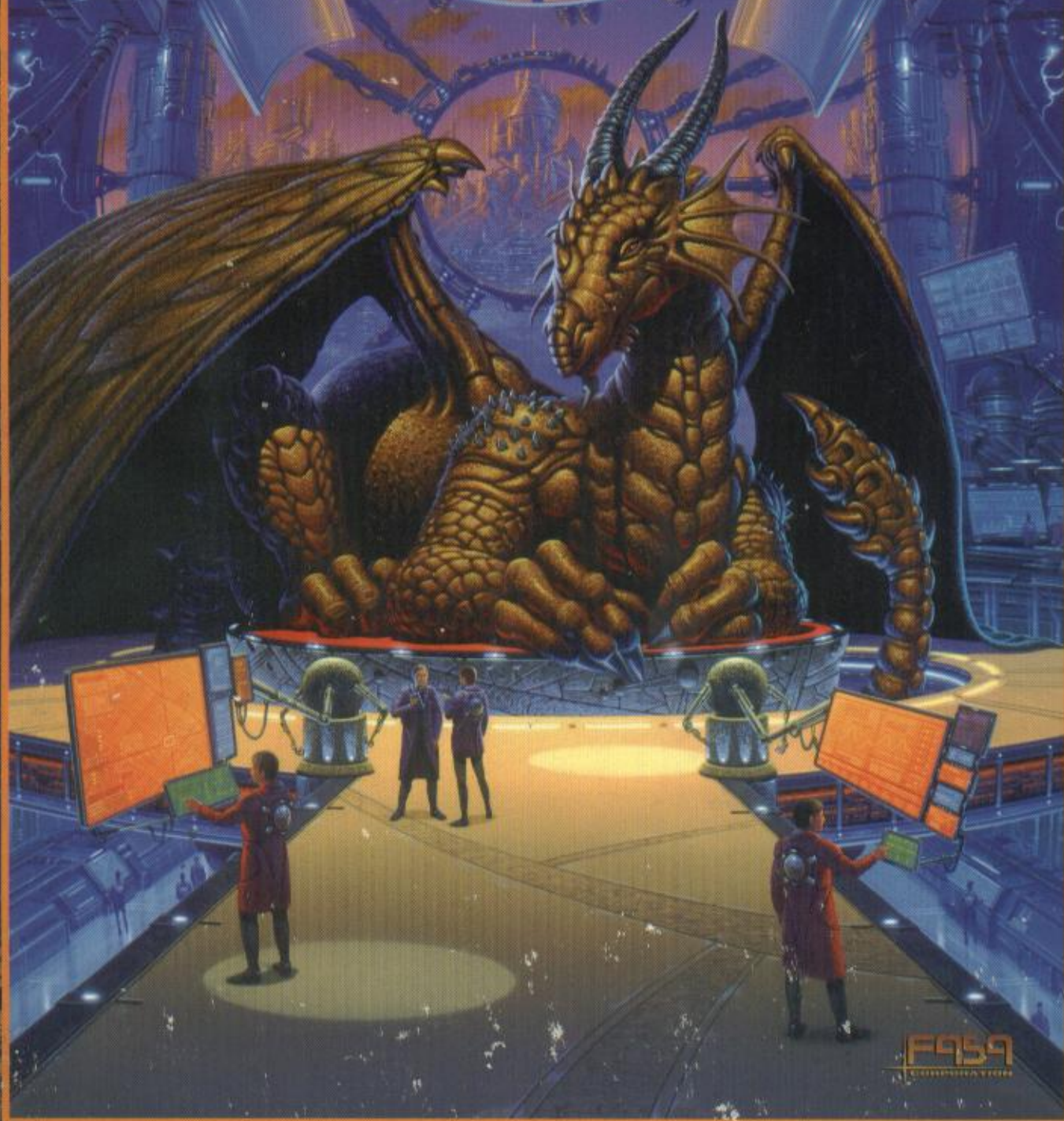


CORPORATE DOWNLOAD™



F959
CORPORATE DOWNLOAD

A Shadowrun Sourcebook



CORPORATE DOWNLOAD™

FASA CORPORATION

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Corporate Download focuses on the ten most important characters in the *Shadowrun* universe—the AAA megacorporations that dictate what happens in the shadows and the world at large. The year is 2061, and the dust is settling on a corporate war in which one of the mightiest megacorporations fell. In the aftershocks, three new megacorps rose to prominence, each taking a different path to the top and showing the other megas that they do not have the market cornered on deception and power.

Corporate Download is presented as a series of electronic documents posted by Captain Chaos, sysop of the vast Shadowland archive—the number one source for shadowrunners on what's going on in the world of *Shadowrun*. The documents are written by various runners, each with their own prejudices and points of view, and marked up with a running commentary by other runners, each adding to, revising or contradicting the author. These pieces of black information add innuendos, allegations, opinions, misconceptions, misinformation, lies and sometimes even the truth to the information presented. It is left up to the gamemaster to determine which facts are correct and which are just filling.

The first two documents run side by side and provide different perspectives on what the corporate world is all about. *Nothing Personal, Just Business* addresses what megacorporations are and how they make their money. The second piece, *They Got The Whole World In Their Hands*, discusses their political, economic and social power, and how they maintain it in a fractured world. *The Corporate Court* addresses the entity that controls the megas from its catbird seat orbiting the Earth. *Surviving the Corps* provides information on how runners should handle employment by the corps, and what to expect from a Mr. Johnson, the representative a corp uses in the shadows. It also discusses the concept of the company man, shadowrunners who work exclusively for a corporation. Following these sections, each megacorporation is given its own chapter, outlining the corp's structure, players and history, as well as defining its business interests and agendas.

Wrapping it all up is a *Game Information* section, which introduces a system of giving Attributes and Ratings to a corp, and how to use these figures during gameplay. It also includes details on how to use each megacorp, defining personal agendas, security and how the corp deals with and pays shadowrunners.

Corporate Download requires *Shadowrun, Third Edition (SR3)* and the revised *Shadowrun Companion (SRComp)*. Other *Shadowrun* sourcebooks, such as *Rigger 2*, *Virtual Realities 2.0*, *Critters* and *Magic In The Shadows* may also be helpful.



NOTHING PERSONAL JUST BUSINESS



Nothing personal, just business. How often have we heard that little saying? Corporate suits like to pretend that they have no choice, that their job requires them to act as a complete fragger, as if it excuses them for their behavior—they try to pretend that their work lives have no impact on their private lives. Wrong. Anyone who's run the shadows knows that's just one of the many little lies that people tell themselves so they don't have to think about the consequences of their actions.

Unfortunately, shadowrunners rarely have the luxury of forgetting that each and every action has repercussions—too many are fatal if ignored. On top of that, runners are forced to deal with the consequences of corporate actions as well. In this land of transnational corporate monoliths, even minor tremblings from a corp send shockwaves through the shadows. So when a Johnson tells you it's just business, remember: It's your business as much as his.

So just what is the business of the corporations, especially the megacorps? I'd tell you to go take a gander in our Corporate Research Archive three nodes over, but I've been there recently, and it's ugly. Corporate wars have a tendency to create a storm of data. Not only are many of the records in the archive out of date, but they're cluttered with gigapulses of corrections, notes, revisions, black information and far more rumors than facts. Trying to find something useful and factual was like begging change from Damien Knight—fruitless, and ultimately painful.

So I decided it was time to reboot the data dump, which meant I had to get off my digital behind and spread the word to the shadow community as a whole that we needed updates. We wanted hard facts and up-to-date dirt, not just a revision of existing files. Considering the effects of the corporate war—the fall of Fuchi, the Renraku arcology lockdown and three new megacorps—most of the old files were useless. We needed a fresh start, with current paydata.

After several months, we've pulled this collection of files together. It'll tell you who and what the megacorps are, how they interact, what their goals and interests are, how deadly their security is, why they hire shadowrunners and how they go about it. Of course, these are just the minimal details that you should know for survival; we highly recommend doing your own digging before a run. Consider this collection a good starting point.

We're going to start it all off with a couple of introductory pieces from the Infamous Chromed Accountant and a retro-anarchist known as Wobbly. They both cover the basic ground every runner should know about the corps, albeit from slightly different perspectives: CA gets down and dirty with definitions and business terms, while Wobs lays down what the corporate world structure means, especially for runners.

This download ain't no economics lesson. If you want that, slot a chip. This is hardcore information on the megacorps from the perspectives that shadowfolk like us need. If you want to run with the corps and stay alive to enjoy your pay, then scan on.

● Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 26 February 2061 at 15:02:59 (EST)

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TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

by the Chromed Accountant



So what makes the difference between a corp and a megacorp? What are the parts of a megacorporation, and how do they function? Well, class, I'm here to tell you all about that, and hopefully to give you some appreciation of exactly what you're

dealing with on the streets and in the shadows. You see, most people never realize just how large and powerful the megacorps are. From the streets, the view of the corps is like the story about the blind men feeling an elephant and trying to guess what it is—and that's exactly how the corps like it. Me, I worked the other side of the street for a long time. I got to see the megacorporations in all their vastness, and let me tell you, it wasn't a pretty picture.

Let's start off by defining some terms. A *corporation* is a legal entity empowered to act with the rights and liabilities of a person. In a legal sense, corporations are considered individuals. They earn money, own property and have liabilities. If Mitsuhamas new wetware cooks your brain cells and you live to tell about it, the employees, executives and shareholders of Mitsuhamas aren't liable for what happened to you—Mitsuhamas, the corporate individual, is liable. That's pretty much all a corporation does. There's no limit on the size of a corp; one person can create a corporation.

A *multinational corporation* owns property in more than one nation. Multinationals are traditionally big-time corps, but they don't have to be. Technically, a corporation with offices in Seattle (UCAS) and Vancouver (Salish-Shidhe) is a multinational, even if that's the extent of their business. Still, most multinational corporations are big—not megacorps by any means, but with revenues up there in the millions of nuyen. Some of them hire runners, but they don't operate at the level of the big boys.

A *megacorp* is a giant multinational, with revenues in the billions of nuyen. Megacorps make up only a tiny percentage of the world's corporations, but they control the vast majority of wealth, resources and market share. More importantly, megacorps benefit from corporate extraterritoriality, meaning they're considered the equivalent of a national entity in legal terms, entitled to their own laws, citizens, currencies, militaries and other tools of power.

By their own standards, not every megacorp is considered equal. The *Big Ten* are the sharks among the megacorporate minnows. They're the largest and most powerful corporations on Earth, more influential than

THEY GOT THE WHOLE WORLD IN THEIR HANDS

by Wobbly



The upper class has gone through many changes since its god-sanctioned heyday in feudal times, when aristocrats lived in comfort and privilege on the backs of peasants. Through the advent of industrial society and the

colonialism that followed, the rich transformed to fit the times, changing their methods of control to maintain their dynasties of power. Princes became CEOs, and peasants became wage-slaves. Now, corporate power has expanded past national boundaries, increasing to a vastness that dwarfs last century's super-powers. The megacorps have assumed sovereign domain over land, property and people, with little resistance. In effect, the transnational capitalism of today is nothing but feudalism on a larger scale.

But all is not well in the kingdom. Despite their lofty pretensions, the corporate nobility is still competitive and in conflict, only now their border wars are global in scope, and threaten to rip the world apart. Rather than lose their realms to petty competitors, the upper strata of megacorps pooled their resources, and created a global authority, to simultaneously serve as watchdog and lapdog: the Corporate Court.

Make no mistakes, terms. It's not dragons you need to watch, or power-hungry elves. Keep your eye on the forces that manipulate the world from high in the sky. The more you know about how these giants move and operate—their history, the limits of their extraterritoriality, and the vast scale of their power—the easier it will be to hide in their shadows.

● Quite an opening, Wobs ... Cap was right, we know where you stand.

● The Chromed Accountant
"It's all about dollars and sense"

RIISING ABOVE THE MINIONS

So how did we get here? Several factors from last century led us down this path. With resources becoming more scarce and competition more fierce, corps were straining to increase profit margins, so the multinationals shifted their facilities to Third World countries where labor and resources were considerably cheaper. The dominoes slowly began to fall, with increases in security budgets to protect corp holdings from rebel groups, bandits and petty tyrants. Soon, the corps brought in merc units to "pacify" countries. Meanwhile, as prices rose and competition narrowed,





nations, wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice, and as ruthless as they come. Right now, the Big Ten control more resources than all the other corporations in the world put together.

The Big Ten also comprise the entity known as the *Corporate Court*, which acts as a world judicial body to the megacorps. The Corporate Court mediates conflicts, sets standards and rules, and has the enviable power (okay, it has nothing *but* enviable powers—but this one takes the cake) in that it alone decides a corporation's status to the rest of the world.

CORPORATE STATUS

Capitalism is based on hierarchy, and capitalists love to distinguish between the haves and the have-nots. This is true even among the megacorporate sphere, where the Big Ten make it clear that not only do they own the tree house, but they decide who can even climb the ladder.

The Corporate Court has designated a ranking system that divides multinational corporations into three categories: A, AA and AAA. With typical arrogance, the Corp Court gives no rating whatsoever to companies not considered multinational. This rank determines whether the corp has extraterritoriality, and what powers it has on a global scale. Most nation-states roll over and accept the Court's judgment in such matters, but there are a few who ignore the Court's edicts and deal with corporations on their own terms. Usually these nations are Awakened nations (like Tir na nÓg or Amazonia) who want to keep the corps out, or practically a corporate subsidiary (like Aztlan or CalFree) who want to keep the *other* corps out. In either case, they ignore the Court at their own risk.

Unrated—National Corporations

These corporations are barely a blip on the world economic screen, with a presence in only one country, or sometimes only a city. Some of these corps are granted privileges by the local government that aren't extended to average citizens, such as permission to protect assets and operations with lethal force. Despite their status, many of these businesses are nothing to laugh at. In smaller countries, they may hold considerable economic and even political or military sway. For the most part, the Corp Court ignores the nationals (and the nationals like it that way).

Some countries, such as Tir Tairngire, require corporations to be partly or wholly nationalized, meaning that the state owns or controls the corp to some degree. Other countries only allow home-grown national corps to operate within their borders.

Well-known corps in this range include Brackhaven Investments (UCAS), Andalusian Light Industries (Tir Tairngire) and Bluedog Tunes (CAS).

previously privileged populations in First World countries faced a decline in their standards of living that led to increased crime and civil disturbances.



When Seretech security guards cut down a starving and riotous mob that had mistaken a truck filled with medical waste for a food shipment, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the corp's right to maintain armed forces to protect personnel, property and public safety. Over the next ten years, similar rulings were made in most other First World countries (in the Third World, the corps already wielded enough power to make the point moot).

Around the same time, the Supreme Court also nullified federal regulations that kept Shiawase from building a private nuclear reactor to provide power to its own facilities. Shortly thereafter, Shiawase security forces shot and killed a group of alleged eco-terrorists who carried enough explosives to blow the reactor open. The resulting charges brought against Shiawase opened a can of worms that kept the Supreme Court busy for months. Their final decision declared that Shiawase and a select number of similar corps were to be granted extraterritoriality for certain specific sites. In other words, those sites became the sovereign territory of the corporation, and anything on them was not subject to the laws or jurisdiction of the surrounding nation-state or any other entity.

- Extraterritoriality used to apply only to embassies of foreign countries. If you were in New York but stepped into the British Consulate, you were considered to be in Britain for legal purposes, and subject to British law.

- Expatriate

- This applies to all laws: criminal, civil, business, labor, environmental and what have you. In practice, the corp gets to do whatever the hell it wants inside its boundaries. If the corp decides it's legal to whack trolls because they're ugly, you can shoot as many trolls as you can find, as long as you stay on that corp's ground.

- Legal Beagle

At first, the Shiawase Decision only applied extraterritoriality to certain corporate sites under conditions set down by the Supreme Court. Before long, the corps had initiated events that precipitated similar rulings in most major nations. Predictably, a large number of restrictions have since been nibbled away by various corp-sponsored decisions. Many corps have taken full advantage of the balkanization of various countries, and ensured that newborn nations supported extraterritoriality for their corporate sponsors.

EXTRATERRITORIALITY

Interpretations of extraterritoriality remained fluid for years, depending on the country in which the issue came



A—Multinationals

Also known as third-tier corps, this category includes multinational companies that are just starting to make waves in the world. They have yet to distinguish themselves as major players, and are not granted extraterritoriality until they prove capable of holding their own. A-level corps are in the unenviable position of being big enough to draw the attention of hungry megacorps, but weak enough that resistance is futile. Larger megas constantly prey on A-level multinationals, taking over profitable divisions, stealing research, or luring away promising scientists and managers. Lots of nationals become A-rated corps, only to get gobbled up before hitting the next tier.

Nations such as Aztlan and the Tirs do not allow A-multinationals or larger corps to transact business in their domains. They do, however, allow the creation of partially nationalized "affiliate" corps. Most companies find the accompanying restrictions too burdensome to pursue, but the loophole exists.

Some multinationals still strongly favor their "home" nations, sometimes to the point where they pursue political objectives as readily as economic ones. In return, their home country usually makes concessions that it denies to "foreign" megacorps.

Tan Tien (China), Warpdrive Systems (Denver FRFZ), and Telestrian Industries (Tir Tairngire) are examples of A-level corps.

AA—Extraterritorial Megacorps

The second-tier megas are overgrown multinationals that have exhibited enough business acumen, stability and promise to earn extraterritorial status. Large enough to strain an expert system accounting program, they can usually go toe-to-toe with the Big Ten and survive, perhaps even unbloodied.

Though AA corps have frequent dealings with the Corporate Court and accounts with the Zurich-Orbital Bank, they have no official presence on the Court proper. Despite their power, they remain as much at the Court's mercy as the smallest corps. Each and every one would kill their mothers to get on the Court.

Well-known double-A megas include Transys Neuronet, Lone Star, Yakashima and Zeta-ImpChem.

AAA—Prime Megacorporate Status

These are the Big Ten that every gutterpunk can name. Their power literally extends across the globe.

Think about that for a minute. When you think of Ares Macrotechnology, most of you probably recall the newest Ares-made bang-bang you picked up from a fixer, that "fell off the back of a truck." You might know something about Ares offices in your city, and about the corp HQ in Detroit. But just *think* for a second about how big Ares Macrotechnology really is. We're talking



up. The corps took advantage of this situation wherever possible, setting up shop in countries with "liberal" laws and generally fragging with the countries that opposed them. Gradually, world leaders realized that they had to cut the megas some slack or face drastic economic sanctions.

Despite embargoes and worse, however, some nations still fight extraterritoriality tooth and nail.

In 2042, the Corporate Court "invited" most world governments to support a universal standard for deciding exactly what extraterritoriality means and who gets it. Called the Business Recognition Accords, the initiative encouraged nations that signed on to adjust their laws to comply with the standard; those nations that did so received certain economic incentives (read: bribes). As of this posting, only a few nations have yet to support the initiative, among them Amazonia, Aztlan, Manchuria, Tir na nÓg, Tir Tairngire and Yakut.

The Accords clearly state that the Corporate Court determines extraterritoriality. Court members set the standard, and if they think a corp merits the coveted status, they expect all the signatory nations to comply. In rare cases, some countries refused to recognize the Court's decision and declined to extend extraterritorial privileges to a corp they didn't like. Every one of them has since paid for its arrogance.

Back in 2045, the Corporate Court finally got around to promoting Wuxing from mere multinational to extraterritorial status. At the time, Wuxing had several key port facilities in the Canton Confederation. Some elements of the Cantonese power structure still held a grudge against Wuxing from the old Hong Kong Independence days, and refused to acknowledge the corp's new standing. Wuxing demanded that the Court enforce its decree, and within three months the Confederation was reeling from "accidental" port blockades, power outages and food shortages, not to mention increased attacks from freshly armed neighbors. The crisis sparked a power struggle, and the old guard was thrown out. The new regime proved much friendlier to Wuxing and granted it increased privileges along with extraterritoriality.

● HK Kid

Privileged Status

The Business Recognition Accords laid down several policies that the Corporate Court expects signatory nations to follow when dealing with extraterritorial corps. Some nations that have felt the Court's wrath follow it to the letter, but most nations' policies vary slightly.

The Accords dictate that extraterritoriality applies in situations where a corp's site or facility is "continuous and contiguous, recognized and long-term." This means that as long as an intuitively obvious distinction between corporate property and the surrounding area



about a corporate entity that owns facilities and subsidiaries around the world, controls space launching platforms in Florida and Texas, owns chains of retail stores, car manufacturers, industrial plants, security companies, electronics firms, aerospace plants, even its own fragging space stations. Ares employs *millions* of people, directly or indirectly. And yet, to most shadowrunners, Ares is just "the gun corp." And Ares isn't even the biggest megacorp.

• Sometimes, I hear runners talk about Ares and other corporations like they're people. "Aztechnology fragged us over," or "Ares is okay by me." Chummers, "Aztechnology" doesn't frag people and "Ares" doesn't care about your opinion. People within those corps may do things, good and bad, and the corps may have policies they follow, but it's damn difficult in my experience to make too many blanket statements about anything as big as a megacorp. Keep that in mind when you're reading this stuff.

• Findler Man

CORPORATE STRUCTURE

Corporations follow a hierarchical structure, with power coming from the top and working its way down the pyramid. This arrangement is deceptively simple, as we shall see.

Corporate Divisions

Generally, a megacorporation has an "umbrella" or "parent" organization, which controls various subsidiary corporations, which in turn have various divisions of their own. Take Ares Macrotechnology, for example. Ares Macrotech is the parent organization, based in Detroit. It owns numerous subsidiaries like AresSpace, AresArms, Ares Global Entertainment, Knight Errant Security Services and so forth. Now, AresSpace alone is a megacorporation in its own right. It has its own corporate headquarters in Houston and owns various subsidiaries like Global CommSat, NASA Consulting Inc., AresSpace Lifters, and many, many others. On the other hand, AresArms is based out of Baltimore and owns subsidiaries like Ares Small Arms and the Weapons World retail chain—that last taken from Monobe Corp a couple years ago in a leveraged buyout.

All the subsidiaries answer to the Ares Macrotech main offices in Detroit, but as you can see, Ares is a vast organization. One subsidiary is the size of a second-tier megacorporation.

There are plenty of megacorporate subsidiaries where ownership isn't even common knowledge. For example, most people think of Ingersoll and Berkeley as an independent corporate entity, with subsidiaries like Ingersoll Aquaculture and Berkeley Soy Products. Truth

exists (such as a fence, or the tenth floor), and the area is officially and publicly designated as corp property (it has a sign), and the corp owns the place or has a signed lease, it counts as extraterritorial.



• For example, the Omnidome Theatre in downtown Seattle is clearly labeled as Renraku property. The corp logo is everywhere, and a nice tall hedge separates it from the aquarium next door (remember that next time you catch a flick or magic show there). Obvious, right? By comparison, the secret Renraku surveillance post on the twenty-eighth floor of an undisclosed building next to the shut-down Renraku arcology is not clearly labeled or delineated, and so doesn't count as extraterritorial.

• Renraku Fox

• Most likely, the Renraku goons will shoot first (no questions asked) in either locale. Security at such unlabeled sites tends to act as if it's extraterritorial anyway. If nothing else, they'll plant a large red "corp property" sign next to your body before the cops show up.

• Gumbo

Additionally, if the corporation owns the land, then the airspace above it and the ground below it—defined as a cone traced from the property's boundary down to the earth's core and upward to 1,200 meters—are also considered extraterritorial.

• That means if you're planning a cruise over downtown Seattle, you better have one of them programs that smacks a current 3-D representation over your HUD so you can avoid cutting through Corp X's sovereign airspace cone and getting blasted for your mistake.

• Rigger X

Bureaucratic to the core, the corporations know exactly what freedoms extraterritoriality grants them, as well as its limits. Whenever possible and profitable, they have turned the situation to their advantage. For years, corporations used extraterritorial land to store toxic waste and other hazardous materials that eventually began to contaminate the surrounding area. Nowadays, national governments keep a sharp eye on extraterritorial enclaves to ensure that the consequences of actions taken by the corp do not pass the corp's boundaries.

• The UCAS used that justification to seize control of the Renraku arcology situation. With several reactors in the basement and Dog knows what else inside, smack in downtown Seattle, they weren't going to take any chances. The Corp Court backed the decision, and Renraku fumed—though they sure didn't mind some



is, Ingersoll and Berkeley is a subsidiary of Universal Omnitech. Even worse, Universal Omnitech is a member of the Pacific Prosperity Group, which is dominated by Yamatetsu and Wuxing, Inc. So something going on at Yamatetsu's offices in Vladivostok may roll all the way down the pyramid to Ingersoll Aquaculture in Seattle.

- Already has. Some of Ingersoll's developments in accelerated hydroponic farming are of great interest to some members of the PPG. Word came down from on high to keep them quiet until the data could go to Yamatetsu's biotechnology division. Before that happened, Ingersoll's lab got hit by runners working for New Life Harvest, Inc.—a subsidiary of Mitsuhaman Biotechnologies, owned by MCT, which is opposed to the PPG. But you already knew that, didn't you, CA?

- Prime Runner

Ownership

Corporations belong to shareholders, or stockholders. A shareholder owns a share of the corporation. The corporation issues the shares and uses the money from selling them to fund its initial operating expenses. The shareholders control "their" corporation through the voting power of their shares. Direct ownership of shares isn't even necessary, as owners can sign their voting power over to "proxies" who vote for them.

This is the most important point about corporate ownership: whoever controls the most shares controls the corp. Corporate power-players struggle to control a majority of shares in order to ensure their power, or to at least control a sizable minority so that they can stand against other factions and alliances within the corporation. They use politics, persuasion, bribery and outright blackmail to get what they want and ensure control over corporate resources.

Take Damien Knight, one of the best power-players in the business. For years, Knight and Leonard Aurelius struggled for control of Ares Macrotechnology. Each controlled roughly twenty-two percent of the corporate shares. Then Dunkelzahn kicked off and left his twelve percent of Ares in the hands of Nadja Daviar, newly elected VP of the UCAS. Dunkelzahn's death led to rioting in the streets. In stepped Damien Knight, with an offer to help, provided that Daviar gave him the power to vote her shares. In a single stroke, Knight controlled thirty-four percent of Ares and trumped Aurelius. Of course, Daviar still owns her shares, and now that she has regained control of them, we'll see where the chips fall. Knight wielded a lot of power for a while—now we get to see if he can play nice with his co-owners.

- Internal corporate struggles tend to take two forms: competition between subsidiaries or divisions, or fights

other gump shouldering responsibility for anything that might happen.

- Renraku Fox

Most extraterritorial corps have their own sets of laws, as well as guidelines for enforcing them.

These laws often vary from site to site,

sometimes even month to month. Employees who break minor laws may face retribution such as salary cuts, forced labor or anything else the corp decides is a good way to slap wrists. Anything more serious generally results in more severe punishment. Most corps don't bother wasting money on prisons, though they sometimes contract out.

- More than one corp has been known to ship its "irredeemable" criminals over to corp research labs, for whatever experiments the brainiacs might desire. If you have good cyberware, they'll chop you for parts first.

- Doctor Grue

- I was convicted of "malicious murder, sabotage and conspiracy" by a Fuchi kangaroo court for my part in a run against them. Instead of geeking me, they offered me a job. It was a suicide run, but my options were limited. In the long run, I lived, even if I needed a new arm. Guess I got lucky.

- Sam the sam

- You get rid of that cortex bomb yet, Sammie?

- Max

JURISDICTION

Given the extent of extraterritorial corp holdings in the world today, jurisdiction is an epic nightmare. What happens if you shoot someone on the street and then step onto megacorp property, or shoot a corp goon on corp property and step off into the street? Will you be held, extradited or allowed to walk?

- If I could condense the ramifications of jurisdiction into a one-liner, I'd say every runner should have it tattooed on their arm. Knowing where a corp's power ends can save your life.

- Prime Runner

Corp to Corp

Obviously, no sane corp will grant legal authority to another corp's security officers. So if Corp A wants to extradite someone from Corp B, A's execs need to convince B's that extradition is in Corp B's interest. To maintain good business relations, most corps cooperate with another's extradition requests, but they usually expect compensation of some sort. If there happens to be bad blood between the corps—a frequent occurrence since the corp war—then one corp is more likely to tell the





between major shareholders. The whole war that tore Fuchi apart was a struggle between the three biggest shareholders for control of the corp. Lots of powerful shareholders hire shadowrunners to help them secure control over other shares, usually through blackmail or sabotage. It can pay off if your grateful Johnson becomes the new CEO or chairman of the board, but it can backfire if the Johnson's enemies end up in control.

• Nightrunner

CORPORATE COMPETITION

Corporations exist in order to turn a profit, and corps have lots of ways to make money. Some are fairly obvious; others are complex art forms mastered by corporate suits. Some are legal and aboveboard, others so illegal and secret that nobody knows about them. Quite a few of the latter involve a little help from the shadows now and then.

Marketplace Competition

The bulk of corp money still comes from the traditional business of marketing goods and services to consumers. Just about anything you want to buy, from simchips to security services, is provided by a corporation—usually more than one. Corps sell products to everyone, from consumers to other corporations to national governments, and rake in billions of nuyen doing it.

The key to marketplace competition is marketing and advertising products and services. You can learn about that from any business school or from the Matrix, so I won't go into it here. The important thing to know is that marketing depends on perception: what people think of your company and your products. The trick is to make your products the most attractive while making your competition look bad. Corporations often turn to the shadows in order to solve a particular "marketing problem"—for example, hiring runners to sabotage a competitor's new product line or otherwise tarnish the rival's image.

Takeovers

Corporations also make money by juggling numbers and playing games on the stock market. I won't go into detail about how corps manipulate stocks; there's not enough megapulses to fit that drek into this post. Suffice it to say that the basic stock market game is to purchase stock, drive up its value and then sell it at a profit. Conversely, corps also try to drive down the value of competitors' stocks, making them vulnerable to takeover attempts.

There are two ways to compete in the corporate world: do a better job than your competitors of attracting and keeping customers, or take away your competi-

other to frag off. Sometimes this happens because one corp is having a bad day, or doesn't think the perp did anything wrong (by its laws). In these cases, the corp pushing for extradition can resort to dirty tactics (extractions, bad publicity and so on) or can appeal to the Corporate Court. Depending on whom the Court favors at the time, it may order extradition or do nothing.



Corp to Nation (and vice versa)

Most nations have long since learned that corps rarely grant extradition requests; the corps don't want to do anything that might erode their sovereign powers. Likewise, nations quite clearly let the corps know exactly where their sovereignty ends, and they keep a close eye on that line.

The line gets blurred when local governments hire companies like Lone Star or Knight Errant to perform police functions. The larger of these police corps are extraterritorial in their own right. This tends to make for easier dealings, as the policing corporation can appeal to the Corporate Court as well as the local government.

After several vicious firefights erupted during jurisdiction "disputes" between Zeta-ImpChem security forces and London police in the 2040s, the Corporate Court decided it needed to get more closely involved in such matters. Its members established official Corporate Court embassies in dozens of major countries and cities, to act as middlemen during jurisdictional negotiations. The ambassadors have limited authority because most are recruited directly from Court megacorps, and they often have a definite bias.

• Hangfire

Special Cases

Most countries (and the Corporate Court) have specific rules regarding Matrix and astral jurisdiction. According to the rule of thumb, your physical body doesn't count; your consciousness does. So if you waltz into a Novatech Matrix host, you're subject to Novatech laws, even though your body may be slumped over your deck twenty kilometers away. The same goes for magicians and riggers—if you pop a drone into Novatech airspace without a permit, or astrally project into a Novatech facility, you've just broken Novatech law.

Shipping and transportation is another messy area. For decades, megacorps have argued that extraterritoriality exempts them from import and export regulations. Most governments reply that corporate transport vehicles do not meet the requirements set down by the Business Recognition Accords, are not considered sovereign, and are thus subject to search, seizure and taxation. Despite this, numerous corps have successfully negotiated (or forced) deals that have effectively



tors' ability to compete with you. In other words, if you can't beat 'em, buy 'em, and if you can't buy 'em, beat 'em down until they give up.

The most amiable way of dealing with a competitor is through merging with it. Rival corporations sometimes find it in their best interests to combine into a single, larger corporation with more control over the market and less energy wasted on competition. Such voluntary mergers do happen, such as when the merger of Saeder Strategic Industries and Krupp Manufacturing created Saeder-Krupp.

Most of the time, takeover means *hostile* takeover; that's when the shadow action really gets going. In your basic hostile takeover, Corp A drives down the value of Corp B's stock so that Corp A can buy it up cheap and gain significant—if not total—control over Corp B. Then Corp B is no longer a competitor, because Corp A runs the show.

How does a corp drive down a rival's stock values? You guessed it, chummer—hiring you to do a shadowrun. A corporation can try to weaken a rival using traditional market techniques: advertising, superior products and so forth. However, these techniques are expensive and time-consuming. It's far more cost-effective for a corporation to make a rival look bad through sabotage and blackmail. Hire some shadowrunners to arrange a few "tragic accidents" involving your competitor's product, and the competition's market share value will start to plummet. Or hire runners to gather some juicy blackmail on a major shareholder, to encourage him or her to sell out at a "reasonable price." Similar tricks happen all the time.

- As always, let the runner beware. I once took a job to make a soy-food corp look bad by putting a "harmless stomach flu" virus in one of its processing tanks. Turns out the "harmless virus" would have killed at least a thousand people and probably destroyed the corp, not to mention leaving me facing a mass-murder charge. Causing trouble for the corps is one thing; killing a thousand people I don't even know is another. We managed to prevent the tainted food from shipping, but it cost us.

- Blade

Sometimes, a corporation takes over another one for a specific purpose other than controlling its competition. For example, a competing company might have a new product or a bleeding-edge research department that would take another corp years to build. The corporation buys out its rival to get hold of what it wants, then divides up the rest of the company and sells it off piecemeal, making a tidy profit in the process. Other times, a corporation may simply want to put a rival out of business. The first corp buys up the rival company, then breaks it up and sells off the parts to other corporations

exempted their transportation services from import/export controls.



- Pay attention, kids. This means you can theoretically pay a megacorp delivery service such as Mercury Express (owned by Ares) to deliver a rocket launcher from your pad in L.A. to your pal in another city; whereas you'd be busted hard and fast if you tried carrying it across the border yourself. Granted, finding a delivery service with this power that reaches the destination you desire may be problematic, and Mercury might decide to charge you extra for "discretionary service," or they might just keep it ...

- Roadkill

CORP SCRIP

Another benefit the corps received from extraterritoriality was the ability to issue their own currency, called corporate scrip. While corp scrip is sometimes used for internal corporate financial transactions, it is primarily used to pay employees, and thus further tie them to the corp. Like national currencies, corporate scrip has no value outside the domain of the corp that issues it. This is true even with electronic corp scrip; while national electronic currencies can be converted and exchanged quickly through any virtual bank, the Corporate Court has ruled that corp scrip may only be exchanged with the issuing corp or with the Zurich-Orbital Bank.

- Naturally, the ZOG Bank isn't going to convert corp scrip for Joe Citizen. Heck, they won't convert corp scrip unless you're exchanging the equivalent of million-nuyen amounts.

- Red Wraith

- Corp scrip can really be a chain around an employee's neck. If you've worked with Renraku all your life, you've probably saved up a nice nest egg—in Renraku corp scrip. You're going to think twice about jumping ship to Shiawase then, because all that savings would become worthless.

- Nuyen Nick

In order to undermine black market corp scrip transactions, the Corporate Court has also ruled that corp scrip may only be owned and used by an employee of the issuing corp.

- So if you get ahold of a wad of Ares corp scrip and decide to purchase something with it, you first have to get onto Ares property and visit an Ares store that will take it, and then you have to get your Ares corporate ID scanned. Better make sure your counterfeits are well made.

- Bootleg



for a nice profit, with the bonus of seeing the competition destroyed. Then the corp uses the profits from the deal to buy out its next competitor.

• Takeover schemes get very complicated. There's the patented "white knight" play for example, where a situation is created to make Corp A think they're being threatened with takeover by Corp B. In steps Corp C, with a generous offer to help Corp A. When the dust settles, Corp A is saved from a takeover, but is so indebted to Corp C that C easily gobbles them up ... which was C's entire goal in the first place.

• Brazil

CORPORATE WAR

No discussion of corporate competition would be complete without talking about the final option open to rival corporations: out-and-out corporate war. A corporate war happens when competition between two or more corporations spirals out of control and erupts into outright conflict.

• So when a corp uses the shadows for a covert war, it's just biz as usual. But when the war gets so big that the shadows can't contain it, then it's a corporate war, and that's a different level of rivalry. If you ask us, the corps are always in corporate war—it's just that sometimes, no one is shining the light on them.

• Hoosier Hackers

"Hacking More Than Corn"

Locked into constant competition, the corporations and megacorps do whatever they can to remain one-up on their rivals and slowly claw their way up the corporate food chain. A certain amount of shadowruns and other "black ops" are expected as part of this competition. Generally, when dealing with a shadow strike from a rival, a corp either decides to take its lumps and cut its losses, or it retaliates. Retaliation can lead to an escalating cycle of attack and counterattack. The corps involved usually call things off before they get out of hand, but sometimes that doesn't happen. More often, corps go to war over a prize that both sides feel is worth fighting a war to possess, something worth risking the delicate balance maintained by the Corporate Court.

A corporate war generally exists between two rival corporations. Though there have been some close calls in the past, the world thankfully has never had to face an all-out war between all the megacorporations. When conflict between corporations grows to the point where it borders on corporate war, the Corporate Court usually steps in. The Court may censure the corporations, which is usually enough to make them back down. If censure doesn't work, the Court may issue an Omega Order



• Some Johnsons like to pay runners in corp scrip when they can get away with it. If you decide to accept such payment, make sure to get a temporary corp ID out of the deal too, so you have a chance to spend it. Your other option is to take it and convert on the black market. Heck, there's an exchange node here on Shadowland that offers good rates.

• Grid Reaper

THE BALANCE OF POWER

So now we have ten corporate monoliths, each more powerful than any nation. Each one has a gross yearly product that rivals or exceeds that of any major



against one or more of the offending corps, essentially declaring open season on them. The Court is understandably reluctant to do this, as it may simply escalate an already tense situation.

Sometimes, the Corporate Court finds it in its interests to allow rival corporations to fight it out. The recent corp war between Fuchi and Renraku was settled largely by the Corporate Court, but the Court chose to remain as neutral as possible during the breakup of Fuchi—it declared Fuchi's implosion an "internal matter." The addition of Wuxing and Cross Corporation to the Corporate Court settled some brewing corporate wars, or at least delayed them for a time and gave the Court more authority to deal with them when they happen.

● Has anyone else noticed a general escalation of corporate conflicts in recent years? Used to be, the megacorps kept such things carefully covered up. Two corps could be going at it hammer-and-tongs and you'd hear hardly a whisper. When Renraku and Fuchi went at it, drek was blowing up all over the place and both corps ended up beaten and battered for their trouble. What happened?

● Hangfire

● Personally, I think recent events have been brewing for a long time. The megacorps maintained the status quo for years, fighting to keep a lid on internecline conflict as long as possible. Then came Dunkelzahn's assassination, trouble in Chicago, revolution in the Philippines and similar drek all over the world, like lighting a match in a powder-keg. Suddenly, it was every corp for itself. The situation seems to have climaxed and settled into a new status quo, but the standard low-intensity conflict has definitely been turned up a notch or two.

● Nuyen Nick

Corporate wars are fought on several fronts. Corps can target each other's assets, fight on the virtual battlefield of the Matrix, or even take their disputes to the level of military conflict.

Targeting assets is the most common tactic of corporate war. Corporations target each other's assets all the time, of course. They constantly set up shadowruns for sabotage, espionage and extractions. The prime difference in corporate war is the kind of assets that get targeted. In warfare, corporations don't play by the unwritten rules of conduct. They stage operations against rival assets completely unrelated to their target, in what basically amounts to inter-corporate terrorism. For example, if two corps get into a scrap about some new piece of technology, it's considered in-bounds for them to target shadowruns at development labs, research personnel and so forth. However, if one corp hits the other's enter-



industrialized country. They don't just drive the economy; in many nations, they are the economy. If they ceased operations in selected areas, they could easily cause small nations to collapse overnight, without taking significant losses. Their economic impact is so widespread that a single change in operations on their part can influence the economies of twenty to thirty nations at once.

The amount of assets the Big Ten claim is almost beyond scale, easily accounting for at least a quarter of the world's wealth (in all likelihood, this figure is much higher, especially if you estimate secret funds and hidden ownership). In their early days of the Corporate Court, when they were the Big Eight, each had controlling shares in fifty of the old Fortune 500 companies. And each has grown even larger.

Besides their financial stability (each owns numerous banks) and stranglehold over a high percentage of world resources (from food to fuel to drinkable water), the Big Ten each encompasses numerous near-perfect monopolies. For just about any industry you can imagine, every step of the process is in their hands, from the harvesting of resources to the production and distribution to the waiting hordes.

Most of the neat gadgets and state-of-the-art tech toys you use for criminal activities were invented by megacorporate think-tanks, engineers and factories. They jealously hold on to the world's best and brightest scientific research minds, at least until shadowrunners extract them for another megacorp. If they didn't provide the raw processing power that is the backbone of the Matrix, you couldn't hack into their corporate hosts and steal info from their impressive corporate databases.

Very little happens in the world today unless a megacorp wants or allows it to. And even if something does elude their grasp, you're only likely to hear about it from a trid pirate; the megacorps control the media outlets and crucial data services. They dictate social trends through advertising and marketing, and by carefully funding certain societal elements. If they face opposition from the civil sector, they buy it, or hire runners to crush it, or gradually influence public opinion until it ceases to be a threat. Even powerful nations rarely cause the corps trouble—they know better than to drek on their main suppliers of military hardware.

● Fortunately for shadowrunners, most corps direct their attentions toward legal citizens with nuyen. The large SINless sectors are practically ignored, making it easy for us to work without attracting too much attention.

● SINner

● They'd never admit it, but the suits like having an underclass. It gives them a threat to hold over the heads



tainment division simply to do damage, that crosses the line into corporate warfare.

Likewise, certain corporate assets are normally considered "off-limits" for shadow operations. These are "core assets," vital to the corp's continued ability to do business.

Examples include communication satellites and networks, Matrix networks, main headquarters, and VIPs like CEOs and similar big noises. You simply don't go after targets like these unless you're looking to start or finish a corporate war. It may be okay to sabotage a corp's favorite R&D lab, but go after its head offices, and it's war. Extract your rival's top researcher, fine. Kill the chairman of the board, and it's war.

One example of a strategic asset is the Matrix. Deckers raid corporate systems all the time during shadow wars, but "core wars" in the Matrix are considered verboten. It's one thing to slip into a rival's host system to snatch a valuable piece of data. It's quite another to plant a virus in your rival's host system that destroys it entirely. The corporations all rely on the Matrix's data-processing and transfer capabilities. Anything that threatens the stability of the Matrix threatens all the corporations, and is likely to invite swift retribution.

• More than nearly anything else, Matrix warfare is likely to cause the Corporate Court to issue an Omega Order against the offending corporation. Things like the Crash of '29 make the idea of full-scale Matrix warfare much like full-scale nuclear warfare in the minds of the megacorps: mutually assured destruction. Nobody wants to uncork that genie, at least not so far.

• FastJack

The final option for corporations at war is open military conflict. Such a full-scale military operation would easily equal a world war in scale; fortunately, that kind of warfare has never broken out between any of the megacorps. So far, corporate military conflicts have taken place between smaller corporations or subsidiaries, or else get handled through the Desert Wars.

Desert Wars

The Desert Wars started out as a means of settling military conflicts between corporations without risking the destruction of valuable corporate assets. Each battling corporation fielded military forces in a suitably barren area, typically the North African desert, and fought it out. The networks quickly picked up on the idea of broadcasting the Desert Wars, and the corporations made major money from them. These days, the Desert Wars are fought on a regular basis as part of a public relations and security training system. Occasionally, two corps use the wars as a way of settling real disputes, but most Desert Wars are staged for the benefit of the audience.



of their employees ("If you're truly dissatisfied with your salary, perhaps you'd like to consider downgrading your housing to squatter class?"), and it gives them a pool of "deniable assets" to pull from when they don't want to muddy their loafers. Likewise, a lot of runners would be screwed if the corps didn't supply job opportunities. It's a sick co-dependent relationship.

• Davis

• Who says runners need the corps? There's plenty of ways to survive in shadow communities without being a salary-stiff or corp goon. Corps always make better targets than employers, in my opinion.

• Autonome

Considering their worldwide presence, extraterritoriality and sheer power, each of the Big Ten might be viewed as a "meta-nation." Each counts enough "corporate citizens" to support that claim, many of whom live in a corporate society distinct enough to be considered a separate culture. Hundreds of thousands of workers have lived their entire lives within a megacorp. They were born in a corp hospital, "educated" in a corp school, raised in a corporate enclave and have become faithful corporate slaves, toiling away in service to the corporate empire.

• You can always spot these jokers when they leave their unnatural habitats and wander into the sprawl—wide eyes, shocked expressions, corp logos (sometimes even tattooed!), the whole rabbit-in-the-headlights look. Even the ones who're so alienated by the corporate environments and flee to the shadows have trouble adjusting; it's scary how many actually get homesick and crawl back to their cubicles.

• Patterson

Why, then, do nations still exist? First, they act as a shield—a first line of defense between the corps and the unruly masses. Governments, in many cases, present a friendly front for corporate power, as they pretend to be duly elected representatives of the public will. They serve to misdirect attacks, distract the citizenry and provide necessary scapegoats. Second, most governments still perform several social necessities that most corps don't want to dirty their hands with. As long as governments continue to clean the sewers, pave the roads and push the SINless out of sight, the corps can focus their energies on more profitable pursuits.

THE CORPORATE COURT



Getting information on the Corporate Court is like taking on all ten megas at once. As a concentrated center of corporate power, the Corporate Court knows how to protect its secrets, and those that empower it keep their own. Luckily, I have a friend who used to work for AresSpace, who'd actually spent time as staff on Z-O. She loves space more than anything, and when Ares tried to send her groundside, she went independent. I doubt anyone can give us the scoop on the Court and its orbital home better than she can.

As a side note, she sent this file downloaded with some heavy encryption that I suspect was "borrowed" from Zurich Orbital. The code protects the file as read-only—that means no comments. If I can figure out how to crack it, I'll open it up for posting later.

● Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 18 April 2061 at 07:28:31 (EST)

ZURICH-ORBITAL HABITAT

You want to know about the inner workings of the Corporate Court? Well, first you need to know about the Court's home, high above the rest of the cattle: the Zurich-Orbital Habitat.

HISTORY

The early twenty-first century was not a good period for space habitats. After the disaster that destroyed the international space station *Unity/Zarya*, the Harris-3M owned *Wheelchair* (formerly the Russian *Mir*) and NASA's *Freedom* were the only birds left in the sky. When *Wheelchair* caught a space rock in 2008 that decompressed its hull, *Freedom* became the only "live" space station. For awhile, it looked as if *Freedom* might fall too, as NASA was too busy with scandal, bankruptcy and general blazing incompetence to keep it functional. With the feds feeling the Ghost Dance heat, NASA was dead weight; the national gummint was only too happy to unload it on Ares who conveniently busted in and made them an offer they couldn't refuse. Before you could say "geosynchronous," Ares had bought NASA top-to-bottom and was the busiest beaver in space. AresSpace smacked *Freedom* back into a stable orbit and started scooping up black-market space junk like you wouldn't believe. Lucky for them, they salvaged enough spy-sat tech to keep themselves in the black.

For the next few years, *Freedom* was Ares' primary orbital parking lot, at least until the corp got *Apollo* up and running. Once Ares restructured *Apollo* into the *Daedalus* platform and started construction on several others, *Freedom* looked obsolete, so the corp pawned it off on the Corporate Court in 2023. I suppose the megacorp overlords couldn't pass up a chance to float above everyone else's heads and gloat, even if it meant sitting in an overpriced aluminum can.

Ever since beginning its new life as Zurich-Orbital, the station has attracted so many corporate heavyweights and raw power that I sometimes think the suits believe the Earth revolves around Z-O. In any case, it's been upgraded and refitted so many times that its mother wouldn't recognize it. Without doubt, Zurich-Orbital is the highest-tech, most secure fortress in the sky that a paranoid bean-counter could ever ask for.

IMPORTANT FEATURES

From an outside viewpoint (which I highly recommend), Z-O currently looks like a tinkertoy set. Based on the old *Freedom* design, it's composed of numerous four-by-ten-meter cylinders linked together. These act as quarters, work-stations and so on. The cylinders are completely modular, so the suits can restructure Z-O to fit

their current whims (which they seem to do about once a year). At the center are two dodecahedrons, each thirty meters in diameter. One, called the Rotunda, serves as the command center. The other, just assembled and added last year, is where the Corporate Court now meets. Six mini-rotundas dot the structure as well, each about ten meters in diameter. These smaller modules serve as meeting rooms and living quarters for some of the luckier primary residents. At least one of them houses nothing but Xeno-Cray ultra-computers and communications gear that God would drool over; another acts as a fraggin' gourmet kitchen for the primary residents.

The entire contraption floats in equatorial low-earth orbit—just low enough for some yob with a surface-to-orbit missile to hit (ahem). It was never designed to spin, so it lacks the gravity that other habitats (like *Icarus*) have. Accommodations are roughly similar to life aboard a submarine; you're in constant real-close quarters, so you get used to a total lack of privacy and the ever-pervasive BO draft. Most staffers share "bunk-tubes," but at least with the zero-g they get to use all the space inside. The station also features a top-of-the-line medical clinic (with a focus on gerontology), docking facilities and sophisticated air and water recycling works.

PRIMARY RESIDENTS

You don't hear their names mentioned often, but Z-O is a permanent home to six of the world's richest people. Combine their wealth, and they could easily buy out Saeder-Krupp if its shares were public. Allegedly, they're living out their retirements on Z-O so they can take advantage of the microgravity to keep their health and extend their lives. Realistically, most of these slags were forcibly "retired," either to remove them from the action or to shut them up. Most of them are holding grudges about their banishment; despite their isolation, they have enough cred and influence to interfere in events down below, and do.

Being a primary resident is an all-or-nothing deal. Each of the six had to appeal to the Corporate Court for the privilege, and each signed over their fortunes to the Court when they croak. Living on Z-O is the most expensive one-way ticket in existence.

Here's a list of the current primary residents:

Eiji Yakamura, 94, is probably the richest man alive, and the longest-term resident of Z-O (fifteen years now); he has his own mini-rotunda as his personal quarters. In his prime, Yakamura was Mitsuham's top mover and shaker. He still claims to be MCT's largest shareholder (twenty percent), but he hasn't exerted any influence on their board in years. Either his mind is gone, or he exerts his voting power unobtrusively through twenty different channels, or he's signed his proxy rights over—perhaps permanently. According to another rumor making the rounds, he's been a Yakuza man his whole life, and they paid him off with the shares but not the power (he gets the money, they get the votes). His health has been fail-

ing for some time; scuttlebutt among the orbital crews says he's been on life support for two months now.

Wilhelmina Graff-Belolt, 96, was at the helm of Saeder-Krupp until Lofwyr appeared and took control. She may have been the first to utter those famous words, "Never deal with a dragon," but I could be wrong.

Agatamori Kihara, 101, was the big cheese at MCT before Yakamura. As I scan it, a struggle within the Yakuza led to Kihara's faction falling out of favor. Yakamura tried to have him killed, but only succeeded in forcing him to retire so that Yakamura could take over. The hatred between the two is legendary aboard the habitat; with Yakamura on his deathbed, Kihara's already planning a party.

Yuri Severenko, 87, is the mystery figure. As far as anyone can tell, he's a totally undistinguished man who spent some time on Renraku's board. Undoubtedly, some dark secret lurks in his closet that explains his presence on Z-O. I know several of the other residents have spent years trying to find out. He's currently shackled up with Wilhelmina in a mini-rotunda module.

Akai Ono, 84, replaced former resident Sakehisa Tajika when Tajika died of natural causes several years back. Ono had been a Corporate Court Justice for Ares, and liked Z-O so much that he spent all his time there. He didn't have the wealth to become a resident, however, until he struck up a friendship with another former resident, Donald Ho III. Apparently Ho helped Ono build his fortune from orbit; once Ono had been accepted for permanent residency, Ho walked out an airlock. You make the call on that one.

Geraldo Solis, 78, is the newest resident. A former secret Aztechnology shareholder, his acceptance on board the habitat was hurried, and strongly resisted by Aztechnology. By all accounts, Solis is a skittish, haunted fellow, who is also a mage-o-phobe. When he came on board, he had us (the Z-O staff) reconfigure the habitat so his personal tube could be as remote from the others as possible. He made it clear that no Aztechnology personnel were ever to be allowed near his quarters. Rumor has it that his body is scarred beyond recognition, as if scar tissue had replaced most of his skin. The rumor is tough to confirm, however, because he has virtually no contact with any live bodies other than his personal aides. The staff's pool on seeing him is sitting on 423 days (my bet's on 512)—the payout has grown to 7,500Y.

SECURITY

Z-O is easily the most secure facility on or off the planet. No lie. Only fully authorized and accounted for personnel can even hope to get on a shuttle passenger list. There's about zero probability of scamming your way on board, even if you could find out when and where a shuttle is lifting off. Here's the skinny: ID check (fingerprint, retinal print, voice print, DNA match, height and mass), every scanning device imaginable (ultrasound, X-ray, magnetic anomaly, blood analysis and more), and a thorough astral exam to make sure you're not under the

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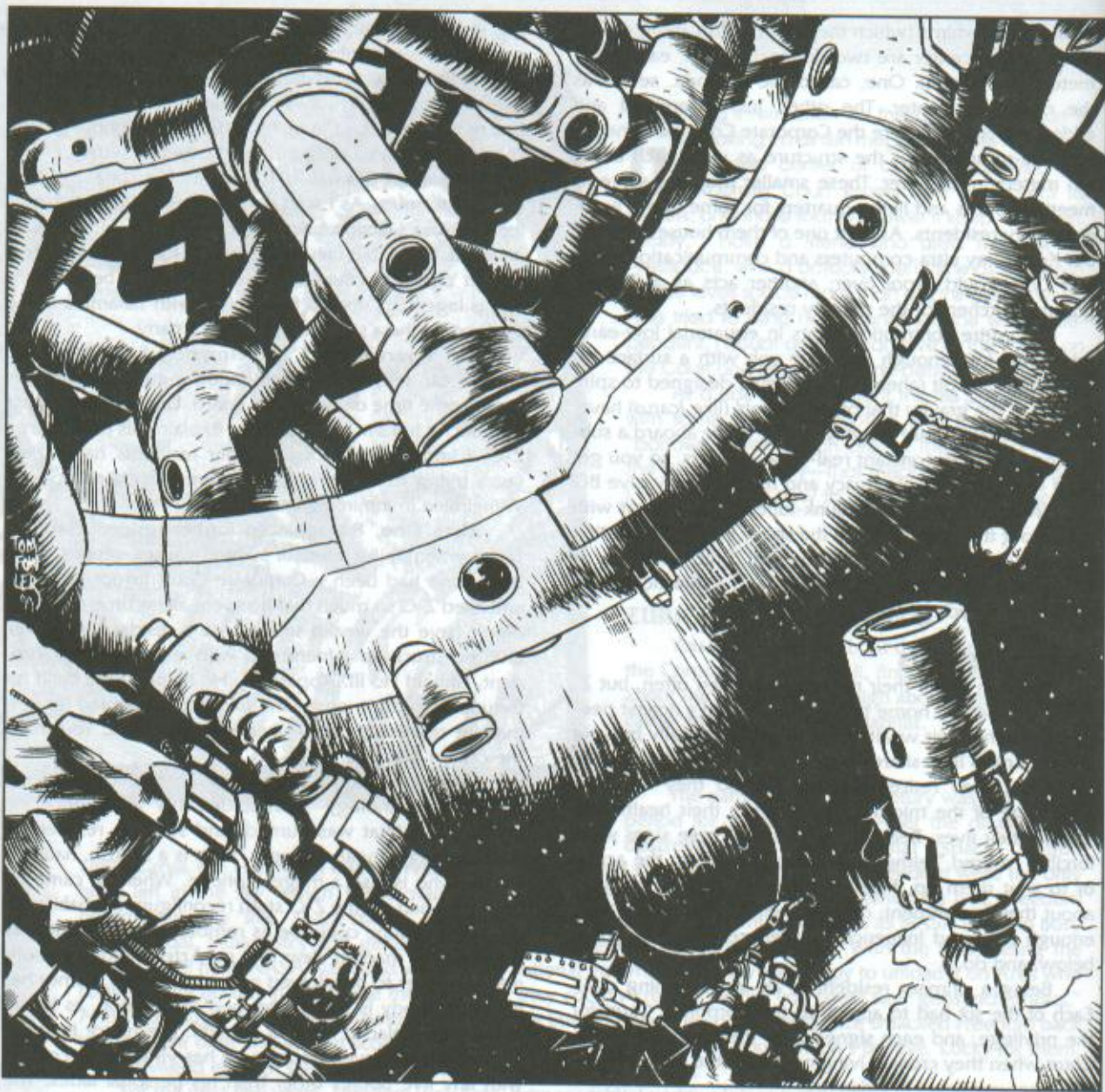
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THE CORPORATE COURT



effect of any spells or magic. Each and every piece of gear gets a complete security check, too. Everything that goes on the shuttle is weighed to the gram and accounted for, so smuggling isn't an option.

Z-O staff members go through all the same scrutiny, if not more. Minimum requirements include a spotless five-year service record with one of the AAAs and a family that you leave behind in caring corporate custody, just in case you get any ideas about doing something bad.

Communication with the habitat occurs only through dedicated, glaciered uplinks. All communications are timed, prearranged, heavily encrypted and initiated by Z-O. Assuming you found an uplink node in the Matrix (buried away in a black corporate host somewhere),

caught it during the brief transmission time and got through the IC, you're looking at a minimum Red-6 Z-O host, with little time and less options. Rumor is, such an unauthorized hookup only happened once, and only then because the corps wanted a test run.

Z-O engages in very little shuttle traffic with other orbital habitats, and sports a full array of high-tech killsats eager to eliminate any threat that might come too close. Magic doesn't work outside the biosphere, so there's little concern about magical attacks or astral intruders. In the event that something should happen to the habitat, a number of quick-inflating, solar-shielded life-support bubbles theoretically allow the residents to escape and float around, until rescued by a space scavenger like me.

THE CORPORATE COURT

In the beginning, after the major corps started going extraterritorial all over the place in the early aught-aughts, they naturally started acting more like nation-states and building up their offensive and defensive capabilities. Corps that used to hire mercenary troops to do their dirty work started keeping the mercs around full-time, and most security budgets expanded to include milspec toys. Naturally, anyone with this kind of gear lying around is tempted to use it on others that frag him/her/it off, and guess who frags off a corp? Yup—another corp. When two of the bigger boys—Keruba and BMW—went toe-to-toe in 2010, they didn't stop until they had nearly reduced each other to rubble. Naturally, the other corps spent bundles on defensive options to avoid stray shots, and they weren't pleased either. As a whole, the corps picked up on the rules of warfare pretty quick—all's fair, and there are no innocents. Then they melded it with the first rule of business (profits!), and realized that war (among themselves at least) was bad for everyone's business.

With the Awakening throwing everyone into a tizzy, some of the corp brains decided to try having meetings between the Big Seven corps to sort out problems before they escalated. They called it the Inter-Corporate Council, and modeled it on the UN to a degree. Typically, the delegates that the bigshots sent knew drek-all about what their corps were really doing, so the ICC pretty much went nowhere. Its failure to keep Keruba and ORO from stomping on each other in 2013 proved that it had no teeth.

The corps didn't give up, though. For their next trick, they required the CEO or his direct representative to come to the meetings. Naturally, only the reps showed, and they still knew nothing (deniability is a wonderful thing). As the corps kept rehashing this theme over the next decade, the face-to-faces actually started to help a bit, though the ICC still lacked real power. It also became obvious that it didn't matter if the Big Seven were at peace (and significantly larger in size than anyone else), the lesser corps were twice as violent, and even harder to stop. Feeling patriarchal, the big boys decided they needed to exert some authority, not just to control their own behavior, but to police the lesser brats as well.

In 2023, the ICC moved up the well to *Freedom*, re-established itself as the Corporate Court and vested itself with several powers over the extraterritorial corporate world. Naturally, some of the lower-tier corps resented this, but after Court members cooperated in smoking a few who opposed them, the rest started to realize that it might not be a bad set-up after all.

The original Court members included Ares, Aztechnology (formerly ORO), Fuchi (after buying out JRJ International), Mitsuhamma, Renraku (formerly Keruba), Saeder-Krupp (formerly BMW), Shiawase and latecomer Yamatetsu (which snuck in the back door at the last minute). For more than thirty years it stayed that way, until the recent corporate war. During that mess, Fuchi bought the farm and Novatech took its seat (again using the JRJ connection). Somehow—I don't know how, but

I'm damned interested—Cross and Wuxing managed to shmooze themselves onto the Corp Court as well.

COURT STRUCTURE

The Court is composed of thirteen justices selected from the ranks of the Big Ten. There's been some chatter since the ranks expanded of adding more justices, but no agreement yet. Each justice tends to be a frosty corporate attorney, but that isn't a requirement.

The justices sit on the Court for six-and-a-half-year stretches, and can serve as many terms as they can get re-elected for. They can also be recalled by the corp they represent, though the corp usually just geeks the skag to save time. Terms are staggered, so a new justice comes up for re-election every six months.

Justices are elected by a special commission that meets every six months (or sooner if necessary) and is composed of two representatives from each of the Big Ten. Unlike most elections, however, individual votes have different values, depending on some insanely complicated formula that determines how powerful a corp is (based on income, assets and other economic drek). In other words, the votes of a more powerful corp count for more. Allegedly, this system provides an incentive for the corps to keep each other at about the same level.

A bedrock clause states that the original Big Seven founders can never lose their last seat on the Court (and thus can't lose their AAA ratings). Theoretically, however, corps such as Yamatetsu, Cross and Wuxing can lose their justices and be removed from the Court. You can sure as drek bet that rule is on everyone's mind whenever the justices from non-founding corps come up for election.

Despite the fact that AA megacorps aren't allowed a seat on the Court, the Court has made it standard practice to allow double-As to address the Court with regard to grievances and disputes. Any corp that abuses this privilege finds itself blacklisted long enough to get the message. Lesser corps never get permission to address the Court, though they may submit requests (in writing) to be given AA status. Typically, such requests take at least five years to process.

LAW AND POWER

The Corporate Court represents itself as the only authority by which extraterritorial corporations are bound. In practice, corps are still expected to respect national jurisdictions, pay taxes and otherwise act as good guests when inside national borders. However, the Court is clearly the only entity with jurisdiction over all extraterritorial corps—at the behest, of course, of the Big Ten.

The Court itself has absolutely no way to enforce its decrees: no military forces, nothing. Theoretically, it could command the Z-OG Bank to enact strictures and such, but as the bank staff comes from the Big Ten, it's anyone's guess whether or not such a tactic would work. In practice, however, the Big Ten comply with the Court's decrees because they recognize it as the glue that binds them together and keeps them all from slipping down the tubes.

THE CORPORATE COURT

Laws

Despite their bluster, only three laws really matter to the Court and the corps behind it. They are:

Don't go to war. Corps hate to lose money, and that's usually what war means. More importantly, war threatens the fragile balance of power the Big Ten have created on the Court. Corps are nothing if not conservative; they may tolerate a little rocking of the boat, but they don't want it overturned. This law has effectively kept all-out pan-corporate war from breaking out ... so far. Instead, we get low-intensity sustained warfare, as evidenced in the past few years.

Don't overthrow a national government. Corps prefer having nation-states around to handle all the baseline, non-money-making civil drek. If a nation goes down, that means more costs for the corp. Corporate coups also tend to make other nations and masses of people twitchy about corporate power and its abuses. It's OK to control a government, but don't overthrow it. There's a fine line between the two (just ask Aztlan), but a line nonetheless.

If you break it, pay for it. If you break, kill, steal, destroy or otherwise damage another corp's property (employees or assets), and your target can prove it, you have to foot the bill. Lesson learned: don't get caught. That's right, the existence of the Corporate Court makes shadowrunning a must—by law. Cool, eh?

Penalties

If a corp gets caught breaking one of the pan-corporate laws above, that corp can expect to get nailed for it. The exact punishment, of course, depends on the corp's status within the megacorp community.

If the Court decides that a non-AAA corp broke the law and deserves a spanking, the Court issues a mandate to one of its member corps, giving full authority to use security/military assets to whup hoop on the perp. The mandated corp gets a set amount of funds from the Z-OG Bank to finance its operations. Each mandate specifies the extent of the damage the mandated corp can inflict, based on the severity of the violation. If the mandated corp steps over these boundaries (as such corps are often enticed to do), that corp becomes subject to corporate punishment.

If the Court decides that one of its own AAA members has violated the rules, it has several options. For minor infractions, the Court orders the Z-OG Bank to increase the bad corp's fees for various services—for example, charging higher interest rates for loans. For more severe rule-breaking, the Court will delegate two or more AAA megacorps to punish the violator using their security assets, just as might happen to a lesser corp.

For extreme transgressions, the Court issues an Omega Order. This decree, essentially a mandate to all AAA corps to punish the offender, makes it open season on the condemned corp. It's the corporate equivalent of a death sentence, and it ain't pretty.

NAMES AND FACES

Contrary to popular opinion, not all Corp Court justices live aboard Z-O. A select few prefer to participate

via Matrix connection, and shuttle up only when sensitive discussions are necessary. The following profiles describe the Corporate Court justices as of early 2061.

Yves Aquillon (Cross) served as Lucien Cross' personal aide and counsel before ascending to the Court. She has done wonders defending Cross against Ares' predations. Her acumen and eloquence have swayed the opinions of several other justices in numerous decisions.

Alexander Belczyk (Saeder-Krupp) is a sharp and methodical analyst from S-K Prime. Various sources have fingered him as the bastard of some member of the Polish royal family.

Neil Benson (Renraku) hasn't done much to bolster Renraku's sagging performance of late. His track record as a corporate lawyer is untarnished, but also exceedingly unremarkable. He comes across as flustered and occasionally shows flashes of deep paranoia.

Raphael Coleman (Mitsuhama) has shown himself to be a brilliant practitioner of international-extraterritorial law. He's good and he knows it, but his arrogance is likely going to cost him one day.

Li Feng (Wuxing) is the youngest justice, and the most unorthodox. Chosen during the corp war, he was a compromise of which some corps undoubtedly hoped to take advantage. If anything, Li Feng has been skillfully manipulating them ever since his ascension.

Paul Graves (Ares) still looks like a thirtyish Urban Brawl player, even though he's nearing sixty and wrapping up his second term on the Court. He's got an in-your-face military style, which fits with his rumored background.

Yoshiko Hino (Yamatetsu) is charming but cold-hearted. She's well known for coming up with solutions for the messiest problems, though sometimes her solutions don't fly with the squeamish.

Octavia Laux (Ares) makes no apologies for being a former "resource adjuster," though I think she does resent the loss of her legs in an "accident." She spends most of her time on Z-O, where her condition is less of an impediment.

Steven Nishimura (Shiawase) only came up to Z-O once, and was quickly tranquilized and sent back down. Apparently Shiawase failed to run him through the appropriate battery of psych tests, as he suffers from a major phobia of space travel. He's also an unapologetic racist, which has made him both friends and enemies on the Court. Rumor is that Shiawase may recall him soon.

Lynn Osborne (Novatech) is a witty woman whose insightful observations have livened up numerous boring, dragged-out Court discussions. Her term is up soon, and apparently Villiers needs her back home. Her replacement, former Fuchi prosecutor Benjie Hackett, is already being groomed for the slot.

Jean-Claude Priault (Saeder-Krupp) is the oldest face on the Court, now serving his third term. An incredibly well-mannered man, he's become the default "head" of the Court. He's also famous for his dry, monofilament humor.

Anna Villalobos (Aztechnology) is the latest justice that Aztechnology seems to have conjured from nowhere. She knows her business, however, and can talk shop with the best. She's brought a new approach to Aztechnology's interests, which has spawned numerous rumors regarding an internal struggle within the corp.

Leonard Yang (Mitsuhama) is your standard corporate achiever, with a bit more luck than others on his side. For unknown reasons, he harbors a bitter hatred toward Yamatetsu Justice Hino, which she appears to regard with amusement.

ZURICH-ORBITAL GEMEINSCHAFT BANK

The Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaft (Z-OG) Bank is the world's biggest and most important financial institution. It is also the tool by which the Big Ten and their Corporate Court consolidate and facilitate their control.

HISTORY

Z-OG's progenitor was a Zurich-based financial corp called Global Financial Services. Global was a rising star in the banking world, with a sharp investment eye, dragon-like long-term planning and SOTA data transaction methods. In the early part of the century, Global made a bid to oust the World bank from its position as the dominant force in world finance—easily accomplished, given the World Bank's recent losses and over-stretched capital.

Global fared surprisingly well in the Crash of '29, and had recovered almost completely by 2032. At the time, its primary customers were the Big Seven, who suddenly realized how screwed they would be if anything ever happened to Global. So they got to Global first and staged a bloody, hostile-as-you-can-get takeover. As most of the megacorps were incredibly indebted to Global, they found themselves in a position with potentially dire consequences for themselves and the world. Luckily, some suits activated their brain cells and convinced the Big Seven to hand the bank over to the Corporate Court, where it could be used to balance inter-megacorp power and prop up the Court's authority. In 2033, Global renamed itself and relocated to Z-O.

STRUCTURE

By decree of the Corporate Court, ownership of the Z-OG Bank must be split evenly between the AAA megacorps, meaning that each of the Big Ten owns ten percent. When the Big Eight first became the Big Ten, you can bet

this even split was hotly debated. As The Big Eight, each mega owned 12.5 percent. Asking them to surrender 2.5 percent across the board was like unhooking a chiphead from his BTL deck.

The Z-OG Bank is managed by a nine-person Board of Directors (nicknamed the "Gnomes" of course). The directors are chosen by votes from the Big Ten CEOs, out of a pool of qualified Big Ten employees. Each Gnome serves a nine-year term, and a new one is chosen each year. Directors are limited to one term, and as with Court justices, can be recalled if necessary. With only nine slots that means that one corp will not be represented for a single year. They automatically get the next slot when it opens up. Right now, the next opening belongs to Shiawase, when Ares loses their seat next year. While they work on the board, the directors are still paid (quite well) by their sponsoring corp. To keep this double pay scale

from creating an environment ripe for corruption and exploitation, any shady dealings mean an instant mandate (if not Omega Order) against the violating corp, as well as a death sentence for the director. Not surprisingly, that level of punishment leaves little incentive for abuse.

USES AND ABUSES

The purpose and mission of the Z-OG Bank can be summed up in one simple sentence: "Maintain the status quo and keep the megacorps making money." The Big Ten uses the bank to finance arbitrage, loans and all other kinds of financial drek, with the express purpose of keeping them on top of the pig pile. They allow smaller corps to use the bank as well, but predictably the little guys get reamed with variable rates.

The Z-OG Bank deals exclusively with data-based financial transactions. Its board members sure as drek aren't going to pay the costs of lifting gold bullion into orbit, no matter how greedy they are. Seeing as how Z-OG is the most important bank in the world, it of course covers its transactions with the best IC and encryption and complicated redundant transmission schemes that the Big Ten can afford, which is saying something. You won't find better security anywhere else.

Of course, if the Z-OG Bank should ever crash (figuratively, not literally), the Big Ten would face a serious and sudden cash flow shortage. In order to keep afloat, they'd turn on each other like starving devil rats. All out pan-corporate war would ensue, and in the process they'd probably take down the rest of the planet. Pretty thought, neh?

CURRENT Z-OG BANK BOARD DIRECTORS

Affiliation and Residence as of February 2061

Damien Abernathie, Saeder-Krupp, London
William Gold, Novatech, Zurich-Orbital
Izanami Fujiwara, MCT, Chiba, Japan
Vivian Lachman, Renraku, Zurich-Orbital
Justin Neou, Aztechnology, Chicago
Takehiko Noro, Yamatetsu, Vladivostok
Charles Safran, Wuxing, Hong Kong
Tracy Stewart, Cross, Québec
Xavier Talbot, Ares, Seattle

SURVIVING THE CORPORATIONS



on what a Johnson thinks and does. Finally, I asked Nightfire to give us a lowdown on working the shadows from the corporate side.

This info isn't just for newbies—I've seen too many "pros" grow sloppy over the years. And if you think someone like Nightfire isn't worth listening to because he works the other side of the street, well, it's your funeral, frankly, he's got insight you could use.

● Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 21 April 2061 at 03:54:16 (EST)

DENIABLE ASSETS: SHADOWRUNNERS

by Prime Runner

"Shadowrunners are vital to modern society." A shadowrunner said that once, and oddly enough, it's true. Shadowrunners are vital to modern society, specifically to modern corporate society. I hate to burst the bubble of any of you out there who might have a "lone hero up against the capitalist corporate empire" complex, but the only reason shadowrunners exist is because the corporations need us. Tough pill to swallow? Welcome to the real world, chummer.

The fact is, everything in the twenty-first century is tagged, catalogued and cross-indexed within a micron of its life. The Matrix knows all, and few escape the reach of its informational tendrils. With the right search programs, you can find out just about anything about anyone. Shadowrunners, however, are ghosts in the information machine, SINless individuals who have skills the corps need. We're vital because we're deniable assets: invisible, untraceable. We don't exist as far as society is concerned, so we can do the corps' dirty work for them. In short, the corps let us exist because they find us useful.

● A touch simplistic, but essentially correct. Shadowrunners and corporations have something of a symbiotic relationship. We need the corps because they're our best employers (to say nothing of being our best targets), and the corps need us to carry out their black ops. It's that simple.

● Argent

● No way, omael I may take corporate money, but I'm no hoop-kissing, boot-licking, corporate lapdog! Being outside "society" gives us total freedom, the kind corporate wage slaves only dream about!

● Dr. D

lost a friend today.

Her name doesn't matter. Suffice it to say that she was a runner, and our line of work has more than its share of occupational hazards. The circumstances of her death do matter, though—at least to me. You see, she died because she made some bad choices in regards to dealing with a corporate employer. She thought she knew the score on the corp in question—interests, goals, enemies, and so on—and she probably did. But that didn't keep her from crossing an invisible line in the street that made her more "expendable" than an "asset."

It's not enough to just know the corps. You have to know how the corps deal with the shadows. You have to suss out their standard operating procedures and their do's and don'ts. You need to know what they expect from you, and what you can expect from them. If you don't know how to survive dealing with a corp, you probably won't.

So I've pulled together three players to give everyone the basic rundown. Prime Runner gives his view on how to survive as a freelance runner. Boom, a Bean-town fixer, give us an inside-scoop

...e it to say
...work has
...hazards,
...matter,
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SURVIVING THE CORPORATIONS

● Uh-huh. I'm sure lots of shaikujin would love to give up their comfy condos and nine-to-five jobs to live with devil rats and get shot at on a regular basis. Having no legal existence, hiding out from the Star and living in the Barrens ... that's real freedom! Most runners do shadow-work to survive, not because it's romantic adventure.

● Hangfire

RULES OF THE GAME

There is a delicate balance between corporate need and corporate greed. Runners walk that line. One step too far in the wrong direction, and a corporation may decide you're worth more to it dead than alive. If we were nothing more than a constant threat to corporate security, the corps would wipe us out in a second. But the corps need runners, so they observe certain unwritten "rules" when it comes to hiring and using us. There's no profit in wiping out a useful asset. Good runners know the rules of the corporate chess game and how to play by them. Bad runners usually end up dead. Captain said it was important to get down and dirty on the basics, so I've outlined them as simply as I could.

Don't Get Caught

Rule Numero Uno of shadowrunning. Whatever you do, don't get caught doing it. The corps may regard a certain amount of shadowrunning as part of doing business, but don't expect that to help you if you set off an alarm in the middle of a high-security corporate compound. The guards won't buy "Hey, chummers, it's just biz!", and your employer will deny ever hiring you. Runners who frag up usually die; even if they live, their reputation will have gone down the tubes.

● One thing to keep in mind if you do get caught: play it cool and keep your mouth shut. The corp-cops and the Star will do everything they can to lean on you and make you talk. If you manage to keep your wits about you and don't give away anything, your Johnson might, and I stress *might*, decide to pull some strings and get you out of trouble. It's certainly in his best interest to make sure you don't talk to the authorities. Of course, I've known some Johnsons to ball a runner out, only to have him killed to ensure his silence. Dead men tell no tales.

● Dancer

● In which case, you might be better off cutting a deal with the other side. The trick is to know which way to jump, and hope there's somebody there to catch you.

● Skater

Don't Embarrass Yourself

You're supposed to be a professional, so act like one. I can't tell you how many times I've gone into meets with runners who are fresh out of some urban hellhole like the Redmond Barrens or El Infierno. They're usually gangers or ex-gangers accustomed to being hot drek on the

streets. They bluster, show off and play dominance games with the Johnson, like he even cares who's the big man in the Sprawl. Most of those runner wannabes got passed over, or worse, hired as cannon fodder for suicide runs. Don't be stupid. Want to be treated like a professional? Then be professional.

● This includes knowing where and when to haggle, and what to haggle for. If you ask for too little or too much, you might come off as a novice or overconfident. Keep in mind that some Johnsons have better access to assets other than nuyen. And, as a general rule, remember: half up front.

● Brick

Don't Ask Too Many Questions

Simple fact of life: your Mr. Johnson won't tell you everything. He won't tell you his real name, who he really works for or why he's really hiring you, and half the time he won't even tell you the point of the shadowrun. Everything in the shadows is on a need-to-know basis, and most of the time runners don't need to know. In fact, the more you know, the worse off you are in a lot of ways; even in this day and age, there's such a thing as "knowing too much." A Johnson who thinks you're too much of a risk is likely to try to have you silenced, permanently.

Do Your Homework

On the other hand, you should find out as much as you can on your own. It's considered bad form to let a Johnson know you're checking up on him, but it's also stupid not to do a little sniffing around to make sure of a Johnson's motives and ties. Likewise, when it comes to the run, *do your legwork*, it may save your life as well as your rep. Find out all you can about your target before you make the run. Talk to your contacts and find out what they know. Put together a plan in advance, and a backup plan. A gets shot to hell (it almost always does). Above all, remember that no plan ever survives contact with the enemy.

● This one is a double-edged sword. You need to do legwork and gather information, but if you poke and prod too much, you risk alerting your target that something is up. Do what Prime suggests and gather intel, but don't push your luck or you could end up walking into a carefully prepared trap.

● Argent

Take Care of Your Sources

Your contacts are some of the most valuable resources you've got. Take good care of them and they'll take good care of you. That means protecting the identity of your sources, and not asking about other people's (a sure sign of a newbie shadowrunner). Don't put your sources in positions you wouldn't want to be in. If you've got a friend working for a corp, and she passes informa-



tion on to you that gets her fired, you've just lost a contact as well as a friend. Make sure to reward your contacts for helping you out.

- A wide network of contacts also means you're more likely to hear about it if someone's taking an interest in you.
- Face

Limit Collateral Damage

The corps expect a certain number of shadowruns to happen; that's the price of doing business. However, the more damage you do, the more you cost the corp. The more you cost it, the more likely the corp is to come down hard on you. In other words, never make it more worthwhile for the corp to geek you than to leave you alone.

Collateral damage includes wrecking anything you don't absolutely need to in order to get at your target: killing or wounding corporate personnel, destroying corporate property, trashing security systems and so forth. The ideal shadowrun leaves no clue that you were ever there. The less damage you do, the better. Generally, Johnsons want their runs done quietly, which means not leaving a trail of bodies behind you for corp security to follow.

Of course, if your client wants collateral damage—go nuts!

● I'm endlessly amazed by the number of newbie runners who think they can kick down the front door of a corporate facility and come in, guns blazing, mow down some corporate guards and take what they want. No finesse, no subtlety—and then they wonder when the corp comes down on them like a ton of bricks and their Johnson won't return their calls.

● Fro

● Limiting collateral damage keeps your Johnson happy, unless he's specifically hiring you to cause a lot of damage, in which case I suggest doing some digging to find out why. Most of the time, it means your Johnson is looking to hire a distraction for something else, or that he's involved in something really nasty.

● Eye-Spy

Don't Frag Over Your Employer

Pay attention; the next sentence is the most important one you'll ever read. *Do not frag over your employer.* A shadowrunner who gets caught double-dealing or trying to betray an employer is almost certainly a dead shadowrunner. Even if you manage to survive scamming your Johnson, you can pretty much forget about ever

SURVIVING THE CORPORATIONS

working the shadows again. (You can always change your name and face, or go somewhere they've never heard of you, but it better be somewhere your Johnson and his corporation can't find you.) Corporations rely on shadowrunners, but they can't afford to let runners think they can pull drek and get away with it. Shadowrunners who turn against their employer are usually made an example for the rest of us. I've seen a few in my time, and I learned my lesson well. Don't frag with Mr. Johnson—it's just not worth it.

Maintain Silence

This rule is related to not fragging over your employer. Once you've finished a run, keep your mouth shut about it. The corp is paying for your silence along with your expertise. That means don't go blabbing at the local watering hole about the latest run you pulled off, don't post the gory details all over the Matrix and don't go telling your friends how you helped pull off the run of the century. If you just have to talk about a run on a secure node like Shadowland, at least change the names and dates to protect your employer's interests. If word leaks about a run, Mr. Johnson will come looking for you first. And if you think that having this information gives you something to hold over Mr. Johnson's head, think again. It just makes you worth more to him dead than alive.

On the other hand, share as much as you can with your runner chummers. I know that sounds like a contradiction, but if you tell us about the bleeding-edge security measures at a Novatech site you just hit, we don't care who hired you or why—we just need to know the stuff that may impact us.

Your Word is Your Bond

The whole point of these rules is to build some kind of trust between runners and Johnsons. Laugh all you want, but that's the deal. Shadowrunners and those who hire them have to be able to trust each other, if only a little, or the whole system falls apart. A Johnson who gets a reputation for fragging over runners and hiring for suicide missions won't be able to hire very many runners after a while. A runner who gets a rep for burning employers and flapping his lips about every run will end up unemployable (or floating face down in the nearest body of water).

This is where the quality they used to call honor comes in. If you tell a Johnson you're going to do something, do it. If a Johnson betrays you, make sure everyone knows it. Remember, the shadows work both ways. The corps need us like we need them; they don't want a rogue Johnson making them target number one (or worse, blacklisted by the quality talent). The pressure on a corp with a rogue Johnson is immense—and if you get the plum job of hunting the bastich down, think of where you stand with the corp and the shadow community.

THE LIFE OF MR. JOHNSON

by Boom

Many people have pointed out to me that "Mr. Johnson" is likely to have the shortest life expectancy of

any corporate employee. From the corp's point of view, he knows too much about the company's dirty laundry and black ops to be entirely safe. From the shadowrunner's point of view, he's an untrustworthy skag who's probably burned at least a few runners somewhere along the line. So the question is, who in his right mind becomes a Mr. Johnson, and why? I have some experience dealing with Johnsons, as well as *being* a Johnson, so I'll try to answer that question.

Basically, Mr. Johnsons come in two types: the professional Johnson (a corporate fixer or a freelancer working for a corp) and the amateur.

The amateur Mr. Johnson is someone—usually a corporate exec with some resources to throw around—in need of shadowrunners for a particular job. Amateur Johnsons don't work with runners on a regular basis, and for various reasons of their own choose not to go through other channels available to them. It might be a secret project that the Johnson can't trust anyone else with, or a personal agenda that doesn't necessarily jibe with the corp's plans (or at least with the plans of the Johnson's immediate superiors). These guys are Johnsons pretty much because they don't have a choice. Their runs can get tricky, because they often involve inter-corp politics or other personal agendas.

Amateur Johnsons also include various non-corporate folk who aren't used to hiring or working with shadowrunners. In my day, I got hired by everyone from a coalition of farmers fighting off an agricorp to a nervous middle-manager looking to track down his ex-mistress who had some incriminating holos. You can usually tell an amateur Johnson right away; they tend to be nervous, flustered and unfamiliar with the unwritten rules of the shadows. Most amateur Johnsons work through fixers and middlemen, and their inquiries are often clumsy. Still, I've run into some corporate execs who never worked with shadowrunners before, but carried themselves off like professional Johnsons. A lot of the skills used in the boardroom apply equally well to dealing with the shadows.

The professional Johnson is the one shadowrunners deal with most of the time. He (or she—I know a lot of capable "Ms. Johnsons" as well) is a corporate agent whose business is hiring shadowrunners. Generally, professional Johnsons are on a fast track to corporate power, and their connections with the shadows are their key to the top. They have the dirt on everyone in the company, and they're more than willing to use their contacts and knowledge of the shadows to protect themselves and advance their own cause. Keep an eye on these folks, because they often end up in the corner office using the power they've accumulated. It can be good to have a former Johnson owe you a favor, and bad to have one with a grudge against you.

Contrary to popular belief, the professional Johnson's job is not hiring shadowrunners to set them up for a fall or otherwise frag them over. Yes, Johnsons do lie. Any Johnson who tells you the whole truth is either crazy or desperate. However, a Johnson who makes a habit of set-

ring up shadowrunners simply isn't going to be a Johnson for long. A successful Mr. Johnson needs a good reputation in order to attract and keep quality shadow-talent, just like a fixer needs a solid reputation to maintain his network of contacts. A Johnson who sets up a team of runners either doesn't care about his reputation—possibly because he plans to get out of the shadow-business in one way or another—or doesn't know about the double-cross any more than the runners do. Corporate higher-ups have been known to set up Johnsons just like Johnsons are said to set up runners.

● Quite so. I recall a particularly harrowing shadowrun some years ago, where our Ms. Johnson engaged us in the recovery of some data. It turned out the data was worthless. Our run was a tailchaser, a feint for some operation Ms. Johnson's superior was running. She was even more displeased than we were over the whole matter.

● Neddy

● Chummer, it's not a shadowrun until your Johnson tries to screw you. That's the way things are.

● Jaxon

● Maybe you've had some bad luck with Johnsons, Jaxon ol' boy. In my experience, most Johnsons are trustworthy enough, at least as much as you can trust anybody in this biz. It's the Johnsons with personal agendas, or who are being used as part of someone else's agenda, who are the problem. The trick is learning to spot problem Johnsons and avoiding them like the plague.

● Sioux City Sue

In fact, most professional corporate Johnsons are no more the true "employer" of a team of shadowrunners than a freelance fixer. Corporate Johnsons are valued for their anonymity, providing a middleman for the corporate execs who call the shots. If a Novatech VP needs a shadowrun, he doesn't go out looking for runners himself. He passes word to someone in the corp's Resources Adjustment department and they send out a Johnson to do the talking. Most of the time, the runners never know whose office the run originated from.

● Corporate execs only do their own hiring when the run is too sensitive to be trusted even to a company Johnson, which usually signals some kind of high-risk operation.

● Hood

● A lot of corp Johnsons have a stable of street fixers that they work through. When they need a runner team, they go to the fixer most likely to bring them what they're looking for. Depending on the fixer, the Johnson will have some detailed background on who he's hiring, not to mention whatever dossiers the corp has with your name on it.

● Marcelles

● Some corps use stock identities, a fake ID shared by multiple Johnsons. Legend has it that the first and most popular cover identity was none other than "Mr. Johnson" himself, the source of the popular name for all employers of shadowrunners. A more recent example is Hans Brackhaus, a Saeder-Krupp Mr. Johnson. Herr Brackhaus doesn't really exist—he's a cover identity used by multiple S-K Johnsons to hire runners.

● Kilroy

● That's just what Lofwyr wants you to think, Kilroy. How did you manage to stay alive all these years?

● Dragonslayer

● One of Mitsuhama's newest Johnson IDs is "Mr. Bunraku." It must be some kind of joke by somebody in MCT's black-ops division; bunraku is Japanese for the operator of a puppet theater, and also Yakuza slang for a prostitute. Pretty clear what Mitsuhama thinks of shadowrunners.

● Soylent Grin

COMPANY MEN

by Nightfire

While most shadowrunners are freelance operatives, working for the highest bidder and living hand-to-mouth, some of us in the shadows choose a different path. We become full-time employees of a particular corporation. Known as company men—along with many other, more colorful names—we provide our corporate patrons with dependable shadow-assets they can call upon at any time. They provide us with the stability and regular income other shadowrunners often lack.

There are many benefits to working for one corp: regular pay, new gear when you need it, a roof over your head and the backing of your corporate patron. Perhaps the most important thing I get out of being a company man is knowledge of where I stand. In the shifting alliances of the shadows, you may work for one corp one week, its arch-rival the next. In a situation like that, it's difficult to know who your friends are. Working for one corporation, I have a better idea of who my friends and enemies are at any given time.

● That may be true most of the time, but megacorporations are huge critters, and just because you're working for (say) Ares Macrotech doesn't mean that everyone in the "Ares family" is your friend. Interdepartmental rivalries, power plays and internal politics can be just as bad, if not worse, than dealing with your current employer's rivals. At least in the latter situation, your enemies are usually up front about wanting to geek you. They don't pretend to be on your side before pulling the rug out from under you.

● Ditch

● Company men aren't quite like everyday employees, either. The really effective company men are just like

SURVIVING THE CORPORATIONS

shadowrunners, usually SINless and outside the law in many ways. This means they don't really exist. The corp pays them out of secret slush funds for black ops, puts them up in safehouses, provides them with cover identities and such. If the company ever decides to pull its resources and leave its shadow-ops out in the cold, they're literally nobodies, just like any inhabitant of the Barrens. Well, any inhabitant of the Barrens with serious black-ops training and some cutting-edge gear, anyway.

● Doc Foniks

Corporations able to hire full-time shadow-ops tend to treat them well. They take care of logistics—supplying the gear, setting up safehouses and allocating resources—while we handle planning and execution of shadowruns. Of course, things tend to be a little more controlled than most shadowrunners are used to; company men still have to play by the company rules. We answer to our employers, just like other runners answer to their Mr. Johnson, but we don't always receive complete freedom in our operations.

For example, my particular field of expertise is the Matrix. Like any shadow-decker, I build my own hardware and write my own code. However, I get access to corporate hardware and tech shops to do my deck-building, and corporate mainframe-time to do my programming. On the other hand, the tech I build and the programs I write have to meet with the approval of my employers if I intend to use them in the corp's service.

● Very diplomatic, Nightfire. However, in my experience, a great many shadowrunners can't handle this aspect of being a company man. You might think it wiz-cool at first to have access to all those company toys, but shadowrunners are generally used to doing things their own way. Deckers build and program their own stuff, magicians design and enchant however they want, samurai choose their own weapons and riggers often have their vehicles and drones wired like Christmas trees. That kind of drek doesn't always pass muster with a corporate employer who wants things just so. If you're a company man, you generally have to do things by the book. Personally, I threw the book out a long time ago.

● FastJack

In the shadows, the popular view sees company men as "sellouts" because we work strictly for one corporation. Corporate-retained shadowrunners apparently violate the much-cherished notion of the shadowrunner as a romantic rebel mercenary, fighting corporate oppression and taking from the rich in Robin-Hood fashion to give to the poor—namely, himself. From where I sit, the shadowrunners who change their loyalties depending on who is paying them at any given moment seem more like the sellouts, but that is neither here nor there. The point is that

company men are often shunned by freelance shadowrunners who subscribe to the "sellout" theory. If you're planning on taking a regular corporate assignment, keep in mind that many of your so-called "friends" may not look kindly upon it.

Working full-time for a corporation may also spoil you. After spending time living in the worst rat-traps, scraping by on various shadow-jobs and keeping your gear together with sweat and prayer, you may find life as a company man almost luxurious. Sometimes we get passed down gear that the rest of the world doesn't even know exists yet. Corporate employers expect the best from their professional shadowrunners, and provide the best for us to make it happen.

● One other thing Nightfire neglected to mention is the fact that company men are much like Johnsons. They can know too much, and once outside the protection of the corp, it takes a long time to get back. Once you're branded a company man, it can take awhile to shed that perception. People think you're an undercover agent, a narc or a corporate spy. Everyone thinks you still have contacts with your former employer, which may or may not be true. And there's always folks who still carry a grudge from your days with the company, who may be looking for payback now that your employer's name no longer protects you. You have to fight twice as hard and be twice as good to survive.

● Argent

● Don't forget company men who work for other organizations: UCAS or Tir governments, the Mafia, the Yakuza, the Draco Foundation or Human Nation, just to name a few. Some work for organizations or powerful individuals so secret you may not even know they exist. That secrecy and power can make them tough to break away from, perhaps even tougher than a known organization or a corp. Am I correct, Argent?

● Wolf

● Working for an organization offers a certain security. The toys, competent partners (and the personal relationships that develop from working with the same team day in and day out), the scale of the job, the benefits and perks ... It's like regular shadowrunning, but the rewards are much greater. The loss of freedom is hard to swallow, though. I've tried it both ways, and though I may never be really free from my former employers—I know and saw too much—the independence I have is sweet. If they called me back, I'm not sure I could turn my back on them. Something changes in you when you work for an organization. It's not good or bad, it's just different. It's your choice. It's always your choice.

● Talon

THE BIG TEN

The next ten posts each provide a profile on a AAA megacorp, from the top ranks to the bottom line. Compiling these reports wasn't easy—there's lots of runners out there with good data—like the group who hit an Ares warehouse in Detroit and snagged some prototype weapons, or the team that extracted an MCT exec who spilled his guts about whom he was sleeping with. But the intel they provided was just isolated facts; they failed to portray the full picture on the corp and what it was up to.

What we really needed was solid intelligence and inside information. But the megacorps keep their lids sealed tight, so I needed sources beyond the average runner to pry them open. I needed experts on the corps—ex-wage slaves that had been in deep, or outside analysts that watch corps the way the gaffer down the hall watch Urban Brawl matches.

Naturally, the ol' Shadowland crew came through, and we scored the sources we were looking for. The people that wrote these posts know what they're talking about, from buried skeletons to business deals. Some of them have put their necks on the line by speaking out—that's dedication to what Shadowland stands for.

You'll recognize some of our authors, such as the Crowned Accountant and Pyramid Watcher, who provided the latest scan on Aztechnology. You'll also likely be familiar with Lei Kung and the Sons of Thunder, who were thankfully still alive and able to update their Wujiang info. The same goes for the Renraku Fox, who's survived the arcology lockdown and no amount of risk, but still gives us the goods on Renraku.

Some of the other authors you'll be seeing for the first (and possibly last) time. An Ares Johnson with a reputation in the shadows for sending runners to their deaths coughed up the info on his corp; you may not like him, and you certainly shouldn't trust him, but it was the best we got. Chauffard, Kensai, Naginata and Spiderhawk were all insiders who've left their corps for various reasons. They've decided to spill the beans on what they saw, heard and assensed, and fill us in on Cross, MCT, Shiawase and Yamatetsu respectively.

The Marketeer and Felix are both well-informed on their subjects (Novatech and Saeder-Krupp, respectively), though how exactly they come by their info is unclear. We checked the facts they threw at us, and each was right on target. That means they're either damn good at espionage, or they have an inside connection and they don't want their cover blown or they're corp agents who've crafted a nice set-up job to plant misinformation on Shadowland. Your call.

As always, use this information wisely, check the facts and watch your back.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 27 February 2061 at 08:43:46 (EST)



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ARES MACROTECHNOLOGY



World Headquarters: Detroit, Michigan, UCAS

President/CEO: Damien Knight

Chairman of the Board: Damien Knight

Corporate Status: Public Corporation

Major Shareholders:

Arthur Vogel (24.1% approximately)

Damien Knight (23.7% approximately)

Nadja Daviar (12.2% approximately)

Major Subsidiaries:

Knight Errant Security

Headquarters: Detroit, Michigan, UCAS

Executive VP: Roger Soaring Owl

Ares Arms

Headquarters: Baltimore, Maryland, UCAS

Executive VP: General Guido Cantarelli

AresSpace

Headquarters: Houston, Texas, CAS

Executive VP: Charles Pollack

Ares Global Entertainment

Headquarters: Paris, France

Executive VP: Gustav Van Sydow

General Motors

Headquarters: Detroit, Michigan, UCAS

Executive VP: Eugene Fischer

Other Subsidiaries: Ares Consumer Electronics, Ares Global Commsat, Ares Integrated Solutions, Ares Small Arms, Crystal Optics, Hard Corps, Leviathan Technical, Lifescape, Mostrans, NASA Consulting Inc., National Broadcasting Service, Osprey Technical Publications, Pratt & Whitney, Quick Trigger Systems, Silicon Valley/Apple Computer Products, Weapons World

Please allow me to introduce myself. I use the name Mr. Johnson, and trust has been my stock in trade for fifty-four years. I've learned to nurture it like a newborn, dispense it like a drug, and pervert it into a weapon.

I worked the shadows with a professional team for more than five years. One night my team walked straight into an ambush and died, so that a fledgling Knight Errant could prove to the media that they were competent and ready. By sacrificing my team, I bought myself a place as an Ares Macrotech company man.

As a shadow contractor for Ares, I've completed 94 percent of my objectives, though 89 percent of my freelancers have not lived to tell about it. While that rate is fantastic for Ares, it's personally frustrating; no matter how many deaths I arrange, I just can't seem to break 90.

You may have heard about me. If you've ever worked for Ares under my direction, there's an 11 percent chance you're still around to read this post. Lucky for the rest of you, I won't be around to raise that average.

I knew this psycho as Mr. Roddy Wilcott when I was still employed by Ares. Before he ran the shadows, he was a hostage negotiator for the Star. On his last job, he convinced a madman with ten hostages to take him in exchange. The freak turned out to be a toxic shaman, who held him captive for over sixty hours, ranting the whole time and messing with his head. Then the toxic suddenly croaks, and Mr. Hostage finds himself shuffled off to a disease control unit. Turns out the toxic had infected each of the released hostages with some sort of biowarfare germs. Final death toll: Thirty-four.

Roddy hasn't been the same since. He used to take all the Johnson jobs at Ares that no one else would touch. He's a real charmer—none of the other Johnsons could stand him, and refused to work with him. They called him Betrayal behind his back.

Errant Knight

Johnsons like this slag have a short life expectancy. From the sound of it, Ares decided it was time he "retired." Guess this post is his payback.

Argent

You may suspect my motives in presenting the following information. Am I posting this to set you up? Is it the logical conclusion of my life to betray not only Ares, but myself as well?

My reasons are mine. But know this—the information in this post is accurate enough to seal my fate.

You can trust me.

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

At the dawn of the millennium, an influential man named Nicholas Aurelius had a vision of things to come, and took steps to prepare for it. As a major shareholder in General Motors and owner of many smaller companies, Aurelius consolidated and fortified his assets into one of the first business behemoths that

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ARES MACROTECHNOLOGY

the world would come to call a megacorp: Ares Industries. Ares quickly achieved extraterritorial status in the U.S. and in many other countries soon afterward. As an American-based megacorp, the old U.S. government effectively gave Ares free rein, granting tax exemptions and other concessions in return for support both at home and overseas.

Contemporaries of Aurelius viewed him as a foolhardy gambler, but his risks almost always paid off big. He regularly depleted his largest and seemingly most important assets in order to acquire or beef up new ones, and rumors circulated that he used espionage and strong-arm tactics to build his juggernaut. (For once, the rumors were true; I have records of Ol' Nick drugging a board member who opposed his buyout of the poor slob's corp.) Not that the truth mattered; as far as the U.S. was concerned, what was good for Ares was good for America.

Like any predator, Nicholas Aurelius fed off the weak and the lame. In 2016, he liquidated a sizable chunk of his empire (including his prized General Motors shares) to purchase NASA from the collapsing U.S. government. Even with Ares holding its hand, the U.S. was fractured by VITAS, the Awakening and the Ghost Dance rebellion, and its economy was in dire straits. President Garrety expedited the NASA sale, and Congress agreed to release the entire U.S. space program, including all facilities, vehicles and equipment. Under the agreement, Ares pledged to return portions of the equipment to the government in 2055—of course, the U.S. was dead and buried long before it could collect.

Ares used its new toys to kick off a lucrative space salvage program, recovering satellites and other orbital gear for resale to the original owners at a fraction of new equipment costs. The program gave Ares access to state of the art technology, not to mention surveillance data and influence over the satellite communications infrastructure.

Aurelius temporarily passed on the CEO's mantle to Sakehisa Tajika during the early 2020s, but unofficially remained supreme in his empire. Tajika extended Aurelius' expansion program, and Ares continued to prosper, renamed to Ares Macrotechnology in 2024. In 2028, Ol' Nick reclaimed the top job, taking the captain's chair just in time to pilot his megacorp through the worldwide Crash of '29. Due to luck rather than foresight, Tajika had established a small but crucial network of Ares facilities that remained isolated from the net, and so had not been affected by the Crash virus. The backup information stored at these sites helped Ares to recover from the Crash faster than their competitors.

Having weathered the Crash, Aurelius was finally tired and contented enough to retire. Passing the crown to his son Leonard, he lived out his last few years believing that his personal Camelot would forever belong to his own blood kin. Then Lancelot showed up.

On January 24, 2033, at 11:42:08 EST, a networked set of expertly tasked computers logged on to the Boston East Coast Stock Exchange and launched a series of stock transactions that lasted just over one minute. By 11:43:11

EST, a newly minted player stepped onto the megacorporate stage as the proud owner of 22 percent of Ares Macrotechnology stock. This infamous "Nanosecond Buyout" brought world attention to Damien Knight, corporate raider.

Riding the wave of the buyout, Knight usurped control of Ares from Leonard Aurelius and became the megacorp's chairman and CEO. Bitter rivalry ensued between the two men for the next two decades, leading to countless internal conflicts and shadowruns. (I personally sent dozens of runners to their deaths in my efforts to keep the particulars of our little family squabbles a secret.) Knight managed to keep his edge over Aurelius for most of this time, although Aurelius did snatch away the chairman position in 2049.

Nicholas Aurelius, of course, would never have stood by and allowed this maverick to steal the Ares kingdom from his son and chosen heir. Too bad for Lenny that dear old Dad succumbed to a fatal heart attack just months before the Nanosecond Buyout.

- Knight must have had Nicholas rubbed out so he wouldn't interfere with Knight's takeover scheme. I'll bet the old man still had plenty up his sleeve, and Knight knew it.
- Godfather (of soul)
- Can't anyone rich and influential just die of natural causes for once? Why is everyone so hyped up to see conspiracies everywhere?
- Cynic

The key to Knight's success, of course, was backing from the great dragon Dunkelzahn. Knight wasn't the only winner from the Nanosecond Buyout; a holding corp named Gavilan Ventures also ended up with 12 percent of Ares stock. As revealed in his will, Dunkelzahn secretly owned Gavilan, and through it cemented Knight's control over Ares ... except for those moments where he played Knight and Aurelius off of each other for his own purposes.

Knight led Ares to new heights, expanding its private and public space programs and turning Ares Arms into the current well-known monopoly producer of destructive toys. Knight's personal baby, Knight Errant Security, has grown exponentially and now rivals the military divisions of most world governments.

In more recent years, Ares has played an instrumental role in several key events in the UCAS. Highlights include the disaster that turned Chicago into Bug City (and its aftermath), and the Election of 2057.

In the mid-2050's, Knight Errant was alerted, perhaps by Dunkelzahn, to the existence of insect spirits, particularly those that were using the Universal Brotherhood as a front to harvest more host bodies. Knight initiated a secret bughunt program and sent KE out to quietly sniff out hives and mop them up. The operation went smoothly in several cities, until KE hit the motherlode of bug hives in Chicago: their screw-up released a swarm of insect spirits on the hap-

less people of Chicago. KE even detonated a sub tactical nuke in the insect hive, to no avail.

After the UCAS quarantined Chicago and walled up its luckless citizens, Detroit was flooded by desperate Chicago refugees. Tensions flared, fueled by fear that some of the refugees might be disguised bugs, and erupted into riots. KE forces put the riots down with extreme prejudice, earning their reputation as heavily armed thugs for hire.

Ares' image suffered, until they launched another operation in Chicago in 2058, armed with new biotechnology. After spreading Strain-III Bacteria, which feeds off astrally active entities, throughout the Containment Zone, Ares pulled out its troops and declared an end to the quarantine. The wall came tumbling down, but there wasn't much rejoicing. Chicago remains a desolate ruin, and no one knows for sure if the insect spirits are really gone.

Meanwhile, Knight took a personal hand in the presidential election of 2057, strongly backing the Dunkelzahn/Haeffner ticket. Using Ares Global Entertainment to promote the dragon's popular candidacy and call for "a new Golden Age" in the UCAS also enabled Knight to polish his corp's tarnished reputation. After the dragon's assassination, Ares forces helped bring nationwide rioting under control, without the brutality they'd displayed in Detroit—remaking Ares in the public mind.

Dunkelzahn's will almost handed Knight total control of Ares Macrotech. Through careful wheeling and dealing, Knight acquired the proxy rights to Gavilan Ventures from Nadja Daviar, to whom the late Dunk had bequeathed them. Knight used those shares to depose Aurelius as chairman and quash any hopes he had of regaining the Ares throne. Aurelius read the writing on the wall and jumped ship, selling his shares to Arthur Vogel, a former presidential candidate and respected ecological lobbyist who was bequeathed a seat on Ares' board by the dragon. With the proceeds of that sale, Aurelius bought himself a slot with Ares' emerging rival, Cross Applied Technologies. After decades of behind-the-scenes fencing, Aurelius has finally taken on the visible role of Knight's nemesis.

With the recent return of Gavilan Ventures' proxy rights to Nadja Daviar, Knight finds himself having to fight his own board again. The stock Vogel has compiled from Aurelius and Dunkelzahn makes him the primary shareholder, only slightly ahead of Knight. It's an open secret that Nadja Daviar abhors Knight, and the rumor mill has it that she may try using her position as UCAS Vice

President to somehow keep Knight in check. On the other hand, Knight has enough yes-men board members to make sure everything he wants goes through. Perhaps with three players, Ares will be more stable than it was with only two ... though I bet they said that about Fuchi, too.

THE POWER PLAYERS

I don't know everything about everyone, but I probably know more than you do. Here's the facts as I see them.

DAMIEN KNIGHT

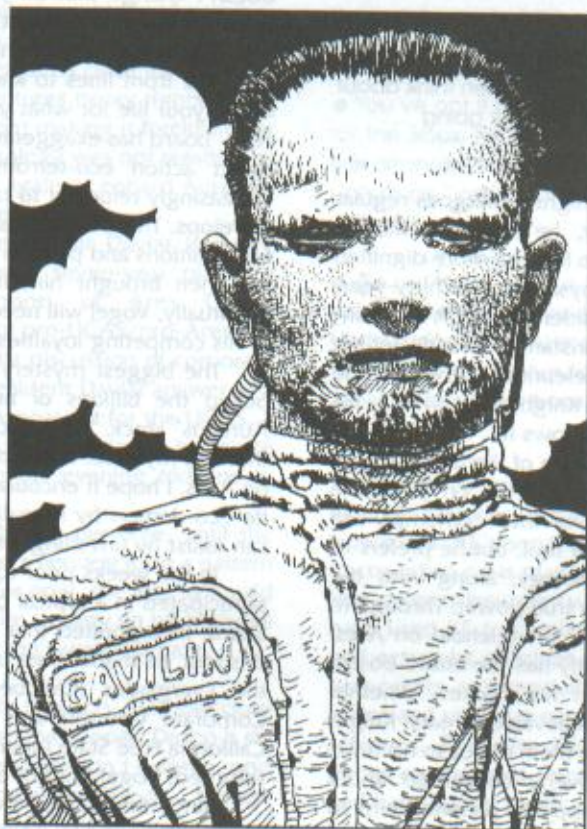
Speculation runs pretty rampant on Damien Knight's background. His origins before the buyout are a mystery; one which he carefully fosters as part of his image.

Worry no more. I have conclusive proof that Knight used to be known as David Gavilan, leader of the Echo Mirage project that fought the Crash virus. The picture

accompanying this file clearly shows Damien Knight wearing a uniform labeled "Gavilan."

- Since when do digital pictures count as "evidence" in this day and age? Give me a press release photo of Knight, and I can give you blackmail-quality pix of him doing the nasty with VP Daviar in less than an hour. This proves nothing, especially given that no military records of Gavilan exist.
- Ms. Thing

This picture comes from the records of Alice Haeffner, a fellow member of the Echo Mirage team who died fighting the Crash virus. Alice was the wife of—you guessed it—Kyle Haeffner, Dunkelzahn's running mate and current UCAS Prez. Knight combined his military experience and computer expertise with the great dragon's resources and genius to pull off the infamous Nanosecond Buyout. Dunkelzahn left the most obvious of clues by naming his shell holding corporation Gavilan Ventures.



● Even with his expertise, Knight couldn't have programmed the buyout on his own. He had help from another computer guru ... who's now become his largest rival.

● Squire

● Are you telling us that Lucien Cross was a partner with Knight and the Big Wurm? Got any proof to back it?

● Bitter Lemon

● Check into when and where Cross made his fortune, and who he worked for prior to that. And then think about just why Ares and Cross have such a rivalry going ...

● Squire

Well into his sixth decade, Knight undergoes regular leonization treatments. Recently, he's been adding a touch of artificial gray to his hair to foster a more dignified image (while maintaining the physique of a thirty-year-old Olympian). He makes a considerable effort to maintain his playboy image, and constantly attends jet-set functions to hobnob with other celebrities. However, the aging process is something even Knight can't own ... his youth won't last forever, and he knows it.

Possibly because he's well aware of the fact that he's "only human," Knight feels an intense envy of the Awakened that frequently curdles into contempt. He doesn't hesitate to use magic as a tool, but he prefers to put his faith in mundane technology, along with the axiom that knowledge is the only true power. Through it, Knight has managed to retain his stranglehold on Ares' board of directors. Knight currently has the entire board, excluding Daviar and Vogel, in his pocket. Whether through promises, blackmail or believable threats, Knight knows just how to make the lot of them dance to his tune.

Knight is wary, but not overly concerned about Vogel. So far he's kept Vogel happy by allowing him to focus on various earthbound subsidiaries and re-fit them to meet his ecological viewpoint. While Vogel indulges in the sandbox, Knight devotes ever-larger chunks of Ares' resources to space-based and military developments.

Knight's largest concern at the moment is a manila envelope given to Nadja Daviar upon the death of Dunkelzahn, the contents of which outline the dragon's seven-year plan for the 12 percent of Ares stock that Daviar now controls. Coupled with her positions of Draco Foundation director and UCAS Vice President, she wields enough influence to make Knight quite nervous. He refuses to use magical surveillance on Nadja, fearing that the Foundation's tremendous magical resources may have given her some way of detecting their activities.

ARTHUR VOGEL

Arthur Vogel remains something of an enigma. With a well-publicized career as a hotshot eco-lawyer and his green-slanted presidential campaign, he sold himself to the general public as a virtuous defender of Mother Earth. Even after Dunkelzahn's will put him on the board of

Ares—and his subsequent buyout of Aurelius' stock made him the primary shareholder—the common man still views him as a valiant green warrior, fighting the big bad megacorps from within the belly of the beast.

I've met the man on several occasions; and I can tell you that Arthur Vogel may actually believe these fantasies about himself. In reality, however, this image is a distortion. Vogel is a lawyer, and working for the tree-huggers doesn't change that dirty fact. Sure, he's done a lot of good for the environment, but that's how he makes a living. Up on his rung of the ladder, he's too far removed from the front lines to know what it's like to literally lay down your life for what you believe in. His ascension to Ares' board has exaggerated the rift between him and his direct action eco-terrorist allies. They are becoming increasingly reluctant to take risks based on strategies he develops. This dissent has forced him to adopt more radical positions and plans in order to keep their favor, which has then brought him into conflict with Ares' board. Eventually, Vogel will need to break one way or the other, or his competing loyalties will tear him apart.

The biggest mystery about Arthur Vogel is how he pulled the billions of nuyen out of his hoop to buy Aurelius' stock. This piece of elusive data is a festering thorn in my side. If this document has any future impact on Ares, I hope it encourages someone to expose this little eco-demon by revealing whose puppet he truly is. I can assist by unveiling what I've discovered so far.

In the weeks prior to the Aurelius-Vogel deal, Vogel participated in a typical pro-environment tour funded by Sierra, Incorporated that crossed North America. During this tour, he made three unscheduled and secretive stops: the Everglades (Caribbean League), Santa Fe (Pueblo Corporate Council) and the northern crescent of the California Free State (near Mount Shasta). The day after he returned, Vogel bought out Aurelius.

Since the buyout, I've gotten orders from Vogel on seven different occasions to hire runners or runner teams to hand-deliver sealed parchment tubes to various locations. Each time, Vogel met personally with the runners before they left, and they were never heard from again. I sacrificed a few more expendables to partially track three of these deliveries. One went as far as the Pueblo Sector in Denver, the second to an offshore airfield in the Caribbean League. The third went straight to Prince Edward Island, formerly owned by Dunkelzahn. One of my runners managed to get a look at the scroll, and reported that it was sealed with some strange sort of astral ward.

Whether Vogel is backed by one power or three remains unclear. If three, are they working together, or are they unaware of each other? Perhaps Vogel is smarter than he seems, and is playing several backers off against each other. The truth remains to be found.

Whoever is pulling his strings, Vogel has made no move to drastically reduce ecological infractions caused by Ares as a whole. He attacks subsidiaries instead, instituting easily circumventable conservation programs.

Many of his upper-level advisors and fellow Sierra board members frown on his "short-term help for long-term healing" agenda (to use the dwarf's own words), but the media continues to lap it up.

NADJA DAVIAR

Damien Knight chills me to the core of my being. Nadja Daviar could shatter my frozen body and soul with one mesmerizing glance. Dunkelzahn could not have chosen a more fitting avatar for his schemes.

So far, Daviar is keeping her cards close to her chest. Knight returned the Gavilan Ventures proxy rights to her in August of 2059, but aside from making it forcibly clear to Knight that Ares Macrotechnology was not wasting its time or resources in a vendetta against Leonard Aurelius, Daviar seems totally uninterested in Ares.

My only conclusive evidence that Daviar is doing anything to bring the infamous "seven-year plan" to fruition is her active support of Ares Global Entertainment's new blitzkrieg of pro-UCAS/pro-Ares tie-ins. For example, during a media discussion of corporate involvement in politics, Vice President Daviar answered a reporter with the statement, "A new era for the UCAS, a new Ares for the UCAS." (That rousing slogan has since been repeated ad nauseam on the evening trid and in countless Ares ads.)

Perhaps Daviar is merely biding her time, until the threads she weaves at the dragon's bequest form a pattern that she can take action upon. For now, she acts as a wild card in Knight's affairs, forcing him to carry on his business as usual, as if still under Dunkelzahn's watchful gaze.

- Daviar's not spending much time on Ares because she's far too busy dealing behind-the-scenes. Draco is still churning out shadow ops like you wouldn't believe, and Daviar's definitely working towards something ... though even she may not be clear on what that is.

- Trouble

MAJOR SUBSIDIARIES

In the UCAS especially, Ares is an omnipresent phenomenon. Its presence is so familiar that it dissolves into the background noise and we fail to see its impact. To truly understand it, we must begin at the top, with its major divisions—each a megacorp unto itself.

KNIGHT ERRANT SECURITY SERVICES

After almost thirty years, Roger Soaring Owl continues to head up Damien Knight's favorite division. It's no secret that he is little more than Knight's puppet in this regard, tending mostly to administrative duties while giving Knight the wheel. Soaring Owl has a rather unspectacular record given his tenure; he performs adequately, but is hardly noteworthy.

Despite persistent data-sifting, I couldn't find anything to explain why Knight would keep this shadow of a man in such a lofty position. Soaring Owl occasionally butts heads with his boss concerning company practices,

but only on matters where Knight's methods are impractical or too costly. So far as I know, Soaring Owl has never directly challenged Knight's authority.

- Somehow, Soaring Owl and Knight know each other from their military days, when Soaring Owl was a Sioux Defense Force pilot and Knight was known as Major Gavilan. I've heard rumors that Soaring Owl was a spy for the palefaces, but the sources aren't very credible.

- Everett

- You've got it backwards. Soaring Owl's a spy all right—for the Sioux. He's been leaking them intel for years, and has arranged for a certain percentage of Ares Arms products to be "lost" each year in Sioux territory.

- Stretch

- It's not just the Sioux that Soaring Owl discreetly aids; he's got a strong network both within Ares and throughout North America of "former" NAN military types. Either he's one hell of a recruiter for Knight, or he's building his own Amerindian power base.

- Misty B

Knight Errant has expanded since its early days, when it basically provided top-of-the-line corp security. Nowadays, KE's services include municipal policing contracts, urban crisis management, special forces operations and counter-insurgency campaigns. Many governments have used KE to combat insurrections, civil disturbances and extremist policlubs. KE differs from standard mercenary outfits, as it specializes in low-intensity warfare operations and utilizes a number of well-developed infiltration schemes. The elite KE "FireWatch" teams are special forces commandos, equipped with top-notch cyberware and hard-hitting magic.

KE recently founded the Awakened Control Center upon realizing that the insect spirit menace in Chicago was not an isolated event. Little more than a fancy name for exterminators, the ACC has crack teams placed in strategic locations around the globe to defend against any Awakened threat—for a price, of course.

KE has been working hard at developing new non-lethal weaponry, partly in a bid to win the orichalcum left in Dunkelzahn's will to the first company to invent a non-lethal weapon that is affordable and accurate to a hundred meters.

- KE already submitted one claim: a riot club with a device built-in that can generate a directional sonic blast. The harmonics stunned targets, and caused them to suffer incapacitating nausea and cramping. Nadja Daviar blocked it, claiming its accuracy and range failed to meet the Draco Foundation's requirements. Despite the setback, Knight Errant is still working on the project, and it may eventually become a staple of the Knight Errant arsenal.

- Errant Knight



● Sounds nasty, but I'd rather face that than the previous prototype they had on the drawing board: some sort of backpack/rifle unit that ionized air along a targeting path, then released a bolt of electricity at the target. They were having quite a few problems with manufacturing costs however, not to mention its unpleasant effects on targets with cyberware.

● Lab Rat

The Unseen

For some time now there have been internal rumors regarding a grouping of magical operatives that are expert at remaining untraced. Allegedly, this was a division or initiatory group that Knight ordered to be created to better counter the likes of Cross' Seraphim and the Draco Foundations' magical skills. After some digging, I determined this rumor to be mostly false: no such internal Ares grouping exists.

However, I did discover something close. First I found two case reports that hinted strongly that initiates capable of unknown concealment metamagic have acted in concert with, or on behalf of, KE operations. Upon further investigation, I pinpointed five individuals, all initiates and followers of shamanic traditions. These five came from tribal groupings in Pueblo, Yakut and elsewhere, and have some sort of working relationship with Amerindians employed by KE. They are too sympathetic towards Ares to be spies, but too independent to be Ares-employed. They appear to be highly-skilled freelancers or allies, though their goals remain unclear. Unfortunately, my research drew their attention, and the bulk of the data I had accumulated was conveniently destroyed days ago. Undoubtedly, they are watching me now.

ARES ARMS

Ares Arms makes every type of weapon you can think of, from hold-outs to broadswords to missiles to tanks, and that's just the beginning. Add in every kind of accessory and piece of combat gear you can think of, cause they probably make them too.

On a global scale, Ares Arms is the largest weapons distributor, providing weapons to corps, governments and rebels alike. This division views any conflict as a prof-

it-making opportunity, and has no qualms with equipping opposing factions simultaneously. The marketing directors of Ares Arms are geniuses at supply and demand; they talk one side of a war into escalating their battle technology, thus forcing the other side to upgrade their gear as well in a never-ending arms race.

● Ares Arms has actually been known to intervene here and there to make certain some conflicts keep going or that one faction doesn't wipe out another; they don't make money when truces are signed or when wars are won.

● Bouncing Betty

● Knight Errant and Ares Arms have a scheme they run where they play off each other's actions. Usually, the way it works is Ares Arms delivers a few weapons shipments to some Third World guerrilla faction, encouraging them to raise more of a ruckus. Then Knight Errant steps in, offering its counter-insurgency expertise to the besieged government. They mop up the rebels, then back out, and a year later they start the cycle again.

● Steel Lynx

General Guido Cantarelli is still on the roster as Executive VP of this subsidiary, despite the fact that he's as scattered as a frag grenade. It may cost the production crew an extra thirty-odd takes, but Guido delivers in Ares Arms promotional ads with the fervor and determination of a true war hero—which, despite the Alzheimer's, he is.

● From what I hear they use a pair of mages to control the General's thoughts and actions. Sometimes they also use illusion spells to create an Israeli soldier named Maya who supposedly "calms" the General down (ah, the things you discover with mind probes).

● Special FX

● Maya's the name of Guido's cat, you drekwits. Don't count Guido out yet. He's a sly old fox, and he certainly didn't earn all his decorations by letting his opponents take advantage of him.

● Mongoose

Troy Carpenter is the one really calling the shots in Ares Arms, but he may not be around for long. For years now, Carpenter has been using his position as Number Two in the division to restructure production and distribution. In fact, he's done such an excellent job of selling, to both legal and shadow buyers, that he's essentially flooded the markets, driving down Ares profits. If he isn't careful, he'll find Number Three—General Zachary Klausen—replacing him.

ARESPACE

When Ares took over NASA, they also took on the pioneering position in off-world development, and they show no sign of letting go. Ares currently has five operational orbital habitats, with a sixth under construction. These habitats range the gamut, from the cramped workstation *Artemis* to the research station *Daedalus* to the large, semi-commercial torus *Icarus*. These habitats, while hideously expensive, are also quite profitable for Ares thanks to microgravity research and production, communication services and global weather and geological analysis. Ares is also looking into opening up *Icarus* as an orbital vacation spot, to compete with Yamatetsu's plans.

● Considering the safety record of Ares' habitats, I'd pick Yamatetsu's. I have no desire to suck vacuum because some underpaid slob forgot to replace a seal gasket.

● Inspector 12

● Ares has another space station that they don't like to publicize: *Helios*. I don't know what its purpose is, or even what orbit it's in.

● Bellerophon

● That's cuz *Helios* isn't in orbit around Earth, you snot.

● Orbital Bandit

Down in the Houston headquarters, Director Charles Pollack is one hell of a taskmaster. Since his promotion to AresSpace VP two years ago, he has overseen the completion of the *Icarus* and pushed forward their lunar habitat plans by two-years. His predecessor, Dacia Lucas, left Ares to join Aurelius at Cross Applied Technologies. Knight assigned Pollack as her replacement under the "sink or swim" proviso of Knight's timetable. Lucky for Pollack, he has surpassed Knight's requirements, forcing his division to operate constantly at peak performance levels.

● A whole section of the *Daedalus* habitat was set aside as a special "research gulag." It seems Ares has decided to put some of those pesky criminal magicians they have in prison up in orbit, where they can be used for extra-biosphere magical experiments. Needless to say, few last long.

● Ad Astra

If you've ever watched the weekly NBS science show "Final Frontier," you know that Ares has maintained a

lunar compound near the original Apollo 11 landing site on the Sea of Tranquility. The compound boasts research facilities ranging from medicine to geology. Primarily, however, it serves as a front for Ares' primary lunar concern: the Aitken Basin Project on the dark side of the Lunar South Pole. This moonbase seems to play a key role in his future agenda, whatever that may be.

● What about Ares' bases on Mars?

● MUFON Boy

● Ares has no interest in Mars, there's nothing there that's immediately profitable to them.

● Eldritch

● The other megas—not to mention the amateur astronomers of the world—have enough eyes to the sky that undertaking any secret space missions is incredibly difficult. Of course, a mega like Ares has many resources at its disposal ...

● Orbital Bandit

ARES GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT

Five years ago, Gustov Von Sydow dragged the North American Broadcasting System (NBS)—a wholly-owned Ares subsidiary—and its affiliates from the brink of ratings annihilation. Long-considered a dry network that did nothing but spew boring corp propaganda, Sydow transformed it into an exciting network spewing out flashy corp propaganda. This feat made him the new head honcho of Ares Global Entertainment (AGE) when former VP Lakha retired.

After the Detroit riots PR disaster for Ares, Von Sydow kicked off a complete image overhaul campaign for Ares Macrotechnology. With the help of his insufferable French toady, Jean-Pierre Dupre, Von Sydow has gained Knight's permission to revitalize Ares-controlled outlets with the aim of dominating the media battlefield. With Jean-Pierre as the Johnson, Von Sydow has employed a vast network of shadowrunners in sabotage and datasteals against competing media consortiums.

Von Sydow's campaign is simple, make Ares look good, by any means necessary. Predictably, any chance they get to smear the opposition, particularly Cross, is jumped upon.

Surprisingly, one of Von Sydow's most dangerous enemies comes from within Ares: Karen King, division head of Ares Seattle. Von Sydow started off a feud when a run he sponsored in Seattle went bad, and someone had to take the heat. Rather than leaving Dupre on the spit to cook (it was his frag up, after all), Von Sydow pinned it on King. King's a tough lady, and doesn't take drek, so she cornered Von Sydow in a studio one day and undressed him in front of all his cronies. Major loss of face. Since then, Von Sydow goes out of his way to make King and Ares Seattle look bad, and King responds by fragging up AGE ops in "her turf." Unless Knight steps in, it's just going to keep getting uglier.

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After the Detroit riots PR disaster for Ares, Von Sydow kicked off a complete image overhaul campaign for Ares Macrotechnology. With the help of his insufferable French roach, Jean-Pierre Dupre, Von Sydow has gained Knight's permission to revitalize Ares-controlled outlets with the aim of dominating the media battlefield. With Jean-Pierre as the Johnson, Von Sydow has employed a vast network of shadowrunners in sabotage and datasteals against competing media consortiums.

Von Sydow's campaign is simple, make Ares look good, by any means necessary. Predictably, any chance they get to smear the opposition, particularly Cross, is jumped upon.

Surprisingly, one of Von Sydow's most dangerous enemies comes from within Ares: Karen King, division head of Ares Seattle. Von Sydow started off a feud when a run he sponsored in Seattle went bad, and someone had to take the heat. Rather than leaving Dupre on the spit to cook (it was his frag up, after all), Von Sydow pinned it on King. King's a tough lady, and doesn't take drek, so she cornered Von Sydow in a studio one day and undressed him in front of all his cronies. Major loss of face. Since then, Von Sydow goes out of his way to make King and Ares Seattle look bad, and King responds by fragging up AGE ops in "her turf." Unless Knight steps in, it's just going to keep getting uglier.

ARES MACROTECHNOLOGY

- My bet's on King. She's much more accustomed to fighting dirty and under the table.
- Count Orlock

GENERAL MOTORS

In a move considered long overdue, Ares purchased a majority of General Motors stock in 2059. The buyout consolidated Knight's monopoly over the city of Detroit, but it also caused heavy friction with neighboring Ford Corporation, which used to bid against GM for Ares contracts.

GM's incorporation into the Ares fold has come with enough media hype (especially from NBS) to make Armageddon a second-tier story on the newsfeeds. Ares' new line of GM smartcars arrived with equal hype. According to the sales pitch, this line of vehicles is designed to keep the common UCAS family shielded and safe from the dangerous outside world.

- Lucky me, I'll tell the wife and kids. FYI, these new smartcars are basically a rehash of older models with extra armor, stronger theft deterrent features, mobile PANICBUTTON technology and various other options dear to paranoids.
- Rigger X

Eugene Fischer has kept his position as head of GM under Ares, but he's on the road to early retirement, in my opinion. His lackluster performance single-handedly kept the smartcar line from meeting UCAS government regulations for almost a year. Knight hates anyone not giving 150 percent, and he's already grooming an ex-Fuchi staffer named Tobias Czank for Fischer's job. Czank is a dwarf, an engineering mastermind and probably one of the brightest minds in VTOL technology in the world. I talked with him after his extraction, and he's a little reluctant to move from the workshop to the boardroom, but he apparently loves nuyen more than his engine designs.

OTHER DIVISIONS

In addition to the functional divisions outlined above, Ares also has a number of regional-based divisions: Ares-UCAS, Ares-CAS, Ares Europe and so on. Each of these divisions has numerous sub-divisions and subsidiaries. For example, Hard Corps, Ares' secondary security company, is primarily UCAS-based and so falls under the jurisdiction of Ares-UCAS. Likewise, Ares Integrated Solutions, which produces machine tools and automated, mobile production and repair facilities for small arms to outlets around Europe, falls under Ares-Europe.

WORKING FOR ARES

The relationship between Ares and its employees is very ... American. The typical Ares employee considers their work and home life to be quite separate, when in reality they are highly integrated. The majority of Ares employees may not grow up and live within an Ares corporate enclave, but their lives are definitively influenced by a subtle Ares presence: they drive GM cars home from work to watch NBS on the trid, usually in a city protected by crime from Knight Errant (and there's always their Ares Predator for home defense). In many UCAS areas such as Detroit, Ares runs the town in all but name, to say nothing of its influence upon UCAS national politics and agendas. Rather than acknowledging his dependence on the corp, the Ares employee takes his lifetime support of Ares as a point of workingman's pride. He lives as if the company were dependent on him, which makes for powerful loyalty: "I can't do less than my best. The company is counting on me." Ares fosters this corporate patriotism by carefully entwining it with UCAS jingoism. This attitude even extends to some company men working the shadows.

ARES IN THE SHADOWS

Those of you reading this will be pleased to know that most shadowrunners who work for Ares live to enjoy their payments. Ares is a good mega to work for, for several reasons. KE and Ares Arms make it easy to get ahold of quality hardware for Ares-sponsored ops. Occasionally, Ares will even pass out prototype models for "field testing" in exchange for a debriefing on the item's performance for R&D purposes. In fact, Ares prefers to pay its operatives with hardware credit, which leaves less of a document trail to link Ares with any illegal operations. Ares also frequently issues DocWagon coverage bracelets to its "subcontractors" for the duration of their tenure. The more paranoid of you might like to verify their authenticity; I always issued bracelets to my expendable assets, but if we didn't want them to come back they were forgeries (you should see what a person will do if they think their hoop will be saved) or loaded with tracer technology if we thought they might skip out.

For the most part, Ares Johnsons are on the level, and will do what they can to support hired operatives. But like any mega, Ares occasionally has a need for expendable assets, preferably runners who have good working relationships with rivals like Cross. So if you work for Ares, check out your Johnson, and make sure he's not my replacement.

AZTECHNOLOGY

by The Chromed Accountant and Pyramid Watcher

Welcome, to the strangest show in town.

When Aztechnology is mentioned to a denizen of the shadows, it brings to their mind lurid tales of blood magicians and evil conspiracies—as well it should. And yet The Big A is still here and by all reports doing pretty damn good. In fact, some pundits put it as the current number two mega just after the all-powerful Saeder-Krupp.

How can this be, you ask? Isn't all that creepy blood magic stuff important to the general public? The answer is simple: no. Don't get me wrong, most of the bad things said about Aztechnology are true—some of us know better than most! But it's all just so much muck sliding off of Aztechnology's Teflon coating.

Let's look at some facts:

- The Aztechnology empire is the world's number one producer of consumer goods.
- More than a billion people own products directly or indirectly produced by the Big A.
- You probably used, ate or bought something produced by the Big A in the last hour, but didn't realize it. For example, if you stopped at the Stuffer Shack (about 60 percent of the products within one are Big A produced) and picked up a best-selling Hot Mama Nuke'em burger, you just contributed to the twenty-seven billion nuyen Aztechnology will likely rake in from Stuffer Shacks alone worldwide.
- Aztechnology's sales continue to rise no matter what the shadow community exposes.

How do they do it? Three words: P—freaking—R. The Azzies have an amazing Public Relations machine. All the megacorps run morally questionable secret operations, but only Aztechnology seems to repeatedly survive the exposure of them unscathed. Most non-shadow denizens don't even understand the Big A's connection to Aztlan (more on that later), and those who do don't appear to care. This makes Aztechnology dangerous because it can get away with murder (literally); the average consumer will buy Aztech products anyway. Whether you consider it brand loyalty, spin doctoring or consumer brainwashing, Aztechnology has mastered it.

- Laying it on a bit thick, ain't he? People can't be that stupid.
- Tyro

• New to this, aren't ya? Check this: When those grisly trid shots were released in the CAS and UCAS that implicated Aztechnology soldiers as responsible for the Campeche massacre, the Azzies' market share in those countries rose slightly. The same thing happened when the news broke in Europe. Sad though it is, Aztechnology's PR people have the general public well in hand.

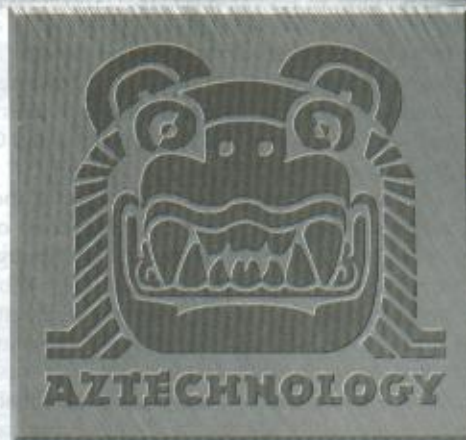
• Ranger

• Did you ever notice that when some bad stink about some Aztechnology operation hits the news, their subsidiaries suddenly unleash a media blitz about some great new and improved products? The standard consumer retains the bad news for about five seconds, then forgets all about it.

• Garbonzo Bean

• You can always tell when the Azzies are feeling some heat—they'll release seven new products at once. Remember that big shindig near the Texas border right after the Big D died? Everyone forgot it once they saw that cute little ad campaign that featured a surveillance drone checking on the bath products people used. I don't blame 'em, I still laugh at that one myself.

• Harker



World Headquarters: Tenochtitlán, Aztlan

President/CEO: Juan Atzacapotzalco

Chairman of the Board: Unknown

Corporate Status: Private Corporation

Primary Known Shareholders: Domingo Chavez, Oliver McClure, "Motecuhzoma," Domingo Ramos, Thomas Roxborough, Tsurunaga Shinoyama, Anna Villalobos

Major Subsidiaries: BANCOMEXT, Dassault, Free Transit Cartage, Genetique, Hawker-Siddeley, Marine Technologies, Maritech Enterprises, MediCarra, Natural Vat Technologies, Optical Dreams, Pemex, Productos Cultivatos, Pyramid Operations, Televisa, Très Chic Cosmetics

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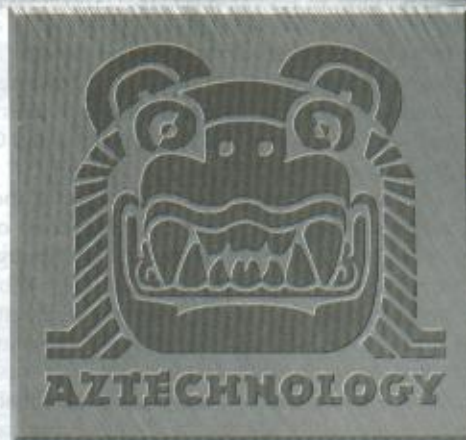
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RISE OF A CORPORATE EMPIRE

Like most of the megacorps, Aztechnology existed long before the Awakening in one form or another. It started when a group of drug cartels bought a resource development company in 2007 and renamed it ORO Corporation. The name comes from the three major cartel leaders who established it: Ortega, Ramos and Ortiz. ORO, incidentally, also means "gold" in Spanish.

The very next year, huge deposits of the valuable metal molybdenum were found off the coast of Panama, where only ORO had exploitation rights. Though nothing was ever proved, ORO obviously had prior knowledge of the deposits and had taken steps to ensure that only it had access. The profits from the molybdenum brought ORO into the industrial major league.

Over the next few years, ORO essentially bought control over several Central and South American governments, including Panama, Colombia, Nicaragua and Honduras. Those countries, at ORO's urging, revoked all laws preventing the copying, repackaging, re-engineering and so on of software products. ORO subsidiaries began "pirating" and selling software products at much-reduced prices, undercutting the world market and turning an immense profit. The existing megacorps weren't pleased, but had little power to fight it, as those countries did not yet acknowledge their corporate extraterritoriality and their governments all backed ORO.

The VITAS plague swept through Mexico in 2010, and ORO took the PR opportunity to provide medicine and humanitarian aid. In 2011, the Mexican government collapsed, giving ORO its chance to gain control. The corp built the first Matrix-based electoral system as a "public service"—in reality, it allowed ORO to control the votes and thus the government of Mexico from 2015 on. ORO's chosen puppet was the Azatlán Party, led (on paper, at least) by Francisco Pavón. The party advocated a return to Mexico's roots, and Pavón's first act upon election to the Presidency was to rename his country Aztlan.

In response to the relative stability of the Aztlan government compared to those of other Mesoamerican nations, ORO moved its headquarters to the Aztlan capital of Tenochtitlán. In 2022, ORO renamed itself Aztechnology Corporation and recast its image as a new organization via an enormous public relations campaign. Aztechnology spent the next twenty years helping Aztlan expand northward and southward, until Aztlan contained most of the smaller countries ORO had formerly controlled, as well as parts of the old United States.

● Helping themselves, you mean. Aztechnology controlled Aztlan's government then, and it still does. Aztlan is basically a division of Aztechnology.

● Cheshire

In 2044, following Aztechnology's orders, Aztlan nationalized all holdings belonging to other megacorps in the country. The megacorps fought back in 2048 by

launching Operation Reciprocity, a military strike on Aztechnology's Ensenada facilities that was backed by the Corporate Court. The Azzies gave in to the other corps' demands, but managed to do all right for themselves at the bargaining table. The resulting Veracruz Settlement dictated that Aztechnology pay direct compensation to all corps whose assets it had nationalized, that other megacorps could only establish local subsidiaries in Aztlan, and that major shareholders in those subsidiaries must be Aztlan citizens or majority-owned Aztlaner corps.

● Is this the first example of the Corp Court's infamous Omega Order?

● Arclight

● I don't think so. None of the Azzie assets outside Aztlan were hit—if the corps had free rein, they would have been. Reciprocity was just short of it, though—all the megas working together to take one of their own down a peg.

● Beowulf

In 2050, a massacre of civilians by Aztlan soldiers near the city of Campeche sparked a civil war. The Yucatán area, long a hotbed of resentment, had been a powderkeg waiting to explode for years, and Campeche set it off. The rebels have managed to "liberate" significant sections of the Yucatán through constantly changing guerrilla tactics, but Aztechnology has continued to commit more troops and better weapons to the front. It's an open secret that Amazonia is helping the guerrillas, who likely would have folded without that aid.

● All this history is more important than you think. To the megas, this stuff all happened yesterday. Most of them are still pissed at Aztechnology for piracy and other stunts it pulled when it was ORO, not to mention the more recent nationalization. Veracruz just happened, in their long view. If you know this basic history, you can better understand the relationship between the Azzies and other corps, and understanding aids survival.

● Argent

Recent developments in the megacorporate world (the fall of Fuchi and rise of Novatech, Cross and Wuxing) have shifted the power scales. The Big A has jumped to Number Two in the world overall, and has made friendly overtures to all three of the new megas. So far, only Cross has answered with a tentative agreement, but it seems fairly clear that Aztechnology is scooping its competition and re-making itself in the consumer's mind.

● Cross has a little more than a tentative agreement with the Azzies. They both view Ares as a primary rival, and Ares' home turf is stuck smack between their own. Count on seeing some joint operations to put the squeeze on Ares.

● Turner

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MasDougall

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

The basic structure of the Big A is fairly well known, but specifics are few and far between. Aztechnology is a private corp, meaning it doesn't have to file reports with the various Securities and Exchange Commissions or send out reports to shareholders. The most important benefit of being private, though, is that the Azzies don't have to publicly identify their major shareholders. They can keep the names of the corp's actual owners under more wraps than a bag lady on a freezing night. We have rumors, speculation and some spotty facts, but we're still missing several pieces of the puzzle.

THE SHADOWY BOARD

The Board of Directors are the people who really run the show. Though Aztlan law requires that board members' names be made public, the government has (unsurprisingly) chosen to waive that requirement in the Big A's case. We don't know how many board members there are—our best informed guess is around a dozen. We do know that Aztechnology's Corporate Court Justice is always a board member. Rather than sending a puppet to the Court, they prefer their mouthpiece to know the full score.

- Rather, they couldn't figure out a way to sustain control manipulation spells in space, so they had to resort to sending a slog who knows the score.
- Cheshire

Though we don't know who all the directors are, we have managed to ID a few, detailed below. All we have for the rest are unsubstantiated rumors: a feathered serpent, a free spirit, long-time Great Chief of the Ute Nation Margaret Howling Coyote, an AI and corporate president Juan Atzcapotzalco. We think these rumors are all false, but we couldn't find proof one way or the other.

We do know that something happened to a major board member named Oscuro within the past three or four years, and he's faded into the background. We've seen evidence of serious power struggles on the board since then, the kind that happen when a big player goes down.

Though all the directors have their own agendas, in addition to raking in nuyen, they seem united towards a goal of recreating the Aztec Empire, and not just in Central America. They've done a hell of a job implementing this agenda in Aztlan, especially with religion and culture. But it's clear now that they're not restricting this program to geographical borders; Aztechnology enclaves and sites around the world are adopting cultural practices considered normal in Aztlan now, from architecture to music to worship to sports.

- Certain evidence points to the fact that the high priests of Aztlan's religion—the Path of the Sun—meet regularly with Aztechnology's board, taking their orders directly from on high.
- Doc

Here are the board members we've unveiled:

Thomas Roxborough

Roxborough is a sleazy corporate raider who's made his fortune through hostile takeovers, and who owns shares in numerous smaller corps. When people call him a slimebag, they're correct—literally. You see, Roxy isn't really human anymore ... what he actually is we leave for you to decide. A degenerative genetic disorder turned his body into a disgusting mass of useless flesh; he survives in a vat through treatments from Universal Omnitech doctors.

Roxy's brain is still intact (theoretically), and he still conducts business through the Matrix or via holotrid projections. However, in late 2057, right around the time Oscuro seems to have been removed from the board, Roxy disappeared from the Matrix for a week. In the shakeup that followed, Roxy seems to have abandoned most of his plans (the ones we know anything about) and become a recluse.

Within the past year, Roxy's influence has begun to be exercised again. He appears to be working primarily through Hector Ramirez, Aztlan's Denver Council rep. Ramirez has been given a top position in Genetique, an up and coming biotechnology Big A subsidiary favored by Roxborough.

- Roxy owns about 5 percent of Universal Omnitech. It's why UO doctors oversee him rather than Azzie ones—he figures they're more impartial. UO and Aztechnology (through Genetique) have co-released numerous medical and genetic research documents over the last year, implying that UO may have other ties to Aztechnology besides Roxy. The Azzies definitely have a good reason to be chummy with UO: they're pursuing inclusion in the Pacific Prosperity Group, of which UO is a member. You can bet Yamatetsu and Wuxing will have something to say about that ...

- Hoosier Hackers
"Hacking More Than Corn"

- Roxborough has been confronted by his past, and is paying for his crimes now. He doesn't need your awe or your pity. He deserves everything that has happened to him.
- Alice

Domingo Chavez

Until recently, Chavez was Aztechnology's Corp Court Justice. He's been gaining wealth and influence since Oscuro's fall, and is becoming quite a power in the corp. Perhaps he's filling a leadership void, or perhaps he's just pursuing a ruthless agenda to expand his power. We don't have a background on him, or much info at all, except that he's a mage—though not, as far as we know, a blood magician. Personal accounts describe him as arrogant and self-obsessed, with a strong machismo attitude.

• Chavez makes it a practice to get ritual samples from people who cross him. He uses them to get revenge.

• Toro

• Yeah, right. Chavez is too busy getting rich for drek like that. Just because he's a mage don't mean he uses magic to do everything. He can hire people to get his revenge for him.

• Carter

Anna Villalobos

Villalobos is the Big A's new Corp Court Justice, replacing Chavez. She is Chavez' protégé and owes her position to him. That puts her in his debt, and she's made it her duty and obligation to keep him fully aware of the Court's machinations. At the present, she appears to be a minor power on the board (backing Chavez), and we've yet to see much action from her.

Domingo Ramos

"Ding" Ramos is an elf and the son of Julio Ramos, the "R" in ORO. He inherited his shares, and has been fairly quiet lately—he seems content to sit back and enjoy his wealth. He loves to travel and is constantly hopping the globe and hobnobbing with various high-society cliques.

• Ding is a Lord of Vices (fitting for the son of a vice lord). His personal palace near Concepcion in Panama has a number of outlandish and esoteric features, including a personal zoo and a dungeon that would make the Marquis De Sade green with envy.

• Lola

Tsurunaga Shinoyama

Shinoyama is another one who's exploited the recent power struggles to advance himself. He jumped ship from Fuchi about ten years ago and so impressed Aztechnology with his ability to read and manipulate consumer trends that he was offered the position of Chief Information Officer. At the time he was pegged as just a pawn of one of the board members, but during the recent board upheavals, he was apparently given the chance to buy out someone else's shares (Oscuro's?) and promptly moved up the food chain. His current agenda is unknown.

• Nakatomi tried to have him greased when he left Fuchi. Shinoyama's never forgiven him, and that hatred has followed Nakatomi to Renraku. Any conflict between the two corps has a good chance of originating from that feud.

• Link

Oliver McClure

McClure sticks out on the board like a sore thumb. A well-established and respected civic leader from Québec City, McClure was awarded his Aztechnology stock and board seat in Dunkelzahn's will. The presence of an outsider threw the board into chaos for a short while. They first attempted to assassinate him (three failed attempts

to date), then attempted to buy him (Chavez offered him control of Aztechnology's Enterprise Zone in Québec City) to no avail. McClure is a businessman with a conscience, and he's tried hard to apply it in board meetings. Domingo Ramos mocks McClure continuously, and Chavez clearly disdains him, but despite this, McClure's honesty and charisma have gained him support.

Motecuhzoma

This one's just a name. We traced several runs back to this entity (it could be a group as well as person) and struck out trying to dig up any further info. There's more digging to be done here, but we're going to have to find some deeper cracks in the that big pyramid in Tenochtitlán first.

• Motecuhzoma was the name of two of the Aztec kings. Could this just be another name for Atzcapotzalco, the Big A's President?

• Del Vientos

• I made a run once for a Johnson against some guy he called Motecuhzoma. I got an astral peek at him, and he looked almost like he was possessed by a spirit. He had some major mojo, so I beat feet while I could. Think it's the same guy?

• Wizworm

THE PUPPET PRESIDENT

The office of President and CEO of Aztechnology has been a farce for some time. Theoretically, the person in these positions would run Aztechnology. In truth, the current incumbent, Juan Atzcapotzalco, has been the board's puppet ever since he got his job, more than seventeen years ago. The board presents him to the public as a "little farmer from Guadalajara that made good," and he plays a big part in their PR strategies. He's been nearly invisible for over a decade, never appearing officially in person and rarely even showing up on internal corp trid. He only seems to come out of hiding for public announcements. No record of Juan as a board member exists, though usually a CEO/Prez would have a board seat too.

Dunkelzahn left Atzcapotzalco a box in his will, with instructions to open it during the next Festival de Muertos (Festival of the Dead for those of you without your Spanish lingua-filters running). This fueled rumors that Atzcapotzalco was dead and his body under the control of the board. On the specified day, Atzcapotzalco showed up in person at the Draco Foundation Headquarters in Washington DC, opened the box, thanked Nadja Daviar and the other Draco heads, and walked right back out again. Since then, he's disappeared ... and this time it seems to be permanently. He hasn't shown his face in public since then, and they're recycling old recordings of him for necessary trid spots. On paper, he remains corp president.

• Sometimes I would kill to be an astral speck on the wall.

• Shetani



● The loss of Atzacapotzalco hasn't meant much to the board—they're still using his image as a figurehead, and the Aztecs seem to be buying it. Of course, who knows how they'd react if they learned the truth about their hero?

● FastJack

● I saw Atzacapotzalco several months ago, during a run into Aztlan. We were holed up in an abandoned insane asylum near Quetzalzacatenango, and we got some help from some unhappy citizens. He was hiding with them, but he left when he realized I'd recognized him.

● Apollo

● He's down in Amazonia now. I don't know why, but they're protecting him—maybe they want the secrets he knows about Aztechnology.

● Toro

● I spotted Juan down in the CFS, during **(.8 Mp deleted by SysOp)**

● Thibault

● Okay, children, enough "I saw Juan" stories. Back on topic.

● Captain Chaos

MAJOR OFFICERS

Aside from the directors and prez, Aztechnology has several other important corp officers. Even though they sit on the board, these positions are considered to have non-voting status, a situation unique to the Big A.

The Chief Operating Officer is an old man named Diego Chavez (no relation to Domingo, as far as we know), who got his start as a bodyguard to one of ORO's founders and worked his way up the ranks as an assassin and expeditor. He still knows his stuff, and is one of the deadliest enemies you can make in Aztlan.

● About four years back, a team of Tir elves tried to kidnap Diego when he was visiting Denver, probably hoping to rape his mind for what he knows about Aztechnology's internal machinations. They got through his bodyguards, but he single-handedly held 'em off until reinforcements arrived.

● Eli

Another oldie but goodie, Carmencita Rico, is the Chief Financial Officer and has been in that position for at least ten years. She has no past that we could find—someone with the same name was registered as a mid-level accountant about fifteen years ago in the Seattle offices, but if she's the same woman, we can't prove it. Despite her age (seventy-something), she has quite a reputation as a man-eater.

The current Chief Information Officer is Francisco Guzman, a close personal friend of Domingo Chavez. Guzman is infamous for his memory retention skills; he never forgets names or faces, and can recall what he ate for dinner exactly 159 days ago. Maintaining the Aztech

Management Information System is on the level of a side project for him. Chavez usually directs him towards managing more important projects.

Aztechnology's major divisions are allegedly represented to the board by four figureheads: José Escobedo, Juan LaTorre, Peter Morales and Carmelita Rocha. Their bios are all pretty similar; they're sixtyish, have worked about thirty years with the Big A and are viewed by the wageslave masses as power players. In reality, this group of Senior Executive VPs is just padding. They're at the top of the Big A ladder, and still have no real power.

MAJOR DIVISIONS

Aztechnology contains six primary divisions: North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Australasia, each run by a senior vice president. The HQ in Tenochtitlán runs the whole show, but is technically part of the North American division.

Each of the six official divisions is divided into regional subdivisions, run by a junior vice president or a managing director. The junior execs have carte blanche to run their areas as they see fit, as long as they show profit. Of course, the bigwigs can hold them personally responsible for any frag-up anywhere in their organization, down to the lowliest grunt worker; the stress level is intense, to say the least. Turnover in these positions is pretty high.

- So if a bigwig has it out for a junior veep, all he has to do is wait for anyone in that veep's regional division to screw up and the veep's history? That's harsh.

- Hotel

- Or arrange for a problem to happen. Now we see why all the senior executive veeps are such mindless suck-ups; they've got the same problem, with more chances to blow it.

- Happy Cap'n

- Of course that scenario will only work if the lower-veep wasn't chosen by a board member. In Aztechnology it's all about power bases. You have to do your legwork. You never know if someone is a relative, a protégé or a friend of a friend of someone on the board.

- Pumas

PRIMARY BUSINESS CONCERNS

Taking over the world requires nuyen, so even Aztechnology makes profits a priority. Consumer goods continue to be their primary cash rake, with food production and military gear right behind. After several years spent divesting itself from vulnerable heavy industry facilities, Aztechnology's board seems to have swung about and is now re-structuring a large percentage of their industrial sites. Typically, this strategy has meant selling off all of their older facilities to smaller corps that need them at inflated values. Newly-designed expert systems are also sold to the purchasing corp to help them run the

machinery, and a percentage of the previous Aztech employees are rented out as "workforce trainers." The profits from these deals are then used to build SOTA facilities in countries where workforces are cheaper to buy. It's an old strategy, but it still works.

- Not only does Aztechnology end up with more modern, cheaper to run facilities at little cost, but you can be sure they're using backdoors in those expert systems and reports from those "trainers" to collect valuable information on the smaller corps.

- Blue Tag

The Big A is currently concentrating on chemicals, software, military technology and mystical goods and services. Aztech forces use some of the chemical and military products against the rebels in the Yucatán, but most of it hits the world market. Aztechnology's latest software package releases have been expert systems for holographic database management, interactive marketing research, traffic grids and multi-user games. Mystical goods are generally limited to spell and foci formulas and enchanting materials. Aztechnology has also been breaking ground with magical services, contracting out the Awakened for anything from enchanting to security to training.

- I've heard the Azzies have hired some blood mages out as mercenaries in the Desert Wars.

- Redfoot

- That's the magical equivalent of using nerve gas in training exercises—not bloody likely. And if they did, those mages would be target numero uno; I doubt many would survive long.

- Hangfire

Recently, Aztechnology has increased biotechnology and cybernetics research, with a focus on pharmaceuticals and combat-oriented bodyware. There's some evidence that a number of combat drugs and implants are being field-tested against the Yucatán rebels.

HOLDINGS AND SUBSIDIARIES

The Big A has holdings across the world. The largest, though unofficial, is Aztlan itself. With iron control over the Matrix voting system, Aztechnology essentially owns Aztlan, and even provides security for the nation. This control extends to anyplace officially run by the Aztlan government, such as the Aztlan Sector of Denver. Aztechnology has also been granted an Enterprise Zone in Québec City.

The majority of Aztechnology's major subsidiaries are based in Aztlan. For example, the Azzies own Pemex (Petroleos Mexicanos), Aztlan's national petrochem corp, as well as Televisa, the major media conglomerate. BAN-COMEXT (Banco Nacional de Comercio Exterior), Aztlan's foreign trade bank, is Aztechnology property, as is MediCarro, the Azzie version of DocWagon.

- MediCarro is basically a DocWagon franchise. DocWagon runs it for the Azzies, and it provides care to DocWagon patrons in Aztlan as well as to its own customers.
- Socio Pat

Outside Aztlan, Aztechnology has subsidiaries in most countries. Of those who restrict the Azzies from operating inside their borders, the two Tirs (Tairngire and na nÓg) are the best-known, though the Philippine Islands, Cuba and Amazonia also deny the Big A access. On paper, Aztechnology can't do business in the California Free State either—but its CFS subsidiary, Pyramid Operations, tells the real story. One of the corp's biggest plums is Genetique in the Algonkian-Manitou Council. As payment for services rendered, Council leaders granted the Big A an open-ended contract to "super-verse" all future grain genetics work for the Council. This contract has brought Aztechnology major nuyen, and Genetique has branched out into other genetic research fields. From this foothold, Genetique has also been used to buy up numerous smaller A-M corps, making Aztech the most influential corp in the nation.

- Council citizens have engaged in serious rioting to protest such influence being granted to foreigners, so far to no avail.
- The Keynesian Kid

SECURITY

The Azzies are fragging paranoid. Period. Every megacorp puts meganuyen into security, but Aztechnology takes it to an extreme. Though company paranoia lessens a bit outside Aztlan, runs against the Big A are guaranteed to be deadly no matter where you are.

Magical Security

Aztechnology is rightly famous for its magical security. A higher-than-normal percentage of magically active individuals work for Aztechnology Corporate Security (ACS), and these assets are usually integrated with mundane forces for overall better protection. ACS Magicians are under orders to also provide magical support when they're not around, meaning you may run into mundane troops protected by sustained and anchored spells, spirit help or foci. Shamans are as common as mages, with favored totems being Snake, Jaguar, Scorpion, Wolf, Puma, Dog and Plumed Serpent. Quite a few adepts also serve in the ACS, as do a small number of aspected magicians.

- Most of the aspected magicians are conjurers, who use their spirits for astral patrols and physical backup if necessary.
- Carter

ACS magicians use watcher spirits extensively as sentries, usually in pairs, commanded to alert their masters whenever they spot a magical intrusion. More sensitive areas are usually patrolled by paranatural animals.

The Azzies seem to prefer hellhounds and piasmae, but nagas, cockatrices and basilisks are also fairly common, as are cybernetically enhanced guard dogs.

And before you ask about blood magic: yes, it exists, and some Azzie mages use it. From what we understand, it's a rare metamagical technique, which standard ACS security magicians aren't capable of (lucky for us). Don't expect to tell by how the spellslinger looks, though; smart runners will treat any ACS magician as if he's Death incarnate. No offense to magicians at large, but it needs to be said: geek the mage first, especially when running against Aztechnology.

- When it comes to blood mages, most magicians would probably agree, CA. If you do bag one, don't forget to collect on the Draco Foundation bounty.

Beowulf

● Given recent events, those who follow this foul tradition are decreasing in numbers. However, those who remain have learned from the mistakes of others, and are more deliberate and careful with their plans.

The Laughing Man

Matrix Security

The Big A prefers complex, unevenly layered Matrix protection. In peripheral systems, ice is almost exclusively white or gray to keep system load down. Black ice is the rule in core systems, including cascading and psychotropic versions. In especially sensitive areas—the places you need to go as a runner—the Azzies use adaptive ice, expert system-driven ice, multimode constructs, Escher loops and data worms. It's also SOP (standard operating procedure) for ACS deckers to patrol sensitive systems. ACS employs a legion of deckers who are about as aggressive as they come. Many of them specifically operate in the Matrix at large, outside of Azzie hosts, actively hunting for wanted deckers or information posted on Aztechnology activities to shadow hosts. They've been known to plant decoy information in Shadowland nodes on occasion, hoping to lure anti-Azzie runners into traps.

● Aztechnology's Matrix security isn't up to the level of the real bad boys, but it's no pushover. Runners looking for a weak link in security won't find it here. The hunting deckers can be a real pain in the hoop, but ACS keeps its best people working in the corp's own systems, so the bloodhounds aren't too hard to deal with.

FastJack

Physical Security

Physical security is where things start to break down a bit, relatively speaking. In general, ACS grunts aren't very well trained; they learn to go "by the book" and follow SOP, so a creative runner can usually outfox 'em. To make up for this regimented training, the Big A equips its grunts with better (and more) arms and armor. ACS personnel usually have equipment one notch above what



other corps' security people carry in each situation. For example, where sec goons of another corp might carry a machine pistol and wear light body armor, Azzie grunts would have medium armor and use shotguns.

- And they don't hold back with 'em, either. Never mind asking questions later—the ACS grunts shoot first, cuz they don't give a drek what you have to say.
- NiteSpawn

The saving grace of ACS physical security is its elite units, the Leopard and Jaguar Guards. These guys wear virtually the same uniforms as the grunts, so they're usually an unpleasant surprise. The Leopard Guards are in charge of high-sensitivity security throughout the Aztechnology business empire. More than half are modified with cybernetics and most of the rest are Awakened. A standard team includes five members: a magician (usually a shaman), an adept and three cybered hoopkickers. These guys are trained like soldiers, act like soldiers and look like soldiers, even though on paper they're just sec guards. They're also incredibly vengeful, and are occasionally granted permis-

sion to track enemies down. If you get past them on a run, you can bet they'll make an effort to find you and repay the favor ... even if it's three years later.

The Jaguar Guards are like the Leopards, only with more special forces training. These guys are the creme de la creme of the ACS, some of the best in the world. They never serve outside Aztlan; jaguars guard high-sensitivity areas within the nation, such as Aztechnology's Tenochtitlán HQ. Thankfully, there's only about a battalion of Jaguar Guards.

- Only? Sheesh!
- Beard
- Considering that about 400 out of 150,000 people serve in the ACS (remember, they provide security for all of Aztlan), that isn't many.
- Argent

Aztechnology also uses quite a few surveillance satellites to keep an eye on current events. Major locations like the Seattle pyramid and the Tenochtitlán HQ are

kept in the "footprint" of at least three satellites at all times, and the surveillance equipment on board is good enough to see a book clearly from orbit on a decent day.

Internal Security

When I said the Azzies were paranoid, I wasn't kidding. They keep close watch on all their employees and engage in intense testing of candidates for various low-level management positions. Applicants undergo a battery of aptitude and personality tests that take up most of a day, as well as a magical mind-scan. Employees being promoted to mid- and high-level positions go through another mind-scan. Needless to say, employees who make it are generally staunch loyalists.

All employees are subjected to constant cultural conditioning, re-affirming their glorious history and heritage. Periodic festivals and rituals are held for worship by Path of the Sun followers, though no overt pressure is applied to force attendance; even so, the majority of Aztechnology employees do. Petitioning of the gods (through the priests) is also encouraged, and likely monitored, as is sacrifice (the ritual burning of small objects, or even a few drops of blood). While such practices may be creepy to outsiders, they are standard practice in Aztechnology's ranks.

- Aztlaner Spanish is the corp's official language, and used in most major dealings. All employees are expected to know or learn it, though English is used almost as much. *Nahuatl*, the language of the Aztecs, is also making a comeback with some dedicated Aztlan nationalists.
- Diamondback

Aztechnology prefers to keep its employees grouped nicely together (and in their control) in arcologies or smaller corporate enclaves called *castillos* ("castles"). Though *castillos* are not completely self-sufficient, they contain almost all the basic living and entertainment necessities. Even credsticks are unnecessary, as everything is registered via print scanners. Each *castillo* features at least one temple for worship. Security is high, both to protect Aztech assets and to monitor for dissidents. As many Aztechnology employees work via telepresence, *castillos* are treated as corporate facilities. Rank and privilege are made very distinct by the quality of services in different *castillos*, which also provides an incentive for employees to climb the ladder.

The Azzies apparently believe that the children of their workers belong to the corp—which isn't all that unrealistic, as quite a few of those kids end up working for the Big A eventually. Corporate head honchos see the early education and training given to corp kids as an investment that must be protected, so they isolate corp kids as much as possible from non-Aztechnology citizens (taking care of them "in-house," as it were). This kind of thing is standard for megacorps, but the Azzies take it a step further than most. They actually assign internal security

personnel to promising corp kids, to ensure that no one extracts them. Despite the surveillance, most rising stars don't seem to mind their minders; though they might if they weren't so isolated from the outside world and other ways of life.

BLACK OPERATIONS

The Azzies don't like the word "shadowrunner," so they call us "black operatives" or "expendable assets." Most Aztechnology jobs are reprisals against other corps or extractions of valuable employees from rivals. The more sensitive ops, like takeover- and acquisition-related jobs, fall to ACS specialists, though the corp occasionally hires runners if it needs maximum deniability.

Azzie paranoia affects corp dealings with the shadow community in various ways. The Big A knows it has a bad rep with shadowfolk, so its execs do their best not to let us know we're working for them. Hiring under assumed guises or through a long line of shell and holding companies is an Azzie tradition. Many street fixers refuse to work with Aztechnology, though there is always someone who will work for anyone if the cred is good.

● You ain't kidding. I did a lot of work over several years for a company called Charger Corp, and I'd almost gotten to the point where I worked for them exclusively when I found out Aztechnology owned them. I freaked when I heard the news—everyone knows Aztechnology is a bunch of backstabbers and cultists. So I blew up the Charger offices and took off.

● Jobu

● And you wonder why they didn't tell you.

● Carter

● FYI, we've tracked down several independent fixers in Seattle who have a higher than average pro-Azzie rate. They may be Azzie employees, or they may just be regular fixers whom Aztech has created a working relationship with. You decide.

Nick Rigatos: Nick specializes in jobs that require magical talent. He runs a talismongering shop in Auburn called (predictably) "Nick's."

Ana Mailza: Ana works for a small corp in Bellevue called Anodis, Inc. that does market research. We couldn't find anything connecting Anodis to Aztechnology, but ...

Canon: The street preacher who calls himself Canon is well-connected and always seems to have a job for his associates. Most of them are for the Big A, but he also hires for runs against them. What you might get is anybody's guess.

Alexander Gorel: Alex does biz out of a downtown bar called "Deviance," mostly offering jobs against Renraku. We're fairly sure he's a flunky Shinoyama uses to hire runners.

● Dead Deckers Society

CROSS APPLIED TECHNOLOGIES

by Chauffard

Who am I, to tell you about Cross? I worked as a driver and bodyguard for several members of CATCo's top brass for almost ten years. In a position like that, you see and hear a lot of things. I was paid well with plenty of benefits to ensure my silence, and kept under surveillance just in case. I considered it a point of personal honor that I was trusted, and never repeated anything while I worked for Cross.

Naturally, I was a bit peeved when the corp I had served so faithfully attempted to terminate my employment ... with an uzi.

It went like this. My last round of duty was minding an upper echelon manager. I saved her from taking a shot in the gut by some punk-ass ganger. Little did I know it was a hit arranged from some slag up the hierarchy, who wanted this particular chica dead because she threatened to tell his wife about their steamy affair. My efficiency caused some problems, and embroiled me in a mess I cared nothing about. So now I carry a new face, a new identity and a nice new jones to wreak havoc with Cross.

I remember when Lucien Cross made a televised address to the Québec-based Cross facilities, shortly after it made AAA status. He made a point of telling us how different Cross was from the rest of the megacorp scum (especially Ares), and how Cross would pursue an enlightened agenda that would make other Québécois proud. Nationalist bulldrek. Cross is just like the rest, a megacorp with a bottom line.

• Just a little FYI—most Québécois have had a serious "us against the world" complex ever since they went independent and discovered that nobody liked them. They feel they have to band together to ward off the hordes of barbaric English speakers poised to swarm across the Québec border. Cross took that attitude and built on it, and Ares' constant attacks have only reinforced it. CATCo employees outside Québec tend to take a more cynical view of their place in the corporate family, but they're still probably more loyal than most other corporate employees. CATCo generally treats them well, listens to their opinions and makes them feel as if they make a difference in the corp's fortunes.

• Cyril

CORPORATE HISTORY

Lucien Cross founded Cross Matrix Technologies in 2034, as a parent company for various high-tech research and development firms. Before that, Cross had worked for Acquisition Technologies, conducting Matrix-based "investigative research"—in other words, corporate espionage. You can certainly make a living with a job like that, but if it pulled in enough francs to buy up corps like Lucien did, you and I would be CEOs and not runners. So where did Lucien get his funding from?

There's no "official" story, but I overheard some very tasty tidbits of information during my tenure at Cross. At Acquisition Tech, Cross allegedly worked side by side with another hotshot programmer in the research department, one David Gavilan by name. Those of you who know your history, will recall that Gavilan was a lead programmer on the Echo Mirage project—one of the first deckers. As you've also probably heard, Gavilan dis-

CROSS APPLIED TECHNOLOGIES

World Headquarters: Montreal, Republic of Québec

President/CEO: Dr. Lucien Cross

Chairman of the Board: Jean-Marie Cross

Corporate Status: Public Corporation

Primary Shareholders:

Dr. Lucien Cross (51%)

Leonard Aurelius (27%)

Jean-Marie Cross (9%)

Jezebel Surreteau (3%)

Major Divisions:

Cross Advanced Electronics

Headquarters: Seattle

Division Head: Nicholas Aurelius

Cross Biomedical

Headquarters: Boston

Division Head: Sandra Wright

Cross Entertainment and Multimedia

Headquarters: Atlanta

Division Head: Alexandria Hunter

Cross Global Development

Headquarters: Detroit

Division Head: Leonard Aurelius

Cross Matrix Technologies

Headquarters: Montreal

Division Head: Bernard Cross

Important Subsidiaries: Artemis Industries, Beaux Retail Consortium, Bicon Biomedical, Bioleve, Dawn Development, Fleche Armaments, Virtual Air Inc., Xerxes Positive Research

appeared in 2032 ... and Damien Knight appeared on the scene in 2033 with his Nanosecond Buyout.

- And suddenly Cross has the cash to buy whole corps. Interesting. Since we also now know that Dunkelzahn had his claw mixed in that affair, certain pieces of the puzzle begin to fall into place.
- FastJack

Cross had three advantages going for him. First, he was operating out of Montreal, so Québec's harsh anti-competition laws gave him a big edge over foreign rivals. Second, his days as a corporate spook had taught him the value of corporate espionage, and he spared no expense hiring the best spies he could find for his own intelligence division. Third, an analysis of Cross' finances in this period shows that he had considerable financial backing from an anonymous source, bankrolling numerous projects and takeovers. Add to that Cross' own business savvy and a knack for buying the right company at the right time, and you can see why Cross Matrix Technologies grew so quickly. The corp branched out into consumer electronics, entertainment, biomedical research and more, and reincorporated as Cross Applied Technologies in 2044.

- "Anonymous source," eh? That's a no-brainer.
- The Chromed Accountant
"It's all about dollars and sense"
- Dragon points, Cross buys. Simple. I could be a multi-zillionaire with that kind of "business savvy."
- Airwasp

The Cross fairy tale ended in 2053 when it grew large enough to demand extraterritorial status, drawing the attention of the big boys. This maneuvering nearly cost Cross his life. A bodyguard soaked a bullet for him that year, and since then he's managed to avoid at least four other assassination attempts (that I know of). Though no actual proof exists, most people believe the hit squads took their marching orders from Damien Knight. Their explanation revolves around CATCo's takeover of Bioleve, a bioware company that turned out to be an Ares subsidiary, which sparked an ongoing feud between the two.

- Corps steal from corps all the time. No biggie. But this one became personal almost overnight. While hind-sight is 20-20, even us jaded shadowfolks should have figured something was up ... or at least wasn't as dead and buried and Cross and Knight wished it to be.
- Sister Sledge

That was the first volley in a covert/overt war between Ares and CATCo. Despite being outgunned in this fight, CATCo held its own through creative use of Québec's draconian trade regulations and the best corporate intelligence squad in the business: the infamous Seraphim.

The big shift in the balance of power between the two feuding corps came in 2059, when Leonard Aurelius—former Chairman of the Board at Ares Macrotechnology—finally gave up trying to recover control of Ares from Damien Knight. He sold all of his Ares stock to Arthur Vogel and became a major shareholder in CATCo, bringing more than a few subsidiaries and high-level managers along with him. Aurelius' inside information, not to mention his massive bankroll, put CATCo in a much stronger position against Ares. The following year, against all odds, a CATCo justice was appointed to the Corporate Court, officially making CATCo a triple-A megacorp. Ever since then, Ares' undeclared war against CATCo has grown more subtle to avoid the Corporate Court's attention, but has also gotten a lot more vicious.

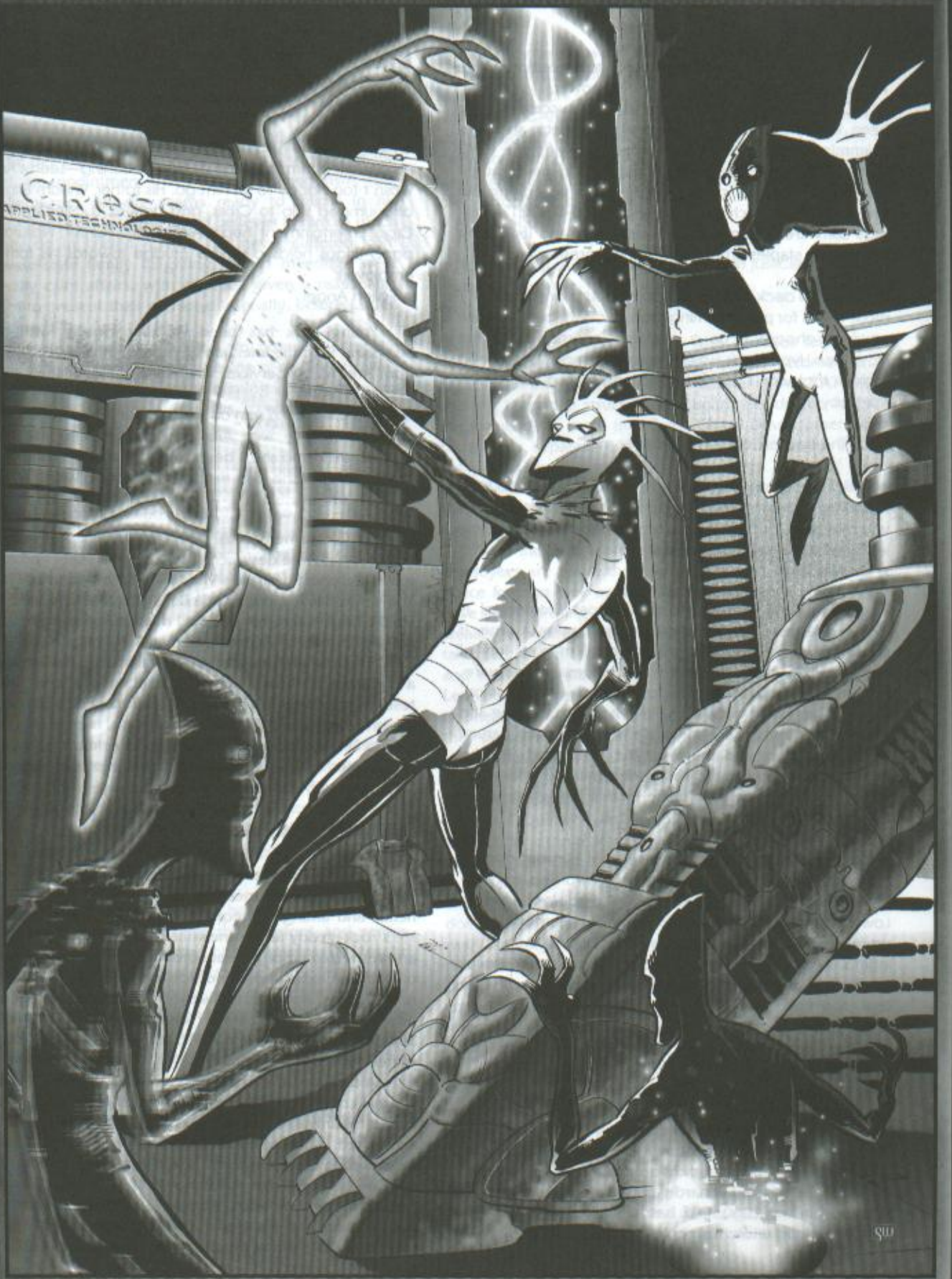
- It's safe to assume the Seraphim played a major role in getting a CATCo justice on the Court. The exact circumstances played out just a little too neatly for there not to have been some covert manipulation.
- Z Zidane
"The Golden Boot"

CORPORATE STRUCTURE

Perhaps because of its rapid growth, CATCo has a more centralized structure than most other megacorps. Main divisions generally locate their headquarters and most of their administrative, research and production facilities in a single city, sometimes in a single building. CATCo includes some semi-independent subsidiaries and remote facilities, of course, but has tended to keep all of its eggs in one basket. The arrival of Leonard Aurelius with his pockets full of former Ares puppet corps helped to spread things out a bit, adding holdings from all over the map. CATCo created a whole new division—Cross Global Development—to deal with the fact that it now has facilities on four continents, in fields it has never tackled before. CGD is basically a dumping ground for the companies that came with Aurelius, a mixed bag of wildly diverse corps. It's pretty much Aurelius' private stomping grounds at the moment, which makes some CATCo board members a touch uptight.

Historically, CATCo divisions concentrated primarily on pure research, selling discoveries to other megacorps for lucrative licensing contracts rather than producing gadgets itself. Continued expansion and the acquisition of former Ares production companies has begun to change that policy as well. CATCo is picking up more production and marketing companies, including a lot of smaller corps "orphaned" by Fuchi's collapse. Considering that a large number of companies that CATCo used to license its discoveries to are now its main competitors, this agenda seems wise.

The oldest, largest and most profitable of CATCo's divisions, Cross Matrix Technologies, is technically headed by Lucien's nephew Bernard, but in reality it's overseen by Lucien Cross. Bernard is a screw-up (he nearly lost Cross Advanced Electronics to Mitsuhamma a few years back), but



he's family, so he's been "promoted" to a position where he's carefully watched and has no real power.

CMT's greatest achievements and successes have been in the workstation, personal cyberdeck and programming computer fields, especially with the CMT Avatar. The new Babel series of cyberdecks have caught on big with smaller corps, and seem to be edging out low-end classics such as the Sony CTY-360-D. CMT's business software is also popular worldwide, and its coding utilities are staples among the world's programmers.

- The Babel deck is pretty cheap and surprising sturdy. It's more useful for programming than decking, but I've seen newbies choose it as a cheaper alternative to the Novatech Hyperdeck, which has less memory. If you need a deck that won't burn out and can take a bullet, pick this baby up.

- Bull

"The best ork decker you never met"

- CATCo programming kits and suites are wonderful tools for writing your own utilities. They're not as customizable as you may wish, but they're perfect for whipping up quickies for those runs that sprung out of nowhere.

- Grid Reaper

While CMT is the cash cow, Cross Biomedical is CATCo's fastest-growing division. Once upon a time, it concentrated on the "straight" medical market: lots of blood substitutes, prosthetics, business cyberware, immunosuppressants, organ-cloning hardware and so on. Now it's branching out a little bit: cyberlimbs, healing and performance enhancers, inhalable boosters, even natural herbal medicines and drugs for the Awakened. They're churning out some radical new designs and options in order to carve their own niche in this field, and so far they're pulling it off.

- Cross Biomedical has become target number one for prototype and research extractions. Be warned, not only are their labs SOTA, but they're better defended than Lowfy's bedroom. I personally know of two teams (very professional) that came back empty-handed, with nothing to show but bullet-ridden armor and horror stories about CATCo security. Shlawase and Yamatetsu both pay top cred for information on Cross Biomed projects—as much as the going rate for one of those freaky Renroku Arcology drones. If you score paydata you can write your own ticket!

- Prime Runner

Cross Advanced Electronics, a Seattle-based division, concentrates on consumer electronics (appliances, trideo sets, chip players and so on). Ever since Nicholas Aurelius, the son of Leonard Aurelius, took over as division head in late 2060, CAE has been doing much better than it ever did under former leader Bernard Cross.

- Wait a sec, didn't Raymond Briggs jump ship from Ares to head this division?

- Mongoose

- He did, but he held the office for all of eight days before he caught a terminal case of lead poisoning—seems Ares wasn't too happy to let him go. His father, William Briggs, also jumped ship to Cross, and acts as a consultant to Cross Entertainment head Alexandria Hunter. Naturally, papa Briggs holds a serious grudge towards his former employers.

- Fallen Angel

Young Nick has been working closely with the Seraphim, with the intention of extracting his sister Sharon from Ares Matrix Services, where she is still confined.

- That's the CATCo spin on the situation. In reality, Sharon decided to stay with Ares when daddy and brother jumped ship, and she's been resisting Nicholas' attempts to recruit her. If she gets extracted, it's not a willing one.

- Fallen Angel

CATCo has numerous important subsidiaries, such as business-software designers Dawn Development and custom Matrix host designers Virtual Air, both owned by CMT. You've probably shopped at a Beaux Retail Consortium, or used a firearm or other personal defense toy with components provided by Fleche Armaments; both are owned by CAE. The former-Ares medical research corp Bioleve was a big score for Cross Biomed, and they're offered field-testing programs for some of their products through Blicson Biomedical in Seattle. Other crucial members of the CATCo family include aircraft-designers Artemis Industries and Xerxes Positive Research (infamous for their oddball "pure research" projects).

LIFE WITH LUCIEN

Lucien Cross is a hard-working man, despite recently passing seventy years of age. He keeps firm control of the corp, regularly meeting virtually with his division heads and arranging frequent face to face talks as well. He's rock-steady and somewhat cold, but he's well-liked and respected among his subordinates. His personal zone of charisma extends well outside the corp—he practically runs Québec, and holds influence with prominent figureheads as far away as the Russian National Supreme Soviet. The higher ranks of CATCo have always firmly supported him.

Since Leonard Aurelius has entered the picture, the internal corporate CATCo family has changed significantly. Before his arrival, Cross' upper echelon was very tight-knit and united, a francophone community. From the moment he walked in the door, Aurelius was not trusted by most of CATCo—he came from Ares after all, their worst corporate enemy. In the time since, Aurelius has proved on numerous occasions that his loyal to CATCo, but some still watch him closely for signs of treachery. His interests and CATCo's

have been very compatible so far, but his methods are beginning to tear the board's unity apart.

Most of CATCo's board members staunchly back Lucien Cross. He built this corporation up from nothing, and his people will follow him until he fails them badly (like he did me). His son Jean-Marie is Chairman of the Board, an appointment that's more than nepotism—the younger Cross actually seems ready to follow in his father's footsteps, and the board believes in him as much as they do in Lucien. CATCo has never suffered from Shlawase-style family infighting. Board meetings were generally calm affairs, with all sides given a reasonable chance to present their opinions rationally, before Lucien Cross made the final decision.

Aurelius, by contrast, treats every board meeting like a war. More than once, as I drove one of my clients away from a meeting, I heard them screaming into their phones over the latest audacity by Aurelius, to whom they usually referred as "Monsieur Bourrique:" "Mr. Jackass."

● I've seen it happen before. When you bring a new face into an established hierarchy, most of his or her "new" ideas—even ones proven successful in the past—are disparaged or ignored. On the opposite end, since Aurelius is looking at CATCo from a fresh perspective, he's probably seeing a hundred entrenched policies that need improvement. But the people running the show are the ones who put the old ways into place, and they're not about to admit that the new guy has a better idea. CATCo will continue to hurt itself if they treat Aurelius like an outsider.

● The Chromed Accountant
"It's all about dollars and sense"

● You also have to consider that Aurelius is used to dealing with the likes of Damien Knight, in an environment where he had to fight tooth and nail for every vote. He probably approaches CATCo's boardroom with that same mentality, which no doubt ticks off a lot of CATCo board members if they're used to a more collective approach.

● Neon Samurai

Factions are forming in the boardroom, and differences are trickling down into the divisions and senior management. Many of the older employees resent Aurelius' intrusion and "grandstanding"—the first time he stood up in a board meeting and called the Corporate Court on his phone to pull some strings in Cross' favor, he was slammed for his behavior. Many feel he has gone out of his way to make it seem as if CATCo owes its AAA standing to him personally.

● My sources say CATCo's arrival on the Corporate Court had more to do with good old-fashioned wetwork than Aurelius' influence. The Seraphim whacked Renraku's second justice, Chandaria, in order to make room for CATCo's rep on the court.

● AAAbacus
"Count on me"

● There may be more to it than that, chummer. I have evidence that the Seraphim planned the crash of Flight 1118, which killed Fuchi's Corp Court rep, so CATCo could get AAA status. CATCo didn't have enough pull to get its own justice elected, so the Seraphim had to spend most of the next year getting as much dirt as they could on all the surviving justices. When they had enough leverage, they killed Chandaria and took his place.

● Anonymous

● Blackmailing multiple Corporate Court justices? In your dreams, chummer.

● Sinik

The employees who came with Aurelius felt their new colleagues' resentment and quickly returned it. Rather than integrating the Ares transplants into CATCo's existing corporate structure, the board decided to lump the former Ares corps into Cross Global Development, a completely separate entity, which just made the new companies seem even more like outcasts. Some of the UCAS managers have resented the superior attitudes they've been given, escalating the problem and creating more hard feelings.

Even the Seraphim are split on Aurelius. Few CATCo employees are aware that the Seraphim act as an internal police force as well as an external intelligence unit. They have been crawling all over Aurelius from the beginning, creating a potentially explosive situation. Some Seraphim take their organization's Biblical imagery quite seriously, and there's talk that some of them consider allying with Leonard Aurelius akin to dealing with the devil. If they decide to act against him, or against any other executives they perceive as supporting him, CATCo may implode so spectacularly that Fuchi's collapse will look like a minor tiff.

LIFE WITH CROSS

As a Québec-based corp, employees of CATCo are subject to stringent regulations regarding language. Within Québec, it is illegal to conduct business dealings in a language other than French. While CATCo has extraterritoriality and can ignore this internally, the corp does have an image to maintain, and so French is the primary language CATCo uses in daily operations. This rule is not enforced upon divisions in other countries, but all upper level management dealings are expected to be conducted in French. Language classes and chipjacks or knowsoft links (for linguasofts) are offered free to all CATCo employees worldwide.

CATCo has no arcologies, but it does attempt to provide encapsulated and self-sufficient communities for its workers, usually in proximity to their actual workplace. Preferring a more open-air and decentralized architectural style, these enclaves are adequately described as "housing parks." In addition to the usual employee benefits (entertainment, education, daycare), all CATCo employees have full medical coverage, and are given exceptionally low rates for work-related implants.



Alone among the megacorps, CATCo does not issue its own corporate scrip. Instead, the corporation uses the New Franc (Québec's standard), which exchanges at a rate of 2f to 1Y. All internal CATCo dealings utilize this currency, with the exception of Cross Global Development.

DEFENSE AND OFFENSE

With Ares as a primary antagonist, you can bet your wired reflexes that CATCo emphasizes security. CATCo wouldn't be where it is today if it didn't know how to defend itself and get the upper hand on its competition.

CROSS SECURITY

CATCo security emphasizes the balanced integration of various types of security. Physical defenses, magical support, security riggers, electronic surveillance and Matrix security are all carefully designed and trained to work together. Though the corp doesn't have world-class defenses in any of these categories, they are extremely effective when combined.

CATCo's Matrix defenses are its strongest, where a combination of well-trained deckers, top-of-the-line IC and clever system designs make CATCo hosts tough to crack. CATCo deckers have top-of-the-line hardware and software, and while they may not be the best at one-on-one cyberduels, they know their systems well and are not afraid to get backup. CATCo uses very little black IC except on their most sensitive datastores; they prefer to keep out or knock out invading deckers, then use Trace IC to locate the decker for a detailed debriefing about their purpose for being in CATCo's systems.

Physical security personnel tend to be lightly armed and armored, but very well-trained. Standard facility guards travel in groups of three, and usually wear light security armor and carry nothing heavier than an SMG. In the event of an attack, backup security tends to consist only of more guards, rather than more heavily armed ones. Magical support is infrequent, though more important facilities will definitely have a mage or two available. Wards and paranormal animals are rarely used except in the most sensitive locations.

Multiple cameras, some obvious and some concealed, monitor key entry points to secure facilities, and there are usually multiple levels of checkpoints within a CATCo facility. Rigger-controlled security systems are very common at CATCo facilities, and all types of security personnel are expected to remain in constant communication with the security rigger, who usually acts as the site security commander.

Internal security at CATCo "parks" is heavy. Many CATCo employees are restricted from leaving their parks without appropriate travel authorization, and important suits are given PanicButton-type devices that alert CATCo security and also act a tracking device.

- The Seraphim have been known to issue bugged PanicButtons to people they wish to monitor.
- Fallen Angel

In Québec, CATCo is very tight with the Gendarmerie (the local arm of Lone Star). Because Cross carries so much weight in the country, the Gendarmerie frequently bend over backward to any CATCo "security requests" in

order to keep their favor (and their contracts). This means that if you're on the run from CATCo in Québec, your standard street cop and border patrol guard will also have an APB and be looking for you.

THE SERAPHIM

The Seraphim are one of the most well-developed spy networks in the world today. This branch executed some of the most stellar operations during the recent cor war—efforts that ultimately enabled CATCo to achieve AAA status. They are the cream of the crop, and have their feelers sunk in almost every AA and AAA corp in the world, not to mention most national governments.

The Seraphim are more than just spies and shadow operatives, they also operate as bodyguards, internal security, information analysts and research specialists. Their surveillance tech experts are at the forefront of their field. They are excellent at anticipating risks, manipulating chains of events and using the latest gear or mystic development for surveillance or espionage purposes. If necessary, they're also skilled at wetwork. If it's important to CATCo, count on the Seraphim being involved.

I don't know much about the Seraphim's internal workings. They clearly have a penchant for Biblical names and imagery—I've heard various Seraphim figures referred to as "Gabriel," "the Cardinal" and "Angelique." I've seen some evidence to believe that some of the Seraphim are highly involved with some strange sort of mysticism and hold interesting philosophies, though I don't know what core beliefs are involved. Perhaps it's merely a system used for identification or code, or perhaps it's a tool used to ensure loyalty and secrecy.

The Seraphim are quite careful about whom they recruit, and they have been successful at poaching elite operatives from other sources. New agents must pass through a series of tests—physical, mental and possibly more—that determine their rank and branch assignment.

- The Seraphim are highly diverse and hard to categorize. They include mages, deckers, adepts, cybersoldiers, tech-wizzes, riggers and even the occasional shaman. Whatever their nature, they will certainly have access to top-of-the-line equipment and cyberware, be extremely well trained and be well-briefed on their situation with quality intelligence.

- Fallen Angel

- I've heard that some Seraphim have begun operating independently, they seem to think that they know best how to act in the corp's interest. Most of these rogues view Aurelius' entrance into CATCo as a threat, and are keeping a close eye on him.

- Anonymous

SHADOW OPS

Historically, CATCo has very rarely entered into a long-term relationship with shadowrunners. Black ops which are particularly important, delicate or sensitive are

generally handled by the Seraphim. Shadowrunners are left with jobs that are both too dangerous to risk Seraphim personnel, and not so sensitive that only CATCo operatives can be trusted with them. In general, this means that CATCo only employs shadowrunners for quick, violent jobs like the destruction of an enemy facility, high-profile kidnappings or datasteals, or blatant wetwork. These are not the kinds of jobs that generally mean a long career for shadowrunners, so CATCo rarely deals with the same team more than once or twice.

That policy has begun to change since Leonard Aurelius' arrival, however. Aurelius has watched Damien Knight deal with shadowrunners for many years, and has learned a lot from his rival. He has begun offering runners unofficial "contracts" with CATCo, in which he pays a runner or team a guaranteed monthly stipend in exchange for exclusive rights to the runners' talents for a specified time period (usually three to six months). Lucien Cross does not approve of these methods, but is willing to let Aurelius' "experiment" continue to see how practical it is. Aurelius has avoided using long-time CATCo fixers and Johnsons for this work, using instead a number of ex-Knight Errant and Hard Corps veterans who followed him from Ares.

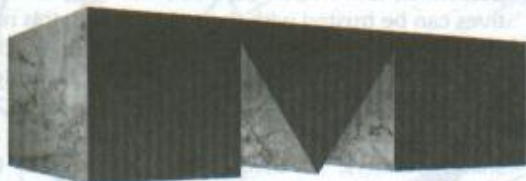
CATCo contractors will receive a guaranteed base salary of a few thousand nuyen per month (with the exact amount depending on experience), plus bonuses for particularly challenging or dangerous missions. Contractors are expected to be available on demand and ready to go within four hours of initial contact. While runners are not expressly forbidden from taking other work while under contract, if a call comes in from CATCo, they are expected to drop whatever they are doing and report in. If they do not, or if they turn down an assignment, the contract will immediately be voided, and CATCo "collection agents" will usually be sent out to collect any pay the characters have already received.

The advantages of being a CATCo contractor are the guaranteed minimum salary, a wide variety of work, and access to quality gear. Contractors may take their salary either as nuyen, or up to twice the nuyen value in CATCo products. (Deckers, in particular, almost always choose the latter option.) Contractors may also be given a chance to try out experimental equipment at no cost, though this is sometimes a risky choice ("Actually, the FDA hasn't let us do animal testing yet, much less human tests, but we're sure it's safe. Now hold still!").

The disadvantages include the inability to turn down jobs freely, and the likelihood of unwelcome attention from the Seraphim. Many of the elite espionage agents do not trust Leonard Aurelius or his "pet runners," and will watch the contractors' behavior very closely. Some will even go so far as to deliberately sabotage the contractors' operations, in order to make Aurelius look bad. They will not try this if they think the result would be detrimental to CATCo as a whole, but anything that hurts Aurelius' reputation or bottom-line income is fine with them.

MITSUHAMA COMPUTER TECHNOLOGIES

by Kensal



MITSUHAMA COMPUTER TECHNOLOGIES

World Headquarters: Kyoto, Japan

President/CEO: Toshiro Mitsuhama

Chairman of the Board: Samba Oi

Corporate Status: Public corporation

Major Shareholders:

Eiji Yakamura (20%)

Samba Oi (13%)

Yuriyasu Shin (11%)

Oguramara Saigusa (10%)

Akai Uehara (10%)

Important Subsidiaries:

Computers: Mitsuhama Computers, Black Lotus Software, Dolmen Data Systems, Aekei Heuristic Technologies, BrainWave, Inc.

Robotics: Mitsuhama Automatronics, Elk-Sedge Systems, VOR Robotics, Drive-Ware Technologies, Astin Remote Systems

Magic: Mitsuhama Magical Services, Pentacle Distributing, Inc., HermeTech Associates, Pentacle Press, Ambrasius Publications, Mitsuhama Thaumaturgical Research

Entertainment: Mitsuhama Media, Confederate Broadcasting Company, Soonan Simsense, Sakura Studios, Mitsuhama Music, Highstar, Inc.

Heavy Industry: Mitsuhama Industrial Technologies, Automation Systems, Inc., Zen-Marsh Chemicals, Takai Development Corporation, Mitsuhama-Benguet Mining

Novatech and Cross are still getting their collective acts together, Mitsuhama is cruising along, pushing the SOTA as far as it can before its rivals can catch their breaths.

Mitsuhama is making strides in the development of intrusion countermeasures. Known for particularly brutal IC, MCT is banking on that reputation to sell to corporate customers. Already Mitsuhama has snatched customers away from Renraku and Novatech, and is looking to further expand its market.

Mitsuhama also shines in rigger gear and remote robotic systems, providing top-line software and firmware for rigger interfaces, autopilots, rigged security systems, industrial robots and drones. The corp will surely push the envelope further in this area.

- One little-known MCT business is traffic-management software and systems for Grid-Guide™, which many metropolises use to try to ease traffic congestion. I hear MCT always builds a back door into the Grid-Guide that lets the corp track any registered vehicle on the system. MCT doesn't like to play this card often, but it's worth knowing about.
- Road Rash

Mitsuhama Computer Technologies (MCT) has long been the last-place runner of the three computer megacorps, behind Fuchi and Renraku. Apart from near-constant rumors of its Yakuza connections (which I'll address in a bit), little has been said about Mitsuhama. Now, in the wake of a corp war that gut-punched its two biggest competitors, MCT is in a position to take the top slot in the high-tech business. Mitsuhama aims to be Number One—with a bullet, if that's what it takes. It's got some bleeding-edge advances in the latest high-tech fields, including quite a few that you won't hear about on the streets because they're not intended to leave survivors.

I know about Mitsuhama and its toys because I grew up in MCT custody. Following my parents' example, I was prepared to work my whole life for them ... until we had a parting of the ways over a matter of "policy." My totem and my job didn't agree with each other, and I bailed while I had the chance. I don't hold a grudge—they treated my family and friends within the corp well enough—but I'm not naive; I know exactly what MCT is and what they will do to succeed. I learned a lot during my time in the corp, and I've still got contacts within who pass along juicy tidbits now and again. Follow along and I'll show you some of what lies beneath MCT's carefully constructed shroud of shadows.

THE BUSINESS

Though Mitsuhama is primarily considered a computer company, like every true megacorp it actually has a wide range of interests and investments. Quite a few of them may surprise you.

COMPUTERS

MCT is a leader in computer engineering and computer science, able to keep pace with Renraku, but still behind Cross and Novatech on both fronts. However, while Renraku is reeling from the corporate war and



MITSUHAMA COMPUTER TECHNOLOGIES

MCT's computer hardware is state-of-the-art, focusing mainly on desktop and portable personal systems. The corp doesn't deal with as many mainframe systems as Renraku, but does have a growing microframe and networking business. While there's a certain cachet to having a sleek, sexy Novatech computer, Mitsuhamas systems are more cost-efficient and priced for the average consumer. MCT's Sakura™ personal computer system sold quite well during the past holiday season.

Mitsuhamas is also moving rapidly into what you might call "wetware;" biologically-based computer systems. The potential for a bio-computer system has existed ever since Hilkta first invented ASIST, but bio-computers haven't caught on because of their various limitations when compared to modern optical-chip computers. Despite the drawbacks, Mitsuhamas continues to work on the technology.

• They're also working on more advanced brain-computer interface systems. Not the kind where you plug a machine into your brain, more like when you plug a brain into your machine. We're talking cybermancy, cyborging and brain-transplant tech here.

• Bull

"The Best Ork Decker You Never Met"

fer working conditions or raises and don't defect to other companies. Best of all, they follow orders without hesitation ... or mercy.

• Lady Black

• I got hired for a run once by a labor union to sabotage an MCT takeover of their company. The union knew the corp would replace them all with robots ten minutes after the deal was signed. Of course, without Mitsuhamas's backing, the company eventually folded and got bought up for a tenth of its value. So it goes.

• Blade

For Mitsuhamas, robotics covers two areas: hardware (drones and robots) and control systems. When it comes to hardware, Mitsuhamas is launching new designs all the time. The company designs and builds robots and remote-piloted vehicles for nearly every use imaginable. Most are industrial 'bots intended for tasks too boring, demeaning or hazardous for people, or so the marketing promos read. Mitsuhamas also produces robots and drones for security work and military applications.

• And the corp often "field tests" such systems at its own facilities. Don't be surprised if the "guards" at the next MCT-



• I heard that Dr. Halberstam (yes, *the* Dr. Halberstam) got hired on as a consultant with MCT's wetware project. Knowing Halberstam's record, I shudder to think what might be going on in some top-secret MCT research lab. Watch your backs in the Matrix, kiddies.

• Black Isis

"Download or Die"

ROBOTICS

Robotics and related technologies are major areas of investment for Mitsuhamas, which is the world's number one producer of industrial robots.

• As far as Mitsuhamas is concerned, robots make the perfect employees: they don't call in sick, don't ask for bet-

owned building you break into are actually drones, armed to the teeth and able to shake off low-caliber gunfire like a spring shower. These nightmares make me long for the days when MCT just used hellhounds for extra muscle.

• Fro

MCT produces two major types of control systems: remote (rigger) control and autonomous. Rigger control is pretty much what you'd expect: any system that a person plugs into to control the drone. Mitsuhamas manufactures everything from vehicle control rigs to remote control decks and rigging software. The corporation has several major military contracts for drones, including Russia, Imperial Japan and Quebec. It is also working on using telepresence and rigger control for things like complicated microsurgery, mining and deep-sea survey operations.

Autonomous systems are basically robots, from "dumb" systems that carry out a series of programmed tasks to "smart" systems with various subroutines that allow them to choose from a variety of options. The smart systems can even "learn" new procedures and responses to situations. Mitsuhamas is keen on combining an autonomous system with rigger control—a robot can be left on its own most of the time, but taken over by a rigger when a "human touch" is required.

- This option sometimes allows enemy riggers to interrupt or override the control signal from an MCT rigger, provided the intruder has a powerful enough transmitter and knows his stuff. Controlling the robot also takes some knowledge of the various security protocols MCT uses to prevent remote systems from accepting unauthorized commands. You've got to be part rigger and part decker to pull it off. Fortunately, I'm both.

- Weaver

I've heard from inside sources that MCT is working on various types of "artificially intelligent" expert systems for robotics, called "ABC's" for some reason. Exactly how intelligent these systems are, I can't say—robotics was never my field. However, you can be fairly sure that the new MCT control systems are at least intelligent enough to make guard robots practical.

- Oh, frag. "ABC" stands for "autonomous biological control" systems. In other words, when they talk about the robot's dog brain, they're talking about a dog's brain.

- D-Con

- Oh, wow chummer, you slotted that chip too? Know where I can score some more like it?

- Bung

- Mitsuhamas also designs robots for use in deep space. The corp sells industrial assemblers and work bees to Ares for use in its space program, and supplies maintenance drones to space stations like Zurich Orbital. Rumor also has it that MCT is designing different types of lander and probe drones for an Ares-sponsored explorer mission to Mars.

- Digital Kid

- Truth. Not only that, but I know MCT tested its experimental lander robot in a Barrens neighborhood. Seems the system may also have some military applications, and Mitsuhamas wanted to find out how it handled "search-and-destroy" along with "find-and-analyze."

- Whiskers

- Unlike Renraku, Mitsuhamas focuses its AI research on making smarter robots—self-contained machines not connected to the Matrix. Fortunately, that limits the robot's potential processing power and how quickly its "intelligence" can develop.

- Ronin

- Don't count on that, chummer. Don't forget about MCT's wetware tech. They may not be into the same lines of AI research as, say, Renraku or Novatech, but their biotech computer research may yield interesting results sooner or later.

- FastJack

- Let's hope not.

- Ronin

MAGIC

Mitsuhamas is so strongly associated in the public mind with high-tech fields like computers and robotics that most people don't think that MCT even spends any nuyen at all on magic. But before I hit the streets, I did some checking on Mitsuhamas's magical divisions. Eagle was calling me at the time (dreams of hunting down rodents and flying free were keeping me up at night), and so I had an interest in what they did. I was a bit surprised to discover that MCT is the world's second largest producer of magical supplies and services, after Aztechnology.

Pentacle Distributing, the largest magical supplies distributor in the Pacific Rim, sells to lore stores and talismongers all over the world. Pentacle also provides Mitsuhamas with magical supplies and equipment. The company is slanted toward hermetic magical gear, but also provides supplies for shamans who prefer online catalogs to going out in the woods and picking up twigs and pebbles. Pentacle certifies all its supplies as handmade, gathered without heavy machinery or other things that might pollute the material's magical nature. I wouldn't touch this stuff with a ten-meter pole normally, but in a fix or two I've actually used it. Not bad.

- Just because MCT and other corps can't use robots and heavy machinery to gather magical goods doesn't mean they're being "nice" about it. Ask any of the migrant workers Pentacle pays bottom dollar to hand-pick plants for them—or to mine crystals and minerals using only hand tools, without any modern conveniences (or safeguards). I'm sure they don't appreciate the corp's "eco-friendly" attitude. It just goes to show: If you don't gather it yourself, you really don't know where it came from.

- Silicon Mage

In recent years, some independent talismongers have tried to break the influence of Pentacle and other big talisman distributors over the market. The United Talismongers Association in California has set itself up to compete with Pentacle, and aims at a "customer-owned" distribution system to benefit small magical businesses. Pentacle, for its part, has started a marketing campaign to make it appear more friendly to small business, and is carefully negotiating control of the best sources of magical supplies to add to its extensive contacts in the NAN, California and Tir Tairngire. Be careful taking jobs for any side in this issue, the level of conflict is escalating and drawing other mystic groups into the fray. The runs are

magic-heavy, and your opposition won't skimp on the force of the spells they throw.

- Seattle is a useful resource for Mitsuhamas—through the city, it gets trade with Tir Tairngire. The Tir is none too friendly with CalFree, and so can't trade with the UTA even if it wanted to (which I doubt); the Tir also doesn't much like Aztechnology. So most of the Tir's output of magical teesma and other such goodies goes right to Pentacle Distributing, with the Tir and MCT splitting the profits.

- Wiz Kid

MCT also owns Pentacle Press and Ambrosius Publications, the two largest magical publishing houses in North America. Pentacle Press puts out several major Matrix magazines on the subject, like *Magician's Monthly* and *Hermetic Digest*. It also publishes spell formulae, major theoretical texts and similar documents. Ambrosius publishes the *Manual of Practical Thaumaturgy*, the standard reference text used by professional magicians, along with a wide variety of books ranging from scholarly treatises to popular best-sellers about the Awakening, magicians and magic. Ambrosius's *Magic for Mundanes* series is hugely popular with un-Awakened folk who want to understand how magic works.

Mitsuhamas and its various subsidiaries, like Petrovski Security, Parashield and HermeTech, provide top-line magical security for a variety of corporate and private customers. In addition to setting up wards and guardian spirits, MCT offers consulting services, Awakened guard animals, biotechnological security options to keep out astral intruders, and training seminars for security employees on how to handle magical intruders and threats. Needless to say, Mitsuhamas is constantly coming up with new magical security measures and testing them in its own facilities.

Mitsuhamas's "magical consulting services" cover a broad range from sophisticated illusions and other "special effects" for simsense productions to cosmetic magic to police forensic work. HermeTech Associates, one of the largest magical consulting firms, is a subsidiary of Mitsuhamas. In essence, the company's consulting service is a "mage for hire" business. Many Mitsuhamas wage mages like consulting work because of the broad range of jobs and opportunities to make contacts in different fields.

The real magical action happens in MCT's Thaumaturgical Research and Development department. The best magicians in the company do cutting-edge research into new magical techniques, new spells, exploration of astral space and other applications of magical knowledge. The R&D department also aids in developing unique combinations of magic and technology, or applying magic to the development of new technologies. Though the corp permits a certain amount of pure research, Mitsuhamas tends to focus on marketable discoveries. Research projects that do not show sufficient profit potential are usually discontinued.

Like most technical fields, magical R&D tends to attract big brains and bigger egos who live entirely in their own little fiefdoms, where they can get the respect and attention they think they deserve. Management handles the company's magical assets very carefully; Mitsuhamas can afford to lose any of its vice presidents before it can afford to lose a highly trained and capable magician.

ENTERTAINMENT

When you think of entertainment corps, you probably think of big independents like Amalgamated Studios, Truman Technologies or Brilliant Genesis, but Mitsuhamas is actually the number one AAA megacorp in the entertainment biz. MCT has major interests in simsense, trideo, music, publishing and virtual-reality games. The corp owns studios and production labels like Highstar, as well as major broadcasting networks (such as CBC, the Confederate Broadcasting Corp.) on which it shows its various wares. Mitsuhamas's entertainment division is a hotbed of political maneuvering, with careers being made or broken by gambling on what will be next week's entertainment blockbuster.

In addition to the obvious profit in so much mindless amusement, the entertainment division allows Mitsuhamas to stay on top of the SOTA in simsense and virtual-reality technology, which feeds back into the computer division and vice versa. Among other things, Mitsuhamas is a leader in simchip technology.

- A lot of MCT's technologies "trickle down" to the Yakuza sooner or later. For example, the Yaks were quick to pick up on the potential profit of selling BTL and 2XS chips once Mitsuhamas and other corps developed the technology. Likewise, the Yaks were the first to start using BTL and neural tech to open up "bunraku" parlors, where customers can enjoy the company of brain-chipped prostitutes. I shudder to think of what uses the Yakuza might find for some of the things Mitsuhamas is working on now.

- Lola

HEAVY INDUSTRY

Often overlooked in the shadow biz is Mitsuhamas's position as the number two heavy-industry megacorporation, not far behind Saeder-Krupp. Mitsuhamas produces automated factory systems, industrial chemicals, prefabricated parts for construction and heavy equipment for earthmoving, mining and building. Most of its heavy machinery is automated and equipped with "smart" expert systems to make it more "user friendly." MCT marketing touts the company's equipment as well-suited for the "needs of today's workforce," which translates as, "easily used by workers who may be functionally illiterate."

The company has invested heavily in urban reconstruction projects throughout North and South America and Asia. Elsewhere, MCT isn't much of a player (yet). Saeder-Krupp dominates the European heavy industry market, and in South America MCT faces heavy competition from Aztechnology.

● MCT does quite well along the Pacific Rim. It controls much of the heavy industry in Japan, Hong Kong, mainland China and Singapore. Mitsuhamas is also cleaning up in California, where Saeder-Krupp and Aztechnology are banned by the government.

● Bay Jewel

● MCT's investment in heavy industry and chemical production gives them access to all sorts of exotic chemicals, including military-grade nerve gas and chemical weapons. The corp's been known to stock some of its security robots and auto-guns with that kind of lethal dreck. The drones are immune, and the stuff virtually guarantees a quick takedown.

● Wraith II

THE PLAYERS

The CEO of MCT is Toshiro Mitsuhamas, son of Taiga "Tiger" Mitsuhamas, who founded the Mitsuhamas corporate empire. Both are icons within the corp; my folks have pictures of them both in their condo. Fairly young for a megacorporate CEO, Toshiro is only in his mid-forties. Leonization treatments have kept him looking about thirty and given him the general physical condition of a man in his twenties. Currently, Toshiro is steering Mitsuhamas toward more aggressive acquisitions and competition with the company's major rivals. In particular, MCT is going after the chunks of the computer market left open by Fuchi and Renraku.

Toshiro's use of cyberware embodies his company's high-tech image. Along with the usual datajack, MCT's CEO uses a head full of state-of-the-art technology in his day-to-day business. His eyes are cyber-optics linked to his headware data system. He also has a cyber replacement for his right hand—the meat one got mangled roughly eight years ago, in a terrorist bombing of an MCT facility he was touring. The cyberhand is chromed steel, and Toshiro never covers it with synthflesh. He likes to rap it on the conference room table when making a point. He is rumored to have additional cyberware, including weapons built into his hand.

"Tiger" Mitsuhamas, though just shy of seventy and technically retired, remains actively involved with the corp. The elder Mitsuhamas is in excellent health and has the vitality of a man half his age. From his home in Kyoto, Tiger advises his son on running the company and keeps abreast of corporate politics. A deal-maker extraordinaire, Tiger regularly attends parties and maintains a vast network of contacts. If he ever called in all the favors and markers owed him, Tiger Mitsuhamas could probably change the fate of nations.

● Interestingly enough, Toshiro and Tiger Mitsuhamas only own about two percent of the corporation between them. Their dynamic and skillful administration, rather than controlling ownership à la Damien Knight, keeps them in charge of MCT.

● Nano Flower

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rumors have circulated for years about Mitsuhamas's ties to the Yakuza. I've even heard that MCT is nothing but a front company for the syndicate, a convenient means of laundering money. Nothing could be further from the truth. Mitsuhamas has Yakuza ties, all right, but the Yaks aren't using Mitsuhamas. If anything, it's the other way around.

Mitsuhamas started out as the brainchild of Taiga Mitsuhamas, a Japanese businessman who wanted to forge an alliance between several large but failing corporations in order to create a powerful conglomerate with the leverage and influence needed to survive and prosper. To make his dream a reality, Tiger needed investment capital—lots of it. The economic recession in Japan at the time made it nearly impossible to secure the needed loans, until Tiger turned to the Yakuza for help. The Yaks, heavily invested in the banking industry, had a lot of pull. In exchange for a substantial chunk of interest in the new corporation, a group of oyabun arranged the financing Tiger needed. It turned out to be the best investment they ever made.

The major shareholders who currently sit on Mitsuhamas's board of directors are still powerful figures in the Yakuza, but they are far more powerful in the business world. MCT makes more profit in a day than all the Yakuza gumis in Japan make in a year. As long as that continues, Toshiro remains CEO and the board lets him run the company as he sees fit.

● Don't believe it. The Yakuza are big wheels in MCT. They use the corp to launder cred, smuggle contraband and back up all kinds of Yak operations all over the world. For all we know, Kensai isn't even a real runner, he could be a Yak puppet planting false documents. Don't doubt it.

● Yakkity-Yak

● Sorry, Yakkity, but I agree with Kensai on this one. For MCT board members, their Yakuza activities are more of a hobby than anything else. Yes, they have influence with some Japanese gumis, and yes, they sometimes use that influence to the company's advantage, but it's a fallacy to say "the Yakuza runs Mitsuhamas." If MCT got too deep in Yakuza activities, it would face trouble from the Corporate Court. Why risk a multi-billion nuyen megacorp for a multi-million nuyen crime syndicate?

● Nuyen Nick

● Yakuza honor doesn't always make sense, omae.

● Yakkity-Yak

● Speaking of Yakuza pawns, what about Yakamura, the slag living on Zurich Orbital? Does he really own 20 percent of MCT?

● Trudy

● He owns it all right, but someone else votes for him—no one knows who. When he croaks, though, his shares revert

to the Corporate Court. You can bet several factions are scrambling to get him to sell before he kicks the bucket.

- Red Wraith
- Hey, wasn't Kyoto—where MCT's home office is—one of the three places the great dragon Ryumyo showed up at before he disappeared?
- Ryu
- Yes. Why do you ask? Are you implying a connection between Ryumyo and Mitsuhamas?
- Dragonslayer
- Dunno yet. Just curious.
- Ryu

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

At this point, Mitsuhamas doesn't have a lot of allies. It regards many corporations as rivals, and acts neutral at best toward others. On the other hand, Mitsuhamas also doesn't have a lot of overt enemies. It stayed pretty much out of the recent corporate conflicts, which left the field wide open for it to step in and reap the benefits of the infighting.

- It seems like Mitsuhamas is second-best at nearly everything: second in computers after Novatech and Cross, second in magic after Aztech, second in industry after S-K. Are they first in anything besides mindless entertainment?
- Jaxon
- Not yet, ornae, but give them time. Mitsuhamas is one of the most diversified megacorps. Second-best, maybe, but like you said, they're second-best at nearly everything. That means MCT is hungry and aggressive. They'll be gunning for some of those top-spots real soon. They're going after the computer market now; I predict the magical biz will be next, with Aztechnology running into trouble on the home front.
- The Keynesian Kid
"Greed IS good"

MITSUHAMA LIFE

I know a lot of people think it sounds like a contradiction in terms, but there is life inside Mitsuhamas, a lot of lives, as a matter of fact. MCT employs thousands of people all over the world. Of course, I can only talk about the place I've lived. Still, one Mitsuhamas community is pretty much the same as another; the company likes it that way.

When you work for MCT, you're part of a community. Not a family, really (unless it's a really dysfunctional family). It's more like being citizen of a nation, or a city-state like Seattle. I grew up in company daycare and went to a company school, where I learned a lot of MCT's history right alongside the three Rs. I also learned how to bow properly, and speak respectfully to my elders. To this day I can't get used to the fact that non-MCT people figure I should shake hands because I'm an Anglo. I learned to speak Japanese and English from when I started to talk, and I'm fluent in both.

My family shopped at a company store, and we lived in company housing, usually a nice private neighborhood with playgrounds and streets. Sometimes it was an apartment complex, but it was always nice, clean, safe, and quiet. The company made sure of that, usually with security camera, fences, and locks. I played outside, played games on our trideo, and watched shows on the approved channels.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying life as a corpbaby was paradise. But life inside Mitsuhamas is very stable. You know what you can expect. The company has its rules, and it takes good care of its people, as long as they follow the rules. That was drilled into us from the start: rules good, disobedience bad. If you could deal with that one fact, you could be happy. You'd have a home, a community, and a place for your children to grow up. The only problem is that MCT doesn't have room for anything that doesn't fit into their neat little picture. As much as I miss the home I had, I know that the sprawl is my home now, and Eagle is my guide, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

SHADOWRUNNING BY THE NUMBERS

Mitsuhamas has always played its shadowruns "by the numbers." If you accept a run from Mitsuhamas, you do it the MCT way or not at all. On the other hand, Mitsuhamas provides its runners with a lot of support and information in exchange for the corp's increased level of control. Corp honchos may expect you to do it their way, but they give you what you need to get the job done.

Failure is not an option. Mitsuhamas expects the best from the runners it hires. If you do well, you get rewarded with bigger and tougher (and more lucrative) runs. If you fail and live to tell about it, Mitsuhamas either doesn't want anything to do with you or wants you silenced as a possible security risk. Running for MCT can be like riding a tiger.

- One common cover identity used by Mitsuhamas Johnsons these days is "Mr. Bunraku," which is Japanese for a puppeteer. And that's exactly how MCT deals with runners. The corp is pulling the strings.
- Soylent Grin

Mitsuhamas has a lot of influence with the Yakuza in Japan and other parts of the Pacific Rim, and so often uses Yakuza resources to handle shadowruns. The Yakuza also act as go-betweens and fixers for various MCT operations. If you're hired to do a job for the Yakuza, you may actually be working for Mitsuhamas.

INTO THE ZERO-ZONE

Running against Mitsuhamas is tough because the corp pulls no punches. Mitsuhamas invented the corporate "zero-zone," which means zero penetration, zero survival. You don't get in, and if you do get in, Mitsuhamas shoots first and asks questions later. MCT facilities go for all manner of lethal security measures, especially automated weapons controlled by a computer or a security rigger using closed-circuit simsense. Other favorites are

UNFINISHED BUSINESS



gas traps and guards armed to the teeth with the latest ordinance, with shoot-to-kill orders. If you're lucky, an MCT security guard will give you one warning before he blows your head off: usually something along the lines of, "Stop ... BANG! BANG! BANG! ... or I'll open fire!"

Mitsuhama produces closed-circuit simsense systems that allow a rigger to interface with a building rather than a vehicle. This kind of tech lets the rigger run the security system from "inside." The company has almost entirely converted to this type of security, except for the few facilities at which robots run the show all by their lonesome.

If you're inside an MCT site, remember too that the security rigger isn't just hitting you with drones and automatic weapons, he's also taking detailed trid shots of you and your team. Those images get scanned through the MCT databases as soon as possible, in they hope that they can tag you and track you; in other words, you might arrive home to find they've beaten you to your doss. If you get away, they'll still pass the image around to fixers, the Yakuza, bulletin boards and so on. When I left MCT, the corp circulated a clip of me blasting a guard with a lightning bolt (you do what you gotta do); my parents saw it and now consider me a murderer as well as a traitor. So play it safe and watch your back.

- At Mitsuhama sites, the adage "the walls have ears" is literally true. MCT uses riggers not just to run its security systems, but also to act as the "brain" of a facility. In addition to monitoring security, the rigger keeps tabs on troublemakers and basically spies on everyone in the place for corporate management. Such snitches aren't too popular with rank-and-file wage slaves.

- Thery

- I'd still rather deal with bloodthirsty MCT security guards than some of the corp's robots. At least the guards are metahuman (or something closely resembling it). The bots are cold, inhuman killers, armed and armored to their chrome teeth.

- Slipstream

Mitsuhama has some of the world's best magical security; I'd rate the corp a close second behind

Aztechnology. MCT integrates security magicians into its regular security forces, supplementing them with astral patrols and bound spirits. The corp invented several of the best-known astral countermeasures on the market today; it uses biofiber, guardian vines and similar biotechnology to shield areas against astral forms, along with traditional wards. Highly secure areas often have layers of astral protection around them.

- MCT mages are also pretty good at using spell anchors to create magical "booby traps" and things like barrier spells that spring up on command from a guard. The corp uses them sparingly, but they're out there.

- Wraith II

A pioneer in the use of Awakened creatures as guard animals, MCT still employs them extensively. The most common are canines like hellhounds and barghests. Other guard critters include basilisks, cockatrices, plasmae, sirens and stonebinders. The company has spent years experimenting with various cybernetic implants intended to control these critters, with limited success. Skilled handlers and magicians from subsidiaries like Parashield generally train and deal with guard paranimals.

Mitsuhama also experiments with cybernetic enhancements for Awakened guard animals, as well as custom-engineering its own nasty life forms. I've personally gone on two expeditions to capture mutated creatures from the California coast, to be used as "test samples" for the design of new critters.

- Just when you thought the corps couldn't get any sicker ...

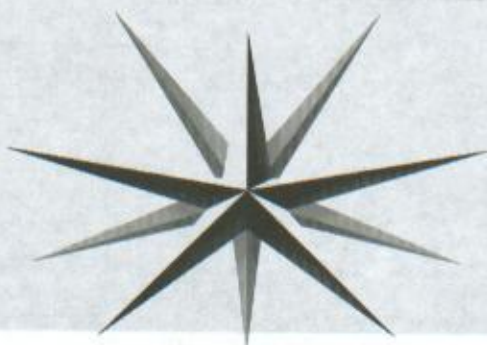
- Sereena

- It gets better. I've heard rumors that MCT is experimenting on all sorts of other critters, including some humanoids like ghouls, sasquatch, a few vampire-types and maybe even metahumans. Just imagine an astral security squad of ghouls or banshees.

- Wiz Kid

NOVATECH INCORPORATED

by Marketeer



NOVATECH

World Headquarters: Boston, UCAS

President/CEO: Richard Villiers

Chairman of the Board: Not applicable

Corporate Status: Private

Major Shareholders: Richard Villiers (65%)

Samantha Villiers (7%)

Miles Lanier (3%)

Trans-Latvia Enterprises (24%)

Darren Villiers (1%)

Major Divisions:

Novatech CalFree

Headquarters: San Francisco

Vice President: Brian Jenkins

Novatech Carib

Headquarters: Miami

Vice President: Maya Cruz

Novatech CAS

Headquarters: Atlanta

Vice President: Michael Ruane

Novatech Europe

Headquarters: London

Vice President: Nigel Winthrop

Novatech North America

Headquarters: Boston

Vice President: Lucas Don

Novatech Seattle

Headquarters: Seattle

Vice President: Sam Villiers

Novatech South America

Headquarters: Buenos Aires

Vice President: Antonio Ortega

Important Subsidiaries: Aurora Design, Cavalier Arms Limited, Central Industrial, CompuForce, Cyberspace Development Corp., FTL Matrixware, Fuchi Orbital, JRJ International, Matrix Systems, Minuteman Security, Nightingale's, Pacific Rim Computer Consultants, Pioneer Cybernetics, PULSEware, Silveril Investments, Simplex Software, S & S Agricorn, T99, Visionary Design Works, Walker Aerodesign, Wolfware

HISTORY

If you want the full story on Novatech, you need to start way back before the invention of the commercial cyberdeck. Back in 2032, Richard Villiers was just another young corporate shark who bought corporations, dismantled them and sold off the parts at a profit. He was rising fast, but even at the rate he was chewing through businesses, he couldn't break into the megacorp big leagues.

The early 2030s were post-Echo Mirage, and computer companies were springing up everywhere in hopes of getting a chunk of the new era of "virtual reality" computing. One of those firms was Matrix Systems of Boston. In late 2033, MS showed off a desk-sized cyberdeck intended for general business and consumer use to local venture capitalists, including Richard Villiers. Villiers wanted to buy the young company and its technology outright; never a stupid man, he knew instantly what Matrix Systems had in its hands. The company owners, Ken Roper and Michael Eld, refused a total buyout and limited Villiers to a 49 percent stake.

Matrix Systems put out the Portal in 2034—a desktop-sized cyberdeck, the first available to anyone outside of the Echo Mirage team. Never advertised or sold in retail stores, it sold like wildfire through word of mouth, enough so that within weeks of the Portal's release, Roper and Eld had enough free capital to attempt to buy out Villiers.

● I've got an original Portal that I managed to find a few years back. Big and ugly, but it's an amazing piece of technology. Some of what we take for granted in deck construction was first done in the Portal.

● Wildsmasher

What happened next is the stuff of conspiracy theories and raw conjecture. Six weeks after the Portal's release, Roper and Eld both died in apparent "accidents" and the entire Matrix Systems computer network, including all back-ups, crashed with absolutely no hope of recovery. Coincidence? Not bloody likely, but no formal charges were ever leveled against anyone. Hot rumor at the time said the UCAS government didn't want Echo Mirage technology in the hands of the public (or more likely, foreign businesses and governments). I don't buy it; it wasn't the UCAS government that benefited the most from the triple catastrophe. It was Richard Villiers, Roper and Eld's "partner."

● The Marketeer is also convinced that Richard Villiers crashed the Tokyo Stock Market ("White

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Monday") just so he could buy out key Fuchi subsidiaries and start up Novatech ahead of schedule. Just because Villiers benefited from both events doesn't mean he had anything to do with it. He's just meaner and quicker and more opportunistic than most suits.

● cary@allstar.org

● True, as far as it goes. Given how ruthless and brilliant Richard Villiers has proved himself to be, however, I don't doubt that he might have pulled both triggers.

● DJ Havikk@sc-style.com

Richard Villiers bought up the remains of Matrix Systems for pennies. About a month later, he contacted Fuchi Industrial Electronics, a company that was already making a name for itself in consumer electronics and computing. Somehow (in the modern era of shadowrunning, do I really need to draw a map?), he had in his possession the mainframe Matrix Systems backup tapes, plus several working Portal cyberdecks and next-generation prototypes—exactly what Fuchi needed to leap to the forefront of cyberdeck and Matrix development across the globe. Richard Villiers parlayed these treasures into a one-third share of Fuchi and control over its North and South American branches. Several years later, in 2036, Fuchi put out the CDT-1000: the first cyberdeck available through retail channels worldwide.

The uneasy Fuchi partnership was riding the wave of success, and Villiers arranged to take it to the top, targeting JRJ International for takeover. JRJ was one of the Big Seven megas at the time, which founded and controlled the Corporate Court. Combining Fuchi's financial assets with his insider knowledge and large percentage of shares in JRJ International, Fuchi Americas gobbled up JRJ and took its place on the Corporate Court.

Now let's leap ahead about two decades. The First Wyrms has gone boom and left a massive estate behind. Dunkelzahn's will hands out cash and various toys and goodies to all sorts of characters. The will included a bequest of four million voting shares in Renraku to Miles Lanier—Richard Villiers' right hand man and director of security for all of Fuchi (though Yamana and Nakatomi, the other two Fuchi heads, resisted his advice as often as they could). Suddenly a key player in Fuchi owned about two percent of Fuchi's biggest rival, Renraku, and a seat on its board. The specter of divided loyalties immediately raised its head.

● For about seventy-two hours, Fuchi was in utter chaos, with the big boys desperately trying to change all the locks and passcodes. I know a few runners who took advantage of the disarray and pulled off some sweet scores. A few others assumed it would be a cakewalk and got geeked by unusually paranoid guards.

● D-Ghost

Exactly what happened while Miles Lanier sat on Renraku's board of directors remains unclear. Obviously, most of his fellow board members neither liked nor trust-

ed him; however, during his tenure Renraku experienced explosive growth. In fact, Renraku was well on its way to becoming the dominant megacorp. From 2057 to mid-2059, Renraku shot to the forefront of innovation, a position it hadn't held too often in the past. Even worse, it seemed to beat Fuchi to market with virtually identical products by days, then weeks. Yamana and Nakatomi, along with many in the business community and the shadows, assumed Lanier was spilling Fuchi's secrets to his new Renraku buddies.

Richard Villiers, as I said before, is not a stupid man. He knew his slim edge over his rivals had evaporated and that he needed to take action before they did. Management purges in Villiers-controlled offices and subsidiaries made sure that the remaining personnel owed Villiers their sole loyalty. While that was going on, Villiers began quietly purchasing his own companies under the names Villiers International and Cambridge Holdings. Chunk by chunk, Villiers managed to purchase major portions of Fuchi Americas (that division includes South America, for my near-sighted UCAS friends) from under the noses of Yamana and Nakatomi. He even managed to buy several non-Fuchi businesses to expand his stable. Some other holding companies and shells he used include Trans-Latvia Enterprises, Northwest Assets, Blue Cap Limited and Blaze PLC. More certainly exist, but those are the only ones that were definitely owned or controlled by Richard Villiers.

Meanwhile, in June of 2059, Fuchi brought suit against Renraku in the Corporate Court. You might remember the recent tension; lots of folks genuinely feared that a corporate war was breaking out, and that the Court might even issue an Omega Order.

The suit produced some interesting fallout. Miles Lanier sold his two percent stake in Renraku to the Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaft Bank at below market prices, causing Renraku stock to plummet. Lanier was then "taken into custody" by Fuchi, which had to pay undisclosed damages to Renraku; scuttlebutt said Lanier and Villiers had pulled off a major anti-Renraku sting. Some felt Villiers had saved Fuchi by hurting Renraku, others that he had taken far too big a risk. The battle lines inside Fuchi were drawn; the megacorp was doomed.

● They probably did pull a fast one on Renraku; rumor is, Lanier took a lot of Renraku paydata back with him to Villiers, and a fair number of Renraku subsidiaries conveniently fell prey to Cambridge Holdings.

● Lone Play

When the White Monday stock market crash hit on September 29, 2059, Villiers marshaled everything he had and bought out many of the companies he still needed at rock-bottom prices. A week later, he announced the formation of Novatech, Incorporated.

● Which triggered insane infighting within Fuchi. Yamana and Nakatomi both fought for Villiers' shares tooth and

nal in the vain hope of gaining the upper hand. Didn't work; they ended up with about 49 percent each. What's funniest is that Villiers, like a good corporate raider, managed to make tens of millions of nuyen on the infighting, which he probably spent securing Novatech. Brilliant.

• Dbeuhrer@gridsec.org

Technically speaking, Novatech was a borderline AAA corporation in size and overall stock value. But because it owned JRJ International, a charter member of the Corporate Court, Novatech had a single seat on the Corporate Court that couldn't be taken away, giving it undue influence for a corporation its size. Justice Lynn Osborne, a holdover from Fuchi who remained loyal to Richard Villiers, became Novatech's new Court representative.

NOVATECH IN 2061

Here's some current data about the little megacorp that could. Novatech, Incorporated is privately owned by Richard Villiers. His ex-wife Samantha owns about a 7 percent stake, Miles Lanier owns roughly 3 percent and Darren Villiers, Richie's little brother, owns a 1 percent stake. Being a privately held corp, Novatech doesn't have to report to shareholders or hold shareholders' meetings. Most of Novatech's subsidiaries are publicly traded, however, including those in which Novatech has a controlling interest (as opposed to owning the thing outright).

• Someone else is rumored to own a hefty chunk of Novatech, but no one knows exactly who. Technically, Trans-Latvia Enterprises owns that little chunk ... but whoever controls Trans-Lat, it isn't Villiers.

• ARMstrong

• I thought the Marketeer said Trans-Lat was a Villiers-controlled holding company.

• Cecilia@ultimate.com

• It was. In the chaos of Novatech's formation, however, someone seems to have pulled a quick one on Villiers, and managed to buy out a controlling interest in Trans-Lat. Who is anyone's guess. So far, they seem to be playing according to Villiers' game plan.

• ARMstrong

• What about Richard's brother, Martin Villiers? Why isn't he part of the Novatech family?

• Digger

• Martin prefers to build his own fortune, without relying on his older brother. They're friendly towards each other, but Martin seems to have a bit of a competitive streak that keeps them from working together.

• ARMstrong

Novatech's HQ is in Boston, and Villiers is working the UCAS patriotism angle as hard as they can. It seems to be working; Novatech has a higher approval rating in

the UCAS than Ares right now, which seems to both annoy and amuse Damien Knight.

• Hey, plenty of us like it that the UCAS has another mega in its backyard. About fraggin' time, you ask me.

• New England Patriot

• Just because Novatech's HQ is in Boston doesn't mean that Richard Villiers gives a frag about the UCAS or about your hoop. It's all about spin and image.

• Shandwick@spn.com

MAJOR DIVISIONS

Novatech's organizational structure is still somewhat haphazard and unbalanced. Separate divisions may have domain over small regions (Novatech Carib, run by Maya Cruz from Miami) or vast ones (Novatech Europe, run by Nigel Winthrop from London). The division name does not necessarily reflect its area of coverage, as with Novatech Seattle (run by Samantha Villiers), which also handles Novatech's Asian assets.

The vast majority of the corp's power and influence remains in North America, where Novatech's tentacles reach across the continent. Novatech CAS vice prez Michael Ruane is playing pro-CAS patriot from their Atlanta offices, and Novatech North America is making new inroads into the NAN nations. South America is likewise a solid Novatech domain, and the corp has sturdy beachheads in Europe. Asia is a lost cause, however. Renraku execs have made Villiers and Lanier targets of a bitter vendetta, and will put aside any internal conflicts in order to give Novatech the shaft.

• What the heck does Novatech do in South America? I'd think Amazonia would keep lots of corps out.

• Wilbur@ariz.edu

• It does, sort of. The South American division is run by Antonio Ortege, an extremely charismatic Argentinean hand-picked by Villiers for the post. He's made Novatech a major South American player, allegedly by "persuading" key members of the Argentine government to see things the Novatech way. Novatech manufactures a significant portion of South Am's consumer electronics; even with all the dancing and dodging they have to do around Amazonia, it's still cheaper to make that stuff locally. There's also plenty of biotech work, with subjects pulled from deep inside Amazonia for very black research. Novatech's presence means lots of shadow work, both for and against Amazonia (mostly against Amazonia's government has its own pet runners). Be warned, Amazonians welcome megacorp-sponsored infiltrators with lots of firepower and little mercy.

• Mucho Grande Gringo

• North America isn't just the UCAS and the CAS. Novatech also has a healthy relationship with the Sioux and factions within the Pueblo Corporate Council. The Tir

treats Novatech like any other corp. As for the Carib League, it's anyone's guess.

- Rio

- I've got a big "guess" for you, then. Novatech controls quite a few Carib pirates. Just for starters, the Red Rum Raiders and Chromeboy's Bastards have been known to take Novatech nuyen. Piracy is one way Novatech gets its South American goods back north while bypassing Amazonia and Aztlan—especially sensitive drek from its South American biotech labs.

- Red Cat

- Don't forget Novatech's CalFree presence. CalFree—or at least parts of it—seems to love Novatech. Villiers snapped up most of the old Fuchi offices in the Free State; Brian Jenkins, Novatech's new CalFree veep, immediately embarked on a metahuman-friendly hiring spree that's made some folks in Orkland think he's the Messiah. The local Japanese, regardless of corporate affiliation, loathe Jenkins, and have sponsored several runs against PacRim Computer Consultants, a Novatech subsidiary, as a "polite" warning to cut the drek.

- Orange Stripe

DOING BUSINESS

Novatech took over much of Fuchi's cyberdeck production, reselling Fuchi decks under the Novatech name. The cyberdeck market is probably Novatech's biggest and best-known money maker, and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Villiers still holds the belief that made him buy into Matrix Systems so long ago: control the Matrix and you control the world. Tactics and technology have shifted, but the goal remains the same.

About the only segment of the cyberdeck market that Novatech doesn't dominate is the low end. Novatech puts out the Megadeck-3, but so far it hasn't garnered much market share (despite being a decent cheap machine). Everywhere else, Novatech is well in the lead. The corp makes a host of other computer hardware, peripherals and devices geared toward businesses and individual consumers; the general public regards Novatech's skillsoft jukeboxes and pocket secretaries (like the top-selling model JVS-251, aka "Jeeves") as the best available.

Almost all of those items carry the Novatech name; however, plenty of the corp's subsidiaries don't. FTL Matrixware, which Novatech owns outright, makes killer software, and is especially renown for their persona code and cascading IC. Matrix Systems is still around as well, now focusing almost exclusively on system sculpture and complex coding for Matrix constructs such as bulletin boards, chat rooms and historical re-creation nodes. Their executive design team takes year-long contracts for one-of-a-kind host designs; if you've seen the new Draco Foundation system, you know how hot their architecture is.

Walker Aerodesign of Boston is Novatech's premiere aerospace subsidiary, excelling in rocket design, autopilot systems and new propulsion system designs. Novatech

gobbled up the Fuchi space program fragging near whole; Villiers knows there's big nuyen in space, just around the corner. Between Fuchi Orbital and Walker Aerodesign, Novatech has a hot operation that could be a real player in the nascent space race.

- At the moment, Novatech seems content to build communications satellites and LEO automated chip factories, but rumor has it that Jacques Lemer, who heads Fuchi Orbital, is gearing up for something more. Stay posted for details.

- Gurth@understairs.nl

Novatech owns 79 percent of Cavalier Arms Limited, a small Texas-based manufacturer of personal firearms (the rest belongs to Cavalier's founder, Patrick Goodman—a traditional Texan, complete with cowboy boots and Stetson). Along with the pistols and other small arms Cavalier produces, Novatech has a foothold in the miltech field through a wide array of smaller firms that produce everything from APDS rounds to vehicle-mounted autocannons.

Some other Novatech-controlled companies of note are Central Industrial, a well-known heavy industry company based in Detroit; Pioneer Cybernetics; and Nightengale's Body Parts (though no one will admit this publicly). Central Industrial makes factory machines that churn out tractors and the like. Pioneer Cybernetics makes some excellent high-end cyberoptics, generally priced beyond the reach of everyone but the wealthy; needless to say, the company doesn't have a major market share. And almost every shadowrunner has heard of Nightengale's, a chain of small private hospitals and cyberware clinics. You can find one of these in every major North American city.

- Here's an interesting development. Novatech bought out T99, a small DeeCee-based magical research firm, a month after purchasing a controlling interest in Reality Studio (a Boston-based magical research firm). An indication of Novatech's growing interest in the arcane arts, perhaps?

- Wildsmasher

- Villiers has also been making subtle efforts to scoop up Manadyne Corp and their magical research labs, but he's going to have a scuffle with Lone Star if he tries it.

- Arioch

Despite its varied holdings, Novatech's bread and butter remains the Matrix and high-end consumer electronics. Even through the uncertainties, corporate retaliations and assorted other problems related to the Fuchi-Novatech shakeup, Novatech has kept Fuchi's reputation for making the best bleeding-edge decks and IC.

- Despite Renraku's best spin efforts, Renraku's PR flacks spend more time bad-mouthing Novatech than hyping their own corp.

- christy@spin.com

ENEMIES

Novatech is lean and mean, but still vulnerable. Renraku would like nothing better than to stomp Richard Villiers, an ambition only intensified by the presence of former Fuchi head and Villiers-hater Shikei Nakatomi in Renraku's ranks. Nakatomi in particular seems to have taken Fuchi's collapse and Novatech's emergence personally; he's been devoting hours and resources to operations against Novatech, Villiers and Miles Lanier. Villiers has survived two assassination attempts in the past six months, and Lanier at least one as well—and we can all guess who sponsored them. For the moment, Korin Yamana (the other displaced Fuchi poobah) seems content to establish himself as a power in Shiawase. He signed a one-year truce with Samantha Villiers and Novatech in exchange for her two percent stake in Fuchi; even though that period has expired, the truce seems to have continued ... for now.

- I doubt Yamana will give Novatech any breaks, but I don't foresee him launching any major retaliatory strikes just to frag with his old rival. Nakatomi, on the other hand, seems to have made destroying Villiers his only reason for living.
- Dr. Steffens@bsu.edu

As for Villiers and Lanier, they've both apparently decided to forgo payback strikes—not out of any altruistic motive, but because it makes good business sense. If they become consumed with personal revenge, Novatech can't survive. And survival is the best revenge of all.

KISSING HOOP

Given Novatech's small size compared to other megas, the corp is doing everything it can to protect itself and expand. Villiers has been courting President Kyle Haefner, Ares CEO Damien Knight, Cross Applied Technologies CEO Lucien Cross and various UCAS and CAS senators and representatives, all in hopes of earning favors. So far, the charm-school strategy seems to be working: Novatech landed major contracts for computer hardware from the UCAS Commerce department and the Sioux Treasury, and Ares is talking about some kind of joint aerospace venture.

- The venture with Ares is nothing more than Ares spin, floated to grab a few approval points with the public. A venture with the UCAS government is more substantial. Villiers and Lanier have been spotted talking with top UCAS military brass and Secretary of Defense Michael Broeder. The icing on the cake? Samantha Villiers, Richard's ex-wife, has had several lunches with Nadja Daviar, veep of the UCAS. According to sources, they got along quite well. The most powerful woman in the UCAS is a good friend for Samantha and Novatech to have.
- Desert Cat

• All of which won't make Damien Knight very happy. The question is, will he try to subvert the Novatech threat by allying with Villiers' corp, or will he treat Novatech like Cross Applied Technologies, his current bitterest rival? If the latter, what might Cross do with Novatech? Looks like interesting times ahead ...

- Avenger@wight.uk.com

NOVATECH'S FUTURE

So what's coming up for Novatech? More acquisitions of course. Villiers managed to take Fuchi's space assets and most of its North and South American software and hardware producers, but he didn't get everything he wanted. Future acquisitions are likely to center on Matrix-involved corps, and a good number of them will probably be former Fuchi businesses. Other purchases are intended for simple expansion, to cover areas in which Novatech is still weak, such as the recent buyout of S&S Agricornp, an Ohio based agri-research and farming company. He'll move as aggressively as he can get away with, but Renraku won't just sit by and let him take what he wants. Things could get real interesting, real fast.

Villiers has resorted to a number of his old corporate raider routines, in order to quickly generate the nuyen needed to expand. Typically this means hostile takeover of a company, then immediately breaking it apart and selling off the pieces at a profit. Naturally, Villiers keeps the elements he needs for his empire, such as SOTA manufacturing facilities or nova-hot (ahem) research teams. The rest goes out the window, meaning that Novatech is putting a lot of people out of their jobs in some areas, which isn't good for PR. On the other hand, some smaller corps are getting a boost by following Novatech's trail and scooping up the scraps.

Villiers has been quite careful to protect Novatech's Corporate Court seat. He's well aware that Novatech's AAA status was due more to a technicality than anything else, but he's made sure to turn JRJ International into a private corporation owned solely by him. Even if he were to lose Novatech, he would still have JRJ to keep him on the Court.

Barring some unforeseen tragedy, I doubt Novatech will crash anytime soon. Eventually, Villiers will have all the pieces of the Novatech puzzle, and the hyperkinetic pace of acquisition will slow to a more normal crawl. What then? Once secure, Novatech will most certainly move into Asla. Outer space itself may also be the next big thing. There's a lot out there, I'm told, and I'm willing to bet Richard Villiers wants a piece of it.

IN THE SHADOWS

I know for a fact that Villiers had to leave behind some drek-hot scientists and Matrix wizards when he formed Novatech, and that he wants them back. And all you smart shadowboys and girls know what that means.



● I've been pulling extractions for Novatech for the past two months. I don't normally keep working for the same Johnson this long, but her money's been good, and so has the intel she's given me (she also doesn't take any drek from sexist men, always a plus in my book). If you get a call from a Carrie Allman requesting a meeting at the Alibi (an old downtown Seattle bar), odds are you'll be sounded out about an extraction for Novatech.

● SD@freenet.com

● That's in Seattle. Here in Boston, you know you're being hired by Novatech if your Johnson is Christi Briggs—she seems to handle "stock manipulations" a lot. You know: blow this up, plant this story there, that sort of thing. Then there's Deon Hund, a suave black elf who specializes in wetwork, almost exclusively for Novatech or Yamatetsu. A Johnson named Jennifer Prevo handles Christi's job down in Atlanta.

● Celtic Dan

● Interesting. Deon's turned up in Seattle also, working the same line of biz. Renee Davies fills the slot here that Christi Briggs does in Boston. You know, it just struck me that Novatech has a lot of Ms. Johnsons. That's highly unusual. Anyone know why?

● Mykki Brawn

● Nope. It may be standard, but it's not the rule, as the #S%@!I slag William Ager proves. Billy Bob is a Novatech Johnson in Seattle, and he's a Humanis wannabe. I'd love to use my baseball bat on his racism—**5 MP Deleted by SysOp.**

● Slamm-O!

● While both of the Villiers (Richard and Samantha) work the rich and powerful, Lanier is pumping serious nuyen into the shadows. Extract this researcher, blow up that factory, protect this shipment, assassinate that manager. The money's good if you are; Lanier makes sure his "resource adjusters" and other Johnsons don't hire posers.

● Ceredwyn

● Not quite, Ceri. Lanier doesn't have as much to do with the shadows as it sounds like, mainly because he's been working 24/7 to close all the backdoors in Novatech security that are left over from the Fuchi days. Sometimes that includes signing off on shadow operations, but he doesn't run it all for Novatech ... yet.

The one to watch for in Seattle is Darren Villiers, Richard's younger brother. A dwarf, he's rarely seen but is reportedly in charge of Seattle "special assets." He's also rumored to be an adept of some power, which makes for a nasty fragger handling the shadows for Novatech Seattle.

● Tuvyah

● Didn't want to interrupt, but Sam Villiers' name keeps popping up without explanation. What's up with Richard

and Samantha? They divorced in late 2049, after sixteen years of marriage. But she kept the Villiers name, and the two of them are clearly allies—plus, they seem to genuinely be good friends. For years, Samantha was Richard's edge in controlling Fuchi; if she hated him, she could have sold him out years ago. I would have thought two brilliant and ruthless corporate sharks like these would loathe each other after a divorce.

● Meekl@seatac.com

● If you look at marriage as a contract, a sort of business merger, then you begin to understand Richard and Samantha. A divorce is a dissolution of the contract, not a termination of the relationship. Both of them live and breathe business, first and foremost.

On the other hand, they knew that if they remained married, their shark-like instincts would eventually get the better of them. Things could have gotten extremely ugly, not only for them personally, but probably also for Fuchi. To prevent that, they divorced. I know their marriage wasn't based on any discernible business advantage, so maybe there was real emotion behind it. They only dated for about three months before their engagement; they got married in a surprisingly simple and elegant ceremony two months after that.

They had one child, a daughter named Caroline Tara Villiers, now twenty-eight. They didn't do well as parents, and Cara bailed on them as soon as possible (over ten years ago), and has been out of the picture since.

Richard is a charmer and one of the world's most eligible bachelors, but he's not known as a Casanova. They don't see each other that often, but when they are together—at the UCAS inaugural balls, for example—they are the ultimate power couple. They even vacation together for a few days a year. I'd say if either of them has a weak spot, it's for each other. Just don't suggest that to them directly, if you value your life.

● The Marketeer

● Cara Villiers tried to kill her mom in 2053, but scufflebutt says she was under magical influence at the time. She was damaged in the incident, and fitted with a new left hand. She's running the shadows now, under the name Rouge. Every so often, Samantha Villiers pays some runners to track her down and keep a watchful eye on her only daughter.

● Link

ON THE INSIDE

Like other megacorps, Novatech provides pretty well for its employees and their families. Novatech has no arcologies, but does group its corporate citizens in self-sustainable enclaves. In several locations, Novatech residential compounds are for all practical purposes working compounds, as a significant percentage of employees work via the Matrix. In fact, Matrix work, education and culture are extremely integrated into the corporate cul-

ture as a whole. Novatech workers and dependents also receive free health care, education and day care, all with a subtle pro-Novatech slant—a powerful incentive to remain loyal to the company, and an equally powerful weapon for keeping employees in line. So far, the corp hasn't had to break out the stick much; the pro-company, pro-Villiers atmosphere is fragging near thick enough to touch.

SECURITY

If you're facing the pointy end of Novatech, don't expect an easy ride just because it's a new megacorp. Miles Lanier has been working overtime to close any remaining Fuchi backdoors and to upgrade security across the board to his exacting standards.

As many of you know, Lanier was a decorated UCAS Army sniper in his pre-Fuchi days; his military training shaped his demand for precision in security. He approaches his job with the knowledge that a single well-placed bullet is just as effective as a thousand bullets raining down. Precision is his life, in everything from the cut of his clothes to his gym regimen to designing counter-intrusion procedures.

In terms of physical security, Novatech's big on passive defenses. Expect layer upon layer upon layer of scanners and sensors of various types (none of which are linked to the outside Matrix), all able to detect the precise number and location of intruders.

You won't find guards patrolling the grounds toting milspec armor assault cannons, or psychotic cyberdogs roaming about (except in the rare so-called "Zero Zone" compounds). You will find well-trained security guards who know exactly where you are and who will react intelligently to shut you down. Cutting off escape routes and detaining intruders is a significant aspect of Novatech security procedures. They use popular tactics such as locking down rooms and flooding them with Neurostun, sealing entrances and exits with hefty blast barriers, and ambushing with multiple fire zones (forcing shadowrunners to react to incoming fire from several directions, and placed to "funnel" them into an area where they can be trapped).

Lanier loves rigged security, and so important Novatech facilities generally have an on-site security rigger. These folks don't often go after intruders with armed drones, however; instead, they usually act as "quarterbacks" and direct the security teams. Most Novatech security riggers have minimal weapons training, but they know strategy and tactics as well as Clausewitz and Sun Tzu.

● Don't think you won't ever run into paranimals or other heavy ordnance at a Novatech site. Novatech just tends to keep them locked up nice and tight, away from public view. If the situation warrants, they'll break out the major artillery and reduce you to splatters on the walls. Only at the most heavily defended Zero Zones will you see that kind of heavy security out in the open.

● Drekhead

Novatech is also using more non-lethal techniques than Fuchi ever did. Lanier wants to know why shadowrunners broke into one of his compounds and who hired them; dead runners can't give him those answers. Depending on what you tell the secboys, they might give you a job or a pair of concrete boots. Or they might just let you go.

- They don't "just let" anyone go. If you're lucky, they fit you or your gear with tracking devices. If you're not, they'll hit you with some serious brainwiping, making it so that you not only can't run against Novatech, but you'll get warm fuzzies buying their products. I think I'd rather die than have my wetware fragged with.

- Physics Guru@adam.net

As for Matrix security, Lanier has taken the legendary Fuchi security one step further. Hardcore research projects that could bag major nuyen are kept almost exclusively off-line, with no permanent Matrix connections. What's left on the Matrix is protected by bleeding-edge Novatech IC.

- "Combat deckers," runners who can shoot guns and slice IC, can practically write their own ticket on most shadowruns against Novatech.

- PJ the Cat

Cascading and psychotropic IC seem to be the favorites; you won't find much trace IC, as Novatech lacks the resources to be that proactive with its security. At the moment, the corp seems generally content to scrag your deck with gray IC rather than your body with black IC. (Maybe they hope you'll buy their hardware to replace what they just melted down.)

- If you get hit with Novatech's psychotropic IC, you won't have much choice but to buy Novatech 'ware. I hate that psycho stuff.

- Mach

- They don't stop at "I love Novatech" psycho-mods, either. The other favorite is to induce object terror of the Matrix. Doesn't physically harm anyone, and it's almost as long-term a solution as death. Nice and neat from a corporate perspective.

- Marki@itribe.net

Magic remains Novatech's weak point—another holdover from the Fuchi era. Plain and simple, Novatech

doesn't have a lot of security magicians on the payroll. Consequently, the corp goes for passive magical defenses, like astrally active ivy and wards, in attempts to keep astral magicians out. If you get in, you won't find too many magicians tossing spells at you. Runner teams with a drek-hot magician have a solid edge against Novatech.

- Only for as long as the magician survives. Novatech's standard procedure really is to "geek the mage first" in an attempt to level the playing field. And don't sell astrally active ivy short; that, plus that weird astral wood stuff combined with some solid wards don't exactly make anti-Novatech runs a cakewalk for magicians.

- Drekhead

- Am I the only one who's seen the magical defenses around Novatech's Boston HQ? It's crawling with living barriers, wards and patrolling elementals. Lanier must have had a hand with it—the layout is just too clever. I doubt the corp's other offices are as impressive, but the Boston HQ is an astral Zero Zone.

- Two-Headed QB

- Novatech's also still re-building some of its pet initiate groups. Under Fuchi, these groups had sworn loyalty to the corp, and sometimes members of the group had loyalties to opposing Fuchi factions. When Fuchi split, some groups imploded. Most have since re-formed and sworn allegiances to their new masters (Novatech, Renraku or Shiwase). A few magicians also went rogue and joined us here in the shadows. Samantha has her "Black Omega" group back online, but it's not the instrument of terror it once was. I for one hope it never recovers. Cybered combat mages with attitude are not my idea of a good time.

- The Whistler

- What about the Fuchi cybermantic clinic?

- El V

- Not sure. Indications are that it eventually went to Novatech, but missing key parts and personnel that reduced its effectiveness (apparently more than a few important mages were snuffed by ritual sorcery). Undoubtedly Villiers is doing what he can to bring it back on-line.

- The Second Gunman

RENRAKU COMPUTER SYSTEMS

by Renraku Fox

When I first informed the illustrious denizens of Shadowland about the Renraku Arcology "problem," my posts were scorned as paranoia. When the truth of the situation became known and my suspicions confirmed, my posts were then derided as Renraku disinformation—since I obviously had good intel, I must be a Renraku spin doctor.

I'm not going to reveal who I am or how I get my data. It's up to you to believe or doubt my word, but I think my track record speaks for itself. I state my facts as facts, and clearly mark my speculations and suspicions. And, no, I'm not Sherman Huang in disguise.

● Rats, I was hoping to score a date with Dr. Frankenstein himself.

● Lola

● You can check the Fox's credibility yourself in the Renraku Arcology: Shutdown SIG. He's been helping us shadowfolk understand how and why the AI named Deus and its otaku minions took over the arcology, while Renraku is still covering the situation up, safe from the public eye.

● Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 04 March 2061 at 12:31: 01 (EST)

That said, let's move on to the details of life in, around and against Renraku. Before we get going, let me address one issue right off the bat. For the past year or so, most of the talk about Renraku has focused on the arcology disaster, at least in North America. From shadowrunners to stock consultants, everything said about the corp has picked up the bad taste the Seattle situation left in everyone's mouth. Everybody in the UCAS seems to think Renraku is about to go belly-up, because it lost its North American headquarters, because Deus the Demon AI will rip the company apart from within, or because the public has lost whatever faith it may once have had in the corp.

Bulldrek.

Renraku isn't going anywhere, chummers. Sure, it's taken a big nosedive compared to where it was in 2058, but this is a AAA megacorp. For Renraku to lose one building, no matter how big and high-tech, is like Neil the Ork Barbarian losing a finger. It'll hurt and it'll slow him down for a bit while it heals, so he may not swing his axe quite as hard as he used to—but he'll still hack your head off if you slot him. Renraku may have lost its workhorse, but the zillion Renraku facilities from Chiba to San Francisco to Bangkok are working overtime to pick up the slack.

From a megacorporate standpoint, the physical loss of the arcology building was more of a PR disaster than anything else. It's easy enough to build labs and offices and factories to replace the ones that were lost, and Renraku can certainly find enough wage slaves and promote enough saratimen to fill the vacancies. Building back public confidence in the corporation will be harder, but Renraku has



RENRAKU COMPUTER SYSTEMS

World Headquarters: Chiba, Japan

CEO (in absentia): Inazo Aneki

CEO (acting) and COO: Haruhiko "Harry" Nakada

Chairman of the Board: Yukiako Watanabe

Corporate Status: Public corporation

Major Shareholders: None (no shareholder owns over 10 percent)

Major Divisions:

Renraku America

Headquarters: Manhattan, New York, UCAS (formerly the Renraku Arcology in Seattle)

Manager: Dr. Sherman Huang

Major Subsidiaries: Adams-Westlake Mediaworks (Realizm Simulations, National Trideo Network and Paradigm Pictures), Architectural Dynamics, Armada Personnel, Champion Financial Group (including GloBank and Temperance Investments), FactFiles, Festival Foods, HyperSense, Iris Firmware, Najima Securities

Renraku Asia

Headquarters: Tokyo, Japan

Manager: Surin Supachai

Major Subsidiaries: Fuchi Corporate Services, Ganbare Aerospace, Shin Chau Kyogo, Ultimax, Underwater Living, Wakotta Software

Renraku Australasia

Headquarters: Sydney, Australia

Manager: Lucy Don

Major Subsidiaries: Australian Development Cooperative, Genecraft, Harland & Wolff Nautical Designs

Renraku Europa

Headquarters: Munich, Bavarian Free State, German Alliance

Manager: Karl Stadt

Major Subsidiaries: Blohm & Voss GmbH, Eurosoft, Gaz-Niki, Izom Armaments, Securitech International, Tetrydne Matrix Systems

some of the best spin doctors in the business working on it. Combine that with the fact that the Red Samurai are currently reclaiming the arc—in a bloody floor-by-floor nightmare of a battle—and Renraku's stock is already climbing out of the gutter.

● However, in today's information economy, the loss of all the data in the SCIRE host was a blow below the belt to Renraku, not to mention the shambles Renraku America leadership was left in. More than a few corps scrambled to seize some Renraku assets in the chaos. Transys Neuronet, Novatech and Aztechnology were all big winners.

● FastJack

If you ask me, the worst damage from the Seattle fiasco has nothing to do with the arcology building. It has to do with the fallout. The fact that a demonstrably hostile AI was lurking in Renraku's own computer systems for an unknown period has made Renraku management paranoid to a truly unprecedented degree. All major policy meetings now must be held *face to face*, because the execs aren't totally convinced that their electronic conversations are secure. As you can imagine, this plays havoc with the schedules of executives used to attending international policy meetings from their hot tubs at home. All sensitive databases are now stored off-line, with a lengthy series of checks and triple-checks required just to get the things online for a brief, heavily encrypted burst transmission. Renraku commercial semi-autonomous knowbot designs have undergone intense re-coding, and are now promoted with "special control features" for companies nervous of sprouting an AI of their own.

Furthermore, no one knows how long the AI has been tweaking records to suit its own purposes, so Renraku has an army of auditors going back over all of its major databanks and comparing them to archive copies—*manually*. That's right, folks, they don't trust searchbots because of Deus' possible interference, so they have to check all the records by hand. All major pieces of coding, Matrix defenses and transactions are being analyzed for anomalies and bugs. It's the worst computer nightmare since the Year 2000 mess.

Regardless of Renraku's problems, I want to remind everybody that 95 percent of Renraku is up and running at full capacity. I've overheard a lot of investors who are waiting for the corp to collapse, and a lot of shadowrunners who think a strike on Renraku is going to be a cakewalk now that the corp's distracted with Deus. Most of those investors will lose their shirts and most of those runners will wind up dead, because Renraku may be hurt, but it's not crippled. If anything, the corp is more dangerous than ever because its back is against the wall.

Okay. Now that I'm off my soapbox, let's get down to business. First, the basic facts: a little background, who runs the place, where the main offices are, what they do and how to make a profit from Renraku Computer Systems.

WHEN

A corp this size has way too much history to cover in this post, so I'll condense it into the ultra-brief version. Renraku got started as Keruba International, a Slovenia-based military consortium that made a fortune in the war-like first decade of the twenty-first century. It muscled its way into the "Big Seven" megacorps, ticking off most of the other megas in the process, and stayed there until the Crash of '29, when the company founder died and the corp nearly went belly-up. Inazo Aneki, then a hot young corporate raider, took out a huge loan and bought out Keruba through a holding company named Renraku. He was all ready to gut Keruba and sell off the parts, but for reasons of his own he decided to keep it. He moved its headquarters home to Chiba, changed its name to Renraku Computer Systems and installed himself as President and CEO.

During the 2030s, Renraku was a key player in the post-Crash rebuilding of the global information network, which made the corp fat and happy. Unfortunately, a lot of key executives spent most of their time lining their own pockets while Aneki was busy enjoying the trappings of power. Aneki eventually woke up when a few top executives tried to oust him; he managed to stay in power and decided to streamline the corp. Since then, Renraku has been a lean, powerful corporate machine—never a market leader, but always in the top five.

When Dunkelzahn died in 2058, the dragon's will made former Fuchi security head Miles Lanier a major shareholder in Renraku. Lanier left Fuchi under a cloud (or so it seemed), and helped Renraku strike back against his former employer. His inside information, combined with an unprecedented series of technological breakthroughs, put Renraku in position to surpass Fuchi as the second most powerful corporation in the world (behind Saeder-Krupp, naturally). Then the Corporate Court got involved, Lanier turned out to be a spy for Fuchi's Villiers, Renraku's technological edge evaporated, and an AI took over the corp's North American headquarters. The good news? When Fuchi collapsed, Shikei Nakatomi took what remained of Fuchi Asia and joined up with Renraku—partly for financial reasons, but mostly to get back at Richard Villiers, the man who fragged up both Fuchi and Renraku (the latter via Miles Lanier).

WHERE

RENRAKU COMPUTER SYSTEMS

Like most AAA parent companies, Renraku doesn't do much other than sit there and own other companies. The only actual employees of RCS are the highest-level Renraku executives, their personal staffs, dozens of lawyers and a legion of accountants who spend all their time determining what exactly RCS owns, what each of those other companies owns, what they want to own next, and how much all of it is worth. Each of the four divisions described below is its own legal entity (wholly



RENRAKU COMPUTER SYSTEMS

owned by RCS, of course), incorporated in the countries where it does business.

RENRAKU AMERICA

The premier top-level division, Renraku America covers both North and South America. Formerly based out of the SCIRE arcology in Seattle, RA relocated its headquarters to Manhattan after certain developments made it ... er, impractical to remain in the arc. Predictably, Renraku America got hit hardest by the arcology disaster; it lost its headquarters, largest single manufacturing facility, many of its top-level executives, thousands of other employees and the backbone of its Matrix systems in a single night. However, the division is recruiting heavily, and has added many new facilities and expanded existing ones to compensate for its losses. RA has been operating at a massive financial loss since December of 2059, but it looks like the bleeding is finally beginning to slow down.

The divisional manager is Dr. Sherman Huang, who has had the words "brilliant" and "eccentric" applied to him so many times that he might as well legally change his name to include them. When it comes down to it, he's probably the one responsible for the AI's creation and takeover.

RA's subsidiaries pretty much cover the spectrum, from Festival Foods (makers of Sloppy-Soy, Vitmoe, and more of your favorite brands) to Architectural Dynamics (office building developers extraordinaire, and AD also probably owns every mall you've ever been in) to Iris Firmware in Pueblo (producers of quality network peripherals, chip-readers and more). Major corporate facilities exist in New York City, San Francisco, Sacramento, Los Angeles, Dallas, Charlotte, Kansas City, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Santiago and Buenos Aires.

RENRAKU ASIA

Renraku Asia was once the real heart of the company. Over the years, however, more and more attention went to Renraku America (possibly because Sherman Huang catered more to CEO Inazo Aneki's pet projects), and Renraku Asia began to fall behind. With the arrival of Shikei Nakatomi from Fuchi, all that has changed. Building on his own substantial Asian power base, Nakatomi "encouraged" former divisional manager Tev Greenwaldt to take an early retirement, then replaced him with Surin Supachai, one of Nakatomi's personal yes-men. Renraku Asia is now the biggest of Renraku's regional divisions, at least in terms of financial value, and Nakatomi isn't about to let anyone on the board of directors forget it.

The aforementioned Supachai, a lifetime sarariman, was formerly the head of Fuchi Asia's Bioenhancements Division. A puppet of Nakatomi who followed his boss faithfully in the transition from Fuchi, Supachai was a surprise choice over Nakatomi's daughter-in-law Noriko Sakai, who held the former Fuchi Asia VP position. Nakatomi was displeased with Sakai's handling of the corporate war, feeling that she had allowed too many Fuchi Asia subsidiaries to be stripped away by competitors. Sakai has been relegated to President of Renraku China,

where she plots to regain her position from Supachai while limiting Wuxing.

Some well-known subsidiaries of Renraku Asia include small arms manufacturers Ultimax and Shin Chou Kyogo, Underwater Living (builders of several undersea sites in the Philippines) and Wakatta Software, renowned for their data conversion and compression suites. Major facilities exist in Tokyo, Seoul, Chiba, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Madras and Taipei.

RENRAKU AUSTRALASIA

Renraku Australasia split off from Renraku Asia in the early '50s, when the Asian division was at the peak of its power. Some say Aneki wanted to keep any single division from becoming too powerful in order to minimize internal conflict—which may be true, but there were sound economic reasons for the separation as well. Renraku Australasia is viewed as something of a "maverick" division, which means it's slightly less conservative than the rest of the corp. When Renraku ruled the Matrix world in the late '50s, some of the company's drek-hottest software and hardware came out of Australasia's labs. That well of innovation has since dried up, and Australasia's computer techs have taken a back seat to heavy industrial development and impressive agricultural breakthroughs. Still, the computer lab-boys are always working on a thousand oddball products; 999 of them may wind up as recycled electrons, but that last project might just shake the world.

Lucy Don is in her ninth year as divisional manager of Renraku Australasia, and some highly placed sources are hinting that it might be her last. She's apparently a distant relative (second cousin or something) of Lucas Don, one of the suits who helped Richard Villiers strip Fuchi bare. There doesn't seem to be any connection between the two—no one has confirmed that they've ever even met—but that hasn't stopped Shikei Nakatomi from making her the main internal target of his anti-Villiers crusade. He's been after Lucy since he came on board at Renraku, using everything from subtle innuendo to hired shadowsnoops. My sources tell me Lucy's getting ready to retire—not because she has anything to hide, but because she's fed up with taking Nakatomi's drek. After spending her entire career clawing her way up the male-dominated corporate ladder, she's about ready to kick back and enjoy the good life.

Renraku Australasia has its headquarters in Sydney, and most of the division's major facilities are there as well. Other prominent sites include Brisbane, Perth, Christchurch, Bandar Seri Begawan (it's in Brunei, chummers, if that helps at all) and Honolulu. Most subsidiaries concentrate on pure research and sell their designs back to the parent company, so you've probably never heard of them. Three exceptions are the Australian Development Cooperative (the ones who stirred up that whole hornet's nest with the Aborigines back in '47), Genecraft (an early innovator in bioware), and Harland & Wolff Nautical Designs, shipbuilders to the rich and famous.

RENRAKU EUROPA

Renraku Europa is primarily comprised of the remnants of Keruba International, the military conglomerate that Inazo Aneki built into Renraku. The most conservative branch of a conservative corp, RE has dwindled in importance to the parent company over the past decade. The SCIRE disaster proved something of a break for Renraku Europa, as it's taken some attention off RE in board meetings and allowed them a chance to rebuild. However, Europa is feeling pressure from a new competitor: Shiawase, whose presence in Europe has vastly expanded following the arrival of Korin Yamana from Fuchi Pan-Europa.

Divisional manager Karl Stadt is a hard-nosed, bottom-line-oriented executive in the grand old twentieth-century tradition. He's determined to bring Renraku Europa back to a prominent position in the corp hierarchy if it kills him—and if recent reports about his heart condition are true, it might do just that.

Among RE's most recent acquisitions is Securitech International, a company that has made quite an impact providing Matrix security and tracking of computer criminals. Divisional offices recently moved to Munich (primarily because Stadt couldn't stand the anarchy of Berlin); other prominent facilities exist in Ljubljana (that's in Slovenia, folks), Trieste, Amsterdam, Madrid and Moscow.

- Isn't there a Renraku Africa?
- Ivory

- Yes, but it's a sub-division of Renraku Europa, with headquarters in Oranje-Vrystaat. Primary operations are agriculture, pharmaceuticals, Desert Wars training and fragging with Ares, Shiawase and S-K.

- Shetani

WHO

CEO INAZO ANEKI

A former corporate pirate and current social philosopher, Aneki is the man who created Renraku as a heavily indebted holding company, made it into one of the Big Ten and led it into (and out of) near-disaster and near-supremacy. Shrewd and savvy, he's one of the few megacorporate CEOs who is also personally likable ... if you can get near him. Aneki took an indefinite leave of absence in early 2060, and if anyone on Renraku's board has heard from him since, they aren't talking. Officially, he's visiting mysterious Tibet, using a seal he inherited from Dunkelzahn to pass beyond the country's hermetically sealed (pun intended) borders. Folks both in and outside of Renraku are beginning to wonder if there's really enough happening in Tibet to keep Aneki occupied for a year while his corporation is in crisis.

COO HARUHIKO "HARRY" NAKADA

Nakada has been Renraku's Chief Operations Officer for twelve years, and is currently acting as CEO as well. Aneki's selection of Nakada as acting CEO during his leave

of absence lent credence to rumors that Nakada is being groomed as Aneki's eventual successor. Nakada has been trying to hold down the fort until Aneki returns, mostly by steering straight ahead and avoiding significant policy changes. That may not last long, though; Aneki shows no signs of returning soon, and Nakada is feeling increasing pressure from Shikei Nakatomi to take a more aggressive stance against the AI in the Seattle arcology and Renraku's corporate rivals (most notably Richard Villiers' Novatech). Nakada's decision to send troops into the arcology seems to have bought him some time, but if the reconquest of the building bogs down or Novatech starts to pass Renraku in the technology race, Nakatomi won't be the only board member trying to bring Nakada down.

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD YUKIAKO WATANABE

Watanabe has a reputation as the toughest woman in Japanese business, and the current situation is putting her skills to the test. She and Inazo Aneki have long presented a solid front on major business decisions; with Aneki out of the picture, Shikei Nakatomi is targeting Watanabe as a weak link. While most of the board respects Watanabe's business acumen, most also remain uncomfortable with the idea of a woman holding such a significant position. If Nakatomi can have her replaced as chairman before Aneki returns, he'll be in a much better position to make a power play on Renraku's board.

SHIKEI NAKATOMI

Known as "the business butcher" during his younger days, Nakatomi is a ruthlessly efficient businessman and a master of boardroom politics. His father co-founded Fuchi Industrial Electronics, and Nakatomi sees Richard Villiers as the cause of Fuchi's self-destruction. Now that he has settled into Renraku's boardroom, Nakatomi is quietly forming a coalition of board members who likewise have a bone to pick with Villiers. Once he's sure he has enough votes, Nakatomi is expected to dump Watanabe and have himself or one of his cohorts voted in as chairman. If and when that happens, corporate attacks on Novatech will almost certainly increase dramatically.

- Part of Nakatomi's hatred towards Villiers may stem from the fact that Villiers likely had his father Kiyoshi assassinated, as Kiyoshi was opposed to letting Villiers buy into Fuchi. Of course, Nakatomi might still be serving in his father's shadow if Villiers hadn't knocked him off, but still ...
- Link

WHAT

As its name implies, Renraku Computer Systems has always focused on the Matrix. Hardware research, software development, data management, interface cyberware—you name it, Renraku has at least a dozen labs working on it somewhere. The corp's technological prowess reached its peak in '58 and '59, when Renraku labs churned out gigapulse after gigapulse of revolutionary software and precedent-shattering hardware. They virtually owned the

market for a year or so and their deckers seemed unstoppable, on offense or defense. All that came to a sudden halt in the summer of 2059, when something went haywire in Renraku's Matrix systems. The corp's defenses sprouted gaping holes, Renraku deckers floundered helplessly and half of Renraku's techs couldn't even access their own systems. No one knows exactly what happened, though many people suspect the incident was an early sign of the arrival of the AI known as Deus.

Renraku's computer divisions have begun rebuilding from that setback, but in the meantime the corp has had to rely heavily on some of its other moneymakers. Renraku remains fairly strong in military technology, harkening back to its origins as arms conglomerate Keruba International. Small arms are produced by SCK and Izom Armaments, and Gaz-Niki and Blohm & Voss produce several military and security vehicles in addition to consumer offerings.

With the 2055 acquisition of Genecraft, Renraku became a major player in the world of cyber- and bioware. Since then, the corp has taken over a number of other significant biotech firms. Agricultural research has also become a surprisingly profitable field, primarily due to spinoff discoveries from the Seattle arcology, underwater farms and the attempted "greening" of Australia's Great Victoria Desert.

Renraku's weakest area is probably the aerospace industry, though the arrival of Ganbare Aerospace (with Shikei Nakatomi) has boosted Renraku's space operations from feeble to merely mediocre. Likewise, magical research has never been that important to Renraku, but many suspect that that may change once Inazo Aneki returns from Tibet.

LIFE INSIDE RENRAKU

Renraku follows the standard Japanacorp procedure of encouraging lifetime commitment from its employees. It favors arcologies as a way of cheaply and efficiently integrating the personal lives of its workers with the corporate routine. Such control also allows them to establish Japanese culture as the dominant intercorp culture. Interestingly, religious worship is not encouraged, and Renraku has politely but steadfastly refused to allow Shinto shrines or Buddhist temples to be established in its territory; several groups of employees have established virtual shrines in Renraku Matrix hosts, but Renraku closes these down when it finds them. Children and young adults are thoroughly indoctrinated with Renraku propaganda through corporate daycare, schooling and work programs. Renraku actively encourages—perhaps to the point of demanding—its workers to get cyberware implants (typically datajacks and softlinks) installed to increase their work potential, offering benefits to employees who do.

● Renraku is notably lax on testing its children and employees for magical aptitude. You could spend your entire life within the corp, never knowing you had the Talent.

● Twist

Japanese is Renraku's operating language, and certain traditional elements actively discourage the use of English or other languages during any business transactions. A large percentage of Renraku's Japanese employees speak no other language. Classes and linguasofts are required for Renraku citizens who do not speak Japanese.

Racism towards metahumans, both personal and institutionalized, is standard within Renraku. Like many Japanacorps, metahumans have little chance of rising above the lower management level, but the bulk of its manual labor force is drawn from metahuman communities. Hate crimes are a frequent—and tolerated—occurrence, especially towards any metahumans attempting to climb the company ladder.

HOW

● Now we get to the part you really want to know about, right? How do we make money off Renraku, running for or against it? That, my friends, is a question others are better qualified to answer. As it happens, one of them has agreed to discuss that very issue with us today.

Ms. Cassie Barnett was once a member of a shadowrunning team that worked exclusively for Renraku. That all changed when her team was sent inside the arcology and went up against Deus' drones and subverted warriors. (You can read that fascinating story in detail in the *Renraku Arcology: Shutdown SIG.*) Cassie's team got slaughtered, literally. Only quick thinking and no small amount of luck allowed Cassie to escape the arc with her life. Once she'd made it outside, Renraku goons intent on keeping secret the intel that Cassie had gathered tried to silence her once and for all. Thankfully, they were unsuccessful.

Cassie is alive and well and ready to speak out about what it's like to work for Renraku. Given the circumstances under which her employment with Renraku ended, you'll forgive her if she displays a certain bias against the boys in red.

● Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 03 March 2061 at 22:02:37 (EST)

RUNNING FOR RENRAKU

by Cassie

I gave Renraku ten years of my life, and what did I learn from the experience? That you can't lie in bed with Renraku for that long without getting screwed in the end. It comes with the territory. Objectively, you know that when you sign on for the long haul. When the reality of the situation slaps you in the face, though, objectivity is the first thing to go.

Renraku's shadowrunning teams are tools to get the job done, and so both are expendable and replaceable. That's the way it is. After all, Renraku doesn't even trust its own employees, so you can hardly expect them to trust you. If you want to work for any megacorp, remember that. Don't let your pride or ego lead you into believing that you're something special, that you actually matter to the corp. That collar around your neck may be made

of gold, but it's still a collar. Forget that, and you'll get a rude awakening somewhere down the line. If you aren't prepared for it, you could pay for your ignorance with your life.

So why work for Renraku at all? Well, it has its perks. First of all, you get regular and steady employment. When you're working for a corporation as large as Renraku, there's always something brewing that requires the services of an anonymous ops team. Once you enter into exclusive service, you don't have to worry about where your next job is coming from. You just have to worry about *living* to see the next one.

Another perk is access to cyberware and to doctors who can implant it. State-of-the-art medical facilities beat the hell out of disreputable street clinics. You can go into surgery and not worry about cyberware rejection afterward, or about dishonest docs filling your body with cheap or unreliable secondhand parts. Sometimes the corporation even foots the bill for your medical expenses, though more often than not they take it out of your pay.

Which leads me to the last perk: better pay. If you work for Renraku long enough, they'll start paying you a regular salary just to keep you on retainer. Make the jump from getting paid for each contract to getting regular pay-sticks just like a corp wage slave, and you won't ever go hungry again. It's a nice life ... while it lasts.

Renraku has a signature method of scouting talent. The corp uses a special breed of Johnson, affectionately referred to on the street as a digger (or Mr. D), to set up runs against its own holdings. A digger has unusual latitude for his position. For example, diggers have the authority (which they use frequently) to set up real runs. In other words, the Renraku subsidiary being hit doesn't necessarily know the run is coming. Makes the game more realistic, and if a few corp employees are injured or killed—or if the runners are injured or killed—well, that's just factored into the cost of finding good help.

Because Mr. D is the one who outlines the job and supplies the information, he is responsible for evaluating the team's performance. Based on the level of displayed talent and the report from Mr. D, Renraku decides whether or not to offer the team an exclusive contract with the corporation.

RENRAKU SECURITY

When it comes down to it, Renraku security is scattered and haphazard. They train their standard guards well, give 'em good gear, and try to provide magical support, but what really matters is how important the site is to the Renraku hierarchy. Security at less important facilities may suffer from manpower shortages, equipment failures and other problems derived from neglect. Hot sites will be guarded, however, and ready to rock with and runners.

As befits the corp, Matrix security is still its strong point, especially given recent events. The Matrix is also Renraku's primary intelligence source, and the corp has several squads of deckers assigned to Matrix research,



surveillance and penetration. Most recently, those deckers have been seeking out data on the otaku, in particular those associated with Deus.

The Red Samurai

The run into the SCIRE arcology ended my illustrious career with Renraku. Despite the corp's best efforts, Deus has held the arc for more than a year. Judging from recent developments, however, it appears the AI is finally loosening its grip. Renraku troops have retaken the first five floors, and it's only a matter of time before they manage to regain control of the reactors in the basement. Once they do, the AI will be finished.

- Sure. Unless the AI decides that if it's going down, it might as well take Seattle with it ...
- Bung

Much of the credit for Renraku's gains can be laid at the booted feet of the Red Samurai. The Reds are Renraku's cream of the crop, an elite group of soldiers and security specialists who are the very best in their respective fields. The Red Sams include electronics and demolitions experts, combat mages and military strategists. You can bet Red tacticians cracked the arcology walnut, allowing Renraku to obtain that first (and most critical) foothold on the ground floors of the SCIRE.

In some other megacorps, a runner who serves faithfully can expect a promotion into the ranks of the corporation's top security forces. Not so with Renraku. I never had a chance of becoming a Red Sam, for two reasons. First, trust. Renraku does not and will not ever trust shadowrunners. It doesn't matter how long you work for the corp. They'll never forget where you came from, and that prevents you from hitting the big time. You might end up as a hired gun in Renraku's mid-level security outfits, but you'll never be one of the Reds.

The second reason? There's no way to put this delicately, so I'll just come out and say it: racial purity. Take a stroll down my family tree and you'll find that an inordinate number of my relatives have undergone goblinization. I'm not an ork or a troll, but to the Reds it amounts to the same thing if your past is checkered enough. Red Samurai recruiters bandy about phrases like "genetic integrity" and "bloodline purity" as they shake their heads and send you on your way.

The end result, of course, is that Renraku has a security force as elitist as it is elite. The Red Samurai are an arrogant bunch. Not only are they damned good at what they do, but they see themselves as warriors of purity and honor. They believe their rigorous standards of racial integrity somehow make them better than other fighting forces of equivalent skill. This cockiness is one of the Reds' collective weaknesses, and like all weaknesses it can be exploited. Red Samurai teams are frequently overconfident, especially in situations where they are overwhelmingly sure of success.

Another weakness of the Reds is (you guessed it) the very racial purity they believe makes them strong. Red Samurai are excellent when brute force is called for. Defensively they excel as bodyguards, and offensively they function well as hit squads. They fall down, however, in espionage and subterfuge. The Reds are racially and ethnically homogenous, a rarity in this modern polyglot world. Most are Japanese, and a majority are male. As far as spies go, they don't have a lot of range to choose from. One reason Renraku has dealt so ineffectively with the Ork Underground beneath the arcology, for example, is that no one among the Red Samurai can pull off an infiltration—there's not a Red ork in sight.

● Renraku has experimented with elfen mages in the Red Samurai. I know it sounds odd, but some Reds seem to be fascinated with the Tir's level of honor, discipline and duty,

as exhibited by their Paladins and Ghosts. And, in their racist minds, elves aren't nearly as bad as the other metahuman scum. So they've picked out a few Tir exiles and tried to train them with Samurai philosophy ... hoping to obtain an ultimate mage warrior, I guess. Of course, they have no idea what the heck they are talking about, but it is fun to watch.

● Lone Wolf

Now let me acquaint you with some of the Red Samurai's strengths. First and foremost, the Reds are warriors. You don't want direct confrontation with a Red hit squad. A hit squad usually consists of a five-man team, built using a technique known as overlapping concentration. That means at least two team members share skills and specialties. In the event that one of the two is incapacitated, a backup man can take over.

All five team members are usually trained in military tactics, and one is always a spellslinger. Red Samurai teams are usually deployed in situations where stealth is not a factor. Search and rescue missions that involve direct assault, military operations and personal protection are all domains of the Reds. For more subtle missions, Renraku usually turns to shadowrunning teams.

What truly distinguishes the Red Samurai from other corporations' security squads is their ability to function seamlessly as a unit—hardly surprising from a corporation whose very name, *renraku*, means communication and connection. To understand how strong the team bond is, you need to understand the process of becoming a Red. Potential candidates are recruited from all age groups. Some come straight out of high school, others are sent to become samurai after distinguishing themselves through exemplary service to the corporation. All samurai candidates are sent to the Forge (in Japanese, *kaeteru*) in Chiba, where they train for two years. During the first six months, the instructors observe their pupils and determine each candidate's strengths and weaknesses. It is their job to assess the students' abilities and decide in which branch of the samurai each candidate will serve. At the six-month mark, the fledgling samurai are divided into squads; they spend the next year and a half learning how to function effectively as a team.

The squad divisions persist past graduation. Red Samurai are rarely assigned or reassigned to tasks as individuals; they get moved around as groups. When you go up against them, remember this. The samurai on the team know one another extremely well and likely have more experience than you do at working with their teammates. They know how to cover for their mates' deficiencies, and they won't hesitate to put their lives on the line for their comrades.

That should give you some idea of what to expect when running for or against Renraku. Try not to get yourself killed.

SAEDER-KRUPP

by Felix

Across the globe, the name Saeder-Krupp is synonymous with the name Lofwyr—a great dragon who is as well known and as mysterious as the megacorp that is his personal toy. Beyond the awe and mystique, most runners know only that Saeder-Krupp (S-K) is the “heavy industry” corp. It mines and exploits resources, and builds big, heavy mechanical devices—boring drek compared to slick corps like Novatech. Any more substantial information is cast aside; everyone knows the street adage, “Never deal with a dragon.” Most “smart” runners step back, not wanting to know more. S-K well deserves the fear engendered by its reputation; it is currently the single most powerful corporation in the world—which means that smart runners can’t afford to ignore it.

The following profile is for those of you who want to know more. I can give you my bona fides if you question the source of my information, but you should just trust me—Captain Chaos does. If it helps put your mind at ease, I am a member of the Klabautebund polclub, an organization that actively opposes the megacorps and seeks to live as free from high technology as is possible in this day and age. We support other groups that can accomplish things we can’t take on ourselves, mostly pirates and green cells who directly frag with megacorporate interests. Our reputation of being highly magical and possibly even toxic is quite useful; does it matter if it’s true?

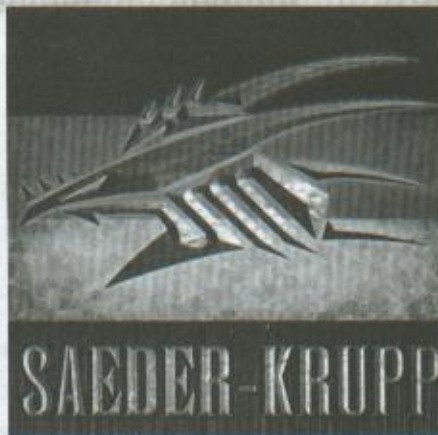
My personal insight into Saeder-Krupp’s biz is partly a result of living and working in Germany, but mostly a testament to my ability to survive close contact with the schemes of the world’s most powerful corporate entity—and that’s not a boast, it’s just a fact. It’s also a fact that S-K’s power structure is more complex than you might imagine, and even a monolith this big has cracks that can be exploited.

CORPORATE HISTORY

Even before Lofwyr took over, Saeder-Krupp was a prime corp running ahead of the transnational pack. It first hit the radar in 2010, when a man named Michel Beloit seized control of BMW and maneuvered it into place as Europe’s premier industrial power. Expanding its automotive focus, Beloit restructured BMW, integrating Saeder Munitions and Krupp Manufacturing. He also established stronger operations in Africa and the Middle East. After Beloit died under mysterious circumstances in 2032, his clever wife Wilhelmina Graff-Beloit seized the reins, purging those who opposed her. She ran the company for five years, taking advantage of the devastation left by the Euro-Wars to reap new profits.

No sooner had Mina elevated S-K to a new apex of power than Lofwyr walked in, with 63 percent of the corp’s shares in his pocket. The wyrm had spent two decades quietly accumulating control through various shell companies. He’d joined the Council of Princes in Tir Tairngire in 2036 (despite heavy protests), and it seemed he’d decided to come all the way out of the closet. He voted himself in as president, ousted Mina and the board and pulled a management buyout. Mina actually had the guts, or at least the rage, to strike back at Lofwyr—once. Lofwyr saw it coming before she’d finished her plans, and warned her—also once. She took a permanent vacation and fell into obscurity, taking the boost up to Zurich-Orbital in 2050.

Lofwyr swiftly restructured the corp to meet his whims and embarked on a ruthless expansion campaign. He made a killing buying war surplus from Russia and the Islamic countries, and he bought up the remnants of the European Space Agency with his spare change. Lofwyr’s primary agenda during this period was a “European



World Headquarters: Essen, Germany
President, CEO and Chairman of the Board: Lofwyr
Corporate Status: Private corporation
Major Shareholder: Lofwyr (100%)

Major Subsidiaries:

Heavy Industry: Barytech, BMW, Krupp Manufacturing, Krupp Specialist Engineering, Heavy Metal, Lunar Mining Corps, Ruhr Nuclear, Saurer-Rieter, Trans-Oceanic Mining, Undine Processing, Vulcan Systems

Chemicals: Fatima Petrochemical, Krupp Chemicals, Krupp Munitions, Morgen-Tek GmbH, Triax, Volvox Industrial Chemicals, portions of AG Chemie Europa

Finance: Commerzbank, Dresdner Bank, Lathian-Yaea PLC, Nippon Credit and Trust, Swiss Bank Corporation

Aerospace: Messerschmidt-Kawasaki, Orbital Dynamix, S-K Aerospace

Computers/Robotics: Siemens-Nixdorf, Krupp Robotics, Maser Industrial Electronics

Magical Research: The Arcanum, Awakened World Research, Elemental Services, Spellweavers Consortium

Service: Amalgamated Technologies and Telecommunications, Intel-XS, Ruhr DataFax, Transnational Communications

Entertainment: American Broadcasting Service, Angelic Entertainment

Restoration," an attempt to create a united, industrial Europe in the wake of the Euro-War's destruction. If he could centralize European political and economic authority, the continent as a whole would be easier for him to manipulate from behind the scenes.

This plan met virulent opposition from policlubs whose members believed that Europe's cultures should remain distinct and non-homogenous. They saw a second European Community as merely a step toward assimilating Europeans into a pan-corporate police state, with Europe's resources wide open for corporate consumption. They rallied popular support and pursued direct action that raised the social costs of such integration, eventually foiling the Restoration and saving Europe from total corporate domination.

- Nice spin, Felix. First off, rampant xenophobia and prejudice kept the Restoration from uniting Europe as much as any organized opposition did. Secondly, the Nachtmachen and Revenants and other policlubs that fought Lofwyr's Restoration didn't defeat it by pure sweat and willpower. Let's just say it takes fire to fight fire.
- Gretchen

Unfortunately, Lofwyr was clever enough to extract victory from defeat. While Europe remained decentralized, the surviving nation-states could barely control their own people, much less sustain the force needed to ward off aggressive neighbors. With few exceptions, these governments propped up their authority with easily negotiated corporate backing. Over time, the divided and factionalized European states have sold pieces of their souls to seemingly separate corporate concerns. With few exceptions, those concerns are tied—often through many shells—to S-K, and they dance to Lofwyr's tune. As we can now see, European nations have sacrificed their autonomy as the price of apparently retaining it.

Postwar crises in Russia and the Islamic countries precipitated similar events in those regions. Through S-K and numerous industrial powers indirectly linked to him, Lofwyr can exert considerable influence in almost every nation in Europe, Russia and the Middle East. For those who believe I am exaggerating S-K's might, check it out for yourself. Pay particularly close attention to the careers of individuals such as Stanislaw Wlasek, Fahrouk Eshw and Josef Goldman. Their histories are most interesting.

- Wlasek is the Polish Minister of State, considered the power behind the throne. He also happens to be a "former" Saeder-Krupp attorney. Eshw is the spiritual leader of a militant Shilte sect; according to MET 2000 reports, their primary arms source is Knorr-Bremse, a wholly owned S-K subsidiary. Josef Goldman was an aide to an influential member of the Russian National Supreme Soviet, with no connection to S-K that I could find at first glance. He was assassinated two days after this file was posted.
- Red Wrath

Saeder-Krupp seems to have survived the recent corporate war relatively unbloodied. In fact, S-K managed to seize crucial elements of Fuchi Pan-Europa's dissolving empire. At least a dozen experts in computer science were intercepted during their transfer to Shiawase, and now work diligently in S-K computer labs. However, S-K's undiminished status has made it a primary target for megacorps seeking to regain lost strength.

ORGANIZATION

S-K's internal structure is constantly in flux, as Lofwyr frequently rearranges the corp to facilitate his Byzantine plots and personal goals. The dragon is infamous for running the corp singlehandedly. S-K suits who want to stick around learn to stay loyal, work hard and love micro-management, or they're wyrm food. If nothing else, S-K's confusing hierarchy makes it difficult for enemies to deduce the corps' weaknesses and its chain of command, much less gather meaningful intelligence.

- Misdirection is S-K's standard operating procedure. While certain divisions seem to overlap or have redundant tasks, other areas of operation seem to be ignored altogether. Don't be fooled. In most cases, such a gap merely means that the S-K subsidiary handling that area is particularly well concealed.
- The Chromed Accountant
"It's all about dollars and sense"

SAEDER-KRUPP PRIME

Division Head: Rolf Bremen
Office Headquarters: Essen, Northrhine-Ruhr, German Alliance

The S-K Prime division deserves special attention as the only division with a static hierarchy and structure. It primarily acts as a watchdog force and redundancy system for other S-K divisions. For example, if S-K CAS falls behind in production, its personnel may find themselves reporting to S-K Prime North America instead of S-K North America. The majority of S-K Prime suits are skilled at problem-solving, creating and executing contingency plans and swift, merciless corporate restructuring. The pool of expertise among management executives is eclectic, and the division also features an above-average number of think tanks and "pure research" teams. In effect, S-K Prime seems to be Saeder-Krupp's "fix-it" squad, internal police and future-analysis division all rolled into one. S-K Prime personnel have significantly more training, influence and sway within the corp than your standard execs.

PRIMARY BUSINESSES

Saeder-Krupp's center of power rests firmly in Europe, but it also enjoys the largest megacorporate presence in the Middle East. Its African and Asian holdings are important as well, primarily advancing cheap exploitation of resources. S-K has a minimal public presence in the Americas, though Lofwyr is believed to own

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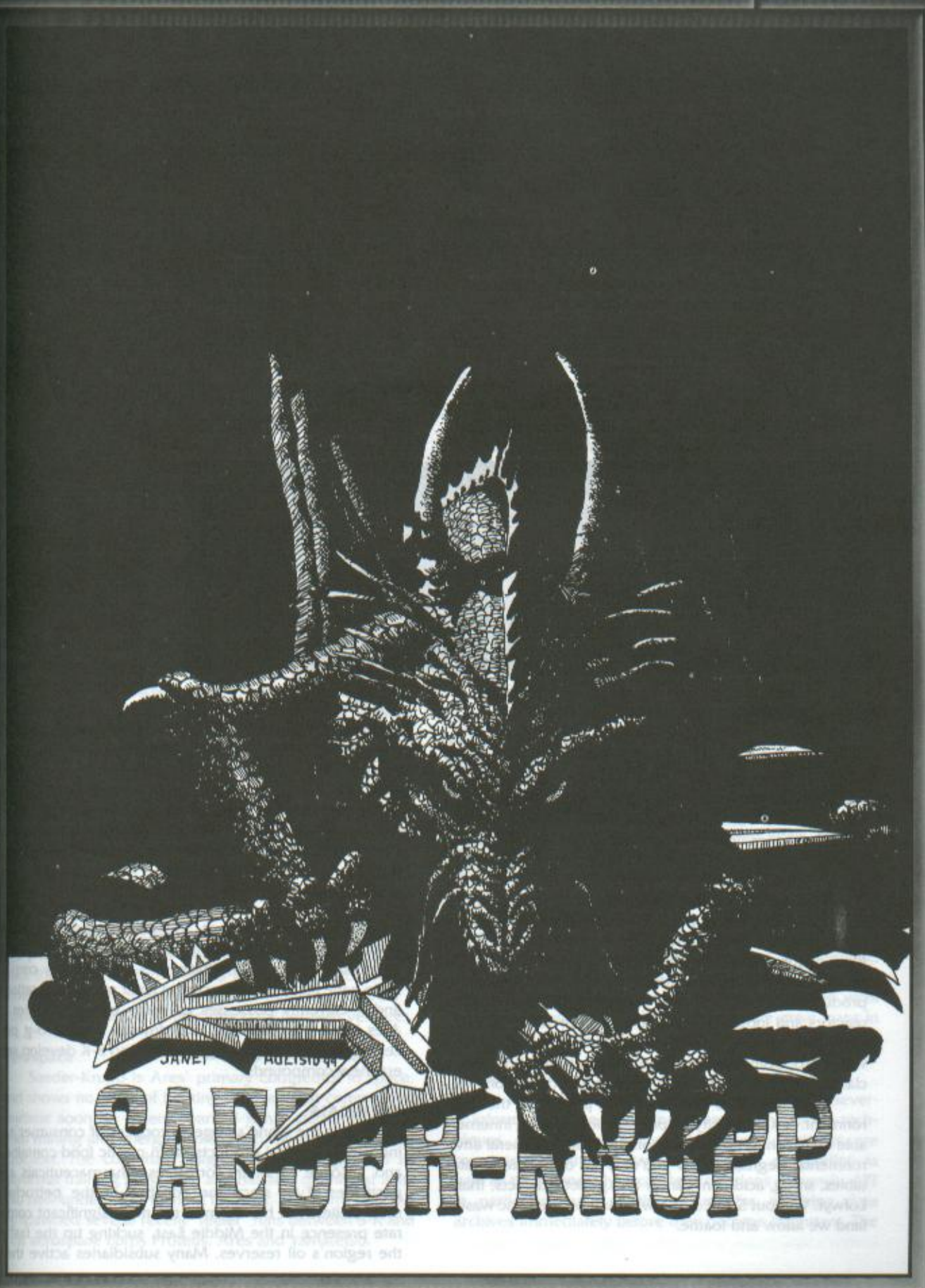
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late presence in the Middle East and in the
the region's oil reserves. Many subsidiaries active in

numerous holdings through layers of shell companies and other camouflage.

Officially, S-K is banned in Tir Tairngire, California Free State, the Philippines and most NAN nations. In reality, S-K is everywhere. For example, most S-K operations in CalFree are under the Angelic Entertainment umbrella, which is nothing more than an S-K shell.

● Banned from the Tir? Isn't Lofwyr on the Council of Princes? What gives?

● Cracked

● That's exactly why S-K has no official Tir holdings. As part of the compromise that placed the wyrm on the Council, S-K was barred from operating in the Tir. "Conflict of Interest" was the argument used, I believe.

● Black Knight



HEAVY INDUSTRY

Saeder-Krupp is known as a heavy-industry corp, but the significance of this designation seems to escape most runners. Heavy industry makes all other industries possible. Without the power sources, manufacturing equipment and raw resources in which S-K specializes, most other industries could not function. As a result, S-K has critical leverage over numerous lesser corps because they rely on S-K monopolies.

S-K subsidiaries derive power from just about every source imaginable: nuclear fusion reactors, geothermal plants, hydro-electric dams, even orbital solar collectors. Most of Europe and the Middle East get their power from Saeder-Krupp, directly or indirectly. S-K subsidiaries also produce engines, complex engineering components, reactors and industrial electronics. Hundreds of processing plants deal with water purification, recycling and waste processing. S-K also manufactures just about every class of automotive device a rigger could dream of.

These industries extract a heavy price from the environment. S-K is directly responsible for creating innumerable toxic zones, not to mention their role in general environmental degradation. If you're a fan of polluted water tables, smog, acid rain, cancer and genetic defects, thank Lofwyr. Without S-K, Europe wouldn't be the toxic wasteland we know and loathe.

Fittingly, S-K doesn't let contaminated real estate go to waste. Toxic zones throughout Europe and elsewhere serve as prime havens for secret S-K research facilities. Such locations benefit from their remoteness and the general unpleasantness of their surroundings. With no threat of outbreaks or concerns for harming their neighbors, facilities in the toxic zones can experiment with weapons, biotech, genetics, twisted magics and whatnot. The Irradiated Saar Legislative Zone (SOX) between the German Alliance and France is an S-K favorite.

● While all this activity in toxic areas might imply plenty of employment opportunities for toxic shamans, officially, S-K offers a bounty for toxic shamans, as do many other corps. Unofficially, Lofwyr very occasionally tolerates their involvement in his affairs in order to accomplish specific goals. Surprisingly, S-K mages and techs have become

quite proficient at decontamination—they get a lot of experience with hazardous materials and hostile climates. They've pioneered several ecological reclamation techniques; in fact, rumor has it that S-K sponsors an initiatory group dedicated to detoxing and astral cleansing through meta-

magic and the use of certain spirits.

Apparently even Lofwyr realizes it's hard to make money when your biosphere collapses.

● Gretchen

● Who needs a biosphere when you have an arcology to live in? S-K will make sure its suits have clean air to breathe, but they'd strip-mine the planet if they thought they could get away with it.

● Deep Green

Toxic zones are not the only remote locations beloved by Lofwyr's corporation. In addition to several Arctic and Antarctic installations, S-K is the only corp so far to have established functional lunar mining operations, and it currently possesses as many orbital factories as Ares has orbital habitats. Experiments with zero-g processing and manufacturing have helped S-K develop several new compounds.

CHEMICALS

S-K is the world's largest producer of consumer and industrial chemical products, from plastic food containers and gasoline to smart corrosives, pharmaceuticals and pesticides. Ever since the collapse of the petrochem monopolies, S-K has claimed the most significant corporate presence in the Middle East, sucking up the last of the region's oil reserves. Many subsidiaries active there

hide their S-K connections, to divert attention from radical factions who view any foreign power—much less one run by a dragon—as anathema.

S-K faces strong competition in this arena from other European chemical giants, particularly Zeta-ImpChem, which also owns a significant percentage of AG Chemie.

FINANCE

S-K has been a dominant force in world banking for decades, outstripping even the Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaft Bank in scope and assets. S-K's various financial subsidiaries cover almost every aspect of corporate finance: commodities brokerage, insurance, arbitrage, futures trading, tax evasion and so on. The far-reaching coverage of S-K's financial portfolios allows a smart wyrm like Lofwyr to engage in copious insider trading with no one the wiser.

A large percentage of S-K's financial transactions are conducted through clandestine tax havens, most conveniently owned by Lofwyr. This allows S-K to cover its tracks with ease, and makes it possible to mislead snoopers when necessary. S-K handles most of its financial dealings through data transmissions, and so its banking divisions possess some of the densest encryption algorithms and most vicious IC known to man (or dragon).

S-K also excels in data-traffic analysis, useful for financial analysis and intelligence purposes. Almost every architectural Matrix gateway in Europe either belongs to S-K or is secretly monitored by S-K expert systems. In addition to determining patterns and zeroing in on financial happenings that S-K can exploit, most traffic is filtered for keywords, icons or coding that S-K finds interesting. All packets that get tagged are sent to S-K Prime for analysis; anything truly interesting gets funneled directly to Lofwyr.

- Not only is some S-K geek scanning your e-mail, datafaxes and comcalls, but if you're in Europe and they've got your Matrix connection flagged, they'll trace you so fast your Icon will spin.

- Shockwave Sie

OTHER AREAS

S-K is continuously expanding its horizons, taking every advantage offered to gain new ground. Especially since the recent corporate war, S-K has begun to challenge other megacorps from unexpected directions. Here's a quick rundown of S-K's other important business ventures.

Aerospace

Saeder-Krupp is Ares' primary competitor in space, and shows no signs of backing off from that competition anytime soon. In recent years, S-K has shifted its focus from mining and energy exploitation toward habitat construction. The corp has assigned larger budgets to its astronaut training programs, and has also opened at least two new underwater training facilities. This flurry of activity spawned several recent "feeler" runs between S-K and rival aerospace corps Proteus, Ares and Yamatetsu.

S-K has a sophisticated satellite flotilla in place, including everything from spysats to commsats to solar-energy downlinks. Most of the birds are used primarily as listening posts and tracking systems. If S-K knows where on the planet to look, its sats can get zoom shots, IR pics, or scan the bar code on your license plate.

Currently, S-K controls all the former EC launch facilities, as well as the Tyuratam Space Center in Khazakistan. S-K makes approximately one launch a week.

Computers and Robotics

S-K fared well after Fuchi's fall, acquiring former Fuchi affiliate Siemens-Nixdorf along with other companies. An important subsidiary of the ECC Eurotronics consortium that handles Matrix programming and hardware controls, Siemens-Nixdorf puts S-K closer to serious contention with MCT and Novatech in terms of product and influence. The implications for the ECC have been immense; S-K is engaged in internal maneuvering to manipulate the consortium, and several former ECC business partners have backed away from it.

MCT and S-K are already running neck and neck in developing new robotics, as well as automated and remote-system industrial units. Earlier this year, Saeder-Krupp revealed a new line of autonomous defense drones, nicknamed the Furies. S-K allegedly has second-generation units ready for production, and needs only to field-test the prototypes.

Magical Research

Though magical goods and services don't make S-K a fortune, the corp nonetheless has a budget for research and development that rivals Mitsuhamas. S-K focuses on quality rather than quantity; its few releases of spell formulae, metamagical techniques and enchanting processes have been flawlessly produced and amazingly strong sellers. The masking wards patented by Awakened World Research, for example, were considered years ahead of their time. S-K also sponsors several dedicated initiatory groups, many of which focus on specific areas of applied thaumaturgy. The thoroughness of their training and their access to arcane lore place them in a far higher class than most other corporate mages.

Though most Saeder-Krupp magicians are hermetic, S-K also employs a surprising number of shamans and idol-followers. Many of these specialize in conjuring and work heavily with spirits. S-K also has also made great leaps in paranormal-animal research, primarily for security uses.

Service

In the realm of public services, S-K pioneered several Information Age technologies and extrapolation techniques. The various S-K data service subsidiaries are renowned for their instant news-access capabilities as well as their generally accurate predictions of trends. ATT in particular has a distinct knack for acquiring data archives immediately before they become important. The

company also possesses an interesting collection of fully reconstructed, pre-Crash files.

S-K specializes in this field for one critical reason: Lofwyr is an Info Junkie. The dragon receives direct feeds from all S-K data and news sources, and can instantly access a vast number of databases. During Europe's post-war reconstruction, Lofwyr sank his talons into almost every European state agency, and he continues to maintain deep connections to most national intelligence agencies. Much of Interpol also fell into S-K's hands, and the corp has kept it alive and functioning under numerous guises.

The most disturbing side effect of S-K's control over these vast amounts of data is its ability to shape new trends and plant fake data. These capabilities have enabled S-K to efficiently distract and mislead its opponents on countless occasions.

THE DRAGON'S CIRCLE

Several people are far more important to Saeder-Krupp than most shadowrunners suspect—though none of them, of course, match up to the dragon CEO.



LOFWYR

Being a High Prince of Tir Tairngire and running a triple-A megacorp all by himself ought to take up a lot of Lofwyr's time. As far as I can tell, Lofwyr has time to do both because he never sleeps—literally. Certainly his other responsibilities don't keep him from becoming personally involved with corporate doings when the situation warrants it. In fact, Lofwyr's personal visits have become a legendary bedtime spook tale among S-K execs.

Lofwyr has a vaunted reputation as a puppet-master, and the dragon's guile is beyond dispute. When dealing with S-K, and with Lofwyr in particular, remember that he and his toy corporation only operate from a position of strength, and that their true assets and influence often lie concealed. Lofwyr's taste for vengeance and his patience in pursuing it are likewise legendary. In most cases, Lofwyr's victims fail to appreciate the uncanny complexi-

ty with which the dragon exacts his revenge; few recognize the extent of the measures taken to ensnare them.

Lofwyr has many and varied agendas, perhaps beyond the ken of mere mortals. His behind-the-scenes movements and activities betray some of his goals, however. He clearly seeks to bring all of Europe, and perhaps Russia and the Middle East, under his dominion, and is not far from doing so. His power and influence in these regions is subtle but pervasive, and he tolerates little opposition. Slowly and methodically, Saeder-Krupp is molding the political and economic landscapes of the regions Lofwyr covets, with frighteningly little resistance. The Orwellian implications are staggering, and hopefully will alert you to the danger Lofwyr poses to us all.

- Paranoid drek. Saeder-Krupp is accumulating power just like any other corp. Just because Lofwyr's a dragon doesn't mean he's rounding us all up for a late-century snack.

- Zed

- Perhaps not, but you would do well to heed the danger. Unlike other corporate powermongers, Lofwyr's sense of time and scale extend much further than you ephemerals can appreciate. I recommend you take advantage of your relatively short-sighted view whenever possible. Ancients like Lofwyr can be slow to react to quick developments.

- Orange Queen

According to recent observations, Lofwyr has been loosening his grip on S-K's helm and directing much of his attention toward other, unrevealed concerns. He still directs S-K when necessary, but has recently allowed several subordinates increased autonomy in taking care of business. This change has led to a subtle but definite shift in direction and procedure for certain divisions, and has highlighted the concerns of some S-K execs that Lofwyr's personal agendas are leading the corp away from more profitable activities. Some executives have taken advantage of the dragon's recent inattention to redirect matters more to their liking. So far, Lofwyr has apparently decided to tolerate these "independent" actions.

SAIED BEY

Division head of S-K Middle East, Saied Bey is the personal friend of just about every Shi'ite and Sunni Islamic figurehead who might turn up in a Matrix search. A social chameleon and skilled diplomat, Saied presents himself simultaneously as a devout follower of Allah's will and a man who wishes to meld Islamic interests with the ebb and flow of the modern age. In his elegant Istanbul demesne, he receives constant reports on current affairs in the Arabic world; little escapes his attention, whether a hot new black clinic in Istanbul's back streets or a security upgrade at an Aztechnology facility in Baghdad.

Saied enjoys playing chess in the Matrix with the leaders of various radical groups, from the fascist Grey Wolves to the fundamentalist Jihad X. During these "social visits," the players invariably chat about the weather, politics and

the occasional black ops job—delicately negotiated with plausible deniability in mind, of course. Saied prefers his clandestine deals neat, clean and comfortably distant, and a man with his influence is rarely disappointed.

Recently, Saied has become more vocal in expressing his concern to other S-K bigwigs that Lofwyr's personal interests are proving detrimental to the corp. His criticism has merit, considering the gains S-K could have made by gobbling up more of Fuchi Pan-Europa during the corp war rather than letting it fall into Shiawase's hands. His redirection of certain initiatives toward pure profit-making have considerable internal support, but many suspect it is only a matter of time before his boss lets him know he has overstepped his bounds.

ROLF BREMEN

As head of S-K Prime, Rolf Bremen is Lofwyr's right-talon man. A former MET 2000 mercenary turned Marienbad Council warlord, Rolf was recruited by Lofwyr for his uncanny skill at crisis management and damage control. Rolf virtually lives in the Lear-Cessna Platinum II that he uses to globe-hop wherever Lofwyr may need him. In high-level S-K circles, Rolf's appearance is almost as feared as Lofwyr's. He's been more active than usual in recent years, undertaking certain activities that the dragon formerly handled personally. Late last year, Bremen dropped in on Saied Bey to discuss Saied's "concerns" with regard to S-K's current direction. Though not unsympathetic, Bremen made his position crystal-clear: whatever Lofwyr wants, Lofwyr gets.

- Rolf has a shadow; some dwarf I haven't been able to ID follows him everywhere. That dwarf's head is pure silicon; he probably has enough processing power in there to serve as a Shadowland node. Very useful for making certain tactical decisions.

- Guyver

MARIENE CARSTAIRS

A former S-K Corporate Court justice, Carstairs has an intriguing past. Once upon a time, as part of der Nachtmachen policlub, she followed the Dragonslayer idol. Her failures against Lofwyr turned her away from her idol and toward the dragon's service. Unquestionably loyal since joining forces with Lofwyr, her dedication to Saeder-Krupp borders on fanaticism. She currently heads S-K Asia, where she is spearheading an expansion plan despite opposition from the Japanese megacorps and the Pacific Prosperity Group.

- I've got intel that says Carstairs has been even more effective than this claims. Anyone want to bet which PPG corp she secretly controls?

- Oni

CLAUDIA ROMANOV

An elf of striking appearance and poise, Claudia is a prominent figure in Europe's high society. Unknown to

many, she serves as Saeder-Krupp's primary ambassador to national and societal figureheads. Her work is a model of discretion. Next to nothing is known about her past, but more than a few observers have commented on her striking resemblance to Nadja Daviar.

- Here's another one for you:

Scale

This creature you don't want to meet. I'm not completely sure, but I think it's an ally spirit that can assume various forms; I've personally seen it as a mini-draconform, elf and lizard-man. Scale acts as Lofwyr's expediter and personal messenger.

- Shetani

PROMINENT ENEMIES

Like its fellow megacorps, Saeder-Krupp has many enemies, corporate and otherwise. Many of Tir Tairngire's elven factions vocally loathe Lofwyr and seek to thwart him at every turn. Surprisingly, High Prince Lugh Surehand is not among these opponents. Despite the hostility of Surehand's fellow elves, he and Lofwyr clearly have a working relationship. One wonders what element binds them together ...

- Simple. Lugh needs backing to hold his own against the other princes, especially the scheming sitch (and may I add incredibly power-hungry) Jenna Ni'Fairra. In return, Lugh keeps the other elves off Lofwyr's back.

- Lone Gunman

- Nothing so cut-and-dried, my friend. Behind the favors and support lies a tangled history of deceit, rivalry and an oath unfulfilled. The princes do not squabble as your megacorps do, but balance their conflicts with patience, poetry and passion.

- The Laughing Man

- One thing I do know—there's serious bad blood between the wizworm and Prince Aithne Oakforest. Oakforest sent Lofwyr a "token of sympathy" after Dunkelzahn's death—some sort of statue, I think. Lofwyr told the prince he was sending it back, then dropped it smack into the prince's limo from about 5,000 feet. Nearly flattened the prince's son.

- Black Knight

Several environmental groups also hold S-K and its overlord in low esteem—only to be expected, considering the corp's track record of eco-disaster. Over the years, Saeder-Krupp and its affiliates have come under increased pressure from groups who oppose the corp's wanton environmental destruction and reckless ecological practices. The Klabauterbund, Green Cells and others have staged numerous successful actions against S-K polluters in Europe, Africa and other regions where toxic devastation has fueled local support for ecological issues.

- Quite a few of those eco-cells have Amazonian backing. Lofwyr doesn't seem well-liked by his fellow Awakened beings.
- Deep Green

Lofwyr's connections with other dragons, if any, remain well-shrouded in secrecy. Hints of mutual hostility exist between Lofwyr and Hestaby, though no one has the slightest idea why. In Africa, Mujaji the Rain Queen has sponsored several retaliatory actions against S-K facilities in an effort to curtail the megacorp's rampant exploitation of the continent's resources. Most other European dragons, such as Schwarzkoppe and Nebelherr, keep a low profile in the face of Lofwyr's might.

- Such insight, yet lacking so many significant details ... tell me, Felix, are your sources fraternal in nature?
- The Laughing Man

In terms of corporate opposition, S-K's primary competition comes from MCT, Ares, Proteus and Zeta-ImpChem. S-K also seems to stage a significant number of operations against Aztechnology, often with no apparent financial gain in mind. Aztechnology reciprocates, but so far has taken the worst of the duel.

And of course, no list of Lofwyr's enemies would be complete without the name of the woman from whom he stole the corporation that has made him infamous: Wilhelmina Graff-Beloit.

WILHELMINA GRAFF-BELOIT

Nowadays, Mina Graff-Beloit's ruling passion is her undying hatred for Lofwyr. She worked her way from "executive escort" (read: high-priced call girl) to heading up a megacorp through sheer ruthlessness and determination, only to be cast out when Lofwyr arrived on the scene. Rumor has it that she's groomed her daughter, Anikka Beloit—a major figure in the Bavarian People's Party—to exact revenge on the dragon should Mina die before getting her chance at payback.

The great dragon Dunklezahn added his two nuyen to the mix by bequeathing to Mina several promissory notes owed by numerous S-K subsidiaries. Most of the notes are for assets rather than nuyen and they don't mature until 2065, which creates an interesting situation. According to the contract that lets Mina live aboard Zurich Orbital, her assets revert to the Corporate Court when she dies. However, if she dies before the promissory notes mature, they transfer to her oldest living descendant—none other than Dietrich Beloit, CFO of Proteus AG. Dietrich's a bit of a shady character, and he's expressed more than a little interest in the notes. However, the attempt on his life last month may mean that Mina favors Anikka as the beneficiary.

- The notes' true value lay not in nuyen (though they represent a considerable sum), but in the information they provided and the disruption of S-K activities caused by their

bequest. S-K had kept secret its ownership of most of the affected subsidiaries; Dunklezahn's revelation of those ties forced Lofwyr into hurried restructuring in order to avoid losing certain critical assets. Needless to say, Mina reacted immediately to use the information to her advantage.

- Shockwave Sie

WORKING FOR THE DRAGON

Though keeping company with a great dragon might worry most people, a surprising number of S-K employees choose to live within S-K corporate territory. The most likely reason for this preference might be that S-K's corporate facilities look like islands of stability in a fragmented, chaotic world—particularly in the German Alliance, S-K's primary home. Like every megacorp, S-K provides housing, schooling, entertainment and all the amenities for its corporate citizens. It has only a few arcologies, such as the imposing structure that houses its corporate headquarters in Essen (part of the Rhine-Ruhr Megaplex). Without exception, S-K enclaves are well protected and isolated; Lofwyr knows the value of keeping outside influences away from his employees.

S-K appears to impose fewer "educational requirements" (read: pro-corp brainwashing) on its citizens and children than other corps; apparently, Lofwyr sees value in employees who possess a certain amount of initiative and a capable of independent thinking. The competence of management professionals who receive S-K training justifies this strategy, though no one should ever assume that Saeder-Krupp demands less than total loyalty from its people. All corporate citizens are evaluated for magical potential as early as possible, and those who prove gifted receive exceptional training.

Interestingly, S-K has a presence in almost every so-called free state and city on the planet. In Berlin, for example, S-K strongly influences city politics, and also controls the primary airport. In the Free City of Kronstadt, S-K negotiated a deal to support the city's infrastructure in return for access to its naval shipyards. S-K also turns up in CalFree, Denver and throughout Africa and the Caribbean. Lofwyr uses facilities in these regions to keep in close contact with the world's shadow markets and communities. Except for trusted operatives, however, S-K citizens posted to these places are subject to restrictions on where they can travel and who they can hang with.

CORPORATE SECURITY

One word sums up S-K security: formidable. Secrecy and unpredictability are the corp's first line of defense; finding an S-K facility can often be as challenging as breaking into it. Many S-K subsidiaries remain secret because they don't know what megacorp they belong to; the corp also uses decoy facilities and misleading intelligence to protect its sites. All corporate personnel receive rigorous background checks and frequent psychological tests. Lofwyr also ensures the loyalty and discretion of certain key personnel through chemical dependencies,

though the affected employees are usually unaware that they are kept in check with carcerands.

S-K maintains a large military force that goes through Desert Wars training and frequent, extended military exercises. Individual units periodically switch places with civilian security guards for cross-training. In practice, this means that all S-K security guards have military training and backgrounds. In general, S-K security personnel are equipped with conventional armor and weapons; milspec gear and other heavy weapons are strictly confined to "official" military units. However, rapid-deployment military squads are placed near every S-K facility in case serious firepower is necessary.

Each security and military squad includes at least one mage or shaman; its mundane personnel are trained in the limits and uses of magic, and can identify the sensation that signifies an astral intruder. S-K has always made use of parabiologicals, and the corp continuously introduces new critters (or finds new uses for old ones). The most common paranimals include sirens, hell hounds, fenrir wolves and birdmen.

Many sites have security riggers, and S-K has developed several new security drones. Security riggers are frequently equipped with powerful transmitters that enable them to seize control of or jam attacking drones. On occasion, S-K has used "sprayer" drones to hose down infiltration squads with a DMSO cocktail.

- S-K riggers like to station a passive, stealth-equipped Condor in permanent position over a facility. If the site gets hit, the Condor goes active; suddenly, the runners are facing an eye in the sky that's pinpointed their locations and can rain down indirect fire on them from other drones.

- Rigger X

- S-K has lots of nasty tricks you won't see described here. On my last run into an S-K site, my team was on the way out when every light in the building went stroboscopic. In addition to the glare, two of my chummers seized up with epileptic fits. Luckily, we managed to drag one out; the other was a troll, and we had to leave him. Too fragging heavy to budge, with him thrashing around like that.

- Mr. White

Thanks to Lofwyr's micro-management, Saeder-Krupp keeps little of value on the Matrix. The most potentially profitable hosts to scope are the S-K Prime systems, but almost all of them are on dedicated PLTGs accessible only through teleporting SANs. S-K doesn't fool around with its IC, either. The corp may not use the worst IC you'll ever hit, but the stuff is usually enough to slow you down. Where S-K really gets ugly is with trace IC. These hound dogs will track you in a flash, and a rapid-response squad will be in the air over your doss before you jack out.

Lofwyr has made it standing policy to test S-K's defenses, often hiring runners for set-up jobs. S-K also knows the value of secure communications, making clever use of incremental encryption schemes and

paranatural communication lines (spirit messengers and so on).

DOING A DRAGON'S DIRTY WORK

Most runners who work for S-K never recognize their real employer. S-K often hires shadowrunners through front groups, puppets or indirect agents. It's standard procedure to deceive deniable assets and misdirect them as to the corp's true identity and goals. Most S-K Johnsons find this easy, as they often receive orders to sponsor runs that seem to have no rhyme or reason. That's what happens when you work for a dragon whose goals are mysterious and who sees ramifications far beyond us short-lived folk.

The corp keeps track of runners it has employed, and a team's record determines whether S-K ever uses it again. S-K places runners on retainer only if they have proved themselves to the corp several times. S-K Johnsons often stage runs specifically to "field-test" candidates; those who prove dependable get taken onboard. On the flip side, S-K also frequently disposes of runners who have outlived their usefulness, or who have otherwise offended Lofwyr.

Working for S-K can be one of the frostiest set-ups a runner team could ask for. S-K treats its professionals well, and runners are no exception. Of course, the corp also handles failure quickly, efficiently and lethally.

S-K typically offers its shadow employees a variety of payment options, including gear, services and information. The latter is often more useful than many runners realize, though the data is generally planted to encourage specific actions or publicize certain developments. Invariably, paying runners in data serves S-K's purposes somewhere down the line.

- If you've ever gotten a job from a skag named Hans Brackhaus, he's a Saeder-Krupp Johnson, no matter what metatype he is.

- Maus

- Guess again. Brackhaus is Lofwyr, in various metahuman guises.

- Trevor

- Last time Brackhaus hired me, he turned out to be a Shiawase suit. The other corps picked up on the Brackhaus routine awhile back; now they use it when they want smart runners like you to think they're working for the wyrm.

- Griffin

- Griffin, that's exactly what Lofwyr wants you to think!

- Dragonslayer

- What's in a name? If the wyrm wants to use you, he will. Period. Your best bet is never to deal with him in the first place.

- Mason

SHIAWASE CORPORATION

by Naginata



Shiawase

World Headquarters: Osaka, Japan
President/CEO: Tadashi Shiawase
Chairman of the Board: Sadato Shiawase
Corporate Status: Public Corporation
Major Shareholders:

Sadato Shiawase (13%)
Tadashi Shiawase (11%)
Soko Shiawase (10%)
Ryoi Shiawase (10%)
Karin Yamana (8%)
Raiko Shiawase-Shimada (<3%)

Major Divisions:

Shiawase Atomics

Head Office: FDC, UCAS
Managing Director: Christopher Keratsu

Shiawase Envirotech

Head Office: Osaka, Japan
Managing Director: Mamoru Shiawase

Shiawase Biotech

Head Office: Tokyo, Japan
Managing Director: Etsu Powicke

Important Subsidiaries: Arboritech, Desert Storm Security, Fuchi Simsense Studios, Hephæstus Technologies, Imperial Tech Services, Kuroyama Minerals, Ressha Corporation, Shiawase Armaments, Shiawase Health and Welfare, Vector Matrix Services

Konbanwa, shigata ga nai.
I know Shiawase as my own family; for most of my life, there has been little else. My parents gave their lives in service to this zaibatsu, and until recently I followed in their footsteps. Shiawase has made me what I am, molded to me to fit their interests, programmed me to follow their routine. But like all families, Shiawase is dysfunctional, and many of its children turn against it.

Shiawase is a household name, and their logo is omnipresent—on the plants that generate your power, on your city's mass transit and garbage trucks, on the over-the-counter medicines in your bathrooms. Despite this, most would be shocked to learn that Shiawase owns more of the world than any other corporations save Saeder-Krupp and Aztechnology (and the latter is still under contention). The public eye has never lain long on Shiawase, and the corporation likes it that way. Even the average shadowrunner knows little about Shiawase, possibly less than any other megacorporation. It's a pity the reverse is not true.

Shiawase was the first megacorporation, and its identity is inextricably intertwined with its past. To work for and against a corporation, you must understand it—and to understand Shiawase, you must know its history.

THE FAMILY MEGACORP

The seeds of Shiawase Corporation and of today's megacorporate world were sown before the turn of the millennium. The two Shiawase Decisions, in 2000 and 2001, paved the way for the dystopian world we live in. The first gave Shiawase the right to run a private nuclear power facility; the second granted the corporation extraterritorial status. Other large corporations swiftly exploited this precedent, but Shiawase was the first true megacorporation—a distinction its leaders have never forgotten.

Founded as a family enterprise during the post-World War Two reconstruction of Japan, Shiawase remains approximately 80 percent controlled by the Shiawase dynasty. Until Emori Shiawase assumed control in 1989, the corporation had been struggling to maintain itself in an increasingly dynamic economy. Within a decade, Emori transformed the low-profile operation he had inherited into an efficient international competitor. After the Shiawase Decision of 2001, Emori's shrewd management enabled Shiawase to capitalize on its unique position while lesser corporations remained mired in court, trying to duplicate Shiawase's feat.

- You'll never see this in the audit sheets, but Shiawase boosted their finances by using their extraterritoriality on behalf of certain criminal organizations (in return for wads of nuyen). Not to mention the joy the corp brought to millions by dabbling in "recreational pharmaceuticals."
- Just Johnny

• Shiawase also exploited extraterritoriality by founding its Envirotech division to pick up the lucrative market for hazardous waste disposal. The territorial amendments of 2023 came as a blow to Shiawase because

SHIAWASE CORPORATION

they forced the corp to worry about pollution beyond its borders. After that, the Envirotech division had to start living up to its name.

- Fletch

"Can I interest you in a prime piece of Shiawase farmland?"

Emori died of a heart attack in 2019, wearied by the changes that the return of magic had wrought in the world. A succession of undistinguished family members followed him, none of them sufficiently brilliant or sufficiently incompetent to markedly affect the corp's fortunes.

- UGE and goblinization left no family unscarred, and the Shiawase dynasty was no exception. The current chairman's first child was declared stillborn in 2012, and his younger brother was last seen the night before everyone goblinized. Can we say "infanticide" and "fratricide," boys and girls?

- Brick

Shiawase suffered no worse than its contemporaries from the Crash of '29; in fact, the corp's reliance on services and tangible products provided a buffer against the crippling effects of the world's massive data loss. The conservative bent of corporate management at the time stifled Shiawase's recovery, however, and the corporation lost ground throughout the 2030s to its upstart competitors. It had patented fusion reactor technology in 2027, which allowed it to survive the setbacks of the '30s despite pedestrian management.

The current chairman, Sadato Shiawase, served as Managing Director of Shiawase Atomics during the 2030s and eventually rode that division's success into power as Chairman of the Board. Sadato used his new authority to found the Market Information and Forecasting Department (MIFD), ostensibly as a defense against renewed espionage attempts by rival megacorporations.

- The MIFD is a major player in Shiawase's internal politics, thanks to the division's control of information-gathering and manipulation. It's the corp's nexus for corporate intelligence; MIFD techs are masters of analyzing data and applying it wherever psychologically (and commercially) useful. The division is also Sadato's personal watchdog, and pervades the corporate structure. Lots of MIFD agents work in other Shiawase divisions, though known operatives don't have many friends.

- Metropolis

Sadato's move to the chairmanship had other repercussions as well. Relations between Sadato and his elder sister Soko, always chilly, reached a new low in 2049, when Sadato ordered Soko's fiancé apprehended on suspicion of espionage. The suspicion proved unfounded, and Soko responded by dispatching hired assassins to kill her brother. Her first attempt failed; a subsequent one

claimed their younger brother Ryoi and ensured that the family feud would live on.

- Soko's reaction is understandable when you consider that they pumped lover-boy full of truth drugs and went to town on him with a Shiawase special mind probe; MIFD interrogations are never pleasant. He's alive, but still catatonic—probably permanently.

- Tin Lizzie

- Each assassination attempt grew more desperate, until Soko arranged for a fuel-air explosive to destroy the top three floors of Shiawase Atomics' remodeled corporate headquarters in San Francisco. Sadato was the target, but he'd sent Ryoi to the opening ceremony instead. The blast turned Ryoi and 237 onlookers into a fine red mist.

- Torch

With the dawn of a new decade, Shiawase has made a bold move reminiscent of Emori Shiawase's reign—the acquisition of Fuchi Pan-Europa during the recent corporate reshuffle. It remains to be seen whether the corporation has overextended itself, and how it will consolidate its new position as the world's third-largest megacorporation.

GROWING UP IN SHIAWASE

As the oldest corporation, Shiawase has had the longest time to engender a corporate culture; most Shiawase employees believe deeply in the "corporate family," and can scarcely conceive of life outside it. A major percentage of employees have signed lifetime contracts, giving up all to become part of the zaibatsu family. In my experience, the enclave where I lived was all I knew as a child, its residents my extended relations. This is the norm among Shiawase's children. In practice, this means that many employees keep close tabs with those they have lived and worked with, even when one is transferred to another division or locale.

Shiawase runs a corp-wide mentoring program for gifted children, which I was privileged to join. The corporation tests all children of its employees before schooling begins, seeking such talents as deductive or empathic ability, spatial awareness or magical potential that Shiawase can exploit for its benefit. Every child takes lessons in Japanese etiquette and language; those who achieve high marks in these areas are considered for the more prestigious international postings as adults.

- About 10 percent of Shiawase kids have mentors, hand-picked from the employee pool and usually skilled in the area for which the child shows an aptitude. The mentors act as a secondary family for the child, guaranteeing a pro-Shiawase environment.

- Neon Flower

Not too many metahuman kids get mentors, of course. There's only one troll kid in the entire program, and that's because she burned down her condo with a fire-starting spell at age five ... too powerful an asset to waste.

● Bleach

Corporate-family sentiment runs strong in most Shiawase enclaves. For example, "family members" are expected to marry within the corporation to avoid "conflicts of familial interest." The company goes to some lengths to ensure that its dependents find suitable mates, offering dating and social services from a very young age.

● Marrying within the corp keeps the "family" nice and close, and gives Shiawase several levers to use on you. Makes extractions from Shiawase real fun, too.

● Neon Flower

The company also takes a keen interest in the performance of all employees' children; parents can expect salary bonuses if their children perform well in exams and conform to the model attitude. Cram colleges are the norm throughout high school, with truncated or non-existent summer breaks. I left the corporation after high school graduation—the hardest thing I have ever done. I left behind my family, my friends and the only world I knew. Shiawase was safe, comfortable ... and ultimately stifling. I did not start to live until I had left Shiawase far behind.

BOARD MEMBERS

The following are brief profiles of the most prominent members of Shiawase's board of directors. All of them are people to be reckoned with.

SADATO SHIAWASE

Head of the Shiawase clan and current Chairman of the Board, Sadato is imperious and traditional-minded, but also a charismatic and relatively popular leader. He controls the board through proxies from many of the family's minor shareholders and through his close ties to the MIFD.

Though his son Tadashi runs Shiawase's day-to-day operations, Sadato sets corporate policy and planning. Many of Shiawase's anti-metahuman policies, for example, stem from Sadato's personal prejudice against metahumans.

TADASHI SHIAWASE

Less of a traditionalist than his father, Tadashi has a cold and calculating soul. He runs Shiawase with sharp efficiency, rarely allowing sentiment to affect his decisions. Though not excessively harsh, no one would describe him as warm or likable. No one doubts his competence, but his tendency toward caution has raised a few mutterings that he lacks flair and insight.

Tadashi is married, but his family plays virtually no part in his corporate life. His eighteen year-old daughter Hitomi has proved something of an embarrassment,

engaging in wilder and wilder escapades seemingly aimed at getting her father's attention.

● Hitomi, currently in a fast-track college technology program, appears to have recently undergone a remarkable transformation into a dedicated and loyal Shiawase asset. Her father seems satisfied that she's settled down; no doubt she'll be given a prestigious assignment when she graduates.

● Marco Polo

● She pushed hard to get into her current course at MIT&M—Daddy apparently didn't want to let her out of his sight. She's busy making all kinds of friends and contacts, and is popular with her classmates.

● Academe

SOKO SHIAWASE

Soko controls the other major power bloc within Shiawase. Her bitterness at being passed over in the dynastic succession has only been exacerbated by the unwillingness of the rest of the family to trust her management capabilities. Though her daughters (and occasionally Tadashi) vote with her, she does not personally control enough proxies to pass motions, let alone oust Sadato from power.

RYOI SHIAWASE

Despite being ten years deceased, Ryoi often controls the balance of power on the board. In one of their rare agreements, both senior Shiawasens concurred that Ryoi's consciousness lingers despite the dispersion of his physical body. The board therefore voted to override his will, in which he left his shares to his daughter, and keep him as a board member. The family then sought a way to communicate with Ryoi's ghost.

● If he's really a ghost, Ryoi's goals aren't likely to be the same as those of a living corporate exec. He seems to be steering the board in his own direction, but no one has yet worked out what that is; many of the decisions he's influenced seem totally unconnected. They could be part of some master plan, or just the disjointed delusions of someone who refuses to die.

● Tamino

"All too easy!"

● Dead? I know rich people are weird, but that's just freaky. How do they claim to talk to him?

● Kevlar

● Here's how:

Jerri Howard

As the mouthpiece of Ryoi's spirit, Atlanta-based medium Jerri Howard effectively controls Shiawase Corporation. Pressured in opposite directions by Soko and Sadato, Howard constantly walks a precarious line. She's doing quite well for a nobody—someone (perhaps Ryoi)

SHIAWASE CORPORATION

has been tutoring her behind the scenes in political machinations. She's managed to consolidate a degree of personal power among the shareholders, playing on their sympathy for Ryoi and emphasizing his presence as a moderating influence in Sadato and Soko's little feud.

● Shaloko

● Maybe Ryoi's for real, and he's sticking around to give his older sister some payback.

● Khan

● I've seen a trid sequence of her in the act of "channeling." She's an albino, and she pulls this whole three-second convulsing act, almost getting some color in her skin. Then she acts like a good-natured, younger Japanese sult, which is almost a comedic masterpiece. She reminds me of a two-bit carnival fake I knew, used to con housewives outta their nuyen. If Howard's her, I guess she found the best scam in town!

● Grit

● If she's not a fake, she found a way to yank Ryoi's chain.
● Giovanni

MITSUKO SHIAWASE-YAMANA

Mitsuko, holder of less than 1 percent of Shiawase, is Soko's youngest daughter and VP of Shiawase Envirotech in the Philippines. So far she has protected corporate interests there with dedication and innovation, making the lives of local pirates and rebels utter hell. She recently received assistance in this endeavor—two platoons of ex-Fuchi troops, courtesy of new husband Korin Yamana. Mitsuko appreciates her independence, far from HQ and her fractious family, and is slowly solidifying her own little intra-corporate empire.

KORIN YAMANA

The ex-head of Fuchi Pan-Europa, Korin Yamana brought a sizable chunk of Fuchi's assets as his dowry, and received a large number of Shiawase shares in exchange.

● Conditional, naturally, on his signing the voting rights over to his new wife for several years. Of course, Mitsuko always votes Mommy's way, which leaves Sadato precariously balanced. He needs to retain control over all his major proxies to keep his sister outvoted.

● Neon Flower

Yamana now holds a seat on the board and presides primarily over the integration of Fuchi's European assets into Shiawase's empire. Ninety years old and tired, he may be growing weary of power-brokering, and is said to be considering retirement.

● He's managed to make himself less than popular within Shiawase already, mostly by accident. The marriage-gift of Shiawase shares he received had to come from some-

where—Shiawase issued another stock series, diluting the value of presently held shares. Most board members retained their equity by purchasing from the new issue, but many shareholders lost out.

● Bespectacle

● The marriage of Korin and Mitsuko was purely economic; they have no love for each other and spend no time together, though they do respect each other's capabilities. If Yamana decides to retire to Zurich-Orbital, though, his shares will go to the Corporate Court when he dies, instead of to Mitsuko. Those shares may be crucial to her future power on the board, and she won't let them go without a fight.

● Link

REIKO SHIAWASE-SHIMADA

Twenty-five-year-old Reiko is the only child of the deceased Ryoi, and stands to inherit his 10 percent stake in Shiawase if his existence ceases. Currently, she controls less than 3 percent. She's not happy that her father refuses to pass on entirely, and is particularly at odds with Jerri Howard. Vindictive and emotional, Reiko is prone to temper tantrums despite her age. Her husband, Ryoji Shimada, recently moved to Europe (perhaps in search of domestic tranquillity) as a senior executive for VMS' European department.

Reiko wields power of her own—she is a vice president within Shiawase Atomics and holds a substantial bloc of Shiawase voting stock left to her by her mother. Fickle and unpredictable, she has refused to sign over her proxies, and votes for whichever board faction is currently in her favor. So far, she has proved sufficiently canny to avoid offending any faction enough to warrant her removal, and her future within Shiawase appears bright.

● Reiko is surreptitiously searching for a way to remove Ryoi's presence (mostly through magical means). If his stock reverts to her, she'll own more shares than any other single shareholder. Sadato in particular is eyeing her warily.

● Tamino

"All too easy!"

● Affirmatory on that magical bit. She's been doing some hush-hush nosing around MagickNet, and someone's been talking to a lot of conjuring experts.

● Academe

CORPORATE STRUCTURE

Shiawase is organized divisionally rather than regionally, leading to a diffuse corporate infrastructure. The corporation's main divisions are Shiawase Atomics, Shiawase Envirotech and Shiawase Biotech. Aside from its core interests, Shiawase prefers to conduct business through subsidiaries. Though usually wholly owned, the subsidiaries are allowed a fair degree of independence in their operations, and Shiawase's ownership is rarely acknowledged. In particular, Shiawase operates most of its polluting industries at

SHIAWASE CORPORATION



arms' length so that their activities do not adversely affect Shiawase's reputation as an ecological savior.

The divisions themselves are self-contained, each having sub-divisions and subsidiaries that allow them to do everything themselves, from constructing their own buildings to managing their own resources to manufacturing their own products. Because of their separation and the fact that Shiawase's board itself is divided, divisions may end up even competing with each other until the board realizes there is a problem and resolves it.

SHIAWASE ATOMICS

Managing Director: Christopher Keratsu

This prominent division supplies nuclear power to the UCAS, the remnants of Eastern Russia and the Southeast Asian Basin. Shiawase Atomics also builds custom nuclear and fusion plants for large vehicles and spacecraft. SA obtains much of its raw uranium from several large reserves in Australia; it currently holds an exclusive contract with the Australian Government, giving SA mining rights to the world's largest uranium deposit at Olympic Dam.

They also are eyeing the "untapped" markets in southern Africa, India and even South America. SA and Saeder-Krupp have been stepping on each others' toes for years now and each time there might be some kind of conflict, one of them pulls out.

- Shiawase Atomics is keen to re-expand into Europe—after the disastrous meltdown in 2011, it was cheaper to declare bankruptcy in Europe than to pay for the cleanup. The thought of an untapped market makes Keratsu itch, I guess.

- AdamJ

- These are the slots responsible for the Glow City reactor in the Redmond Barrens. Have you SEEN the size of the teeth on the mutant rats around there?

- Warhawk

SHIAWASE ENVIROTECH

Managing Director: Mamoru Shiawase

Shiawase Envirotech deals in environmental engineering, production of biological agents and mystical

research, and has recently expanded into breeding and training paranormal animals. It also conducts efforts to repair environmental damage caused by its subsidiaries, such as reforestation projects, land enrichment and so on.

Mamoru Shiawase was an academic researcher with no experience in high-level management when the managing directorship fell into his lap. He appears to be floundering somewhat; most likely his family loyalties rather than competence earned him this high-status post.

- The previous MD of Shiawase Envirotech, Mariko Kiyonobu, recently died in a TerraFirst! attack at the opening ceremony of a hazardous waste-processing facility in North Africa. Mariko had notable "interests" in various environmental organizations, and may well have run afoul of murky ecoterrorist politics.

- Neon Flower

SHIAWASE BIOTECH

Managing Director: Etsu Powicke

This major division covers bioware and cybernetics development, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and services, and genetic manipulation of all kinds. Etsu used to be a cybertechnician himself; in fact, he was the model of a mad scientist. Years ago his superiors deemed it best to give him a desk job before he did something ugly, never realizing that he would excel in creative management as well. Now he has the authority to sponsor and fund his crazy science projects, which are increasingly becoming a drain on this division's resources.

- One of Etsu's pet projects is creating a vaccine for certain strands of HMMVV. For a long period he had Tadashi Shiawase himself embroiled in undertaking some secretive field experiments, but it doesn't seem as if the vaccine actually works.

- Grid Reaper

- This division also deals in narcotics and BTLs—though I wouldn't trust the chips, given Shiawase's predilection for psychotropic reprogramming.

- Lady Jesty

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- Sadato and Soko both keep a close watch on Shiawase Biotech's gerontological research. If they can't murder each other, they can maybe outlive each other.

- Marco Polo

- Biotech runs Humana Hospital in Seattle, which includes a private cyber-clinic. Local runners tied to the corp can expect to be offered payment in cutting-edge 'ware.

- Hacksaw

SUBSIDIARIES

Like the other megacorps, Shiawase probably has hundreds of subsidiaries, but only a percentage of them are public and worth noting here. Each of these operates outside of the big three divisions.

Arboritech

CEO: James Elders II

Arboritech is a recently formed subsidiary, wholly owned by Shiawase Envirotech. It embraced most of Shiawase's non-mining primary production and related industries, including farming, aquaculture, logging, agricultural research and related endeavors.

Hephaestus Technologies

CEO: Kim Su Yun

This subsidiary handles heavy industry. It stands to benefit greatly from the recent acquisition of Fuchi's European assets, which give Hephaestus an entirely new market along with an established distribution network and corporate infrastructure. CEO Kim Su Yun, an innovative Korean, brought great success to several industrial corporations before Shiawase snapped him up with a lucrative offer.

Hephaestus Technologies is heavily involved in chemical production and research, manufacturing and industrial services and utilities.

Imperial Tech Services

CEO: San-yo Ohara

This conglomerate is Shiawase's main interface with the Japanese government. Through it, they hold a legion of service contracts, from Imperial Navy shipyard repair to national defense electronics support to re-fitting the Emperor's motor pool. On occasion, Shiawase has used this subsidiary to attach observers to military operations, and has obtained use of Imperial Marine facilities for "training purposes."

CEO Ohara was previously Yamana's VP of Fuchi Pan-Europa. He scored his post at Imperial Tech thanks to his previous military experience; the CEO before him was a corp war casualty, killed in a "random attack" on his pleasure yacht by Filipino pirates.

Kuroyama Minerals

President: Erika Thyssen

Shiawase Envirotech owns approximately 70 percent of Kuroyama Minerals and controls an additional 10 per-

cent of proxy votes; the remaining 20 percent belongs to various investment houses. Kuroyama oversees Shiawase's mining operations and the processing of raw materials (apart from uranium mining, which is jealously guarded by Shiawase Atomics).

Shiawase Armaments, Inc.

Managing Director: Unknown

This division, recently spun off as a subsidiary of Shiawase Atomics, retains public affiliation with Shiawase proper. SAI develops, produces and distributes all of Shiawase's military and arms-related products and services, including the Shiawase shipyards and naval forces. The primary impetus for the incorporation of Shiawase Armaments was the acquisition of Fuchi Pan-Europa's military assets. These gave Shiawase for the first time a major contingent of military personnel and the necessary maintenance and command infrastructure, as well as expanding the corp's existing production and distribution facilities.

- Most people figure Korin Yamana is at the helm. Although no digging by me or my Matrix chummers have found anything linking the company to him. Whomever runs this ship has the lid sealed tight. The former Fuchi forces owe personal loyalty to Yamana, so their integration into Shiawase's corporate command structure needs careful handling.

- Neon Flower

Vector Matrix Services

CEO: Nigel Coltrane

This corporation sprang to prominence with the amalgamation of former Fuchi resources, acquiring overnight a range of Matrix service provision contracts across Europe, as well as bleeding-edge systems analysts, software and hardware design houses and a range of other SOTA computer-related industries. VMS contracts its services out for Matrix enforcement and protection, internally and to other corporations. Nigel Coltrane, previously a computer security executive in Shiawase HQ management, now runs a major business asset that is currently shaky, but that may become a serious player in the computer industry.

SHIAWASE TODAY

Shiawase's Fuchi acquisition precipitated a massive corporate reorganization, to integrate Fuchi Pan-Europa's regional structure into Shiawase's divisional model. Korin Yamana currently presides over a huge management reshuffle, working with various managing directors to implement changes. Needless to say, several heads are rolling in a loyalty purge engineered by the MIDs. Shiawase is filling this power vacuum mostly through internal promotions from existing divisions, which has dumped lots of spare talent into the job market—among them several disgruntled managers shifted out of their pet positions.

The merger of Yamana's assets into the corporate portfolio gave Shiawase a strong presence in Europe.

Many European corps, particularly Saeder-Krupp, view this development with a wary eye. The sudden acquisition of Pan-Europa's infrastructure makes Shiawase a potentially serious competitor in heavy industry, chemicals, biotechnology and agriculture—all fields that Saeder-Krupp regarded as its exclusive playground prior to the Fuchi-Shiawase merger. The situation has raised tensions between Shiawase and Saeder-Krupp, though no direct confrontations have yet occurred. Fuchi's assets have also beefed up Shiawase's presence in simsense entertainment, consumer goods and high-end electronics, formerly the corporation's least developed fields.

- Shiawase suffers from entrenched arrogance about its status as the first extraterritorial corp. Because its actions paved the way for today's megacorporate world, Shiawase sometimes acts like it expects the other corps' gratitude, which tends to offend a lot of the other megas. Nowadays, Shiawase execs are also inordinately proud that their corp is still around while other powerhouses, like Fuchi, have come and gone.

- Marco Polo

- Shiawase's power struggles tend to be internal, like the feud between Soko and Sadato. They also tend to focus on personal power within the corp rather than the corp's business directions. Practically speaking, there's biz waiting for Joe Shadowrunner, but the focus of a job may well be different. The senior Shiawasens, bitter rivals though they are, won't give an outsider power at Shiawase's expense just to score points over each other.

- Neon Flower

- Shiawase takes a long view, and division heads plan as far into the future as possible. This means they play their cards close to the chest. They also don't tend to make rash moves, leaving the "visionary" role to more dynamic, adventurous corporations. Only their excellent intelligence-gathering resources keep them up with the game.

- Nuyen Nick

- How do you explain the recent acquisition of one-third of Fuchi, then?

- Marco Polo

- Just too good a deal to pass up, I guess.

- Nuyen Nick

Fuchi's dissolution and partial absorption by Shiawase have strained Shiawase's relations with other corporations as well. Novatech maintains a particularly uneasy truce; with Fuchi gone and a year past, Yamana is no longer obliged to keep his hands off Novatech (according to his agreement with Samantha Villiers, in return for which she sold her Fuchi shares for a considerable sum). Whatever Yamana decides, no one knows how it might affect Shiawase as a whole. For the moment,

however, Shiawase remains overextended after its Fuchi purchase, with a load of debt and new acquisitions to integrate. Novatech, for its part, is still a minor megacorp, and so any confrontations in the near future are likely to be mere posturing.

- To ease the strain, Shiawase is looking to divest itself of non-essential holdings. A "fire sale" looks likely among assets such as consumer goods, financial services, military technology and a range of uninteresting former Fuchi holdings.

- Nuyen Nick

Relations with Renraku may be a different matter. Shikei Nakatomi, Fuchi's other former partner, is vindictive by nature and embittered by the collapse of his family's company. For the moment, however, Renraku is distracted by the recent Seattle arcology shutdown and the company's acquisition of Fuchi Asia. Nakatomi's influence over Renraku's future agenda remains to be seen.

Shiawase is currently looking to increase its biotech strength by acquiring Universal Omnitech. Shiawase executives have made several hostile moves against Omnitech in recent years, though action appears to have been put on hold since the latter company joined the Pacific Prosperity Group.

- No kidding. Even a mega is careful about tangling with this bunch of corps. So far, the Malaysian Independent Bank has been shoring up UniOmni against Shiawase's predations—but who knows for how long?

- Bespectacle

THE 411—MAKING NUYEN FROM SHIAWASE

Whether you work for or against Shiawase Corporation, understand that the MIFD controls everything it can. Remembering this may save your life someday.

Most Shiawase Johnsons do their jobs "by the book:" they love to follow standard operating procedures, do not approve of improvisation and frequently come across to shadowrunners as hidebound and uptight. Shadowrunning opportunities for the corp tend to be run-of-the-mill, though Johnsons with closer ties to the MIFD are often more innovative. If you know you're working for Shiawase, you can judge how close your Johnson is to the MIFD by assessing the tasks you are given. If you receive complete and accurate information or the object of the run is somewhat unusual, then the MIFD is probably backing your Johnson quite a bit.

- The MIFD makes working for Shiawase a two-edged sword. If you get good information and support from your Johnson, it probably means he's more capable of fragging you as well, compared with Johnsons unbeloved by the MIFD. The latter may be less tolerant of your improvising and may not give you as much info or support, but they'll also have less information about you. That means they have fewer ways to screw you over.

- Neon Flower

SHIAWASE CORPORATION



Targets for Shiawase runs vary widely, though the corporation does have a preferred modus operandi. Shiawase Johnsons like quiet, unnoticed runs, as opposed to daring escapades that make a public statement. Most Shiawase Johnsons also like misdirection, disguising themselves as employees of other corporations more often than usual.

Shiawase prefers subtle manipulation, the effects of which you may never see or understand. Favorite objectives include planting data, forging evidence, sabotage and so on. Given Shiawase's predilection for information-gathering, datasteals are common, whether Matrix-based or in the physical world. Matrix datasteals were a Shiawase stock-in-trade in the past—Shiawase's comparatively low-level Matrix presence forced it to employ outside talent to acquire much of its information.

Shiawase Johnsons employ any given runner team as rarely as possible, unless the team is allied with the corporation. Understanding the importance of information and generally distrusting shadowrunners, Shiawase will not allow runners to see too much, lest it endanger the corporation. Runners who have proved themselves particularly useful to Shiawase can bind themselves more permanently to the corporation. Generally, a senior executive with the need for a long-term, deniable operative

and the means to hire one will select a shadowrunner or team based on personal experience and the candidate(s) track record. The executive will sweeten his overtures to the chosen runners with promises of cutting-edge cyberware, access to superb medical facilities and all the other perks of being a corporate soldier.

- Shiawase tends to lace its 'ware with tracers and kink bombs, and its headware chock-full of dataworms and psychotropic reconditioners. Fun stuff.

- Kevlar

SHIAWASE TODAY

- What are you ranting about? Working for Shiawase's great, they take such good care of you—best choice I ever made!

- Ziggy

- See what I mean?

- Kevlar

The Shiawase family itself is dysfunctional enough that many senior family members maintain their own contacts with the shadow community and underworld; they distrust Chairman Sadato's MIFD almost as much as they do any outsider.

CORPORATE PROTECTION

Many runners mistakenly believe that Shiawase lacks security, compared to its fellow megacorps. I can tell you otherwise. Shiawase may prefer non-lethal means of protection, but guards everything that belongs to it with as much fervor as any other megacorporation. It is true that Shiawase facilities vary greatly in their defenses, largely because each division is responsible for its own security. Two Shiawase facilities in one city may therefore have vastly different levels and types of security measures.

Physical security in most Shiawase facilities is relatively subtle—most present a friendly face to the world, with threat responses and protective measures activating only when they detect a security risk. The corporation relies heavily on technological devices to assess threats—sensors, expert systems in charge of security nets and the like—and respond to alerts with guard patrols. Few patrols come out swinging—they're trained to put on a happy face for the public if the alert turns out to be an error, and squad leaders are generally trained in negotiations and spin-doctoring. Use of security rigging varies widely between divisions, though most significant compounds and facilities have a security rigger on the payroll.

- This general setup is a big weakness that shadowrunners can exploit. Technological threat-assessment devices are generally easier to fool than eyes. As for the guard teams, it's a lot easier to talk your way past a sergeant than a sentry drone. The biggest risks for shadowrunners are—as always—the security riggers and their systems.
- Just Johnny

Like its physical security, Shiawase's magical defenses also vary. In general, sensitive areas are patrolled astrally by spirits, who notify security mages of anomalies. As with physical security, the emphasis is on identifying intrusions, neutralizing the threat with minimum lethality and extracting information from captives. Shiawase mages are masters of magical thought manipulation in general, mind probes in particular. Shiawase also employs more shamans than is typical, particularly within Shiawase Envirotech.

Until its acquisition of a large chunk of Fuchi, Shiawase had somewhat pedestrian Matrix security for a megacorporation. Fuchi's assets gave the corp an immediate leg-up, particularly in bleeding-edge IC. Currently, many of Shiawase's important Matrix systems are being retrofitted with a range of Fuchi IC and system conventions.

- The upgrades give Shiawase an immediate boost in nastiness, but also give some of us an advantage. If you're used to handling Fuchi's system protocols, a lot of Shiawase's systems are going to look a lot more familiar. Those anti-Fuchi tactics aren't useless yet.
- HeadKase

● There's a bit of a twist, though; the upgraded systems aren't just new-and-improved Fuchi. Shiawase's system designers show a distinct preference for psychotropic IC, tapeworms and other tricks that focus on manipulation and information-gathering.

- NuDawn

MIFD (MARKET INFORMATION & FORECASTING DEPARTMENT)

Director: Ichiro Kiyomoto

Shiawase possesses superlative information-gathering and analysis capabilities, thanks to the MIFD. Tightly controlled from within Shiawase's headquarters, the MIFD is theoretically responsible for hiring all "extended assets" (shadowrunners). Rumors also accuse the MIFD of share-price manipulation, corporate blackmail and various other no-nos of corporate etiquette.

- The MIFD is completely under Sadato Shiawase's control. Director Ichiro is an old school buddy of Sadato's, and the bonds linger. Access to the MIFD—specifically, the amount of information and degree of cooperation received—is based largely on internal corporate politics, and often makes or breaks Shiawase execs.
- Marco Polo
- Ichiro Kiyomoto is scary—not because he's big or tough, but because he knows so much. He's a paraplegic, and collecting information is his life's work, hobby and passion all rolled into one. Without him, Shiawase might not still be a triple-A mega today.
- Belladonna

The MIFD owns several Matrix environments dedicated to collecting, indexing and analyzing the volumes of data it collects. These rely heavily on semi-autonomous knowbots and pattern-detection algorithms, making Shiawase a world leader in applied cryptography, chaos theory and complexity. The MIFD also takes a keen interest in AI research and the phenomenon of the otaku.

- I've been through the MIFD's system, and it's a freaky place. It rivals the Hague data haven for sheer size, and I swear bits of it push UV status. Sometimes it reacts like it's alive.
- Neon Flower
- The MIFD is also heavily into mental manipulation and psychological conditioning. They want to understand the brain, probably to control it better. If any corp ever achieves the ability to control our minds, I'm betting Shiawase will.
- Metropolis

WUXING, INCORPORATED

by Lei Kung



WUXING

World Headquarters: Hong Kong Free Enterprise Enclave

President and Chairman of the Board: Wu-Lung Wei

Corporate Status: Public corporation

Major Shareholders:

Wu Lung-Wei (24%)

Fu Peng (12%)

Sharon Chiang-Wu (11%)

James Harper-Smythe (8%)

Malaysian Independent Bank (8%)

Major Subsidiaries:

Finance: Wuxing Financial Services, Prosperity Development Corporation, Albion Mutual Funds, Fidelity Mutual Insurance Corporation

Shipping: Wuxing Worldwide Shipping, Swift Wind Deliveries, Minh-Pao Exports, Cartwright Cartage and Freight Inc.

Consumer Goods/Services: Jam-Ba Games, Eastern Electronics, Lotus Multimedia, Tiger Trideo and Simsense, Saba Foods, Saito Studios

FINANCE

One key to Wuxing's influence, and the success of the PPG, is the company's extensive financial investments. Wuxing is a powerful source of investment capital, financing, banking, real estate, stock and mutual fund management and insurance. The corporation subsists largely on its financial interests, loaning money to everyone from start-up businesses to major megacorporations to families looking to buy their first home. Wuxing is also heavily invested in stock markets and in providing insurance to private and corporate clients.

The company's financial interests laid the foundation for the Pacific Prosperity Group. Most of the corporations involved in the PPG borrowed money from Wuxing or one of its subsidiaries. Wu-Lung Wei was more than willing to call in some favors when it came time to get these corporations together under his company's aegis.

Wuxing's stock market activities often prompt accusations of insider trading and other financial scams. I can tell you that Wuxing isn't above using shadowrunners to make sure the market swings whatever way

One of these days, I'm going to retire. I'm going to settle down in a little house somewhere, maybe with the right person to keep me company. I'm going to raise a garden and talk with little nature spirits, and I'm going to forget all about everything I've seen and done in the streets and back alleys of Hong Kong. Assuming I live that long—but I haven't made it this far to give up now. Until I give up the "glamour" of my life as a shadowrunner, I figure the least I can do is pass on some of what I've learned. Plenty of times in the past, Shadowland or someone I met there helped to haul my hoop out of the fire. So if some of what I know can do the same for someone else, why not share it?

Captain Chaos asked me to give you the low-down on Wuxing, Inc., a recent addition to the Corporate Court and the Big Ten and one of the newest and most ambitious kids on the block. Wuxing definitely has big plans for the future, though I can't say for certain what they are. But I've worked both for and against Wuxing at various times—like almost every shadowrunner in Hong Kong—and I think I know this corp as well as anyone does.

THE BUSINESS

Three years ago, when my team first got hired to gather Intel on Wuxing, my friend Snow Tiger pulled together an impressive collection of data on the corp's holdings and resources. That data is seriously outdated; Wuxing has changed quite a bit recently. The Intel in this post is the most up-to-date I've got, but even it may change faster than you think.

Wuxing is most heavily involved in finance, shipping, and consumer goods and services. The corp has fewer investments in fields dominated by the other megacorporations, like heavy industry, electronics, cybernetics and military tech, though it does have interests in all those areas. Wuxing's primary businesses involve information, influence and transportation. The umbrella corporation of the Wuxing corporate "family" thrives on a web of connections throughout the Pacific Rim. These connections brought about the first step in one of CEO Wu-Lung Wei's plans: the formation of the Pacific Prosperity Group (PPG), an alliance of smaller corporations under Wuxing's benevolent guidance. The PPG gives Wuxing resources and influence far out of proportion to its size.



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the corp needs it to, but aside from that, the accusations are largely exaggerated. Most of Wuxing's reputation for financial wizardry is well-earned.

● "Financial wizardry." Interesting choice of words. I've heard rumors that Wuxing somehow used magic once or twice to manipulate the stock market. Some kind of precognition, perhaps? Anyone out there got any intel on this?
● Findler-Man

● Thankfully, that's nothing more than a rumor. Precognitive magic simply isn't reliable enough to forecast trends in any system as complex as the stock market. Too many variables can change too quickly. You can always find investors who swear by their astrological charts or their I Ching books, but there's no evidence that any divination technique makes a difference when it comes to investment.

● Silicon Mage

● Perhaps not conventional magic, SM—but remember, Wuxing has at least one, if not more, of the Four Coins of Luck mentioned in Dunkelzahn's will. Isn't one of those coins supposed to control prosperity? Who knows what kind of magic they have? Maybe Wuxing is using it to make more money. Hell, maybe they used it to set up the PPG and get onto the Corporate Court.

● Talon

● I seriously doubt that, Talon, but—as I know nothing more than rumors and legends about the aforementioned coins—I can't really say for sure.

● Silicon Mage

Wuxing's other major financial investment is the number of insurance companies under its control, providing a wide range of insurance services to customers worldwide. The corporation has a lock on the insurance business in much of Asia and is working to expand outward along the Pacific Rim, particularly into California, Seattle and parts of the Native American Nations.

As part of competition in the insurance business, Wuxing isn't above arranging the occasional "accident" to cost its rivals some money and make them look bad. Properties insured by rival companies have been known to mysteriously burn to the ground, or suffer equipment failures and similar mishaps. These incidents sometimes invite reprisals against Wuxing, but only when the other company can be sure who was responsible for its misfortunes.

● Such tactics also work the other way. Arrange a few "unfortunate accidents" to convince a potential customer that his insurance coverage isn't adequate and get him to sign on with you. Suddenly, everything is running smoothly. It's little more than a large-scale protection racket, but it works.

● Frasier

SHIPPING

The second big cog in the Wuxing machine is its extensive import/export and transportation business. Wuxing owns and controls numerous shipping, trading and freight companies, along with warehouses and all related services needed to store and ship huge amounts of goods anywhere in the world. Like its financial interests, Wuxing's shipping business gives the corp a lot of influence, because it moves goods for lots of other corporations and businesses.

● That kind of "influence" can cut both ways, however. Wuxing may have pull because it can threaten to cut someone's shipping lines and make it more difficult for them to get their goods where they need to go. By the same token, customers can threaten to pull business from Wuxing and go with another shipping company. Like most things in the corporate world, it's rarely cut-and-dried.

● Nuyen Nick

Wuxing's transportation network is also perfectly suited to other, less legal, businesses than shipping. Some Hong Kong Triads have been known to use Wuxing subsidiaries to smuggle contraband out of the Enclave to places all over the Pacific Rim. When the authorities manage to catch them, the Triads get arrested and Wuxing feigns surprise over the whole thing. The corp throws some of its middle managers to the media wolves as scapegoats, and the subsidiary in question usually goes out of business immediately thereafter—to be replaced a short time later by an identical company "under new management."

Wuxing's extraterritorial status also allows it to ship "sensitive" materials without being subject to search and seizure from any nation, unless that nation wants to risk the wrath of the Corporate Court. Wuxing has faced some tense situations shipping materials into war-torn China and other areas where local authorities wanted transports seized or searched. Wuxing refused to back down every time and threatened to defend its "property" with force, if necessary. Each time, the Corporate Court backed Wuxing's actions, because the Big Ten can't afford to set a precedent that violates their extraterritoriality.

● One time, I had a particularly hot item I knew I wasn't going to be able to carry across the border. So I put it in a box and shipped it to a chummer of mine at my destination, using Swift Wind Deliveries, one of Wuxing's subsidiaries. I waltzed across the border, null sweat, and the goods were waiting for me when I got back.

● Silver Fox

● Lucky for you Wuxing wasn't aware of what you were doing, or that it didn't have any interest in causing trouble. The corp could have just as easily spotted your little package and turned it over to someone else, or decided that the "item" was worth keeping. After all, what could you do about it? File a complaint? "They took what I stole fair and square!"

● Black-Eyed Susan

CONSUMER GOODS AND SERVICES

Wuxing has a formidable share of the consumer products and services market, including entertainment. The corporation owns numerous subsidiaries that produce everything from home appliances to toys to automobiles. The PPG is providing new distribution channels for many of these products, which are coming in greater and greater numbers to parts of North and South America. Large pools of inexpensive labor in China and the rest of Southeast Asia permit Wuxing to produce goods inexpensively and undercut competitors' prices.

Simchips being produced in Hong Kong and shipped all over the world are a less-than-legal example of this. These "Kong chips" are generally lower quality than those produced by top studios in California and the UCAS, but they provide just as much of a thrill at a much lower price. Wuxing has apparently taken a hint from California and started producing simchips with the signal gain cranked up enough to provide a "better than real" experience, like so-called California hot chips. But Kong chips are less expensive than Cal hots, so California finds itself in an odd situation. Cal hots are legal in the Free State, but Kong chips are starting to outsell the locally produced variety and a lot of the studios are yelling at the do-nothings in Sacramento about it.

Elsewhere in the CAS and UCAS, Cal hot chips and jacked-up Kong chips are illegal, which makes for a booming black market. Triad-controlled front companies buy thousands of Kong chips from Wuxing distributors and sell them on the black market with a huge markup. If the authorities complain, Wuxing just shrugs and says it can't control what its customers do with its product, which Wuxing sold to them completely aboveboard. Add that to the fact that the Triads also sell Kong-chip BTLs, with the gain turned up high enough to blow out the user's cerebellum if he's not careful, and you can see why the Triads are cleaning up in the chip market.

• And let me tell you, the Yakuza is not happy about it. The Yaks have always dominated the BTL market in North America, but now the Triads are challenging their dominance. "Object lessons" are starting to fly on both sides, leaving a lot of dead Yaks and Triad members. Not a fight to get in the middle of, in my opinion.

• Rigger X

• A lot of legitimate entertainment corps aren't too happy about Kong chips, either. There seem to be two basic responses so far. First, point out that Kong chips are cheap, low-quality drek likely to cause brain damage if they're used for too long. Novatech is trying this one, basically saying, "Our brain-benders are much better than theirs! Really!" Other corps are looking to copy Wuxing's success, turning out low-quality Kong chip knock-offs of their own. I've seen some of the cost-analysis reports; they basically say the corp will make far more in profits than it will cost to settle the few lawsuits they might have to deal

with from brain-damaged customers and their families. Nice stuff.

• Weaver

• There's another option: sabotaging some of those Kong chip manufacturers to slow down the flow. Twenty nuyen says plants in Hong Kong and elsewhere will suffer some "accidents" in the near future.

• Prime Runner

THE PLAYERS

The power structure within Wuxing isn't as precariously balanced or fragmented as in the other megacorps. While there are a number of crucial names and faces, when it comes down to it, the number one Wuxing player is Wu Lung-Wei, the company's chairman and CEO.

WU LUNG-WEI

Wu could easily be considered an eastern "Damien Knight;" he has connections all over the Pacific Rim and is forging a powerful coalition of corporations against the power of the Japanacorps. The PPG is becoming a serious concern for companies like Shiwase and Mitsuhamma, not to mention weakened Renraku. Wu's face is being splashed all over the front pages of publications like *Business Today* and *CorpWatch*. People seem to think he's some kind of financial genius, and you can read his complete, authorized biography from Four Winds Press (coincidentally a wholly-owned subsidiary of Lotus Multimedia, owned by Wuxing, Inc.).

The bio tells the dramatic story of Wu's rise to power: born the son of Wuxing's founder, he was educated abroad, where he met and fell in love with Sharon Chiang, then wooed and won her. He returned to Hong Kong with his new bride to become an executive in his father's company. He refused all special treatment (apart from the meganuyen used to raise and educate him, apparently) and worked his way up the corporate ladder, eventually earning the job of CEO right around the time dear old dad decided to retire. I can tell you, I shed a tear or two.

The bio won't tell you some of the wilder events in Wu's life, and that's the really interesting part.

• Hey, how come Lei Kung is on a first-name basis with this Wu Lung-Wei guy?

• Minuteman

• He's not, you dope. In China, people have their family name first, their given name second. The CEO of Wuxing's family name is Wu. His first name is Lung-Wei.

• Hex-A-Gram

I've done more than my share of digging about Wuxing in the past few years, and over time my friends and I have turned up some interesting stuff. Seems that, before he left for college, Wu Lung-Wei took an extended "vacation." The official story says he spend a year touring Europe, but it turns out Wu actually hopped a boat to

the Chinese mainland and spent the better part of that year traveling through the Chinese Kingdoms on his own. Why? Who knows? Maybe it's the sort of thing you do when you're eighteen and the son of a wealthy businessman. However, that little fact gets interesting when connected with a few others.

Flash forward to 2057. Wu Lung-Wei is CEO of Wuxing, and the company gets millions of nuyen from Dunkelzahn's will. Wu also gets a statue, called the "Jade Dragon of Wind and Fire," from the Big D. (It doesn't look like a dragon, but don't ask—it's a long story. If you want to know, go read the *Dunkelzahn's Secrets* file.) Additionally, Wu's wife inherits something called "the Second Coin of Luck." All of a sudden Wuxing goes from a barely second-tier megacorp to the really big time. Wu's got the capital and the influence to make his dream of an alliance between some of the Pac Rim corporations come true, and the Pacific Prosperity Group is born about fourteen months later. Not long after that, Wuxing muscled its way on to the Corporate Court and into AAA megacorp status.

Nowadays, Wuxing is consolidating its hold on its new resources, firming up its position in the Court and pushing the PPG to all the "mini-dragons" along the Pacific Rim. Wu Lung-Wei is at the top of his game. He's a major celebrity in Hong Kong. He and his wife are already being called the King and Queen of HK by the press. Word that Mrs. Wu is pregnant hit all the screamsheets like it was front-page news. Everyone is eagerly awaiting the arrival of the heir to the Wuxing fortune.

Still, it doesn't look like Wu is done yet. Recently, some strange things started happening around the Wuxing corporate HQ in Hong Kong. Nothing major, at least not at first, just a lot of refurbishing and reorganization. My chummer Lo-Wang still knows some people at Wuxing, and he did a little asking around. Seems that the top five floors of the building were being cleared out on Wu Lung-Wei's orders, floors being rearranged and some heavy renovation being done—including Wu's office, which was temporarily moved downstairs.

All this happened a few months ago. I figured, with all the construction, the place's astral security might be a little less than perfect, so I send my astral self out to have a look-see. As near as I can tell, workers have gutted the HQ's top five floors and are in the process of turning them into one big room, some five stories tall, with high windows and a floor covered in marble tile. It looked to me like they were either building the world's largest bathroom or some kind of ballroom, but it was tough to be sure. The next time I thought to check it out, there were so many guard spirits hovering around the top of Wuxing Tower that I never even got close.

Once the construction was finished, Wuxing shipped in a bunch of VIPs for some kind of private party. According to what Snow Tiger managed to dig up, all of the "VIPs" were magicians working for various divisions of Wuxing or other companies in the PPG. In fact, the only mundanes at the entire gathering were Wu and his wife.

No other corporate VPs or CEOs, no investors, nothing. Just a big group of mages gathered together in what looked like a giant temple or ritual room atop one of the tallest buildings in Hong Kong. A building sitting on top of a major junction of dragon lines and containing a magical item from the hoard of a great dragon. Need I go on?

Some friends and I have started to notice weird magical drek going on here in Hong Kong, and I'm pretty sure what caused it.

- What kind of "weird drek" is Lei Kung talking about?
- Nightfall

• Looks mostly like some pretty drek serious mana surges. Similar to the drek going on in places like LA or Siberia, where magic is all out of whack and you never quite know what you're going to get when you cast a spell or whistle up a spirit. Sometimes it fizzles, other times it's way more powerful than you wanted. Happens on occasion, though it's been going on in HK for an unusually long time.

- Magister

THE BOARD

Wu Lung-Wei was able to solidify his control over the board shortly after Dunkelzahn's death, but the other board members are nothing to sneer at. Snow Tiger's devoted a lot of her free time over the past few years to digging up some facts on Wuxing, and she's pulled together a decent portfolio of who's who.

Sharon Chiang-Wu is the lucky wife of Wu Lung-Wei, whom he met while attending Harvard. She's a sharp cookie, and takes a direct hand in helping Wu steer the corp. Her forwardness, added to the fact that she's a woman and an American-born "decadent Westerner" to boot, makes her a bit much for some of the traditionalists in the corp to swallow, but they do anyway so as not to anger Wu. She's currently on a leave of absence, as she's expected to give birth to their first child quite soon. Whether her pregnancy is actually a result of the Second Coin of Luck's alleged "fertility" properties is anyone's guess.

Fu Peng is the largest shareholder after Wu, and is best described as an eccentric and mysterious old man. Despite his position and the wealth it would imply, Fu seems to have no real-world assets or estate, or even much of a legal ID. The personal descriptions we've gotten describe him as a man of modest means, rarely seen in public, and usually alone. He has a long history as a Wuxing shareholder and close ties to the Wu family, but there the trail ends. Various rumors have pegged him as a geomancer without peer, a Triad boss and Wu Kuan-Lei's ally spirit (implying that Wu Lung-Wei's father was a magician, which no other evidence supports).

In contrast, James Harper-Smythe, another major shareholder, is a very public figure. The young scion of a British noble family, Harper-Smythe's ancestors migrated to Hong Kong in the early 1900's and have become quite entrenched. When Hong Kong reverted to Chinese control, they were one of the few British aristocratic elements

to remain. During its bid for independence, the family fully supported the Hong Kong corporations; if nothing else, they were protecting their own interests. The Harper-Smythe's gave Wu Kuan-Lei the financial backing he needs to start and expand Wuxing, and they still play a role. James, at 32, is the only surviving member of his dynasty, and remains unmarried. In many ways he seems to be your typical snotty Brit, educated at Oxford and so forth, but he seems to hold a peculiar antagonism towards a number of the British elite.

- The feeling's mutual: a lot of the British Druids have a grudge towards the Harper-Smythes. They go out of their way to snub him when he attends events back in the Kingdom.

- Snowdon Squire

A total of almost 16 percent of Wuxing stock is in the hands of smaller PPG corporations. As far as I can tell, Wuxing handed over this stock as a sort of "hostage exchange" to convince certain smaller corps to join the PPG. Those corps have since tossed their shares around a bit, and the Malaysian Independent Bank now controls about 8 percent—enough to get them a board seat. Snow Tiger has pulled up evidence that indicates the MIB representative usually attends board meetings via Matrix projection.

- The Malaysian Bank is a wacky group. They've grown from being a second-hand data and tax haven to being an important PacRim player. They have almost zero physical assets, they're as virtual an institution as they come. Naturally, they protect themselves accordingly; don't expect a run on a MIB host to be a cakewalk.

- Grid Reaper

THE PACIFIC PROSPERITY GROUP

Chairman: Tzu Cheng

Headquarters: Hong Kong Free Enterprise Zone

Major Members: Eastern Tiger, Gaeatronics, Federated-Boeing, Kwonsham Industries, Lami Look Pagkaon, Malaysian Independent Bank, PacRim Communications Unlimited, Shibata Construction and Engineering, Tan Tien, Universal Omnitech, Wuxing Incorporated, Yamatetsu

The Pacific Prosperity Group has irrevocably changed the world's corporate power structure. Backed by two AAA megacorps and their seats on the Corporate Court, the PPG rivals almost every other corporate power bloc in terms of economic clout. The backbone of the PPG is the Malaysian Independent Bank (MIB), which serves the same role for the PPG that the Pacific Rim Bank has played for many corps over the years.

The PPG acts as a coalition, similar to alliances like NATO or OPEC in the twentieth century. Any corporation based in a Pacific Rim country and willing to submit to the requirements of the group's charter may petition for membership.

Each member corporation has a representative on the PPG board, from which the PPG elects its chairman.

Privileges of membership include special rates with the MIB, favored trade status with other member corps and certain countries under their influence, and a united front against non-member corporations. In addition, PPG corps have begun several joint projects and exchange programs in order to make themselves more competitive, like the Wuxing/Yamatetsu oceanic dome project. Some of the smaller PPG corps, such as Mangadyne, Polynesian Fuels and Red Wheel Engineering, have already profited greatly. Other perks and responsibilities of membership range from rules of competition to production limitations. Certain areas, such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Vladivostok and Vancouver, are also being developed as PPG-favored centers of commerce.

- Mangadyne is a corp to watch: Founded in Hong Kong, it was started by a hot young software wiz named Cale Winters. The name is both a spoof of a magical-research corp run by his sister (Manadyne, outta Boston) and a reflection of the firm's specialty: wicked IC iconography, based on the latest anime styles. Mangadyne's code is on par with Novatech's, and they supply the MIB with a hefty chunk of their protection and system sculpting.

- Grid Reaper

Tzu Cheng, a gregarious and cunning negotiator from Wuxing, was elected as the first chairman and has done a skillful job of balancing the interests of big corps like Yamatetsu with the PPG's smaller members. So far, the PPG has had few internal problems.

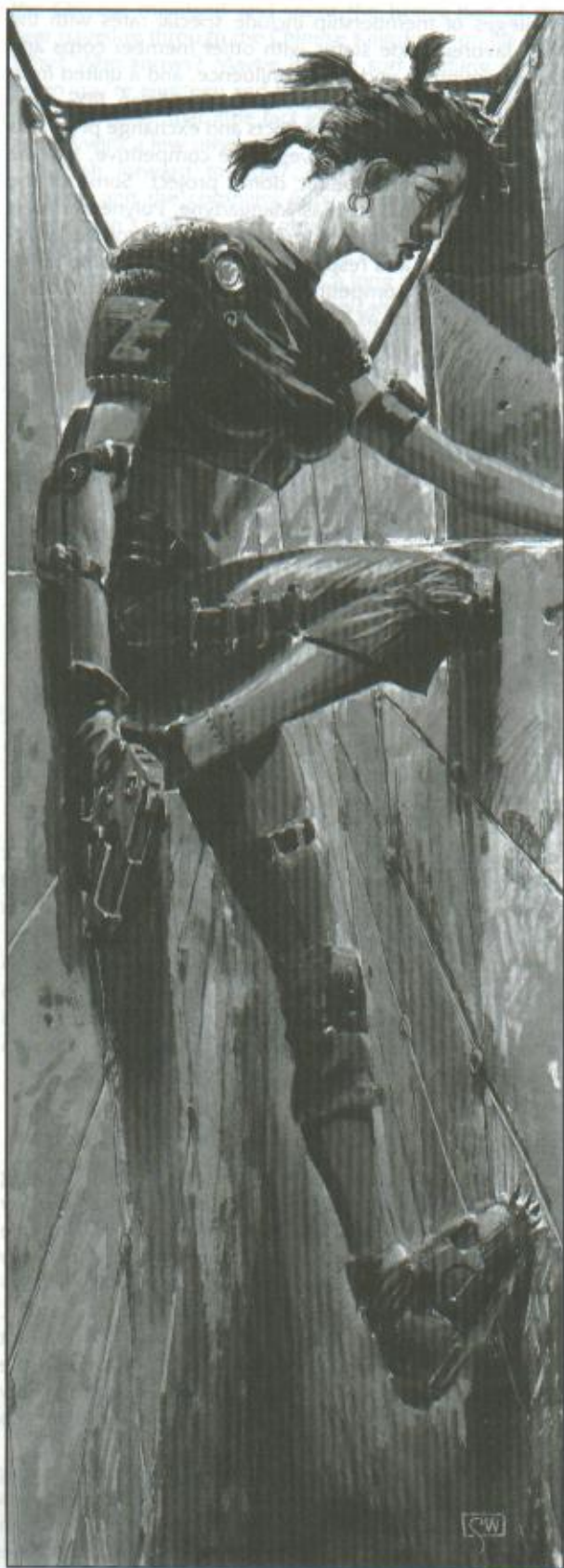
- Few that anyone outside it knows about. For all their talk of corporate brotherhood and cooperation, Wuxing and Yamatetsu aren't about to surrender any of their power in the PPG. They want to keep the lower-tier corps under their thumbs, and they're not above arranging some shadowruns to ensure that. Some runs involve spying on member corps and ensuring that they stay in line; others often involve "convincing" smaller corps to sign up with the PPG's Pan-Pacific protection racket.

- HK Kid

THE TRIADS

Okay, everybody asks, "Are the Triads backing Wuxing?" Yes, and no, and sort of. Here's what I can say for sure; the Triads are definitely interested in Wuxing one way or another. Some Triads in the Hong Kong area may be handling shadow-work for the corp, especially a lucrative smuggling business, with Kong chips, drugs, weapons and other drek making its way to different points along the Pac-Rim like China, Malaysia, the Philippines, California and Seattle. Triads like the Yellow Lotus and the Eighty-Eights are raking in some serious cred from cooperating with Wuxing.

On the other hand, some Triads seem to hate Wuxing with a passion that borders on fanaticism. That includes the Red Dragon Triad, the largest in Hong Kong—though maybe not for long. Triads like the Yellow Lotus, that have



Wuxing's backing, are looking to push the Dragons out of HK. Local authorities seem to be focusing their efforts on Red Dragon activities, and largely ignoring Triads like the Lotus and the Eighty-Eights.

I suspect the reason for the bad blood between Wuxing and the Red Dragon Triad has something to do with the whole "Four Coins of Luck" thing. Wuxing has one of the coins, and tried to acquire the others. One belonged to a poor fisherman in Hong Kong who got skragged by Triad assassins. I actually had that coin briefly, but I handed it over to representatives of the Yellow Lotus in order to keep my head attached to my shoulders. The Yellow Lotus has ties with Wuxing, so you can bet the coin ended up with the corp. The location of the third coin is unknown to anyone except maybe Dunkelzahn and his heirs, the Draco Foundation. And guess who owns the fourth? None other than the great dragon Lung, who's rumored to be the secret head of the Red Dragon Triad. Get the picture? Seems like Wuxing is messing with Lung's plans and the dragon doesn't like it. My prediction: a serious gang war between the Triads over this in the future.

● That explains some things. Lately, the Octagon Triad in Seattle has been pulling runs aimed at Wuxing. Didn't make any sense to me, 'cause I'd heard the Triads were working with Wuxing. Turns out the Octagon owes loyalty to the Red Dragons, and their Incense Master is rumored to have been trained by Lung. Perhaps his placement in Seattle has something to do with Wuxing? More when I know it.

● Jumper

WORKING FOR WUXING

I never worked for Wuxing except as a shadowrunner, but I know plenty of people who have and do work for Wuxing. So I asked them what it's like working for the biggest and brightest corp in Hong Kong, and here's what they told me.

Wuxing is actually pretty Westernized, for a Hong Kong institution. Employees are generally expected to be able to speak English because it's the language of the corporate world. Most of the company's documents are in English as well. Employees need a certain degree of education, even for the lowest office jobs, but Wuxing works hand-in-hand with schools and universities to ensure a steady supply of employees. Word is that graduates from major colleges around the world can make a killing by signing up to work for Wuxing or one of its many subsidiaries around the world. A lot of business majors are studying Chinese and Russian these days instead of Japanese or German.

Wuxing is not Yamatetsu, but they're pretty meta-friendly, as corps go. They hire all metatypes, but orks and trolls don't generally show up as executives. (Of course, orks and trolls don't often get MBAs, either, but that's a completely different discussion.) Elves and dwarfs are found in all levels of the company, although the really high-level execs tend to be human. Orks and trolls show

up most in the security division, and other areas where being big, strong and intimidating is an asset. Magicians of all stripes are popular hires, although again the corp tends to favor mages and Eastern wujen over shamans and even more out-there types.

Wuxing doesn't have the same kind of "closed" corporate culture that a lot of the Japanacorps have. There really aren't any Wuxing-owned arcologies or housing developments (not yet, anyway). What the company does do is provide all kinds of programs to help employees out: health benefits, help finding a place to live, tuition reimbursement, company-sponsored daycare, that sort of thing. Rather than build schools, housing developments, and child-care centers, Wuxing prefers to use what's already at hand, providing vouchers and other sorts of help for employees. It has definitely made the corp popular with pre-existing infrastructures. When Wuxing opens a branch office, you know that your own business isn't going to be pushed aside so the company can build its own self-contained community. Wuxing's PR department milks their "community attitude" for all it's worth.

Of course, as Wuxing grows, I suspect you'll see more and more company-run support systems. Wuxing's "openness" can leave some valuable employees vulnerable, and they're learning a lot of the same lessons that led the Japanacorps to build arcologies.

RUNNING FOR AND AGAINST WUXING

Running for Wuxing involves a lot of moving around, because the company has interests all over the place these days. Of course, that also means Wuxing shadowruns can spring up just about anywhere along the Pacific Rim and often beyond.

- The corp's pretty active in CalFree, with definite Wuxing-backed shadow-ops going on in and around San Francisco and LA. Wuxing's using Triad influence in San Francisco to slip shadowrunners into the city and get at the Japanacorps right inside their North American stronghold.

- Bay Jewel

- Wuxing is running lots of operations here in Seattle, too: gathering intel on the competition, pulling datasteals and extractions, the usual sort of thing. The interesting part is that it looks like some of the PPG corps are pulling runs for each other. For example, I heard recently about a Wuxing run against the Ares building in Seattle to net some intel about AresSpace. Wuxing doesn't have any major interests in that area, but new PPG member Federated-Boeing does. Likewise, Ingersoll and Berkeley recently hired some people for a run against Novatech. Nothing of interest for an agricornp like I&B, but they belong to Universal Omnitech, another PPG member, and I heard the stolen data turned up in Yamatetsu's hands shortly thereafter. The smoke and mirrors being thrown around by the PPG is making it hard to know who's hitting who sometimes.

- Findler-Man

Wuxing is interested in information on its competitors and even its newfound allies, so corp Johnsons hire plenty of runners for datasteals and surveillance, along with corporate and freelance watchers to pass on anything interesting. Extractions are also increasingly common, especially of skilled magical and technical personnel.

From time to time, Wuxing also hires runners to provide additional security for its shipping operations. Sometimes the job is legit, guarding shipments from piracy in the South China Sea and the Philippines. Other times, Wuxing hires runners for shadier operations involving the Triads and whatever they're shipping off to San Francisco, Seattle or Macao. Working for Wuxing is definitely a good way to see all the heavy-traffic areas of the Pacific Rim.

One benefit of working with Wuxing these days is that you may get help from the corp's allies in the PPG. Wuxing has been known to cooperate with fellow members on shadowruns of mutual interest to it and to the PPG as a whole. Wuxing also tends to give runners wide latitude to get the job done, but prefers subtlety and style over firepower. Though the corp is big news in Hong Kong, Wuxing still treads softly among the big boys of the Corporate Court (for now, at least).

As many runs as I've done for Wuxing, I've done twice as many against them. Wuxing has decent security for a low-level megacorp, focused heavily on protecting vital information. Their sites have pretty good Matrix security, and magical security is better than average because the corp concentrates most of its magical assets in security and research. Since Wuxing's elevation to the Corporate Court, the corp has tightened and upgraded its security measures several times.

One interesting thing I've noticed is that Wuxing tends to build facilities on power sites. Not just magical research centers and things like that, but ordinary offices and other facilities. The Wuxing HQ in Hong Kong is built on top of a honking big nexus of dragon lines, and the corp uses geomancers as consultants when setting up new offices and facilities just about anywhere. I'd be tempted to dismiss this practice as superstition, except that a lot of times the power site seems to favor Wuxing's interests. I've noticed that doing magic is often more difficult on a Wuxing site.

The other thing to watch out for when running against Wuxing—or, to a lesser degree, any of the PPG corps—is the company's extensive network of contacts. Wuxing is owed favors by the Triads and a lot of smaller Pac Rim corps, and the corps in the PPG also tend to look out for each other's interests. So if you're setting up a run against Wuxing, be careful who you tell, or you may find that word has found its way back to your target before you're ready to go. By the time things go down, Wuxing might well know everything about your operation except for the color of your underwear that day. Consider it a friendly warning from someone who's been there.

YAMATETSU CORPORATION

by Spiderhawk



World Headquarters: Vladivostok, Russia

President/CEO: Saru Iwano

Chairman of the Board: Yuri Shibanokuji

Corporate Status: Public corporation

Major Shareholders:

Buttercup (27%)

Yuri Shibanokuji (19%)

Saru Iwano (11%)

Hideo Yoshida (5%)

Newton Chin (5%)

Ramon Dizon (3%)

Major Divisions:

Yamatetsu North America

Home Office: Seattle

Division Head: Mary Luce

Yamatetsu South America

Home Office: Vladivostok

Division Head: Hideo Yoshida

Yamatetsu Australasia

Home Office: Hong Kong

Division Head: Ramon Dizon (previously

Cross-Walters)

Yamatetsu Asia

Headquarters: Vladivostok

Division Head: Mochikune Mibu

Yamatetsu India

Home Office: Vladivostok

Division Head: Rajiv Desai

Yamatetsu Middle East

Home Office: Vladivostok

Division Head: Sean Rooker

Yamatetsu Europe

Home Office: Vladivostok

Division Head: Michelle Forlani

Important Subsidiaries: Crashcart Medical Services Corporation, MetaErgonomics, Pensodyne, Tsuruga International, Xiao Technologies, Yamatetsu Naval Technologies

If you were to ask a group of runners to name all ten megacorps, each one would forget Yamatetsu. I've kept my eye on the Shadowland and Nexus corporate payday boards, and I've gotta say it's criminal how much of the real story behind Yamatetsu remains untold. I figure most of you out there don't even really know how or why Yamatetsu squeezed onto the Corporate Court so many years ago. Well, I worked for Yamatetsu for more than a decade, so I've got plenty of factoids and nuggets of information gold. Here's the entire story, from Nippon beginnings to cold Russian nights.

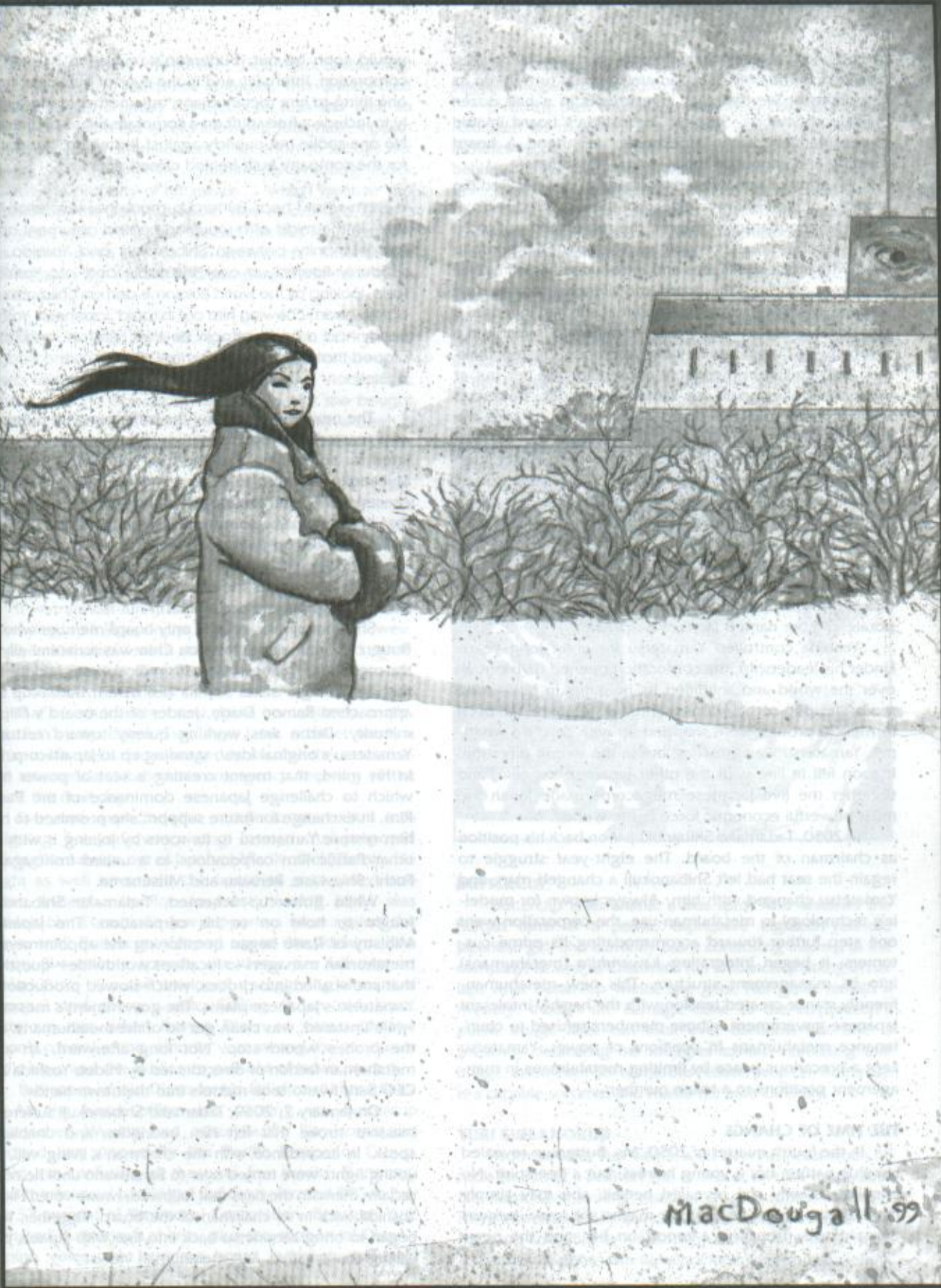
HISTORY

Yamatetsu Corporation broke ground in 2032, founded by Tadamako Shibanokuji and built around his Tsuruga International shipping company. His original intent was to form a consortium of Japanese and Filipino companies strong enough to resist takeovers from the Japanacorps. The consortium formed a board of directors from the heads of the companies, split down the middle: fifty percent Japanese, fifty percent Filipino. Because Tadamako Shibanokuji dreamed up the whole deal, the board named him as its chairman. Given their varied backgrounds and fields of interest, a strong military engineering bent (lucrative in those war-torn years) and a policy of exploiting the burgeoning metahuman markets, the consortium was not only successful, but in a perfect position to challenge the megacorps.

In 2041, Yamatetsu made the plunge and tried to break into the Corporate Court, sparking a low-level corporate war. The black ops were hot and heavy, and after a few months some corps started using their military assets. Yamatetsu skillfully exploited existing conflicts and played its enemies off against each other. Because it was not considered a traditional Japanacorp, Yamatetsu earned the support of Ares, Aztechnology and Saeder-Krupp, who wished to break the Japanese megacorp majority on the Court. Yamatetsu also had numerous smaller allies, who were more than willing to back Yamatetsu in cracking the Court's facade, so that they might themselves bid for a higher position later. In the end, Yamatetsu won through sheer tenacity, and became a AAA megacorp in 2042.

Yamatetsu was now in the big leagues, but while the company was thriving on the surface, it was filled with turmoil and pandemonium within. A young Japanese director named Hideo Yoshida used his influence among the Japanese directors to buy up much of the stock held by their Filipino counterparts. I suspect he also had backing from the other Japanese megas, who sponsored his backstabbing and shadowruns. With the Filipino vote shrunken to a minority, Yoshida initiated a coup, stealing the chairmanship from Tadamako Shibanokuji and purging most of the Filipino directors. With them went all of Yamatetsu's stuffed-shirt bravado about combating the Japanacorps—it had effectively become the enemy.

Yoshida's stock manipulations spawned an interesting side-effect: approximately 11 percent of Yamatetsu's stock was purchased by an unknown source, in a maneuver that had all the



MacDougall '99

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markings of a takeover attempt—perhaps by a rival Japanacorp. The only data Yamatetsu could turn up on its new investor were similar investments in a half dozen major corporations. Suspicious, Yoshida's board invited representatives of the stockholder to attend a board meeting and announce their—or its—intentions.

An army of Yamatetsu execs and lawyers awaited the entrance of their enemy. Instead of the expected team of Japanese negotiators, however, the rep turned out to be a lone Japanese teenage woman. She opened a portfolio filled with stock certificates and introduced herself as Ms. Buttercup, shocking the board into silence. Ignoring their surprise, Ms. Buttercup explained that she had inherited a great deal of money and was determined to invest it in a company that would make her even more. Ousted chairman Shibanojuji immediately offered to buy her out at twice what she'd paid for Yamatetsu's stock. Buttercup refused, then told the board she planned to take the board seat her investment had bought her.

The board didn't have much choice in the matter. Buttercup assumed her seat and began a long period of carefully watching the board's machinations, but rarely intervening. On occasion, she offered her considerable wealth and power within other corps to bolster struggling divisions and projects. Meanwhile, Yoshida embarked on a fruitless campaign to discover Buttercup's history and true identity, employing the espionage expertise of a corporate-climber named Jacques Barnard.

Yoshida controlled Yamatetsu for eight long years. Under his leadership, the corporation opened divisions all over the world and solidified its holdings in Japan. The mom-and-pop corporations that the consortium had been formed to protect were snapped up with barely a whimper. Yamatetsu was growing, but in the wrong direction. It soon fell in line with the other Japanese keiretsu, and together the five Japanese megacorps made Japan the most powerful economic force in the world.

In 2050, Tadamako Shibanojuji won back his position as chairman of the board. The eight-year struggle to regain the seat had left Shibanojuji a changed man, and Yamatetsu changed with him. Always known for modeling technology to metahuman use, the corporation went one step further toward accommodating its prime customers; it began integrating *kawaruhito* (metahumans) into its management structure. This new metahuman-friendly stance created tension with the harshly intolerant Japanese government, whose members refused to countenance metahumans in positions of power. Yamatetsu kept a precarious peace by limiting metahumans in management positions to a token number.

THE TIME OF CHANGE

In the fourth quarter of 2050, Ms. Buttercup revealed her true nature: not a young heiress, but a free spirit. No one knows why she revealed herself; she may simply have felt the time was right. Or maybe she knew Jacques Barnard was preparing a report on her, and the news

would soon be out. Buttercup's revelation harmed the corporation, internally and in the eyes of outsiders. It was one thing to hire metahumans, but another matter entirely to include a free spirit on a corporate board of directors. No one spoke out publicly against Buttercup, but distrust for the company built behind closed doors.

● From what I hear, Buttercup made her revelation with style. In the midst of a recurring heated argument about metahumanity between Shibanojuji and Yoshida, she suddenly floated up over the table and into Yoshida's face, looking all the world like some demon child about to eat his heart, chewing him out in rapid Japanese. Yoshida nearly had a heart attack. He shut right up, and hasn't argued that point since.

● Brick

The next few years saw the emergence of Buttercup as a masterful corporate manipulator. Rumors had circulated for some time that the free spirit had engineered Shibanojuji's return to power, and everything the once-conservative chairman did following his return suggested that there might be some truth to the tales. For whatever reason, Buttercup had enough influence over the chairman to make him vote in favor of legislation in 2056 that installed even more metahumans in management positions throughout the corporation.

Shibanojuji was not the only board member who felt Buttercup's influence. Newton Chin was a natural ally for the metahuman cause, given his radical views and the fact that his younger sister Sophia is a dwarf. Buttercup also approached Ramon Dizon, leader of the board's Filipino minority. Dizon was working quietly toward restoring Yamatetsu's original ideal: standing up to Japanacorp, Inc. In his mind, that meant creating a seat of power from which to challenge Japanese dominance of the Pacific Rim. In exchange for future support, she promised to help him restore Yamatetsu to its roots by joining it with the other Pacific Rim corporations as a united front against Fuchi, Shiawase, Renraku and Mitsuhama.

While Buttercup schemed, Tadamako Shibanojuji fought to hold on to his corporation. The Japanese Ministry of Trade began questioning the appointment of metahuman managers to locations worldwide—questions that snowballed into probes, which slowed production in Yamatetsu's Japanese plants. The government's message, while unstated, was clear: get rid of the metahumans, and the probes would stop. Not long afterward, an anti-metahuman faction of directors led by Hideo Yoshida and CEO Saru Iwano took matters into their own hands.

On January 7, 2059, Tadamako Shibanojuji suffered a massive stroke that left him bedridden and unable to speak. In accordance with the chairman's living will, his voting rights were turned over to Saru Iwano until he could reclaim them. In the days that followed, Iwano voted Hideo Yoshida back in as chairman of the board. Together, they began to bring Yamatetsu back into line with Japan's prevailing conservative, anti-metahuman views.

Six weeks after the stroke, Tadamako Shibanojuji died. As far as I can piece together, this unexpected development prompted Buttercup to rush her plan to fruition. She spent the weeks following Tadamako's death buying out lesser shareholders in an effort to solidify her power base. Meanwhile, Shibanojuji's voting stock became the property of his estate ... which went to Yuri Shibanojuji, the son Tadamako had abandoned almost forty years ago. Word soon spread that this forgotten son was coming to Kyoto to claim his inheritance. Unfortunately for Yoshida and company, Tadamako's son was an ork.

● As the story goes, Yuri Shibanojuji fell victim to the wave of goblinization in 2021. Rather than face the ridicule of his peers, Tadamako hid his wife and child in Vladivostok. Buttercup found out about Yuri shortly after she bought into the corporation. This plan of hers must have been a long time in the making.

● Corp Watcher

Following Buttercup's script, Yuri announced that he would assume his father's seat on the board, after which Buttercup and Chin threw their strength behind him. Their combined votes made Yuri Shibanojuji the new chairman of Yamatetsu Corporation.

It was almost funny for a minute or two: a kawaruhi-to heading up a Japanacorp. The humor wore off, however, when Yamatetsu stock started plummeting and stockholders began deserting like rats fleeing a sinking ship. The conservative element of the board made it clear to Yuri that he could either step down immediately or die. Yuri didn't step down. Two days later, a bullet made a home in his chest. He managed to survive the assassination attempt, and called an emergency meeting of the board the next day.

Everyone expected the attack to scare Yuri into resigning. Everyone was wrong. Instead, Yuri proposed moving Yamatetsu out of Japan to Vladivostok, Russia. He might as well have told the board to strip naked and dance around a bonfire; to most, leaving Japan was unthinkable. Even Yuri's few supporters were against the move, until Buttercup stepped up to the podium. In a twenty-five minute speech, she threw her full support behind Yuri's plan and produced a staggering amount of personal and proxy votes. Calling in an old favor, Buttercup also asked Ramon Dizon to vote with her. Dizon's control of the minority vote swung the pendulum Yuri's way, and the motion to pull out of Japan passed.

Buttercup repaid Dizon for his aid almost immediately. As the home office was packing up, Buttercup approached Wuxing and other Pacific Rim corps and pledged her support for the Pacific Prosperity Group. Amid the confusion of the next few weeks, Buttercup used the financial backing of the newly formed PPG to buy out 37 percent of Yamatetsu Corporation. Between Yuri, Chin and Buttercup's shares, plus the support of Dizon's Filipino votes, the Japanese board members suddenly

became the minority, their dreams of becoming Japan's biggest megacorp turned to dust.

Over the past two years, Yamatetsu Corporation has relocated its main office to Russia and other Japanese facilities to other Pacific Rim countries, leaving the stay-behinds to fend for themselves. The corp's evacuation from Japan and its appointment of an ork as chairman of the board damaged Yamatetsu's public image among many ordinary Japanese, but its vocal support of the PPG is earning it several new friends.

THE PLAYERS

Yamatetsu has too many powerful figures to list them all in this post, so I've only included the ones I feel are most important to the corporation. You won't find a better source of info on the who's who of Yamatetsu Corporation.



BUTTERCUP

Buttercup is an anima, a free spirit who assumes the human form of a petite, expressive eighteen-year-old Japanese girl. She currently has a controlling interest in the company, as well as Chairman Yuri Shibanojuji sitting in her lap; what Buttercup wants, she gets. Her goals remain a mystery, though the damage done to the corporation's public image after Yuri took over concerns her. She is presently dedicating her energies toward rebuilding that image, aside from her numerous hidden projects. Buttercup is a capable sorcerer, and masks her aura carefully.

YURI SHIBANOJUJI

Truth be told, Yuri was in a bit over his head when he took his father's seat on the board of a AAA megacorp. He does have several years of small business management experience to draw on, as well as Buttercup to hold his hand and Chin to advise him. So far, he's doing well, and taking it all on with the air of facing a good challenge.

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Almost all of his decisions have been in-line with Buttercup and Chin, with the exception of a few minor requests that his father made in his will. One such "request" resulted in the appointment of Jacques Barnard as head of the restructuring effort—an unexpected development, to say the least.

● Yuri has become a bit of an item in the Vladivostok cosmopolitan social circuit—he's definitely enjoying the perks of his position. He's been pressured by metahuman polyclubs to champion certain social causes, but so far has refused out of fear of compromising his position or causing further bad publicity for Yamatetsu.

● AK

● The appearance of a stylish and mysterious elven woman at his arm during public appearances has caused a bit of gossip. Little do they know she's his hoop-kicking bodyguard, assigned to him following the assassination attempt.

● Woodward

RAMON DIZON

The only director I've had the pleasure of meeting, Dizon comes across as down-to-earth and charismatic. He's the type of guy you'd expect to see in a nightclub doing shots of synth-rum, not acting as a key figure in Yamatetsu's ongoing power struggle. The most prominent Filipino director to survive Hideo Yoshida's first term as chairman of the board, Dizon is less interested in seeing Yamatetsu grow and more interested in events occurring in the Pacific Rim. Oddly enough, Dizon has not asked Yamatetsu to increase its presence in the Philippines. He's a hands-on leader; the few businesses Yamatetsu owns in the region report directly to him.

● Ramon Dizon gobbled up the Philippines Broadcasting Network when it tried to jump ship to Tan Tien. Lately, he's been holding high security meetings with the dragon Masaru. Supposedly they're discussing Yamatetsu's facilities on Mindanao, but you don't schedule monthly meetings to discuss a housing complex. There's something more going on.

● Muntianak

NEWTON CHIN

A quiet and unassuming man, Chin was an old friend of Yuri's father and bought into Yamatetsu in the beginning. He has supported Buttercup's initiatives and acted as an advisor to Yuri. In return for his help, he has been allowed a free hand in Yamatetsu's re-structuring, and has instituted a number of radical changes.

● Chin comes from a family of Japanese communists and anarchists. His cousin tried to assassinate the Emperor in 2022. He's not active in any polyclubs that I'm aware of.

but I suspect he holds sympathies and provides discreet aid to certain causes.

● Red Sun

SARU IWANO

This man has been the one constant in Yamatetsu over the years. Everyone knows Yamatetsu's CEO is a right-winger who winces at having a kawaruhito chairman. Despite his anti-metahuman sentiments, however, Iwano's job has never been in danger. His excellent head for business makes him too invaluable an asset to waste.

● Saru Iwano isn't the type to sit around and let an ork ruin everything; he's building up a substantial anti-metahuman fifth column within the corp. He does it all through Hideo Yoshida, however—Yoshida's been Iwano's puppet for a long time now.

● Blackguard

● He's not just de-stabilizing the corp from within. Alamos 20K has pulled several runs on Yamatetsu recently, and their ops were well-funded and briefed on Yamatetsu security.

● Brick

HIDEO YOSHIDA

A descendant of a Japanese nobleman with an ancient samurai's pride, Yoshida's family has strong ties to several Yakuza clans. Twice deposed as Yamatetsu's chairman of the board, he is bent on retaking that position, but realizes that his power is limited as long as Yuri and Buttercup remain in charge.

Aggressive and smart, Yoshida doesn't make direct contact with shadowfolk or anyone else outside the corporation. Instead, he uses a network of trusted fixers to do his dirty work. He's currently fostering pockets of racist resistance within the corp, and making alliances with anti-metahuman groups.

● Yoshida's fallen out of favor with his Yakuza connections after disappointing them for years now. They feel he's failed to do his job in keeping Yamatetsu "pure" and promoting their interests. He's trying to make up for it by helping the Yaks gain a foothold in Vladivostok.

● Caine

● Check this—I was running surveillance last month on an upper-level suit from Yakashima corp—Yamatetsu's traditional rival—named Hiro Senzeni. During the time I was watching him, Senzeni had a five-hour meeting in Tokyo with a suit I later identified as Yoshida. Think he's planning on jumping ship? Or maybe he's just selling secrets ...

● Balthazar

● Senzeni is a front-man for the Human Nation. They were probably sizing up a new recruit.

● Link

JACQUES BARNARD

I've only found snippets of information on Barnard; the rest of what's out there is tied up in datastores I'll never access. Barnard is a hermetic initiate with a background in shadow ops. He's worked his way up from head of the Seattle offices to his current title of Chief Operations Officer. Yuri has him working closely with Newton Chin on the restructuring efforts. According to the files I managed to access, Barnard is responsible for cleaning up each division—not just trimming the fat, but finding out who is and isn't rallying behind Yamatetsu's new leaders.

Barnard's new job puts him in an interesting spot. He holds a personal dislike for Buttercup, and has frequent disagreements with Chin. Under Yoshida's command, he led the operation to uncover Buttercup's background, and continued his information search long after she revealed herself as an anima. During the initial stages of the move to Russia, Barnard's vocal distrust of Buttercup led the corp to tag him as a flight risk. He has apparently thought better of it since, though his motives for staying with the corp remain unclear. His increased power and flexibility following the move certainly have something to do with it, but I doubt that's the whole story. Any guesses, anyone?

● I did my own digging, and it turns out that Buttercup paid a late-night visit to Barnard one evening in his Kyoto mansion during the Yamatetsu move. No idea what they talked about, but Barnard is still around.

● Jammer

CORPORATE PROFILE

Yamatetsu's operating style is dramatically different from the other megacorps. Yamatetsu built its rep as a principled father-figure type corp, investing in smaller corporations and helping them grow. Investment has always been the corp's bread and butter, which is why you won't find a slew of products with the Yamatetsu label. Most Yamatetsu products are made and distributed through its subsidiaries. Yamatetsu continues to pursue this agenda with the Pacific Prosperity Group, recently starting a myriad of joint ventures with smaller PPG corps.

● Yamatetsu's "principles" may make you feel warm and fuzzy, but they're still a megacorp, and they'll still rape and pillage smaller corps when it suits them. The only thing separating Yamatetsu from the other megacorporate pirates is that they'll feed and hug you before they make you walk the plank.

● Black-Eyed Susan

Unlike the Mitsuhamas and Renrakus of the world, Yamatetsu allows its subsidiaries to maintain their own identities. Doing so makes it harder for Yamatetsu to achieve the notoriety of a corp like Ares, which plasters its logo on everything it owns. On the positive side, the hands-off approach keeps Yamatetsu from damage in the public eye should something go wrong.

Yamatetsu is still struggling with an identity of its own. They shed their Japanese image like diseased skin, but they can't truly claim to be rooted in Russian cultural heritage either. Instead, they seem to be embracing a cosmopolitan and multicultural "we are the world" image, which fits nicely with their pro-metahuman stance. Given the breakdown of cultural and national identity across the globe, this distinction is popular with younger generations. In areas with entrenched and stolid cultural roots, however, the plan has backfired a bit.

On the other hand, unlike most corporations, Yamatetsu keeps its division heads close to home; with two notable exceptions, all division heads are based in Vladivostok. This is deemed bad business sense by some, as the leadership is physically distant and doesn't have local experience. Given modern communication and Yamatetsu's penchant for "Matrix management," this structure doesn't seem to have any adverse effects. In fact, the proximity of the senior management to each other leads to interesting cross-fertilization and joint projects between divisions, so that Yamatetsu is continuously supporting itself and expanding into new areas.

● This also means it's easier to cut into communications between Yamatetsu lackeys and the higher ups.

● Slamm-O!

PRIMARY BUSINESS CONCERNS

Business-wise, Yamatetsu focuses on what the suits like to call "metahuman factors engineering"—a fancy way of saying "we build stuff for metas." Yamatetsu is also the leading cybernetics megacorp, with a strong biotechnology field as well. Yamatetsu produces most bioware and cyberware used by metahumans today. The megacorp is also strong in the fields of agriculture (particularly aquaculture), finance and aerospace.

Yamatetsu has seven primary divisions: North America, South America, Asia, Europe, Australasia, India and Middle East. It also owns dozens if not hundreds of subsidiaries, from the PensoDyne pure research think tank to the blockbuster MetaErgonomics; important ones are described below. In addition, Buttercup owns controlling interest in several corps, including Shibata Construction and Engineering, a member of the PPG.

Yamatetsu North America

Division Head: Mary Luce

When Barnard became COO, his protégé inherited his old job as top Yamatetsu exec in North America. Unlike other vice presidents, Luce operates her division from Seattle, perhaps because she also inherited Barnard's extensive network of shadow contacts. She spends a good deal of time recruiting and hiring shadowrunners for full-time jobs with Yamatetsu, especially Awakened runners.

Luce seems to be avoiding taking sides in the board's conflict, instead focusing on expanding her division and maintaining an alliance with Wuxing. Her division chiefly

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produces military interface technology (smartlinks), headware, integrated communications systems and metahuman-ergonomic consumer goods and workstations.

Yamatetsu South America

Division Head: Hideo Yoshida

This division is a mess, having jumped from a marginally profitable agricultural outfit to a high-yield research machine in two years. When things went sour in Japan, Yoshida began dropping his personal yen into the South American market, snapping up a number of smaller biotechnology businesses in an attempt to expand his personal power base. His efforts have solidified the corp's presence in Peru and Chile, but the division's profitability has suffered.

Yamatetsu Australasia

Division Head: Ramon Dizon

Dizon oversaw Yamatetsu's divestment from Japan, moving most of its assets to other Pacific Rim nations. The cutting-edge security- and military-grade electronics outfits ended up in Hong Kong, along with their telecommunications and simsense facilities. Through a primary subsidiary, Xiao Technologies, under the direction of Dr. Suyi Kim, Yamatetsu is working on a series of next-generation maglocks guaranteed to raise industry standards. This division has also begun working closely with Wuxing and the PPG in an attempt to gain a stranglehold on shipping and transport in Southeast Asia, much to the concern of the Japanacorps.

Yamatetsu Asia

Division Head: Mochikune Mibu

Easily the biggest and most diverse of Yamatetsu's divisions, Mibu keeps this operation competitive in fields such as bodyware and integrated biotech components, processed foods, metallurgical products and industrial chemicals. Recently made connections in Yakut and Manchuria have expanded this division's trade in teslas and mystic goods. The acquisition of the Svobodny Cosmodrome allowed Yamatetsu to make a cameo appearance in space and launch a fleet of satellites, but the division has now turned and stuck its head underwater (literally).

Saotome Aquadomes

Director: Nadine Cross-Walters

Technically a sub-division of Yamatetsu Asia, this deep sea research and living operation has ballooned in size and significance. Through hectic construction and keen management (Cross-Walters gave up her position as head of Yamatetsu Australasia to direct the project), this underwater domed city is now fully operational. While smaller than you might expect, the domes are fully self-sufficient, and are breaking new ground in undersea agriculture and deep sea mining and cyberware applications.

In the fourth quarter of 2060, Yamatetsu invited the Draco Foundation to inspect its facilities in the Sea of Japan. Draco board member Aina Dupree arrived with a

contingent of technicians and engineers, as if she intended to take the place apart. Instead, she declared Saotome Aquadomes the winner of a five-million nuyen Draco Foundation grant dedicated to the first founder of a self-sustaining underwater community.

• Technically, Saotome isn't the first self-sustaining underwater city. Proteus AG built huge arkoblocks that run from the surface to the sea floor. But, the Draco Foundation found that any water-line of above structure was a violation of the Big D's will. Proteus lost out. Yamatetsu's aquadomes are located entirely on the sea floor, so they won the prize. Proteus has been unusually graceful about losing.

• Jaz

MetaErgonomics

Subsidiary Head: Juanita Grant

MetaErgonomics is one of Yamatetsu's best PR tools. It researches, designs and sometimes builds just about anything metahumans (specifically dwarves, orks and trolls) might use, so that it fits well with their physical forms. They take on everything from architecture to vehicle design to keyboards to pistol grips. MetaErgonomics also leads in experimental drugs and military cyberware and hardware adapted for metahuman use.

Crashcart Medical Services Corporation

President/CEO: Melissa Ranshandani

After nearly pushing DocWagon out of the industry several years ago, Crashcart suddenly imploded and found itself wobbling on the edge of financial ruin. Yamatetsu Seattle absorbed it and stuffed it in a corner until the public forgot about it. In the past few years, Yamatetsu has restructured and expanded this division. Just last month, Crashcart simultaneously opened ten new offices around the world, meaning they now have facilities in every city where there is a major Yamatetsu presence. DocWagon has been wary of this new expansion, but so far the competition has been subdued. Crashcart and its subsidiary, Crashcart Clinics Inc., constitute the only officially sanctioned emergency medical service for Yamatetsu execs.

• Crashcart also hosts free clinics for the SIMless in cities worldwide. On paper, the clinics are a great PR vehicle, but even after tax write-offs they report losses every quarter.

• Nuyen Nick

• Losses in more ways than one. Nick, I did some checking: it looks like every now and then, a clinic patient slips through the cracks. Their paperwork disappears, and eventually so do they. Think Crashcart is testing cyberware on its patients again?

• Buddy

• How much did DocWagon pay you to make that last post, Buddy?

• Skaver

Yamatetsu Naval Technologies

President/CEO: Fyodor Uvarovka

Navy Tech is Yamatetsu's first attempt at creating its own military assets division, and is more a result of the move to Vladivostok than anything else. Constant predation of Yamatetsu shipping by Pacific Rim pirates made it clear that a security fleet was necessary. Yamatetsu also needed to establish a liaison between their security and the Russian military, and they decided to combine the tasks. They assigned former Russian military advisor Uvarovka to command it; his first project is the development of special-operations units similar to the UCAS Navy SEALs.

YAMATETSU ENCLAVES

Yamatetsu has always been a quiet little keiretsu, obeying traditional Japanese precepts of caring for workers and their families. Like other megacorps, Yamatetsu builds self-contained enclaves for its employees, each one complete with schools, non-denominational churches, strip malls, daycare facilities and Crashcart clinics. Yamatetsu emphasizes high standards in the free education it provides to corp children. Students are tested for certain aptitudes (magic, Matrix programming and so on); gifted students wear symbolic patches and are pushed through special curriculums.

Under Chin's direction, Yamatetsu's re-structuring has also attempted to build a multicultural "community" within the corp and increase "corporate democracy." Employees are encouraged to cooperate more on projects and socialize together, team management is emphasized over individuals, and in some divisions promotions are conducted by elections.

MODUS OPERANDI

Following Yuri Shibanokuji's appointment as chairman of the board, several directors, vice presidents and high-placed security officials cashed in their stock options and left Yamatetsu for calmer waters. Their exodus compromised the security of Yamatetsu's network of shadow contacts, crashing some operations like a house of cards. The handful of operatives that remain are not considered expendable; ordinary runners are another story.

Yamatetsu's image-first approach to corporate operations makes it a rich environment for deniable assets. A good shadowrunner can set himself up for life with a few key runs overseas. If you're looking for work from Yamatetsu, however, understand exactly what "deniable assets" means. It means that if you get caught or die, Yamatetsu never knew you.

• If it's no risk to them, Yamatetsu will offer death benefits. A chummer of mine got geeked doing a high-risk job for them. Once the after-effects of the run had blown over, the corp moved her husband and kids out of Seattle and set them up for life.

• Kess

Yamatetsu tends to hire out-of-town runners for top-flight jobs. If the corp needs a high-profile assassination in Vladivostok, you can bet your pocket secretary that the talent will come from the UCAS or elsewhere far away.

Yamatetsu has a standing internal policy that all runs must be sanctioned by the corp's high muckety-mucks. Sanctioned runs include all the extractions, data sabotage, asset protection and outright hoop-kicking jobs you hear about on the late-news trideo. Despite this rule, however, a number of unsanctioned runs are coming out of Yamatetsu these days. These are usually ops offered by the Johnson for his or her personal gain: hits on other employees, inter-office sabotage, data tapping and drek like that. Yamatetsu doesn't take kindly to them, so if you end up on an unsanctioned run, expect to have Yamatetsu security breathing down your neck every step of the way.

• The "no unsanctioned runs" policy is a security measure to prevent mid-level execs from messing up situations that they don't have enough clearance to know about. The corp enacted it after an executive privately ordered a hit on a Shiawase suit who'd been making trouble for Yamatetsu. Turned out that the target was a Yamatetsu plant, setting up piddling runs against Yamatetsu to boost Shiawase's confidence in him.

• Balihazar

JOHNSONS

Slick black suit, thousand-nuyen loafers, platinum Rolex and horns. Guess which mega this Johnson belongs to? Though not every Yamatetsu Johnson is metahuman, more metas work as Johnsons for Yamatetsu than any other.

Yamatetsu is notorious for its high-security meets. Even when hiring for piddly jobs, the company goes to great lengths to ensure that its Johnsons remain anonymous and that opposing factions aren't listening in. Yamatetsu meets often occur in unusual venues; one Johnson I know liked to meet at sea. I used to ride a rental boat out to the middle of Puget sound, where Ms. Johnson and her goons would be waiting aboard their own ship.

During my years with Yamatetsu I got to know quite a few Johnsons. These three were in deep with the corp before Yuri took over. It's possible they may have bailed in the resulting chaos, so be careful and stay prepared.

Kerry MacSwain

A Seattle-based executive, MacSwain's forte is corporate extractions, though he also has significant contacts with the city's underworld. Surprisingly, this elven native of Tir na nÓg is in good standing with the Watada-rengo Yakuza organization, often acting as Yamatetsu's spokeswoman when dealing with them. These connections have brought her into conflict with Seattle's Shotozumi-rengo Yakuza, as they recently declared themselves independent from the Watada-rengo.

Johnny Tsui

A sharp negotiator with aspirations to corporate power, Tsui served as Jacques Barnard's assistant during his tenure as VP of Yamatetsu North America. Tsui was known for his ability to re-acquire data that had been stolen from the corporation. Just before the relocation to Vladivostok, Tsui was accused of stealing sensitive data. Barnard fired him; within hours, Hideo Yoshida had rehired and transferred him to the corporation's South American division.

Eric Fiengold

The former Security Subdirector of Crashcart, Fiengold is one of three upper-level officials to survive Crashcart's takeover by Yamatetsu. Fiengold managed to stay afloat because the corporation found his list of contacts indispensable. The corp usually calls on him for high-risk shadowruns, as the runners he prefers to use demand high fees for their services.

CORPORATE SECURITY

The day after the failed attempt to assassinate Yuri Shibanokuji, Yamatetsu's head of security was terminated. Jacques Barnard handpicked the current incumbent, Vanessa Ramirez, as part of the restructuring effort. Ramirez was eminently well qualified for the job, having served as head of security for Yamatetsu's Middle East division. Here's the kicker—Ramirez is a dwarf. Not only is she the only female head of security in a triple-A mega, but the only metahuman as well. She's tough as nails, and has been bringing an aggressive new element to the corp's sec operations.

MILITARY ASSETS

Yamatetsu has never maintained a military force, but it does have military assets. Navy Tech maintains a fleet of forty ships that patrol corp shipping routes, and Yamatetsu has a contract that allows it to call upon the Russian military to help safeguard Yamatetsu facilities on Russian soil. Part of what's kept Yamatetsu afloat this long is its ability to get help from the most unlikely sources, and the Russian military certainly qualifies. As the only megacorporation making its home in Russia, and Russia's largest source of revenue, the Russkies have an interest in protecting Yamatetsu. Lately, there's been talk of extending a Russian military division to protect Yamatetsu interests outside the motherland.

MATRIX SECURITY

Given Yamatetsu's tele-management structure, plus the recent loss of several high-level execs, the corp has emphasized Matrix security recently. All SANs leading into Yamatetsu systems have been loaded with IC. Assuming you can break through, it's pretty much a walk through the park until you hit the datastores—then you're in a world of trouble. Every data unit I've seen is heavily

encrypted and lined with IC blacker than anything this side of Mitsuhamma.

- The IC wall is weaker in some places than in others. Smaller divisions, like Yamatetsu India and what's left of the Kyoto offices, got overlooked when the corp bought new Matrixware. Break through one of these hosts, and you can bypass the glaciers by routing through internal PLTGs.
- Red Wraith

PHYSICAL AND MAGICAL SECURITY

Yamatetsu facilities typically combine automated and human security, occasionally monitored by a security rigger. They don't tend to have many drones, but they make up for that with paranimals—usually hellhounds. Some Yamatetsu security officers carry non-lethal weapons, but those are a holdover from the pre-Ramirez days. Now they have orders to shoot first and keep shooting.

Historically, Yamatetsu has fallen behind in the magic department, but it's catching up. Their personnel roster still doesn't include enough mages to cover every site, so they've resorted to subcontracting magical security from other corps when necessary.

- Yamatetsu has been investigating ways around the mage drought, including conducting extensive testing on dual and Awakened bacteria, similar to what Ares used in Bug City. Yamatetsu may not have that many mages at its disposal, but it sure as heck knows how to stop them.
- Mystic@nowhere.loopback

PERSONAL SECURITY

The exodus from Japan and ongoing corporate restructuring has made Yamatetsu careful about keeping its high-level employees. Stories of draconian security measures abound. Though I can't confirm this, some of my contacts say Vanessa Ramirez "tagged" all officials considered high flight risks with tracking devices. I can confirm that the corp has collected ritual samples from all its high-level personnel. These samples are kept in the Crashcart offices in the cities where those employees work.

Likewise, all key employees are now assigned a Special Security Detail. The SSD acts as a bodyguard team, except that in many cases they are undercover and integrated with the key person's workstaff. Naturally, some strenuous objections have been raised to this, as many directors balk at being guarded by people they didn't choose, not to mention the feeling that they are being "spied on."

Before promoting anyone to a higher level, Yamatetsu runs extensive background checks. Credentials are rechecked at each new promotion, to ensure that the corp knows everything there is to know about people at the top. In practice, the promotion list is pretty much confined to metahuman-friendly employees with families—the former in keeping with Yamatetsu's pro-meta image, the latter to give Yamatetsu potential leverage against anyone considering an outside job offer.

The Big Ten megacorporations that inhabit the world of *Shadowrun* are the single most important "characters" at a gamemaster's disposal. From personal vendettas to the constant underground war they wage with each other, the corps define and support the shadows that the runners thrive in.

There is a tendency, however, to make these corporate characters one-dimensional and stereotypical; Aztechnology is evil, Ares is good, Saeder-Krupp is enigmatic, Shiawase is traditional Japanese and so on. As with player characters, such a narrow approach makes the corp less interesting and more difficult for the gamemaster to use in the long run. The following sections open up the corporations by treating them like characters and defining their Attributes and other characteristics.

Rating The Corps gives each of the megacorps a series of general Attribute and Asset Ratings. These figures help to define where exactly where the corps stand in relation to each other and where their strengths and weaknesses lie. These stats can also be used for various tests and target numbers during gameplay.

Following that section is a series of entries that provide details on each megacorp to assist gamemasters when using each corp in their campaigns. Each entry features a *Running For ...* section, that delves into the personal agenda of the corp and its board members, and includes information on their favorite targets as well as their pay practices. This section uses the base pay scale found on pp. 99-100 of the revised *Shadowrun Companion (SRComp)*. This section also includes information on becoming a company man for the corporation and working the shadows from the other side.

Each megacorp entry also features a *Working Against ...* section that details the standard security measures the corp fields in response to shadowrunner teams. Information on elite security or special forces is also given, as well as what kinds of runs other corps are likely to stage against the corp in question. Security personnel are rated by their professionalism (see *NPC Professionalism*, p. 248, *SR3*) and their threat level (using the *Creating Prime Runners* rules, pp. 83-84, *SRComp*).

The information in these sections should be used as guidelines, but gamemasters should also remember that particular elements of a corp may be quite different from the megacorp as a whole. The most unique aspect of the megacorporations is that they are huge entities that are delving into new fields and experimenting with new procedures all the time. Gamemasters should feel free to add to and improvise upon these details and rules; the Big Ten should never be played purely by the book.

RATING THE CORPS

This section provides gamemasters with two sets of ratings for the Big Ten Megacorps that can be used for various purposes during game play. The first set are called Attributes, and describe a corp's abilities in certain areas such as intelligence-gathering, public relations, security and so forth. These Attributes can be used by gamemasters to make tests for the corp in the same manner in which characters would use their Attributes, or they can be used as a target number for tests made against the corp. Additionally, a set of Asset Ratings is described so that gamemasters may get a feel for how strong a corporation is in business fields ranging from



aerospace to mystic goods and services. Gamemasters should keep in mind that corporations are huge and complex entities, and difficult to represent except with abstract game mechanics. With that in mind, gamemasters should feel free to adjust this system and manipulate it as they see fit.

CORPORATE ATTRIBUTES

Each corp has nine Attributes, detailed below. The specific ratings we suggest for the megacorps described in this book appear on the Megacorporate Attributes Table. Because the megacorps are monolithic entities, these Attributes should only be taken as benchmark figures that roughly represent the corp as a whole. It is highly likely that specific divisions and subsidiaries of the same corp could have different Attributes, though it is unlikely that they would ever vary more than 2 or 3 points.

Intelligence

Quite simply, this is a corp's information-gathering capabilities. It measures how efficient their spy and snitch networks are, and how quickly they pick up rumors. This Attribute can be used to determine how many dice a corp rolls to determine if it knows of something going on in the shadows or behind locked doors at another corp.

Use the Contact Knowledge Table (p. 67, *Shadowrun Companion*) to determine a target number, or if the test concerns another corp, use that corp's Counter-Intelligence Attribute as the target number (see below). Successes determine how detailed the corp's information is.

Because some corps have more ears to the ground in some areas than others, or can better make sense of what they hear in regard to certain topics, apply any appropriate modifiers to the target number from the Intelligence Modifiers Table. Gamemasters should feel free to use any other modifiers they feel are appropriate.

If you are using the *Walls Have Ears* wrong party rules from the *Shadowrun Companion* (p. 63), subtract two from the target number of the Wrong Party Test for every two full points a corp has in Intelligence. Also use any appropriate modifiers from the Intelligence Modifiers Table.

Counter-Intelligence

This Attribute describes how successfully a corporation keeps its secrets and prevents information from leaking out. This Attribute can be used as a target number for

INTELLIGENCE MODIFIERS

Megacorp	TN Modifier	To Tests Concerning:
Ares	-1	Military technology, the UCAS government, Cross or bug spirits
Aztechnology	-3	Aztlan
Cross	-1	Ares
	-3	Québec
	+1	Agriculture
Mitsuhamu	-1	Robotics, drone technology or non-sentient Awakened beings
	-2	Yakuza
	+1	Other criminal syndicates
Novatech	-1	Renraku
	-2	The Matrix
Renraku	-2	The Matrix and otaku
Saeder-Krupp	-1	The Awakened World, Europe or the Middle East
	-3	Dragons
Shlawase	-2	Biotechnology or environmental projects
Wuxing	-1	Triads
	-2	PPG member corps
	+1	Yakuza
Yamatetsu	-1	Metahuman concerns or PPG member corps
	-2	Undersea operations

MEGACORPORATE ATTRIBUTES TABLE

	Intel.	Cntr-Int.	Public.	Effic.	Black Ops	Security	(Matrix/Maglc/Physical)
Ares	6	5	8	6	7	7	(7/7/9)
Aztechnology	5	9	10	7	7	7	(7/9/7)
Cross	9	7	5	6	8	6	(8/5/6)
MCT	6	6	6	6	6	8	(8/9/9)
Novatech	5	6	8	9	7	7	(10/5/8)
Renraku	6	6	5	6	6	7	(6/7/8)
Saeder-Krupp	8	9	6	8	8	8	(7/9/9)
Shlawase	9	8	5	5	7	6	(7/6/7)
Wuxing	7	8	7	7	6	6	(6/8/5)
Yamatetsu	6	5	7	6	6	6	(6/7/6)



GAME INFORMATION

Intelligence Tests made by a rival corp, or as a target number for determining how much a contact knows about a specific corp or corp project.

If you are using the Contact Knowledge rules (p. 67, *Shadowrun Companion*) and a contact is being asked for info concerning a corp, use the corp's Counter-Intelligence Rating as the target number for the contact's Intelligence or Etiquette Test. Also apply any appropriate modifiers from the Contact Knowledge Table.

CONTACT KNOWLEDGE TABLE

General Information	-1 or -2
Specific Details	+1
Secret Information	+2
Highly Sensitive Black Info	+4
Contact's Specialty	-2
Contact is a Fixer or Mr. Johnson	-2
Contact works for the corp	-2

Efficiency

This Attribute is a measure of how greased the corp's wheels are. This is management training, crisis response, system redundancy and problem-solving skills all rolled into one. Efficiency can be used for tests to determine how long it takes for the corp to make decisions, react to aggression, or take a course of action. It can also be used as a

target number for attempts to deceive a corp with faked IDs or forged paperwork.

Twitch is trying to determine what corp owns a secret BTL-manufacturing facility in the Barrens. He has a contact who happens to be a mid-level manager at Novatech, so he asks the contact if he or Novatech knows anything about it. Unknown to Twitch, the factory is owned by Renraku, whose Counter-Intelligence Rating is 6. The gamemaster first makes a Knowledge Test for the contact, using either Intelligence, Etiquette (Corp) or any appropriate Knowledge Skill. Starting with a base target number of 6, modified by +2 for "secret information," the final TN is 8. Unfortunately, the contact gets no successes. Twitch asks the manager to check around at Novatech. The gamemaster then makes another Knowledge Test for Novatech, using its Intelligence of 6 against a TN 6, modified by -1 (it concerns Renraku), for a final TN of 5. An amazing four successes are rolled, and the gamemaster decides that Novatech must know all about Renraku's BTL operation—perhaps they're even setting up a run against it ...

Publicity

This is the equivalent of a Charisma Attribute for corps. Not only does it determine how favorably a corp is viewed by consumers, but it can also be used to make tests to see how effectively a corp spin-doctors a bad situation, promotes a new product or scandalizes an opponent.

Angered that Renraku is manufacturing BTLs in an area Twitch considers his gang's turf, he decides to blow the whistle on the operation. He feeds the info he received from his Novatech contact to his independent media contact, and asks the snoop to run a story on the facility. The snoop does, and Renraku immediately responds: the gamemaster makes an Opposed Test between the media snoop's Etiquette (Media) of 6 and Renraku's Publicity of 5. Surprisingly, Renraku wins the test, and immediately issues a cover story and forces the snoop's station to retract it in fear of a lawsuit.

Twitch now decides to take direct action. He asks his decker friend Slamm-O to penetrate the Matrix host of the Renraku site and create a set of false credentials, so that Twitch can sneak his team past the security. Slamm-O easily hacks the system and alters a maintenance schedule, changing it so that they should expect a "maintenance team" a week early. Twitch's team plans to masquerade as the maintenance team. The gamemaster decides to make an Efficiency Test to see if Renraku notices the forged schedule before the team arrives. He makes an Opposed Test pitting Renraku's Efficiency of 6 against Slamm-O's Computer Skill of 8. Slamm-O easily wins, with three net successes; Renraku does not discover the discrepancy in time.

Black Ops

Shadow operations are a matter of course for the megacorps, and this Attribute determines how skilled a corp is at organizing and executing them—not to mention covering their tracks afterward. This represents the abilities of company men and runners on retainer, rather than deniable assets. If a gamemaster wants to randomly determine how well a corporate shadow team pulls off an operation against another corp, she can make an Opposed Test between one corp's Black Ops Rating and the other's Security Rating.

The night before Twitch's team hits the Renraku site, a Novatech team hits it first. The gamemaster makes an Opposed Test, pitting Novatech's Black Ops of 7 against Renraku's Security of 7. Novatech wins, with two net successes. That's enough to pull off a good run, but not enough to leave the site a smoking crater. The gamemaster decides that a Novatech squad busted in, damaged the optical gear, and made off with several crates of hot new BTL chips.

Security

This Attribute measures how well a corporation is able to protect its assets from outside aggression, usually

other corps or shadowrunners. Security can be used as a general figure covering all security assets, or it can be further broken down into Magical, Matrix, and Physical Security.

Gamemasters can use these ratings as a general security-related target number for runners who are attempting to defeat a corp's security systems. Certain highly secure facilities or operations will likely have higher security ratings (1 or 2 points), whereas less sensitive facilities will have lesser ratings.

After the Novatech run, Renraku decides to pull the plug on the site, and starts breaking it down. When Twitch's team arrives that night, the gamemaster decides Security has been drastically reduced, down to 5. At several points during the run, the gamemaster uses that number as a benchmark for security systems (they run into a Rating 5 maglock and so on).

Using Corporate Attributes

As given, the Corporate Attributes by no means provide an exact system for gamemaster use. It is primarily intended as an abstract device for the gamemaster to use as a general gauge. Depending on your style of gameplay, you may wish to use these Attributes only for determining specific target numbers, as outlined in the descriptions above. Alternately, if corporate activity has a large influence in your game, you can use these Attributes to make various tests to randomly determine how the corporations are faring against the runners and each other.

ASSET RATINGS

Asset Ratings provide gamemasters with a tool for rating a corporation's performance against its competitors. The Asset Ratings allow gamemasters to gauge a corporation's strengths and weaknesses, and to compare it to other corps. Primarily, Asset Ratings are intended as a guide for determining who's doing what, and who's on top.

Every corporation has an Asset Rating in the fourteen major interest categories described below. The Asset Ratings associated with each interest represent all of the corporation's holdings in that category, including subsidiaries, research, patents, and licenses. These assets may physically exist in any one of a number of cities or countries, or may only exist as datafiles in the Matrix.

Aerospace

This category covers all aviation-based interests, including production, research, and development. It

CORPORATE ASSET RATINGS

Rating Points	Assets
0-1	No assets worth mentioning.
2-3	Poor
4	Adequate
5	Above-par
6	Good
7	Very Good
8	Extensive
9-10	Superior
11	Extraordinary
12+	Dominates the world market (no competition)

encompasses conventional aircraft, space-capable craft, and aerospace technology.

Agriculture

This category encompasses all aspects of food production and distribution, including farming, animal husbandry and processing, and distribution.

Biotechnology

This area includes most medical technologies and research, from pharmaceuticals to advanced bioware.

Chemicals

This area includes chemicals and chemical-related products of all kinds, from cheap plastics to space-age carbon polymers. It also encompasses common chemicals for consumer and industrial use.

Computer Engineering

This category includes research, development, production, and distribution of computer and computer-related hardware.

Computer Science

This category encompasses research, development, production, and distribution of computers and computer-related software.

Consumer Goods

This area includes common goods of all kinds, from toasters to telecoms to hair dryers.

Cybernetics

Cybernetics includes all technology related to man-machine interfacing, from simple reactive circuits to advanced cyberware.

Entertainment

This field includes trideo, simsense, music, theater, book and magazine publishing, and related industries.

Finance

This field includes money-based concerns such as investing, banking, insurance, and brokering.

Heavy Industry

Heavy industry encompasses construction and production, including heavy manufacturing, waste processing, and related industries. It also covers power generation and distribution, including conventional, nuclear, hydroelectric, geothermal, and solar power.

GAME INFORMATION

Mystical Goods and Services

This area principally covers magical research and development, spell and focus design, talismongering and alchemy as well as other marketable end results.

Military Technology

This area includes various industries and technologies geared specifically toward research, development, and production of weapons, defensive measures and countermeasures, and other military interests. Corporations rated in this area often have similar ratings in one or more of the Aerospace, Computer Engineering, and Computer Science assets.

Service

Service includes service and support industries such as fast food, transportation, security, data management, police and fire, and so on.

Total

This is the total of the Asset Ratings added together and is mainly used to determine where the megacorp stands in relation to the other megacorps. This Net Rating does not include the megacorporate Attributes, since it is a measurement of the hard assets. Most AAA Megacorporations have a Net Rating between 75 and 90, but that doesn't mean that it can't drop below 75 or increase further. As long as a corporation maintains its seat on the Corporate Court, it is considered a AAA megacorp, though a corp that decreases in assets drastically will likely not remain on the Court for long.

Gamemasters can use this Asset rating system for other corps as well. AA extraterritorial corps are likely to have a Total Rating between 50 and 80, and A-rated multinational corps are likely to have a Total rating between 25 and 70. Unrated national corporations tend to have a Total Rating less than 50.

THE RATINGS GAME

Because the standings of the megacorps in the world of *Shadowrun* change over time, the Asset Ratings shown in the Megacorporate Asset Ratings Table should as well. Simply varying the numbers over time in a method that corresponds with the gamemaster's campaign is the best method of doing so. For gamemasters who want to add in a random factor, we offer the following system.

Once every six months of game time, the gamemaster can make a series of tests for each corp to determine if their Asset Ratings change. These changes would reflect successes and failures in the business world: new acquisitions, buyouts and mergers, new releases, and damage from bad publicity and competition. Because the megacorps are overwhelmingly huge, the success (or failures) of player character shadowruns are unlikely to have an actual impact on Asset Ratings (unless it was a really *big* run).

To determine Asset Ratings changes, make the following tests:

Efficiency Test against a Target Number 4. This represents a corp's success in building the corporation. Each success gains one point to be added to an Asset Rating (gamemaster or random choice). Each Asset Rating may only be increased by one point from this test.

Publicity Test against a target number 8. This represents a corp's success at grounding bad press and keeping the uglier side of its business practices hidden. The corp subtracts three points from any Asset Ratings (gamemaster or random choice), minus one point per success. Extra successes beyond three have no effect.

Black Ops Test against another corp's Security Attribute. This represents a corp's attempts to steal valuable assets from a competitor. If the corp achieves zero successes, they lose one Asset point. If they achieve one success, they break even. If they achieve 2 or more successes, they gain one Asset point and the targeted corp

MEGACORPORATE ASSET RATINGS

	Ares	Azt	Cross	MCT	Nova	Ren	S-K	Shlaw	Wux	Yam
Aerospace	11	4	4	3	7	4	7	5	3	7
Agriculture	3	8	0	6	3	7	4	8	6	7
Biotech	3	6	7	6	4	6	6	10	5	8
Chemicals	5	7	5	8	2	5	9	7	4	6
Comp Engineering	4	4	10	9	10	8	8	7	5	6
Comp Science	5	6	8	8	9	9	5	6	4	5
Consumer Goods	8	10	7	6	7	5	6	3	7	4
Cybernetics	4	6	7	5	6	6	4	6	4	9
Entertainment	7	4	6	8	5	6	3	2	6	3
Finance	3	6	4	6	3	5	9	5	8	8
Heavy Industry	7	6	4	9	4	5	11	9	5	3
Military Technology	11	8	5	4	6	7	7	7	3	4
Mystic Goods	4	7	2	7	4	5	6	3	6	6
Service	8	7	5	2	2	8	6	10	9	8
Total	83	89	74	87	72	86	91	88	75	84

loses one. The affected Asset Ratings must be the same (both aerospace, or both finance and so on).

Intelligence Test against another corp's Counter-Intelligence Attribute. This works exactly the same as the Black Ops Test above.

Six months of gameplay have gone by, and the gamemaster decides it's time to update the corp ratings. She starts off with Ares, and makes an Efficiency (4) Test using Ares' six Efficiency dice. She gets three successes, and decides to raise Ares assets in Cybernetics (now 5), Mystic Goods (now 5) and Computer Science (now 6).

Next she makes a Publicity (8) Test using Ares' eight Publicity dice. She gets one success, so Ares covers up some of their usual corporate misdeeds, but the corp still loses two Asset points. Choosing randomly, the gamemaster picks Military Technology (now 10) and Agriculture (now 2).

For the Black Ops Test, the gamemaster decides that Ares has targeted Saeder-Krupp's Computer Engineering assets in recent months, so makes the test against S-K's Security of 8 using Ares Black Ops of 7. She gets no successes, meaning that Ares loses an Asset point—looks like the wyrm saw it coming, and made Ares pay. Ares Computer Engineering is now 3.

Finally, the gamemaster has Ares make an Intelligence Test (six dice) against their old rival Cross (Counter-Intelligence 7) in an attempt to beef up their Consumer Goods assets. Again, she rolls no successes, and Cross's Seraphim apparently detect Ares' attempts and use their efforts against them. Ares Consumer Goods is reduced to 7.

Moving on and making the tests for the other corps, Ares' ends up losing another two Asset points through Black Ops and Intelligence efforts by rival corps. Ares' Entertainment is reduced to 6, and Biotech to 2.

When the dust has settled, Ares clearly has not done so well in the past six months, with a net loss of three Asset points. Its updated Total Rating has been reduced to 80.

Making It Fun

If gamemasters choose to use the random method outlined above for periodically changing a corp's Asset Ratings, it is recommended that the gamemaster get the players involved by assigning them each a corp or two, and allowing them to choose what Assets and competitors are targeted. The results can then be abstracted as news reports and world events during game play.

USING ARES

Ares Macrotechnology is intertwined deeply with the psyche of the UCAS populace. They are an icon of hard-working UCAS values and ideals, right up there with mom and apple pie. In other countries, however, Ares has



ARES
MACROTECHNOLOGY

a reputation as a cold-hearted weapons dealer, willing to sell arms to anyone—including both sides of a conflict if they can get away with it.

RUNNING FOR ARES

In many ways, Ares operations are handled in a military fashion; organization, discipline and chains of command are emphasized, and collateral damage is accepted as a necessary evil. Ares does not stick to uniformity, however, and permits its Johnsons and high-

er ups quite a bit of leeway; there is no standard Ares Johnson or job.

In the UCAS, Ares will always play its "be a good UCAS citizen" card first in any dealings. From Ares' viewpoint, anything good for Ares is good for the UCAS, and this jingoism will work its way into most dealings.

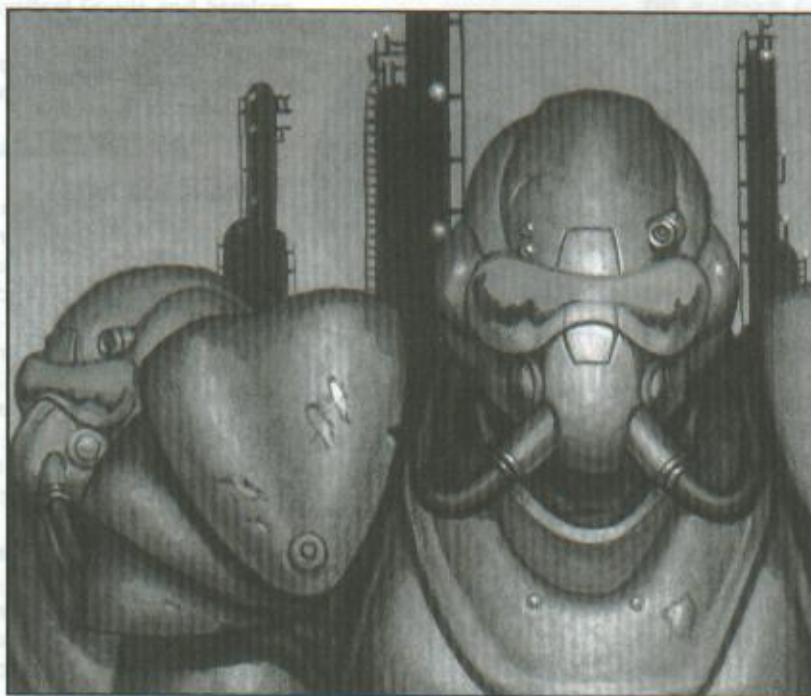
Ares operations do not place a high value on subtlety—success is far more important. This means that sooner or later almost every Ares job leads to a series of explosions and gunfire. Ares never hesitates to pull out the big guns—the fact that the corp authorized the detonation of a nuclear warhead in Chicago proves this point. Naturally, Ares is quite adept at turning big explosions and scenes into a pro-Ares, pro-UCAS media blitz.

Personal Agendas

Damien Knight is ambitious and ruthless to the extreme—he'd rule the world if he could. He firmly believes that he knows what is best for the UCAS, and that Ares is leading it in the right direction. Knight always gets his way, and only faces opposition from Ares' upper echelon when his agenda clearly conflicts with Ares' bottom line. His personal vendetta against Cross is a good example of this; he is willing to go to great lengths to take Cross down, but so far has listened to those advising him and reined his operations in. Knight's main interests lie in Knight Errant's success and the expansion of AresSpace programs.

Vogel's presence within Ares has remained minor and neutral, though he may just be playing it safe and biding his time. He has so far pushed no agenda forward, with the exception of tackling some smaller divisions and subsidiaries in regard to their ecological impacts. He seems to have secret backing of some kind, which Knight and many others are interested in unmasking.

Davlar, still in the White House and working with the Draco Foundation, has also kept her interaction with Ares relatively low-key. Her current agenda, as detailed in the envelope of instructions left by Dunkelzahn, remains unknown, but is bound to have an impact in the years to come.



Other players within Ares may also turn to the shadows in pursuit of private agendas. Karen King and Gustov Von Sydow are engaged in a personal feud, and regularly stage operations against each other. Roger Soaring Owl goes to great lengths to keep his connections with Native American interests hidden, often using outside channels. Some Aurelius supporters also still remain within Ares, and Knight may be looking to root them out.

Hiring Runners

Ares is normally willing to expose themselves as the employers of a shadowteam. If they do not, they pay in nuyen using the standard pay rates.

If they are up front with their affiliation, Ares Johnsons may offer hardware instead of cash for payment. The team will be awarded 120 percent of the equivalent cash payoff in weapons, military gear and accessories, with half up front and the rest upon completion of the shadowrun. If nuyen and gear are mixed in the payment, the nuyen portion will be reduced by 80 percent. Ammunition, clips and other accessories are taken into account when tallying up the pay. Vehicles and drones can be included but should be negotiated separately.

Ares sometimes asks trusted shadowrunners to test new gear. The runners must submit to a debriefing and are almost never allowed to keep the gear.

Teams that takes jobs for Ares are often offered free DocWagon or comparable coverage during their employ. However, Ares will not hesitate to leave a runner out in the cold if it suits their purposes. These DocWagon contracts are owned by Ares and end the minute the run is over. In some cases, Ares will secretly issue bracelets with tracers built in; such tracking devices cannot be removed

without rendering the DocWagon bracelet useless.

Ares' company men and women are given their own private DocWagon contracts, and can generally expect a pay rate 20 percent higher than freelancers.

WORKING AGAINST ARES

"Shoot first, shoot often and shoot last" is the motto of Ares security. All Ares guards (including Knight Errant, Hard Corps and the rest) pass through a rigorous training program and will have a minimum skill of 5 in the weapons they carry, and a minimum Security Procedures Skill of 4. They each go for maximum firepower, and are unlimited in weapon and ammunition choices. Knight Errant guards will be slightly better trained and equipped, and will field more integrated teams (Awakened guards, riggers and so on). Rate these guards as Equal and either Professional (Knight Errant) or Trained (Hard Corps and the rest).

Knight Errant Firewatch Teams

KE's Firewatch teams are squads of five to seven elite troops, including at least one rigger and one Awakened member. Firewatch teams train together for years and usually have their own specialized tactics; no two teams will respond the same way. Many Firewatch troops are drawn from other elite outfits, such as the Sioux Special Forces, and so combine a wide variety of experience and tactics.

Firewatch teams are equipped with top-of-the-line gear—anything they ask for, they get. Each member will be likely to have some cyberware (including Awakened members); all cyberware will be alpha grade at minimum, and betaware and deltaware are not uncommon.

There is no perceivable sex or race discrimination amongst the Firewatch teams, you're as likely to run into a female Amerind dwarf as you are a human Anglo male. Hermetics are far more common than shamans. Firewatch squads tend to compete with each other, but won't let competition affect their mission objectives. Each team has their own symbol, team name and distinct markings.

The NPC ratings for a Firewatch squad are Professional and at least Superior to the Runners in play. Awakened squad members will be initiates of at least Grade 3, typically skilled in the metamagic techniques of Shielding and Centering.

The Unseen

The Unseen are meant to be just that. They are an elite force of shamanic initiate operatives skilled in magical and metamagical techniques of concealment and surveillance—including several not yet known to the world at large. In all likelihood, they compose a magical group,

and they clearly originate from Native American and Awakened lands.

Oddly, the Unseen are not trained and organized by Ares, but they do work closely with and on behalf of the corporation. Who's behind them and what their true goals are remain unknown at this time. It is not even clear whom they are connected with inside Ares as they operate outside both official and unofficial standard Ares channels. Perhaps Knight has recruited allies with similar goals to spy on his enemies, or Soaring Owl is using them in pursuit of a private agenda, or maybe they are somehow linked to Vogel's hidden backers.

The Unseen are small in number, and should be treated as high level players, with both Professional and Superhuman NPC Ratings.

THE GM SMARTCAR

The GM smartcar release is basically a copycat of the Ford Americar (p. 155, *Rigger 2*) with some flashy protective features added in. These features are also an optional package for all new models (2061) of GM and Ares vehicles that are not designated for military or security work. The standard "smartcar" package adds 50 percent to the vehicle's cost. These vehicles can be considered SOTA advancements if using state of the art rules (p. 84, *SRComp*).

All smartcar vehicles have the following features:

- Two points of standard armor.
- A Rating 5 anti-theft system (p. 141, *Rigger 2*) consisting of an alphanumeric keypad and fingerprint scanner. The system also includes an automatic-call Rating 4 PanicButton (p. 293, *SR3*) that can be activated on demand (by pressing the button or clearly speaking a keyphrase) and that includes a tracking device (p. 291, *SR3*). Once activated, the vehicle is considered as if it was in a Lone Star Security Rating A Zone for law enforcement response (see p. 111, *New Seattle*). In areas where Knight Errant has a presence, the PanicButton can be rigged to alert Knight Errant instead for a 1,000¥ monthly fee. Knight Errant will respond as if the vehicle is Rating AA, and will bill the client accordingly for security services rendered. If the PanicButton is triggered in a Z-Zone area, it will be ignored.

These built-in features do not impact Load, Cargo or any other vehicle attribute since the vehicles were redesigned to include these options.

USING AZTECHNOLOGY

Depending on who you ask, Aztechnology is either the most loved or the most hated corporation on the planet. Public-relation manipulation, extreme paranoia and a drive to establish a new Aztec Empire are hallmarks of Aztechnology, as most runners know. But to the pub-



lic at large, Aztechnology is a respected producer of consumer goods; Joe and Jane Citizen continue to eat Nuke 'em burgers with no qualms or worries.

RUNNING FOR AZTECHNOLOGY

Working for Aztechnology means never really knowing that you work for Aztechnology. The corp knows its shadow reputation and knows that it's much easier to convince runners that they're working for someone else.

Many times, its agents will make a run sound as if it's against Aztechnology to bait the hook. Due to the factionalized board, sometimes it actually is.

Personal Agendas

As a whole, Aztechnology is seeking to spread its concept of Aztec culture across the world. However, the board rarely agrees upon a specific plan of action, each board member has their own ideas for implementing Aztechnology's goals—and their own as well. Usually a board member will simply take matters into their own hands, acting according to their own agenda as long as no one opposes them. For example, from the '20s to the '40s, the board used economic and military aggression to expand Aztlan's borders, until lack of support from the NAN and conflict with Amazonia and the Corporate Court forced it to settle down. In the '50s, Oscuro implemented an aggressive plan to use blood magic to bring on the next phase of the world, one in which Aztechnology would rule. He failed, and Domingo Chavez usurped the board, sending many Oscuro supporters to the Yucatan and pushing forward his own plans.

Meanwhile, other board members continue to pursue their own agendas, often conflicting with each other. As the full extent of the board's membership is hidden, many of these movements are unforeseen. In fact, many suspect that Chavez is himself not truly in control of the board, but that an unknown shadowy player pulls the strings, allowing some board members to take the lead, but manipulating all of them toward unknown goals.

Hiring Runners

Aztechnology almost never directly employs shadowrunners. Runners are instead hired through one of Aztechnology's myriad of holding, shell or subsidiary companies (none of which are easily connected to the corp).

Aztechnology pays well, usually better (125 to 150 percent) than the recommended fees. Depending on the front company being used, the runners may be offered consumer goods or services from the company's product base for up to 50 percent of the fee. These can include free meals, electronics or even vacations—just about anything instead of nuyen.

The Big A uses runners for almost all standard operations, with the exception of assassinations—Leopard Guards and blood mages handle those jobs.

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WORKING AGAINST AZTECHNOLOGY

None of the other megacorps like Aztechnology, and they utilize the full array of shadow ops against the Big A. Aztech subsidiaries are usually somewhat autonomous and out of the loop; if the runners are after hardcore paydata, they'll likely have to make a run on a main Aztech site, or possibly even into Aztlan itself. In many cases, runs against Aztechnology itself (not its subsidiaries) will be given a pay scale of double or even triple the usual amount.

Aztechnology Corporate Security

ACS is both a security service and a military. The lower ranks of ACS troops are adequately-trained, but they generally lack experience, imagination and do not adapt quickly. Aztechnology compensates for these weaknesses with superior firepower; ACS troops will generally be carrying gear a notch above what is necessary for the job. As NPCs, treat ACS soldiers and police as Inferior and Semi-Trained; police units are likely to have several cyberware implants. ACS guards rate as Equal and Trained, and most will have cyberware and bloware, and possibly even anchored or quickened spells. ACS commanders should be one NPC Rating higher than their troops.

ACS ranks include more Awakened than most other security outfits, including a surprising number of shamans following Aztec totems. Awakened ACS troops are better-trained and never fielded as mere grunts, though they are well-integrated in guard units (at least one Awakened character per seven guards). As NPCs, they should be considered Equal and Trained.

Leopard and Jaguar Guards

Leopard and Jaguar Guard units are the elite troops of ACS. Leopard Guards are the highest security at all sites outside of Aztlan. Jaguar Guards maintain security on the main Aztlan headquarters in Tenochtitlan and other high security sites found in Aztlan. Both types of units adhere to a warrior's code they have derived from ancient Aztec practices. They prefer to capture opponents when possible (for sacrifice later), and will go to great lengths to hunt down enemies. Some Jaguar guards have gone so far as to request demotion so they could pursue a foe in foreign lands.

Leopard Guards should be considered Equal or Superior and Professional. They will be equipped with quality cyberware, bioware and magical protection, and will have specialized weapons training. At least one out of every five will be Awakened; a high percentage of Awakened Leopard Guards are adepts.

Jaguar Guards are rated as Superior and Professional, and will carry top-of-the-line implants and gear.

Matrix Security

In an actual Aztechnology node, the first trigger alert will usually bring an ACS decker (Equal and Professional NPC). Other alerts may bring more deckers, as well as white and gray IC in peripheral systems or exclusively

black in core systems. The third trigger is almost always the activation of trace IC.

When not on node duty, ACS deckers actively search the Matrix—especially Shadowland and other hosts frequented by runners—for files and queries about Aztechnology. When a character searches the Matrix for information on Aztechnology, make an Aztechnology Intelligence Test (see p. 125) with a Target Number of 6 plus the player's Computer Skill. Any successes means an ACS decker has picked up on the query. The ACS response is up to the GM, though the standard reaction is to attempt to trace the character and capture/interrogate his meat body.

Blood Mages

With the rise of Domingo Chavez and the fall of Oscuro, blood mages have lost much of their support and privilege. They still remain, though they are less public and active; some are in hiding while others have maintained their positions of power within Aztechnology by siding with Chavez. They are primarily used for religious functions, ritual sorcery, torture and assassination. Blood mages should be initiates (minimum Grade 8) and are rated as Professional and either Superior or Superhuman.



USING CROSS

Cross Applied Technologies knows it's a small fish compared to the big sharks on the Corporate Court. They have survived and thrived so far by the skill of two savvy veterans: Lucien Cross and Leonard Aurelius. These two operate as if they are involved in a Cold War rather than megacorporate business.

RUNNING FOR CROSS

CATCo's shadow ops are surgical strikes: detailed, time sensitive and precise. In nearly all cases CATCo has someone on the inside, setting things up for the run. Seraphim agents are often in so deep that CATCo will hire runners to extract them. In such cases, the other corp may never realize the extractee was a spy, and the method in which they were originally turned or infiltrated will remain secret.

Personal Agendas

As a corporation CATCo has one enemy: Ares Macrotechnology. With the assistance of Leonard Aurelius and well-placed Seraphim, it has been able to predict Knight's attacks and parry them. Knight is aware of this, and has begun to work more and more outside of the Ares structure to counter it.

Cross' personal agenda is to see his corp survive and grow as a AAA. He's recognized Aurelius' expertise in this area, and has begun to rely on it heavily, despite opposition to Aurelius from others on the board. On Aurelius' advice, he has recently begun approving risky and aggressive actions against weaker Novatech, with the goal of using assets taken from Novatech against Ares. Cross has also strengthened ties with Aztechnology in order to ensure a noncompetitive marketplace for their goods, and to combine some anti-Ares efforts.

The Seraphim are at a crossroads—a significant faction feel betrayed by the inclusion of Aurelius, and the free reign he (and his operatives) have been given. Some Seraphim have defied orders and are investigating ways of derailing Aurelius. These rogues have also opened channels with anti-Aurelius board members, undermining Cross' control of the Seraphim, and possibly leading to a future internal struggle.

Aurelius continues his efforts to prove his dedication and value to CATCo, primarily through hounding Ares and expanding Cross Global Development. The lack of faith and open hostility shown by some CATCo leaders is beginning to get to him, however, and he's more than willing to fight back if provoked.

Hiring Runners

In the past, operations that required finesse or confidentiality were handled by the Seraphim, and the less delicate jobs were handed out to shadowrunners. Even jobs that were given to runners were planned down to the most minute detail by CATCo, and runners were expected to play by the game plan or else. If the runners had no decker of their own, CATCo usually assigned a company decker to shadow the team (sometimes openly, sometimes not) as insurance. Runners were never given contracts, though sometimes they were recruited by the Seraphim.

These standards still apply, though Aurelius has begun to change them drastically. Under his orders, more and more jobs are given to runner teams (at standard pay rates), and some teams are put on the payroll. Runners hired on retainer are typically paid with a Middle lifestyle, or 2,500f a month (5,000¥), modified by their experience and with bonuses for difficult jobs. They may also choose to take their pay in CATCo products, especially software.

Runners hired by CATCo are often asked to go through a debriefing, so CATCo can extract any other useful info out of them. CATCo also encourages runners to raid any datastores they come across, and offers to purchase any extra paydata (or other loot that may have intelligence value) runners pick up, even paying extra for it (1.5 times the normal value) on occasion.

WORKING AGAINST CROSS

To the other megacorps, CATCo is an upstart with government backing and delusions of grandeur. It produces quality products, however, and is less influential and easier to pick on. Since ascending to the Court, CATCo has increasingly been a target of shadowruns by

other megacorps. Ares frequently sponsors runs against Cross, often at double or triple the usual rates.

Physical Security

All CATCo facilities have at least one security decker and one security rigger on duty at all times. Security systems, components and personnel are carefully integrated and designed for compatibility.

To CATCo, information is more important than body count; non-lethal but incapacitating weapons and security measures are commonplace. In some cases, runners will be "tagged" and then allowed to escape, so they may be followed back to their employer.

Security personnel tend to be lightly armed and armored, but very well-trained (Professional and Equal Ratings, with specialized training in stun weapons). Magical protection is rarely used, and even Awakened guards are rare, and are usually hermetic.

Matrix Security

CATCo deckers are rated as Trained and Equal to player characters, but their software and decks are Superior, and in some cases Superhuman. They commonly work in pairs within a host.

CATCo Matrix hosts are heavily laden with trace IC. High-rated white and gray IC is common; black IC almost never appears.

The Seraphim

The Seraphim are one of the world's top spy networks. Seraphim agents are quite diverse, but highly skilled in their field. Some are engaged in research, others in security and protection and others in espionage and black ops. They are rated as Professional and Superior, and will be specialized in one or two skills that match their specialty. They have access to whatever gear is necessary, as well as alpha- and beta-grade cyberware. Any operation they engage in will be thoroughly researched and planned out, with multiple back-up plans.

There is little sex discrimination within the Seraphim, but there are very few metahumans (mostly elves and dwarfs) within their ranks.

THE BABEL CYBERDECK

The Babel deck is an inexpensive cyberdeck favored in the shadows because of its increased memory, usefulness for programming and sturdy casing. It features an MPCP 5 (Bod 3, Evasion 4, Mask 4, Sensors 4), a level 3 casing (Impact 4, Ballistic 3) and a built-in programming shop.

When used for programming, the Babel deck's programming shop confers a +2 task bonus; if the utility being programmed is less than 500Mp in size, the task bonus is increased to +3. The Babel deck may not be used for decking while programming.

The Cross Quick Coder Utility

This utility is a semi-expert system capable of programming simple utilities on its own. When installed and

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run in a computer or deck (taking up its Mp in Active Memory), this utility can program other utilities on its own with a Computer Skill equal to its rating (there must be enough additional Active Memory for the utility being programmed). Apply any appropriate task bonuses (double memory, programming kit and so on). The Quick Coder can only be used to code straightforward utilities without any special options; options are too complex for the utility to handle. It also cannot program frames.

The Quick Coder utility is commonly used by deckers who don't have enough time to whip up a whole program themselves. When a decker works with the Quick Coder utility to program, use the average of their Computer Skills (rounding up) when making the Computer Test to determine the task period.

Because this is only a utility, it is less than perfect. If a Quick Coder is used to program more than half of a utility (determined by programming days), the completed utility will function at a Rating one lower than it was programmed for.

A Cross Quick Coder utility can be installed on a new Babel deck for 75 percent of its cost.

Rules for programming can be found on p. 100 of *Virtual Realities 2.0*.

USING MITSUHAMA

Sleek black and chrome—cutting-edge and deadly—is the image Mitsuhamas projects to consumers, the business world and the shadows. MCT pulls no punches. Dealing with them, whether as a runner or an employee, is serious business.

RUNNING FOR MITSUHAMA

MCT believes in diversity—it will hire anyone to do anything. While this can lessen the corp's blows, it also makes MCT more unpredictable. It compensates for deficiencies by maintaining strict control over shadow ops; you play MCT's way or else.

MCT does not accept failure lightly, whether it's an employee, board member or shadowrunner. Failure means serious punishment at best, slow death at worst. MCT will use the Yakuza to track down anyone who fails them and flees; they are patient, and will wait years to enact revenge if necessary.

Personal Agendas

Mitsuhamas is troubled by almost no personal agendas—you are either part of their corporate community or

THE BABEL CYBERDECK

Deck Rating	Hardening	Active Memory	Storage Memory	I/O Speed	Response Increase	Cost
MPCP-5	2	1000	1000	200	0	70,000Y

THE CROSS QUICK CODER UTILITY

Program Rating	Size (in Mp)	Cost	Availability	Street Index
3	54	5,400Y	2/7 days	1
4	112	22,400Y	4/7 days	1.5
5	200	40,000Y	4/7 days	1.5

you are an outsider. MCT's leadership is quite unified in their goals.

MCT does face trouble with its Yakuza connections. When Hanzo Shotozumi created his own rengo in Seattle (see p. 101, *New Seattle*) he severed his MCT connections, as MCT has an alliance with Shotozumi's former superiors, the Watada-rengo in Japan. This break has cost MCT North America a number of valuable street operatives, forcing it to hire more runners and risk more failure. While the board of directors wishes to make an agreement with oyabun Shotozumi, their hands are tied by previous agreements.

Hiring Runners

Mitsuhamas prefers to approach shadowrunners that have been recommended by the Yakuza, as they are more likely to carry out their operations with honor. Once contact has been made and an agreement struck, MCT expects runners to stick to the plan they give and follow orders—even if they make no sense. Obedience is valued more than improvisation skills.

Many MCT runs involve "sending a message," which can mean the runners may be asked to do something unusual: write a note, send off a gaggle of watchers, break into somewhere to leave something or cut off someone's ear, tusk or digit (but leave them alive).

MCT pays nearly double the normal rates for shadowruns, however it prefers to pay in MCT corporate scrip (unless the runners are being kept in the dark about their employers). MCT Johnsons have been known to pay in scrip even when they have negotiated otherwise. If the runners are hesitant about shopping through MCT, the corp can recommend numerous Yakuza fixers who will also accept the scrip (albeit at higher costs, after Street Index is factored in).

WORKING AGAINST MITSUHAMA

Mitsuhamas's wide range of business interests make them a good target for just about every other corp, from Aztechnology to Wuxing. Payment for most runs against MCT is standard, though runners going against a MCT

zero-zone may squeeze more out of their employers for the risk factor.

MCT's arrangement with the Yakuza means that even the most simple run may have run into Yakuza interference. The Yakuza may hear about the runners' plans, or they may be serving as extra protection for MCT, or they may even be used by MCT to hunt the runners down for their actions.

Security Measures

Mitsuhama guards (usually rated Equal and Trained) are used to supplement the corp's technological defenses, and are trained to use lethal force. They are well-integrated with other security features, and are often dispatched in waves to overwhelm the opposition. Medium security armor and assault rifles are standard, and heavier weaponry is common.

Security squad leaders are quite experienced, consider them Superior and Professional. Most MCT security units will consist of Japanese humans. Metahumans are rare thanks to MCT's institutionalized racism, but gender discrimination is much less prevalent.

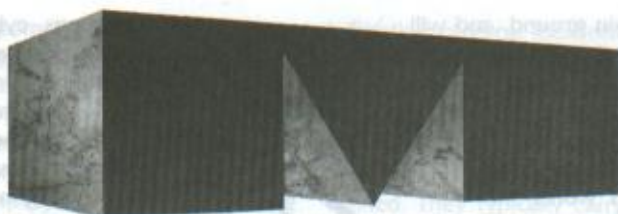
MCT spares no expense with magical security, and uses everything from wards to biofiber to anchored spell traps. Security magicians are common at MCT sites, though mages are more numerous than shamans. Security magicians are rated as Equal and Professional. Guard critters are also frequently used, and at least one trained handler will be present to keep them under control. Particularly dangerous guard critters may have a magician handler who knows spells like Control Animal/Pack.

MCT's strongest security measures are technological: It makes good use of cold, deadly and faceless automated systems, from monowire to sentry guns. Most MCT facilities are surrounded by a zero zone, a perimeter that acts as a killing field—nothing gets in, nothing gets out. Security riggers (rated as Superior and Trained), drones and robots are common.

Autoguns

MCT uses standard smart autoguns (p. 236, SR3) mounted in pop-up turrets that give the weapon a 60-degree arc of fire. Usually fitted with an Ultimax MMG (p. 278, SR3), the autogun will also be rigged if the site features a security rigger. Autoguns can be programmed to not fire at individuals carrying special coded-signal transponders, allowing the guns to fire only on unauthorized personnel; standard MCT autoguns have a Sensor Rating of 3 for purposes of identifying targets.

Mitsuhama generally places autoguns outside, on the grounds of their facilities, though they are sometimes found indoors, mounted behind special drop-away panels in the ceiling, walls or floor and able to pop out on command.



MITSUHAMA COMPUTER TECHNOLOGIES

Gas Traps

Gas traps are most often set in Mitsuhama facilities that have sealable vestibules, airlocks, "clean" rooms and such, creating an indoor zero zone. When the trap is triggered, the room is sealed off. The standard

Barrier Rating for the doors and windows is 12. Gas is pumped into the room through hidden vents near the ceiling and/or floor. All the gases used in gas traps work on contact with the skin, so breathers or gas-masks are not sufficient protection against them. The most commonly used gas is Neuro-Stun VIII (p. 250, SR3), but Mitsuhama has been known to guard more sensitive areas with two lethal gases it manufactures: Seven-7 and Green Ring 8. For more information on gas traps, see p. 90, *SRComp*.

Seven-7

Damage: 10D

Speed: 1 Combat Turn

Description: Both of these war gases are colorless, odorless and designed to penetrate standard chemsuits. A standard chemsuit adds 2 Combat Turns to the gas' speed. Special military "X-E" chemsuits exist which will keep the gas out, but they are difficult to acquire (15,000¥, Availability 8/2 wks, Street Index 2).

Both of these gases cause cramping, nausea and double vision. For every two boxes of damage taken due to gas exposure, add a +1 modifier to all target numbers. These effects last for ten cumulative minutes per +1; both gases oxidize and become inert after 10 minutes of exposure to air.

Green Ring 8

Damage: 10S

Speed: Immediate

Hachiman-series Security Robot

MCT's newest toy for the zero zone, the Hachiman gives a "robotic" face to the cold edge of killing. The Hachiman is a top-line security robot, equipped with a sophisticated robotic brain, heavy armor and weapons. Hachiman robots are programmed to patrol specific areas, watching for intruders. They are generally programmed to recognize and ignore "friendly" targets. They have a tracked chassis, with a humanoid upper body and sensor-equipped head designed to look vaguely like a samurai warrior. Rules for robots appear on p. 67 of *Rigger 2*. The Hachiman is extremely rare.

USING NOVATECH

Novatech is an extension of Richard Villiers, and to a lesser extent, Miles Lanier. It is a lean, mean corporate machine, carefully constructed by their will and determination to succeed and reap the rewards of influence and power.

As the smallest AAA, holding on to its status by technicality, Novatech is hungry and aggressive. It is

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doing everything it can to gain ground, and will respond brutally to anything that threatens its survival.

RUNNING FOR NOVATECH

With Miles Lanier at the helm of Novatech security, this corp works the shadows more than any other. Lanier and his Johnsons know talent when they see it, and they squeeze the shadows for every last bit. Many of Novatech's security personnel were recruited directly from the shadows.

Despite its reliance on the shadows, Novatech knows where and when to draw the line. If you get an offer from Novatech, that means they think you're good. If you get killed by Novatech, that means they thought you were too good.

Personal Agendas

Villiers calculates everything in terms of gains and losses. If success means walking away from a direct fight, then so be it. Vengeance and grudges only block clear business thinking. Because of this, Villiers holds no special agenda towards his ex-Fuchi partners, nor does he place too much emphasis on new rivals like Ares.

Lanier still thinks and operates like a soldier/sniper. He prefers clean kills, with as much distance between Novatech and the target as possible. He's well aware of Novatech's limits, but makes sure that his opponents pay dearly for any victories.

Hiring Runners

Novatech's still in the process of rebuilding its black ops assets, and is constantly on the watch for good talent. Lanier has even taken to capturing runners who engage in ops against Novatech, then making a bid for their services and turning them against their former employers.

Novatech pays slightly above standard rates (5 percent) for new contractees, but will steadily increase the payscale for future runs up to 25 percent above the standard rate. It will substitute nuyen for gear at discount rates, including cyberdecks, utilities, Cavalier Arms



NOVATECH

weapons, cyberware from Pioneer and even bodywork at a Nightengale's Body Shop. As standard policy, anything extra a runner team happens to pick up in the course of an op is theirs to do with as they wish, though Novatech offers good cred for anything interesting.

Lanier has pioneered the use of company men during his career, and continues to do so. Recently, he has placed several teams on retainer, but allowed them to continue taking outside jobs—with the provision that those

teams are still required to jump when Novatech calls them to action.

Lanier is incredibly security-conscious, and thoroughly checks the background of hired runners. He won't hold any action from their past against them, but he will use it for leverage if necessary.

WORKING AGAINST NOVATECH

Novatech is a prime target because of its perceived weakness as the smallest of the megacorps. Corporations looking to cash-in on the fall of Fuchi have hit Novatech with all types of runs, usually paying standard rates or lower. Lanier actually makes some effort to encourage this image of weakness, while simultaneously upgrading security as much as possible.

Ex-Fuchi partner Nakatomi, now with Renraku, will pay double or triple the going rates for ops against Novatech; many of these are specifically intended to cause maximum carnage and damage.

Security Measures

Lanier has orchestrated Novatech security to impede shadowrunners as much as possible. Strong passive defenses are the first line of defense; what cannot be seen or scoped out is harder to penetrate. Guards and other systems emphasize quality rather than quantity, though Novatech is careful to build-in redundancy and back-ups should certain systems be compromised. Security riggers and quality surveillance systems are common, though armed drones are not.

HACHIMAN-SERIES SECURITY ROBOT

Handling	Speed	Accel.	B/A	Signature	Pilot	Sensor	Learning Pool
3/6	10	2	2/5(7)	7	3	5	3

Initiative: 6 + 4D6

Economy: 1.5km/PF (10 min/PF Idle)

Cost: 70,000¥

Fuel: Electric (70 PF)

Setup/Breakdown Time: NA

Other Features: Ablative armor (1), remote mini-turret with Ultramax medium machine gun, remote control gear, rigger control gear, spotlight

Non-lethal methods are primarily used, as Lanier would rather have runners captured, interrogated and possibly used than just killed. The more Novatech knows about who's targeting it and why, the better.

Novatech guards and riggers are rated as Equal and Professional, and typically have specialized in two weapon skills. Novatech employs all genders and metatypes, with little discrimination.

Novatech is currently quite weak in terms of Awakened security guards, but any that are present will be Equal and Professional, and almost all are Initiates. Novatech employs almost as many shamans as mages. To compensate for the dearth of Awakened guards, astral barriers are heavily used and standard procedure is to target Awakened intruders first.

Novatech's Matrix security is the best. Trace IC is rare, but cascading gray and psychotropic black IC are favorites.

Black Magic

Black Omega is a hermetic Initiatory group composed of elite combat mages. The original group under Samantha Villiers at Fuchi was less combat-oriented, but the group has been reconstructed by both Samantha and Miles Lanier. The current group has a dozen members, each at least a Grade 5 and sporting state of the art combat cyberware as well (some of it delta-grade). These mages are rated as Superhuman and Professional. At least two of the members are skilled in cyber-mantic magic.

Black Omega is only used when Novatech needs to break out the really, really big guns. On occasion, a pair of members will be used as backup for important shadowruns.

A secondary Initiatory group called Black Alpha is open to both hermetics and adepts, and functions as a training group for future Black Omega members. Black Alpha focuses on providing astral security and spirit control for critical Novatech sites, as well as mystic research. They are Initiates of at least grade 3 and are rated Equal or Superior and Professional.

A third initiatory group, designated Black Nova, was recently started. Black Nova is composed of shamans, and currently operates in the same areas as both Black Alpha and Black Omega.

Schrodinger's Cats

Originally created as a social club by Villiers-friendly Fuchi deckers, the Cats have grown into a more elite society of Novatech deckers. Currently at slightly more than twenty members, at least half combat deckers, the Cats are identified by their strange Matrix antics and mind-bending Escher-esque icons. They have a reputation as highly skilled goofballs.

The Cats have no stated mission or signature tactics, though a number of them have become quite proficient at

infiltrating physical locations to access hosts that are not linked directly to the Matrix. Lanier has begun to use their expertise more and more, especially when gathering information on runner teams.

The Cats' combat deckers should be considered Superior and Professional, the rest are Superior and Semi-Trained. They typically carry the best decks and utilities Novatech can supply.

USING RENRAKU

Before the Corporate War, Renraku had it all—its competitors were dropping like flies, its innovations were light-years ahead of everyone else and it was ready to challenge mighty Saeder-Krupp as the dominant megacorporation. Then it all fell apart—its cutting edge was blunted, its primary arcology was seized and its CEO took a personal vacation. Renraku is still recovering and in a state of disarray, but it's doing its best to get back on its feet.

RUNNING FOR RENRAKU

Renraku is using many resources to get itself back on track, and a lot of its nuyen is flowing directly into the shadows. Competition is fierce between Renraku and the Pacific Prosperity Group, and several Renraku Johnsons enjoy targeting Yamatetsu for its metahuman support.

Renraku is also busy fending off smaller Japanacorps like Yakashima who can sense its weaknesses. From runs into the arcology, to snapping up Fuchi orphans to making Richard Villiers' life hell, Renraku is hiring all the runners they can find.

Personal Agendas

Without the backing of a strong leader, the Renraku board spends most of its time finger-pointing and blaming each other for their problems. Some are suspicious of Inazo Aneki's disappearance when the corporation needs him the most. Others despair of him ever returning, and fear that Nakada will not be strong enough to keep the corp together.

The scam perpetrated by Miles Lanier on the board has seriously damaged the trust allotted to outsiders, making Nakatomi's new position difficult. Despite this, he clearly has his eye on Nakada's position. Confidence in Yukiako Watanabe is also crumbling, as she both "cleared" Miles Lanier and knew of the otaku and AI projects, which both went horribly wrong.

Novatech is target number one, fueled primarily by Nakatomi's vendetta, but also to re-build Renraku's strength.

Nakatomi's feud is quickly becoming tunnel vision; it has yet to affect Renraku's bottom line, but if it does, it may invoke a power struggle on the board.

Several board members and division heads are frantically sponsoring runs to unearth anything involving the





AI Deus and its otaku minions. Sherman Huang in particular has gone so far as to sponsor runs on UCAS military intelligence and Novatech archives.

Hiring Runners

Renraku jumped into the shadowmarket with both feet, and the nuyen is flowing fast and freely. Many of the jobs it is churning out are rushed, and so lack proper background research. This means the corp isn't as picky about who it hires, but considering that many of the runs are ending in clusterfrags (especially arcology runs), it's starting to build up a bad shadow rep.

Renraku is fairly enlightened when it comes to dealing with runners: more flexibility, better pay, some sense of security and a constant supply of jobs. Right now their johnsons are paying good cred for any and all runs and in many cases offering two or three jobs at once to make sure they keep runners busy and on their side.

Renraku prefers to test out any new talent first, using a Johnson called a "digger." Runs set up by diggers are usually mock runs, but on occasion the diggers make it real, and use it to test corp security.

After the first successful run for Renraku, characters are often offered gear, cyberware, and surgery instead of nuyen, for up to 25 percent of payment; anything beyond this must be paid from the runner's pocket. Each subsequent successful run increases the amount of gear Renraku will exchange pay for by 5 percent. The amount of gear never exceeds 50 percent of the total pay for the run.

Despite (or rather, due to) the racism prevalent in the corp, Renraku Johnsons have no qualms about hiring metahuman runners, and actually seem to prefer to. Of course, while all shadowrunners are expendable to Renraku, metahuman operatives are even more so.

WORKING AGAINST RENRAKU

Renraku seems to have something everyone wants: advanced research into otaku and the secrets of artificial intelligence, lost Matrix and computer research exposed during the corp war, Fuchi Asia assets, and a shutdown arcology full of corp secrets and unparalleled robotic constructs. Runs staged by other corps against the Renraku Arcology typically pay an extra 200 percent in hazard pay, and will buy anything extracted from it at five times its value. Datasteals and hacking against Renraku are also at an all-time high as the corp scrambles to reroute and reconstruct its Matrix information and nodes; these runs typically pay double normal rates.

Security

Despite its problems, Renraku is still a very capable megacorp, and its defenses are currently on a constant state of alert; there are some very trigger-happy guards at their facilities. Electronic defenses and guard support (rigged systems, sentry guns, trideo cameras and so on) are somewhat erratic, so Renraku's defenses have relied on increased numbers of live personnel, which in turn has reduced the number of qualified guards. Basic guards and

magicians range from Inferior and Semi-Trained to Equal and Trained, depending on the importance of the site, and almost always male and Japanese.

Renraku has increased its use of paranormal animals to counter its other weaknesses; barghests, cockatrices, hellhounds and even harpies are now frequently used to supplement human security.



a behind-the-scenes force, using its hidden assets and puissance only when deception fails.

In many respects, S-K epitomizes the materialistic corporate philosophy: all resources exist to be exploited, including metahumanity; any consequences of this exploitation can be postponed or dealt with later. This attitude brings S-K into direct conflict with a range of eco-activist and Awakened groups.

The Matrix

Renraku's Matrix defenses are chaotic; system security varies wildly and unpredictably, from locked-down Red systems which are constantly on alert to Green systems with plentiful IC but gaping security holes. Much of Renraku's sensitive data has been moved to offline storage, requiring physical penetration of a facility in order to extract the paydata. Renraku has begun relying less on IC and more on security deckers since the arcology went off-line. These deckers are rated Equal or Superior to player characters and Trained.

The Red Samurai

The Red Samurai were the first fully-trained elite corporate response team created. Normally, The Red Samurai are not used for everyday security concerns, so if the Red Samurai are on guard detail they must be protecting something vital to Renraku's survival.

The Red Samurai are primarily used for corp-sanctioned black ops, sometimes including pursuing shadowrunners that have struck at Renraku. The Red Samurai are almost exclusively human and male; an occasional elf does enter the team, but usually only if he has magical ability. No other metahumans will be found as part of a Red Samurai unit, and unless the tactical situation dictates otherwise, these troops tend to target metahumans first.

A typical Red Samurai squad consists of four troopers and one mage. The troopers are equipped with state of the art cyberware, combat armor and top-of-the-line weaponry. The mage is armed and armored exactly like the other troopers to avoid being singled out for enemy attacks. All communication within the team is done by headware or in-helmet radio and is encrypted; Red Samurai almost never speak aloud. Red Samurai are rated as Superhuman and Professional.

USING SAEDER-KRUPP

S-K is the ultimate power player. The vast resources and power of the world's largest megacorp are in the claws of a creature with the strategic genius of a thousand generals and the foresight that comes only with near immortality. Conspiracy, deceit and plots within plots are S-K's trademark.

S-K is immensely powerful, but it rarely exercises its full might, preferring instead to use subtle machinations and carefully exerted influence. S-K is more than anything

RUNNING FOR SAEDER-KRUPP

Working for S-K means almost always working for Lofwyr either directly or indirectly. More and more, however, there are cases of others within S-K ordering ops without Lofwyr's approval. They may be taking a gamble, but they either feel Lofwyr will approve or they will get away with it because the dragon's attention seems diverted—potentially a fatal mistake.

Personal Agendas

Lofwyr pursues a number of goals that often seem to have nothing to do with S-K itself. However, Lofwyr and S-K are intertwined, and anything affecting one surely affects the other. Many of the operations instigated by Lofwyr are part of a larger, concealed plan in which the runners play only a small role. Many serve no rhyme or reason apparent to anyone besides Lofwyr; these are the ones that keep CEOs and shadowrunners up at night.

That being said, runs sponsored by Lofwyr and/or S-K do tend to fall into several arenas: operations against other dragons or Awakened forces (from Amazonia to the Tirs), consolidating control over Europe and the Middle East, researching magical artifacts or threats, expanding S-K's business interests or just gathering data for intelligence purposes.

Other prominent figures within S-K pursue many of the same goals, albeit with S-K's financial interests more in mind. Saied Bey, for example, has brought a number of Middle Eastern power players under his thumb, and uses them to amass even more influence.

Hiring Runners

Working for S-K is no easy task. S-K goes to great lengths to mislead runners as to who their actual employer is, and the jobs S-K hires for are often difficult to measure at first glance; inevitably they are much easier or harder than expected.

Whether or not the runners succeed in the perceived goals of the run is usually not as important to S-K as the larger picture framing it. Many runners are surprised to find their Johnson unphased by their failure; to S-K, it's more important that the runners followed the instructions and made an honest attempt at the job. Because of this, S-K Johnsons often award bonus pay at the end of the run, as the original negotiated fee was based on the stated, and not actual,

GAME INFORMATION

goals. Runners who don't follow directions and fail (even when they think they have succeeded) will be paid twice—once for the negotiated fee, and once again somewhere later down the line as payback for ignoring orders.

If a team has successfully undertaken several S-K runs, they will likely be noticed. At this point S-K operatives may send the runners on a few more "trial runs," usually concentrating on the team's or any individual's weakest abilities. If the runners survive, they are considered company men by S-K, and given preferential treatment. The catch is that the runners will not be informed of this; they may regularly work for S-K without knowing any of this is going on. Usually only runners who have performed exceptionally for years are fully brought on board.

Once put on retainer by S-K, the jobs certainly don't get easier, and if anything, become harder to predict. They can range from milk-runs to apocalyptic nightmares, usually requiring the runner to globe-hop and undertake tasks without explanation.

S-K usually pays higher than standard rates (150 percent), and is generous with hazard bonuses. Runners on retainer are generally paid double to triple the standard rate, and are free to accept any job offered them (after all they don't know they are on retainer). Often the corp knows exactly what the runner wants and needs (sometimes before the runner does) and can throw it into the deal. Data and intelligence taken from S-K's considerable network are commonly included as payment, as are fake IDs, travel papers and other bureaucratic conveniences. S-K is more than willing to substitute unusual gear and other requests for nuyen payment.

WORKING AGAINST SAEDER-KRUPP

Due to S-K's feared reputation, Johnsons rarely admit (assuming they know themselves) to runners that they are being hired for a run against S-K. Most other corps would rather avoid angering Lofwyr, and so the fewer people who know about a job against S-K the better. However, if the facts are on the table, Johnson will usually pay two to three times the standard rates for a run against S-K.

S-K is a favorite target for direct action eco groups, many of whom have backing from Awakened nations and other powers. These groups often use runners for distractions, intelligence-gathering or backup.

Security

S-K's primary security is secrecy and unpredictability. The security set-up at any two S-K sites will never be the same, and facilities tend to have their own distinct tricks and traps for intruders.

S-K's security guards are exceptionally well-trained, rated as Superior and Professional. All of them have had a

tour of duty in the Desert Wars and are trained in leadership (tactics) and security procedures (minimum skill of 4); they are also trained to recognize the feeling of an astral form passing through their aura.

Basic security units are twelve-person squads: ten guards, one magician (Initiated) and one rigger. Any site with more than one squad will also have a site commander (Superhuman, specialized in tactics). Additional personnel, from extra riggers to deckers to adepts, may be assigned as well.

S-K security undergoes constant testing and re-evaluation, sometimes using runners to test their own defenses. Most mundane guards have cyber implants to boost their performance, and more metahumans are employed by S-K than most other corps.

A high-threat response team equipped with heavy weapons, military gear and strong air support is within a quick response distance of all S-K facilities.

Rigged systems are common, although they are rarely the primary line of defense, instead serving as backup or integrated with security squads. It is not uncommon for S-K to keep its own sites under stealth drone surveillance, and most S-K drones are armed with non-lethal weaponry. Aerial sprayer drones (p. 105, *Rigger 2*) equipped with DMSO-bonded Gamma-scopolamine (p. 250, SR3) are a favorite, as the spray penetrates most armor and is absorbed directly through the skin.

Magical Defenses

Astral barriers, bound spirits and anchored spell traps or alarms are often used by S-K; each site will have at least one magician dedicated to keeping these defenses. Idol-worshippers and shamans are less common than hermetics, but still frequently used.

Almost every type of paranormal watchcriter that can be conceivably trained for use as guard animals has been used by S-K somewhere, and in quite a few cases "uncon-



trollable" creatures such as fenrir wolves have been used.

A high number of important S-K research facilities are intentionally located in toxic zones and other inhospitable habitats, which typically means the background count is quite high, deterring astral snooping and magical assault.

Matrix Defenses

S-K's primary means of data security is to limit access. Most crucial S-K data is kept off-line, and that which must be kept on-line is only accessible through private LTGs with teleporting SANS. Quality encryption is also par for the course.

Saeder-Krupp has some of the best trace IC on the net, and its control of key Matrix architectural gateways allows the corp to quickly track down interloping deckers on certain grids. Whenever a decker encounters trace IC within a Saeder-Krupp facility, raise all ratings by 2 for determining how well the IC locates the decker if the host is on an S-K PLTG or within the European, Russian or Middle Eastern grids. S-K follows its traces up with a fast-response squad, armed for bear and ready to rock.

USING SHIAWASE

Shiawase is introspective, conservative and deeply traditional. Its main strength lies in information gathering, assessment and manipulation. The Shiawase family's long-term plan of controlling Asia politically and through its economic bases—agriculture, banking and energy—has been delayed due to the acquisition of Fuchi Europa. In the meantime, Wuxing, Yamatetsu and the Pacific Prosperity Group have all made inroads into their holdings. Only time will tell if their traditional business practices can adapt to the new world order.

RUNNING FOR SHIAWASE

The Shiawase family follows a strict code; each member is expected to honor their family by doing their duty. This code reaches down into the extended corporate family as well. Employees are expected to work hard to bring their zaibatsu honor. The corp carefully cultivates this internal culture, and occasionally enhances it with simsense, chemical and even genetic behavior modification; if these methods enhance productivity, then they are not dishonorable.

Shiawase has similar expectations from the runners it employs. While they are not expected to behave as dedicated drones, they will be harshly handled if they exceed certain bounds or fall in their tasks.

Personal Agendas

The board of Shiawase is a less than exemplary example of the corporation's "family spirit." While each member of the Shiawase family dutifully puts all their energy into the corp, their unity is shattered by under-

handed power struggles and backstabbing.

Sadato and Soko are engaged in a bitter feud, often dragging other family members into the conflict. Despite their hatred, they both refuse to employ runners to strike directly at each other, preferring to keep it within the family. For less direct affairs, however, they will use shadow assets to interfere with and undermine the other.

Unknown to many, Tadashi has a special interest in certain unsavory fields, including research into HMMVV as well as various methods of conditioning subjects through biotechnology and other means. He has sponsored several runs delving into these areas, and has exhibited a willingness to test his findings on unknowing subjects.

Whether Ryoji is an ancestor spirit, a ghost or a fraud perpetuated by Jerri Howard, the bulk of his decisions are directed toward continuing the family dynasty.

Ryoji thoroughly believes that Shiawase is working on several methods to bring him back; in reality this is untrue. Unknown to his daughter Reiko, Ryoji has cultivated a power base that will support her in the long run. Reiko, however, is currently investigating ways to remove her dead father and/or Howard from the scene.



Shiawase

Hiring Runners

In order to accomplish their agendas, Shiawase must deal with outsiders who do not share their loyalty to family, duty and honor. Shiawase Johnsons attempt to circumvent this by working only with specific fixers who find runners that meet their Bushido requirements.

When they hire runners they expect them to accomplish their mission or die trying. They do not understand nor accept failure. At the same time they expect their runners to be discreet. Those who make excessive noise or draw negative publicity to the company will simply not be employed again.

Most Shiawase Johnsons work in the Market Intelligence & Forecasting Department (MIFD), and the MIFD keeps scrupulous records on all runners used and employed. Runners who have proved their loyalty by operating according to the Shiawase standards of conduct are often "assigned" to a particular MIFD Johnson/exec, who will use them as quasi-company men. MIFD uses these runners as enforcers, provocateurs and occasional assassins. The more a runner works for Shiawase, the more information the MIFD has on him or her—quitting Shiawase is never easy.

Shiawase pays standard fees, and will negotiate for 10 percent of the fee to be Shiawase stock. This is non-voting stock, but will pay a dividend. If runners like, Shiawase will arrange for up to 50 percent of the fee to be stock, but never more. Tadashi has been promoting cyberware payments for runs, particularly since he needs bodies to test the newest biotechnological and psychotropic advances his experiments have created.

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WORKING AGAINST SHIAWASE

Shiawase seems to be an easy target: slow, conservative and even a bit dim to the modern ways of shadow ops. Johnsons will hire for any type of job against Shiawase at the standard rate.

SECURITY

All Shiawase security personnel follow the corp's version of Bushido-Ninjo Giri; where fidelity, honor, and duty only exist for those in the Shiawase family. Everyone else lacks honor and therefore can be dispatched without remorse. Despite this, Shiawase security responses will be calm and restrained at first; once attacked, however, Shiawase security will fight to the last.

All security is rated Equal in Combat Skills but Superior in Negotiation and other Social Skills. All physical security troops know one melee weapon specialization, and are considered Professional. Magicians are rarely integrated directly into the security teams; but each site usually is assigned one Equal rating magician. Nearly all security guards are Japanese, though new Fuchi recruits have taken to the family honor and have been welcomed in, for now.

Shiawase security deckers also follow their own code of Bushido. Equal and Professional-rated deckers will usually appear at either the fifth or sixth trigger step. The company uses a wide variety of white and gray IC, particularly probes, rippers, high-rated scramble IC, data worms and especially psychotropic IC. Killer black IC is restricted to the most sensitive of Shiawase's systems.

Shiawase doesn't bother with hunting down rogue runners, choosing instead to disseminate any information the MIFD has to the media, government and even other corps.

The Spirit Company—Kami No Bushi

The Spirit Company is Shiawase's elite security force. Trained by former Fuchi operatives, each group consists of six Shiawase guards, including at least one adept and a member with some skills in either decking or rigging. They are assigned by the MIFD where needed, occasionally performing black ops or backup on shadowruns. Magicians are deployed separately as needed, but always in pairs. All members are considered Superior and Professional, and the adepts and magicians are initiated (at least three grades). Like Renraku's Red samurai, the Spirit Company fields customized armor similar in style to medieval Japanese samurai armor.

USING WUXING

Wuxing is all about influence: financial influence, corporate influence through the Pacific Prosperity Group, social and political influence in Hong Kong, criminal influence through the Triads and even magical influence

through the magical items and lore they have accumulated. Wu Lung-Wei wants control over whatever he can reach, and he's willing to be patient enough to arrange things so his plans can't go wrong.

RUNNING FOR WUXING

Wuxing has made many inroads into far-eastern underdeveloped countries, and frequently directs runners into these locations as couriers, pirates or smugglers. Because Wuxing is intertwined with the Pacific Prosperity Group, running for Wuxing can mean the runners end up anywhere a PPG member exists: Hong Kong, China, the Philippines, Yakut, California, Seattle, and even NAN lands.

Personal Agendas

Wu Lung-Wei is fascinated—or perhaps obsessed—with magic, and personally sponsors runs to extract interesting mystic research; possible targets for these runs include the Draco Foundation, the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research, Aztechnology, the Atlantean Foundation, magical orders like the Illuminates of the New Dawn and even certain dragons.

He has placed standing orders that Wuxing facilities should take advantage of mana lines and power sites and follow the principles of feng shui, and so Wuxing occasionally uses runners to gain control of certain areas.

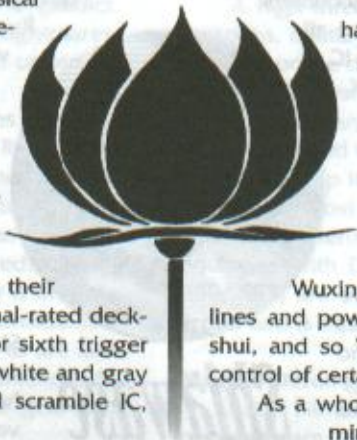
As a whole, Wuxing's primary agenda is to undermine Japanacorp domination of the Pacific Rim, and so most Wuxing runs fall into this realm. Given its resources and paternalistic role in the PPG, Wuxing often acts as a middle-man between smaller PPG corps and runner teams, sponsoring a wide array of shadow ops.

Wuxing occasionally hires runners to support its Triad allies. These runs may involve smuggling, but they more likelier will aim to undermine opponents such as the Yakuza or Mafia in some manner. Wuxing tries to steer clear of conflicts between Triads, but is not always successful.

Hiring Runners

Wuxing's Johnsons almost always work in pairs, and usually one of the two is an initiated wujen. The wujen's job is to assense the runners for signs of magical influence or surveillance, and they often discreetly employ Analyze Truth spells. Treat wujen Johnsons as Superior and Professional, they commonly will arrange to meet near a power site or mana line and will have a great form spirit of the elements on call.

Generally speaking, Wuxing gives shadowrunners enough latitude and support to get the job done without exposing the company to any undue risk. Other than that, the corp is diverse and flexible. Wuxing pays standard rates, occasionally offering imported goods or travel/shipping services as well.



WUXING

Wuxing prefers to hire groups with strong magical talent. It also makes no secret of the fact that good operatives may make good Wuxing assets. Wuxing is more than willing to hire runners on for permanent duty and will pay well for seasoned veterans, offering a Middle lifestyle for samurai, deckers, and riggers and High lifestyle for Awakened characters. Wuxing asks runners on retainers to relocate to Hong Kong for several years, to immerse them in the Wuxing way—though their operations may move them around the globe.

If hired runners need back-up or a place to hide out, Wuxing usually connects them with a Triad contact. These contacts can be useful for obtaining smuggled gear as well; Wuxing sponsorship will mean the Triad will not mark the price up by the Street Index, though the character will still have to wait for the gear to become available.

WORKING AGAINST WUXING

Wuxing is still relatively new to the AAA megacorporate game, and the other megas really don't know what makes it tick. Many rival corps have sponsored "feeler" runs merely to gather intelligence on Wuxing's activities, management and interests.

Due to its leadership role within the PPG, Wuxing is also a prime target by the Japanacorps, from Yakashima to Shlawase. Many of these runs are geared towards de-stabilizing Wuxing's power bases, while others attempt to sow discord within the PPG.

Security

Wuxing's security improvements have lagged behind its rapid growth and aggressive acquisition of new companies, meaning that security is less than competent at many sites. Standard guards may range from Inferior and Semi-Trained to Equal and Trained, sometimes intermixed in a location. At several facilities, Wuxing has boosted its guard ranks with Triad members, who are usually rated as Inferior but Trained. Wuxing security forces exhibit little racial or gender discrimination.

Wuxing's Matrix security is also suffering under the rapid expansion, though Mangadyne's new IC is helping to even out the situation. Most of Wuxing's paydata is stored on PLTGs that are only accessible through hidden trapdoor SANs within hosts belonging to shell companies. Wuxing deckers rate as Equal and Trained.

The other security measure Wuxing relies on is its extensive network of contacts. Wuxing often hears about potential threats in time to take defensive action. When shadowrunners are doing legwork for a run against Wuxing, use the Wrong Party Tests system (p. 63, *SRComp*).

Magical Security

Wuxing's magical security is tough and getting tougher all the time. The majority of Wuxing's security

magicians are wujen following the path of Wuxing (see p. 17, *MITS*). Though other types of magicians are employed as well, it is the wujen's ability to identify and use the earth's natural mana lines (called dragon lines or feng-lung) and power sites that make them important to the corp.

Wuxing attempts to place any establishments they control on such a dragon line. They will move a building five feet if it means they can better tap into the power of a mana line. Wujen are assigned to sites in which their magic is compatible with the site's feng shui. All of these sites develop an aspected background count giving their magicians an advantage while making it harder for intruders to use their magic (see p. 83, *MITS*). The Wuxing HQ building in Hong Kong is located atop a Rating 4 power site.

All Wuxing magicians are rated as Superior and Professional.

Mana storms and wild magic (see p. 86, *MITS*) seem to appear more frequently near Wuxing sites and may be a condition of their heavy manaline manipulation.



USING YAMATETSU

Yamatetsu has many unofficial names: race traitor, dishonorable *kawaruhito*, commie corp and so on; but to most people, it's known as Yamatetsu Who? With its recent move and new policies, however, Yamatetsu is making more of an appearance in the international spotlight. Its actions have earned the corp numerous powerful enemies, but Yamatetsu is surviving and prospering thanks to

strong investments, smart decisions and alliances with Russia and the Pacific Prosperity Group.

RUNNING FOR YAMATETSU

Runs sponsored by Yamatetsu must theoretically be "sanctioned" by the upper levels of the corp. Given the many factions operating within Yamatetsu these days, unsanctioned runs are becoming more commonplace. These runs invariably interfere with other Yamatetsu ops.

Personal Agendas

Yamatetsu is still in turmoil as a myriad of corporate factions maneuver against each other, spawning numerous runs. The difference between sponsors means no Yamatetsu run is like another.

Buttercup has definite plans for the corp, and will not tolerate impediments from mere mortals. She learned her lessons from association with Dunkelzahn, and now seeks to use her influence to make an impact on the world in positive ways. She has forged an alliance with Shibanokuji, Dizon and Chin, and uses them to push forth a pro-metahuman, anti-Japanese-imperialist position, but her true agenda goes much deeper.

Iwano and his puppet Yoshida are the main opposition within Yamatetsu, and they still seek to wrest control from Buttercup and her allies and steer the corp back

towards traditional Japanese megacorp ways. They have sought out anti-metahuman allies both within and outside the corp, and if the situation turns desperate they may even turn toward other corps.

Barnard is the company's wild card. He is no friend of Buttercup's, but he has sided with Shibanokuji in restructuring the corp, placing him in opposition to Iwano. Whether he's just gaining confidence for a future betrayal, is seeking personal power or merely keeping his options open remains to be seen, but it could be a deciding factor in future conflicts.

Yamatetsu is heavily engaged in shadow operations against Pacific Rim Japanese corps, especially Shiawase, Mitsuhamma and Yakashima. It's looking for any allies it can get, even making overtures towards Ares, Saeder-Krupp and the Awakened Yakut nation. It is also eyeing Proteus AG for a possible future takeover, as the German corp's underwater and aerospace assets would be most beneficial.

Hiring Runners

Yamatetsu's Johnsons are the most paranoid in this paranoid profession, and always ensure that their meets are as secure as possible. An increasing number of Yamatetsu Johnsons are coming from the Russian military and police services and assume everyone is an enemy until proven a friend.

If the runners are new to Yamatetsu, the corp will give them a simple job—courier duty, security or some other milk run. The pay will be below standard (between 50 and 80 percent). Upon completion, the runners may be hired for an additional test run or two on the spot, at standard pay. The runs will increase in toughness and unexpected twists until Yamatetsu is satisfied the team is competent.

Runners that stick it out will be offered more high yield work, almost all of it requiring travel; Yamatetsu prefers using runners who don't have a local rep. The pay scale increases, up to 200 percent (including travel expenses). Yamatetsu often will connect the runners with local corp contacts, as the runners are unlikely to have many foreign ones of their own.

Yamatetsu also offers other payment options for these runs, including fake IDs and cyberware. If available in their home area, Yamatetsu will offer Crash Cart Executive Diamond service (identical to DocWagon's Super Platinum service—see p. 303, SR3—except it costs 75,000¥). On certain runs, Yamatetsu will offer lower-priority Crashcart services, assuming it won't reveal anything to the opposition.

Over time, runners may be offered Special Security Detail employment, which usually amounts to surveillance and/or bodyguard duty. To be considered for this, runners must provide a DNA sample to the corp. The pay for SSD work is a minimum of twice the standard rate.

Yamatetsu exhibits no prejudice towards runner teams it hires, and in fact prefers to hire teams with metahumans. A large percentage of Yamatetsu Johnsons are metahuman as well.

WORKING AGAINST YAMATETSU

Yamatetsu is expanding into new areas and this means that their research is valuable on the market—especially by Japanese corps that want to teach the "traitor" a lesson. Many Mitsuhamma and Shiawase Johnsons consider it a point of honor to punish Yamatetsu whenever possible. Most Japanacorps will pay double the standard for runs against Yamatetsu.

Other corps, like Ares, are interested in opening up Siberia and other parts of the Far East; most of these seem to be simultaneously attacking Yamatetsu and negotiating with them. Likewise, Yamatetsu's breakthroughs in undersea applications like deep-sea cyberware, agriculture and marine life, as well as its developments in nanotechnology and metahuman cyberware, make it a valuable target.

Security Measures

Yamatetsu security has been bolstered by former Russian military and escaping Japanese and Chinese metahumans. Their security personnel are rated Equal and Trained. Security squads are composed of five to eight guards, each with at least one ork or troll. It is not uncommon for squads to be backed up by hellhounds or cockatrices. Yamatetsu strives to have at least one magician for each site (contracting out if necessary); the tradition of these guards varies, with wujen, shamans and hermetics all being common. Magicians are rated as Equal and Professional, and many of them are metahuman.

Locations founded before Yamatetsu's move to Russia have much more modern security: automated drones and sentry weapons, security riggers, on-site deckers, lasers, traps and so on. These locations are being used to store important datafiles until security at newer sites can be upgraded, and are laden with IC. Yamatetsu security riggers and deckers rate as Equal and Trained.

Special Security Detail

The SSD is an undercover security force created to offer an entire team of operatives to a board member or other high ranking official. Members of the SSD are selected from top security personnel and trained in the latest stealth and counterinsurgency techniques. They normally act as bodyguards and executive protection, but they occasionally are used to monitor suspect employees and intervene if necessary; sometimes they are fielded for black ops as well.

SSD teams are typically composed of seven members: a weapon specialist, a rigger, a decker, an adept, a full magician (usually a shaman) and a team leader. Usually at least three team members keep close proximity to the target, while the rest maintain a perimeter, ready to respond if necessary. The leader is usually a human or an elf, while the others can be of any race. They are rated Superior and Professional.

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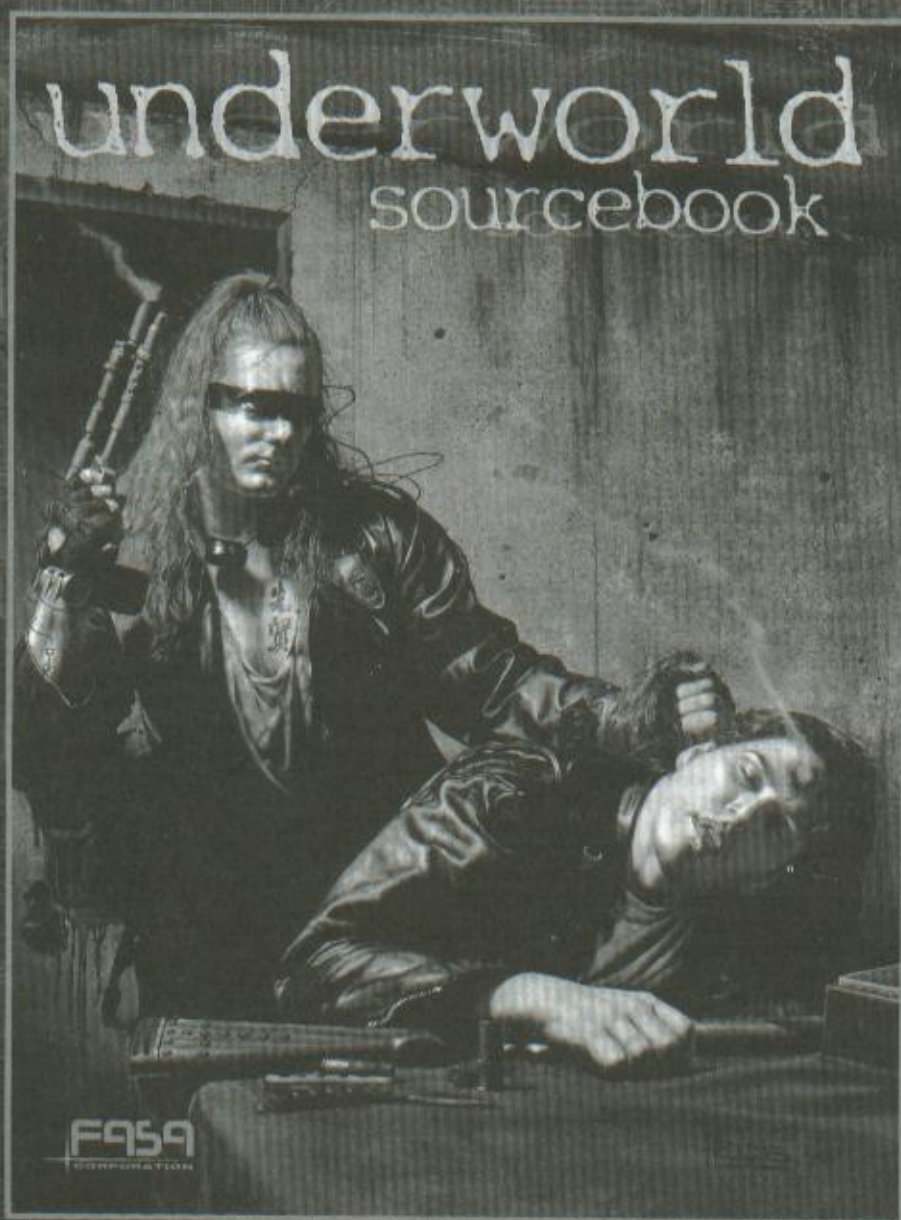
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