel, only yards below the surface, and just as it began to turn over and sink, somehow twelve of the eighty-eight crew members in that section escaped the vessel and swam to the surface.

The Jimmy Carter saw none of this. But it heard it all.

Captain Thompson ordered his boat to open its outer doors during the loudest part of the engagement and then to a full stop and dead silence as the action continued. He and every man who heard the death of the Zachary Taylor cringed at the sounds, but then soberly and determinedly waited for a chance to mete out justice and death to their enemies. The enemy boat in front of them had slowed down and was creeping towards them as quietly as it could, while the other enemy sub maneuvered wildly to avoid the Zachary Taylor's Mk-48 ADCAP.

But the Zachary Taylor was not going to die alone on this day.

It's single Mk-48 ADCAP ran hard through all of the Chinese defensive efforts and caught up with the Chinese boat. Struck amidships and holed, the Chinese could not control the flooding. Waiting too long to blow its ballast tanks, the enemy sub never got above a depth of 50 meters, and then slowly began to sink to the bottom, giving its surviving crew members, which included the captain and the entire control room, several minutes to contemplate their fates. Soon after passing its crush depth of over 600 meters, it was heard imploding and breaking up by the crews of both the Jimmy Carter and the second Chinese submarine which was unknowingly coming closer and closer to the Jimmy Carter.

The second Chinese submarine would soon follow the fate of its companion.

When it had approached to within eight hundred yards of the Jimmy Carter, which remained dead in the water, listening passively to their enemy's approach, Captain Thompson ordered two Mk-48 ADCAP torpedoes fired through the already opened outer torpedo doors.

The Chinese did not have the time to even take a snap shot at the Jimmy Carter. It would not have helped them if they had. Immediately going to full power, the Chinese boat attempted to make a downward spiraling turn, knuckling its wake and dropping noise makers into it as it did so.

None of it helped.

Within a few short minutes, there were two more explosions and another Chinese submarine sank to the bottom with the loss of all hands. Holed twice, this one sank much faster than the first.

When he saw that the Chinese vessel did not have the time to mount even a snap shot at its position, Thompson ordered the Jimmy Carter to maintain its position and its dead quiet status. After a full forty minutes of listening, the boat then carefully continued its stealthy approach towards Wake Island.

Not knowing that they had now cleared all of the major Chinese underwater defenses, it took the Jimmy Carter another two hours to come in close to Wake Island. There, they finally discovered the Chinese surface ships that were helping with the defense of the island. Those ships consisted of none other than the cruiser, Kunlun, the damaged Chinese Beijing class carrier, the Nantong, and the completely

operational and undamaged Type 52D guided missile destroyer.

Upon discovering them, the Jimmy Carter carefully and stealthily spent the time necessary to maneuver in as close as possible to ensure kill shots on all three vessels.

From a range of five miles, Captain Simon Thompson, calmly fired four Mk-77 supercavitating weapons at the Chinese vessels and then quickly loaded all four of his tubes and fired again. He then rapidly egressed to the southwest at high speed. Those eight weapons wreaked horrific havoc on the remaining Chinese ships, utterly annihilating all three of them.

Struck by two of the weapons as it attempted to start a high speed turn, the Kunlun was torn into three pieces and rapidly went down with its captain and Admiral Tsung, the task force commander. Of the three hundred and eighty personnel on board, only fifty-two were able to safely abandoned ship.

Hit by three of the four weapons targeting her, the already damaged Beijing class carrier simply rolled over amidst a tremendous cloud of smoke and debris and sank rapidly. Only two hundred oil soaked personnel, many of them badly injured, survived to either be picked up by the few remaining Chinese helicopters, or to swim towards and be washed ashore on Wake Island itself.

The Type 52D destroyer, which was furthest from the Jimmy Carter's attack, made a valiant effort to run directly towards the island and ground itself there, where its missiles could still help with the defense of the island. Although one of the multi-mode American supercavitating weapons was successfully defeated by the shallow water the ship was running in, the last Mk-77 followed its target right in towards shore and detonated against its after section on the port side, breaking it in two there where both parts sank. Many of the crew survived and joined the ground forces still fighting on Wake Island.

The water was shallow enough where the Chinese guided missile destroyer went down that both pieces did not sink completely, rather, they came to rest on the shallow ocean bed, the upper portions of their superstructures canted at unnatural angles and sticking grotesquely out of the water.

Pictures of that destroyed Chinese vessel would be aired throughout the allied world, and ultimately find their way to Beijing and the Politburo. They would be the banner photos depicting the defeat and surrender of CAS forces at Wake Island, which occurred less than twelve hours later. Those photos would also herald the beginning of the allied offensive into the conquered territory and holdings of the CAS in the central Pacific Ocean on the road to Japan and the Chinese mainland itself.

January 27, 2011, 21:08, Local time

Presidential Offices

New Delhi, India

Acting President Rahmish Patel reviewed the information he had received from the Director of the Indian Intelligence Bureau. It was a very sensitive document referencing the current defense and intelligent situation in Siberia, within India and in the Indian Ocean.

Patel was under a lot of pressure from Jien Zenim to get things under control on the sub-continent and in the other areas of influence that the Indian government had heretofore had responsibility for. The presence of huge numbers of Chinese troops only underscored the pressure. It was clear that if the

Indians could not bring things under control themselves, then their Chinese allies were more than willing to do it for them.

“General, are you certain that this data represents the most up to date information?”

The acting President was already well known for his impatience, and his present demeanor was a clear indication that, for whatever reason, that patience had been exhausted long before the General had ever entered the room.

“Yes, Mr. President, it represents the most up to date information we can get our hands on. The people over at the Multi Agency Center (MAC) regularly update their information from the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), from the Joint Intelligence Task Forces (JITF), from the Defense Image Processing and Analysis Center (DIPAC) and from our own Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). They then analyze all of this in conjunction with the latest information from the Chinese and the GIR intelligence agencies to come up with this report every twelve hours.

“The report you are holding was completed a little over an hour ago. It is the latest information we have.”

As he reviewed what he was holding for the second time, he had to voice his disgust at what he was seeing.

“Well, General, the report is either flawed, or it is the most dismal intelligence report I believe I have ever read.

“Well, which is it?”

General Singh knew that Patel was powerful, influential and smart. He also knew that he could be dangerous if provoked.

But the General knew his duty and he performed it.

“Mr. President, we do not control the events that make up the intelligence situation reports, nor can we. What we do is report them as accurately as possible.

“That is what you have in your hands.

“The report is not flawed, but it is a dismal report in the circumstance. It is also accurate and that gives us at least the power to respond from a position of knowledge.”

The President respected a clear and direct answer...despite his propensity to berate the messenger when he was at the end of his patience.

“Well, the old boy has some grit left in him,” the President thought, “Good, we will see what he is made of.”

Turning to the summary of the situation in Siberia, the President spoke clearly to Singh.

“Well, then we shall start in Siberia.

“Ambassador Gavanker...or should I say, the traitor Gavanker, must be brought to justice.

“His treachery has put us all in a very desperate situation and he must be made an example of.

“Him and his entire family and any staff loyal to him and his actions. Do I make myself clear, General?

“Put your best team on this.”

Singh nodded his understanding and made a few notes before responding.

“I do understand, Mr. President. We will send our best team in there and have them contact our operatives already in Siberia to arrange it as soon as it is practicable.

“Is there anything else?”

Patel thought about the executive summary for each area.

On the ground in India the Americans and their allies had been halted along a line from just south of Bombay, across to Bangalore and then south to the coast just north and east of Madras. Only the arrival of literally millions of Chinese troops had stopped the Americans and their technology machine. It had done so only because there were more Chinese personnel and equipment than the Americans could effectively destroy.

Now, the enemy was pouring more and more resources into the country at Cochin and Madras...and it was clear that they wanted to occupy Bombay and use it in a similar manner.

...and they may soon be able to do just that based on what had happened in the Indian Ocean on the 18th and 19th.

Diego Garcia had fallen to the Americans.

On the same day that the Indian military leadership had received a detailed report from the Chinese regarding the loss of Wake Island, the same thing had occurred at Diego Garcia. An entire American amphibious task force, supported by two carriers and numerous escorts had arrived off of Diego Garcia completely undetected.

“How will we ever overcome the events of that day?” the President asked himself as he reflected back on the events of just a little over a week ago.

“A completely submerged amphibious task force, carriers, escorts and all, arrives at of nowhere.

“Until I saw the actual reconnaissance pictures I could not believe it. I thought our own people were making up wild stories to cover their own deficiencies.”

But the Indian military had not been covering up. Twenty thousand U.S. Marines came ashore in the first four hours from those behemoth submarines. Then, a few hours later, as soon as it was safe, as was the case at Wake Island, twenty thousand more were landed on the island by those gargantuan, American C-90B transports.

Benefiting from the use of the awesome variety and firepower of the U.S. cruise missiles, and from the newly inserted space station over the Indian Ocean, the fighting was brief. But it was also violent.

By 1900 hours that day, the island had been overrun. Over twelve thousand Indian soldiers and personnel were killed in that single day. The United States lost almost nine hundred personnel. More importantly in the overall scheme of things, they had re-established themselves in the Indian Ocean where they could conduct naval operations throughout the region as they had done prior to 2006 when Indian forces had taken it from the Americans.

The strategic implications of the American presence at the base at Diego Garcia were not lost on Patel. He knew that it would be particularly useful to them for punishing and threatening the CAS forces still fighting to hold onto parts of western and northwestern Australia. It would also be of great benefit to them in the support of their ongoing invasion and operations on the sub-continent itself, and in wrenching control of the oil lanes from GIR and CAS hands.

“...and with their damnable space station, there is next to nothing we can do about it,” thought the President.

That was perhaps the most troubling thought of all.

The Americans were slowly but surely establishing themselves in an overall invulnerable position throughout near-earth space... watching over the various theaters where their space stations existed... raining down fire from above on targets of their choosing. Patel, Sayeed and even Zenim were powerless to halt or interdict it.

Then the President had a thought.

“If they can’t keep the Americans from targeting us, then perhaps we can pull in so close to them... embrace them so tightly... that their war shots will be just as apt to kill their own as us.”

Patel looked up and noticed that the General was still patiently waiting for more orders or requests.

“Er... yes, General, there is something else.

“Have my chief of staff come in, and re-arrange your schedule for a general meeting of the entire cabinet. I would like you to brief them all on this same information. It shouldn’t take more than an hour or so to arrange the meeting... those who can attend directly and video feeds for the others.”

As the General stepped out of the room, the Indian President thought about how he could best implement what he was thinking. Clearly it was not a new thought... others had tried before.

But those others had not been Rahmish Patel.

As his Chief of Staff entered the spacious and ornate room, Patel stood up from behind his large desk and came around it to pace in the middle of the room. The Chief of Staff held back, in the entryway, waiting for the President addressed him.

“Mahj, arrange an emergency executive defense committee meeting. We’ll hold it in the conference room down the hall. Make sure those who are within immediate driving or walking distance are here personally. Bring the others in via live video feed.

“Tell them it is a matter of utmost importance and that General Singh will brief us on some critical intelligence and that I will make a statement.

“What time is it now?”

The Chief of Staff looked quickly at his watch and responded.

“It's almost 9:30, sir.”

Patel thought about the people who would be attending and their likely schedules for a moment.

“Okay, convene the meeting at 10 PM and let them know that it will take no more than an hour, with a follow up meeting late tomorrow morning.

“You might as well schedule that one now too, Mingh. Make it for 10 AM and make sure everyone is aware and clears their schedules for two hours tomorrow.”

January 27, 2011, 21:51, Local time

High Geosynchronous Orbit

Over the Indian Ocean

USSS Guadalupe

“How certain are we of this information,” the Captain asked his communications officer who had just delivered the decoded and translated message.

“Sir, it all depends on whether the information we received from our Indian allies is accurate or not. Based on the nature of this message that the ELINT people intercepted and that the frequencies, encryption keys and translators we received from the Indians just allowed us to decode and translate, it would seem that their information is very, very accurate.

“My own read, and the read of all of our ELINT people earth-side and here on board, is that we are looking at an actual, honest-to-God message from the Indian President's office.

“They will be having an hour-long high level meeting starting in the next ten minutes.”

Captain Lewis rolled the information his communications officer had just given him over in his mind for another second or two. The he asked.

“What does our G2 say?”

The Lieutenant had already checked.

“G2 has been in contact with his counterparts in Diego Garcia and Cochin. He has also talked with G2 at USSC. All of them feel this is the real thing, sir.”

David Lewis liked a junior officer who was on the ball...who had all of his ducks in a row. And this Lieutenant was clearly displaying that he had all of that right stuff, and more.

“Reminds me of myself,” he thought before continuing.

“Okay, thanks, Lieutenant. Patch me into the orbital network and get me Captain Clark at the Point Solitude Complex.”

While the Lieutenant did as he had been commanded, Captain Lewis, who had recently been promoted and given command of this new Station before it was launched over the Indian Ocean, considered how pleased he was that it was Captain Floyd Clark he would be working with on this operation.

It seemed like ages ago that the two of them, Lewis and Clark, had embarked on that historic first mission to the asteroids. It was hard to believe that it had actually only been seventeen months.

“...and only five months since we got back,” he thought.

Upon returning to earth orbit, and after several urgent combat missions where most of their carbonaceous chondrite projectiles had been expended, the Commanders and their crews had all received ninety days leave. Afterwards, upon returning to duty, both Lewis and Clark had immediately been promoted to Captain and then sent right back into space.

Clark was given command of the Point Solitude Space Complex where asteroid material was being received regularly now and fashioned into projectiles. Lewis was given command of the USSS Guadalupe and sent into combat on station over the Indian Ocean to support the landings at Diego Garcia and operations in India and the Indian Ocean.

...and so here he was, doing just that.

When his communications officer motioned to him that contact had been established with Point Solitude, David Lewis keyed the microphone he was holding and spoke into it.

“Hello, F.L.?”

“This is Lewis on the Guadalupe and I have a rush order for you my friend.”

January 27, 2011, 22:48, Local time

Presidential Conference Room

New Delhi, India

General Singh's presentation had gone well. Everyone recognized the import of the data and it had set the stage for the President's impassioned presentation outlining what he wanted his military planners to do. They had all listened raptly as Patel had explained his plans for embracing the enemy forces.

He had just finished that presentation and was about to open the meeting up for questions and discussion when the double doors to the conference room flew open, banging hard against the interior walls, and the President's security detail came rushing into the room.

“Seated! Everyone remain seated.

“Mr. President, you must come with us now!”

Before Patel could respond, two burly security officers grabbed him by each arm and literally picked him up off the floor and rushed him out of the room. As the room erupted into pandemonium, with various agency heads and military leaders shouting questions and calling to their own security details who were also entering the room, the President asked the head of his detail.

“Rammi, what is this all about?”

The Colonel turned to the President as the team rushed through the front doors past many armed guards who had not been there when the President's meeting had started. They were guarding and lining the path to a waiting presidential executive helicopter, whose blades were already slowly spinning.

“Mr. President, we've picked up an object coming in over the Himalayas. One projectile, sir, targeting New Delhi.

“It's coming in at orbital speed and will arrive here at almost any moment. Mr. President.”

Rahmish Patel could only think of one thing to say.

“The Americans!”

The whine of the helicopter's turbines picked up, and its blades began turning faster and faster, as the security detail led the President to the open door on that side of the helicopter. While Patel was getting in, he put his hand out and held onto the door frame to steady himself.

He noticed that the darkness of the night was waning and giving way to...light! A growing light though it was not yet 11 PM. Rapidly, that light increased and the President's attention was drawn to the east and north...the source of the growing light.

There it was! A fiery mass coming directly at them at a speed that was almost too fast to comprehend.

The Colonel wasted no time.

“Mr. President, get in now!”

He shoved the President into the helicopter hard and then rapidly closed the door, motioning frantically for the pilot to take off.

Climbing rapidly and turning to the south and west, the officer piloting the executive helicopter tried to escape the oncoming horror with his President. Patel had been thrown to the floor by the Colonel's shove, and then held on there as the helicopter frantically rose and turned. He had just gotten his hands up to the window sill and pulled himself up enough to look out.

What he saw took his breath away.

The landscape for miles around was lit up surreally, as bright as the middle of the day. Long shadows were being cast to the south and west by an impossibly bright light immediately behind the helicopter that Patel couldn't see from his position.

In that moment, as he watched, the intensity of the light increased tremendously in magnitude as the orbital bombardment projectile impacted behind them.

Patel's helicopter was no more than five hundred feet in the air and only a quarter of a mile away from the site of the impact, which produced a blast with the force of a small nuclear weapon.

The blast and shock wave from the impact caught up with and arrived at the presidential helicopter at almost the same instant. First the shock wave swatted the President's helicopter from the air like it was no more than an agonizingly slow-moving fly being hit by a lightning-fast, stone-hard swatter. Then, less than two tenths of a second later, the blast incinerated the wreckage and everything in it before it ever reached the ground.

Before Patel's plan for embracing the Americans and their allies could be put into motion...or even communicated...the Americans had reached down from space and embraced him first.

Chapter 6

“We shall not tire, we shall not falter, we shall not fail.” – President George W. Bush, January 11, 2003

March 23, 2011, 13:20, CST

The Main House

Lazy-H Ranch

Outside of Montague, Texas

Billy was amazed. Everyone he could hope to be here, was here, as he was preparing to once again leave home and go into harm's way. Family and friends had come from all over the country to wish him well and see him off.

Besides his Mom and Dad, grandparents and uncles, aunts and cousins, their good friends, Joe and Liz Trevor, were here with their daughter, Patricia. Billy had known Patricia most of his life, although the Trevor family had moved away some years ago. Now, over the last two weeks, something of a romance had begun to develop between the two of them and Billy was somehow glad she was here to see him off.

“See me off,” he thought

“A few short weeks ago that had seemed so improbable.”

But a miracle of remembrance and healing had occurred after Billy got home and began walking through the woods and fields of his home. Those walks, the smell of the flowers, the hay, the sounds of the birds...particularly the meadow-larks...all of it had been like a salve to his heart and mind.

To his soul.

With his family and friend there to help them along, one day the memories had simply started flooding in,

filling in the gaps, giving him his full identity back.

Speaking of friends, of course his best friend, Leon Campbell was here with him as well, and Leon had brought his Mom, Geneva, down from Boise, Idaho. She was a gem of a woman whom Billy had met while he was in school at Boise State University where he had first met Leon.

“God bless them for being here,” Billy thought.

“I know that in their loss it has got to be especially hard for them, particularly for Mrs. Campbell, with Leon so set on going back out too.”

Even though he knew it was hard for Leon's Mom, after losing Alan, Billy could understand Leon's desire to get back out there, in the thick of things fighting the enemy. He felt the same way, and would have it no other way.

Though things were going much better for the allies now, and progress was being made on all fronts, the enemy was resourceful and ruthless, as they had proven over and over again throughout this war. Until they were completely put down, they would remain dangerous and capable of causing terrible harm to American forces, or to America's people.

“You don't have to look to far, any place in this country, to know that's true too, thought Billy.”

He and Leon had discussed it many times, it was one thing to be fighting these enemies overseas and living with the horror of combat and the sudden loss of friends and comrades. It was another thing entirely to hear of these enemy animals infiltrating into the United States itself and butchering innocent civilians there.

For that reason, if no other, Billy and Leon, and millions more like them from every walk of life, from every income bracket, from every social segment of society, were in the fight until it was over.

“Until we put these animals down, and everyone who supports and abets them.

“Just like the rabid dogs that they are,” he thought to himself.

Billy had been raised in a good Christian home. He had been taught to love his neighbor, to turn the other cheek and to be kind to those that spitefully used him. He believed all of those things, he really did...and he wanted to emulate his Savior, Jesus Christ, and be like Him. But he also believed that there came a time when you had to sell what you had and buy a sword to defend your family, your home, your freedoms...and in this case, your very religion...from those who would destroy all of them.

It was something Billy took no joy in doing. It was something he didn't *want* to do. It was something he *had* to do. He was almost as upset about being forced to take up his sword in his own and his family's defense against people who would enslave, kill, and destroy all he cherished...his very way of life...as he was at the carnage those enemies created. But, it was a necessary business, as distasteful and horrible as it was.

Billy was determined to wield the sword until it was completely finished so that his own future children, his mom and dad, and all of those he loved would not have to experience any more of the horror.

Now, the meal was finished, the conversation was slowing down...the time had come.

Billy's Dad, Jess Simmons, stood up and everyone got quiet.

"Well, I guess it's that time. As much as none of us want the time to come...particularly Cindy and I, the time has sure enough come and Billy is going to have to be driven down to Ft. Worth.

"Billy, before you go...and I can say this to Leon as well because I know that within ten days he will be making this same trip, except out of Idaho...anyhow, Billy, we just want you to know we love you. Go with God, son.

"What you are doing is necessary. I know how you feel...exactly how you feel. I have seen it, felt it...been there. If the doctors would let me...if they would clear me...I would be right out there with you. As it is, I will have to settle to be with you boys in spirit and in faith and to do what I can here at home working with the intelligence, analyzing, and sharing what I have experienced and learned in my own campaigns."

Turning to his wife, Cindy, Jess beckoned that she too stand...and she did.

"Cindy, would you like to say something?"

Cindy already had tears in her eyes...streaming down her cheeks. She took a handkerchief and wiped them away, and then she spoke softly.

"Oh, I guess so, Jess.

"Billy, you know we love you. You know we'll miss you. We're so glad to have *you* back...completely. Be safe and stay close to God. He'll watch over you.

"While I was working at the factory, building those airplanes...all I could think about was how each one of them was going to be used to protect boys like you and Leon here. I prayed over each one that I worked on...not that it would necessarily kill someone else's boys...because they are children of God too...but that it would be a tool in God's hands to protect liberty and freedom, particularly freedom to worship Him.

"...and, I must confess, that it would be a tool in His hands to maybe protect you, Billy, and your father...and God has answered those prayers.

"Now, look here, I've gone and said a lot more than I intended.

"Just know we love you son and will be looking forward to your return when this business is finished."

When she finished, she stepped over and gave her son a big hug...and was soon joined by Jess who wrapped them both in his arms.

After they had finished with their own family goodbye, and tears were dried, everyone came up to shake hands with and hug Billy...and most of them also hugged Leon and thanked him for his service as well. Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces...friends...all of them took part in the farewell and all of them were touched and filled.

A somewhat awkward moment came when Patricia Trevor stood in front of Billy...awkward, but cute. Billy stuck his hand out to shake her hand and she grasped it...but did not shake it. She just looked at it for a second or two. Then, Billy, unable to hold himself back, reached out and hugged her...tightly...and

she hugged back.

All four parents watched, and cried, silently praying for a safe return so that the tender shoot that was developing here in their hearts, might have a future opportunity to grow and blossom.

Then it was time to go.

Billy, Leon, Jess and Grandpa Simmons all climbed into Jess's F-250, 4X4, crew cab pickup, rolled down the windows, and all of them waved as they drove away. The family members waved back as they drove down the drive, and those in the pickup, especially Billy, kept waving until they were out of sight and well on their way over to US 287 for the trip down to Ft. Worth.

April 3, 2011, 23:48, EST

Jessup Residence

1724 Ridgeline Rd.

Henderson's Gap, Tennessee

Sloan Jessup was up late. He'd been out surfing the internet, reading the latest news about the war on the CBN and WNN web sites. After he had reviewed today's news, he had surfed a few other web sites that interested him, and then he had purchased some things for his son and daughter, things that might bring them some joy and also teach them a thing or two about the true priorities of life. It was something he had been doing for them for years.

As he thought on his kids, one eighteen and the other almost twenty, he couldn't help but reflect on their mother, Judy, and their brief three years together from 1989 through 1992. The time seemed to flash through his mind in a few seconds. They had been so young then. Now, it had been seventeen years since the divorce, eighteen years since they had irrevocably separated...eighteen years of dedication on his part, trying to atone for his life before.

Earlier today, as he did every Sunday, Sloan had attended church services from 10 AM until noon. Every week he attended the 1ststreet Methodist church in Henderson's Gap and taught a Sunday School class there. He also helped with the youth program as a scout leader every Wednesday evening. He prided himself on having helped over fifty young men obtain their Eagle Scout award over the years.

Many members of the congregation, and other prominent people in the small town talked about Sloan all the time. His success with the Scouts was something that made the entire community proud. He was so consistent, so dedicated to his worship and to the scouting program, that the pastor, most of the congregation, and many people in the community considered him to be among the most faithful and loyal members of not only the Methodist church, but also of the entire community of Henderson's Gap.

But Sloan Jessup was not a Methodist, and he was not a Christian. He had not been either for over twenty years.

Sloan had served in the 101stAirborne Division during the 1990-1991 Desert Shield and Desert Storm operations in Kuwait and Iraq. He had been there on the ground for over seventeen months, first preparing for, and then taking part in the combat operations against the Iraqis in Kuwait and Iraq. His

particular unit had been inserted deep into Iraq as part of a blocking force and had remained there in Iraq for several months after combat operations had ceased.

It had been a great victory, one that had come much more easily than had been expected as the Iraqi forces had been bombed relentlessly, and then had, for the most part, either fled in panic or surrendered by the tens of thousands when American and allied forces attacked. As a result, there had been very little cost in lives to the American and allied armies.

For Sloan, who was a young man twenty-four years old at the time, though the physical cost due to combat had not been great, his other experiences there had led to the greatest sacrifices he would make in his entire life. Ultimately, the decisions he made in Iraq would lead to the sacrifice of his wife and children, the sacrifice of his faith, and the sacrifice of all that he had been loyal to or held dear to that point in his life.

While providing security in southern Iraq, before allied troops pulled back into Kuwait, Sloan's company had also supplied humanitarian relief to the local citizens. In the course of his duties as a non-commissioned officer, Jessup had met and been befriended by a prominent Shiite cleric and his family in one of the small towns. He had no idea that the leading Ayatollahs and mullahs in Iran had issued fatwahas to that very effect, to find and befriend American soldiers whenever and wherever possible.

Despite regulations against that type of fraternization, Sloan had ultimately used his position and his duties to create opportunities to meet with the family in general, and the father in particular, under the pretext of giving them and their small town aide and counsel. Over a space of several weeks he had become very close to them and been influenced by them and their beliefs.

...and in the process, Sloan Jessup had been converted to the Shiite branch of the Islamic by that very influential cleric who would later rise in prominence within the GIR. It was a conversion that he had never doubted and from which he had never wavered in all of the long years since.

While surfing the internet tonight, he had briefly visited a site that he had been instructed to visit through his surfing of the internet the month before. It was Sloan's habit to surf the internet every Sunday night. He stayed on for no more than forty-five minutes each time. Once a month, he received a message instructing him to visit another site in the course of his other innocuous surfing. Every week he would visit that site and he would then memorize the single phrase that he ultimately found there. In reality, this was the real purpose of his internet activities.

Due to the instructions that had been given to him, he had never returned to any of those sites once a message had been delivered. Even if he had, he would have found that it did not matter. The small sites were developed with html and java programming code that tracked any visitors that happened to find them. That code was specifically looking for Sloan's tell-tail internet identification so his handlers would know that he was remaining true to the instructions that had been given to him. Once the code indicated to his handlers that Sloan had visited the site after the message had been posted the site was deleted. It's IP (Internet Protocol) address and its URL and the files that made up the site were deleted from the internet by early the next morning.

Each week, for over twenty years, whether it had been through receiving faxes from a new number each week, then through use of receiving messages from changing free, email addresses each week, or finally, for the last thirteen years, through the use of the internet and the different sites he had been instructed to visit, Sloan Jessup had been faithful to his instructions. He had followed them with exactness in each of his visits, memorizing the short phrases and directions his handlers sent him and acting accordingly.

Mostly, the messages he received were nothing more than a new number, a new email address, or a new internet URL address for him to use until he received the next message.

Occasionally there was something more.

That had been the case in late 2001 after the 911 attacks. Oh, how he had rejoiced in those attacks. They had punctuated everything he himself had been living for and working towards. He had hoped that he would somehow get the chance to strike his own blow at that time against what he had come to believe was the decadence and immorality of his own nation's form of government, and the liberties it afforded to its citizens.

He had bought completely into the belief that control and strict discipline proscribed and administered by religious political leaders was the only way to avoid sin. He had come to believe that those Ayatollahs and Mullahs, in curtailing freedom of choice and in punishing severely the slightest variance from what they proclaimed as God's plan, were in fact acting for God.

In so doing, he had given his free will over to tyrants...and had had given up his own soul.

After 911, when the messages started coming in instructing him to do specific things, he had felt that his almost ten years of faithfulness were about to be rewarded with a substantive mission of some sort. When he had been instructed over the course of four consecutive weeks to retrieve several vacuum packed bags containing a fine white powder, and to then store them all and keep them safe until otherwise directed, he was sure that an actual mission of some sort was in the offing. He was particularly convinced that this was the case when news reports of packages and envelopes of a similar white powder started showing up in Florida, the Washington, D.C. area, and other places causing anthrax. He was certain that he was about to be used as part of a massive and even more deadly second wave of attacks.

But, although he had done as instructed and retrieved and stored those eight packages, no further orders specifically concerning them had been forthcoming. The silence was broken in mid-2007 when he had been instructed as to how to obtain eight more vacuum packed bags, this time containing a fine gray powder.

As with the white powder, he was instructed to carefully store them and await further instructions. Again, he had felt that a mission of some sort that would involve him personally was in the offing, particularly since so many attacks were already occurring on American soil. But once again, outside of the regular changes to the addresses and locations for his communications, no more specific orders regarding either set of packages had come. He had kept them ever since, wondering what their purpose was, wondering what his part would be in their use.

Now, tonight, another message had finally come that had nothing to do with a new internet address. It was a message to act...to make use of the packages he had kept for so long. The countdown had begun that Sloan had long dreamed of, that would allow him to atone for his earlier life...to atone for his earlier part in the attacks against Islam.

"Six weeks...over the next six weeks I will learn my part, and then I will enter into Allah's paradise and receive the martyrs reward," he thought.

Unknown to Sloan, the same message had gone out to nine other Islamic operatives who had been held in deep cover for all of these years. In all, ten operatives. Ten Christian converts who had stood the rigors and test of time and events.

Originally there had been twenty-four of them, all single, all living alone in various places throughout the United States, Canada, Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany. In the intervening years, six of those had died of wholly natural causes. Eight more, who had appeared to have wavered in the faith in the slightest, had also died. But their deaths only *appeared* to be from natural causes. In reality, those deaths had been anything but natural, despite how they had looked and how they had been ruled.

Now, the last ten of the deepest cover operatives that the GIR had amongst their enemies...three in the United States, one in Canada, one in Great Britain, one in France, one in Italy, one in Germany, and two in Russia...had all been ordered to act simultaneously. There was nothing that could or would tie their actions together, other than the acts themselves. There would be only vague hints as to exactly where their motivations lay, and they themselves would not survive the operation to be questioned.

May 9, 2011, 06:25, Local time

Politburo Executive Committee Meeting

Secret Hardened Facility

100 km North of Beijing

Even though he detested the need, Jien Zenim was grateful that he had had the foresight to begin holding the executive committee meetings in these secret hardened facilities. There were eighteen of them scattered around the nation and they rotated the meetings through them according to a random, computer-generated pattern that varied the location, the meeting time and the meeting duration.

Despite the inconvenience, the necessity had been proven in late January when the Americans had killed the acting President of India, Rahmish Patel, with a decapitation strike from space. That strike had killed the Indian President and many of his cabinet members and key advisors. Zenim knew, that such a strike, if brought down upon him, even here in this nuclear hardened facility, would most likely prove fatal to himself and everyone in the facility.

Because of that, a dozen newer facilities were being constructed around the nation. The new facilities were stronger, deeper, and much more self-contained and were designed to withstand the largest American orbital bombardment devices that had been seen to date. The Chinese President was anxious for these executive meetings to move to those locations. Each of those locations was a very tightly guarded state secret, with clearances set to the highest levels within the People's Republic security apparatus. They were so secret that the facilities were being constructed using slave labor that could be disposed of after construction was completed to ensure that none of those workers ever spoke of their existence or location.

As the various leaders droned on regarding the status of their particular areas of responsibilities...and each was a status that Jien was already aware of and had reviewed and edited...Zenim contemplated the worsening military situation.

At first, he had been shocked by the death of Patel and the resulting fall of his government. Then he had realized that it could actually represent a windfall for his own plans. The Chinese had already been prepared to step in and assist the Indian government to any degree necessary, up to an including full control of all governmental functions using Indian figureheads. Patel had been proving that he was

unsuited in that role. Although he was dedicated to the CAS and Jien Zenim's vision for it, he was also far too independent and ambitious. His death had opened the door for Zenim to have the local Chinese military and political generals to install individuals far more pliable to the Chinese will.

...and that was exactly what they had done.

But things had still not gone as Zenim would have liked. Irrespective of the vast numeric superiority enjoyed by CAS forces in India, the Americans and their allies had continued to advance. That advance had surged during the confusion resulting from the loss of the top end of India's chain of command. Once Chinese forces had effectively stepped in and placed their own people in positions of authority, and as the large Chinese forces were better integrated into the Indian forces, the advance had slowed.

But it had not stopped.

At the present time the Americans and their allies had advanced to the point where they controlled all of India south of a line that ran from the southern suburbs of Bombay eastward along the Narmada River to its source and then southeast to the coast near Kharagpur. It was clearly only a matter of time before both Bombay and Calcutta fell into allied hands completely. At that point, almost half of India would have fallen to the allies.

More and more Indian citizens, frightened of the ravishes of war, were either surrendering to the allies, or they were streaming away from the fighting as refugees. The problem was, that most of those refugee convoys were doing all in their power to escape southward, past the front lines into allied controlled territory.

...and the subcontinent was not the only place where CAS and GIR fortunes were fairing badly.

Australia was on the verge of being completely cut-off by sea, stranding several million CAS and GIR military personnel and civilians there. The CAS and GIR military forces there were now constantly under allied air attack from the sea, even in those north and western areas of the country staging had safely been accomplished in the past. Large concentrations of Chinese, Indian or GIR troops anywhere on the continent were almost immediately attacked by either orbital bombardment or by the deadly attacks of the latest American Hail Storm missiles. With more and more of the Indian Ocean coming under allied sea control, and with the two American space stations in place over Australia and the Indian Ocean, there was nothing that anyone could do about it. The outcome was inevitable, within a few months at the most, Australia would fall completely into allied hands.

In late February all remaining GIR forces in Iran had been completely over run by the Americans, the British, the Brazilian and their other allies. On March 2nd, 2011, the remaining GIR military and political apparatus in Iran surrendered to allied forces unconditionally and the date was designated as VG-Day by the allies to represent the defeat of the GIR, even though the knew Hasan Sayeed had escaped and was coordinating his forces in the Pacific from somewhere in Indonesia. Despite this fact, most western people had recognized the defeat of the major center of the GIR's influence and power as the death knell to the radical Islamic cause and celebrated it as such.

At the time, Jien Zenim had felt that the western allies were premature in their celebrations and that Sayeed would certainly come up with some plan to counter attack and regain his lost power.

But, within weeks, on March 28th, 2011, under the threat of orbital bombardment, laser attacks, and hail storm missile attacks, remaining GIR and CAS forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan surrendered, along with the surviving political leadership in those countries. It had been a shocking development to Zenim

and to Sayeed, forfeiting what both leaders had hoped would be significant time and effort that the allies would have otherwise had to expend on attacking and conquering those nations.

“I suppose we are experiencing a taste of what the Americans and their allies experienced in 2006 as so many nations surrendered to us without a fight,” Zenim thought.

“Well, if we have the time and if we can once again develop the appropriate technological innovations, it can happen again, despite these major setbacks.”

After Afghanistan and Pakistan surrendered, allied forces immediately began occupying the strategic areas of both nations and subjecting the rest to their world-wide and very effective *Ruthless Sentinel* operation for pacified nations. In so doing, they minimized the amount of personnel necessary to occupy the nations and were able to concentrate on moving their large forces into position to continue the advance into India on a second front, and ultimately into China as well.

With the fall of Pakistan, all GIR military activity was now limited to Australia, the islands of the Pacific around Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia, and to the Malay Peninsula itself. There were still hundreds of millions of GIR citizens there with significant production capabilities.

“...and the GIR still has several million personnel to throw into the fight,” the Chinese President reflected.

Thinking about the GIR and its forces led the Zenim to thinking about Hassan Sayeed himself. He glanced at the large digital display screen which showed the various individuals attending the meeting by secure video conferencing. There, sitting in a executive, leather swivel chair, was the Islamic Mahdi.

“There he is, directing his portion of the fight from what must be a formidable and advanced headquarters of some type.

“The very fact that he was prepared to move himself and his staff to such a facility speaks volumes about the man and his resourcefulness, survivability, and planning.

“I may not know exactly where he is, but I'm glad he's still a part of the fight...that he didn't just disappear.

“He's a strong ally and I know he'll capably fight and impede the Americans on that southern front, while I concentrate on India, the approaches to Japan and on Siberia.”

“Siberia,” he thought.

“That vast northern, cold, cold wilderness. So full of resources, so helpful to us in this war... and so remote.”

Zenim knew that its very remoteness was a two edged sword. It had cut for the CAS when the Russian and American forces were so far removed from it. It cut against *him* now that those same enemies had invaded it. Siberia was providing his enemies, headed by angry American Eagle and its sharp talons, and a vengeful Russian bear, avenues leading directly into China itself.

Airborne Russian forces, supported by American technology had landed in the capitol of Omsk, Siberia in October of last year. At the same time, a massive assault, supported by Hail Storm missiles and orbital bombardment had broken huge gap in CAS defenses in the Urals, behind an entire retreating and then

surrendering Indian Corps.

Since that time, the Russians and their European allies, had driven across Siberia to Omsk and linked up with the airborne Russian forces there. All efforts by Chinese and Indian troops to flank those forces, or to block them, had been crushed by American support from space and by increasing numbers of Hail Storm missiles. Several of the attempts had been pressed home extremely well and had impeded and slowed the Russian advance, but nothing had been able to stop it.

Now, a formidable Russian and European force was cutting south from Omsk, clearly intent on invading Chinese territory in Mongolia and ultimately intent of the invasion of China itself from the north.

The most critical offensive against Chinese forces was being waged from the eastern reaches of China where the Americans had established a beachhead in 2009. At that time they had completely flanked and cut-off Chinese forces that had invaded Alaska, advancing from their positions on the seacoast of Siberia northward into the staging and logistical areas of the Chinese force in Alaska.

After the defeat of those forces, the Americans had turned their interest westward, towards China. All along that path the Chinese had resisted heavily. Some of the most viscous and long lasting fighting of the war had occurred in this area. The proximity to Chinese airfields and missile emplacements meant that a steady stream of air and missile attacks harassed and punished the Americans. But, as had been the case in other areas, the Americans Hail Storm missiles technology and their orbital bombardment and laser capabilities was proving too much for Chinese defenses and counter attacks.

Now, this deadly American dagger was poised on the Chinese border itself, pointing towards Manchuria and then Beijing itself. Although Chinese attack operations continued unabated, Zenim knew as he looked at the digital display depicting the most up to date strategic information on the far wall, that the conditions that the CAS was facing were becoming more and more critical.

Considering that overall situation, and when thinking of the actions that Sayeed had taken, it became clear to Zenim what he and everyone gathered here in this meeting was going to have to do.

“...actions similar to those Sayeed had taken,” he thought as he made up his mind.

“The seat of government will have to be moved further to the west, in the interior where we can continue directing operations with the least threat of disruption and danger.”

Interrupting the finance minister who was detailing for the group the increasingly dire economic situation as more and more requirements taxed their production capabilities and began to draw into the strategic reserve of the PRC, Jien Zenim addressed him.

“Pardon my intrusion Minister Chu, and thank you for the status. We can all see that our strategic reserve is being diminished across the board, but as a preparation for conditions like this was the very reason we created and maintained it.

“You may be seated.”

Then, making his comments to the entire group, he continued.

“Now, let us all be very clear about this, we face dire circumstances and we are relying on our research and development to come up with solutions to the American orbital bombardment, Hail Storm missile and their new submerged task force capabilities. Those particular areas are giving the Americans and

their allies a tremendous advantage over our forces and those of our allies, despite our own technological innovations.

“In a few minutes, Comrade Lu Pham will present to us the latest condition of our advances and what they can mean to us and how soon they will be available.

“Before we do that, I would like this entire group to consider the possibility of moving, with our entire staffs, further to the west. Specifically I am talking about the ten current facilities we have in the areas surrounding- and the eight new facilities under construction there. In order to facilitate this, I intend to order all construction on other facilities to cease except for cosmetically completing those facilities to the point of fooling the future operations of the Americans and their allies.

“In fact, if we are wise, we may leak some information to them in order to test those facilities against the orbital bombardment the Americans surely plan for them. In this fashion we will be able to make whatever adjustments necessary to the actual facilities.”

To his surprise, before he could continue, Jien Zenim found himself being interrupted.

Hassan Sayeed spoke up over the video conferencing link from his own command facility.

“Mr. President, excuse me for the interruption.

“I believe your idea is a good one. In order to facilitate it best, it is clear that we must buy time so we can develop and then implement plans that will first halt, and then throw back the oncoming enemy forces.

“I would like to give this entire body a high level briefing on a plan that I have ordered implemented that has the power to do this very thing. It is a plan that will be conducted within the borders of our enemies...and not only within the United States, but within the borders of all of our major western enemies.

“It is an operation that will most surely give them pause in their advance...and potentially it will have the power to defeat them. It will strike fear and terror into their population, and may well destroy a majority of their populations.”

As Hasan Sayeed made this pronouncement, the intake of breath from several in attendance was audible. The looks of incredulity on their faces was also very apparent.

After a brief pause, Sayeed continued.

“Yes, I said a majority of their populations

“In so doing, it will also paralyze their manufacturing, their economics, their transportation and every aspect of their societies.

“Without discussing the specific details regarding the operation itself or its exact timing, let me explain the basic timing, which is very imminent, and the basic outline to you so you can be prepared to take advantage of it.

“I will also ensure that our scientists make available to you and your scientists the measures you can use to protect yourselves and your people from any unintended harm that the operations may inadvertently

cause your own people.”

May 9, 2011, 23:00, Local time

Presidential Quarters

Secret Hardened Facility

100 km North of Beijing

As he prepared to retire for the night, Jien Zenim was amazed at the audacity of Sayeed's plan, particularly now that the two of them had spoken individually and he had be appraised of all of its details and finer points.

“It just might work,” he thought.

But they only had a week to prepare...and that was not nearly enough time to get as ready as they would otherwise like to do. The ramifications on their own population and leadership could be extreme if they weren't ready when the storm hit that this operation was sure to generate.

“But, still, I can understand Hasan's reluctance to speak of it earlier. The potential for leaks to the Americans was just too great.

“In fact, I am surprised that he gave us any warning. He must think that the operation, with the few details he has divulged, at this point is beyond being compromised.”

The more he thought about it, the more impressed he was...and the more concerned.

He was worried about what the allied response, particularly the American response would be.

He remained impressed as he thought about the preparation, the compartmentalization, and the control over long years. All of that was something he never would have believed the Islamic intelligence services capable of. In addition, the communication channels back to the clerics and mullahs throughout the Middle East who were prepared, on the signal of the attack to rouse the people to rise up in insurgency, was also impressive.

“Sayeed must have an especially effective...what would the Americans call it?

“Yes...an especially effective grapevine to pull this off without a leak,” he continued to himself.

Yet, as he thought about it, perhaps that aspect of it was not so surprising after all. His own intelligence services had reported to him at the time that before 911, many more people on the Arab street had been aware of the planned attacks on America than what anyone had thought possible. They may not have known the exact date, or the exact method, but they had definitely known something was coming.

Based on what Sayeed had told him today, clearly something like that was going on in the Arab and Islamic world with this attack too. Additionally, Sayeed wanted to coordinate the response even further by having the remaining GIR armies, the Indian armies and the Chinese armies coordinate an all-out attack against allied forces in conjunction with the upcoming operation...something planned to maximize

the loss of moral the allied forces were sure to experience when they found out about the devastation of their homelands.

“Yes, if we time it right, and if it is effective enough, it just might work after all.”

Later, as the operation and its effectiveness unfolded, Jien Zenim would wish with all of his being that he had listened more to Lu Pham's objections to the plan during the meeting after Hasan Sayeed had finished. He especially would wish that he had listened to that part of him that this evening was registering his own concerns about supporting Sayeed's plan, and how the Americans might respond to *that* .

Instead, Zenim cast all doubt and concern aside and threw every bit of moral, political, and military support he could muster behind Sayeed's operation and the now developing CAS and GIR plans to take advantage of it.

May 16, 2011, 12:00, CST

I-70 Bridge over the Mississippi River

St. Louis Missouri

Sloan Jessup drove his late model SUV along the interstate, westbound over the Mississippi River. In the back, packed into a single oversized duffle bag, were thirty small, helium filled balloons. Each balloon was attached to small, light-weight device containing a tiny printed circuit board controlling a timer and a set of small louvered holes on the bottom of a small platform. Each small platform was covered with a heavy cellophane wrapping that was filled with a mixture of the white and gray powders that Sloan had brought with him.

The balloons and their attached devices were small enough that they all fit into the single duffle bag. All of the devices together weighed less than twenty-five pounds and would be easy for him to carry and climb with, which was exactly what he intended to do.

Sloan had carefully mixed the powders late this morning in his hotel room exactly as he had been instructed. He had then carefully filled the cellophane covered devices with the mixture according to the directions he had received and placed them in his car. The mixture included a special binding and acceleration agent that had caused the powders to merge at the molecular level and initiate rapid DNA alterations within the resulting cultures.

Unknown to him, several Iranian scientists had covertly obtained the necessary documentation and samples Iraq and then continued the biological work of the Iraqis after 2001. By the time the GIR was formed in 2005 and 2006, they had made significant progress towards developing a unprecedented biological binary-agent process. Using the Iraqi anthrax and other pathogens, the GIR scientists found a way to manipulate the DNA strands of the target cultures and apply the necessary agents to accelerate and bind them into something much more lethal. That process had matured in early 2007 to the point of producing the second set of packages that Sloan Jessup and the other Islamic sleeper agents in the west had received.

Soon after the dispersal of these pathogens, an American cruise missile attack had destroyed the main research site outside of Tehran, and killed most of the principle scientists the GIR had employed in the research and development effort. Most of their documentation was destroyed with them.

The GIR literally had this one opportunity to use their development against America and their allies.

Now that the agents had been combined, Sloan knew that he only had a matter of hours before his own contact with the powders would begin having an effect on him. After that, he only knew that his own end would come fairly quickly.

“The glory be to Allah,” he thought as he slowly stopped his car in the outside lane of the westbound traffic.

As traffic began to pile up behind him, and as cars honked and sought to get around, Sloan waved them by.

One of them pulled up next to him and a young black man asked,

“Hey there, need some help?”

Sloan concentrated on not showing his nervousness as he replied.

“Oh, no. But thank you.

“The car has just stalled and I believe it may be a vapor lock of some sort. I have a few tools and will just take a look, or wait until it can start again.”

As that car drove off, and as other drove by, Sloan walked to the front of the car and lifted the hood. He then went around to the passenger side of the vehicle and got the duffle bag out of the back and brought it to the front of the car where he stood, looking under the hood as if trying to fix the problem.

In reality, he was waiting.

More vehicles were held up in traffic behind him and the traffic jam began to grow. To those passing, it seemed like a middle aged man who knew what he was doing was trying to fix his stalled car in that outside lane.

Then, behind him, Sloan heard in the distance the sound he was waiting for. It was the sound of screeching brakes and a collision. Looking to the east he could see that about a quarter mile behind him a car that was attempting to get out of the stalled traffic lane had pulled in front of another car and caused a collision. That collision had caused a chain reaction that ended up blocking all lanes of traffic, just as they were supposed to do.

Now westbound traffic was being stopped completely by the major wreck and Jessup could see people getting out of their cars and rushing around to see if anyone was injured.

Sloan did not know who the others were who assisted him, or where they had come from. He just knew from the messages that he would be helped in some fashion and that he should wait until it occurred. Once it did, Sloan waited another minute or two while the traffic between him and the wreck cleared out. Soon all of the cars behind him had passed, and there were no cars between him and the major wreck behind him.

Upon seeing that his automobile was relatively alone, Sloan left his car and began climbing onto the railing and structure surrounding the support column next to which he had stopped. He had scouted the

area yesterday to ensure that he could climb the support structure. In so doing, he found things exactly as they had been described to him.

Once he climbed to a certain level, he reached the access gate to a ladder that led him directly to the top of the column and the support cables that ran along the top. He had to use a large pair of bolt cutters to cut locks off of both the bottom and top access gates to this ladder, but with no one in the near vicinity and the duffle bag draped over his back, he easily accomplished that task.

Standing at the top of the structure, over one hundred and fifty feet above traffic and over three hundred feet above the Mississippi River, Sloan began to release his balloons, one every twenty seconds as he had been instructed. As they were released from the bridge, each balloon floated lazily out over the river. With the wind eddies around the bridge and the normal gusts, a good deal of separation developed between each of the individual balloons.

All of the balloons and the devices they carried were generally being blown towards the downtown St. Louis area, and the suburbs beyond. As each device moved along in the air, rising gradually as they went, they slowly began releasing their fine powdery mixture just about the time they crossed over the Mississippi shore.

The biological agent began to drift and settle to earth. Barely noticeable, it gently settled on homes, cars, streets, warehouses...and on the people along the path of each balloon.

May 16, 2011, that same time

I-70, East of Sloan Jessup's Vehicle

St. Louis Missouri

Deputy Haggerty had his emergency lights on and was occasionally sounding his siren and blowing his horn as he approached the site of the wreck. He had been dispatched to the site of the wreck moments ago after a cell phone caller had reported it to the 9-11 dispatcher who, in turn, had routed it the Highway Patrol.

Haggerty had already been approaching the bridge eastbound on I-70 and it was a simple matter of driving up to the wreck in the opposite lanes and then using one of the *Emergency Vehicle Only* crossovers near to the wreck to gain access to it.

“And I'll be able to do that in just a moment or two as long as I can navigate the rubber necking backup this wreck is causing,” he thought as he approached the location of the wreck.

“This one right here should do,” he said out loud to himself as he slowed his cruiser and turned into a crossover almost a half mile west of the wreck.

As he did so, he reported in.

“Dispatch, this is 33-17, now coming up on the scene of the accident.”

The response was almost immediate.

“Dispatch copies 33-17, approaching the scene of the accident on the I-70 bridge.”

As he proceeded eastbound in the westbound lanes, Haggerty saw a single car, with its hood up, parked in the outside lane a little less than a quarter of a mile from the wreck. He could not see anyone around the car.

“Dispatch, 33-70.

“Be advised, I have a single stalled automobile with no occupant, stopped in the outside lane of I-70 westbound. Between the state line and mile marker one.”

After a brief pause of perhaps five seconds, the Highway Patrol dispatcher responded.

“Dispatch copies.”

Haggerty pulled up to the wreck and stopped. He got out to appraise the situation and check for major injuries. Thankfully, there were no major injuries outside of some bruises and a few minor cuts and scrapes.

The three vehicles involved in the accident straddled all three lanes of traffic and were effectively blocking them all.

Haggerty told the drivers of the vehicles to wait just a moment, and he called in to dispatch again, this time using his lapel mounted microphone.

“Dispatch, 33-70. We have no injuries here. No ambulances or EMT required.

“We are going to need three wreckers. Have them approach using I-70 eastbound and then use the first crossover after the state line on the Missouri side and proceed eastbound in the westbound lanes to the scene of the accident.”

After hearing that dispatch understood his requests, the deputy began to walk over to the first wrecked vehicle. Then he realized that he would need some more documentation, measuring devices, and flares from his vehicle and he turned back towards his cruise.

When he did so, he remembered the solitary vehicle with its hood up further down the road.

Looking that way, he could see that the stalled vehicle was still there...and then he noticed movement at the top of the support column on this side of the freeway in his peripheral vision. Looking closely, he saw a single individual on the very top of the column releasing what looked like balloons into the air.

Looking more closely, he could see that the man was releasing something more than balloons. There appeared to be some sort of platform suspended below each balloon. There was a line of several of them now stretching out in the air, over the Mississippi River, far out and away from the bridge towards...downtown St. Louis!

May 16, 2011, five minutes later

On the I-70 Bridge near the wreck Over the Mississippi River

St. Louis Missouri

After receiving a frantic call from Deputy Haggerty, the Sheriff's dispatch had relayed the basic information relating to the call, and then the call itself, directly to the St. Louis Regional Crisis Center for the Department of Homeland Security. The dispatcher there immediately advised her superior, the current duty officer, of the situation who immediately got on the radio with Haggerty.

Upon hearing the description of the objects the individual was releasing, and then hearing that the individual was releasing them in an orderly fashion, the duty officer immediately instructed Deputy Haggerty to use whatever means necessary, up to and including deadly force, to stop the individual from releasing any more objects.

After issuing those orders to the deputy, the duty officer requested that the Sheriff confirm the orders, and then the duty officer began coordinating other resources to address the crisis. This included reporting the situation up his chain of command to the National Crisis Center, talking to the duty watch at NORCOMM, and speaking with local and state agencies.

The Sheriff, who had had listened to the conversation, and respecting the duty officer's recognition of proper protocol, confirmed the orders to his Deputy.

Haggerty, who years earlier had qualified as a marksman in the United States Army as a Ranger, and who maintained that classification within the Sheriff's department even at his current age of forty-six, immediately drove his vehicle over to the stalled car. Upon getting there, he got a Bull Horn from the backseat of his cruiser, and then got out and went to the rear of the vehicle and opened the trunk.

From the trunk, he retrieved a special, law enforcement version of the Ruger Mini-14 rifle. The rifle differed from the stock Mini-14 in that it had a three-way select switch that allowed for single shot, semi-automatic, or full automatic operation. It also differed because it had a special, longer and thicker tactical barrel on it. This heavier barrel allowed the Mini-14 to maintain better accuracy than the stock Mini-14. With a lighter, shorter barrel, the stock variety was known for heating up after several shots and becoming less accurate.

Grabbing several thirty round clips, Haggerty positioned himself for a clear shot of the perpetrator, who had just released another balloon. Feeling ready to confront the individual, Officer Haggerty turned on his Bull Horn and spoke.

"You there, on top of the support column.

"Immediately cease releasing those balloons. If you attempt to release another one, I will be forced to shoot to kill.

"Drop the duffle bag on top of the structure, keep your hands away from it, and start down the ladder, now!"

May 16, 2011, that same time

On top of the I-70 Bridge Support Column

Over the Mississippi River

St. Louis Missouri

When deputy Haggerty spoke through the megaphone, Sloan immediately looked down and saw the officer and noticed the rifle.

Without having to think about, Jessup immediately dropped down on his stomach, laying prone on top of the structure. He knew in this position, that the officer could not see him and he would have another few minutes to release more balloons according to the pattern he had been instructed.

A loud ping on the side of the column near his feet sounded almost simultaneously with the crack of the deputy's rifle.

Then another shot...and another.

Sloan felt a tug on his back and realized that the top of the duffle bag was probably visible to the deputy. He carefully removed the duffle bag, taking it off over his shoulder furthest from the officer and laid it out next to him. There was a neat hole through the upper back of the bag, but no balloons had been hit.

Sloan released another balloon over the side of the column.

A shot rang out almost immediately and the balloon simply disappeared as it was exploded by the high velocity round and its device fell to the freeway below, showering Haggerty and the opposite lanes of traffic with its deadly mix.

The sound of an approaching helicopter told Sloan that he had even less time than he had thought. Rather than risk the balloons being picked off one by one, Sloan made the decision to release them all at once.

Opening the mouth of the duffle bag completely, Sloan pulled the last nine devices from the bag and then pushed them all over the side of the column at the same time into the air.

Another shot rang out, than another and another. Three devices fell, each one a little further away from the interstate towards St Louis. Then the shots began to miss as wind current moved the devices around, making them harder to hit.

Before Haggerty stopped shooting, three more devices had been brought down over the Mississippi River...but three others escaped destruction and joined the other twenty one devices on their way to St. Louis. Several of them were already over the city, releasing their cargo.

A military helicopter pulled up near the column, with a sniper hanging over its side, strapped to the interior compartment. Another voice spoke through a megaphone and issued stern instructions for Jessup to either cease his activities, not move and lay prone, or to be shot dead on the spot.

Rather than comply, Sloan Jessup, convert to Islam and soldier for Allah, simply rolled off the column and fell, not to the waters of the Mississippi River which may have offered some chance for his survival, regardless of how small, but to the pavement of the Interstate Highway below.

As Deputy Haggerty, who himself was a walking dead man...he just didn't know it yet...watched the perpetrator bounce off several support beams and then hit the pavement, he knew immediately that there was no chance of survival.

He called the Sheriff's dispatch and reported that the standoff situation had ended and was now under control. The Sheriff himself, as well as the Crisis Control Center were both listening for any report coming from the scene. Upon hearing that the immediate situation had been resolved, the Sheriff thanked Haggerty and told him he had done a fine job.

But in reality, the situation was anything but under control, it had really only just begun. Over the next several weeks, the deadly situation triggered by the release of this substance by Sloan Jessup and his compatriots would rage completely out of control throughout the free world, and it would lead to the most horrific warfare ever fought by mankind.

May 16, 2011, 18:45 EST

Air Force One

Over Madison, Wisconsin

"Alright everybody, for right now, let's just stick to the basics of what we know."

President John Bowers was sitting in his office on Air Force One, having been whisked away by the Secret Service from an economic summit in Minneapolis two hours ago. He had his Chief of Staff, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Commerce, and the Secretary of the Housing and Urban Development with him, who were also seated with him in the office now.

There were twelve screens set into the wall across the room from the President's desk. All of those present in the room were facing these screens, eleven of which displayed the real time images of other members of the President's cabinet, high ranking members of the National Security Council, or other individuals critical to the discussion. These included the Vice President, the Secretary of Defense, the Director of Homeland Security, the Director of the FBI, the Director of the CIA, the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Director of the Center for Disease Control, the Attorney General, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CINCNORCOM (The Commander in Chief of NORCOM), and the Secretary of State.

The President did not know all of the details yet, but he knew the situation was serious. Instinctively he knew that his country was under a major attack and he was determined to first understand it, to then counter it and stop the damage and suffering...and then to pay back the enemies who perpetrated it. The purpose of this meeting was to make progress towards the first two goals.

As soon as he had a decent understanding of those first two, he would sit down with the key members of the National Security Counsel and the military and map out an attack plan.

Addressing the Director of the Homeland Security Department, the President spoke.

“Stewart, what do we know regarding the number of incidents?”

The Director of Homeland Security had been conducting his own emergency meetings for the last two hours. In those meetings he had talked significantly with the agencies from the State's affected, the Emergency Preparedness Office for the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, with NORCOM and with several ranking staff members reporting to the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

“Mr. President, we can confirm three incidents here in the United States, with a possible fourth. The confirmed incidents occurred in St. Louis, New York City, and in Philadelphia. The unconfirmed report comes from San Francisco. Within the last hour we have also received a confirmed report from Toronto, Canada.

“From the reports we have pieced together, all of these incidents occurred in the separate places within five to ten minutes of each other. There is no doubt it was a concerted effort. Each incident involves the spreading of a very light, airborne substance, delivered by various means.

“Each of the perpetrators was either killed, or committed suicide when approached by authorities.

“We are working with local authorities and the FBI at this point to try and identify these people and determine something about their background. None of them had any personal identification on them and for those who had cars, their license plates are a dead end. Either stolen or fabricated in each instance.”

When Director Langstrom had stopped speaking, the President turned to the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Jill North.

“Secretary North, what is the latest on the symptoms and what we know of the material that these people attacked us with?”

Jill North had been a part of the Weisskopf administration. She had lived with the knowledge that such an attack was possible, even probable, since 2005 when major hostilities in the Middle East began. She had been surprised, but thankful, that nothing had transpired to date. In the intervening years, she and her staff and the agencies under her, had taken the time to plan and prepare.

But, as symptoms of these incidents were beginning to display themselves and as the disease was spreading, she knew that she could not have been fully prepared for this.

“Mr. President, we are studying the substance. Samples are already in Atlanta and I will let the Director of the CDC address that particular question in just a moment.

“As to the symptoms that victims are displaying...it is extremely troubling and something we need to immediately take into consideration. We may not know at this point exactly what the substance is, but we do know that it is extremely contagious and that it proves to be fatal, very quickly.

“Our most direct example of this occurred with one of our first responders. In St. Louis, the Sheriff's deputy who responded to the incident there, and was personally instrumental in helping end it, was exposed to a liberal dose of the substance. Within three hours of exposure, he began developing severe flu-like symptoms that led rapidly to severe hemorrhaging and the expulsion of bloody sputum. Most disturbing was a rapid swelling and severe pain in the lymph glands and then the appearance of sores in his mouth and on his skin that rapidly spread over his entire body, these sores rapidly filled with an opaque fluid and then turned into sharply raised pustules.

“This deputy died in great pain less than an hour ago. Several motorists and other officers that the Deputy came in contact with after the incident, and then several of the initial medical workers who dealt with him, have all come down with the same symptoms within the last two hours.

“We are treating all of them now in secure, environmentally controlled facilities. The entire episode, including all incidents are being treated as a class 3 contagion and we are following procedure to cordon off and quarantine areas. We have a major lock down on the city of St. Louis now, where hundreds of cases of these same symptoms have now been reported.

“We are experiencing similar conditions in all of the affected cities. Panic in those areas is becoming a very real concern as people are hearing of the disease and its symptoms, and as they observe official governmental efforts to cordon off areas. The result is that many are trying to leave and escape in front of it. The problem is that many of those trying to escape have already been infected.”

Let me ask Dr. Slater to step in at this point and talk about the substance itself. Dr. Slater?

Dr. Ian Slater, a medical Doctor, held a PhD. from John Hopkins in the study of contagious pathogens. He had been working with Secretary North for several years to prepare for just this type of an outbreak. That work had included significant coordination and cooperation with the Department of Homeland Security, who coordinated the efforts with the states, and with NORCOMM.

“Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, we have an extremely serious situation on our hands.

“This substance is highly contagious and exhibits very dangerous and quick acting symptoms both in terms of its incubation period, but also in terms of its onset and maturity. In the end, those qualities may actually help us as its spread plays out...but right now, it is hurting us badly, as is evidenced by Secretary North's description of current conditions.

“The agent itself is rather complex. We are almost certain at this point that it is at least a binary agent...perhaps an agent with as many as three or four pathogens factored into it.”

The President interrupted briefly at this point.

“Excuse me, Dr. Slater, but for the benefit of those who may not be aware, please explain what you mean when you say it is a binary agent.”

The Doctor immediately understood the need to be a little more basic in his explanation and complied.

“Certainly, Mr. President.

“A binary agent is one that is activated to its full potential when the two agents are combined. Standing alone, the two agents may or may not be dangerous, but when combined, their threat posed by them usually rises by several orders of magnitude.

“We believe that this is what we are dealing with here.

“We have already isolated *Bacillus anthracis* as one of the agents in this deadly mix. For those of you unaware of the significance of that statement, let me fill you in. *Bacillus anthracis* was the substance that was used in the anthrax attacks in the United States after 911.

“Our test have already indicated that this particular strain is of the same variety as that which was used in 2001. In other words, this substance comes from the same source as that used in 2001.”

With this statement by Dr. Slater, several of the individuals in attendance immediately began asking questions, or making statements simultaneously. Several of the attendees literally shouted at the Dr. himself about the sensitive nature of the statement that he had just made.

The President considered the nature of the statement and the security clearances of everyone in attendance. He judged for himself that their clearances were adequate and that there was a definite need to know for everyone on the room, given circumstances. He judged that this warranted him making an important and startling revelation.

“Okay everyone, let's have some order.

“Everyone please be quiet so we can continue.”

Once everyone settled down and order was restored, the President continued

“Alright, I am about to make a statement that must be considered by everyone in this meeting to be a Q Class Secret, Eyes Only and Ears Only. You are not to discuss it outside of this meeting, or other meetings that deal specifically with this topic and specifically with the people you know are cleared for this information.

“For all intents in purposes, that only includes the people in this meeting unless you are otherwise informed in person by myself, the Vice President, the Director of Homeland Security, or the Secretary of Defense I will now ask each of you directly, for the record, if this is clearly understood.”

After querying each person regarding their understanding of the statement he had just made, and seeing that everyone had quieted and been sobered by the statement, the President continued.

“In 2001, following the 911 attacks, this nation was subjected to a biological attack by anthrax. It was a small attack and we wondered at the time why a more major attack was not forthcoming.

“The substance that was used was determined by the CDC and by military analysts at the time to be weapons grade material that had originated in our own labs several years earlier. We had given it to a sponsor state for use in their research operations with an agreement that precluded any further development or weaponizing without our express agreement and instruction.

“But the sponsor nation not only developed more of the material, they weaponized it and then attacked us with it after the 911 attacks by bin Laden.

“That nation was Iraq.”

With this revelation, the meeting again descended into chaotic discussions, shouted questions and statements. The President let it go on for just a minute as a form of relief valve, but then he reigned the meeting back in.

“Okay folks, get control of yourselves.

“Please stop the separate discussions and let me continue!

“This information was classified at the highest levels of our government. It was not relayed to the public. I was not a part of the administration at that time, but I can fully understand the need for the sensitivity.

“I can tell you this, the knowledge that I just shared with several of you, was a considerable part of the decision process to invade Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. That was because we knew that Hussein had this material, and we knew that it was the material that had been used to attack us. It was not until late 2002 that a direct link was made between the attack us and the Iraqi government.

“This is extremely germane to the current discussion because our own intelligence agencies determined in 2005, while in Iraq, that the material had been moved into Iran before our attack on Iraq, in much the same way that Hussein moved his most modern aircraft into Iran in 1991 during Operation Desert storm.

“Ultimately, with the rise of the GIR, Hassan Sayeed took possession of all of the remaining inventory of that particular strain of anthrax that was used in the attack on America in late 2001.

“Now, in light of this information, Dr. Slater, if you would, please continue.”

Slater himself had not been aware of the complete story, he had just known that the material had originated in U.S. military labs and been transferred to Iraq during the period of time when the United States helped Iraq in an effort to balance the region against Iran and the Ayatollah Khomeini and his Revolutionary Council.

“Well, as I stated, this strain of anthrax has already been identified and we believe that there are at least two, maybe even three other substances included in the overall agent.

“The symptoms suggest perhaps the plague and small pox, but we are not entirely positive about that yet.

“In addition, as I stated, the incubation period and onset of symptoms and their maturity seem to be vastly accelerated through some form of DNA altering and acceleration process we are not familiar with.

“Apparently these unknown DNA altering accelerants are introduced to the various pathogens. When they are mixed together under the right conditions, an extremely fast acting, extremely contagious, and an extremely lethal biological weapon, with the significantly altered characteristics I have described, is the end result.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I cannot over emphasize the seriousness of this attack. As time goes on we will learn more about the substance, we will decode it, and we will find ways to defeat it. Right now, we must arrest its spread and that is going to take extraordinary efforts. I have to tell you, it my professional and considered opinion, that even with our best efforts, there are going to be a large number of fatalities in the infected areas...a very large number.”

The meeting was quiet and the mood somber as everyone in attendance absorbed the impact of Dr. Slater's statement. But the meeting had to go on and the President took the lead in getting the discussion back on track.

Turning to his Chief of Staff, Talbot Johnson

“Talbot, prepare Executive Order T2500 for my signature, declaring a National Emergency over this attack and that invokes all provisions of the Presidential Directives associated with National Emergency Operation *Barrier* . Make sure the wording implements Executive Orders 10990, 11001, 11003,

11004, 11005, 11049, and 11310 specific to this situation in the effected areas and any surrounding areas up to a two hundred miles radius. Ensure there are provisions to expand that radius as the situation requires.

“Have that Order ready for me to sign by 2000 hours including the removal of its temporary designation and logging it under its official national registry number.”

Responding to the questioning look from several of the attendees, the President addressed them all.

“Folks, the Executive Order that I am directing Talbot to prepare will officially implement the quarantine orders and national emergency plan on the designated cities. Each of those areas, based on the orders of the CDC, the Department of Health, FEMA and Homeland Security are already being physically quarantined even as we speak.

“What this Executive Order will do, in addition to continuing, expanding and accelerating the quarantine operations, is that it will allow the government to take over all communications, all transportation, all emergency and hospital health services, and all emergency response in the impacted areas. We will use the current providers, but their actions, by law, will be directed and coordinated by the CDC, FEMA, and the Department of Homeland Security.

“Martial law will be declared, curfews will be instituted and strictly enforced...up to an including the use of deadly force. Local, State and Federal agencies will all work together in implementing this. The cordoned off areas will have the quarantine enforced in the same manner.

“Announcements over radio stations, TV stations, and in the local newspapers will be made immediately, by special edition if necessary. Vehicles and aircraft will announce the situation and provisions by loud speaker and mega-phone twenty-four hours a day.

“The National Guard and elements of the regular services from NORCOM will be called up to assist in the martial law, the curfews and the quarantine. They will provide security at power plants, government offices, banks, malls, shopping centers, and major food stores. Units operating in infected areas will wear full bio-gear and will be subjected to decontamination and chemical check and analysis before exiting areas. Even then, those units themselves will reside in fully quarantined areas during their off hours.

“Folks, this is not going to be easy. We've all drawn up plans regarding just this type of scenario. We all expected it sooner in this war, and perhaps, with the successes we have been having, that the danger of this may well have passed.

“Today we have found out that this is not so and now it is time to put our plans and training into effect.

“Dr. Slater, please let us all know the moment you have more relevant information about what we are facing and about how we can counter it here at home. In the mean time, Jeremy, work with Ben to draw up a full response to this using our space based assets and our Tridents. I want to know who instigated it or abetted it.

“I will address the nation tonight at 2200 hours.

“Are there any other comments or questions?”

The Secretary of Defense, Jeremy Stone, motioned with his hand, and upon being recognized by the President, he addressed the entire group.

“Just briefly, Mr. President.

“Before coming in to the meeting I was informed by the National Reconnaissance Office, by SPACOM, and by several of our other intelligence assets, that the CAS, particularly the People's Republic of China, GIR forces, and numerous insurgency elements in already occupied lands are in the process of vast and imminent preparedness.

“I expect within twelve to twenty-four hours we are going to see a massive offensive directed against us across the board.

“In addition, I was just able to confirm reports of major uprising in many of the more fundamental towns and cities of Iraq, Syria, and Iran. There has been significant damage to infrastructure that had been repaired and there is significant loss of life amongst relief workers and some allied forces that have been isolated in the attacks.

“Given this, and given the positioning of enemy military forces engaged with our forces at the front, their generally weak defensive posturing, and their logistical situation, I find all of this extraordinary. I can't believe that it is a coincidence that this is occurring at this time, in conjunction with these biological attacks.”

The President considered his good friend's words. For many years, while John Bowers had himself been a junior officer in the military, Jeremy Stone had been a General Officer, ultimately rising to be the Chairman of the Army and then the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs... now he was John Bowers own choice for the Secretary of Defense. The President had tremendous respect for Stone's military knowledge, his intuition and his wisdom.

“Have our forces deal harshly with the uprisings in Iraq, Iran and Syria, Jeremy. In areas where *Ruthless Sentinel* may have been suspended, re-institute it. Immediately. It is a shame that these radicals and fundamental Islamics have not learned their lesson. We will not risk allied lives to try and negotiate with or pacify them. Until they come to us from out of these particular towns and cities willing to submit themselves to abject unconditional surrender, have the Predator IVs and, if necessary, full-scale Hail Storm missile attacks do out talking and negotiating for us.

“Regarding the buildup of their forces at the front, I guess it could be a coincidence Jeremy... perhaps they want to simply try and overwhelm our space based and hail storm capabilities and make a breakthrough somewhere. In that case I would watch closely where they start their attacks, figuring that those attacks may just be diversions meant to soak up our orbital bombardment and Hail Storm missiles. There principle targets would likely be elsewhere.

“Having said that, I tend to agree with you.

“I do not believe it is a coincidence that they would be gearing up for a global offensive within a few hours of this level of biological attack.

“Make sure our Theater Missile Defense capabilities are primed in all theaters. Our response is likely going to invoke the need for that protection. Make sure we do the same for the offshore and onshore AEGIS sites here in the CONUS, and make sure General Percifer with SPACOM has all of his ducks in a row for laser defense of the Continental United States and the theaters where he has assets as well.”

May 17-June 8, 2011

The great Biological attack of World War III

In the United States, the advance of the disease was very rapid. In several cases, infected people had already left the cordoned off areas before they could be stopped and the disease rapidly spread wherever they went. Major *hot spots* of disease infection developed around each of the initial sites and in the towns in between.

From San Francisco, the disease spread across the bay to Oakland and San Jose, it spread south to Santa Cruz and north to Santa Rosa, and then east to Sacramento, and the numerous smaller towns in between. It then progressed to Reno Nevada and Bend, Oregon and the areas immediately surrounding them before being arrested on the west coast.

In St. Louis, the spread of the disease was particularly horrific because the deliver mechanism spread it over such a large geographical area before it could be stopped. Major Missouri hot spots developed in the large metropolitan area of Kansas City, downstream in Cape Girardeau, and in Springfield. The disease also jumped the Mississippi River into East St. Louis, Illinois and down stream to Paducah, Kentucky.

In the New York City area, the number of infected people was the largest as the substance was released from several high rise buildings without being impeded at all. Hot spots developed at White Plains and on Long Island. The disease jumped the Hudson River quickly and took hold in Jersey City and in Newark, New Jersey. More hot spots developed as far out as Bridgeport, Connecticut and Paterson, New Jersey.

From Philadelphia, predictably, and perhaps as planned, the disease rapidly marched south towards the nations capitol. Wilmington, Delaware was infected, then Aberdeen, Maryland, and finally Baltimore, Maryland. A monumental effort was made all along the Patuxent River in Maryland to stop the spread before it reached Washington, D.C. The effort was successful, but not before numerous people had to be shot while attempting to cross the line between Maryland City and Laurel. From Philadelphia the disease also spread north to Trenton, New Jersey and into the interior of Pennsylvania, infecting Allentown, Reading, Lancaster, and York before being halted.

Road blocks were established further and further out from the infected areas in an attempt to ensure that anyone who could possibly have been infected were stopped before spreading the disease further. As Dr. Slater had suggested, the rapid incubation and onset of the disease ended up helping in this regard because people could not get as far before exhibiting signs of the disease.

To help in this, the executive order President Bowers signed, and which he explained in full in his address to the nation on the 16th, went into full effect on the 17th. By that afternoon all transportation was halted within three hundred miles of any infected areas, except for biologically protected law enforcement agency personnel, or other personnel working for government agencies directly involved with addressing the situation.

In those areas of the country infected by the disease, all commerce ceased and the negative economic impact grew to dangerous proportions. Commerce simply could not continue as heads of households, business owners, workers, and others gathered their own around them and sought to isolate themselves from others to prevent the spread of the disease. For the most part, and based on the advice of the government agencies, this meant staying at home and using the phone to call emergency numbers for food

or medical care. But in all too many cases, and as time dragged on without complete help being available, massive numbers of deaths occurred in rioting, looting, stealing, murdering for food or medicine, and as people, in desperation tried to break through the barricades and defenses set up at the perimeter of the quarantined areas.

For those seeking help, and for those personnel guarding the other parts of the countryside that were not infected, it was a heartbreaking and gut wrenching business.

The entire attempt to contain the disease and then help those infected was a monumental effort, and as Hasan Sayeed had foreseen, and as Jien Zenim recognized, the effort required literally millions of personnel. To cordon off the areas effected and then administer help and aid to the roughly twenty million people living in those areas infected by the disease stretched the nation, despite its war footing, to the its breakingpoint. The National Guard and military reserve were employed, Home Guard personnel were called up to unprecedented full-time duty, military leaves were canceled, units about to depart for foreign theaters were rerouted to help at home . America's ability to continue its ground and sea offensive against the CAS and GIR was negatively impacted.

But if Hasan Sayeed and Jien Zenim thought for an instant that this would impede an American response, they both were terribly mistaken, as future events would make clear.

The CDC did a heroic job of identifying the pathogens and how they were working together. In addition to the *Bacillus anthracis* anthrax that was identified that first day, based on the symptoms, it was quickly determined that *Variola major – hemorrhagic* , the most fatal version of small pox, and *Yersinia pestis*, commonly known as the Plague, had all been involved in the weapon that was employed against the United States and the rest of the free world.

Exactly what accelerants were used and what form of genetic alterations the enemy had made to these diseases would not be known for over a year. But within a week it was determined that the anthrax and plague could be prevented, and at certain stages of the incubation, treated, with the right antibiotics. Both were also able to be completely prevented with the right vaccinations before infection.

The only treatment for the small pox, which was the most lethal ingredient to the mix, was for the person to either have been vaccinated beforehand, or for the individual to survive the disease itself. With the form of small pox deployed in the Islamic weapon, the mortality rate ended up being almost 90%.

In Toronto, the disease was almost completely restricted to the metropolitan area itself. One terrible exception was when a family of seven left the area before the quarantine could be adequately completed and drove the entire distance to Montreal. They were deathly sick when they arrived. First relatives, then friends, and then medical staff who tried to help them were infected before the outbreak there was recognized. Those people in turn infected more and more people and ultimately all of Montreal had to be cordoned off while the authorities fought the spread of the disease in both cities in Canada.

In Europe, large areas around London, Paris, and Rome were infected. In Germany the outbreak occurred in Mannheim but spread to Karlsruhe and Heidelberg before it could be stopped. In Russia, St. Petersburg and Moscow were hit hard. The English and French had very effective anti-biological warfare plans and agencies in place, as did Germany and were able to mitigate what would otherwise have been an even more horrible disaster. But in Russia, large areas of the countryside around the two major cities were infected before a sufficiently large and impenetrable perimeter could be established.

By the end of the first week in June, the worst of it was over. Spread of the disease had been halted and the rampage had run its course with those who had been infected. By that time, emergency and

governmental personnel had established enough aid stations that were well enough supplied to feed those who remained. Vaccines and antibodies were finally available in sufficient supply so that the entire population could receive the appropriate shots and doses if they so desired. Most chose to do so.

It would take another nine to twelve months before anything close to normal day to day living would be re-established. There was just too much damage, there had been too many deaths and there was just too much work to do to make it possible to return to *normal* any sooner. If indeed things would ever be *normal* again. But, by June 8th, the clean-up could at least begin.

The clean-up job itself proved to be as monumental a task, if not more so, than the effort to stop the spread of the disease, cordon off those areas infected and provide food and necessary, life-sustaining services to the victims within those areas until the disease could run its course. There were millions of dead bodies, animal and human, that had not been buried or otherwise properly disposed of. This in itself caused outbreaks of all manner of disease and other health concerns.

There were tons and tons of food that had gone bad. Most services had broken down or been destroyed in rioting and looting. There was wide spread property damage.

There were whole neighborhoods and small towns whose entire population had been wiped out.

As the workers went into these areas they saw the horrors for themselves, or were told of the unbelievable carnage that had existed while the disease ran its course. Collectively, a name began to develop for this period in the free world when so many were killed or injured by this act of war. It was called the *Great ThraxPox Plague* of 2011.

The numbers were staggering.

In the United States alone, over eight million people contracted the disease and just over seven million of those died. Another million died in the rioting, looting, murdering, hunger, thirst and in the other outbreaks of diseases associated with the effects of the attack. Over eight million Americans lost their lives in a single attack over a four week period.

Nothing like it had ever occurred in America before. Not even the great civil war, or as some called it, the war between the states, of 1861-1865 could compare. All of the wars the United States had been involved in its history combined, outside of this one, did not produce the horrible carnage that could remotely compare to this.

The impact to the national consciousness from such a wide spread catastrophe was deep and abiding. Entire histories, novels, series of novels, and large studies would be devoted to the attack and its impact for decades to come. The stories of the suffering and survival of the victims and those attempting to help them or prevent the spread of the plague would ultimately be spread down through generations. No one would have to utter it, it would be imbedded in the resulting psyche of the nation.

Never, never forget!and Never, never again!

In the rest of the world, the attack was even more horrific.

Over twelve million people in those other nations died, a disproportionate number of those in Russia where emergency services and preparation were still not as advanced as in the western nations. Like in the United States, the effort to address the attack itself and then its aftermath was tremendous and taxing. Offensive operations were suspended and the allied nation, in conjunction with the United States, held

their ground, while they gathered information on the attack and the attackers, and prepared their response.

As it turned out, holding their ground was not so easily accomplished. The CAS and GIR armies came boiling out of their own defensive postures and attacked allied position relentlessly in India, Australia, in the islands of the Pacific, north of Manchuria and in Siberia north of Mongolia. In many instances, despite orbital bombardment, Hail Storm missiles and conventional defenses, the overwhelming numbers of personnel and equipment being produced within the factories of the CAS and being drawn from strategic reserves, pushed the western allies back.

A significant bulge developed in the middle of the line in India. Under the onslaught of literally millions of Chinese and Indian troops, allied forces were driven into a hard fought and begrudging retreat. The allies finally thinned out the ranks of their attackers sufficiently to stiffen up and hold in the streets of Bangalore.

In Australia, the result of the counter attack was a halt in the allied advance. Perth, which had been liberated by the allies two months before, was again overrun by Indian and Chinese troops and armed civilians. The street to street fighting was intense and destructive. Before it ended around June 1st with the CAS forces retreating along the coast to the north of Perth, the entire city had been laid waste and was in ruins.

In Siberia a large pocket of Russian and European Union troops was flanked and then surrounded. Over half a million were caught in the pocket that was cut off as over a million allied personnel withdrew one hundred miles to the north into defensive positions and used air power to try and lend support to their surrounded comrades. No quarter was offered and none was requested. The entire Russian and European Army Group fought to the death, inflicting over two million casualties on the Chinese before they succumbed to the hordes of Chinese forces and equipment.

In Manchuria, a large, two million man Chinese force attacked into the teeth of American technology and firepower. But four hundred thousand had to give way before the two million and the Americans were pushed back sixty miles to the north of the border where they established adequate defensive lines to hold the Chinese at bay as orbital projectiles and large attacks of Hail Storm missiles prevented the Chinese from overrunning the American position.

During this time, SPACOM successfully launched and inserted two new space stations that would prove highly destructive to the Chinese. One was in orbit directly over southern Japan, the other was placed in orbit over the South China Sea. From those positions, the Americans were able to defend allied task forces anywhere in the western Pacific theater, including ballistic missile defense with their laser weaponry.

Though the Chinese launched hordes of missiles at the stations, they were unsuccessful in damaging or impeding their operations.

June 12, 2011, 21:20, Local Time

15 km north of the Heavily Fortified Command Bunker

Deep in the Muller Mountains

35 km Northwest of Kualakurun, Indonesia

Major Riley Adams was once again doing what he knew best, and what he loved the most. Deep in Indian Country, as enemy territory was called by people in his line of work, he was scouting out and performing valuable reconnaissance and surveillance of a high value and important enemy target.

“...and in this case, it is a target that is about as high value as they come, and it is one I have watched before,” he thought as he reflected back five and a half years to the moment when he and Tony Davis had been operating in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq.

“Tony had this same SOB, Sayeed, in his sights and was ready to pull the trigger when that traitor Talabari offed him and went over to the other side.”

Those events had ultimately led to completion of Hasan Sayeed's rise to power and the complete formation of the Greater Islamic Republic. It had led to World War that had raged now for over five years...and it had ultimately led to Adams himself getting the opportunity to administer justice and payback to Talabari in Tbilisi, Georgia, almost three years after Tony's death.

“How many people could have been saved, how much suffering could have been spared had we just got this guy back in 2005,” the Major wondered?

“Maybe not all of it, because Jien Zenim and the Chinese were going to do their thing in either case...but it would have saved a lot and made the job of beating the Chinese a lot easier.”

But now, after today's observations, Adams was sure that Sayeed was in this particular facility.

It looked innocuous enough from this distance. A simple entry into the mountain at the end of a single lane, mountain road. A very small guard detachment, no more than six men at that entrance at any one time and very few people going in and out.

But when you looked closer, you could see that the road itself was much more than a simple country lane here in the middle of this island in the wilds of Indonesia. The drainage for the road was excellent.

After careful study it was clear that someone had spent a lot of time and dollars building that road and contouring and then re-vegetating the cuts through the hills. In addition, the culverts, bridges, and roadway support was first rate too and all very professionally disguised and covered to make them be very hard to spot from the air.

Adams was looking at it from the vantage point of another mountain side, a vantage he himself had chosen to give him the clearest view possible of the road and the entry.

“The road alone has to be worth millions way out here.

“And it is uncharted, meaning it has been built in the course of this war after our satellite coverage was down.”

Unless he had been made aware of it by a local villager whose family had disappeared while working on the project four years ago, Adams would not have been aware of it.

This was the third such facility he had observed. His hopes had been high at the other two when he witnessed a lot of official looking activity. He had watched and watched and no one official had ever entered or exited the facilities on those other islands.

If it had been almost any other operative, they might have been fooled. But Adams and his single security NCO had been up close, within hearing distance, and had listened to the guards talk and joke amongst themselves.

They had all been far too at ease for the main man to have been in there, he thought.

But that's not the way it is here.

At this facility, there was very little fanfare. But when Adams had been close, he found that these people were all business. No at ease feeling whatsoever. They were strung as tight as a bow string.

Then today, his patience had finally been rewarded. After two and a half weeks of observing here, he had finally seen a small party come of the entry and move up a trail on this side of the mountain. Four security personnel had accompanied the party directly while at least eight or ten others had fanned out into the brush both above and below the party for several hundred yards, clearly sweeping the area.

The communications link had also let him know that in conjunction with the exit from the facility of this party, a large flight of GIR aircraft, the most modern ones they had, had taken up a CAP position over the mountain.

“Thank goodness we have our station up over the South China Sea,” he thought.

“There's so much more to see when you have a bird's eye view like that.”

From a range of a little over two kilometers, he had used the optical and digital enhancement capabilities of his surveillance gear to enhance the image of those he was watching. Then he had taken a close look at each of the principle personnel in the party. It wasn't clear to him why they had exited the facility or what they were inspecting, perhaps there was a radar site or air duct up there.

But he did know that the third man he looked at was Sayeed.

He had reported it in with a simple phrase.

“Control, the Mullah is in the hole,” which he followed with the exact GPS coordinates of the entry and the mountain itself, including a digital terrain model of the mountain.

Now, as he had been ordered to do, he had moved back to this more remote position to continue with his observations and reports until ordered to do otherwise.

Despite those orders, Adams knew that they had found the big bad dog of the GIR and he couldn't help but think that real soon, something would be along to put the rabid dog down.

And he was right.

June 14, 2011, 12:00, EDT

Oval Office, The White House

Washington, DC

President John Bowers looked very serious as he stared into the camera and started his address to the nation and to the world. It was a message meant as much for his enemies as was for his friends, compatriots, allies and countrymen.

“My fellow American, allies, and friends.

“Tonight I speak not only to you, but to our enemies. In particular I want Jien Zenim and Hasan Sayeed and their fellow tyrants, henchmen and underlings to hear what I have to say and to understand the deadly seriousness with which I speak.

“In the middle of last month the United States and our allies were attacked mercilessly by our enemies who employed biological weapons of mass destruction. The death toll has been beyond imagination. Literally millions of our fellow citizens are dead and large areas of the country have been rendered idled and devastated.

“I will address more fully the specifics of our domestic response, our relief efforts and the progress we are making in each area at another time, with another talk to you my fellow Americans.

“Tonight I want to talk about our international...our military response to the enemies who attacked us in the dastardly and horrendous manner.

“Our enemies thought that such an attack would force us to negotiate. They thought that we would be cowed by such an attack. They feel, even at this late date, even after so much has transpired, that we are weak and we are soft.

“They have learned nothing and they could not be more wrong.

“A great occupant of this office said a number of years ago after a similar, but less horrific attack.

“*Today we pray, tomorrow we fight.*”

“Well, today I say to all within the sound of my voice, including the animals who perpetrated or supported this barbarity.

“Today we shall fight while we pray!

“I am issuing an ultimatum to the so called Coalition of Asian States and to the Greater Islamic Republic.

“Surrender now, today, this moment...or die.

“You must offer up you unilateral surrender within twenty-four hours or you and your people will face a retribution like none other this world has ever seen. Nuclear hell-fire and orbital bombardment will commence starting tomorrow on your capitols, on your manufacturing centers, on your economic centers, on your armies and navies and on your persons.

“The United States is in the position to prevent you from attacking us in a like manner and we will use those land based, sea based and space based assets at our disposal to completely intercept and interdict any return fire our counter launches we observe.,

“You lie helpless and prostrate before us. I say again, after the loss of millions of our own, whose lives and blood literally cry from the ground for our righteous indignation and retribution, surrender now, or die.

“In order to punctuate the reality of this ultimatum and the firmness of our commitment, I will now show you all a real time display of an attack we are making on the principle perpetrator of this horrible attack at this very moment.

“Enemies of American and liberty, watch and learn.”

The President turned to a black screen on the wall which lit up with a live video feed as he watched. The camera zoomed in on that display and the picture showed a lush, jungle-covered mountain with the following caption:

Hasan Sayeed's Command Bunker

The Muller Mountains near Kualakurun, Indonesia.

The display centered on a large concrete reinforced, metal entry door set in the side of the mountain with a paved road leading to it. It was dark outside, but with the infrared imagery the audience could easily make out the guard post several hundred feet in front of the entrance.

Over the space of several seconds it became apparent that the landscape was lighting up in an unnatural way. It was occurring far too quickly and the hues of color were unnatural for a normal sun rise. Soon, the camera caught, in its upper left corner, the unbelievably fast approach of a tremendous meteor-like object, the entry to the bunker slid open.

The entry door rose swiftly on its tracks as it was opened from inside. Before it was fully opened, a group of men was seen rapidly exiting the bunker, running towards a waiting, armored SUV. As they reached the SUV, and its doors were jerked opened for them to get inside, the display zoomed in on one of the individuals in particular.

That person had stopped, realizing it was much too late to run, and was now watching the approaching object that was heralding his own death.

The clear image of the High Ayatollah, Hasan Sayeed, filled the screen momentarily. A look of complete and utter disbelief filled his face, but his eyes burned with rage.

Suddenly, the picture went white with a blinding flash of light.

After several seconds of nothing but a bright white screen, the image slowly clarified itself. What it showed was the image of a glowing crater, roiling with flames and smoke. The lush vegetation, the metal entry door on the mountain side, and Hasan Sayeed standing next to his SUV peering into the heavens had all completely disappeared and were now nowhere to be seen.

Rising above the cauldron, marking the fiery tomb, was a fireball of flame, smoke and material, rapidly climbing upwards into the night sky in an expanding mushroom cloud.

As the cloud continued to rise, the camera again turned to the President who was now once again facing the audience in the Oval Office. With a look of complete determination on his face, he spoke a single, simple phrase..

“*Sic Simper Tyranis*...thus may it always be to tyrants.

“Remember Jien Zenim, you have until tomorrow.

“America and her allies shall rise up stronger as a people and as a nation.

“To the American people, and to all of our allies I say, God bless you all...and may God continue to bless the United States of America.”

Chapter 7

“True worth is in being, not seeming.” – Alice Cary

July 12, 2011, 02:14, local time

Special Hardened Bunker

Executive Committee Conference Room

Gongga Mountains, Near Litang, China

Twelve of the hardened facilities had been completed in time to escape the American retribution. The entire Executive Committee of the Politburo had been dispersed to them before the Americans onslaught.

Since June 15th, as the American President Bowers had promised, more and more of China's major manufacturing facilities, her political infrastructure, military bases, research and development facilities, shipyards, major highway bridges, power plants, major refineries, (particularly the new refineries that were processing synthetic petroleum products), airports, and any other major infrastructure was systematically destroyed by orbital bombardment or nuclear missiles strikes.

The orbital bombardment projectiles, except for the smaller ones with which the Americans attacked the smaller targets, were impervious to the anti-ballistic missile capabilities of the later generations of the Chinese KS-3 and KS-4 missiles. With respect to American ICBM (Inter-continental Ballistic Missile) attacks, the United States had become so adept at utilizing the non-nuclear versions of those missiles that the Chinese had been forced to attempt to intercept every incoming ICBM, not knowing which ones may at some time carry a nuclear warhead.

With the all-out onslaught, on many occasions, incoming tracts of twenty to forty warheads would be seen on radar attacking a target. Of those, only two or three would actually be nuclear armed warheads. The others would be either conventionally armed warheads, or small orbital bombardment projectiles coming in on the same trajectory. In almost all cases, Chinese ballistic missiles defenses were completely overwhelmed...and they invariably missed the one or two incoming American warheads that were

nuclear.

The results were that more and more of China's infrastructure was being destroyed.

Those results also meant that larger and larger portions of the metropolitan areas containing critical manufacturing, shipbuilding, refineries, political leadership, infrastructure and military bases were being destroyed. Tens of millions of Chinese were dying and hundreds of millions of them were being displaced.

Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Hong Kong, Qingdao, Nanjing, Wenzhou, Fuzhou, Chongqing, Guiyang, Nanning, Chengdu, and Lanzhou had already been ruined and laid waste in this manner.

Lu Pham's beautiful daughter, Chiang, her aspiring political husband, Hua, and their new daughter, Lu Pham's only grandchild, were all killed in Beijing. They had been at home eating lunch together on June 15th, not far from where Hua worked in the National People's Congress. When the buildings housing the congress had been destroyed by American orbital bombardment, Hua, Chiang and their daughter had all been killed by the shock wave that washed over that section of the city.

Lu Pham's wife was only spared death in Tianjin because she was with him, protected for the time being in the hardened facilities.

The same thing was happening to the other leaders and their families and relatives all across the nation.

"...and yet we survive," thought the PRC president.

"Despite the best efforts of the Americans, our leadership survives, tens of millions of our military personnel survive and fight on, and our strategic reserves and hidden manufacturing and research facilities survive.

"We planned well.

"We must give Lu Pham time."

Lu Pham, the brilliant Vietnamese scientist who had provided so much technical expertise and leadership to the PRC, was now being called upon, along with his entire staff, to do the almost impossible: defend against the American orbital onslaught from space, destroy the American space stations that were becoming more and more numerous over every major theater of war, and wrest control of the seas once again from the growing, overpowering presences of the United States Navy and its allies.

Pham had ongoing projects to address each of these areas...but none of them had borne fruit yet.

In that regard, Pham's research scientists had reported on their study and analysis of the orbital bombardment material the Americans were using. It proved conclusively that the material definitely came from the asteroid belts beyond Mars. The projectiles were made of the hard carbonaceous chondrite material that could only have originated there.

This definitive news, delivered by Lu Pham in this very meeting, had stunned most members of the executive committee into silence. The fact that the Americans had extended their operations out that far into space indicated that they were already permanently on the moon and Mars, or that they would soon would have permanent bases there.

Addressing them now, Jien Zenim strongly upbraided them for flinching at the American achievements.

“So what?”

“We have achieved many startling technical breakthroughs ourselves and are still capable of more.

“We must steel ourselves and continue to inspire our military leaders, our politburo and other political leaders, and our people.”

Zenim was surprised when an angry outburst interrupted him.

“How long must we listen to the fatal dreams and mortally dangerous fantasies and blathering of this old fool?”

The outburst was coming from Director Lin Xin, the leader of the Council for Financial and Economic Health in the Politburo and someone Zenim had always felt was unalterably loyal to him.

“Lin, calm yourself.

“I would hardly categorize what we have achieved over the last six years as dreams and fantasies. We have united the entire western Pacific and all of Asia and the Middle East.”

Shocked to be interrupted twice in such a fashion, Jien Zenim was literally shouted down by Lin Xin.

“And where has it gotten us you ass?”

“Tens of millions of our people are dead!”

“Almost two hundred million of them have been displaced.

“I tell you all now, even if we could somehow find a way to stop the American attacks today, our economy would take twenty years to recover and half of our people would die of hunger and starvation before we could even begin to feed them.

“...and this old fool, he said, pointing a shaking finger directly at the digital camera, wants to use what little resource we have left to continue to fight a hopeless battle.

“Our dead...our precious dead, cannot be brought back.

“It is time we recognize the inevitable, end the reign of this madman who has led us all to destruction and sue for whatever measure of peace we can obtain from the Americans and their allies.”

Zenim recognized that Xin had lost his wife and entire family in a strike at one of the nuclear hardened sites outside of Shanghai. He had hoped to be able to control Xin's obvious mourning and emotions and gradually bring him back into the fold. But what happened next told Zenim that such hopes and remedies were not going to be possible.

The men gathered in this meeting were not here by chance or for light or transient reasons. They had all proven their commitment and their loyalty to Jien Zenim over decades of dealings at every level of government. Most of their hands were stained with the blood of countless underlings, competitors and the many internal enemies who had challenged each of them and lost, or whom these men themselves had

challenged and defeated.

But commitment and loyalty only go so far when the pressure becomes intolerable. In response to Xin's outburst, of the ten Executive Committee members present at the conference, three more of them agreed with Xin and called for the immediate ouster of Zenim, followed by dialog with the Americans.

Jien Zenim used the control console on the arm of his leather chair to cause his screen to go blank for a moment so that he might regain his composure, address this issue of dissention, and not be seen by the others while he was doing so. His two most trusted confidants were here with him. Lu Pham, who now headed all Chinese military and scientific research and development and was himself one of the members of the executive committee, and Liu Liang, the head of internal security forces for all of the PRC.

Beckoning quickly to Liang, the President simply said.

“Take care of this...today.

“...all four of them. No later than tomorrow morning.”

Liang immediately left the room,

Zenim used his control console to reactivate his screen. He had only been off for a few seconds, but when the video feed was restored, Zenim was surprised to see all of the other participants sitting quietly, if somewhat impatiently, waiting for the meeting to proceed.

That is, all but one.

Only seven images of the other members of the Executive Committee were now being displayed where before there had been eight. One of those screens had gone completely blank and the loss of that image had nothing to do with Jien Zenim's control console.

Several of those in attendance began speaking.

“Where is Comrade Cheng?”

“Mr. President, we lost your display in the conference for a moment.”

“Does any of this matter? The entire Politburo is in disarray and it is time to resolve things.”

Jien Zenim simply held up his right hand, palm facing the camera recording his image.

“Comrades, I know that your frustrations are high, so I will forgive some of these outbursts for the time being. Our leadership council simply *cannot* fracture at this point.

“I am sure Comrade Cheng will join us momentarily. Apparently there has been some sort of a technical difficulty with the video feed. I am sure that as soon as the technicians have corrected it, he will rejoin us in the meeting.”

A small measure of calm was restored by these events and by the President's comment. The meeting continued, but it did not last long.

With dissension in the ranks on the verge of verbally and physically manifesting itself again at any

moment, Jien Zenim quickly ended the meeting. He had hoped that he could make it last longer, that some type of resolution to their difficulties could be agreed upon, and that Comrade Cheng's image would reappear. But the prospect for more open defiance and dissention was too great and the meeting ended without any of those things transpiring.

Cheng's absence, as one of those who still supported Zenim, left another pallor over the entire affair for the President.

Even though Jien Zenim had been wrong about Cheng rejoining the Executive Committee meeting, he would soon find out that he had been correct about why Cheng's video signal had failed. There had been a technical difficulty.

Forty tons of carbonaceous chondrite material arriving at orbital speeds tended to create significant *technical difficulties* .

It also tended to curtail attendance at Executive Committee meetings... forever.

Carefully leaked information allowed the Chinese to successfully use their other, not-as-reinforced facilities as effective decoys to lure American orbital bombardment or nuclear missiles onto them. This not only drew the fire of the Americans, but it also identified weaknesses in China's own security and identified traitors to Jien Zenim's government.

But despite reports circulated of the deaths of various high-ranking members of the Executive Committee associated with these attacks, the Americans relentlessly continued their search for the specific locations of all Politburo and Executive Committee members in an effort to eradicate them.

Reports coming in later that day after the Executive Committee meeting was over would make it clear to each and every member of that committee that America's intelligence efforts and their growing space-based reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities had paid off. Comrade Cheng was dead. Using their latest super earth penetrating orbital projectiles the Americans could now destroy these new facilities at will, just as soon as they found them.

The message from the Americans to Zenim and all of the surviving members of the Executive Committee was clear.

There is no place that you can hide. You will all ultimately be found and brought to justice.

August 5, 2011, 10:15, local time

100 Nautical Miles West of Hawaii

U.S. Navy Testing and Proving grounds

The dreadful sound of the approaching enemy Killer Whale filled the water. It was a sound that had literally terrorized the earth's oceans for the last five and a half years. It was a sound that had heralded the destruction of thousands and thousands of ships, and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of allied personnel throughout the conflict.

It was also a sound that for well over half of the war, had caused the most powerful Navy the world had

ever known, the United States Navy, to retreat and give place to the advancing CAS and GIR military juggernaut.

But now, all of that was ending. Due to more recent American military technological advances, the U.S. Navy had once again regained supremacy of the seas. With weapon systems that had been specifically designed for defending ships against Killer Whale attacks, the United States Navy and its allies had slowly, painfully, pushed the enemy forces back.

The allies had developed everything from enhanced programming for allied torpedoes, to the TRES (towed, reactive, explosive system) devices that were towed behind escort ships, to the SUB CIWS (sub-surface close in weapons systems) that fired streams of underwater hypervelocity projectiles, to supercavitating weapons of their own in the effort to defend allied shipping and defeat the Killer Whale weapons. Despite all of this, the enemy LRASD devices, these "*Killer Whales*", still struck and destroyed allied shipping far too often.

Everytype of vessel from merchants vessels, to tankers, to destroyers, to AEGIS cruisers, to large amphibious assault ships, to aircraft carriers, to submarines were still being hit by the enemy weapons. Whenever that happened, except for the largest of ships, it was almost a given that the stricken ship would sink. In the few instances where that was not the case, a larger ship was put completely out of commission by both the terrible damage and the horrendous loss of life .

Now, while American orbital bombardment and missile barrages were laying waste to enemy lands, the United States Navy and the navies of its allies were still slowly advancing back across the Pacific Ocean. But the cost of that advance was still far too great in terms of the loss of personnel, vessels, and material. The enemy still had very long and extremely sharp teeth.

Something had to be done. The political leadership demanded it. The military leadership demanded it. The people of the free nations of the world demanded it.

Today, as this particular LRASD weapon approached the American submarine that lay just off its path, America's military weapon designers would find out if they had finally devised a solution that would answer the demands of the allied nations and finally, once and for all, defeat the Killer Whales.

This morning they would discover whether or not they had developed a foolproof, 100% reliable weapon to interdict and destroy these killers of the oceans.

The weapons officer in the control room of the USS Texas, the Virginia Class nuclear attack submarine conducting the test, informed his superior, and the others who were there monitoring the test, of the progress.

"Target, range 5400 yards and closing at a speed of 585 knots.

"Target now acquired. It will be in range in five, four, three, two, one, zero.

"Target in range and locked."

The Captain of the USS Texas immediately gave the order that weapon system developers, flag officers, and political leaders throughout the United States and her allies had been waiting for, for well over 14 months of research and development.

"Engage the target."

The weapons officer immediately selected the “Engage Target” option from the new fire control menu on his console and the system activated.

Through the water, at the speed of sound, a special sonic wave was produced by the USS Texas from a new weapons port on her forward starboard side, the side facing the oncoming LRASD weapon. That sonic wave was computer generated and controlled, and was very tightly focused on the approaching Killer Whale. It mimicked perfectly the sonar, acoustic, and transient signature of the USS Texas, and amplified it powerfully.

That amplification was modulated to grow rapidly in volume and presence so as to create all of the acoustic parameters coincident with the terminal phase of the approach of the weapon itself. This was done in such a way so as to fool the weapon into thinking it was actually within proximity striking range of the USS Texas.

Tests on captured Chinese weapons had conclusively proven that the Chinese developers had ingeniously built a capability for detecting and reacting to these acoustic signatures through the cavity created by the passage of the weapon. When the Chinese LRASD proximity detection system gauged that the weapon was going to miss its target, it immediately performed the necessary calculations and detonated the weapon's warhead at the closest approach to its target.

The new American system simulated these acoustic signatures in an effort to get the LRASD weapon to react to it. If the proximity effort failed, the American acoustic weapon was capable of producing sounds, at very high amplitude, that replicated the sounds of the approaching weapon's cavity collapsing as a result of contacting the intended target, which was a condition the Chinese developers also took into account.

In that case, the Chinese had designed their weapon's sensors to detect the collapse of the cavity associated with impact on the target and activate the LRASD detonation timer so as to explode the warhead well within the confines of the targeted vessel's hull.

If all of this failed, the American weapon was capable of focusing a much more intense and focused acoustic wave at the sensors on the LRASD. Computer simulations indicated that this increase in intensity invariable overloaded the acoustic brain of the weapon and caused it to lurch violently to the side, ripping itself apart in the resulting turbulence and trauma associated with the collapse of its cavity.

In this case, the first option succeeded. At a range of over 2000 yards, the weapon, thinking it was well within proximity range of its intended target, but that it was going to actually miss that target, exploded in the open ocean creating a huge bulge and then fountain of water on the ocean's surface, but otherwise not causing harm or damage to anyone or anything.

Over the next week, the USS Texas would conduct extensive tests using all four of the weapons ports that had been installed on the boat. Those tests would be conducted with similar live-fire exercises that simulated attacks from every angle, ranging from engagements of a single weapon at a time, up to as many as six weapons simultaneously approaching the boat from multiple angles.

Every phase of the new American defensive system would be tested, from stimulating proximity fusing, to causing contact detonation, to overload of the enemy LRASD system.

In all, thirty-seven captured LRASD devices would be launched toward the Texas during the week of testing. By the end of the week, the record of the USS Texas in defending itself against all of those

attacks was perfect. All thirty-seven enemy devices were destroyed by the new MSWAD (Modulating Sonic Acoustical Wave Device) system.

The USS Texas immediately off-loaded all of the Naval and contract project management personnel who had observed and evaluated the testing. A few contractors remained on the boat to help operate and maintain the system and to train the crew in its use. The rest were soon in Hawaii filing their reports and their recommendations.

By August 13th, 2011, the USS Texas departed for her maiden assignment with the new defensive system. She was ordered to make flank speed across the Pacific Ocean to the Arafura Sea north of Australia where she would begin interdicting enemy shipping of all types. Soon thereafter, after a completely successful initial mission where she expended all of her weapons stores while destroying eight Killer Whales launched at her, she was ordered to take the fight into the heart of enemy waters. Her next assignment was to conduct offensive patrol operations in the heavily enemy infested waters of the Java Sea and then in the South China Sea itself

While the USS Texas transited the Pacific Ocean towards that initial assignment, more MSWAD weapon systems were being rushed to forward staging areas and repair facilities throughout the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Although they had not envisioned the astounding level of success that the Texas experienced off of Hawaii, and later would demonstrate in the Arafura Sea in combat, the development contractors, the military and the political leadership of the United States had nonetheless anticipated a large measure of success. Because of this, full scale production had been ordered before the testing off of Hawaii even started, and now systems were en route to facilities where other submarines and surface vessels could be rapidly retrofitted with the new, life saving MSWAD systems.

The contractor supplied a large number of personnel to perform the initial training of the naval personnel onboard every vessel fitted with the system. These contract employees began their work as the systems were installed and continued it through the maiden voyage, the contractors themselves going into harm's way for the benefit of the nation.

When the systems and the contractors began to arrive in theater, a large backlog of vessels was already waiting for the work to begin. Within a matter of weeks, while the USS Texas was entering the Java Sea, more and more American and allied vessels were fitted with the system, and sent immediately into battle.

October 24, 2011, 14:55, local time

Manila Bay

Luzon Island, The Philippines

The bay was filled with transports of all types. Most of them were older variety military and commercial transports, tankers, cargo ships and container ships. There were also two Alaska class SSTNs and three large C-90B aircraft offloading men and material in the packed harbor.

During the last two months, the growing allied military machine had pushed in towards China on all fronts. Outside of the Chinese forces on the sub-continent, the remains of the shattered Indian political apparatus, along with what remained of its military, had surrendered on August 29th, 2011. That date

was designated as VI-Day and the celebrations in every major allied city were long and joyous. The hope and anticipation of an ultimate VC-Day began to grow in hearts throughout the allied nations.

But over two million Chinese troops still fought on to the north in the mountainous Kashmir regions of the country. Those Chinese forces were hemmed in by mountains to the north and allied forces to the east, west and south. The allied armies were content to serve as blocking forces by parlaying any major Chinese efforts to break out of the area, while American orbital bombardment and Hail Storm missile attacks destroyed each large concentration of Chinese troops whenever and wherever they were found.

Major hostilities ended in Australia on September 18th, 2011 when the Chinese and Indonesian forces there attempted a major offensive near Halls Creek just off the Kimberley Plateau. A combined arms force of one division of American Marines, a brigade of British Highlanders, and elements of two divisions of the reconstituted Australian Army acted as a lure to pull the enemy forces into the trap.

Sensing that this may be their last opportunity to achieve a victory and push the allies back, the CAS and GIR forces had taken the bait. Eight small orbital bombardment projectiles and three Hail Storm missile barrages completely annihilated the Chinese and Indonesian formations and every piece of armor they had left to them before they ever reached the main allied forces.

Despite inflicting minor casualties on the allied scouting and probing forces who lured them into the killing fields, the result was a complete slaughter of the last major CAS and GIR force on the continent. Over eighty thousand enemy personnel lost their lives and over one hundred thousand more were either wounded or captured.

It would be months before all remaining pockets of enemy military personnel or armed enemy civilians were completely destroyed or captured. But with the engagement on September 18th the final nail was hammered in the coffin of CAS and GIR hopes for occupying and controlling Australia. Outside of those small engagements against scattered groups of enemy soldiers or civilians, Australia's long nightmare was over.

On October 6th, 2011, Indonesia surrendered unconditionally. Major fighting continued on many of the smaller islands and on New Guinea as allied forces rooted dedicated enemy forces out of the dense forests of the island's rough mountains. But the leaders of the last major belligerent Islamic nation, having seen the complete defeat of all other GIR nations, having witnessed personal strike against Hasan Sayeed and his command facilities, and having heard of the utter and ruthless defeat of all fundamental Islamic uprisings in allied occupied territory, wisely decided to take the United States and its allies up on the demand for an unconditional surrender.

The defeat of Indonesia was followed in quick order on October 12th by the surrender of all enemy forces occupying the Philippines, even before allied forces could arrive there. So fast and unexpected was the unilateral surrender in the Philippines that the allies could not stage or send any aircraft or vessels to the islands until October 19th. Since that date, the numbers of allied forces had been steadily growing on each of the major islands, and particularly around the capitol, Manila.

...and then the People's Republic showed the United States and her allies that there was still a terrible ferocity and viciousness left in the Chinese bite.

Lu Pham and his LRASD engineers had been informed about the new acoustic weapon the allies were employing with greater and greater effect through the Pacific and Indian Oceans. After studying the issue, they determined that they would not be able to develop an immediate defense against the new American system, but they did make some suggestions on how the Chinese devices might be

programmed and utilized to overwhelm it.

Today was the date when those ideas would be put to the test,

Approximately eight hours earlier, the programming had been completed by PLAN underwater specialists on a large group of forty-eight LRASD weapons that had been seeded in the Luzon Straits to guard against allied approaches to Taiwan. Those weapons had then been launched towards the shipping in Manila harbor with provisions for defeating any ships the allies had picketed around the harbor to prevent a large attack.

The PLAN had seeded literally thousands of the weapons within the approaches to the South China Sea, approaches to Taiwan, Korea, Japan and elsewhere at strategic bottlenecks, narrows and straits in the area.

These had all worked to good effect up until the time that the USS Texas had entered the South China Sea and begun destroying the packs of devices it ran across. The Texas had been followed by other Virginia class attack subs and two of the Sea Wolf class boats, the USS Connecticut and the USS Jimmy Carter, once it had been recognized that the Chinese had seeded them in all of the strategic approaches to the mainland.

Now, in an effort to make use of these devices before they were all lost, and hopefully for the Chinese and Lu Pham, to find a way to keep them from being lost, the Chinese had rearmed and reprogrammed this group to go up against allied naval forces in and around Manila Harbor.

Within the group of forty-eight LRASD devices were eight devices that been modified to be pop-up air attack variants. These were evenly divided between four separate attack groups that would approach the Bay from two different directions. Each attack would consist of two groups of devices following one behind the other, with each of those groups comprised of ten underwater attack variants and two air attack variants.

The first group in each attack was slated for any picket or guarding force positioned along its approach path. The second group would follow behind and off to one side in an effort to then penetrate through to the harbor. One approach was along the Bataan peninsula, the other swung further south around past Cape Calavite on the Island of Mindora and was timed to arrive at Manila Bay at the same time as the first attack.

The allies had defended each of the approaches to Manila Bay.

October 24, 2011, that same time

East of Bataan Peninsula

Luzon Island, the Philippines

Acting in concert, fifty miles from the entrance to Manila Harbor, two Arleigh Burke class destroyers and an AEGIS class cruiser, the USS Monterey, were working with the new Virginia class attack sub, the USS Atlanta. The cruiser and the Atlanta had both already been outfitted with MSWAD, in addition to the SUB CIWS weapons they carried. Both destroyers carried SUB CIWS as well. They were positioned to be able to interdict any Chinese air, surface, or sub-surface attempts to get into Manila

Harbor and attack the ongoing landing and supply operations there.

It was the Atlanta that sounded the first alarm.

Positioned fifteen hundred yards in front of the surface action group consisting of the destroyers and the cruiser, the Atlanta's sonar operator picked up the approach of the twelve LRASD devices first, while they were still operating under conventional power. News of the contact was transmitted to the AEGIS cruiser via a secure communications protocol over a line that trailed behind the sub to a small towed pod just below the surface. That pod had a single thin, but very stiff antennae, designed to noiselessly break the surface of the water so it could establish the communications link with the Task Force command ship, the AEGIS cruiser.

All of the American vessels immediately went to battle stations.

At almost the same moment, the lead LRASD unit acquired the Atlanta, communicated its presence to the other devices in its group, and all ten of the underwater attack variants of the LRASD devices activated their rocket engines for a simultaneous, multi-axis supercavitating attack against the Atlanta.

The weapons officer on the Atlanta immediately apprised the Captain of the situation as other weapons officers on each ship in the task force did the same to their commanding officers.

“Incoming! Killer Whales, seven, eight...nine, no ten devices. Ten thousand yards and closing from multiple vectors.”

The Captain of the Atlanta, showing no exterior display of emotion or concern, calmly replied.

“As soon as they are in range, engage the incoming devices with both forward MSWAD stations.

“Ask the Monterey for support if they please.”

At 2000 yards, the Atlanta began picking off the attacking Killer Whales two at a time. At five hundred yards, there were still four devices approaching and it looked like the limit for the number of attacking LRASD units a single Virginia class boat could handle had been found.

That's when the effect of the Monterey's MSWAD system came into play. While the Atlanta picked off two of the remaining devices, the Monterey got the other two as they came into range of her system. But those last two LRASD weapons exploded a mere two hundred feet from the Atlanta, causing significant structural and instrumentation damage. She was forced to surface.

And while doing so, she met her fate.

The last two devices, the ones designed to go airborne, lingered behind the wave of the ten devices that had already attacked. Those last two devices continued on towards the Atlanta using conventional power for twenty seconds...and then they activated off their own rocket engines.

At a distance of 2000 yards, they both broached the surface and began flying towards the spot where they would intercept the Atlanta, skimming just above the surface of the water at an altitude of no more than twenty feet.

Weapons officers throughout the small group of ships had only seconds to warn of the new threat.

“Vampire, vampire, vampire!

“...two targets.”

The first one sensed the USS Monterey and altered its course towards her, rising to a height of one hundred feet. The second one continued toward that spot on the ocean where the Atlanta would soon be surfacing, still skimming the surface of the ocean, no more than twenty feet above it..

The Monterey and the two Arleigh Burke destroyers, at a range of less than 3500 yards, acquired both LRASD weapons on their radar after they broached the surface. All three immediately fired two of the latest batch of Standard AAW missiles at each target. A total of six American missiles were attacking the Chinese devices as the AEGIS system prepared their CIWS systems to engage the missiles should the Standard missiles fail to intercept them and should they then come in range of the CIWS.

But the Chinese devices had no intention of ever coming in range of the CIWS, or of ever even reaching their targets.

As soon as the electronic counter measure circuitry aboard each LRASD sensed the launch of the American AAW missiles, each LRASD device dove towards its target and exploded simultaneously. The first one exploded at a height of twenty feet above the surface, the second one did so just after it penetrated the water.

The explosions were not conventional, they were nuclear.

A light brighter than the sun lit up the sea, the islands, and the ridges on the Bataan Peninsula. The blast and shock wave from the air detonation reached out immediately and engulfed all three surface vessels which were completely destroyed, leaving no survivors. Terrible destruction and death were also caused on the Bataan Peninsula.

The USS Atlanta was no more than eight hundred yards from the underwater nuclear detonation when it went off. Her hull was immediately caved in by the force of the explosion like a tin can crushed by the impact of a sledge hammer. The boiling fireball from that second explosion rose in a huge mountain of water, steam, blast and debris from the wreck of the Atlanta, marking the death of the entire crew of that fine vessel.

While all of this was occurring, a similar episode played itself out beyond Cape Calavite and that approach to Manila Bay. There, two very capable British Type 45 destroyers, accompanied by the HMS Artful, an Astute class attack submarine, were patrolling the ocean to interdict any enemy force trying to make a break for Manila Harbor and the anchorage there. All three of the vessels were outfitted with SUB CIWS but none of them were equipped with the new MSWAD system.

They were engaged by the second arm of the Chinese LRASD attack in much the same manner that the first arm of the Chinese attack had engaged the American blocking force.

...and with the same results.

Within minutes, two more nuclear explosions obliterated all three of the British vessels. Those blasts also caused terrible damage on Mindora Island with a significant loss of life.

The path into Manila Harbor was open.

October 23, 2011, 03:02, EST

Presidential Bedroom, the White House

Washington, DC

Sandy listened to the one sided conversation as her husband sat up in bed and talked on the phone to the Secretary of Defense, Jeremy Stone.

The call had come through a few minutes earlier, when a Secret Service agent had awakened them so the President could take the call. From the tone of her husband's voice, and from the part of the conversation she was hearing, it was obviously a very tense moment that boded very bad news.

"You have got to be kidding me.

"How the hell could something like this happen, Jeremy?

"I thought we had found a sure-fire defense against those.

"Okay...yes, yes, I know. The enemy we are facing is still very resourceful and dangerous.

"Yea, I do.

"Alright, alright. I'll call an emergency National Security meeting for...let's see, 0430, and get Talbot to do whatever is necessary to ensure that everyone available is in attendance.

"Okay...good, we'll have an update at 0400. I'll make sure Vice President Reissinger and Bill Hendrickson are there if you'll get Ben Ryan and CINC PAC patched in.

"I'll talk to you then."

The President had a splitting headache by the time he hung up the phone.

Sandy had sat up in bed with a concerned look on her face.

"Honey, is everything going to be okay?"

She knew that it wasn't, but wanted to give him an opportunity to share whatever he could with her. She was prepared to be a sounding board, a listening ear, a confidante...whatever it was that her husband needed at this especially difficult moment in time.

"It's very bad news, sweetheart.

"I had somehow hoped that we were past this type of thing...that the worst of it all was over.

"But apparently I was too premature in my optimism. Even in defeat it seems as though Zenim is intent on taking as many of our people with them as possible.

"Our forces landing in Manila Harbor have just been hit by a Chinese nuclear attack.

“Apparently it came from the sea and involved those damnable supercavitating weapons that they have been using against us throughout the war.

“Tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands are dead in the harbor and particularly on shore there. Manila has been terribly damaged.”

Sandy gently took her husband’s hand. She knew him well enough to sense, without another word being spoken between them, that the silent voices of those who perished were weighing heavily on his mind and burdening his heart

November 12, 2011, 09:38, EST

Rodriguez Home

Little Havana, Florida

Maria Rodriguez knew her husband was in Asia...but she didn’t know exactly where.

...and she was okay with that. It was part of being the wife of a military man.

Her father-in-law had told her that he hoped that he was in China directly and hopefully, “taking it to those sorry ChiComm animals directly.”

No matter where he was, she missed Hernando so much, and she worried about him constantly. But she had learned over several years to put the bulk of that worry in God's hands. She knew He was involved in all of this and that her faith and trust in Him, whatever the result, was of great help to her, to her sons...as young as they were...and to Hernando. She knew that although her husband was away from her, he was always within *His* vision. Maria regularly reminded herself that worry would serve no useful purpose except to erode faith, that her part in all of this was to earnestly pray for Hernando’s safe return home, and accept God’s will in that regard, even if it did not coincide with her wishes.

“I have a good man, who loves his wife, his sons, his parents, and who loves the Lord.

“I could not ask for more,” she thought to herself as she contemplated these things.

“He’s been home several times during the course of this war, and if those precious visits end up being all I have to remember...well then, that will be more than many people have.”

As it was, she was hoping to see him home soon for good.

It was obvious to her that the United States and her allies were on the verge of winning the war. Iran and India had already fallen. The leaders of those nations who had planned this horrific war were dead. China was being hemmed and closed in upon.

It could not be much longer now.

Taking one of her sons into each arm, she looked closely at Felipe and Jose.

They were such beautiful children. She could not imagine the horror of so many in America in Missouri, Pennsylvania, New York and California who had lost so much. Whose beautiful children had died due to the biological attack that summer...and the many who had died from the numerous terror attacks throughout the war.

Yes...she had much to be grateful for.

She thought she would go over to her in-laws and share these feelings with them this evening. She always enjoyed her visits there.

As she made her plans, she could not know, she would not know for several months, that Hernando was in fact fulfilling the wishes of his own father that very day. He had just crossed over the Manchurian frontier into China directly with his companions.

The front lines had already progressed well into China, over seventy-five miles, in fierce fighting. Word from the front was that there was no shortage of Chinese regular Army and militia who were willing to close with the allied forces now invading directly into their homeland, regardless of cost.

And that cost was a horrific butcher's bill for the Chinese. Orbital bombardment of staging areas literally slaughtered large regular Army groups before they could completely form and advance on the front. Hail Storm missile attacks annihilated the broken formations that were able to advance along with the large local militia that attempted to stand in the way of the allies.

Despite all of this, it seemed either to the front or on either flank that thousands of Chinese personnel invariably closed to direct combat with the vanguard of the offensive. American air support was overpowering, but here near their homeland, the Chinese, who had dispersed thousands of fighters and attack aircraft, were still making a fight of it. Air supremacy had not been achieved. In many cases, air superiority was denied the allies.

Hernando was subjected to air attack on several occasions as he and his company advanced into Manchuria towards the front. The danger and the commitment of the enemy were even more apparent after arrival at the front.

Even though the Chinese were steadily losing ground, at this point, and in this particular vicinity on the direct road to Beijing, they were giving it up begrudgingly and soaking the landscape in blood. Though Hernando knew, along with everyone else in his company, that China's defeat was sealed-that it was only a matter of time, he also knew that a lot of American and other allied personnel in this area were going to spend their life's blood to make sure it happened.

Like his wife, he placed his trust in God, and prayed that he might be spared to see his family once again.

December 23, 2011, 05:06, local time

Two miles west of Hualien, Taiwan

Far Western Pacific Ocean

Billy Simmons was amazed at the technological advances that his nation had made during his long stay in

Australia . He had never conceived of going into battle, his attack helicopter and all, in a submarine. He had also never conceived of a submarine so large, or of an entire massive invasion force consisting of entirely submersed vessels.

Yet that was exactly what was occurring here today.

Irrespective of the update training he had received and the exercises that he had been a part of in preparation for this operation, it was always something else again to actually be conducting the real thing. That was especially so in this case because of the major innovations that were now a part of American amphibious operations.

At 0500 hours the execute order had been given. His vessel immediately surfaced and began disgorging Marines into air cushioned landing craft. As that occurred, an elevator carried his AZ-1W Viper attack helicopter along with him and his crewmate (his backseater) up to the flight deck, which itself had just moments before appeared on the surface of the water.

As he lifted off from his vessel, along with four other attack helicopters, he saw numerous F-35 Joint Strike Fighters providing cover to them from high above. He knew that those aircraft had themselves been launched by six submersible carriers further out to sea. Continuing to climb, Billy could also see that the sea was full of U.S. Navy vessels all around him.

There were ten SSTN, Alaska Class amphibious assault subs, filling the sea with forty large air cushioned landing craft at a time, filled with Marines and their equipment. Those SSTN vessels were also filling the air with helicopters and other aircraft. There were six SSCN, cruiser subs, which were filling the air with missile barrages targeting enemy positions and formations near the beach and further inland. The six SSCVN aircraft carrier subs were also filling the air with fighter and attack aircraft in support of the landing.

In addition, though he could not see them, Billy knew that sixteen fast attack subs were protecting the fleet all around them. In all, thirty eight vessels comprised this task force. Their target, Hualien, was fewer than two miles to his west, and he banked his Viper in that direction to attack enemy formations or fortifications that would contest the allied landing.

As he passed over the air-cushioned landing craft that were speeding towards shore from over a dozen Amphibious Assault vessels, Billy knew that historically, despite the most massive poundings imaginable, somehow enemy forces always managed to live through the preparatory bombardments to contest the landings.

Today would be no different. Some enemy forces did survive the orbital bombardment, the Hail Storm missile barrages, and the massive attacks of American attack aircraft, and land based bombers from afar. That part of the historical norm held. But the historical norm did not hold in the numbers of enemy forces surviving. In this case, it would not be many, and though the landings were opposed, the Americans were very quickly ahead of schedule.

Within four hours, eight massive C-90B aircraft landed just offshore, taxied up to the beach, and began disgorging more and more American and allied personnel and equipment.

...and this was not even the main landing on Taiwan that day.

December 23, 2011, that same time

In the mountains, 35 miles SE of Kaohsiung, Taiwan

Far Western Pacific Ocean

President Chen Shu-bien looked out to sea from his sparse command center. There were sixteen such command center spread through the mountainous regions of the Island and he had been moving between them for almost six years as his nation was ravished and raped by the mainland Communist Chinese invaders.

All of the more modern facilities had been found and destroyed. The Republic of China had known that, if there was a successful landing and occupation of their island by the communists, traditional warfare and resistance would ultimately be doomed.

Even though they had prepared for such traditional defenses, and fought hard using those plans, they had also planned for long term, more low-key resistance. The President had been leading that effort now for over five years, ever since the last major command facility had been found and destroyed.

That entire time, the free Chinese on Taiwan had suffered terribly. With every act of resistance, terrible retribution had been visited on the people. There had been many times when Chen himself had considered ending the struggle to save his people from the horror.

But each time he had reminded himself that the horror would not end. The Chinese were raping the Island, killing and replacing the former citizens while they brought in their own mainland citizens who were eager to occupy and make use of what the free Republic of China had established.

No, the horror would not have ended with our abdication, President Shu-bien thought.

The only thing that would have ended was hope.

And hope was something that Chen had held out which had allowed him and his compatriots to survive. Despite the overwhelming advantage of the enemy, despite so many brave and loyal patriots for Chinese freedom who had been tortured and killed, despite dissention from within when the times had been hardest...the resistance movement had survived and it had grown.

From these low-tech, barely above stone-age locations, planning had been accomplished and orders had gone out. In the long resistance on Taiwan, strong legs, unflinching loyalty, and endurance had replaced radios and other more modern forms of communication. Bare hands, ice-picks, small arms and any other tool available had replaced jet fighters, cruise missiles and tanks as weapons.

The willingness for his countrymen to suffer untold hardships and to fight with their bare hands if necessary had encouraged and bolstered Chen's hope. But those things alone did not establish his hope. The communist numbers and ruthlessness were simply too great for that alone to nourish his hope all of these years.

What had given seed and root to his hope was his faith in the principles of liberty, and in the bastion of liberty that he knew was strong enough to someday carry the fight back to the monstrous Dragon that had arisen on the mainland.

...and that bastion was the United States of America.

Chen remembered President Weisskopf's words to his own people in the dark days of March, 2006, to those who were left behind as the United States armed forces were driven so far to the east by the Chinese military machine. Back then, the American President, Norm Weisskopf, at that dark hour, sensing what the future would bring, committed his country and himself to that future. He had also addressed those words to all lovers of liberty everywhere, including America's allies.

...and President Chen Shu-bien had committed those words to his own memory and spoke of them constantly amongst his own forces. He did so to bolster them, to help them endure, to help them feed and hold on to their hope.

He recited those monumental words of President Weisskopf now, whispering them to himself this very morning, as he looked over the intervening hills and out to sea to his south and west.

"I make a commitment before the citizens of America and before God. We will not rest, we will not stop, we will never, *ever give up!* If it takes us three years, or if it takes us ten years, our nation will overcome your dastardly and cowardly attack. We will produce aircraft carriers like the ones you sank by the dozens. We will produce technology to defeat whatever you may throw at us. We will produce weapons and methodologies that you will never conceive of in your closed, collective society.

"To our allies I say, *stand with us* .

"We may have been knocked to the ground, but you can count on us getting back up stronger than before, filled with a righteous indignation that we will pour out on our enemies.

" *Stand with us*.

"We will not forsake you. The United States of America makes a solemn commitment and promise to return to liberate any who fall under the blight that is now spreading. We shall return! There will be no iron curtains at the end of this fight. The governments currently prosecuting these invasions and this tyranny will cease to exist...every bit as much as the governments of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan ceased to exist after World War II.

" *Stand with us*.

"And we will stand with you to the end. If you choose not to, then all we ask is for you to stay out of the way. We will do this with, or without help.

"To our forces who are fighting on in Asia in the face of monumental odds. Who fight with the knowledge that our relief efforts have failed and that relief is far off, I say: "*Fight on*.

"Fight this enemy wherever you may find him and out of whatever circumstances you may find yourself. Take to the hills if you must, take to the streets, take to the night. They are the enemies of all we believe in and all we as a people stand for.

" *Fight on*.

"With your weapons, with your fists, with stones and clubs if you must. Fight with your words, fight with non-compliance, fight with your silence. Like an American hero from the Vietnam War, Rocky Versace. When they captured him and beat him and ultimately marched him off to execute him, he was singing "God bless America."

“ Fight on.

“And never give up. We will make every effort to come for you soon, but if we cannot, do not despair. As surely as the sun rises in the east, we are coming. The time will arrive when like at Normandy on June 6th, 1944, you will look out and see the sea and the sky filled with the innumerable host of your comrades come to liberate the captive and put down the tyrant.

“To the American people I say, take heart! Yes, armies of tyranny and coercion are on the march in the Middle East and now ominously in Asia. Yes, many of our own have died at the hands of these tyrants. Yes, some of our friends will undoubtedly fall under the control of these tyrants, but our fathers and grandfathers faced the same threats. The fight for liberty has always been so tested. Like them, America will rise to the challenge and again be the vanguard for liberty for the world. We will liberate the captive and destroy the despot .”

President Weisskopf had been true to those words and to that commitment to his dying breath. The new American President, John Bowers, was also true to those words and commitment, as was attested to by this mighty armada which had almost magically appeared today off the coast of Taiwan.

...and President Chen Shu-bien had been true to the words and commitments as well.

Now, Chen saw over eighty huge American vessels offshore, disgorging hundreds of landing craft filled with so many troops, tanks and other equipment. He saw other ships filling the sky with American aircraft and missiles.

“So that is what the attacks of yesterday and last night were all about,” he thought.

He now knew what the awesome display of American orbital bombardment and Hail Storm missile technology that had pounded and pulverized Communist Chinese positions yesterday and throughout the night meant. He wondered why it hadn't dawned on him then what might follow such a pounding.

But now, this morning, he did know. With this American attack, just as Weisskopf had promised, he knew that the hour of his nation's liberation and salvation were at hand.

He turned to his aide and gave the execute order for the operation that had been planned for so long, but had awaited this day, the return of the Americans for its implementation. Even though millions of Republic of China citizens had suffered and died, many of the remaining millions would now rise up and use the arms and material that had been so carefully hoarded and laagered in the most massive urban uprising imaginable.

Over the next four weeks, millions of the citizens of the Republic of China would willingly put their lives and blood on the line alongside the Americans and their allies to purchase their own freedom. In so doing, the free people of Taiwan, would ensure that many, many more of the enemy would pay for their atrocities with their own lives and blood as they were driven off of Taiwan soil forever, and as liberty was extended across the straits to the mainland.

February 8, 2012, 16:35, local time

USSS Weisskopf, High Geosynchronous Orbit

Over the South China Sea

Designated as the SC-01, for Space-going Cruiser, she was the newest, largest, and most powerful American military space craft launched to date. Large and space worthy herself, she could take up position over any theater of war on earth as a space station and control the ground, the air, the sea, and near-earth space in the vicinity of that theater with her laser, charged particle, kinetic energy, missile, and electronic warfare weaponry.

She could also act as a controlling point for multiple other space craft. This included the weaponry on the Corvettes, Frigates and Destroyers the American SPACCOM (Space Command) had already launched, as well as the armaments and weaponry on any of America's space stations that were in range if necessary. Using the latest SPAEGIS systems, her offensive and defensive capabilities were simply unsurpassed by any other available asset.

Captain Floyd Clark thought it very fitting that this vessel had been named for the late President. He also found it fitting that the first deployment for the Weisskopf would serve to assist in the decisive defeat of the Chinese Evil Empire that the late President had dedicated himself to, and ultimately sacrificed his life for. Clark was also honored to serve as the commander of this marvelous vessel and its highly motivated and trained crew of ninety-five personnel.

He wished he had been able to get the vessel launched and operational early for the invasion of Taiwan, but that opportunity had already passed. As it was, he knew the Weisskopf would be decisively involved in the retaking of Japan and the invasion of China across the Formosa Straits to put more pressure on the failing Communist government in Beijing.

He was already providing support to the two arms of the pincer that was advancing on Beijing. One of those was a large and aggressive American force approaching Beijing from the northeast out of Manchuria.

"General Bennett is like a modern day Patton," Clark thought to himself as he considered the bulldoggedness of his advance and the manner in which Bennett motivated and drove his forces.

"It's clear that if it is left to him, he'll be on and through Beijing long before the Russians get there.

"In this case, I don't believe that there's going to be any political forestalling or holding back of Bennett's forces as there was with Patton in World War II."

Clark knew this would be the case because he knew that John Bowers and his administration were most interested in ending this war as soon and as decisively as possible. He also knew that the United States, unlike conditions with Roosevelt towards the end of World War II, was not involved in any political negotiations to hand over any of the liberated peoples to another despot or tyrannical regime.

"There aren't any," Clark said to himself, "and after this war I don't think there will be any for a long, long time."

The other part of the pincer operation directed at Beijing was a Russian and European Union force, with American support, approaching from the northwest. That one was further away from the Chinese capital, but had succeeded in cutting completely across Mongolia and penetrating over two hundred miles into China from that direction.

Directed laser fire, particle beam fire, and the targeting and controlling of orbital bombardment from his old duty station at Point Solitude were all part of the support he was providing those operations. He was anxious to use the same awesome firepower to help open up a third front south of Shanghai so that the Chinese communist government's fall could be further hastened.

There was another hope he had.

Captain Clark held out the hope and desire, as did many American and other allied commanders, to be the officer who would command the fire mission that would destroy whatever command and control facility or bunker that housed the president of the People's Republic of China, Jien Zenim.

March 23, 2012, 19:35, local time

Observation deck, Sanyo Tower

Tokyo, Japan

There had been very few targets in the last two days for Leon's sniper position here high above the streets of the Japanese capitol.

After some stiff urban resistance on the streets and alleyways of the city, the fighting had seemed to melt away and now a surreal quiet had settled over the capitol.

Word had it that the commander of all Chinese forces on the island, beset by allied forces and their technology, powerless to stop American space power, and also beset by hordes of Japanese citizens, had surrendered unconditionally. Leon wouldn't believe that until it was official, and more importantly, until he had witnessed with his own eyes the lines of disarmed enemy prisoners.

Campbell had personally witnessed too many of his close friends, and heard of countless others, who were now dead or horribly wounded because they *believed* the enemy was either about to surrender, or already had done so, and had then momentarily let their guard down.

Still, he could believe it was possible while maintaining his guard at the very highest degree of preparedness and alertness. He could believe it might be so because of what he had seen over the last two weeks since they landed on Japan. There had been some Chinese resistance at first even though they had taken a merciless pounding before the landings. Apparently they had mobile reserves that had somehow avoided the attacks. These had created havoc further inland, away from the beaches.

Leon realized that havoc was a relative word. In this case, havoc meant that the allied advance had not gone unimpeded. In times gone by, the level of resistance encountered on this operation, particularly for such a major operation, would not have even been considered moderate. It was more like light resistance that was pointed at particular locations. The Chinese reserves, though they had fought hard at specific locales, had fallen victim to American technology and firepower. Any large concentrations in a position to be targeted by orbital bombardment had simply ceased to exist and the fighting over the last several days had devolved to sniping, roadside bombings and minor engagements.

Now this quiet.

Leon was sure that part of it was due to the Japanese civilians who had fought so hard themselves,

charging into automatic weapons fire of the smaller Chinese squads and patrols and overwhelming them with their numbers. Many Japanese died that way, but they exacted their revenge on the Chinese soldiers they were able to overcome in this manner.

As the Chinese personnel fell back in what had become more and more of a rout, they were shown no mercy whatsoever by the Japanese civilians. Given the atrocities that he had heard of, and given the large pits of Japanese dead that he had seen himself in their advance... filled with thousands of Japanese bodies at every stage of decomposition, from skeletal remains to new bodies, Leon could understand the Japanese reaction. Just as soon as the Chinese boot was lifted even the slightest bit off their necks, the Japanese had attacked their failing captors.

"Those pits were just like something out of Nazi Germany," Leon thought.

"No, they were much worse than any of the pictures I ever saw in history books about the Nazis... and their atrocities were considered among the worst in history up until their time."

As the sun got lower to the horizon and the time for his relief approached, Leon found that he could finally consider the end of this conflict and his life beyond it.

Although he looked forward to contemplating that, to rolling it over in his mind like a gentle river running through fertile country, he would wait to do so until he was off duty and safely back at base.

To do otherwise would be to let down his guard, and Leon Campbell was not about to do that... even for a moment.

May 8, 2012, 09:20, local time

Main Bridge over the Bei Jian River

Shaoguan, China

Lu Pham walked briskly with his wife, pulling their rickshaw behind them, dressed as peasants who were leaving the city with the stream of refugees retreating in front of the American advance. He felt that their disguise was adequate, and he knew that, with his personal security force of eight Vietnamese guards that he had personally brought to China, that he would be protected from any hoodlums that might otherwise prey on the refugees.

But it was not really the hoodlums that Lu Pham was afraid of.

He was much more concerned about the Chinese internal security forces that might recognize him.

For him, a hero of the People's Republic, a ranking member of the Politburo, and an Executive Committee member, to be found out here amongst the refugees, dressed like this, would be treated for what it was. Desertion and potential defection.

At this stage of the game there could be little doubt what the punishment would be, particularly for Song. Oh, they would perhaps use Song and the threat of her torture and death to control Lu, but the ultimate outcome could not be in doubt, and that was because the ultimate outcome of this entire effort was no longer in doubt.

Lu had accepted it. He didn't exactly understand it, but he saw it and accepted it. He, his entire staff...no one...was going to stop the American military machine now. The Americans had successfully turned the tables and overcome their disadvantage and now turned it into an advantage so great that they could not be stopped.

The operation in Manila Harbor had worked flawlessly. Tens of thousands of Americans, their allies, and literally hundreds of thousands of Philippine citizens had been either killed or injured. A lot of the equipment and vessels the Americans were using for the occupation and pacification of the Philippines had been destroyed.

But in the end, it was only a drop in the bucket. More vessels and more of their huge transport aircraft had replaced the men and material within two to three weeks and things kept right on going. Although a few more successes with LRASD devices programmed to overwhelm the American MSWAD system had succeeded, never again would the Americans or their allies leave themselves subject to such massive casualties. They simply adjusted their own procedures and applied their own technology to avoid it...and then kept coming.

With dwindling funds...and personnel, the People's Republic simply did not have the capability to develop counters to the growing American technological edge.

"...and if we did, we would no longer have the capacity to manufacture them," Lu muttered as he walked along.

"What's that, Lu?" Song asked as she turned towards him.

"Shhh, do not address me by my name."

Speaking more quietly now, while looking around carefully to see if anyone had noticed, Lu answered his wife's question.

"It was nothing, I was just thinking as we walk along."

Song realized her mistake and why Lu had said what he did. He had told her of this before and she chided herself mentally and then assured Lu.

"I am sorry husband, I will not do it again."

At the end of the bridge, Lu and Song were directed to the right, to the south down a narrow lane that wound along the river. They continued to follow this path for some miles, the crowds of refugees thinning markedly as they turned toward the American advance.

After several kilometers, they turned to the left and followed a gravel road up into the foothills around the river, ultimately climbing into more mountainous terrain where the road turned into a trail. By that evening, after several turns onto different trails, and some steep climbs, exhausted and hungry, they arrived at their destination.

It was a simple cave that had been boarded up on the outside and provided a dry place to be in out of the weather.

Within a few minutes, four of Lu's security personnel were in the structure with them, while the other four

maintained a vigil surrounding it.

After a short meal and some water to drink, Song lay down and was soon asleep. Lu stayed up for some time, thinking about events that had led him to this point.

Lu Pham, hero of the People's Republic, member of the Executive Committee of the Politburo of China, life-long enemy of the United States...was going to defect.

The contacts had all already been made. An American special forces team would arrive tomorrow evening or, at the latest, early the next morning and take he and Song away.

Lu's had lost his son, his daughter, his grand-daughter, and most of his best friends, including Sung and Ming Hsu, who had been killed in a large American orbital attack on Tianjin. His accomplishments did not amount to much compared to that. No amount of acclaim for the political or military apparatus of the People's Republic could compensate for that loss.

This late in life, Lu realized that he had been trying to compensate for something that could not be compensated for, the loss of his parents to American forces during the Vietnam war. It had been the fuel that had driven him to accept the Chinese offer and work for them those many years. It had led to his great discoveries and accomplishments...but it had not brought back his parents

And now, it had led to the deaths of his beloved children and close friends...and they would not be coming back either.

Very late in life Lu finally learned that unless the thing he was doing was worth the sacrifice in and of itself, unless it held intrinsic value and worth, then it would not bring any reward or peace. He certainly had none now.

But he was going to do something about it, however late.

Herecognized now that there was something intrinsic by which the west in general, and America in particular, was driven. It was something more than retribution, revenge, or even ideology . It was something almost spiritual that fueled them and gave them the incentive and drive necessary to persevere regardless of circumstance. It was deep and it had allowed America to return from a condition that he had been certain should have finished them off.

...and yet it had not.

Lu Pham was determined now, after all of his own losses, after all of his own experiences, to discover what it was that drove them.

If he could survive to do so.

June 2, 2012, 09:20, local time

Special Hardened Bunker

Near Guilin, China

President Jien Zenim was ready to depart this facility. Liu Liang had made all of the necessary arrangements and he and his staff would be safely departing in the next fifteen minutes.

Of the original twelve orbital bombardment facilities, only three remained. The others had all been found and destroyed by the Americans, one by one, with the Executive Committee members unlucky enough to have been in them when they were attacked.

Now, there were fewer Executive Committee members left than there were specially hardened facilities... and Jien Zenim did not know where the most important (excepting himself, of course) of those members was.

For almost a month now, Lu Pham had been missing. All efforts to find him had been futile. Jien was uneasy about it... but could not bring himself to believe that Lu Pham, after all that had been done for him, after his undying commitment to the cause, would intentionally desert that cause or his mentor.

The other surviving Executive Committee member that Jien was aware of was his new arch enemy, Lin Xin. Somehow, Lin Xin had successfully avoided Liu Liang's efforts to silence and destroy him. Though Liu swore that there was no possibility that Lin could have survived the latest attempt, Jien knew he was still alive.

He knew it because he had just received a communiqué from Lin requesting either a personal meeting with the President, or he President's physical location so a video conference could be arranged to discuss future planning.

At this point, Jien was not about to be lured into a trap like that. Jien would handle all of the *future planning* himself.

But a trap by Lin was now the least of Jien's worries.

It was clear that the Americans were going to find all of the special facilities, so there was no use waiting to be pulverized into dust by one of their orbital attacks. Jien knew that there were still plenty of innocuous places in China to hide and still enough loyal troops and forces to continue the fight. Plans had been made against just such conditions as this, and though Jien had never expected to have to implement those plans, he was content that he could go into the hinterlands like Mao himself, and re-establish a power base and return to eradicate the enemy and drive them from the mainland when the time came.

The Chinese people, in their great masses, who had benefited so much from Jien's guidance and planning, would not let him down.

Jien Zenim was certain of that.

...and Jien Zenim was wrong.

July 14, 2012, 16:17, local time

Outside of the Provincial Capitol Building

Kunming, China

Kunming is the Provincial capital of the Yunnan Province. As Chinese cities go, it is relatively small. But it is still a large city, having grown to over one and a half million people by the summer of 2012. The influx of so many refugees trying to escape the fighting to the east had almost doubled the size of the city.

Kunming was relatively remote, located within four to five hundred kilometers of the Vietnam, Laos, and Burma frontiers, each of which contained many very remote areas, barely inhabited.

Much of its economy was based on the production of items more important to infrastructure, agriculture, and more civil related matters than military ones. Because of all of this, Kunming had escaped most of the destruction of war, and this made it a prime area for refugees to run to.

One of those refugees was President Jien Zenim.

He was operating out of a secure area of the Provincial capital facilities. The Yunnan governor was very loyal to Jien Zenim and was dedicated to using his own influence and provincial forces to help protect him if he could.

But events were setting their own course.

Just this morning Liu Liang had indicated that the potential for unrest and insurrection in the city was high and that the President should consider moving his operations towards a remote village on the Burma border where he could continue to consolidate.

Jien Zenim had agreed.

His efforts here over the last few weeks seemed to be progressing nicely, despite the bad news to the east where most of Manchuria was under allied control and Beijing was about to fall.

The Three Gorges Dam had been captured intact by the allied and the PLA forces there to defend it if they could, or destroy it if they must, had simply surrendered and held the facilities until the Americans could arrive.

Even more disturbing was the now confirmed report that Lu Pham had defected to the Americans and had already been flown out of the country. No miracle technological answers to the continuing situation would be forthcoming.

All of this was disheartening, but Jien was certain that he could rise above it. Many of the PLA, COSTIND, Politburo and other agency refugees had been found and were coalescing here. They all looked to Jien Zenim to organize their efforts and strike back at the western aggressors pouring into the country, now from three directions. It would just take some time.

But with news of the potential of unrest amongst the masses, Jien knew would not have the time here.

The masses had always been the great unknown, the great wild card in Chinese politics. Zenim had learned over the course of decades that they were fickle and had to be guided...but they also had to be respected. There were just too many of them.

"Liu, is everything prepared," Jien asked as he and his chief of staff exited the building.

"As well as can be expected, sir.

“We have security out along the path we will be taking and they will contact us if there is any problem.”

“Good, good,” Zenim replied.

“Exactly how long should it take for us all to arrive at our destination?”

Liu Liang, who had planned their departure in great detail, down to every last turn on every street, did not have to do any calculations.

“Twenty minutes to the airstrip outside of the city. Two hours of low level flight.

“We should have you and the other leaders on the ground and in your meeting within three hours, Mr. President.”

On the way out of town, Liu followed Jien Zenim's armored limo. There were security cars in front and behind. As the four vehicle motorcade approached a turn towards the four lane thoroughfare that would lead them out of the city, there was trouble.

“Mr. President,” Jien Zenim heard Liu say in his ear phone.

“A large demonstration has spilled into the streets between us and the highway.

“We are going to divert to an alternate route.”

Jien Zenim was not concerned. Liu was a professional and there was no doubt that the alternate routes planned would get them safely to their intended destination. They always had...and they would today too.

At the next turn, the lead security car led while Jien Zenim's vehicle followed. But Liu's vehicle and the security car behind him did not make the turn. The trailing security car sped up and rapidly exited the area while Liu's car slowed to a stop at the intersection and watched.

Jien Zenim saw the large crowd spill into the street in front of the lead security vehicle. That car stopped as the entire street was blocked by hundreds and hundreds of people who were holding anti-government signs and shouting, repeating some chant that Jien Zenim could not make out.

Jien's car stopped directly behind the first car.

Looking back, Jien saw that more crowds had spilled into the street behind his vehicle and that Liu's car and the trailing security car were nowhere to be seen.

“Liu, Liu.

“We are surrounded and being hemmed in by a large crowd.

“We need assistance.”

There was no response.

Suddenly, as the crowd approached the first car, all of the doors opened and the security guards came piling out. They were all well trained and veterans of China's special, elite forces. Jien Zenim expected

them to raise their weapons and confront the crowd, firing on them if necessary.

But they didn't.

They ran, and to Zenim's surprise, the crowd opened up a corridor for them to pass through.

At that same moment, Jien's driver and personal guard exited his car in much the same manner and ran directly through the approaching crowd, who let them pass.

Jien Zenim, thinking he could reason with the crowd and sway and manipulate them, opened his door. That was when he heard the crowd's chant clearly.

“Kill Zenim, Kill Zenim!”

That's when it finally dawned on Jien Zenim exactly what all of this was about...the need for the trip to the Burma frontier.

A thrown stone glanced off Zenim's temple, drawing blood, as he rapidly got back in the car and closed and locked the door. Desperately, he looked through the safety glass separating him from the front seat and saw that there were no keys in the ignition. The driver had taken them with him.

The crowd reached the vehicle and began beating on it with sticks, rocks and anything hard they could lay their hands on. Quickly, that beating gave way to a violent rocking and within a few seconds the armored limo containing the President of the People's Republic of China, President Jien Zenim, was turned completely over onto its top. Gasoline from Molotov cocktails was liberally doused over the entire car and then lit.

As the burning pyre produced a column of thick black smoke, and as Jien Zenim was literally roasted alive before the armored limo's gas tank exploded, ending his life, the people surrounded the burning vehicle and continued their chant.

“Kill Zenim, kill Zenim!”

From a block away, back at the intersection, Liu Liang watched it all from his own armored limo. When Zenim's limo exploded, he spoke two simple phrases into his the mouthpiece, reporting to his new leader.

“Lin Xin, this is Liu.

“It is done.”

July 18, 2012, 20:00, local time

The Oval Office, The White House

Washington, DC

President John Bowers could scarcely belief it was over.

Well, the major fighting was over...the hard task of keeping the peace and reconstituting world affairs

still remained. But the President knew that he and the American people and their allies would be equal to the task.

The necessary paperwork had been signed by the lone surviving member of the Executive Committee of the People's Republic Politburo, Lin Xin. The unconditional surrender was in place and millions of allied soldiers were now pouring into China and the other remaining enemy controlled lands.

...and it was time to announce it to a waiting, anxious and war weary nation. A nation that would surely erupt into celebration and cheering the likes of which had not been seen since V-J Day so many years ago, before John Bower had been born.

“My fellow Americans, free citizens of the world.

“Tonight I am here to make an announcement of utmost importance to us all. It is an announcement we have longed for, dreamed of, fought for, bled for, and that many of our citizens and military personnel have died for.

“Four days ago, Jien Zenim, the leader of the People's Republic of China and the principle architect for the horrific war we have been involved in was killed in Kunming, the capitol of the Yunnan Province where he had been hiding. Fittingly, he was killed by an uprising of his own people.

“Today, July 8th, 2012, the remaining government and military leaders of the People's Republic surrendered unconditionally to our forces, finally achieving V-C day for Victory in China..

“My fellow Americans, the war is over.

“While it will take some time, perhaps many years, to completely rebuild and reconstitute our own nation and the nations of those afflicted by this horrific war, particularly the enemy nations, we will carry out that duty in the same manner that we have gone about winning the military conflict.

“Our doctrine will be to stamp out the evils of totalitarianism, tyranny and abject compulsion. No government, no religion acting as government, and no ideology that endorses such tactics and beliefs will stand after this conflict. Our enemies will be reconstituted into Constitutional Republics where basic unalienable rights are recognized and protected by their governments.

“We have persevered in a horrible conflict, but we have accomplished a great work for ourselves, for our children and for our children's children. We will not abandon the very foundational reason for that work at this hour.

“The road forward will be long and it will be fraught with difficulty...but not as hard and not as difficult as the path we have just trod. We can look forward to brighter days, days filled with peace and hope because of the sacrifice and commitment of so many...indeed, of us all.

“I will not take more of your time. I will not further delay your well deserved celebration. More information regarding conditions and policies will be announced by the various agencies of government in the upcoming days.

“For now, let us celebrate this victory, this day that we have all longed for, worked for, and suffered for. God be praised that we have survived to see it...and God grant that we shall always be worthy of keeping this peace that He has helped us win.

“With His blessings, I know we shall.

“God bless the United States of America.

“Goodnight.”

Epilogue

John Bowers would go on to finish his term as President and be re-elected to a second term by a landslide.

In addition to establishing the Bower Doctrine for reconstruction and reconstitution after the war, which called for the establishment of Constitutional republics in all defeated lands, the President fulfilled another promise he had made to his cabinet and the people. He turned the awesome research, development, production, and manufacturing capabilities of the United States outward to space.

Before the end of his second term, first permanent bases and then flourishing colonies were established on the moon, Mars and in the asteroid belt.

Later administrations would push that threshold even further into space. It would expand within ten years to Venus, to Jupiter, to Neptune, Pluto, and beyond. But John Bowers would be recognized as the father of Man's expansion into space, and he would be remembered, along with Norm Weisskopf, as one of the three or four greatest Presidents in American history.

In all of it, he would be supported and encouraged by his wife, Sandy, who would also go down in history as one of the greatest first ladies in American history.

Lu Pham and his wife Song were brought to the United States under the tightest of secrecy and security. After a debriefing that lasted well over two years, and after psychological evaluations indicated that he was sincere in his agreements, he and Song were given new names and relocated to the Houston, Texas area.

He worked there for the last twenty years of his life as a chief research engineer for NASA, where his work and activities were, by agreement, kept under tight surveillance for the rest of his life.

Based on his theoretical research and the virtual models he created based on them, which models were created using Sandra McPherson's virtual modeling methodologies, Lu proved that faster than light travel was theoretically possible. In so doing, he added so much to man's understanding of quantum physics that his name (his new name) became as renowned and revered as the name of Albert Einstein.

Fifteen years after his death, on a small Jovian moon, a material was discovered that allowed for Lu's theories to be put into practice, making the construction of the first Faster-than-Light (FTL) drive possible. The drive would be named after Lu Pham's new name, Perry Lee, and would be called the Lee Drive. It would allow mankind to finally truly reach for the stars.

Jess and Cindy Simmons, Joseph and Elizabeth Trevor, Hernando and Maria Rodriguez and their boys Felipe and Jose, Billy Simmons and his new sweetheart Patricia Trevor, Leon Campbell and the girl he

would ultimately court and marry, Ruth Johnson, Leon's mother Geneva and most other Americans would live out their lives in peace and freedom. That did not mean they would be perfect or without any problems or troubles. Free choice goes hand in hand with liberty and free choice means people are free to make mistakes.

But to people who base their lives and their choices on fundamental moral principles, which principles are based on a faith in a loving and merciful God, mistakes represent opportunities. Such opportunities allow people to learn, to grow and to improve. Improvement through this process, as long as the moral foundation is maintained by the people, allow for those people to become something much more, and much better than what they otherwise might have been.

This was the great secret and ideal that Lu Pham (later Perry Lee) was searching for...and ultimately found.

In keeping with this, Medal of Honor winner Leon Campbell was captivated by his late, younger brother's final letter. Over a several month period, he searched for and found Alan's friend from the war, Lonnie Thompson, the one who had taught Alan on the battlefield about Jesus and been instrumental in Alan's conversion before his death. Leon arranged, along with his mother, Geneva, to meet Lonnie and his family and they all became best of friends.

Leon and his wife and mother ultimately joined the church that Alan had joined. He raised his children to have faith in Christ like his mother had, and like his brother developed and shared before his death. Many years later, amidst great honor and respect, Leon became one of the General Authorities of that church, traveling the world proclaiming his faith.

Hernando Rodriguez would ultimately become the Mayor of Miami And then a U.S. Congressman. Maria made the work of her life her family and home. When her parents became old and infirm, she took them in and she and her family took care of them. In 2023 she would be named Woman and Mother of the Year.

The Rodriguez's son, Felipe, would follow in his father's political footsteps and one day he would become the Governor of the state of Florida. Their son, Jose, would follow in his father's military footsteps and join the United States Army. He would make a career of his service and ultimately rise to the rank of Major General before he retired in 2055.

Billy Simmons and his wife Patricia would inherit his parent's Lazy H Ranch, where he would work the fields successfully and expand the ranch until it became one of the largest and most successful operations in all of north Texas. The Simmons would wisely invest their profits into banking, auto sales, and other real estate until they became some of the wealthiest people in that part of the country...though you would never know it by looking at them.

Billy would never lose his love of taking fishing and hunting trips up and down Clear Creek...and he would teach it to his three sons and two daughters, who in turn would pass it along to most of the eighteen grandchildren the five of them would produce.

All of them would live by the simple motto that Billy and Patricia both adopted after they got married concerning their own parents,

"If I can be half the person my parents are, and raise my kids to be twice the person I am, then I will have accomplished much good in this world."

...and they did.

Bhupendra Gavanker became the first elected President of India after the Allied Coalition Occupation Authority once again established truly free elections there. His good friend, Field Marshall Andrei Nosik, would become the President of Russia at about the same time. Both of them would serve the maximum amount of time allowed law and they would spend many years working together for the improvement of their respective peoples in peace and freedom.

Reconstruction and reconstitution of the war-torn countries took well over thirty years. It was completed using the Bowers Doctrine, and paid for (or paid back) from the income of the rebuilt nations themselves, as their free market economies kicked in to the solar-system wide free markets.

Every one of the affected nations adopted a Constitutional Republic form of government based as closely on the American model as possible, without exception and without opposition. Those governments all included a clear separation of federal powers and the recognition of unalienable rights for their citizens, including freedom of speech, freedom of religion (as long as the religious beliefs did not deny or advocate the denial of unalienable rights), the right to self and societal defense through bearing of arms, trial by jury of one's peers, and every other right mentioned in the Bill of Rights in the United States Constitution.

It would not be until during the lifetime of the children's, children's, children's, children of the people who lived through it-over one hundred and fifty years-that the lessons learned in the great world war of 2005-2012 began to be forgotten. It would be another fifty years after that before the same old tired ideologies of tyranny, elitism, collectivism and absolutism-but with new space-aged names-took more firm root among the people.

When they finally did, it would cause the cycles of time to turn and the wheels of history to grind away the golden years of mankind's peaceful expansion into space, leading to yet another large and horrible military conflict.

That conflict would not play itself out merely on a world-wide stage. No, at that later date, it would play itself out on a solar system-wide and interstellar stage.

But for now, the telling of that tale is best left to a future day and time.

Afterward

The Dragon's Fury Series of novels is a fictional account of a possible World War arising out of current events. The epitaph or summary of that horrific war can best be stated as follows.

First, simply said, *the price of liberty is eternal vigilance* .

Second, if a free people will not pay the price of eternal vigilance for the moral underpinnings of their liberty and defending against the threats (both external and internal) growing against them, then ultimately and unavoidably *the tree of liberty must be watered from time to time with the blood of tyrants and patriots*.

Third, let the following table, that documents the potentially horrific price of the watering of the tree of liberty, attest to what is at stake in a modern, post-911 world unless we remain vigilant:

WORLD WAR III CASUALTIES

APPROXIMATE NUMBERS – DEAD AND WOUNDED

OCTOBER 2005 – JULY 2012

ALLIED CASUALTIES

	Military		Civilian	
	Dead	Wounded	Dead	Wounded
USA	2,310,500	4,765,500	9,750,500	14,250,500
Canada	875,000	1,650,500	1,060,000	1,985,500
UK	1,550,500	2,750,500	1,450,500	2,205,500
EU	1,950,500	4,950,500	5,200,500	7,100,500
Russia	5,505,500	9,240,500	11,960,500	18,350,500
Brazil	1,875,500	3,500,500	950,500	1,675,000
Australia	1,550,500	2,500,500	1,850,500	3,100,500
Japan	450,000	1,100,500	4,575,000	7,550,000
Israel	980,500	1,700,500	950,500	2,550,000
Taiwan	1,008,500	2,500,500	2,575,000	4,500,500
TOTALS	18,057,000	34,660,000	40,293,500	63,268,000

CAS/GIR CASUALTIES

	Military		Civilian	
	Dead	Wounded	Dead	Wounded
China	49,510,500	85,570,500	55,500,500	98,350,000
India	41,460,000	72,450,500	48,250,000	84,350,500
GIR	25,350,000	41,200,500	27,500,500	55,540,500

TOTALS	116,320,500	169,221,500	131,251,000	238,241,000
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Finally, let the words of the ancient Greek philosopher, Sophocles, who spoke them over twenty-three centuries ago, provide historical perspective and reference to the truth of these principles:

Far-stretching, endless Time

Brings forth all hidden things,

And buries that which once did shine.

The firm resolve falters,

The sacred oath is shattered;

And let none say, "It cannot happen here."

The End of Volume V.

The End of the Dragon's Fury Series.

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

TERM/ACRONYM	<u>DEFINITION</u>
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AAW	Anti-Aircraft Warfare
Abrams	Premier main battle tank designated M1A1. (U.S.)
ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile
ABS	American Broadcasting System
ADCAP	Advanced Capability
AEGIS	An advanced phased array radar system for acquiring, tracking and engaging airborne targets (U.S. Navy)
AH-64	Most capable western attack helicopter called Apache (U.S.)
AIM-999	Advanced, electronic firing cruise missile called Hail Storm
ALCM	Air Launched Cruise Missile
ALRAAM	Advanced Long Range Anti-Aircraft Missile
AMRAAM	Advanced Medium Range Air to Air Missile
Apache	Dangerous attack helicopter designated AH-64 (U.S.)
APS	Armored Personnel Carrier
APSRON	Afloat Pre-positioning Ship Squadron (U.S. Navy)
ARCM	Anti-Radiation Cruise Missile
ASAT	Anti-Satellite
ASDS	Advanced SEAL Delivery System
ASROC	Anti-Submarine Rocket assisted torpedo
ASV	Armored Security Vehicle designated M1117A
ASW	Anti-Submarine Warfare
ATO	Asian Theater of Operations
AV-8B+	VTOL or STOL fighter-bomber used by U.S. Marines called Harrier. (U.S.)
Avenger	AAW variant of HMMWV carrying Stinger missiles. (U.S.)
AWACS	Airborne warning and command aircraft

B-1B	Advanced supersonic, Long range bomber called Lancer or Bone (U.S.)
B-2	Sub-sonic, long range stealth strike bomber called Spirit (U.S.)
Backfire	Supersonic, long range Russian strike aircraft, exported and license built designated TU-22M. (Red China, India)
Badger	Older, subsonic, 1970's vintage Russian strike aircraft export designated TU-16(Red China, India, GIR)
Bandit	Enemy Aircraft
BATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (U.S.)
BDA	Bomb or Battle Damage Assessment
Bear	Older, prop-driven Russian reconnaissance & ASW aircraft designated TU-142. Exported and license built. (India)
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defense
BRITREP	British Representative
Buddy Stores	Refueling tanks
C-90A, B	Huge surface-wave lift transport aircraft developed by the U.S.
CANTFOR	Canadian Task Force
CAP	Combat Air Patrol
CAS	Coalition of Asian States
CBC	Continental Broadcasting Company
CBG	Carrier Battle Group
CBT	Carrier Battle Task Force
CENTCOM	Central Command (U.S.)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (U.S.)
CIC	Combat Information Center

CINC	Commander in Chief
CINCCENT	Commander in Chief Central (U.S.)
CINCPAC	Commander in Chief Pacific (U.S.)
CIR	Council on International Relations
CIWS	Close in Weapons System
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations (U.S.)
CO	Commanding Officer
Comanche	Advanced, stealthy recon/attack helicopter. RAH-66 (U.S.)
Condition Zebra	Watertight combat threat condition for naval vessels.
CONUS	Continental United States
COSAS	Coalition of South American States
COSCO	China Ocean-going Ship Company
COSTIND	Commission of Science, Technology & Industry for National Defense (Red China).
CTF	Combined Task Force
CVN, CVX	Nuclear Powered Aircraft Carrier, CVX is the latest generation
DDG	Guided Missile Destroyer
DDH	Large helicopter carrying destroyer
DDX	Advanced Guided Missiles Destroyer (U.S.)
DNC	Democratic National Committee
DOE	Department of Energy (U.S.)
Dragon's Fury	Chinese operation in March 2006 to ambush the U.S. 7th Fleet
E-2C	Naval Airborne Early Warning and Command aircraft called Hawkeye. (U.S.)
E-3	Air Force warning and command aircraft called Sentry. (U.S., U.K., Japan)

Eagle	High performance, supersonic fighter aircraft designated F-15C. (U.S.)
ELINT	Electronic Intelligence
EMCOMM	Electronic Emissions and Communications
EMP	Electromagnetic Pulse
EMT	Emergency Medical Technician
ETO	European Theater of Operations
EU	European Union
EW	Electronic Warfare
F/A-18E	Most modern, supersonic, high-performance naval fighter/attack aircraft called Super Hornet. (U.S.)
F/A-18F	Two seat attack/strike/EW version of F/A-18E. (U.S.)
F-14D	Latest upgrade (early 90's) of supersonic, high performance, long range , 1970's carrier based fighter/bomber called Tomcat
F-15	High performance, supersonic fighter aircraft called Eagle
F-15E	Two-seat strike version of F-15C aircraft called Strike Eagle
F-16	Highly maneuverable fighter/bomber called Falcon or Viper
F-22	Advanced, stealthy, high performance fighter, the Raptor
F-35	New, very advanced, multi-service fighter-bomber called the Joint Strike Fighter. STOL and VTOL. (U.S. and allies)
Falcon	Highly maneuverable fighter/bomber, F-16 (U.S. and allies)
FBC-7	Long range strike aircraft (Red China)
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation (U.S.)
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency (U.S.)
Fencer	Long Range Strike Aircraft called designated SU-24 (China.

	GIR and India)
FFG	Guided Missiles Frigate
Flanker	Advanced Russian fighter/bomber exported and license built designated SU-30. (Red China, GIR, India)
Foxbat	High speed, 1970's vintage Russian export interceptor designated MIG-25. (North Korea, GIR).
FTP	File Transfer Protocol
Fulcrum	High performance Russian export and license built fighter bomber designated MIG-29 (Red China, India, GIR)
GIR	Greater Islamic Republic
Global Sentinel	High altitude, long endurance unmanned aerial vehicle. (U.S.)
GOA	Government Office of Accounting
GPS	Global Positioning System
HAIL STORM	Advanced, electronic firing cruise missile, AIM-999 (U.S.)
HARM	High-speed Anti-Radiation Missile
Harrier	VTOL or STOL fighter bomber used by U.S. Marines and U.S. allies designated AV-8B+ (U.S.)
Hawkeye	Naval Airborne Early Warning and Command aircraft designated E-2C. (U.S., Taiwan, Japan, France)
HELLFIRE	Laser guided anti-tank or surface missile (U.S.)
HGP	Human Genome Project
HMMWV	High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle
HR-7	Hyper-velocity, exo-atmosphere reconnaissance and surveillance aircraft called the Thunder Dart. (U.S.)
HUMRAMM	AAW variant of HMMWV carrying ground-launched AMRAAM missiles. (U.S.)

ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (Nuclear)
IDF	Israeli Defense Force, or Indigenous Defense Fighter (ROC)
IFF	Identification Friend or Foe designator
IFV	Infantry Fighting Vehicle
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service
J-10	Advanced fighter/interceptor/attack aircraft. (Red China)
JGI	Joint Genome Institute (U.S.)
JH-7	Long range interceptor aircraft (Red China)
JMSDF	Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force
JSF	Joint Strike Fighter (U.S.)
JSOW	Joint Standoff Weapon
JSTAR	Battlefield management aircraft using synthetic aperture radar and advanced processing (U.S.)
KEDS	Kinetic Energy Defense System (On board U.S. Space Ships)
KFOR	Korean Forces
KS-2(+)	Advanced surface to air missile, Plus (+) variety has similar characteristics to Patriot. (Red China)
KS-3	Advanced version of KS-2+ missile, TMD capable (Red China)
KV	Kill Vehicle
Lancer	Advanced supersonic, long-range bomber, the B-1B (U.S.)
LAWS	Light Armor Weapon System
LAX	Los Angeles International Airport
LCU	Landing Craft Utility
LRASD	Long Range Anti-Shipping Device
LWS	Laser Weapon System (Aboard U.S. Space Ships)

M1117A	New generation Armored Security Vehicle (U.S.)
M1A1	Premier main battle tank called Abrams. (U.S.)
Mach	Designation for the speed of sound
MAD	Mutually Assured Destruction
Mk-77 SCWS	New American Supercavitating Torpedo system
MLRS	Multiple Launch Rocket System
MEB	Marine Expeditionary Brigade (U.S.)
MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit (U.S.)
MFD, MFCD	Multi Function Display, Multi Function Color Display
MIG-25	High speed, 1970's vintage, Russian exported interceptor called Foxbat. (North Korea, G1R).
MIG-29	High performance Russian export and license built fighter bomber called Fulcrum (Red China, India, G1R)
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
MPSRON	Maritime Pre-positioning Ship Squadron (U.S. Navy)
MSWAD	Modulating Sonic Acoustical Wave Device
MUAS	Miniature Underwater All-aspect Surveillance Devices
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NAS	National Academy of Sciences (U.S.)
NASA	National Aeronautical and Space Administration
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCA	National Command Authority (President of the United States)
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer in the military
NEW	National Endowment for Women
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization (Affiliated with the United Nations)

NHGRI	National Health Genome Research Institute (U.S.)
NIH	National Institute of Health (U.S.)
NORAD	North American Air Defense Command (U.S. and Canada)
NORCOM	Northern Command (U.S.)
NRO	National Reconnaissance Office (U.S.)
NSA	National Security Advisor or Agency (U.S.)
OIC	Officer in Charge
OPLAN	Operation Plan
Orion	Turbo prop ASW, Recon & strike aircraft designate P-3C (U.S. and allies)
P-3C	Turbo prop ASW, Recon & strike aircraft called Orion (U.S. and allies)
Patriot Missile	Land based, long range, anti-aircraft missile system.
PCRM	Poly-carbon Reactive Mesh defense for U.S. Space Ships
PDWE	Pulse Detonation Wave Engine
Peacekeeper APC	Highly exported APC armed with .50 cal. machine gun. (U.S.)
Pervador	Modern high speed, high altitude, reconnaissance and surveillance aircraft designated SR-77. Replaced the SR-71 Blackbird. (U.S.)
Phoenix	Long range air to air missile designated AIM-54 (U.S.)
PKF	Patriotic Kurdistan Front
PLA	People's Liberation Army (Red China)
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
POC	Point of Contact
PRC	People's Republic of China (Red China)

PTO	Pacific Theater of Operations
RAH-66	Advanced, stealthy recon and attack helicopter called the Comanche (U.S.)
RAM	Rolling Airframe Missile
Raptor	Most advanced, stealthy, high performance air superiority fighter aircraft designated F-22 (U.S.)
ROC	Republic of China (Taiwan)
ROC(AF) (N)	Republic of China Air Force or Navy
RORO	Roll On Roll Off transport ship
RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
R&R	Rest and relaxation
RTB	Return to Base
RV	Re-entry Vehicle
SAC	Strategic Air Command or Special Agent in Charge
SAG	Surface Action Group
Sea Flanker	Naval version of the Russian SU-30 aircraft designated SU-33. (Red China, India)
Sea Sparrow	Medium range, ship launched, radar guided naval anti-aircraft missile. (U.S.)
SEAL	Sea, Air & Land Special Forces (U.S. Navy)
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense (U.S.)
Sentry	Air Force warning and command aircraft designated E-3. (U.S., U.K., Japan)
SFOD-D	Special Forces Operation Detachment - Delta
SFS	Security Force Superintendent
Sidewinder	Advanced all aspect short-range air to air missile designated

	AIM-9X (U.S.)
SITREP	Situation Report
SLCM	Submarine Launched Cruise Missile
SPAEGIS	Space-born version of the AEGIS weapon's system
Spirit	Stealthy, sub-sonic, long-range bomber designated B-2 (U.S.)
SR-77	New high speed, high altitude recon and surveillance aircraft called the Pervador. Replaced the SR-71 Blackbird. (U.S.)
SSBN	Nuclear Powered Ballistic Missile Submarine carrying ICBM's.
SSCN	Large nuclear powered arsenal submarines (U.S.)
SSCVN	Large nuclear powered aircraft carrier submarine (U.S.)
SSGN	Nuclear Powered Guided Missile Submarine carrying SLCM's.
SSN	Nuclear powered attack submarine
SSTN	Large nuclear powered transport submarines (U.S.)
SSTO	Single Stage to Orbit Space launch
Standard Missile	Long range U.S. anti-air missile. Advance used for TMD.
Stinger missile	Short range, all aspect, self-guided anti-air missile. Shoulder, vehicle, helicopter, aircraft or ship fired. (U.S. & allies)
STOL	Short Take-off and Landing
Strike Eagle	Two-seat version of F-15C aircraft designated F-15E (U.S.)
SU-24	Long Range Strike Aircraft called Fencer (CAS & GIR)
SU-30	Advanced Russian fighter/bomber exported and license built called Flanker. (Red China, GIR, India)
SU-33	Naval version of the SU-30 aircraft, designated Sea Flanker. (Red China, India)
SU-35	Two seat strike/radar suppression/EW version of SU-30

	aircraft. (Red China)
SUBT CIWS	Sub-surface Threat Close in Weapons System
Super Hornet	Modern, supersonic, high performance, naval fighter/attack aircraft designated F/A-18 E (U.S.)
SUV	Sport Utility Vehicle
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics (Police)
T-72	1980's variety main battle tank employed by GIR and CAS.
T-80	1990's variety main battle tank employed by GIR and CAS.
Tango	Military term for a terrorist
TAS	Tactical Assault Ship (Red China)
Ta shih	Chinese anti-stealth sensor, acquisition and fire control system.
TF	Task Force
Thunder Dart	Hyper-velocity, exo-atmosphere reconnaissance and surveillance aircraft designated HR-7. (U.S.)
Threat Condition	Watertight combat threat condition for naval vessels.
Zebra	
TMD	Theater Missile Defense
Tomcat	Supersonic, high performance, long range , 1970's carrier based fighter/bomber designated F-14D (U.S.)
Top Dome	Russian provided radar system for advanced surface vessels. (Red China)
Top Plate	Russian radar system for advanced surface vessels. (PRC)
TOW	Wire guided anti-tank missile
TU-16	Older, subsonic 1970's vintage Russian strike aircraft called Badger (Red China, India, GIR)

TU-22M	Supersonic, long range Russian strike aircraft, exported and license built called Backfire (Red China, India)
TU-142	Older, prop-driven Russian reconnaissance & ASW aircraft called Bear Exported and license built. (India)
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UEDF	Unified European Defense Force
USCGS	United States Coast Guard Ship
USFK	United States Forces Korea
V-150	Highly exported APC armed with a 20mm cannon used by U.S. Air Force security. (U.S. and allies)
VLF	Very Low Frequency
VLS	Vertical Launch System
VTOL	Vertical Take-off and Landing
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WNN	World News Network
XO	Executive Officer



About the Author

Jeff Head is a 48 year-old father of five children living in southwest Idaho. He and his wife of 26 years are also the proud grandparents of three grandchildren. He has worked as a designer, an engineer, and consultant in the defense, nuclear power, and computer industries. Among other projects, he has worked on the A-7 aircraft project, the San Onofre nuclear power project, the Multiple Launch Rocket System, and the Theater High Altitude Air Defense System.

While working as a director at Structural Dynamics Research Corporation, Mr. Head was involved in efforts at the Thiokol Corporation Strategic Operations Division to improve operations in the years following the shuttle Challenger disaster. As a result of that effort, in 1992 Mr. Head was presented a Vice President's award from Thiokol Strategic Operations for his team's efforts.

Since 1995, in both a program management and consulting role, Mr. Head has traveled extensively overseas on behalf of U.S. firms to establish manufacturing and development operations in the Far East, India, and Eastern Europe. Since January of 2004, Mr. Head has worked for the Federal Government designing and implementing security systems for the Bureau of Reclamation.

Mr. Head has been involved in several civic events including the "Klamath Basin Water Crisis" in Oregon in 2001. In August of 2002, Mr. Head accepted a "Person of the Year" award resulting from his involvement at Klamath Falls and work associated with his 9-11 web site, "The Attack on America".

Mr. Head is also very active in his Church and involved with the Boy Scouts of America, helping with rafting trips and winter camps in the mountains of southwest Idaho.