

UNTITLED WW3 PROJECT

By Alex Aaronson

Chapter 1

March 30th, 1981
Washington D.C.

It was just another Monday when Secret Service Agent Mathew Lynch pulled the limousine off of Florida avenue and onto the winding path of T street in front of the Washington Hilton Hotel. He'd made this drive over a dozen times during the past three years, and this was his least favorite part. While most of the Washington D.C. streets were laid out in straight lines connected to traffic circles, T street was one of the rare instances where the road wove between buildings. The gentle "s" curve wasn't difficult to navigate, even in the bulky 1972 Lincoln Continental limousine, but it did obscure visibility where T street intersected with Connecticut Avenue.

His annoyance wasn't enough to change fifteen years of evolution in Secret Service policy or tactics. This was where he would pick up President Ronald Reagan, as he had picked up President Jimmy Carter so many times before. Since the hotel's opening in 1965, the Secret Service had performed this ritual over one hundred times. Lynch was intimately familiar with it. He brought the limo to a stop in front of the VIP entrance where he would meet up with the President's personal detail. He kept his eyes moving as he pulled to a stop.

There was the usual cluster of reporters gathered to the left of the main hotel entrance. Ahead he could see the traffic moving down Connecticut towards DuPont Circle. He could only follow the flow of traffic for a few yards before it was obscured by the Universal North office building on his left. Lynch kept his focus on the forward quarter of the car. Another agent, outside of his view, opened the rear passenger side door. The limo had rear hinged "suicide"

doors that that opened outwards making it easier for the President to enter the vehicle. In his peripheral vision, he could see the President's entourage leaving the building and approaching on his right side. He could hear the reporters shouting questions as Reagan neared the limo.

That's when all hell broke loose. Six shots rang out inside of two seconds, shattering the Monday routine. Lynch's instinct was to hit the gas as soon as he heard the shots. It took all of his discipline to remain where he was, with the car in drive and his foot on the brake. He knew that he couldn't leave until his fellow agents had secured the president. For a brief two seconds, his duty to protect the president kept him in place.

During those two seconds, a million things happened at once. John Hinckley Jr., an unknown young man from Colorado, had raised a .22 caliber revolver and aimed it at the president as he walked by the crowd of reporters. Capital Police Officer "XXXXXX" watched as the gun came up, but there was nothing he could do in that instant to stop it; he was too far away. Instead, he watched as Hinckley fired the first two bullets in quick succession.

The first of these bullets struck Press Secretary James Brady in the head. The "devastator" bullet had a small Lead azide charge that exploded on impact, sending fragments of the lead slug into Brady's brain. The second round hit Officer XXXXX's partner, Thomas Delahanty, in the neck as he turned towards the sound of the first shot. Delahanty dropped to the ground as Brady called out, "I'm hit!" In the fraction of a second between the first shot and before Hinckley could fire a third, chaos erupted in the crowd of reporters that surrounded him.

Secret Service Agent Jerry Parr, who was standing closest to Reagan, instantly shoved the president towards the open door of the limousine. Fellow Agent Tim McCarthy started towards the crowd, and bystanders began converging on the shooter. The shoving of the crowd caused Hinckley's third shot to go wild. After being jostled but before anyone in the security detail or the nearby crowd to stop him, Hinkley fired again. His forth bullet landed squarely in Agent McCarthy's gut as he tried to obscure the shooter's view of the president.

With McCarthy down, Hinckley now had a clear shot at his target. He'd spent hours at the range practicing for this shot. He was proficient with his firearm and he would never have an opportunity like this again. As Agent Parr pushed Reagan into the limousine, Hinckley's fifth shot struck the armored window of the car, right where the president was standing. The sixth and final shot struck the rear of the car as the two men tumbled into the back seat.

As soon as Parr had Reagan in the back seat of the car, he called out to Lynch, "Haul Ass!" Lynch dropped the hammer. Agent Ray Shaddock slammed the door closed as the car leapt from the curb and hurtled towards Connecticut avenue, away from the Chaos.

In the back seat, Parr realized that he'd lost his radio during the struggle.

He yelled at the driver, "Lynch, give me the handset!"

Lynch pulled the handset from the radio and tossed it over his right shoulder as he flew towards the busy intersection. Parr sat with his back to the driver as he retrieved the handset.

"Halfback, this is Stagecoach," said Parr, using the code names for the limo (Stagecoach) and the follow on car (Halfback). "Rawhide is okay. Repeat, Rawhide is okay."

"Understood," said Shaddock, who had slammed into the follow-on car as it raced after the president's limo. "Are we going to the hospital, or the White House?"

"We're going..." Parr looked at Reagan, who was leaning forward in the limo. He appeared to be unharmed, just taken aback by the explosion of violence. "We're going to Crown," he said, using the code name for the White House.

"Back to the White House," replied Shaddock, matching the code word to the location in a breach of security protocol. This had Lynch concerned. If they were under a coordinated attack, Shaddock had just told anyone with a police scanner that the detail was headed back to White House.

Damn, we could be heading straight for an ambush, he thought as he cranked hard to the left onto Connecticut. In the back seat, Parr noticed that the president still seemed in distress. "Are you hit?" he asked.

“No...” replied the president. “At least, I don’t think so. I think you knocked the air out of me when we landed in here.” Parr realized Reagan was having trouble breathing. He reached across the passenger compartment and patted the president down. Working from his head then down to his chest and abdomen then out to his arms, Parr couldn’t find any signs of injury. No blood, no overt pain. From what Parr could see, his detail had just been very lucky. A small circular crack in the armored window to his left emphasized the point. *We’ve literally dodged a bullet*, he thought.

The president brought him back into the moment when he said, “I’m having trouble breathing... I think you might have cracked one of my ribs.” Parr looked back at Reagan but lost sight of him as the car entered the tunnel under DuPont circle. Lynch was on the radio, coordinating with Shaddock in the follow-on car, and Agent Mary Ann Gordon in the motorcade’s decoy limo, a near exact copy of the one Lynch was driving. As the vehicle rose out of the tunnel and back into the open, Parr was aghast to see blood on the president’s lip. Reagan dabbed at his mouth with a handkerchief. It came away red.

“Damit,” said Parr. “Lynch, we’ve got to get to the hospital now!” Lynch had been considering that since the moment the shots rang out. He knew that the nearest trauma unit was in the hospital at George Washington University. This would put him heading in the opposite direction (west instead of east) than his route to the White House. He pulled on the cord of the radio handset to retrieve it from the passenger compartment and called out to agent Gordon in the decoy;

“Gordon, change of plans, we’re heading to the ER at GW.”

“Understood,” came the reply. Everyone in the limo then careened to the right as Lynch swerved to the left to avoid a car pulling out into the right lane. Parr picked up the handset that Lynch had dropped and repeated the change of course to Shaddock in Halfback. By this time, a cruiser and two motorcycles from the Capitol Police had joined the head of the motorcade as it screamed towards the White House. Just as Parr and Reagan had regained their balance,

inertia slammed them to the left as Lynch made the 130 degree right turn onto K street, just in front of Farragut Square.

“Jesus Lynch, it won’t do us any good if you kill us all before we get there,” said Parr, scrambling back to his seat. Lynch ignored the quip. He was singularly focused on getting to the hospital. Shaddock watched from Halfback as the limo went right and the Capitol Police went left.

“Damit,” said Shaddock to nobody in particular. Then to his driver he said, “Get in front of Stagecoach and make a hole for them.” The driver floored the Cadillac and pulled into the left lane. In the limo, Lynch understood what was happening, and let off the gas to allow Halfback to take the lead. *More of a fullback now*, thought Lynch as the Caddy took the role of lead blocker. The two cars raced towards Washington Circle. Halfback merged right into the circle access lane. A Honda Civic, oblivious to the sirens of the oncoming state cars, pulled halfway onto the lane before being slammed back against the curb by Halfback. The front of the tiny import blew apart as the 10,000 pound Cadillac tossed it aside.

Lynch flinched, but stayed the course as he passed the wreck. “Oh hell,” he said aloud as Halfback made a sharp left onto the circle, heading counter-clockwise against the flow of traffic. Even with the sirens, the flags and the horn blasting, not everyone could get out of the way as what was left of the motorcade neared the entrance to the ER at George Washington. By the grace of God and years of training, Halfback was able to clip an oncoming station wagon in the front driver’s side quarter, knocking it out of the way so that Stagecoach could pass between the Cadillac and an oncoming Buick. With the last of the obstacles cleared, Lynch turned right and pulled to a stop in the intake bay at George Washington University Hospital.

**State Department Headquarters
Truman Building
Washington D.C.**

“What the hell?” Jack Waters had been with the State Department Foreign Affairs Document and Reference Center for five months before the new administration came in and decided that they needed a name change. The powers that be renamed the unit the “Foreign Affairs Information Management Center.” As the most junior analyst in the center, it fell to Jack to update all naming and labeling of the Center throughout the department. In addition to this mundane task, he was also assigned to listen to the local police chatter on a bulky radio “scanner” that took up a corner of his desk. The staffers in Jack’s office derisively referred to this task as “XXXXXX”

Alexander Haig, the incoming Secretary of State had started the policy in an effort to ensure that his office had as much information as possible regarding what was going on in the city. Jack thought it was probably lingering paranoia from Haig’s surviving an assassination attempt some eighteen months prior. While General Haig was the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR), Communist dissidents attacked his state car with an explosive device, wounding several of his security detail. After the brush with death, Haig became increasingly security conscious. Right until this very minute, Jack had thought that the scanner was overkill. Then he heard the words that changed his mind forever.

“Repeat: Shots fired! We have an officer down. The president is being evacuated.”

Even after hearing it a second time, it took a second for Jack to understand that this was exactly why he’d been listening. Once his brain started spinning again, he jumped up from his desk and poked his head out of his cubicle.

“Larry, I’ve got something that you need to hear,” said Jack, calling his immediate supervisor. The news spread through the Truman building like a wildfire. Within minutes,

Secretary of State Haig headed for the garage and a waiting staff car that would take him to the White House.

Alexander Haig spent his life in service to his country, starting with his appointment to Westpoint when he was 20. Haig had served with distinction in both the Korean and Vietnam wars. His assignment as a staff aide in Korea had given him the right contacts to secure a staff officer position at the Pentagon during the interwar years. In 1966, Haig graduated from the XXXX course at the Army War College, and then headed to Vietnam where, as a Lt. Col. he commanded the First Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division. He and his men fought with distinction during the Battle of Ap Gu near the Cambodian Border in 1967.

This combination of political savvy and battlefield command made Haig a natural for Washington D.C. where he worked with the Nixon administration to negotiate “Peace with Honor” to end the war with North Vietnam. Haig’s ability to exert control and navigate the narrow minefield of international negotiations earned him the respect of President Nixon, who first appointed Haig as the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, and then as Nixon’s Chief of Staff during the explosive end of the Watergate Scandal. Haig had kept the nation running during President Nixon’s darkest hours and ensured a smooth transition to the Gerald Ford Administration. Haig then returned to the Army and served as the SACEUR before retiring from the Army in 1979 and taking a position in the Reagan Campaign.

From the back seat of the Lincoln Town Car, Haig considered what he knew and what he thought he knew. He was woefully short on the former, which caused his mind to focus on the latter. He didn’t know for a fact that there had been an assassination attempt on President Reagan. It would be foolish to think that this was anything else. He also didn’t know for a fact what the motivation for the attack was. That was the most important question.

From his own experience in Brussels, Haig’s initial concern was that the Soviets or their sympathizers were responsible. It just made sense. Reagan had been a vocal critic of the communist regime during the campaign. The Polish “Solidarity” movement in Gdansk was

pushing the labor situation there to a breaking point. Could that be enough to move the Soviets to action? And if so, to what end? Was targeting President Reagan the start of a wider attack on the United States? General Haig didn't know the answers to any of these questions. But he firmly believed that he needed to work from the assumption that this was the worst case scenario, and that the nation would soon be at war.

By the time the Town Car had crossed the five blocks between the Truman building and the White House, Haig had made up his mind. He would not let the country be caught with its guard down. There would be no lack of resolve coming out of the White House. The Soviets must be made acutely aware that any additional action would be met with the full force of a focused and unified American response.

When he arrived at the White House, the situation was tense. There wasn't any panic or chaos, just tension and confusion. Between the time that Haig had left the State Department, and his arrival at the White House, news of Reagan's trip to the hospital had trickled in. At this point though, nobody knew exactly why he'd gone. Nobody had reported that he'd been shot. There were even murmurings that he had walked into the hospital under his own power. The current speculation was that the president had suffered a heart attack.

Haig processed the information as it came while he made his way to the White House Situation Room. On his way he heard an aide call out,

"Secretary Haig, they're meeting in Jim Baker's office." The young man then guided Haig towards the room.

Once there, Haig was quick to notice that Baker, the White House Chief of Staff, wasn't there. In fact, neither were XXXXX or XXXXX. Realizing that nobody would take charge, Haig told one of Baker's assistants to get Vice President Bush on the phone. This was exactly what Haig had worried about. There was a crisis happening, and the government was about to become paralysed by indecision and a lack of leadership. He needed to get the chain of command re-established. That meant getting Vice President Bush back to Washington.

Bush had gone home to Texas to help sell the President's economic package to local Democrats in congress. His first trip back to the Lone Star State was about to be cut short.

"George, this is Al Haig," said the General once he was connected. "We've had... an... Incident. I need you to get back to Washington as soon as you can. George... can you hear me?" The connection was a mess. Haig couldn't be sure that the vice president had understood his transmission, and even if he had, would he understand the gravity? Haig's concern over Soviet involvement forced him to be very careful with his wording. If there were Soviet agents listening in on this conversation, he couldn't give them any information that might trigger a response. He had to contain this thing.

National Security Advisor Richard Allen was in the room. While Haig had been trying to get the vice president up to date, Allen had been talking to XXXX Murphy about a premonition he'd had that morning. Haig was appalled. There would be time for that crap once they had a handle on things. This was exactly the kind of amateur hour bullshit that worried General Haig during the administration's negotiation on building the crisis management team.

"Who's going to put out a statement?" asked Allen, showing the kind of uncertain leadership that Haig had come to expect.

"Listen," said Haig, gaining control over the room. "We need to stay together on this. We can't have anyone playing public relations without everyone in this room knowing about it. We'll decide what the hell we're doing. That's the best way. That's Always the best way."

"The point is," said Allen, realizing that he was losing his grip on the room. "We need a spokesman to put this out and Larry-"

"Larry's at the hospital," said one of the Aides.

Haig couldn't believe it. This was getting more ridiculous by the second. First Allen can't be bothered to lead, then when he does he just repeats what Haig himself had just said. Then he immediately shows that he has no idea of what's going on when he tries to assign Larry

Speakes, the deputy press secretary, to issue a press release when the man wasn't even in the building.

It was decided that David Gergen, one of the George Bush holdovers who'd joined the Administration on the communications staff, would draft the release, then bring it back to the room for a once over before they gave it to the press. With the issue of the press release resolved for now, Haig moved on to the next priority: Setting the tone.

"Listen everyone. We have three ranges of problems here. The first is how we are going to portray this character." He was referring to Hinckley. "When Kennedy was killed, they intentionally suppressed any leftist aspect to the assassination." Allen nodded. "I don't think that would be in our interests. If we have any information about this guy's motives, we need to play it straight with the American people."

"Sure, As soon as we can get any information on him," said Allen, stating the obvious. "Is the secret service getting this guy's psychiatric records?" Before Haig could get to the second and third problems he wanted to put on the floor, the debate broke out into whether Hinckley was a lone nut, or whether there was a conspiracy afoot. This had been Haig's first question to himself, and he was astonished that it seemed that many of the men in the room were considering this for the first time.

"Look, he might have been just plain nuts," said Haig, trying to calm the crowd. "Let's get Webster and Casey in the room. That way we can check it out from the intelligence side." As the situation was unfolding, Haig knew the importance of getting the Directors of the FBI and CIA involved. This would be the only way they could get any information on possible Soviet involvement. Before anyone could speculate further, Gergen came into the room with the draft press release. Again, the focus shifted as the ad hoc committee wordsmithed the document that would inform the nation and the world of the condition of the president, and the entire United States Government.

While Haig was looking over the release, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger arrived in the situation room. Allen and Ed Meese, the President's attorney (who called in from the GW trauma unit), caught Weinberger up on the situation. As soon as Cap was up to date, Haig asked, "Cap, do we have the football?" Haig was referring to the nuclear release codes. Without those codes, the American government would be unable to launch a retaliatory nuclear strike, should the Soviets choose to attack. If this were a Soviet plot, it would be absolutely critical to have those codes.

Without directly answering Haig, Weinberger asked, "Do you think we need the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs over here?"

"No," replied Allen, let's leave him at the National Military Command Center.

"That's right," agreed Haig. "I want him at the NMCC."

Weinberger then said "I think we need to put the Strategic Air Command on Alert. We put them on Alert during the Kennedy Assassination."

Before the discussion could continue, Allen pointed to the television.

"There's Gergen," he said, as everyone in the room turned to the screen. They watched in silence as David read the statement that they had prepared. As soon as he finished the statement, the press started shouting questions at him. Gergen stammered, unprepared to take questions. As he struggled, the room erupted.

"No! No questions!" shouted someone in the back. Allen said, "Oh, get off the platform!" Confused, Haig asked "I thought the press guy was going to be there?"

"He IS the press guy," replied Allen.

Mercifully, Gergen was able to escape without causing too much damage, but everyone in the situation room feared the perception of any chaos in the government. Regardless of the perception of chaos, actual chaos started to spread throughout the situation room. A debate broke out about what calibre handgun was used, while Allen tried to get a secured telephone

connection established with the hospital. As people were talking over one another and the room became unmanageable, Haig re established control:

“Listen. We’re going to have a direct line to the hospital here. Anything that we put out will be discussed right here at this table.” He slapped the table for emphasis. “Any telephone calls that anyone is getting with instructions from the hospital, come to this table.” He gave the table a forceful tap with his right index finger as he continued, “Right here. We will discuss it here so that everyone knows what’s going on. This is the command center.”

An Aide holding a phone receiver said “I have the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs on the line”

“Tell him that we’re going to issue alerts to SAC, and any other units that he thinks are desirable,” said Cap.

“What kind of Alert Cap?” Asked Haig.

“Just a... a standby alert”

“Okay, so we’re not increasing readiness?” Haid was concerned that if the US were to increase the Defense Condition (DEFCON) from Five (the normal readiness during peacetime) to Four (an increase in intelligence and security measures) could tip off the Soviets to the gravity of the situation. If they were preparing for an attack, or an intervention in Poland, any detectable increase in readiness could be the trigger for a preemptive Soviet launch against American nuclear facilities.

“No, no, no,” said Weinberger. Look, the main thing is for General Jones to stay at the Pentagon for now.”

“Let’s not elevate the situation if we don’t have to,” said Don Regan, the Treasury Secretary.

“We’ve been down this path before with Henry,” said one of the Defense Department Aides, referring to then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger’s DEFCON 3 during the 1973 Arab Israeli war.

“That’s right,” said Cap. “The alert simply means that there are conditions that may require very quick actions.”

“Are we looking at DEFCON 3? DEFCON 4?”

“No, we’re probably looking at.. I don’t know. Probably DEFCON 2,” said Weinberger to Haig’s disbelief. The US Military had only been placed on DEFCON 2 once since the establishment of the system in 1959. That had been at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the likelihood of a nuclear exchange between NATO and the Warsaw Pact were at their height.

Cap clearly doesn’t know what he’s talking about, thought Haig. This added to his concern that the man was in over his head. The chaos of the room pushed the talk of any alerts out of the way. It was replaced with a new discussion on the passing of presidential power to George Bush. With Reagan under anesthesia on an operating table, and Bush in flight and inaccessible, Haig realized that there would be a leadership vacuum during the next six hours.

“The helm is right here,” said Haig, pointing to his chair. “And that means right in this chair for now, constitutionally, until the Vice President gets here.” Allen thought that was odd. He didn’t think there was anything in the constitution about succession beyond the vice president. Before he could raise the issue, the conversation jumped again. They were back to arguing about whether it was a .38 or a .22. Everything was moving so quickly it was becoming difficult to tell what was actually getting done.

“Okay,” said Cap over the noise. “The alert has been raised from a normal condition to a standby condition. We can then move to a higher alert status more quickly if needed. We’ve only communicated this to unit commanders, so there won’t be a lot of leaks to the press. We’ve done that on the basis that this looks like an isolated event, but we’ll be ready to act accordingly if anything else comes up.”

Haig was satisfied with this outcome. While it was clear that Cap didn’t know what he was talking about with regard to DEFCON levels, the end result was right. With the immediate

military issues resolved, the room began to try and process any new information coming out of GW. Press Secretary James Brady was in surgery, but they didn't have any details beyond that. This prompted more discussion on the weapon. The consensus now was that it had been a .22 calibre revolver.

While the debate over the weapon ebbed, the deputy press secretary, Larry Speakes appeared on the TVs in the situation room. After several minutes, Haig realized that Speakes was succumbing to the same issue that had plagued Gergen before him. Once he'd given them a prepared statement, he tried to field questions.

"Jesus... He's turning this into a Goddamn disaster," said Haig, as he started for the door. "Dick, how do I get to the press room from here?" he asked Allen. The two men walked down the hall, then up the stairs to the press room. Upon seeing the two cabinet members, Speakes stepped away from the podium, making room for General Haig who addressed the crowd of reporters.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I just want to touch on a few matters associated with today's tragedy." He then went on to give the press the details of the situation as the cabinet knew them. Once he was finished, he opened the floor for questions.

"Who's making the decisions for the government right now?" asked one of the reporters.

"Constitutionally, you have the president, the vice president, and the secretary of state, in that order. As of now, I am in control, here in the White House, pending the return of the vice president." Allen was shocked. Once again, Haig was asserting control where he had none, and citing the Constitution which contained no such provision. Haig continued through the press's questions ending by letting them know that they did not have any evidence at this point that the assassination attempt had been a part of a larger conspiracy.

"Well done," said Allen as the two walked back to the situation room. He was still bewildered by Haig's assertion that he was in control, and that it had something to do with the Constitution, but he wasn't in a position to argue the point. He'd wait until they were back in the

situation room, and they could get a copy of the constitution to consult. The question of succession was quickly overtaken by events. When they walked into the situation room, Caspar Weinberger was in the middle of explaining the orders that had been given to the bomber crews.

“..Each alert crew will be taking station on their planes instead of in their alert quarters. This will shave three and a half to four minutes off of their response time,” said Cap. “The nearest submarine is 10 minutes, 47 second off, which is two minutes closer than usual.”

“The nearest Soviet sub?” asked Allen.

“Yeah. They’re in and out of here all the time, but this is a close approach. Our bomber bases always have some crews on alert, we’re just moving them onto the bombers.”

“And that’s based on the Soviet subs, not based on the president’s situation?” asked Haig.

“It’s based on the idea that until we know more about what’s going on it’s better to save three and half or four minutes to launch.”

“We need to make sure that we’re not suggesting that this is a reaction to the events here-”

“Nobody is suggesting anything AI,” said Weinberger. “This is what I thought we should do, and this is what we’re doing. There are no public statements going out on this, and I think it’s essential that we save those three to four minutes if we can.”

“Cap, I stood up there and told everyone that there wasn’t any increased alert. Damn it, I’m not a liar.”

“I didn’t know you were going up there AI-”

Seeing that this wasn’t going to end well, Allen stepped in.

“What about the KNEE CAP? Is it airborne?” he asked, referring to the National Emergency Airborne Command Post (NEACP). This was a modified Boeing 747 that would be used to insure that the American military command authority continued even if the NMCC was destroyed in an attack.

“No, we haven’t put it up. Someone would definitely notice it taking off from Andrews. The press already has photographers camped out there waiting for the Vice President to return,” said Cap. “We’re going to wait until after dark to launch.”

“If the Soviet Sub gets any closer, and when the vice president gets here, we can talk about raising the alert.”

Allen looked up from the report on the Soviet submarine. “Actually, there’s another one. There are two subs being tracked together.” There was a pause in the conversation as everyone weight the gravity of this latest revelation.

“Cap, is this alert your sending out, is it because of the submarines, or because the president’s under surgery?”

“Look Al, until the vice president gets here, I have command authority. I have to make sure that we do everything we need to in order to maintain readiness.”

“You’d better read the Constitution,” replied Haig.

Again, Allen stepped in to keep the group focused. “One way or another, we need to take the initial steps to make sure that we’re ready for when the vice president gets here. He won’t be able to make some of these decisions without first consulting with the cabinet, so we need to do whatever we can to make sure that we can move quickly when he gets here.”

Ignoring Allen’s attempts at resetting the conversation again, Haig persisted;

“Is the alert because of the submarine, or because of the surgery?”

“The reason I’ve tasked the crews to move to the planes is because of the incident and I will continue to take that position until I know absolutely definitively that it’s an isolated incident, which I believe it is. But I don’t know that yet, and I don’t want to take any risks here. The risk of having some newspaper publish a rumor is a lot less than the risk of not having our military in place to react if things escallate.”

Having finally gotten his answer, Haig was pulled aside to take a call regarding a hijacked airliner in Bangkok. With Haig distracted, Allen leaned in to consult with Weinberger.

“Jesus Christ. I didn’t know he was going to make a statement up there Cap. I’m not his watchdog. Shit, I thought he was just going to pull Speakes off. I know that what you’re doing is prudent. I really don’t appreciate him carrying his turf battle over into this sort of thing, so when Bush gets here it will be fine. But until then, you have command authority as I understand it, but he has succession authority.”

“I understand,” replied Cap. “I suppose that’s why he went up there to declare himself in charge.”

“It’s important for other countries to know that someone is in charge. I don’t have any problems with that, but I don’t want to worry about conflicting orders coming out of the White House, or even rumors of conflicting orders. With the Polish labor strike and this increase in Soviet submarine activity, we’re in a delicate situation right now.”

“All right, look. We’ll keep it with the crews moved to the bombers, and we won’t launch the Knee Cap just yet. That should get us to where we need to be until the vice president arrives,” said Cap.

With that, the Cabinet settled into an organization that would hold until Geroge Bush arrived.

April 13th, 1981
Washington D.C.

Secretary of State Al Haig made his way to the “Family” dining room in the White House. He hadn’t been to the room since his time as Chief of Staff in the Nixon administration. In the two weeks since the assassination attempt, Reagan had worked hard to get the country back to normal. Today was his first full business day at the White House since being released from the hospital two days prior. His schedule was packed as tightly as possible, and Haig was pleasantly surprised to receive the invitation to lunch.

During the first three months of Reagan's presidency, there had been a lot of tension between Haig and several of the members of the White House staff. The events of March 30th did nothing to improve that situation. In fact, in some ways, those events, and the days that followed had only galvanized Haig's belief that there was something afool going on behind the scenes. He didn't think that this would be the right time or place to bring up his deeper concerns, but he hoped that he would at least be able to deal with what he felt was the most concerning issue of the day: The Soviet involvement in the assassination attempt.

When Haig was ushered into the room, he saw that he was not the only person who had been invited to this meeting. Bill Casey, the director of central intelligence, sat at the four seat table, holding a cup of coffee. Reagan and Casey stood as Haig walked in.

"Good morning Al, I'm so glad you could make it over here today," said the president. The men shook hands and sat down to get to business.

"Al, I've brought you in to go over something that Bill and I have been talking through since the attack," said Reagan. "As you know, during the campaign my foreign policy was focused on taking a hard line against the Soviets. The Carter administration's weakness has allowed increased Soviet adventurism across the world. You yourself have gone to great lengths to warn us about Soviet interference in Central America." Haig could see where this was going, but he let the president finish.

"Bill here has commissioned the CIA to pursue an investigation into the role of the Soviet government into the rise of terrorist attacks across the globe." Reagan looked over to Casey who picked up the conversation.

"It's fairly uncontroversial to say that the Soviets have had a major role in most of the terrorist attacks that have attempted to destabilize contested regions. KGB projects in the Middle East have acted as a direct counter to the peace initiatives that the Carter administration achieved. XXXXXX [examples]. In fact, I'm commissioning a National Intelligence Estimate on teh role of Soviet Intelligence activity on international terrorism. The president and I wanted to

bring you in because I believe that you both share the experience of surviving an assassination attempt that was directed by the Soviet Government.”

There it was. This had been Haig's gut feeling at the time of the attack, and every action that he took was with the concern that this “worst case scenario” was playing out. He had never made these suspicions known to the president, but internally, using his own office resources he'd assigned some analysts to see what they could dig up on the topic. He'd been briefed just before this meeting in the hopes of getting this on the table. As a commander though, Haig knew the risks of confirming his own biases.

“That's a very serious charge Bill. We've always known that the Soviets were likely behind the car bombing in Belgium last year, but I think we need to be very careful about what we say regarding this attack on the president.” Haig wanted to be cautious and see what information Bill had before he committed to his support of this deadly serious contention.

“Believe me Al, I understand better than anyone how serious this is. In fact, that's why you're sitting in that chair, and not Baker or Bush,” said Casey, referring to the White House chief of staff and vice president, respectively. “Even with his time as the director of central intelligence, George doesn't want to hear any of this.” Haig wasn't surprised. He felt that the “Texas connection” was asserting too much control over the administration and was the primary power structure pushing the secretary of state out of the decision making process. He still couldn't quite understand the rationale for appointing James Baker, George Bush's campaign manager, to be the White House Chief of Staff. From Haig's perspective, the Texas contingent had managed to “play nice” with Reagan's inner circle, but was fiercely territorial against anyone (like Haig and Casey) who fell outside of those two bubbles.

Haig was well aware that this pissing contest inside the administration was known to the president. Hell, it had been played up on the pages of the Washington Post for months now. But he felt that his best bet was to avoid taking any shots right now, and to stick to the topic of Soviet involvement in the assassination. He needed to tease out what Casey knew.

“I appreciate your trust on this, Bill. what are we looking at?”

Casey looked over to Reagan, who nodded.

“We have HUMINT sources in Poland who confirmed that during the hours following the assassination attempt, Soviet troops and crack Polish army units were preparing to roll into Gdansk and crush the labor uprisings there. Those human intelligence assets went to great risk to get that information out of the country. They wouldn’t have done so without believing that the situation was critical. In fact, we’ve since lost contact with one of them, and we have reason to believe they were compromised in the effort.”

“Additionally” continued Casey, “one of our SIGINT birds intercepted very low frequency communications between a previously unknown Tu-142 Aircraft with the callsign ‘11 Black,’ and the two Soviet ballistic missile submarines that were patrolling off the east coast. To the best of our knowledge, 11 Black is the new Soviet version of our TACAMO aircraft, used to communicate directly with submerged submarines. The transmissions were coded, but our best estimate is that the first was a standby order, issued in line with the first reports coming out of the president going to the hospital. The Second, issued an hour and a half later, was a cancellation order. We don’t know exactly what they were up to, but the fact that they had a brand new aircraft in the air to take advantage of this timing speaks volumes.”

This chilled Haig to his core. It was clear to him that the Communists had put themselves in an advantageous position to attack the United States during their most vulnerable window in the middle of an international crisis. The Soviets, of course, would deny everything. They would claim to be testing a new aircraft and communications system, and if the American’s admitted that they had intercepted these transmissions, the Soviets would know that they had to change their tactics to avoid detection in the future. There was nothing they could do with this information, except to use it to plan for the future.

After turning this over in his mind for a minute, Haig asked, “If they were in position to act, why did they issue the recall order?”

“That’s the sixty-four thousand dollar question, isn’t it?” asked Casey. “It’s clear that Brezhnev set up the dominos, but for some reason, they didn’t all fall. It could have been something in Poland that didn’t line up, it could have been reports that the President would recover, hell, someone just might have gotten cold feet.”

Haig had an idea of his own. Once the Soviets knew that there was still central control coming out of the White House, they knew that they wouldn’t have the decisive advantage that they had hoped for. He’d never say that out loud, but he wondered if he’d saved the world when he assured everyone that he was in control.

“Okay, and what about this Hinckley character? Do we have anything that links him to the KGB?” asked Haig.

“Not as of yet,” replied Casey. “We’re still working that angle. There is some suspicious activity during his later teen and early twenties in Dallas, plus his psychological records however we don’t have anything solid.”

“So he could just be a lone nut bag? Doesn’t that seem like the most likely explanation?”

“It would,” said Casey, “but you have to keep in mind, that his being a psychiatric patient makes him more likely to be a KGB asset instead of less likely.” Haig raised an eyebrow at that. “It’s true,” assured Casey. “You might recall project MK Ultra.” Haig did recall. MK Ultra was the CIA’s program that ran from the end of the Korean war until its official cancellation in 1973, during Haig’s time as chief of staff with Nixon. MK Ultra was the CIA’s attempt to recreate the perceived Soviet and Chinese advances in “brainwashing” that had caused American POWs to turn on their county and created a bit of hysteria captured in the 1959 Novel, The Manchurian Candidate, and the Frank Sinatra movie that followed in 1962.

“I don’t quite follow,” said Haig.

“During the evolution of MK Ultra, we tested thousands of subjects. Some were taken from the military, others were volunteers from colleges, others were brought in from newspaper ads for clinical trials. In the end, the best candidates were those that already displayed some

degree of mental instability. Instead of having to break them down completely and then try to rebuild them into functioning assets, we simply had to manipulate their existing psychosis to get the desired results.” Haig was taken aback.

“I know,” said Casey. “It was ghastly. That’s why we put an end to our program. Well, that and we weren’t getting the results we had hoped for. But there is no indication that the Soviets ever ended their program. In fact, from what we’re learning through the Hinckley investigation, We believe that the KGB was conducting some kind of operation in Dallas. We don’t have the details pinned down and now that Hinckley is blown, I doubt we ever will.”

The conversation came to a halt as a White House steward brought in a tray of sandwiches and another a fresh pitcher of water and one of tea. Once the stewards had retreated, Reagan addressed Haig.

“Al, I’ve brought you in today because I’d like to start working on some plans that I want to keep very quiet right now. I believe that the Soviet Union is the very essence of evil in the world. They destroy everything they touch, including the souls of the very people they purport to help. Bill and I are putting together a plan to deal with the Soviets once and for all and I need you on board if we’re going to make this work.”

Haig wasn’t sure what the president had in mind, but he was one hundred percent on board. “Mr. President, I believe that you are correct. Not only that the Soviets were involved in this attempt on your life, but in the very evil that is the Soviet Union.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” said Reagan. “I’m sure you and Bill can get started right after lunch.” The president turned the conversation towards Fernando Valenzuela’s opening day heroics for the Los Angeles Dodgers. As he enjoyed his lunch with the president and the director of central intelligence, Haig wondered how far these men would be willing to go.

Chapter 2

April 15, 1984
Torii Station, Okinawa

Staff Sergeant Jan Santos looked across the shore to the incoming waves. When he first received his orders to Okinawa, his friends chided him that “Okinawa ain’t got waves.” From where he was standing right now, he thought they might be right. But there were surfers about, and after a few inquiries, he was told that there were some nice spots across the island. One of the better points was actually just a few miles to the south of Torii Beach, where he was standing.

The beach at Sunabe was located at the very southwestern tip of the runways at Kadena Airbase. During the surf season running from June through March (and accentuated by the occasional typhoon) Surfers were treated to excellent waves and a closeup view of F-15 Eagles of the 18th Tactical Fighter Wing as they conducted flight operations. Jan’s mind was snatched back to the present by Staff Sergeant Larry Hale.

“Hey Claws, any word on when the new Chi-lings are supposed to be here?” Hale was asking the question that had been on everyone’s mind over the past week. Hale and Santos were members of Operational Detachment Alpha 1122, of Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group; the famed “Green Berets.” The First Special Forces Group had been deactivated after the Vietnam war and had just been reactivated during the Reagan administration’s defense buildup of the past three years. While most of the 1st SFG was stationed at Fort Lewis in Washington State, the 1st Battalion was forward deployed to Okinawa.

“No idea Hale, how the hell am I supposed to have any more information than you do? You’re the coms guy, I should be asking you.” There was some truth to the statement, but it was

mostly just banter. Hale was in fact one of the two communications specialists in ODA 1122, but being able to toss up and pull down radio waves didn't give him any secret information on company manpower and organization. Santos, as one of the detachment's medics, was equally in the dark.

Okinawa was about four hundred miles east of Taiwan, and the brass had mentioned that the Army was bringing in some Mandarin speakers to help train up the 1st SFG in some of the basics of the Chinese language spoken by both the Republic of China in Taiwan, and their adversaries on the mainland, the People's Republic of China. One of these was Harvey Wu, a native speaker who was also a Green Beret. The rest were graduates of the Army's Foreign Language Center in Monterey, California. These were human intelligence collectors who had trained in the language in order to maximize their effectiveness as interrogators.

Each Green Beret was required to maintain proficiency in at least one foreign language. For Santos, his youth growing up in a dual language household had given him a fluency in Spanish. Hale, on the other hand, had taken some basic Russian language courses in high school and his one year of college before the Army sent him to Monterey to round out his training. Even so, his "mastery" at the language was dubious at best.

"After the formation, me and some of the guys are heading over to Camp Foster to catch the new Dirty Harry movie," said Hale, moving past the issue of language training. "You coming with us?"

Jan replied, "Nah man, I saw it in the States before we shipped out."

"Me too, but I love that guy... I'd pay full price just to see Eastwood say "Go ahead... Make my day," said Hale, doing his best Clint Eastwood impression, delivering the line with exacting precision.

"You know, in that scene, Callahan fires his gun six times, so there's now way he could have shot the last guy right?" asked Santos.

"That's B.S. and you know it."

“You don’t have to believe me, but just watch and see,” said Jan, knowing that he was just making up this “fun fact” and chuckling inside at the idea that his friend would obsessively count the rounds in the scene and then report back his findings.

“Anyhow, I’m just going to head back to the barracks after the dog and pony show,” concluded Santos. The “dog and pony” show in question was the same formation that Hale had mentioned. Their squad, along with several of the other squads in the battalion had been tasked with attending a presentation by Larry Korb, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Installations and Logistics.

The Reagan administration was making a big tour of the Pacific on their way to meetings in mainland China. While the main delegation was going straight to Beijing, various Defense Department functionaries were stopping in to visit US Military installations in the theater. Santos wasn’t big into politics, but he was pretty sure that most of this was all about Taiwan. He and his unit had been stationed here as the first level of defense against the People’s Liberation Army. If Reagan couldn’t work things out with the Chinese, Santos was convinced that he and his brothers would soon be in Taiwan working with the Taiwanese Army and teaching them all about interlocking fields of fire and defense in depth.

That was the Job, and Santos wouldn’t have it any other way. At the same time though, there was a persistent thought rattling around in the back of his mind. Sending in Green Berets to train the Taiwanese could easily entangle the United States in a war between the tiny island republic and the massive communist nation on the other side of the Taiwan strait. *So be it*, thought Santos. *That’s what we’re here for.*

April 25th, 1984
Air Force One
Somewhere over the Pacific Ocean

Secretary of State Alexander Haig sat in the Senior Staff meeting room and reflected on the events that had led to this historic trip to China. After President Reagan’s near death

experience at the hands of a would-be assassin, the power struggle in the foreign policy wing of his administration rose to epic proportions. The Beltway press in Washington, D.C. had a field day with the war of open words and back room informants raged as each side tried to assure the public and the president that they had the best interests of the nation at heart.

In the end, most of this was just political theater. Haig, and Bill Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence, had made their case and won the argument in the Family Dining Room of the White House in April of 1981. Everything that came afterwards was simply figuring out who in the administration would go along with the new direction. As the chief architect of the new foreign policy, Haig pushed out anyone who got in his way. There was a chain of command, and he wasn't about to tolerate anyone who couldn't or wouldn't toe the line.

The final climax of this reshuffling was the resignation of James Baker as the White House Chief of Staff. Baker was able to hold out using his well known political finesse, but Haig viewed Baker as a George Bush Loyalist, who couldn't be counted on to make the bold strikes that would be called for in the coming years. The only holdout that Haig wasn't able to have replaced was Caspar Weinberger. Cap had taken over Baker's role as the Chief of Staff in mid 1982. As a longtime Reagan friend and advisor, the president had assured Haig of two things: 1. Weinberger could be counted on to advance Reagan's policies, and 2. If Haig couldn't figure out how to make this arrangement work, he could find another job.

"Sometimes I think these long flights are the only time we get to actually sit and contemplate," said Jeane Kirkpatrick, the President's National Security Advisor. Dr. Kirkpatrick had originally been named the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, however she was selected as the NSA when Richard V. Allen stepped down. Allen had been Haig's first target during the takeover. The two of them had bad blood dating back to the Nixon administration.

"Thanks for coming down, Jeane. I appreciate it," said Haig. He'd asked her to meet him here to review the broad strokes of the plan and goals of this final international push of

Reagan's first term. At least that was his excuse for calling the meeting. In reality he was just having trouble sleeping. "What do you think our chances are on this trip?" he asked.

"It's going to be a delicate operation," she replied. "We need to be able to convince the Chinese that we're willing to be partners with them in economic and even military issues, while at the same time we can't give the Chinese or the world an indication that we're going to reduce our support for Taiwan."

"At the very heart, it's a contradictory message," said Haig. "There's no way that we can overtly tell the PRC that our support for Taiwan is necessary to their overall security. Firstly they wouldn't believe it, and secondly we'd have to tip our hand if we really wanted to convince them." Haig and Kirkpatrick headed a Special Security Committee (SSC) that had been working on a grand strategy for dealing with the Soviet threat once and for all. In order to accomplish this, they would need to be on friendly terms with the Chinese Communists, while at the same time building up the very forces the Chinese feared the most.

"Our best hope will be to convince them that we want to be friends, and that the Taiwan issue can be pushed off for now. Hell, depending on how things come together, we could push for a specific date to hold talks on Taiwan. We could even suggest a neutral host and tie this to our renewed Summit meetings with the Soviets." To this point the Reagan administration had not held any direct meetings with the Soviets. Instead, they spent Reagan's first term building up the military in order to negotiate from a position of strength. The plan was to open a dialog with the Russians starting in 1985 to help ease tensions while at the same time preparing for a showdown.

"That's not a bad thought. We have some time before we need to put the details together, but let's keep that in our pocket and float it if things start to bog down."

"The bottom line," said Kirkpatrick, "is that when we leave, we have the rough sketches of an economic plan with the Chinese and no restrictions on our role in Taiwan. On top of that, we should be able to get an informal agreement on our diplomatic support for their territorial

dispute negotiations with the Soviet Union. If we have to drop one of those goals, it's the economic plan. Frankly, that's more for them than for us."

"I agree with that assessment. Once we get back, from Beijing, we'll have a better feel for how to move forward with the second phase of our military buildup"

"Aren't you being a bit presumptuous? After all, there's still an election in seven months." Haig looked at her quizzically. They had been operating under the belief that Reagan's second term was all but guaranteed. Fritz Mondale hadn't been able to put up a fight, and it really seemed that the Democrats were more or less sitting this one out before they ran one of their younger dynamos in 1988. His mind was still processing the question when he saw a grin creep across her face. The two of them shared a laugh at the notion. Yes, there was an election, but that was someone else's department. They were on a mission, and they wouldn't be stopped.

May 7th, 1984
SSC Conference Room
White House

National Security Advisor Jeane Kirkpatrick looked across the cramped conference room. Sitting with her around the oval conference table were Secretary of State Haig, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff David C. Jones, Director of Central Intelligence William Casey, and the Army Chief of Staff, General John Wickam Jr.

Rumsfeld had taken the position when Cap Weinberger replaced James Baker as the Chief of Staff. This was Rumsfeld's second stint as Secretary of Defense. His first was under Gerald Ford, and during his time in office he had supported major new defense programs including the B-1 Bomber that had been cancelled by his successor Harold Brown and the Carter administration. His emphasis on trying to build up the United State's conventional forces had won him favor in the new cabinet.

“Gentlemen, let’s get this started,” said Kirkpatrick in her characteristic no-nonsense tone. “Today we need to understand the Army’s requirements for supporting Operation Mosaic. We’re also conducting meetings with your counterparts in the other service branches, but today’s meeting is solely to review the needs of the Army. Al, do you have anything before we begin?” She looked at Haig, who shook his head.

“No Dr. Kirkpatrick, I think we’re all on the same page here. John, what do you have for us?”

General Wickam handed a folder to each attendant. “This is the general outline. In order to make this happen, we’re going to need to add significant manpower to our Airborne and Air Assault assets. This will necessarily require a pivot in our training programs which are currently geared towards armored warfare and the defense of NATO territory in the face of the Warsaw pact threat.”

This wasn’t a surprise to anyone at the table.

“What’s the overall size of this expansion?” Asked Haig.

“We’re going to need to establish an entire new airborne brigade. The current plan is to add this as the 4th brigade of the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg. We won’t be able to keep a lid on this expansion, but we can at least hope to minimize any Soviet reaction by keeping them attached to an existing division instead of creating an independent brigade.” Haig nodded as General Wickam continued.

“Next, we’re looking at transitioning the 7th Light Infantry Division out of Fort Ord into an Air Assault Division. This will take some time as we’ll need to get men trained up at the Air Assault School in Fort Campbell. We’re considering starting a separate training command at Fort Ord to keep everything together, but we don’t have the numbers on that just yet. Either way, we’ll start one battalion at a time, bringing in air assault qualified soldiers as we rotate out anyone who can’t or won’t pass the air assault course.

The air assault course at Fort Campbell had been called “the toughest ten days in the army.” It had become an instrumental tool during the Vietnam war, teaching the infantrymen how to fly and fight from helicopters. During Vietnam this was almost exclusively done from the ubiquitous Bell UH-1 Iroquois, known to nearly everyone as the Huey. Since the late 1970s, the Army transitioned to the newer Sikorsky UH-60 Blackhawk.

During the ten days of the air assault course, the men would endure greater physical training than they had as infantrymen, while also learning everything the Army could cram into their heads about air assault tactics, how to sling cargo to the helicopters, and how to repel from the helicopter and into the battlefield. During the process, about half of the soldiers in the class would wash out. Adding a division's worth of air assault troops would create the training challenge that General Wickam had described.

“What about Special Forces?” asked Haig. “We had discussed making some changes to the training focus of the Green Berets, where are we on that?”

“We’re just now finishing up the logistics of reactivating the 1st SFG. Now that we have them up and ready, we’re shifting our training program to emphasize direct action while trying to ensure that we have enough Mandarin Chinese speakers to maximize effectiveness.”

“And this is all being done under the auspices of a move to protect Taiwan, correct?” asked Kirkpatrick.

“That’s correct. Since we’ve been given the green light on the defense of Taiwan, we’ve been using that as cover to explain the new emphasis on China.” The shift in focus from “Foreign Internal Defense” to “Direct Action” was just as significant as the new focus on the Chinese. Most of the work that the forward deployed Special Forces would perform was related to training up indigenous defense units so that they could better defend their territory. Direct action on the other hand, would emphasize the use of the SF ODAs as elite combat units conducting combat operations against the enemy. This would make the Green Berets an even greater offensive weapon.

“Okay John, what else are we looking at?” asked Haig.

“This is what we’ve put together in accordance to the guidelines this committee provided. Since the guidelines emphasized airborne and air assault, Larry Korb over in manpower has started working with Major General Foss at the Army Infantry School at Fort Benning. They’re looking to add an additional week of air assault training to give everyone in the infantry a bit more background there. That should help us reduce the number of washouts during the air assault course. That one’s going to be a budget breaker though. We should have the numbers on that within a week.

“Thank you for your time General, we’ll be in touch soon for a follow up,” said the National Security Advisor. Once Wickam had left, Haig leaned back in his chair.

“What do you think Bill, are we on the right track?” The Director of Central Intelligence considered the question.

“Given what we are trying to do, and without having given the service chiefs complete information, I believe that we can provide what we need to achieve our preliminary goals. The CIA’s assets in China and the Soviet Far East have identified several areas of exploitation that we can move on as soon as we have the Special Forces operators in place. Our Chinese Nationalist dissidents are ready to mobilize, in China, and we have everything in place for phase one.”

“What about the bigger picture Don?” asked Kirkpatrick, looking at the secretary of defense.

“I believe all of our forces are either in place or under construction. Manpower increases in all of the services will be a challenge, but we’ve been here before with Ford when we eliminated the draft. Unemployment among service aged men has been dropping over the past three years, so that’s something we’ll have to deal with, but our projected force levels are in reach.”

Rumsfeld continued, "Our Naval buildup will give us the assets we need to handle the Soviets in the next five years. We should be able to hit our target of a six hundred ship Navy by 1987. This includes new units in both our surface and submarine fleets, to say nothing of the carrier fleet."

"Right now we have the Iowa class battleships finishing up their refit. From everything that we can see, these are more than a match for the Kirov cruisers that the Soviets have started fielding. The addition of the Tomahawk anti-ship missiles has given them the punch they needed to compete. In a surface action, they won't be able to stop us. Of course there is no way that we'll have a simple surface action against the Soviets. We can't ignore the air threat. That's where the Aegis ships come into play. First batch of these new air defense cruisers is putting to sea now.

"Up to this point, the Soviets have invested heavily on a Naval Aviation branch to augment their fleet, and prevent our Navy from gaining access to their Northern Fleet ports in Murmansk. The F-14 Tomcats will be able to intercept the enemy strike aircraft at long range with their Phoenix missiles. The SPY-1 radar on these new ships, when coupled with the SM2 missile should be able to knock down any missiles that approach the fleet. It's really just a numbers game, but this new system puts the numbers in our favor like never before.

The two new Nimitz class ships will augment our carrier strength, that'll give us a lot of flexibility in planning. With these two new ships, we'll be able to cover both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters with a total of sixteen carriers. Of course, at any given time we'll only have access to ten at most, depending on the maintenance schedule. This will be enough to move forward with our plans.

"We're also going to have to be able to deal with the Soviet submarine threat. While we have surface ships and aircraft to help track and destroy Russian boats, the best weapon against a submarine is another submarine. We'll have all thirty-one of the Los Angeles class

submarines in service by the end of next year. Those submarines are the equal or better than anything the Soviets can throw at us.”

“And the Air Force?” asked Haig.

“The first of the B-1 squadrons should be ready for deployment by this time next year. These have been included in the counts for our Nuclear fleet when reporting to the Soviets, but the real value of the B-1 will be as conventional penetrators. We’ll keep the B-52 fleet on nuclear alert. There have been some delays in the “Advanced Technology Bomber” program, so we might not have an operational model before the end of the decade. That’s not a problem that we can just throw money at either. We’re going to have to plan to move forward without that one.”

This had been a running issue for the Special Security Committee. The suits at Northrop had told the Air Force that they’d have a radar invisible medium bomber by the middle of the 80’s. This revolutionary technology would be a game changer if it could be deployed for the coming conflict, but as the timelines slipped it was becoming more and more likely that the ATB wouldn’t make it in time. Everyone at the table was thankful that they’d backed the B-1 as an interim solution to the aging B-52 bomber fleet.

“There is some good news, though,” continued Rumsfeld. “The F-117 squadron in Nevada has reached full operational capacity. While they lack the range and payload of the ATB, they will be irreplaceable in destroying strategic targets beyond enemy lines.” The F-117 was the most secretive aircraft in the inventory. There were no official records that it existed, and the DoD ensured that the rumors that were out there were so outlandish that no serious analyst would give them any credit. The aircraft was nearly invisible to most air defense radars and the Air Force would use it to strike at targets the enemy thought were too well defended to be vulnerable.

“That’ll be a nasty surprise for Ivan,” said Casey.

“All right,” said Haig. “It looks like we’ve got our ducks in a row here. Obviously there are a lot of details to work out, but we’re heading in the right direction. Bill, this is going to be your

operation at the jump. If you can work some of that agency voodoo on the Sino-Soviet border, we'll be able to start looking at moving forward with phase two. We still have a lot to work out on the logistics there both militarily and politically. I have a team from State working on the political aspects, but we can't let a hint of this get out or the whole thing will collapse like a house of cards."

"Be that as it may," said Kirkpatrick, "I should like to see what you are planning over there." Haig shot her a sharp look. "Relax Al, I'm not looking to make any problems, but I'm sure you'll agree that my expertise could be valuable in this planning phase." Haig couldn't argue with that point. Kirkpatrick was every bit the expert on the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact that he was. It would be silly to keep her out of the loop on this. At the same time, he knew that he needed to maintain control over the process. He'd have to keep an eye on that.

"You're right, Jeane," he said. "I'll set something up, and we'll go over the details."

May 10th, 1984
Executive Conference Room
Truman Building

Jack Waters flipped through the overhead transparencies one more time to make sure that everything was in order. He knew he had five minutes before the meeting started, but he also knew that the meeting would start on time. Both Secretary Haig and Dr. Kirkpatrick were acutely punctual. He'd been told more than one that "five minutes early is still five minutes late," meaning that if he wanted to be on time, he'd better be completely ready ten minutes before the appointed hour.

His learning that lesson quickly was one of the key factors to his quick success and rise in the ranks of the bureaucracy. He'd first gotten Secretary Haig's attention during the Reagan assassination attempt. At that point, it was just dumb luck that he was manning the scanner when the police calls started to come through. But he'd handled himself well and started the

process that put Haig in the right place at the right time to get control over the Situation Room. From there it was a matter of not screwing things up that kept him climbing the ladder. Now, as Special Assistant to the Secretary of State, Jack found himself inside the inner circle of foreign policy.

Today he was briefing the National Security Advisor on the results of a “war game” that he had been heading up to brainstorm the unlikely scenario of how to keep NATO and the Warsaw Pact from intervening in a U.S. versus U.S.S.R. conflict. When thinking about it, Jack chuckled to himself. Three years ago, his reaction to the proposition would have been “that’s ridiculous.” But he’d seen enough in his short time to know that it didn’t matter what he thought about a possibility. He just needed to provide the data that was requested.

His thoughts were interrupted as Secretary Haig and Dr. Kirkpatrick entered the conference room. Jack was a bit surprised that they were the only two in attendance. He had assumed that there would be some White House staff invited as well, but instead it was just the three of them. Haig made introductions and Jack was briefly star-struck. Kirkpatrick’s essay “Dictatorships and Double Standards” had been instrumental in Jack’s decision to apply for a position at the State Department. He’d grown comfortable with Haig and the other giants of foreign policy in the Truman building, but he’d never met Dr. Kirkpatrick before.

“Okay, Jack, what do you have for us?” asked Haig. Jack dimmed the lights and flipped on the overhead projector, which had the first of his presentation sheets on it. A title sheet with a map of Europe was displayed on the screen at the far side of the conference room. The NATO allies were shown in blue, with the Warsaw Pact nations, minus the USSR in red.

“These are the findings of the State Department Working Group on non-intervention. Our goal was to ascertain the most likely way of using political means to prevent the spread of an armed conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union to the major European powers. This effort was focused solely on nations aligned with either the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization, and the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance of 1955, also known as the Warsaw Pact. We have not included any analysis on non-aligned powers.”

Jack swapped out the sheet with another, this time showing sections of the text of the NATO charter side-by-side with sections of the Warsaw Pact.

“We started with an analysis of the treaty text. For brevity, we’ll be referring to these documents as “the Charter” and “The Pact.” It’s important to note that our working group does not have any military background or experience, and we were obviously not tasked with creating any military plan. However, even absent this experience, our first note is here in Article Four of the Pact. This article specifically defines the collective defense limits of the Pact.” Jack read a quote from the article in question.

“In the event of armed attack in Europe on one or more of the Parties to the Treaty by any state or group of states, each of the Parties to the Treaty, in the exercise of its right to individual or collective self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations Organization, shall immediately, either individually or in agreement with other Parties to the Treaty, come to the assistance of the state or states attacked with all such means as it deems necessary, including armed force. The Parties to the Treaty shall immediately consult concerning the necessary measures to be taken by them jointly in order to restore and maintain international peace and security.”

After pausing for a moment to give his audience a chance to process the text, he continued, “There are two important aspects of this clause that we can use to prevent the nations of the Warsaw Pact from responding to any Soviet invocation of Article 4. The first of course is ‘In the event of an armed attack in Europe.’ The Central European powers were adamant that this agreement not cover any attacks on Soviet interests outside of their own areas of interest. This was specifically included due to the vastness of the Soviet empire, and the importance of this clause was reiterated during the Sino-Soviet split in the years following the ratification of the treaty.

“Our first recommendation, then, is that any conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union could be limited to Asia and the Soviet Far East. In such a conflict there would be

no legal grounds for a treaty action by the signatories. This is the most straightforward method of keeping the Warsaw Pact out of the conflict.”

“Of Course,” continued Jack, “the main industrial, agricultural and economic centers of the Soviet Union are west of the Ural Mountains. This makes our first recommendation very unlikely in real world application. Nonetheless, we feel it is important to understand the possibilities of fighting in Asia to the exclusion of a European campaign. We would obviously leave it to the military to study the viability of this strategy. Our assumption in this analysis is that a strictly European conflict will not be possible. That leads us to our second recommendation.

Haig looked over to Kirkpatrick, who was fully engaged with Jack’s presentation.

“The most important aspect of this second recommendation is the understanding that, by and large, the Signatories of the Pact are not highly motivated to fight on behalf of the Soviet Union. If the Soviets are being attacked, even if that attack were to happen somewhere on the European continent, unless the individual governments are under attack, we believe that they will only need the slightest legal pretense to delay or outright refuse military aid. This argument revolves around the use of the word “Shall” in article four.” This was met with a raised eyebrow from the National Security Advisor.

“If we look at the Russian language text of Articles Three and Four, we can see that a different verb is used to signify the obligation of the signatories. In Article Three, they use the verb “Budut”, which clearly indicates an imperative. In Article 4 the verb is “okozhet”, which does not carry the same gravity. Essentially, this is the difference between ‘shall’ and ‘must.’ If the Warsaw Pact nations did not believe they were under threat, they could very easily declare that they had no obligation to offer military aid to the Soviet Union. The treaty would obligate them to consult with other treaty signatories under Article Three, but would not obligate them to commit to war.”

Dr. Kirkpatrick interrupted Jack, “That may make some vague legal sense, but what would be the purpose of the pact, if not to obligate mutual defense?”

“Our argument is that Article Four was added to streamline a claim of mutual defense under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter. And of course from the perspective of the non Soviet signatories, it was meant to give them the benefit of protection while giving up the least possible amount of state sovereignty.”

“I see,” said Kirkpatrick. “So the plan then would be to ensure that it would be in the rational self interest of the Pact nations to turn their backs on the Soviet Union?” The question was posed with skepticism.

“Yes, that’s correct. And in the end, that’s the ultimate question. What can convince the Romanians that it would be better to stay out of the fight? We can give them the door, but they need to want to open it. The key to that will be the second half of our analysis: keeping NATO out of the fight.” Jack swapped sheets on the overhead.

“Keeping NATO out of the fight is simple. We must be the aggressor. Much like the issues in Article Four of the pact, Article Five of the Charter. This Article similarly limits the invocation of mutual defense to attacks in Europe or North America. Any combat in Asia falls outside of the scope of the agreement. In the case of combat in Europe, if the United States is the aggressor there would be no reason for the NATO members to get involved unless we directly requested their assistance.”

“And we wouldn’t request their assistance because that is the key to having the Pact nations open the door. They would let the Soviets fend for themselves in exchange for a NATO non-aggression agreement,” said Dr. Kirkpatrick, finishing the thought.

“That’s exactly right” said Jack, feeling like a school-kid who’d just gotten the right answer in class.

“And you believe that this will be enough to keep them out of the conflict?”

“I have no way of being sure. My assignment was to find the most likely way to keep them out of the conflict, and I believe this is it.”

“Surely your working group has an idea of which member states are most likely to open the door?”

“Yes, of course. Poland, obviously. They’ll take the first chance they get. Czechoslovakia would be a tougher sell, but once we get those two, Honecker in East Germany should fall in line. The more that we get on board, the more pressure there will be on the remaining nations to buy in.”

“Yes, that would follow,” said Dr. Kirkpatrick. “Al, I think you have something here. I think we need to start working on specific diplomatic packages tailored to each Pact member to help encourage their agreement. We’ll want to have everything ready in the event that we need to move quickly on this.”

“I already have Jack’s team working on those very issues,” said Haig. “Jack, thanks for the update, let the team know that I’m proud of the work you have done here.” Jack knew this was his cue to leave, so he collected his sheets, flipped off the overhead, and turned on the light as he left the conference room and headed back to his office with a satisfied grin on his face.

Chapter 3

March 5th, 1985

10 Miles East of Fuyuan, China

Sino-Soviet Border

Staff Sergeant Larry Hale was living the dream. During his enlistment, he’d often considered what his first direct action mission would be like. He’d always thought it would be somewhere in the jungle. Some of that was from the history of his unit in Vietnam, some of it was from the fiery rhetoric coming out of the White House about the communist threat in Central America. Either way, Hale would never have bet that his first direct action mission would be freezing his balls off just over the river from Siberia.

Less than thirty miles to the northeast was the Soviet City of Khabarovsk. “Khab” as the Americans referred to it, was the second largest city in the Soviet Far East, after the coastal city of Vladivostok. During the past few decades there had been a simmering conflict between the Soviets and Chinese over islands in the Amur river that acted as a border between the nations. Tonight, SSgt Hale was going to help stoke the fire of that conflict.

Hale and Master Sergeant Alvin Goodman had been detached from ODA 1122 to fill out a team from the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the CIA's Special Activities Center. Together with two SOG officers, the four-man team was going to pursue American policy goals via the “*tertia optio*,” the third option for when neither diplomatic pressure nor military force could be used. The Agency had added Hale and Goodman to the team for two reasons: First a familiarity with the Russian language, second if everything went according to plan, ODA 1122 would be active along the Sino-Soviet border in the near future.

Under the cover of darkness, the team moved silently along the south bank of the Amur river. They moved in and out of the brush that clung to the river's edge, and kept clear of the river road that connected this tiny hamlet to Fuyuan, to the west. This area was sparsely populated, and the men of the SOG team hadn't seen a single vehicle along that road since they'd taken their position just after sundown.

On the hand signal from Gerald Ingram, the team leader, the four men darted across the road and into the treeline on the opposite side. Their objective was less than a quarter of a mile from their current position, and they made their way carefully through the forest. Their progress was slow and methodical. There were no paths through this section of the forest, and each meter they crossed had to be covered without making any undue noise. After what seemed like an eternity, Hale could see the forest thinning out ahead of him.

Their objective was a small farming operation. This far from the central government in Beijing life here had been largely untouched by the communist revolution and the “great leap forward” that had cost the lives of so many Chinese. The tension between the Russian and

Chinese farmers however was as old as anyone on either side of the river could remember. The most recent flare up of tensions between the two sides had occurred sixteen years earlier when the Chinese Army ambushed Soviet Border guards not far from this farm. That was what had made this the optimal location for tonight's mission.

The forest cleared, and Hale could make out the objective. There were several wooden buildings clustered in the middle of open fields. The buildings looked unusually tall for farmhouses, and Hale knew that this was because they were all elevated on stilts to protect against the occasional flooding of the Amur. He could make out the housing from the storage and livestock areas based on their pre-mission briefings, and knew that they would be advancing to the northwest corner of the compound. He fell in behind Goodman as Ingram led them along a low irrigation ditch that took them almost directly to the barn area.

Once they reached the point of the ditch closest to the barn, they paused to regroup and prepare. Hale unslung his pre-Soviet era Mosin-Nagant rifle and double checked its readiness. With the rifle charged and the safety off, he prepared to sprint to his assigned coverage point along a fence-line overlooking the main farmhouse entrance. On Ingram's signal, his men rose from the cover of the trench and bolted for their positions. Hale's job was simple enough. Cover the door and make sure that no Chinese could disrupt the Spooks who were heading into the barn.

He crouched along the fence, leaning on a post with his rifle raised and his eyes on the door. In the darkness he couldn't see the smoke starting to rise from the barn. He could, however, hear the sounds of animals in distress. Most of the animals trapped in the now burning barn were doing everything they could to break free. Hale knew that this was a good sign, and in a matter of minutes things would get spicy. He could hear the cracking of the fire as it engulfed the wood structure. Then came the unmistakable sounds of 7.62 millimeter rifle fire.

Ingram had released two oxen from their pen and the beasts burst out of the barn trying to get away from the flames. As they made it into the clearing, Goodman began laying down fire

as quickly as he could work the bolt of his rifle. They had calculated the entire scene to ensure that it would alert the farmers to the attack. As if on cue, the door burst open and Chinese farmers began to spill out of the house. Hale was ready and fired five shots at the scrambling men. Once his fifth shot had cleared he quickly reloaded the internal magazine with a stripper clip that he then discarded next to the small collection of empty shells. The villagers would add this to the weight of evidence collected by the locals to let them know who had done this.

As if to emphasize the point, he could hear Ingram call out in Russian, “Fall back to the river!” This was Hale’s cue to shout the Russian line he’d been practicing for weeks now:

“Die, you Chinaman sons of bitches!” with that, he pulled up and fell back to the team’s rally point to the southwest of the farm, in the opposite direction of the Amur river. This ridiculously simple means of throwing off any pursuit wouldn’t have been effective against most military opposition, but against unsuspecting civilians, it would buy them enough time to get to the tributary that ran to the east and back to the main river several miles away.

As the team boarded the pre-positioned raft and pushed off towards their extraction point, Hale finally had time to consider what had happened. They’d executed the mission to perfection. Executed. That word stuck with him. The mission wasn’t the only thing that he’d executed that night. Though he was a good soldier, and he was doing what needed to be done, he was having a hard time accepting that those farmers needed to die. He wasn’t sure how many he may have killed or wounded, but he had no doubt that the first one out the door had died instantly. If this was the “Third Option,” he sincerely hoped that it was worth the price.

March 7th, 1985
Korfovsky, Siberia, Russia
Sino-Soviet Border

Staff Sergeant Harvey Wu tried to think warm thoughts. He and his COG team had been camped out in the Siberian Forest south of Khab for a week now. They knew they would need to

be in position prior to their sister team in Fuyuan's operation. Penetrating the Soviet border was hard enough without the start of a border crisis. Nobody wanted to try to get in once the alert level of the border guards had been elevated.

Wu was the only Green Beret on the team that consisted of two CIA Officers and two Chinese Nationalists from the Taiwanese "Airborne Special Service Company." The five of them had crossed into the Soviet Union across the Ussuri river near the town of Ebergard. From there, they'd ridden in the back of a truck for just under two hundred miles to where they disappeared into the Siberian forest. They'd hiked to the north and west until they could pick up a local radio station, and then they waited for the news of the attack in China. That news had come in yesterday.

Unlike Hale's team, who had worn civilian attire and played the role of angry nationalist peasants, Wu's team was wearing uniforms from the People's Liberation Army, the ground forces of the Chinese communists. With those uniforms came better weapons and a much more dangerous mission. They were there to escalate the tensions, so they needed a target and an operation that would provoke a direct response from the Soviets. If anyone were captured during an operation, this whole effort would unravel.

It was with this in mind that Wu's team crossed the four miles from where they'd made camp to the rail station south of Korfovsky. The team had three targets: One the rail yard itself, two the quarry that supplied the rail yard with stone and three, the housing unit that hosted quarry workers. As an engineer, Harvey was well versed in his part of the operation. He would place and detonate explosives at the main switching station, as well as lighting off an incendiary bomb in the control building.

While Harvey was preparing his boom time, the Taiwanese commandos would infiltrate the housing unit and execute the workers sleeping there. This was the aspect of the operation that was riskiest. Blowing things up and disappearing into the night was a pretty straightforward affair. Getting intimate with the enemy and eliminating them without allowing them to raise the

alarm would require some finesse. The commandos were also tasked with the grim detail of painting the Chinese phrase “Outer Manchuria” on the walls of the building in the blood of the dead. This was to serve as a reminder to the Soviets that they were living in Chinese territory, regardless of what treaties may have been signed to the contrary.

Once the ASSC commandos had butchered the workers, they would rendezvous with the CIA team a half a mile to the southwest. Once the four of them had formed up, they would then detonate explosives the CIA team had placed in the Quarry operations building. This particular target wouldn't cause significant damage, but meant to increase the overall terror effect of the attack. By the time the operations building went up, Harvey needed to have his toys ready to play with. Wu would detonate his explosives and then meet up with the rest of the team at a rally point a mile and a half to the southwest, where a truck would be waiting to start their journey back to China.

At the northwest corner of the rail station, the team split up and Harvey went to work. One of the reasons they had selected this target was its relative lack of strategic value. They weren't here trying to score a victory in the furtherance of a military objective. They were here to send a message and to terrorize the local population. As such, the security at the rail yard was relaxed and geared more towards keeping hooligans away from the equipment than in repelling an experienced operator like Harvey Wu.

In a perfect world, Harvey would have wanted more time to observe the security situation to make sure that he wasn't missing anything. Tonight, he didn't have the time to spare. Once he'd put eyes on the old man wandering the tracks, he simply started to follow him, staying behind him and out of sight, until he hit the first of his objectives, the rail switch that connected this yard to the main north/south line between Khab and Vladivostok. Harvey had spent the past month going over this piece of equipment in detail. He attached the bundle of C4 and the remote detonator to three points in the junction between the main line and the four feeder lines that led to the yard. While he could have done this blindfolded, it still took time.

With the explosives placed, Harvey looked for the guard, but he'd lost sight of him in the darkness. Using his familiarity with the layout of the yard, Harvey was able to creep along the most likely path that the guard would have taken back to the warmth of the administration building. He crept along the path while he was also looking for something among the rail cars. That moment of distraction almost cost Staff Sergeant Wu his life.

When his eyes shifted from the rail cars back to the path, he could see the bushes off to his left rustling as the guard made his way back to the path. Without hesitation, Harvey drew out his **Ka-Bar** and stepped behind the man, plunging the knife into his neck while covering his mouth to stifle any noise he made as his life drained away. Wu knew that he'd just started a timer, and that he was on the clock. The odds were about zero that this man was the only person on duty that night, and at some point he would be missed. Harvey had two choices. First, he could proceed deploying his explosives in the hopes that the entire operation could unfold before the alarm was raised, or second, he could actively seek and eliminate the remaining guards.

Knowing that he didn't have any time to consider his options, Harvey quickly frisked the dead man and found the hand-held radio attached to his belt. This would give him a head's up as the man's disappearance was detected and reacted to. He moved along the southwest edge of the yard, still looking among the cars as he made his way towards the control building. He knew that this was most likely where the other security personnel would be. He was weighing the pros and cons of eliminating the guards, or trying to blow the building with them in it when he suddenly found what he was looking for: A giant tanker car. This changed everything.

Wu took a quick look around to verify that his path was clear, then sprinted across two sets of tracks and slipped between the cars. From here he could see a light on in the control building, but couldn't make out any activity. Turning away from what had been his primary objective he climbed over and through several cars before finding what he was looking for: a giant tanker car. He started to scan the length of the car looking for a sign. There it was. He ran

his hand across the stenciled words “дизельное топливо.” He couldn’t speak a word of Russian, but he knew that this was a diesel tanker.

A quick inspection of the one of the bottom outlets let Wu know that the tanker was still carrying fuel. It may not be full, but he was willing to bet that it would serve his purposes. Due to the ever changing inventory of rail cars Wu couldn’t be sure that there would be a tanker here, but he had hoped (and trained) for the possibility. This changed his plan considerably. He knew that he could make a much bigger impact with this car that he could have by starting a fire in the office.

This would be a little tricky, but nothing too complicated. Harvey rigged some C-4 along one of the seams of the tanker, where the end-cap met the cylinder of the body. He then set a modified M49A1 trip flare under the tanker, off center towards the side with the bomb. When the bomb exploded, the contents of the tanker would begin to spill out on the earth, where the magnesium flare would then ignite the fuel, causing an intense fire that would make a spectacle and get the enemy’s attention. With any luck, the fire could easily spread to the surrounding forest.

As he was placing the flare and double checking his handiwork, he heard the radio crackle to life. That was the signal that he didn’t have much time left on his clock. He had another twenty minutes before the soonest he could expect the other teams to set off their explosives. He couldn’t set his off prematurely except as a last resort and he couldn’t leave them for the guards to find when they went looking for their dead comrade. There was only one thing for Wu to do. With grim determination he made he was back across the rows of cars and tracks.

The radio crackled again as he came to the edge of the trains facing the clearing between the building and the tracks. He reached down and turned the volume down and looked back towards the office with the light on. After several minutes, he watched another man, dressed as the guard he had killed, left the building, locking the door behind him. *That’s a good*

sign, thought Wu. If he was locking the door, that meant that there was nobody else in the building. Things were breaking in Wu's favor.

While Wu was deciding how to stalk his prey, his concentration was interrupted by a voice calling out from behind him.

"Chto delayesh!?"

Harvey couldn't speak Russian, but he could read a situation, and this one said "you've screwed up, son." He dropped and rolled under the nearest railcar while trying to get a look at his pursuer. He could see the man's legs, and then saw his face as he bent down, still shouting at Harvey. There wasn't enough room under the car for Harvey to easily unslung his rifle, so instead he drew his Chinese Type 64 pistol. Aiming the cheap pistol at his adversary, he dearly missed his M9 Beretta. He fired two shots as he saw the man reach for his own weapon. The Type 64 might be a piece of junk, but at this range, it could do the job. The guard crumpled to the ground.

A shot ricocheted off the steel wheel next to Wu's head, reminding him that he'd had to turn his back on the other guard to engage this one. He knew that he was in the soup now. He spun around firing a couple of hastily aimed shots to get the enemy's focus on self preservation, and not on killing Wu. In what was possibly an even worse turn of events, Wu could hear the man calling into the radio. This was getting out of hand.

Wu rolled to his right and crawled out from under the car as more rounds came his way. He unslung his rifle and ended the guard in one swift move. His years of training and discipline showing the vast difference between a hardened operator and a total amateur. But the damage had been done. By now the call had gone out, and God only knew how many people were roused by the gunfight. As he bolted away from the rail yard and into the forest to the west, he heard the sounds of explosions in the distance. With that, he pulled his own detonator, and triggered his own charges. He could hear the explosions light off as he ran.

He was too far away to hear the sound of the flare tripping, but if he had looked over his shoulder, he would have seen a column of black smoke rising from the burning tanker. Within minutes the fire would be raging at five hundred degrees and with a little luck (of which Wu was clearly running low), the local resources would be busier fighting the fire than trying to find him.

He was the first of the team to make it to the rendezvous point. This made sense. The firefight at the rail yard had caused the team at the quarry to detonate their charges before they were in position. It wasn't long though before the remaining three members made it to the spot. One of the Taiwanese commandos wasn't with them, but the CIA team leader indicated that they were pushing on. Whatever had happened to the man, Wu would have to wait to find out as the team silently headed southwest towards their waiting ride.

The team covered the mile and a half of forest quickly and quietly. They hadn't heard any signs of pursuit just yet, but they knew it was only a matter of time. They couldn't let up, they had to put as much distance as possible between themselves and the chaos they'd created. Occasionally Wu would catch a glimpse of his handiwork as the black smoke continued to billow. After their hard push through the forest, they finally made it to the clearing off the side road that would take them back to the highway and towards freedom. The truck wasn't there.

March 10th, 1985
SCC Conference Room
White House

Jack Waters was in the thick of things now. His work on the hypothetical US-Soviet conflict and how to prevent that from spilling out into the rest of Europe had led to his being read in on Operation Mosaic. Mosaic was the brainchild of the Haig/Casey partnership. While Jack had been working on the diplomatic side of the equation, the Department of Defense was working on the military side. Somewhere in the shadows in between, the CIA had put together a

plan to advance both the political and military objectives. The plan was coming together, and Jack found himself in the middle of it all as Secretary Haig's senior aide.

Haig liked to compare Jack's role to his own during the Korean War, when Al served as the deputy chief of staff to General Douglas MacArthur. Jack wasn't so sure about that. He wasn't out in the field, and the odds of him freezing to death in the Chosin Reservoir were much lower. But he loved what he was doing, and he loved being in the know. Jack had been working on this for a year now, and today was the day that knowing what was about to happen would turn into knowing what was happening.

Today's meeting was being conducted by CIA analyst Amanda Frazier. Amanda was Jack's counterpart at the CIA, working closely with William Casey and ensuring that all of the moving parts of this operation were well informed by the Agency. In the dark of the room, the light from the slide projector reflected off her large, round glasses and illuminated her short, brown curls. Jack found her attractive in a "mousy librarian" kind of way, but he was also terrified of her. In order for Amanda to rise quickly in the "boys club" of the CIA, she needed an endless supply of self confidence. That cocky attitude put Jack, who found himself in over his head more often than not, on the defense around her.

"Thank you for joining us today," said Director of Central Intelligence Casey. Going forward we will be having these meetings weekly to keep this committee up to speed on where Operation Mosaic. Before we begin, does anyone have any questions?" There were none. Everyone in the room had known what this meeting was about and each had already take the chance to clear up any questions beforehand.

Ms. Frasier started the presentation, "As we have outlined previously, our operations began with the establishment of several mobile broadcasting facilities in northern Pakistan and eastern Mongolia. These broadcast stations have been 'reporting' on cross border crimes by both the Soviets and the Chinese. Using different frequencies and different languages, they have been informing the rural populations along the borders of increasing incursions by their

opposite numbers. After several weeks of establishing these stations and verifying their reception with HUMINT resources on the ground, we started our direct action campaign.”

Jack was sure that he wasn't the only one who had recommended that the Americans focus on Asia, but he still felt that his early work on Mosaic had directly lead to this “direct action.” The thought excited him. Frasier continued,

“Teams were in place in the first week of March and began active operations on March 5th. At that time, a team was sent into a Chinese village along the Amur river to disrupt and destroy a farming operation there. Reports of this action were immediately relayed from our stations in Pakistan and Mongolia. Since that first attack, we have been conducting escalating ‘reprisal’ attacks on a constant but irregular basis. Between the attacks and the constant barrage of reporting on them, we have begun to receive reports of non-sanctioned fighting between the two populations. Ethnic Chinese are being beaten and detained on the Soviet side, with ethnic Russians being treated in kind on the Chinese side.”

“I don't want to break up your flow Ms. Frasier,” said Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, “but could you please give us an update on the missing men from these direct action units?” This was a surprise to Jack. Coming into this meeting nobody outside of the CIA and the DOD knew anything about the missing Special Operations Group team.

“Of Course, Secretary Rumsfeld,” replied Amanda. “During our first operation near the Soviet city of Khabarovsk we lost contact with one of our teams. The team in question was a five man operation consisting of two CIA officers, two Taiwanese commandos and a Special Forces engineer. We were able to verify that they had succeeded in the mission, however they failed to make contact with the local extraction team.”

There was a flurry of voices all talking at once. “For all we know the Soviets have those men, and they know exactly what is happening?!?” said Haig over everyone else. Haig was bordering on rage at not having this detail until now.

“AI, that’s a possibility but not a likely one,” said Casey, trying to calm his State Department counterpart. “We have no information from any of our sources... and I’m talking about communications, electronic surveillance, men in the field, any source, that indicates that this team has been compromised. I understand that Defense and State are used to operating in the open, and the idea that an asset going dark is almost exclusively bad news. I have to assure you that this isn’t the case.”

“Well what the hell makes you think that?” asked Haig, unconvinced.

“For starters, by the very nature of covert activity, these teams can’t simply pick up the phone to ‘reach out and touch someone.’ They have to go dark and operate autonomously until it’s safe to reestablish contact. These men were operating deep in communist territory with enemies on either side. We knew going into this that we would run the risk of losing contact. That’s the price of doing business. The complete lack of reaction in our intelligence and your diplomatic channels tells us more about this than anything. We also have reason to be suspicious of the extraction team. These are Russian dissidents who can normally be counted on, however the report we received from them had some suspicious timing.”

“How so?” asked Dr. Kirkpatrick.

“It came far too soon. At first we had no reason to be suspicious, but as reports of our attack came out, it was pretty clear that the dissidents were reporting the failure of the SOG team to rendezvous long before they should have expected them. It is our current belief that the extraction team got cold feet and abandoned our men in the field. Once they transmitted that report they went silent. They most likely buried the radio equipment, or dumped it into the Ussuri river.”

“This isn’t very comforting Bill,” said Haig. “What are we doing about this?”

“Nothing AI, we’re not doing anything.” Haig started to turn red. “There’s nothing for us to do right now,” continued Casey. “The team will work their way through the Soviet countryside

and contact us from their alternate extraction point.” With that point of explanation, Haig seemed to relax a bit.

“And where, exactly, is that?” he asked calmly.

“Amanda, give me slide 2,” said Casey. With a click, a map of the Soviet Far East was displayed on the screen at the front of the room. Casey pointed at a spot south of Khab along the Ussuri river. “About two hundred miles to their East here on Lake Khanka.”

“You have got to be kidding me,” said Haig. “Two hundred miles, across the Siberian forests... in March?”

“It’s going to be rough going,” said Casey. “I can’t deny that. But the two things to remember here are: One, the area is famously uninhabited. These men can live off the forest land and the river indefinitely. I have no doubt that they have a better than even chance of making it to the secondary extraction point.” Jack thought those odds weren’t as promising as Casey seemed to think “Two, if they die, they’ll just be five dead Chinese in the forest. There will be nothing to tie them back to our plans.” As ghastly as that was, it did score some points with Haig.

“There’s nothing to be done about that now,” said Kirkpatrick, trying to get the meeting moving forward again.

“Thank you Dr. Kirkpatrick,” said Amanda, as she clicked the projector twice to get to the fourth slide in her presentation. “We can see some major mobilizations here in Khabarovsk.” The slide displayed a side by side image of the Khabarovsk airport. “Here on the left we can see the Khabarovsk airport during the week prior to our efforts. As you can see, there is nothing unusual, and the traffic is moderate, but unspectacular. On the right, we have an image that was taken yesterday.” Jack looked and was amazed at how quickly the area to the right of the airfield had been transformed.

“Khab is one of the main air hubs for the Far East. This makes it a logical staging area to a force buildup. Here to the east of the airfield,” she pointed, right where Jack had been looking,

“we can see that at least a regiment’s worth of infantry being moved into the area to support the 64th Independent Motor Rifle Brigade, which is garrisoned at Khab.” Her pointer moved to the west where a small armory was located. “From everything we can see, it appears that the Soviets are countering the tensions with an increase in light infantry forces to keep a lid on things.”

“So there has been no increase in mechanized assets?” asked Kirkpatrick.

“If we look at the smaller military airfield to the southwest of the main airport, we can see what appears to be a doubling of the helicopter force located here.” Her pointer moved to the east, to the smaller airfield. “These are primarily older MI-4 helicopters that will be used for patrolling the border along the Amur and Ussuri rivers. None of these represent the commitment of anything like a frontline unit. Instead, this is completely within the expected scope of a Soviet reaction.”

“What of the Chinese?” asked Haig.

“There is a small airfield, centrally located here,” she pointed to a thin strip of white in a sea of green. “However, the Chinese have not moved any aircraft into the area. Instead, we believe they are focusing on adding additional river patrol craft at the small harbors in Fuyuan, Zhuajizhen, and Zhingtongdao. We don’t have imagery on those areas, but we do have corroborating evidence that this is in fact happening.”

“This is good and well, but how can we expect this to escalate to the levels that we require?” asked Rumsfeld. “Back in the 60s they had a full blown military skirmish along the Ussuri and even that didn’t lead to a complete breakdown between the two.”

“That’s right,” said Bill Casey. “In that case, the border skirmish was just a territorial dispute. This time, we’re going to take it further.” Rumsfeld raised an eyebrow. “We’re going to make it personal for the Chinese.”

March 10th, 1985
Nevelskoye.
Siberia, U.S.S.R.

Harvey Wu felt a sense of security in their solitude. His team had been working their way south and west for the past three days. They had taken a very indirect path in order to help obscure their trail, should anyone come across it. Of course they had also taken painful measures to hide that trail, but being located so far from friendly forces, they were taking every precaution they could. The sound of nothing at all was the most reassuring sound he could hear.

His team had been staking out the small Soviet village for a day now. Before they had left Taiwan en route to the mainland, this village had been identified as a vital contingency point for the operation. It was twenty five miles south west of Khab, which gave it some distance from the hub of Soviet forces in the area. It was small enough to avoid most scrutiny during any searches, and most importantly, it had a long secluded riverbank that was covered in brush and trees. Even without their leaves, the rough terrain helped obscure the comings and goings of a small team of commandos.

Silence was the order of the day, as it had been since their extraction team had failed to materialize. But during the past few days Wu had picked up some bits and pieces of what happened three nights prior. When they made what passed for a camp on the first night, Lan Zhang, the second SOG agent, told him what had happened to Third Class Master Sergeant Xu Yang.

While Harvey was in a shootout with the locals, the dorm where Xu and his partner An Hsu were in the middle of their killing spree. As Xu was writing "outer Manchuria" on one of the walls, he was rushed by a survivor who plunged a hunting knife into his thigh. Xu had killed the man quickly, but the damage had been done. He'd collapsed as his destroyed left quadriceps couldn't support his weight. He cast a knowing look at An, who drew his pistol and shot the man in the head. Just like that, they were down a man, and moving out of the area.

Harvey cast a quick glance at An, wondering how heavy a burden the man was carrying. Not that it made a difference. Right now the entire team was focused on getting the hell out of Russia, and making it to Lake Khanka. In order to do that, they needed to get into Nevelskoye, steal a small boat they'd identified for the task, and floating north along the flow of the river to the Chinese village of Zhuajizhen. Once on the Chinese side, they had what headquarters referred to as a "soft contact." They knew this man only as XXXXX, "the Trapper."

XXXXX was a long descendant of the Chinese fur trappers that had settled the area centuries before. While the fur industry had moved to the more efficient farming of fur animals, XXXXX and his forebearers moved to the typical methods of providing illicit goods and services to remote populations: Bootlegging and smuggling. As a Soft Contact, XXXX couldn't be counted on to provide his service or assistance due to any ideological motivation (as their original extraction team had been), instead XXXX relied on cold, hard cash. It was something of a gamble, but Ling Bai, the CIA team leader believed that it was their best option for getting upriver.

The sun dipped below the horizon, and the grey of dusk gave way to the dark of night. With the cover of that darkness, Bai led the team down to the river's edge. On the north west side of the village, the first farm along the river had a small low-draft flatbottom boat that could carry all of the men and their gear. Bai slipped into the farm's small dock and loosed the boat. Once he'd pulled away from the farm and into the flow of the river, he drifted north a half mile to a landing where the rest of the team waited.

Once they were all aboard, they remained hidden in the brush and trees of the small inlet. According to the intel they had, they could expect at least one patrol to come upriver during the night. After what seemed like an eternity, they could hear the low sound of a motor patrol boat moving south against the flowing waters. Each of the operators made themselves as still and small as they could as they watched a cone of light push along the shoreline, searching for anything out of the ordinary. They were good at what they did, and within a few minutes, the

boat had passed. The four commandos pushed off and into the current, drifting north in the silent night.

END OF TEXT

