

DESTINATION UNKNOWN

Volume 4, Winter 2023/2024



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MCUP

Marine Corps University Press
2044 Broadway Street
Quantico, VA 22134

First edition, 2024

THIS VOLUME IS FREELY AVAILABLE
AT WWW.USMCU.EDU/MCUPRESS

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FOREWORD

Sharpening the Mind for Future War

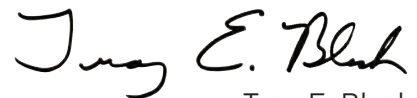
In the vast landscape of modern warfighting, there exist unexplored concepts, methods, and technologies that our Marines have yet to discover and exploit. To access this realm, Marines are continuing to sharpen their skills through realistic training, military education, self-learning, and continuous character development. These activities are foundational to the warfighting instincts of Marines and sustain their intellectual humility as they explore the complex terrain of future battles.

As the Marine Corps continues to modernize, Marines employ the latest tools, technologies, and resources needed to adapt our current force for future combat. Nevertheless, there are also unknown features of warfighting and advanced technologies well beyond our Service today. Though these things may be out of our reach now, Marines still find ways to simulate and conceptualize future war under different conditions—to include the use of graphic novels.

The *Destination Unknown* series serves as a testament to the potential of this medium and the ingenuity of Marines trying to comprehend and navigate the future of warfare. By harnessing our warfighting ethos and visual storytelling, these stories offer a new way into the multifaceted aspects of the changing character of war. In a few short pages, they boldly combine complex human and nonhuman characters, portray advanced technologies, and introduce new social issues to highlight what Marines may someday encounter.

I believe that *Destination Unknown* will not only reveal glimmers of future war but will also help stimulate the creative spirit of our Corps in other areas as well. For instance, one can only imagine what our Service could someday learn from augmented reality systems, high-quality simulations, and advanced modeling methods for individual and unit-level training. In the meantime, we should all pick up something to read—old or new—to get a sense of destinations unknown in war and peace.

It is important to keep your blade sharp but your mind even sharper, Marines.



Troy E. Black
Sergeant Major, U.S. Marine Corps
Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Here's to volume 4! Well, technically, volume 4.5 if you can get your hands on the digital winter special from 2020. The *Destination Unknown* experience to date has been truly humbling, and we must admit we have a case of the feels. Unexpected success came early, as we received national recognition with a Department of Defense Gears of Government Award and a Department of the Navy A+ Award in 2019 for innovation and creative writing. Each volume has had its unique challenges and rewards, but we have always been amazed by our contributing servicemembers and their dedication to their projects. We had a good run, but now change is on the horizon.

Past Is Prologue

This issue is likely the last for our core creative team. Austin Duncan, Ian Brown, Sara Wood, Tyler Quinn, and Adam Yang have been with *Destination Unknown* from its inception and earliest days. But nothing lasts forever, and the currents of life are taking our editors to new destinations that require their full attention.

The fact that the first volume of *Destination Unknown* ever had a sequel—let alone several—is a testament to the deep belief in the value of this enterprise. *Destination Unknown* has always been a passion project, executed in the editorial team's "downtime"—always writing, editing, advertising, coordinating, and cajoling around day jobs and other extracurricular responsibilities.

The original members of the *Destination Unknown* team were motivated by a few beliefs: that Marines needed to prepare for future challenges; that educational organizations owed Marines platforms to launch their ideas; and that Marines, sailors, airmen, and soldiers would willingly contribute their talents if there was a venue—and we were not disappointed. One of the most gratifying outcomes of the *Destination Unknown* project has been observing the creative processes of our teammates throughout the years. The men and women serving in the U.S. military today are truly astonishing, and this series has brought out the best from the best our nation has to offer.

By the Warfighter, for the Warfighter

Notably, *Destination Unknown* has become a unique outreach tool for the Brute Krulak Center for Innovation and Future Warfare and Marine Corps University. This graphic novel hovers over the unique nexus of professional military education, creative problem solving, future warfare, and artistry. As a milestone for all our supporters, in academic year 2022-23, the series finally became what its creators always hoped for—a formal educational asset for Marines. The College of Distance Education and Training's (CDET) Continuing Education Program converted the first volume of *Destination Unknown* into a distance learning course for enlisted Marines. CDET intends to create additional modules for the subsequent issues, and we are ecstatic that this development fulfills our guiding philosophy of creating an educational program "by the warfighter, for the warfighter."

The first three volumes of *Destination Unknown* depended on the editorial team's ability to recruit and inspire talented servicemembers to populate its pages. Conversely, this fourth volume marked a distinct change, as it was crowdsourced in its entirety. With the support of the Marine Corps University Foundation and the Krulak Center, we solicited creative contributions via a completely open writing contest. As you will see in the coming pages, the submissions received for this volume are impressive, and their work reminds us why we started the project in the first place.

To Infinity and Beyond

The future of *Destination Unknown* is in your hands. The Krulak Center is always looking for a new group of Marines to continue the educational legacy of this graphic novel series. We are confident that others will pick up the reins and drive this rewarding project in new and exciting directions. Take the helm and steer this ship. Build a great team, unleash their talents, and inspire the Service.

Looking back, we want to extend a special thanks to some of our creative mentors, to include August Cole (writing), Mark Sable (writing), and Gabriel Pons (art and design). We are also indebted to the leadership and direct contributions from some of our greatest Marine Corps leaders: General Charles C. Krulak, 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps; General Alfred M. Gray Jr., 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps; General Robert B. Neller, 37th Commandant of the Marine Corps; Major General Mick Ryan, Australian Army; and Sergeant Major Troy E. Black, 19th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps. There are many, many others to whom we are deeply grateful.

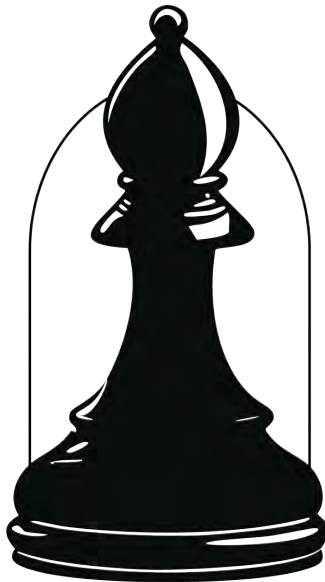
If you dare to take the reins, please reach out to any of us, and we will be happy to help guide your adventure. It will not be easy, but we promise it will be rewarding. Much like when we started, the destination remains unknown.

The Editors of *Destination Unknown*

No Limits: Marine Expeditionary Space Unit

Story and Illustrations by
Major Philippe I. Rodriguez

Color work by
Major Scott Richards





In 2038, a new Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) element, the Marine Expeditionary Space Unit (MESU), has validated its worth after completing numerous significant humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) efforts, leveraging the latest hypersonic space vehicles to access any place in the world within 30 minutes.

The effects of global warming have prompted a rapid increase in HADR missions, which have comprised the majority of Marine Corps responses. The Arctic region has received the most immediate focus in the last two years, specifically for the United States and partners such as Canada, Norway, Iceland, and Sweden. Arctic melting has also affected coastal locations as far south as the United Kingdom, Maine, and parts of South Korea and Japan. These global warming effects stem from geopolitical challenges between global power competitors.

Major Rey, commander of the 1st MESU, which is aligned to the Arctic regions, has been leading his unit through a nine-month predeployment training program (PTP). His executive officer is Captain Margot, and his operations chief is Master Sergeant Em. The company's artificial intelligence (AI) asset is called CharlieAI. Key MESU capabilities include a hypersonic vehicle platform; an AI command center; exoskeleton body armor; unmanned space intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); unmanned orbital logistics pods; and a full arsenal of kinetic and nonkinetic fires.



How's the hypoxic looking?
Did that leak get taken care
of, or are we going to have to
execute the bump plan?

Good evening, Sir, the leak has
been resolved. No need to use
hypersonic vehicle number 2.

CHARLIE AI



Sir, the reason the leak occurred was that—

Charlie—really! You think the CO wants a dissertation?!

Psh . . . artificial intelligence, my ass.

Sir, I'm headed to the TOC to download the HADR mission data for the company. Let's go, Charlie.

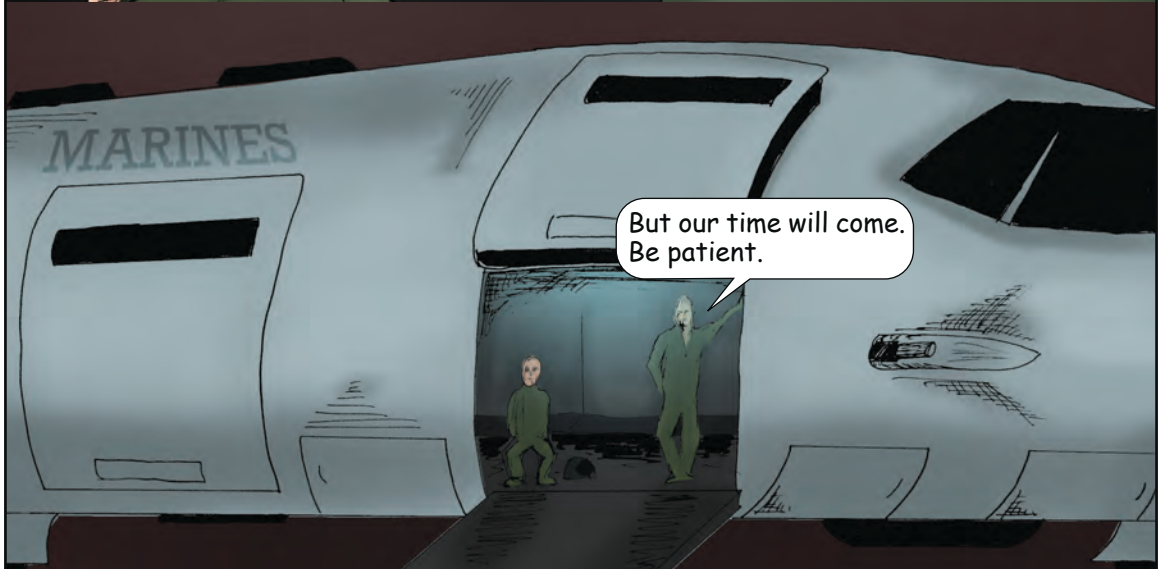


XO, when are we going?
I'm tired of this "hurry
up and wait" game.



I just want to head out
and get this HADR done.

Easy, buddy—I know you're
eager. The PTP didn't pre-
pare us for the "hurry up
and wait" game . . .

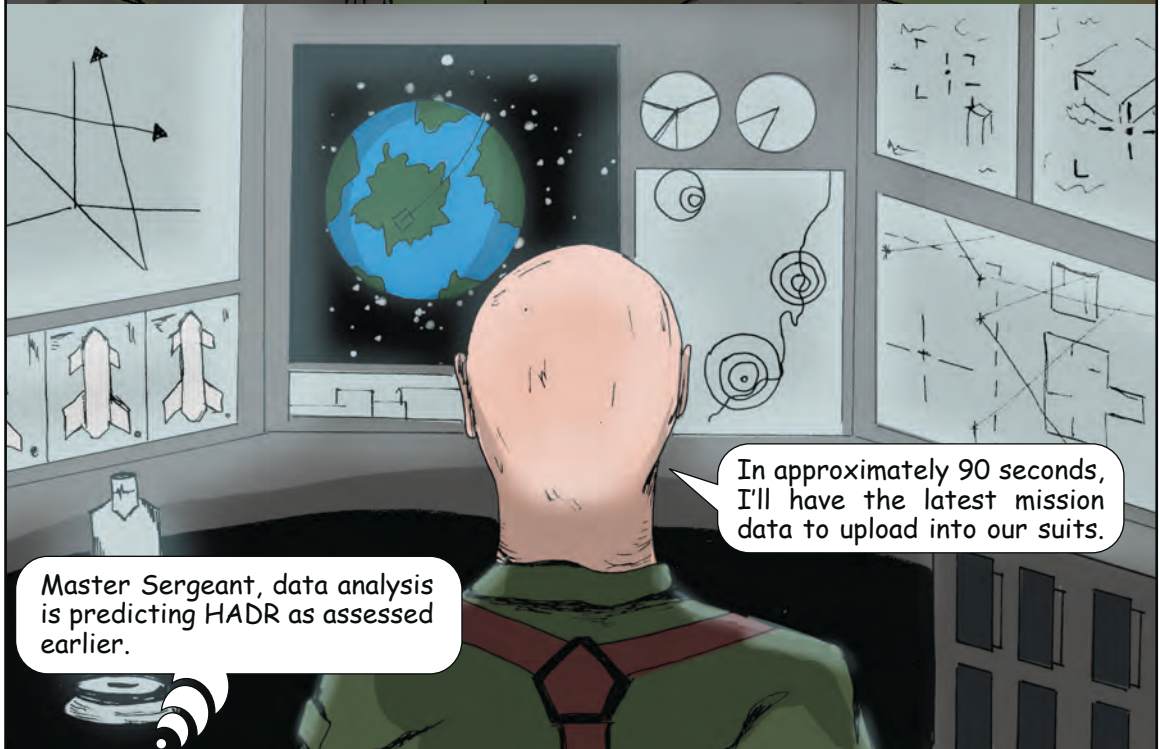


But our time will come.
Be patient.




Charlie, how we lookin'?

TOOL



Master Sergeant, data analysis is predicting HADR as assessed earlier.

In approximately 90 seconds, I'll have the latest mission data to upload into our suits.



The AI card is good to go, Master Sergeant.

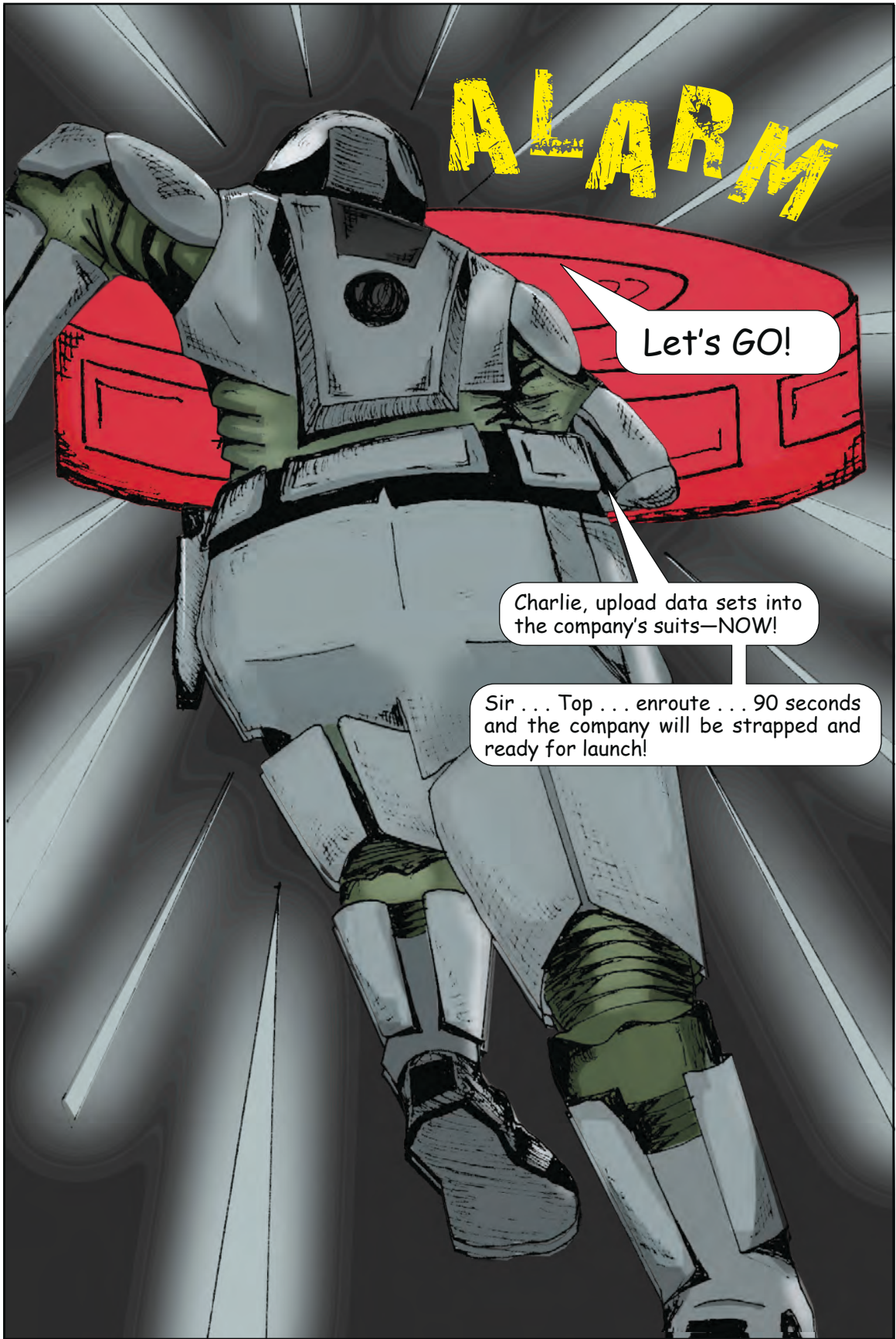


DOWNLOAD MISSION DATA

All mission data is up to date and will be good for the next 24 hours. We'll get updates over the 8G network.

Thanks, Charlie. Can you give me a hand putting it in my pack? Oh wait—you don't have any hands! Ha ha ha!

Not funny.





General, strapped in the hypovic.
HADR confirmed. Ready for launch.

APPROVED! Good luck!

Are we there yet?

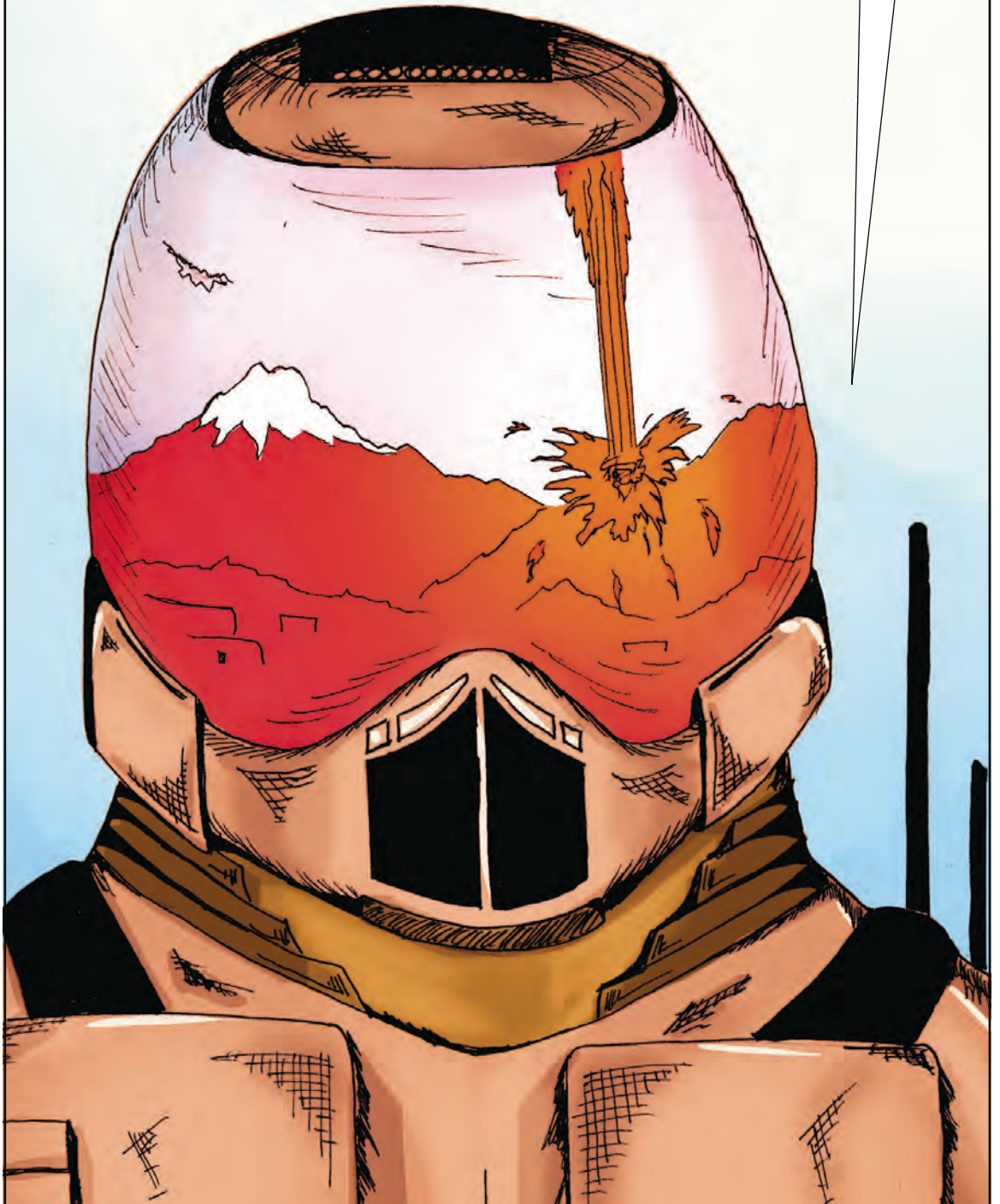
All right, fellas—stay warm in the Arctic.

Charlie, once we get out, let's set up that aid distribution point.

Sir, I will get with the embassy to confirm no indications or warnings of a NEO mission.

Good to go. . . . Wait, what the hell is that? Copilot, do you see that?

Top, launch the QRF! This is NOT a HADR—
SOMEONE'S MELTING THE POLAR ICE CAPS!!



NO LIMITS: MARINE EXPEDITIONARY SPACE UNIT

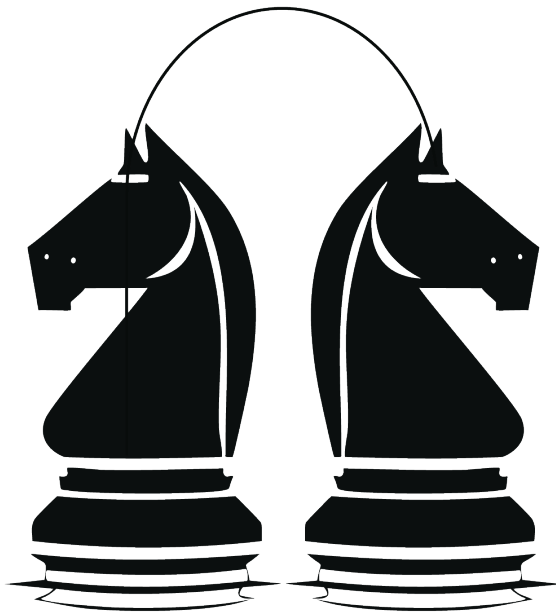
Discussion Questions:

1. If/when AI robotics integrate within the military, what tasks or activities would you feel comfortable allowing AI-enabled robots to carry out? What tasks or activities do you believe humans should maintain?
2. Do you believe that the Marine Corps should operate and deploy in the space domain to deliver lethality? Or do you think that the Marine Corps should leave that responsibility to the U.S. Space Force or others?
3. The Marine Corps continues to focus on the concept “any clime or place.” Do you believe that the Marine Corps is prepared to conduct large-scale operations in the Arctic? Should the Marine Corps be concerned with global warming and its effects?
4. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan saw the Marine Corps execute the “three-block war” concept. What makes the Marine Corps unique for conducting this concept in places where it must conduct humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and combat operations within the same evolution? Can any of the other U.S. military Services execute the three-block war concept?
5. What characteristics of a science fiction film—such as *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Halo*, or *Tron*—are in the realm of possibility for the Marine Corps by 2040?

Reckless

Story by
Lieutenant Colonel Brian Kerg

Illustrations by
Zoe Kerg



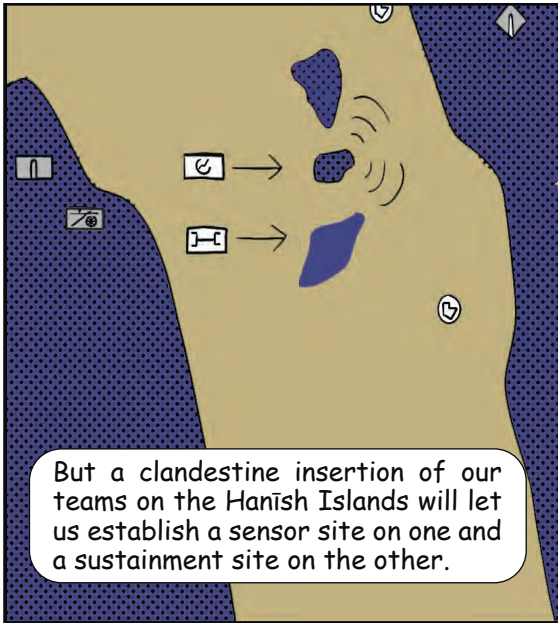
Forward deployed in 2035 . . .

Okay, Marines, listen up!

The rebels in Yemen shut down the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

They're using long-range munitions to sink everything that tries to get through.

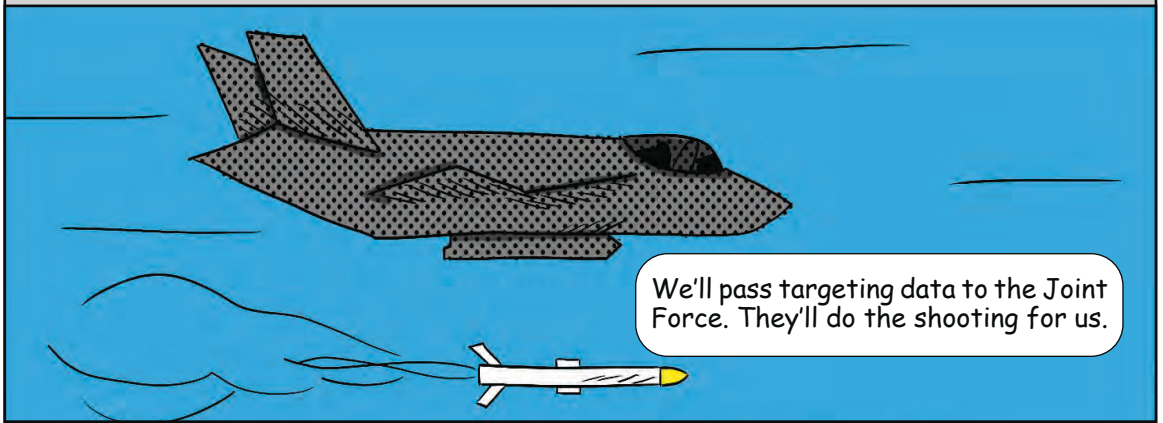
No one wants to put boots on the ground in Yemen proper and risk another quagmire.



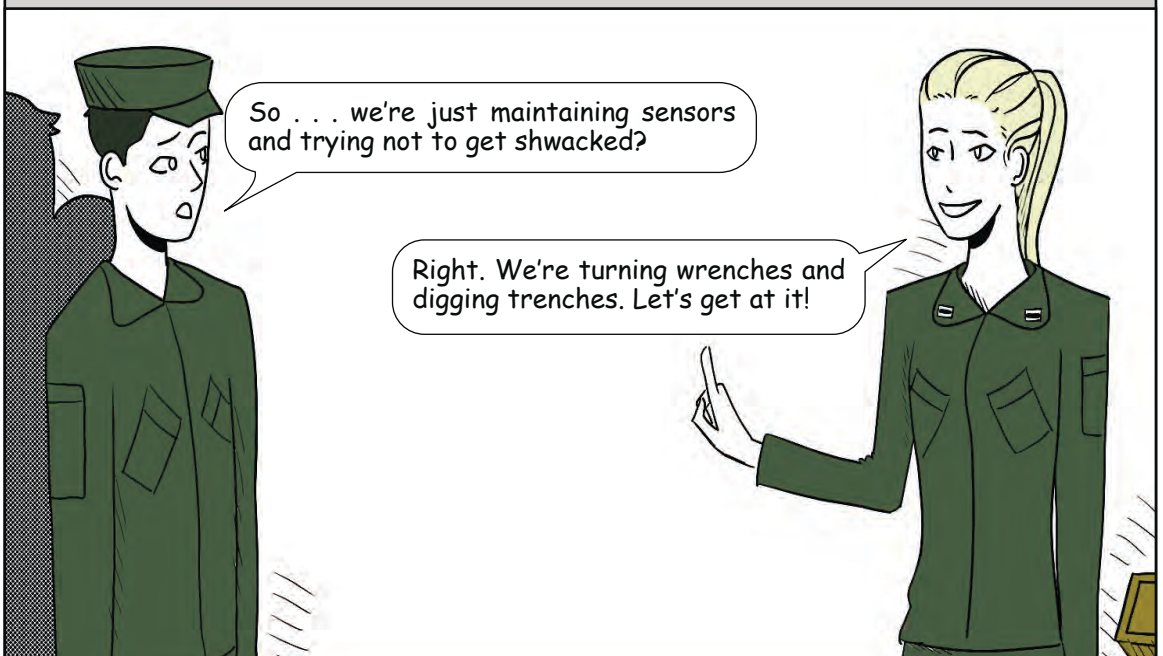
But a clandestine insertion of our teams on the Hanish Islands will let us establish a sensor site on one and a sustainment site on the other.



We're not going there to shoot—we're going there to scout.

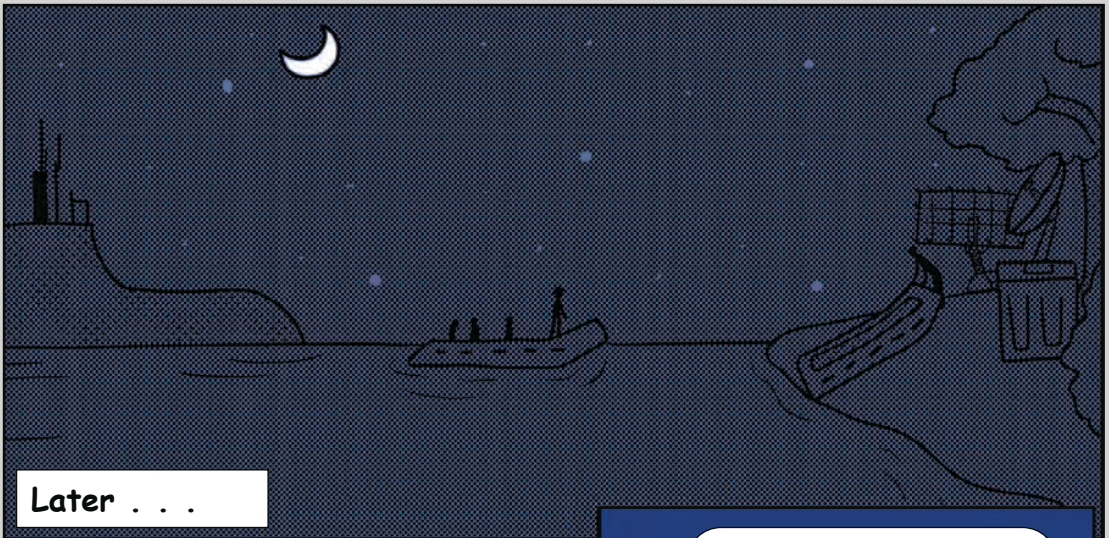


We'll pass targeting data to the Joint Force. They'll do the shooting for us.

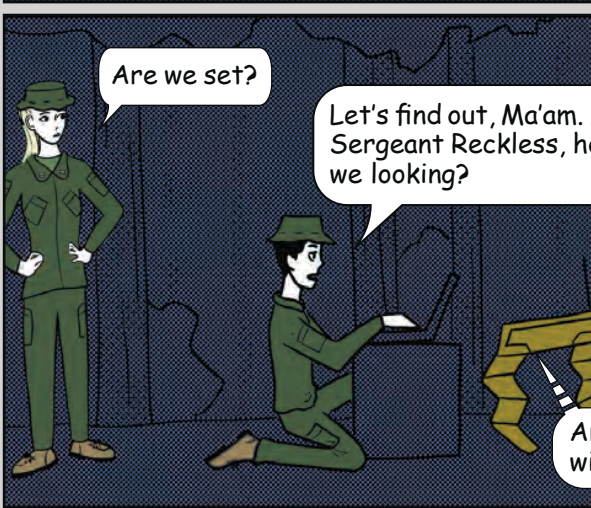


So . . . we're just maintaining sensors and trying not to get shwacked?

Right. We're turning wrenches and digging trenches. Let's get at it!

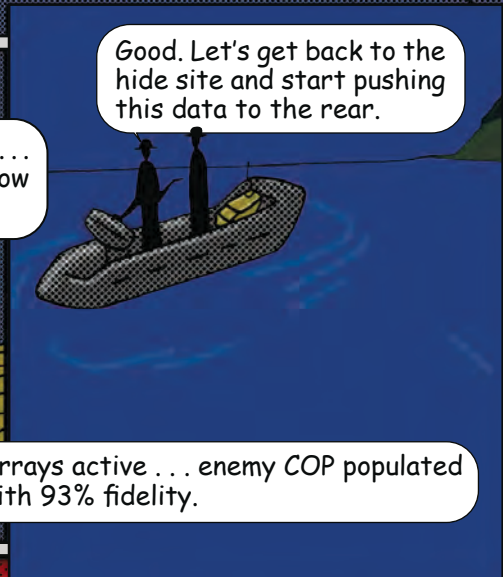


Later . . .



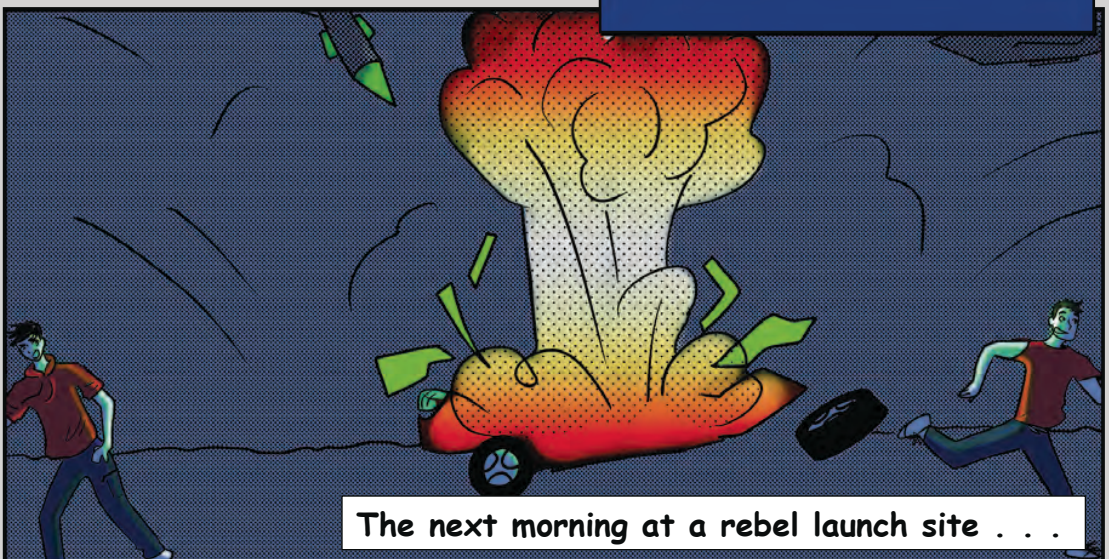
Are we set?

Let's find out, Ma'am. . .
Sergeant Reckless, how
we looking?

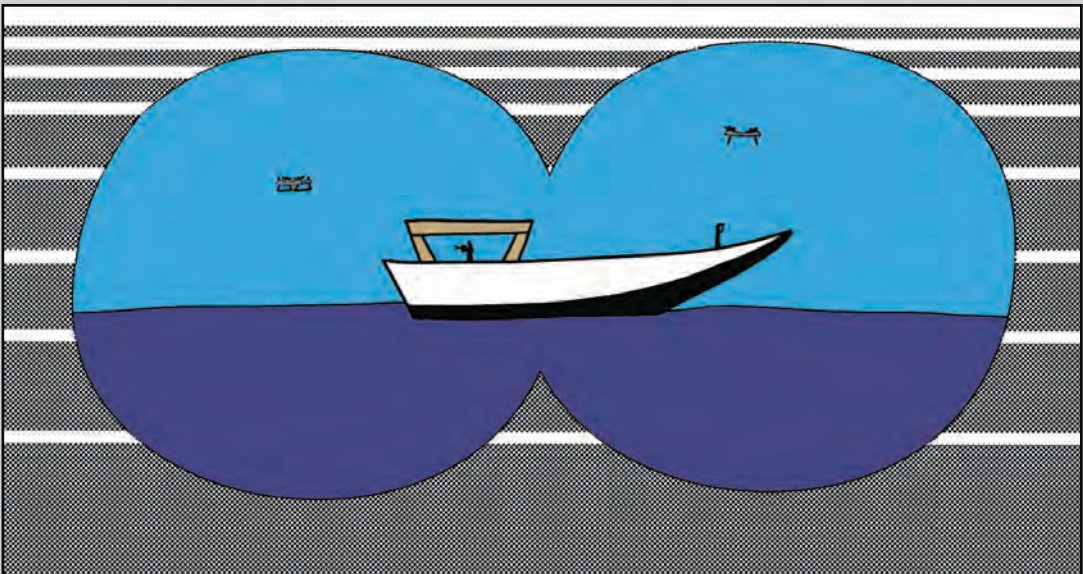
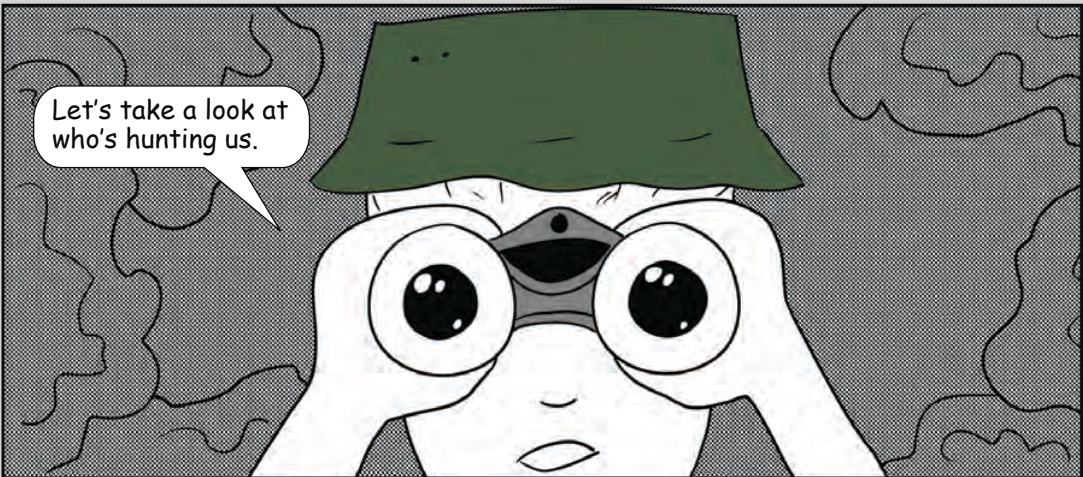
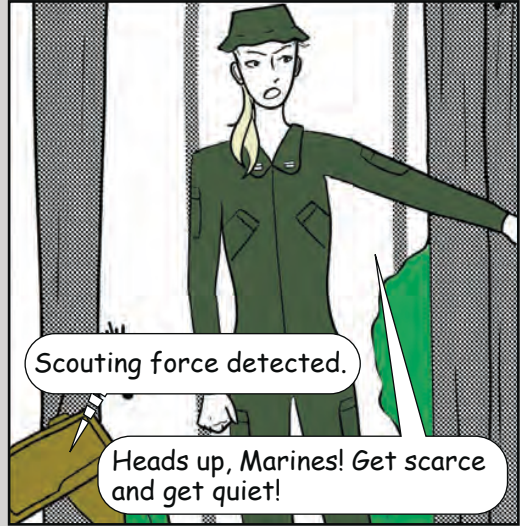



Good. Let's get back to the
hide site and start pushing
this data to the rear.

Arrays active . . . enemy COP populated
with 93% fidelity.




The next morning at a rebel launch site . . .






That was close, Reckless.

Targeting data acquired. Interrogative:
Request fire mission?




No. We'd give ourselves away. These guys get a pass.

Later . . .




Arrays down. Maintenance required.

I'll send Ramirez and Jones.



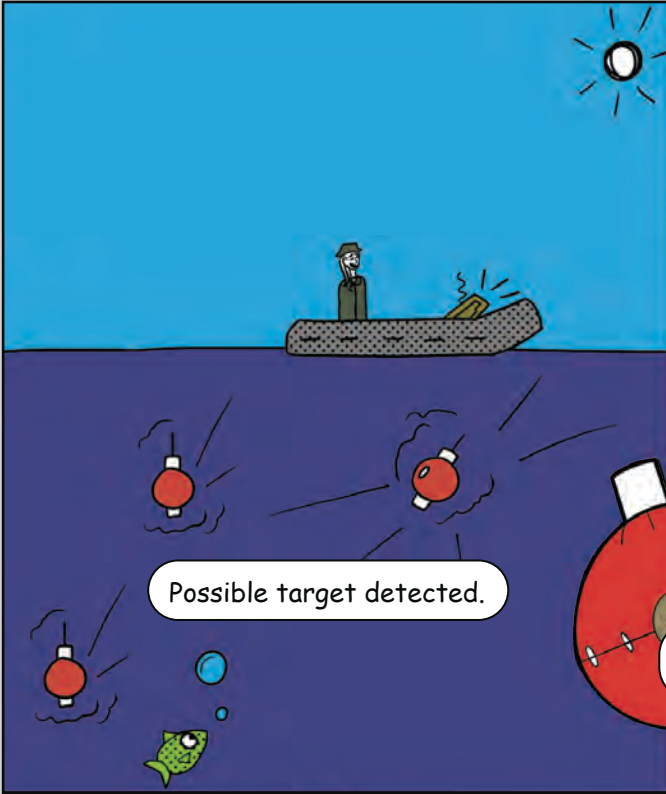
No, I'll go. The guys need a break.



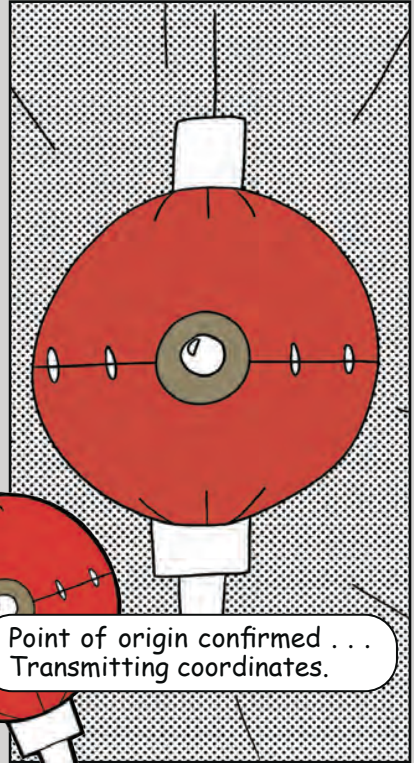
You can't go alone, Ma'am!



I'm not . . . Sergeant Reckless is coming with me.



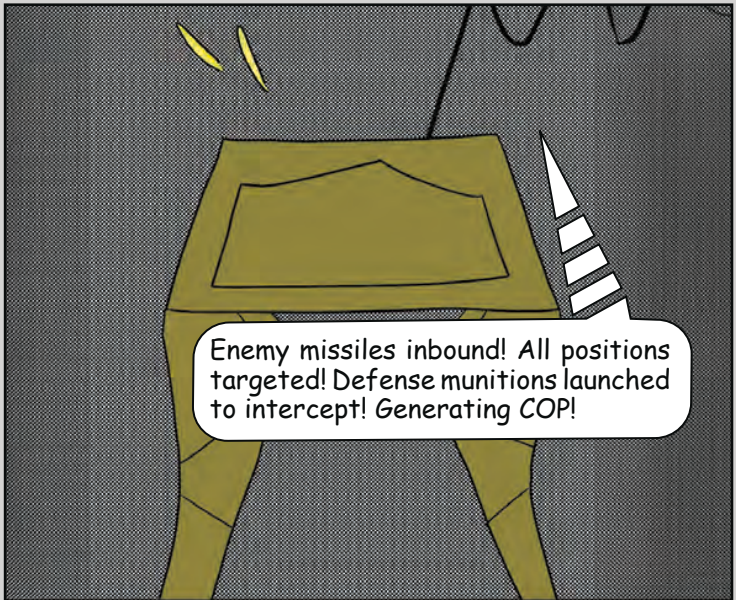
Possible target detected.



Point of origin confirmed . . .
Transmitting coordinates.



That should do it, Reckless. We're back online.



Enemy missiles inbound! All positions targeted! Defense munitions launched to intercept! Generating COP!

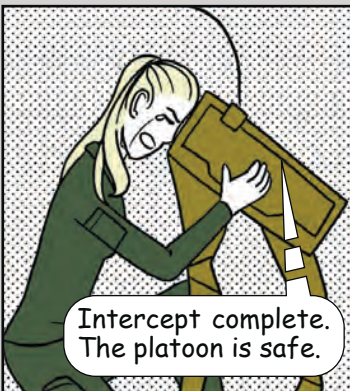
Interceptors out. With current allocation, we have a 55% chance of survival, and the platoon has a 45% chance of survival.

... and if I push all interceptors to defend the platoon?

Our chances drop to 2%. The platoon's rise to 98%.

... do it.

Override initiated. Redirecting interceptor



RECKLESS

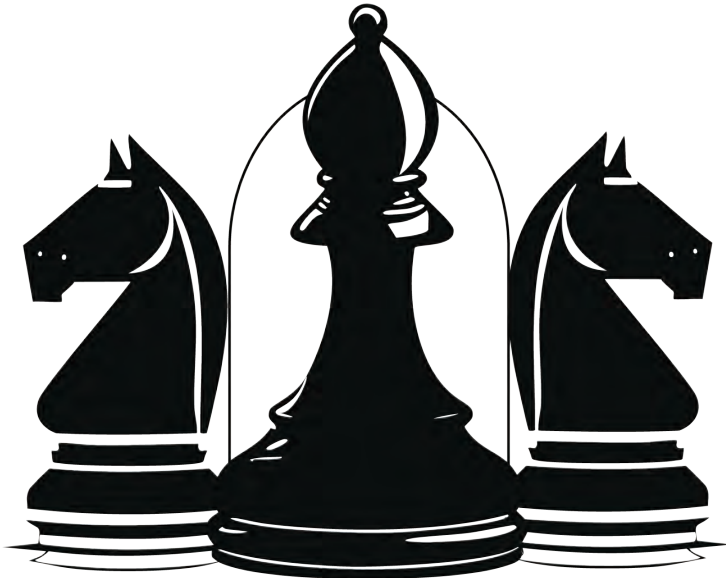
Discussion Questions:

1. Throughout the story, the captain used the algorithms and data provided by Sergeant Reckless to inform her decision making. Was Reckless a useful decision-making tool, or did the calculations provided impede the captain's decision making? Should the captain have instead trusted her own judgment and ignored Reckless?
2. In the story, the Marines served primarily in the role of sensing enemy forces and relaying that information back to the Joint Force for action. Is this an appropriate use of Marine Corps combat power? Was it an effective operating concept? In this situation, with the same restraints, should the captain's team have been used in a different way?
3. At the story's end, the captain assessed that the preprogrammed air defense munitions would not be sufficient to save herself and her Marines. She instead decided to focus the interceptors on the site where her Marines resided, maximizing their survival while risking her own life. Was this the right call? Did she correctly balance mission accomplishment and troop welfare? Did she place too much trust in the figures provided by Reckless?
4. The Marines gave Sergeant Reckless, a drone, the status of Marine by assigning it the nominal rank of sergeant. This status was most apparent when the captain traveled to the sensor site with only Reckless as her partner, rather than taking a human Marine with her to form at least a conventional human buddy pair. Were the Marines right to treat Reckless as a peer in this way? Is there additional risk or opportunity in treating a drone as a full member of the team?

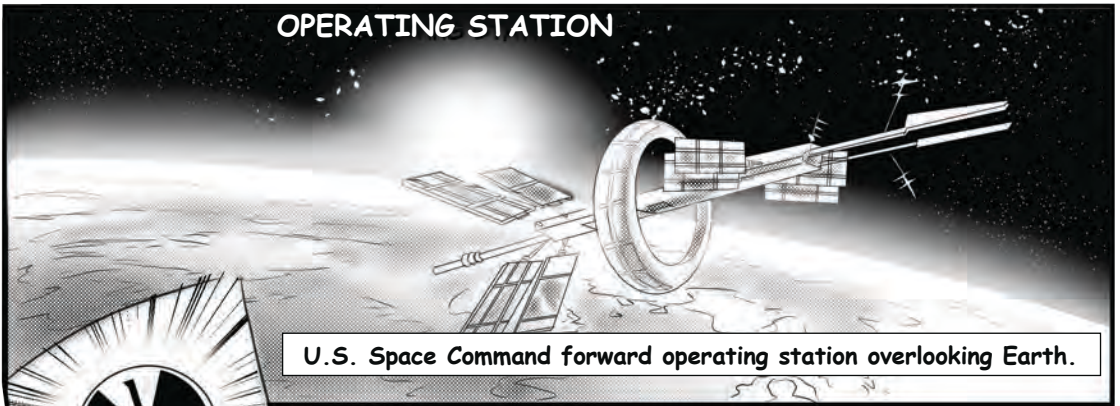
The Key to the World

Story by
Gunnery Sergeant Chase McGrorty-Hunter

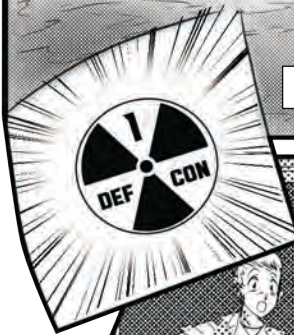
Illustrations by
Daniel Donnelly



OPERATING STATION

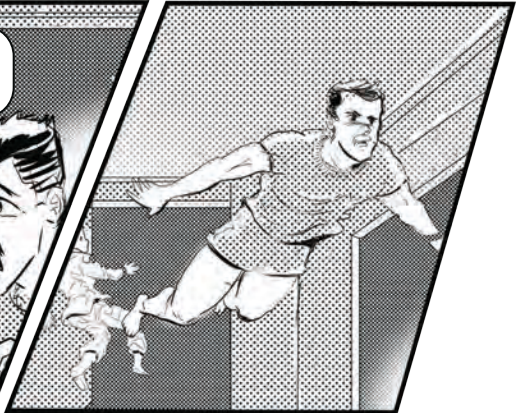


U.S. Space Command forward operating station overlooking Earth.



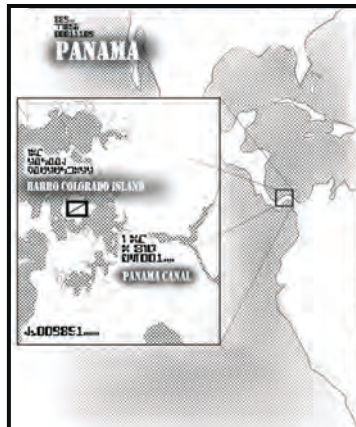
Sir! There's an urgent video call from Space Command. They need you now!

What time is it?



Colonel, it's gone hot. This morning at 0100 Zulu time, the PLA launched an attack on Taiwan by both sea and air and conducted a targeted strike on our airstrip on Okinawa. The Japanese home islands have been defending incoming missiles from China for the last 15 minutes, and there are reports of sleeper bases activating in many of the Belt and Road Initiative countries. We are working on sending you full reports, but we need your assets on standby for target acquisition.

Yes, Sir! We'll be ready!

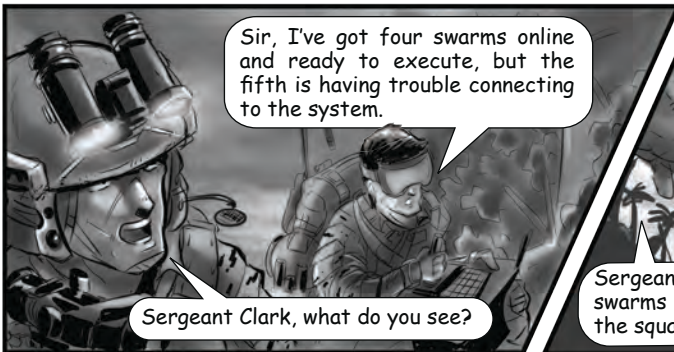
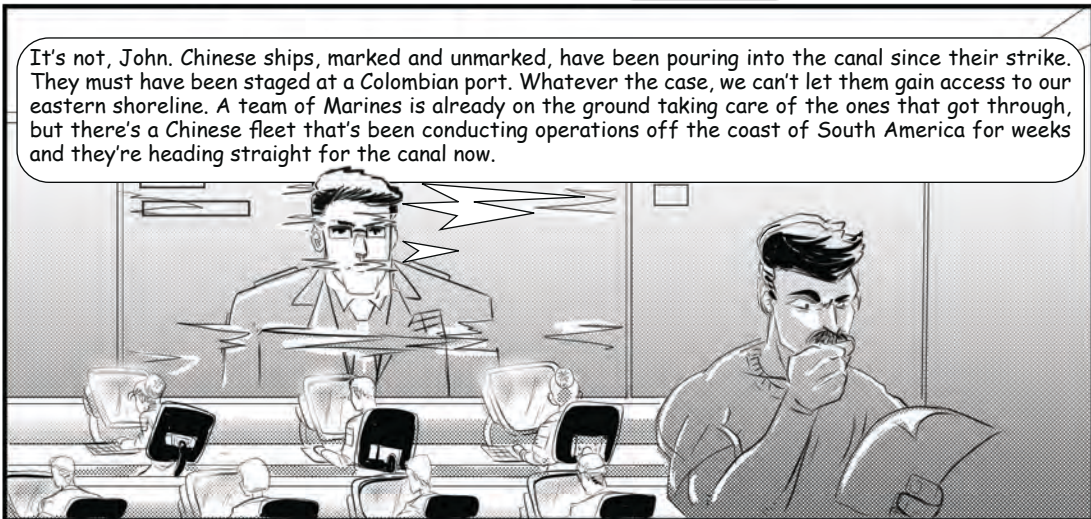
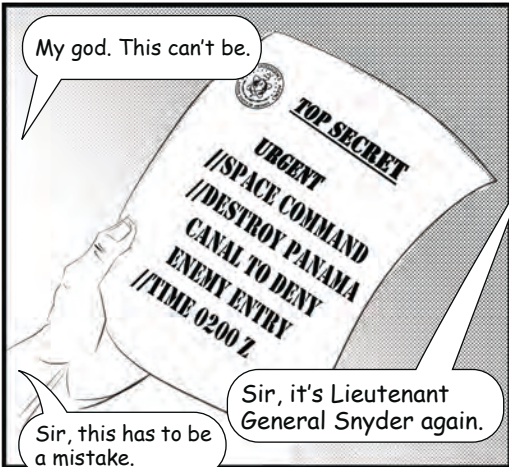


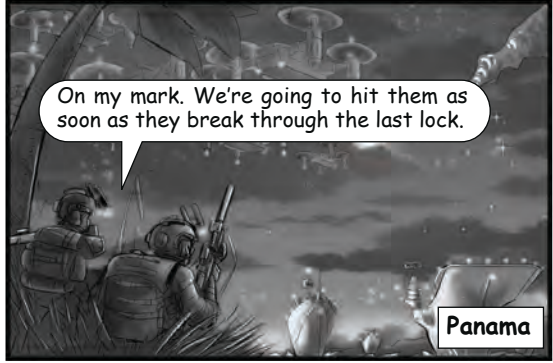
Hightower, this is Sledgehammer. HALO insert was successful. We have reached the target and are opening the package now. Will report back when assets are ready for takeoff.

Copy all, Sledgehammer. This is a no-fail mission. You cannot allow them through.

Roger. Out.

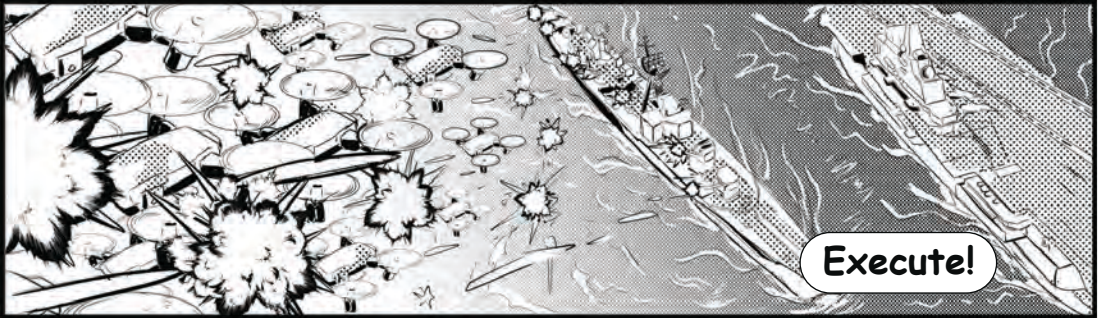




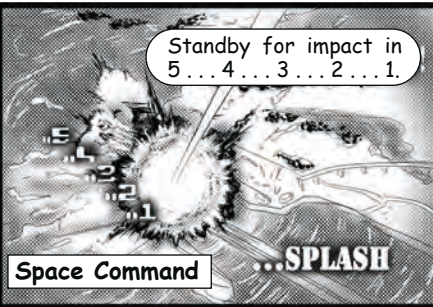


On my mark. We're going to hit them as soon as they break through the last lock.

Panama



Execute!



Standby for impact in 5... 4... 3... 2... 1.

Space Command

...SPLASH



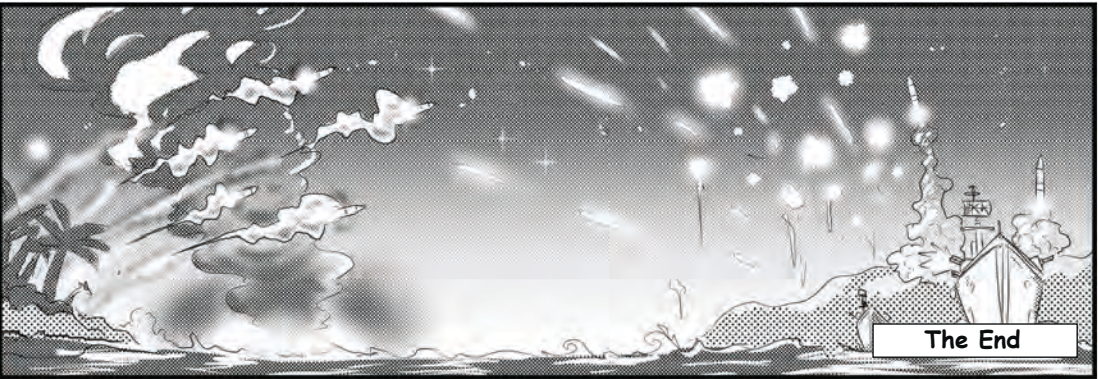
No Chinese getting through there now, Sir.

You're right, Lieutenant, but now neither are we.



Sir, our squad missile system is ready to launch. But if we... Sir, they'll know our location!

I know, Rod. Stand by for my mark.



The End

THE KEY TO THE WORLD

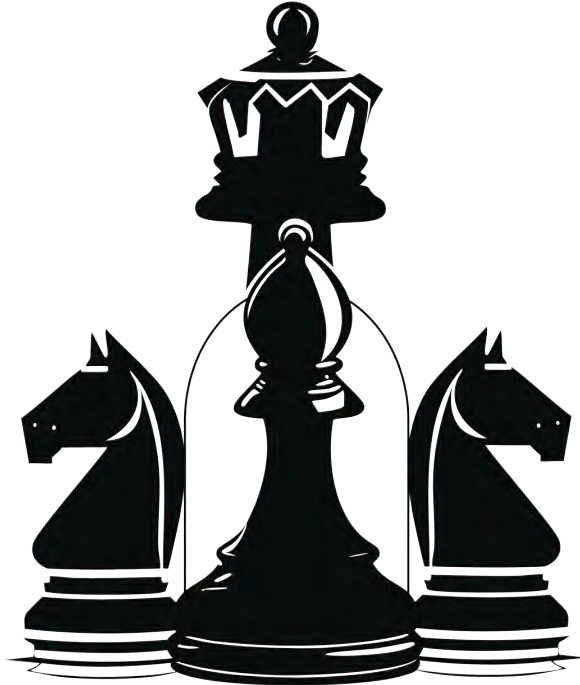
Discussion Questions:

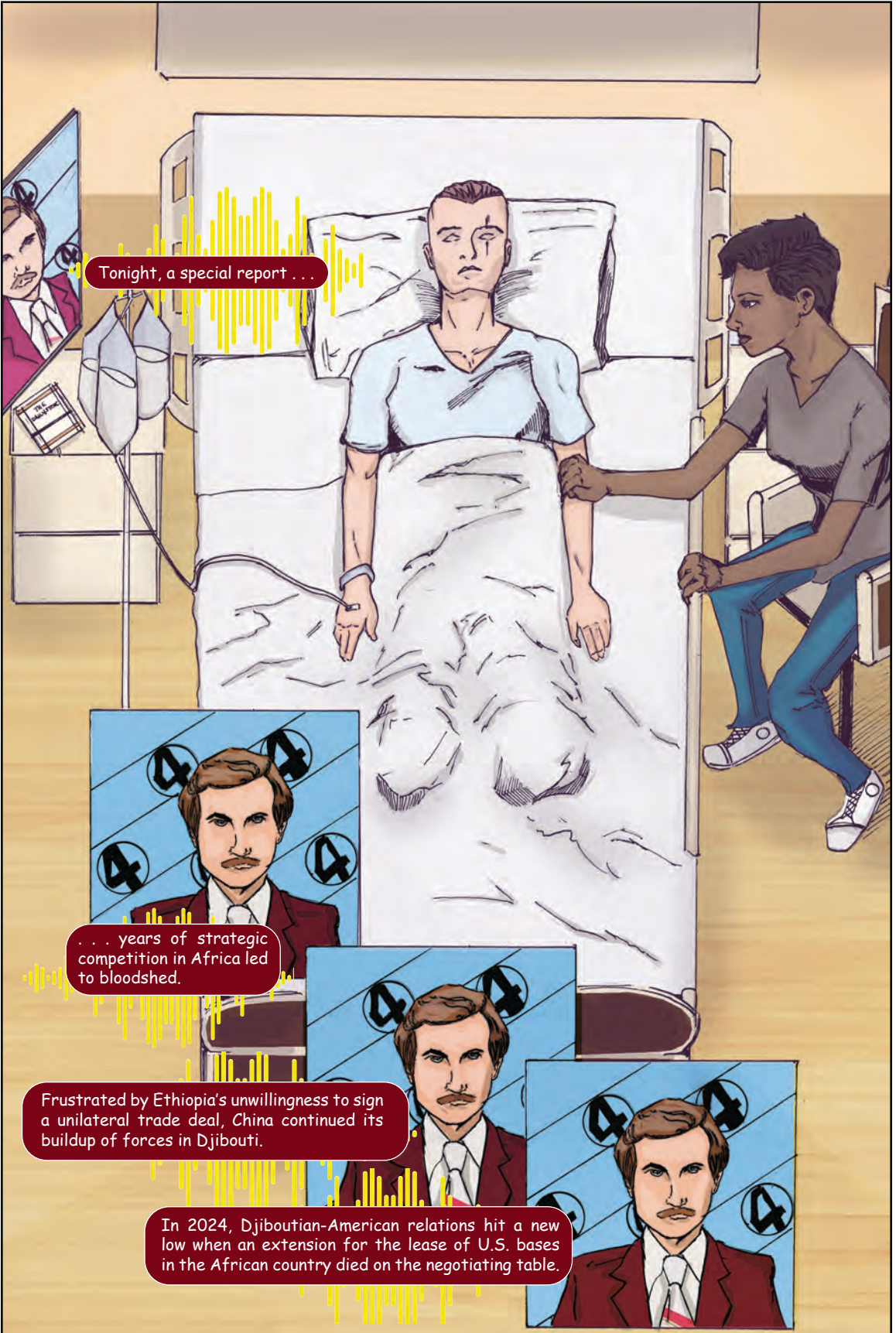
1. The decision to destroy the Panama Canal may seem far-fetched in the present era, but it highlights an important point: decisions that might seem unfathomable today may have to be made in the future. What other types of strategic-level decisions could you see being made in future warfare that you may have never considered before? What could be the ramifications of these actions?
2. The decision to target the Panama Canal was made to prevent adversary ships from rapidly gaining access to the eastern coastline of the United States. Why do you think that it was vital for this decision to be made? Do you think that this was the best decision that could be made at the time, or would you have done something different? How so, and why?
3. Adversary vessels were able to quickly move toward the United States because they had been staged in the ports of countries that have become allies of China through its Belt and Road Initiative program. With countries in South America, Africa, and the Pacific accepting China's terms and buying into the Belt and Road Initiative, how does this pose a security threat to the United States? What could the United States do to counter China's growing economic influence?
4. The Marines who inserted on the east side of the Panama Canal gained access to swarms of drones that were preplaced likely months or years earlier. How can the use of prepositioned equipment and logistical supplies be capitalized on in the future? Is this a worthwhile venture for the Marine Corps to pursue further, and if so, where and why?
5. The Marines on the ground were tasked with a high-priority mission to stop the adversary ships at all cost. In doing so, they used all their drone swarms, and the lieutenant employed a squad-packed missile system from their location. The use of this system would likely give away the Marines' position and allow enemy ships to fire ballistic missiles at them. How do you feel about the lieutenant's decision? How do you weigh the lives of your Marines against the mission?

Big Trouble in the Little Horn of Africa

Story by
Lieutenant Colonel Wes Faulk and Lieutenant Colonel Tyler Quinn

Illustrations by
Major Scott Richards





Tonight, a special report . . .

. . . years of strategic competition in Africa led to bloodshed.

Frustrated by Ethiopia's unwillingness to sign a unilateral trade deal, China continued its buildup of forces in Djibouti.

In 2024, Djiboutian-American relations hit a new low when an extension for the lease of U.S. bases in the African country died on the negotiating table.



Three weeks ago, China conducted what appeared to be a flagrant attack that resulted in several casualties.



Its first move was to neutralize U.S. satellites.



And then, the real fighting began.



Can't tell if this is true or a dream . . .

//INTSUM//

ETHIOPIAN FORCE STATUS:

Ineffective, 30% casualties, 60% prisoners, 10% unaccounted. C2 architecture decapitated. Civilian networks severed.

CHINA FORCE STATUS:

Full control of GLOCs. Armor and para-mil teams control populace. IDF and A2AD assets emplaced. **KINETIC ACTIONS**

LAST 24:

China drone forward observers coordinated precision rocket strikes on C2 nodes and IDF against Ethiopian attempts to flee or fight. Minimum of 2X Chinese Armor Regiments across border. Highest losses among Ethiopian home defense and crisis response forces, roughly 70%, primarily from ethnic Djiboutian para-military ambushes.

AA LOC:

Estimate with strong confidence, (13) SASHM (surface-to-air or surface hypersonic missile) Curmudgeon missiles, emplaced in Djiboutian territory appx 1930Z 17 Mar 2030. Paired with T 1000 "Killjoy" radar, assessed effective targeting at 500 nautical miles. Reliable source states range doubles with real-time satellite uplink/downlink.

Current locations, unknown.

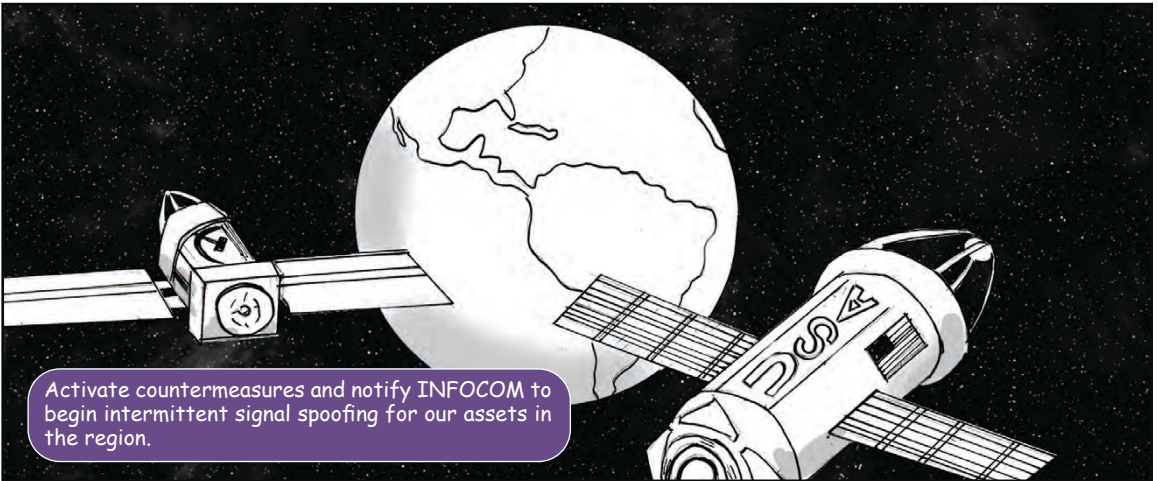
INFO ENVIRON: Chinese control of media outlets and release of only approved "facts" has allowed for terrain dominance with their narrative: Ethiopia requested Chinese support. Unrest over rising market costs and ethnic tensions led to I&W of a coup. Casualties primarily among rebelling units. Priority is orderly disarmament of Ethiopian forces. Deployment will end when support is no longer needed.

Low quality counter videos have emerged, likely from Ethiopian diaspora in the AU and neighboring countries. XAnonX, an iteration of Anonymous hacker group, has distributed the more heart-wrenching segments to local news stations through their global chain.

//END REPORT//



Cyberattack imminent.

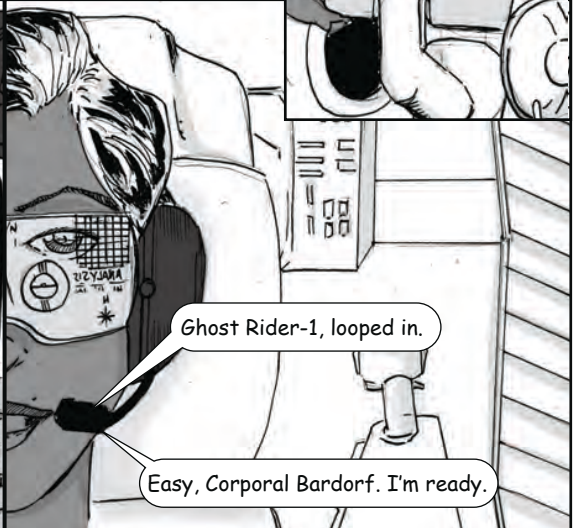
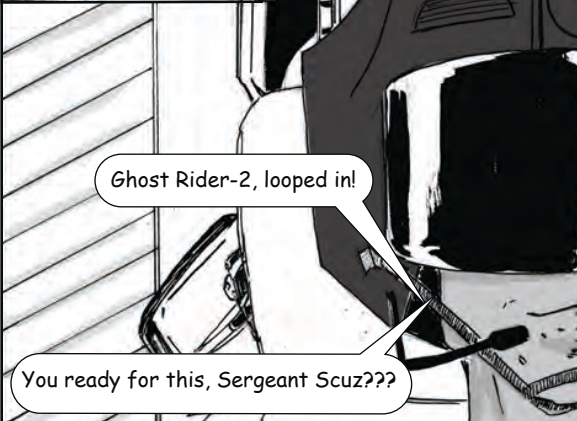
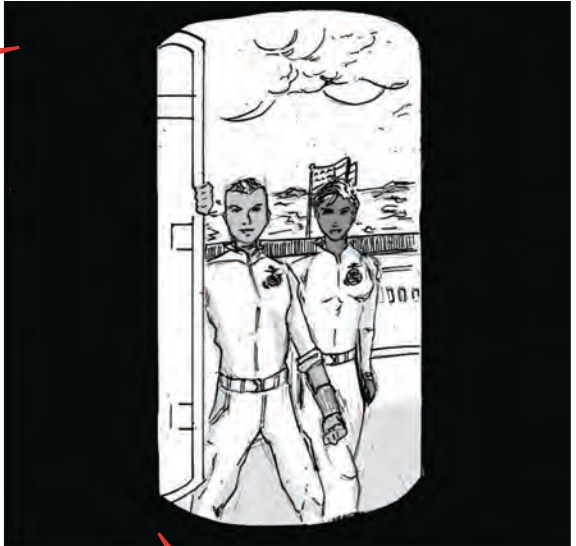


Activate countermeasures and notify INFOCOM to begin intermittent signal spoofing for our assets in the region.

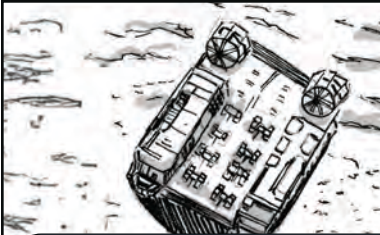
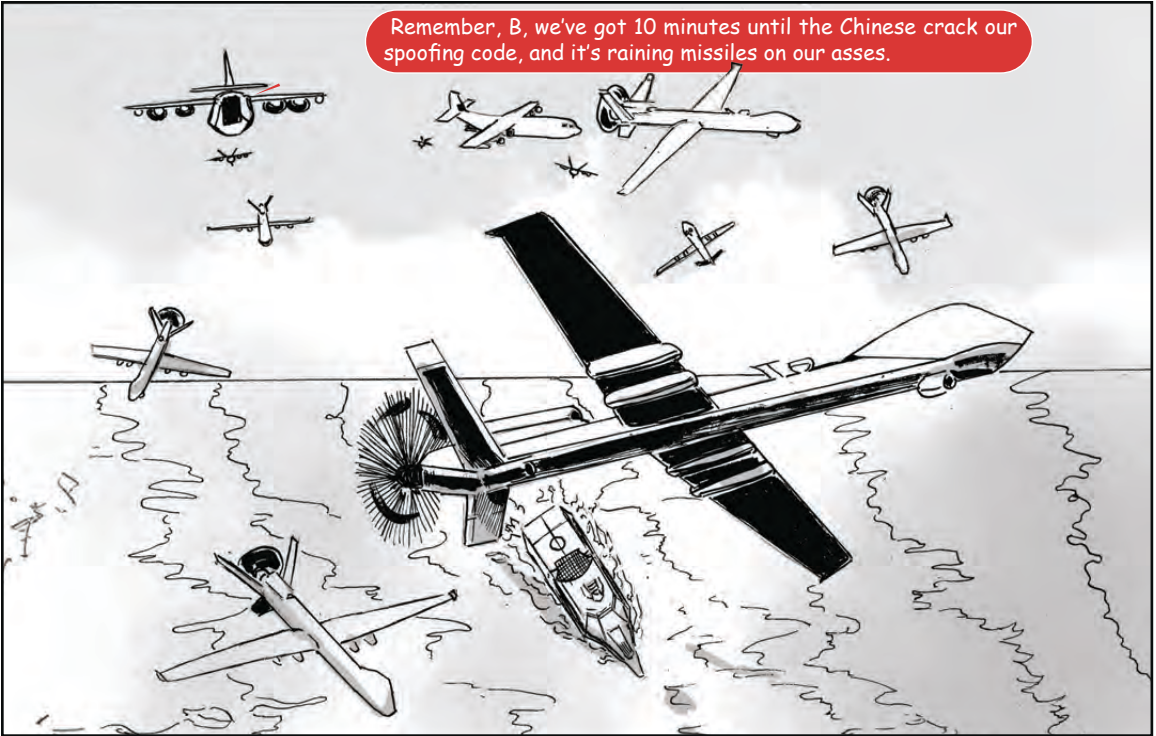


Contact the 2d MLR. USAFRICOM-Actual has given the go-ahead to deploy and neutralize enemy A2/AD assets.

KAZZAATT

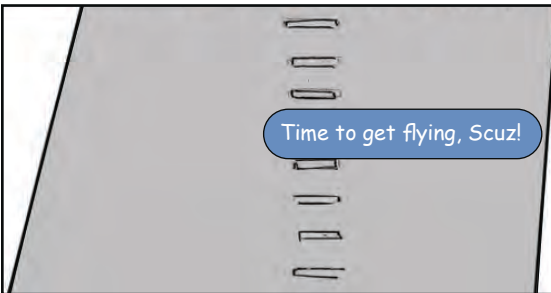
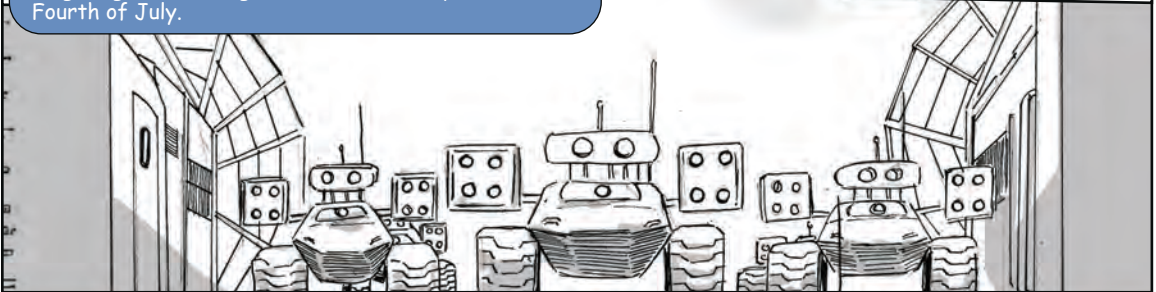


Remember, B, we've got 10 minutes until the Chinese crack our spoofing code, and it's raining missiles on our asses.

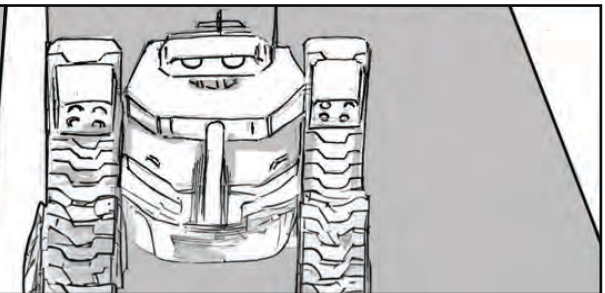


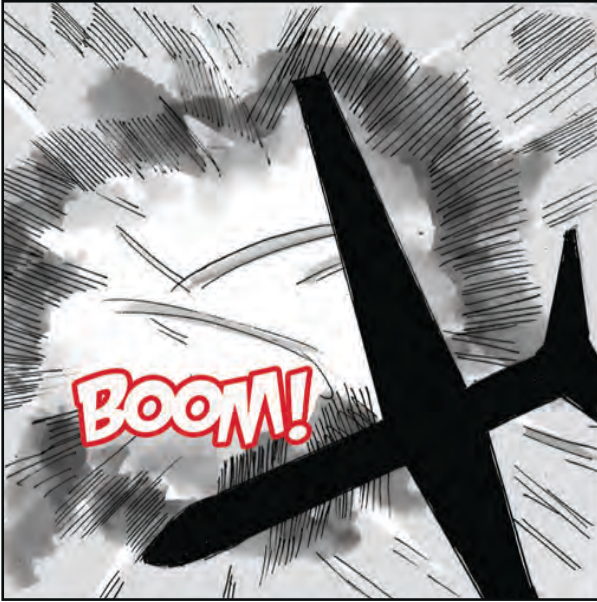
I'm moving my case of Cushman's into position.

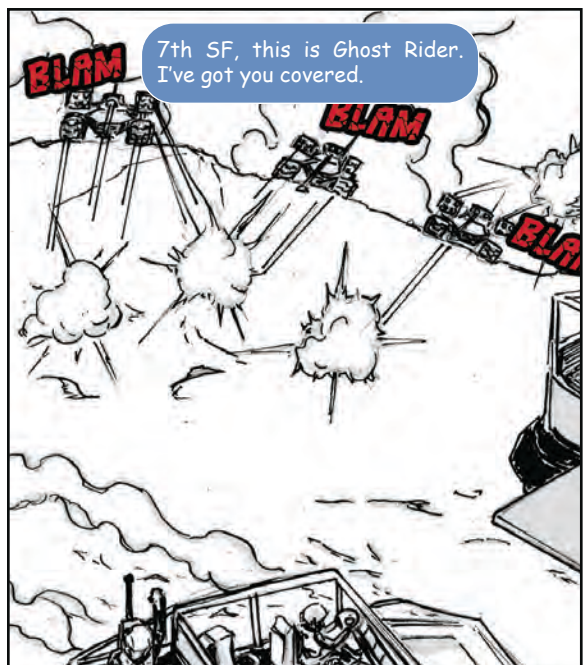
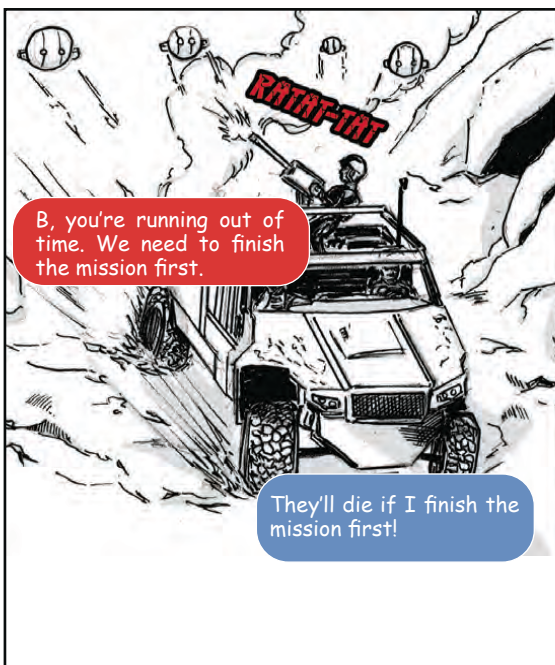
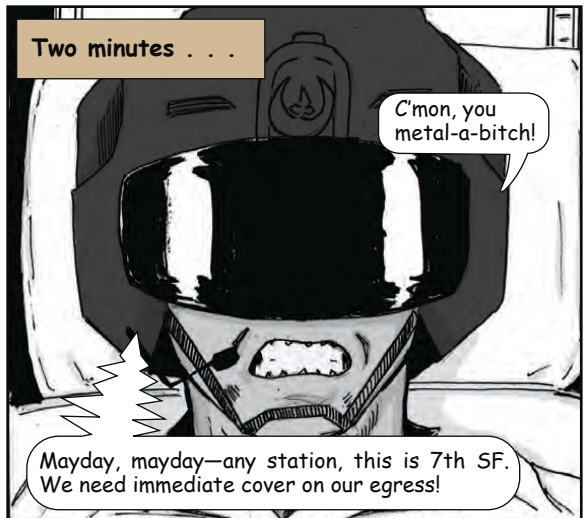
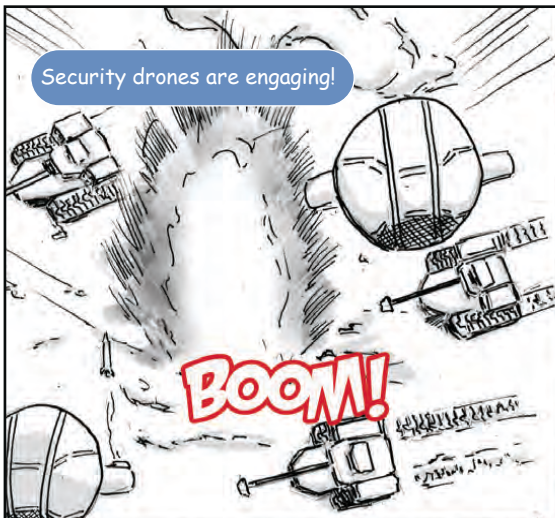
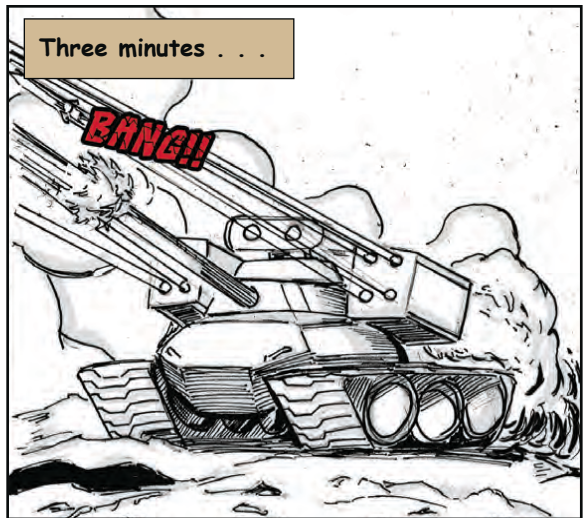
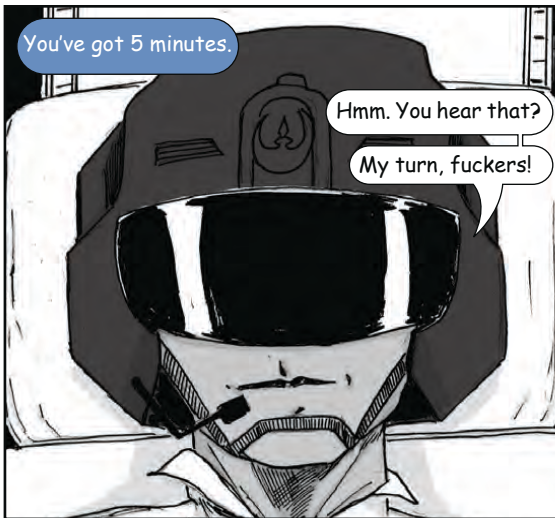
No worries, Scuz. As long as your birds get me that targeting data, I'll light those fuckers up like it's the Fourth of July.

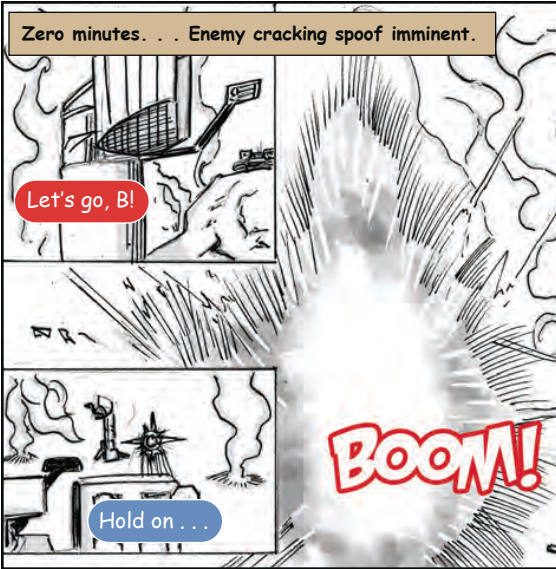


Time to get flying, Scuz!







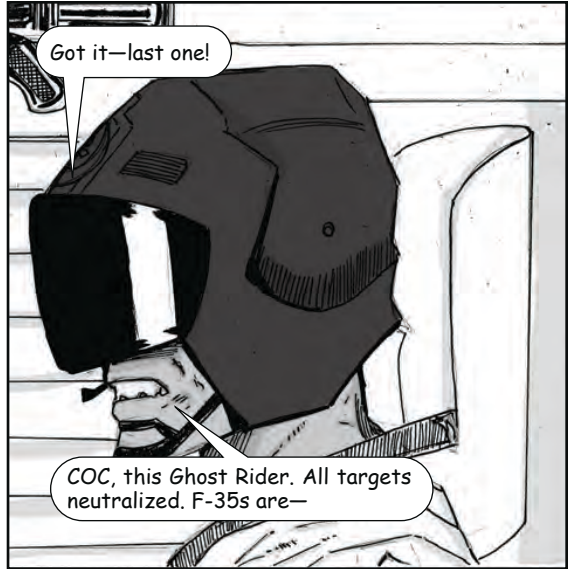


Zero minutes . . . Enemy cracking spoof imminent.

Let's go, B!

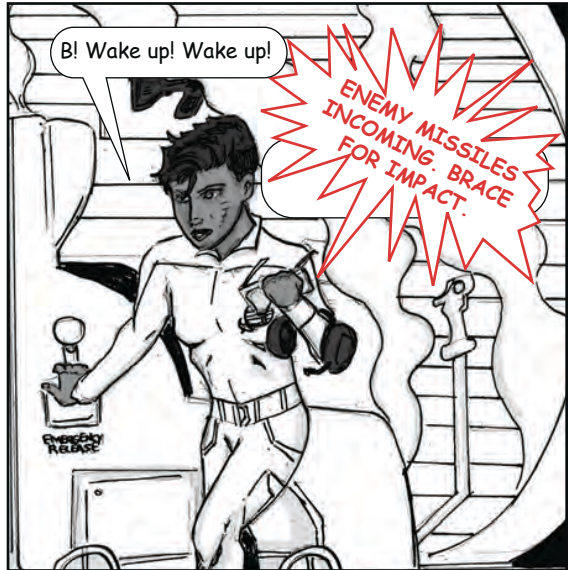
Hold on . . .

BOOM!



Got it—last one!

COC, this Ghost Rider. All targets neutralized. F-35s are—



B! Wake up! Wake up!

ENEMY MISSILES INCOMING. BRACE FOR IMPACT.



I'm going to get us out of here!

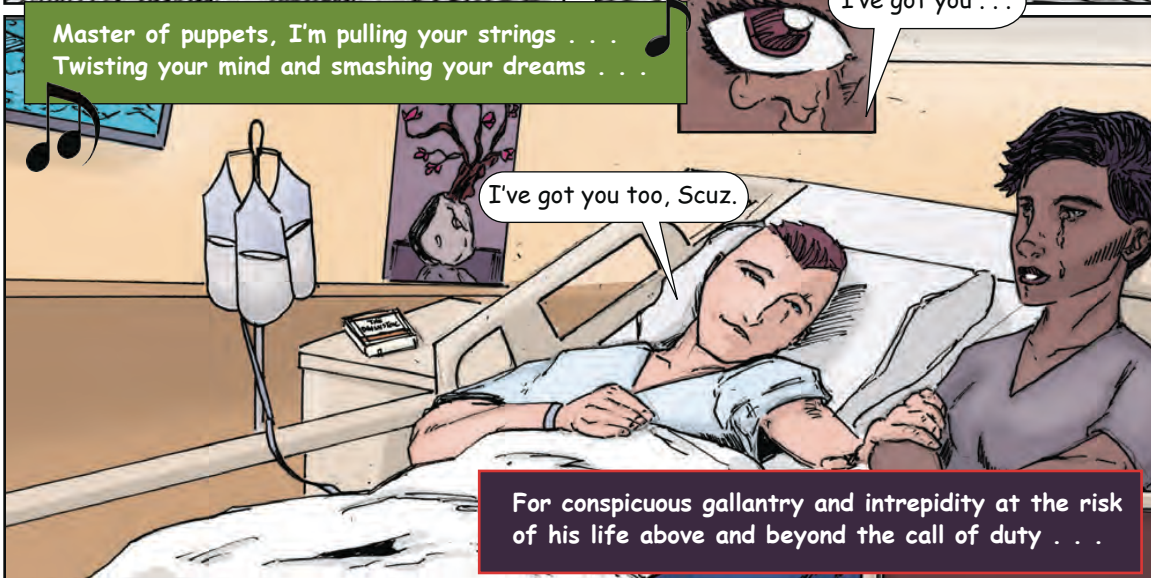
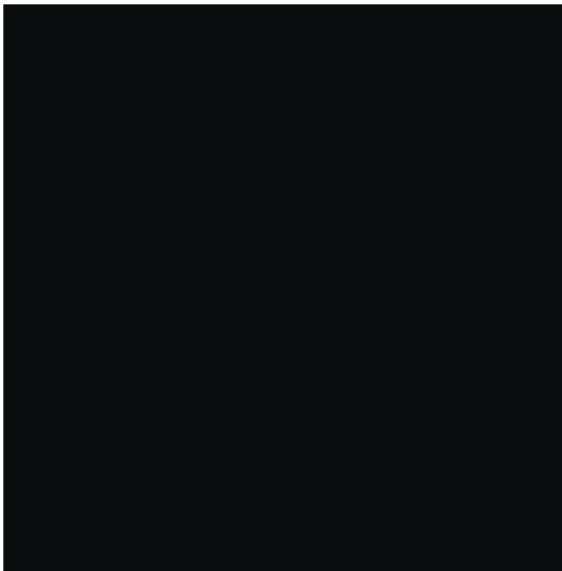
WOOSH



Damn, B—for a skinny lil shit, you're fuckin' heavy.

Almost there . . . I'm going to get you below deck, don't worry.





By their undaunted courage, bold fighting spirit, and unwavering devotion to duty in the face of almost certain death, Sergeant Jessica Brush and Corporal David Bardorf reflected great credit on themselves and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.



The End?

BIG TROUBLE IN THE LITTLE HORN OF AFRICA

Discussion Questions:

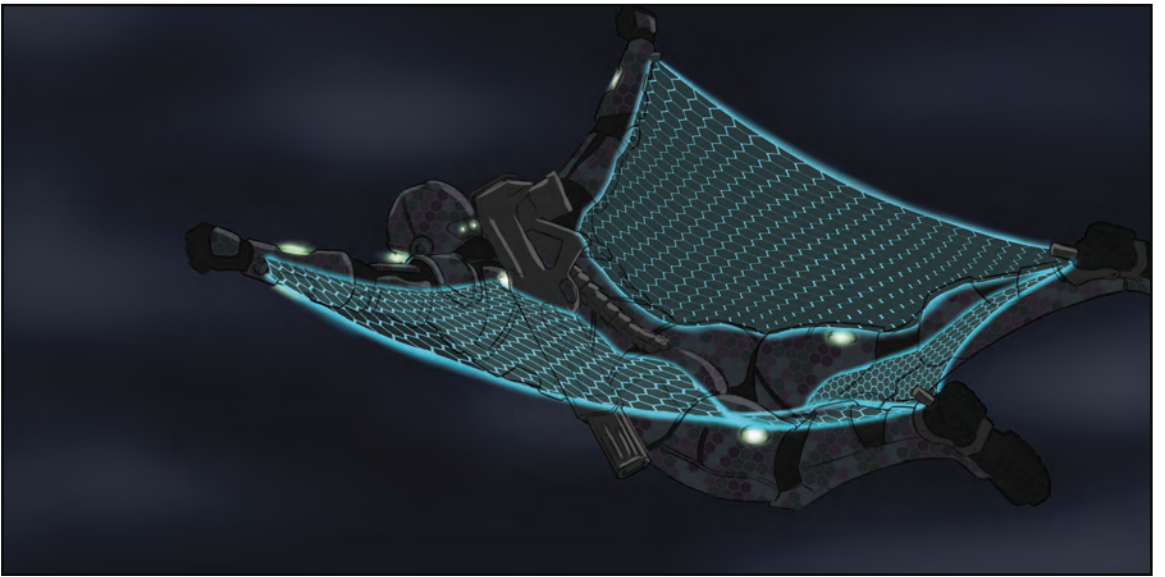
1. In this story, remote vehicle operators were presented with the nation's highest award for valor. How do you feel about valor awards being presented to remote vehicle operations? Should there be a separate category?
2. How can your unit enhance its combat efficiency and effectiveness through the use of manned-unmanned teaming?
3. How would you design a drone/robot that would make your unit's job easier and/or potentially less dangerous? Could that robot eliminate your unit's need to put boots on the ground?
4. If your unit increased its use of robots, would that decrease the human element of warfare? What human factors would still play a role in war with increased manned-unmanned teaming?
5. Could Marines now, or in the near future, handle the information load of multiple drones or a swarm? What could be done to increase the capability and capacity of Marines to employ drones and multiple feeds?
6. What other factors need to be considered in the case of increased drone warfare? How could the laws of armed conflict change?

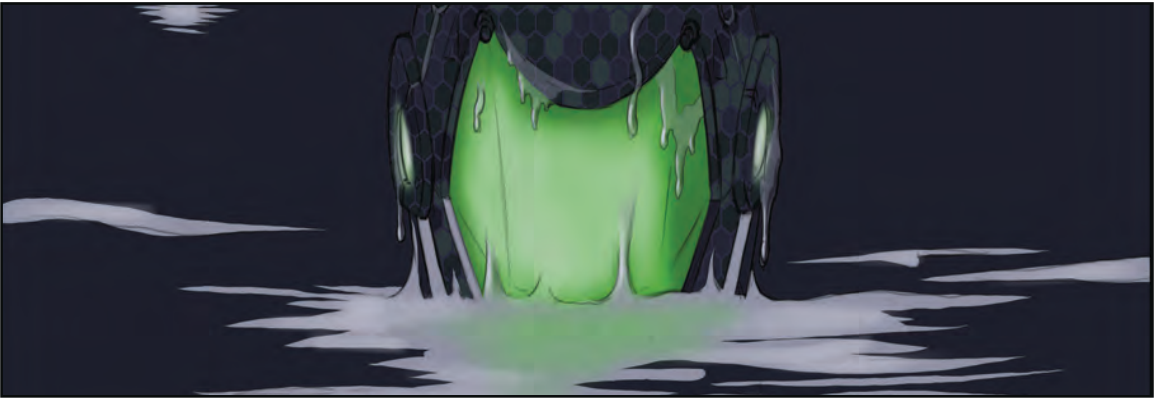
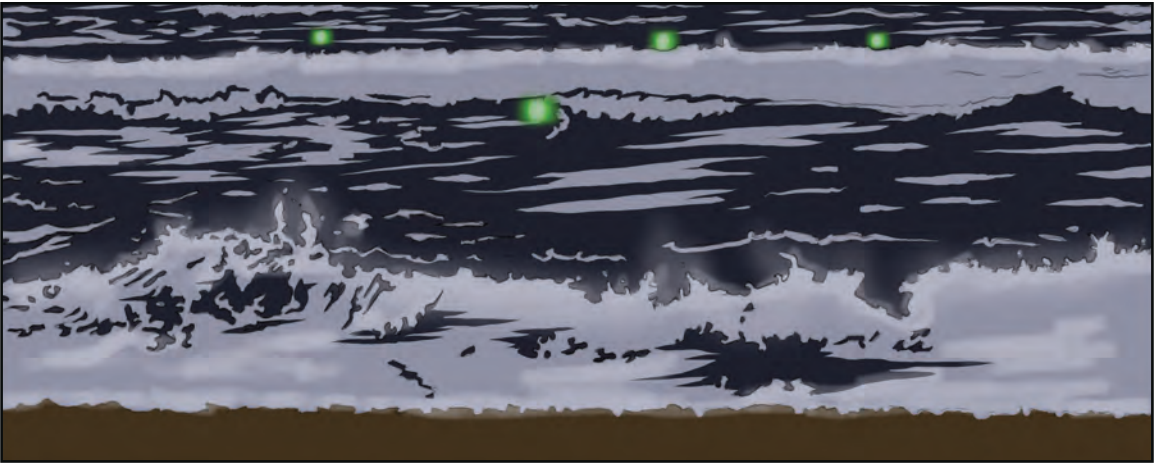
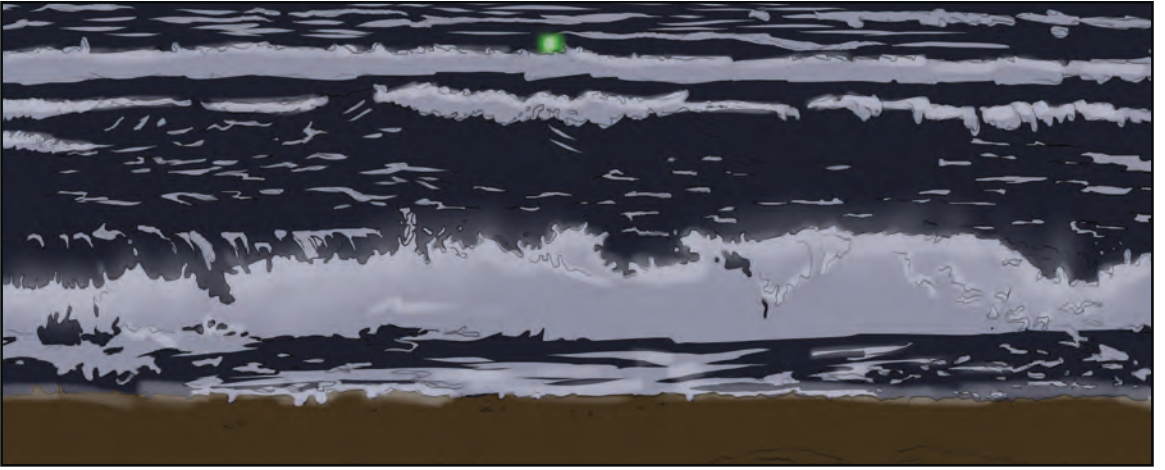
Zulu Force

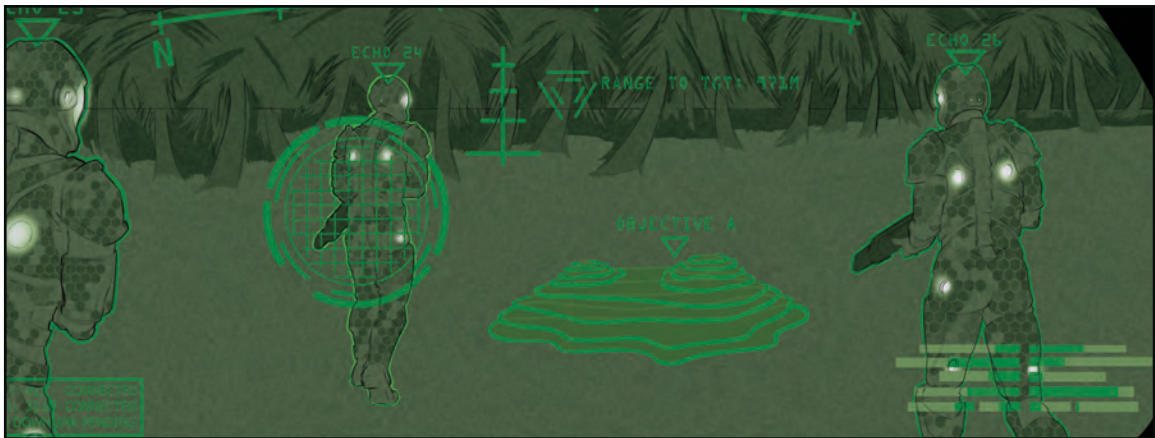
Story by
Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Zepeda

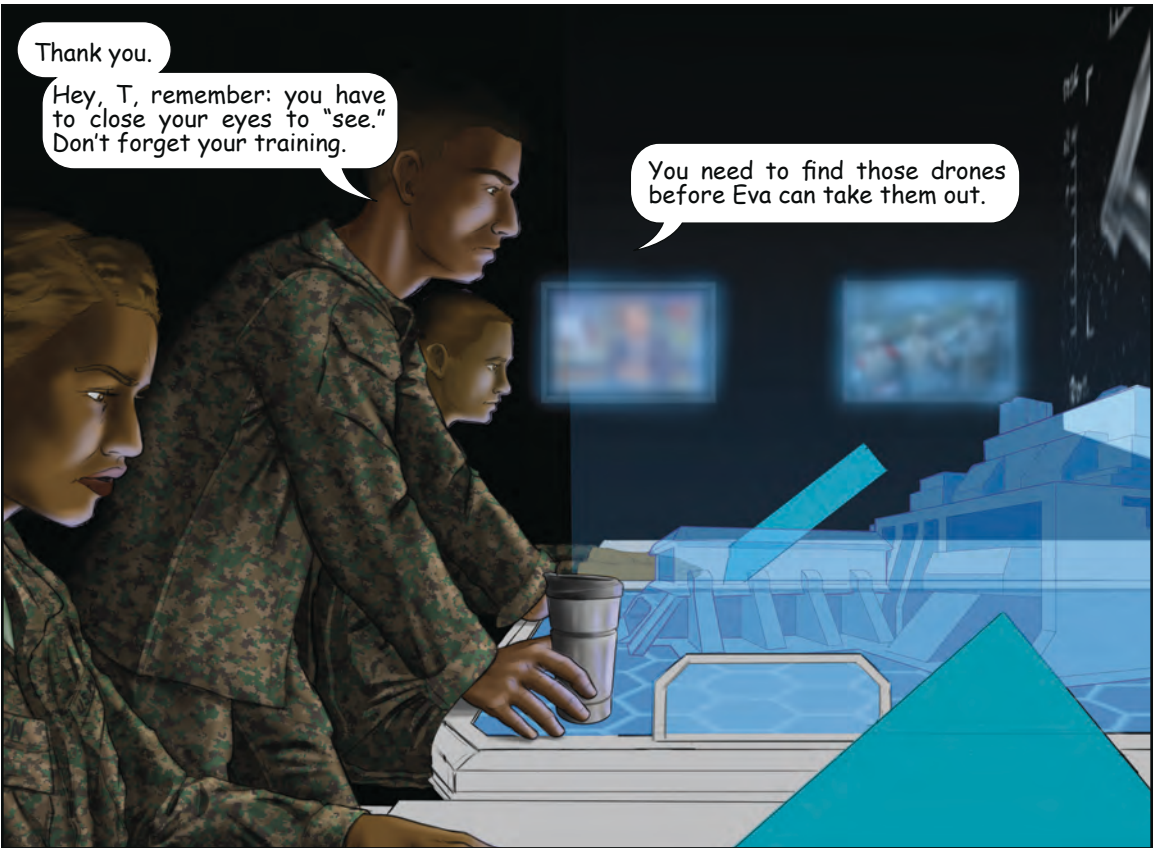
Illustrations by
Major Stan Zivanovich







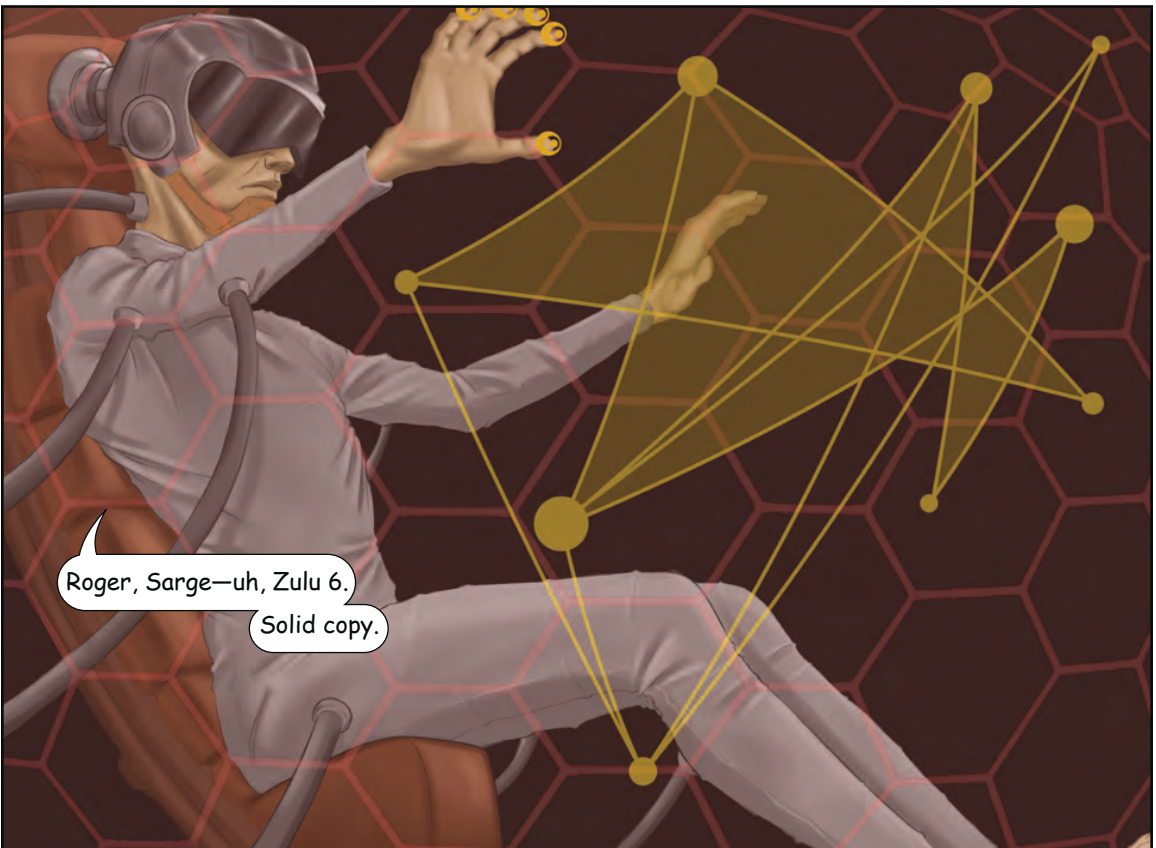




Thank you.

Hey, T, remember: you have to close your eyes to "see." Don't forget your training.

You need to find those drones before Eva can take them out.



Roger, Sarge—uh, Zulu 6.

Solid copy.

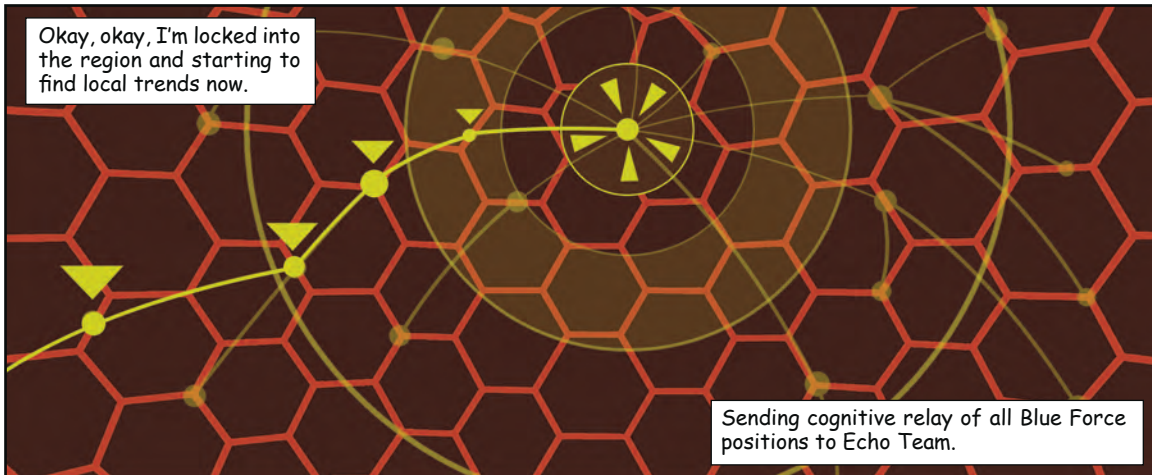


Zulu 6, I'm online with Dark Saber. Ready to engage.

If Tin Man can get his crap together...

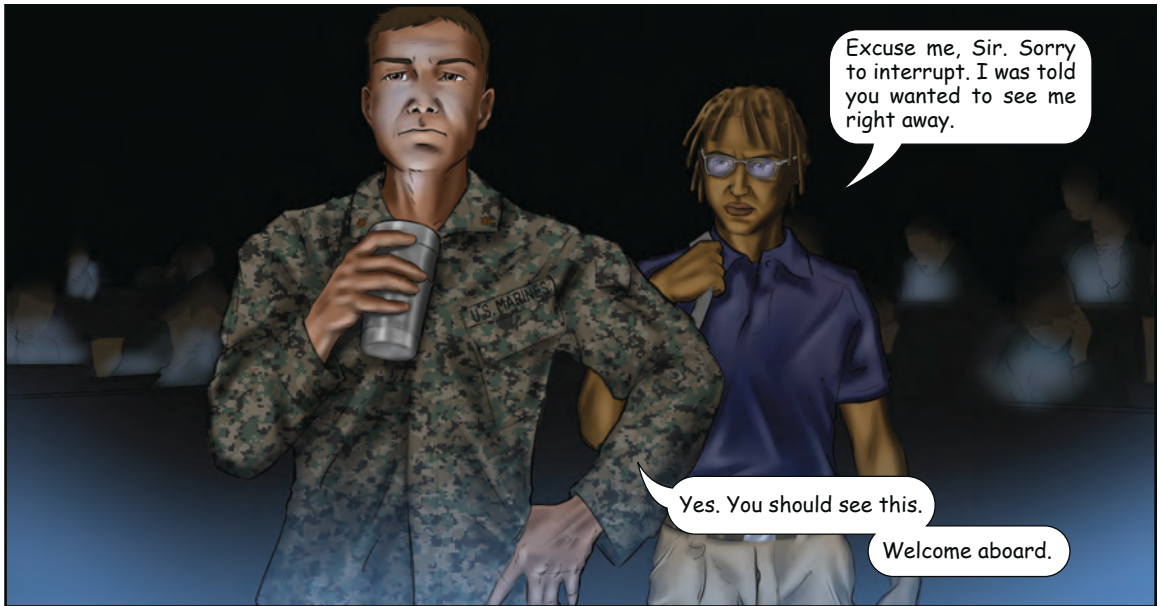


Shut up and let me concentrate!



Okay, okay, I'm locked into the region and starting to find local trends now.

Sending cognitive relay of all Blue Force positions to Echo Team.



Excuse me, Sir. Sorry to interrupt. I was told you wanted to see me right away.

Yes. You should see this.

Welcome aboard.



Thank you, Sir. Quite the setup.

You're looking at possibly the first truly real-time intelligence COP.

All-domain, all-source, and live feeds from our team on the ground.

And all augmented by AI info management systems.

Your field, correct?



Yes, Sir.

Solid copy, Echo Team. We're still working that. Five clicks. Break . . .

Echo 23, check your levels.

What?

Means you're crashing.
Activate an I-MRE.

I feel fine . . .

Of course you do.

The nanites make sure of that,
but they also consume fuel like a beast.

You'll feel like a million bucks . . .

right up until you
seize and die.

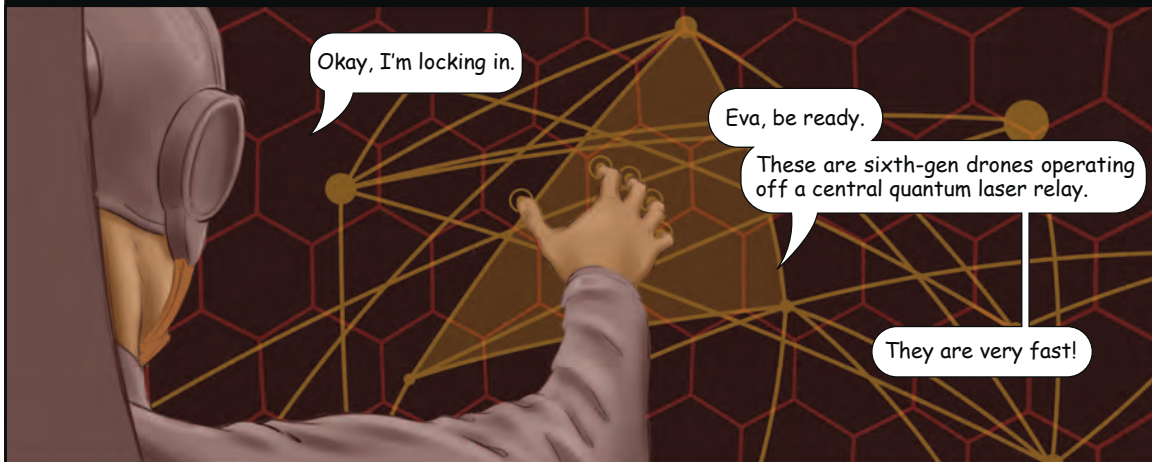
Zulu 6, this is Echo Team, in position
and beginning reconnaissance.



Agh! Dammit, Tin! I'm losing connection with Dark Saber!

What the hell are you doing?

I'm chasing "Red." But they're cloud-hopping and using omnidirectional spoofing IP jumps.

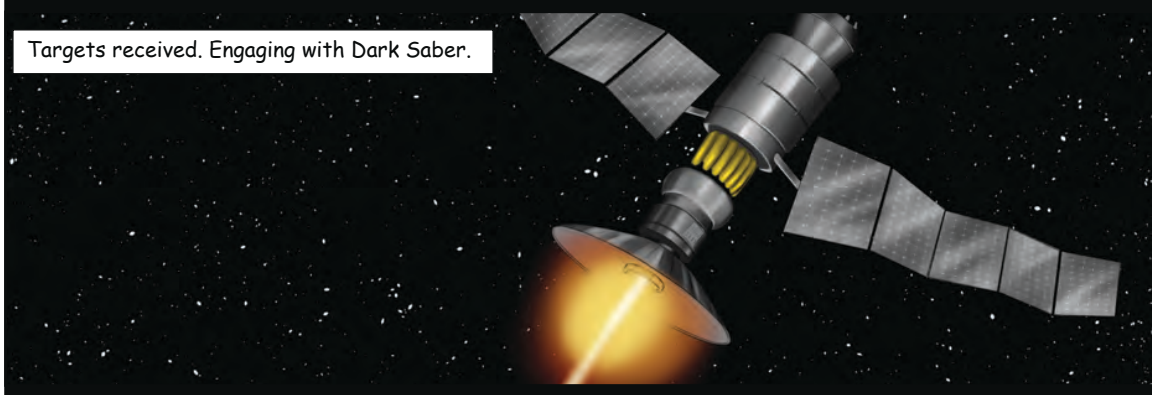


Okay, I'm locking in.

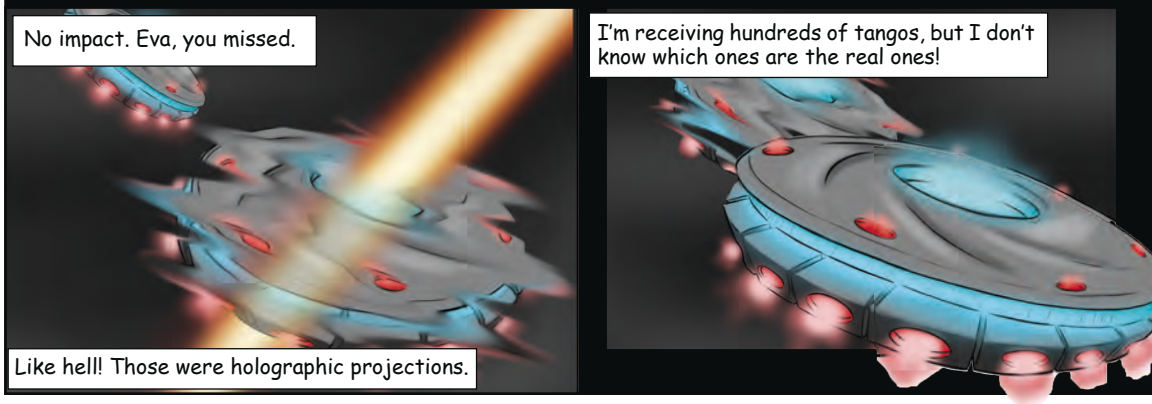
Eva, be ready.

These are sixth-gen drones operating off a central quantum laser relay.

They are very fast!



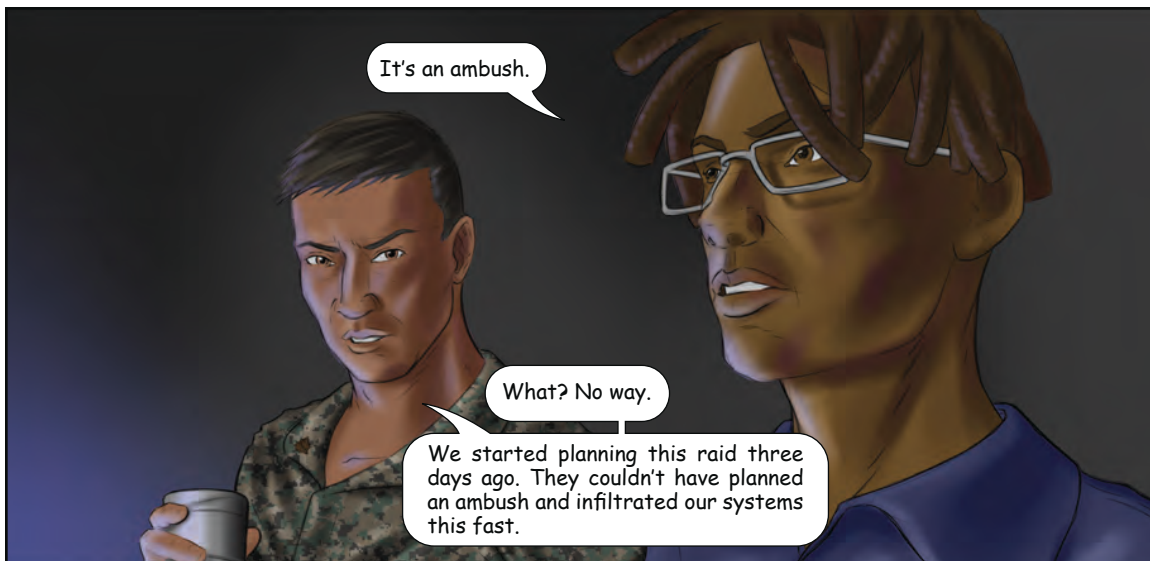
Targets received. Engaging with Dark Saber.



No impact. Eva, you missed.

I'm receiving hundreds of tangos, but I don't know which ones are the real ones!

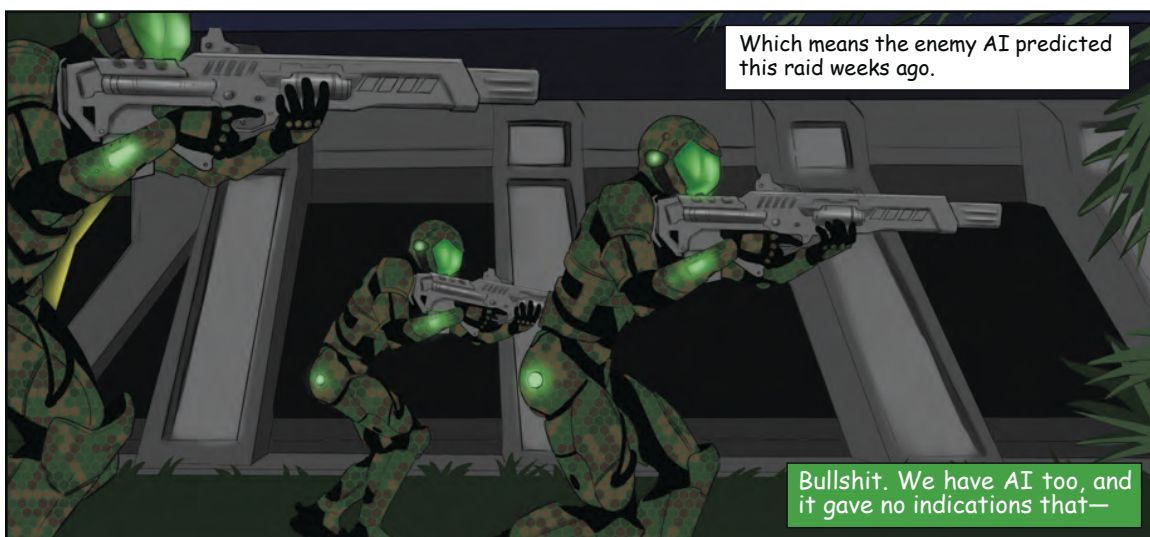
Like hell!! Those were holographic projections.



It's an ambush.

What? No way.

We started planning this raid three days ago. They couldn't have planned an ambush and infiltrated our systems this fast.



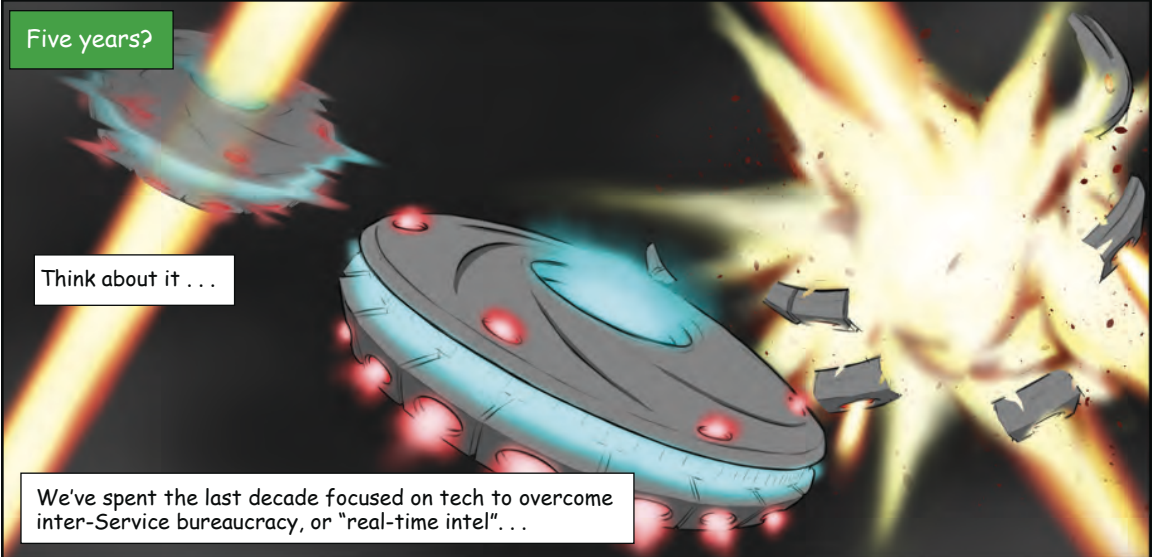
Which means the enemy AI predicted this raid weeks ago.

Bullshit. We have AI too, and it gave no indications that—



Our AI still believes you can stop the sunrise by killing the rooster.

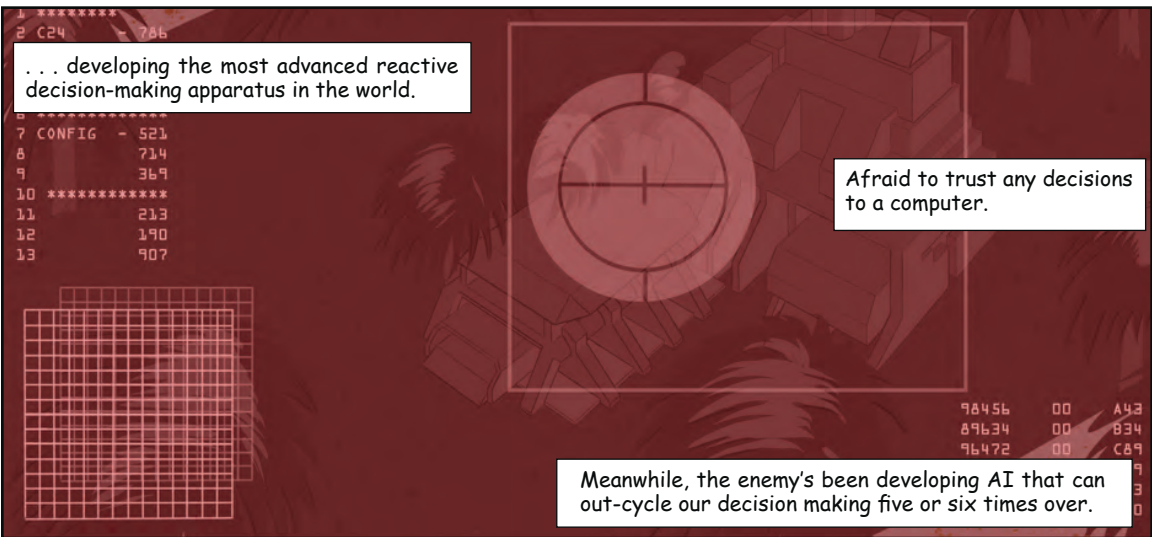
It's fine for simply correlations, but it's five years behind what the enemy has.



Five years?

Think about it . . .

We've spent the last decade focused on tech to overcome inter-Service bureaucracy, or "real-time intel" . . .



. . . developing the most advanced reactive decision-making apparatus in the world.

Afraid to trust any decisions to a computer.

Meanwhile, the enemy's been developing AI that can out-cycle our decision making five or six times over.



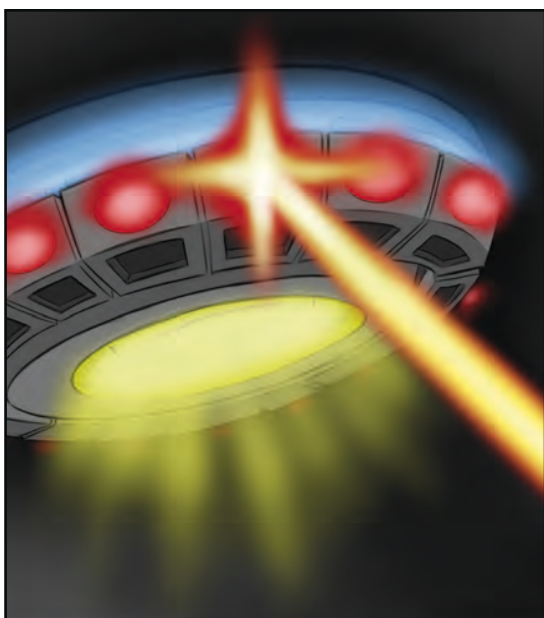
So, Ghost Dragon . . .

Yes.
It's already operational.



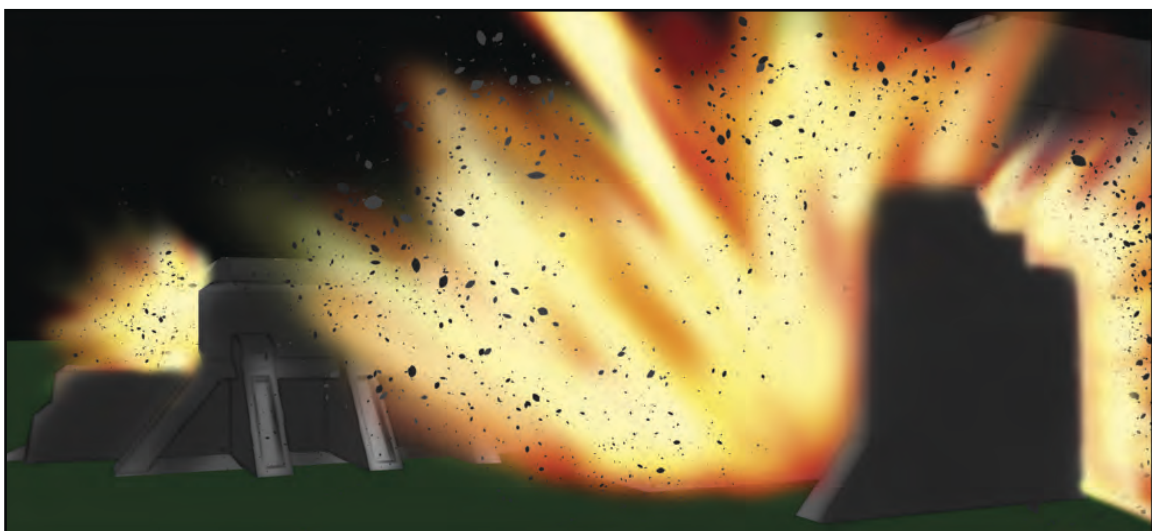
Echo Team, abort!

Immediate extract!



Echoes! Fall back!

I repeat, fall back!





Echo Team, taking casualties.

Fall back to rendezvous point
for immediate exfil.



Echo Team, report!

To be continued . . .

ZULU FORCE

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important NOT to make decisions simply based on data correlations, especially during combat operations?
2. What do you think is the most advantageous way to apply the Internet of Things to the military context?
3. How can a MAGTF of interconnected things be achieved through technology to help Marines act as one whole (e pluribus unum)?
4. It is typical within military circles to study history and its relevance/impact on the current and future battlefield. Why should these military circles also consider a deliberate study of recent history?

Meet the Team

Editors

Lieutenant Colonel Adam Yang, PhD

Lieutenant Colonel Yang is a communications officer and creator of the *Destination Unknown* series. He is a native of Brooklyn, New York. His interest in comics and science fiction has extended from his childhood to the present day and down to his children as well. Today, he serves as a strategist within the Strategy Branch of the Plans, Policies, and Operations directorate within Headquarters Marine Corps. As a cofounder of the #EndersGalley innovation community, he is a staunch advocate of grassroots innovation. Email him at adam.yang@usmcu.edu if you ever need an innovation ally.

Lieutenant Colonel Austin Duncan

Lieutenant Colonel Duncan is an original member of the award-winning *Destination Unknown* project, serving as a visionary, author, and editor. He is currently assigned as the information warfare coordinator at I Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group. He is also a Service chief fellow at the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency and a nonresident fellow at the Brute Krulak Center for Innovation and Future Warfare at Marine Corps University. Austin cofounded #EndersGalley with Lieutenant Colonel Yang as a grassroots innovation platform rooted in the professional military education ecosystem. He remains driven by an innovative spirit and the continued pursuit of education.

Major Ian Brown

Major Brown recently retired from the Marine Corps in the summer of 2023 after serving 20 years as a Sikorsky CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter pilot, a forward air controller, and, in his last billet, as the operations officer of the Brute Krulak Center for Innovation and Future Warfare at Marine Corps University. He authored the story “Plan Crimson” in *Destination Unknown* volume 2.5, coauthored “Just the FACTs” in volume 3, and provided editorial and operations assistance for volumes 2 and 4. He has authored more than four dozen articles, short stories, and book reviews, and his book *A New Conception of War: John Boyd, the U.S. Marines, and Maneuver Warfare* from Marine Corps University Press is on the Commandant’s Professional Reading List. He is a lifelong science fiction and comic book nerd and has transitioned from the realm of simply playing wargames to designing and publishing them, with his first game, *#Maneuver Warfare*, being released in 2024. Working at the Krulak Center was the highlight of his Marine Corps career, and supporting the *Destination Unknown* series was one of his favorite efforts while there. “You can’t take the sky from me” is Brown’s personal motto.

Major Sara Wood

Major Wood is a reserve intelligence and information operations officer with the Marine Innovation Unit. She has served as either an author or editor on four volumes of *Destination Unknown* and previously served as the academics officer at the Brute Krulak Center for Innovation and Future Warfare at Marine Corps University. She is a lifelong science fiction and graphic novel enthusiast and works as a rural health nurse in her civilian life.

Captain Jacob Acebo

Captain Acebo is an infantry and reconnaissance Marine officer hailing from South Texas.

After six years of active-duty service, he completed his MBA at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas, and founded Silent Stag Publishers, where he published his first young adult fictional novel, *The Rider's Bane*. Today, he continues to work on future novels and serves in the Selected Marine Corps Reserve with the 4th Reconnaissance Battalion. He loves the art of storytelling and has a passion for devising captivating tales that live rent-free in the reader's mind long after the finale.

Second Lieutenant Nicholas Gallagher

Second Lieutenant Gallagher currently serves as assistant operations officer at the Brute Krulak Center for Innovation and Future Warfare at Marine Corps University. He is a new addition to the *Destination Unknown* team. He is an MBA candidate in the Mendoza School of Business at the University of Notre Dame, class of 2026. Outside of the Marine Corps, he is an obnoxious Philadelphia sports fan, an urban planning enthusiast, and a student of theology and philosophy.

Cover Illustrator

Major Scott Richards

Major Richards is a military police officer and a first-time *Destination Unknown* contributor. He was born in Boston and grew up in Hopkinton, Massachusetts. He is assigned to the Capabilities Development Directorate within the Marine Corps' Combat Development & Integration. He coordinates and facilitates requirements across the Joint capability areas. He has been interested in illustration since childhood, stemming from his love of comic books. Additionally, he draws inspiration from various other mediums, including books, movies, and rock music. He is a self-taught artist but credits the famous comic book artist Jim Lee and his weekly Twitch streams as catalysts for his creative growth. For those interested in exploring his past and future works, he can be found on Instagram @scottrichards_art.

“No Limits: Marine Expeditionary Space Unit”

Author and illustrator: Major Philippe I. Rodriguez

Major Rodriguez, a first-time *Destination Unknown* contributor, wrote and illustrated “No Limits” while attending the Marine Corps Command and Staff College. He served a combined 20 months in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom as a communications officer and an information operations planner. He currently serves at the Marine Corps Cyberspace Operations Group in Quantico, Virginia. He is inspired by the continued pursuit of personal and professional development, which drives his intellectual curiosity in innovation, security studies, and strategic culture. His family fuels his purpose and motivation as he continues to serve the men and women of the Marine Corps.

Color work: Major Scott Richards

See Major Richards's biography above.

“Reckless”

Author: Lieutenant Colonel Brian Kerg

Lieutenant Colonel Kerg is a prior-enlisted mortarman, communications officer, and operational planner. He is also a nonresident fellow with the Brute Krulak Center for Innovation and Future Warfare at Marine Corps University, a WSD-Handa fellow with the Pacific

Forum, and a member of the editorial board for the U.S. Naval Institute's *Proceedings*. A native of Piqua, Ohio, he is a lifelong reader of speculative fiction, thanks in large part to the generosity of the Piqua Public Library and its remarkable staff. His professional writing includes useful fiction written for *Proceedings*, the Center for International Maritime Security, and the *Marine Corps Gazette*, and his mainstream fiction appears in several literary journals including *The Iowa Review*, *Line of Advance*, and *The Deadly Writer's Patrol*. He can be contacted via email at bkergr@umich.edu or on Twitter at [@BrianKerg](https://twitter.com/BrianKerg)

Illustrator: Zoe Kerg

Zoe Kerg is a high school student and college art student enrolled in the College Credit Plus program, studying art for simultaneous high school and college credit through her local institutions. She draws and paints frequently, most recently expanding into comic book illustration and digital tablets, and is experimenting with several art styles. An avid reader, she is a fan of mysteries. As an aspiring artist, she is excited to tackle new projects and challenges. She posts her artwork on Instagram at [_zoe.arts](https://www.instagram.com/_zoe.arts). She can be contacted through her father, Brian Kerg, at bkergr@umich.edu.

“The Key to the World”

Author: Gunnery Sergeant Chase McGrorothy-Hunter

Gunnery Sergeant McGrorothy-Hunter is a cyber network chief by trade but currently serves as a faculty advisor at the Marine Corps Staff Noncommissioned Officers Academy at Quantico, Virginia, where he has taught at both the sergeants and career schools. He is the president of the Quantico Warfighting Society, through which he organizes monthly meetings to advance the intellectual capabilities of Marines of all ranks. While this volume of *Destination Unknown* is his first attempt at creative fiction writing, his works of nonfiction have been published in *Leatherneck*, the *Marine Corps Gazette*, and the *Lethal Minds* journal. He can be contacted via email at chase.mcgrorothyhunter@gmail.com.

Illustrator: Daniel Donnelly

Daniel Donnelly served in the Marine Corps from 2007 to 2013 and in the New Jersey National Guard from 2014 to 2022. After completing his service with the Marine Corps, he attended the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art in Dover, New Jersey. He published his own full-length manga, *Death Trap*, in 2021 and has worked as an artist for many different publishers. He can be found on Instagram at [@firstamericanmanga](https://www.instagram.com/@firstamericanmanga) or on his website at www.firstamericanmanga.com.

“Big Trouble in the Little Horn of Africa”

Authors: Lieutenant Colonel Wes Faulk and Lieutenant Colonel Tyler Quinn

Lieutenant Colonel Faulk is an artillery officer who enjoys ultrarunning, picking heavy things up and putting them down, and coaching. He has enjoyed writing for many years but was unsure about trying a new medium. He is currently assigned as the senior Marine advisor to the Naval Sea Systems Command and lives in Quantico with his wife, Diana, their son, David, and a snaggle-toothed ankle-biter named Apple.

Lieutenant Colonel Quinn is an original member on the *Destination Unknown* team, and this is his first year as a creative contributor. He grew up on *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Calvin and Hobbes*, and *The Real American Heroes*, but he never crafted any draw-

ing skills beyond stick figures. He enjoys science fiction, graphic novels, FICINT (fiction writing and intelligence), and professional military education, so this project provides a perfect outlet. He currently works as an operational planner at the Marine Corps Training Command.

Illustrator: Major Scott Richards

See Major Richards's biography on page 64.

“Zulu Force”

Author: Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Zepeda

Lieutenant Colonel Zepeda is a Marine Corps infantry officer currently assigned as the deputy director for the Brute Krulak Center for Innovation and Future Warfare in Quantico, Virginia. His previous assignment was as future operations officer in the 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms, California. He completed a Joint tour at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation and served there as a team leader for the Command and General Staff Officers Course and as a director for the Joint Interagency Operations Course. He has the additional military occupational specialties of 9702 (Joint specialty officer), 0577 (operations and tactics instructor), and 8241 (foreign area officer, Latin America) and was the first Marine officer to serve as the Personnel Exchange Program (PEP) officer with the Colombian Marines in 2006.

Illustrator: Major Stan Zivanovich

Major Zivanovich is an artillery officer who enjoys ice hockey and cycling, but only to fill the time when he is not drawing. He has been reading comics for 30 years and drawing them for almost as long. He hails from the great commonwealth of Pennsylvania and currently serves as the operations officer for the 5th Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company in Okinawa, where he lives with his wife, Kaitlyn, and their four children.

Glossary

| | |
|----------|---|
| 3D | three-dimensional |
| A2/AD | antiaccess/area denial |
| AA LOC | amphibious assault location |
| AFRICOM | Africa Command |
| AI | artificial intelligence |
| AI/ML | artificial intelligence/machine learning |
| AR/VR/XR | augmented reality/virtual reality/mixed reality |
| AU | African Union |
| C2 | command and control |
| CAR | Combat Action Ribbon |
| CO | commanding officer |
| COA | course of action |
| COC | command operations center |
| COP | common operational picture |
| DARPA | Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency |
| ETA | estimated time of arrival |
| GINNA | generic integrated neural network advantage |
| GLOCS | ground lines of communication |
| HADR | humanitarian assistance and disaster relief |
| HALO | high altitude, low opening |
| HDV | human digital virus |
| HSTP | hyperspace transaction protocol |
| HTTP | hypertext transfer protocol |

| | |
|---------|--|
| I&W | indications and warnings |
| IDF | indirect fire |
| I-MRE | Intravenous Meal, Ready-to-Eat |
| INFOCOM | Marine Corps Information Command |
| INTSUM | intelligence summary |
| IP | internet protocol |
| ISR | intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance |
| JADC2 | Joint all-domain command and control |
| JV | Joint vision |
| LiDAR | light detection and ranging |
| LVC-B | live-virtual-constructive-bootcamp |
| LVC-MP | live-virtual-constructive-mission preparation |
| LVC-T | live-virtual-constructive-training |
| LVC-W | live-virtual-constructive-warfighting |
| MAGTF | Marine Air-Ground Task Force |
| MESU | Marine expeditionary space unit |
| MLR | Marine littoral regiment |
| NEO | noncombatant evacuation operation |
| ODA | Operational Detachment Alpha |
| ORP | objective rally point |
| OSI | open systems interconnection |
| PCAP | packet capture |
| PLA | People's Liberation Army (China) |
| PTP | predeployment training program |
| QRF | quick reaction force |
| RTB | return to base |
| SF | special forces |

| | |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| SOF | special operations forces |
| SSAE | Secret Society of American Eugenics |
| TOC | tactical operations center |
| USAFRICOM | U.S. Africa Command |
| VAGD | visually augmented guide display |
| XO | executive officer |



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No Limits: Marine Expeditionary Space Unit

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Reckless

Amid rebel chaos in Yemen, a Marine Corps captain leads her unit and their AI companion, "Sergeant Reckless," in a daring mission. As complications arise, difficult decisions must be made. Explore the future of warfare and the profound impact of AI in this gripping tale of duty and survival.

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Big Trouble in the Little Horn of Africa

In the heart of an African conflict ignited by China's aggression, two Marine remote vehicle operators plunge into a perilous mission, and the clock is ticking. They have 10 minutes to accomplish their mission before being found by the enemy. Will they succeed? Or will they suffer a tragic fate? Be warned: what readers find will change how they think about warfare—forever.

Zulu Force

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