



# STORM FRONT™

**CATALYST**  
game labs™



THINGS THAT GO BOOM .....	3
EYE OF THE HURRICANE.....	5
THE TRIUMPH OF AZTLAN.....	9
FALL OF A DRAGON.....	35
SEATTLE SHAKES.....	63
LIGHTNING IN DENVER.....	87
ARES TREMBLES.....	112
SHADOW NETWORK.....	130
FIRST AMONG EQUALS.....	131
THE ARTFUL DODGER.....	136
SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY.....	139
ESCAPING THE GHOST DECADE.....	144
FRACTURES.....	151
THE CRACKS INSIDE.....	155
GAME INFORMATION.....	186

## CREDITS

**Writing:** Patrick Goodman, Jason M. Hardy, Philip A. Lee, Devon Oratz, Scott Schletz, Brandie Tarvin, R.J. Thomas, Michael Wich, Thomas Willoughby, Russell Zimmerman

**Editing:** Jason M. Hardy, Philip A. Lee, Kevin Killiany, Katherine Monasterio, Andrea Rebholz

**Art Direction:** Brent Evans

**Cover Art:** Echo Chernik

**Cover Layout:** Matt Heerd

**Interior Art:** Gordon Bennetto, Joel Biske, Mark Bulahao, Victor Perez Corbella, John Emmons, David Hovey, Ian King, Igor Kieryluk, Jeff Laubenstein, Jeremy McHugh, Victor Manuel Leza Moreno and Mark Poole

**Interior Layout:** Matt Heerd

**Shadowrun Line Developer:** Jason M. Hardy

**Proofreading:** Patrick Goodman, Philip A. Lee,

Devon Oratz, Scott Schletz, Brandie Tarvin, Michael Wich, Thomas Willoughby, Russell Zimmerman

Copyright © 2013 The Topps Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Shadowrun, Storm Front, and Matrix are registered trademarks and/or trademarks of The Topps Company, Inc., in the United States and/or other countries. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the Copyright Owner, nor be otherwise circulated in any form other than that in which it is published. Catalyst Game Labs and the Catalyst Game Labs logo are trademarks of InMediaRes Productions, LLC.

First Printing by Catalyst Game Labs, an imprint of InMediaRes Productions, LLC  
PMB 202 • 303 -91st Ave. NE, E502  
Lake Stevens, WA 98258

### Find us online:

info@shadowrun4.com  
(Shadowrun questions)  
<http://www.shadowrun4.com>  
(official Shadowrun website)  
<http://www.catalystgamelabs.com>  
(Catalyst website)  
<http://www.battlecorps.com/catalog>  
(Catalyst/Shadowrun orders)





# ... THINGS GO BOOM ...

## Posted by: FastJack

Given all of the things that I'm going to share with you in this posting, what I'm about to say might sound odd, but I'm saying it anyway: All in all, we're getting off easy. We've seen the world go nuts before. The Great Ghost Dance (yeah, yeah, none of you are old enough to remember it. Shut up), VITAS, the two Crashes, and more—several times this century, the world has completely upheaved itself, erased and rewritten large parts of the map, turned powerful people into peons and peons into kings, and so on and so forth. What's happening now is plenty dramatic, and lots of people are going to lose their lives due to what's going on, but at least it doesn't feel like the world is going to end for all of us. The world economy is not going to collapse. Megacorporations are not going away. The players are changing, but the shadows are remaining in place. Work is flooding our way. Some of us will drown in that flood—a few of us have already gone down—but the rest of us will get calls from Mr. Johnson throwing money our way as long as we put our lives on the line. Just like always.

I'm not saying that nothing has changed, though. We've got a war that's tumbled to a conclusion, with a clear winner and an angry loser; a shakeup among the great dragons; including a death; a clash of powers in Denver raining chaos on the city; and political pressure mounting in Seattle. And then we have—well, we have something else.

Fortunately for most of us but unfortunately for a select few, JackPointers have been out there, seeing what's happening first hand and doing their best to come back and report to the rest of us. Most of them made it back in pretty much one piece, and I have hopes that a few others will re-appear sooner or later. For now, we have a lot of solid information that will help you navigate the changing world.

First, we take a look at the resolution of the Aztlan-Amazonia war. I can't say I'm surprised by the eventual outcome, but the war took some interesting twists and turns to reach its final endpoint, and the rubble left down Bogotá way promises to cast some interesting shadows for a good long time.

Next up is a brief recounting of the Great Dragon Civil War that sets up the epic clash that happened in GeMiTo recently,

leaving a great dragon dead. A good number of shadowrunners didn't make it back from that fight, but I know a few who made it through and came back with heavily padded bank accounts—and some incredible stories to tell.

Then we take another look at the shadowrunning capital of the world, Seattle, where the Brackhaven administration has hit a level of disarray I've never seen it accomplish before. It's to the point where I can't be sure Brackhaven will survive, and judging by the amount of money pouring into the shadows, a lot of other people feel the same way and are anxious to help grease the skids for their beloved governor.

After that we move to Denver for a look at how Ghostwalker's been operating ever since his mysterious return. It's not entirely clear what's happening in that town, but someone seems to have a serious grudge against the White Wyrms—and the balls to attempt to take him on. The city keeps exploding in chaos, and there are plenty of parties there who know how to take advantage of a good crisis.

The next area of focus is Ares. The release of their horribly malfunctioning gun, the Excalibur, was bad enough for them, but they seem to be having trouble recovering from it. It's like there are some forces actively holding them down, and Sticks has some ideas about what that might be.

Then we have some quick hits, a look at some of the people and places undergoing some interesting evolutions, including the Tír Tairngire Council of Princes, vampire hunter Martin de Vries, the big three Japanacorp, and a check in with our old friend Dodger.

The last chapter is—well, it's rather personal. I put everything I wanted to say in that chapter, so I don't need to say anything more about it right here.

This is the part where I tell you to read on and use what you learn to make some money. This time, though, I want to say this: Stay alive. We've lost some, we're going to lose more, and we need everyone we can get. We need what you know and what you're going to learn. So stay alive. For me, if you can't figure out a reason to do it for yourself.



Connecting JackPoint VPN ...  
... Matrix Access ID Spoofed.  
... Encryption Keys Generated.  
... Connected to Onion Routers.  
> Login  
\*\*\*\*\*  
> Enter Passcode  
\*\*\*\*\*  
... Biometric Scan Confirmed.  
Connected to <ERROR: NODE UNKNOWN>

"Hard pounding, gentlemen. Let's see who pounds the longest."  
-The Duke of Wellington

## JackPoint Stats

140 users currently active  
in the network

### Latest News

\* <011875> It's all done. The maintenance is complete. Just got some emergency security measures to put in place, but ... well, more about that later. -FastJack

### Personal Alerts

\* You have 7 new [private messages](#).  
\* You have 4 [messages](#) queued for anonymous re-routing.  
\* You have received 3 new [Metalink Friends](#) add requests.  
\* 4 individuals have dropped you as [Metalink Friends](#).  
\* You have 27 [new responses](#) to your JackPoint posts.  
\* PDA: Your fixer says his headache has gotten worse, and he says everyone should stay away from him for a while.

### First Degree

You are hidden from all contacts.

Your Current Rep Score: 73  
(61% positive)

Current Time: January 18, 2075, 11:35

PREFERENCES

FEEDS

TASKS

LINKS

HISTORY

Welcome back to JackPoint, omae;  
your last connection was severed: 16  
hours, 12 minutes, 45 seconds ago.

## Today's Heads Up

- \* If Brackhaven goes down, don't you want to grease the chute? [Tag: [Dirty Tricks](#)]
- \* There are many ways to be a samurai. Most of them hurt. [Tag: [The Way of the Samurai](#)]

## Incoming

- \* History is important, especially when there are people who might shoot history in your face [Tag: [Euro Wars Antiques](#)]
- \* We finally had enough operatives return from the wild alive to put together a report on critters [Tag: [Parazooology 2](#)]

## Top News Items

- \* Media blackout from Asamando continues; Matrix interference is happening on "a level not seen since the Crash," GOD investigators say. [Link](#)
- \* Celedyr announces relocation of critical NeoNET research projects from Albuquerque to Boston. [Link](#)
- \* Aztechnology mages call reports of manmade structure allegedly discovered in Antarctica "nothing more than pure fantasy." [Link](#)



CHAT

MESSAGES

FILES

POSTS

NEXUS

SEARCH

Active

ComStar  
Firewall

Active

Jack-in-the-Box  
Antivirus

Active

SpamWitch  
Filter

On/Receiving

Comunicode

Excellent

Signal

Active

Hidden  
Mode



Local  
Map

## STORM FRONT

Posts/Files tagged with  
"Storm Front"

Eye of the Hurricane  
The Triumph of Aztlan  
Fall of a Dragon  
Seattle Shakes

[More]

CONTINUE

ADVANCED  
SEARCH

SAVE



# ... EYE OF THE HURRICANE ...

All the runners I've ever known—the ones still *living*, anyway—say to never go on a bender the night before a big job. You do too much boozing, chipping, whoring, whatever, and your brain's gonna be duller for the whole rest of the day after you wake up. Synapses don't fire as quickly. Slower reaction time. A nanosecond's hesitation can get even the best runner in his prime killed.

So, why in the hell do I have this Turing-cursed hangover?

First thing I notice on waking up—besides the buzzing in the back of my head and the throbbing at my temples and the base of my neck—is my left arm, just a few centimeters from my face. It's depilated, to better show off my nanotattoos, except I can't even make out the design from this close. I slide my arm away from my face to bring the rest of the world into focus. Everything sharpens except for the tattoo. The programmable nanite design is something unrecognizable. Rubbing my eyes of sleep and refocusing them doesn't help; it only accentuates the wrongness of what used to be a painstakingly crafted gold-and-red *draco occidentalis* coiling around my forearm. Now it looks like blocks of garbage code, like the 256th-level glitch from that ancient 2D game with the yellow ball that eats ghosts. The mirrored nanotattoo on my other arm is likewise wrong. Placing both arms side by side, the patterns—seemingly random at first—match each other perfectly, as though this was intentional.

Must've had too much to drink to have done something like that, because I sure as hell don't remember reconfiguring it. I close my eyes—not because I have to, but because it helps to shut out the light right now—and access the tattoo nanites' programmable function. Buffer recall easily restores the twin dragons in seconds. Should be faster, but this hangover is slowing everything down.

I don't understand this. Don't remember having *anything* to drink last night. Okay, *maybe* I had *one* drink, but that wouldn't dull me like this. In fact, I don't even remember quite what I did last night.

*Think*, Ragno. What did you do last night?

I sit up, wander into the shower. Water always seems to help jog the memory. Last night was ... the meet at Sulla Vite with Signora Rossi. Had one glass of *vino rosso* with dinner and a chocolate gelato while we reviewed the plans for tonight. Nothing that would make me feel like this.

Showers usually wash away all remnants of the night—the *vino*, the women, the entertainment—but not today. That buzzing in the back of my head is still there, but it's not the buzz I'm used to. For those of us in constant contact with the Matrix, the continuous flow of data in and out of our brains is a comforting presence. The input/output stream passes through my consciousness like a raging river when I need it, or a gentle brook when I don't. I can speed up or slow down the information as much as I want, but it's always there, even if it's just a trickle. Now, though, the brook feels ... polluted somehow. Like someone put a filter on incoming data. Or the signal-to-noise ratio is drowning out important data with random garbage.

This is not good.

As I'm getting ready for today's job, the background noise isn't getting any better. A breakfast of soykaf, a *cornetto*, and some methamphetamines pills doesn't help calm it. A quick run on the treadmill does wonders for my stiff muscles, but my brain still feels like it's lodged sideways in my cranium.

Something's wrong with my wetware. I'm sure of it. Problem is, I don't know of any street docs that would have any clue on how to treat a virtuakinet, and, besides, I *really* don't want anyone rooting around in my brainpan unless it's necessary. One wrong move and I could end up lobotomized or lose my connection to the Matrix for good. Or the *medico* could sell me out and my brain would end up in a jar in some Mitsuhama lab somewhere.

Whatever's wrong with me, it feels like my skull's home to a hundred lightning bugs all fighting to get out of a jar that's just too damn small.

Maybe it's the Dissonance creeping up on me.

Maybe I'm just getting old.

I spend most of the morning going over the plan in my head. The more familiar with it I am, the better I'll be in case this noise doesn't go away. So far, the noise is mucking with my concentration whenever I try to do anything more complicated with the Matrix than access a public node with very little security. I try to thread a complex form to take root access from the soykaf shop across the street, just to see if I can do it; it works, but almost trips an alarm. From the streams of Matrix code, I try compiling a low-rating sprite. I call it Zero-Uno. It coalesces in my AR view as this lopsided, geometric monster that again makes me think of the 256th-level glitch.

Zero-Uno works, but just barely, and the attempt nearly knocks me out. I keep the sprite cached just in case; no need to let that effort go to waste.

After another soykaf, I'm heading out the door of my flat with my Beretta 97 tucked into a shoulder holster, my dummy commlink shoved into the pocket of my jacket, and a swirl of Matrix noise rattling around in my head. I've got my jacket sleeves rolled up to my elbows, so both dragon tattoos are visible.

No one hassles me on my way down the street. The uninitiated take one look at the tats and assume I work for the great dragon Alamaïs, who seems to be dropping by every once in a while to remind us small folk that he's *capo* at the top of the food chain. These people think if they look at me wrong, I can summon the golden *bastardo* right on the spot and he'll eat them all. If people want to think that, fine; I don't do anything to discourage them, but the tattoos are for something else entirely.

A large shadow covers the street for a moment, and I flinch. A dragon—a *real* dragon—just passed in front of the sun, flying on its way to wherever. Can't tell if it's a great or a normal dragon. All I know is, from its coloring, it's not Alamaïs, and I can breathe a sigh of relief. How long ago was it that the average man on the street



never saw a dragon? Nowadays, dragon sightings are so common that the occurrence is becoming customary. Give it another few weeks, and I'm sure I won't even notice how many dragons are in the sky anymore.

Though I've already had more than enough caffeine, I stop in a soykaf house on Via Gaudenzio Ferrari. My game face is on; it's easier to maintain today because of my hangover, bad dream, Dissonance, or whatever is going on with me. Sitting in the back corner is part one of my job. A pert, young businesswoman in a snappy Italian pantsuit sips a cappuccino along with the rest of the mid-morning crowd, while perusing something in an AR.

"Buon giorno, Signora," I say. "How are the markets looking today?"

Capricia Fuselli, granddaughter of N'drangheta Dona Allegra Fuselli, glances up at me through the AR overlay for only a single moment. "Sit."

I slide into the booth across from her. The waitress stops by and I order a double espresso. Two soykafs already today, and I still feel like I haven't slept in weeks, so I'll take all the help I can get. "Signora Fuselli," I say, but she cuts me off with a glare I believed could drive off a crazed free spirit, were she so inclined.

"You've got a lot of nerve showing your face in this sprawl again, Ragno, after what you did last night."

I recoil from her accusation. I've done many things, some I'm not proud of, but this ...? Last night I was at Sulla Vite, having *vino* and gelato. "I don't—" I quiet down as the waitress drops off my steaming mug and wait for her to leave. "I don't know what you're—"

"Stow it," Capricia snaps. "I will get the info from you one way or another."

"I'm sure you will," I say. I try to play coy, but it's difficult to do while sipping scalding-hot espresso, sending Zero-Uno to search for any recent news items that might be connected to me, and trying to press through the swarm of lightning bugs bouncing around in my skull. "But I honestly don't know what you're talking about."

Capricia frowns. "You think we wouldn't find out? —out? —out?"

A wave of vertigo and nausea hits me. Everything sounds hollow and distant. Capricia turns into a blend of psychedelic colors that waves back and forth, and darkness edges in on my vision.



An explosion of pain brings the world back into focus. I'm not in the booth anymore, but from the heady tang of soykaf vapors I can still smell, I haven't gone far; probably to the apartment above the café. A quick check with a GPS service over the Matrix confirms my suspicion.

I'm sitting in a chair, and sunlight streams into my eyes through the windows. My Beretta and 'link are resting on a nearby table, far

out of arm's reach. Two armed, cybered goons—also in expensive Italian suits—flank Capricia and will likely shoot me dead if I try to make a move for my sidearm.

"Let's try this again," she says. "Tell me who you're working for." "Some small-time outfit," I lie. "You wouldn't know 'em."

She backhands me across the jaw. Takes me a moment to refocus my eyes. I taste blood in my mouth.

"You're working for *il drago*, aren't you?" she says. "Alamais sent you here to kill me, didn't he? He wants to destabilize my grandmother's hold on this part of GeMiTo and crush us for defying him, doesn't he?"

I immediately send Zero-Uno on a quest for any pertinent and current data on the Calabrian N'drangheta. "I already told you, I don't know what you're talking about."

"Then how do you explain this?" Capricia turns her AR window so I can see it.

In some security camera footage, I watch myself, wearing the clothes I wore yesterday, attempting to hack a maglock on the outside of a building.

My throat goes dry. My pulse quickens. I do not remember myself doing that last night.

"What is this?"

"You tell me," she said. "You tried to break into one of our data havens. And you've apparently been a very busy little spider of late, Signore Ragno." She changes the image. "This is from three days ago, when you hit another of our data farms." Another snapshot. "This is from a week ago."

I don't know if I want to laugh or cry. I never did any of those things, but the clips all look real. And in each one I'm wearing outfits I normally wear. Have I been ... sleepwalking? *Sleephacking*?

My throat constricts in on itself and my blood goes cold. Last night's hangover, the reprogrammed nanotats, the reason I feel like I haven't been sleeping, and the lightning bugs all bottled up in my braincase ... What in Turing's name is going on here?

"I ... you've got everything all wrong," I say. "I was ... I don't work for Alamais. The dragon tattoos ... they're just a code. A way of communicating nonverbally to contacts or potential clients. Dragon means I'm working a job. Violin spider means I'm available."

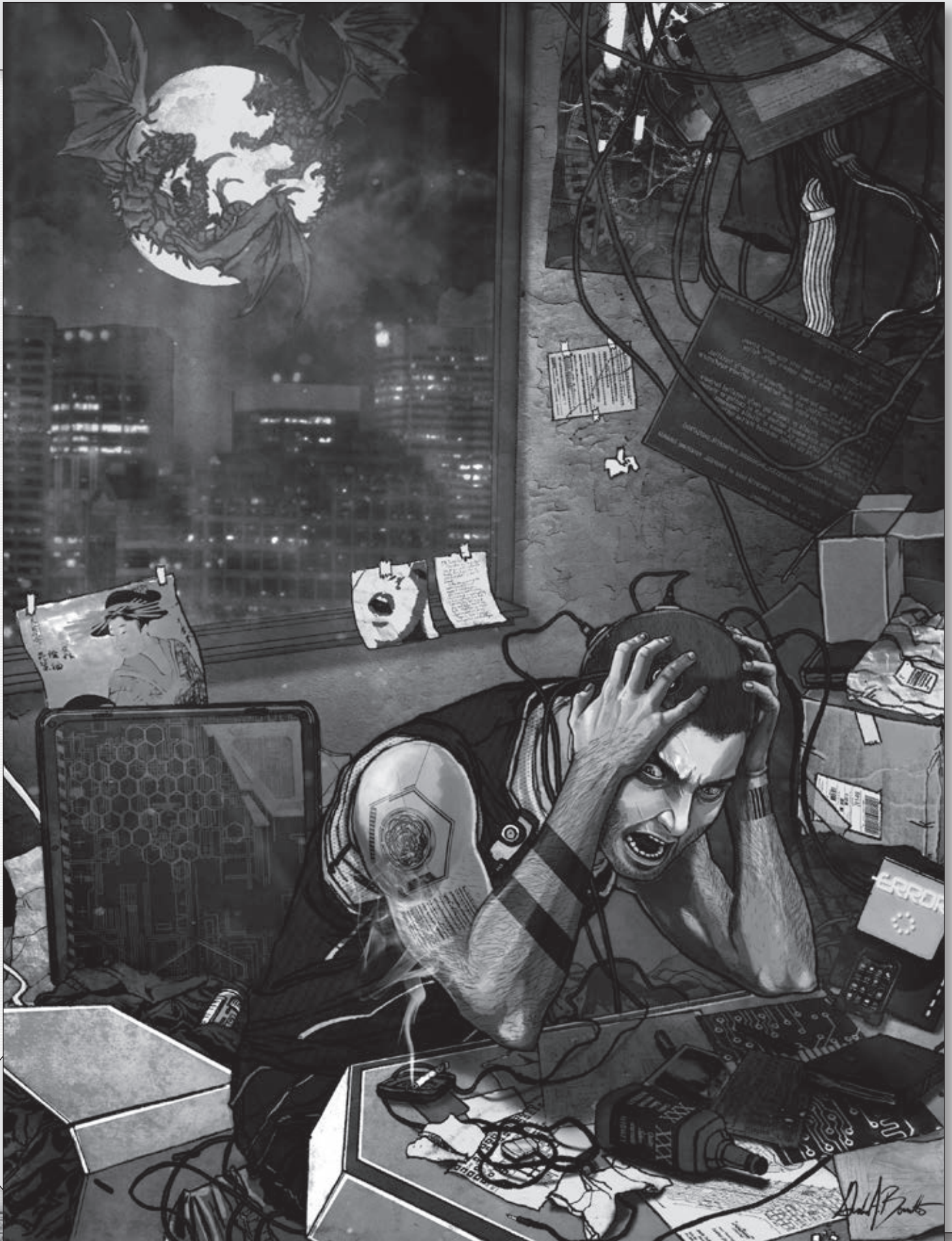
"And the data stores?"

I know she's never going to believe me, no matter how truthful I am. She has evidence of things I don't remember doing and would have no motive for. I feel something break on the inside. All of my hardened runner instincts are gone. "You want to know who I'm working for? Your grandmother the *dona*," I admit. "She wanted an outsider to keep tabs on you. Make sure you weren't trying to create your own power base to push her out of the organization. But this?" I wave at the accusatory AR footage hovering less than a meter in front of me. "There's nothing I can say to convince you that's not me, because, frankly, I can't be sure it's *not* me. But I tell you, I have no conscious memory of any of these incidents. Someone must've done this to me."

A sensation in the back of my thoughts alerts me to Zero-Uno's return.

*Did you mean to upload this database to your bio-storage late last night?* the sprite said in my AR view. *The data trail marks the files as originating from a series of local nexi operated by the Calabrian N'drangheta Mafia.*









In the space of about five seconds, I scan the database I didn't even realize I already had downloaded to my wetware, and a huge red flag pops up.

By Turing ... *it was* me who had hacked all those mob nodes.

Capricia's eyes narrow into monoblade daggers. "My *nonna* would never have *me* supervised."

"She would if you were *guilty*," I say.

Now she's pointing the pistol right in my face. "Do you know what happens to people who tell lies about me?"

"*Sì*," I say as calmly as I can muster. "You sell them out to Alamaïs. You betray members of your own race to that scaly pile of *merda*."

Capricia winds up to pistol-whip me, but the blow never lands. The sunlight disappears, just like when I was out walking, only this time it doesn't come back. There are—there are *dragon* wings headed straight for the window in front of me. Time slows. A blur of dragon scales sends a thousand barbs of shattered glass sailing through the room. Capricia screams and throws herself to the ground. One of her bodyguards takes a broken piece of windowpane right through the jugular. All of the air seems to have been sucked out of the room. And then, the adult Western dragon falls away from the hole it made in the building, bathing the room in sunlight once again.

Out the window, I see another dragon—a much *bigger* dragon—rearing up to strike at the first dragon.

For five seconds I cannot breathe. When I do, I smell only burning. I dive for the table, grab my Beretta—the commlink is worthless—and run for the door.

"After him!" Capricia shouts.

The surviving goon fires. Splinters from the doorframe pelt my arm as I bolt into the hallway. I blind-fire a few shots of my own, and then I'm down the stairs, into a soykaf house filled with shrieking, fleeing patrons. The ground shakes several times and I nearly fall face-first into broken saucers and mugs. Flames from the upper story lick at my heels.

I don't know if Capricia is still alive or not, and I don't care.

I'm out on the street, which smells like hellfire and brimstone. I look up, and my bravado vanishes with a whimper. The two adult dragons are trading magic and fire in the sky, diving and nipping at each other. Nearby buildings fared far worse than the burning charnel house behind me. Whole sections of pavement have been uprooted. Storefronts were reduced to burning rubble. Smoke and magic paint the morning into a scene of Hell itself.

And then I look past the two wrestling dragons. In the sky above them are *dozens* of other dragons, both young and adult, maybe even a few great dragons for all I know. Scintillating pockets of magical energy created by great form spirits fill the air. Drakes and countless other creatures I cannot even begin to name take to the skies like all the fireflies banging about in my head.

Somehow I've walked right into a scene straight from a war trid.

To get away from dragons, fire, and magic, I run down Via Gaudenzio Ferrari—or what's left of it. At Via Montebello, I turn down a stretch of unbroken road. And for some reason, I can't stop looking behind me at all of the destruction.

*Are you getting all this?* Zero-Uno asks in my AR overlay.

My wetware's been storing every image my ocular nerves have captured since Capricia woke me. *Start uploading this feed to every news service on the Matrix that you can reach*, I instruct the sprite. *I have a feeling we just walked into a fight we want no part of.*

Ahead, I catch sight of the Mole Antonelliana's upper spire. Tallest brick building in the Sixth World, home of Museo Nazionale del Trideo. Right now it's probably one of the safest places in all of Torino. If I can just get there and find my way out of the sprawl, maybe I can figure out what's gone wrong with my head.

The sky darkens as I'm almost to the base of the *mole*. Two more dragons blot out the sun. Amid a haze of fireballs and ear-scraping dragon shrieks, both reptilian beasts collide into the Mole Antonelliana's squarish, conical crown—and burst through the other side in a spray of brick, glass, and fury. The massive, broken spire leans toward me in slow motion as gravity wins. I keep running, regardless. Grit and debris rains on my face. The sun darkens again, but not from dragons this time. It is inevitability.

I glance down at my arms. The twin tattoos are no longer dragons, but the 256th-level glitch again, changing with each fraction of a second.

Someone is reprogramming them, but it's not me.





# ... THE TRIUMPH OF AZTLAN ...

*Forward Air Base, Task Force Two*

*Location: Classified*

*1415 ZULU*

Long ago, Major Hector Mendoza's first flight instructor told him that the hardest part of battle was waiting for it to happen. In his youth, that was especially true; Mendoza was always driven, determined to accomplish whatever was required to get whatever he desired. This drive had carried him well through his military career, fast-tracking him to major five years ahead of his peers. Combined with his natural skills and instincts (his superiors called him a "hot stick"), Mendoza was confident bordering on arrogant and aggressive in the sky. In short, he was a perfect combat pilot. He relished the time he spent in his plane; merging his mind with a powerful craft was intoxicating, to say the least. And yet, despite the awesome destructive forces at his command, when he was gliding among the clouds, he never felt more at peace. With over fifty combat missions completed without so much as a scratch on his craft, Major Mendoza felt completely invincible.

At least, until the demons visited his home city of Cali.

Mendoza clenched the small sun coin in his hand once again, focusing his will to keep his mind clear and focused. Since command started the operation, Mendoza and his squadron had been placed on high alert. His squadron's twelve-hour rotation was almost complete, and soon another would take their place as the alert-ready aircraft. But until he was relieved, he had to be ready for the call. So he sat in the cockpit of his fighter with his rigger cocoon open, the day's heat washing over him despite the thermal insulation of his aircraft's shelter. The rest of his squadron was in the pilots' ready room; making good use of the air conditioning. Mendoza preferred to wait in his craft for the order to launch. He was a native Aztlaner, and all his life he'd embraced the heat of the beloved sun.

With a mental command, he accessed the chrono in his commlink; less than twenty minutes before the alert shift was over. Mendoza squeezed his coin again, hard enough to leave an indentation despite his heavy flight glove. He wanted the scramble order to come so that he could be one of the first to respond, the first to enact righteous vengeance. Mendoza opened his palm and stared at the dull yellow coin.

It wasn't worth anything, except to Mendoza. His son Roberto

purchased the once-bright coin with the gaudy cartoonish sun when their family visited Tenochtitlán four years ago. It was a cheap trinket meant for tourists, but Roberto knew how devoted his father was to the path of the sun and wanted Mendoza to have it. The coin remained forgotten in a pocket for years until he found it again after Cali. It was the only thing he had to remind him of his family. Mendoza squeezed the coin yet again, trying to focus, but his will failed him, that fateful day coming back in excruciating detail.

His squadron was one of the first to arrive in the skies over Cali, and nothing had prepared him for what he witnessed. Demons on leathery wings soared in the sky, raining death onto his city below. On the ground, monsters advanced like a rising tide, slow and unstoppable. Like any good solider he charged in, the afterburners of his Zeta-Bravo fighter spitting trails of hellfire behind him as he desperately tried to defend his people from the advancing threat.

But all his training, all of his experience, and all of his raw determination meant nothing. His weapons refused to lock onto the dragons, and when he overrode the launch protocols to dummy-fire his missiles, his adversaries simply dodged out of the way. Still he fired and fired, letting everything loose until his weapon bays were dry. This must have amused the beasts, who swooped past and looped around him and his wing mates, toying with the Aztlan fighters. Before long the dragons grew bored and started tearing the wings off the fighters. Mendoza lasted longer than most, and managed to kill one who ventured too close to his fighter's rear. The flames from Mendoza's afterburner removed the creature's face and head like a blowtorch on butter. He had tried to engage another after that, but the recall order was given. Enraged, Mendoza refused to retreat and aimed his craft at the biggest demon of all. But before he could complete his suicide run, Mendoza's commander overrode the fighter's controls.

Mendoza watched through the rear sensors as his city, his home, his family, was destroyed in one final blue flash.

When he had arrived back at his base hours later, Mendoza was promptly escorted to a holding cell, where he languished for two days. Convinced that he was to be court-martialed for refusing to obey orders, perhaps executed for failing at Cali, Mendoza wasn't surprised when he was taken to an interrogation room. There, a man



in an Aztlan uniform bearing a Military Intelligence insignia and a man in a well-cut business suit were waiting. Mendoza's fears were almost confirmed when the Intelligence officer told Mendoza that he was now officially a dead man. The man in the suit passed a commlink with a data packet on it, which Mendoza took, thinking they meant for him to sign a confession. Instead, the packet contained a new identity, a benefits package for a new employee of Aztechnology, and new orders.

That was over two years ago. Since then, Mendoza and many more began training for a special mission: this mission. They were given the most bleeding-edge equipment Aztlan and Aztechnology had to offer. Mendoza's own craft came straight from the R and D labs and had no real designation other than Bloodwing. Sleek, black, and deadly, with its unique variable-geometric wing surfaces and unique vectored thrusters, it could outperform anything he had flown before, including his old Zeta-Bravo. There were also other aircraft, ones that could control an entire squadron of drones by themselves. The drones they controlled were also unlike anything Mendoza had ever seen. There were other craft stationed at other forward bases, strange ones that were the same design as his but somehow integrated magic into their systems. Mendoza wasn't sure what to think of that, but it wasn't his place to think. He had his orders, had his weapon. One thing all of these craft had in common: every single one of them was armed with weapons designed to achieve the revenge he—and everyone around him—wanted.

Coming back to the present, Mendoza let out a huff of satisfaction as he thought of the special ordnance in his weapon bays. He gave his coin a soft kiss before pocketing it. He checked his chrono again; only four minutes before his shift was up. Frustration started to creep into his mind, but he resigned himself. If the gods willed it, he would be at the tip of the spear. If not, he would just have to trust that he would be part of some other master plan.

With three minutes and fifty seconds to go in his rotation, AR tags lit up Mendoza's field of vision as alarms blared all over the base. The order was given: all pilots SCRAMBLE. Pilots and aircrews rushed to their respective craft as techs moved into position. Mendoza gave silent thanks to the gods as he slid down into his cockpit and closed his eyes. The VR immersion systems came online instantly as his rigger cocoon sealed. In less than a heartbeat, he was one with his craft. Its sensors were now his eyes and ears; the power of its engines was his heartbeat. Already craft status indicators were filling his VR heads-up display indicating all systems were green. With a mental command, Mendoza checked all control surfaces. In his virtual vision, he could see the ground crew visually verifying the test. With a thumbs-up from the crew chief, Mendoza blinked the running lights three times to indicate his own thumbs up.

"Avenger Two-Zero-Zero, ready for taxi," Mendoza signaled to the control tower.

With an acknowledgement, Mendoza watched as an unnecessary AR overlay indicated which runway to proceed toward; he knew the base by heart for just this moment. As the engines powered up,

Mendoza felt a rush of adrenaline as his craft made its way down the runway. By the time Mendoza reached takeoff position, his wingman, Lieutenant Perez, was also pulling into position to his right. With both craft properly positioned, they heard the order to take off.

Mendoza took a deep breath as he mentally applied throttle and brought his engines to full military power. With Perez on his wing, both craft roared down the runway and into the sky. Once airborne, Mendoza checked his tacnet. Coordinates filled his eyes, indicating course, speed, direction, and time to target. With practiced ease, Mendoza and his Avengers formed up at their predetermined rendezvous, turned toward their target, and applied full afterburners. According to information from the combat flight controllers, their target had finally decided to make good on his promise to destroy Tenochtitlán. Mendoza smiled; they would intercept him long before then. Fifty kilometers from Acapulco if his estimates were correct.

"Avenger Two-Zero-Zero to group, come to ten thousand feet and maintain current speed. On my order, initiate attack plan Alpha. Leads go for good shots only and wings watch their backs, especially for more bandits. Everyone watch your exit vectors; don't let those idiot drone-jockeys box you in. Let them absorb the damage!" A chorus of acknowledgements came over his comm, but Mendoza was already thinking ahead. At present course and speed, they would intercept the target in approximately fifty-one seconds.

As the seconds and the kilometers ticked away; Mendoza watched as his long-range radar and sensors synched up with orbital assets and painted his target. Mendoza came in on the target's three-o'clock side, high, and for a moment it seemed the enemy was unaware of their presence. Mendoza held his breath as his weapons systems worked to gain a solid lock, but just before they could, the target stopped suddenly and turned ninety degrees—directly toward them.

Cursing to himself, Mendoza shouted out orders: "All Avengers; break and engage at will, repeat: engage at will!"

The Aztlan flyers broke neatly into pairs, trying to scatter and force the target to choose a direction so the rest could turn and engage. But before the maneuver was completed, the target was among them. Screams and pleas from the doomed pilots echoed across the tacnet as the target tore into them with tooth and claw, or blasted them with magic.

Mendoza continued his bank and saw through the tacnet that two-thirds of his squadron were already gone. Twenty seconds in and the engagement had already degraded into a chaotic dogfight. Kicking his engines to full, Mendoza went vertical and inverted into a dive back towards the engagement zone. With his nose pointed directly at the target as he dove, Mendoza held his breath as his sensors tried to lock on to the target. Just as the Bloodwing's targeting system registered a weapons lock, the target looked directly above, right into Mendoza's eyes. Mendoza snarled as Sirurg arched his back and surged upwards towards him, his mouth full of dagger teeth opened wide.

"That's right! Come on! Come ON! COME ON!" Mendoza belatedly as his missile fired.



- Before we get this thing going, I have to say that 2074 has been a clusterfuck of world events (no shit, huh?). But we have to start somewhere, and this section deals specifically with the end of the Amazonian-Aztlan War. Although I don't think I should say "end," because while it's been officially over for about three months, battles still continue in some form or another. There are even whispers that the real war is just beginning, as if the last three years weren't enough. Still, we're going to do our best to throw out everything we know so far, which may not be much. After all the shit that Aztlan and Aztechnology pulled, who the hell knows what the flying frag is really going on down there anymore?

Fianchetto is going to take point on this and give a brief rundown on the war's first few years. Then we'll turn things over to several guest posters—some you all may know, some you may not, but all of them were actually there when things went down. Now before anyone freaks, anyone who posts has been vetted, so no messages about it, scan? I got my own problems to deal with right now. And before anyone asks why certain familiar faces aren't posting, it's because they're either recovering or missing. Picador is quite fucked up, but alive, after eating more than her daily requirement of lead. She's now post-third surgery in Lisbon and her unit's chief NCO Sergeant Major Martinez is filling in for her here. We've confirmed that Hard Exit survived the Battle of Bogotá, but she's gone to ground and that's all I know. We've also confirmed that Lyran is alive, but she got caught up in some serious shit down there and is taking time to deal with it. When I asked if she would post, her reply was simply "maybe." Aufheben, Black Mamba, and Marcos are all currently MIA. So, yeah, if you have any data on them, please let us know.

- FastJack
- Has anyone been able to verify any of the information in Black Mamba's last message?
- Sticks
- Not yet, but the whole thing will show up later in the file.
- Glitch

## HAVOC CRIED AND DOGS OF WAR SLIPPED

Posted by: Fianchetto

First of all, I want to say I wasn't in South America during the war, but I have numerous associates who were. As such, I am not claiming to know everything that went on there; rather I am trying to honor the memories of past and future friends by doing a small part in all of this.

A long time ago, I was a soldier. I know what war, real war, is like. That's why I volunteered to do this posting.

As most of us already know, the war in South America is one of the worst in recent history and in some ways surpassed even the carnage and destruction of the Euro Wars (which I witnessed firsthand). Much is written on why and how this war started, and I won't rehash every detail and waste bandwidth talking about every small independent group or bit player(s) involved. Check JackPoint for that.

The main focus of my contribution will be simply a very brief history of the war as it pertains to Aztlan and Amazonia, and what I

believe are the key points of the war. Specifically, I'll attempt to illustrate the events that lead the war's end. In a nutshell, I believe it ended because Aztlan got enough public opinion behind it to spend some of their capital by putting their boot to Amazonia's ass. But, that is my opinion and I will try and stick to the facts as I know them.

### OPENING SALVOS

Aztlan officially declared war against Amazonia in early 2072 when Amazonian agents were caught infiltrating an Aztlan research facility. There has been much contention and speculation as to why the Amazonians were there; they claim they were trying to end an Aztlan weapons program that was specifically targeting their country. Aztlan claimed the infiltration was an unprovoked attack and act of blatant espionage. There is evidence indicating that Amazonia was set up and that Aztlan engineered the whole affair just to start the war for expansion. Regardless of why, the war was officially on and both sides came out swinging.

While their respective militaries had vastly different organizations, tactics, and doctrines, both sides were evenly matched in the early months of the war. Amazonia repeatedly frustrated the more conventional Aztlan military with its guerilla-style approach to warfare and magic that was backed up by the rainforest itself, especially when the Aztlan dared venture into the jungle. Conversely, when Aztlan managed to draw out or pin down the elusive Amazonians, it was in urban areas, where the Amazonians were destroyed. Because of its location and strategic (and political) importance, Bogotá became the de facto center of the conflict, as both sides fought in and around it for months, trying to force their opponents into a fatal mistake.

- Hey, there's no mention of runners, mercs, or other types who flocked to the area like vultures to a carcass. And what about the corps in all this?
- Slamm-0!
- I did say I was going to stick to key points. I had hoped to avoid the usual complaints and "get to the good stuff."
- Fianchetto
- Don't take it personally; a lot of us are still keyed up over this and want answers.
- Glasswalker
- While Fianchetto wisely stays on topic, I think it would also behoove anyone to study the Vietnam War of the late twentieth century, specifically the tactics of the USA and the North Vietnamese/Viet Cong if they wish to better understand the tactics employed in this war. There are several parallels in strategic goals, methodologies, and ideologies that can grant a greater understanding of how and why the current conflict played out as it did.
- Thorn

With the opponents evenly matched, the first year of the war quickly devolved into the bloody stalemate that would become a regular theme. Early in 2073, an event occurred that drastically affected how the war would be fought and set the stage for its ultimate outcome.



On January 18, 2073, the great Amazonian dragon Surrurg led his forces into the Aztlan base at Cali. By now we should all know about the merciless, brutal slaughter of Aztlan soldiers and the killing of thousands more civilians though Surrurg's entropy power. This one attack forced Aztlan military planners to completely change their operational doctrine. No longer would they mass large numbers of conventional forces for fear another dragon attack would devastate whole military units in a single stroke. From that point on, Aztlan adopted a more unconventional methodology, deploying their troops in smaller numbers that operated more like Special Forces units rather than conventional military. Amazonia, with their decentralized military command and units operating in small groups or cells, had the advantage of experience in unconventional/guerrilla warfare and took out Aztlan units piecemeal.

As the months dragged on, the body counts on both sides rose steadily. Aztlan and Amazonia bolstered their respective forces with mercenaries, shadowrunners, and other irregular assets who were better equipped and experienced for the war's more unconventional style of combat. Mercenaries in particular became valued assets for both militaries, especially as both sides continued to take heavy losses and needed ready, experienced troops to fill their ranks. Several mercenary companies, including the top-tier Big Four (MET2000, Tsunami, Combat, Inc., and 10,000 Daggers), took contracts in the war. By the war's end, there were almost as many hired assets as there were regular troops.

It was this influx of troops that caused the first real shift in the war. Using mercenaries to garrison key strategic locations, the regular Aztlan military was free to engage targets. Aztlan surged into the jungles of Amazonia using orbital observation satellites as spotters, prosecuting several key positions. The attack was sudden and unexpected; Amazonia was caught completely by surprise and their border was pushed back approximately fifty kilometers.

- I know he doesn't mean to, but Fianchetto makes it sound like mercs and runners didn't come into the scene until well into the war. The reality was, we were there from day one, and even before then. Just like every other job, we did all the lovely dirty work that makes us oh-so-famous. The only difference was that we had to factor an active warzone into our plans. South America, especially Bogotá, is still a shadow bonanza even after the war.
- Beaker
- Hell, the only conventional troops Amazonia had were mercs.
- Stone
- I've also gotten more than a few bounties from the overflow in South America, including one rogue blood mage. Not my cup of 'caf, but cred is cred, and he was right there. Although I think I'll stick to bugs from now on.
- Sticks
- One of my favorite jobs was creating back doors for the CAS in several spy satellites. Seems they got a little nervous when their favorite enemies started moving troops around. Too bad all that good work went to waste.
- Orbital DK

INCOMING FEED.....

