

SHADOWRUN

CORPORATE GUIDE

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CORPORATE GUIDE

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MISSION STATUS: Complete

Aggregate Report Factors
contribute to final
Performance Data analysis.

Component of analysis has
enhanced future factors
for 2009 quarter.

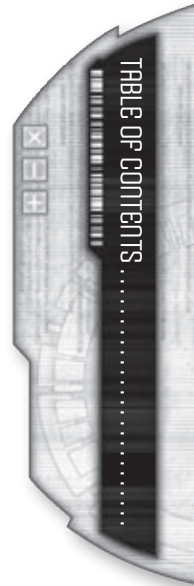


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2009

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This is the story of the day Nephrine left.

He had a nice desk in a clean lab. Most days he sat quietly and manipulated AROs, researching the limits of human physiology and how to expand them. Some days, rare days, he worked with actual, physical materials to make sure reality matched the simulations.

Nephrine had a few ARO award plaques in his workspace to recognize the contributions he had made to the company. Some of his colleagues brought their awards with them wherever they went, surrounding themselves with proof of their own importance. Nephrine left his in his workplace—he didn't need any extra clutter in his virtual environment.

There were times when, for many reasons, he thought about leaving his job. During one of those days, he was casually following comments and random observations from his colleagues running through an ARO in the bottom left of his vision. One particular comment caught his attention.

"Ghost sighting, Springfield facility."

He shouldn't have paid attention to it. Just because a ghost showed up at one place didn't mean it would come to another. The Springfield site was close, but there was no reason to think the ghost would hit both places.

"How high-ranking is this ghost?" one of his colleagues asked.

"Very," the original poster answered. "Office in the same building as the head ghost."

Nephrine's hand twitched, a single nervous tic, and he hated it. He didn't want the ghosts to impress him or make him nervous. But you spend enough time in a corp, and that's what happens. It's a reflex.

"Ghosts" were what Nephrine's co-workers called the people at the top of the corp, the people who were seldom seen but whose effect was felt everywhere. Most people thought it would be interesting to see a ghost, but they also worried about what might happen to them if they did.

His co-workers tracked the progress of this particular ghost for the rest of the day. With each update, Nephrine's hand spasmed again, no matter how hard he glared at it. There was speculation the whole day about whether the ghost would come there, and if he did, what he'd do.

It all ended with a message from a Springfield branch worker.

"He's not coming there," it said. "We asked if he was going to visit you, and he didn't recognize the name of your branch. Didn't know you exist."

Nephrine had been thinking about leaving before that day. But that remark seemed as good an indicator as any that he should shut down his system at the end of that day and never turn it on again.



• We all know that we're only as good as our best information, and we also know that the corps that pay so many of us—and try to mess up even more of us—are never sitting still. There's plenty going on that we should pay attention to, from Aztechnology getting a little testy with their neighbors to the south to Evo pushing the limits of what it means to be a metahuman to Horizon having employees who smile so much that my cheeks hurt just looking at them. Some of our various people in the know have helped me round up profiles of the latest developments among the movers and shakers, but we're going to start with Cosmo, offering a refresher on the basics of business for anyone who needs one.

• FastJack

THE ACCELERATING VELOCITY OF MONEY: POSTCAPITALISM TODAY

Posted by: Cosmo

Okay, I know how corporations work, and you know how corporations work, but there are plenty of people running around out there doing corporations' dirty work who don't, and that's dangerous. Do you need to know exactly how each car part works in order to drive? No, but parts of your car are not actively plotting to fuck you up, so forget that analogy. A better one is if you're going into a fight, it's always better to know how many people are on the other side, what they're armed with, and what tactics they might employ. Well, make no mistake about it—corporations are on the other side. They might pay you, they might even hire you for a long period of time, but they are always and forever on their own side and will throw anyone overboard to make sure that the legal entity that is the corp survives.

I've had a little downtime lately (speaking of which, anyone know a wujen who's any good with broken bones? Because mine sucks), and to keep myself in soykaf I took a few nuyen to write the following document. There are far too many young runners who have worked for a corp without really knowing how the corps work. Some of them talk together, just like we do, and they thought it would be a good idea to pay someone to provide the basics of the business world. They hired me, and here's the final product. Since you guys are of course the experts, I thought I'd let you tear into the material I put together and have a few laughs. If you want to add useful information while you're at it, that would be great. Remember, it's not just for me—it's for the kids.

THE MAN

You've heard of the Man. Spending 80 hours a week at an office working all so you can spend your free time giving your hard-earned money back to your employer through various channels? That's the Man keeping you down. At a club where the party spills out into the street, and some hired goons with a little metal shield on their chest charge in and start beating people over the head with their clubs? That's the Man clamping down on you. Maybe you don't get a promotion at your wageslave job, or maybe you get fired from it, because you're not the right color, or you have horns, or tusks, or pointy ears, or you're short, or not Japanese, or do something, whatever it is, to not look like what they think you should look like? That, my friends, is the Man sticking it to you.

There were times in the past when the Man came in a lot of different forms, and while he still has a lot of different faces, he

springs from a single source—corporations, especially the Big Ten. Yes, that may look like a Mafia don who's giving you a smackdown, but that Mafia don makes a good sum of money distributing the latest amphetamine that keeps corp drones going through their eighteen-hour shifts. Without that corp money, the Mafia man has no empire. You may be hassled by whatever new laws were just passed by the nation you're living in, but the only reason those laws made it through was because some corp or another leaned on the government to push those laws through. And that may be a great dragon about to toast your ass, but in reality those great dragons are really serving the interest of... okay, great dragons are serving their own interests and aren't under any corp's thumb. But they're the exception. Everyone else has got a lot harder time getting out of the Man's shadow.

• Aw, look, he even fit the word "shadow" in there for us. Clever.

• Slamm-0!

The good news for us is that there's a trick to it. In reality, corps aren't the Man—they're the Men. There's lots of them, and they have different and competing interests. Keep them with their weapons pointed at each other, and there's less of a chance that they'll be pointed at you.

• That's more work than you need to do. Don't worry about keeping them mad at each other, just keep them from being mad at you. The best way to do that is stay out of sight.

• DangerSensei

Now that we've established what the Man is, let's get a better understanding of the different forms he comes in and how he operates.

CORPORATE STRUCTURES: THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF POWER

The idea behind a corporation is simple and not even all that sinister. The idea is this: There are some ideas and concepts that have a life of their own. Take a church, which is one of the earliest forms of a corporation. A church is bigger than the sum of its members, and it can't really be described as just a collection of their interests. It goes beyond them, and it has an identity of its own that in turn affects the identity of the people that are a part of it. It is distinct, and it will continue even after some of its members die. That's why, back in the day, churches were some of the first organizations incorporated.

But there's a lot more than religion that can bring people together. A corporation that ties together the interests of a bunch of people in a singular industry has a lot more sustained earning power than just some guy working on his own.

• Earning power may be where it starts, but it goes far beyond that. Once you establish that a corporation is a separate entity, then it's natural to make laws describing how that individual functions, what limits it has, and how it interacts with the rest of society. The intersection of corporate power with government power has deep roots, which often—though not always—means that corporations have been steadily able to influence laws to become increasingly favorable to them. Which helps explain how we got to where we are today.

• Mr. Bonds



Quick Query:

Question: Is a corporation really equivalent to an individual, with the same rights?

Answer: A corporation may be judged to have “legal personhood,” but that does not automatically make it equivalent to actual people. Different jurisdictions can decide just how far they want this personhood to go.

So a corporation is essentially a bunch of people grouping together to make something stronger and longer lasting than themselves. Just because that’s the common goal, though, doesn’t mean there’s only one way to go about designing a corporation. The structure you choose often reflects what it is you want the corporation to do—and, to a degree, how successful you’ve been in your work to that point.

- Sometimes it’s the opposite—what a corporation does is shaped by the structure chosen for it.
- Mr. Bonds

Let’s work our way up the food chain and see how an idea becomes an organization, an organization becomes a behemoth, and a behemoth becomes a monstrosity that would chew up the whole world except for the fact that there’s a few other monstrosities keeping it in check.

Incorporating

There are plenty of people who run some kind of business or another by themselves—from watching the neighbor’s sprats for a while to driving the getaway car while the neighbor’s sprats raid a talislegger’s place for some magic goodies—and most of them are just fine with staying on their own. But let’s say you’re doing so much work that you want to bring in other people to help you do it, or that you’ve noticed that if you go ahead and register with local government, you can do better on your taxes than if you don’t. So you incorporate. Now you’re not just a guy doing a job—you’re an organization.

- You’re also someone who is now leaving more of a trail behind you. Corporations can’t help but leave fingerprints here and there—once they form, they have to be registered somewhere—so if you get tied into one, you need to worry about what records you might be tied into and where they’ll show up
- Sunshine
- How is this different from individuals? We leave trails, too.
- /dev/grll
- It’s not different, necessarily, but it’s an addition. Another data trail. And since there are fewer corporations than there are people, and they are often dealing in larger sums of money and goods than individuals do, their virtual footprints are often larger.
- Sunshine

- Remember that there are at least two ways to obscure your trail. One is to move so lightly that you do not leave any trail at all, or at least not one that anyone but the most skilled trackers can follow. The other is to leave a trail so convoluted, so filled with switchbacks and dead-ends, that only the most perseverant and business-savvy can follow it. Corporations have long been used to create false trails, disguise ownership of properties, and other diversionary tactics—Saeder-Krupp is the past master at these kinds of activities. There are lots of reasons to have a holding company (a corporation whose only purpose is to own other corporations), but one of them is to disguise ownership trails and corporate connections.
- Mr. Bonds

Corporations come in many shapes, but they all fall into two different categories—public and private. Private corporations are owned by a fixed group of people—maybe a single owner, maybe a group of people the owners brought in, or maybe some investors who looked at the business and thought it would help them grow their money. The main thing is, ownership of a private corporation isn’t very fluid. Someone may inherit a share of the corporation after an owner dies, or one of the owners may sell their stake to someone else, but there’s no daily trading of ownership shares on the stock market.

Public corporations, by contrast, can be owned by just about anyone who has the nuyen and the willingness to buy stock in it. Stock generally comes in two flavors, common stock and preferred stock. Common stock gives you a voice in corporate affairs essentially equivalent to the percent of all existing stock that you own; preferred stock doesn’t come with voting rights, but if the corporation decides to pay out some of its profits as a dividend to stock holders, the ones with preferred shares get them first.

The important thing to consider when deciding on a corporate ownership structure is that since theoretically anyone can buy into a public corporation, there are usually requirements for the corporation to make certain reports and data available to the public. It’s a tradeoff—by selling ownership shares to the general public, you can bring in a nice infusion of capital to your company (or help bring about Crash 2.0, but that’s another story), but you also put more information out there, and if you have more than three functioning neurons in your head, you know that information is power.

- You have to read public information carefully—the bigger a corporation is, the better it is at telling you only what it wants you to know—but by looking at the way information is presented, and paying close attention to what is *not* said, you can learn a surprising amount about how a corporation, and even others in its sector, functions.
- Mr. Bonds
- You better know your shit, though, because these corps don’t go out of their way to spell anything out for you.
- Sticks

Most public corporations (and a few private ones) have a board of directors that provides leadership and guidance to the corporation. Typically the board consists of other high-ranking



Quick Query:

Question: Just how many shares of stock would I need to have a majority interest in a corporation?

Answer: It varies. The key number to focus on is the number of **outstanding shares** of common stock—preferred stock has no voting rights, so it doesn't matter in this aspect. The number of outstanding shares a corporation has is usually public information and not hard to find. Also, shares owned by the corporation itself (called **treasury stock**) don't matter, since they don't have voting rights. The short answer is that for any large corporation that has been around for a decently long time, you're talking about billions and billions of shares. Start saving your pennies now!

- There's another trick to buying out a corp besides the expense. Most corps have **authorized shares**, which is the total number of shares they can issue and is generally higher than the number of outstanding shares they have. Some corporations, if they are worried about a takeover bid, will quickly issue more shares and make sure they fall into friendly hands, making it that much harder for someone else to get a majority.
- Mr. Bonds

businesspeople within the corporation's sector (though as a corporation becomes more diversified, the term "sector" becomes less meaningful).

- There's lots of idiocy in the corporate world, and corporate boards contribute plenty of it. Basically, a powerful CEO invites her powerful CEO friends to give her advice, pretend to provide oversight, and set her salary. In return, she sits on the boards of her friends' corporations and performs the same functions. And can we guess what the end results are? Why, boards often walk lock-step with the CEO, and they tend to recommend ridiculously high compensation, complete with generous buyouts (or "golden parachutes," as they're called) for CEOs who screwed up so bad they've gotta quit and lay low for a while until one of their friends hires them as a consultant. It's a system built for keeping power in a closed circle.

- Aufheben

- If this is the case, why are they always going for each other's jugular?

- Marcos

- Because while they'd rather that outsiders don't get their power, they'd *really* rather that they got more and the others in the Big Ten got less. Notice how most of their hostile moves don't involve much power going to outside groups.

- Aufheben

Some mention should be made of nonprofit corporations. The name sometimes throws people off—they hear "nonprofit," and they think it means "no money." But that ain't the case. Giant universities are nonprofit, and so is the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research, and no one would deny that there is plenty of nuyen and power flowing through those places. What makes them "nonprofit" isn't that they don't bring in money, it's that any profits they might receive are put right back into the organization. They also usually don't pay taxes, since their work is deemed to be part of the "public interest." That means people don't get rich off owning a nonprofit, but you can still make a good living working for one. Ask any university president.

- Governments determine what's in the public interest, and since governments tend to be very responsive to corporate interests, that means there are some interesting categories of nonprofits out there. For example, in Aztlan, burnishing Aztechnology's public image is seen as good for the government and good for the nation, so you can receive tax-exempt status for doing that. Naturally, Aztechnology controls several such nonprofits, which help them shelter some of their income while strengthening their already-formidable PR army.

- Mr. Bonds

Growing Your Corporation

You came up with an idea, you developed an ownership structure, and you started doing business. Congratulations—there's a fifty-fifty chance, or worse, that your whole ship will still be afloat in five years. It's possible that you could keep your business at the same small, initial size and survive—maybe you've got one or two really dedicated clients—but for the most part, if you want to survive, you have to grow. You bring in more clients, or you sell more things. You go from having one guy who does everything to having a guy for finances, a guy for sales, a guy to manage the office, and a guy to make sure the other guys are doing their things. If you keep growing, then you build in more layers—people at the bottom do stuff, people above them watch them and make sure they're doing stuff, and people above them make sure they're supervising that first group properly, while acquiring more clients and generating more work for the people back at the bottom.

- We've got few better friends in the world than big organizations with specialized divisions. As long as there are people in one part of a corporation that don't know what's going in some other part, we've got room we can work in.

- Mika

There's lots of tricks involved in having a corporation survive and grow, but at the center of it is a concept that any shadowrunner should know about: Be better than the competition. Maybe you win through prices, maybe you win through better products or services, or maybe you win because you've got a troll with a studded two-by-four on the payroll who will beat the living shit out of people if they don't do business with you (or you find other, subtler ways to mess with the competition). There's lots of ways to get it done, but if you don't figure out one of them, you go away.





INCOMING FEED.....

Becoming Ranked

Like I said before, most new corporations will die out within five years or so of their founding. Of the ones that survive, only a few will keep growing long enough to earn a coveted ranking from the Corporate Court. There are three categories of rankings—A, AA, and AAA—and if the Court tags you with one, you have definitely arrived. It's not easy, though. You could start as a humble widget salesman, going door to door in your neighborhood, then move on to becoming the largest distributor of widgets in your hometown, and keep growing until you're the largest in your region, and then the largest in your nation, and you still may not be ready to be ranked. Getting a ranking either means you

do one thing (or a few related things) at an exceptionally broad level (think Lone Star and security), or you can keep branching out, bringing in business after business, diversifying yourself to the point that you have a finger in just about any business area in the known world (Aztechnology and Saeder-Krupp are prime examples of this, but most AAA-rated corps qualify).

We're going to be referring to Corporate Court's ratings a lot as we go on, so let's take a minute to define what they mean and what a corp needs to be to get that rating.

Unrated Corporations

Most corporations aren't large enough to gain the Corporate Court's notice, so they don't get rated. That doesn't mean they're insignificant—there's some good-sized corps in this category, and some of them are making their owners good money—but they just don't fit the categories defined below. Brackhaven Investments, led by Seattle Governor Kenneth Brackhaven, is one of the more notable unrated corps out there.

A-Rated Corporations

You want a rating, you better be a multinational. You don't have to have too many "multis" in there, though—significant operations in two different countries is enough.

Quick Query:

Question: Where do corporate profits go?

Answer: A corporation may wish to re-invest excess revenues back in the business, but often profits are paid out to owners as **dividends**. If it's a privately owned corporation, the profits go to the owners in proportion to their ownership of the company. If it's publicly owned, dividends primarily go out to holders of preferred stock on a per-share basis.

HOW TO GET BIGGER

If you want your corp to grow, you've got two basic choices—growing from within, or bringing things in from the outside. Bringing in outside assets is faster, but it's also more expensive, so it's usually left to larger companies.

Sometimes a company grows through a friendly acquisition, where all parties involved agree to the process that is going to take place. This may be a merger of equals, where two similarly sized companies decide to combine their assets and form a new entity. If they were privately owned, the respective owners work out who owns what share of the new company; if they were publicly owned, stockholders surrender their shares of the old companies and receive replacement shares in the new organization.

More common is the acquisition, where one company buys another. This can be an agreed-upon transaction, where the two parties negotiate and decide on a compensation amount for the owners of the company that will disappear. Money moves to the appropriate accounts, and assets shift to the purchasing company, which then decides what it will keep and what it will liquidate.

Corporations can also acquire unwilling companies through a hostile takeover. Usually this is done by acquiring a majority ownership stake through stock purchases; since stockholders are not always willing to sell, that majority

isn't always easy to come by. One corp can also attempt to take over another by purchasing as many corporate assets as it can, hoping to turn their rival into an empty shell. Tax laws and possible liens on the target company's assets can complicate this kind of takeover, which is one reason why going after corporate stock is more common.

- Do I need to point out how many run opportunities there are in a hostile takeover? From persuading reluctant stockholders to sell, to forging ownership of various goods, to extracting "assets" from one company to another, there's plenty to do once one corp goes after another.
- Baka Dabora

Sometimes acquisitions are integrated right into the existing business, but other times they are worked in as subsidiaries. A subsidiary functions just like any other autonomous corporation, but the majority of its ownership is held by another corporation, meaning orders flow down from the parent corp, and profits flow up to it. Acquisitions are not the only way to start a subsidiary; sometimes, in embarking in a new business direction, a corporation will create and fund a subsidiary so that they can establish a new brand for themselves as they stake out new territory.

- Note the "significant" part. Just having a lot of money stowed in a Swiss bank account doesn't make you multinational.
- Dr. Spin

Once a corporation hits a certain size, going multinational is a logical step—different countries have different laws, which means you have at least two different sets of loopholes to squirm through. It also means two different sets of legal requirements and tax filings to deal with, but most corps of any size figure the benefits are worth the hassle.

Then there's the golden plum of getting a Corporate Court rating—you fall under Corporate Court jurisdiction, and you can put together your own defense force to fight off any threats. Congratulations, but don't let it go to your head. Single-A corps don't have extraterritoriality (see below), and they're usually not big enough to push around national governments on their own. That means they usually need to make at least a show of playing nice.

While by any normal terms A-rated corps are huge entities, they're the small fries of Corporate Court ratings. They often find themselves to be the target of aggressive merger and acquisitions teams—more than one corporation has decided that the easiest way to go from AA status to AAA is to simply add another A. If you catch my drift.

- Sometimes we look at the Court rankings as a ladder everyone wants to climb, but there are plenty of corps who have fulfilled their highest goals when they reach A status and are happy to stay there.

If they were disciplined when they grew and didn't spread their stock out too thin, they can hold their place fine without some aggressive corp coming along to pluck them up.

- Kay St. Irregular

AA-Rated Corporations

Since the big prize that comes with an AA rating is that gift Shiwase fought so hard for—extraterritoriality—the criteria the Court uses to hand out this rating is simple. They just ask: Is the corporation ready for it? Issuing your own scrip and managing corporate citizenships takes a lot of work, and you have to do it while still managing your everyday business. The Corporate Court doesn't want to grant extraterritoriality to a corp that is large but unstable, and that might issue scrip only to have it and the whole corporate structure disappear in a poof of corruption or mismanagement at the top.

The life of an AA corp is good—there's a lot of money pouring into those things—but if they have a complaint, it's that they often have the size of an AAA but not the clout. Only so many corporations get AAA status, and none of the organizations that have it are eager to expand their ranks. Double-A corps may be as big as, or even bigger than, AAAs, but if they don't get a seat on the court, they're not as powerful. And that ticks them off.

- It's an eternal question—how do you force someone to share power when they're not inclined to do it? You can threaten them, but if they're more powerful than you, the threat doesn't carry much



weight. You can go for a bribe, but it's not always easy for AAs to find something they have that AAAs want. Finding the right pressure point is tricky, as the recent non-expansion of the Court shows. The players may have shifted, but the number of corps on top has stayed steady since the Corp War.

- Stone
- They may be at the top, but don't pretend the AAAs don't want anything. They've got money, they've got power, but they could always use more. You don't get to run an AAA unless you're the type of person that thinks too much is never enough. And not only are they never sated, but they also are always watching each other, probing for the weakness in others while trying to hide their own. As long as the big guys don't like and don't trust each other, then there will be business for us. In other words, forever.
- Aufheben

AAA-Rated Corporations

This is it. The people running the Big Ten, the only corps with an AAA rating, are the only people in the world who can honestly stand up and shout "Made it Ma! Top of the world!" There is nothing bigger than them.

The perks of gaining an AAA rating are solid—a seat on the Corporate Court and a share of the Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaftsbank. Oh, and there's also the whole King of the World thing, which is pretty good too.

It's hard to decide just what the ideal number of AAA rated corps is. One is clearly too few—if there was one megacorp, it would run rampant over the world, exploiting people and resources and funneling any wealth it could scrape off the earth into the hands of a precious few.

- Doesn't sound much different than what we've got right now.
- Slamm-0!
- I'm plenty critical of the way things are now, but that doesn't mean I don't understand that it could be worse. There's a difference between serfdom and slavery.
- Aufheben

Two or three corps on top would also be bad, because they'd always be thinking that if they just took out the other ones, they'd have everything to themselves. A larger number—say, twenty—would be too unwieldy, and it's not certain that the world's population could support twenty megas anyway. So the right number seems to be near ten, but it clearly doesn't have to be ten. As has always been the case, there are corporations, both within the Court and without, who are agitating for more seats to be added, while others quietly plan to knock one of their peers down a peg or two and make the Court that much more exclusive. But we'll get to some more details about the Court later.

BUYING, SPENDING, AND PAYING

Corporations are all about moving money around. The faster money moves around—the more velocity it has, to use an economic term—the better it is for an economy in general. So when people come up with innovations in monetary systems, it's usually for one of two reasons: First, to get money to move around more and give more people access to it, so that they can spend more, particularly at corporations; and second, to give people who have money as many ways as possible to get their money to work for them.

- Finding a way to get around taxes is another motive, and it ties into both your reasons. Business doesn't always consider government a good customer, since government is often slow moving, so they'd rather prevent money from being stuck in the sludge of government budgets. The less you pay in taxes, the more of your money can stay with you and work for you.
- Kay St. Irregular

Currencies

Once upon a time, money had value because it represented gold or some other precious material (or was gold or some other precious material). That time has passed. Nowadays, currency has no intrinsic value—it only has value because some body says it has value, and they force everyone within their jurisdiction to accept it. If their economy is strong enough, the currency might be accepted in other places, or they might at least exchange it for some of their own.

Urgent Message...

THE SHIAWASE DECISION

by Kay St. Irregular

The world-changing, extraterritoriality-granting Shiawase Decision started with a nuclear power plant. Wanting to supply their own power and get themselves off the public energy grid, the Shiawase Corporation won the right to build a nuclear power plant inside the borders of the old USA. While the nation let Shiawase build the plant, they weren't about to let them go without oversight, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission provided several guidelines for the operation of the plant.

Then, about a month after the plant went online, eco-terrorists from TerraFirst! struck and managed to penetrate the plant's exterior security. The NRC didn't like this one bit,

of course, and they sued, saying Shiawase clearly could not adequately protect their sensitive asset. Shiawase said, in essence, nuts to that, our hands were tied by your stupid rules. Let us defend the thing as we see fit, and it'll be perfectly safe.

The case went all the way to the Supreme Court before everything was settled, but when the dust cleared, Shiawase was the big winner. The Court ruled that if corporations have many of the same functions of a government, such as providing their own power, they have a right to defend themselves and their functions. Shiawase was thus allowed to behave like a corporate nation—it received extraterritoriality, and the first megacorporation had emerged.

The exchange rate for currencies is based on the relative economic power of the two groups issuing them; the stronger your economy is, the better your currency does against others.

- That's a bit of an oversimplification, but if I don't let Cosmo get away with some oversimplifying, this will take forever. Besides, the core of what he says is true enough. This means that tracking exchange rates can be an excellent indicator of how different currency-issuing organizations are performing in relationship to each other. Want to see how the growing tensions down south are affecting Aztechnology's operations? See how their scrip is doing in currency markets.

- Mr. Bonds

The vast majorities of currency today have no printed form. You may have heard some ancient songs about coins jingling in your pocket, but that time has passed. Currencies are electronic, and transactions are an instantaneous transfer of credit from one account to another, with nothing physical changing hands. You want something jingling in your pocket now, carry a few extra bullets.

- The biggest knock against physical currency is it's destructible and can be duplicated. The history of cash is all about issuers putting in new anti-forgery measures, and forgers catching up with them. Electronic currency is encoded with algorithms complex enough to make Deus cry, which makes them damned hard to crack.

- Pistons

- Doesn't stop forgers from trying. And, if they're really lucky or really good (usually both), occasionally succeeding.

- /dev/grll

- If you're going to forge currency, might as well mess around with certified credit instead of of currency—but I see we're just about to talk about that.

- Kia

One of the advantages—and disadvantages—of electronic currency is that it leaves a trail. It has to, since the recipient needs to know where income is coming from, and the person paying money out wants to know where their money is going. I think we all understand, though, that there are times when someone wants money to go where it needs to go without anyone being able to follow it. That's when certified credit comes in handy. Certified credit is an encrypted file that, unlike your bank account, resides on a particular device. You could carry the file around on your commlink, or any other device capable of holding electronic information. You could even do it like they did in the old days, putting it on something that has no other purpose other than holding that file.

Lots of places are not enthusiastic about accepting certified credit, since it's significantly easier to forge than regular currency. But that doesn't really matter—if you've got certified credit, you're not using it to buy Womp-Snappers at the Stuffer Shack. You're dropping it into your regular account, and then you can buy all the Womp-Snappers you want the regular way.

MAKING CURRENCIES WORK FOR YOU

by Mr. Bonds

The best reason to know about different currencies and exchange rates is that it can mean extra profits for you if you manage it right, which is one of the better reasons life presents us for knowing things.

When you're going into a meet with Mr. Johnson, you should always know what currency you're going to be asked to be paid in. The default is the nuyen, of course, which has plenty to recommend about it, but that doesn't mean you should always ask for it. If you're doing an infiltration run against a corp, it can be useful to get an advance in their scrip. You can usually make purchases from corp stores at somewhat lower rates than you might pay elsewhere (though selection is limited to just a single corp's products, of course), so you can make your money go a little longer. If you have the right Johnson, they might be a little freer with scrip than with nuyen, because sometimes it's a relief to get the less flexible currency off their hands.

Most of the runs shadowrunners undertake aren't going to have a huge effect on any nation's economy or corporation's bottom line, but you never know what information you're going to come across. For example, if you obtain information that Horizon is about to get involved in various propaganda activities surrounding the increasingly interesting Bogota area, which could provide a nice boost to their profits, then getting paid in Horizon scrip is not a bad idea.

- I know that certified credit is the way we usually get paid, but I like it when a Johnson can do a straight-up account-to-account transfer. I've always thought that if the Johnson is using certified credit, he's telling you he's got something to hide, but he's not smart enough to dummy up an untraceable account somewhere (I've got an untraceable account—why shouldn't he have one too?). Secretive and dumb is not a combo I look for in people I work with.

- The Smiling Bandit

- You're overthinking this one. Maybe you can work hard to make your accounts untraceable, but there's always a chance that they're not. Certified credit is, by its very nature, untraceable. So I accept it cheerfully—why should I make my life more complicated than it needs be?

- Haze

- Oh look! Haze surfaced! Now go away again.

- Sounder

The dominant currency in the world today is the nuyen, and it gets by on the considerable strength of its issuer, the

Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaft Bank. A few other nations, including the stubborn CAS, have their own currency, the euro retains a significant foothold in Europe, and some feral cities are so messed up that they've resorted to using actual printed currency, or they've just ditched money altogether and have fallen back to bartering.

The megacorporations of the world have their own scrip, which is used for almost all internal currency matters. Scrip is generally only accepted by the issuing mega and its subsidiaries, which makes for a nice closed system. Employees get paid in scrip, which quickly makes its way back into corporate coffers as they buy what they need from the company.

- Most middle- and lower-level employees get paid in scrip, but if you're upper management and you don't have a contract guaranteeing that you get paid at least in part in nuyen, then you're a sucker.
- Baka Dabora

One of the tricky things about the various forms of currency floating around out there is that, as I said before, they're not backed by anything. Banks and corps don't issue currency based on the amount of gold, gems, or other precious metals they have hidden away in a vault somewhere. These currencies are backed only by the faith of the issuer—and of all the users out there. It has value as long as we believe it does. We stop believing, and bad things happen.

Assuming, though, that we don't stop believing, you might think that this is perhaps a dangerous power to give to the organizations that issue currency. I mean, what would you do if you could print your own money? You'd just keep reeling it off, making a never-ending supply that would keep you in clover until your stomach burst from being overstuffed with caviar and 5,000¥-a-bottle Scotch. So what's to keep the megas and other currency issuers from doing the same?

Simple: inflation. Let's say that instead of using nuyen, the Z-OG Bank said that tree leaves were now the dominant currency in the world. How would you feel about that? Would you accept tree leaves as payment for work? No! Leaves are all over the place! If you wanted some, you could just grab some, and have all you want, and you wouldn't even have to put yourself in the line of any gunfire to get it. Leaves are useless as a currency, because they're too prevalent. If everyone can get them, then not enough people really want them.

Same goes for currency. If the Z-OG Bank suddenly mints a whole bunch more nuyen, the value of the currency already in circulation declines. That leads to prices rising—if nuyen is more common, then merchants want more of it to make a transaction worth their while. Mint too much money and prices start getting out of control—hyperinflation occurs, where the bottom drops out of a currency's value and prices skyrocket.

- Again, this is a little over-simplified, but it will do (this is not an economics textbook, after all). Just be aware that prices might react to a number of things that have nothing to do with the overall supply of currency, such as changes in the supply or demand for various goods, and workers' expectations of regular salary increases.
- Mr. Bonds

- Is anyone getting ideas from this? Well you should. If you forge currency that's good enough to at least fool some primitive analyzers, you can introduce a flood of new currency and get prices to do some weird things. Quick and dirty economic instability.

- Slamm-O!

- It's a nice idea, but most currency issuers are too big for this to have any real effect. Do you know how much scrip you'd have to forge before a megacorporation even noticed?

- Baka Dabora

The common thinking is that some inflation is a good thing, as long as it doesn't badly outpace economic growth. Since money supply is a key factor in inflation, banks and corporations try to control it by regulating the access to money. Worried that inflation is too high? Tighten up credit by raising interest rates, and people will have less cash to spend. Want a little inflation to keep the economy hopping or move it out of the doldrums? Lower interest rates so that more people can get their hands on money and move it around the economy.

Debt

Understanding how corporations look at debt requires us to stop thinking like individuals for a minute. See, a lot of us are used to thinking of debt as bad. Debt is a burden, it's a cloud over our head, it's the thing that could lead to guys with sharp teeth and sharper knives deciding just how many knuckles of our index finger they're going to allow us to keep. Most of us, especially those of us who are running, avoid debt. Debt is a complication, and it ties us down, which is the last thing we want.

But we're not corporations. Corporations look at debt differently. You still need to be cautious about getting in over your head, but the view generally is that if you have no debt whatsoever, or a very low level of debt, then you are probably not doing as much as you can. Think of it this way: If you're walking around the streets, unarmed and uncibered, there are some jobs you can do, and some earnings you could bring in. But if you can get someone to advance you the money to get a cyberarm with a built-in gun, then all of the

Quick Query:

Question: Why does a CEO pay only four percent interest to the bank on the mortgage for his sixth mansion, while I pay 25 percent interest or more to the guy on the corner who makes loans to get me to the next payday?

Answer: Simple answer: Because they can. More detailed answer: Interest is how lenders control risk. Say what you will about CEOs, but they're likely to be able to pay their debts, and they usually do. Most of the money you lend out will come back to you, so even a low level of interest can be profitable. The guy on the corner, though, is likely to have several people welch on him, or die before they can pay him back. So he jacks up his rates to make sure the payments that *do* come in justify his efforts.





INCOMING FEED.....



sudden you're available for a lot more runs—probably at a higher level of pay. So you went into debt, but your increased earnings from that debt could bring in more than enough to pay off your debt. If you hadn't gone into debt then there were potential earnings that you just left sitting there by not borrowing the money.

That, in simplified form, is why corporations go into debt, because they believe they could use the debt to build something that, to them, is like having a bigger gun. If they don't take advantage of the fact that some people or organizations might loan them money, then they're just leaving that bigger gun lying on the table, unused.

- Where some other corp can pick it up.
- Kay St. Irregular

CORPORATE MUSCLES AND HOW THEY'RE FLEXED

We've already hit on this a little—any organization that can control its own currency is going to have a lot of power. But there's more to it than that, and if you're going to hang out in corp shadows, you'd better be aware of all the tools they can use to come after you if you're careless enough to let them notice you.

Money

This one's a no-brainer. Big corporations have lots of money, and they generally know a lot about how to use it. Using money is

more about being able to buy and sell assets and knowing which assets to purchase; it's targeting the right pressure points. Got a competitor who's being extra annoying? Buy up so many goods that their supply chain is interrupted. Have some extra large sums of currency to do with as you please? Invest in companies that can give you favorable treatment, or in banks that might give you good terms while not playing as nice with your rivals. Want to distract a rival for a time? Short-sell a bunch of shares of their stocks, driving the price down and hopefully making lemming-like market analysts downgrade the stock, leading to a wide-scale dump off.

- That's what money's all about—options. For us, having some cred can mean the difference between choosing what you want for dinner or not eating that night. The higher up the monetary scale you climb, the more choices you get. And some of those choices can be pretty earth shaking.
- Kat St. Irregular

Information

Information is the greatest form of currency there is, because no one has to issue it or prop it up. The only thing information needs to back it up is its own truth. That's what gives it its value.

- Silly Cosmo. Information doesn't have to be true to be valuable. It just has to be able to draw attention.
- /dev/grll

There's a reason corporate espionage is a big-budget activity in the megas (and why so many of us have been able to make good nuyen working in this area)—knowing what your rivals are up to is a great way to get a leg up on them, and keeping them in the dark about what you may be doing is a great way to keep them frustrated.

But information is about a lot more than what may be coming to market and what may not be. Public perception is very important to corporations—the way their brand is viewed directly affects whether people buy that brand or not, and stock prices have long been vulnerable to the slightest whisper. It's also important to know that, as far as rumors are concerned, bad news travels faster than good. If people hear, for example, that “Horizon is building toward record-breaking revenue this quarter,” they might think that's nice and decide to keep an eye on Horizon, but they won't rush out en masse and buy the stock. That might well happen if said rumor turns out to be fact, but not until then.

Bad news, however, doesn't need any verification. Start spreading rumors that Global Sandstorm is going to lose control of the Lagos pipeline, or that Manadyne has taken control of a talislegging operation away from Mitsuhamma, and watch some stock prices fall.

- There's a little more art to it than that. I can't just stand out on a street corner screaming “The end of Saeder-Krupp is nigh!” and expect anything to happen. While you can do a lot with rumors, they need to be rumors that play on pre-existing conceptions of a corporation and that are placed with sources that are likely to be believed. And you have to target the right ears—if you can get “insiders” to dance to your tune, you're going to do a lot better than if you had just broadcast the rumor yourself.

- Sunshine

Take a look at the big stories facing the megacorporations these days, and it's pretty easy to come up with a rumor that might be fun to spread. How is Aztechnology going to handle the growing tensions with Amazonia? Who did Jeremy Falloon kill/sleep with to get named as a possible Corporate Court justice? Why have so many Horizon PR consultants been flocking to Denver lately? The corps will certainly be hard at work looking to counter any rumors that might crop up, but the gossip mill has long shown itself to be able to grind up any defenses.

Most PR people will tell you that the number one tip for countering negative rumors is to get out in front of any damaging info and change the narrative from one that makes you look bad to one that puts you in a more positive light. If there's anything that will kill you, it's a long-term cover up. No one likes to admit they've done anything wrong, but doing that early in the game is a whole lot better than doing it late.

- For a negative example, let's look at the PR nightmare that was the Renraku arcology shutdown. Renraku went into full denial mode, which worked for a short time in that it kept everyone in the dark about what was going on. Eventually, though, word got out, and Renraku's credibility and popularity took a nosedive. They had to work for *years* to recover from that, and people still haven't forgotten.

- Kay St. Irregular

- Compare that to Charisma Associates' work with Tír Tairngire. They came in after the Council of Princes went down, and they played a huge part in shaping the new image of the Tír as a more democratic nation. The reality of this new openness is widely debated—in the end, the Tír is still led by a small group of elitists—but the fact that far more government data is available on the Matrix than there was before, and you can even watch some (limited) Star Chamber proceedings live has played a big role in the new perception of the Tír as a more open nation.

- Dr. Spin

- I've heard the whole “get in front of the story early and don't cover things up” bullshit a million times, but as long as Aztechnology remains as popular as it is, covering things up is going to have plenty of appeal. Yeah, if something's going to get out, it's better to get ahead of it, but the Big A shows it can be even better to do evil shit and make sure most people don't know about it.

- Snopes

Infrastructure

Corporations are about stuff. We sometimes forget this in our day-to-day life, when we're talking to each other over the Matrix and interacting with ever-present AR. Lots of things we do lack physicality, and lots of things corporations produce lack any tangible reality—advertising, public relations, hot AR designs, new ideas and patents, and financial manipulation are all ways corporations can make substantial sums without actually making anything.

In truth, though, corporations derive a tremendous amount of power from their physical assets. Most of the intangibles listed above don't mean anything if there isn't eventually something physical tied into it. All the advertising in the world doesn't do any good if you don't have something to sell. New ideas are great, but eventually you have to turn the idea into something tangible for real money to come in. And designing AR overlays is fun, but if no one has the hardware needed to make and run those designs, then all you've got is a bunch of pretty code that no one will buy. If you want to make money, generally you need to have stuff, either stuff to sell or stuff to help you produce services that people will pay you for.

- Financial and investment services would be one exception to this; business consultancy would be another. I could probably come up with more. The basic point holds, though, because none of these things could do business in a vacuum. They may not have many tangible assets, but they depend on other organizations that do. If all organizations were simply involved in shifting money around, there wouldn't be enough wealth in the first place for those organizations to worry about. Also, the point about needing things to provide services is important. Without significant processing power at your fingertips, your financial operation will be slow and a step behind everyone else.

- Mr. Bonds

The “stuff” the corporations use to build their wealth and enhance their power takes many different forms. It can be factories and manufacturing facilities, it can be powerful nodes and the bits of silicon and microprocessors that make the Matrix work, it can be a fleet of vehicles, and on and on and

on. Whatever it is, corporate infrastructure can give considerable power. If you have a factory that allows you to assemble goods faster and cheaper than your competitors, you have an advantage. If you have more delivery vehicles in your fleet than others, you have an advantage. And if you can play a role in controlling how people get onto the Matrix and where you are able to go, you have an advantage.

- And right there, as much as anything else, is the root of your “technomancer scare.” We technos have power that the corps can’t control, can’t purchase, and that can fuck up what they’re doing if we put our minds to it. They saw the danger we represented, and they’ve been using every tool at their disposal—including propaganda to paint us as the mysterious “other” that metahumanity seems to always get worked up about—to get us under control.

- Netcat

- And that, perhaps, could explain what’s happened to our old friend Puck.

- Plan 9

- What do you know about what happened to the bastard? If you’ve got something, say it!

- Slamm-0!

- Right, that’s what I thought. You were just spouting off again.

- Slamm-0!

Infrastructure also includes your human assets, which are critically important. If you want to gobble up some smaller company, it helps to have an army of accountants who can tell you how much your efforts will cost, how you can best maximize your assets to obtain as many shares of your target as possible, and to inform you how to avoid any possible tax burdens that might accompany your various activities. And once the money guys’ plan goes in motion, having a stock brokerage firm under your corporate umbrella can help a lot, too.

- And let’s not even get started on how an army of creative lawyers (contradiction in terms?) can make life miserable for just about any target they set their eyes on.

- Sunshine

As powerful as your corporate infrastructure can make you, it can also be a weakness. Any runner who has been in the business for any length of time knows the danger that attachments and stuff can pose—the more you have, the more ways there are for someone to hit you.

- Sometimes, though, corporations own so much stuff that it can make efforts to hurt them by going after that stuff futile. You’d have to do a lot of damage before a megacorporation even noticed, and they are all savvy enough to have built-in redundancies so that the loss of one part of their infrastructure won’t slow them down much.

- Mr. Bonds



INCOMING FEED.....



- Yeah, but there's some stuff that can't be easily ... um, redundantified? Is that a word? Well, "made redundant" should work. If you've got a great R&D mind in your corporation, there's no way to duplicate that function. That's why extractions are so popular—they help one corp that gets the new blood, while hurting another one that can't easily replace what they've lost.

- DangerSensei

Military and Security Assets

While this technically could be considered part of a corporation's infrastructure, the amount of sheer firepower in military assets means we should give them their own category. The Shiawase Decision gave extraterritorial corporations the right to have their own armies, and they haven't been shy about exercising this right. Some corporations have found that building up their military assets can have at least two benefits—not only does it make them more secure, but they can also hire out some of their assets to others as security or mercenary troops.

- Though the assets you're hiring out to someone else are assets that aren't around to protect you. If things get hot down in Bogota, you can expect Aztlan to hire a lot of mercenaries and not just rely on Aztechnology military assets, because a lot of those need to stay where they currently are.

- Picador

While some feared that corporations would horrendously abuse their military power (possible new advertising slogan: "Buy Ares or people will come to your house and blow your head off!"), in truth they have been relatively restrained. That's not to say there haven't been abuses, but the wholesale Armageddon some people were expecting hasn't come to pass. Yet.

War can be used as the ultimate hostile takeover, but it has to be deployed carefully. A quick victory can be a tremendous boon for a corporation, but a long, drawn-out fight helps no one. The physical damage a war inflicts is bad enough, but the PR damage and the blows to employee morale (turns out most employees don't like being shot at) can take a serious toll on a corp, especially if they're dealing with these issues while their peacetime competitors continue to roll ahead with less encumbrance.

There are other uses for military assets besides full-frontal war, however. Security and mercenary income are two other issues; deploying special ops teams on covert missions is another popular use. If you want to target your opposition's assets, having experienced military units at your disposal is a great way to go about that.

- An important thing to remember about corporate military assets is they can vary in quality, just like some corporate divisions have their shit together a lot more than others do. They're not all crack, elite troops who can shoot the eye out of a blackberry cat at five hundred paces. Ares is a good example of the disparity of skill—Troy Carpenter has a pretty solid military mind, and he makes sure good units are assigned to his division (Ares Global Entertainment), giving AGE tighter, better skilled security than you might expect from an entertainment division. Ares Heavy Industry, by contrast, is so big, and so many good troops are engaged with Knight Errant, Ares Arms, and AGE, that they don't always have well-trained troops

Quick Query:

Question: Any corp forces I should be particularly worried about?

Answer: Besides the obvious Lone Star and Knight Errant, here are some units and subsidiaries to look out for: Dassault (Aztechnology), Desert Storm Security (Shiawase), Knights of Rage (NeoNET), Minuteman Security (NeoNET), ParaShield (Mitsuhaman), and Red Samurai (Renraku).

- I'm not sure if I'd classify the Knights of Rage as either security or military, but they're certainly a group to be worried about.

- Riser

guarding their facilities. Sometimes you can luck out and sneak into a facility full of rookies.

- Hard Exit

- "Sometimes" being the operative word there.

- Picador

Intelligence Assets

Having military assets without having intelligence assets is like giving a blind man a gun. Anyone who wants to use a weapon properly had best know where to point it.

I covered some of this above when I was talking about information as currency; the salient points are, the more you know about what's going on, the better prepped you are to respond to it. And the better you are at spreading misinformation, the more you can make the world appear as you want it to be, persuading people to ignore how it really is.

- This ability to get people to believe what you are presenting rather than the reality outside the corporate bubble has long been referred to as the "reality distortion field," and CEOs who can wield it automatically get a leg up on their competition.

- Sunshine

Intelligence operations are a little slipperier than their military counterparts. Part of effective security is putting on a good show—wave a big gun in front of people, and they'll know not to mess with you. So military people wear uniforms, patrol in ways that allow them to be clearly seen, and take other measures that may help them intimidate opponents into backing down without firing a shot. Intelligence assets don't want to make that big of a show. Indeed, the most effective intelligence operations are the ones no one knows exists. They're not listed in any corporate directories, their activities are not detailed in corporate newsletters, and no intelligence operative has ever won an employee-of-the-month award.

While keeping your intelligence assets a total secret may be optimal, reality seldom matches that ideal. Corporate accountants tend to get nervous when money disappears down a black hole, so intelligence-gathering operations generally cannot be totally

invisible. Usually they're buried in an "unspecified" part of some division—external affairs is a popular choice. If you want to track down a corp's intelligence ops, study corporate structure in as much detail as you can. Look for a group that has vague descriptions of its activities and little to no measurements of its success, and there's a chance you've found where its intelligence assets are hiding.

- Many corporations have intelligence divisions that are small in manpower, making them easy to hide—the department is nothing more than a desk and a secured node in some back office. The actual work is farmed out, either to people like us or to firms specializing in espionage and counter-espionage, like CIS, Infolio, and Aegis Cognito. These corps are paid well to keep the information they gather secure, but if you can find a way past their security, they've got treasure troves of data on them

- Ma'fan

Clout

Clout is a word that occupies an interesting middle ground between the legal and the illegal. It's not just doing business as normal, as the whole point of clout is to get things to go in a direction they otherwise wouldn't go. But it's also not doing things illegally, or not exactly. It's not blackmail, it's not stealing from the public till, or anything of that sort. So that's what it's not—but what is it?

It's a shame that the city of Chicago was bugged and nuked, because one of the things that was lost was one of the greatest clout-production machines the world had ever seen. City officials had long perfected the art of steering money and resources where they needed to go in order to help them stay in office while generally adhering to the letter of the law.

Employing clout is a subtle art. Anyone knows how to wave money at people in order to get them to do your bidding, but lots of the time the way they do it is illegal.

- Who gives a fuck? Honestly, who is going to enforce bribery laws? The corporation's security? The government? If it's not in anyone's interest to expose the crime, then the crime is not going to be exposed.

- Aufheben

- It's not quite that simple. First of all, you've got competing levels of government—sometimes there are both federal and local laws that cover aspects of bribery, so if you're trying to bribe one level, the other might come after you. Second, within a government or corporation, you have rivals who are sometimes eyeing each other's position, or who at least want to screw over someone else in the corp to build their power base. So if the chief of the security division hears that the head of manufacturing has been taking a few extra nuyen to locate a factory in a certain city, he very well may pursue that charge just to make his rival look bad. The same rule holds true for corp people as does for us—don't give 'em any rope they might be able to use to hang you.

- Kay St. Irregular

So how does clout actually play out in practice? A lot of it is based on how well you are able to deliver things people want. Clout functions in different ways in different cultures, but in the end it usually comes down to one thing—finding the right person to grease the wheels. To speak in gross generalities, in westernized countries, what's important is a person's position. You need to know who makes what decisions, and how you can get that person on your side. Get on the right side of the guy who's in the right place, and you're ready to use a little clout, with the aim of making the bureaucratic structure work in your favor. In places such as Hong Kong and Tokyo, it's a little subtler. Relationships and honor come into play, and power is determined less by organizational structure and more by social status. You need to negotiate the whole web of interpersonal relationships and favors to find out who can get whom to do what, but if you find the right person, whole worlds open up to you.

- In China, Guangxi is all about patience. Building a network doesn't happen in a day, and you get a whole lot more done with a good network than without one. Bottom line is, if you want to try to clout your way through Chinese bureaucracy, don't do it yourself—get someone to front for you.

- Lei Kung

Tracing how clout is used can be tricky, because sometimes the players are involved in a very long-term game. While public officials may wish to avoid taking bribes while in office, at least if they're under close scrutiny, most of them know that good relationships with the private sector can benefit them in the long run. That means you may get a zoning official who constantly makes decisions to favor a certain corporation, and you could search and search and not find any evidence of that official taking any money, but then, once he retires, boom—he's hired by the company he had done so much for, at a salary ten times more than what he was making with the government. In some ways, it's like a bribe that just takes a long time to materialize.

Quick Query:

Question: What are the most common uses of clout?

Answer : Clout is used most often to circumvent bureaucracy. Sure, you could go through the whole appeals process to try to throw out your ticket for ignoring 23 consecutive GridGuide restrictions, or you could have your clout (sometimes the word is used to refer to the person who does clouting on your behalf) make the ticket disappear. You could stand in a virtual line with all the suckers waiting to get your building permits through proper channels, or your clout could fast track it so it's approved before you sign it. Some governments have taken to instituting complicated bureaucracies mainly to punish corps that don't have enough clout to get around their rules.

THE BUSINESS RECOGNITION ACCORDS: THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD

Megacorporations like to pretend they don't need governments at all. They can defend themselves, issue money, enforce their own laws, and do whatever else they need to, and government doesn't need to lift a finger. They're bigger and more powerful than national governments, so what would they need from these lesser bodies?

Well, not much, to be honest, but not nothing, either. Governments have a few tools they can use to gain at least a little leverage on the megacorps operating in their borders, and the Business Recognition Accords are one of the best tools they have. But there's a downside—the use of this tool invariably cedes more power to corporations in some way, shape, or form, and that does not always contribute to making the world a better place.

By adopting the basic Business Recognition Accords, a nation agrees to recognize the Corporate Court's rankings and the basic powers granted to megacorporations—namely, extraterritoriality, the right to grant corporate citizenships, and the ability to issue currency. The country also recognizes the Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaft Bank's right to control what's what with the nuyen. In return for this recognition, the corporations agree to be subject to certain regulations, such as the inclusion of peak controllers on simflicks and rules about the production and distribution of controlled substances.

- The latter generally doesn't have a prohibition-type angle to it—it's not so much that governments are trying to forbid certain drugs as they are making sure they get a cut of the sales. Though as the whole tempo situation showed, there are some drugs that most legal bodies don't want a thing to do with.
- Kay St. Irregular

There are only a few nations that haven't ratified the BRA, with Amazonia, Manchuria, and both Tírs being the most notable, though some speculate that Tír Tairngire's ratification may only be a matter of time.

- I'm not saying Amazonia is going to grant the BRA anytime soon, or even at all, but if things continue to heat up between them and Aztlan, they might have to think about what concessions they might have to give to corporations to get their support. No great dragon ever likes to admit that they need help from anyone but themselves, but Hualpa might want to start lining up allies if Aztlan is already doing so.
- Marcos

Citizenship

One of the complicated parts of extraterritoriality, and a topic that is buried in the many articles of the BRA, is citizenship. If you can grant corporate citizenship and issue corporate SINs, how does that interact with the national system surrounding that particular corp location? What happens when citizens of one corp give birth to a child on the soil of another nation? What if you have dual citizenship and there's a corp or nation that recognizes one of your SINs but not the other? Entire tomes could

EXTRATERRITORIALITY

We've talked about extraterritoriality a fair amount, but a definition of it is due. The basics are that when a corporation gets extraterritoriality, they are recognized as sovereign over their territory. That means that their laws trump other laws in the territory they own. It doesn't mean you get out of taxes, because the corporation's physical sites are generally surrounded by public infrastructure that the corp uses and thus is theoretically obliged to pay for.

- Though any big corp with a decent accounting staff should know how to reduce their tax liability to a bare minimum. Couple that with the incentives many governments are willing to offer if you locate in their jurisdiction and you can come up with a net gain to your bottom line.
- Mr. Bonds

The word "own" is crucial. If a corporation is leasing property, they don't get to apply their own laws there. Also note that extraterritoriality can't just be assumed, it needs to be asserted. That means marking your territory clearly.

- And not just physically. You want to be able to fend off astral espionage according to your rules of engagement, you better put up plenty of astral markers.
- Winterhawk

be written about this, and I'm not going to cover all the various permutations here.

- Wise decision, mainly because what's important isn't the shape of all these permutations but the fact that they exist. Anyone who has done a run involving a large bureaucracy knows that bureaucratic complications are your friend. Where there are unclear areas, or where one thing is treated one way and a similar thing is another, there is confusion. If you don't know how to take advantage of confusion, shame on you.
- The Smiling Bandit
- One of the easiest ways to use this is with the different ways some nations treat Aztlan and Aztechnology. You and I may think those two things are one in the same, but other nations don't, and they might be more lenient toward Aztlan citizens than they are toward folks from the Big A, or vice versa. So what you do is gin yourself up a fake Aztechnology SIN, then get the Aztlan databases to recognize it as valid and issue an Aztlan SIN. Just like that, you've got dual citizenships that you can deploy as necessary, depending on who is going to be more accepting of what.
- Marcos

Urgent Message...

THE MEGACORPORATE SHUFFLE





INCOMING FEED.....

THE CORPORATE COURT

There are people who will tell you that the Corporate Court is the most powerful body in the entire world, a group that has become everything the Star Chamber wanted to be, delivering justice—or a small group's version of justice—at the highest level. Others will tell you that the Corporate Court is the most ineffectual gathering of powerful people that could ever be imagined, a group that is so thoroughly compromised by outside interests that it never does much of anything. It reacts slowly to pressing issues, and when it does its actions are weak and meaningless. It only has the power its corporate masters give it—and corporate masters are not fond of giving away power.

The truth, as is its habit, rests between the two extremes. The Corporate Court's power is too easily underestimated. Remember that it is made up of representatives of the Big Ten, people who have survived bruising corporate battles and emerged in some of the highest-profile positions on the planet. They are survivors, and they know how to wield power. Plus, they live on one of the most isolated, well-defended spots in existence. If they had no power, they wouldn't need to worry about being attacked so much, would they?

But they are also not unified, and it would be all but impossible for them to join in common cause. They represent megacorporations whose entire existence is based on beating back

the competition, on doing better and reaching for more. They're not going to change their stripes just because they all sit in the same body. The lack of concerted agreement on the Court often cripples whatever actions they come up with.

- One of the best ways to understand the Corporate Court's difficulties is to look at what it takes for them to move boldly. One of the Court's most aggressive moves was the Omega Order of 2044 against Aztechnology, clearing the way for all sorts of corporate aggression against the Big A. How did they arrive at the point of issuing that order? By watching Aztechnology make a nakedly aggressive move that benefited them tremendously and hurt everyone else on the Court. Thinking they were a little more imposing than they actually were, Aztechnology pushed the puppet Aztlan government to nationalize every industry in the country, using the government to make a hostile takeover of every corporate asset in the land. So most of the then-eight members of the Court were united in common cause, and that was enough for the Big A to get slapped hard. That's the kind of naked aggression it takes to get them to respond. For the most part the justices line up about as often as the planets.

- Kay St. Irregular

- And when *they* line up, they ain't bringing about no Age of Aquarius.

- The Smiling Bandit

- “Age of Aquarius”? Shit, how old *are* you?
- Slamm-O!

THE COURT’S JURISDICTION

If you look back into the Corporate Court’s history and squint real hard, you’ll find an organization that started mainly to mediate potential disputes between the burgeoning megacorporations that were still in the process of learning how much power they had and how they could use it. Over the years, the Court has managed to expand its authority beyond that realm, following the same pattern that conquerors have used for thousands of years—convincing smaller corporations that they should submit to their authority or else bad things would happen; namely, the bad things that the Court members themselves would inflict.

- When the Mafia does it, it’s called a protection racket. When the Corporate Court does it, it’s merely “expanding their authority.”
- Pistons

This doesn’t mean that any corporation can immediately take a case to the Corporate Court. The Court only deals with AA-rated corps or larger; the only business a smaller corp has with the Court is requesting AA status. AA-rated corps are allowed to address the Court with any grievances they may have, but the Court typically does not take them seriously unless they have availed themselves of other legal channels first.

- It gets a lot worse than merely not being taken seriously—if you annoy the Court enough with what they deem as frivolous requests (and their definition of “frivolous” can be highly subjective), they’ll do more than just ignore future requests. You’ll find decisions suddenly going against you, including decisions that you didn’t even know were pending, and they might keep pummeling you until you’re weak enough that one or more of the Court’s members will swoop in and gobble you up. The Court is not to be trifled with.
- Baka Dabora

The Corporate Court, in many ways, serves as a kind of international Supreme Court. There is no appeal of its decisions, and there is no higher level of government of any kind to which parties can take their claim. Once you’ve lost in the Court, you’ve lost.

Should the Court have a case that it does not want to hear but still believes someone should hear, it’ll remand it to one of two places—the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

Quick Query:

Question: If A-rated corps cannot appeal to the Court for anything, why would they bother to honor limited trade lists from the Court?

Answer: Because every little wooden corp wants to grow up to be a real boy some day. And even if they didn’t, no one wants to piss off the Court, whether they can appeal to them or not.

Private Message...

- Speaking of Mikrolens, this intercept gives a nice glimpse into how Court justice works.
- FastJack

From: Afina Dodrescu

To: Amador Burgos, Assistant Chief of Staff, Office of Julian Sergetti

Re: Mikrolens judgment

The good news is that Mikrolens doesn’t have any friends out there, at least none that matter. The board’s put out conflicting stories about their espionage activities, to the point that no one trusts them anymore and everyone thinks they were the target of their spying. If the Court went full Omega on them, no one would raise much of a fuss, but it might be better to step back from that brink, if only to avoid setting a bad precedent.

I think we could convince the Court to seize all of the company’s non-Turkish holdings, but Belczyk seems like he’s running a little short on favors at the moment, so it seems unlikely that we could claim all of those assets. If we don’t get them, I’d say Ares and NeoNET would be the first in line to claim them, and it does us no real good to give them more Eastern European assets, even if we get something at the same time. What might be best is if Belczyk suggests taking the assets in a single country, one where we would be the most logical corporation to receive those assets. It wouldn’t hurt Mikrolens as much, of course, but they’re not the ones I worry about. We get a nice bonus, Mikrolens gets smaller, and everyone else stays the same, which sounds ideal to me.

I’ll let you suggest the country based on your assessment of the current political and economic climate. I know Belczyk is always receptive to your input.

REMEDIES

No legal body is any good if they can’t deliver consequences to the loser of an action. The Court’s divided nature sometimes takes the edge off these penalties, but make no mistake—when the Court wants to crack down, it can crack down hard. These are the sticks they typically use to enforce their wisdom:

Sanctions

Sanctions can come in many forms. Most of the time the Court uses their big stick, namely the Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaft Bank. The Z-OG Bank has tremendous influence in the financial sector, and if it moves in one direction, may other financial orgs follow suit. So if it tightens credit for a corporation selected for punishment, other financial institutions often change their credit policies, too. Occasionally, this cumulative punishment is so severe that it cuts off the targeted corp’s credit entirely.

But the Court has a lot of member partners who are invested in its success, and it can call on them to punish a losing corp. The Court can limit the losing corp's ability to trade with others, narrowing them down to a specific list of potential partners (generally referred to as a "limited trade" list) who are all eager to gouge the losing corp and curry the favor of Court bigwigs.

- There are a number of benefits to being on the limited trade list, and corps aren't the only ones to reap them. Nations can benefit too, if it serves a corp's interest to make them benefit. Take the current Aztechnology/Amazonia situation. Since the Azzies have a seat on the Court and Amazonia doesn't, they've been taking what opportunities they can to strengthen their position. If you look at some of their recent sanctions, a recurring theme is that corporations on the approved list are located in Argentina, especially those selling natural resources. That means that more nuyen is flowing into Argentina, their industry and resource extraction sectors are expanding, and the nation is feeling a little friendlier toward the Big A. The consequence is that Amazonia has to keep at least one eye firmly planted on their southwest border.

- Picador

Asset Loss

Just as normal courts can order a fine as part of any punishment, the Corporate Court can fine the losing party in any

decision. This could be a simple nuyen transaction, but it might be more, including transferring talent, physical assets, or even entire divisions from one corporation to another. Sometimes the recipient of the confiscated goods is the victorious corp, other time the goods are spread about as the Court sees fit—again, either to repay favors or to get on someone's good side. In the recent Mikrolens case, an upstart A-rated corp got the stuffing knocked out of them due to some alleged espionage, and the entirety of the corp's holdings in Romania were turned over to Saeder-Krupp.

Physical Strikes

The oldest remedy in the world hasn't gone away yet and shows no sign of losing its popularity. If someone goes and gets you, you smack them down hard to teach them a lesson. Simple and clear—is there any wonder people love this form of solving problems?

If you're going to make a strike on someone, though, you need to take a number of elements into account, with the most important being you don't want the target to strike back. That's why corporations appeal to the Corporate Court for intervention instead of lashing out on their own. The Court gives a veneer of legitimacy—it's not just you going against your opponent in some spat, but rather it's you going after them because justice has decreed that it should be so.

Plus, it's generally in the interests of all the megas that the Corporate Court function with some degree of legitimacy. If they



INCOMING FEED.....



allow the target of physical sanctions to strike back against those carrying out the sentence, the Court will appear weak. That means that a majority of megas line up behind any physical strike before it happens, and there are few organizations or individuals on earth who are stupid enough or prideful enough to make a group like that need to prove how strong they are.

- You're missing the long-term strategy. Sometimes there's value to being a martyr. Build up a shell that's likely to collapse in a few years anyway, piss off enough people that the Court comes after you, and then—if you survive—come back like the plucky insider who withstood the worst the Court could throw at it.
- Axis Mundi
- I'm not buying it. Growing a corp just to watch the Court bring it down? That's a lot of effort for not enough return. I have no doubt that some corps try to position themselves as fighting against the Man after they've been smacked down, but I don't believe they planned for that whole mess to happen.
- Lei Kung

There's one other factor to remember—combat isn't cheap. To offset that, the Z-OG Bank generally funds operations against targeted corporations.

- We're forgetting that the Court has the tools for other kinds of strikes. The Grid Overwatch Division, which I'm sure Cosmo will get to, is often thought of as mainly a defensive body, but they have more than enough skills to go on the offensive if they need to. Is a corporation that lost a judgment slow to fork over a fine? GOD swoops into their accounts and takes it. Want to keep the target of an oncoming assault in the dark until the actual attack arrives? GOD messes up their Matrix security. Let's face it, with all of their physical assets orbiting high above us, the Court often has to rely on GOD as the quickest way to reach out and touch those of us with our feet on the ground.
- Clockwork

Omega Orders

Sometimes you just gotta cry "Havoc!" and let the dogs of war do their thing. An Omega Order is essentially the Court taking the shackles off the megas, throwing their hands in the air, and saying that whatever happens, the target of the order deserves.

It's harsh, which is why it's seldom used. How seldom? Well, depends on who you talk to. Most people agree that Operation Reciprocity, the strike against Aztechnology in 2044, came as the result of an Omega Order, but a few holdouts claim that if it truly was an Omega Order, the attacks would have come on a wider geographical scale and would have been more damaging.

- Look, it was an Omega Order. There's this idea that Omega=immediate extinction, but that doesn't have to be the case. Sometimes, if you inflict enough pain but let the victim survive, what you get is a better corporate citizen. Though I have to admit Aztechnology is probably not the best case to cite in support of this argument.
- Snopes

• It was *not* an Omega Order, no matter what your history books may say. All the other AAAs at the time, and plenty of AAs, were chomping at the bit to go after Aztechnology after Aztlan's nationalization scam, and if they had been given the Omega go-ahead, enough hell would have rained down on Aztechnology that they wouldn't have had even a lemonade stand left to their name. The Court was mad at them and wanted them hurt, but not enough to go Omega.

- Axis Mundi
- Just out of curiosity, and not that I believe your line, but if everyone was so pissed at the Azzies, why not go all the way?
- Frosty
- The ones making the decision were the peers of the heads of Aztechnology. Sometimes, the inclination of the powerful to look out for their own overwhelms all else.
- Axis Mundi

The other Omega Order that most people agree occurred was the Thor shot (and associated offensives) that killed Art Dankwalther and dismantled his empire in the aftermath Crash 2.0. Without going into details on the whole Dankwalther story (I hate thinking about Crash 2.0 anyway—always makes me think of Captain Chaos), the moral of the whole thing is simple: You can become pretty big in this world, but never bigger than the biggest gun. It helps, then, to have other people on your side, and in the end, Dankwalther didn't.

The Court obviously takes Omega Orders very seriously and is reluctant to issue them, but the Court also very much enjoys holding the threat of an Omega over corporations' heads. The justices are very careful to maintain the belief that an Omega Order could be issued at any time—they regularly update their Omega Protocols, which detail what steps should be taken once an Omega Order is issued.

• 99.9 percent of the people who claim to have seen a copy of the Omega Protocols have actually been taken in by one of the many fakes circulating around out there, so I'll understand if people are skeptical about any claims as to their contents. I believe, however, I can safely say this: They don't intend for the delay in organizing Operation Reciprocity to happen again. The protocols identify several military assets in various parts of the world that can be called upon for fast, devastating strikes.

- Mr. Bonds

THE JUSTICES

To some, Corporate Court Justice is a title that is second only to CEO in terms of desirability. To others, it's second to none. Being a justice on the Corporate Court gives you the chance to discuss issues of worldwide importance, and to maintain (or shift) the balance of power in the world. While the justices are quite powerful, they have far more independence than other high-ranking individuals. They don't have a whole passel of employees they have to manage, and given their isolation on the Zurich-Orbital Habitat, they aren't subjected to the constant lobbying and influence brokering that their high-ranking earthbound compatriots deal with.



- Not the same level, true, but that's not to say they never encounter lobbyists or others trying to sway them to a certain position. There's a steady stream of trideo flowing into the habitat each day, as lobbyists, executives, and other concerned parties beam their images to the habitat. It's not the same as having to be in the same room, of course—it's a lot easier to turn off a dumb trideo machine than it is to walk out on an actual person.

- Kay St. Irregular

- And don't forget the constant lobbying by the person who helped put you where you are—your friendly CEO. Justices can develop an independent streak if they like, but without the luxury of lifetime terms, those who want to keep their position need to listen to the person at the top.

- Baka Dabora

There are ten corporations who have justices on the court, but there are thirteen justices. Most corporations have a single representative; Saeder-Krupp, Ares, and Mitsuhamma have two. How did they swing the extra justices? It's complicated.

According to Corporate Court bylaws, the original Corporate Court members retain at least one seat for each of them, from now into eternity—or until such time that the bylaws can be revised or amended.

The election of Corporate Court justices is a fascinating procedure, one more secretive and full of intrigue than most Court proceedings. While the names of the Court justices can be reeled off by any businessperson worth their salt, the members of the

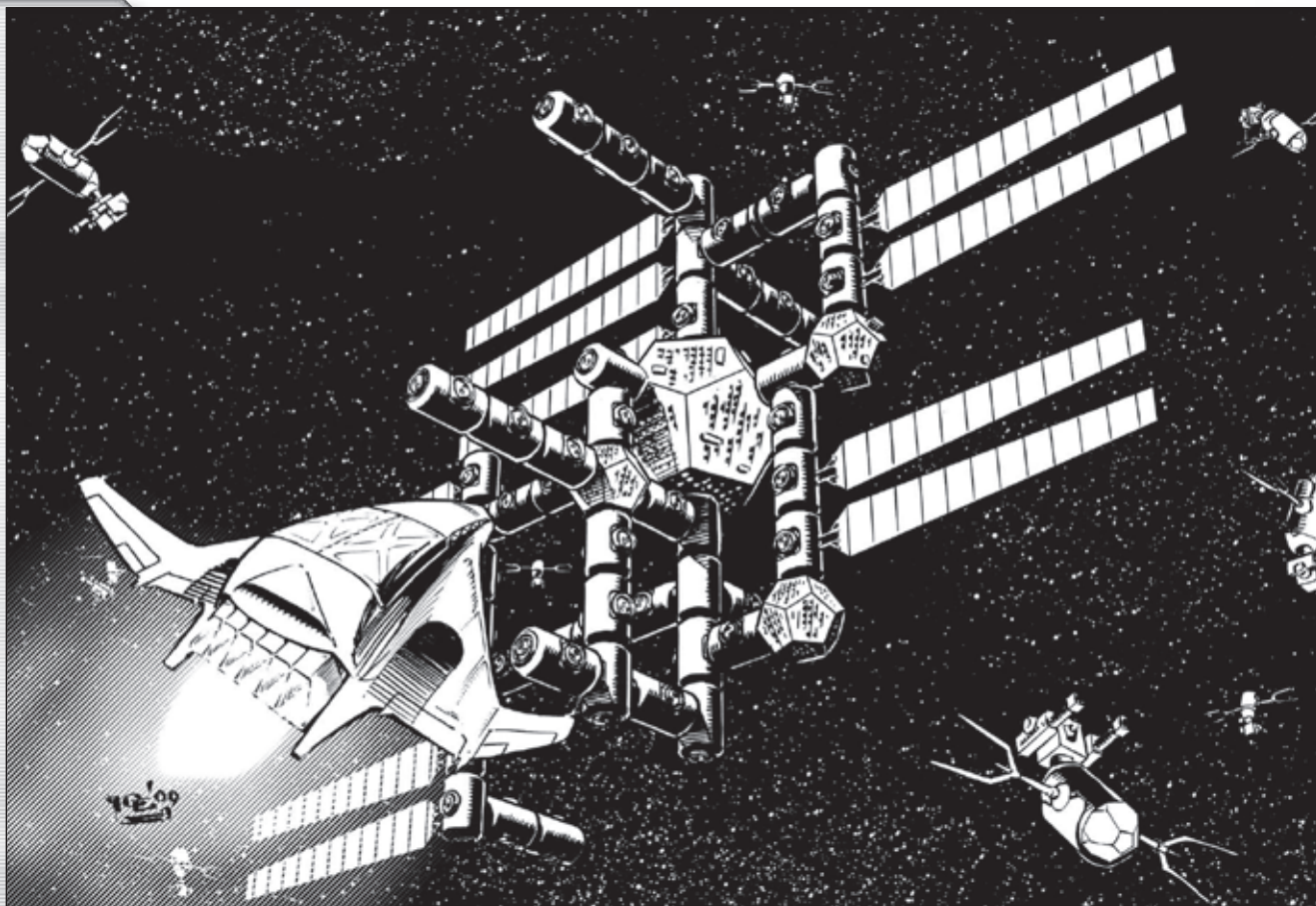
commission that votes the justices into office are not well known. In fact, they change frequently—the commission meets twice per year, and it consists of two members from each corporation on the Court. The names of the commission members generally aren't released to the public, so it's not clear how much continuity there is from one meeting of the commission to the next.

- Some, but not a lot. Corporate CEOs appoint their representatives to the commission, and they're looking for two main qualities: loyalty to the CEO, and the ability to negotiate in commission proceedings to either advance a candidate the corp likes or deep-six one they're not fond of. The latter characteristic promotes some degree of continuity—once you've found someone who is capable of negotiating the intricacies of the commission, you may be inclined to keep them there—but the former is the one that keeps things unstable. Corporate politics are always changing, which means CEOs are constantly revising their assessment of who is loyal to them, and who they can trust.

- Baka Dabora

- This here is big business. Unlike the Court, the proceedings of the commission take place on terra firma. And since execs are constantly jockeying for position within their corp, and looking for dirt on the others who might be on the commission, there are plenty of data runs, slander runs, and other fun to be had. With two meetings per year, it's never long until the next meeting. The positioning never stops, and nuyen keeps flowing into the shadows.

- Stone



INCOMING FEED.....

CORPORATE COURT JUSTICES

Are you ever going to meet a Corporate Court justice? I could try to fudge here and say “well, maybe, anything’s possible,” but I’m not. Simple answer: no. No you’re not. You’re also not going to be hired by one. They’ve got people who do their dirty work for you, and they’re better than you.

- *ahem*
- FastJack

Still, it’s a good idea to know who they are. The decisions they make have a way of trickling down to the streets, and there are always runs to do for people who are trying to work their way up the ladder and replace these guys. Justices have long terms—six and a half years—and they can serve term after term into infinity, but nothing lasts forever. At some point, each and every one of them will be replaced, and there’s a lot of work going on with that fact in mind. So here’s the current crop:

Alexander Belczyk (Saeder-Krupp): Belczyk is supposedly descended from Polish royalty, and he carries himself like it. He’s not the most aggressive justice, but very analytical, and he’s never caught unprepared. Information is important to him, so he puts a high priority on protecting it, meaning he strongly supports GOD.

Emma Binghampton (Horizon): Everyone expected Horizon’s Corporate Court justice to be a skilled negotiator, and Lightford has met all expectations in that regard. While she has a good legal mind, her true gift is for schmoozing and boozing her fellow justices until they better understand her perspective.

Michele Borden (Ares): Earthbound due to severe space sickness, Borden has become the public face of the Court. She was an eco-lawyer in a previous life, which is how she fell in with Arthur Vogel, who eventually brought her into Ares. She’s a decent-looking elf, which makes Court pronouncements easier to take, but when she goes off script you can tell she’s in over her head.

Raphael Colemno (Mitsuhamma): Years ago, everyone, including Colemno himself, knew that he was about the sharpest mind on the Court. In the isolation of the Z-O, though, there are only a few wholesome things to do for recreation, and a few tons of unwholesome shit. Colemno’s opted for the latter, and years of over-indulgence in just

about any vice you can think of have taken a toll on both his mind and body. He could be nearing retirement.

Li Feng (Wuxing): Long ago, during the corp wars of the late 2050s, a young, Confucian-robed Li Feng ascended to the Court as the kind of candidate that all sides thought they could manipulate into doing their bidding. An expert in intellectual wushu, Li Feng used others’ aggression and overconfidence against them. A decade and a half later, he remains the Court’s resident master of backroom deals and favor trading.

Yoshiko Hino (Evo) [Chief Justice]: There are a few people who claim Hino has a warm smile, but the great majority of the world has never seen it. Cold, calculating, and as ruthless as she needs to be, Hino is the type who could easily cut off her own hand to save the rest of her. She’d be even more willing to sacrifice someone else’s hand if she has that option.

- Here’s the weird thing—my Z-O Habitat sources (that’s right, I’ve got Z-O Habitat sources. Suck it) tell me that while Hino dutifully appears at every single Court proceeding, she’s been making all of her appearances via AR recently, not in person—even though she lives on the habitat. My sources are trying to find someone who has seen her in person lately, and they’re still looking.
- Sunshine

Octavia Laux-Denier (Ares): Laux-Denier is tough enough that she’d likely still be a corporate troubleshooter had it not been for the accident that cost her both her legs back in the ‘50s. She’s been comfortable in the habitat’s zero-G environment, but word is she will retire at the end of her next term. The ever-vague “family matters” excuse is the only explanation I’ve heard for her decision.

Kenta Marushige (Renraku): Few last names are as infamous within Renraku as Marushige’s. Son of Tadashi Marushige (the former head of Renraku Arcology’s security and the chief of Deus’ Blues), Marushige believes he owes the corporation a significant debt of family honor, making him quite malleable in the hands of Renraku executives.

Steven Nishimura (Shiawase): Unlikable yet somehow invincible. Age has not softened Nishimura; formerly an open racist, he has evolved into a complete misanthrope who hates everybody and everything equally. Every year brings a rumor that Shiawase or his

fellow justices or the commissioners who choose the justices are finally tired of his act and will find a way to kick him out, yet year after year he stays on the Court.

Lynn Osborne (NeoNET): As popular as Nishimura is hated, Osborne is the Z-O Habitat's resident grandmother figure, an image helped by the fact that AR versions of her grandchildren are perpetually in her residence. She may be the most gentle-looking ork you ever meet, but she still has tusks.

- I'll say. No one should be fooled by her sweetness-and-light act. She was on the Court in the '60s, then off for a time, then came back after playing a strong role in bringing her predecessor down in a bribery scandal. Plus, during Crash 2.0, she was more than willing to sacrifice a few thousand lives here on Earth in exchange for keeping the Habitat safe.

- Snopes

Jean-Claude Priault (Saeder-Krupp): Hino may be the Chief Justice of the Court, but Priault is the dean. He's been on the Court for a few decades, and when he talks, pretty much everyone listens. That doesn't mean everyone likes him, and it certainly doesn't mean he's nice—it just means he knows how the Court works, and he knows how to make his side the winning side.

Kosuke Shimizu (Mitsuhama): A true mystery, Shimizu has an undistinguished résumé, and his legal knowledge seems to be independently gained. He's often overlooked or condescended to by the other Justices, but then he'll ask a question that shows an unexpected depth of knowledge (his discourse on dark matter during the Mikrolens case has to be heard to be believed). He clearly has some allies within MCT, but no one knows just who that is.

Necali Xólotl (Aztechnology): The newest justice on the Court, Xólotl replaces the blunt and ineffectual Anna Villalobos. Taking a lesson from the Big A's PR machine, Xólotl has tried to gain allies by being smart, attentive, and humble. This last quality, when coming from an Aztechnology representative, has shocked some of his colleagues into incoherence.

Part of the trick of the commission is that it's not one person, one vote. The voting is done through a proprietary—and heavily protected—algorithm that weights each vote differently. It's clear that the size of the corp an individual is representing plays a part in that weighting (notice how two of the top three corps, Saeder-Krupp and Mitsuhama, have an extra justice), but just how much weight size is given and what other factors are considered remains a mystery.

ZURICH-ORBITAL HABITAT: THE GREATEST FORTRESS IN HISTORY

Good fortresses serve at least two purposes. First, they offer actual protection. If your fortress doesn't make you significantly safer from anyone who wants to attack you, then it's not a fortress, it's a house. Second, a fortress is a statement of power. By building something large, impressive, and imposing, you're telling the world that you've got plenty of money and juice, and you're not going to hesitate to use either to keep yourself safe.

The Zurich-Orbital Habitat is tremendously imposing—and ridiculously expensive. It tells the world that there are some things the corps want to be untouchable, and the Big Ten will spare no expense to make them so.

Z-O's first and best defense is its distance from everything else. It orbits at an altitude of 560 kilometers, which of course puts it out of the range of most of the people and weapons sitting here on the ground.

But not all of them. Some surface-to-air missiles could still conceivably reach the station, and there are of course vehicles capable of ascending to the height of the station. So height is not enough.

The second line of defense is secrecy. We may know the approximate altitude of the station, but we don't know its location. Considering that the surface area of the sphere defining the station's possible position is more than 600 million square kilometers, there's plenty of space for the station to hide. While vast, that physical space is of limited use. There is a constant stream of communications traffic going between the ground and the station (especially since the bulk of the Court's administrative activities take place on the ground), and no matter how good your Matrix people are, that sort of traffic is tough to hide. The folks on Zurich-Orbital are not eager to broadcast their security secrets, but from what I hear there are as many as six dummy satellites in orbit at a similar altitude, and these are subjected to a constant barrage of garbled communication. I know a few hackers who have driven themselves crazy trying to break the encryption of these streams, only to find that beneath the garbled noise is only more noise.

- For all we know, some of those hackers might have lucked on the real deal. I'd be severely disappointed in GOD if their encryption was weak enough that some yahoo on the ground could break it.

- Clockwork

- Except it's not just yahoos who are looking for this info. Those who are capable of cracking the encryption algorithm, however, are also the least likely to talk about what they have done.

- Axis Mundi

THE COURT ON THE GROUND

The Z-O Habitat is a mighty big station, but it's still nowhere near big enough to house all the operations the Corporate Court requires. The Towers in Manhattan hold the ground-level headquarters of the Court and ancillary operations, and there's plenty happening there. First, each justice has their own staff, including communications staff, legal clerks, and representatives to meet with the unending throng of lobbyists, attorneys, and executives beating a path to the justices' doors. Then there's the administration of the Court itself—new case intake, calendaring cases, etc.

Besides the people directly working for the Court, you have a high number of people working in related organizations. While the Grid Overwatch Division has some crucial people up in the air, monitoring things from their lofty vantage point, most of their heavy lifting is done on the ground. Some people believe the Tower houses the finest collection of hackers anywhere on Earth. Naturally, the Corporate Court Matrix Authority also has the bulk of its workers in the Towers, and while the Z-OG Bank has offices throughout the world, it also has plenty of workers based in Manhattan. Taken together, this adds up to about 15,000 workers laboring on the ground to ensure things go as smoothly as possible in the air.

The Corporate Court also has a growing presence in Nairobi, mainly in anticipation of the completion of the Kilimanjaro mass driver. The space elevator should have a significant effect on the Court's operations, and even though the opening of the thing is eight to ten years in the future, they are already looking to see how they can take advantage of it and get the infrastructure in place to use it as soon as it starts moving.

- But wait, wouldn't having to occasionally dock at a fixed place hurt the orbiting habitat's ability to stay hidden? Couldn't people who want to track down the habitat stop scanning the skies everywhere, and instead camp out in Nairobi and wait for the station to arrive?
- Slamm-O!
- Shhhhhh ...
- Axis Mundi
- I wouldn't worry about the habitat too much. What do you think the staff in Nairobi is going to be planning out for the next eight years besides how to get stuff up and down without compromising security?
- Orbital DK

So in the end, the habitat can't depend on staying high and hidden for its security. Like just about every other entity in the known world, the folks on Z-O decided there's no protection like things that fire things at other things at high speeds, or things that make other things blow up.

Before we get to the specifics of these defenses—or as specific as we can get—let's talk about the station's shape. The core of Z-O is a massive dodecahedron known as the Rotunda. Important stuff is here, including the main courtroom, associated smaller meeting rooms, the justices' offices, and the most important tech systems on the station. There are a few other smaller rotundas, and they are connected by a number of cylindrical chambers that have living quarters, various supplies, and the facilities needed for the station's other basic functions. Spreading out from this rather graceless amalgamation are several wing-like solar panels that take care of the station's power needs.

Hovering around the station like bees around an especially fragrant flower are several satellites, most of which are there for defensive purposes. Some of the satellites are there for spotting or tracking purposes; most are armed. Armed with what, you ask? Well, pick a weapon. Lasers, missiles, rail guns, whatever. If it can break something, it's mounted on Z-O.

- Most of those weapons have a defensive orientation. The Z-O is not about to go on the attack—for one thing, it's far too clumsy and difficult to maneuver for that. The things the station intends to blast into little bits are the things that come near it, not the targets it picks for aggressive action.
- Orbital DK

Does the habitat have any vulnerabilities? Well, yes, but they're mostly theoretical. A small craft that approaches the station is likely to be vaporized, but what about an asteroid or something of similar size? It probably could get through, or at least a big chunk of it could. Not that everyone's got a mass driver capable of hurling a big rock at a hidden space station, but if anyone did, they'd have a chance of doing some damage to the habitat. There's one last line of defense, though—the habitat is modular, so if one section breaks off, the others are capable of sealing themselves off and sustaining life inside for a while. A rock could do some damage, but it wouldn't take the whole station out.

But why launch a physical attack, which requires hard-to-find equipment costing millions of nuyen, when you can try to virtually access the station with the equipment you have on you all the time? The folks at the habitat are well aware that Matrix attacks are far more likely than physical attacks, and they have emphasized Matrix defense to a proper extent. Any discussion of the habitat's Matrix defenses starts with the Corporate Court Matrix Authority.

THE CORPORATE COURT MATRIX AUTHORITY

It's great that we all have these devices and commlinks and all, but if they don't talk to each other right then we might as well be carrying around empty beer bottles. The Corporate Court Matrix Authority is the body that sets the standards and protocols that ensure that your brand new commlink can jump on the Matrix and communicate with all the other nodes out there.

While that sounds like the type of job that could be done by a half-dozen gear heads generating code in a locked room, there's a lot

more to it than just issuing protocols. As you might imagine, corps are always trying to chip away at the edges of protocols, looking for ways to adhere to them (or nearly adhere to them) while giving faster, smoother access to their friends and worse access to whoever they don't like at the time. There are plenty of other shenanigans going on, including corps running black ops against each other over the Matrix and horning in on each other's virtual territory, along with disreputable providers offering access that would have to improve significantly in order to be called "sporadic."

In order to address these areas, the CCMA needs enforcement. The first two letters in their acronym help—they've got the backing of the Corporate Court for what they do, and that carries a lot of weight. Any remedy in the Corporate Court's power is available to the CCMA, though they usually don't get into the extreme end of things.

- Usually they don't have to. The corps may occasionally pull dirty tricks, but in the end a functioning, fast-moving Matrix is in their collective best interest. The CCMA offers that, so most everyone is usually willing to comply, and if they step out of line, a firm word from the CCMA often brings them back. It helps that these guys know their stuff, and their pronouncements are highly respected. If their word isn't enough, they always have fines and sanctions to back them up.
- Netcat

There's one other thing a body like the CCMA needs—if they're going to make rules and enforce those rules, they're going to need a way to find out who is breaking those rules so they can do something about it. This is why the CCMA got GOD.

Grid Overwatch Division

The Grid Overwatch Division is the Matrix version of what Interpol was supposed to be—or at least, what people, especially those who watch action trids, think Interpol was supposed to be. They're the ultra-competent big boys who step in when the local police are overwhelmed, or when a crime is too big or crosses too many jurisdictions for the locals to deal with on their own. The agents of GOD are confident, aggressive, and good at what they do. Since so many Matrix transactions cross jurisdictional boundaries—how many nodes do you think people are passing through just to get a look at this post?—GOD can be pretty free about taking over just about any case they're interested in.

That doesn't mean everyone else likes GOD stomping all over them, or even goes along with it. Sometimes the resistance is formal, registered as official protests and what not; other times it flies under the radar, including stuff like "forgetting" the proper access codes to certain nodes, "accidentally" allowing annoying viruses to tail GOD agents in their investigation, or even hiring runners to find creative ways to harass GOD agents as they work.

- I landed one of those jobs once. It was fun—the only objective was "delay them as long as you can," so we got to do all kinds of stupid shit. My favorite was the botnet where all the agents looked like hyper cartoon rabbits. Watching the GOD agents' icons, with their trademark fedoras and trenchcoats, try to swat away these swarming rabbits was great. Especially at the end, when they just whipped out virtual pistols and started shooting the bastards. Good times.
- Slamm-0!

Despite their swagger, GOD agents know they can't just run roughshod over the corps they investigate. They'd prefer to intimidate when possible, but they understand there are times when a little honey is called for. They usually save that lighter touch for when they're finding what they need in their investigation—the people they arrest receive no sweetness whatsoever.

- And that's just from the normal GOD agents. The special ops division of GOD, usually called the "Right Hand," is as swift and brutal as they come. Quick example: A-rated security corp ignores several CCMA interdictions to stop using a particular form of IC that is a little indiscriminate in whom it chooses to attack. Regular GOD agents drop by via the Matrix, are snowballed, go home empty handed. The targeted corp, knowing they were about to be targeted, take all their systems offline, then loaded them down with all sorts of off-book black IC, just in case GOD agents found a way in.

Next morning they fire up the machines and get to work. The machines are fine, the data is untouched. But overnight, their stock has plummeted and is worth less than a nuyen per share. It's about at the point where it should be de-listed, but that doesn't happen. Instead, Knight Errant swoops in and eats the whole damn corporation up. That leaves the original corp desperately erasing their own files before Knight Errant takes over, because no one wants KE to have IC more powerful than they've already got.

To sum up: The Right Hand knows how many ways there are to get to you, and they're good at all of them.

- Kay St. Irregular

ZURICH-ORBITAL GEMEINSCHAFT BANK: MAKING THE WORLD GO ROUND

The other major organizational tenant of the Z-O Habitat is the Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaft Bank, which has the minor duty of issuing the premier currency in the world. Along with that, they have the duty of keeping the world's economy afloat and growing, and of doing the wide-scale lending and financial operations that a mammoth bank would be expected to be involved in. But that's it!

- Remember that keeping the economy growing has nothing to do with making it more fair or equitable. Generally it's the opposite—Z-OG Bank's method of growth is all about putting more resources in the hands of those who already have plenty.
- Aufheben

Issuing and distributing currency is a tremendously complicated activity. First there's the encryption. If you don't make your currency secure, then no one's going to use it—or worse, everyone's going to use forged versions of it. The Z-OG Bank Mint division and the CC work together to create the very best encryption on—and above—Earth to keep the nuyen secure and preserve its values.

Once you have a reliable currency, there are plenty of other questions to tackle. How much should you issue? How should it go out? At what rate? And perhaps most importantly, how do you maximize the value of the assets you possess?

That last question gets the bank into all sorts of interesting areas, from buying and selling stocks and bonds, currency trading, real estate acquisition and management, etc. etc. It comes down to

AND THE REST: OTHER NOTABLE Z-O HABITAT RESIDENTS

Luxurious trappings. No crime (besides the occasional white-collar sort, and that's usually directed against poor saps on the ground). Plenty of privacy. And none of the hassles of gravity. There are several good reasons to take up residence in Z-O, but life there ain't cheap, so only people with connections and cash get a shot at taking up residence.

- Hold on a minute. People aren't retiring to Z-O to live a life of luxury. They're retiring up there either because staying in gravity any longer might kill them or because someone wants them out of the way. Or both.
- Orbital DK

Here's a list of some of the more interesting residents currently floating above our heads at regular intervals.

Agatamori Kihara: 112 years old and counting, Kihara is a cranky old man. A former Mitsuhamama CEO, he was forced out when he got a little too chippy with his Yakuza compatriots. Now that he has survived his rival, Eiji Yakamura, Kihara doesn't seem to have much left to live for. But he still keeps living, spending almost all of his time on the Matrix telling anyone he encounters how stupid they are.

Taiga "Tiger" Mitsuhamama: No corporation has sent as many retired executives to Z-O as MCT, so it's only fitting that the founder of the MCT empire has now made his way up the well. Tiger doesn't make many public appearances—signs of dementia have been seen in him, and he's been getting pretty regular treatment to keep his mind as sharp as possible. Part of the reason he came to Z-O was to keep an eye on things for his son, Toshiro, who is running MCT's things on the ground, but his efficacy at this job has been questioned.

Yuri Severenko: Severenko is either crazy, having the time of his life, or both. He's a mystery man—he spent some time on Renraku's board, but just what he did to earn his way onto Z-O is anybody's guess. Severenko himself is no help; the stories he tells about himself change daily. There are accounts on record of him claiming to have been an Olympic archer, an arcanoarcheologist who uncovered incredible ruins in Antarctica, the one-time holder of the in-flight speed record, and the inventor of

the Matrix. What is certain is that he is in reasonably good health for a 97-year-old man, and he has the most extensive repertoire of zero-G dance moves of anyone on the station.

Akai Ono: Ono rivals Severenko for the title of person having the most fun on Z-O, which makes it something of a shame that the two men do not get along better. Ono was a former Ares CC justice who liked Z-O so much that he stayed up there. Living off a fortune that may be ill-gotten and seems to have pushed at least one of Ono's acquaintances to suicide, Ono seems determined to extract as much physical pleasure from his body as he can as long as it remains functional. The collection of AR themes he has at the ready for his personal quarters would make even a determined pervert blush.

- I shouldn't have to spell this equation out, but here it is: Guy who is looking for new pleasures + guy with lots of money = moneymaking possibilities for creative individuals.

- Kane

Geraldo Solis: There are times when the back corridors and chambers of Z-O can seem rather foreboding. The common joke residents use to reassure themselves is this: Don't worry, there are no ghosts in Z-O. There's only Solis. When Solis arrived on Z-O, he was a horribly scarred former Azzie who seemed to be on the run from his old employer.

- The Azzies went so far as to attempt to whack Solis right there on the habitat itself, something the CC justices didn't like one bit.

- Picador

Understandably, Solis didn't go out seeking company; he mainly stayed cloistered in his quarters. As the years had passed, Solis has come out more; surgeries have improved his appearance, but he hasn't become any more outgoing. He slips through the habitat's corridors, watching anyone who comes near him with his wide eyes and not saying much. Matrix traffic indicates he's doing more than just sitting around up there, but whether he's plotting revenge against Aztechnology, researching surgeries to further improve his appearance, or just playing game after game of Bug Zapper is anybody's guess.

this—the Z-OG Bank has tremendous resources along with the backing of the ten most powerful corporations in the world. If there is some form of financial activity it wants to get involved in, it will.

- The commonplace line is that the power of the Z-OG Bank comes from the Big Ten, but in truth it doesn't. It comes from all of us. The nuyen, like most currencies of the twenty-first century, is backed by nothing but our collective faith. If we removed that faith, the currency, and the whole system it supports, crumbles. Yes, that would cause considerable pain and difficulty for us, but it would also present

unimaginable problems for the Big Ten, and there's no way they want that to happen. We give the nuyen value, and we could take it away. It is we who have them over a barrel—not the other way around.

- Aufheben

- Okay, you can stop now. Call me when you've got a few billion people enrolled and unified in your "Let's devalue the nuyen through our faith" plan. Until then, you have only words; they still have money.

- Snopes



Organization

The Z-OG Bank is controlled lock, stock, and barrel by the Big Ten. The fact that they own equal shares in the bank is one of the greatest incentives there is to keeping the Big Ten at ten—back when Cross and Wuxing joined the world's most exclusive club, the members of the then-Big Eight all lost a little bit of influence in the Z-OG Bank, since they had to share it with two other shareholders. So while the Big Ten coordinate together to promote their efforts through the Corporate Court and the Z-OG Bank, none of them ever forget that they'd have even more power if one of their compatriots fell by the wayside.

The Z-OG Bank is organized to keep everyone involved and a little bit hungry. There are only nine seats on Z-OG's board of directors (the holders of those seats are collectively known as the "Gnomes"); each director represents one mega, and each of them serves a nine-year term. That means that someone's term ends every year. When that happens, the corp that person was representing takes a year off from board membership, rejoining at the beginning of the following year. Currently, Ares is suffering through a year off of the board; next year, Wuxing takes the trip to purgatory. Corporations live in continual dread of the year off, and they are making plans on how to endure it from the moment their nine-year term starts. Then they spend the year off frantically making plans for the next nine-year period so their board member can hit the ground running.

The board is selected by the Big Ten CEOs themselves. During their time on the board, they collect two salaries; one from their parent corp, one from the Z-OG Bank. In theory, this makes directors continually remember to balance their loyalties between their corp and the bank. In practice, this makes a position on the

board even more coveted than it would otherwise be, meaning those who make it to the top are cutthroat survivors. On the plus side, the high level of compensation makes the directors fairly resistant to bribery, which is important to the CEOs.

- Bribery is simply a matter of figuring out what someone wants. And everyone wants something.

- Winterhawk

- Also, when bribery fails, blackmail is a fine second option. No one makes it this high without leaving a few bodies behind them.

- Baka Dabora

From Heaven to Earth

Another consequence of the board's dual-salary structure is that directors often have affairs to take care of back on the ground, so the majority of the directors do not reside on the habitat. Some do, either for the perks of orbital life, to keep an eye on things in the air, or both. Since they don't have a majority up there, board meetings take place on the ground at the Z-OG Bank's Zurich headquarters.

- These meetings are always a scene. There are protestors everywhere—Aufheben's type of people—and since these are regularly scheduled protests, they have a well-planned theatricality that spontaneous protests lack. I wouldn't say Zurich becomes insecure during Z-OG Bank meetings, but it definitely gets more chaotic, and there's all sorts of talent wandering the streets. Good place to meet people.

- 2XL

Megawatch Buzz:

MEGAWATCH BUZZ

//Keyword: Corporate Court

//Date: 01/01/2072 - Current

CORPORATE COURT MATRIX AUTHORITY CERTIFIES AFRICAN STOCK EXCHANGE

NAIROBI, KENYA—The expected transition of the Nairoboi Stock Exchange to the African Stock Exchange took one step closer to reality as the Corporate Court Matrix Authority certified the systems the exchange will use as meeting the CCMA's standards. This comes after strong opposition from Azania, who believed the process had not been open enough and that Azanian financiers were being shut out of the burgeoning development in Nairobi.

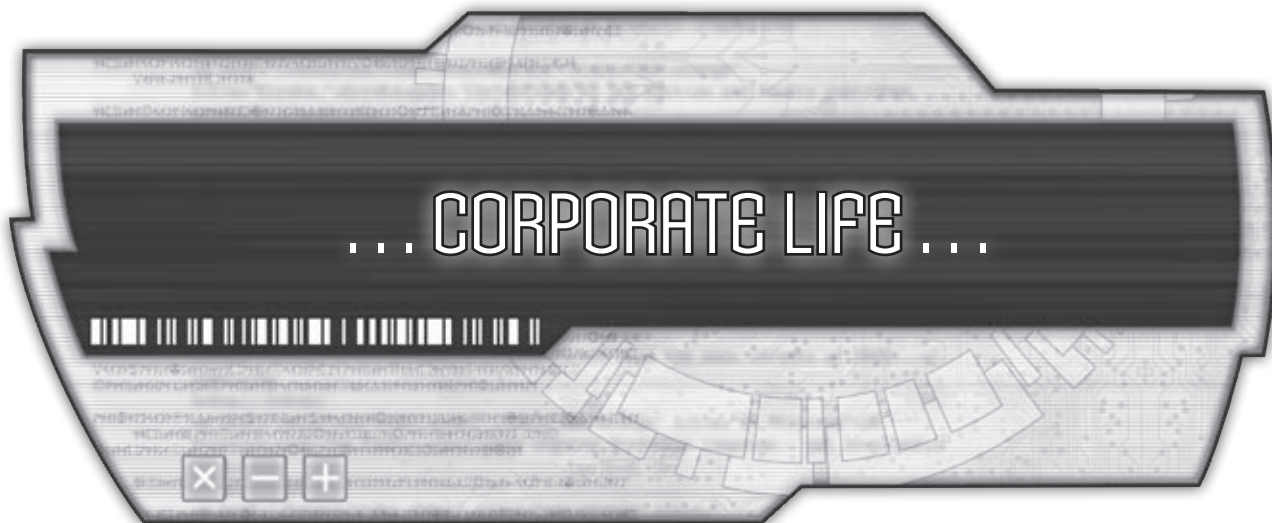
VON SYDOW TO FILL LAUX-DENIER VACANCY?

LOS ANGELES—In a controversial move, former Ares Global Entertainment executive Gustav Von Sydow has been put forward to fill the Corporate Court vacancy left by the upcoming retirement of Octavia Laux-Denier. Von Sydow retired from Ares after a long, bruising fight with Ares Seattle vice president Karen King, and his defeat in that fight was thought to mark the end of

his career. An acknowledged master at energetic, persuasive propaganda, Von Sydow might have employed his skills on his own behalf to give him a final shot at a high-ranking position in Ares. King and other Ares executives have remained silent about Von Sydow's nomination, and some insiders insist Von Sydow has enough enemies to ensure he will never be seated on the Court.

PLOT TO DUPLICATE ICONS OF CORPORATE COURT CHIEF JUSTICE FOILED

MANILA, PHILIPPINES—A raid on a seemingly independent Matrix development studio uncovered in-house nodes that held several unfinished icons apparently aimed at replicating Corporate Court Chief Justice Yoshiko Hino. Representatives of the Huk government are leading the investigation, and they claim none of the icons had been completed to the point where they could have successfully imitated the Chief Justice. Government representatives refuse to speculate what the motives for creating the icons might be. As part of the investigation they are looking into the ownership of the development studio, but so far have not been able to connect the individual owners to any larger organization.



CORPORATE LIFE

Posted by: /dev/grrl & Kia

I know that most of the posters on JackPoint are from outside the corporate machine. Since I've been raised in a megacorp—with all the brainwashing that entails—I thought it might be fun to educate you outsiders on just what it's like growing up in a mega.

- As another former corp brat, I thought I'd help /dev/grrl give y'all another perspective on corporate life.
- Kia

WILLING SLAVES

For lots of people, becoming a corporate citizen—the ultimate goal of most employees of an AA or AAA corp—seems like the pinnacle of success. From the outside, the corporate life looks like a world of comfort, security, protection, and opportunity. From the inside—well, let's just say, the term “wageslave” is pretty apt. But the corporate masters paint the outside world as a bleak and violent place to their little slaves, and so the vast majority of corporate citizens would much rather be inside than out.

- Don't ever underestimate the appeal of comfort and security. Look around. It IS a bleak and dangerous world out here. Who wouldn't be willing to trade some personal freedom for security and luxury?
- Kia

LIFE AS A WAGESLAVE, OR “WHAT'S IT LIKE, BEING A [INSERT CORP NAME HERE] CITIZEN?”

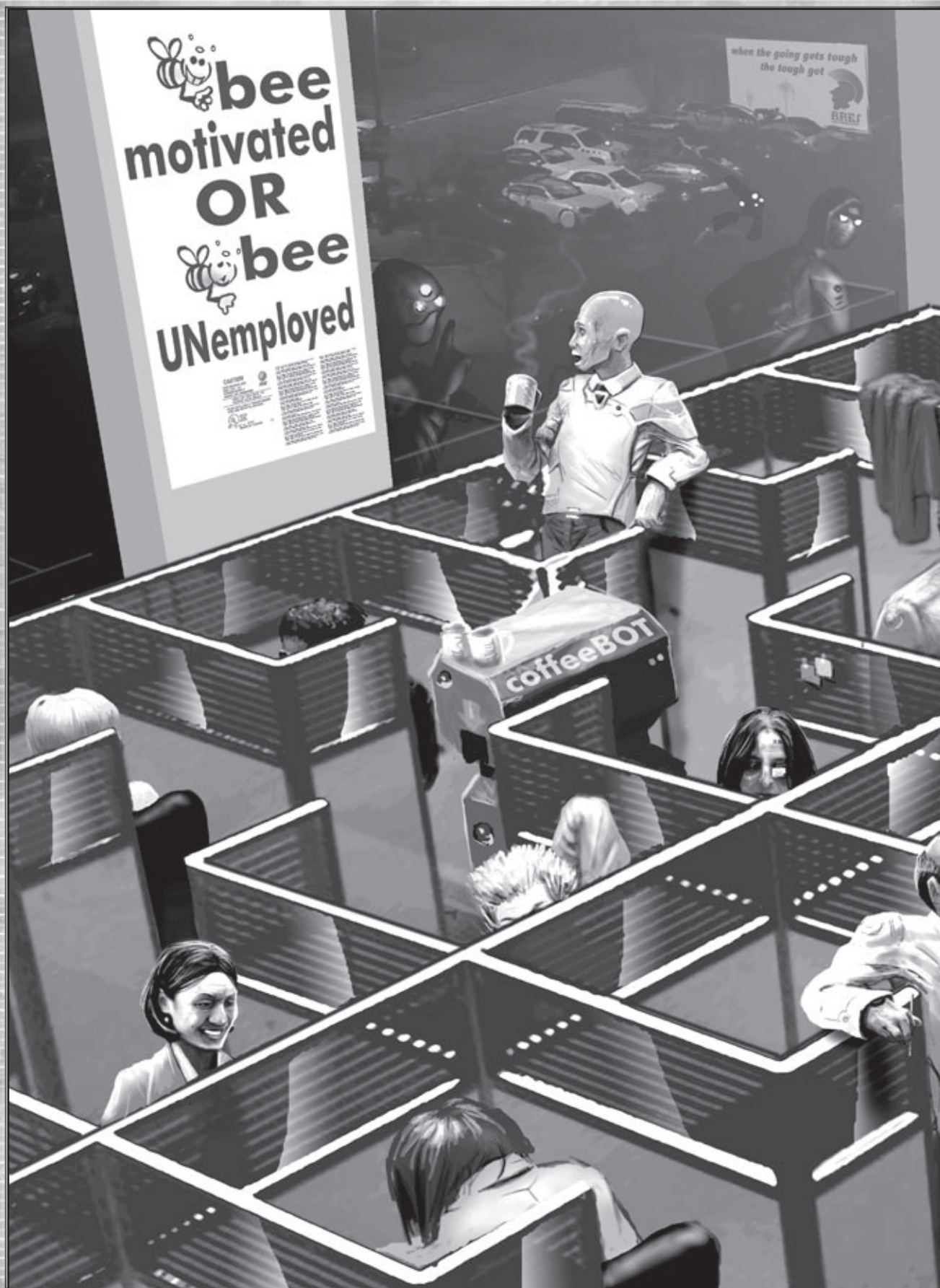
/dev/grrl: This may strike you as odd, but I wouldn't have understood that question at one time. Seriously. This is key to understanding the wageslave mentality, in fact. I've been around the world now and spent time in some pretty rough places. The things I took for granted as a spoiled little corporate brat are real luxuries outside of the corporate world. Being a corporate citizen is like being wrapped in a warm, cozy blanket—wrapped so tightly that you can barely breathe, let alone move. You sign over

your life, your body, your soul—and in return you're cared for, sheltered, loved, and told how, what, and when to think. If you grow up in a mega, you never know life could be anything else.

- Corporations are aware that their controls need to be subtle and mostly invisible to their employees to minimize the impact on employee morale. Typically, these measures take the form of tightly controlled environments that subtly limit lifestyle options while providing employees the illusion of choice. If it's done right, none of the contented sheep ever notice the shepherd.
- Plan 9
- Yeah, but with the Matrix and media everywhere, isn't it pretty *obvious*?
- Beaker
- *shrug* Most of the AAAs and a lot of the AAs have entire generations of citizens that have been born and raised inside the system. Indoctrinated from birth on the benefits of corp life, educated, sheltered and buffered from the outside world. Of course they're not totally unaware—today's media-saturated society makes it almost impossible to block outside influences, except in closed enclaves. But have you looked at the news out there lately? Drug-fueled crime sprees, murder, corrupt cops, diseases in the Barrens...
- Kia
- Ever wonder what will happen as this goes on for more than a few generations? How alienated from the rest of society will these pampered corporate drones become? And what happens when their corp is destroyed, lays them off, breaks up, or they get extracted?
- Aufheben

Housing is often provided for citizens by the mother corp (at least for the more valuable citizens). Obviously not everyone gets room and board, though—the costs make it unfeasible, and with telecommuting a viable alternative, in many jobs it doesn't make much business sense. But for those citizens eligible for housing, security is a prime reason to trade away personal freedom; well-





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patrolled, well-guarded corporate housing enclaves provide citizens with an abundance of security. These folks don't see themselves as locked in—they see the dangers beyond the corporate walls as being locked out. Protection against the dangers of the outside world—this is the reason security guards need to be armed, cameras are everywhere, and all citizens must have RFID tags. Of course, guns can be turned at new targets at a moment's notice, cameras can track the movements of citizens as well as outsiders, and RFID tags enable your corp to monitor who you're with, where you are, what you're doing—thank god I'm a hacker, otherwise my social life would suck.

Depending on its location, corporate housing may be anything from a block of apartments inside a secured enclave to an all-inclusive arcology whose residents have access to every imaginable need and luxury—food-delivery services, restaurants, shopping centers, medical clinics, physical-fitness facilities, recreational facilities, schools—*everything*. Among corporate citizens, living in an enclave is considered a prime goal and comes with a measure of social prestige. At the lower end of the spectrum are the dreary blocks of corporate owned pre-fab housing, entire stretches of square, boring, and ugly-but-functional apartments and housing centers. These dense urban-housing facilities are where the lowest-ranking citizens live—but they still are far better than the urban slums of the non-corporate neighbors.

Generally, salary is paid in corporate scrip, which you can spend only in corp-owned stores or at approved, affiliated shops and merchants. After all, it's not like you can go into the big downtown mall and spend your Saeder-Krupp scrip. Just another fun way Mother Corp limits your choices and ensures that every little cent you earn finds its way back into the corporate coffers.

Even clothing choices are controlled—just how tightly depends on the corp. Those citizens who want to be successful understand that wearing the corporate-produced and -sponsored brands shows loyalty. House brands or certain dress styles are

avored over others. More insidiously, corporate facilities often have specific dress codes, and the presence of RFID tags in every piece of clothing you wear means that your boss really can tell what color panties you're wearing. (A note to anyone planning to infiltrate a hi-sec facility: a wageslave who isn't broadcasting a plethora of tags stands out to both security and to other employees.)

- Heh. There really is a “fashion police.”
- Glitch
- Yes, and they should be pounding on your door, Glitch.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

Corp-issued health mandates dictate what's available on corp food-delivery sites, and the so-called “health engineers” who write these mandates are always changing their minds as to what makes employees healthier, more productive, more energetic, better able to retain information, and so on. Once, our health engineers discovered a study that found kids achieved higher mental test scores after ingesting flaxseed oil. We all got a dose with our school breakfasts for months—blagh. I've heard that Shiawase is the worst when it comes to food—all that soy crap, and Horizon is the best—real food! What a concept!

- Then again, I've seen a leaked confidential Horizon document that indicated obesity and high cholesterol are becoming topics of concern within the corp.
- Dr. Spin.

Entertainment varies from corp to corp, as does what constitutes legal entertainment. Government restrictions don't apply on corporate grounds, and so it's up to each individual corporation to decide what's okay and what's not. From what I've seen, corps will allow anything as long as it keeps the citizens happy, productive, and oblivious to the strict control the corp exerts over their lives.

Urgent Message...

TOTAL INFORMATION SOCIETY

Kia: Gathering, analyzing and using information—what goes in, what goes out, how it can be spun—is one of the most important tasks for any modern megacorp. And gathering info on its employees and citizens is no small part of this task. Besides keeping his residence functioning, the home node of your typical wageslave also collects data on what's consumed in the residence, which trid channels are watched, and any use of drone feeds on demand. If the employee is important, you can also count on cameras and other sensors in his residence—these are used to track who visits the residence and for how long.

Most of this information is archived and used by the corp's human resources and internal audit/security departments for internal market analysis, audits, and censuses. In other words, the corp uses it to track employee satisfaction and discontent, so the corp can quickly address any problems that may affect its bottom line. It may also be used to create and maintain internal social profiles of employees.

- Information is Big Brother's Achilles heel. Today's megas have so many employees they're always at risk of choking

on the volume of data they collect. They're never pro-active on anything except the most blatant transgressions or matters concerning high-value targets. A few more bytes for an edit or spoof won't make a difference in the river of input—well, not if I'm the one editing and spoofing.

- Slamm-0!

Privacy is an illusion if you live within a megacorp. There may not be any black-ops trucks or thought police patrolling the streets, but everything is tagged with RFIDs—including the employees. Even simple occupancy-sensor lights tell on you. Combined with real-time security-access logs, a megacorp knows where any of its employees are at any given time.

- Again, Big Brother stories are there to scare off the amateur runners. Who really cares if Joe the Janitor's ID says he's been in the closet for an hour. If he's not in a high-profile site and DocWagon hasn't been alerted, corp security will say he's human resources' business and ignore the info. You just have to make every move plausible or invisible to security.
- Slamm-0!



- /dev/grll, you're glossing over the difference between national regulations and corporate laws, especially when it comes to "entertainment." Drug use and prostitution come to mind.
- Sticks
- C'mon, Sticks! She's sixteen! Her idea of "entertainment" isn't nearly as depraved as yours.
- Pistons
- You don't know that, but I volunteer to find out.
- Kane
- On corporate soil, anything the corp wants to allow is allowed. Most corporations offer "professional companion" services to their citizens. And while most allow some soft drugs, they tend to clamp down if recreational drug use reduces employee productivity. You don't want to burn out your employees, after all. Typically, a wageslave looking for a buzz need only visit his nearest certified pharmacist, who will prescribe the citizen's feelgood-of-choice for pickup at the corporate drugstore or club. Of course, all these transactions are recorded, so wageslaves who want to keep their drug use secret or want harder drugs end up going outside the corp.
- Kia
- Horizon, Evo, Saeder-Krupp—even Mitsuhamma—allow recreational soft drugs and moods. Other corps have much less permissive policies. Of course, Horizon had a vote on the matter following the tempo boom last year.
- Sunshine

Kia: On the plus side, corporations generally provide food, clothing, and shelter at competitive prices and higher quality than what's available outside. And you can't beat the conveniences of living in a corporate arcology. I mean, who wants to deal with the hassle of finding a babysitter at the last minute or a repairman who won't screw you? In an arcology, the air is usually cleaner, necessities are generally within walking distance, and you don't have to worry about criminals. If something of yours breaks, you can get it fixed or replaced fast. Potholes are filled quickly, lawns are maintained, your neighbors share your values, and entertainment is readily available and tailored to those living in the community.

Most corporations are seriously committed to keeping their employees content—an unhappy worker is less productive, can spread dissidence, and may even want to leave. While many corporations still employ psychological conditioning—both individual and collective—and more coercive techniques to keep their citizens in line, most have been moving toward Horizon's methods of building and maintaining a sense of community among its workers. It just makes good business sense—it's cheaper to keep an employee satisfied and on the job than firing him and finding someone else to do the job.

- That is until an agent or drone can do the job—then all bets are off.
- Ethernaut
- Ethernaut, there's a reason robotics hasn't managed to kill off sweatshops and production lines. Human life really is that cheap.
- Plan 9

CORPORATE FASHIONS

- **6-Tees (Horizon):** Retro-American casual.
- **Beaux Retail (Mitsuhamma):** Middle-class casual and mid-level business attire.
- **Bodyline (Spinrad Industries):** Casual, street, and clubbing clothing featuring biometric art.
- **Brilliance (Horizon):** High-end evening-wear and executive fashions.
- **CD/Common Denominator (Evo):** Practical urban-style clothing.
- **De Button (Aztechnology):** Classic executive-wear.
- **Europa (Renraku):** A line of "never wrinkles, never stains" clothing for the traveling executive.
- **Furba (NeoNET):** Pop urban-wear.
- **KoGo (Wuxing):** Executive fashion.
- **Lyric of Portland (Telestrian):** Neo-Celtic casual.
- **ME MetaL (Evo):** Meta-friendly street, casual, and professional wear.
- **NuZoot (Monobe):** Urban/Asian street-wear.
- **RhineGold (Saeder-Krupp):** Old World business attire.
- **Très Chic Clothing (Aztechnology):** Casual and evening-wear lines.
- **Tribale (Aztechnology):** Ethnic street-wear.
- **Vashon Island (Shiawase Fashion):** Chic casual and fine executive-wear.
- **Victory (Ares):** Casual and sportsmen's wear.
- **Wellington Bros. (Shiawase Fashion):** Classic executive lines.

Designer clothes such as Berwick, Aston, and Zoé are acceptable only for upper management and execs. The Tanake line of cologne and perfume may be worn by employees of any level.

MEDICAL CARE

/dev/grll: Generally speaking, corp citizens tend to be in better health and fitter than your typical UCAS citizen. That's because it benefits a corp to keep its employees healthy. Lost workdays and productivity due to the stomach flu really annoy the higher-ups. And providing subsidized medical care is yet another way to ensure that your employees stay loyal—not to mention it lets you monitor everything that's going on in their bodies and minds.

- A few recent medical reports claim that the amount of time spent cooped up in sterile arcologies, factories, and offices is causing allergies and biological intolerances to rise among corp citizens. But so far these findings haven't spread much beyond medical circles.
- Butch

The bigger megas are proactive when it comes to health care. Several offer discounts on health-enhancing implants, and most offer low-cost genetweaks and designer babies to expecting parents.

Urgent Message...



Which brings us round to augmentations. Everyone knows they're becoming increasingly common in the workplace, and that's largely due to corporations looking to enhance productivity. I've seen studies that say about 80 percent of corporate citizens have some kind of job-related cyber- or bio-ware implant—and often both. Skillwires and headware are widespread, as is performance-enhancing bioware. And at the higher levels of management, genetweaking and nanoaugmentation are becoming popular.

Most employment contracts and citizen agreements at the big megas include sneaky clauses that give the corp full ownership of what comes out of your mind and what they put into your body while you're in their employ. If you put any 'warez in on the company dime, and you want to leave the corp, you've got to return the 'warez. Yes, you read that right. And you're shit out of luck if you accepted those shiny cybereyes—what, you think they kept your worthless little organic eyeballs? However, some corps—such as Lone Star—allow employees to obtain ownership of their augmentations by withholding the costs from the employees' salaries.

- Frequently, a corporation will accept a marked-up remuneration in place of returning the cyber/bioware. Occasionally corporations sue other corporations for compensation on extracted employees' ware—the Corporate Court has set precedents for this, basically ruling that while a corporation can't actually claim a metahuman as property, the physical cyberware/bioware/geneware within said ex-employee is corporate property and must be returned or paid for. It doesn't come up often, but every now and then a couple of the little corps get in a snit and throw that at each other.

- Kay St. Irregular

- Geneware is tricky. Can't get that back. And there's definitely grey areas when it comes to gene-tweaked infants and test-tube babies—not to mention cloned infants. In fact, the Corporate Court's docket contains a case involving a pregnant corp employee who used a corporate-approved sperm bank and had some gene work done on her fetus in-utero. The woman later jumped ship and her former employer is claiming the fetus's genes as property. Talk about messy.

- Dr. Spin

- The vast majority of wageslaves will never get extracted—and they'll never be able to save up enough to compensate their employers for the costs of their corp-provided educations, warez, housing, clothing, entertainment, and so on. They are unable to leave their corp, even if they want to. Slavery is alive and well in the megacorps.

- Ethernaut

AUGMENTED OFFICE SPACE, TELECOMMUTING, AND FACE TIME

Kia: Augmented office space is the next generation of employee work zone, designed to reduce inventory, maximize space, and boost productivity. To an unaugmented observer, the employee sits in a cubicle that is less than 2 cubic meters in area (there is occasionally accommodation in size for metahumans). This is almost a 60 percent reduction in standard cubicle size, which allows the corp to squeeze in more employees per floor. The walls of the cube allow for maximum use of AR softs and enable

the augmented employee to create the illusion of space and add personalized touches (within corporate policy, of course) such as tactile enhancements with AR gloves or walls that stretch to create dynamic surfaces.

- So how many chickens can they pack together?

- Ethernaut

Telecommuting is another cost-saving tactic widely employed by corps. Statistics show an average of 15–20 percent of any given corporation's workforce telecommutes. This enables a corporation to reduce its overhead by eliminating the need for physical office space and other metahuman amenities. Telecommuting also provides other benefits. Virtual workdays are 24/7, so there's no need to be constrained by local time zones. No productivity is lost through employee socializing, no time is lost for commutes, there's no need for expensive relocations. And telecommuting really does allow anyone, regardless of their language, to communicate at any time. Mr. Wageslave just slaps on his trodes in the morning, plugs in, and spends the next fourteen hours working in a virtual office. Even some factories and production facilities are controlled via on-site spiders linked to drones, or through virtual control rooms used to direct robots.

- Next thing you'll see is catheter implants to remove bathroom breaks.

- Ethernaut

Security concerns are the only reason telecommuting hasn't become more widespread. Even the most secure network is vulnerable to a determined and talented hacker, and the possibility that valuable information will be intercepted is too great a risk. For these same reasons, many corps restrict telecommuting to on-site locations such as arcologies or hard-wired site-to-site buildings.

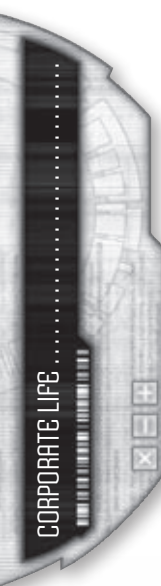
Despite their benefits, telecommuting and virtual office space have not made face-to-face communication in the modern corporation obsolete. "Face time" provides corporations with security when sensitive matters are handled—not to mention the chance to check the identity of an individual—and with opportunities to assess their employees' well-being. The amount of face time present at an office depends on the corporation and the corporate culture.

- Always check the protocols to figure out how long you can impersonate someone's persona/connection.

- Netcat

VACATIONING AND CORPORATE TOURISM

Kia: The average wageslave has a limited number of days in which to escape his daily grind. He can head out on his own to tourist locations such as Virtual Disneyland in CalFree, the Las Vegas strip, or Manhattan's Times Square. A worker at a larger corporation can get company discounts at approved vacation spots and company subsidiaries for his transportation, accommodations, and other vacation costs. An employee at an AA or AAA corporation also has the option of spending his vacation at a dedicated corporate vacation spot. These destinations feature virtual offices or secured-network connections back to



headquarters, which enable guests to work reduced hours while vacationing and thus stay away from the daily grind for longer periods. Well-known corp-vacation options include Denver's Winter Wonderland Ski Resort, where guests from six different AA corporations can ski the slopes, and the Majestik Cruise Lines, where corporations can purchase an entire deck of cabins for their vacationing employees.

- If you can sneak into one of these corporate-vacation sites or cruise ships, you're in paydata heaven. Vacationing employees tend to relax their guards—and are easy to drink under the table.
- Pistons
- You may also find yourself in a unique position to exploit corporate rivalries and play employees of different corps against each other.
- Slamm-0!

Finally, the truly privileged worker can vacation at one of the rare megacorporate-owned retreats. Some of the best known include Aztechnology's Pineapple Beach Resort in Antigua, Ares's Cordoba Retreat in Spain, Saeder-Krupp's underwater Poseidon Dome in the Aegean, and Evo's orbiting resort. Usually the only way to enjoy a holiday at one of these resorts is to be an exec working for the megacorp resort owner; a lower-rung worker must usually perform a truly remarkable service for his corp to earn a stay.

Many corporations also arrange special leisure events for their employees. They may reserve entire theme parks for the use of their employees or offer their workers discounted tickets to musical or dramatic performances or sporting events. This type of event sponsorship is popular with all types of corporations, as it provides a cost-effective way to reward or punish employees—denying a pass to a shamed employee can be a very effective method of discipline.

- Team-building exercises and activities are still very much in vogue, though these days a lot of the big boys also plan “office vacations” where office teams get to hang out and relax—hopefully bonding and getting better acquainted.
- Sunshine

Additionally, many Western corporations sponsor or own sports teams or players. This helps foster corporate loyalty—an employee who follows his corp's team as it competes against those owned by other corps is likely to be competitive when vying against rival corporations in the workplace. And the loyal fan/employee is likely to buy team merchandise as well.

- Corporate team ownership has a dark side, too. When Corp X's Urban Brawl team faces off against the team owned by archrival Corp Y, it's always an occasion for a marked increase in criminal activity and mischief perpetrated by the teams' most rabid supporters.
- Slamm-0!

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Kia: Crime is in the eye of the beholder, and internal corporate laws reflect the values of corporations, unsurprisingly. Stealing corporate property and leaking information may be considered

capital offenses, for example, while violent hate crimes may earn a mere slap on the wrist.

Corporations have many different ways to punish errant employees, depending on the severity of the infraction and the corp's cultural milieu. Typically, corps use systems of gradually increasing punishment designed to penalize errant employees without seriously reducing their loyalty and productivity. The least severe punishments take the form of warnings or reassigning important jobs away from the offender. Both penalties are temporary and usually suffice because of the offender's corporate and cultural conditioning. A more permanent yet still minor punishment is persona marking. Similar to an age-old Japanese practice, in which trainees receive AR “badges of shame” for not completing tests or failing deadlines, persona marking consists of pinning badges to the offender's public profile. This has a two-part effect—the employee is ostracized by his fellow employees and also overlooked for promotions and plum assignments or denied certain privileges by his superiors. In other corporations, an employee's persona contains a rating that determines whether he receives special privileges or prizes. If the employee breaks the law, points are subtracted from his persona rating, effectively penalizing him.

- There's a niche market for persona “cleaning.”
- Slamm-0!

If these measures are not effective, a corporation can move to more severe punishments: access restrictions, demotion, transfer to undesirable departments or locations, or enforced community service. An exec who runs afoul of his corp's laws may find his executive privileges restricted or revoked altogether. He may be reduced to using the common employee bathroom or cafeteria, for example. Some corporations will also strike at a person's *kao*—social face—by socially embarrassing him. But not too much—the point is to bend, not to break the employee, after all.

- One of the severest kao strikes I've seen was when a party of ten–nine executives and their boss—went to a restaurant and the table sat only nine. Pretty nasty stuff.
- Ma'fan

Punishing an employee by striking at his kao is a common tool among Asian corps. Of course, kao penalties are typically for non-criminal offenses. Other corporations humiliate errant workers by posting compromising information online.

- Leaking security photos of a worker engaged in socially unacceptable behavior would definitely have workers thinking twice.
- Glitch
- That's a little heavy-handed. You're more likely to see performance evaluations posted, or a record of missed deadlines or workdays.
- /dev/grll

Qisas—an eye for an eye—is practiced in Middle Eastern corporations. Under this system, a corporation punishes a transgressor by inflicting injury on him that is equivalent to the injury

caused by his crime. These punishments used to be limited to intentionally injuring a transgressor's natural physical body. But modern biofeedback technology enables more sophisticated means of punishing a lawbreaker. Hot SIMs—with embedded psychotropic programming—can be used to force the criminal to mentally experience his transgression from the perspective of his victim, and the experience can be looped any number of times.

- I had a buddy whose employer crippled his cyberware as punishment. I asked why he didn't get it replaced. He gave me two reasons. First, he felt he needed a reminder of the crime. More important was the kink bomb that would be triggered if he removed it.
- 2XL

Some megacorps are not above punishing or pressuring an employee by depriving him of the company of loved ones or prized possessions. Some corps will move your family away under the guise of removing distractions. For more serious violations, more permanent measures might be taken. Corps that employ this tactic walk a fine line—destroying someone's spouse, pet, or prized possession can cause even greater problems by pushing the wageslave into leaving the corp altogether—or worse, plotting revenge against the corp.

- It's only a rumor, but I've heard that down in San Diego a corp sacrificed/culled employees' pet dogs after a bad performance review.
- Mika

When a megacorp finds itself with an employee engaged in seriously undesirable behavior—gambling, arson, dissident thought—and the usual disciplinary measures don't work, the corp might attempt to rehabilitate the miscreant through group support, cybernetic implants, or drug/gene therapy.

- It boils down to how important the employee is. A brain in a jar can still operate in the Matrix.
- Glitch

If absolutely nothing works, the megacorp will simply terminate the worker. The ex-employee loses his citizenship and security rights and becomes SINless, the greatest fear of many corporate citizens. If the employee lives in a corporate-owned residence, a moving service will immediately change the locks and remove all the ex-employee's non-corporate owned property from the residence. Depending on the severity of the ex-employee's offense, the corp may decide to prosecute him. The ex-employee could also be subject to binding legal agreements or magic gas to prevent him from divulging corp secrets.

Generally, the corp's handling of the termination is determined by the potential and likelihood of the ex-employee causing problems for the corp. If he has knowledge of sensitive data and is in a position to use it, for example, the megacorp is more likely to “play nice.” Some corporations will provide the ex-employee with a severance package, assistance in finding new employment, or at least someplace to store his stuff until he finds a new job. Of course, if an ex-employee *really* knows too much, he may experience a very serious, potentially lethal “accident.”

- Sometimes termination really does mean termination.
- Kane

Some ex-employees can't handle living outside their corporation and try to maintain the illusion of employment. They may get dressed in the morning and then spend the day in the park or create an artificial office.

PROPRIETARY RIGHTS: GROWING UP CORPORATE

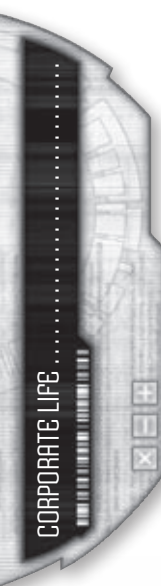
/dev/grrl: When it comes to human resources, megacorps are famous for taking the long view, or so I've been told. Specifically, that means trying to ensure they'll have a future workforce, trained to fill their forecasted future needs and perfectly loyal. Some corps have been around forever and have workforces of second, third, even fourth generation citizens.

- Collecting intel on employees, arranging marriages between citizens, and other such measures designed to cultivate a corp's “family” are usually the purview of human resources departments. This makes HR departments an extremely powerful though often overlooked player in corporate environments.
- Kia

Corporate “families” vary according to the culture of each individual corp. Ares, for example, is into the traditional NorthAm family model of two monogamous parents with 2.7 kids, a family goldfish, and white-haired grandparents. Ares sells itself as the “family-friendly” corp and supposedly tries hard to keep family units together by encouraging long-term marriages through pre-marital counseling, monetary bonuses for anniversaries, and annual child-support stipends. Dating outside the corporation is discouraged, while internal matchmaking services are heavily advertised.

- Other corps define “family” much more broadly. Evo, for example, requires employees to register their family units to receive benefit packages, but the corp's definition of a family is pretty flexible. It includes virtually any imaginable combination of members—and some you probably can't imagine—as long as all sexual partners are of legal reproductive age. The legal reproductive age varies among metatypes and sentient critters—for example, orks are considered legal at age 13. Evo highly encourages selective reproduction as well and offers bonuses to parents who bear and raise test-tube babies.
- Plan 9

• You see a lot of that in corporations. Bearing a child for the corp is one way to move up the ladder, especially for lower-level workers. Female citizens are usually encouraged to conceive via the corp sperm bank—donors are selected for optimal genetic matches—or to gestate lab-created embryos, complete with bonus geneware packages for favored corp parents. Higher-level childbearers who use the corp sperm bank are typically executives who think “parent” will look good on their resumes or who want to ensure their offspring have desirable genetic traits. Female execs sometimes go the sperm-bank route simply because they don't have the time or interest for a live donor in their busy lives. Awakened genetic traits are probably the most sought-after hereditary characteristics. Sperm from Awakened



donors is one of the top requests for corp mothers-to-be. In fact, many corps require their Awakened employees to donate eggs and sperm and then offer the resulting embryos to couples seeking to start or expand their families.

- The Smiling Bandit
- Too bad metagenetics are so tricky. Magic isn't like blue eyes—two mages do not a magical child create. And clones of the Awakened, even when grown the old-fashioned way, do not Awaken with any predictable patterns.
- Winterhawk
- The latest thing in eugenics is the race to produce technomancers. So far, I haven't seen anything suggesting that corp researchers have determined whether genetic or environmental factors are behind technomantic traits, let alone identifying any specific genes involved. One theory holds that Awakened traits are produced by the unique chemical cocktail of a pregnant technomancer's hormones—which may explain the lack of success using wimp wombs or surrogates to incubate technomancer babies.
- Nephrine
- I'm almost afraid to ask. "Wimp wombs?"
- Turbo Bunny
- A lot of high-flying female execs are turning to cloned wimps to carry their babies for them. No missed work due to morning sickness, no hormonal mood swings. Apparently some corps are now using wimps as artificial wombs in efforts to grow technomancers.
- Butch
- Oh, joy.
- Netcat
- A couple of us have a baby pool going. You can pick boy/girl, human/elf, length and weight, and, now, we've added mundane/Emerged. Twenty nuyen entry fee.
- Glasswalker
- Where's the entry for freak/non-freak? Oh wait, there's no guess- ing needed for that one.
- Clockwork

PARENTING AND THE ROLE OF THE CORP

When you're a kid in a corporate family, you probably see your teachers and after-school care providers more than your parents. Twelve-to-fourteen hour workdays pretty much ensure you won't get to interact with your folks, even if they telecommute. Most corporations provide 'round-the-clock nursery care for newborns up to preschoolers. At age three or four, corp kids are shuffled off to a corp-approved educational facility, where they learn under the loving guidance of "early childhood development specialists." In my opinion, the corps go out of their way to push corporate care for kids, encouraging the notion that parents don't know as much about child-rearing as the corp's highly trained specialists.

- Corporations that take the long-term view know that the key to having a highly trained, adaptable, and competitive

workforce in the future is to groom their "future assets"—namely, children—today. As /dev/grrl pointed out, that usually means placing kids in institutional care facilities even before they're done nursing.

- Goat Foot

While some corporations—such as Horizon—may encourage parents to take an active role in child development, most corps marginalize parents. This ensures the first and foremost loyalty of the average corporate brat is to the Mother Corp, not his parents.

EDUCATION

By the time a corp kid is six years old, his corp has probably already laid out his educational path, based on early childhood evaluations, any exceptional talents the child possesses, his parents' social standing and corporate position, and the megacorp's projected future workforce needs. The majority of kids end up in internal corporate schools. Teaching techniques vary from live classrooms to VR classrooms, AR and sims, tutorsofts, even personalized mentorships for the exceptional.

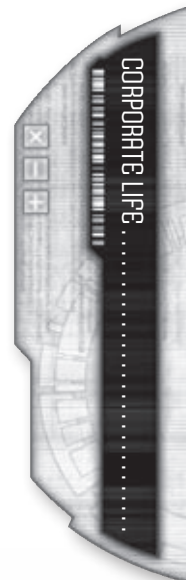
- When a corporation quantifies their potential labor force, it becomes a commodity. They can then trade it to make up deficits. So how much is your mechanically talented son worth? Three secretaries or half a hacker?
- Mr. Bonds
- And people ask why I never sold out.
- FastJack

Kids destined for trade or technical paths start in their areas of learning quite early, while those who'll end up in the general labor pools take the minimal levels of general schooling. Specialized professional courses for those who'll end up in menial, physical, or non-managerial jobs are fairly standardized and emphasize flexible skills training to prepare workers for future needs.

Generally speaking, skillwires are reserved for "disposable" non-citizen employees, typically menial laborers in production facilities or sweat shops. This results from the strong social stigma attached to skillwires, which many citizens view as evidence that an employee is too slow to learn things the "normal" way.

- Skillwires are seen as the crutch of the incompetent, the inept, and the lazy. Having skillwires means you rely on coded skills, instead of developing your own abilities. Since skillwires override muscle control and reflexes, you're less likely to learn from experience and develop your own talents to any exceptional level.
- Butch

Those corp kids bound for college are generally placed in college-prep or accelerated programs and fully transition to online programs by their teen years. Aptitude and vocational psychtesting are built into the corporate educational system, and by the time you're in high school, it's likely you'll have a career or two mapped out for you.





INCOMING FEED.....

- While we're talking corp education, let's not forget the early behavioral modifications that ensure future employees meet the corp's standards and fit in with its culture. Conditioning begins at an early age, when kids are subjected to corporate propaganda and rhetoric in schools. This psychological conditioning may also include subliminal modifications so that a child relates particular colors or symbols with pain. This enables the corp to employ those same colors or symbols later on as another means of controlling its citizens.

- Kia

- It also tends to work out that the colors associated with pain happen to be the colors predominantly used in competitors' logos. One more way to keep people from jumping ship.

- Glitch

- Mental programming can also be achieved through virtual facilities, though this entails a slim chance of inducing cyber-psychosis. This may seem like a minor drawback when an individual is involved, but the effects can be quite serious when they affect an entire class of kids attending a virtual corp school.

- The Smiling Bandit

DATING, MARRIAGE, AND OTHER STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

`/dev/grrl`: Last year, our guidance counselors gave all the corp kids "the talk." It basically boiled down to one main point: date within the corp only.

Frankly, the corp isn't really going to enforce that suggestion, unless you—or your daddy—is somebody important. Your average wageslave is free to date whomever he wishes. With that in mind, I saw some statistic that said that 70 percent of people end up meeting their future spouse in the workplace. I don't know if that's true or just more propaganda—although my parents met on the job. I do know that many megacorps encourage marrying within the corp family by sponsoring singles lunches, co-ed after-work activities, matchmaking services, online dating, even arranged short-term relationships.

- And those matchmaking services also fall under human resources' purview, of course.

- Plan 9

- While workplace romances have survived the rise of virtual offices, the Matrix and simsense have greatly expanded the possibilities for virtual partnerships and marriage, as well as redefining "office sex." However, virtual relationships aren't conducive to producing future generations of wageslaves for the long-term growth of the corporation, so corps discourage them by offering alternatives.

- Kia

Although some corps are pretty relaxed about citizens dating outside the corp, marriage is a different story. Many of the big corps don't legally recognize a marriage or partnership unless both parties involved are corporate citizens. It is

possible to obtain corporate citizenship for your spouse, but this involves jumping through a series of bureaucratic hoops. Even at the lowest levels of employees, corps intensely scrutinize potential new citizens, with corp security departments going over candidates' backgrounds with fine-tooth combs. Still, so-called "mixed marriages" happen every day, and they're not too big of a deal—if you're an average wageslave, that is. Folks in important positions and other highly valued citizens usually have a harder time getting citizenship for a spouse from the outside. In fact, arranged marriages are common for the upper echelons in many longstanding corporations, particularly for individuals from legacy families or lineages in which the corp has invested heavily.

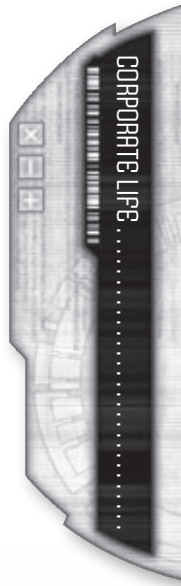
- There's more to this particular equation than our friends here are mentioning. Whether it is the result of job stress, mismatched working hours, or office flings, divorce rates are pretty high for corporate workers. Now imagine your divorce turns nasty, and your pissed former spouse works at the same company, in the same department, or—spirits forbid—the same office. A contentious split can make things really ugly in the workplace.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Well, if things get out of hand, the corp's human resources people usually step in and relocate one of the parties to a different section of the company. Typically the spouse with less-important job or the least seniority gets shafted, whether or not he or she deserves it.
- Kai

Unlucky lovers who belong to different megacorps must pick one or abandon any marriage plans. Higher-valued citizens

generally can arrange for their lover's extraction, but others must fend for themselves.

Even within a marriage, citizens are encouraged—subtly or blatantly—to remember that their first responsibility is to their corporation.

- Since /dev/grrl doesn't mention "legacy families," I will. In megacorps that have third-, fourth-, or fifth-generation employees, these "legacy" citizens enjoy a certain social standing. In many corps they belong to special cliques, and their corps favor them and their families. These same corps tend to discourage citizens from dating or marrying outside the legacy clique and even go so far as to arrange marriages among them.
- Pistons
- Nothing worse than legacy brats. Bunch of inbred assholes with oversized egos.
- Mika
- Generally there are two kinds of legacy families: "Heritage" families are common in American megas and see themselves as embodying the corporate ideals of entrepreneurship and professional excellence. Membership confers automatic social status, but heritage-family children are expected to move on and up from their parents' positions. "Lineage" families tend to appear in European and Asian megas and value continuity and stability over mobility. Membership confers status but lineage-family children—particularly firstborns—are expected to follow in their parents' footsteps and eventually take over their parents' position or positions of equal rank.
- Kia



TESTING FOR THE AWAKENED/EMERGED

All corporations have some method of testing corporate kids for potential talents. The Dumas Series is considered the gold standard of Awakened testing. These tests enable a corp to identify those kids who have some magical latency around age ten. Possessing some talent—no matter how minor—is a prestigious thing for a corporate kid and, by extension, his family. Many corporations provide the child's family with compensation—corporate citizenship, a monetary bonus, placement in premier housing, and the like—to bind the child and his family even closer to the corporation. Awakened corporate children have a broad variety of educational opportunities, and most corporations foot the entire bill for their educations. Typically, the child is placed in a specialized training environment, which may be anything from a private school to an individual mentorship program. Later, the child moves on to a course of magical studies at one of the major universities and may even continue with a post-graduate program.

Standardized testing for Emerged children does not (yet) exist, and so identifying them is still a hit-or-miss proposition at this time. Usually, most of the Emerged children in a corporation are identified by their parents or teachers. Education and training for Emerged children—and adults for that matter—is a dynamic, evolving field. The first virtuakinetic program of study was established at CalTech, by Horizon's Singularity subdivision. Currently, six other universities have instituted similar programs or are in the process of doing so.

- While Awakened children are universally prized, Emerged children may receive a far different reception. Some corps—including Evo, Horizon, and Shiawase—embrace them and give them and their families treatment similar to that afforded Awakened children. Other corps—Saeder-Krupp, Aztechnology, Ares, Wuxing—are still cautiously exploring the potential uses of Emerged children. And still others—well, you don't want to be suspected of being a virtuakinetic at Renraku, Mitsuhama, or NeoNET. And I probably don't need to say it, but there are still those corps—mega and minor—that offer bounties for technomancers, and these corps don't care if the technomancer is five or fifty years old.

- Netcat

Urgent Message...



JUST SIGN HERE: JOINING A CORP

/dev/grrl: Joining a megacorp is the Big Dream for a lot of people, and there are quite a few ways to do it. The easiest way is to be born to parents who belong to the corporate family—bingo, automatic citizenship. Marrying a corp citizen is another way; outsiders who want in can even register with any number of services that will match them up with lonely corp citizens looking for spouses.

Megacorp-sponsored college and technical scholarships are another recruitment tactic. Corps troll schools around the globe, offering fully paid scholarships—and occasionally citizenship for the entire family—to the best and brightest students. In return, the recruit accepts a fixed-term employment contract. These deals can effectively leave the recruit indentured to the corp for decades—though a lot of people don't see this as a bad thing.

- There's some good work in hacking into the various college testing databases to funnel the data to corporate Johnsons before test scores are made public.
- Glitch

Simply applying for a job is another way in. Many ex-military folks parlay their experience into positions in private militaries or corporate security departments in this manner. People with useful skills—programmers, research assistants, medical assistants, and the like—are often able to get a foot in the door by applying for open positions in less desirable divisions or subsidiaries. These may not be the most glamorous jobs, but they often provide a chance for corporate citizenship. (Most corporations do not automatically grant new employees corporate citizenship; instead, they use it as bait to attract the most desirable recruits or as a motivational tool to get the most out of their new workers.)

Extractions from other corps are reserved for those individuals with highly sought-after skills and knowledge—scientists, executives, project managers, and so on.

Once a recruit has been accepted into a corp, he must survive the corp's "intake procedures" before starting. The depth and breadth of these procedures vary by corporation. I've heard that Aztechnology subjects all new recruits—and their families—to full mind scans performed by mages. All the big corps require that new recruits submit biometric samples, which the corp keeps on file—ostensibly for "medical purposes." They also like to implant little broadcasting tags into their citizens. Instruction on corporate culture, rules and regs, and appropriate behavior are other common intake procedures. New recruits can also expect to receive lines of credit from their new corp's in-house stores, as well as brand-new SINs.

- While **/dev/grrl** provides a good overview of what it's like at an AAA, don't forget that the majority of wageslaves out there don't work for megas. New recruits are hired by the hundreds of thousands at smaller corps that don't qualify for extraterritoriality, as well as the AAs—some of whom don't have massive resources, long histories, insular corporate enclaves, pervasive corporate cultures, or the Byzantine bureaucracies associated with megacorps. Hell, some AAs don't even provide SINs to their citizens.

- Kay St. Irregular

- On the other hand, even smaller corps like to tag their employees, and stealth tags aren't just for the more valuable citizens—or rebellious teenagers with worried parents. Detecting—much less disabling—these tags is almost impossible for the individual implanted with the tag. MRIs can pick them up, however, if they haven't been piggy-backed on top of other cyberware.

- Sticks

- And technos can find them, sometimes. BTW, thanks Netcat.
- Kia

- Just remember that when I need a babysitter.
- Netcat

- Hey, did I just hear Slamm-O! faint? ;-)
- Pistons

WORK ETHICS AND PHILOSOPHIES

Kia: Corporate ethics and philosophies can be divided into five broad categories—American, Asian, Middle Eastern, Indian, and European. Megacorps are international enterprises, of course, and foreign divisions usually tailor their business philosophies according to the cultures in which they operate. That said, every corp usually has a single dominant type of ethics and philosophy.

American corporations prize individuality and do-it-yourself thinking. Teamwork is a necessity, rather than a goal, and the rights of the individual often trump those of the group. A worker's value is measured by his possessions and rewards, and money confers prestige and social status. These corps design their organizational schemes with versatility in mind, and their employees tend to get on a first-name basis with each other very quickly. American corporations are rabidly competitive—externally and internally—and usually have pretty tolerant or even supportive attitudes toward internal conflict. In fact, corporate-sponsored teams and a win-at-all-cost mentality are prevalent. This competitive ethic can take many forms. Ares's ownership of its many sports teams is one manifestation, while conflict at NeoNet can be seen in the competition between its many think-tanks and wholly owned subcontractors.

Asian corporations exalt the group and an ethic of teamwork. Individual efforts count for little unless they are directed at the success of the group as a whole. Behavior is constrained by social roles, conformity is prized, and outsiders are shunned. Protocol is essential; hierarchy is observed at all times and employees at all levels always use rank-appropriate honorifics when addressing one another. Planning and implementation are regimented and highly structured, and specialization is prized over versatility. Internal mobility is limited, though it tends to be less nepotistic—at least among the lower ranks of workers—when it does appear. Finally, Asian corporations place much greater importance on long-term goals than on short-term goals. Mitsuhamma and Wuxing are two corporations that exhibit these "Asian" ethics and philosophies.

The ethics and philosophies of Middle Eastern corporations resemble those of Asian corporations. Behavior is constrained by social roles, and most Middle Eastern corps would rather do business with another Middle Eastern corp than with outsiders. Hierarchies tend to be strictly observed and nepotism abounds. Principles drawn from Shari'ah are evident in the ethics of Middle Eastern corps as well. The practices of usury—charging interest on loans—and false advertising are prohibited. While these principals promote ethical business practices, this hardly means that Middle Eastern corps are always on the up and up. Very often, they simply devise ways to get around these principals.

Indian corporations take a more holistic approach to business. They look at society as a great machine that encompasses shareholders, employees, customers, and the world at large, and they view business as one cog in that machine. This sentiment stems from the practice of “dharmic capitalism,” which incorporates elements of Hindu philosophy—including caste stratification and an emphasis on families—into contemporary corporate practices. Another important element is progression through the Four Ashrams, or stages of life. According to this concept, an individual achieves his destiny by passing through four life stages alternately characterized *kama* (sensual pleasures), *artha* (worldly gain), *dharma* (duty/vocation in life), and finally *moksha* (spiritual liberation through the fulfillment of life goals). Horizon and Shiawase are good examples of corporations that adhere to Indian-like philosophies.

European corporations value heritage, longevity, and social engagement. Their work ethics and philosophies emphasize negotiation and diplomacy—even in the form of cutthroat backroom deals—over conflict and clashes. Internal coordination and cooperation prevail over competition, and an ethic of teamwork is strongly ingrained—obtaining a positive result in the long run is much more important than winning or losing in the short term. Personal status is prized over material possessions or internal upward mobility. Hierarchical relations tend toward the formal and rigid; protocol, ritual, and rank play important roles in corporate life. Because “European” corporations take the long view on issues and strategy, they are sometimes slow to react to the market.

ASIAN BUSINESS TERMINOLOGY

Giri: The self-sacrificing devotion to duty and obligation.

Jitsugyoka: Someone who works with honesty for the establishment of the industry.

Kao: The concept of saving face and maintaining public respectability.

Karoshi: Death from overwork.

Nemawashi: The presentation of information and negotiation prior to a meeting so as to draw a conclusion ahead of time.

Wa: The social obligation of keeping the peace.

Wakon-Yosai: Incorporating a foreign concept into your way of thinking. For example, “Japanese spirit, combined with Western science.”

MIDDLE EASTERN BUSINESS TERMINOLOGY

Qard-el-hassan: The prohibition against usury.

Takaful: An Islamic alternative to insurance.

Ijma: Consensus without hard facts.

Zakat: The taxation of goods for charitable needs.

INDIAN BUSINESS TERMINOLOGY

Ahimsa: Practice of prevailing in the marketplace by innovating rather than by destroying the competition.

Dharmic Capitalism: Capitalism that incorporates elements of Hindu philosophy and is guided by the virtuous path of the Four Ashrams.

Poorna Swaraj: Unleashing the strength of the common person.

Gandhigiri: Social responsibility; giving instead of taking.

The Four Ashrams: The four stages of life characterized by attention to sensual pleasures, worldly gain, duty/vocation, and spiritual liberation through the fulfillment of life goals.

Structural Chakras: The nexuses in corporate organizational flowcharts.

Urgent Message...



CORPORATE LIFE



FITTING IN: A RUNNER'S GUIDE TO SOCIAL CLIQUES

/dev/grrl: At some point, you may need to blend into a corporate environment. No skillssofts are available for internal etiquette at the Big Ten—although general business-etiquette skillssofts are available—so knowing how to behave, what to say, and what not to do is pretty crucial if you don't want to blow your cover.

First off, do your research. Every corp is different. Learn which languages are used within the corp and take the time to learn any internal jargon unique to the corp. Linguasofts are useful but they won't help you with any slang, popular expressions, body language, or social norms unique to a corp. At Horizon, for example, telling politically correct jokes and sending comical sketches to coworkers is the norm, as are positive body language and hip slang. Profanity, insults, racist and sexist slang are strongly discouraged. On the other hand, racist and sexist comments are the norm at Lone Star, and anyone who tells a PC joke will stick out immediately.

Know the internal dress code and fashion trends at your corp and dress accordingly. Don't show up at an Aztechnology lab facility wearing a Synergist business suit. And make sure you dress for your social sphere. A 2,000-nuyen jacket is not appropriate for a help-desk drone. For similar reasons, an executive in a division with budget overruns had better dress modestly. And remember it's a faux pas to wear clothing that's more expensive than the wardrobe your boss sports—so if he's wearing off-the-rack, no tailored suits for you.

Once you've taken care of the basics, you can start working your way into your new corp's central clique. Every office and corp has one of these indispensable social networking systems. By learning the ins and outs of the clique, you may be able to gain entry and enjoy some considerable advantages. Most important is the deference that corp security personnel often display toward clique insiders. This can be really, really helpful when you're infiltrating a corp and can make the job infinitely easier.

To gain entry into a clique, identify and befriend the group's central "node." A clique node is the person who seems to know everyone in the clique, is hyper-aware of

the social status and evolving behaviors of members, and is the person everyone else goes to for gossip. Bribes, brown-nosing, recreational drugs—use whatever it takes to get that person to take a liking to you. Alternatively, you can simply imitate him. I usually make the social scene and see who does what outside the workplace. At NeoNET for example, I discovered that the guitar player in Fat Man's Misery was a policymaker for an associated utility and belonged to a group of musicians who regularly met for jam sessions. I managed to meet the guy through one of these sessions and became part of his clique, which enabled me to ... oh wait, nevermind.

Finally, remember that conformity is the key to fitting in.

Kia: Familiarizing yourself with the basic cultural norms of a corp can help you make a good first impression—which can be key to getting in with the in-crowd. In a Western corp, you might get away with a general wave when being introduced to co-workers. In a European corp, a firm handshake is expected, and in an Eastern corp a bow or handshake is the norm, as well as an exchange of honorific information—your title, name, affiliate, department, and the like. Save hugs and kisses for informal social gatherings and those people you're more familiar with.

There's no skillssoft for learning your way around a new corp. The next best thing is an agent secretary. Basically, these associate corporate forms are linked to departments. Agent secretaries are usually available from the human resources department, but they need to be updated with new information weekly. Plus, these agents usually report on the new hire's progress.

As for cliques, I begin with the department hierarchy—information technology, system support, customer support, and such—to identify cliques that can help me get the job done. Subcultures of hackers and middle managers are always good bets, too. They can really make your life easier. On the flip side, they can make life very difficult for anyone on their shit lists. Many corporations don't do anything to oppose such cliques because they're wary of the power cliques can wield and because clique members are usually careful not to break rules.



FALLING BETWEEN THE CRACKS

Kia: Despite the aura of competence that corporations carefully cultivate, the sheer size of modern megacorps virtually ensures that things will go wrong occasionally. And the larger the corporation, the more possibilities for oversights. What's more, such glitches—virtual or physical—can persist for years until someone notices them and takes corrective action. And attentive shadowrunners can frequently gain important advantages by exploiting the chinks in a corporation's armor presented by such gaffes.

The most common oversight is failing to install patches or updates to protective software for non-critical systems. This can create "back doors" that can be used when hacking critical systems. The next most common oversight is the failure to upgrade critical-system software in a timely manner. Frequently, corporations cut costs by delaying upgrades and continue to use systems even as they exceed their intended capacities. This can lead to the accumulation of junk data and higher frequency of bad or questionable transactions within a system.

Another problem prevalent in Americanized corporations is the accumulation of excess physical assets. As corporations upgrade hardware or redistribute workers, surpluses of terminals and other hardware can develop. As these items are placed in storage, they may not be adequately "sanitized." Consequently, they may contain sensitive data and be inadequately secured as they await recycling into the workplace. Similarly, corporations may purchase office equipment and materials then forget the intended purpose for the purchases. This can lead to rooms filled with unused terminals, nodes of forgotten processes and reports, and garages filled with unused corporate vehicles. And when corporations move operations out of rented spaces, material may be abandoned, creating treasure troves of legacy office material—which is one reason behind the trend toward virtual offices and workplaces.

- This is the kind of thing you work on during those times when Mr. Johnson isn't calling as frequently as you would like. Even if there's no data on the old gear, it's usually worth something on the street, and since the corp has often forgotten about the gear they don't usually get around to missing it. At worst it's relatively easy money, at best it's a mother lode of useful data.

- Cosmo

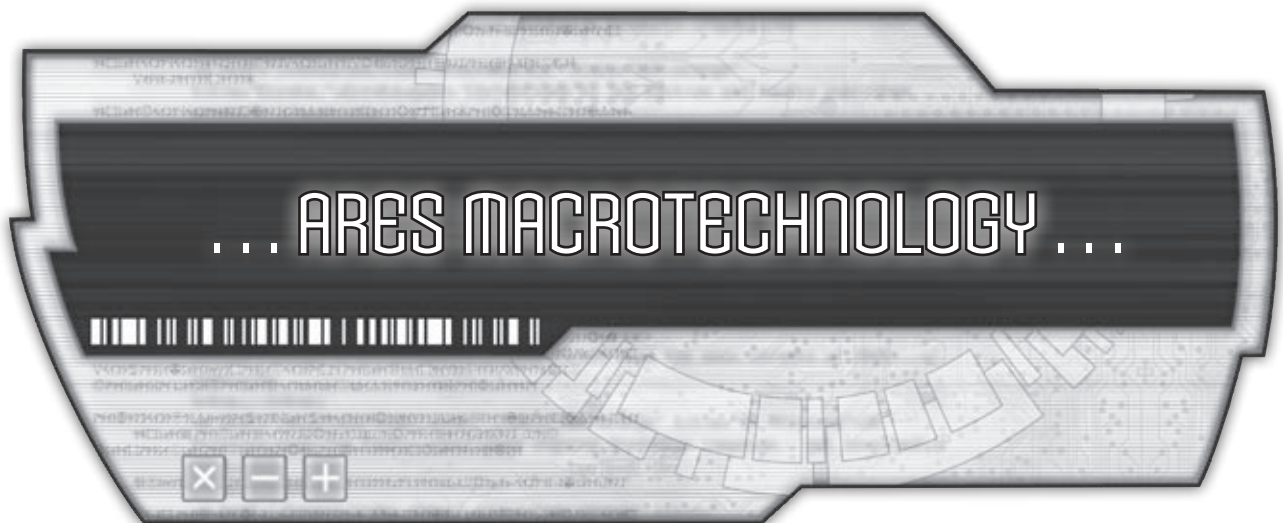
Related problems can occur when corporations merge, buy, and sell property and resources. Overlooked goods—known as "gimmies"—may be left sitting in warehouses. I've heard of cases of tons of gimmies—from food preservatives to boots—left in storage. Sometimes corps even purposefully abandon devalued goods to avoid disposal costs. Often, large corps may overlook properties as well, creating "13th floors." These forgotten spaces—cube farms, entire office floors, community housing, and such—may sit empty for years.

Even employees can fall through the cracks of a megacorp. Reorganization or restructuring can leave overlooked wageslaves unaffiliated with any department or division. Sooner or later these "zombies" are reintegrated into the corp, usually through their corporate clique, but some zombies can linger in limbo for considerable periods. Oversights may also create "ghosts"—employees who are terminated but retain full or partial access to buildings or networks. In Asian corporations, ghosts commonly make themselves inconspicuous by taking up residence in conference rooms and avoiding managers. Sometimes ghosts "sell" themselves or are kidnapped by runners, who exploit the ghosts' access privileges. Most ghosts are detected within three to twelve months of their termination, depending on the thoroughness of their former employer's security, the size of the corporation, and how many levels of contractors are employed by the firm.

Last but not least, oversights can lead to the creation of "karmic projects." Typically, a corp will allocate buckets of money for a given project and create a dedicated cost-center and IO for the project. Occasionally such a project will be terminated but a time lag will occur before the cost-center and IO are terminated, leaving money available for a "karmic project." During the lag, anyone who can access the money is basically free to spend it however they desire, as the corp system will contain no record of the karmic project's funding. Usually some deviant manager discovers the money and initiates a karmic project, but occasionally a hacker may discover such unaccounted-for money and initiate a project.

- This is where those odd cybered freak guards or expensive toys come from.

- Plan 9



Keisha paced herself so as not to run past the other worker drones, foremen, and the occasional suit or secretary on their way out of the complex. *I made it, she thought. Can't wait to tell C.* Lining up before the security gates with the rest of the UnlimiTech workforce, she barely resisted opening up a private channel to post a daring message to her mentor. She recalled their last conversation as she waited.

"You're *not* going in there alone, I won't let you," C said. "UnlimiTech belongs to Ares, and they're as paranoid as the worst of them. You're good and you're smart and you should know better. Besides, the pay isn't that great. What did I tell you about negotiating with the Johnson?"

"Aww, c'mon C, I followed your instructions to a T. I triple-checked everything. The ID is ace and the background just screams legit. I even cracked the high school database to put pictures in their fucking yearbook."

Her mentor's voice got serious, and cold. "My opinion stands. You go in, you're on your own. No safety net."

"Ma'am, please empty your pockets and open your bag." The security guard's voice brought her back to the present. Security drones hovered nearby, randomly marking employees for spot checks from the guards. "Shut off your firewall and approve the upcoming remote access request for a commlink scan." Her heartbeat sped up, *I am prepared for that—my ID is ace.*

"Sure, done. There you go, officer." She forced a smile, though she could see only her fake platinum-coated tusks sparkling in his mirrored visor.

"Thank you for your cooperation, private. Please move along." The guard's voice was a monotone as he spoke the mantra he repeated day in, day out.

Not bad for a test run, Keisha thought as she exited the grounds. A few days from now and I'll be walking out with the payload through the front gate.

Excited, she pinged C on her way to the O'Hare entertainment district but only got his usual grumpy "Leave me a message or leave me alone" voicemail. "Hey C, it's me, K. Now, I know what you said and all, but ... well I went in anyway. Can I tell you—a piece o' cake. The security on the front gates—a joke. Shit, I'm babbling, call me when you get this or after you've calmed down. Maybe it's time for you to introduce me to your friends on Jackpot, or whatever you call it.

A few thousand kilometers away, Cosmo sighed. *Another hotshot trying too much, too fast.* Though Keisha *was* good, he had to admit. Still following her trail via O'Hare's gridlink and the occasional AR tag along the road, he released the hijacked security drone and logged out of the Unlimited Technologies system. *Need to ring up Sticks to ask him what he knows about Unlimited Technologies. Let's hope we didn't stir up a wasp nest.*





ARES MACROTECHNOLOGY

Corporate Court Ranking (2071): #6

Corporate Slogan: "Making the World a Safer Place"

Corporate Status: AAA, public corporation

World Headquarters: Detroit, UCAS

President/CEO: Damien Knight

Major Shareholders: Damien Knight (23.7%), Arthur Vogel (24.1%), Gavilan Ventures (12.2%)

MAJOR DIVISIONS AND NOTABLE SUBSIDIARIES:

Ares Arms

Fleche Armaments (Miltech Systems), Israel Military Industries (Armament)

Ares Consumer Products

BacteriTech (Biotech/Genetech), Cerebrotech (Cyberware, Optics), Crystal Optics (Electronics/Cybernetics), General Dynamics (Electronics), Leviathan Technical (Communications/Electronics/Cybertech), Lifescape (AR/Sim/Software), Quick Trigger Systems (Software), Unlimited Technologies (Hybrid Technologies/Research)

Ares Heavy Industry

Ares Integrated Solutions (Heavy Industry/Nanotech), General Motors (Heavy Industry/Automotive), Honda-GM (Automotive), MosTrans (Automotive/Naval)

Ares Services

Ares Global Entertainment (Sim/Trid Production), Executive Protection Services (Personal Security), Hard Corps (Security Service Provider), Info Santé (Medical Service Provider), Mercury Express (Delivery Service), Quantas (Airline), Wolverine Security (Security Service Provider), Truman Distribution Network (Media/Entertainment)

AresSpace

AresSpace Commsat (Aerospace/Communications), AresSpace Lifters (Orbital Construction/Transport), NASA Consulting Inc. (Aerospace/Orbital Management)

Knight Errant

MORE BANG FOR THE BUCK

Posted by: Sticks

"Guns, they make guns, right?" is probably the biggest oversimplification of Ares made by noobs and veterans alike. I had misconceptions about Ares myself, before I got the truth burned into my retina. Don't worry, I'm not going to share all my nightmares with you, but I'll fill you in on the basics and what you need to know about Knight and his empire. Feel free to add your own two cents.

While Ares Arms is indeed the world's top arms manufacturer, there's a lot more to the megacorp besides your trusted Predator IV. Orbital station and satellite construction and maintenance (AresSpace), civilian and military vehicles or drones, security services and mercenary contracts are all part of Ares's product palette. And don't forget its media and entertainment division, Ares Global Entertainment. Or its heavy-industry branch, which designs, constructs, and sells underwater habitats, mining and drilling platforms, and related engines and machinery. Last, but certainly not least, Ares enjoys a rep as the world's best military and national security advisor, and more often than not Knight Errant works for both sides in a conflict. Their recent acquisition of the Seattle security contract is just one more feather in the big Knight Errant cap. The megacorp's strong emphasis on the military sector is reflected in both Ares's internal structure and corporate culture. And Knight's own track record in managing global crises such as the Corporate War of the Fifties or the Crash 2.0 proves the success of this strategy.

- No matter how much Knight tries to modernize Ares's image and organization, he's put too much effort into the tough-guy approach to start downplaying it now.
- Dr. Spin

ORIGINS

Ares Macrotechnology was born from the vision of one Nicholas Aurelius, who merged General Motors and numerous medium to large enterprises around the world into Ares Industries, one of the world's first megacorporations. By the time of the first global computer crash, Ares had already purchased the U.S. government's defunct space program and had turned it into a profitable satellite-salvaging enterprise, had helped found the Corporate Court, and had sold the Court the refurbished space station *Freedom* (later renamed *Zurich-Orbital*).

Ares earned enormous profits by salvaging space junk left in orbit after the 2029 Crash and equipping *a lot* of different armies during the Euro Wars. Then suddenly a new era began for the rechristened Ares Macrotechnology with the infamous "Nanosecond Buyout" in 2033. Then-CEO Leonard Aurelius was still mourning his late father's demise a few months prior, when on January 24, 2033, Damien Knight stepped into the corporation's boardroom. In less than a minute Knight had acquired about 22 percent of Ares public stock through a series of expertly programmed market transactions. Knight immediately seized control of the corp, disempowered Aurelius, and became Ares's CEO and chairman.



- No one had heard of Knight then, and even today the man is shrouded in mystery. No known family, no background, regular Léonization treatments that make his age impossible to ascertain, no visible augmentations—it all adds to the expertly constructed aura of the invincible corporate raider with the physique of a professional urban brawler.

- Sunshine

AFTER THE BUYOUT

Bitter infighting between Knight and Aurelius marked the next decades. Aurelius claimed the top seat for a few years in the '40s, but Knight came out on top eventually.

Under Knight's leadership, the corporation prospered and broadened its range of products and services even further with the creation of Knight Errant (corporate security services) and the expansion of Ares Global Entertainment (proud sponsor of the Desert Wars, among other media gems). Somewhere along the road, Ares learned about the insect-spirit menace, and Knight Errant became a driving force in the fight against the bugs. Knight Errant's no-holds-barred tactics in Chicago and Detroit (trying to keep the Chicago refugees at bay) resulted in a lot of bad press, but for the most part, they did what they had to do.

- "Did what they had to do?" I doubt that's how Chicagoans see it, whether it's the detonation of a tactical nuke in the downtown core or the release of an Awakened bacteria that chewed its way through the city's astralscape.

- Winterhawk

- Whatever you might think of their actions, the alternative would have been worse—much worse. Ares took the fight to the insect spirits long before any other organization of comparable size even knew the threat existed.

- Man-of-Many-Names

There was much speculation about who pointed Ares towards the insect spirits and the Universal Brotherhood conspiracy. My take on it is that the late dragon Dunkelzahn had a claw in the matter, which would explain why Ares backed the Dunkelzahn/Haeffner ticket in the '57 presidential campaign with funds, lobbying, and Ares Global Entertainment coverage. It would also fit the theory of Knight and Haeffner being buddies all the way back to the days of the first Crash. I'm sure some of you still remember Haeffner's turn of phrase repeated ad nauseam in the corporation's ads after he was sworn in: "A new era for the UCAS, a new Ares for the UCAS."

While Dunkelzahn didn't survive his inauguration night, Ares scored generous contracts with the UCAS military during the Haeffner administration and even survived the Corp War pretty much unscathed. I've heard of several moves against Knight's supreme reign during those years, starting with the arrival of eco-lawyer Arthur Vogel on the board of directors, courtesy of Dunkelzahn's last will and testament. Knight held on tight to his CEO chair but had to deal with Vogel gaining influence when Leonard Aurelius sold his stock to the dwarf and then jumped ship to Cross Applied Technologies, an AA on its way into the major leagues. Knight and Vogel owned nearly equal shares of stock, and

Gavilan Ventures—Ares's third major shareholder—suddenly had enough voting power to tip the scale to anyone's favor.

- Gavilan was secretly owned by Dunkelzahn until his death. The Draco Foundation controls it today, since its CEO Nadja Daviar-Haeffner's vice-president and former voice of Dunkelzahn—went MIA during the UCAS coup d'état in the early days of the Crash 2.0.

- Frosty

Despite the Vogel and Gavilan Ventures voting bloc, Knight ruthlessly continued his course. During the Crash 2.0, he dealt the deathblow to arch-rival Cross Applied Technologies. First, the Quebec megacorp lost its CEO in a suspicious plane accident mere hours into the Crash. Then Cross found its worldwide cash cows taken over by Ares-owned subsidiaries or shell corps. Ares easily snapped up the juiciest chunks of Cross, then it discarded the looted corpse.

- Little known factoid: A few years prior, Ares entered into a partnership with the Frankfurt Bank Association, a German finance AA. During the hostile takeover of Cross in '65, Frankfurt orchestrated lawsuits against Cross Applied Technologies, effectively freezing its assets even as the bank loaned money to Cross through affiliated or Ares-owned banks.

- Cosmo

RECENT EVENTS

When the dust settled, Ares looked stronger than ever. Most of Knight's enemies were either dead, vanished, or broke. Displaying cunning foresight, Knight used the following years to initiate a restructuring of his corporate empire, consolidating his control and keeping his internal enemies at bay.

But recently the first cracks in the wall have emerged, lending proof to the rumors that all is not well in Aresville. With President Colloton's yes-men now in all the right seats, Ares's miltech supply and service contracts and connections have suffered major setbacks. And the takeover of Cross Applied Technologies wasn't the piece of cake it was portrayed as. As other events monopolized Knight's attention, key Cross personnel jumped ship left, right, and center as AA scavengers fought over the scraps left of Cross.

- Ares initially secured Cross' main divisions, including Cross Biomedical. But unfortunately for Knight, Zeta-Imp Chem grabbed Cross Biomed in Russia with an assist from the Kremlin, which had successfully kept Knight out of the country even before Cross went under.

- Nephrine

Ares's brutal acquisition campaign during the Cross Applied Technologies assimilation also tarnished its public image and caused a downright loss of face in Europe, South Asia, and the Far East. Knight's decision to reorganize the company around newly formed Ares Global Holding started a major shakeup that triggered internal resistance throughout the entire organization and intensified the rivalry between Vogel and Knight. In fact, some say Vogel would not be alive today had he not relocated to the Daedalus space station after barely surviving a biodrone bomb attack in LA last year.



Earlier this year, Roger Soaring-Owl, Knight's trusted advisor and the longtime executive vice-president of Knight Errant, resigned from his duties to take a high-paying military consultant position with the Sioux Nation. In a surprise move, Knight named Clayton Wilson—founder of Lone Star and long since ousted from his own corp—as Soaring-Owl's successor.

Things took another interesting turn when the Draco Foundation granted Gavilan's proxy rights to Nicholas "Young Nick" Aurelius, the grandson of Ares's original founder, thereby reinstating Knight's old opposition into the corporation. Vogel has since sided with Aurelius. The pair's first joint action was the recent recall of Ares's Corporate Court representative, Paul Graves, whom they replaced with Michele Borden from Vogel's camp.

- I hear Borden is only an interim solution until Vogel's ready to take on the position as Corporate Court justice himself. With an agenda as green as Vogel's, the other polluters on the court are already shitting their pants. As little as the dwarf may be, he's got troll-sized cojones.
- Ecotope
- Tensions have been brewing between Ares and the Draco Foundation ever since the foundation got involved with Gavilan Ventures. It's only gotten worse since Nadja Daviar dropped off the face of the earth after the Haeffner assassination.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Maybe the foundation decided to take a more active role in what it assumes would be Daviar's best interests.
- Plan 9
- That's assuming that the foundation doesn't know Daviar's whereabouts.
- Frosty

Aurelius' arrival and the joint display of power from Aurelius and Vogel, however, showed Knight that he needs to fight to remain in control. Never afraid to play dirty and use black ops and deniable assets should the situation require it, Knight has contracted several operators to find out more about Aurelius' and Vogel's true agenda. This includes everything from Vogel's true backers to the whereabouts of Nadja Daviar and the agenda of the Draco Foundation. Only time will tell if Knight can successfully fight off this internal threat to his fiefdom.

CORPORATE CULTURE

Ares's proximity to the military sector strongly influences the corporation's culture and business ethics. Clear-cut hierarchies and structured communications, obedience to superiors, and an ingrained esprit de corp (heh!) defines the work philosophy at Ares. The company encourages a "be-all-that-you-can-be" mentality in its citizens; wageslaves wanting to elevate themselves to a higher income bracket must undergo personal development and training programs that would bring tears of joy to the eyes of military drill sergeants. As the Ares human resources department phrases it, "A prosperous corporate society requires strong leadership."

Traditional North American values and quaint ideas such as "the American Way" play a major role in Ares' corporate culture as

well. Self-reliance, ingenuity, industry, and the ability to squeeze the most out of the ostensibly rigid hierarchy are all prized traits in citizens. And priorities are hard work, family, and security—in that order.

Ares citizens are constantly indoctrinated by in-house media and infotainment to be loyal, dedicated, and patriotic toward the mother corp. In one of many borrowings from military psychology, the Ares esprit de corps is put above all, and contributing to the success and prosperity of the Ares "family" is the duty of every good corporate citizen. Individual accomplishments are recognized and honored, and citizens can earn promotions through displays of notable "sacrifice, valor, and initiative."

- The corporate culture and conveyed ideology are two major issues with the assimilated Cross Applied Technologies assets. Some execs rely on methods others would call brainwashing. Ethically questionable but totally legal, at least according to corporate law. Extraterritoriality is a wonderful tool.
- Cosmo

Additionally, Ares offers extracurricular training and modular classes to teach employees new motivational techniques and hone their leadership and teamwork skills. Attendance at these functions is noted on employees' records, and wageslaves who attend are awarded brownie points in the form of AR profile badges with titles such as "Core Business Strategist" or "Leadership Training Specialist." While these titles do not appear on formal business cards or signatures, they are a status symbol in the Ares corporate community, just as campaign badges are among military personnel.

Similarities with the military extend beyond the cubicles and conference rooms. Ares invests significantly in efforts to groom the next generation of loyal corp soldiers and executive warriors by offering military-style academic education to select corporate citizens and their families based on the parents' performance ratings (or recommendations from their superiors).

- Unsurprisingly, a lot of military slang has filtered into Ares workers' daily lives. For instance, an intern is called a "private" in office parlance, and assets within a functional division (such as Ares Arms) are referred to as "brigades." A regional division (such as Ares Europe) is a "corps," and the Detroit-based Ares Global Holding is often referred to as "C&C" (for Command and Control).
- Picador

Even with a workforce this loyal and motivated, increasing efficiency remains a constant challenge. Esprit de corps and the ambition to excel at one's job may boost overall productivity, but maintaining steady increases in productivity is the responsibility of the company's managers. And while Ares certainly provides career development programs, the firm's military-style culture does not foster the most dynamic or innovative thinking in its managers.

- Ares regularly scouts the campuses and rival corps' think tanks for premium scientific talent it can recruit to its roster. Ares executives figure that as long as these individuals adopt the Ares worldview, their educational backgrounds are irrelevant.
- Kat o' Nine Tales



- Ares is also one of the leading corporate investors in full academic scholarships and sponsorships. One trick the megacorp uses to get its hands on new talent is to offer student loans that must be worked off (rather than paid off). The typical five to ten years required to pay off that debt is more than enough time for someone to get hooked on the perks of corporate life.

- Kia

CORPORATE STRUCTURE

Before the restructuring, Ares's organizational model was messy at best. The company's tiered divisions were attached to regional headquarters but still might have their offices in a different country entirely, and the regional headquarters reported back to Ares in Detroit. For example, Ares Global Entertainment, located in Paris, France, reported directly to Ares Europe in Copenhagen, while AresSpace in Houston, CAS, was a stand-alone entity under Ares Global Holding. Other branches, such as Ares Arms, established their own regional presence regardless of any other local holding. Interdivisional communication and purviews were haphazard nightmares. Add the protectionist behavior of regional and division execs, and you get an idea of the bureaucratic nightmare Ares had become over the decades.

- Again, not unlike many national militaries.

- Picador

- A streamlined and efficient organizational model and communications are two of the biggest hurdles to overcome for any company. But they sure are useful for people like us. Lots of cracks you can squeeze through.

- Mika

- Nothing beats watching the little cogs throw spanners in each other's capitalist engines to halt them. Overeager execs organizing runs against rival upstarts in a neighboring division are par for the course.

- Aufheben

The restructuring initiative is designed to organize the corporation's divisions into a streamlined hierarchy under the high command of Ares Macrotech's Global HQ (now Ares Global Holding) in Detroit—similar to the different arms of the armed forces (with Global Holding acting as the Joint Chiefs). The marketing department proclaims the new model will “enable Ares to offer customized services and products, significantly increasing Ares's service quality and response times.”

Even before the Crash 2.0, the mutation of stand-alone subsidiaries reporting only to the regional head put a lot of power into mid-level execs, who enjoyed their independence. It also opened the door for ambitious division heads to expand their influence further. The time-consuming integration of Cross Applied Technologies assets outside NorthAm in particular required local cultural and business expertise. This meant that Knight couldn't just extend his control and send in his NorthAm-based loyalists without compromising the transition further, and that let Vogel and Aurelius place their men in key positions.

So once you look past the spin, it's obvious that Knight's main concern is the newly minted Vogel/Aurelius voting block.

- Vogel spent the last few years establishing his own powerbase by taking over the former Cross Applied Technologies Matrix tech assets. His rapid progress reeks of assistance from Aurelius way before the Draco Foundation put him back onto Ares's board of directors. I feel this will be getting ugly soon.

- Cosmo

Once it is fully restructured, Ares will possess regional divisions—North America, South America, North Europe, South Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia-Pacific—each responsible for coordinating business presence, providing logistics and infrastructure, and developing strategies for its region. The restructured Ares will also be divided into functional divisions—Arms, Heavy Industry, Space, Services, Consumer Products, and so on. Subsidiaries and subdivisions will align with “industry” divisions (not unlike the different corps in traditional armed forces). The notable exception is Knight Errant, which remains an autonomous division while other security assets have fallen under Ares Services control.

Both regional and functional divisions will report directly to Ares Global Holding in Detroit—in theory, at least. The following document from the newly founded Internal Engineering Group (part of the Ares Services division) spotlights obstacles that project managers are encountering.

//upload email :: user Sticks :: 04.09.72//

From: Marcus Gavaird / Internal Engineering

To: Rachel Drennan / Assistant to Mr. Knight

Topic: Re: Progress

Mrs. Drennan:

Thank you for your email and for the unexpected opportunity to explain the project status to Mr. Knight personally in a very constructive conversation yesterday. Per Mr. Knight's request, please find a summary of the current delays listed below.

To a large extent, the reorganization remains on schedule. Eighty-five percent of the North American business units are already reorganized according to the planned model, and the remaining departments will be integrated before the end of the current fiscal year. The situation in Europe as well as Asia demands our utmost attention though, as less than seventy percent of business units in those regions have been reorganized. Additionally, fully two-thirds of the problem business units hail from our Cross Acquisition and Integration portfolio. The remaining third can be attributed to divisions that previously benefited from greater autonomy.

Progress has been delayed by passive resistance in the form of administrative and bureaucratic obstacles, lack of on-site cooperation, and lack of personnel resources to monitor the ongoing restructuring within the regions and divisions. I'd gladly welcome Mr. Knight's offer to reemphasize the importance of this project in another internal memo sent directly to the divisional and regional executives. I would also like to offer my full assistance in identifying and escalating responses to deviation from the projected schedule through open disobedience or covert resistance.



Also per Mr. Knight's request, I have attached a preliminary evaluation of potential candidates for key positions within the revised organization—though as I understand it, vice-president and divisional manager positions will require board approval and hence compromises. Please feel free to contact me any time should you require further information or additional clarification.

Sincerely,
M. Gavaird
//end attachment//

- Brown-nosing buttwipe. I'd say Knight's been given a taste of his own medicine. Initially he planned the entire restructuring initiative to further cement his position and influence within the corporation, but he's discovered that Vogel and Aurelius have pre-empted his moves.
- Pistons
- Some execs don't want to wait until the shit hits the fan. Over the past year, I've handled quite a few extraction requests from Ares's rivals for employees unhappy with the new structure. Only half of them were former Cross Applied Technologies employees. The other half were disaffected long-time Ares wageslaves.
- Stone

Regional divisions in particular have seen their power and influence significantly reduced, and they find themselves spending much time on intercorporate logistics or administrative tasks such as coordinating the centralized information flow within the

region or to the various functional divisions. Established local subdivisions, such as Ares Seattle and Ares California, are all to be integrated into regional divisions, much to the dismay of the local CEOs and execs. About eighty percent of the corporation's assets on the North American continent have been reshuffled into the new structure, but the Southern European, Middle East, and APAC regions are far behind schedule. Regional divisions will also be responsible for network security, which seems odd on the face of it but means Detroit can snoop on what everyone is doing.

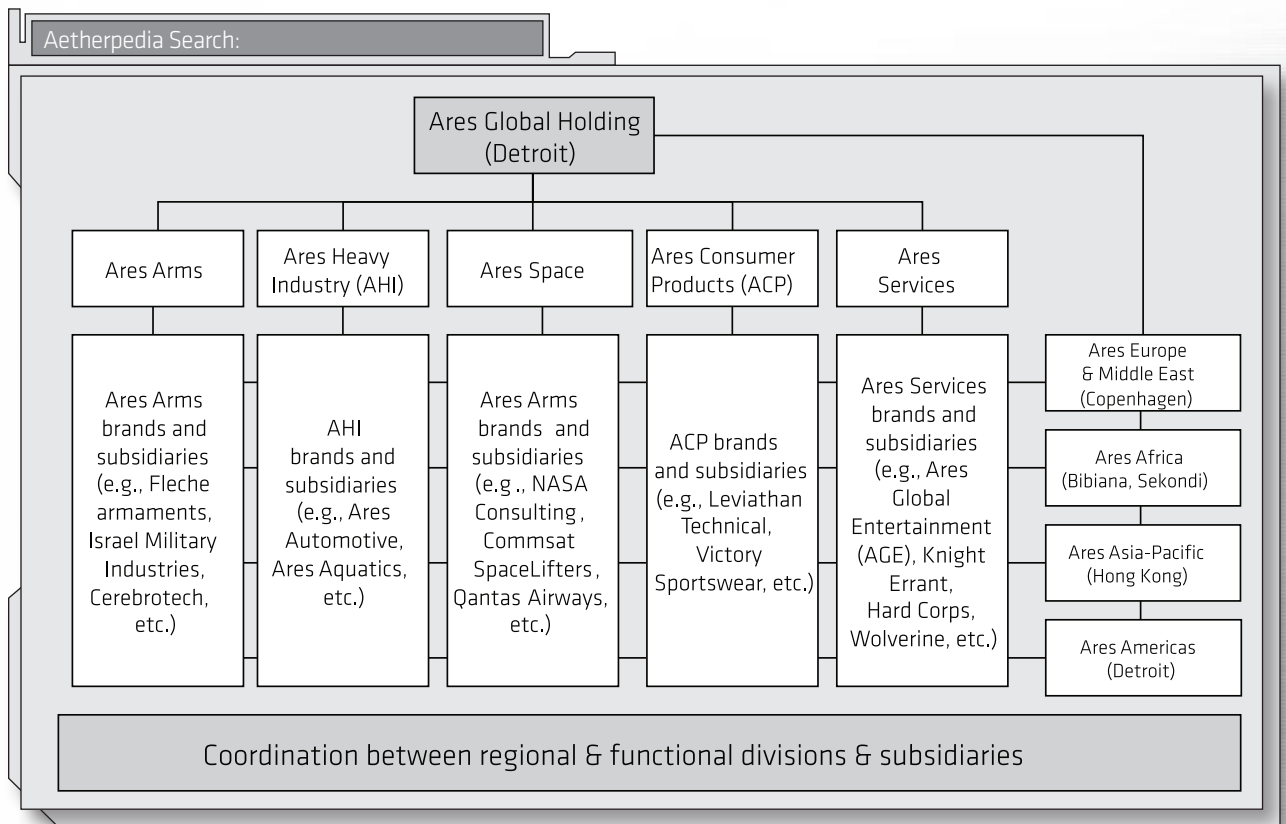
While some of the more conservative Ares executives are personally offended by the changes and curtailing of autonomy, some of the eager young upstarts are maneuvering their cronies into key positions to have first-hand access to the major intracorporate communication lines and intel.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

While the major shareholders have remained the same for more than three decades, I rang up some old acquaintances that happen to keep tabs on Ares's triumvirate and also watch some of the underlings making a name for themselves.

//temporary account established :: sysop FastJack//
//temporary account logged on :: user Drackenfelts//

The following profiles are patched together from intel by Infolio, a French datamining corp. I trimmed them down to basics to spare you the annoying details on Knight's favorite golf course or Vogel's vegan preferences.



Damien Knight

One of the world's most visible celebrities for more than three decades, Damien Knight is instantly recognizable by his sharp trideogenic features and athletic build. While his true age remains undetermined, Knight looks to be in his late thirties and is believed to resort to regular Léonization treatments. He also keeps himself in excellent physical condition and is believed to sport a significant but undetermined number of discreet augmentations.

Concrete details of Knight's history remain elusive. Assuming the data loss during the Crash of 2029 was solely responsible for this lack of details would be naïve, though it certainly contributed to the dearth of information. What details have emerged about the man's peers, enemies, and contemporaries suggest that Damien Knight is a fabricated identity.

Though several theories about his true origin and the reasons for his change of identity persist, the leading hypothesis is that "Damien Knight" is in fact one David Gavilan. A former UCAS military computer analyst and programmer, Major David Gavilan was lead programmer with the Echo Mirage project, the team of expert hackers assembled to fight the computer virus that caused the first Crash way back in 2029.

- Which is where he supposedly met Kyle Haeffner, who Knight helped into the Oval Office in '57. Haeffner's wife Alice was one of the first casualties in the fight against the virus.
- Fastjack

After the Crash, Gavilan resurfaced in the Investigative Research Division at Acquisition Technologies, a third-tier corp specializing in industrial espionage and a precursor of corporate intelligence divisions such as Shiawase's MFID or independent intel corps such as Infolio or Aegis Cognito. It's reasonable to assume that Gavilan used Acquisition Technologies to organize and choreograph his masterstroke and vanished a few weeks before the Nanosecond Buyout. Then, in January 2033, Damien Knight materialized on the scene in possession of twenty percent of the corporation's stock accompanied by another (new) major shareholder, Gavilan Ventures, which owned an additional 12 percent.

- It's now presumed that Dunkelzahn's ownership of Gavilan Ventures explains how Gavilan/Knight was able to fund his stunt in the first place, though how the two came together has never been explained to my satisfaction.
- Fastjack
- Oh, oh, two comments in a row from gramps. Everybody come 'round the campfire, Jack's tellin' stories from the good ol' days.
- Slamm-0!

Knight went on to diversify Ares's range of offerings, introducing new products and services—among them his pet project, Knight Errant. Possibly through his own background in the military and at Acquisition Technologies, he developed a vast network of international political contacts, thereby opening the door for Ares's military branch and consultancy services. Over time, Ares has become the world's leading military consultant, and the Ares Arms division has won profitable contracts to equip

various national militaries, the UCAS military ranking first among these. Extensive lobbying, government contracts, and political arm-twisting have ensured that miltech remains a mainstay of the corporation's profits.

In political terms, Knight is undoubtedly one of the most powerful individuals on the global scene. His influence ranges from open involvement in national politics to applying discreet political clout in strategically valuable regions.

- Like many of his peers in the megacorp elite, Knight is more than slightly megalomaniacal, thinking he knows what's best for this world. Making things worse, Ares has the military power to implement Knight's overriding ambition—profiteering from war.
- Aufheben

Knight has outlived most of his enemies, and he even seems to have been on the right side of the fates during the Crash 2.0. Not only did Ares navigate the worst of the turmoil and conquer arch-rival Cross Applied Technologies, but Ares's space division raked in profits from the reconstruction of the global satellite network, and the corp's arms division arranged for several profitable regime changes in resource-rich, backwater nations.

But Ares experienced significant setbacks on its home turf. Many of Knight's connections in Washington found themselves out in the cold (or dead) following President Haeffner's assassination, and Ares's relations with President Colloton were cold at first. Knight, however, persisted and kept lobbying the military, which seems to be one of Colloton's most influential backers. Though Colloton is still wary of Knight, the CEO's approach seems to have worked and Ares is back in the game—Boston tea parties, Washington fundraising dinners, and all.

- There have always been rumors about a shadow cabinet pulling the strings behind Colloton. Maybe Knight finally found a way in?
- Plan 9
- The UCAS isn't the only government that Ares is courting. Through Clayton Wilson, Knight has an in with the CAS government, and Knight's old buddy Soaring-Owl is a military advisor to the Sioux Nation.
- Mika
- Not the way I hear it. Soaring-Owl and Knight aren't on speaking terms. Soaring-Owl resigned the day he returned from a visit to UnlimiTech's Chicago O'Hare facility, but his sudden resignation remains a mystery to me.
- Cosmo

Outside North America, Ares consultants are busy shaking hands with national leaders, arranging impressive weapon demonstrations with the few moderate Middle Eastern regimes, or whispering anti-Aztechnology propaganda into the ears of the small but resource-rich nations in Aztlan's shadow.

Arthur Vogel

Arthur Vogel is a Caucasian dwarf in his late fifties. A Harvard law school alumnus, Vogel had a long and distinguished law career before joining Ares. Moving from corporate lawyer to eco-



activist, Vogel rose to preeminence as the front man for the Sierra Inc. environmental activist group. From there, Vogel wrangled the Democratic presidential nomination in the 2057 elections. Though his bid for the UCAS presidency failed, he acquired a considerable stake in Ares shortly thereafter—big enough to ensure a seat as an executive director on the board.

The media has never been quite sure what to make of Vogel. The man seems to view himself as an upright, uptight Green advocate, despite a lackluster performance during his first few years on Ares's board of directors, when he avoided questioning the ecological impact of Ares's business.

Despite Vogel's fall from grace with the likes of TerraFirst!, GreenWar, and the Awakened Liberation Front, it's questionable whether any of these groups was behind last year's bombing at the LA Environmental Summit—an incident that left Vogel gravely injured and requiring extended hospitalization.

- There is, of course, the possibility that the assassination attempt might be linked to one of Vogel's Deep Green associates from before he bought Aurelius's Ares stock. No one has ever pinned down where he got the money from, but there've been hints at the involvement of dragons other than Dunkelzahn. Some of the lizards also have green thumbs, which would fit the treehuggers' claims of responsibility.
- Mr. Bonds
- I've heard plenty of rumors that Vogel met secretly with Leonard Aurelius a few days before the event. Maybe Knight ordered the attack. With the Gavilan shares on his side, Vogel has more voting power than Knight himself. A direct hit isn't Knight's usual modus operandi, but desperate times require desperate measures.
- 2XL

Vogel spent almost a full year recovering on Ares's Daedalus space station as he waited for cloned tissue and organs. Despite his condition, Vogel insisted on fulfilling his duties and responsibilities. He coordinated the continuous acquisition and legal integration of some of the more problematic Cross Applied Technologies assets into Ares. Whether or not he received some help from Aurelius is unknown, but his success certainly pleased the other directors and shareholders.

- Pleased everyone except Knight. By using some loopholes in the restructuring initiative, Vogel brought these subsidiaries under his direct control, shutting out Knight.
- Kia

His recovery must have given him time to develop his strategy. Since his release from rehab almost a full year later, Vogel's been busier than ever, even though he chooses to remain on Daedalus. Besides blocking several of Knight's projects in favor of more eco-friendly initiatives, Vogel spends a lot of time in "private host" meetings with Nick Aurelius, the newly appointed Gavilan Ventures representative and proxy. Their concerted vote to recall Ares's Corporate Court representative Paul Graves and appoint former Cross Applied Technologies legal counselor Michele Borden as his replacement was an unambiguous warning to Knight—though so far they've been

content to ensure they control key positions in Knight's new corporate structure.

- Grassroots (pun intended) whisper: Vogel's trying to reconnect with several eco-activist NGOs. They're giving him a hard time, but he's pressuring them, as if someone or something is breathing down his back.
- Ecotope
- Maybe he's figured out that Aurelius cares as much about the environment as Knight? The dwarf is playing a dangerous game allying with Aurelius. Could be that's why he's seeking help from old acquaintances.
- Cosmo
- There's more to it than that. Ever since he ascended to the board of directors, Vogel spends a week every year on vacation somewhere in Amazonia. Coincidence? I think not.
- Glasswalker

As current treasurer of Ares Global Holding, Vogel oversees the internal financials, evaluates business strategies, and manages risks such as take-over opportunities and threats to Ares's core businesses. Since almost half his body was artificially replaced as a result of the bomb attack, Vogel has taken great interest in cybernetic and bioengineered augmentations in combination with low-gravity physiological rehabilitation treatments, and he is pushing the corporation's R&D departments to intensify their research in these particular applications.

In addition, he has taken on the position of Executive Director of AresSpace and is supervising the reorganization of the division. AresSpace already plays a leading role in the space-elevator consortium and has profited from the technology boom and reconstruction of global satellite networks in the past few years. Finally, Vogel has begun to show great interest in Ares's deep-sea endeavors. He has initiated a major new project to study the effects of tectonic shifts, tsunamis, and similar disaster scenarios. The project's initial funds originated from Ares Arms division, suggesting that military interests also play a key role in the project.

- It is unclear how Vogel was appointed Director of AresSpace—there hasn't been any formal vote or announcement. My sources say the position was offered to Vogel the minute he woke up in the ICU.
- Butch

Nicholas Aurelius

Aurelius's appointment by Gavilan Ventures, Ares's third major shareholder, came as a surprise to everyone. The Draco Foundation—executor of Dunkelzahn's will—has controlled Gavilan Ventures ever since its CEO and former UCAS Vice-President Nadja Daviar went missing in 2065. While the name Aurelius still jacks up Knight's heart rate, Young Nick is less biased than his old man and may actually prove to be a promising addition to the board, business-wise. Before joining Ares, Aurelius followed his father to Cross Applied Technologies, where he led Seattle's Advanced Electronics subsidiary. When Ares triggered the feeding frenzy on Cross Applied Technologies, father and son



Aurelius made a fortune in several bidding wars for Cross Applied Technologies' more valuable assets, then laid low while waiting for the dust to settle.

- "Father and son" pretty much sacrificed Cross's empire during the Crash, but not before securing some of the corp's most valuable assets, such as a significant number of Lucien Cross's personal cadre of special agents—the Seraphim.
- Stone
- The Seraphim were divided during Cross Applied Technologies' final weeks. Some followed Aurelius, others remained loyal to the surviving Cross family members, and others seized the chaotic moment and went rogue.
- Fianchetto

With great fanfare, Ares Global Entertainment proclaimed the return of Aurelius as a new dawn for Ares, much to Knight's anger and despite his several attempts to keep the announcement as neutral as possible. It certainly helped that Young Nick's facial features and physique clearly mark him as a true Aurelius. He maintains a noble yet somehow distant expression and displays calm and well-mannered behavior.

Despite his decision to side with Vogel in recalling Ares' Corporate Court judge Paul Graves, Aurelius evaluates propositions from both Knight and Vogel case by case. He has yet to reveal his own agenda. Ares Global Entertainment's coverage portrays him as someone who genuinely cares for the future of Ares and lives up to the image by asking inconvenient questions and stopping the bleeding of several of Knight's wounds.

- Nicholas still seeks advice from his father, who was last seen in D.C., talking to some high-ranking military officials. Regardless of Knight's reputation and covert influence, the name Aurelius still has a lot of pull with the conservatives and especially with hardliners such as Colloton.
- Kay St. Irregular

CORPORATE OFFICERS

Aside from the leading triumvirate, the continuing integration of Cross Applied Technologies personnel and the ongoing restructuring initiative reshuffled the cards for several of Ares's execs and high potentials.

Daniel Truman

Daniel Truman, the Chicago media mogul and former CEO of Truman Technologies, owes his life to Damien Knight. Literally. Ares evacuated the Truman family from Chicago right before the city was sealed off. Truman Technologies relocated to LA under Ares sponsorship and a few years later was absorbed into Ares Global Entertainment as Truman Distribution Network. Grateful for Knight's help, Truman has been a strong supporter of Knight's uncompromising management style, but that loyalty seems to have waned recently. Truman was hoping to lead Ares Global Entertainment himself someday. He has never gotten along with current Ares Global Entertainment Vice-President Troy Carpenter, who skillfully maneuvered the division through

the Crash and the rebuilding years. Carpenter is an experienced Ares Arms executive and seems firm in the saddle.

- It started earlier. Truman's daughter Melissa bailed before she could be evacuated and went missing when the Chicago Wall went up. Truman counted on Knight Errant to find her. But Ares's abandonment of Chicago after '58 opened his eyes.
- Sticks

Repeated clashes between Truman and Carpenter over business practices and the strategic course of Ares's media division have shifted from the boardroom into the shadows. Carpenter's European background gives him an advantage over Truman when coordinating the assimilation of Cross Applied Technologies' media assets and fighting off European competitors such as Sol Media or DeMeKo. With the European situation demanding Carpenter's attention, Truman has slowly but surely reached out to domestic North American news outlets, undermining Carpenter's authority and building a powerbase on his own.

Truman seemed a broken man after the Chicago evac. Despite undergoing Léonization and other treatments, Truman's spirit has been broken by the sight of his hometown falling apart and his corporate empire crumbling. A haunted figure, Truman has since shied away from the media spotlight—feat in itself in LA—and nowadays leads a secluded life, surrounded by his immediate family and a cadre of bodyguards.

- During my (admittedly short) stint at Horizon, I noticed several memos and reports tagging either Ares Global Entertainment or Truman. Maybe he's thinking about switching to Horizon?
- Sunshine

Soren Johannson

The vice-president of Ares Europe, Soren Johannson works from Ares Europe headquarters in Copenhagen and is Damien Knight's current golden child. During the Crash, Johannson was the first to carry out Knight's final strokes in the long crusade against Cross Applied Technologies. Since then Johannson has proved to be an expert negotiator with the NEEC and several member country governments. Ares Europe has been the corporation's fastest-growing division for eight years in a row, and Johannson is determined to keep it that way.

- Johannson's handlers carry a serious reputation among the European runner scene while Johannson himself feels as comfortable among the Grand Tour high society as he does among NEEC ministers.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Johannson is not above sabotaging Ares ops if that means his division stays ahead of the curve, growth-wise.
- Fianchetto
- If I thought it were possible, I'd say Johannson is Knight's clone. The same build, similar gestures, speech patterns and rhetoric—the only difference between the two seems to be Johannson's pale skin and his straw-colored hair.
- Plan 9





INCOMING FEED.....



The Middle East region was added to Johannson's area of responsibility as part of Ares's restructuring initiative. While Johannson is pleased with the prospect of even more power and clout within Ares, his division is among the farthest behind in the restructuring project's schedule. Fights over profitable sales territories, the refusal of functional divisions to follow newly implemented reporting guidelines, and simple clashes between managers' egos are causing more and more delays. Johannson will have to make some drastic changes soon or request assistance from Detroit to avoid falling from grace with Knight.

- Johannson has asked Karen King, vice-president of the Seattle division and long-time Ares veteran, for help. King has a reputation for playing hardball—her legendary fight with former Ares Global Entertainment vice-president Gustav von Sydow ended with Sydow's early retirement and Troy Carpenter taking over Ares Global Entertainment.
- Dr. Spin

Michele Borden

A native of California, Michele Borden is a cool and calculating elf and one of the surprisingly few metahumans on the Ares

executive roster. She's also clearly under-qualified to hold the position of Corporate Court justice.

Borden followed Arthur Vogel from Sierra Inc. to Ares in 2066 and assisted him on the legal side of the Cross Applied Technologies integration. At Sierra, however, she had almost no exposure to executive-level management or legal issues of the magnitude she handles for Ares nowadays. Borden is more conservative than her former boss and keeps her emotions in check. She downplays her history with Vogel to convey an impression of impartiality and professionalism, even though the two remain close.

- Her background is a bit sketchy. Her only important case had something to do with illegal chemical sludge disposal by a third-tier Aztech subsidiary and compensation payments to a Latino community in San Diego. Not exactly a sterling rep for a Corporate Court justice, neh?
- Glasswalker
- Maybe she wasn't Vogel's. Maybe his mysterious partner forced him to nominate her. We still don't know who's pulling Vogel's strings.
- Axis Mundi



After she was appointed justice to the Corporate Court, Borden visited Daedalus, no doubt meeting with Vogel before continuing to Zurich-Orbital. Time will tell what her fellow judges think of her, and more importantly, what Knight thinks of her.

Clayton Wilson

Clayton Wilson is the latest addition to Ares Macrotechnology, and his name should ring a bell with everyone on JackPoint. As the founder of Lone Star, Wilson led that corp through the Roaring Twenties as it became a multi-billion-dollar company. He was ousted from his own corp in 2036 after a majority vote nominated his brother James to helm Lone Star. Over the years, Wilson and Knight met on several occasions and developed a friendship born of mutual respect. When Knight's longtime friend and Knight Errant vice-president, Roger Soaring-Owl, resigned in February, Wilson quickly was brought in to manage Knight's personal baby.

- You can't help but applaud Knight. In Seattle, Lone Star's rep was in the gutter after the tempo debacle, and Brackhaven was looking for a scapegoat to save his own ass. With Wilson helming Knight Errant, Ares took advantage of the opportunity and grabbed that plum contract from Lone Star.
- DangerSensei

CORPORATE DIVISIONS AND GLOBAL PRESENCE

While Damien Knight's leadership of Ares has remained largely unchallenged for more than twenty years, Young Nick's and Arthur Vogel's agendas are certain to make Ares's future interesting. Globally, there's growth potential for every single Ares division, and regardless of current delays or internal resistance, the restructuring initiative has improved the overall managerial coordination between the divisions by weeding out redundancies.

Ares Arms

As a manufacturer, seller, and distributor of weapons, military supplies, and services, Ares Arms doesn't need to maintain a high profile. Its name speaks for itself, and it has the biggest clout of all Ares divisions.

Typically, Ares Arms is the first Ares division to enter a market. Once Ares Arms has established a relationship with a regime by selling it military equipment such as tanks and e-warfare systems or renting it corporate mercenaries, the door is open for other corporate divisions to do business in the new market. Ares Arms also provides military consultancy services, which further cement the corporation's relationship with client regimes. (Ares also gains market penetration through its global network of political contacts, which it cultivates by "establishing diplomatic ties" through legitimate and not-so-legitimate means.)

Typically, Ares Arms' managers and executives have military backgrounds and/or experience in foreign affairs. The division's biggest current markets are Europe and North America, with Africa ranking third but catching up.

In corp-controlled Sekondi, Ares Arms really pulls the strings for the corporation's regional headquarters. By supplying weapons to warlords, petty kingdoms, and tribal rulers, Ares is trying to

exert its influence and—again—open the door for its heavy industry division to roll in and stripmine the untapped natural resources on the continent.

Ares Asia remains the biggest untapped market. Asian corporate competitors, the Triads, and Yakuza syndicates all continue to oppose Ares's entry into the market by using their influence over governments or warlords to prevent Ares from gaining a foothold in Asia. For years, Ares has been trying to enter the market through shell companies, local distributors, or even by supporting revolutionary troops in unstable Asian countries. But its Western attitudes and economic philosophy have made business relations with local governments, warlords, and guerrilla armies difficult.

- Despite everyone wanting to equip their troops with the biggest bang on the block, the daredevil attitude of your typical Ares salesman kills a lot of deals in the first round. Knight must have realized that the Asian situation requires local knowledge and cultural understanding. Ares is on a recruiting spree again, handing out extraction assignments to freelance operatives.
- Lei Kung

Generally, the politically stable European market—with its domestically well-connected competitors such as Saeder-Krupp, French Esprit Industries, and EuroForce—offers little room for expansion by Ares Arms. But the tumultuous Balkan market is a notable exception to this situation. By using mercenaries to reach out to the warlords and military generals of the Balkan states, Ares is angling to gain a foothold in Russia.

- Sure they equip the Balkan warlords, but everybody else does, too. And some nations' flags change colors faster than you can pop a new clip.
- Picador

In addition to these aforementioned markets, Ares Arms is always monitoring emerging markets (read: current or potential future crisis zones) such as South America for new business opportunities.

Ares Heavy Industry

Ares Heavy Industry encompasses Ares's automotive, aquatic, and mining branches, which makes it a megacorporation of its own. Ares automotive and aquatic military projects are the division's cash cows these days, largely due to the division's close ties with Ares Arms. Resource-mining equipment ranks second for Ares Heavy Industry, and civilian vehicles sold through a variety of brands such as General Motors, Honda-GM, and Pontiac add to the overall bottom line.

One of the most well-funded research departments within Ares, Ares Heavy Industry performs cutting-edge research into nanotech applications for the entire corporation. R&D resources have spiked recently with several major projects initiated in quick succession following the Corporate Court's announcement of the space elevator construction.

- I predict a second spike, this time in shadow ops for or against Ares. Ares Heavy Industry's core expertise overlaps with that of other megas, first and foremost Saeder-Krupp and Shiawase. The



space elevator is a profitable and prestigious undertaking for everyone involved, and as soon as the bidding deadlines are announced, all gloves will be off.

- Clockwork

Ares's automotive subdivision and its subsidiaries are still major players on the industrial and military vehicle market, but they have lost ground in the commercial sector. Industrial espionage and strategic alliances such as joint ventures and buyouts with smaller local players are common, but such alliances have become increasingly hard to control as the number of different subsidiaries and local companies involved grows. Competition is especially fierce in Asia and more recently Europe, where Saeder-Krupp and several traditional vehicle manufacturers still have considerable economic influence and consumer trust.

AresSpace

Whether it is catering to the space-tourism industry, shooting satellites into orbit, constructing space habitats, or salvaging floating space junk for a hefty service charge, AresSpace all but dominates the space industry. In coordination with the Heavy Industry division, AresSpace rents out lab space and resources at its Daedalus orbital station to other divisions for cross-divisional projects. Its Helios station is rumored to be an experimental lab focusing on xenogenetic research for the military division, and the division's Charon space station has been officially upgraded for expanded microgravity research. The space-junk salvage boom and wave of satellite re-launches after the second Crash, as well as turnover from sister Ares Heavy Industries' scientific research in space, lines the division's pockets.

- Ares is looking for ways to sabotage or take over Evo's base on the Red Planet. Evo's Mars base—the first established on the planet—is a continuing embarrassment to Ares.
- Orbital DK

Since Arthur Vogel took over AresSpace, he has been busy promoting a new space race, extending the post-Crash tech boom beyond Earth. Late last year, Ares unveiled a new prototype light-sail and ion engine at the Hong Kong Aerospace Fair. Planning to catch up with Evo's Mars ops, Vogel also recently announced AresSpace's intent to expand its lunar operations with a permanently manned research facility and establish a base on the Martian moon Phobos by 2079. Just last month, Vogel was seen in Dubai wineing and dining potential investors from the Caliphate, Dhaka, and the Canton Confederation for a space-tourism venture. And finally, AresSpace has announced it will be responsible for the habitat and biosphere construction on the Corporate Court's skyhook counterweight asteroid.

Needless to say, competition with NeoNET and Saeder-Krupp in space development has reached an all-time high. So far, orbital space seems big enough to cool off this rivalry, but it's only a matter of time before the megacorps will begin stepping on one another's toes.

- Vogel indeed is pushing the corp's expansion into space, but he's also trying to distract attention from other projects he's pushed through the pipeline without running them by the responsible

directors. I've seen preliminary schedules for an Ares Aquatics project dealing with disaster scenarios such as tectonic plate shifts and deep-water thermal eruptions.

- Sounder

Ares Services

Mostly known for its various security providers (including Hard Corps and Wolverine), Ares Services also encompasses Info Santé and several other Cross Applied Technologies assets, as well as the megacorporation's distribution and delivery services, airlines, logistics, and financial-services departments.

Of all Ares's new divisions, Ares Services has the most diverse portfolio of interests and subsidiaries. It is also one of the best integrated and has encountered the fewest problems during the shuffle.

Another component of Ares Services—Ares Global Entertainment—has benefited the most from the Cross Applied Technologies assimilation. While Ares predominantly served the North American continent before the Crash, Cross's European media presence has allowed Ares Global Entertainment to become a serious competitor to traditional European media corporations such as DeMeKo and Sol Media. Looking at its North American and European portfolios, Ares Global Entertainment seems like two distinct companies. In North America, Ares Global Entertainment focuses on political and business news coverage, while in Europe the division is known for its primetime entertainment and blockbuster studios. Recently, Ares Global Entertainment has tried to gain a foothold in India's thriving sim-sense industry, despite the lingering bad rep the firm earned with its casualty-ridden defenses of Cross Applied Technologies' Indian biomed and computer tech assets against takeover attempts.

Knight Errant

Despite holding a significant share of municipal service contracts across North America—with the proud new addition of the Seattle contract to their portfolio—Knight Errant has long focused on providing corporate and real-estate security services rather than public police and administrative services. But after last year's tempo crisis seemed to jeopardize many of competitor Lone Star's prized metroplex service contracts, Knight Errant has been gunning for these juicy contracts. Both the experience and contacts Clayton Wilson brings to the table as Knight Errant's new vice-president confirm the importance of this new direction.

- Lone Star screwed up in Seattle during the tempo mayhem, but Knight Errant seriously fucked up in Hong Kong. It's only a matter of time before the Hong Kong syndicates use their influence over the executive council to finally kick Knight Errant out for good. The Hong Kong contract would certainly make Lone Star feel better about the loss of Seattle.
- Lei Kung
- Lone Star's got more going on than just chasing Hong Kong. It has announced aggressive expansion plans for its operations outside the North American market. The firm already holds minor beachheads in Europe and Asia, but in the past it's had trouble adjusting its procedures to the local laws.
- Hard Exit



Ares Consumer Products

More a mixed-bag of research projects than a full-blown division, Ares Consumer Products manages Ares's mass-market goods and services, from cybernetic augmentations to financial services to the corporation's "Victory" casual apparel line. Despite its rather limited consumer-products line, Ares Consumer Products pumps major funds into its R&D departments and works closely with the corporation's Arms and Heavy Industry research labs. Promising military or industrial research projects frequently result in products appropriate for the mass market, and this is where Ares Consumer Products comes in.

- Sounds much better than it really is. I was talking to a former Cross egghead I extracted from an Ares Consumer Products lab a few months back, and the division seems to be the corp's recycling bin when it comes to scientific research. Scientists dread being transferred to Ares Consumer Products.
- Nephrine
- If you can arrange such a transfer as part of an extraction, you won't have to deal with the military prototypes that typically guard Ares Arms labs. The consumer products facilities are guarded by regular Knight Errant grunts.
- Ma'Fan

With the assimilation of several Cross Applied Technologies assets in the biomed, cybernetics, and consumer-electronics sectors, Ares Consumer Products has served as an umbrella division to evaluate, dissolve, or realign all of Ares's existing products and brand names.

Many Ares Consumer Products brands were not originally connected with Ares. This has enabled the corp to establish listening posts in markets where the presence of Ares's other branches would rouse the suspicions of authorities and rival corporations. Ares Consumer Products also manages all advertising for the megacorporation's brands.

- I was skimming your Chicago guide, Sticks. What's the deal behind UnlimiTech? They're Ares Consumer Products too, no?
- Cosmo

- My relationship with UnlimiTech has had its ups and downs, but what they're doing now surprises even me. I never thought the org would rather study the bugs than put a bullet through their brainpans.
- Sticks

- For years, there have been rumors that Ares itself has been infiltrated by the bugs, becoming a hive. Bugs targeting Ares makes sense when you remember that Ares led the global crusade against the bugs with new developments, both mundane and arcane. They must have done some serious and in-depth research on the bugs.
- Plan 9

- If you stare into the abyss, the abyss stares back at you.
- Man-of-Many-Names

Ares Shadow Ops

Runs for Ares have the highest casualty and mortality rates in the biz. If you buy into the "duty and destiny" crap your corp handlers try to sell you, they'll certainly give you the chance to fulfill that duty and destiny in spectacular fashion. Ares's shadow ops range from all-out suicide missions to start-a-revolution-with-a-fork type of runs. On the plus side, Ares pays well, and more often than not you get to keep the primo tools with which you've been equipped. But if you fail the megacorp, it won't hesitate to help you meet your maker.

As one of the first megacorporations, Ares was among the first to employ shadowrunners. I've seen Ares shadow ops covering a pretty broad range of objectives during my time. The megacorp's longtime experience with shadowrunners seems to have become part of its corporate culture, and everyone from mid-level branch managers to regional vice-presidents to Damien Knight himself regularly hires shadowrunners.



Megawatch Buzz



//Keyword: Ares
//Date: 01/01/2072 - Current

Space Nanotech Development

DAEDALUS STATION, LEO—Damien Knight held a brief virtual press conference today on the Daedalus Station to unveil an innovative new nanotech system that may very well revolutionize space exploration. With its *Excelsior* nano-constructors, AresSpace appears to have solved issues with nanite vulnerability to the high radiation and extreme temperatures of orbital space. The nanotech system is designed for easy and cost-effective maintenance of satellites and the construction of larger orbital habitats. Ares representatives

declined to comment on whether this technology would be employed in the Corporate Court's recently announced space elevator.

Pack Hunter Drones?

NAIROBI, KENYA—Inside sources tell us that Ares troops engaged in tracking down anti-corporate forces near Kilimanjaro are field-testing new biodrone technologies for Ares Arms, inside sources say. One new technology, codenamed "AlphaPack," is designed to enable biodrones to mimic the task-sharing and cooperative capabilities of biological predator packs. This follows rumors that Ares is working on similar coordinated-action applications for traditional drone-pilot firmware.

- The board members usually have their personal or at least “trusted” cadre of shadow operatives or corp men. Aurelius supposedly has access to the Seraphim and Knight allegedly maintains a cadre of personal henchmen called the Unseen, a small group of high-ranking initiates placed all over the globe. Both groups act as agents as well as handlers for their patrons.

- Axis Mundi

- I can confirm your assessment of the Unseen.

- Man-of-Many-Names

Going with the Ares corporate image, the firm’s execs seldom require or even request subtlety in their shadow ops. Many missions are designed to set an example or send a clear signal to someone. This is what produces the high casualty and mortality rates among freelance operatives. However, if you complete your mission and return alive, you will be considered a proven asset and will receive further assignments. Over time, your Ares Johnson might offer medical treatment as a perk, and on rare occasions mission specs come with substantial background information and strategic evaluation of possible routes in and out.

- Quite a few Desert Wars vets and other ex-military types become “proven assets” and end up working exclusively for Ares.

- Picador

- Keep in mind that once you’re considered a proven asset, your Ares Johnson will try to keep tabs on you and your team as best he can. Trading your independence for a steady employment and credflow can provide definite perks. Just don’t try to screw over Ares while you’re on the megacorp’s payroll. Ever.

- Mika

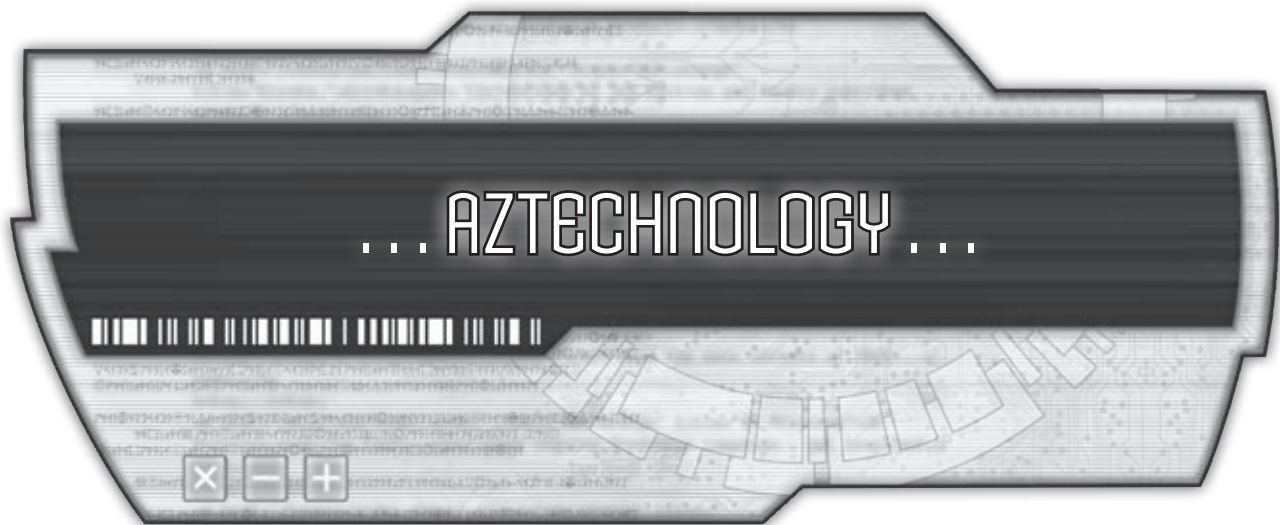
- Speaking from experience, Mika?

- Ma’fan

- Not with Ares, no. Evo’s another matter, though.

- Mika





The stink of fear and sweat was embedded in the dingy hotel room. Marius sat on the edge of the narrow bed and stared at his shaking hands. In his right hand, he had a month's supply of his anti-anxiety prescription from the corporate pharmacy. He hadn't taken the pills for the month, even though he couldn't sleep, couldn't close his eyes without seeing the ritual they had done to decipher the mystery of the artifact.

In his left hand he had a gun. Something made by Ares and sold out of a filthy little shop a few blocks off the waterfront. The irony of that twisted his mouth in a smile.

He still hadn't decided. If he were a man, a real man, he'd just do it. But he was a coward. And the pills called to him with their siren's song.

So he sat and sweated and called himself a coward as his hands shook.

He jerked the gun up when the door swung open, but it was knocked from his hands. An ochre-uniformed security guard sneered with contempt as he kicked the gun across the room.

A black-eyed man in a plain grey suit closed the door to the hotel room. Marius's gut twisted as the small man slowly walked across the room.

"Dr. Flores," the black-eyed man sighed. "You've inconvenienced me."

Marius felt the spit dry in his mouth, felt his throat clench shut.

"Your flight back to Tenochtitlán is waiting," the man told him. "Your lab is ready. You don't want the research to start without you, do you?"

Marius sat on the bed, trapped. He forced himself to speak, "No. I won't do it."

The black-eyed man sighed. "It's a pity my associates believe we need your expertise," he said, "But fortunate for you. For now." Marius cringed as the man took out an obsidian knife. Beside him, the security guard pushed up the sleeve of his uniform, revealing an arm with scars snaking up it. The man sliced into the guard's arm. Blood flowed down the black blade as the guard stood, impassive. Marius opened his mouth to scream, but the sound was strangled in his throat. The black-eyed man spoke: "You're under a lot of stress, Dr. Flores. Take your medicine. You'll feel better."

Of course. He *was* under a lot of stress. The pills helped. They always helped. Marius opened the bottle, shook out two pills, and dry-swallowed them. He instantly felt better. His hands stopped their shaking. The black-eyed man watched him, then nodded.

"You need to get back to your lab."

Of course. He needed to get back to the lab. Marius stood, feeling a sense of urgency, and followed the security guard out of the room.

"The artifact is waiting, Dr. Flores. And my associates are anxious for your return," the black-eyed man said, following him. "You should consider yourself lucky."

Of course. He was the luckiest man in the world. He worked for Aztechnology.



AZTECHNOLOGY

Corporate Court Ranking (2071): #4

Corporate Slogan: "The Way to a Better Tomorrow"

Corporate Status: AAA, private corporation

World Headquarters: Tenochtitlán, Aztlan

President/CEO: Flavia de la Rosa

Major Shareholders: Undisclosed

Major Divisions: Aztechnology North America, Aztechnology Latin America, Aztechnology Europe, Aztechnology Australasia, Aztechnology Asia, Aztechnology Africa

Notable Subsidiaries/Brands:

Austrafarm (Agribusiness), CEI (Heavy Industry/Mining), Energia Viva (Energy), Maritech Enterprises (Aquaculture), Nature-Taste (Consumer Goods/Foodstuffs), Pemex (Oil/Chemicals), Productos Cultivados (Agribusiness), Carlsberg-Heineken (Foodstuffs/Liquor), Líder (Megamarts), Natural Vat Technologies (Consumer Goods/Foodstuffs), Stuffer Shack (Convenience Store chain), Trés Chic Cosmetics (Cosmetics), Optical Dreams (Matrix/Simtech), Microtrónica Azteca (Matrix/Hardware), DhakaSoft (Matrix/Software), ComPac (Matrix/Software), Channel 12 (Media/Trid Network), Televisa (Media/Trideo & Simsense Producer), BANCOMEX (Banking/Finance), Corporación Clínica (Hospital Management), Cuerpos Radicales (Health Care/Clinics), Genetique (Biotech/Genetech), Medicarro (Medical Service Provider), Embraer (Aircraft/Miltech), Marine Technologies (Naval), Soluciones Orbitales Integradas (Aerospace), Mystics and Magicks (Arcane Service Provider), Pyramid Arcane Supplies (Magical Goods), Armamentos Murreta (Personal Armament), Dassault (Miltech/Aerospace), Esprit (Miltech/Armament), Hawker-Siddeley (Aerospace/Drones), Air Montezuma (Airline), Free Transit Cartage (Shipping), Seguridad Primero (Insurance/Emergency Service Provider), Aztech Shuttle Service (Urban Transport)

Dominant Business Language: Aztlaner Spanish

Secondary Business Languages: English, Nuevo Nahuatl

NO SACRIFICE TOO GREAT

Posted by: Pyramid Watcher

- There's no better expert on Aztechnology than Pyramid Watcher, who's been watching the pyramid for more years than some of you have been alive. He's here as my guest, again—you know, P.W., one of these days you'll have to take up my invite and just join my VPN.
- FastJack

THE PAST

Aztechnology is one of the oldest megas around, with a history going back a full century to the rise of the major Mesoamerican drug cartels (yes, it's true, the Big A got its start as a criminal enterprise—and look how far it's come!). As the cartels earned more money and bought more political influence, they began to invest in legitimate businesses, gradually becoming one of the foremost investors in the region.

Eventually, several came together to leverage their combined power in these legitimate business ventures, under the driving force and guidance of Juan Ortega, head of the Medellín Cartel. This move pushed Ortega to the head of the entire Mesoamerican drug trade. Under his guidance, the cartels bought a large resource-development corporation based out of Villahermosa, Mexico in 2007. They renamed it ORO, as a clever play on words (Oro is the Spanish word for "gold") and a nod to the three cartel leaders who were the corporation's primary shareholders: Ortega (Medellín Cartel), Julio Ramos (David Cartel), and Diego Oriz (Masaya Cartel).

As a happy "coincidence" in 2008, a large mineral deposit was found off the Panamanian coast in a location whose mineral rights were solely owned by ORO. This deposit—molybdenum, if you're interested in the particulars—was valued in excess of tens of billions of U.S. dollars. Consolidation of other investments soon began. With the combined incomes of the cartel's drug revenues added in, ORO had annual revenues that exceeded several European GNPs.

ORO worked to influence local governments, especially those of Colombia, Panama, Nicaragua, and Honduras, and the group took over a plethora of smaller national companies. When those local governments pulled out of international copyright agreements (at the bequest of ORO), ORO and its affiliated companies began to repackage and resell filched software, undercutting market prices and shooting its revenue up even higher.

Flush with cash, ORO began consolidating in earnest the various companies the cartels had infiltrated through their legal investments. Regional banks, agribusinesses, biotech, and consumer-goods companies all fell into ORO's gravity well.

Nation Building

In the mass chaos of the Awakening, ORO stepped in and took control—direct or indirect—of more Mesoamerican countries, including Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. Consequently, ORO's software piracy expanded into those countries as well.

When VITAS swept through Mexico and that nation's government toppled, ORO supplied significant humanitarian aid. ORO worked to ensure a smooth transition to a democracy,





WELCOME TO AZTECHNOLOGY!**Bridging the Past to the Future ... with Your Help**

Bienvenidos a Aztecnología, the corporation with a vibrant history and exciting future. As a new citizen, we hope you'll feel just as excited about your future opportunities with your corporation as we do. Aztechnology couldn't exist without the citizens who put so much of their hearts into building our future together, and Aztechnology is dedicated to ensuring your transition to the corporation is a positive experience.

As a new citizen, you no doubt have many questions. This brochure should answer some of the common questions. You can also contact your *calpōlli* at any time for any assistance you may need. Whether it's a workplace, lifestyle, or spiritual question, your priests can provide answers twenty-four hours a day.

All citizens are automatically entitled to Aztechnology-provided health-care benefits for themselves and their families. Accordingly, the health history information, biometric data, and DNA samples you and your dependents provided will remain safely on file, readily accessible at any time, at any of our medical facilities. Aztechnology provides a 25 percent discount on biological or cybernetic augmentations to all employees and their dependents, and customized treatments based on your DNA are always available. Credit lines are also available for citizens.

As part of your pre-employment screening, you and your family underwent standard examination by Aztechnology magicians. This examination is universal for all citizens, ensuring that you—and your coworkers—all share an equal commitment to the growth and well-being of your corporation. This routine assessment lets you know you can trust your fellow citizens as they work beside you. Periodic reassessments are

conducted on a random basis at all facilities, so you can trust that you and your coworkers continue to share that commitment.

Language classes are available via Aztechnology's patented in-house Matrix learning systems; your priest should have already enrolled you in your mandatory introductory *huehuetlatolli* class. Additional educational opportunities are available at reasonable rates. Dependents also qualify for Aztechnology educational opportunities, and all minors (ages 16 and younger) are required to attend a full-time educational institution (online schools are available).

The new corporate SINS and IDs issued to you and your dependents by Aztechnology's Data and Information Systems department enable you to access all the benefits of your new corporate housing. These SINS and IDs also provide you and your family with the unrivaled protection of Aztechnology security no matter where you are—in your home, at work, or at school.

To provide a second layer of identification and safety, you and your dependents have been fitted with RFID tags that broadcast your IDs at all times. These RFID tags will enable you to access the appropriate areas of your housing facility and access all benefits—including grocery services, entertainment complexes, medical centers, nurseries, and educational facilities—at no additional charge. And in combination with our patented ChildBSafe technology, these tags give you real-time locators and health indices for your minor dependents, so you can have peace of mind. At Aztechnology, we provide the best in benefits and security for you and your family!

Bienvenidos a Aztecnología! Where your hard work, devotion, and sacrifice helps ensure a brighter future for us all!

establishing the world's first Matrix-based electoral process and helping create the fledgling nation of Aztlan. By 2015, the positive press from ORO's actions in Mexico transformed its public image. The group also adopted and promoted the Aztec Revival movement, using cultural pride (and a pick-and-choose approach to past rituals and history) to persuade the masses to believe in the ultimate revival of their past glory.

Riding high on that positive public image, in 2022 the corporation moved its headquarters to Mexico City—now Tenochtitlán—renamed itself Aztechnology, and undertook one of the most effective re-branding campaigns in history.

- It wasn't just cultural pride. Rumors of blood magic surfaced in the countryside almost immediately after the Awakening. Blood rituals were a part of some Mesoamerican cultures, but not all. Other rumors—the sacrifices, the existence of blood mages, even the existence of cults dedicated to the darker gods of the past—have been around even before Aztlan coalesced. It's been hypothesized that there are forces in the country that predispose the magic there toward the old faiths.

- Winterhawk

- Hell, it's well known that large portions of the country are aligned toward their own nasty brands of magic. Why do you think the powers-that-be of Amazonia so fiercely resist Aztlan's attempts to claim more territory in South America? The two cannot co-exist.

- Glasswalker

Left unsaid is that Aztechnology magnanimously provided Aztlan's computerized voting system, assisted in establishing the temples that are central to the Aztec Revival, and spread the Revival around the world through its own corporate citizenry. Aztlan government officials were and continue to be elected with Aztechnology blessings—no ones gets elected if they lack Aztechnology support.

Aztechnology provided the new country of Aztlan with basic infrastructure along with intelligence operatives and systems, and the megacorp worked hand-in-hand with the Aztlaner military machine. It helped, no doubt, that Aztechnology already had its claws in many of the countries that Aztlan took over—the corporation repeatedly helped soften government control to facilitate Aztlan's advance. And so it came to pass that Aztechnology and Aztlan became bound at the most fundamental level.

- And now you see why some of us don't make any distinction between Aztlan and Aztechnology. The corp and the country have been so closely tied for over half a century, you can't see where one leaves off and the other starts.

- Marcos

- I've heard it said (and I happen to agree) that Aztlan is Aztechnology's largest subsidiary business. And while we in the shadows may view it that way, that is not the perception of the common Jane and Joe—either in or outside of Aztlan. Few people realize the extent to which the two are interlinked, and the Azzie corporate spin machine—the second-best public-relations machine in the world—works overtime to keep it that way.

- Pyramid Watcher

All the while Aztechnology's corporate tentacles continued to spread, finding purchase on all continents and assembling a diversified portfolio of assets all over the world.

Mexican Standoff

Aztechnology tested the Corporate Court's authority with its next notable feat. Starting in 2044, Aztlan authorities began nationalizing the assets of foreign (including extraterritorial) corporations found to be "unfairly exploiting the Aztlaner people." These assets were later "repatriated" into the hands of Aztlan nationals—that is to say, Aztechnology's grubby hands.

- The move had massive support from the Aztlaner public, which was riled up with the righteous nationalist propaganda Aztech spin doctors were spewing. This explains why the Big Boys took so long to react. Any opposition they made would have screwed with their local images and their bottom lines. They put off any action until they realized Aztlan wasn't going to back off, then the hammer came down hard.

- Fianchetto

Despite the Corporate Court's orders to cease and desist, Aztechnology kept up the charade until 2048, when the Corporate Court put Operation Reciprocity into action. A coordinated pan-corporate strike on the joint-Aztlaner/Aztechnology military base in Ensenada, the surgical strike was a show of force and a stern warning—enough to force Aztechnology into signing the Veracruz Settlement.

- And here's the kicker. For the past 20 years, Aztechnology has sold the settlement to its home crowd as a win. The exact Veracruz compensations were never disclosed and the nationalized assets remained in Azzie hands, so on the face of it, Aztechnology played national Robin Hood and got away with a slap on the wrist.

- Marcos

Crumbling Giants

Things were going great for the Big A up until the Sixties. And then, like the saying goes, bad luck came in threes. First, in December of '61, the Pueblo Corporate Council maneuvered into Los Angeles, literally rolling into the city just hours before Aztech forces got there. A brief skirmish south of the city forced Azzie troops back to San Diego.

Pueblo had already suspended all of Aztechnology's licenses to conduct business within the territory. Just a few months later, the Corporate Council flexed its muscles and fully revoked all of Aztechnology's business licenses for council territory, citing the corp's "unprovoked aggression." This move effectively kicked Aztechnology out of the Pueblo (and LA).

On Christmas of that year, a huge white dragon flew into Denver. It proceeded to kick the hell out of the local Azzie assets and then handed the Aztlaner section of the city to the CAS as a New Year's gift.

In two fell swoops, the Big A was deprived of its two biggest operations (and major transportation hubs) in North America.

Smarting from those losses, Aztlan decided to soothe its ego by finally ridding itself of the Yucatan rebels a month later. The corp started a serious slash-and-burn campaign, but the effort ran into a serious snag when earthquakes and tsunamis hit the area in March. The natural disasters spawned a slew of toxic spirits, which decimated both rebel and Aztlan soldiers alike. Aztechnology lost a significant share of the corporate security forces it had loaned to Aztlan in the Yucatan theatre. In 2064, Aztlan cut a deal with the main Yucatecan insurgent faction, but Aztechnology CEO Juan Atzcapotzalco was killed when the peace-treaty signing was bombed by radicals intent on sabotaging the settlement.

During this time, a minor little upstart company had been growing in LA. In 2065, the firm surprised many by snapping up a seat on the Corporate Council. The upstart firm—Horizon—became Aztechnology's primary competitor and a major thorn in the corp's side. Horizon soon cut into Aztechnology's business in consumer goods, electronics, pharmaceuticals, software—basically, most of Aztechnology's profitable business lines.

For a while, it looked like the Big A might crumble from the pressure. But Aztechnology is recovering now with a vengeance. And I probably don't need to tell you that "vengeance" from the Big A is bad news for everyone else.

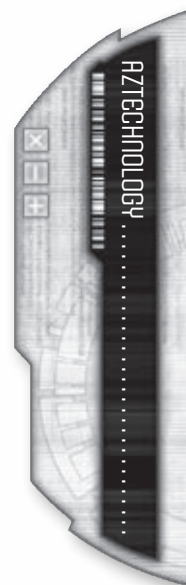
THE PRESENT

Aztechnology is still going strong today, riding high on the favorable public opinion generated by its decisive moves during the tempo crisis. Public opinion of the Big A at an all-time high—scary thought, neh?

Corporate Organization

Like many other megacorps, Aztechnology organizes its operations by region. Unlike other corps, the Big A relies heavily on largely autonomous subsidiaries—most of which are rated A or even AA in their own right—to run its regional operations. While Aztechnology is a strong and recognizable brand for consumers, more often than not its subsidiaries are also strongly branded.

While the subsidiaries are generally held at arm's length on paper, the Big A has its own unique approach to micro-management and provides free rein to its upper-echelon execs to adopt more hands-on policies. Board members, senior regional vice-presidents, and their proxies frequently circumvent standard corporate hierarchies by visiting subsidiaries, inspecting operations and performance, and often taking direct interest in specific products and projects.



- Aztechnology, more than most other megas, tends to divorce itself from the day-to-day operations of its subsidiaries—unless, of course, an Aztech director takes a shine to the subsidiary in question. This can make it a real pain to determine whether Company X is part of the Big A's portfolio. On the plus side, this means that not all Azzie assets are extraterritorial. In contrast, Aztechnology's rival, Horizon, slaps its name and brand on everything it owns.
- Mr. Bonds

Each Aztechnology AA or transnational subsidiary has its own corporate body and is overseen by a president. Depending on whether the corporation is wholly owned or not, the president may report to the subsidiary's own board of directors (usually majority-controlled by the Big A), or he may report directly to Aztechnology's own board of directors. CEOs of A-rated or smaller subsidiaries answer directly to regional Aztechnology senior vice-presidents.

This approach has allowed the Big A to circumvent some of the operating restrictions in countries that otherwise ban or discourage its presence, such as the Pueblo Corporate Council, the Tirs, Amazonia, and the like. In these countries, determining a subsidiary's Aztechnology connection takes a large amount of digging (or a call to a handy fellow like myself). In countries where the natives are friendly, Aztechnology subsidiaries let their affiliation be known.

Subsidiary corporations maintain their own infrastructures or contract other firms (other Azzie corps when possible) to provide needed infrastructure. Aztechnology subsidiaries devoted to specific aspects of infrastructure—logistics, human resources, supply management, janitorial services—provide much of the internal workings for the subsidiaries in each region. This reduces redundancies and increases overall profitability.

Leadership

At the Yucatan Peace Summit in 2064, an extremely convenient bomb killed both the mysterious (and increasingly troublesome) Aztechnology CEO Juan Atzcapotzalco and the shaman Quauhtlatoa. The feathered serpent Pobre was on hand—being one of the figureheads of the Yucatan Independence Movement—and in a jaw-dropping twist, he identified the feathered serpent Dzitbalchén, believed to be a minor Aztech shareholder, as the architect of the plot.

With Atzcapotzalco out of the way, Aztechnology appointed Flavia de la Rosa as president/CEO. Flavia is much more of a public figure than Atzcapotzalco was, although I sometimes miss all the “I saw Juan” stories that floated around.

- Apparently seeing Juan blown to chunks on the trid wasn't enough for some folks. I still get regular reports of sightings. Come read 'em sometime, they're hilarious. Totally loony, but a hoot.
- Snopes
- Is Juan really dead? Or is there something behind the rumors that it was set up?
- Plan 9
- Really, people. He's dead.
- Pyramid Watcher

- And did Dzitbalchén really do it?
- Plan 9
- Pobre says he did, and Aztechnology was willing to believe the feathered serpent's astral assensing of the crime scene. Of course, the megacorp brought in an independent thaumo-forensic team, which confirmed Pobre's findings.
- Pyramid Watcher
- Several other dragons—and their, er, associates—are still furious at the death of Dzitbalchén. Pobre became head of the transitional government of the Yucatan Autonomous State days after the execution. And for some reason, there are those who remain very upset about Pobre's cozy relationship with Aztechnology.
- Frosty
- And to this day, no one has ever suggested why Dzitbalchén would have wanted to disrupt the Yucatan Peace Summit or assassinate Juan. Of course, Dzitbalchén owned a large chunk of Aztechnology shares, and rumors were he wanted on the board bad. My personal opinion? Aztechnology killed three birds with one stone: the corp rid itself of Juan, opened up Dzitbalchén's shares, and secured peace in the Yucatan by giving Pobre the governorship.
- Winterhawk
- Well, there's no arguing that de la Rosa is much more comfortable as a puppet to Aztechnology's board than Juan was; her brief attempt at independent thought, years ago, resulted in the deaths of her family members. As for the rest? I really can't tell. The Big A re-appropriated Dzitbalchén's shares after his “act of treason,” leaving his sibling Zacaultipán out in the cold.
- Pyramid Watcher

De la Rosa was the president-elect of Aztlan from 2053 until 2065, when she took over the role of Aztechnology president/CEO. Yes, that means she went from working for Aztechnology to working for Aztechnology. Remember, though, most of Aztlan and the world don't realize just how closely the two are aligned. So in the eyes of the naïve wageslaves of the world, de la Rosa left the public sector to head Aztechnology. At least we're all pretty sure she's a real, live, breathing person—which puts her several steps ahead of Juan.

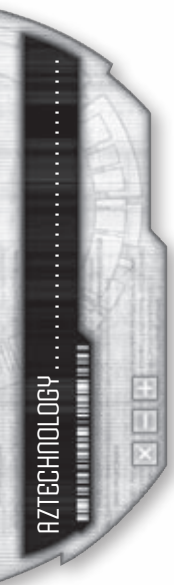
- Are you absolutely sure?
- Glasswalker

Board of Directors

Because Aztechnology is a private corporation, it is not required to provide information on its board of directors or major shareholders. We know some of them, through rumors or even occasionally facts. The roll currently includes the following:

Domingo Chavez

Aztechnology's former Corporate Court justice, Domingo Chavez left that position to pursue his own agenda within the corporation. We know he's a mage, although supposedly not



a blood mage. Chavez is a major power player in the corp with some ambitious ideas. He hasn't gotten over the insult of losing Denver to Ghostwalker or LA to the Pueblo Corporate Council, and reportedly he desperately wants to take the Mojave. He's aching to "reclaim Aztlan's glory" by pushing across the Pueblo Corporate Council and marching up to Denver. This has both the CAS and Pueblo extremely worried. Chavez is on the far side of eighty years old. And while his personal gene-tweakers have been working overtime to keep him looking a spry forty, rumors are his magical abilities haven't aged as well.

- Chavez's business savvy and ambition for the corporation sets him apart from the rest of this bunch of manipulative bloodsuckers. He's the one really pushing for new development and expansion.
- Mr. Bonds

Domingo "Ding" Ramos

Domingo Ramos is both a major shareholder and on the board of directors. He's the son of Julian Ramos, the drug lord and original founder of ORO. He's also an elf—allegedly born before the Awakening—which really gets the conspiracy theorists going. Ding appears to be more interested in partying and living the good life than playing corporate politics, but only the foolish—and short-lived—believe that carefree surface image. Ding has held onto his father's shares and even managed to improve on his fortunes. Some attribute this to his leadership of the David Cartel, the Big A's own in-house criminal syndicate.

- Ding divides his time between meddling in Aztech affairs and running the David Cartel hands on. With the near collapse of the Olaya Cartel following the international crackdown on tempo, Ding's been focusing on expanding his turf into South America. That's given Chavez more room to push his agenda.
- Marcos

Anna Villalobos

Anna Villalobos is the Big A's Corporate Court justice. She owes her position to Chavez, and until recently she backed him in nearly all his power plays. Lately, however, she's begun to display an independent streak—apparently stemming from her disagreement with some of his obsessions. Rumor is Chavez isn't taking her differing opinions well at all. Villalobos is also a psionic, which caused quite a stir on the Zurich-Orbital when first revealed, but the rest of the Corporate Court seems to accept her now.

- The rest of the justices on the Corp Court are still wary of her, but the days of refusing to have meetings in the same room with Anna are long past. Rumors up here are that Chavez's fading magical abilities are behind Anna's newfound independent streak.
- Orbital DK

Oliver McClure

Oliver McClure allegedly owes his stock and board seat to the great dragon Dunkelzahn. Despite repeated assassination attempts and the occasional offer of a buy-out, McClure has stuck around. He's considered honest and has strong business ethics and morals—which are no doubt put to the test on a daily basis by the Big A. As McClure was a Quebec citizen before Dunkelzahn

flipped his life around, there's actually information on the guy out there. He grew up in a middle-class family from Quebec, attended Université Laval, got a history degree (and graduated in the top 83 percent of his class), then worked as a manager for an electronics chain store in Quebec City. His relationship to the dragon remains pure speculation, however. But he's survived despite the considerable odds (makes you wonder, doesn't it?).

- Survived is one way of putting it. He's been patched and sewn back together so many times that the biostress is starting to show. He's lost almost a third of his body weight and is a shadow of his former self. He looks haggard and drained all the time. Heck, one rumor making the rounds down south was that he'd started indulging in tempo to take his mind off the constant strain.
- Marcos

Fact is McClure hasn't been seen in public for a while, which has those of us who consider McClure a check on the Big A's excesses worried. He was last seen dining with Villalobos in Tenochtitlán during her most recent trip down the well, but buzz is that he looked gaunt and less than talkative.

- McClure's survival odds were less than one percent when he got the bequest (at least on the betting sites in Las Vegas). Now he's a mainstay of the corp. Others on the board (read: Chavez) think he's a tool of the Draco Foundation, there to keep an eye on blood mages and their cults.
- Mika
- I think it's fair to say McClure is aware of the cults. But he's no tool of the Foundation or anyone else. If he acts against the cults, it's because he believes it's the right thing to do. Nice guy, really, but I feel sorry for him. Oh, and he's lousy at poker.
- Frosty

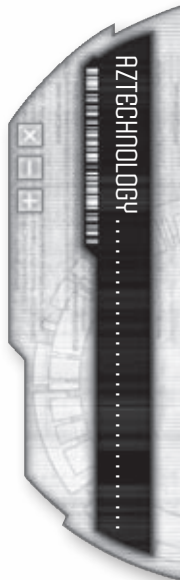
Motecuhzoma

The individual known as Motecuhzoma is yet another mystery. A few rumors suggest he's a powerful free spirit. Others say he is an artificial intelligence. But my favorite rumor pins him as a feathered serpent. None of these has been confirmed any which way, and believe me, I've tried. What I do know is that Motecuhzoma has been a board member for several decades now, although he came to attention only when he stepped forward after the blood mage bloc fell and left a power vacuum. It's said that Motecuhzoma and Chavez have been fighting over the magical side of Aztechnology—specifically those arcane cults (you know the ones that make me lose sleep at night), and especially over the remnants of the blood mage bloc. Creceepy City, if you ask me.

- Supposedly, Motecuhzoma is connected to the Nextlaualli ritual, which is required by execs who want to climb to the upper ranks of the corp.
- Glasswalker

Tsurunaga Shinoyama

Tsurunaga Shinoyama is a corporate shark who came over to Aztechnology from Fuchi almost twenty years ago. He started out as the corporate information officer, and in the past decade



or so, he's ascended to the position of board member and major stockholder. Nobody's sure how he built up his portfolio, but he's smart and well connected. Not nearly as bloodthirsty as Chavez, Shinoyama has been aligning himself with Villalobos lately. He wants to get Aztechnology back to increasing profits and away from wars of aggression, so butting heads with Chavez has become a regular activity for him. Expect to see fireworks soon. If Shinoyama and Villalobos can swing McClure, they'll make a pretty powerful bloc on the Aztechnology board.

J.J. Harvin, Jr.

J.J. Harvin Jr. used to be the risk-taking CEO of the now-defunct Gunderson Corporation of Miami. In a backroom deal, he traded his ownership of Atlantic Security and its profitable contracts for enough Aztechnology shares to snag a seat on the board. (I believe those shares were opened up by the death of Dzitbalchén.) Harvin Jr. is allied pretty closely with Ding.

- Since Atlantic Security wasn't worth nearly what he got in return, it's pretty clear J.J. Jr. was brought onboard for a reason.
- Mr. Bonds
- Harvin's expertise is in security. He's personally overseeing and restructuring the Big A's "security" forces (read: military). Since he's been brought onboard, the Big A has increased its military personnel by more than fifteen percent, and the recruitment drive is still on.
- Pyramid Watcher
- Well, we're a step away from war down here. Maybe they brought Harvin onboard in preparation for an attack on Amazonia?
- Glasswalker

The Dragon

Well, we all found out that Dunkelzahn had held shares in Aztechnology when he left them to McClure. But this has done nothing to quell the rumors that a dragon remains involved with Aztechnology at its highest level. The most persistent version of this story contends that an Eastern dragon is on the board of the corp. Several sightings have been made of an Eastern dracoform in Tenochtitlán over the years, but no connection has ever been established. To muddy the waters further, Aztechnology employs as many as nine feathered serpents in different positions within the company.

REGIONS OF POWER

Aztechnology has six regional divisions. Within those regions, its subsidiaries operate under their own names, selling products under different (but recognizable and popular) brand names. This means, of course, that the majority of Aztechnology subsidiaries *do not* have extraterritoriality (except for those which are rated AA in their own right). Aztechnology has long depended on the ability of its subsidiaries to adapt to local markets to ensure its success. I'll list the major regions here, as well as a few of the better-known subsidiaries. Most of these subsidiaries are transnational, and they have their own transnational interests—which makes them appear more diverse and independent than they really are. Given Aztechnology's

propensity to micro-manage, it's no surprise that nearly everything leads back to Tenochtitlán.

Aztechnology North America

Headquartered in Tenochtitlán, the North American division is Aztech's principal operation—the fact that the NorthAm division's headquarters is located down south is also a statement of sorts. The senior vice-president in charge is one Oscar Ortiz-Pena, a sadistic bastard who greatly enjoys visiting his managers and verifying their performance, loyalty, and devotion. He's even been known to have his pet security mage mind probe them.

The NorthAm division is the most diversified of Aztechnology's operations, with hundreds of subsidiary businesses that operate outside Aztlan itself. These subsidiaries allow the Big A to circumvent restrictions imposed by several governments, such as Tir Tairngire, the Pueblo Corporate Council, and the CAS. In fact, the unofficial motto of the NorthAm subsidiaries could be "we make *everything*." They produce and sell everything from medical supplies to consumer electronics, toys to automobiles.

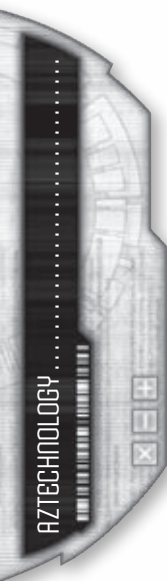
Notable subsidiaries in North America include: Stuffer Shack (do I really need to describe it?); Pyramid Operations, a small A-rated corp based in CalFree; Genetique, an AA-rated agritech, biotech, and nanotech research corp, well known for its cosmetic rejuvenation treatments and less well known for its huge vat-food farms in the NAN; Pemex, a petroleum and mineral resource corp; MediCarro, a medical corp; and Maritech Enterprises, a water-supply, agriculture, and power provider in the old Ute territory of the Pueblo Corporate Council.

- As with most old-time Big Oil companies, Pemex has been actively diversifying and investing in numerous fields from resource-gathering to alternative fuels. In addition, Pemex is rumored to be eyeing several new oilfields outside the Gulf of Mexico, such as the Nigerian wells and new finds in Sudan and off the coast of Argentina. Between overseeing security for prospecting teams to masterminding datasnatches on rival operators, Pemex is a pretty big employer for runners around the globe.
- Mr. Bonds
- Medicarro provides the same services as DocWagon in many parts of South America. It even operates in Amazonia—which just goes to show you how successfully Aztechnology hides its affiliations.
- Marco
- The Big A really keeps its subsidiaries at arm's length and goes to remarkable lengths to obscure the links in some cases—no one can beat the Azzies at their shell game.
- Nephrite

Aztechnology Latin America

Aztechnology Latin America dominates the South American financial sector, which makes it Big A's most profitable division (officially, anyway).

Aztechnology inherited a significant portion of the South American banking industry from its precursor, ORO; the cartels of ORO used their money to buy most of those assets back in the day. Consequently, the governments of the



area (including those of Chile, Venezuela, Paraguay, even Amazonia) were more than willing to enact laws beneficial to Aztechnology's interests. Today, Aztechnology controls most of the banking, insurance, and financial services in South America (including Amazonia).

When the Panama Canal was taken off-line by a Winternight strike, Aztlan suddenly found its Nicaraguan canal to be the only viable passage from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Aztlan peddled its canal so much that reopening the Panama Canal seemed almost pointless. The Nicaraguan canal can handle much larger ships than the old Panama Canal, which translates directly into more nuyen for the Azzies. Security at the canal is correspondingly high, with a full complement of Aztlan troops permanently based at Lake Nicaragua. In addition, Aztlan keeps a significant naval presence in the area. Ships entering either side of the canal are thoroughly scanned, using cutting-edge technology and magic. Aztlan uses the threats of piracy and smuggling to justify the intrusive measures, citing its long and antagonist history with local pirates and smugglers.

In reality, the security measures at the canal provide Aztechnology with an excellent means of monitoring and controlling its competitors' shipping traffic. Other corporations are fully aware of the considerable costs they would incur if they lost access to the canal, so they put up with Aztechnology's behavior and ship all sensitive material via other routes.

- Unofficially, you can find quite a few smugglers with connections on both oceans. If you want to get something shipped (including yourself) from one side to the other, they'll arrange to drop you off in one of the many sheltered bays in Nicaragua, then have a t-bird pilot fly you to a waiting boat on the other side. It ain't cheap—but you get what you pay for.

- Traveler Jones

- Horizon ships seem to suffer from higher-than-average pirate attacks, especially after leaving the Nicaraguan canal. It hasn't been able to prove anything. Horizon would pay top nuyen to get some evidence that Aztechnology is leaking shipping information and cargo manifests, or evidence of Aztechnology arming the pirates.

- Marcos

- Like a pirate would be so stupid as to bite the hand that feeds him. Um, so how much nuyen is Horizon offering?

- Kane

Of course, Aztechnology also has significant agricultural, pharmaceutical, and Awakened-material harvesting operations in the area. The megacorp maintains much of the infrastructure of South America. It provides public and private transportation, media, logistics, public safety, communication, and Matrix infrastructure in countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile, as well as parts of Paraguay and Amazonia (through subsidiaries, natch).

One notable subsidiary is the AA-rated Natural Vat Technologies, which produces about 75 percent of the edible fungi and soy the Big A uses in its processed foods. Natural Vat Technologies also produces an extensive line of products under its own brands (Mr. and Mrs. Soy Chips, anyone?). And NatVat Tech acts as an umbrella for numerous subsidiaries in various countries.

But perhaps the most notable development for Aztechnology Latin America is the Corporate Court's recent announcement that its orbital elevator will be anchored somewhere in the continent's equatorial region. Aztechnology has already been contracted to provide ground-based elements for the elevator. Undoubtedly, this development will boost the profile of the Latin American division over the next decade and command close attention from the Aztechnology board.

- Prime locations being prospected include a site in the former states of Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela. It's likely that construction on the anchor facility for the skyhook won't start until late 2074. If the Azzies have cornered the ground infrastructure and security, they've accomplished a significant coup. This project will have a much larger economic impact than the African mass-driver and will boost the entire South American economy.

- Orbital DK

Aztechnology Europe

Aztechnology sells even more consumer goods in Europe than in North America—under both popular brand names and its own name. This has put Europe at the heart of the Aztechnology vs. Horizon battle for consumer nuyen (and made this past holiday season a shopper's delight in many European sprawls). Aztechnology also faces competition from numerous smaller Eurocorps, whose operations are geared toward local markets and trends.

Aztechnology is also a major security provider in Southern Europe, through Seguridad Primero Europe's security division, its AA-rated military subsidiary Dassault (also a maker of vehicles and drones, with a broad line of high-spec consumer offerings), and its A-rated subsidiary Hawker-Siddeley, a military electronics, vehicles, and state-of-the-art weapons producer. These subsidiaries compete directly with Ares Arms, Knight Errant, Esprit, Saeder-Krupp, and smaller locals for security contracts and supply contracts.

Seguridad Primero also provides disaster planning and relief for governments, corporate enclaves, and municipalities across Europe.

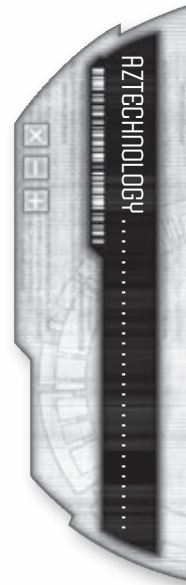
Aztechnology also owns the extremely popular Líder and Carrefour megamart chains—which cover all of Europe—as well as the *awesome* Carlsberg-Heineken company (whose beer is my personal favorite “subsidiary”), which controls a huge chunk of the European beverage market.

Aztechnology United Kingdom, Aztechnology's UK subsidiary, produces a wide array of electronics, surveillance systems, light military weapons and armor, and personal protection systems.

Not surprisingly, Saeder-Krupp and Aztechnology frequently butt heads in Europe (but the rivalry between the top two dogs on the Corporate Court is nowhere near as vicious and tense as the rivalry between Horizon and the Big A).

- It's been said that Lowfyr has a particular grudge against Aztechnology. But whether that grudge stems from Aztechnology's status as Saeder-Krupp's closest rival or other reasons remains a mystery.

- Winterhawk





INCOMING FEED.....



- The CAS is not on friendly relations with Aztlan—especially after it took over the Azzie sector of Denver a few years back. But what does the CAS military drive? Hawker-Siddley Skytrucks, Hawker-Siddley convoy vehicles, Hawker-Siddley recon drones—you get the point.

- Seguridad Primero really spooks me. Sure, it has a great reputation. But when it gets hired, it deploys all these drones, gathers a ton of intel—everything from sewer system layouts to population metrics—and then draws up customized plans for emergencies. It wins longstanding contracts to put in things such as tsunami- and earthquake-warning systems, it conducts city-wide drills and sets up city-wide AR (and physical) warning systems. But think about the information Seguridad Primero is gathering when it performs all this work—and then imagine how this info could be used.

- Red Anya

Aztechnology Australasia

Aztechnology Australasia is based in Hong Kong. The division is run by Sonia Maria Soto, an ex-wife of Domingo “Ding” Ramos. A former manager in the David Cartel, Soto is known as the Black Widow; although Ding’s alive and healthy, it’s not for lack of trying on Sonia’s part—or so they say.

Soto pulled out a lot of her old “managerial habits” after she grew frustrated by the lack of cooperation from some of the local fungus farmers and agricultural producers. Now the Big A is a

primary owner of some very profitable fungus farms and aquaculture operations all across the region, and Aztechnology’s Natural Vat subsidiary has moved into the Australasian market.

Other major Aztechnology subsidiaries with a solid profile in the region include Free Transit Cartage, Maritech Enterprises Asia, and Carrefour. AA-rated Free Transit Cartage is a member of the Pacific Prosperity Group. Maritech Enterprises Asia is known for its extensive underwater mining operations in the area. Carrefour owns several supermarket chains that offer biological produce and quality goods; the firm has a presence in almost every major and minor Australasian sprawl (along with sprawls in Europe and North Am).

The Big A seems to be planning for rapid and heavy growth in the region. The megacorp has recently joined the Pacific Prosperity Group and has been making overtures and cultivating relationships with local megacorps. In fact, an alliance between Aztechnology and Wuxing may be emerging. Wuxing pushed to have Aztechnology admitted to the Pacific Prosperity Group, and local Aztech magicians have been using geomantic techniques that appear similar to Chinese geomancy. I’ve also heard of increased chatter between the two corps at various levels.

- Ding really wants an edge on the Awakened drugs that come out of the Golden Triangle. Only problem is the Triads haven’t been

willing to let Ding play. That's why he placed Soto in Hong Kong. She's hiring shadow talent left and right to hit the Triads while they're still suffering from the tempo shake-up. Anyone looking for work, it's here.

- Snow Tiger

Aztechnology Asia

Aztechnology's Asian division is one of its smallest. Stuffer Shack and Carrefour divisions are in every Asian sprawl, but few other major Aztech subsidiaries are operating in the region. Aztechnology has cheaper labor in Aztlan and Africa, so it's not a major participant in Asian manufacturing industries. But the Big A does possess numerous distribution and licensing agreements with members of the Pacific Prosperity Group and other clout-heavy AAs; it relies on these firms to distribute and sell Azzie products locally.

- Genetique has a large presence in Asia, especially in the Indian Union. It's working on some cutting-edge nanotech stuff down in Chennai.

- Stone

- It isn't just nanotech Genetique is working on. The Genetique subsidiary NeuroTec is located in Chennai. You've probably heard of NeuroTec—it pioneered neural amplifier augs. I've heard rumors it's very interested in the Chaos Engine. It's been seriously courting the individuals reputedly behind the Matrix gang. Some guy named Yayauhqui has been asking around.

- Otaku-zuku

- Yayauhqui? Does that name mean what I think it does?

- Elijah

- A friend of a friend of mine heard that NeuroTec pulled a number of runs against a small corp called Aetherlux. Barely anything on them, except Aetherlux is now working with Wuxing to investigate the Orissa mana network. The Aetherlux boss is a Matrix prodigy from Iran or something.

- Frosty

- Why's a biotech corp sniffing around a manatech corp?

- Plan 9

Aztechnology Africa

Aztechnology Africa is a loose label the Azzie execs use for all their African-based subsidiaries. These firms have long made a killing by exploiting the region's cheap labor, lax (okay, non-existent) regulations, limited Corporate Court oversight, and abundant resources.

Aztechnology's West African firms provide a significant amount of the telesma and labor for the corp's profitable mystical-goods markets (Aztechnology is number two in that area, right after Saeder-Krupp). West Africa is also one of the few places where labor is cheaper than in Aztlan, and Aztechnology subsidiaries use that cheap labor in a variety of factories. Aztechnology also sends numerous "exploratory groups" into the jungles and savannahs in Africa. Supposedly these groups are locating mineral deposits and harvesting natural resources (such as telesma). But I've heard that

these folks are up to more interesting things, such as investigating the shedim infestations of the Congo.

- The Big A is very interested in the Kobikela (who are purportedly "uniting the Congo") and what's going on in Kinshassa-Brazzaville. However, the Kobikela seem to be very anti-Aztechnology. Not to be stopped, the Big A is forming a variety of "independent" groups to go into the Congo and make contact. They're hiring runners as bodyguards, guides, and even emissaries.

- Black Mamba

- Any idea what they're looking for?

- Pyramid Watcher

- Could be dozens of things. None of them good.

- Black Mamba

AZTECH PRIDE: SACRIFICING FOR YOUR CORP

Aztechnology has developed and spread its Aztec Revival culture across the world. Aztechnology citizens are expected to pay at least lip service to the Aztlan national religion, The Path of the Sun, although attending temple services or celebrating the holy days is optional (attendance, donations, and submitting of prayers is logged, however). Praying, by sending in "private" e-prayers through the Aztechnology system, is also encouraged.

Aetherpedia Search:

NAHUALLI

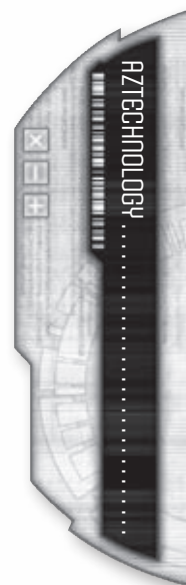
Nahualli—literally "shadow soul"—refers to the animal-spirit twin of traditional Aztec belief. According to the tradition, every person is born with a Nahualli, which shares the individual's soul and becomes the person's protector, guide, and mentor as he grows. The specific type of spirit is determined by the individual's date of birth. Nahualli magicians are said to gain part of their powers by learning to control their animal-spirit twins. Those with the Nahualli spirit are often thought to follow in their animal spirit's path when it comes to their adult vocation. For example, a person with a Hummingbird spirit is likely to have a brilliant military career.

- This article was tagged by someone on your network.

- Accessing tag...

- You get a lot of women asking for planned C-sections on specific days and times, so their child will be born with a promising Nahualli—in fact, most Aztechnology doctors won't schedule a delivery without consulting the priests first. The birth rate in Aztlan increased tenfold on the last Jaguar day.

- Marcos



Most employees seem blissfully unaware that corporate “Employee Relations” specialists comb through these e-prayers.

Officially, the primary language of Aztechnology (and Aztlan) is Aztlaner Spanish, with English as a secondary language. But Aztechnology is determined to make Nuevo Nahuatl—the language the corp derived from the ancient Nahuatl tongue—the dominant business lingo in the next twenty years. New employees are encouraged to take Nuevo Nahuatl classes from their first day of employment. The language is taught in the corporate nursery schools; fluency is required to graduate from the Aztechnology school system. In fact, fluency in the language is a mark of social standing and source of pride among Azzie citizens, and linguasofts for Nuevo Nahuatl are prohibited on corporate grounds.

In the Big A’s shining corporate headquarters, as well as in Aztlan as a whole, a person’s blood matters more than anything else. Pure-blooded *peninsulares* dominate the upper ranks of the corp. The corp is rather sexist also. Men dominate the middle- and upper-management ranks, as well as the security forces. In the scientific and research divisions, the gender split is more even.

- Gender is probably more important in Aztechnology than in any of the other megas. A man is expected to fill a traditional masculine role and act very masculine, otherwise he’s looked down on or even harassed. A few women, such as Ding-the-asshole’s ex-wife Sofia, hold high positions in the megacorp, but they’re rare. All the Azzie priests and ninety percent of the security forces are male. The majority of their mages seem to be men, too. But most of the mages I’ve come across serve in the corp’s security forces, so this could just be my perception.

- Marcos

- What about the blood mages? Rumor, or real?

- Snopes

- Yes, there are blood mages—and adepts and spirits—in Aztlan and Aztechnology. But not all Azzie magicians use blood magic—just a small, nasty minority. Most of them follow other paths—hermetic mages, shamanist paths of their Nahualli, that sort of thing.

- Frosty

- The Draco Foundation is still offering a one-million-nuyen bounty on blood mages (alive only). Almost worth the risk.

- Sticks

- Yeah, the bitch—excuse me, Ms. Dupree—pays out if you can deliver. Finding a blood mage outside Aztlan is rare, but if I were looking (and I’m not!), I’d check out the Guerreros or perhaps the upper executive ranks.

- Frosty

- But what does the Draco Foundation want with live blood mages? That’s what’s got me scared.

- Plan 9

Although Aztechnology has no official policy of discrimination against metahumans, advancement is closely tied to an employee’s length of service at Aztechnology and years of experience in general. This results in de facto discrimination against metahuman workers.

Few upper-level managers and execs are younger than sixty, so the first elf and dwarf employees are only now reaching these positions. Metatypes with shorter lifespans, such as orks, are rarely promoted past middle management, as the megacorp seems to have an unwritten policy of not investing time and training in someone “who’s just going to retire in a few years anyway.”

The Aztechnology corporate culture is much less evident in subsidiaries outside of Aztlan. (In fact, employees at some smaller subsidiaries are completely unaware of their Aztechnology affiliation). These corps place little emphasis on the Aztec Revival culture, and they tend to exhibit much more cosmopolitan attitudes when it comes to gender roles, metahumans, gays, and lesbians. You’ll find a lot more women in “non-traditional roles” (which I’ve been told is a euphemism for being more ambitious than the macho Aztech men at headquarters think is appropriate), and fairly equal opportunity for all employees, regardless of metatype.

On the downside, employees of these subsidiaries are not considered Aztechnology citizens and do not enjoy the protections that go with citizenship. And if the subsidiary isn’t an AA, it doesn’t even have its own extraterritoriality to protect its workers.

- Subsidiary employees outside of Aztlan aren’t protected by Aztechnology citizenship, but they usually hold citizenship and enjoy full voting rights in their subsidiary’s home country. This also gives the Big A one way to discreetly influence foreign countries—as it’s now doing in the Pacific Prosperity Group and the former Ute territory.

- Kay St. Irregular

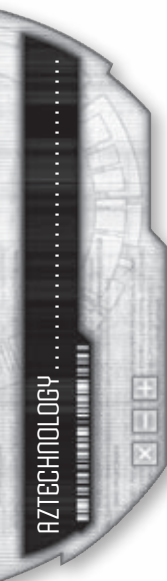
Aztechnology has a greater investment in magic than most other megacorps. Its facilities almost always have Talented guards onsite. Secure facilities often have a mage scanning personnel for dishonest intentions or specific thoughts—and yes, they scan visitors as well (isn’t extraterritoriality great?). Spirits and wards are common. And anyone who’s gone into Azzie pyramids—such as the Seattle arcology—can probably feel the odd vibe that pervades the area. Citizens consider the hair-raising feeling a sign of their corp’s power and approval of the gods. The rest of us call it creepy and try not to visit long.

As everyone knows, Aztechnology came out against tempo last year. Don’t be fooled though. Aztlaners and Aztechnology citizens can buy almost any drug of their choice at company pharmacies—including tempo (cut with other “happiness enhancers” and relabeled). While the hard drugs are technically illegal in Aztlan proper (mostly for appearances’ sake), the middle ground of light drugs and “medicinal supplements” is intentionally kept hazy.

- More profit for the David Cartel, which produces most of the supply within the country. A fraction of the production is sold locally (and legally); most is exported.

- Marcos

- A variety of other vices are legal in Aztlan/Aztechnology as well, from gambling to “companionship services.” Aztechnology controls almost everything, either directly or via the David Cartel. Aztechnology provides police services in Aztlan sprawls, and having



most of the petty vices serviced in-house, so to speak, frees the cops to concentrate on more important issues—such as harassing gringos. The David Cartel and the Aztechnology security services have a tacit understanding, which keeps things in Aztlan sprawls much more peaceful (and profitable) than elsewhere.

- Marcos

Public Opinion

Traditionally, public opinion of Aztechnology has been overwhelmingly positive, despite the megacorp's reputation in the shadows.

That positive opinion had seemed to be dropping recently, largely due to a smear campaign waged by Big A rival Horizon. But the tempo wars provided Aztechnology with plenty of opportunities to burnish its image over the past year. Aztechnology's offer of assistance to Interpol and its decisive attacks on the Ghost Cartels in South America won the corp enormous public support from sprawl citizens sick and tired of skyrocketing drug-related crime. Aztechnology media outlets—Televisa is the biggest—broadcast non-stop footage of soldiers in Aztechnology-brand armor raiding drug houses and warehouses full of tempo. These actions have boosted public opinion of Big A to an all-time high, and the corp will undoubtedly attempt to take advantage of the situation.

- It's already happening. A day after the residents of the old Ute finally gained full voting rights in the Pueblo Corporate Council, the Ute petitioned for a vote to re-license Aztechnology for business in Council territory. The predominantly Anglo and Latino populations of LaLa Land are behind the petition, too—not surprising after the revelation of the tempo manufacturing going on in downtown LA's Baltimore Towers, right under the noses of Pueblo security. The council has pulled out all its corporate stalling tactics to delay a vote on the matter, but it looks like it'll be on the July shareholder's meeting agenda. And it looks like it'll pass.

- Mika

- Wait—if Aztechnology is allowed back in the Pueblo Corporate Council, Pueblo law will give them the right to operate in Pueblo's sector of Denver, right? Is this a back-door way for Aztechnology to get back in Denver?

- Mr. Bonds

- Ghostwalker has already told the council leadership that he will not allow Aztechnology to operate in Denver. Whether the Azzies want to risk it is their business.

- Frosty

GUERREROS: AZTEC ELITE

The Guerreros are the elite, the best of the best, warriors dedicated to Aztlan and Aztechnology. They are culled from the best of Aztlan and Aztechnology's military forces. Magical talent is not as important as being a pure-blooded Aztlaner when it comes to selection, although many of the Guerreros are magically talented. All of the Guerreros are trained in non-lethal combat techniques, and (correspondingly) the use of blood sacrifices to fuel their own abilities.

The Guerreros are organized in four warrior orders, each the stuff of legends and speculation within the shadows. I sincerely hope you'll never run into these guys, but here's a primer just in case.

Ocelomeh (The Jaguars)

The Jaguars live, train, work, and die together. Kitted with the most sophisticated technology and advanced magic available, Jaguar guards almost always work within Aztlan or Aztechnology borders. They protect the most important national and corporate sites as well as high-ranking dignitaries. The *Ocelomeh* can be identified by the traditional Jaguar skins they wear over one shoulder.

Cuacuahtin (The Eagles)

The Aztec knights known as the *Cuacuahtin* typically command soldiers in regular Aztlaner and Aztech military forces. All Eagle warriors are Awakened and trained to use their magical abilities to protect, enhance, and

inspire the troops they lead. The *Cuacuahtin* wear Eagle uniform patches and special officer insignia.

Otontin (The Brave Ones)

The *Otontin* are deep-infiltration operators trained in stealth, deception, and subterfuge. They often serve as assassins. *Otontin* warriors always act alone, usually behind enemy lines or within competitor territories. When chosen to serve in the *Otontin*, a warrior's past is erased. All connections to his military unit, family, and friends are severed.

Cuachicqueh (The Shorn Ones)

The *Cuachicqueh* are hard-hitting black ops operators. Typically, these highly augmented paramilitary specialists are deployed in cross-trained pairs on missions that require high-profile sabotage, terrorism, brute-force killings, and kidnappings. The Shorn Ones can often be identified by their shorn heads, mohawks, or single braids (although not all *Cuachicqueh* follow this tradition).

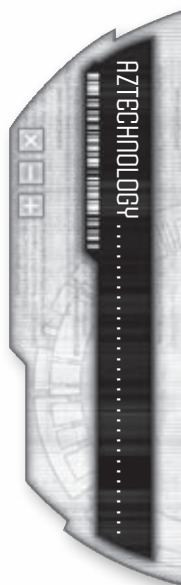
- Persistent rumors place a unit of Jaguars in LA, working with the Burning Angels. Weird, considering that Jaguars normally don't operate outside Aztlan territory.

- Mika

- Unless, of course, you consider LA to be Aztlan territory, temporarily occupied by enemy forces.

- Marcos

Urgent Message...



Yeah. So, now you can see the conundrum that Pueblo is in—either they quickly change their corporate bylaws (which, by the way, they don't have enough votes to do), or piss off Ghostwalker—and he's supposedly said he'll kick the Pueblo Corporate Council out of Denver before he lets Aztechnology back in. Which is why they've been delaying the matter. But they can't stall indefinitely. The Ute has already started agitating for a vote of no confidence if the Pueblo leadership refuses to follow its own established corporate procedures.

- Lyran
- And a vote of no confidence means ... ?
- Beaker
- Bad times.
- Mika

THE FUTURE

A lot of shit is starting to pick up speed down south, and it's certain to spill over into the shadows.

All eyes are on the brewing conflict between Amazonia and Aztlan. It isn't quite war—yet. Aztechnology has bombed sites in neutral territory, with Interpol approval and the Corporate Court's sanction (though we all know what Amazonia thinks of the Corporate Court). Purportedly, the targets of these attacks have been drug fields and processing plants. Additionally, Aztechnology has sent a significant number of paramilitary units down to the border to augment Aztlan forces. And Amazonia has its own militia units in the area. Do the math.

Publicly, Aztechnology has claimed it is proactively protecting the public interest by targeting anarchic conditions that have allowed the drug cartels to flourish. The Big A has portrayed itself as the good guy, the Ghost Cartels as the bad guys—and Amazonia as a nation unable to control the devils in its own backyard and unwilling to allow more “civilized” nations (such as Aztlan) to do it for them. Of course, the real story is much more convoluted. For example, Ding and his David Cartel are certainly in the thick of things. But that news hasn't reached the airwaves, so for now public opinion seems to be on Aztechnology's side.

HOMEGROWN WARRIORS

One thing Aztechnology has going for it, even more so than other corps with a dedicated military focus (such as Ares), is the size and training of its military and security branches. With a home country to grow its own army, Aztechnology doesn't need to recruit military personnel from the outside, as other corps do. Most of its soldiers are born and bred Aztechnology/Aztlan loyalists who have been indoctrinated from birth to die for their corp. They believe their souls travel directly to the great gods if they die in battle, and their families are rewarded with generous survivor benefits.

In 2055, the corporation rolled out a “Family Planning Support” program. On the surface, the program relieves economic stresses on families by providing monetary bonuses for each child born to a family. Under the program, the government of Aztlan provides a 10,000 AZT peso bonus for a single birth, 25,000 for twins, 50,000 for triplets, and so on. (When you consider the average annual wage inside Aztlan is around 120,000 AZT pesos, you can imagine how tempting these bonuses are.) Aztechnology

matches these bonuses for those families that agree to carry, birth, and raise implanted embryos (from Aztechnology labs, of course—who knows what the hell they do to the embryos prior to implantation).

The end result is a whole crop of 15- to 17-year-old ork boys who've been enrolled in special “educational facilities” since the age of 2 years. Those who enlist in the Aztlan military earn an additional 50,000 AZT peso bonus for their families (kids can enlist at age 15 in Aztlan). And those who are accepted into Aztechnology's military forces earn a 100,000 AZT peso bonus. Not surprisingly, Aztechnology security forces have ballooned during the past two years and the growth shows no signs of letting up.

- Yeah, and does that have a bunch of Aztlan's neighbors worried. Countries can't get away with eugenics quite as easily as megacorps. And these kids—they're not just indoctrinated in Aztechnology culture. Some are supposedly cloned from the best Guerreros in Aztechnology service, while others are test-tube babies concocted from gametes donated from those same guerreros. Certainly they're a grade—or ten—above the barrens-brats a lot of militaries recruit.
- The Smiling Bandit

• Speaking of worried, Horizon is watching this military growth very closely. It can't possibly go toe-to-toe with Aztlan/Aztechnology's military might. So supposedly Horizon is working the problem from a different angle. The corp is rumored to have a Dawkins Group cadre in Aztlan, developing propaganda weapons to counter the faux Aztec culture concept.

- Dr. Spin
- Pyramid Watcher, where's the good stuff? The real dirt? The conspiracies to destroy the world? Come on, share.
- Snopes

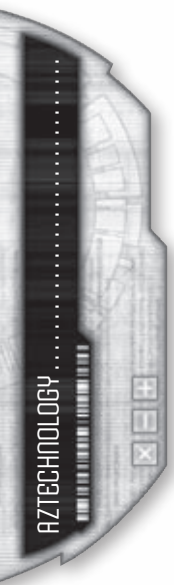
• Heh. Fastjack told me to keep this succinct and on-topic. But if you want something to keep you up at night, here's a scary little tidbit. I should warn you, the chap I picked this up from was bat-shit crazy; he'd been wandering in the Mojave and was close to death from exposure. He'd gouged out his own eyes, so that “they couldn't see through him” and cut out his own tongue. He gave this to me on a piece of hide, the writing in his own blood.

- Pyramid Watcher

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THE SMOKING MIRROR

Legend says that in the ancient days when the gods walked the earth, *Quetzalcóatl* the Feathered Serpent was tricked by his brother, the dark god *Tezcatlipoca*, who showed the Feathered Serpent a smoking mirror of obsidian that reflected images of the peaceful god committing terrible atrocities while under the spell of his dark brother. The peaceful *Quetzalcóatl* fled into exile, shamed. During *Quetzalcóatl*'s exile, the dark god *Tezcatlipoca* ruled, and his reign was marked with devastating wars and bloody sacrifice, slavery, and death for all but his dedicated followers, who feasted on the pain and suffering of the world. *Tezcatlipoca* was known by many names, such as *Titlacahuan* (“We are his slaves”),





INCOMING FEED.....



Moqueueloa (“The Mocker”), *Nahuaque* (“The Night Wind”), and *Necoc Yaotle* (“The Enemy on Both Sides”). But the name my masters call him is the Smoking Mirror, the corrupted reflection that shows a world destroyed.

When the priests of Aztlan celebrate at the Great Teocalli, they claim that the good god *Quetzalcóatl* looks down on our country with favor, that his enlightenment promises an age of learning and advancement that will shower blessings on the Aztech people under his protection.

But it is a lie, a ruse, as much as if *Tezcatlipoca* had shown us a mirror of smoke and shadows to blind us to his real purpose. The priesthood, led by the High Priest, conducts its secret rituals in the Temple of *Tezcatlipoca*. And the priesthood is led by *Aztechnology*, whose leaders serve the Smoking Mirror.

I know. I was one of them. I was initiated into their deepest secrets, bound through the sacrifice of innocent lives, the ritual consumption of innocent blood and flesh. I was their tool.

My sponsor was a man named *Oscuro*, who led the faction that controlled the blood mages and the priesthood. He aspired to bring about the end of the Fifth Sun, so that the world would crumble and Aztlan alone would have the power and foresight to survive and protect humanity. His effort failed and claimed his life. Control of the priesthood fell to another on the board, the High Priest of *Tezcatlipoca*. I could tell he did not trust me, for I was *Oscuro*’s man. He was right, but for the wrong reasons.

Under *Oscuro*, I saw that what I was doing was not holy—now I only hope to die a noble death.

I have fled, my life forfeit, hoping only to redeem myself before *Quetzalcóatl* by exposing the secret darkness that corrupts the heart of Aztlan. I remain bound to *Tezcatlipoca*, and his High Priest can see through my eyes, speak through my mouth. Thus I have gouged out my eyes and cut out my tongue. What this cult hopes to achieve, I do not know. I know only that they scoffed at *Oscuro*, at his “short-sighted goals,” and say they have learned from his mistakes and his haste. And I know they are looking for something. They sent me into the deserts of their ancient foes to be their eyes and ears. But I have disobeyed. I will forfeit my life. Take this and let it be known, that I may claim to *Quetzalcóatl* that I at least denied the Smoking Mirror one minor victory.

//end attachment//

- Well, there’s one for the conspiracy theory board.
- Snopes
- Oh, c’mon. Pyramid Watcher’s pulling your leg. Written in blood on animal skin—riiiight. And I’ve got a bridge to sell.
- Slamm-0!
- I don’t know. I’ve heard of the myths of *Tezcatlipoca*. And Aztlan does contain temples dedicated to him. A cult that’s

worshipping his dark side—I can believe it. But that a board member (or members) are leading the cult? That's stretching it a bit. But that guy Otaku-Zuku mentioned in Calcutta? His name translates to "smoking mirror." Coincidence?

- Elijah

- Aztechnology certainly is sowing more than its share of war and discord right now. Think it's related?

- Plan 9

- *roll eyes* Related to the Big A's profit margin, maybe. I knew I shouldn't have uploaded that file. For the record, I don't think it was anything more than the hallucinations of a dying man. Seriously. If I didn't have a habit of collecting everything to do with Aztechnology, I'd have tossed it aside.

- Pyramid Watcher

- What happened to the guy?

- Frosty

- He died.

- Pyramid Watcher

- Do you still have the original message? I have a—friend—who'd really like to see it.

- Frosty

- I don't. I burned it. Gave me the heeby-jeebies. And it was starting to smell bad.

- Pyramid Watcher

Megawatch Buzz



//Keyword: Aztechnology

//Date: 01/01/2072 - Current

Genetique Announces Breakthrough

The genetech powerhouse Genetique has announced a significant breakthrough in transplanting living tissues from paranormal animals to metahumans.

"We're a long way from a marketable product, but we have overcome the major hurdles in xenotissue rejection that have plagued previous research into Awakened xenomimetic transplants," Genetique spokesperson Jack Dancing Crow said in a press release distributed yesterday. "Genetique hopes to be able to showcase prototypes at next year's industry events."

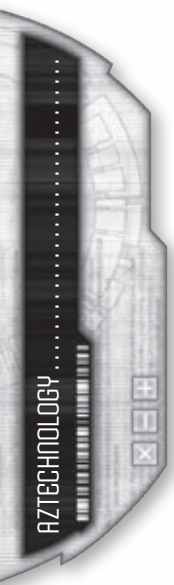
Aztechnology Forces Ambushed on Routine Patrol

BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA—A roadside bomb and ambush has left three Aztechnology soldiers dead and four civilians injured. The attackers are believed to be remnants of the Olaya Cartel or nationalist radicals of

the outlawed Greater Colombia Policlub, Aztechnology Colonel Antonio Mendez de la Huerta told members of the Bogotá media today. Mendez de la Huerta scoffed at street rumors identifying the attackers as Amazonian scouts. No party has claimed responsibility for the attack, which also caused considerable property damage. Aztechnology security forces have skirmished with unidentified attackers on the outskirts of Bogotá for the past three months.

Aztech Sub Announces Takeover Bid

MADRID, SPAIN—Aztechnology subsidiary Carrefour intends to acquire a controlling position in Penzo, Eastern Europe's largest supermarket chain and retail distributor network, the megacorp announced today. The news follows rumors that Carrefour is divesting itself of assets in North Africa and the Middle East to focus on core markets. The multi-billion nuyen deal is contingent on approval by the Czech government, which controls a 25-percent stake in Penzo.





//Begin Audio-Text Transcript//

I want to start by saying I'm sorry. I'm sorry to Devi in the art department. I'm sorry to Jerry and Lou in sales. I'm sorry to the whole Big Gals kickball team. I'm sorry to Yuri. I've hurt you all, and I was wrong.

I thought this was just a normal run. Just six weeks in deep cover. No big deal. But you all took me in. You accepted me as I am, for me. All my life I've been Ugly Charlie, the hideous troll-thing, the fat spider girl, the pitiable SURGE victim. I'm huge and my skin is covered with oil and I stink and my arms drag on the ground if I don't pay attention. Children cry when they see me.

Then I came here. You took me in, and at first I thought I had you fooled. But you took me in not because of my cover identity, but because you wanted to know me. You didn't care what I looked like or smelled like (bless you all for that). Your children played with me and gorgeous men flirted with me. You appreciated me when I helped you and you helped me when I fell short. You let me sing even though my voice is horrible, you let me dance even though I'm not graceful or elegant. You brought me into your homes and welcomed my presence. You knew my worth and convinced me of it, too. You became my family, my only family.

When it came time to plant the chemicals and depart, I knew what I was doing was wrong. I knew it would hurt you all. It would bring tears to Old Mac's eyes when she saw her life's work destroyed. It would have killed little Bobby to lose his favorite playground. It may even have closed the division and your homes would be lost to you, my family.

That's why I came back. That's why I had to stop it. And that's why I stayed to let you capture me. I want to stay. I want to be part of Evo and help build the future of our world. I'm sorry now, and I have been for weeks. I was wrong, and I wish I had realized that sooner. I pray this act of contrition is enough to allow you all to forgive me. I understand if you don't. I lied to you for so long, but your love tore the lies away and now I want to live free, with you.

My team consists of the following people. Mika leads the team. He is an adept and one of the best runners I know. His safehouse in the city is located at ...

//Remainder of Transcript Redacted//

EVOLUTION IN ACTION

Posted by: Plan 9

You guys know me. If it's been released in the past eight years or so, it's been in my body at one point or another. So I'm sure it comes as no surprise that I'm a big fan of Evo. I've owned nearly two hundred different pieces of cyberware, bioware, nanoware ... if it's a -ware, I've been a customer. I can say with authority that Evo has the best stuff on the planet, hands down.

I've also done some work for Evo, and I am pretty chummy with some people on the inside. That puts me in a great position to contribute to this JackPoint file.

- You realize that you have just compromised any concept of objectivity when you posted that, right?
- Snopes
- Since when has anything on JackPoint been written with objectivity in mind?
- Sunshine

Corporate Profile



evo corporation

Corporate Court Ranking (2071): #7

Corporate Slogan: "Changing Life"

Corporate Status: AAA, public corporation

World Headquarters: Vladivostok, Russia

President: Yuri Shibanokuji

CEO: Anatoly Kirilenko

Major Shareholders: Buttercup (29%), Yuri Shibanokuji (22%), Ren Iwano (8%), Hideo Yoshida (5%), Ramon Dizon (3%), Minor Shareholders (33%)

Major Divisions: Evo Africa, Evo Asia, Evo Australasia, Evo Europe, Evo India, Evo North America, Evo South America, Evo Space

Notable Subsidiaries/Brands: ATRP (Investment), CrashCart Medical Services (Medical Service Provider), Lightning Brands (Food), Metaergonomics (Metahuman Consumer Goods), Pensodyne (Biotech/Genetics), Saotome Aquadomes (Aquaculture/Mining), Tsuruga International (Construction), Yamatetsu Productions (Media), Yamatetsu Naval Technologies (Naval Construction/Aquatech/Miltech), Xiao Technologies (Consumer Electronics/Software)

Dominant Business Languages: Japanese, Russian

Secondary Business Language: English

YAMATETSU METAMORPHOSIS

Evo (formerly Yamatetsu) has a long and sordid history dating back to its founding in 2032, with all the drama, backstabbing, and backroom maneuvers that you'd expect of a 21st century keiretsu. It attained AAA status within a decade of its founding, a tribute to the ruthlessness and tenacity of its founders. Then things really got complicated. A break with anti-kawaru bias divided the board and antagonized old Japanacorp allies, a manipulative free spirit bought an active stake in the corp, visionary founder Tadamako Shibanokuji died, and corporate headquarters moved to Vladivostok.

But it's been a while since the Yamatetsu days, and Evo's come a very long way since then. So let's leave the past in the past. When Shibanokuji-san moved the whole kit and caboodle to Vladivostok, he did more than distance himself and his megacorporation from Japanese bigotry and narrow-mindedness. He gave Yamatetsu a break from its sordid past and sowed the seeds of change.

Yuri Shibanokuji wasn't just a man who was trying to make it in a world gone mad. When he inherited the chairmanship of Yamatetsu's board of directors, he had to run a corp with a sullied name in a culture that abhorred orks. Facing resistance from then-CEO Saru Iwano and the Japanese bloc on the board, Yuri was fortunate enough to have the backing of influential board members such as the free spirit Buttercup and visionary entrepreneur Newton Chin (a close friend of his father's), or he would have lost his position right out of the gate.

Gathering his allies about him, Shibanokuji-san steered his ship away from shallows and rocks. He weathered the board challenge and moved his corp across the Sea of Japan and away from the poisonous prejudice of home. He appeased the Japanese hardliners in his company by backing the popular new Emperor and won back some of the lost support from the homeland through his efforts. Leaving Saru Iwano as the frontman for the corporation no doubt helped as well.

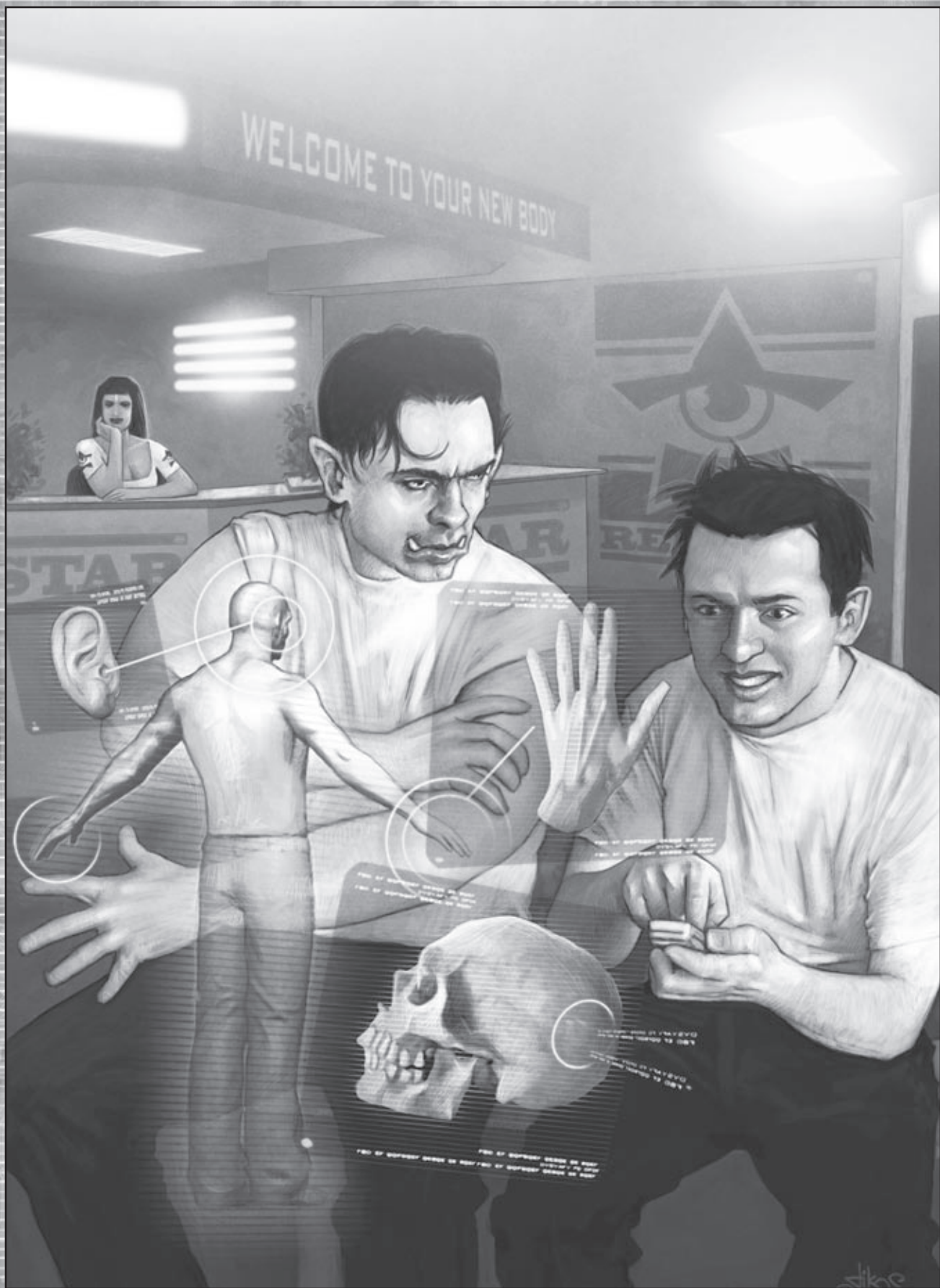
By 2062, Shibanokuji was firmly entrenched as the man in charge of the corp. That's when the real work started.

Evolution

Shibanokuji laid low for a few years, content to advise from behind the scenes and let Iwano and Buttercup handle public relations. Yuri wanted something different for his corporation, and to do that he needed a break from the past. Moving the corp to another culture was a good start, but it didn't address the internal problems. The more "traditional" (that is, intolerant) executives and board members were quietly causing trouble for their chairman.

Another complication arose in 2064, when Shibanokuji revealed that he was suffering from Methuselah's Syndrome, a genetic condition common in goblinized orks, and was aging at an accelerated pace. He took a leave of absence and left the company to his CEO as he sought treatment. It looked like Shibanokuji's vision would never be realized.

- The announcement of his disease and semi-retirement distracted the media and the public from the announcement that Yamatetsu would join the Pacific Prosperity Group. A brilliant bit of misdirection or a very lucky coincidence.
- Dr. Spin





- Membership in the Pacific Prosperity Group brought Shibanojuji much-needed allies against the other Japanacorps rallying against him. Years later it would also prove a fortuitous move, allowing Evo to gobble up floundering Prosperity Group companies in the wake of the Crash and consolidate itself as a regional superpower. The downside has been the erosion over the years of the friendly relations with the other Prosperity Group AAA, Wuxing.

- Mr. Bonds

- Keep in mind that Yuri never entirely broke ties with Japan. Yamatetsu lost a lot of ground, faded into the background, and earned the enmity of the Japanese megas—but it never closed shop or liquidated its assets. When the Emperor’s kawaru policies kicked in and change was undeniably underway, the rebranded Evo simply stepped back out of the shadows.

- Rigger X

Crashing Down

The dust had not yet settled when along came the Crash of ’64, and Yamatetsu’s network was one of the first to collapse. Vladivostok was cut off from the rest of the megacorp, and when one of Yuri’s staunchest allies on the board, Newton Chin, passed away, the old boys’ club made its move against Shibanojuji and his new policies.

Many simply reverted to their old bigoted practices, but others went further with their insubordination. One faction in Eastern Europe assisted the Rybocrats in looting Poland as the civil war came to an end. The Central Asian branch declared open war against the government of Turkestan, allied with elements of Saeder-Krupp and smaller corps. Several North American subsidiaries tried hostile takeovers against orphaned Cross subsidiaries and even a few Ares assets.

- They actually succeeded in the Sioux Nation with the takeover of Ares T. Rowe Price in Cheyenne. They later renamed it ATRP to get the Ares label out of there, but they kept the astrological Aries logo, ostensibly as a nod to the old T. Rowe Price logo, but probably just to tweak Damien Knight.

- Cosmo

Amidst the chaos, Yuri Shibanojuji resurfaced to take control of the corporation. Newton Chin had left him part of his stock, boosting the stock share of the Shibanojuji/Buttercup voting bloc to 51 percent.

In a ballsy move, Yuri and Buttercup blamed Iwano for the lack of direction and chaos engulfing the corporation. The outright defiance and insubordination of Japanese managers and directors, many of whom were Iwano’s former cohorts, sealed the case. Backed into a corner and faced with the prospect of losing face to the kawaru, Iwano committed seppuku.

Yuri took on the title of “interim CEO” and reestablished control over Yamatetsu’s subsidiaries one by one. He consolidated gains made during the chaos after the Crash and cut any losses Yamatetsu had suffered—simply writing off investments that looked non-viable in the new economic climate. He refocused attentions on Yamatetsu’s core business and reprioritized budgets accordingly. He also oversaw the implementation of the Wireless Matrix Initiative, and to this day most of the wireless Matrix infrastructure in Russia and parts of

Korea and China is handled by the corp. Shibanojuji-san became a rock star in his own corporation as much for his reconstruction efforts as for his robust and frankly gorgeous looks.

- This is starting to sound like a document sponsored by Evo.

- Dr. Spin

- The rejuvenation of Yuri Shibanojuji is worth noting. I’ve never heard of Léonization working so fast. How did he do it?

- Picador

- I thought plastic surgery, but unless they doctored the feeds on his close-ups, he’s missing the conjunctivitis associated with Methuselah’s Syndrome. So either he went through Léonization in record time or he’s been cured of Methuselah’s, both pretty impossible prospects now, never mind seven years ago. Maybe it’s magic?

- Butch

- A pact with a spirit—his fellow board member and close associate Buttercup, for example—could potentially make him near immortal, but I’m unaware of any such deal that would make him any younger or correct the effects of aging. A clone maybe?

- Frosty

- Could he be a clone? Maybe if the surgery was done today, but it would be a risky surgery at best. Back in 2065 that sort of procedure would have been impossible.

- KAM

Renew, Reuse, Rebrand

Between January ’65 and July of ’66, a large number of execs and board members lost their positions. Some retired, some were “promoted” to distant subsidiaries, some resigned quietly or after a scandal, some suffered tragic accidents. Shibanojuji-san gained from every single lost position, and replacements were always on board with their chairman. How such an amazing coincidence could have happened all at once remains a mystery.

- Mystery my ass. Okay, people, raise your hand if you didn’t do a job on a Yamatetsu exec or shareholder back in those days.

- Clockwork

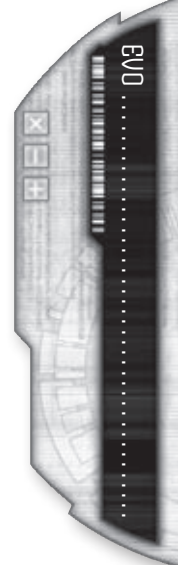
One of the biggest announcements was the appointment of Anatoly Kirilenko as CEO. Kirilenko was an odd choice since he had little background in management, but Yuri and he seemed to hit it off and he had Buttercup’s backing. He was a colonel in the Russian air force and later the head of the very successful manned Mars mission, a project that had fueled the development much new technology development by the corporation.

Kirilenko was Yamatetsu’s first non-Japanese CEO, and a native of Vladivostok. There was some unrest at rumors that Kirilenko was related to the Vory v Zakone, but the rumors were shown to be unfounded.

- If by “unfounded” you mean “completely true,” then you’re right. Let me demonstrate: post something under this comment if you’ve ever worked a job for the Vory against Evo.

- Mika





Then came the biggest announcement: Yamatetsu was finally shedding its past and evolving into a new company. The advertising slogan, “Evolve with Evo,” was plastered all over the world in one of the first AR advertising campaigns. The world had changed, and no longer had a place for Yamatetsu in it. Instead, Shibanojuji-san would usher the megacorp into a new era of inclusion and unity. <edited by sysop>

- Keep it informative. If you ever want to post a main article again, Plan 9, stay away from the kind of fanboy gushing I've deleted here and in other places.
- Fastjack

Among Yuri's steps was a revision of the corporation's charter. This included several key amendments drafted by “the board” that have become known as the Terms of Unity, a set of rules and regulatory policies intended to end racial prejudice in the corporation and set down the guiding principles for EvoCulture. The text declares that all Evo citizens are created equal, whether wrapped in skin, scales, feathers, mana, or data.

Terms of Unity

Once the ground rules were in place, Evo moved ahead, starting with its post-Crash 2.0 gains. The corp's seat on the Corporate Court was retained despite complaints lodged by Ares and Aztechnology. Evo won the hearts and minds of Russian citizens with its contribution to the Russian gross domestic product and its new and inclusive message for metahumanity. Evo also made inroads in several Awakened nations, notably Amazonia and Manchuria, and expanded its presence in South Asia.

An important part of its aggressive marketing campaign was its espousal of equality among all sapient species and sub-species. Over the years, Evo and its direct subsidiaries became the employers with the most diverse workforce on the planet. In fact, it was around this time that Kirilenko made his (in)famous and controversial comment that Crash 2.0 never would have happened if artificial intelligences had been granted the same respect, rights, and dignity accorded metahumanity.

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- Netcat
- Netcat, if you can't keep your techno morning sickness out of my files, I'm locking your account.
- Fastjack
- Sorry. It comes on fast. I'll log in AR from now on.
- Netcat
- FastJack, could you leave this one in the file? It's a fascinating specimen of the effects of pregnancy on technomancers.
- Butch

Nowadays, Evo has positioned itself for prominence. It provides medical, research, consumer, and augmentation services all over the globe. It operates one of the largest and most popular destinations in orbit. It has even spread into the seas and the jungles of the Sixth World. And Evo has gotten to all these places with the help of its unique culture.

EVOCULTURE

“EvoCulture” is the term the corporation uses for the attitudes and expectations the corp has for its employees. It is not merely another set of corporate policies, but rather a way of interacting with everyone, from the lowest janitor to the CEO himself.

EvoCulture is all about harmony among all sapient beings. Employees and corporate citizens are judged by the contents of their character and the value of their contributions to society and the corporation. Any sign of prejudice, racism, or intolerance is severely frowned upon.

- More than frowned upon, really. Shunned is more like it. Punished with a cult-like intensity.
- Axis Mundi

To help citizens and employees bond, Evo facilitates and sponsors a number of social activities. People are offered incentives to participate in Evo recreational sports leagues or all-employee clubs. This incentive is a great boon to workers with low salaries—in some cases it can nearly double a worker's annual income. The policy also helps include people with less common phenotypes, such as centaurs or hobgoblins, in corporate events.

- This looks all nice on the surface, but really it's social engineering of near-Orwellian proportions. In extreme cases, it creates a kind of neo-hippy Evo drone. Hell, when Live and Direct called them EvoPeople, they adopted the name.
- Mika
- It's not that bad across the whole corp, but the social pressure is enormous.
- Sunshine
- Keep in mind that EvoCulture is a long way from Horizon's touchy-feely community policies. The focus is on getting along, but competition is welcomed and appreciated.
- Dr. Spin

The employees of Evo and its subsidiaries are hired on the basis of their skill sets and individual characters. Evo wants people who not only work for the company, but with it. The application process is done at a distance to ensure impartiality; Human Resources is the only department allowed contact with the candidate until he, she, or it is hired. As Buttercup often says, “A bad weed in one garden is a flower in another.”

- What the hell does that even mean?
- Slamm-0!



• Evo proper also hires people just out of school, whether that be secondary school, college, or one of the Evo Urban Integration Programs for non-metahumans, with preference for those that grew up as corporate citizens. Officially, this policy is intended to keep fresh ideas circulating, but I think it has more to do with preserving EvoCulture. I mean, how many fresh ideas do you need to inspect bioware packaging?

• Baka Dabora

• No contact between a department and the candidate sounds a lot more like social control than careful hiring practices.

• Goat Foot

Like all the megacorps, Evo doesn't shy from extracting needed talent from other corps. Unlike others, it has occasionally "ransomed" talent (particularly metahuman talent) under contract to other companies.

On the other hand, Evo retains elements of its original Japanese business culture, concentrating on the success of its customers more than its own success. This has given the corp an excellent reputation among its clientele, from AA corps and nations all the way down to the guy in the CrashCart clinic for a flu shot. Over the past few years, Russian culture has been welcomed into the fold. The resulting mix has given Evo a reputation for a diligent, if somewhat fatalistic, workforce.

Evo's workers possess the greatest number of augmentations of any megacorps workforce. Fully ninety percent of corp employees

have some sort of implant or enhancement. The corporation offers significant discounts on implants for citizens, and employee loans for augmentations. Implants tend to be less specialized and work-related than those pushed in other megacorps as well, and Evo fosters a significant transhumanist clique in its own ranks.

• It's not all free though. Employees are expected to pay the corporation back by working off the costs. And spirits forbid that you change employers; Evo will make sure any proprietary technology you have implanted stays proprietary.

• Jimmy No

CORE BUSINESSES

Evo has a great number of irons in a number of fires around the world. The megacorp is best known for its cyberware and bioware, but Evo is far more than just the world's best manufacturer of future organlegger inventory.

Cyberware

Evo inherited its primary business—cyberware—from Yamatetsu. Many of the smaller moving parts of Evo's cyberware are manufactured on Industry II, Evo's manufacturing satellite. This environment makes it easier to produce perfectly machined parts, which make Evo cyberlimbs and other cybernetic replacements the best on Earth.

Contradicting pundits who claim that cyberware is anachronotech, Evo continues to invest heavily in this core business and is



INCOMING FEED.....



at the forefront of the effort to introduce new functionalities and integration to the cybertech market. Both Evo and its subsidiaries lead the burgeoning fields of nanocybernetics, cybersuites, and the development of modular cyberlimbs.

Bioware

Evo is hands-down the largest manufacturer and provider of bioware in the world. In almost every sprawl of the developed world, Evo-affiliated clinics and bodyshops offer the most diverse and appealing augmentations and proprietary biomods on the market.

Evo's manufacturing satellite, the only one of its kind in orbit, features a biomass reactor that gives Evo's bioware products an increased tissue regrowth rate, providing Evo with a huge advantage in a market it already dominates.

Unlike those of its competitors, Evo's latest ventures in consolidating its control of the bioware market focus not only on the development of practical, everyday augmentations, but also the development of fringe augmentations and treatments that may (or may not) have long-term payoffs. These include the EvoGen series of transhuman phenotype biomods and biogenetic treatments, and what the research papers suggestively call "alternate biological platforms for the metahuman brain."

- Biodrones?
- Glitch
- Somehow I don't think so.
- The Smiling Bandit

Nanoware

Evo was one of the first corps to delve seriously into nanoware. Most of Evo's research is aimed at lowering the costs of practical nano-applications for both industrial and private uses. One of Evo's primary efforts to achieve this goal has been its development of versatile and affordable nanoforges to bring technology to outlying areas. Other nanotech projects include various autonomous repair and surgical systems, programmable nano-colonies, the next generation of nanohive implants, and specialty nanoware that works in non-metahuman systems. And nanotech in general factors heavily into Evo's Nexialism program.

- I'm told that the rumor that Evo nanoware occasionally "phones home" is untrue, but I've seen it happen.
- Clockwork

Genetech

Evo and Universal Omnitech are co-leaders in genetic technology. But while UniOmni focuses mostly on personal augmentation applications, Evo's interests are as diversified and eclectic as you would expect from a megacorp. Shiawase, Proteus, Monobe, and Aztechnology's Genetique are the other major players in genetech, a field where competition is cutthroat and industrial espionage is common.

Although the company refuses to comment directly, Evo's genetech research is assumed to be responsible for Yuri Shibanojuji's dramatic recovery from Methuselah's Syndrome. The corp has practically cornered the market on genetic sequencing

with the fastest proprietary sequencing techniques on the planet and one of the largest libraries of genetic data in the world.

Little talked about is Evo's investment in developing animals genetweaked to produce pharmaceuticals and metahuman-compatible replacement organs.

- Who needs expensive bioreactors and vats when you can have pharmanimals? Just don't advertise it, 'cause people tend to be finicky about where their enhanced thyroid comes from.
- The Smiling Bandit

Mass Market Goods and Fashion

While neither as robust as Renraku products nor as sleek and sophisticated as MCT and NeoNET's offerings, Evo's consumer electronics and fashion lines are a major revenue source for the corporation. Evo products are highly popular due to the megacorp's strong brands and its attention to current trends and cultural memes, which is rivaled only by Horizon.

Evo's nanofax boutiques have made the hottest designer threads instantly accessible and customizable to everyone with enough cash. The recent buyout of the popular fashion house MetaTribe has only increased its appeal with the under-20 crowd.

- Evo is still a member of the Pacific Prosperity Group, and you'll find that a lot of components under the sleek skins and casings of their products are produced by fellow Prosperity Group members rather than homebrewed.
- Ma'fan
- That only includes Prosperity Group members that weren't bought out by Yamatetsu and Wuxing following the Crash.
- Mr. Bonds

Spacetech

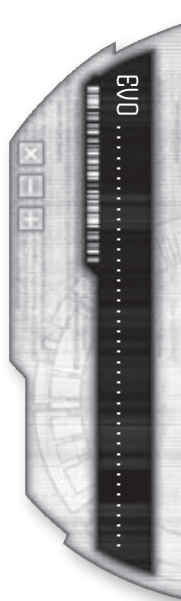
Earth-side, Evo's Space Division is purely administrative. The actual heavy lifting (no pun intended) is handled by Roskosmos, Russia's space program. Evo is the largest sponsor of Roskosmos and its greatest customer. Most of the work at Russia's five spaceports is subcontracted to Evo and its subsidiaries.

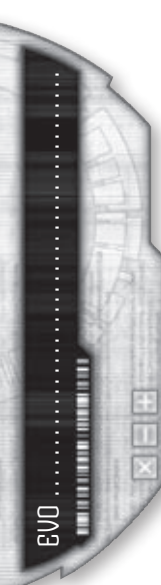
- Roskosmos got a huge boost with the rebuilding of the sat network after Crash 2.0, just like many other nearly defunct national space programs. The Kilimanjaro mass driver is fine for general freight and supplies, but orbital insertion of delicate electronics is not its strong point.
- Orbital DK

Up the well, Evo operates and manages a flotilla of satellites, a half-dozen space stations, and at least one extra-planetary base. Many of Evo's stations are combined research and manufacturing facilities that provide materials and technology that are then implemented by Evo's other divisions. One notable exception is Evo's flagship orbital station, the Shibanojuji Freefall Resort.

Shibanojuji Freefall Resort

This state-of-the-art space station has grown to nearly twenty times its size since its grand opening nearly two decades ago. The triple-wheel station flies in an orbit that brings it nearest to the





Earth every Sunday, when it drops off happy and satisfied clients and takes on new guests and supplies. The central cylindrical hub at the center of the three concentric habitat rings boasts all sorts of microgravity recreation activities, from sports to massage to flying with strap-on wings. The station can accommodate nearly a thousand guests and is home to around two hundred staff.

Mars Colony

Pretty much everyone has heard speculation about Evo's Gagarin Mars base. But few people know that the colony conceals a military installation designed to defend the planet from incursions by other corporations and nations.

The installation is located deep underground, below the Gagarin research base, hidden from probes and telescopes. There, installation personnel have cultivated enough biomass for a small manasphere and have been experimenting with extraterrestrial magical research as well.

The colony has all the mining and technology you'd expect from an extraplanetary base, and draws water from a frozen underground reservoir. The base boasts three fusion reactors and is supplied by a convoy of interplanetary drones that transit a loop between Evo's low-Earth-orbit habitats and Mars orbit every eighteen months. Two of the drones are capable of transporting metahumans and replacement cosmonauts.

Evo conceals communications with the colony by bouncing tightbeams off hidden deep-space satellites to avoid intercepts. Particularly sensitive messages and samples are transported via interplanetary drones.

- This is insane. Evo's research base isn't even self-sufficient. Evo launches unmanned supply runs every three months from Svobodny and their low-Earth-orbit stations. FastJack, why was this fucktard allowed to post a serious document?
- Clockwork
- The rest of his stuff is good intel. Admittedly there wasn't a lot of time to edit it; Plan 9 missed several deadlines in getting this material in to me.
- FastJack
- I can confirm that Evo uses physical drones to send back certain data from its Mars base, and that these drones are designed to explode if tampered with.
- Rigger X
- Sorry, but a manasphere on Mars is completely far-fetched. I don't care how much "biomass" you have.
- Ethernaut
- Are you sure? Ares has maintained a working manafield in one of its stations for a decade now. Setting one up on another planet can't be harder.
- Winterhawk
- If we stick with documentable and verifiable facts, here's what we know about the Gagarin Base. The installation is located near the eastern end of the Valles Marineris, mostly buried in the rock but with a number of sections poking out of the surface or the

side of the canyon. The base is inhabited by about sixty people; postings generally last at least a year. The base has access to underground ice and a number of other elements essential to life. It has an extensive botanical facility for food and air recycling, probably an equivalent of about fifteen hectares assuming a vegan diet. According to most reports, mass restrictions on the transport missions have prevented trolls and other larger metatypes from taking the trip.

- Snopes
- There's a Shibata communications satellite at the Sun-Mars L5 point for when the Sun is between the base and Mother Earth. Probably another one at L4 for redundancy, but if there is, nobody's publicized it.
- Orbital DK

Aquatech

Evo plays second fiddle to Shiawase and Proteus in terms of large-scale aquatech ventures, but the megacorp is rapidly catching up through projects such as the Sadka colony and similar deep-sea mining and research facilities. Evo currently possesses a dozen such installations around the globe, protected by Yamatetsu Naval Tech assets. Evo has taken over many operations of its Saotome Aquadome subsidiaries, and Saotome now specializes in R&D and experimental bases.

Sadka Colony

Sadka Colony is a self-sufficient underwater base about 67 kilometers south of Vladivostok in the Sea of Japan, about 600 meters below the surface. The colony is connected to the surface by a large tether that anchors the Evo Tadamako, an aircraft carrier that also serves as the top of an elevator that connects the colony to the surface.

The facility has extensive aquaculture pens and algae farms and is powered by three integrated geothermal plants. Sadka handles manufacturing processes that benefit from the high pressures of deep water, along with other simple manufacturing. It also acts as an embassy and trading post for many undersea sapient creatures, including a colony of merrow, a few smaller leviathans, and even the odd meistersinger.

Unsurprisingly, Sadka is rumored to host a secure research facility where Evo is exploring aquatic applications of many of its cutting-edge technologies, including deep-sea biodrones and cyborgs.

Other Interests

Like all the megacorps, Evo dabbles in pretty much every field of industry and research, from automobiles to consumer electronics, software to mass-market clothes. Evo and its subsidiaries boast exceptional brand recognition among the youth populations in many countries, and unlike the products of most AAA megacorps, Evo's offerings are viewed as cool, alternative, and trendy. The fact that each subsidiary and division produces a myriad of products has done little to dilute name recognition; in fact, it frequently produces interesting synergies, such as last year's New Transhuman Designer contest run by MetaMatrix and sponsored by Pensodyne.

Evo also sponsors several major cultural movements and events to promote Evo products and EvoCulture.



- Evo supposedly sponsors the Chicago Makers Bazaar. While some of the technology and research produced there can be described as mad at best, the corp is rumored to be behind the more promising projects. Lots of people say that Evo's first biodrone was developed from a prototype produced by a vendor at the Bazaar.
- Sticks

EVOPEOPLE

Evo would be nowhere without its EvoPeople. Here's a short rundown on some of the most important figures in the constantly evolving megacorp.

Yuri Shibanokuji

Yuri Shibanokuji was born Shibanokuji Yuki, son of Yamatetsu's chairman Tadamako Shibanokuji. As an ork in the highly intolerant nation of Japan, Shibanokuji was dispatched to Russia to be raised, where he was called by the Russian name, Yuri. On his father's death, the younger Shibanokuji returned to take his father's place on the board and his own place in history.

Today, Yuri prefers to be called by his Russian given name. He is a very public figure among Evo employees and rubs elbows with workers of all levels. One of his first acts after taking the helm of Evo was personally removing the door from his office to signify his openness to his employees. Many other Evo citizens quickly followed suit. Middle-aged and good-looking, Yuri is instantly recognizable, and he has become quite popular among both Evo citizens and members of the ork cultural movement.

Yuri spends a lot of time with Buttercup, both professionally and recreationally. They work hand-in-hand to advance Evo's interests, both financially and philosophically. He maintains that he owes much of his success to her teachings. It is not known whether they are romantically involved, but the tabloid sites are filled with stories that claim the two are a couple.

In business dealings, Yuri is quite ruthless, which is not necessarily a negative trait in the megacorp environment. If you get in his way, he will remove you without remorse by any means necessary. He displays the same single-mindedness whether his aim is to rebuke a fellow board member, take over a smaller company, enjoy a game of Preferans, or reward a worthy employee. He sometimes makes the extra effort to coat his iron fist with the honey of sympathy, but that doesn't keep his blows from hurting.

- You could say Yuri embodies both sides of the Evo ideal: the all-inclusive, ideal-driven transhumanist vision on the one hand, and the competitive, Darwinistic survival traits bred into generations of post-capitalist corporate scions.
- Kia

Buttercup

The free spirit Buttercup has been around for nearly fifty years. She owns a large stake in Evo; together with Yuri's stake, the two hold a controlling interest in the company. Buttercup doesn't talk much about where she comes from, but it is known that she was a friend of Dunkelzahn before his death.

Buttercup maintains two adjacent offices. She spends most of her work time in the first office, which houses her desk and that of her secretary; like Yuri's office, it has no door. Her second office

has no doors, windows or any other means of entry; this is her private office that she keeps for private work.

Buttercup formerly advised the Japanese Emperor, but in recent years she has turned her attention toward the Russian elite. With her guidance, along with investments from Evo, the Russian government has been making gains economically and socially.

- The Russian government is doing fine on its own. Buttercup's involvement is likely just another marketing campaign. She's not some kind of ethereal kingmaker.
- Mika

Anatoly Kirilenko

Kirilenko is the current CEO of Evo. The native Russian was appointed to the post after he presided over the first successful manned mission to Mars. He is a great motivator in the corp and is not afraid to butt heads with powerful men and women who oppose his agenda.

If Yuri is the good cop (relatively speaking, of course), Kirilenko is definitely the bad cop. The Evo CEO displays little patience for failure and a very dark sense of humor ("How do you make a blonde drown? Hold her head underwater until she stops struggling!"). He loves Western adages and enjoys purposely getting them wrong, usually with his trademark dark humor ("You cannot make an omelet without breaking a few babies!").

Kirilenko is now in his sixties and shows no signs of slowing or resorting to age rejuvenation procedures. Like most Evo cosmonauts, he boasts a number of delta-grade cyber- and bio-augmentations. He's complemented these with a number of useful implants, the exact nature of which remains undisclosed.

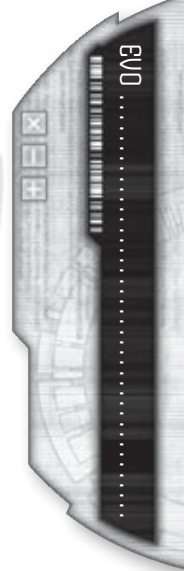
Rumors of Kirilenko's connection to the Vory remain unverified.

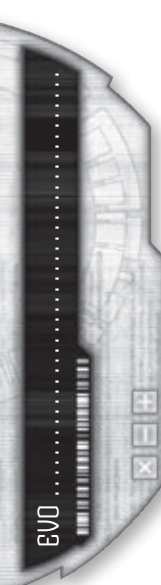
- These rumors may be unverified, but no one disputes that Kirilenko is closely related to known and well-connected Vory members.
- Lei Kung
- A lot of people expected Newton Chin to replace the late CEO Saru Iwano if Yuri ever managed to oust the man. Chin was a Yuri/Buttercup loyalist, with a vision of what Evo could be long before there even was an Evo. Unfortunately, Chin died while undergoing surgery during Crash 2.0.
- Plan 9
- I have a pretty solid contact at Evo who claims Chin has been accessing Evo networks long after his alleged death.
- Cosmo
- In this day and age, these assertions need not be mutually exclusive.
- Icarus

Julia Sanchez

Julia Sanchez is Buttercup's secretary and probably knows more about Evo than any other person on the planet. She handles most communications for both Yuri and Buttercup and occasionally speaks for them.

In many ways Julia personifies Evo's diversity. She is an elf, the unlikely daughter of an ork father and a human mother. She





inherited a trust fund that put her through college, where she earned an MBA and master's degrees in both philosophy and sociology. She started at Evo as a truck driver and spent about two years moving from job to job within the company until reaching her current position as confidant and assistant to the most powerful free spirit in the world.

Julia believes very strongly in the corporation and its stated goals. She donates her money and time to charities all over the world and attributes her worldview to her father's influence.

Ren Iwano

The only son of the late Yamatetsu CEO Saru Iwano, Ren Iwano is the official Evo liaison with the Japanese government. While not as accomplished as his father in the field of business, Iwano has proved an excellent diplomat and negotiator. He was instrumental in opening the way for Evo's return to Japan and its alliance with the Emperor's faction. He can also be credited with Evo's rapprochement with Shiawase, and he continues to cultivate new allies for Evo's agenda in the Diet.

Yuri recognizes Iwano's accomplishments for the corporation and has never shown any bias nor hostility toward him, despite the fact that Iwano's father was Yuri's staunchest opponent within Evo. Similarly, Iwano has never shown any sign of holding a grudge against Yuri for the treatment of his father. In fact, Iwano's loyalty seems to lie firmly with Evo as a whole, and he has been integral in efforts to reconcile Evo's Japanacorp past with its current direction.

- Rumor has it that Ren and Saru were never particularly close. The old man had Ren carted off to boarding school when the kid was five and never really seemed to have any time for Ren. Doesn't really make for strong family ties.

- Kia

- Yeah, but if anyone at Evo today has the Japanese tradition down it is Ren Iwano. And if he takes it as seriously as I suspect he does, sooner or later he's going to have to avenge his dad. Whether he liked the man or not is irrelevant; it's a matter of giri.

- DangerSensei

EVO ORGANIZATION

There's a reason Evo is a household name across the globe. For a corporation with an extra-global reach, Evo is surprisingly centralized and streamlined. This helps keep brand focus and name recognition high.

Evo is organized into a simple hierarchy of regional divisions and national branches. Evo divisions around the globe engage in much the same tasks: manufacturing, distributing, marketing, researching, and coordinating Evo's vast spectrum of products and services. Subsidiaries are autonomous of the main corporation and are generally transnational themselves and structured much like the core organization.

Evo also maintains cross-departmental projects that operate independently of the central structure and whose directors answer directly to the board. Such projects are typically decentralized, with personnel and equipment drawn from Evo divisional resources and organized as cells. These projects have been key to Evo's recent successes, and the position of project director is as prestigious as a divisional director post.

A corporate liaison officer at the regional level ensures communication between divisions, projects, and subsidiaries.

DIVISIONS

Evo divisions are organized on a regional basis in Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

Evo Asia

Evo has a lot of clout in the Eurasian market. Its close ties with Russia and its membership in the Pacific Prosperity Group guarantee it access to the biggest markets across the continent. The corporations it picked up following Crash 2.0 expanded its presence significantly. Consequently, Evo's Asian division, helmed by Nadine Cross-Walters, is the corp's most powerful and profitable operation.

Yamatetsu had some investment in Korea and Southeast Asia, but with the Crash and Evo's buyout of several smaller Prosperity Group members, the company's involvement in the Chinese states has increased significantly. Evo's membership in the Pacific Prosperity Group opened the door to several Chinese countries where Evo possesses manufacturing and research facilities (most notably the recently completed arcology in Tianjin). Evo also has significant commitment in Manchuria, but it doesn't own a single asset there. Instead, due to local regulations, all of Evo Manchuria is locally owned. You can still get everything from Evo Manchuria that you can get from Evo, since Evo Manchuria's only vendor is Evo, and in return it is Evo's only distributor in Manchuria.

Evo retains influence in its original home of Japan. In recent years it has also been making inroads with the Japanese youth market and is steadily recouping its popularity. The Emperor allegedly no longer requests Buttercup's counsel on all decisions, but he is still quite friendly with Evo. Additionally, the efforts of Ren Iwano have started to pay off with Evo's finding new political allies in pro-change Diet members and Empress Hitomi's Shiawase liaison.

Evo Europe

Evo's primary business concerns in Europe lie to the East. For almost a decade, Evo has struggled with Saeder-Krupp (and to a lesser extent Zeta-ImpChem and Bioenergetica Ukraine) for control of Russia. Obviously, Evo has the upper hand at the moment and its influence stretches to all levels of society. The battle is far from over, though, and the struggle has spread to Ukraine and Poland. Russia remains a sovereign nation, but everyone and their mother knows that Evo could take over the eastern half of the country at a moment's notice. That they choose not to is a testament to their honor and restraint.

- Or a testament to their knowledge that running a country is not profitable.

- Fianchetto

- Or that slapping Lofwyr in the snout like that is trouble they can't afford. Take your pick.

- Ecotope

Evo remains cordial with Western European nations and is a heavy investor in the Scand Union and Europort (a subtle attempt to get a seat on the Europort Administrative Ruling Council). Meanwhile, Evo is making inroads in consumer electronics and



SMALLER EVO DIVISIONS

Not all Evo operations are big moneymakers, but most of them are still interesting. Here's a review of other regional divisions.

Evo Australasia

While Evo is very active in Polynesia and the Philippines, it has no resources on any of the islands of Australasia. Instead, it maintains a fleet of research ships that travel from port to port, performing various experiments and collecting specimens. The fleet seems to have utterly no coordination, but none of the vessels seem to get in the way of one another.

Evo South America

Evo has little to no presence in South America, nor does it seem to hold any interest in it. Evo seems content to leave it to Amazonia and Aztechnology, at least as far as we know.

- I did a job for Evo in South America. I won't get more specific, but Evo is interested in the area.
- Black Mamba

Evo Africa and Middle East

Evo is currently in the process of exploiting the remains of the Middle East's oil and natural gas supplies. This project is quite lucrative for Evo, even with the constant expense of dealing with saboteurs, local warlords, eco-terrorists, dangerous fauna, and the occasional sandstorm.

Evo has a number of interests in Africa. From resource-recovery projects in the northeast to a full-on corporate marketing campaign in South Africa, Evo is reaching into the Dark Continent. It even has a number of free medical stations hidden around Lagos, or so I'm told.

- Despite what you may have heard, Evo even has operations in Antarctica, where it maintains a colony on the coast and a research base in the Transantarctic Mountains.
- 2XL

augmentation markets across the continent, under the guidance of Russian corporate shark and Yuri yes-man Serge Lakota.

Evo North America

Evo North Am remains the company's second most profitable division and is active throughout the continent—as any trip through Seattle without a spam filter will show you. Under the leadership of Mary Luce, Evo's interests in North Am have extended into military cybernetics, software, metahuman-ergonomic vehicles, consumer goods, and more obscure areas.

Evo is particularly active in the shadows, where Luce takes an active hand in efforts to undermine the competition and steal market shares. Recently, Luce has focused expansion efforts in the Pueblo Corporate Council and the Sioux Nation.

SUBSIDIARIES

Evo has a few subsidiaries it inherited from Yamatetsu, as well as numerous others it acquired through normal (and occasionally abnormal) methods.

CrashCart Medical Services

CrashCart Medical Services is the largest of Evo's subsidiaries, with clinics, hospitals, and enhancement facilities found all over the world.

At any given moment, CrashCart is providing elective surgery to hundreds of patients around the world. Installing Evo's various enhancement products is CrashCart's chief business, but its other divisions are growing rapidly. Its healthcare and emergency services are second only to DocWagon's, and its pharmaceutical section was ranked number eight last year.

CrashCart offers armed emergency medical services, much like the better-known DocWagon. Its insurance premiums are comparable to those of DocWagon, as are its response times in most urban areas.

- DocWagon has CrashCart beat hands-down when it comes to response time in the barrens. Doubly so for rural and feral zones.
- Stone
- True, but CrashCart has the advantage of having permission to enter Evo territory to bring service to their clients. DocWagon still needs to ask for permission, and that can take a while. If you run against Evo, CrashCart is the logical choice for med services.
- Mika

MetaErgonomics

MetaErgonomics is a manufacturing and engineering corporation that creates products designed for metahumans and other minority beings. From home furnishings for trolls to dwarf-sized appliances, MetaErgonomics is the place to go if your size or shape is different from the majority of people on the planet. Most recent projects include a Matrix interface for free spirits, cyberlegs for centaurs, and some kind of sensory interface designed to help AIs adapt to the physical world.

- I thought this was bull, but I heard from a friend of mine who has just put a down payment with MetaErgonomics for a bit of pixie-sized bioware.
- 2XL

MetaL and MetaTribe

MetaErgonomics' two fashion subsidiaries are staples of fashionable urbanwear, but it runs a few designer and high-fashion lines as well—as anyone who saw Milo Czerda's tuxedo at the world premiere of Orhan Pamuk's *World Awakened from Dreaming* last December can attest.

- Both MetaL and MetaTribe, which MetaErgonomics recently acquired, complement MetaErgonomics' traditional retail distribution operation with a growing network of nanofax boutiques.
- Kia

- For a fashion designer, MetaL is highly active as a shadow employer. I recommend the experience.
- Fianchetto

MetaMatrix

MetaMatrix is a social network dedicated to minority metatypes. Every member is also a “reporter” and posts stories about being a minority in the Sixth World. MetaMatrix is also a hotspot for all sorts of information, from cooking tips to shadow-job leads. It’s a friendly corner of the Matrix, but obviously bigots need not apply.

- MetaMatrix is home to a large repository of open mysteries from Dunkelzahn’s last will and testament. It was folks on MetaMatrix who debunked those two Mars images.
- Winterhawk

MetaMatrix is also home to Arcturus, a metasapient AI and chief admin for the MetaMatrix. Arcturus has tweaked the network to the point where MM is the largest and fastest social network in the world. Arcturus himself is also pretty sharp and is big into minority activism. Rumor has it he’s sponsored more than a few shadowruns in the name of meta rights.

Pensodyne

Pensodyne is Evo’s biogenetics subsidiary. It produces the best bioware and genetic enhancements and treatments in the world, all of which are available at CrashCart facilities. The company is constantly performing cutting-edge research on various new genetic samples that have been popping up since the Awakening, including research on the xenobiological samples Evo recovered from Mars. Pensodyne is also researching a bunch of technology applications for minority metatypes, such as synthetic food for ghouls and devices to assist those infected with HMMVV.

- While proving the absence of something is an inductive (and therefore not completely conclusive) argument, there is utterly no evidence supporting the existence of xenobiological samples from Mars.
- Snopes
- It’s not HMMVV anymore, twit. It’s MVV. Wake up and smell the ‘70s. A little tolerance, please.
- Hannibelle

Shibata Construction and Engineering

Shibata Construction and Engineering isn’t really an Evo subsidiary, but I’m including it here because it’s almost wholly owned by Buttercup. Oddly enough, Shibata doesn’t work with Evo all that often, despite this connection. Usually Shibata partners with other megacorps and companies on various projects, most recently working with Aztechnology to upgrade and manage the Spindle—even though that station’s recreational and tourist facilities are in direct competition with Shibanojuji Freefall Resort. So it’s safe to say Shibata operates completely separately from Evo.

- Don’t you believe it. Follow the money: Evo pours jing into Shibata by the truckload. I’m not sure how the investment pays off, but you can bet that Shibata isn’t just a hobby for Evo.
- Baka Dabora

SMALLER EVO SUBSIDIARIES

Here are a few of the lesser-known wholly owned subsidiaries of Evo.

ATRP

ATRP is an investment company based in Baltimore, UCAS. It maintains divisions in every city with a commodities or stock exchange. ATRP handles investment portfolios and mutual funds for large entities and individual investors alike. It also provides an anonymized service for clients who wish to be more discreet in their investments.

Ersatz!

Ersatz! specializes in simsense equipment, especially in conjunction with live performances. The field of live sim is a highly competitive one, and Ersatz! has a reputation for being one of the dirtiest players in the business.

Lightning Brands

Lightning Brands is a manufacturer of commercial food products, most notably drinks and snack foods. Like all companies in the commercial food business, Lightning maintains an advertising division that is in a constant state of war with its competitors for market share in developed areas.

Tsuruga International

Tsuruga deals exclusively in concrete, plascrete, and ferrocete road construction. Tsuruga is unique among construction companies in that it runs on a franchise model, rather than maintaining divisions and wholly owned subsidiaries.

Yamatetsu Productions

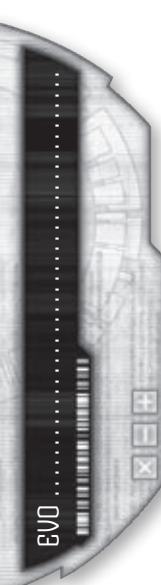
Yamatetsu Productions is a sim studio best known for its support of indie projects. It owns the rights to more films starring minority metatypes and species than any other studio, and it holds an exclusive contract with the superstar free spirit known as Castor.

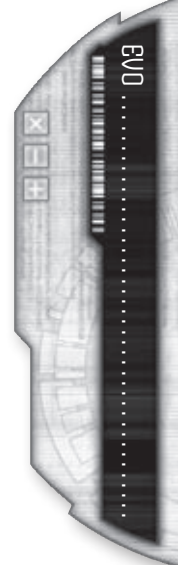
- Shibata has a number of joint projects with members of the Big Ten and their subsidiaries. It makes me wonder what Buttercup is up to, or maybe what Evo is up to.
- Mika

Yamatetsu Naval Technologies

Calling Yamatetsu Naval Technologies a mere naval manufacturer is pretty misleading. Yamatetsu NT is Evo’s military manufacturing arm. Its biggest client is Russia—if you’re looking at a Russian tank, fighter jet, or warship, you’re looking at a Yamatetsu NT product. It also produces a few cutting-edge weapons and armor designs, most designed for implantation or for use with some form of augmentation.

Urgent Message...





While Evo doesn't possess full-blown military forces, it does own a sizeable military fleet that is operated by Yamatetsu NT.

Yamatetsu NT is also one of the last holdouts of the hard-liner Japanese in the corporation. These guys use the division's military-like hierarchy as an excuse to control promotions and perpetuate their bigoted exclusion policies.

- Yamatetsu NT operates fifty warships and subs of different sizes and specifications to protect colonies/bases and patrol the main shipping lanes used by Evo cargo vessels. Vessels above a certain size also carry companies of Evo Marines, who are highly augmented and well trained in shipboard actions.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Attrition is high among the Evo Marines. The Japanese officers show little consideration for the lives of the predominantly metahuman grunts in the ranks, and their tactics show it.
- Picador

THE BLEEDING EDGE

Evo is most famous for its augmentation technology, but only slightly less noteworthy is its dedication to research. Evo started pushing boundaries—technological, biological, and social—in '66 and has never looked back.

TRANSHUMANISM

What does it mean to be metahuman? This question has been asked for countless centuries, but Evo seeks to provide an objective, scientific definition.

The reasoning goes something like this. When Evo asks this question, the definition of "metahumanity" is that which makes a person a person. There's more to it than mere sapience—digital agents are capable of making judgments and decisions. Sentience, self-awareness, and metacognition are all important parts of the equation, but in what amounts? And what parts of a metahuman being are the ones holding the humanity and which are just support structures?

Evo has always been about overcoming metahuman limitations, but that's just the beginning. It is Evo's philosophy that we are more than our bodies, that we can transcend the physical form. Want to be a dragon for a while? It can happen, and not just with crude simsense or even BTLs. Want to switch sexes for a while? (Try it—I had a blast.)

Evo is already moving down this trail. Cyberware was the start, and further augmentative tech followed. MCT's clumsy forays into cyborg technology are just a slim echo of Evo's current research.

- Source?
- Snopes

Here are a few transhuman projects—both the well-known ones and the less-known efforts—going on at Evo.

ModBod

ModBod, or Modular Bodies, is a project that builds on current cyborg research. The idea is to provide people with the functionality of a cyborg body without any of the psychic distress of the cerebral containment unit. Rather than stripping the body

away entirely, as MCT does, Evo espouses a more natural process of full body replacement and customization. Modular cyberlimbs are the first step of the ModBod project and are already in production. Evo has already showcased three prototype modular cybersuits at the Hamburg Enhancement Fair and promises more to follow.

The Dickens Program

One of the newest projects is the Dickens Program. Evo already recognizes AIs as people and citizens, and e-ghosts as a subclass of AIs. If e-ghosts really are the ghosts or imprints of people, they represent the possibility that the mortal shell can transcend the physical and enter a digital form. This would make it possible for people to shed their bodies entirely, transferring their consciousnesses to any vessel (as long as it has a stylish Evo logo on it, of course).

The Dickens Program seeks to discover the origins of e-ghosts. So far, this effort has focused on searching through Matrix logs and interviewing e-ghosts and AIs, along with theoretical research.

- That sounds pretty cool.
- /dev/grll
- Not really. Think about it. Evo wants to know how e-ghosts are formed. As far as we can tell, it always involves a traumatic death. So the research depends on what goes on at that lethal moment. How can you be certain to be there when it happens? Here's another question: how do you test your findings?
- The Smiling Bandit
- Oh, my. I just remembered that CrashCart routinely hooks up patients to 'trodes when treating them, for "diagnostic purposes." I certainly hope that's a coincidence.
- Winterhawk
- Right. And I've got a small island off the coast of Cuba that you might be interested in buying.
- Kane

Mars Research Program

This multi-disciplinary research program associated with the Mars base combines the efforts and talents of several Evo divisions. Both Evo's new hypersynthesis solar-collection system and experimental amplifier fabrics were developed to respond to challenges encountered by Evo cosmonauts at Gagarin Base.

Evo's materials- and geological-science units in particular have profited from a wealth of data that's only now being put to use in a variety of new technological applications. While the biosciences departments have benefited from the information on habitat, metahuman, and biomass systems in place at Gagarin, officially the research program has yet to find any indigenous organisms or native biomass. Controlled experiments are underway with genetweaked terraforming algae to test sustainability in Martian soil.

- And no news on what that pyramid thing in Prez D's will was? Or the skeleton?
- Axis Mundi
- Nope. Nothing at all. Suspicious, isn't it?
- Elijah



- It's hard to tell what Evo's actually up to on Gagarin. Evo takes extra care to secure communications and maintain secrecy—great secrecy at the base (Gagarin personnel are kept secluded from the rest of the corp's employees). If Evo has found anything, it's keeping it under its hat.
- Glitch

Universal Grammar Linguistics Institute

The Universal Grammar Linguistics Institute project is geared toward better understanding languages across species. The working premise behind the project is that all languages derive from the same language, and so there must be some underlying grammar that can be used to bring understanding between the peoples of Earth. This puts the Linguistics Institute in direct competition with similar R&D efforts led by Celedyr at NeoNET.

- You missed Project Dushamoya. This is a top-secret project that I believe to be the “fresh idea” of a smaller division or subsidiary, since there isn't much traffic about it at higher levels of the corp. The project studies beings that are very weak astrally, such as those with far too many augmentations, starved victims of HMHVV, addicts, and even cyberzombies, with the goal of furthering our understanding of the boundary between existence and oblivion.
- Baka Dabora

NEXIALISM

Perhaps as a consequence of Evo's transhumanist goals, Evo is on the forefront of nexialism, the practice of connecting and combining different disciplines. Biodrones are an example of the results of the nexialist philosophy in the sense they represent a combination of cybernetics with drone and Matrix tech. Manatech offerings, such as the AstraLine Forensic Thaumaturgy Kit, are another example of nexialist products, as they combine magic and technology.

Nexialism is really bleeding-edge, and most of its projects—nanoswarm cyberlimbs, biocomputers, manalink networking,

resomancy, chakraware, manatech augmentations, to name just a few—are no more than rumors. But the future is always closing in on us, so don't be too quick to dismiss these rumored products.

- Whoa, back up the monkey truck. What the hell is “resomancy?”
- Netcat

EVO IN THE SHADOWS

Evo is quite active in the shadows. This is true for every AAA corp, but with Evo it's a bit different. With its heavy focus on research—a lot of it secret research—Evo is the target of a lot of shadowruns. Evo does its share of hiring runners as well, and it hires for ops that are just as morally ambiguous as anyone else's jobs. But Evo tends to be more of an equal-opportunity employer than most corps.

Evo's version of Mr. Johnson tends to be younger than those from most other corps, probably because of Evo's hiring policies. He (or she, or it) is also probably one of the EvoPeople, or has been affected by the EvoCulture at the least. Mr. Evo J. is usually quite relaxed to work with, but don't let that fool you—he's just as savvy and tricky as any other potential client.

Evo's money is as good as anyone else's, but most of the time Mr. Johnson of Evo tries to be more creative. You'll be offered augmentations, medical care, Yamatetsu NT weapons, or even CrashCart coverage as often as you will be offered cash. I know that cash is usually the better deal, but the goods and services usually retail for double or even triple what you would get in cold jing.

No matter what the offer, the bottom line is that Evo is usually willing to make a deal, even slightly more so than other corps (except maybe Horizon). They think of you as a person, and afford you your worth and dignity.

- This at least is true. Mr. Johnson apologized when he screwed me, and I think he actually meant it. So when they do backstab you, at least you know they won't twist the knife.
- Mika

Megawatch Buzz

//Keyword: Evo
//Date: 01/01/2072 - Current

Adaptic Cybersuite Unveiled at Trade Show

HANNOVER, GERMANY—After months of speculation and rumor, MetaErgonomics and Evo unveiled their Adaptic Cybersuite at the Hannover Enhancement Technologies Trade Show today. The first commercial modular multi-limb cybersuite remains in beta-stage testing, but judging by the showroom demonstrations in Hannover, Adaptic is on track for release later this year. MetaErgonomics also unveiled the first production models of its Achilles and Castor high-competition cyberlimbs.

Evo Announces Expansion of Gagarin Base

MOSCOW, RUSSIA—Evo Space's planned expansion of its Gagarin Base is projected to be completed within twelve months, corporation spokesperson Maria Korchova

announced today. Once this expansion is completed, the Mars base will accommodate a standing population of 250. The surprising sustainability of Evo Space's biosphere projects has facilitated this acceleration of the initial project schedule, Korchova said. Evo Space expects to continue expanding the base at a similar rate in subsequent years, Korchova added.

VITAS Breakthrough, EVO/GAP

CALCUTTA, INDIA—Evo's Genome Advancement Project (GAP) has finally singled out the gene sequences linked to VITAS, GAP head Prof. Mahindra Dajiri announced during an interview with ScienceNow today. Though related treatments are still very much theoretical, it is likely that genetherapies may well eradicate the threat of VITAS within the decade, Dajiri said. Such genetherapies represent a huge boon for vulnerable populations in impoverished areas and developing nations, Dajiri added.





Sunshine noticed his cube partners were in some deep conference when he got to work. As he made his way through the maze of desks and cubes—designed, he'd been told, to maximize metahuman contact and creative synergy—Shirley saw him and waved.

"Good morning, Sam!" she said, perky as always—all of Shirley was perky. "Where're you going to spend First Friday?" His other two cube-mates looked up, curious.

"Um," Sunshine stalled. He searched his memory. First Friday? What the hell? Did he miss some important new employee memo?

"Oh, he's new, Shirley," said Rachel. "It's his first," she smiled at him, flashing dimples, and Sunshine couldn't help but smile back. Working at Horizon had thrown him completely off stride. Hell, his face muscles hurt from smiling so damn much.

"That's right," Johan said. "First Friday. Our department takes a half day for community outreach. It's on top of our twenty percent personal time, of course. Half of us go out for the morning, half in the afternoon. Personally, I try for the afternoon, then if you want, you can stay later and finish up. Or grab some beers with your team," the blond man shrugged. "I'm going for the building crews. Working on putting up homes for the refugees in Pomona."

"I volunteer at the youth shelters," Shirley said. "I spend time reading to the little ones. I love kids," she said, sending a brilliant smile toward Sunshine.

"Here," Rachel offered, sending Sunshine an AR link. "A list of volunteer opportunities. Just pick one you like. Of course, it's totally voluntary. You don't *have* to participate." The look she gave him said that if he didn't, he'd be given the same status as a bad skin rash in her opinion.

And he'd already figured out that in Horizon, everyone's opinion counted.
Even his own.

All three looked at him expectantly. Sunshine flipped open the AR screen, scrolled through the list of volunteer work, and picked one at random. *Sports Liaison*. Well, he liked sports. He clicked on the tag that automatically filled in the form and received a confirmation for an afternoon spot.

His cube-mates were still waiting. "Sports Liaison," he offered. Shirley beamed at him.

"That's *wonderful*," she said. "Coach Sam. The kids in the refugee camps really dig soccer. And you look *very* athletic," she all but purred. Sunshine felt his expression freeze. An afternoon coaching a soccer team? Were they *kidding*?

"Ah, yeah," he muttered, finally. Sunshine had done a tour through war-torn Bogotá, once spent two days hiding from cartel assassins in a roadside shrine in Aztlan. He'd even once gotten stuck in the middle of the Redmond Barrens, about to be the main dish for a wendigo cult.

He'd never felt more unbalanced.

Strangely enough, he knew that when he left, when he broke cover and reported his findings, he'd actually miss the place. The people. The bizarrely optimistic viewpoint. And the feeling that, for once, he was actually making a difference.

RISING STAR

Posted by: Sunshine

• Some of you may have noticed I've been off the network for a while. I'd approached my editor with the idea of doing an in-depth look at Horizon over two years ago. He was reluctant, but I finally convinced him to let me do a story on the Horizon-run prison systems. Their rehabilitation rates were just too good to be true.

Well, after talking to my contacts, I had a lot of information—and all of it was positive. Seriously, people, couldn't anyone find *anything* bad to say about the corp? A couple of months of this and I was feeling as paranoid as Dr. Spin. Finally, I decided to just go straight to the source.

One new face and a spotless fake ID later, I was a bonafide Horizon employee, with a shiny new Horizon Internal Persona with a 0 rating, a sparkly Horizon citizen SIN, and a job as a research support specialist for Hisato-Turner News' LA branch.

I've written out the basics, the public info, first. If you want to skip to the hidden stuff at the end, feel free.

• Sunshine

Corporate Profile



Corporate Slogan: "We Know What You Think"

Corporate Court Ranking (2071): #10

Corporate Status: AAA, private corporation

World Headquarters: Los Angeles, PCC

President & CEO: Gary Cline

Major Shareholders: Undisclosed

Major Divisions: Horizon Africa, Horizon Americas, Horizon Asia, Horizon Europe, Horizon Southeast Asia

Notable Subsidiaries: Bathotech (Energy), Bio-Fine (Biotech), Cantor-Kurosawa (Media Production), Charisma Associates (Marketing/PR), Columbia Industries (Simsense), Common Denominator (Fashion/Consumer Electronics), Cunard Entertainment (Alternative Entertainment), Horizon Transglobal (Space), KaleidoScape (Software/Sim), Olympus Designs (Architecture/Design), Pathfinder Multimedia (Media/Entertainment), Singularity (Matrix), The Horizon Project (Social Works), Wanderlust (Tourism), Synergistic (ARE Software)

Dominant Business Language: English

Secondary Business Languages: All

In 2061, in the wake of the comet, a group of concerned politicians and industry leaders came together to address the complete chaos that was LA. Faced with riots and natural disasters, these men and women made a proactive deal with the Pueblo Corporate Council to come in and restore peace and stability. Out of this nebulous beginning was born the Horizon Project, a think tank dedicated to improving the lives of Los Angelinos. Like a many-branched tree, the project sprouted new ideas, flowered, and bore fruit. One such branch developed to challenge the entertainment industry status quo, which the think-tank members saw as partially responsible for the huge divide between the haves and the have-nots. (Surprised to discover the very roots of Horizon are based in notions of social responsibility? I was.) The more socially conscious leaders of the entertainment industry—not just studio execs, but simstars, directors, writers, and other artists—pooled resources and began to slowly buy up smaller, promising companies that could challenge the behemoths such as Amalgamated Studios.

The core-group members' extensive contacts enabled them to quickly find like-minded supporters. They marketed the new corp as a social experiment, attracting those with both nuyen and a sense of social responsibility—people who wanted to invest in something *and* feel good. Backing from these supporters facilitated the formation of the Horizon Group in 2062, which was ostensibly a shell corp designed to hold Horizon's broad variety of companies and projects. Most of these were focused on intellectual rights and non-tangible assets such as advertising, media, entertainment, information accumulation, software development, and Matrix systems, but my digging revealed that Horizon had already entered into pharmaceutical development, biomedical research, urban development, and—a bit frighteningly—even politics.

Horizon quickly began investing in other companies through investment capital and directly purchasing corps. Targets included companies such as Columbia Industries (educational simsense), Bio-Fine (biotech), Bathotech (geothermal energy), and Cunard Entertainment (entertainment). Horizon focused on companies that were revolutionizing their niches with new technology, new ideas, or novel marketing. Horizon's ability to predict marketing trends was still emerging, but even at that point the corp was carving out a niche for itself by redefining the way corporations targeted consumers. Hell, if you ask me, it was Horizon's ability to predict and create consumer trends that put it into the ranks of the big boys. More than one AA corp hired Horizon for its consumer trend and info services. A few strategic decisions later, and the Horizon Group had positioned itself to transition LA to the new wireless grid.

Then Crash 2.0 hit.

While all the other big corps out there were scrambling to restore their devastated computer systems, secure their properties, and deal with the deaths of numerous corporate employees, Horizon sailed through as though the Crash never happened. With so much of its business devoted to computer- and Matrix-based markets, the Crash should have wiped Horizon out. Instead the Horizon Group was gobbling up smaller corps, stocks, properties, employees left without employers, virtual assets, patents, and intellectual rights—in many cases, for a fraction of their real value.





• And in many cases, for nothing. Numerous smaller companies were ripped apart by the crash. Executives all dead, computer records wiped out, entire offices left without any leadership. Crash 2.0 took down Cross, so just imagine what it did to the little companies. I know for a fact more than one smaller company discovered that majority shares of its stock and its investment capital loans were held by the Horizon Group. Cantor-Kurosawa, Digitalix, Massive Dynamics—all were consumed by the Horizon Group.

• Mr. Bonds

• And no one argued? I find that hard to believe.

• Plan 9

• Those corps that tried found themselves unable to sustain themselves. Eventually they faded away, fell prey to other corps, or ended up with Horizon anyway.

• Mr. Bonds

In 2065, the corp petitioned the Corporate Court for recognition. But instead of applying for the coveted AA status everyone assumed, the corporate delegation—headed by Gary Cline—went into a closed-door session and emerged with AAA status and a seat on the Court itself.

How did this happen? No one knows for sure. There's dozens of theories. My two favorites are below, and the rest can be found on Snopes's site.

According to theory number one, Horizon had bought up so many corps and so many virtual properties that when the corp laid out its holdings to the Court, it was clearly evident they were more than just a media corp. With subdivisions and projects across the globe producing everything from agricultural goods to high-end consumer electronics, Horizon had the depth and breadth of a megacorp. And furthermore, Horizon obviously knew how to turn huge profits from its media advertising and content businesses, public relations work, information brokerage, and other intangible assets.

According to theory number two, Horizon had strategically positioned itself so well—had its fingers in so many pies, so to speak—that the Corporate Court could not ignore Horizon's ability to positively influence both public and private opinion in ways that would tremendously benefit the corporate world. Remember, the global economy was teetering on the brink of collapse at this time and the corporate world had taken a huge beating. A corporation that could skillfully manipulate public opinion and restore consumer confidence was exactly what the corporate world needed. *Especially* a corporation that was willing to work for the public good—and small enough to be easily controlled by the other megas (or so they thought).

• I'm gonna call bullshit on this one. In four years, a bunch of sim-stars and charity fund-raisers manage to snag a seat on the Corporate Court? Bullshit. What really happened?

• Butch

• Well, there's another theory that Horizon—during its unrivaled consumption of virtual properties—came across something (a database, a virtual company, something) that turned out to be a jackpot of blackmail material. Horizon's huge mediaholdings placed it in a unique position to make this material public, so the Corporate

Court granted Horizon AAA status and in return Horizon buried the incriminating evidence.

• Snopes

• Here's a better question. How was it that Horizon managed to have the LA grid up and running within weeks of Crash 2.0? Why were Horizon's own internal systems all offline at the time and left undamaged? What did Horizon know that no one else did? And why—if Horizon's execs are such do-gooders—didn't they warn anyone else of the impending disaster or try to stop it? You know how many people died? Where's that renowned Horizon social conscience?

• Dr. Spin

• Horizon had planned its WMI-protocol upgrades more than a year in advance and had planned for its systems to be down for 48 hours during the upgrades. You mean you think they'd known about the coming Crash for more than a year? Dr. Spin, you're not normally in the conspiracy-theory camp.

• Glitch

• Do you really believe it was just a coincidence?

• Dr. Spin

CORPORATE ORGANIZATION

Doc Hollywood did a nice job of explaining Horizon's corporate structure in the LA download, so I'll just touch on a few key things here to point out the unique aspects of Horizon's organizational structure.

One unique aspect is the way Horizon's execs run their organization. Instead of employing the traditional hierarchy found in many other corps, Horizon is run like a cross between a think tank and a meritocracy. Employees are rewarded for their skills, personal work ethic, and positive effect on both the corporation and fellow employees. Those at the top of the corp have earned their positions through merit and their creative drive, as well as their high Horizon Internal Persona scores.

Horizon is a big fan of the concept of working groups and assigns employees to projects based on their skills and experience (and Horizon Internal Persona profiles—more on that later) rather than tenure. And if you need to communicate with someone in another subdivision or project, forget the red tape. Just give them a call. As I was told, "Creativity can't breathe in a vacuum." Make of it what you will.

• Basic Neo-Anarchist principles at work. Gotta love 'em.

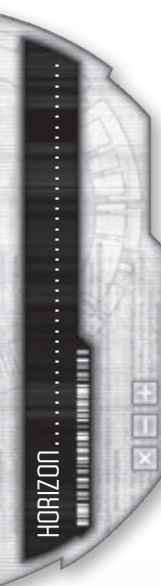
• Aufheben

• Or karma capitalism—basically an Indian approach to business designed to improve the world.

• Goat Foot

• The Indian approach isn't that far off, Goat Foot. Much of Horizon's operating philosophy—such as its strategy of "beating" competitors by building better products rather than attacking the competition—embodies principles of karma capitalism. Gandhigiri is probably the closest thing to a corporate religion that I saw at Horizon—Cline and a bunch of the original founders all follow Gandhigiri.

• Sunshine



HORIZON INTERNAL PERSONA

A First-Hand Experience

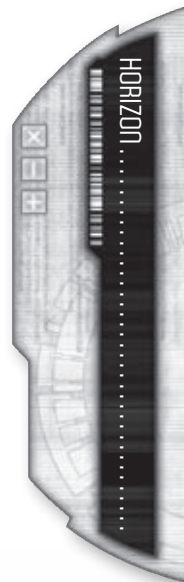
Horizon's Internal Persona system is probably the most bizarre thing about working for the corp. It functions rather like the P2.0 system popular in North Am sprawls but with slightly different metrics.

The strangest, by far, was the fact that any other Horizon employee could affect my Internal Persona rating. I found myself striving to be a better person while around other Horizon employees, both on and off the clock (and since I lived in a Horizon apartment complex—no fancy walled off housing enclaves for *this* corp—that meant basically *all the time*). It was incredibly stressful and at the same time incredibly, well, cool. No dealing with snappish editors who berate their staffs. No asshole manager who is only in his position because his daddy's a bigwig. My boss gave me feedback, generally instantly, and was lavish with the praise when I deserved it (which made me try to recall the last time my real editor said something nice to me). My cubicle partner brought coffee in the mornings. I found myself looking for opportunities to help other employees—even just holding the elevator or opening a door. Hell, just smiling as I walked through the research floor got my Internal Persona a bump; a couple of folks noticed and gave me a positive feedback for “brightening the office.” At first, it felt like I was scheming for ways to increase my rating. After a few weeks, though, I actually got into the swing of things and began to genuinely enjoy those little moments.

After leaving Horizon, I can say that I'll both miss it and that I'm relieved. Being nice is hard. Being nice 24/7 is enough to make any sane person snap. I can understand why Horizon has one of the highest turnover rates of all the megas. I can also say that I wish, in a weird and twisted way, that KSFA would install the same system. I'd get some perverse pleasure in dinging the score of the copy editor who's *always* late to meetings, and my editor might *finally* understand that calling us all “fucking idiots” at staff meetings would net him a 0 score. Oh, well.

For those of you in the shadows, one key thing I noticed about the Internal Persona system was how interconnected it made everyone. During my time at the corp, I actively tried to put my nose in places it didn't belong. I'd filched a high-level security pass (don't ask) but when I tried to get into restricted areas, my fellow employees—and not just security guards, but secretaries, maintenance crews, labor-grunts—actually looked me in the face and met my gaze instead of just glancing at the pass. They remembered my name and face at later encounters, and that sort of thing. I can honestly say Horizon is hands down the most difficult place to infiltrate. (As a note, I gave up the idea of sneaking into restricted areas and instead worked on bumping up my Internal Persona score and getting assigned to a high-level research team to gain access to Horizon's internal systems.)

Urgent Message....



LIVING THE PRINCIPLES

In comparison to the other megas, some of which are on their third generation of citizens and employees, Horizon is shockingly young. The oldest kids born in the corp are barely out of diapers. Consequently, the culture of Horizon is fresh, new, and evolving. New employees are welcomed and many of the “old-school” employees have less than five years of employment with the corp. There are no “legacy” employees, no long-standing bureaucratic “because that's how we've always done it” excuses, no sense of entitlement among the workforce.

During my new-employee orientation, I was introduced to the “Horizon Principles.” These are designed to guide employees in making daily decisions. All proposals for new research projects or creative endeavors are required to address how the new effort reflects these principles (I kid you not). The principles are:

Social Consciousness: All new projects should reflect a commitment to conscientious environmental stewardship, improving the life of all metahumanity, and otherwise benefiting the global community.

Workplace Synergy: All new projects should support employees by contributing to a collaborative, creative, supportive, positive workplace that emphasizes interpersonal communication and relationships.

Philanthropic Profitability: All new projects should derive profits from business practices that help create a cycle of positive change by supporting environmental stewardship and social consciousness while fostering philanthropy.

YOUR OPINION COUNTS

Horizon's commitment to these principles and its community involvement has earned it the public image of the “good mega-corp.” Even in the worst sprawls, Horizon enjoys a positive public image thanks to its strong community outreach programs.

- The shadowrunners I know have a generally positive view of Horizon. The corp doesn't seem to sanction some of the dirty tactics other corps do, like assassinations and involuntary extractions. Horizon pays well and has a rep for being honest and forthcoming, sharing intel, and responding to threats with non-lethal force on its own grounds. Personally, I'll work with Horizon anytime.
- Hard Exit
- I've never heard of Horizon security hackers using anything worse than Blackout. Apparently their Matrix branches have a “do no evil” philosophy and refuse to use lethal measures. However, Horizon employs more than its fair share of virtuakinetics to patrol its systems. The last time I did a hit on a Horizon database, I got zapped by something—one of those sprites?—that fried all my electronics. Had to replace my whole commlink. I was fine, but my hardware was burned.
- Glitch
- Tam Reyes is a big believer in using sprites to protect his systems. You're lucky all it did was fry your commlink. Sometimes they've been known to move into a hacker's system and tag everything the



hacker does. Nothing like seeing all your data, your runs, and your contact list posted on some community forum. Talk about tanking your rep.

- Netcat
- I'm finding that more and more runners are hesitant or even outright opposed to running against Horizon. Not because they're scared or intimidated, but simply because of the potential damage to their reputations. I mean, when you hit a place for a datasteal and discover later you just stole software that was being designed to help autistic kids communicate better—just so another corp could profit by releasing a limited, more expensive version—you feel like a turd. And Horizon has the ability to tell a lot of people about just what a turd you are.
- Aufheben
- All this “do-no-harm” crap just makes me more suspicious. C'mon, folks, this is a megacorp. No AAA gets that high without having buried its share of bodies somewhere.
- Sticks
- Agreed. Horizon's shit simply can't smell that good.
- Slamm-0!

GLOBAL MARKETS

Horizon's focus on intangible and virtual assets—media content, software, advertisements, Matrix-based productivity systems, passive advertising campaigns, downloadable 'softs, real-time integrated knowsofts, and other Matrix-based products—give the corp a reach unencumbered by physical boundaries and political borders. As these assets enable Horizon to reach almost anywhere across the globe without being physically present, some observers have taken to calling Horizon the “omnipresent corp.”

Equally important, this focus on intangible and virtual assets helps Horizon maintain profits, as these assets have almost no physical overhead or related costs beyond their initial development costs.

- This is very true. And furthermore, many Horizon products, such as its popular consumer commlinks, are simply platforms for the firm's more profitable intangible products: media, music, 'softs, software platforms.
- Mr. Bonds

Horizon's diversity is another key to the corp's global success. While most people think of Horizon as “that ad corp” or “The Media Machine,” Horizon's operations are spread over a diverse range of products. Horizon's main bread-and-butter operations provide a stable foundation, while its subdivisions, such as Singularity, perform cutting-edge research and put out the state-of-the-art goods. For example, Singularity made huge waves with the release of its “living” knowsofts. By exploiting Horizon's Matrix-based operations, these knowsofts are continually updated with real-time information from constantly evolving databases that use input from users to remain up-to-date with the latest cultural fads and information. Rival corps are still struggling to mimic these systems. Similar synergies make Horizon a leader the fields of memetic evolution and viral advertising.

Singularity is also at the forefront of software development. The firm's staff of technomancers, supplemented by the cream of the crop from the CalTech and UCLA programming departments, has created numerous software applications that are nearly impossible to reverse-engineer (or crack, for those of you with such inclinations).

Horizon's five regional divisions function as a framework that links together the megacorp's subdivisions and subsidiaries. These regional divisions act as facilitators and identify regional market needs and opportunities, which are met by subsidiaries—such as Singularity—or by specialized workgroups formed within Horizon. Hence, Horizon subsidiary Charisma Associates, based in Portland, can just as easily serve a client based in Mumbai as one in nearby Seattle.

Additionally, the coordination provided by Horizon's regional divisions eliminates competition between subdivisions and fosters a strong global recognition of the Horizon brand, which in turn boosts the profitability of both the megacorp and its subsidiaries.

- The fact that Horizon stamps its brand on everything it touches has ramifications beyond marketing. All those little extraterritorial perks that come with being an AAA really do add up.
- Mr. Bonds

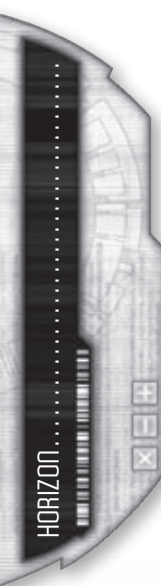
The regional divisions are each headed by a vice-president and his or her cadre of *fellows* (the creative and strategic leaders who form the highest level of each working group). Each vice-president holds a seat on the board of directors. Major subdivisions are also headed by a vice president (also on the board) and a cadre of fellows. Unlike other corporations, Horizon fully integrates its subdivisions. Subdivision employees are full Horizon citizens, subdivision facilities are clearly marked as Horizon property (important for extraterritoriality), and every subdivision's central functions (logistics, Matrix support, and the like) are coordinated by Horizon internal processes. For example, Singularity provides all of Horizon's Matrix services—if you've bought a Horizon product online, you've used a Singularity-designed and administered online-shopping tool. Subdivisions are more closely integrated than in any other corporation I've ever seen. Part of this is the working group philosophy and the “equal-communication” philosophy, both heavily facilitated by the Internal Persona system.

- Horizon doesn't appear to hide its subdivision affiliations, like some other corps do. Then again, there are few places where Horizon's been banned from doing business. Guess Horizon just hasn't been around long enough to step on many toes.
- Kay St. Irregular

- This integration probably only works to the extent it does because Horizon is the smallest (asset-wise) of all the megas. Going by on-the-books physical assets, they're barely bigger than some of the AAs, such as Monobe.
- Mr. Bonds

Horizon Americas

LA-based Horizon Americas is the largest Horizon subdivision. Its interests are widespread and diverse, from several agricorps



in the Central CalFree valleys to wireless-development operations in Amazonia. The subdivision vice president is Mira Castillo, an elven woman from LA. She's rumored to have been one of the original founders of Horizon and still an active member of the Horizon Project.

Horizon Americas' core businesses are AR and infrastructure Matrix technology, specifically applications for agri- and aquaculture corps and pharmaceuticals—especially consumer-based pharmaceuticals and medical treatments. Horizon Americas also makes a hefty profit off CalHots and moodies, which are legal in several of its key markets.

- Horizon Americas is expanding aggressively into Amazonia, focusing on a “green” wireless infrastructure for the country. The coastal urban centers have all been upgraded, and now the subdivision's proceeding into the rainforests and hinterland.

- Marcos

- Maybe this is a stupid question, but why does the rainforest need wireless Matrix service?

- Kia

- Well, for starters the capital is in the middle of the Amazon basin.

- Glasswalker

- There's other practical reasons too. Comms across the northern and western borders have always been patchy and complicated—which makes smugglers, Ghost Cartels, and Azzie infiltrators very happy. But with tensions spiraling around Bogotá, Amazonia it tightening its act.

- Picador

- I could delve even deeper into the hidden reasons, but that stuff probably belongs in a different forum.

- Glasswalker

In addition, Horizon Americas has recently completed negotiations to take over the management of Denver's wireless infrastructure. Horizon has been assisting the Pueblo Corporate Council's local infrastructure operations for several years now, and the corp's successful negotiations with the CAS, UCAS, and Sioux mean that the city will be getting an AR facelift.

- Mira's got a thing for the greats—or they, for her. She's a frequent visitor to Manaus, her skill in negotiating with Ghostwalker was central to earning the plump Denver contract, and she's on a first-name basis with Hestaby.

- Frosty

- Um, Frosty? Does Hestaby have a last name?

- Snopes

- *roll eyes*

- Frosty

- What's Hestaby's interest in the corp?

- Winterhawk

- Hestaby apparently approves of Horizon Americas' agenda. She's one of those responsible for bringing the corp into the Tír, you know—no one will ever convince me that Prince Zinkan made that decision himself. Much to Lofwyr's chagrin, Saeder-Krupp was angling for several of the contracts that went to Horizon after Charisma gave Tír the facelift.

- Frosty

Horizon Asia

Horizon Asia's vice-president is Victor Ngô, an LA-born-and-raised ork of mixed Asian heritage. (Some of you may remember Victor as the star of several popular, low-budget ninja-action sims—artifacts of his wild youth.)

Officially, Horizon Asia's focus is on brand media and electronics—specifically cheap consumer electronics and household goods. Currently it faces intense competition from established local brands (Japanacorp and otherwise). Unofficially, Horizon Asia specializes in “market-data research,” a.k.a. spying. Intelligence is a huge market for the megacorp, and nowhere does it ply the trade as well or as thoroughly as in Asia. Horizon Asia “recruiting” departments have been especially active in coordinating extractions, especially of technomancers. (And while Horizon performs only “voluntary” extractions, the corp has a lot of ways to persuade someone to jump ship.)

Horizon Asia seems to do a better job than most at keeping track of the bickering warlords and Balkanized states common to the region. Using its considerable charm, Horizon has made deals with some of the more stable states, bringing in much-needed economic stimulus with its factories and production facilities. Although Horizon pays incredibly low wages in Asia just like any other corp, it has distinguished itself and earned excellent public relations by paying real attention to working conditions in its factories (these facilities aren't state-of-the-art, but they are much, much safer than those of its competitors). Additionally, Horizon employs large metahuman workforces, rather than relying on automated factories run by a few imported engineers, as is common in the region. Finally, Horizon provides medcare to its Asian workers and maintains company stores where workers can purchase goods at reduced prices.

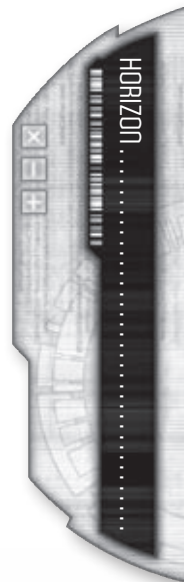
- Being paid almost nothing is still better than nothing, so it's no wonder the locals worship the ground Horizon walks on. Of course, Horizon puts a great media spin on its efforts to bring “economic stability” to these peasants.

- Dr. Spin

- On the surface, it would appear that an automated facility would be more cost-effective than hiring, training, and maintaining a metahuman workforce. However, the cost savings come in the long run, since the initial start-up costs for an automated factory are significant. Many of these areas are plagued by volatile political conditions, and when violence breaks out (as it does every few months), megacorp holdings—such as conspicuous automated factories—are usually among the first targets.

- Mr. Bonds

- Horizon makes more money from intel in Asia than you might imagine. Using its own internal assets, as well as a number of



company men, Horizon has compromised many corporate and political systems in the area. Of course, the megacorp can make a pretty penny by selling info to the various warlords and city-states that are engaged in constant struggles. And Horizon also profits immensely by knowing what its competition is up to in the area. New research of all sorts is analyzed by Horizon's Internal Intelligence department (or as runners call it, "the Eyes"). As you'd expect, Horizon has dedicated a lot of resources to uncovering research labs that perform illicit and unethical research on technomancers, sentient critters, and other unfortunates of late. They're also into using "social engineering" to oust uncooperative regimes and public officials.

- Fianchetto

- Horizon is not using the intel exclusively for profit, though. It appears the megacorp is acting on it to help defuse conflicts before they turn into open war, through operations performed by its Dawkins Group, the Eyes, and independent runners. The areas where Horizon has invested most heavily are significantly less volatile than they were even two years ago. I'd like to say there's an ulterior motive, but I've yet to find it. Except perhaps that peace is more profitable?

- Kia

- Another way they're "revolutionizing" an industry. Only this time the industry is nation-building. I cover it further down.

- Sunshine

- Hey, have you seen Horizon's latest ad setup in Asia? The corp's created chopsticks made of artificial wood, set up so that ads scroll down the length while being held. They hand these things out for free in rural areas—Mongolia, for example—where people can't afford commlinks, and people watch the ads as they eat.

- Stone

- Want something weird? I was tracking down a specific item for a client, and the trail led me into Manchuria, outside the city of Quqihar. I came across a little village in the middle of nowhere. It certainly wasn't on my mapsoft (not that mapsofts for Manchuria are worth a damn). Creepiest thing. Population was maybe five hundred people, all wearing these blank zombie expressions. They were moving around normally otherwise—talking, moving their arms, not bumping into each other or anything. But you could tell they didn't see what was in front of them. Two men walked down a wide, empty street and carefully stepped as if avoiding an object. Others went through the motions of opening and closing doors for buildings even though they were standing in the open on a flat square of concrete. Another woman walked as if she were carrying something heavy, then went through the motions of setting it down and stretching. It was like these folks were living in a totally different dimension. A group of white-coated men were moving around, watching everything and taking notes. I got the frag out of there. A couple of weeks later, I saw one of those scientists in a Horizon enclave in Hong Kong.

- Ma'fan

Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe is overseen by Syriah Sklenka, a media-savvy elf with a PhD in statistical analysis. Born and raised in

the CAS, she was recruited by Horizon back in '63 and was a founding member of Charisma Associates. Sklenka's since been involved in almost every branch of Horizon, and rumors are that she's even spent some time with the Dawkins Group. Two years ago she joined Horizon Europe, and within six months had been promoted to vice president. Since then, Horizon revenues have doubled in most European market segments.

Sklenka is focusing heavily on expanding Horizon's share of the European AR market, snagging contracts for Singularity and Synergistic. Other corps just can't compete with Horizon's consumer-driven marketing or its superior product (Horizon really does produce amazing AR environments—part of its philosophy of gaining customers by producing *better*, rather than by destroying competitors). Recently, Horizon Europe has also announced that it will begin producing tailored Matrix environments for its corporate clients. It's already starting up a new workgroup dedicated to large-scale hardware and systems. So far the corp has focused primarily on small corps and municipalities, but word is it will soon make a hard push to win big public contracts as well.

- Which will put Horizon Europe in direct competition with Saeder-Krupp and NeoNET. Meaning more work for us.

- Stone

- Could be why Horizon's been courting the Greats in NorthAm.

- Frosty

- It's a pretty closely held secret that Ms. Sklenka is a social adept, a high-level initiate. I chanced to meet her once, and if she hadn't chosen to drop her masking, I wouldn't have ever known. Needless to say, I'd suggest caution when dealing with her or any of her fellows.

- Arete

- If it's so secret, why'd she let you know?

- Sunshine

- Oh, she probably didn't realize Arete's always been one for kissing and telling.

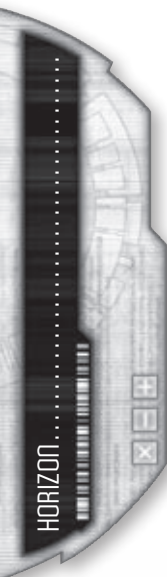
- Kat o' Nine Tales

- Seriously, Kat, that was five years ago! Haven't you heard of forgive and forget???

- Arete

Horizon Europe also has significant market interest in real estate. After the Crash, Horizon took the opportunity to purchase a lot of European real estate from smaller corps going out of business. Horizon's been busily rehabbing many of those properties, creating new fashionable districts in cities. Lured by intense marketing, shops, smaller corporations, and prospective homeowners have been buying into these new "urban life centers" like crazy.

Horizon Europe is also expanding quickly into the local information-gathering market through the Horizon Internal Intelligence division. Primarily catering to governments and smaller corporate entities, Horizon Internal Intelligence holds lucrative contracts in the minefield that is European politics.





INCOMING FEED.....



But by far the most recognizable Horizon Europe business is the sale and marketing of Matrix and consumer goods (surprise, surprise), everything from personal electronics to AREs, clothing, foodstuffs, and home furnishings. If you want to buy it, Horizon offers it for sale. The corp's multifaceted Common Denominator brand is hugely popular. And it isn't the quality of Horizon-produced goods that ensure their market share—it's the marketing. Horizon's official corporate motto may be, "We Know What You Think," but Horizon Europe has refined this motto to "We know what you want, and we've got it on sale!" With its ability to track and predict consumer trends on both global and individual scales, Horizon Europe has come to dominate the consumer-goods market in Europe.

- Horizon Europe has a leg up. They've been responsible for a couple of voluntary extractions from Shiawase's MIFD—disgruntled execs displeased with Yamana's direction, I believe.
- Stone

Horizon Europe's biggest competitor, Aztechnology, is becoming increasingly aggressive in its efforts to regain its primary position in that market. Competition has been simmering between these two megacorps, and I think it's going to just keep getting hotter.

- No kidding. There are so many jobs available right now that any runner with a decent rep is practically tripping over the Mr. Js.

Industrial sabotage on manufacturing plants, scooping ad campaigns before they launch, extracting key personnel, inserting viral software on key systems—most of the jobs are coming from either Horizon or the Big A, and a couple of runner teams I know have started joking that they feel like ping-pong balls.

- Fianchetto
- What bothers me about this situation is how very public some of the failures have been. It seems like every couple of weeks the police get an "anonymous tip" that foils some Aztechnology plot, and the entire thing is caught by the media. Like that one where the runners were inserting toxins into a soy-manufacturing plant's vats. Cops tracked the run back to Aztechnology and the media hit the Azzies hard. The Big A had to throw up some great smoke screens to limit the damage to its reputation. I knew one of the runners, and I know he'd never have worked for the Big A, nor would he have agreed to poison a bunch of kids' soy-nuggets. Smells like a setup to me. That's the problem with having the two best public-relations corps in the world at each other's throats—how can you separate the truth from the fiction?
- Picador

- I agree on the setup theory. The poisoned soy was pulled before it was processed, the runners were apprehended, the media pegged the Big A. And within weeks Horizon snagged several big quality-control contracts for smaller A & AA manufacturing corps and landed a contract with the Netherlands to administer the country's

food- and drug-quality assurance programs. That run probably netted Horizon a cool billion in revenues just for this year.

- Dr. Spin
- A major pharmaceuticals developer and foodstuffs producer will be policing the food and drugs sold in Netherlands? Oh, the irony.
- Clockwork

Horizon Southeast Asia

Horizon Southeast Asia is based in Hong Kong, where Australian-born Lachlan Jai runs the subdivision like a media tycoon. In the past few years, Horizon has managed to acquire five of the six major media outlets in Hong Kong (it scooped up the last during the technomancer riots and forcibly turned the trid station toward a more neutral view of the issue), two major movie studios, and Virtual World Disney's Lantau Island complex. In addition, they control a number of public relations and media firms in the area, under the umbrella of Charisma Associates. Horizon Southeast Asia holds a seat on the Hong Kong Executive Council, through Mei Sterling, the self-help guru. Southeast Asia is also a huge market for Singularity software, for Horizon real-estate development, and for the megacorp's pharmaceutical products.

- Horizon's rep took a major hit in Hong Kong when it came out in support of AIs and technomancers. Since then, Jai and his fellows have been fighting to regain consumer confidence. Distancing itself from both AIs and technomancers would seem to be the easiest way to do that, but Horizon Southeast Asia has been even more pro-AI/techno lately. The corp is starting to make some headway in Hong Kong, but it's been an uphill battle in the outlying areas, islands, and more rural countries. Profits are suffering, but Jai seems reluctant to change course.
- Mr. Bonds
- Idealism must eventually bow to reality. Having the Horizon brand stamped on everything is causing Horizon Southeast Asia's profits to slip as its rep erodes. Horizon's commitment to its idealism is at a crossroads, and a lot depends on where public opinion on AIs and VKs goes from here.
- Kia
- Jai has requested some flexibility in this area. I happen to know the consensus is to stand firm on the Horizon ideology. Rumors are that Jai may be jumping ship if his superiors don't let him do what he wants. If so, he'd be the first Horizon vice president to do so. No doubt a bunch of corps would pay his weight in gold to have a peek inside Horizon.
- Sunshine

Horizon has a growing presence in Australia. Horizon production facilities in the area have been responsible for some of the cutting-edge manatech the corp has produced, and Wanderlust is exploring the tourism opportunities down under.

- Supposedly a chap by the name of Aaden Bryant is heading a corp project on the Great Barrier Reef. Bryant is one of Jai's fellows, and his pet project has something to do with the merrow colony here.
- Stone

- Bryant's producing some interesting results. Most of his work has focused on aquatic environmental cleanup efforts. Horizon recognizes the merrow as sentient and is even said to employ a significant number of them, although I have no idea why a merrow would want to work for a corp. Bryant's also the lead runner-up for vice president if Jai ends up demoted—or extracted (both Evo and NeoNET have shown an interest in him).
- The Smiling Bandit

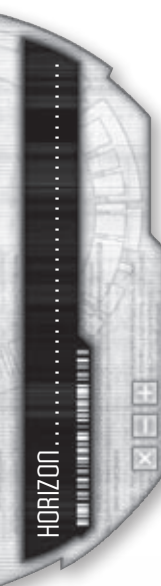
Horizon Africa

Nairobi-based Horizon Africa is led by vice president Ben Leon. The subdivision has far-reaching interests in Africa, from pharmaceutical trials in Lagos to small research groups exploring the Awakened wilderness.

Horizon has brought itself enormous goodwill with its charity work in the slums of various cities, especially through its immunization programs and clean-water initiative. The megacorp is also a major provider of educational and communications material to many of the poverty-stricken areas of Africa. The megacorp has set up extensive virtual-school networks, providing commlinks and proprietary educational sims to kids in the slums across the continent. The campaign has been a huge public-relations success, inspiring numerous celebrity endorsements and human-interest trids.

- I've heard it said that most of Horizon's African investments are really just marketing campaigns designed to open up more lucrative markets for the megacorp. I know the educational program has netted Horizon a lot of contracts to revamp educational systems in a lot of nations. UCAS, CAS, Egypt, and Australia are just some of the big ones.
- Dr. Spin
- I dunno. Public education sucks, mostly, but at least it sucks independently. One corp piping their crap into every kid's mind in the UCAS gives me the shudders. Top it off with Horizon's expertise at manipulating opinions and creating consumers, and you've got entire generations of kids who'll be indoctrinated in Horizon-ese from the time they can talk. Why isn't anyone else freaking out?
- Plan 9
- I've reviewed many of their educational sims and lecture series. I think they've done a good job of presenting an impartial review of history—sometimes a bit too politically correct, but there you go. Sure, the materials are packed with marketing crap, but no more than any other corp does in its own educational sims.
- Snopes
- And the fact that Horizon is rumored to be experimenting with behavior modification and mental conditioning and is the recognized leader at shaping individual and group opinions and dynamics doesn't make this all seem ominous?
- Plan 9

Horizon has also reached out to the Zulu in Azania. Leon's pet project is netting the contract to bring the isolationist tribes into the 21st century.



- Apparently, he's promised to "put the Zulus on the map" and to make them a golden country. He's counting heavily on the public-relations strengths of Charisma Associates, but I hear there's some in Azania who are less than thrilled to have the Tir Tairngire-based company operating in their backyard.

- Black Mamba

- Can you say "Rain Queen"?

- Kane

- Word is that Horizon is in contact with the Kobikela and is now the first megacorp to gain entry into Kinshasa-Brazzaville. They're in some sort of negotiations with the confederation, but I haven't heard any details. Any ideas? Black Mamba?

- Elijah

- I haven't heard anything.

- Black Mamba

MAJOR SUBSIDIARIES

Horizon's subsidiaries and subdivisions aren't technically separate corps in their own right but are usually wholly owned branches of Horizon proper. Therefore, their facilities qualify for extraterritoriality, their employees are Horizon citizens, and their central culture reflects the Horizon principles.

Singularity (Vice President: Tam Reyes)

Singularity, Horizon's Matrix subsidiary, is invested in everything from educational software and virtual schools to bleeding-edge programming. Singularity runs almost all of Horizon's online business applications and subcontracts numerous other corps to provide Matrix design, online business management, secure data storage, and data-harvesting—making Singularity Horizon's most diversified asset.

Singularity's "living" knowsofts and linguasofts dominate the market, and rumors continue that Singularity will be premiering an upgraded line of "living" activesofts in the near future. The Singularity-designed Automated Crime Prevention System was premiered in downtown LA, and after seeing how that system works, corps and cities are standing in line to get the system installed in their area. (More great news for Horizon, less good for criminals like us.)

- Singularity is also responsible for Horizon's successful behavior-modification programs. Under private and government/corporate contracts, Singularity operates centers to treat addictions, mental disorders, and even rehabilitate criminals. Many of Horizon's "Re-educational Centers," a.k.a. prisons, utilize programmable simsense biofeedback in conjunction with counseling, vocational training, and medical regimens. Lone Star has even begun subcontracting their "rehabilitation" efforts to Horizon-run programs.

On the dark side of all this are rumors of experimentation in non-consensual, illegal programmable simsense biofeedback that goes far beyond the normal levels of subliminal conditioning. Most folks dismiss these rumors as smoke blown by competitors, but they do make me wonder. After all, spreading memes would be so much easier with a little help.

- Plan 9

- You need a lot of equipment, time, and trained personnel to do programmable simsense biofeedback. I very much doubt that Singularity has managed to figure out how to do it by piggybacking on my Cantonese linguasoft.

- Nephrine

- But if anyone could, it'd be them. Tam Reyes is a techno, and how many technos does Singularity employ? Who knows what technos can do—or what the complex forms they create can do?

- Plan 9

- Technomancers can't control someone's thoughts or change their personality or behavior. That's still the domain of mages.

- Netcat

Pathfinder Multimedia (Vice President: Uniqua M'tobi)

All the media and entertainment assets of Horizon are consolidated under the direction of Pathfinder Multimedia. This subsidiary is the global face of Horizon and produces everything from educational documentaries to blockbuster hits. Pathfinder also (legally) produces CalHots and has revolutionized the industry with download-on-demand programs in CalFree and Pueblo. Other assets controlled by Pathfinder include various entertainment producers and venues such as Virtual World Disney, Cunard Entertainment, and a variety of vacation providers (virtual and otherwise). Pathfinder appears to have a voracious appetite for other corporate entertainment subsidiaries and has aggressively targeted several for takeovers.

- Breaking news out of LA is that Ares' Truman Distribution Network has finally been absorbed by Pathfinder Multimedia. Word behind the scenes is that Ares is furious to have lost their plum media and sim conglomerate, while Truman himself—still employed by Ares—seems unusually chipper for a man who just lost his pet corp to a rival.

- Dr. Spin

- Pathfinder's main rival is the much-diminished Amalgamated Studios. The two trade blows every chance they get.

- Kay St. Irregular

Charisma Associates (Vice President: Rael WhiteOak)

Who hasn't heard of Charisma Associates? Charisma probably hires more runners than all of the other subdivisions combined. From simple ad campaigns for the local soy-noodle stand to multi-billion-dollar presidential campaigns, Charisma promises—and delivers—whatever result its client desires. Clients range from other corporations to nations. It's been said that Charisma Associates revolutionized marketing and viral warfare (of the marketing type) and continues to forge ahead with new and innovative products.

- Charisma Associates jobs are often the "leave no trace" type, and they prefer runners who display large amounts of discretion and typically produce low body counts. These aren't the types of jobs where you sign over broadcasting rights—they're the type where success means no one ever discovers a run was made.

- Stone



- Yeah, and there are rumors that some jobs require so much discretion that runners are paid a premium to have their memories removed or altered afterward. I'm talking laés, programmable sim-sense, or memory altering magic.
- Dr. Spin

Transglobal (Vice President: Mark Stregatta)

This small subdivision doesn't seem like it would merit a mention, but the vice president—a dwarf named Mark Stregatta—is on Horizon's board. Officially, Transglobal controls Horizon's space assets, primarily its fleet of a few hundred satellites. Transglobal also controls the Mojave spaceport, which Horizon uses as a primary launch facility (despite the fact that using the Mt. Kilimanjaro mass driver would be unquestionably more cost-effective and efficient—a mystery I still have not solved). Rumors that Transglobal is working with Evo on some project continue to circulate.

- Transglobal attracts a lot of conspiracy theorists. People can't seem to believe a megacorp really just has a few hundred communications satellites and nothing else going on. I've heard all kinds of rumors, from space-alien communications to access points to other worlds via "resonance gateways." And something titled D.A.R. keeps popping up—Sunshine? DK? Any clues?
- Snopes
- I've got nothing solid. Transglobal techs maintain their own fleets but do so from Evo stations. Does Transglobal use its satellites for spying? I'd believe it. Do some Transglobal satellites house AIs? I'm not so sure on that one but hell, Evo has a few such satellites, so why not Horizon?
- Orbital DK

The Horizon Project (Chairman: Gary Cline)

The Horizon Project is what the original think tank and social-engineering experiments evolved into once the Horizon Group became a full corporation. The Project has no official vice president, known fellows, or seat on the board, but it's thought to be one of the primary guiding forces of Horizon.

The Project is known for its continued social work—holding town halls, taking opinion polls, keeping track of the pulse of the world, advising nations and other think tanks. But the Project has a not-so-public face as well.

Horizon's Internal Intelligence division reports to the Horizon Project. The megacorp's Social Science Auxiliary Corps is also a branch of the Horizon Project. The Auxiliary Corps is a cadre of social scientists—including anthropologists, linguists, geologists, sociologists, economists, and historians—who work with national militaries, United Nations peacekeeping forces, mercenary groups, and corporate militaries around the world in areas of conflict. Auxiliary Corps personnel provide support to military leaders with the goal of "reducing civilian casualties and improving social stability in areas of conflict through providing advice on local customs, traditions, history, political systems, tribal structures, and economics to clients." It's like having a mobile think tank moving with your traditional tanks. In keeping with Horizon's goal of finding innovative, socially responsible ways to increase profitability, Horizon is redefining how a corp can profit from war.

- Let's call it what it is: nation-building. The Auxiliary Corps sells its services to national governments and "rebels" alike (although generally only picking one side to support) and wage a war of words, ideas, and cultural manipulation.
- Kia

- And who decides which side they assist? Nation-building sounds a lot like playing God to me.

- Dr. Spin

- The Consensus decides.
- Sunshine

- "Politics is war without bloodshed, while war is politics with bloodshed."
- Picador

- Right. And every mega out there plays politics. At least Horizon does it in ways that minimize civilian casualties, increase infrastructure, and bring some peace to war-torn areas.

- Pistons

- The Auxiliary Corps works in the open. The Dawkins Group is much worse. The Group infiltrates movements that represent dangerous ideas and destroys or undermines them from within. Generally no one even knows the Group is there until the targeted movement implodes from leadership conflicts, loss of faith, counter-information, or decaying group dynamics. Supposedly the Group employs cutting-edge social engineering techniques and technologies, and many Group members are social adepts. Of course, trust Horizon to have a black-ops cadre of smooth talkers, right? These guys and gals infiltrate some of the most frightening organizations and regimes around. And want to hear something weird? Word is a lot of Dawkins Group agents have been working in Tenochtitlán.

- Marcos

THE CONSENSUS

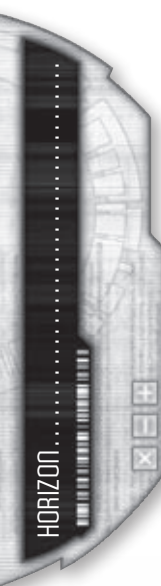
I know all of you are asking one thing (since my inbox is now full, thank you very much). What the hell is the *Consensus*? Frankly, answering that question was my primary goal in this assignment.

As a new employee, I too asked just what the Consensus is. I got the corporate line: "The Consensus is a unique Horizon system for evaluating the moral, social, and community impact of strategic decisions via a communal-input process that takes all Horizon citizen opinions and belief systems into account."

Uh-huh. So what is the real story?

Several times while employed at Horizon, I participated in "global votes" regarding a corporate decision. Some were inane: "Do you prefer lemon-yellow or mint-green for the color in the unisex restroom?" Others were unrelated to anything I could determine: "Should the Horizon Charitable Foundation endow a scholarship at the University of Vermont for underprivileged metahuman students?" Once, everyone had to watch a five-minute AR presentation and then vote on supporting a UN peace-keeping mission. Most of the employees I spoke to believed that these sort of "votes" provided the communal input reflected in the Consensus.

Regardless, all my research turned up *nothing*. I had a few theories I was going to share, but then I got this little note a few



days ago, so I thought I'd upload it and let you all make your own decision—prank, truth, or misdirection?

//upload email :: User Sunshine :: 04.02.72//

Dear Mr. Sunshine,

Thank you for your time and hard work at Horizon. Your efforts and intellectual dexterity were appreciated and your position is still open, if you ever care to return (under any of your aliases). In an effort to prevent the spreading of misinformation, I am attaching the following information. I was under the impression that when you left our organization, you had yet to find a satisfactory answer to your question. I hope this provides some closure to your quest.

The Consensus is a digital construct, a complex database built from the combined experiences and inner values of all Horizon citizens, the purpose of which is to predict trends, provide constructive and impartial feedback, and to balance the moral and social goals of the corporation with the diverse values of our combined metahumanity.

It is not an artificial intelligence or a self-aware Matrix entity. Nor is it a mystical group of any sort or variety.

Again, thank you for your hard work. I would appreciate it if you would pass the enclosed information on to your circle of friends for their edification.

Sincerely,

G.C.

//end attachment//

- So, the big, mysterious Consensus is supposed to simply be a database? WTF?
- Rigger X
- Well, that's a new one to me. I'll have to post it to my site. Kinda vanilla compared to the other theories, though.
- Snopes
- For what it's worth, Sunshine asked me to trace the origin of this email, since it was sent to his JackPoint inbox. To the best of my knowledge—and I've spent the past 72 hours doing nothing but hacking this, with the assistance of Bandit and Netcat—it originated from Horizon's central offices on Arcology Mile in LA, directly from the office of one Gary Cline. Since I've already reassured myself that Sunshine didn't compromise my network—hence the fact that he's still alive and posting—I'm going to be looking into this more myself. Complex database, my ass.
- FastJack
- I do not understand your blatant disregard for information as presented. You say Horizon has an honest reputation within the shadowrunner community. And yet you disbelieve a simple answer, instead looking for conspiracies or nightmares. Why not believe that a corporation truly listens to employee opinion and acts on a socially conscious level?
- Icarus

- Ever heard of the Universal Brotherhood, Icarus? The "we'll feed the poor and we're all super nice—right up until we use their bodies as hosts for the bugs" Universal Brotherhood? Believe what you want. I'm not going to stop looking for the monster behind the smiling face.

- Sticks

THE CLINE FACTOR

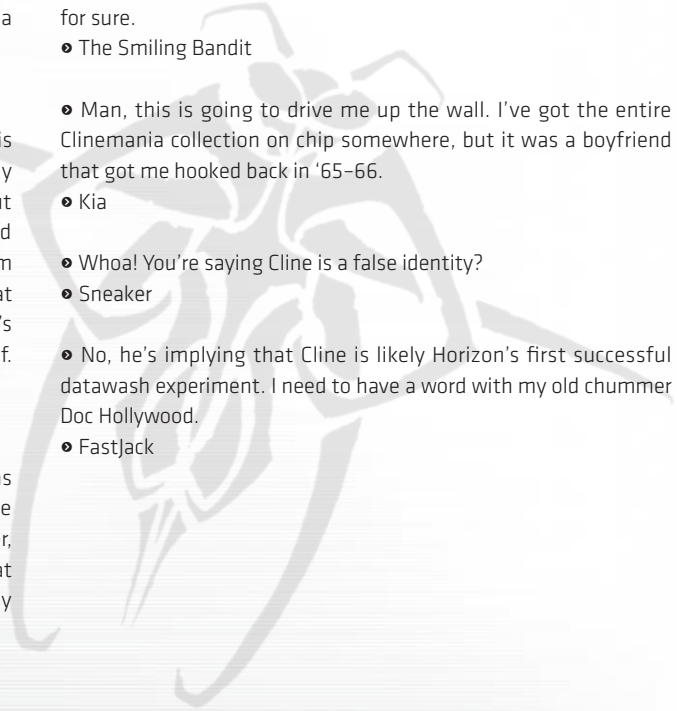
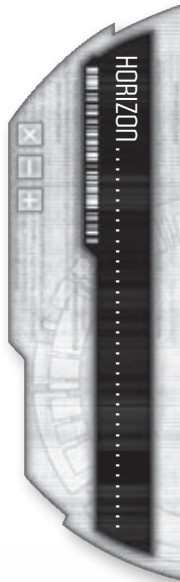
I thought I'd throw this story out there since it's been bouncing around in my head for a year or so. It first cropped up in a viral email that a friend sent my way. I didn't take it seriously at first, but in hindsight I just don't know. I've shared it with dozens of people now and none of them can answer the questions it raises.

You all know Gary Cline, right? Headman at Horizon, former B-series action star, ork-movement poster boy, Horizon Internal Persona/P2.0 Numero Uno, and so on. His bio is plastered all over the Matrix.

Now, here's the thing that's freaking me out. Consider your answer carefully.

Can you honestly say you remember seeing one of Cline's sims before 2064? Yes, I know they date all the way back to *Dog Soldier* in 2055. I've got the H-Channel reruns, and they're all available on pay-per-view. But what I'm asking is whether you remember seeing *Dog Soldier* or *Glory Hound* or any of the others before '60? I know I can't say for sure. Now consider the news items and press clippings. Can you actually remember reading anything about him *back then*? I know you can dredge up old news and vidclips *now*, but do any of you old timers recall seeing this stuff around back then?

- You know what? I can't say for sure either.
- FastJack
- I've never been into low-budget action sims, so I can't say for sure.
- The Smiling Bandit
- Man, this is going to drive me up the wall. I've got the entire Clinemania collection on chip somewhere, but it was a boyfriend that got me hooked back in '65–66.
- Kia
- Whoa! You're saying Cline is a false identity?
- Sneaker
- No, he's implying that Cline is likely Horizon's first successful datawash experiment. I need to have a word with my old chummer Doc Hollywood.
- FastJack



PEEKING BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Posted by: Snopes

Horizon is perhaps the most mysterious of the megas, simply because of its unusual business approach, its meteoric rise to AAA status, and the fact that it just hasn't been around long enough to be familiar, like Renraku or Aztechnology.

Some of you may doubt Horizon's true motivations, since you're all a paranoid bunch (and that's why I love all of your twisted little souls, really). That said, give me some good dirt.

//begin open chat session//

• Okay, I've got one for the record. I took a job from a regular Mr. Johnson. We'd worked with him several times before on international ops. Knew he was a Horizon Mr. J. He was upfront, honest, a real nice chap. Didn't hold back any intel on the jobs he hired us for, and if he didn't know something, he'd tell us upfront.

So he hired us to escort a Horizon scientist home from some little company in India outside Kanpur. Told us that the facility was a Horizon-affiliated place, with a primarily Indian workforce, but that there'd been some unrest in the area and the guy wanted out. Horizon was worried about that guy's safety, hence the armed escort. Our Mr. J specifically instructed us not to injure any of the employees but to watch out for guerrilla forces and to please report back to him anything we saw. Said Horizon hadn't heard from the factory in almost a week and was worried the guerrillas had taken the communications offline. So we head out, loaded for bear.

An hour outside of Kanpur we get to the location and find a factory complex. Place has a double layer of razor-wire fences, drones patrolling, sentry towers, the whole bit. We didn't see anything hostile outside the complex. So we approach, identify ourselves as Dr. Johansen's escort, flash our Horizon credentials and ask to enter.

The reply: "We do not acknowledge."

So we fall back, regroup. Send in our mage to scope out the place. She comes back with reports of a weird vibe to the place, like nothing she's seen before. And *every* person in there is cybered—looked like headware and some light wires, maybe skillwires. Nothing major, nothing that said military. Our hacker taps into the facility's system via hardwire connection and almost flat-lines from the IC. When he wakes up he's screaming "They know we're here!" over and over again. I assumed the guerrillas had taken the place, so we go in, minus our hacker. And then it gets *weird*.

What do we see? A bunch of factory drones. They're all working on some assembly lines. Once we step foot into the factory, they

turn to look at us, all at once. And I mean, *all at once*. Moving with the same motion, the same exact time. A few dozen people. And they stop what they're doing and *attack* us! And they all moved identically. Now, first thing I thought was bugs, seriously. We mowed them down, and they died like they were simply flesh-and-blood. And my mage swears they were mundane, but that their vibes were, and I quote, "off." I'm realizing we just killed a bunch of helpless Horizon grunts and experiencing one of those "oh, crap" moments, when two dozen more come in. By then I was thinking they had skillwires, downloaded activesofts for combat, 'cause they all used the same moves. But they moved in some creepy synchronization. Like they were all meshed together or something, moving in complete accord with each other.

I'll spare you the play by play. We eventually made it into the center of the complex, where we found Dr. Johansen in a surgery-recover room. He'd obviously had some headware implanted. And when we told him we were there to get him out, to take him home, he said, "We don't want to leave."

And he had the same look as the rest of them.

I said fuck it. We left without him. Reported back to the Mr. Johnson, who paid me and thanked me for the intel, apologized for the injury to my teammates, and even set up some rest & relaxation time for my hacker at a Horizon medical clinic.

I haven't heard back from the Mr. Johnson. In fact, I tried to get ahold of him recently, and the number was disconnected.

• Stone

• And you thought they were bugs?

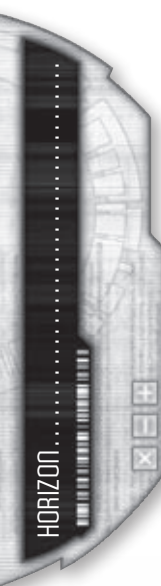
• Sticks

• Initially. I've gone into hives before on extermination runs, and the synchronized movement had me thinking bugs. But they were too easy to kill. Just men and women—flesh, blood, and some light cyberware. And my mage, she's seen bugs before. She knows what they look like. These weren't bugs. I don't know what the hell they were, though. My mage, she swears that their auras all had the same feel to them, as if they were all sharing the same emotions. Or something. You want to talk to her about it? She gets into her mage babble and my eyes glaze over.

• Stone

• Okay, Stone. You win the prize for seriously creepy.

• Snopes





//Keyword: Horizon

//Date: 01/01/2072 - Current

Horizon Offers Pushback on Zulu Isolationism

NEW HLOBANE, AZANIA—As Horizon Africa continues to grow its partnership with the Zulu Nation, sources are reporting that the megacorp is urging the Zulus to reduce their isolationist leanings and downplay their antipathy toward non-Awakened humans. Horizon has targeted the Zulu's considerable magical resources as a huge source of economic growth, but to make that growth happen the Zulus will need to be convinced to export a portion of their magical wealth. Simply allowing more exports would bring in significant revenue, but Horizon wants to do more—they hope to build a brand image for Zulu-built items, which several execs believe would require a change in attitude from the Zulu rulers.

Personal Relationships with a Million People: Horizon's Intimacy Initiative

HOLLYWOOD, PUEBLO CORPORATE COUNCIL—From letters to fans to celebrity hotlines to social networking feeds, Hollywood studios have long sought to capitalize on the value of providing personal access to their stars—or at least, providing a reasonable simulation of personal access. Horizon's new Intimacy Initiative is the latest salvo

in the effort to make viewers think that the people they watch on sims can be their friends. Through the initiative, consumers can buy a persona of their favorite simstar, with a level of interaction based on the amount they are willing to pay. For 5,000¥ you can get a nice but silent AR persona you can hang out with, while for 50,000¥ you can get a walking, talking persona that sounds just like the real thing. Of course, you can't touch that version of your favorite celebrity—there's a wildly expensive part of the Intimacy Initiative that covers that.

Business Prospects Grow with Tensions

BOGOTA—Whether a war is cold or hot, both sides in a conflict need propaganda to sway people to their side or to rile up their citizens, and savvy communications corps approach conflicts as great business opportunities. This means that Horizon, the most powerful communications corporation in the world, is hustling to scare up as much business as possible in the increasing Amazonia/Aztlan hostilities. The PR giant, which has troubled relations with Aztechnology, is more likely to work the Amazonia side of this particular brouhaha, but don't rule out them doing some work for the Azzies—while Aztechnology has a formidable PR apparatus of its own, Horizon is gifted at worming their consultants into situations where the people paying them don't know their true affiliation.





Brett Tanaka squeezed the bridge of his nose. "Dr. Sharon, I cannot grant your request without a valid business reason. Explain again why your project has burned through its annual budget in less than three months."

Doctor Catherine Sharon looked at her departmental boss, Hideo Koga, for support. Koga raised an eyebrow then nodded. Once.

"Tanaka-san, do you know what this division does?"

"Biotech research."

"Do you know what that means?"

Tanaka considered the question, watching them exchange patient and amused looks. "Bioware mods?"

Koga-san laughed. "Hardly. Would you like to see?"

Suddenly dreading the answer to his question, Tanaka nodded. He sensed no whisper of communication between Koga and Sharon, but they probably didn't need to talk.

"Follow me." Koga-san led the way out of his office, down a heavily secured corridor past guards and security cams. Dr. Sharon followed, staying behind Tanaka. He felt trapped. They stopped at a maglocked door.

You can't crack me. You can't crack me, the locks taunted.

Tanaka swallowed. Koga-san slid his hand into a scanner and the door clicked open. Tanaka was ushered into a decontamination room.

"You'll want to shut down your PAN and turn off your commlink," Dr. Sharon said. "And we'll need to scan you for tags."

Tanaka fumbled with his faux-commlink, flicking it off. He reeled in his persona, holding it tightly within and cut himself off from the resonance. When Dr. Sharon scanned him, she only found his Mitsuhamama employee tag, which she quickly deactivated.

"C ... Can I ask the reason for this?"

Koga-san inclined his head slightly. "Forgive me, Tanaka-san, but no network devices are allowed beyond this point."

They walked through a maze of twisting corridors with shotgun-armed guards at every junction.

Carefully, Tanaka unwound a thread of awareness and reached out. He sensed nothing. Not a single whisper of the Matrix. It was like a piece of his mind was numb.

Dr. Sharon stopped before a door marked SJT958. Unlocking the door with an old-fashioned key, she opened it. "We are cultivating autonomous biological control systems. 'Wetware.' Unfortunately, growing biological masses that can keep pace with non-organic computational systems has been difficult to say the least. This is why we're pursuing other avenues of research."

The subject lay strapped to the table, separated from the cold metal by the thinnest of paper medical gowns. Silver hair matted flat against the wires burrowing into his brain. The room's Faraday cage prevented signals from entering or leaving. But the door was open and Tanaka could feel the desperate lash of signal against his skin. There was a quick connection, then a stream of text from the subject that felt like shouting.

Run. Get the hell out of here, you idiot!

Tanaka fought for control.

Who are you? Tanaka asked as Dr. Sharon closed the door.

Puck. Now...

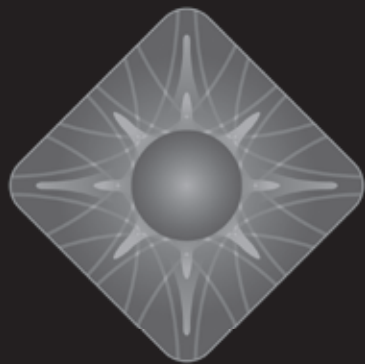
The signal cut off as the door latched shut. Dr. Sharon smiled. "He's my favorite thorn," she joked.

"We need the funding to acquire more testing resources," Koga-san said.

The rest of the visit passed in a blur of panic. Somehow, Tanaka approved their funding. Somehow, he was escorted back to his car without them noticing he himself was a technomancer. Somehow, he managed to escape.

The very next day he called a fixer and arranged his own extraction.





MITSUHAMA

MITSUHAMA COMPUTER TECHNOLOGIES

Corporate Slogan: "The Future is Mitsuhama"

Corporate Court Ranking (2072): #3

Corporate Status: AAA, public corporation

World Headquarters: Kyoto, Japanese Imperial State

President/CEO: Toshiro Mitsuhama

Chairman of the Board: Samba Oi

Honorary Board Advisor: Taiga "Tiger" Mitsuhama

Major Shareholders: Toshiro Mitsuhama (21%), Samba Oi (13%), Shin Yuruyasu (11%), Saigusa Oguramaro (10%), Uehara Akae (10%)

Major 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, Ambrosius Publications, Pentagram Publishing, 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

Mundane and Magical Security: Petrovski Security, Parashield

Recent Acquisitions: Meechi Games (toys and games), CodeBlue Biotech (bioware and biotechnology)

SILICON GIANTS

• While I was doing research on other projects, I found some interesting bits and pieces floating around the Nexus. Worms had devoured some of the bytes, while other segments contained databombs. I didn't even realize they were all part of the same document until I recovered enough to piece it together.

From what I can tell, this was posted within the last few weeks, but the accompanying header data, the poster's handle and location, is completely shredded. When I checked for the article's origin, I ran into some seriously nasty IC. The only traces I could find were what the Haven managed to salvage. Given the content, I thought it should be posted on Jackpoint.

• Netcat

You think you know the tale. But you don't know all of it.

It is no secret that Mitsuhama Computer Technology (MCT) started out as a money-laundering operation for the Yakuza and grew into a megacorp powerhouse envied the world over. Taiga "Tiger" Mitsuhama, the corp's first CEO and President, stepped upon the international stage when he used Yakuza money to bundle a bunch of disparate companies together under one corporate umbrella. He succeeded brilliantly. MCT later became instrumental in building the world we live in today.

But there are discrepancies in this story. Hidden details overlooked. Even we of the kumi seem to have forgotten the most important lesson a kyodai can learn.

Take nothing for granted.

To my shame, I cannot keep silent. I have seen the Rose Garden. The vines are full. I have watched the gardeners prune the flowers, harvesting the thorns. It sickens me and now I must speak so you can learn, and perhaps use, the information presented within. To understand my words, you must first know of truths long forgotten. My goal is to shed light on the corp we all know and love. Here, then, is the real beginning.

• "Know and love?" Seriously?

• Plan 9

• Passive-aggressive sarcasm, Plan. Learn it, live it, love it.

• Black Mamba

• With this talk of "kumi" and "kyodai," I've gotta assume this information came from a Yakuza member.

• Kia

• If that's true, it puts an interesting twist on what we're reading. Members who break ranks like this usually don't survive the experience.

• Mihoshi Oni

REVISITING THE PAST

In the last great recession of the pre-Awakened world, fifty-year-old entrepreneur Taiga “Tiger” Mitsuhamasaw an opportunity. The financial collapse of his father’s construction company stared him in the face. Mitsuhamas Construction was not the only company experiencing problems. Many household names closed their doors, declared bankruptcy, or died the slow death of attrition as they shed themselves of unprofitable divisions.

Where others predicted disaster, Tiger foresaw opportunity. From the oft-quoted slogan of another country, he found inspiration: “United We Stand.” Tiger contacted the CEOs of imperiled companies, offering his own version of salvation. Band together in a grand alliance and the companies could weather the economic storms together.

One by one, they all refused him. Some were certain they could withstand the recession without the help of an outsider. Others feared they would lose their remaining capital by propping up the more debt-stricken members of such a collective. They were reluctant to dump their own capital in a plan with such a limited chance of success, and the state of the financial market certainly didn’t help matters. The banks tightened lending, adding restriction upon restriction, making it impossible for even a person with a good credit rating to get a loan.

Tiger had the survival instincts of a dragon, though. If legitimate institutions would not help him, then he would go to those with vision. The one group who understood what it was like to be dealt 893, the Losing Hand in the card game of life: the Yakuza.

Tiger presented his business plans to a group of oyabun, who gave Tiger the funds he needed. Within the space of two years, Mitsuhamas grew from a small construction company to a major corporate powerhouse with three divisions—computer technology, robotics, and heavy industry. While Mitsuhamas was not a very diversified business, it managed to see profits when other companies bled cash like water. Adding salt to the wound, the fools who declined Tiger’s original offer found themselves being bought out by him anyway.

- Hold up. That math doesn’t add up. An article in the last issue of Cybernetic Monthly said Tiger Mitsuhamas was barely seventy.
- /dev/grrl
- The article must have been a misprint. His son, Toshiro, held a seventieth birthday party for him in 2061. It was all over feeds. Tiger would be in his eighties now.
- Sunshine
- Which would have made him all of fifteen years old, not fifty, when he formed Mitsuhamas, Sunshine. Three articles, three ages. These aren’t typos. It’s just another corporate mindfuck.
- Clockwork
- Or proof that MCT execs experimented with Leonization treatments well before they were available on the open market.
- FastJack
- So what does that say about Toshiro’s age? Isn’t he supposed to be about fifty-four this year?
- Snopes

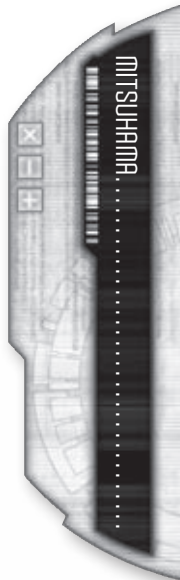
Many people say that the Yakuza demanded positions within Mitsuhamas as the price for their assistance. Nothing is further from the truth. Tiger was certainly expected to treat the Yakuza to a “preferred customer” status. The agreement included laundering money for kumis and assisting members with certain other business transactions. But by the letter of the agreement, Tiger was not required to show any other return on the oyabun’s investment.

Instead, Tiger properly showed his respect for his benefactors by gifting them with a significant number of shares of company stock. He also offered them, or their family members, advisory positions within Mitsuhamas itself. These gifts were graciously accepted by the oyabun, and Yakuza members with extensive clout in the business world ended up on Mitsuhamas’s board of directors.

- Before you run off thinking Mitsuhamas equals Yakuza and messing with one means messing with the other, consider this. There are as many different Yak groups as there are Triad and Mafia. Each group has its pros, cons, and agendas. Yeah, MCT keeps Yaks on its payroll, uses them for runs, and even recruits for them. But that’s not to say MCT deals with all Yak groups or even that all Yak groups deal with MCT. So don’t be surprised if a Yak Johnson approaches you for a job against Mitsuhamas and vice versa.
- Hard Exit
- You may think she’s kidding, but the further you get from the Japanese Empire, the truer this holds. I was in Washington D.C. last month when a local MCT director hired me and my team to take down one of the smaller Yak gangs. Apparently, they were interfering with division’s bottom line, and the director decided his job was more important than good relations with the locals.
- Sticks
- They may not be all buddy-buddy, but that doesn’t mean they won’t work together. There’s no love lost between Seattle oyabun Shoji Yamada and Mitsuhamas, but when some wanna-bes accepted a job to abduct his daughter, he invited one of the VPs to tea. The very next week, Mitsuhamas security forces delivered the rookies’ heads to Yamada-san as a gesture of good will.
- Black Mamba

While Shiawase was off winning the argument that it had the right to maintain its own personal army, Tiger spent his time empire building. He hired his son Toshiro, the current CEO of Mitsuhamas, as vice president of acquisitions. Together, the pair purchased interests in mining companies and the entertainment industry. They bought patents for undeveloped technologies and hired the best engineers to staff Mitsuhamas’s R&D departments. They even lured talented executives from other megas with promises of unlimited budgets and lucrative benefits.

- Let’s not forget their legacy of corporate espionage. When Tiger and Toshiro couldn’t buy someone else’s idea, they had their people go in and steal it. These corporate spies eventually formed the nucleus of MCT’s security force, and they got very good at their job very quickly.
- FastJack



INCOMING FEED.....



MITSUHAMA.....

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- Which explains a lot about Mitsuhamas security procedures, now that I think about it. What lessons they learned from breaking into other companies, they applied to their own defenses. Nasty.
- Hard Exit

- Is this where the zero zone came from?
- /dev/grll

- The zero penetration, zero survival policy didn't get implemented until much later. But I would be surprised to find out Mitsuhamas security didn't consider this information when they first came up with the policy.
- Hard Exit

Under his father's tutelage, Toshiro learned how to lead by example instead of ruling by fear. Even today, Toshiro insists on a rigorous regime of exercise, healthy eating, and consistent attention to detail in all his habits, workplace or personal. His views of quality over quantity have not always been reflected by MCT's product lines, but they have influenced how Mitsuhamas subsidiaries and employees act.

One can only hope the Rose Garden will meet such a fate. Though given how stringent Mitsuhamas waste management policies are, the flowers are sure to be burned.

- Quality over quantity, huh? Doesn't quite sound like the rip-off-and-popularize-others'-innovations MCT I've come to know and love.
- Frosty

- So what the hell is this Rose Garden?
- Pistons

- One of Mitsuhamas pet biotech projects.
- Nephrine

- I'm not so sure about that. Megas don't usually use project names that relate to a project's actual purpose. It's a privacy thing. Keep everyone guessing about the project and no one will be able to trump you by bringing out their own version of your product before yours hits the shelves.
- Dr. Spin

While Tiger and Toshiro initially only retained a small ownership stake in Mitsuhamas, their business savvy earned the respect and loyalty of their corporate and Yakuza peers, allowing them to steer this great company in the direction they chose. The recent passing of Eiji Yakamura—ancestors protect him—left Toshiro holding Yakamura-samas stock shares and the coveted position of majority stockholder.

This well suits the board of directors, as they have always liked Toshiro—when Tiger retired in 2042, the directors shared sake with young Toshiro to congratulate him on his elevation to chief executive officer of Mitsuhamas Computer Technology. They did not even bother to hold a vote.

- This proves how strong Yakuza influence within Mitsuhamas actually is. Sakazuki, sake-sharing, is the ritual used for bringing new

members into the kumi's immediate family. That little celebration was the Oyabuns' way of officially making Toshiro a member.

- Kia

FINDING THE MAGIC

When the Awakening shook the world, Tiger understood the need for "brand expansion." Mitsuhamas could not simply stand aside while others took advantage of magic's potential. It would be bad for business. Whether magic would prove to be a temporary or permanent part of our world, Mitsuhamas needed to understand it. So Tiger established a magic division with Mitsuhamas Thaumaturgical Research leading the way.

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Other megacorporations had their own magical research labs, but Mitsuhamas has the honor of being among the first to use patents and trademark laws on magical formulae, rituals, and branded magical supplies. They have poured considerable sums of money into research and development, and you would be surprised to find out how much of it came from the Yakuza. I know I was. And now I wonder how many other gardens were planted with our fertilizer.

I have walked in shallow soil, kimi. I fear my shoes shall never be clean again. But I digress. You have heard of Mitsuhamas Magical Services, formed a few short years after the research branch? They offer third party "spell-slinging," as the Westerners like to call it, to a broad-based clientele. As you well know, the kumi can avail itself of these wonderful services for discounted rates. If you choose to do so, tread carefully. Better instead to seek the shadows if you require assistance in your investigations. Shadows do not care about this taint I now pass to you, and are reliable enough once they have taken your nuyen. Seek out my contacts in the Kuromaku grid. They will guide you to the more honorable runners.

- For those who don't know, "kimi" is a term of address used for Yakuza subordinates.
- Rigger X

You may not know that neither Mitsuhamas Thaumaturgical Research nor Mitsuhamas Magical Services made a large impact in that first decade. Tiger and Toshiro resolved that problem by once again scouring the globe for the best talent, even offering opportunities for the kumi. This is how it is done, kimi. Use the brightest minds in your employ and you can establish a firm foothold in any community. These are the lessons the Mitsuhamas teach us.

- Convenient how the OP forgets to mention that Mitsuhamas kidnapped some of those spellslingers. And if that shaman or mage refused to cooperate, they were quietly disposed of.
- Ethernaut
- That's a nice euphemism. Don't you mean dissected for experimental purposes?
- Butch
- Only some of them.
- Ethernaut

A FRIENDLY WARNING—THE ZERO ZONE

Mitsuhamas defends its corporate property with the ferocity of a predator and the compassion of a rock. The company takes a hard line with intruders by designating certain portions of their property as "zero zones." Even if a runner manages to slip past the external defenses of such a spot—consisting of thick walls, magical barriers, advanced locks, and automated weapons—he's still not going to make it out alive. The interior of zero zones is rife with traps, awakened critters, and armed security robots with the latest IC protecting their control systems. Occasionally human or metahuman guards are used for certain facilities, but more and more, Mitsuhamas is recognizing the superiority of automated systems that don't hesitate to shoot first and ask questions of the corpse later. Zero zones are expensive to build and maintain, however, meaning there are plenty of MCT properties without this peak level of defense.

Urgent Message...

To further capitalize on this success, Toshiro bought out several small magic-press companies and merged them under house brands Pentacle Press and Ambrosius Publications. He does not want to be a part of this.

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- A side note for those who are interested in all things Awakened: Mitsuhamas's publishing houses produce dozens of academic, research, and pop-culture titles every week. The research division has made significant breakthroughs in hermetic formulae over the past decade, giving Pentagram Publishing a significant advantage over Aztechnology in the printing of licensed spell formulae and professional-academic magical texts. The latest figures provided by BookTrack show market penetration in every continent on the planet, including Antarctica.
- Winterhawk

- Who the hell is buying magical magazines in Antarctica?
- Glitch
- Awakened penguins?
- Glasswalker
- Funny.
- /dev/grll

You have heard of Pentacle Distributing, yes? This Mitsuhamas subsidiary is the largest supplier of magical goods in the Pacific Rim and does everything from harvesting reagents to packing, shipping, distributing, and selling the final product. If you need access into a specific market, contact Katama Odo in the Hong Kong office. If you need supplies, this is the best source. Pentacle Distributing certifies all its products as naturally produced and even offers a money-back guarantee on any supplies that have been polluted by machine harvesting or artificial processing.



- Needless to say, no one has yet taken advantage of this offer because Mitsuhamas goes to great lengths to protect the quality of its products and investigates complaints quite thoroughly. The only complaint on public record came from a group of mages in London about toxic foci. After an exhaustive investigation, Mitsuhamas determined the foci had been contaminated after they left Pentacle's hands and the corp was not responsible for any damage inflicted.

- Cosmo

- Including the insanity, which claimed some poor foci-addicted sot, who then went on a spell-casting spree resulting in the death of three innocent bystanders.

- Arete

- Note the term "public record." The large corps are skilled at keeping stuff off the public record that they don't want the public to see. If you think this is the only complaint people have ever had about Mitsuhamas's stuff, you are quite mistaken.

- Ethernaut

Be warned. In some countries, Mitsuhamas's magical sales have outpaced those of Aztechnology. Keep a low profile if you go there. Aztechnology employees do not like Yakuza and may perceive you to be a Mitsuhamas spy. The consequences would be unpleasant to say the least. Given a choice between Aztechnology mercy and working in the Rose Ga@@jiiI338594jfa

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Have you been to Ipissimus? This Neo-Tokyo megastore is a monument to Mitsuhamas's ambition of stealing Aztechnology's title of magic industry leader. Ipissimus, and its virtual storefront Arcanum, is a declaration of war to Aztechnology and will guarantee the Mitsuhamas legacy. I shall tell you a secret. Guard it well. Plans are currently under discussion to open Ipissimus outlets in Cairo and San Francisco.

I hope to see the day this blow lands upon the brows of those blood-worshipping barbarians.

- The United Talismongers Association isn't going to like that.

- Winterhawk

- The UTA isn't exactly in a position to do much about it. Between disappearing talismongers, stolen goods, torched storefronts, and the banks calling in business loans, everyone's been distracted. Communication has broken down in a major way. It's hard to concentrate when you're getting foreclosed on.

- Lyran

- And now for your conspiracy theory of the day: If banks are foreclosing on the UTA, who's putting pressure on the banks to play hardball? Take a guess.

- Clockwork

- The situation may not be that simple. Aztechnology recently bought an office complex on the other side of the Bay. Word from my contacts is they're setting up an Ipissimus-like facility within the next three months. They will be offering rental space in one building for the blood ritual crowd, and rental space in another building for the nicer, gentler

ritual crowd. Their plan is to beat MCT by competing with them.

- Mr. Bonds

- How do they realistically expect that to work? Most spirits and awakened metahumans won't go anywhere near a blood ritual site.

- Winterhawk

- I don't know enough about magic to answer that question. If you want an answer, I suggest you ask Aztechnology's board of directors. But I don't think the Azzies would make these plans unless they had a reasonable expectation of things working out.

- Mr. Bonds

- Speaking of mysterious corporate hijinks, check out this memo that recently came my way.

- The Smiling Bandit

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The Smiling Bandit :: 04/11/72 //

From: Kenchi Inoue, Vice President, Drive-Ware Technologies

To: Drive-Ware Employees, Neo-Tokyo Office

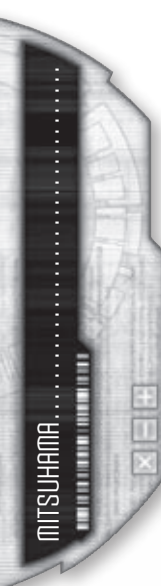
In a constantly changing world, Mitsuhamas refuses to stand still. As a company, we are constantly moving forward, looking for the next project that will showcase our skills and company in the best light. We take our obligations seriously. Product quality is more important than product quantity. We are building the future of our world one product at a time and each of us is responsible for what we do or do not contribute to this future.

Mitsuhamas has always envisioned itself as a company with a sense of social responsibility. Now we invite our employees to join in our efforts. For decades, Mitsuhamas clinics around the world have offered assistance to those in need. Whether it is rebuilding communities devastated by the Crash and Crash 2.0, offering assistance to countries devastated by natural disasters, or giving psychological counseling to AIPS sufferers, Mitsuhamas has always extended a hand to the international community in times of need. Now you can help with our next charitable project.

Despite the progress made against horrible twentieth-century diseases, many poverty-level families continue to suffer from preventable birth defects and genetic ailments. By donating a small portion of your paycheck, you can help fund an immunization program in your local community. Help Mitsuhamas help the world. Together, we can restore civilization, one community at a time.

- Tell me I didn't just see that.

- Slamm-0!



Urgent Message...



- What exactly is included in the category of “birth defects and genetic ailments?” Curious. Just as I read this, the pigeons outside my window took off and crossed the path of the sun. Beware. Dark times come.
- Arete

- Note that the vaccine is only for the poor. Translation: SINless. You know those community-rebuilding projects MCT did in South America and Asia? The people who live there are sterile now. How’s that for a permanent solution?
- Kia

- Didn’t the Human Nation already try the whole “Cure Goblinization and UGE by sterilizing the populace” tactic like centuries ago?
- /dev/grrl

- Doesn’t mean people aren’t still trying.
- Kia

- Interesting how this memo only went out to the Neo-Tokyo office. Do you know how many Drive-Ware employees live in or near the Kanda district? Over half.
- Netcat

- Isn’t Kanda where all the Japanese technomancers hide out?
- /dev/grrl

- Not all, but the district is definitely a safe haven for them. The locals are very protective, to the point where they’ve established citizens’ watch programs to alert the neighbourhoods when MCT forces come snooping around. Or the shadowrunners MCT hires.
- Netcat

THE BLEEDING EDGE

I was invited inside Mitsuhamas’s computer division. I met those who ran the companies, including notable executives of Mitsuhamas Computers, Black Lotus Software, and Dolmen Data Systems. If you get a chance, you should ask to see these offices. They are well-maintained and the employees behave themselves quite respectfully. Lest you forget, this division is famed for its IC, which is sharp, dangerous, and usually deadly. Burn this into your mind, kimi. IC is the division’s flagship product. There is no one better at it than Mitsuhamas. Those Renraku thugs cannot compete with our corporate brothers in this respect.

- I was getting ready to open a fresh can of tasty scorn on that claim, but I wandered deep into MCT’s virtual bowels recently and—yeah. It might be true. I had so many things coming at me I don’t know how I got out, and once I was done it felt like a swarm of swirling shuriken had been thrown at my head. The *inside* of my head.
- Slamm-0!

I emphasize this for good reason, kimi. If you must get involved in gardening, expect to find bugs.

There is a factory and office building for every type of hardware this division makes. Rigger gear, interface firmware, autopilot and rigger-run security systems. Ah, it is a sight to behold the

nanoforges being tested. The nanotech computer systems are simultaneously delicate and robust. Even in their unfinished state, the space drones are quite impressive. And the cyberware. All those magnificent circuits and modular components. Did you know that Toshiro himself constantly upgrades his own implants with the latest in Mitsuhamas technology as newer and better cyberware becomes available? The other day, Dievi said he heard Toshiro rules Mitsuhamas with a chrome fist. I laughed.

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- That’s all I could get out of the file. Whatever else this Yakuza person wrote is fairly well toasted.
- Netcat
- I’ll take a second look to see if I can find anything you missed.
- FastJack

MCT DIVISIONS

Posted by: Rigger X

While I enjoyed NamelessYakGuy’s info on my old employer, he didn’t provide the full coverage we need to really understand MCT. I figured I’d throw in a little information that he didn’t discuss; namely, a breakdown of major divisions. Everybody knows about MCT’s core businesses—computers and robotics—so I’ll touch on those, but concentrate mainly on the new stuff you may not have heard before.

Just last month, the corp underwent a huge reorganization. They created a few new divisions, split some of the subsidiaries off into them, and gutted other subs for resources. This has left behind a lot of zombies, ghosts, and hard feelings. Know what I’m saying?

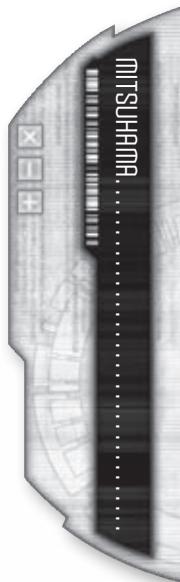
Mitsuhamas Computers

This is the cash cow, the big boy, the division MCT’s most known for. MCT may not always be on the bleeding edge, but they sell a lot of gear, and they know how to innovate when necessary. Need proof? Look at the latest generation of nanoforges and nanofaxes. Of course, innovation is necessary when one is directly competing with S-K. The dragon takes no prisoners.

One of Mitsuhamas’s latest initiatives involves making a big push with the next generation of skillsofts and datasofts. Supposedly, these little chips go into auto-shutdown when the programs sense major fluctuations in the datastreams, which is supposed to prevent data erasure from viruses or AIs. That sounds nice, but I’d hate to be in the middle of a job and relying on one of these buggers when it shuts down on me.

The computer division is also reprinting Pentacle Press’s early publications on datasofts, which include magic formulae and recommendations on how to design your shamanic lodges for the best ritual results.

- I fear a future inhabited by over-eager, under-trained mages.
- Axis Mundi
- Pure marketing hype. Datasofts can never replace the necessity of actual spell memorization.
- Winterhawk



GRIDGUIDE: MITSUHAMA TELLS YOU WHERE TO GO AND WHERE TO GET OFF

GridGuide, the famous traffic management system, has undergone significant revisions since its first appearance back in the '30s. Not only does this little package give instant updates on the locations of traffic accidents, construction blockages, and rush-hour gridlock, but it allows your local metropolitan security company to forcibly reroute traffic away from red-flagged sites.

Is there a political bigwig coming into town and you need to barricade off the side streets to get her through to her destination with a minimum of fuss? No problem. Just flag the system with the proper identification and paperwork. Suddenly Bob the sarariman finds his car shuttling him off on the back roads during his drive to work. Is there a chemical leak on the Upper East Side that requires the evacuation of the locals? Not only will the system drive every active vehicle out of the danger zone, it'll send out alerts to every active commlink in the neighborhood.

This system is networked with all the local MSPs. Local security personnel with the right clearance can track specific RFIDs from any point in time over the past 48 hours. At need, the system can even harvest video footage from all available private and public cameras, greatly improving traffic law enforcement capabilities.

- Would the other megas really give Mitsuhamas access to their vidfeeds?
- Turbo Bunny

• If they think it can benefit them, yes. Safety, security, and reliable transportation are all good for business, so it makes sense for them to work together. Remember last week's story about the murder of simstar Alan Witwicky? Lone Star reportedly used GridGuide to pull Alan's data trail for the last two days of his life. They have everything from what he wore that morning to his commute to and from the studio to a long, lonely drive on his bike down to the pier where he ate a bullet right in front of the cameras. After extensive review of all the facts, and no evidence of undue influence or foul play, Lone Star ruled the incident a suicide just yesterday morning.

- Sunshine
- The more people trust what security footage shows them, the more opportunities there are for people who know how to manipulate security footage.
- Netcat

Miniaturization is the word of the day in the computer hardware department. With the advent of wireless technology, sales of personal computers have drastically declined. To keep up with the trends, Mitsuhamas packs more and more of the average customer's computing needs into its full range of designer commlinks, AR goggles, and mooks. As sales have dropped for the cheaper "plain vanilla" items, Mitsuhamas has taken to donating this non-designer hardware to charitable organizations servicing the education needs of devastated European and African communities.

- How sweet of them to give up stuff that no one wants rather than go to the expense of destroying it themselves.
- Snopes
- Have you seen Desert Wars recently? Apparently MCT is disposing of unwanted prototype weapons and vehicles by donating them to the show. I've seen quiet a few nifty little gadgets I wouldn't mind getting my hands on. If I was stupid enough to walk into a war zone, that is.
- 2XL
- Mitsuhamas isn't disposing of that tech. They're field-testing it using guinea pigs from other corps. Whether it malfunctions and kills the person holding it or works like designed, Mitsuhamas wins. No compensating the families of dead employees or cleaning up messy lab explosions.
- Axis Mundi
- That is either a bald-faced lie or proof that you can't tell fact from fiction. I know from experience that Mitsuhamas field-tests its prototypes in its own facilities, often using the tech against intruders.
- Kia

Mitsuhamas's wetware research appears to be bearing fruit. Using some ultra-secret technique, MCT created a biomass capable of data mining in a consumer orders database. Apparently the biomass has a higher success rate of matching customers to future purchasing decisions than any software program because it is capable of independently developing algorithm variables beyond those that exist in MCT's holdings. While this is a long way from the fully automated wetware drones MCT wants to be producing, it's a significant advance in wetware research.

- And it has absolutely nothing to do with their previous research in transplanting brains into machines, right?
- Ecotope
- Wait. Mitsuhamas researched brain transplant technology?
- /dev/grll
- Among other things. It's part of their cyborg and cyberware R&D line. They've been doing this sort of research for over a decade, though, as part of the now-defunct Remote Online Manipulation project and it's never yielded any results. I doubt this time is any different.
- Snopes

Mitsuhamas Magical Services

They may not have the glitz of some of the magical big boys, but MMS has a little secret—they outsell the other guys. While they're not breaking new ground, Mitsuhamas is aces at breaking down the new formulae and items the innovators are putting out and getting them into a form the masses (or at least, the Awakened

masses) can consume. Sometimes the other magical corps look down at the quality of their products, but the stuff can't be too bad. If it didn't work reliably, people wouldn't keep buying it.

Mitsuhamas has perhaps the most efficient magical production facilities of any corp. From gathering raw reagents, to putting them in a form where they'll be useful, to putting them in the right hands, Mitsuhamas is quite skilled at churning out a significant quality of magical goods.

- Harvesting reagents on a mass level is always difficult. First, there's the competition—reagents are valuable, lots of people want them, making it harder for you to get the quantity you need. Then there's the effect of removing too many reagents from an area—often, local spirits just plain don't like it, so you need to be ready to deal with them. MMS, with its businesslike approach, is not always ready to smoothly deal with spirit-related problems when they crop up.
- Frosty

Little talked about, but widely known, is Mitsuhamas's "magic for hire" consulting services. Mitsuhamas hires most of its mages right out of college, sometimes even offering magic scholarships to talented children of poor families in exchange for a guaranteed post-graduation employment contract.

- And since MCT allows the baby mages to buy magical supplies on credit against the promise of future work, these poor saps end up incurring more debt during their employment. The more debt they have, the more they have to work off. Until finally their dead spirits even end up owing service to MCT after their deaths.
- Axis Mundi
- Does Mitsuhamas ever summon spirits of dead employees back for service?
- /dev/grll
- Ha, ha. They may summon spirits pretending to be former employees, but we all know that no one has established a firm link between the spirit world and the supposed souls of metahumanity.
- Haze

Many mages enjoy working in Magical Services for the variety of experiences and the contacts that can be made. MCT mages have been known to advise other corps on best magical practices, produce illusions and special effects at a variety of events (including rock concerts), play magical bodyguard for celebs, work as forensic mages, and even donate time to Mitsuhamas-approved charity organizations. In the recent re-org of MCT's divisions, all of HermeTech's mages were moved either into Parashield or Mitsuhamas Magical Services, leaving HermeTech with a skeleton staff of research-only mages.

- Notice how Rigger X doesn't mention shamans? Rare is the shaman that actually works for the corp because most totems supposedly don't like Mitsuhamas. Can anyone here tell me why?
- Sticks
- The spirits do not have to explain themselves. They simply speak their will and those who follow obey.
- Man-of-Many-Names

Mitsuhamas does not contract its mages out to Aztechnology, Saeder-Krupp, or other direct competitors. It also does not allow its mages to be hired by shadowrunners. Though when Mitsuhamas hires runners for jobs of its own, the corp encourages its more daring employees to help out. It's on-the-job training, Mitsuhamas style.

Mitsuhamas Automatronics

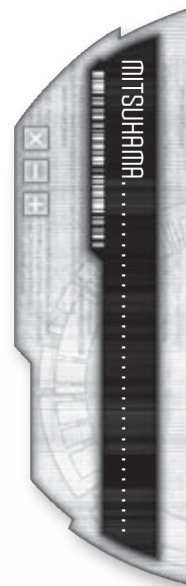
Robotics is Mitsuhamas's third largest division, behind computers and magic by only the slimmest of margins. The division makes vehicles of all types and industrial robots like floor waxers and window washers alongside military robots and security drones. Additionally, the division produces arguably the best control rigs on the planet. Rigger control systems enable the remote control of vehicles, drones, and heavy equipment. The latest rigs combine autonomous systems, using the mook software features, with the rigger control system. MA is also experimenting with biofeedback systems that enhance the rigging experience with an adjustable sensitivity interface. A rigger can dial it up to feel the road under a truck's tires as if he's walking the road himself, or dial it down so that an explosion taking off the arm of a drone barely comes across as a buzz.

This interface gives riggers a new level of control over the rigging experience, exceeding previous safety boundaries. Running in high-sensitivity mode can provide instant feedback that can be useful in promptly reacting to developing situations, but it comes with danger, as it's the equivalent of running hot in the Matrix. Bio-feedback is a bitch and can kill. On the other side, running in low-sensitivity mode is safer, but it slows down system reaction time and often prevents the rigger from recognizing situations that pose a physical threat to the equipment and the job at hand.

- Somehow, weapons are wedged under this division, but I haven't quite figured out how. Best I can figure, Mitsuhamas is trying to keep the firepower as close as possible to the military hardware.
- Rigger X
- Sometimes even in the same factory. Me light up ammo dump. Entire building go boom. The fireworks display that night was quite a sight to see. :->
- 2XL

Automation is the wave of MCT's future, with everything from consumer electronics to vehicles and security drones that respond to and learn from the owner's preferences. We're not just talking automated lights and the trid flipping on to your favorite program when you come home, folks. Every piece of hardware at home is networked into your commlink and your Mitsuhamas-designed mook. This specialized agent tells the trid to load up your favorite programs, tracks your expenses, orders your groceries, and even auto-answers your email and your favorite forum threads if you don't feel like writing up your own response. The MCT mook can even replicate your slang down to the last syllable.

- The messaging and chat features are new to the software. Be careful when using them, because if you don't train it correctly (and training it takes forever) the mook acts like a translation program





INCOMING FEED.....



gone rogue. Words are inserted in the wrong order, idioms are garbled, and other “amusing coincidences occur” (that last part is bad mook-speak for “fun things happen”).

- Rigger X
- Even if you do train it correctly, it’s relatively easy to tell the difference between a mook-generated response and a person. Mook conversation is more stilted and one-note, like chatting with a brick wall whose opinion never changes.
- Stone
- Sorta like chatting with you, then.
- Sticks

Every Mitsuhamas vehicle out of the factory is installed with a free client-side version of GridGuide. Even if your local metro hasn’t adopted the software, you can use the less robust version, complete with advertisements and the new Qwik-Nav feature, to put your bike on autopilot then sit back and enjoy the ride while watching your favorite soap opera in an ARO. No fuss, no muss. Total control. If you want to trust a megacorp, that is.

While many consumer vehicles are sold with autopilot as an option, forty percent of the commercial fleets are autopilot only with another fifty percent utilizing remote control systems. This includes military hardware and construction equipment. Mitsuhamas is making a major push to have its

consumers buying all-automated systems by the end of the century. They’re using the latest version of the mook software to run it all.

- A practice that will put a lot of salaried men out work.
- Kia
- Not to mention soldiers and mercenaries.
- Jimmy No
- A more paranoid fellow might be inclined to believe the automation push is geared at the shadow community. If a truck can drive itself, any runner caught in it can be delivered to the local authorities, or corporate security, at even a hint of a crime being committed.
- Glitch
- The simple solution is, never get into a vehicle you don’t control.
- Turbo Bunny

Automation Systems, Inc.

In a symbiotic relationship, the robotics division has cross-pollinated with the heavy industry division. Automation Systems, Inc. builds pre-fab factory systems and construction equipment using control systems developed by Astin Remote Systems. The equipment is automated, equipped with smart systems that learn on the job and adapt to even the most unique and demanding environments. It’s not quite AI tech, but the rapid rate at which

these machines can learn what their owners want certainly gives that impression.

- It seems Mitsuhama is developing a “set it and forget it” mindset where its automated systems are concerned. Aren’t they at all worried that some hacker will come along, take control of the big crane, and use it to wreak havoc?

- Beaker

- Did you forget the part from before about the IC?

- Slamm-0!

Mitsuhama Industrial Technologies

Lest we forget, mining and industrial chemicals are important parts of MCT’s heavy industry brand. Mitsuhama harvests everything from trees to minerals. While MCT sells a good portion of its plunder to other corporations or the general public, at least half goes back into the company supplies for use in all aspects of Mitsuhama’s business. Raw silicate, gold, copper, iron ore, and many other minerals are processed into whatever the company needs for its current projects. This practice doesn’t entirely wipe out Mitsuhama’s need for external resources, but it makes the corp a lot less dependent on other corporations for the day-to-day basics.

Mitsuhama’s industrial chemicals can be found in the most interesting places. Any restaurant you frequent probably uses MCT’s Grit-Be-Gone cleaning solution. The corp’s acids are used in batteries, and the sulfides show up in medicinal manufacturing. Mitsuhama manufactures so many different types of industrial chemicals, there’s just no way to provide a comprehensive list.

In their new efforts to promote environmentally friendly practices, MCT claims to be weaning itself off of oil dependencies and to be practicing more evolved forms of manufacturing and mining. Every tree removed equals a new tree planted later on. Every shovel of earth removed equals a new garden built elsewhere. CodeBlue, the tiny European biotech company recently acquired by Mitsuhama, is genetically engineering designer algae and lichen. These little “green” parasites are designed to chew up chemical pollutants and leave biodegradable nutrients as byproducts. The algae and lichen haven’t seen the outside of a test tube, yet, but Mitsuhama points to the project as proof they mean business.

- A lesson MCT’s learned from Horizon: taking the high road is a savvy way to build a brand.

- The Smiling Bandit

- It also puts you in a better position with the sniper rifle.

- Hard Exit

This newfound philosophy doesn’t just apply to the heavy industry division. The entire corp is rolling out a campaign of environmental sensitivity. For example, Mitsuhama usually only contracts its magical services out to government and corporate entities. Recently, however, the more daring employees have taken company research excursions across the globe and have even been involved in reconstruction efforts throughout Asia and North America. Mitsuhama mages regularly volunteer to clean up toxic areas and re-establish the natural balance of the world.

- Don’t think for a second that this has anything to do with good intentions. This is about the Emperor of Japan and the Shinto priesthood. Mitsuhama lost a lot of money when the Emperor denied the corp construction contracts for rebuilding Honshu Island after the Ring of Fire disaster. This whole environmental campaign is just a cold-blooded business decision.

- Baka Dabora

- Untrue. Many of the milder environmental groups are very vocal about their support for Mitsuhama’s new programs. In fact, one group even teamed up with a local chapter of Mitsuhama Forever, the company’s official street gang, to replant trees in southern Florida.

- Ecotope

- The corp’s new eco-friendly drive is just another wedge to be shoved between the Emperor and the priesthood. MCT executives are using the recent Yokohama food riots to pressure the Emperor into granting them the reconstruction contract. Eight years after Yokohama was flattened, the citizens are still living in huts with poor sanitation and hardly any resources. The food riots prove the Shinto have failed in their obligations to rebuild the area. Therefore, it falls to those citizens who are responsible enough to take on the burden. And, hey, “we can do environmentalism too.”

- Haze

- Yokohama food riots? When did this happen? I haven’t seen anything on the feeds.

- The Smiling Bandit

- Just a few weeks ago, but it got buried by government and corporate censorship. Several aid stations unexpectedly ran out of food and water due to a sudden influx of demand. Nobody’s quite sure what happened. A few people started screaming something about hoarded supplies and suddenly the entire crowd was tearing the aid stations apart in the hunt for food. The riots lasted less than an hour and no one was killed, but when Neo-Tokyo police finally broke up the mob, at least twenty people got sent to the hospital. Now the government is scrambling to find out what happened and how to prevent it from happening again.

- Sunshine

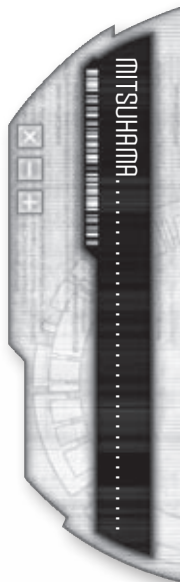
- I don’t know how Mitsuhama expects anyone to buy the new environmentally friendly image after it plundered Tsimshian territory. The entire area is pretty much stripped—gaping craters from strip mining, not a tree in sight.

- Aufheben

- If MCT really hasn’t changed their practices, it’ll be clear soon enough. They have contracts to rebuild devastated territories all across Africa and Asia. The first of those contracts is coming due in the next month and several journalists, including me, will get an early look at the finished product.

- Sunshine

One of Mitsuhama Industrial Technologies’ lesser-known product lines is protective gear such as hazmat suits. Due to the high number of natural and manmade disasters, this product line has been expanded to include things such as survival gear,



earthquake alarms, and personalized trauma kits. While the high-end gear is still sold only to Mitsuhamas usual corporate and government clients, these new products are available through MCT's Matrix store, SafeRecoveries, to the general public.

- Pure hype. Mitsuhamas is just bundling together items already available on the open market, slapping its logo on them, and reselling them for a higher profit margin to the average wageslave. Because apparently no one has ever thought of stockpiling medkits, flashlights, food packets, and water purification tablets before.
- Axis Mundi
- Aekei Heuristic Technologies, one of MCT's computer brands, is supposedly prototyping a whole line of disaster detection equipment. Not just earthquake alarms, but devices that can detect chemical spills, nuclear plant meltdowns, and even mana fluxes. I'm not quite sure how that last one would work, though.
- Baka Dabora
- I'm not sure it's at all possible for that last one to work in any circumstance.
- Winterhawk

Parashield and Petrovski Security

While Mitsuhamas is a brand name in rent-a-cop security, it keeps a low profile compared to corps like LoneStar or Knight Errant. Clients get referred by existing clients or contacts and division profits are buried so deep in the corp's annual reports, it would take even a god AI years to piece together just how much money is involved.

The employees of both Parashield, which has more of a magical emphasis, and Petrovski Security, the branch more dedicated to conventional tactics, start their training with corporate security forces guarding corporate territory. After which, they move up to backing up the hired help on runs. Make no mistake, this training regimen is harsh. But survival equals graduation into Parashield and Petrovski, the P&P, which also equates to higher pay for less risk. That's not to say that the P&P haven't had difficult contracts, but their business usually doesn't include deliberately committing crimes.

- What exactly do you mean by "hired help?" I thought the Yaks did all of MCT's dirty work.
- Aufheben
- Nope. Mitsuhamas does everyday business with the Yakuza, but for runs, it hires deniable assets from outside.
- Rigger X

P&P's more impressive contracts include supporting the Neo-Tokyo Metropolitan Police (NTP) at the behest of the Japanese Emperor himself. The Japanese take extraordinary pride in their police, all of whom are local citizens hired to keep the peace. But the number of "supplementary forces" from Mitsuhamas exceeds the number of ordinary cops.

Petrovski teams integrate with the police and walk the beat while Parashield runs animal management. MCT's robotics division supplies vehicles, weapons, and fully armed security drones to supplement the NTP's outdated resources. From a distance, it's difficult to tell which equipment is leased from Mitsuhamas and which belongs

to the police. MCT's logos are deliberately small, hidden in certain design features. Without augmented vision and knowledge of where to look, you're likely to miss them. If you know the silhouettes of MCT devices, however, you don't need a logo to recognize them.

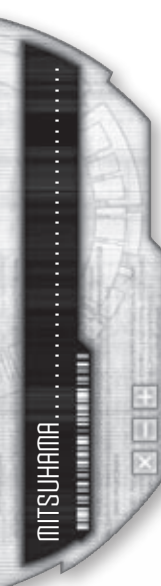
Something to note about the animal management reference: Part of Parashield's work is the creation of security animals and paracritters. Animals of all sorts, usually dogs or predators, are bred and augmented, with the latest in cyber or bioware, at Parashield facilities. Parashield's even showcased its infamous *Menagerie* line of bio-drones at several international weapons conventions for the military elite.

Mitsuhamas also breeds critters such as hellhounds, nagas, and devil rats, just to name a few. All animals and critters are trained to Mitsuhamas highest standards before being sold or used in Mitsuhamas own facilities. The company constantly experiments with different mixes of augmentation and Awakened animals in its search for the perfect guard animal.

- I can attest to that. During a run on a Paris facility last year, a barghest augmented with razor-sharp claws took quite a chunk out of me. Fortunately, it turned on its handlers after I went down, which gave me the perfect opportunity to get out of Dodge.
- Mika
- I've heard they're even creating paracritters to sell as children's pets. Parashield plans to give out the first group of pets to the families of MCT executives, proving both the viability of the program and getting free publicity out of the fact that the execs are trusting their own kids with the critters.
- Snopes
- It's not as benign as it sounds. These critters are really being trained to kidnap children showing signs of Awakened talents.
- Kia
- No way would Mitsuhamas be that stupid. It would cost them too much face, and for the Japanacops, reputation is everything.
- Ethernaut

Many employees consider HermeTech Associates the P&P's country cousin because it remained under the magic division's umbrella when Mitsuhamas created the security division. HermeTech sells biotechnological security options and trains security guards on how to handle magical threats. Everything HermeTech sells or teaches has been thoroughly vetted by MCT's own internal security in Mitsuhamas owned facilities.

- Rigger X forgets to mention that MCT is so firmly entrenched in the Japanese military machine at this point that it's impossible to tell where MCT's security forces end and the military begins. When Japanese military officers retire, they inevitably end up as executives in the robotics or security divisions.
- Snopes
- That disturbing trend is repeating itself in Mitsuhamas branches across the world. The media recently reported that the Italian Confederation, the Scandinavian Union, and the CAS all received large orders of MCT weapons and security drones last year. None of the feeds mentioned the fact that certain Pentagon officials and generals, who are all suddenly



THE LONG ARM OF MITSUHAMA: RUNNING FOR MCT

What's not to love about running for the big M? Mitsuhamas use state-of-the-art equipment, smart ammo, and sometimes even a fully trained security team for backup on top of the promised payout. The intel provided could only be more accurate if they got it straight from the competition's own system. In my experience, no other corporation gives this much direct support to the runners it hires.

As with all things in life, though, there are significant downsides.

For one, while Mitsuhamas welcomes suggestions from the hired help on mission specifics, anything that compromises the corp's objectives is immediately rejected. By the time the corp hires you for a job, the Johnson already has a plan of action mapped out and he expects you to follow it. Minor changes can be made if your team has better ideas, but that doesn't happen often. Also, if Mitsuhamas hires you for a job, they expect success. Failure is not tolerated, especially given the amount of logistics they put into planning.

Another problem is that Mitsuhamas likes to put the more successful runners on retainer. Sometimes the corp even requires a biometric sample from you before employment. MCT won't argue if you freelance on the side. That's expected. You're a shadowrunner, after all. But if you're caught working for the competition—or, more importantly, against MCT—then not only are you off retainer, but chances are Mitsuhamas has planned another mission using other shadowrunners with you being the likely target. And that lovely sample you provided is great ritual fodder for MCT mages.

Caveat venditor, fellow runners.

retiring this year, ended up with really nice vacation homes and cushy teaching positions in MCT's security training facilities.

- Sunshine
- Yes, and now there's a lot of money being offered by A-rated weapons manufacturers for runners willing to mess with MCT's "special retirement packages."
- Hard Exit

Mitsuhamas Media

From the days of Tiger's empire building through the succession of Toshiro to the position of CEO, Mitsuhamas held one of the largest pieces of the entertainment and media pie. In the old days, Mitsuhamas owned the broadest collection of broadcasting stations and cinemas, and then followed up by helping pioneer trideo and simsense technology. The money brought in by just the advertising has given Mitsuhamas the cash to acquire such strong assets as Confederate Broadcasting Company, Soonan Simsense, Sakura Studios, and Highstar, Inc.

Decades of being a formidable media giant have left Mitsuhamas Media a little soft, some corp watchers say. The corp's

lack of vigilance and cutthroat competitiveness played a role in the growth of Horizon—the new kids on the block jumped up and grabbed a chunk of Mitsuhamas's media empire before the sleepy giant got around to preparing any sort of a defense.

- Corporate gossip says the board of directors thought another earthquake had hit Kyoto when Toshiro read the reports on Mitsuhamas Media's market share loss. Toshiro hit the table so hard with that cyberfist of his that he broke it (the table) in half.
- Baka Dabora

While Mitsuhamas is fighting to regain its status, it seems unable to compete with the quality and quantity of entertainment offered by Horizon, especially in the wake of the AIs and droves of technomancers contributing their talent to Horizon. Mitsuhamas has not yet extended a competing offer of employment to either group, a fact that surprises industry insiders. Current market opinion argues that Mitsuhamas needs to move past a mistrust of TMs that has been strong ever since the 2070 destruction of their facility in Queen Elizabeth's Hospital by unstable technomancers.

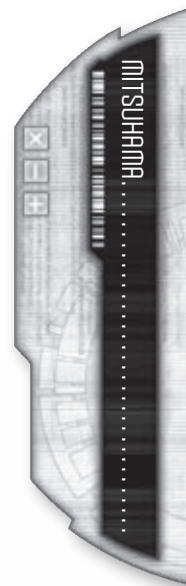
- These so-called insiders are clueless. The problems at QEH were caused by MCT employees to cover up their illegal experiments on captive technomancers.
- Snopes
- Even if Mitsuhamas offered employment to technomancers and AIs, I doubt many of them would take it. And any who think MCT would give them a fair shake, I'd put on anti-psychotic meds.
- Butch

Mitsuhamas continues to offer simsense programming appealing to the lowest common denominator, which filters down through the Yakuza and onto the street. But unfortunately, in this particular case, Mitsuhamas's reputation for quality suffers greatly when compared to Horizon's recent efforts. But don't count Mitsuhamas out yet. The corp's hardware is still the best on the market, and now that they've aroused themselves to the fight, they can focus on matching up with Horizon and Horizon only—no other mega approaches these two in this arena.

Meechi Games

Meechi Games is the redheaded stepchild of the Mitsuhamas portfolio. This Chinese toy company originated in Shaanxi, making Chinese-centric products—wooden dolls, board games like go and chess, card games—by hand from local materials. As the years passed, the company added a variety of toys created by assembly-line automation. Meechi now publishes educational toys and games strategically designed to enhance children's deductive and logical processing centers. The handmade products did not disappear, though, and remain Meechi's most profitable items despite the high amount of manual labor required in their creation.

- Handmade? Like, toys you actually touch to play with? Weird.
- Slamm-0!
- I saw one of those wooden Han-era Chinese Lady dolls a while back. It gave me a weird vibe, so I assented it. I think there was a bit



of reagent worked into it. But I didn't have time to actually examine it. So I might be wrong.

- Ethernaut
- Interestingly, Meechi only sold its toys and games inside Shaanxi until Mitsuhama very quietly acquired the company sometime last year and broadened its reach.
- Kia

No one knows what to make of Mitsuhama's interest in Meechi. The toy company doesn't fit in with MCT's other brands, but the overwhelming success of the Confucius plushy, which dispenses wisdom and advice when hugged, has sparked the interest of investors and children alike. Also, Ipissimus now carries Meechi products as a "counter-programming" gimmick. Mitsuhama has bundled Meechi's toys into "My Little Scientist" kits for the non-magical kids of Awakened parents. The sales pitch is "Why should your child feel left out? By him a kit and let him imagine his own destiny."

Megawatch Buzz

//Keyword: Mitsuhama
//Date: 01/01/2072 - Current

Rumored Prototype Malfunction Sinks Sony Stock

NEO-TOKYO, JAPAN—Sony's stock dropped 300 points on leaked news that a prototype security robot malfunctioned in its Neo-Tokyo plant. Unidentified sources claim the new model, completely designed and manufactured in-house without the input of VOR Robotics, killed five employees when it short-circuited in a test lab. Mitsuhama Computer Technologies, parent company of VOR, just released a public statement expressing its deepest condolences over the loss of valued Sony employees and has offered to support its fellow corporation in these hard times to the best of its abilities.

Land Condemnation Questioned

SAN FRANCISCO, CFS—After several properties in the South of Market area were condemned and purchased by city government, corporate sources have begun to question the government's aggressiveness. Though none of the properties seized were held by Corporate Court-rated organizations, attorneys for Renraku have claimed the condemnations overly interfere with megacorporate affairs. The Renraku attorneys have particularly questioned the proximity of several properties to existing Mitsuhama structures, adding that if Mitsuhama wants to get deeper into the real estate business, they should not have to use the government as a front.

- Slick. Greedy, but slick.
- Butch
- Speaking of slick, I just got this from a source. I haven't decided if this is a good thing or a bad thing.
- Sunshine
- Wow. Can they do that?
- Turbo Bunny
- Megacorps can do whatever they want. Though I'll be very surprised if the other megas don't contest this arrangement in the Corporate Court.
- Cosmo

Private Message...

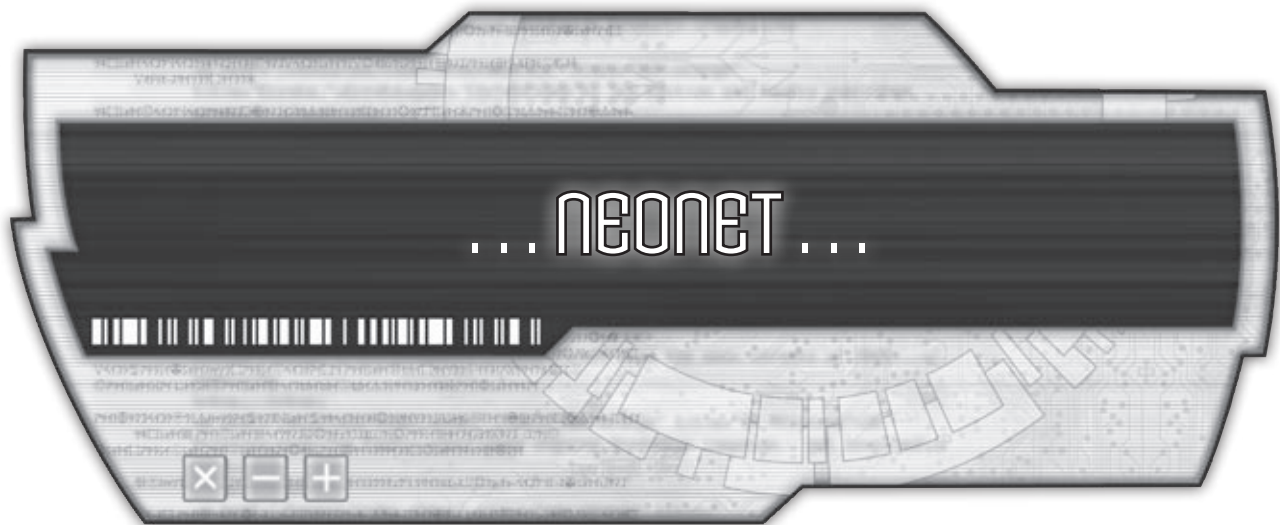
// upload email :: user Sunshine :: 04/14/72 //

From: X
Re: Sunshine

I would love to say this is a social call, but I uncovered something you might want to know about. MCT is in talks with Doc Wagon about sourcing its cybertech. Plans are that Super-Platinum customers will get a discount on MCT parts, where available, so long as those parts are installed at an authorized Doc Wagon clinic by a certified doc. Customers requiring emergency replacement parts are eligible for a discount, albeit a smaller one if services are required off site. The proposed contract is for a one-year trial period in the following test cities: Seattle, New York, Hong Kong, and Kyoto. Doc Wagon would be required to exclusively offer MCT parts to their Super-Platinum clientele, nobody else's hardware, and to encourage the purchase of MCT parts to those customers on the lower end service contracts.

Attached is the recording I acquired.

- I've just finished scanning the file of NamelessYakGuy. (Really, Rigger, did you have to pick that as a handle for him?) There's not much more to it, but what's left is disturbing. I've replaced the garbage characters with periods. Take a look for yourselves.
- FastJack
- stand to see the roses pruned. Too much has gone into the Garden's dev ... pment ... The silver thorn is the most resilient of them all and st ... nds to be harvested soon.
... oticed I'm bein ... followed ... Guard yourself, kimi. And if you will, my daughter as well. I place my fa ... th in ...u ... Seek safety ... Kand ... noman ... or the shadows...
Warn them. If they will lis
- That's it. The last of the document. I think it's time someone looked into this Rose Garden issue. Send me a private msg if you're interested.
- FastJack



Through the closed double doors of the board's conference room, he could make out the heated argument, the determined tones of the muffled voices. He turned his head toward Villiers's assistant, who sat in an elaborate armchair in the hallway as she waited for the meeting to end.

She's changed, he thought. She hasn't been the same since the Novatech IPO, but it's gotten worse since Lanier left.

Trying to make conversation, he nodded toward the door. "They're still at it in there?"

"Malmstein asked for you. That should answer your question."

"What's on the agenda, anyway? All I know is that he wants my opinion on the latest MIT&T metasapience studies.

"It's the AI rights debate again—our stance could have a domino effect. Did you see those last UN reports on the Geneva incident? We can't be too careful."

Clearly, she had changed. A lot. She was right, of course. Should NeoNET support the metasapience rights organizations in their campaign to win basic metahuman rights for AIs and similar digital constructs, the decision would have broad legal and—more important, economic—implications. It didn't help that the board was divided on the matter. For reasons of their own, both Villiers and Malmstein were hesitant to issue a statement on the matter, while the dragon and Verghese—that spineless puppet—each held his ground on opposite sides of the issue. Speaking on behalf of his elusive backers, Verghese wanted to engage in long-term studies of AI/metahuman interaction in unrestricted environments before making taking a stance, while Celedyr was eager to throw NeoNET's entire PR machinery behind the ridiculous claims of groups such as the Digital Liberation Front. No one knew whether the dragon's scientific curiosity or his disdain for rival Horizon's technomancer and AI policy were the motivation behind the brazen pro-AI attitude.

Whatever the final decision, NeoNET needed to make a statement and make it soon. As the key player in wireless Matrix technologies, NeoNET could not afford to wait—any delay in releasing an official policy statement would be viewed by analysts and consumers alike as ambiguity or worse, as dissent within the corporation itself.

"What good are the reports anyway? Since the UN grid's been isolated, any chance for another vote or another debate where we could exert pressure has been eliminated."

"Beats me—Malmstein wasn't overly specific, he just muttered something about 'that damn wyrm.'"

"Good thing the doors are more or less soundproof, then. Celedyr is in there with them."

He looked at her for a moment, then his eyes wandered over to the conference room. Suddenly, the double doors looked like the gates of hell to him. He glanced back at her—he never could remember her name, but he heard he wasn't the only one with that problem—and she gave him an encouraging look, then waved her hand at the door.

"Come on, it's not like we're at Saeder-Krupp, I hear Lofwyr's the one with the appetite for analysts."

He frowned at her, took a deep breath and looked into the retinal scanner. The doors opened with a soft click.



N·E·O·N·E·T

Corporate Slogan: "Tomorrow Runs on NeoNET"

Corporate Court Ranking (2071): #2

Corporate Status: AAA, public corporation

World Headquarters: Boston, UCAS

Chairman of the Board: Anders Malmstein

CEO: Richard Villiers

Major Shareholders: Richard Villiers (22%), Anders Malmstein (18%), Celedyr (13.5%), Trans-Latvian Enterprises (11%), Samantha Villiers (7%), Miles Lanier (4%), Other minor shareholders (24.5%)

Major Divisions and Notable Subsidiaries: Aurora Design (Matrix/ARE Design), Belle Mead Comm (Matrix/Infrastructure), Bristol Optics (Industrial Electronics), Cavalier Arms Ltd. (Personal Armament), Central Industrial (Heavy Industry), China Cable (Matrix), Commonwealth Enterprises (Financial/Investment), CompuForce (Matrix/Drones), Cyberspace Development Corp. (Matrix/ARE Software), Dorada Genetech (Biotech/Genetech), Emerging Futures (Biotech & Cybernetics R&D), Erika (Consumer Electronics/Hardware), Everyman (Consumer Goods), FTL Technologies (Matrix/Hardware), Fuchi Orbital (Space/Communications), Interscience Inc. (R&D Consultancy), JRJ Industries (Holding/Financial), Matrix Systems (Matrix/Hardware), Mindstrom Neurotechnologies (Cybernetics/Nanotech), Minuteman Security (Security Service Provider), NanoGlobe (Nanotech/Cybernetics), Nightengale's (Cybernetics/Clinics), Novatech (Matrix/Everything), Pacific Rim Computer Consultants (Financial), Pioneer Cybernetics (Cybernetics), PULSE (Matrix/Consumer Electronics), Silveril Investments (Financial/Investment), Simplex Software (Software), Suzhou Biotechnology (Biotech/Genetech), S&S Agricorp (Agribusiness), Transys Neuronet (Cybernetics/Biotech), T99 (Magical Research), Visionary Design Works (Architecture/Industrial Design), Walker Aerodesign (Aerospace), Wolfware (Matrix/Software), Ultra (Consumer Electronics/Cybernetics)

Dominant Business Language: English

ANOTHER HISTORY LESSON

Posted by: Icarus

NeoNET is deeply rooted in the chaotic times of the Awakening and the first Crash, and the megacorp's history deeply affects how it does business today.

The origins of NeoNET can be traced back to Richard Villiers. A successful corporate raider, Villiers had built a solid reputation an impressive portfolio of company properties when in '34 he came into possession of technological data and blueprints that would change the world of electronics and Matrix communications. Villiers recognized his find as a ticket to the big time, and he offered the data to the Fuchi Corporation, an electronics giant run by the Yamana and Nakatomi families. In return he would receive a thirty percent stake in the company.

When Fuchi released the world's first portable cyberdeck two years later, the corp created a new market and vaulted into the AAA league. Fuchi's rapid growth enabled each member of the Villiers-Yamana-Nakatomi triumvirate to establish a regional powerbase, with Villiers controlling Fuchi Americas, Korin Yamana managing Fuchi Pan-Europa, and Shikei Nakatomi running Fuchi Asia.

- I imagine most of you youngsters out there are wondering, "what the hell is a cyberdeck?" Well, back then, commlinks like you pups have these days were hard to imagine. So what's a cyberdeck? Take half the functionalities of your commlink at half the connection speed, and multiply the size by ten and you get the idea. Sounds clunky, but at least you could rewire and hardcode it yourself.

- FastJack

- How Villiers came into possession of the design data for cyberdecks is a good story. The original developers both died in freak accidents right before announcing what would be their company's first product. The schematics of their groundbreaking cyberdeck design were based on tech used by Echo Mirage to fight the first Crash virus; this led to the prevailing theory that the developers were snuffed by military leaders who didn't want their tech in the hands of the public.

- The Smiling Bandit

- It's pretty much accepted that Villiers was one of the investors backing the developers, and that's how he got wind of the tech. Then it was just a simple matter of removing obstacles between him and an invite into the megacorporate elite.

- Glitch

- Villiers's dirty tricks could fill archives—rumors of his involvement in the death of Nakatomi's father persist to this day. The elder Nakatomi was shot by his limo driver after he initially rejected Villiers's proposal. In turn, the limo driver was killed before being brought to trial. The key thing to remember is that Villiers is one ruthless son of a bitch and always has been.

- Cosmo

Over the next two decades, Fuchi would become the household name for Matrix, software, and consumer-electronics technology.



→

DUNKELZAHN'S WILL AND THE FALL OF FUCHI

In 2057, the assassination of UCAS President Dunkelzahn destroyed the delicate balance between the Fuchi factions and threw the corporate world into a shadow war.

The dragon's will tipped the balance by bequeathing additional Fuchi stock to Villiers, as well as four million shares of Renraku stock to Miles Lanier, Fuchi's head of security and Villiers's right-hand man. Lanier defected to Renraku and Villiers immediately moved to expand his powerbase, triggering a power struggle with Nakatomi and Yamana that paralyzed Fuchi.

In the subsequent two years, Fuchi consistently lost market share to rivals Renraku and MCT. This prompted a lawsuit that led to all three megacorps appearing before the Corporate Court. In the end, the Court ordered Lanier to leave Renraku and hand himself over to Fuchi in exchange for an unspecified sum in reparations.

While everyone was distracted by these public maneuvers, Villiers orchestrated a killing blow to Fuchi right under his rivals' noses. Ever the clever and cunning number cruncher, he secretly reassigned major parts of Fuchi Americas into umbrella holding companies under his personal control.

- No kidding. NeoNET's space assets, for example, date back to Fuchi's space program.
- Orbital DK

When Villiers suddenly announced the sale of half his Fuchi shares, Fuchi's stock plummeted. The stock price then rose to more than triple its original price as Yamana and Nakatomi raced one another to pick up Villiers's shares. When the stock price reached its peak, Villiers immediately sold his remaining stock and pocketed hundreds of millions of nuyen. Simultaneously, he announced the formation of Novatech. Villiers's new corporation consisted of significant Fuchi Americas assets, his private holdings, and most important, the Villiers-owned JRJ Industries—and its seat on the Corporate Court.

Ten months later, on July 28, 2060, Fuchi officially ceased to exist. By that time Shikei Nakatomi had joined Renraku, which he saw as the perfect vehicle to continue his crusade against Villiers. Korin Yamana offered his Fuchi assets as a matrimonial gift when he married into the Shiawase family by taking Mitsuko Shiawase, a woman sixty years his junior, as his wife.

- Icarus doesn't mention it, but Villiers's ex-wife, Samantha, played a major role in helping her former husband set up Novatech. After Villiers unloaded his Fuchi stock, Yamana and Nakatomi each owned 49 percent of the megacorp. She sold her two-percent stake to Yamana in exchange for a one-year truce that allowed Villiers to get Novatech up and running. She also took a cushy seat at her ex-husband's company.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- With the exception of Lanier, Villiers trusts only his own blood. The Villiers family has a history of involvement in Richard's endeavors since the Fuchi days.
- FastJack

A SHORT HISTORY OF NOVATECH

Novatech's future initially looked bright. Cash flow and a popular brand name fueled its rapid growth, enabling Richard Villiers to borrow enough to mount an aggressive expansion and consolidation policy. Fuchi was no more, and Novatech's primary competitor, Renraku, was soon busy dealing with the Seattle Arcology debacle.

But despite this initial success, Novatech was as fragile as a house of cards. Villiers's borrowing had saddled the megacorp with considerable debt, which left Novatech vulnerable when it came under attack from Arthur Dankwalther, a former Fuchi Americas employee who held Villiers responsible for Fuchi's destruction. Using funds bequeathed him by the great dragon Dunkelzahn, Dankwalther orchestrated a crusade against Villiers that weakened the corporation's financial position and caused its creditors to begin calling in their loans. Ultimately, Villiers had no choice but to announce that he was taking Novatech public to raise the money he desperately needed to keep the company afloat.

- Dankwalther bought the farm early on in the Crash. It's hard to dodge a Thor shot, a solid projectile fired from orbit at its designated target.
- Orbital DK

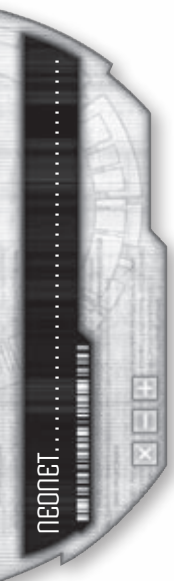
Meanwhile, other events that would shape Villiers's fortunes began to transpire when cybertech giant Transys Neuronet announced a merger with Finnish telecom powerhouse Erika. Both Transys and Erika had already profited heavily from their Wireless Matrix Initiative (WMI) joint venture. A merger would give them a near monopoly as the global rollout of the wireless protocols and related technology got underway.

Under the steady hand of CEO Anders Malmstein, Erika (itself born from a merger of former telecom giants Nokia and Ericsson) had evolved from a semi-nationalized Finnish company to an AA corporation with influence that extended across the Scandinavian Union and the New European Economic Community. In contrast, Transys was beset by an ongoing proxy war between its two major shareholders, the great dragon Celedyr and the British banking consortium Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal.

During the merger, the dragon attempted to buy the majority of Erika's public stock, a move that would have put him in the driver's seat. What he didn't factor in was just how dire a position his attacks had placed Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal. Facing mounting losses and no end in sight to Celedyr's aggression, Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal was receptive when Erika-CEO Malmstein approached the consortium and offered it a chance to recoup its losses. All the consortium had to do was sell him its shares in Transys. Pushed to the wall, Hildebrandt-Kleinfort's board did the unthinkable: they sold out and gave Celedyr the finger.

Before the dragon could react, Novatech's public offering began. Almost instantaneously, the Matrix suddenly turned against us and threw the world into chaos.

- Shiawase attempted a hostile takeover of Novatech during the IPO. The attempt was horribly executed and motivated by a loyalty test within Shiawase's board rather than sound strategy.
- Naginata



MEET THE VILLIERS

Samantha Villiers

The charming and cold-blooded Samantha Villiers is Richard Villiers's ex-wife (society blogs claimed the marriage ended because the two were just too competitive). She holds a seven percent stake in NeoNET, and since her quick and clean divorce from Richard, she has continued to provide emotional support to him in times of need. Behind closed doors, however, she often argues with him about the direction of NeoNET.

An expert acquisitions analyst, Samantha recently beat out Evo to purchase the patents to several promising inventions developed in the Chicago Makers Collective. But instead of buying the patents for NeoNET, she instructed her lawyers to acquire them in her name. This seems to support the rumors that Samantha is getting tired of just being Richard Villiers's ex-wife and has ambitions of her own.

Cara Villiers

Samantha and Richard Villiers's only child, Cara Villiers grew up amid constant fears of kidnapping or assassination attempts from her parents' corporate enemies. Like many a maladjusted corporate brat, Cara developed a rebellious streak early on—perhaps in response to the overprotective corporate environment surrounding her. Cara's relationships with both her parents have been difficult, but over the past several years Richard Villiers has gained his daughter's trust and given her increasing responsibilities and managerial challenges at NeoNET. Insiders whisper that the

fiery-haired Cara is being groomed to carry the torch should Richard Villiers ever decide to step down or otherwise be removed from play.

Darren Villiers

A capable adept and a dwarf, Richard's younger brother Darren Villiers is the only known metahuman in the Villiers bloodline. Darren handled shadow ops for his older brother at Fuchi and Novatech, then moved to NeoNET with the rest of the clan. Relations between the brothers became icy when Richard discovered Darren had tried to join Celedyr's Knights of Rage shortly after the merger of Novatech and Transsys-Erika. Recently, the ascetic Darren has joined forces with Samantha Villiers. The two have been hatching aggressive expansion plans for NeoNET TransAsia, causing headaches for Richard.

Martin Villiers

Richard's brother Martin Villiers maintains a low-key appearance and demonstrates altruistic behavior, in contrast to Richard. Never part of the family's corporate schemes and machinations, Martin has generally preferred to compete with Richard outside his brother's sphere of economic influence. Martin funded several major construction projects to help rebuild his hometown, Boston, after the Winternight terrorist attacks. In the process, he became Boston's second most influential magnate after his brother. Political analysts predict that Martin has a future in local or even federal politics.

Martin is rumored to have made millions of nuyen during the Novatech IPO.

While the world was still climbing out of the rubble of Crash 2.0, Malmstein and Villiers met in secret. The newly formed Transsys-Erika possessed the proprietary WMI technology, and Novatech's IPO had left it with enough money to capitalize on that technology. It was a match made in heaven—and one that would further reduce Celedyr's stake.

THE BIRTH OF NEONET

When the smoke had cleared, a new megacorporate giant had risen from the ashes: NeoNET. Over the subsequent years, NeoNET would leverage its assets to become the world's second biggest megacorporation, after Saeder-Krupp.

Soon after the birth of NeoNET, it became clear that Malmstein, canny dwarf that he is, had started negotiations with Villiers even before Celedyr had time to react to his minority position in Transsys-Erika. Villiers recognized an offer he couldn't refuse and cut a deal with Malmstein, leaving the dragon outsmarted by mortal humans for the second time in a row.

Villiers became the corporation's CEO and president, basking in the media coverage. Malmstein was appointed chairman of the board, and, as a gesture of appeasement, Celedyr was given the position of R&D director.

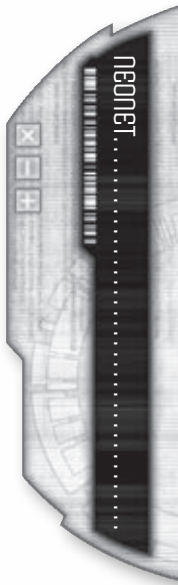
Additionally, Trans-Latvian Enterprises, a part owner of Novatech, became a major shareholder in NeoNET as a result of the merger. The elusive investment consortium appointed Swaraj Verghese as its representative on the board. A former Erika executive, Verghese had been in line to replace Malmstein as CEO after the Transsys-Erika merger. But when Malmstein outmaneuvered Celedyr and claimed the top spot for himself, Verghese left Erika.

The NeoNET board members soon busied themselves with individual pet projects. Malmstein worked to finalize NeoNET's global business and expansion strategy, while Villiers directed the day-to-day management of the integration and business development following the merger. And Celedyr focused on the scientific and technological development that has continued to fuel NeoNET's success.

- Villiers knows his position is secure as long as he maintains the support of his ex-wife Samantha and Miles Lanier. Together, their shares account for eleven percent of NeoNET stock. But despite their support, Villiers doesn't have enough votes to enact his agenda without compromising. Meanwhile, Verghese has played nice and stayed out of everyone's way.

- Cosmo

Urgent Message...



So far, the equal strength of NeoNET's component brands—Transys Neuronet, Erika, and Novatech—seems to have contributed to harmonious relations on the board. While Celedyr remains a minor shareholder, Malmstein approved the nomination of Fiona Barleth—Transys Neuronet's former CEO and Celedyr's long-time associate—as president of the Transys division in late '71, a move that soothed tensions somewhat.

- So you're saying a megalomaniac business shark, a conniving Euro-traditionalist, a scorned executive, and a great dragon are actually playing nice with each other. And that it's all for the greater good of the company?
- Baka Dabora
- Actually no. More on the internal situation further down.
- Icarus

WHAT THEY DO AND HOW THEY DO IT

NeoNET's structure and business model are unique, which reflects its unusual composition: a former megacorp (Novatech) and two merged AA multinationals (Transys-Neuronet and Erika). Reorganizing and branding the new megacorporate giant was no easy feat, as Transys, Erika, and Novatech were all internationally recognized brands in their own right. The solution was simple—keep the established brands and launch NeoNET as an umbrella brand encompassing them all.

NeoNET managed to quickly roll out a bevy of new products designed to complement and enhance the existing core brands. The rapid introduction of the new product lines was made possible by NeoNET's head start in consumer electronics and commlinks designed to work with the new wireless protocols, along with a little assistance from Celedyr's latest developments.

Some observers view the conglomerate as an unending set of megacorporate babushka dolls. Personally, I see it more as a series of interlinked cancerous nodes.

- Hah! So the wireless stuff does give you cancer after all!
- Glitch

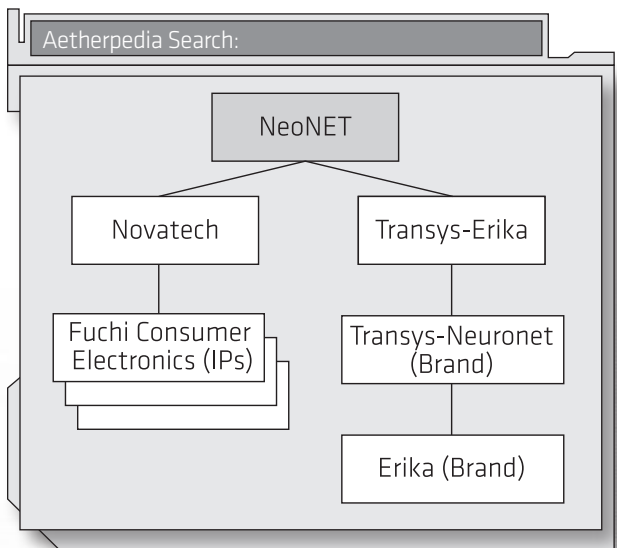
THE STRUCTURE

Whereas other megacorps go to great lengths to “trim the fat” in their organizations and consolidate operations, NeoNET has taken an opposite tack and seems to thrive on the proliferation of its departments, divisions and subsidiaries. The three merged corporations—Transys Neuronet, Erika, and Novatech—are now separate divisions. Each maintains an entirely autonomous infrastructure and commands a legion of subsidiaries.

NeoNET has limited organizational consolidation to two key departments: R&D and financial management. R&D coordination and management is concentrated around the Caerleon R&D headquarters. Caerleon acts as a central clearinghouse for all the innovations under development by the megacorp's myriad assets and think tanks around the world. Caerleon assesses these various projects and prioritizes them. NeoNET's financial management is performed by Novatech's Boston headquarters.

In all other aspects, the megacorp's divisions and subsidiaries maintain a great degree of autonomy. While corporate analysts and bean counters in general point out the organizational redundancies of this model, many overlook the central driver behind this approach: competition. Internally, divisions and subsidiaries have to fight each other for resources and personnel, which motivates them to create superior products and efficiently organize their operations. And those superior products and efficient operations generally do quite well when they compete in the open market.

- On the downside, NeoNET's size and complexity prevents many third-tier executives from seeing the bigger picture. Rivalries between competing subsidiaries are common and regularly escalate into black ops. Apparently, collateral damage hasn't exceeded Villiers's expectations—yet.
- Stone
- In the past, Lanier kept an eye on any internal fire that threatened to spread uncontrollably. But things are heating up on several fronts since he disappeared. And NeoNET's rivals Renraku and Shiawase certainly seek ways to exploit NeoNET's structure as well.
- Cosmo

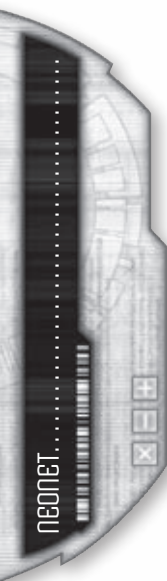


THE FULL MONTY—NEONET'S BRANDS, PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Joe Average knows NeoNET first and foremost as the predominant Matrix service provider. Next, he recognizes it for its wide array of software products and commlinks. And of course, its consumer-electronics products—which include fully customizable electronic appliances and kitchen systems, media-entertainment and comm consoles, all incorporating Novatech's sophisticated programming and reliable hardware—have established NeoNET as a household name.

Novatech

Under the established Novatech brand, NeoNET has ascended to the top of the consumer-electronics market with its wide variety of commlinks, open-source software and related services. Novatech has targeted both the public and corporate



markets with everything from public-data hosting to corporate Matrix-security suites. Additionally, Novatech has heavily invested in skill- and knowsoft programs, always compatible with its core software products and operating systems and interchangeable with other NeoNET brands.

Erika

While Novatech targets public and corporate customers, Erika focuses on the industrial and governmental sectors by offering data-traffic infrastructure design services, as well as specialized and near-autonomous knowbots and software agents. Erika constantly expands its range of products and services; its exclusive media productions, sim flicks, documentaries, and education programs are the latest additions to its offerings. All are promoted with aggressive marketing campaigns that offer skill chips and knowsofts for most of the advertised programming.

Transys

Transys is NeoNET's cyber- and biotech brand, and it has benefitted greatly from both the wireless revolution and Novatech's expertise in cybernetics. The division is at the forefront of the augmentations market, with products ranging from wifi upgrades for all kinds of augmentations to nanotech-scale innovations with fully integrated wireless capabilities. Transys also offers a full range of medical services, including cyber-, bio-, and nanotech surgery. The division also manufactures related equipment and provides maintenance services for hospitals, body clinics, and medical-service providers such as Doc Wagon, Aztech's Medicarro, and Ares's Info Santé.

- To a large extent, NeoNET's success is due to Celedyr's innovative R&D department. I wonder if the dragon really has more influence over Villiers, or Verghese, than it seems.
- Winterhawk
- He's a dragon, of course he has.
- Baka Dabora

Transys continues to conduct major research on the Emergence of technomancers and the birth of a new generation of AIs, but it has yet to release any product, service, or general information related to these efforts. Several of the research projects could have enormous economic impact, but NeoNET typically hides information about this work in the back pages of quarterly or annual reports.

NeoNET has not yet released any official comment on the ongoing AI/technomancer debate. Insiders say the issue is creating the first serious test of the board's united front. Reportedly, Villiers and Celedyr hold opposing views of the issue. Villiers favors strict regulation of AIs and technomancers, while Celedyr—with support from Verghese and Trans-Latvian Enterprises—supports extending basic metasapience rights to digital constructs. Malmstein has apparently thrown his weight behind Villiers, mostly to keep Celedyr in check.

NEONET'S GLOBAL PRESENCE

Each of the megacorp's core brands—NeoNET, Transys-Erika, and Novatech—is a multinational megacorp in its own

right. All are individually managed, and they sometimes compete with each other. This decentralized corporate structure obscures the megacorp's dominating presence in many markets. However, these component megacorps present a united front when facing threats from rivals such as Renraku and Shiawase in Asia, or Saeder-Krupp in Europe and the Middle East.

The Americas

Villiers's Boston-based Novatech HQ expertly controls and manages NeoNET's complex financial network. The megacorp also owns numerous code labs located throughout the Americas, including Iris Software in the Pueblo Corporate Council, the Sioux Nation's FTL Technologies, and Pacific Rim CompCon in California.

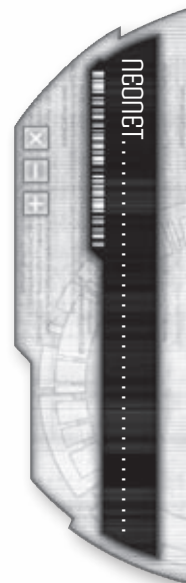
- The sheer number of NeoNET's myriad assets makes it difficult to watch over them all and leaves them vulnerable to being picked off. Texas-based Cavalier Arms, for example, was one small fish in NeoNET's sea of assets until the investment firm Reality Inc. snatched it right from under Villiers's nose.
- Pistons

Erika's presence in the North American media-entertainment market gives NeoNET a strong foothold in the market and puts the megacorp in direct competition with Horizon and Aztechnology. New developments based on Novatech's infamous psychotropic software programs have benefitted Erika's research into consumer behavior and Behavioral Impulse Suggestions—a direction that bears more than a few similarities to Horizon's research in the field. This has fueled the rivalry between the two AAAs, which has escalated during the technomancer/AI crisis. Both corps seem to support technomancers and AI, and the two are waging a shadow war to be the first to unveil the mysteries behind the phenomena.

- It's not just about the secret of technomancer abilities. Celedyr's campaign against Horizon and its ally, the Undernet Alliance, go beyond mere differences in their scientific approaches. The issue seems like a profound philosophical matter to the dragon. While he acknowledges Horizon's scientific progress, he severely dislikes Horizon as a corporation.
- Plan 9
- Maybe he doesn't want someone else meddling with his latest digital obsession?
- Slamm-O!
- I've heard rumors that NeoNET's code labs are suffering from escalating rivalries between mundane hackers and the Emerged. Hell, we still don't know the extent of NeoNET's involvement in the events that led to the Geneva incident.
- Clockwork

Through its biotech research facilities in Argentina, Ecuador, and even Amazonia, NeoNET maintains more than just a token presence in South America.

According to persistent but unconfirmed rumors, NeoNET has been conducting illegal intrusions deep into Amazonian and Aztlan jungles to acquire rare plants and other organic samples



for top-secret biotech projects. These intrusions seem to have the support of the Amazonian government, which gives NeoNET an advantage over its competitors in the region—namely Evo, Shiawase, and the influential Genesis Consortium.

Europe and the Middle East

Europe is the home turf of Transys and Erika, so it's not surprising that business in the Old World accounts for approximately 45 percent of NeoNET's annual revenues. Before teaming up with Novatech, the merged Transys-Erika was already among the top five largest European megacorps and faced stiff opposition from domestic and transnational competitors. The former Transys headquarters in Caerleon, UK, now serves as NeoNET's prime R&D center, uniting the research initiatives of NeoNET's component divisions and subsidiaries. Current projects range from research on advanced cybernetics over Matrix architecture and protocol development to autonomous software design and, of course, applied AR and VR communication technologies.

- Caerleon is where NeoNET designs the future. Research at the center puts it in the forefront of intelligent-host design and the programming of near-autonomous software agents. Indeed, the center has handed over an entire nexus within its development environment to be self-administrated by the latest generation of knowbots.

- Plan 9

- You think they're trying to create breeding grounds for new AI?
- /dev/grll

- Celedyr and Villiers argue about the direction of the research. Apparently, Celedyr envisions applications such as sophisticated market analysis and consumer-behavior "futurecasting," while Villiers would like to use this kind of smartware to manage NeoNET's complex financial streams and futurecast potential acquisition targets.

- Cosmo

Transys-Erika's Finnish headquarters houses the division's global marketing department and manages NeoNET's European and Middle East operations. Whereas CEO Villiers deals with the Corporate Court directly or through NeoNET's representative judge, Lynn Osbourne, Anders Malmstein handles NeoNET's relations with the NEEC and other European political matters.

In the Middle East, NeoNET recently won the contract to provide Matrix services in Egypt. Observers see the victory as the beginning of an aggressive expansion into the region for the megacorp. Celedyr played an influential and atypically visible role in this victory. NeoNET's bid triggered heavy resistance from Saeder-Krupp's Aetherlink, as well as sabotage attempts from Islamic radicals. But the dragon successfully countered these obstacles by courting influential Dubai investors with ties to Egyptian officials and making generous donations to the prestigious Alexandrian library project.

- No dragon actually resides in Egypt, but the country is the region's center of draconic interest. The great dragon Aden is backing the Islamist radicals opposed to NeoNET's expansion. And the dragon Masaru remotely manages the library project from his Philippine lair.
- Elijah

- Clever wyrms. By acting through proxies, they've circumvented the ancient legend that dragons cannot enter Egypt.
- Frosty

- The dragon Masaru calls the shots in the Philippines. Since Celedyr began greasing Masaru's palm by supporting the library project, NeoNET has won several profitable contracts in the islands.
- Mihoshi Oni

Asia/Pacific

NeoNET TransAsia oversees NeoNET's current Asian presence, which primarily consists of myriad associated A-level outfits scattered throughout the continent's main economic centers. These outfits serve as marketing offices and distribution centers for NeoNET. And in Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan, they maintain manufacturing lines that ensure a steady supply of goods to NeoNET customers worldwide.

In India, NeoNET is a highly influential presence in the Mangalore-Bangalore-Chennai Corridor's council through the Mangalore-Bangalore-Chennai Consortium. And the megacorp has significantly expanded its foothold on the sub-continent through its recent acquisition of the Bombay-based Jeyabalan Consortium.

Africa

Many corporations had viewed Africa as the next low-cost production region, but most have turned away from the Dark Continent due to the constant strife, tribal wars, and civil unrest that plague the region. NeoNET owns a few low-profile, third-tier subsidiaries in Africa and focuses its regional efforts in centers of commerce only, where it uses its Matrix-infrastructure services to open markets for its consumer-electronic periphery products.

Recently, Africa has become something of an obsession for Verghese, who sees the continent as a potentially massive consumer market. But Villiers and Celedyr oppose Verghese's vision of a full-fledged expansion into Africa.

- Verghese is looking to establish a regional power base under his control, similar to Villiers's Novatech and Celedyr's Caerleon. The fierce competition in Asia precludes that region as a setting for Verghese's power base. Bribing and threatening Africa's tribal kings and regional warlords into submission is easier—and they can always be moved out of the way later.

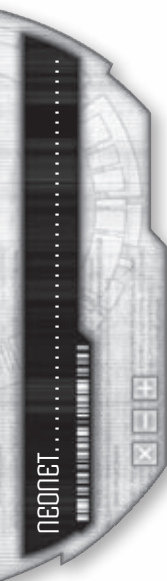
- Picador

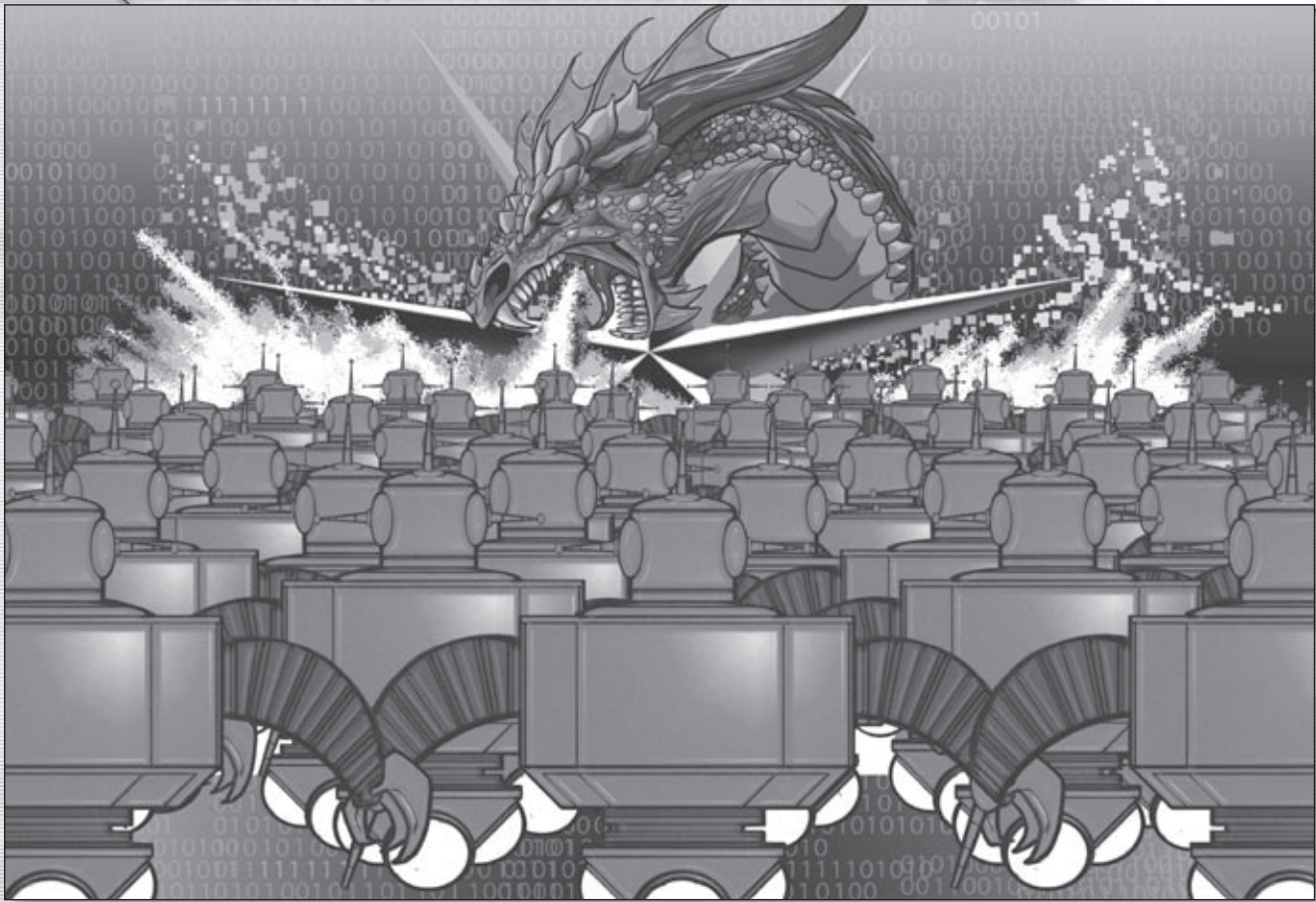
A CLASH OF VULTURES—NEONET'S MAJOR SHAREHOLDERS

The intricate web of NeoNET's myriad subsidiaries, consortiums, and corporate affiliates makes it difficult to gauge NeoNET's overall size. A closer look at the corporation's board of directors suggests that the confusing division of influence and power distribution is deliberate, rather than an unplanned side effect of the merger that formed the megacorp.

Richard Villiers

The merger solidified Richard Villiers's reputation as one of the most skilled corporate sharks in the world, but Villiers is not satisfied with NeoNET's current status quo. The situation is





INCOMING FEED.....

simply too similar to the Fuchi deadlock for his comfort. Villiers controls a large percentage of NeoNET shares as well as large parts of Novatech and other privately owned assets, but several thorns continue to sting his side.

Richard's vision of NeoNET's future differs greatly from Celedyr's, and the difference has led to heated debates between the two. Villiers has called the dragon's course far too esoteric and theoretical to be of any economic value for the corporation. In turn, Celedyr has frequently criticized the megacorp's complex financial structure, which is firmly controlled by Villiers. Additionally, Celedyr has lately been accusing Richard of delaying the flow of required funds into some of Celedyr's Caerleon projects.

Always a loner, Villiers seems especially isolated these days. Richard's long-time friend and trusted advisor Miles Lanier has been notably absent from his duties, and Villiers's daughter Cara is only slowly beginning to fill the consequent gap. Lanier's disappearance seems to be tied to Trans-Latvian Enterprises. The mysterious Estonian company remains a major shareholder in Novatech and is rumored to be connected to a European Mafia blueblood. (I know on good authority that Villiers had directed Lanier to look into the ownership of Trans-Latvian—and Lanier's disappearance might be a sign that he came close to the truth.)

- Villiers is not the only one looking into Trans-Latvian. Celedyr is on it, too. And Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal is tracking Celedyr's moves because it views Trans-Latvian as its best chance to get back into

NeoNET. Recently, HKB intercepted the following communication from a small Knights of Rage cadre that's also shadowing Lanier.

- Stone

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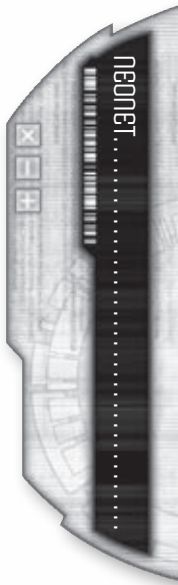
As per the intercepted memos and communication, it becomes apparent that C has appointed agents to follow Miles Lanier and identify the reason behind his absence. The Knights of Rage have only recently picked up an electronic trail of Lanier—a pair of tickets for a Riga/Prague/Rome flight booked under one of Lanier's aliases. Lanier's boarding at Riga was later confirmed by facial-recognition software.

We highly recommend continuing to use external assets to track the Knights of Rage, rather than Lanier directly. Our Oversight Board contacts also confirm interest in Lanier's whereabouts from an unidentified party in upper NEEC circles. We suggest making discreet inquiries via the usual channels in Brussels and Europort.

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- I'm wondering about Lanier's stopover in Prague. Could it be that the whole Trans-Latvian affair is a smoke screen and Villiers really has Lanier looking into Celedyr's dragon affairs?
- Winterhawk

Another thorn in Villiers's side is the diminishing importance of JRJ International to NeoNET. A founding member of the Corporate



Court, JRJ International—privately owned by Villiers—secures NeoNET’s seat on the Court. But NeoNET has reached such a vast size that it would warrant AAA status and a seat on the Corporate Court even without JRJ International and Villiers’s Novatech assets.

As Villiers’s importance to NeoNET has begun to wane, he has attempted to make himself indispensable by implementing complex financial-control procedures and administrative routines for the megacorp and keeping control of NeoNET’s finances in Novatech’s Boston HQ.

- Figuring out what belongs to NeoNET and how is a pain in the ass, but it can be a lifesaver. I shouldn’t have to say it, but do your legwork before running for or against NeoNET.
- FastJack

Anders Malmstein

The shy Finnish entrepreneur prefers to stay out of the spotlight, but Anders Malmstein’s position as CEO of the world’s second-largest megacorp makes it difficult to avoid the public eye. With nearly four decades at the helm of Erika, the old dwarf knows the European markets inside out and is considered one of most influential executives in the Old World. His network of contacts is rumored to rival those of jet-set icon Norman Spinrad or the French noble families. And his word carries great weight within the NEEC and the Scandinavian Union.

Behind closed doors, many NEEC member countries fear Lofwyr’s domination of the European economy, and Malmstein has exploited those fears to advance NeoNET’s presence in Europe. He has successfully portrayed NeoNET as a bulwark against Lofwyr, offering the member countries NeoNET Matrix services and communication technologies as a more secure and reliable alternative to Saeder-Krupp’s Aetherlink.

Malmstein’s relationship with former contender-for-the-throne Swaraj Verghese has become distant after the Transys-Erika merger. Malmstein carefully observes Verghese’s actions and decisions on the NeoNET board, vigilantly watching for a hidden agenda or potential threats.

Swaraj Verghese

Swaraj Verghese was the last exec to join NeoNET’s board of directors, but he quickly became the corporation’s most recognized public face after Richard Villiers. A trideogenic and eloquent speaker, Verghese has skillfully cultivated NeoNET’s image as a powerful and future-oriented megacorp while carefully deflecting attention away from Villiers’s cutthroat corporate behavior. Verghese has also managed to pre-empt the public image of NeoNET as “another dragon-run megacorporation” by successfully downplaying Celedyr’s influence on the board.

Although Verghese lost his bid to become chairman after the NeoNET merger, he retained his position on the new megacorp’s board. Trans-Latvian’s selection of Verghese as its proxy surprised and disappointed his fellow board members, who had been hoping for a glimpse behind the curtain of the elusive investment firm.

Mediating between Villiers on one side and Celedyr on the other is no enviable task, but Verghese has risen to the challenge. Villiers still holds the key to NeoNET’s Corporate Court presence, while Celedyr’s innovations are integral to securing the corporation’s future. Neither Villiers’s nor the dragon’s schemes and

agendas are easy to perceive, but Verghese has earned much respect for his skilled mediation and strategy of mutual compromise.

- Strategies such as Verghese’s usually work until a conflict of some sort erupts among the board members. At NeoNET, the personal agendas of the other shareholders, such as Samantha Villiers, have their own dynamics and add new layers of complexity to the mix.
- Cosmo

Celedyr

The great dragon Celedyr ranks third on the list of NeoNET’s major shareholders, after Richard Villiers and Anders Malmstein. Celedyr’s position as NeoNET’s Director of R&D allows the dragon to combine his personal interest and fascination with the Matrix with his work.

His pet project—enabling Awakened critters to communicate via the Matrix—suffered a major setback as the dragon Eliohann, Celedyr’s “partner in crime” and the only known dragon with a functioning datajack, has been comatose since Crash 2.0. Even before his demise, Eliohann was rumored to have developed severe mental trauma from the initial implant surgery, but the dragons’ joint research continued nonetheless.

- I’m surprised no one mentions the rumors of Eliohann having survived the Crash as a pure virtual gestalt. Or Ghostwalker’s apparent visit to Caerleon shortly after the incident. Or that Eliohann apparently still attends executive meetings.
- Plan 9
- Dragons are inherently magical—there’s no way Eliohann would have survived in the Matrix. Heck, the rumors of software constructs resembling metahumans that died during the crash are just that, rumors.
- Winterhawk
- Some of Celedyr’s projects are considered fringe science. I came across the following outbound memo to Rhiannon Glendower, Duchess of Snowdonia and a close associate of Celedyr.
- Beaker

//upload email :: user Beaker :: 05. 09. 72//

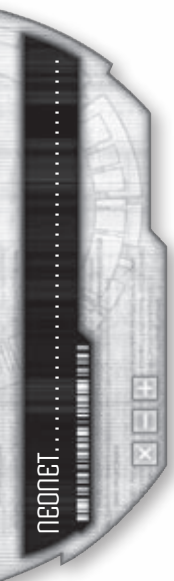
From: Dr. Gordon Browne
To: Dr. Francois Dareau

Dr. Dareau:

Please be informed we require another shipment of quartz crystals shortly. We appreciate the Duchess’s continued support and will provide detailed analyses once we reach the next stage of the Imago project. Unfortunately, company protocol forbids the participation of non-NeoNET personnel in the project, regardless of their excellent qualifications. Therefore we must refuse your request to visit Caerleon and observe the project’s progress.

We await your reply and shipment details.

Kind regards,
Dr. Gordon Browne
//end attachment//



- Browne previously was in charge of Project Enlight, NeoNET's technomancer research program. Imago somehow rings a bell, I just can't put my finger on it.
- The Smiling Bandit

Celedyr's arcane knowledge and skills have benefitted NeoNET greatly. The mystical sector had been a weak spot for both Fuchi and Novatech, but having a great dragon as R&D director has certainly closed that gap for NeoNET.

The megacorp has shown no interest in becoming a market leader for mystical goods or spell formulas. But its recent breakthrough in manatech—the science of creating technological augmentations for Awakened beings—will certainly open a new and profitable market for NeoNET. To push the envelope in manatech developments, Celedyr has reached out to several reputable magical-research groups and Awakened orders while severing his relationships with others, such as the British Ordo Maximus in 2070.

- The dragon's vast range of interests makes him look like he's suffering from AIPS or some attention disorder at the very least. From his personal war against Horizon to his interest in the British ley lines to the rumored involvement of the Knights of Rage in the recent theft of the Phaistos Disc, Celedyr's claw prints are all over the map.
- Elijah
- Celedyr remains a Matrix junkie with a dream of online communication for dracoforms and other sentient paranormal critters. He's also fascinated with linguistics, both ancient and modern, and he's entangled in the usual complex web of rivalries and intrigues with other dragons. That pretty much explains his seemingly inexplicable behavior.
- Frosty

Trans-Latvian Enterprises

Officially based in Tallinn, Estonia, Trans-Latvian Enterprises has fueled the rumor mills ever since it burst on the scene as a major Novatech shareholder.

Little is known about Trans-Latvian's background and corporate history, ostensibly due to data losses caused by the Matrix crashes of 2029 and 2064. Trans-Latvian was held by Trans-Europa Holding, a perfectly legit holding company owned by European Mafia youngsters, when Villiers used it to grab Fuchi America's assets prior to the fall of Fuchi and his formation of Novatech.

Apparently, Villiers expected Trans-Europa to sell the assets back to him after the formation of Novatech. But before he could do so, Trans-Europa sold Trans-Latvian to an unidentified third party—who remains unidentified to this day. After announcing the formation of Novatech, Villiers called on the new owners of Trans-Latvian, but they refused to play along and sell the assets back. Instead, they held onto them and became the shareholders of a twenty-four percent stake in Novatech. And when Novatech merged with Transys-Erika to form NeoNET, that stake turned into an eleven percent share of the new megacorp.

- So how did Villiers then come out on top? He owned fewer shares in Novatech than Trans-Latvian, and now he owns twenty-two percent of NeoNET.
- 2XL

- Villiers received an extra fifteen percent for bringing JRJ Industries into the merger and personal funds from the IPO allowed him to buy even more.
- Mr. Bonds

Trans-Latvian's eleven percent stake entitles it to attend board meetings and cast votes in directorial matters, which it does through its proxy, Swaraj Verghese. The owners of Trans-Latvian remain unidentified; rumored owners include Ordo Maximus vampires, the comatose Eliohann, and others too outlandish to warrant mention.

- Trans-Europa is closely aligned with Boston-based Franklin Associates, another mobster corp. Digging around Martin Villiers background, you'll find that Franklin helped him score heavily during the initial Novatech coup and the NeoNET merger. Coincidence?
- Mr. Bonds
- Trans-Europa also maintains ties to the Vatican bank and its Polish equivalent. In fact, the more I think about it, the more the setup reminds me of a typical money-laundering scheme between the Vatican and the Mob.
- Goat Foot

- So the Roman Catholic Church might own part of a megacorp looking to develop synthetic intelligences—whose very existence threatens many of the Church's fundamental teachings? Excuse me, I've got to update my site.
- Snopes

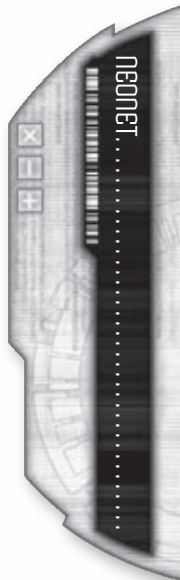
CORPORATE CULTURE (OR LACK THEREOF)

No other megacorporation resembles an economic hydra more so than NeoNET.

After six years, NeoNET has succeeded in uniting its core brands under a single umbrella, but the megacorp has yet to develop a unifying corporate identity, image, and culture. Sophisticated management tools and a growing armada of semi-autonomous software agents have helped execs coordinate the operations of NeoNET's divisions and subsidiaries. But the lack of a strong, central corporate identity has allowed differences in culture, business practices, management philosophies, and competition among NeoNET's divisions and subsidiaries to remain unchecked. Furthermore, employees' loyalties remain focused on the three major shareholders, rather than the megacorp itself.

These cultural differences and divided loyalties run through the entire megacorp, from the warehouse floor to the upper levels of management. Consequently, the shareholders' factions continually compete against one another, using tactics such as deliberate miscommunication and withholding information from one another, passively resisting their rivals' initiatives, forcing rival management teams to work on projects, and worse.

While this competition may pose problems for NeoNET at times, runners can exploit it to their benefit when staging runs against the megacorp.



• Transys employees heard about the NeoNET merger offer through media reports—just two years after the Erika merger. NeoNET’s internal communication has become even worse since then, all in the name of maintaining “internal competition.”

• Dr. Spin

• What makes you think a common corporate culture is even remotely possible when the board of directors is divided between a megalomaniac, a great dragon, and an overly careful diplomat making compromises left, right, and center?

• Kia

• The mention of behavioral control and suggestive impulses makes me think. Everyone assumes NeoNET’s research is aimed at persuading its customers to buy NeoNET products. But perhaps all that research is aimed at creating a common culture among its employees.

• Sunshine

THE OTHER SIDE: RUNNING FOR NEONET

Villiers and Lanier have been using shadowrunners since before the first Crash, and the practice remains prevalent at NeoNET, from the boardroom on down.

The top shareholders and execs—such as Villiers, Verghese, Malmstein, and their cronies—retain reliable assets who have proven themselves on previous missions. And Celedyr, of course, has his own operatives, the Knights of Rage.

NeoNET’s middle managers, on the other hand, always seem to be hiring new talent. The internal competition in the megacorp and the autonomy of NeoNET’s various divisions and subsidiaries create a high demand for runners; every division and subsidiary has its own black-ops budget and even a second-tier NeoNET subsidiary may be an international corporate player. And runners who prove themselves on missions for mid-level Johnsons invariably get noticed by the higher-ups. In fact, a runner who works his way up at NeoNET can earn himself a substantial and steady income.

• I’ve suspected you have an in with the corp, Icarus. But I didn’t know how deep it really runs.

• Aufheben

• My arrangement with NeoNET allows me to take on other jobs, as long as they don’t present a conflict of interest. I remain independent while enjoying the benefits of steady employment and the perks that come with it.

• Icarus

• Needless to say, working your way onto the preferred list of a head honcho also earns you a spot on the shit lists of his rivals. Being caught between opposing sides within the same corporation is never fun—I don’t want to imagine what that’s like on your level of operation, Icarus.

• Riser

Dedicated handlers oversee NeoNET’s black ops on the local level, but these handlers are tied to the corporation’s international network. Interestingly enough, the secret communication lines

between local and regional subsidiaries and NeoNET’s global headquarters work much better than the official business lines.

Miles Lanier had overseen this global network of handlers and shadow agents, and his disappearance has created a serious leadership vacuum, as he didn’t trust anyone enough to share the big picture. The lack of a single overall leader to coordinate the network’s activities has left many handlers and operators isolated. Not surprisingly, NeoNET’s competitors have been quick to exploit this disarray and have bankrolled a series of assassinations aimed at further crippling the megacorp’s shadow network.

THE KNIGHTS OF RAGE

Celedyr’s personal cadre of agents, the Knights of Rage, has been especially active in the shadows recently. The group’s head chapter is based at NeoNET’s Caerleon facility, which also serves as the megacorp’s R&D center and Celedyr’s lair. Originally, the group was a mixed-race African street gang operating in the outskirts of London. The group’s interests—which include such varied subjects as ancient mystics, the latest technomancer plot to take over the world, and AI sightings—closely match the dragon’s interests.

Celedyr met the group in 2043 and won its loyalty by sharing ancient sacred Nubian tablets with its members. Under the dragon’s tutelage, the Knights have prospered and formed new chapters throughout various British sprawls, Egypt, and even Australia.

The Caerleon chapter serves as Celedyr’s eyes and ears—on the streets and in the shadows. Celedyr’s most trusted agent, a woman named Sulawyo, was spotted in Hong Kong on the eve of the technomancer breakout, as well as in Geneva and Lausanne a few days before the UN grid was attacked. Sulawyo’s operations against the Undernet Alliance are the main reasons for the fierce rivalry between NeoNET and Horizon.

• Lately, the Knights have been going after Horizon’s Singularity branch. Behind the scenes, though, lawyers Schmidt, Iakob, and Lei have been hired to mediate some sort of agreement. Interestingly enough, they’re not representing NeoNET, but Emerging Futures—the corporation originally owned by Eliohann.

• Plan 9

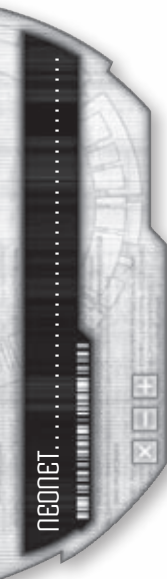
• Schmidt, Iakob, and Lei are really milking their market niche for what it’s worth, but they need to be careful not to step on too many toes. Aside from representing Emerging Futures, Horizon’s another major client of theirs, and they represent a few AIs in their fight for metahuman rights at the UN.

• Kay St. Irregular

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

NeoNET has commanded the public’s attention ever since its formation. Its considerable power and aggressive marketing of its wireless technology has triggered a boom that’s helped revive the post-Crash global economy. Today, NeoNET’s brands and products are found in nearly every household or augmented metahuman, and the megacorporation churns out new gadgets and enters new markets every quarter.

NeoNET still dominates most of the markets it shares with Horizon, Renraku, and Shiawase, but its rivalry with these



competitors has heated up as its corporate rivals have begun to catch up with NeoNET in certain markets and regions. NeoNET also faces challenges from the growing dissent among its board members and their followers. In many instances, this internal dissent has stalled NeoNET's progress or delayed strategic decisions. In the most striking example of this phenomenon, Samantha and Darren Villiers's aggressive push for an all-out Asian expansion has encountered opposition from Richard Villiers, who fears such an effort will reignite the war between NeoNET and its rivals, Renraku and Shiawase. Although Samantha had supported her ex-husband throughout most of his corporate battles, she now pushes her own competing agenda. And while she controls a relatively small number of NeoNET shares, her skilled maneuvering has more than made up for this weakness.

To maintain its growth, NeoNET is expanding its range of products and services constantly by buying up smaller, more flexible competitors and companies with portfolios that enhance the services and products offered by NeoNET's brands. Despite fierce competition from AA and megacorporate rivals on many fronts, NeoNET's efforts are paying off, and the megacorp is close to becoming a one-stop-solution for all of its customers' needs.

- I had been wondering why NeoNET has been sinking massive amounts of cash into orbital construction projects. Instead of challenging Ares's market leadership in heavy construction and engineered materials, NeoNET has been focusing efforts on developing sophisticated drone networks and remote-controlled construction robots. Now it seems clear that NeoNET is positioning itself to win contracts to manage and maintain the Skyhook project.

- Orbital DK

- Or perhaps it's simply applying a different philosophy to win over Ares's customers.

- Sticks

- NeoNET stepped on many toes with its technomancer projects. Several anti-techno interest groups now have NeoNET in their crosshairs. And even groups formerly supportive of the megacorp's technomancer projects are questioning NeoNET's motives after learning of its involvement in the Geneva siege.

- Aufheben

Megawatch Buzz



//Keyword: NeoNET

//Date: 01/01/2072 - Current

Megacorp Probe into Geneva Deadlock

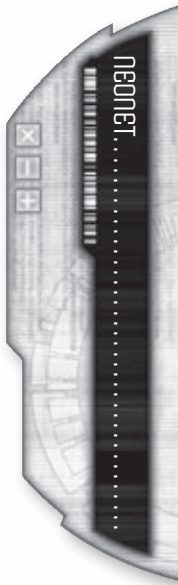
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND—NeoNET agents are investigating the siege of the Geneva grid, according to an intelligence report leaked by an anonymous source today. The investigation is being conducted under the guise of a joint research initiative that NeoNET is undertaking with the Swiss Genom and German AG Chemie corporations, according to the report. This development follows unsubstantiated rumors that the Knights of Rage had been involved in the initial escalation that led to the siege. Meanwhile, the great dragon Celedyr, NeoNET's R&D director, is rumored to be providing covert support to pro-technomancer groups throughout Europe such as the British Lighthouse Brigade and the German *Funkfeuer* ("Beacon"). Both groups are known to operate an "underground railroad" for technomancers.

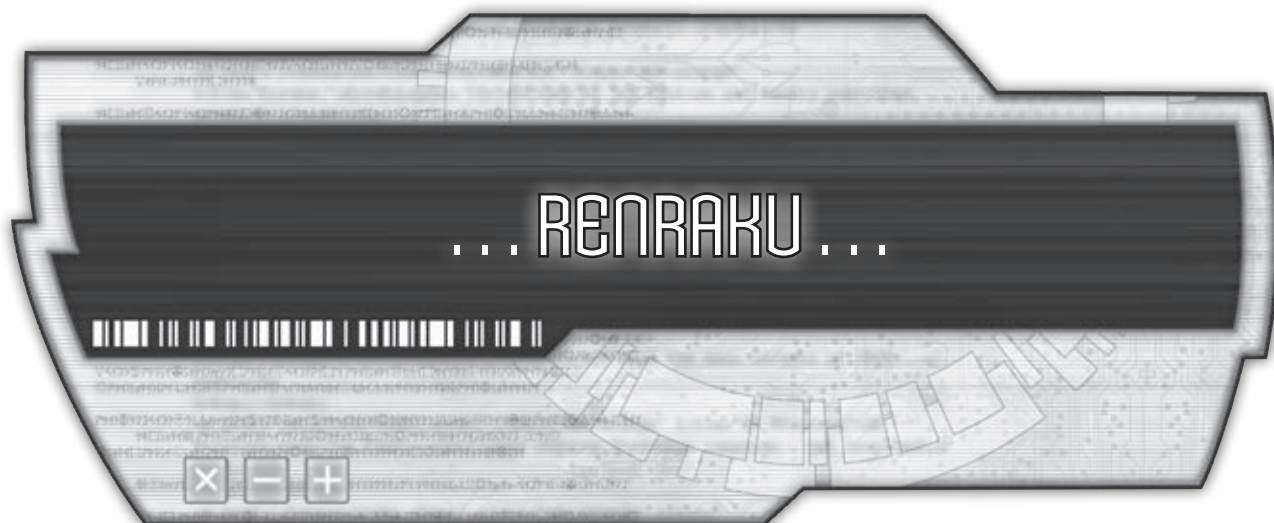
Knights of Rage Named "Persons of Interest" In Recent Attacks

LONDON, ENGLAND—The British Oversight Board has identified the secretive Knights of Rage as "persons of interest" in a series of recent attacks on Druidic circles and Awakened sites across the British Isles, according to an internal board memorandum leaked to the press today. The Lord Protector's Office has not released any indictment in connection with the incidents and has declined to comment on the memorandum. A delegation of NeoNET lawyers and spokespersons were seen leaving the Oversight Board's administrative headquarters in London earlier this week, but the megacorp has declined to comment on the matter.

NeoNET Sues Eastern Tiger Corporation

HONG KONG, HKFEZ—NeoNET TransAsia filed suit against the Eastern Tiger Corporation for patent breach and copyright infringement today. No further details of the lawsuit have been released, but insiders say a Corporate Court ruling in NeoNET's favor would have potentially far-reaching consequences for Hong Kong's Matrix infrastructure and services.





Gray clouds scudded across the midnight sky. Frost watched his man peel free of the UAV and drop straight down. Spettro couldn't fly, but magic and training worked in tandem to cushion the adept's fall. The MCT-Nissan Hellcat bucked sharply, compensating for the lost baggage. Its ocular sensors zoomed in, watching the adept flash across the rooftop to the entrance.

"Keycard access. Use my passkey?" Spettro glanced up at the drone. His blacksuit hugged the shadows, obscuring the runner's form.

"No I got this, Spettro." The Renraku Tower's Matrix system was sculpted like a classic pagoda. Frost floated in the virtual space just above the top level. He triggered a subroutine, an ice blue key, which clicked inside the locked door, spoofing the required code. Forty feet below him a door was now open.

"Ghost is in the shell." Spettro whispered through a bone mic.

"Good, switching to hover mode. Grab the nanoforge and let's get the hell out of here."

A spray of ice signaled his icon's touchdown atop the pagoda. They were using cryptosense sculpting, and it took him a moment to adjust. At once he was aware of a presence, sensing them the same way you notice shadow just beyond your vision. It was there beneath the edge of the eave, watching. Not a script, nothing automated. "There's something in the system with me, Spettro."

"Net security detail?"

He launched a suite of detection programs that cascaded from the sky like winter snow. The thing he could not fully see shifted, evading each falling snowflake. "No, not unless they put their A-Team to work here. Whatever it is, it's wicked fast."

"Frost, contact." Spettro whispered. The hacker risked a glance at the vid feed, splitting his concentration between the thing slinking through the node and the cam on the HUD goggles he'd convinced Spettro to wear. The adept was standing in the path of a soldier clad in the armor of an elite Red Samurai guardsmen, but his armor had blue underpinnings. Spettro moved in quickly, striking the samurai once in the chest. He hit him again in the head, knocking the Kabuto helmet askew.

"What the fuck?" Spettro gasped as the mask fell away, revealing an elven face underneath.

"Something tells me the intel on Renraku was wrong."

Frost felt the net intrusion like a sharp tug on his shirt. Whatever was with him in the node was hacking the UAV. He sent his persona full into the drone's node, ignoring for a moment the scene unfolding beneath him. He was met by a blue-black spider clad in chainmail armor and a kabuki helm. The code was ultra realistic.

"He's down, Frost. Proceeding to target. I need directions."

Frost scanned the interior floorplans. "Turn south at the intersection. It's the fifth door on the right." He felt the tug again but stronger. "Move quickly, omae. I'm losing the UAV!"

He refocused on the digital world just as the blue spider came at him.





RENRAKU

RENRAKU COMPUTER SYSTEMS

Corporate Slogan: "Today's Solutions to Tomorrow's Problems"

Corporate Court Ranking (2072): #5

Corporate Status: AAA, Public Corporation

World Headquarters: Chiba, Japan

CEO: Inazo Aneki (Honorary)

President: Surin Supachai

Major Divisions and Notable Associated Subsidiaries (as of 2072):

Renraku America: Adams-Westlake Mediaworks, Architectural Dynamics, Armada Personnel, GloBank, Champion Financial, FactFiles, Festival Foods, Hypersense, Iris Firmware, Najima Securities

Renraku Asia: Fuchi Corporate Services, Ganbare Aerospace, Shin Chou Kyogo, Terracotta Armaments, Ultimax, Underwater Living, Wakatta Software, Xiao Technologies

Renraku Australasia: Australian Development Corporation, Australian Institute of Magical Research, Baird Communications, Genecraft, Harland & Wolff Nautical Designs, Rees Arcana

Renraku Europa: Blohm & Voss GmbH, Eurosoft, EuroFact, Ferrarius Medical, Gaz-Niki, Izom Armaments, Securitech International, Tetradyne Matrix Systems

Public Services: Australian Telecom Services (Telstra)

Governing Involvements: Manhattan Consortium Member (New York), Sydney Metropolitan Council (Australia), Cairns Metropolitan Council (Australia), Economic Advisor of the Emperor and Japanese Diet (Japan)

THE RENRAKU DOCTRINE

Posted by: **Otaku-Zuku**

The first time I understood ubiquity was at a bar in Guayaquil, Ecuador. I'd been hired by a small shipping conglomerate to investigate some anomalies in their network security. They believed it to be an end user problem, so I spent most of my time mixing with the locals, hoping to stumble upon the right connections to find out who was leaking data. The strangest aspect of this city was that in street dives like this, the locals were using Aztech platforms but running Renraku software. Posing as a freelance systems engineer, I shared what I'd noticed with the bartender. He leaned in close and whispered, "You will find that people who have choices tend to make the right ones."

It was at that moment that I began making my notes for this document. I have always taken Renraku seriously as a corporation. Their words carry weight, and they've always had a lot to say about how the Matrix operates. The AAA rated corp is a founding member of the corporate council and part of the Japanacorp block. However, Renraku has always been just that—a corporation, a job, an opponent, a label. But here at the edge of Amazonia a groundswell of support had blossomed like roses in the desert. Renraku, by accident or aspiration, came to represent a sector of disgruntled Ecuadorians seeking better personal opportunities. To the proletariat, Renraku meant freedom, so Renraku was everywhere.

You see, on the surface megacorporations represent a simpler, cheaper way to do business. The very idea of a megacorp is to gain control of the distribution chains of multiple products from concept to delivery, thus ensuring the end user receives the lowest price and the highest level of interoperability between devices. This is what compels individuals to support them. Corporations are the friendly automaton delivering news vids and hot soycaf to your door daily for only 25¥ a month. Only corporations are not autonomous machines. They are living, breathing entities commanded by people with agendas. Those corporate agendas represent serious political influence, especially in places like Aztlan or Japan where the emperor has tea with corporate leadership, giving their words as much weight as those of his closest advisors. This is why I am sharing my findings with you. It is important to understand Renraku in order to gauge just what they are whispering in our emperor's ear. From those mutterings spring motivations that every technomancer, every AI, and—most importantly to this audience—every shadowrunner needs to understand.

THE 100-YEAR PLAN

Renraku's recent history brings to mind the story of Icarus (the Greek one, not the JackPoint one). Like other Japanacorps from Evo to Yakashima, and even the nation of Japan itself, Renraku has been operating off of a well-developed script meant to position the corporation as the leader in its chosen market. This plan, dubbed the 100-year plan, was based upon the theory that Renraku could continue producing groundbreaking Matrix technologies each and every quarter and use those tech profits to bankroll their expansion into other fields such as biotechnology.

As chronicled in Herkimer's *A Corporate History*, the plan worked to perfection for two decades. Renraku soared to the top of the corporate world. In 2059 they finally flew too close to the sun, inadvertently triggering the birth of the AI Deus inside their revolutionary Seattle Arcology PLTG. Deus quickly assumed

control of the Arcology, forcing a lockdown that led to the deaths of hundreds of people and creating a PR nightmare for the corporation. Renraku, which had been the world technology leader up to that point, stumbled after the Arcology debacle. The Crash made matters quite worse. The corporation lost its number one footing in the tech sector and found that Japan was embracing a “New Way” of thinking that made room for metahumanity and reform. Renraku still had the Emperor’s ear, but not to the extent it once did. To make matters worse, hometown rivals Evo and Mitsuhamma were quickly gaining control of the Japanacorp block. When the mega slipped to number three in Matrix technology, good old-fashioned Japanese shame set in. At the 2067 third-quarter board meeting, corporate president Harry Nakada committed seppuku. The act was a powerful statement, and soon after it Chairman Watanabe stepped down, handing the seat to longstanding board member Shikei Nakatomi. The old corporate butcher ushered in a devastating round of firings. The only division managers to survive the culling were Karl Stadt of Renraku Europa and Surin Supachai of Renraku Asia, who found himself promoted to president.

- Nakada was named president after the company retired the position of CEO. On the books, Inazo Aneki is still listed as CEO, but it’s an honorary title. In fact, Inazo Aneki disappeared into Tibet in 2060 courtesy of a seal he inherited from Dunkehlzahn. He was declared legally dead in ’65 and Renraku officially retired his position soon after. The president of the corporation performs many of the day-to-day duties the CEO would, but the real power rests with the board, and specifically with Nakatomi.

- Mr. Bonds

- Back in ’68 I was hired to insert a Renraku mage into a remote village just outside of the Tibetan border. We reached the village in the late afternoon. Everyone was gathered in the center of town watching a group of monks put together a Dul-tson-kyil-khor painting. I swear one of those monks was a dead ringer for Aneki. The mage I was transporting thought so too. He turned sheet-white the moment he saw him. We left before I could find out more. The mage suddenly seemed in all sorts of a hurry to get out of there.

- Ma’fan

- Aneki didn’t have children, so when he “died” half of his nine percent stake in the company went to the Buddhist priesthood, as indicated by his will. I’m not one to accuse the priesthood of being politically motivated, but I’m sure that stake is at least partially responsible for their vocal support of Renraku.

- Goat Foot

- Speculation’s fun and all, but Aneki’s dead. Stone dead. I should know

- Netcat

Whereas Renraku in the ’60s was led by a woman and was taking baby steps toward social modernity, the new leadership is cut from Chairman Nakatomi’s imperialist mold. All of the new hires have some connection to Japanese fundamentalism. Foremost among them is Kaori Eto, who was hired to lead Renraku Asia. Eto comes with political clout. His family helped establish

the anti-meta policies that have plagued Japan over the last fifty years. Eto and his ilk represent a return to historical/traditional Japanese cultural values. That shift is what sparked my conversation in Guayaquil.

- Stadt and Supachai survived thanks to their divisions posting gains during the tough years. Renraku Asia led the way in data-storage collecting contracts throughout Japan and Southeast Asia. Supachai became known as a deal maker. His team got clients where no one else could. That might have been what won him the presidency. Stadt is a biotech trailblazer. His division has made more leaps and bounds over the past half-decade than Renraku has in the field over their entire history.

- Mr. Bonds

- And he did it by stealing top talent from up-and-coming corporations. Usually corps will try to buy out smaller firms to gain access to their talent. Stadt doesn’t bother going through the trouble. He steals what he needs and leaves what he doesn’t.

- Cosmo

- Stadt’s Johnsons use a mix of assets to pull off the jobs. While they have access to the Red Ninja, Renraku Europa prefers to use deniable assets for this type of work. Usually the Vory are first in line for this type of biz, but lately RE has been going away from syndicate assets and giving runners more repeat business.

- Red Anya

REBOOTING THE CORE BUSINESS

In the years following the Crash, Shikei Nakatomi established a new doctrine based around the premise that everyone’s life would be better if they could turn to Renraku for all of their basic needs. The mega set out to establish a powerbase in every global market that affected the day-to-day lives of its consumers, starting with the basic data that marks each of us as an individual. Bolstered by national management contracts secured throughout Africa and South America, Renraku took a firm grasp of the data management industry, confirming Renraku as the world’s largest data repository. At the time of this post, Renraku technology runs the SIN database for no less than 102 independent countries.

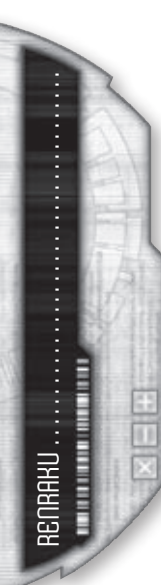
- Over the half the countries in the world? That can’t be accurate.

- Snopes

- Actually, Snopes, it’s a low-ball figure. Otaku-Zuku is working off the public records. He isn’t including the ten or fifteen countries that are running Renraku systems they acquired secondhand. Not to mention the number of AA-rated and below corps that use Renraku information management tools.

- Mr. Bonds

Nakatomi’s experience paved the way for the company’s success. The savvy economist survived the fall of Fuchi. He believed that company fell in part due to the inability to diversify far enough. Diversity is central to the megacorporate economic model, and Nakatomi responded to that by rebranding the corporation, not around the production of any specific service or item, but instead branding the corporation around an idea. By the ’70s



Renraku became known for producing everything from complex financial algorithms to underwear, all of it labeled and branded with imperialist Japanese ideology. Renraku has a subsidiary in virtually every market in the free-market economy. They are still best known, however, for data management, industrial electronics, and, if you can believe it, household appliances.

- Nakatomi also blames Villiers for the fall of Fuchi—something that brought great shame to his family, so you better believe his company is out to get NeoNET no matter what the cost.
- Kia

Renraku had been a company primarily known for information technology. Its subsidiaries were seen as separate entities wholly owned by Renraku and not as part of a larger Renraku family. In Seattle, the Renraku brand had quietly faded into the shadows while its subsidiaries continued to thrive. This changed with Nakatomi. Subsidiaries of Renraku became children of the megacorporation subject to the rules and culture of the father. Surprisingly, this shift in corporate culture sparked recent gains. The key to success? Interoperability. When Renraku sells its services they're not just offering storage space, a superior piece of construction equipment, or even a better toaster. They are providing one-stop shopping networks designed to connect desire to opportunity. Suppose you want to construct an office building. Renraku can provide everything from real estate to construction equipment to financing, all the way to security services to protect what you have built. The same applies to their revolutionary information networks. Renraku SIN services are linked with criminal, historical, and medical data—all gathered through Renraku subsidiaries—to provide a full spectrum image of the individual with the SIN. The services themselves aren't revolutionary, but the way they are put to use is. Each user is provided with their full battery of records as well as data on their historical relevance to the community. In Guayaquil that meant that Lucia could access her records and learn about where her family has been over the last 100 years, her medical likelihood for certain diseases, what politicians best represent her moral and political views, even access a skills and personality assessment that can help place her in the job for which she is best suited. All of these programs come pre-built with elaborate sim tutorials showing how to follow the model of Renraku's corporate culture in using information to help you fulfill your personal destiny. Renraku is teaching its customers to synthesize their historical information to direct their future.

This is the new face of Renraku.

The locals I met in Guayaquil shopped at Festival Foods, they kept their money in GloBank and wore off-the-rack fashions from Renraku clothiers. They weren't interested in Renraku because the products are better. They were interested in the ideology Renraku represented. Call it the legacy of sociologist and honorary CEO Inazo Aneki. Call it the happy by-product of a company whose overarching purpose is to structure a new reality based entirely around Renraku products. For disillusioned Ecuadorians looking to escape from the lies and propaganda that have surrounded their nation's politics since its inception, samurai sensibility and a clear view of their own personal history, as interpreted by Renraku technology, were all that was needed to empower them to make the right choices.

- I heard from a techno once who ran against a Renraku grid in Liberia. A Johnson hired him to switch up some of the assigned value codes to convince voters that his candidate was the one who should be voted into office. The leading candidate was tough on crime, and the powers behind the run figured manipulating the vote was a cheaper solution than overthrowing the government. The only way to change the info was to hit the source, and it took a full team to crash the place. The good news was that Renraku had only sold the management system—they weren't operating it, so there was only local security to worry about. Doesn't mean there wasn't a lot of lead flying around, though.
- Netcat

- Data runs have been en vogue as of late, especially when it comes to Renraku. The company is fond of hiring unsuspecting runners to test their system security. If you pull it off you'll find yourself in line for a long interrogation. Renraku isn't willing to let any security vulnerabilities remain exposed for long.

- Pistons

- Sounds like you speak from experience, Pistons.

- Baka Dabora

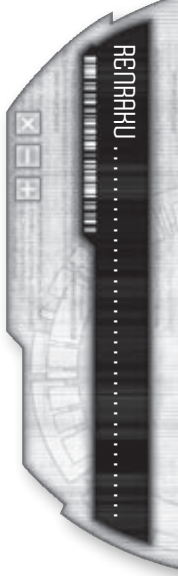
The fact is Renraku's unfettered access to their clients' information provides a means to market their products and ideals. Just like Horizon works the corporate message into your local tricast or NeoNET sculpts your AR grid in a way to further promote themselves, this Japanacorp is providing data solutions with a side of Renraku. So, what exactly was it that the corporation was disseminating to all of those people in Guayaquil? The Bushido code, custom tailored to represent the Ecuadorian people. The company has held fast to the samurai philosophy, representative of the old-style Japanese culture of hard work, honor, and respect, and transmitted these values to a generation of ideologists hungry for something to believe in. Despite all the controversy and setbacks, people still believe in what Renraku stands for. This fact alone makes the organization more dangerous than any standing government.

- There are two types of data that the company works with. Controlled data, like SIN numbers, police records, and the like, are controlled from secured access points. Runners hired to get at that sort of data need to physically break into a location with a host terminal in order to make off with the goods. Uncontrolled data is the truly interesting stuff. This includes tags and other information, which users can attribute to other users. For example, if I don't like the way a restaurant treats its customers I can throw up a review flag in AR outside the restaurant. Renraku servers also store that sort of data, and since it is user manipulated it's easier to get into.

- Clockwork

SAMURAI SENSIBILITY

Renraku is a zaibatsu that is owned by a cabal of families, none of whom own more than ten percent of the organization. Many of the familiar faces, however, have passed on over the last decade, and a new generation leads the company now. They are a reflection of a world that has moved forward. While their tactics



and politics drastically differ from those who came before, this new crop of leaders still strives to represent the purest elements of the samurai code. Honor and respect remain staples of the corporate culture, as is knowing history. This is where Renraku has been able to best connect with consumers. All company marketing points toward an awareness of one's personal history and place in the world. Each sarariman is given a role they can be proud to fulfill. Additionally, faith has become fashionable in Renraku as of late. Where past administrations have refused the inclusion of the Kami and Buddhists, Renraku now sponsors a Buddhist faith tridcast, *The Practice of Zen*, starring the immensely popular Yoshiharu Horio. By making the connection between the religious and the corporate, Renraku has convinced some consumers that their cause is a higher one, and thus worthy of buying into. These principles, along with dedication, have come to be known as the

five tenets of Renraku. Honor, respect, dedication, knowledge, and faith are the areas every prospective employee is quizzed about prior to hiring. If you meet the five criteria you may have a future within the Renraku corporate system.

- So long as you're not a metahuman. There are no metahumans past the rank of junior executive assistant anywhere in the corporation. Meanwhile Evo has an ork and a free spirit running the company. Renraku calls what they are doing "holding on to the old ways." In plain terms it's racial purity, and it comes from Yakuza principles as opposed to the Bushido code. Ideals like that still have a home, especially in places like Guayaquil where the great metahuman melting pot that is Amazonia is only a short jog away.

- Mihoshi Oni

Private Message...



To: Yankee
From: Ladybug
Re: Renraku Executive Profiles

Here's the list of personnel profiles you requested. I pulled the data off a Wuxing nexus in Hong Kong. I should tell you that Noriko Sakai's profile was flagged with some kind of access protocol that I couldn't get into. There's definitely more there, but it didn't feel right when I tried to pry it open. Are you looking into a new Johnson, planning a hit, or what?

Noriko Sakai

Ms. Sakai came to our attention through her work with Renraku Australasia. Her efforts are driven by a desire to surpass her father's achievements in Fuchi Corp and, subsequently, in Renraku. Sakai thrives on the strength of her family name, which has allowed her to move her division in a direction apart from the rest of the corporation. In some circles Ms. Sakai is seen as a pioneer and obvious successor to her father as CEO. Conservative insiders believe her to be a renegade, an assumption supported by the activities of her division. Ms. Sakai is clearly the muscle behind the programs constituting a threat to our revenue stream.

There have been six attempts on Ms. Sakai's life since she took the reins of the Australasia branch. At least two of the attacks were from within the company ranks, prompting her to switch her security detail from Red Samurai to an all-elven security force recruited from the Tír. This outfit is known as the Blue Samurai. Their training appears to be identical to the Tír Paladin force, and many of the members show magical aptitude. Sakai's new security force is being used as evidence to support allegations that she is romantically involved with an unknown member of the Tír council.

Karl Stadt

Stadt was involved in an exclusive real estate holdings firm with Jennifer Sung of NeoNET for several years

before the Renraku BoD required him to divest his interests in the firm. That requirement has cost Stadt 417 million nuyen in possible earnings to date, a number that put him on our radar as someone who could be swayed to defect. Stadt, however, has no intention of leaving Renraku. He has aspirations of serving on the board of directors and clearly believes it is possible to break into the Japanese Boys' Club.

Stadt has had extensive bio-replacement surgery from private clinics, which Renraku later purchased. Other than datajack surgery when he was fourteen, all of Stadt's surgery has been cloned organ or tissue replacement, which has led to speculation that Stadt is Awakened.

Botan Nakada

Mr. Nakada is a man with few discernible weaknesses and the ability to transform tragedy into opportunity. After his father's death, he was made president of Renraku China. Given the need to acquire immediate leverage against his division, we may need to look into providing assistance to his sister, Junko, instead. Junko's gambling habit, and more importantly her debt to the triads, makes her a suitable candidate for conversion. The two have a longstanding rivalry that stems from competition over their mother's affections. This rivalry intensified following their father's death.

Botan Nakada is deeply embedded in the Watada-Rengo. He is the highest-ranking member of Renraku who is also a known Yakuza associate. The day before he was named as president, a team of shadowrunners attempted to extract him from the corporation. The attempt was thwarted and the runners escaped before anyone could discover who sent them. Our intelligence suggests the job was not syndicate related and likely came from a western corporation—possibly Horizon or Ares. Nakada's knowledge and contacts within the military-industrial community makes it likely the job was ordered by Ares.



- I farmed out some work for Renraku a year ago investigating a Hisato-Turner employee. They wanted to be sure that the subject fit into their corporate culture before deciding to extract her. It turns out she didn't meet their standards, but she was too valuable to be allowed to continue at HTB. So I was asked to put together a team that could do the wetwork instead.

- Yankee

The samurai corporate culture filters upwards to the highest levels of the corporation. When Harry Nakada took his own life, the move was met with so much support that his son, Botan, and daughter, Junko, received immediate promotions within their respective divisions. This culture is also held responsible for Renraku's stunning lack of progress in the field of magic. Save for recent acquisitions by the Australasia division and certain elements within the security force, Renraku doesn't have a magical research arm to speak of.

- Renraku has never fully embraced the Awakening. Some even believe that magical aptitude is linked to goblinization, and if you have magical abilities your children have a higher likelihood of sprouting tusks. Others feel that magic is a passing fad with little long-term benefits. They cite Ehran's cycle of worlds theory to suggest that magic will fade in time while technology will endure.

- Goat Foot

- All this philosophy means crap when it comes to security. Renraku knows the bad guys use magic, so they make sure they're well equipped to deal with it. They have a great deal of manatech supplied by Rees Arcana. Still, you're bound to see a mage or more likely a shaman on a top flight Red Samurai squad. That Awakened soldier, however, will never be the one in charge.

- Winterhawk

CORPORATE DIVISIONS

Renraku is split geographically, with divisions spread across the continents. Each of the division directors sits on the board of directors alongside the chief operating officer, the company president, chief financial officer, chief compliance officer, and chief security officer. These regions operate based on the directions of Shikei Nakatomi. However, the day-to-day operations are very different across the board. I pulled some information from the TransUnion Intercorp archives and posted it here to give us a starting point for our discussion. I hope local operators will chime in and tell us what's really happening on the ground.

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Renraku America

Director: Orito Sasaki

Headquarters: Manhattan, New York (UCAS)

Renraku America governs the company's operations in North and South America. Though notorious for the troubles in its former Seattle HQ, Renraku America is best known in the business world for its FactFiles operation, which handles common apps such as GridGuide, as well as regional search engines SeaSource,

QuickSearch, and, Factfinder. This division was hardest hit by the Crash, and their staggering losses prompted other companies to make a run on several subsidiaries. Most notable is the recent failed hostile takeover of Adams-Westlake Mediaworks by media giant Horizon Corp.

The division is managed by MIT&T Business School Graduate Orito Sasaki. A relative unknown in the business world, Sasaki relies on a corps of advisors pulled from the highest ranks of local subsidiaries. Sasaki is a data-driven director who rarely makes a decision without gathering as much research as possible. That "educated answer" attitude has helped him gain allies in the Manhattan Consortium.

The division's workload is split evenly towards advanced research projects and consumer industries such as foods, banking and investments, real estate, construction, software, cyberware, data engines, as well as personal and network security. Regarding research, Renraku America is focused on data management, software and robotics advancements. Though former Director Huang has been arrested (and possibly is deceased), his team of scientists—commonly held to be responsible for the Arcology Shutdown—is rumored to be working on more emergent technologies similar to what was witnessed at the Renraku Arcology in Seattle. This time it is believed they are working on tech that can capture, transfer, and store biological memories.

- Downloading into human brains is how Deus escaped in the first place. It was only a matter of time before Renraku seized upon how the AI did it and patented the process.

- FastJack

- Over the last few months I've been pulling a steady income pulling kidnap jobs for a Johnson. The guy had a list of names—everyday wageslaves—of people he wanted me to snatch off the streets and deliver. Don't ask questions, right? So, I get near the end of the list and I start to recognize some of the names, and then I start to ask questions. It turns out that all of them were involved in Arcology Shutdown. They were all trapped inside when the doors closed. I decided right then that it was time to stop asking questions.

- Hard Exit

Renraku Asia

Director: Kaori Eto

Headquarters: Tokyo, Japan

Renraku's spotlight division is also the heart of its data research and data management operations. Where Renraku America holds title to the glamorous search engines, Asia has once again become the home of Renraku's largest research initiatives. RA has research facilities throughout greater Asia. The research arm mainly focuses on data stream management, data structures, and algorithms. Wakatta Software has long been the spotlight subsidiary in terms of research, though Ganbare Aerospace has been gaining notoriety with its involvement in Renraku's space program as well as developing advanced satellite circuitry. Corporations such as Ganbare and Underwater Living have been working closely with researchers to develop harsh environment habitats that also serve as automated data repositories accessible through the Matrix.

Along with regaining their footing as a world leader in information technology, Renraku researchers have been breaking



CORPORATE KAMI: INAZO ANEKI

The founder and longtime CEO of Renraku Computer Systems has assumed an almost mythical status in the echelons of Neo-Tokyo's business elite. Idolized by Renraku employees and young corporate officers throughout the world, Renraku schools and popular media present their corporate founder as a ruthless businessman who founded one of the greatest megacorps in the world, a visionary scientist who predicted the advent of true artificial intelligence, a patriot and strong supporter of the emperor and the Imperial Japanese State, and a devoted Buddhist who made pilgrimage to Tibet in his declining years. On his death, the Renraku Board of Directors retired the position of CEO, which they feel Aneki continues to hold as the guardian kami of the corporation. Shrines and endowments to the deified CEO are especially common in the Chiba streets that his corporation transformed.

new ground in social research. Through subsidiaries such as Shin Chou Kyogo, Renraku historians have been transcribing ancient texts from villages all over Asia in an effort to create a complete record of human history in what they are calling "The Learning Project." While the corporation's efforts have been seen by some as a gimmick to generate a larger consumer base, Renraku has been supplying these underdeveloped, and sometimes feral, towns free access to their virtual academies in exchange for their historical records. Presently the project is limited to Asia and South America, but negotiations are underway in several African nations as well as in Australia and parts of the UCAS.

- Renraku's Network Academy software is a sore point for Horizon, which launched its own virtual academy only to see their product outshined by Renraku's release a month later. Since then the two have been squaring off in a PR battle that's sure to spill into the shadows.

- Sunshine

- A runner I know asked me along on a surveillance gig in Middle of Nowhere, Yakut. The terrain was so harsh that it took us two weeks to get to the site by snowmobile. After the first week my hands and feet were nearly frostbitten. Worse than that, network signals were hard to find. There was no civilization—no Matrix access—for days on end. We finally stumbled upon the facility, and the signal from that place lit up our commlinks like it was New Year's Day. They even had a dedicated satellite uplink to connect them to the rest of the world. There wasn't much we could find in their system without being detected, but two things were clear: This was a Renraku facility, and the satlink was feeding a massive amount of data into a server running a very complex search query using algorithms I can't crack. It's obvious they're looking for something, but what is anyone's guess.

- Red Anya

The division's director of research, Tadahiro Mori, was acquired from Yokugawa in late 2070. While he adjusted to his

new surroundings, the division relied heavily on Botan Nakada of Renraku China and Zaini Ong of Renraku Malaysia to hold research operations together. Nakada and Ong are considered stars of the corporation. Ong was considered to be a front-runner for the Directorship before the Eto appointment. Most experts agree that Ong lost out because the conservative board was unwilling to put a female in charge of their crown jewel division.

- Director of Research Tadahiro Mori was a contemporary of Dr. Sherman Huang, though of the two Mori is considered the conservative. Mori was actually allowed to defect to Yokugawa nearly two decades ago because he wouldn't push the boundaries of the science. When Huang became public enemy number one, Mori's more conservative approach started to look attractive. That's led to some speculation that Mori was a Renraku plant all along.

- Clockwork

- Mori's extraction back to Renraku was messy. Red Ninja managed to save his three children, but his wife and grandmother were killed. Mori was devastated by the loss, and has since vowed revenge on the Yokugawa Corporation.

- Mika

- There's plenty of stories going around about Renraku botching extractions. It's a strategy based on old Yakuza protection tactics. A family member gets killed and the extractee realizes that he can't go back. Even better, they hold their former employer responsible for the death and work that much harder for their new employer.

- Mihoshi Oni

RA is also home to some of the last remnants of the Fuchi Corporation. Fuchi Corporate Services, known as FCS Investments today, is a top-tier financial company that lists private citizens and governments among its investors. FCS is considered a pet project of company chairman Shikei Nakatomi, whose grandfather helped to form Fuchi corp.

- Less known is the massive weapons operations scattered throughout the region. Terracotta Armaments is the largest weapons supplier in Asia, both through legal means and on the black market. Anything TA makes that isn't sold before a newer model hits the shelves winds up in the hands of black marketeers like Kahmtay Phomvihane, the butcher of Laos. General Phomvihane and others like him turn around and sell those weapons to syndicates and gangs throughout the region.

- Black Mamba

- Not surprisingly, Terracotta weapons have been trickling in to the UCAS, smuggled by pirates to Japanese-controlled ports in San Francisco, Seattle, Boston, New York, Houston, and Quebec. These guns, rockets, and missiles are coming in through different ports, but once they hit American soil they're loaded into transports by Dogmen and quietly shipped out to the same place—the NAN territories. So far I've only heard about a handful of weapons actually sold on the street or placed in the hands of syndicate groups like Haida terrorists. I'm starting to get the feeling that someone is stockpiling weapons.

- Rigger X

Renraku Australasia

Director: Noriko Sakai

Headquarters: Sydney, Australia

The legendary Lucy Don is known for being an upstart, but nothing surprised the corporate world more than when she announced her retirement and practically forced the corporation to accept Noriko Sakai as her replacement. Sakai, like Don, is a powerful female voice in a male-dominated corporation. She has a long history of doing the job her way, which played a role in her being passed over for the Renraku Asia directorship by her father-in-law, Shikei Nakatomi when Surin Supachai was given the position years ago.

- I heard that Don was forced out. Shikei Nakatomi has long questioned her friendship with Samantha Villiers of NeoNET. Nakatomi holds the Villiers family personally responsible for the destruction of his grandfather's corporation. Over the years he has been weeding out anyone associated with that bit of history.

- Mihoshi Oni

- Nakatomi got word that Don was going to sell off her stake in the company to the highest bidder. So, he did what any good chairman would do. He put out a kill order. Her security was ordered to stand down while Red Ninja were dispatched to carry out the work. When they arrived at her compound they were met and repelled by a squad of—I shit you not—elves dressed in blue samurai armor. The next day Lucy Don held a virtual conference with the board and read her list of demands.

- Riser

- Lucy Don put on quite a show for the board. In the years before her retirement Don quietly gobbled up a seven percent stake in the corporation. She explained that she was planning to sell her shares outright to Samantha Villiers unless the company accepted her recommendation to name Noriko Sakai as her successor. Don closed the deal by agreeing to keep a four percent stake in the company and selling the rest to Noriko Sakai, giving her successor a six percent stake in the corp.

- Mr. Bonds

- Lucy Don dumped her earnings into a research startup fund out of Malaysia called Asli Biotech, which is working on advanced medicines with the supposed help of Awakened naga.

- Ecotope

As a result of the influences of these two dynamic women, Renraku Australasia is at times only loosely connected with the rest of Renraku. Australasia is the only division with a focus on magical research. The company recently purchased Rees Arcana and is the primary financier for the publicly run Australian Institute of Magical Research. The research tends to focus on agricultural improvements, for which Renraku Australasia is known. The division is also designing manatech applications for personal and paramilitary uses.

- There's some pretty spooky stuff coming out of there. I heard about something called mage-flak, which explodes over a battlefield and rains down a biological agent designed to disrupt a mage's line of sight. If the mage gets too close, the agent sticks to him, causing all sorts of problems.

- Winterhawk

Surprisingly, Renraku Australasia has been working with Telestrian Industries on a joint research project in the Australian Outback. The project, dubbed FarSight, is designed to create advanced technological applications to simulate the effects of magic and vice versa. The partnership was born out of a meeting between Noriko Sakai and a Telestrian VP named Orin Butterfield. Despite the massive amount of nuyen dumped into the project, nothing marketable has been produced thus far.

- People are asking questions about FarSight, starting with why are these two companies who historically despise each other working together? Moreover, why is it taking place so far off in the Outback? What exactly is Telestrian's role? What relationship does this have with the dreamwalk? No answers have been forthcoming.

- Snopes

- I wonder if the Tír relationship has anything to do with those blue samurai Riser was talking about.

- Baka Dabora

- I'd say they make strange bedfellows, but I could see where they would get along. Renraku, in fact Japanese culture in general, has always been fascinated with the Tír. There are parallels between how the elves and the Japanese behave culturally. Both believe in a hard-working, dedicated society built around social and religious idealism. Both believe in purity, though neither believes the other to be a pure race. On a political note, both Telestrian and Renraku share corporate enemies. According to Sun Tzu, that's as good a reason as any to make nice.

- Traveler Jones

Renraku has always been seen as relatively weak in terms of magical understanding/prowess. Since taking over as head of Australasia, however, Noriko Sakai has held several meetings with the great dragon Ryumyo. The content of these sessions remains a secret, but there are indications that Sakai is trying to purchase some items or information from the dragon.

- Unit entry created by Riser 11/17/71
- Unit entry modified by Mihoshi Oni 3/2/72

Unit Name: Blue Samurai

Unit Composition: Shooter (4), Hacker, Mage

Demographics: Unit distribution is Elven, primarily male. Some personnel are western, but most are Asian.

This fledgling group is Noriko Sakai's personal security force. They appeared on the scene about six years ago working in secret. There were a half-dozen of them all, bearing the hallmark training of Tír Paladins. Your guess is as good as mine how she came across them. The force has grown exponentially since then, to the point where Sakai doesn't even use Red Samurai on site at her pet projects. So far they have been spotted working security at FarSight and a handful of private locations in Sydney. Renraku does not permit the Blue Samurai to operate on Japanese soil.

Urgent Message...



RENRAKU

INCOMING FEED.....

Renraku Europa

Director: Karl Stadt

Headquarters: Munich, Bavarian Free State

Renraku Europa resembles a mashup of the larger Asia and America divisions. Caught between the two geographically, RE attempts to cover some of the same operations as both, but does so for a very sophisticated European audience. Notably, the subsidiaries most referenced by RE are Securitech International, purveyors of fine security garments, and Blohm & Voss GmbH, a one-hundred-and-fifty-year-old corporation widely associated with the finest moments in German history.

- Blohm & Voss blossomed during WWII when it first formed business dealings with the Japanese. There isn't any evidence to suggest that the corporation had Nazi backing, but you'd be a fool to assume otherwise. Renraku acquired the corporation in '29 and made it the cornerstone of their European division. Karl Stadt started as a line manager at Blohm & Voss and worked his way up the chain.
- Mr. Bonds

RE operates in that long shadow cast by Saeder-Krupp, a fact that Renraku has grown to accept, but division director Karl Stadt has not. Instead of battling the industry giant head-on, RE has downplayed the products and services that overlap with S-K, instead focusing on areas of strength. The corporation has made a name for itself in Renraku's trademark data management sector. RE is also known throughout the region as a major biotechnology provider. Renraku—as well as their startup, Ferrarius Medical, which is gaining notoriety throughout Spain and Italy—manages many of the four- and five-star private clinics.

- Biotech is definitely the new battleground in the longstanding war between Stadt and S-K. Stadt has always believed himself to be the dragon's equal in corporate savvy. Every time S-K establishes dominance in a European market, Stadt switches gears and makes a breakthrough in some other market. In time, S-K reestablishes itself in the market where Renraku is starting to shine. On and on the cat-and-mouse game goes.
- M-Sider

RE is also home to Renraku Africa, a largely altruistic offshoot of the corporation that operates under the paradigm of a non-profit. Renraku Africa provides network and data services throughout Africa and parts of the volatile Middle East at cost. Only a select few African nations have responded to the offer thus far.

- Altruism isn't in the corporate lexicon. The nations receiving these services are required to sign a lengthy and private contract, which no one I know has been able to get a hold of. You can bet that Renraku is getting more out of this than good PR.
- Mr. Bonds
- I just found out that Renraku's subsidiary Gaz-Niki has been doing a lot of digging around those cities they're supposed to be helping out with a data connection. Could be they're looking for natural resources.
- Traveler Jones



• Nothing makes more money than war. With so much volatility in the region, we're getting more and more calls to do "peacekeeping" missions all over Africa. Everywhere we're deployed I've noticed the increased presence of Izom Armaments. That subsidiary has been making a lot of money in Africa ever since Renraku went altruistic in the Third World.

• Picador

FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RENRAKU

To take a page from Renraku's corporate mantra, knowledge is power. Renraku is a big corporation, and it has its hands in so much dirt that it was impossible for me to sort it all out alone. I called in some friends to help me build a list of the top five information items that are crucial to know if you plan on dealing with Renraku. These are ranked based on what I found to be most important.

5. MR. SATOU IS MR. JOHNSON

Posted by: Janus

A lot of shadowrunners I know have taken to referring to Renraku Johnsons as Mr. Satou. The joke comes from the fact that the surname is easily the most popular one in Japan, and when it comes to getting jobs in Japan, it's usually Renraku doing the hiring. But there's another level to that moniker. It is important to know who the Renraku Johnsons are, because your so-called shadowrun

might actually be a job interview. Renraku prefers to have its top runners on exclusive retainer. This way they know you will be available when needed, and it helps the corporation know how to find you if you pull a job against them. These "digger" runs, as they're known, are usually real operations against Renraku facilities that do not know you are coming. It is an opportunity to make a name in the corporation. It is also a chance for Renraku to test its own security elements. After several test runs, you will be assigned an operations attaché. This new person is usually someone other than the Mr. Satou who recruited you.

• Not every Renraku run is a job interview of course, but Janus' point of being aware is well stated. Be aware of this too, just because Renraku puts you on retainer and tells you not to pull any action for anybody else, it doesn't mean you're a member of the corporation. Should you get caught on a mission, or even if another corporation realizes you've gone exclusive, Renraku will cut you loose like a kite in the wind.

• Kia

• There are perks to being on retainer with a corporation. Renraku runners have access to top-flight black clinics, experimental weapons, nova-hot software, cutting-edge nanotech—everything the modern runner wants. If the job calls for special equipment, the corp outfits you with it, and you can consider the tech your payment if you survive.

• Black Mamba



4. THE RED NINJA

Posted by: Ma'fan

There is no shortage of pajama-clad assassins whirling through Japan, but the vast majority of them are just posers in costume. There is a lot of evidence, however, pointing to Renraku operating a ninja force of their own (though the term “ninja” is used here in a very loose sense). Their training bears the hallmarks of Ryoichi Musashi's Koga school of ninjitsu, but the Koga school isn't on the payroll.

- Not officially, but Renraku has been paying a handful of Koga *chunin* a retainer over the past fifteen years. The three men are listed as cultural advisors, but it's clear they are responsible for putting together the Renraku program. Renraku's Red Ninja are social chameleons composed of ex-soldiers, spies, and even several *kunoichi*, or female ninja, trained in infiltration. The group works undercover infiltrating rival corporations and other organizations. They are called in when work requires a gentle touch, as opposed to the heavy hand of the Red Samurai.
- Mihoshi Oni
- One of my crew insists the Red Ninja have penetrated the Shotozumi-gumi and some of the smaller groups it controls. I don't know if it's true, but he's connected enough to know.
- Riser
- There are elements within the Kenran-kai who have ninja training. I don't think they are Red Ninja, but one might have trained them.
- Jimmy No
- I've tangled with these guys, and they are definitely classically trained. Their style is indicative of the Koga school, but that group denies any relationship with Shotozumi-gumi or Renraku. Somebody is lying, but why?
- Mika

3. INTRA-CORPORATE POLITICS

Posted by: Kia

As runners, the closest you'll get to corporate leadership is the middle manager fighting his way up the corporate ladder. He's also the person most likely to get you killed. In the Renraku culture, you are judged by your achievements and your public image. The ideal faceless sarariman is someone who doesn't cause trouble yet does all the right things to get ahead. That can only happen with a great deal of image reconstruction, or sometimes image deconstruction. Shadowrunners working for Renraku are likely to find themselves in the middle of corporate infighting as sararimen try to show their superiors that they are the most worthy for promotion.

- If there's one rule in Renraku, it's that production prevails. The company will overlook your transgressions, so long as they're nothing that could cause the company to lose face.
- Sunshine
- Renraku is full of hotshot middle managers looking to make a name. I've worked for a handful and they do not share well. Masaki Masuda, who once hired me to deliver a crate of weapons to a black-market dealer, is a prime example of this attitude in Germany. Only after the job was done did I realize the real job was to deliver

weapons that could be traced back to one of his co-workers.

- Red Anya
- I can give you a litany of Renraku Johnsons looking for runners to scrub their image or scuff up someone else's. The difference with Seattle-area Johnsons is that so many of them look like shit from the Arcology affair that the only way they can get clean is to reinvent themselves as owners/directors of one of Renraku's many shell companies in the area. The real scrub work is erasing the connection between Renraku and the shell company.
- Cosmo

2. RED SAMURAI

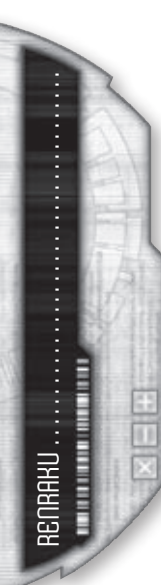
Posted by: DangerSensei

Everyone knows about the Red Samurai. The armored warriors are the corporate equivalent of the British Royal Guard in stature. Unlike their counterparts, these ubiquitous elite military operatives are trained to deal with shadowrunners. The group is as much symbol as security measure, with each officer trained to look the part. They take extreme pride in their *gosoku*, or samurai armor. Putting on the uniform is seen as a lifetime commitment, identical to the vow that samurai of old pledged to their masters. They are required to take the *keppan* or blood seal upon entry to the order. Likewise, all members of the order carry the traditional katana and are trained in the classic sword arts of iado and kendo, as well as aikido to teach them how to fight if disarmed. Elite Red Samurai, the ones you hear about on the trid, take the vow one step further. They go through the complicated process of folding their own blade and having it blessed in a Shinto shrine.

- Yes, and they must draw blood if they draw their blade. This sounds like a bunch of anime crap to me. These guys are paid security. Mall cops with fancy armor.
- Baka Dabora
- Red Samurai guards take their vow very seriously. The position is seen as being prestigious in the company, above that of the average sarariman. Each member is viewed as samurai, and they are expected to uphold the tradition of the samurai to the letter, especially at the higher ranks. Red Samurai are the most highly visible symbol of Renraku, so if one of them screws up the whole company loses face. Members have been removed for excessive drinking or drug use, and yes, even for refusing to draw blood after their blade was drawn. The samurai of old believed in the mysticism of the blade. If a katana is returned to the sheath without drawing blood it is considered a dishonor to the blade and thus to the samurai who bears it.
- Snopes

While local directors and upper-level managers are allowed to request services from the Red Samurai, only the corporate CEO and board can give them orders. The Red Samurai function essentially as their own corporate sub-division, albeit one whose only product is service provided to other corporate subdivisions. They are supposed to cooperate with local management whenever possible, but in the end they are only truly accountable to those at the top of the Renraku pyramid, and they often act in full awareness of that fact.

The elite Red Samurai can be distinguished by the *kozane* or scales on the *gosoku*. Standard Renraku security officers have



red *kozane*, but the top soldiers have black edges around the individual *kozane*. Of course, this ceremonial gear is dual purpose. Red Samurai armor is bullet resistant, HUD equipped, and flexible enough to allow them to chase you down.

Red Samurai operate in squads of five. The group members have overlapping skillsets, so if one goes down, another can take care of their part of any given mission. The exception to this is spellslingers—there’s at least one in every squad, but usually that’s all there is.

- Against these guys, geeking the mage first moves from good advice to being absolutely essential. You don’t want to deal with their physical skills while also trying to defend against magic.
- Mihoshi Oni

Elite Red Samurai are rare, so you aren’t likely to encounter them unless you’re infiltrating a sensitive location. Standard Renraku security consists of a handful of well-dressed guards and a whole lot of automated features.

1. THE SEATTLE AGENDA

Posted by: **Mika**

When Renraku shut down their Seattle Arcology, the company was forced to relocate a lot of personnel. The leadership was transferred to their new divisional headquarters on Manhattan Island, but that skyscraper didn’t have the capacity to hold all of the operations that went on in the Arcology. So anyone whose job description didn’t fit with that New York state of mind was shipped out to satellite facilities across the UCAS and NAN territories. At first we all thought that meant Seattle was past tense for Renraku, but it turns out the corporate presence didn’t vanish entirely. Renraku has been

quietly backing Kenneth Brackhaven for years, hoping those yen would yield a windfall of Seattle-based contracts. But with Renraku’s name meaning mud in Seattle, the corporation has found another way to win its way back into Seattle. Buy the ground under everyone’s feet. Following the Brackhaven model, the company has been using a series of shell companies to purchase real estate throughout Bellevue, Tacoma, and parts of the Outremer. Some of the dozens of sales were made between Brackhaven Investments and Renraku for far less than what the land is worth. No word yet on what Director Sasaki plans to do with all that real estate.

- Renraku’s real estate effort cuts across national boundaries, giving them significant land interests in NAN territories. That puts them up against the Horizon-backed Pueblo Corporate Council. I get the feeling that whatever is going on is larger than just repairing their public image in Seattle.
- Mr. Bonds

- This has the feel of a high-stakes game of chess. Want to guess who the pawns are?
- Turbo Bunny

- Renraku is also making inroads with organized crime elements in the Seattle area. The Yaks have been getting a little extra financial help to deal with the war they are facing, which was expected. All of the corps have an interest in making sure their favored Gumi survives. What caught me off guard is the Koshari. That group is all over the place calashing with street gangs. Every bullet they fire comes from a gun built by Renraku.
- Riser

Megawatch Buzz

//Keyword: Renraku

//Date: 01/01/2072 - Current

Renraku Denies Existence of AI Initiative

CHIBA—Responding to longstanding rumors that Renraku Computer Systems has embarked on a concerted effort to discover and research existing artificial intelligences, Renraku sources have claimed that no such initiative exists.

“The AI project is complete fiction,” said spokesperson Ineko Kawami. “Renraku does not have a program to round up artificial intelligences, and we have no knowledge of how rumors of such projects were started.”

Their past experience with AIs has left the corporation understandably cautious, but many believed Renraku had overcome this reluctance to deal with AIs when it came to the entity known as Goldenboy, who has become a noted figure in financial markets...

Boutique War Ruffles Feathers in Fashion District

SHINJUKU—For the third time in a month, some nanofashionistas will have to turn to a new boutique, as one of the shops on Fashion Row has been severely vandalized. The iNfinity boutique is the second store of that

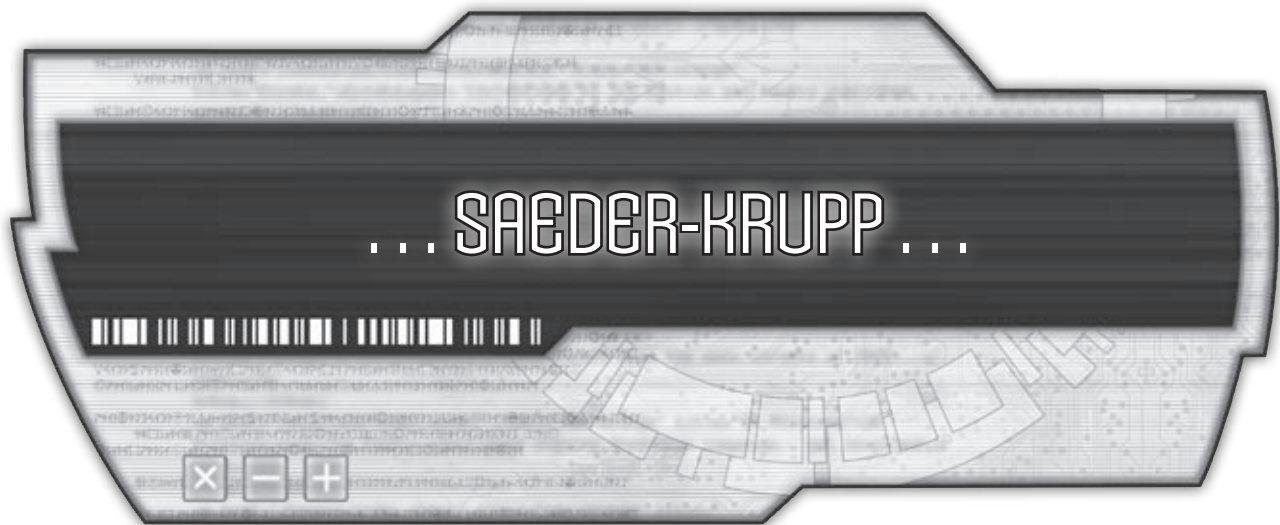
chain to suffer extensive damage in recent weeks—the other recent victim was a nanoboutique run by Renraku subsidiary Iris Software. While authorities maintain they have not discovered any connection between the attacks, district veterans firmly believe that Shinjuku is in the middle of a fashion war.

“It’s all tit for tat,” said Ryo Kama, a fashion consultant at the damaged iNfinity boutique. “Iris can’t compete with us in style, so they resort to thuggery. It’s pathetic.”

Awakened Gene Within Reach, Scientists Say

BANGALORE—The gene that differentiates Awakened metahumans from those without magical talents is close to being isolated, scientists say, which could have significant long-term ramifications on the shape of the world. While the genetic aspects of the Awakened trait have often been disputed, scientists at Genecraft maintain that magical powers do in fact grow from a genetic source, and they are close to finding that gene. Their process of discovery has not come without controversy, however—since Genecraft is a Renraku subsidiary, there are many who believe the company’s only goal in discovering and isolating the gene is to find a way to neutralize it.





Fleur-de-Lys made sure her seatbelt was fastened. She was already in an upright position; she hadn't bothered to lower the seatback, she was wound too tight. She checked the cabin's AR display. The flight was five minutes from Moscow International. She was thirty minutes from freedom.

A smiling flight attendant hovered over her, and Fleur accepted the complimentary drink the attendant offered. Basking in the warmth of the fine wine, she dared to close her eyes.

Bringing in an outsider had been a mistake. She'd known it was a bad idea. Valentine going MIA and leaving the team a man short was no excuse. Unknown quantities always fucked up the equation. It was a run for Brackhaus, for fuck's sake. Spilled milk now.

In his defense, Poole hadn't been green—just a trigger-happy hothead. The Brit had pulled his weight during the op, even helped with Blacksad after the mage took a slug to the thigh. You had to respect that. But it was Poole who had talked Penombre and Gunter into cracking and copying the paydata. It was Poole who had convinced them they could break the cardinal rule: you don't fuck with Mr. Brackhaus. It was Poole who had been cocky enough to lie to Brackhaus's face when they delivered the goods. And it was Poole who had pulled a gun when Brackhaus called him on it.

Poole died in a spray of gunfire from the bodyguard he hadn't killed. Gunter was hit by some unseen strike; he collapsed to the grimy cobblestones of the Parisian alley like a marionette with its strings cut. Penombre and Fleur had gotten lucky. They managed to bolt under the cover of a smoke grenade and evaded their pursuers.

They'd scrambled to one of the safehouses, picked up their escape kits, put on nano-disguises and bought flights out of Paris with the best IDs they had. All in less than two hours. Then they split up. Neither knew the other's destination, but they could contact each other later via a Matrix drop. She hoped Penombre had gotten away.

Fleur was jolted back to reality as the suborbital's wheels touched down and the cabin vibrated. She opened her eyes to see snow streaking past the window. The kid in the seat beside her was shouting giddily in Russian, which reminded her to upload her linguasoft.

The Lufthansa suborbital took a few minutes to taxi to a gate. Fleur waited patiently in her seat for the flow of debarking passengers to thin. She got up, slipped her cold-weather coat on, grabbed the dufflebag that contained what was left of her life and joined a group of German tourists filing out.

She could sense something was wrong as soon as she stepped into the boarding tunnel. The passengers ahead of her were parting around something ahead. As she walked on, trying to hide her dread, she could make out figures in security armor. Saeder-Krupp black. But it wasn't the men in armor and the guns that made her stop. It was the one who stood behind them. She recognized the impassive face. The cold, gray eyes. The short-cropped dark hair. Brackhaus.



SAEDER-KRUPP

Corporate Slogan: "One Step Ahead"

Corporate Court Ranking (2072): #1

Corporate Status: AAA, private corporation

World Headquarters: Essen, Allied German States

President/CEO: Lofwyr

Major Divisions: Saeder-Krupp Prime

Notable Subsidiaries: Ætherlink (Matrix), Amalgamated Technologies and Telecommunications (Matrix), American Broadcasting Service (Media/Trid Broadcasting), AN Meridian (Heavy Industry), Angelic Entertainment (Media/Sim Production), Arianespace (Aerospace), AV of Ukraine (Armament/Military Vehicles), Awakened World Research (Magical Research), BMW (Automotive), Commerzbank (Banking), Dresdner Bank (Banking), DeMeKo AG (Media/Broadcasting), Deutsche Erdölgesellschaft (Heavy Industry), Elementals' Service (Magical Services), Eurocar Consortium (Automotive), Fatima Petrochemicals (Resource Extraction/Chemicals), German Treuhand (Real Estate/Banking), GIAT Industries (Heavy Industry), Heavy Metal (Heavy Industry), Hermes Matrix Services (Matrix), Intel-XS (Computech), Iraq Oil (Oil), Kinesys Heavy Industries (Heavy Industry), Konglomerat Przemysowo-Wydobywczy (Heavy Industry), Krupp Chemicals (Chemicals), Krupp Manufacturing (Heavy Industry), Krupp Munitions (Arms/Military Vehicles), Krupp Robotics (Industrial Robotics), Krupp Specialist Engineering (Specialized Mining), Lothian-Vaea PLC (Investment Banking), Lufthansa Group (Airline), Lunar Mining (Space/Mining), Maser Industrial Electronics (Robotics/Drones), Messerschmitt-Kawasaki (Automotive/Heavy Vehicles), Morgen-Tek GmbH (Industrial Electronics), Nippon Credit and Trust (Banking), Onotari Arms (Personal Firearms), Orbital Dynamix (Aerospace/Satellites), Rosneft (Petrochemicals), Ruhr-Nuclear (Energy), Saurer-Rieter (Heavy Industry), Siemens-Nixdorf (Personal Electronics), S-K Aerospace (Aerospace), Spellweavers' Consortium (Magical Goods), Swiss Bank Corporation (Banking), The Arcanum (Arcane Services/Magical Goods), Transnational Communications (Communications), Trans-Oceanic-Mining (Mining), Triox (Drones/Robotics), Undine Processing (Chemicals), Volkswagen (Automotive), Volvox Industrial Chemicals (Chemicals), portions of AG Chemie (Chemicals), Vulcan Systems (Miltech Drones)

Dominant Business Language: German

Secondary Business Languages: English, French, Russian

• Since nobody among our ranks had much info to offer about the ongoing operations and hidden agenda of Saeder-Krupp, I asked Kernel, a former black operative from Saeder-Krupp Prime, to temporarily join the board. He has limited access rights for the duration of his posting (I might be willing to take certain risks, but I am not senile enough to allow a potential Saeder-Krupp mole to roam free on our boards). For those who are not familiar with the handle, Kernel is a dwarf cyberlogician who worked closely with Rolf Bremen before leaving the dragon's inner circle. (Bremen left a few months after—or got the boot, depending on whom you want to believe.) Kernel now works as a tac-ops freelancer for anyone capable of paying him.

• Fianchetto

CORPORATE DRAGON DEN

Posted by: Kernel

The name Saeder-Krupp is often used synonymously with the name Lofwyr. Although that's a misconception that oversimplifies the relationship between the megacorp and the great dragon, it's one that has played to Saeder-Krupp's advantage ever since Lofwyr began building his corporate empire forty years ago.

HISTORY OF AN EMPIRE

Saeder-Krupp's corporate predecessor, BMW, was among the prime corporations leading the transnational pack in its day. A former German automobile manufacturer with extensive overseas subsidiaries, BMW began to diversify in 2010, shortly after industrialist Michel Beloit gained control of the corporation by wresting control from the Quandt family, which had resurrected BMW from bankruptcy after World War II.

• Beloit stepped in after Keruba and BMW had nearly eviscerated one another. The corporations used freelance mercenaries to mount campaigns of industrial espionage, sabotage, and murder against one another in a struggle that some observers have called the first corporate war. Although it was never proven, many believe it was Keruba-hired operatives who massacred key members of the Quandt family during a private wedding in Munich. The deaths left BMW's ownership in disarray, which ultimately paved the way for Beloit.

• FastJack

Beloit expanded BMW's operations beyond the automotive industry by incorporating German industrial conglomerate Thyssen-Krupp (and its more than 600 subsidiaries), Saeder Munitions, and Fatima Petrochemicals. The conglomeration extended the corp's reach into Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

HOSTILE TAKEOVER

Beloit's widow, Mina Graff-Beloit, assumed control of BMW in 2032 after Beloit passed away under mysterious circumstances. Many in the megacorp's higher echelons who were around at the time believe that Lofwyr played a part in Beloit's death. But apparently the dragon underestimated Mina's acumen and tenacity, and she managed to grab the reins of the megacorp. Graff-Beloit's run as CEO was unexpectedly successful, too, but it was cut short when Lofwyr, who had long been gobbling up BMW stock via shell companies and proxies, seized control of the corp five years later.



for a man, and some women.



400GT
by BMW

TASTE
AMENOS

escorts



According to folks who were present, Lofwyr walked into a general shareholders' meeting and spectacularly revealed his majority control of BMW stock and his true nature as a dragon. He immediately ousted Graff-Beloit and declared himself the new president and CEO.

While most shareholders, directors, and board members shrank away from opposing the dragon (I don't hold it against them, having firsthand experience of his intimidating voice, casual arrogance, and impressive stature), Graff-Beloit actually had the guts to strike back at the dragon. She sent a team of hardcore mercenaries to kill the great dragon. Suffice it to say that Lofwyr is still around.

- Mina was seriously ballsy, but she was no match for the grandmaster of scheming. Lofwyr had stacked the deck too well in his favor. As the story goes, Lofwyr was impressed at Mina's nerve and let her off with a warning that one time. Of course, a warning from Lofwyr meant a trail of dead contacts and supporters all over Europe. Mina withdrew with her family and children to Zurich-Orbital. She lived out her days on Z-0, where she would suffer a stroke that left her paralyzed and on life-support for six months before she passed away on January 25, 2063.
- FastJack
- Rumor has it that Mina continued to make trouble for Lofwyr from the shadows in the years following her ouster. Allegedly, she gathered about her an informal alliance of some of his enemies and coordinated their agendas for maximum effectiveness. It's believed her principal allies were the great dragon Nachtmeister and the euro-billionaire Johnny Spinrad. If this is true, Graff-Beloit stood up to a great dragon for almost three decades.
- Fianchetto

Lofwyr restructured BMW to form Saeder-Krupp, a private megacorporation fully owned by himself, and relocated the corporate headquarters to Essen in the Rhine-Ruhr Megaplex. During the decades that followed, he brought large swaths of Europe, the Middle East, and Russia under his thumb using the considerable profits Saeder-Krupp's steel-fabrication and military branches had realized during the EuroWars. Lofwyr bought a plethora of companies involved in heavy industry, oil production, and mining, as well as a variety of automotive and aerospace assets including the remnants of the European Space Agency and several Russian launch sites. He also invested in a number of cutting-edge technology sectors—such as computer electronics, software manufacturing, robotics, and other information technologies—and soon Saeder-Krupp had established itself as a Matrix powerhouse. Taking advantage of its pervasive influence across Europe, Saeder-Krupp obtained contracts to build and maintain grid infrastructures in several key European nations, parts of Asia Minor, and the Middle East. Lofwyr also moved into the energy, banking, and high-finance sectors. Saeder-Krupp's banking and finance operations were essential in bankrolling the megacorp's expansion and undermining corporations it wanted to take over. Saeder-Krupp's impressive rise led it to the top of the corporate food chain, where it remained throughout the 2050s.

Saeder-Krupp banks faced off against financial giants such as the Frankfurt Bank Association, Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal,

the Malaysian Independent Bank, and the Swiss and Pan-American banks, and continually came out on top. Even when the financial markets reeled following Fuchi's demise in 2059, Saeder-Krupp was strong enough to go on the offensive. Lofwyr accelerated an elaborate, multi-decade plan involving numerous Saeder-Krupp-owned corporations (many of which had no obvious connection to the megacorp), and through a series of masterful and concerted moves he seized several strategic assets, most prominently the Schweizer Bankenverein (Swiss Bank Corporation), a multinational conglomerate of Swiss banks and a long-time Saeder-Krupp rival.

EUROPEAN EMINENCE GRIS

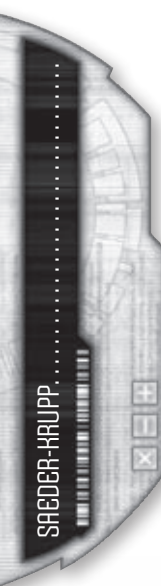
The 2060s saw the rise of the New European Economic Community (NEEC), a major initiative involving both European multinationals and governments. A range of corporations—including the Frankfurt Bank Association, Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal, Erika, and Zeta-ImpChem—were integral to the effort, but Saeder-Krupp lobbyists (with the assistance of Saeder-Krupp Prime, which supervised a number of black ops to keep everything “on track”) clearly guided the direction of the project, despite opposition from activists on both ends of the political spectrum. In the end, the NEEC's fledgling institutions became yet another vehicle for Saeder-Krupp interests.

Under Lofwyr's visionary leadership, Saeder-Krupp even managed to turn a cataclysmic event such as the Crash 2.0 into a corporate victory. Apparently, in the 2030s Saeder-Krupp began implementing a fail-safe system in all the national and corporate grids it operated. This system enabled the wyrm to shut down S-K-operated grids before they could be totally compromised by the Crash worm. While Europe's governments were not amused at Lofwyr's presumption, there was no denying that he had shielded much of the Continent from the worst effects of the Crash. The existence of the secret kill-switch system—which provides Saeder-Krupp with the power to instantaneously cripple entire countries—caused outrage among many, but most Eurocrats were grateful to Saeder-Krupp for its intervention (that gratitude was expressed by economic concessions to Saeder-Krupp in many cases).

- Yup. The kill switch saved tens of thousands of lives, but the revelation that Saeder-Krupp had a virtual gun to everyone's heads put the fear of god into European governments. And being forced to show their gratitude by kissing Lofwyr's scaly ass and handing over juicy reconstruction contracts made government officials even more resentful. Lofwyr may have his claws in deep, but lots of folks are unwilling to play ball with Saeder-Krupp at the lower political levels.
- Stone

POST-CRASH PREDATION

Saeder-Krupp has seemed almost restrained in the wake of the Crash 2.0. Most observers had expected the megacorp to jump at the chance to gobble up weakened corporations. But Saeder-Krupp has defied expectations by running silently for the past couple of years, content to ward off upstarts such as NeoNET, which has leapfrogged up the megacorporate totem-pole and is gunning for the pole position. While Saeder-Krupp has continued to acquire new assets at a modest pace, the megacorporation has liquidated a number of assets (including member companies of the



AG Chemie consortium). Whatever the dragon is concocting, it hasn't left his inner circle.

- That fits with the intel I've gotten from my sources. Nobody knows what the dragon is really up to. But given the amount of cash Lofwyr has been piling up, it must be something big.
- Mr. Bonds

Saeder-Krupp has become very active in the North American market—especially in the Native American Nations—in the post-Crash period. The megacorp has been quite successful in obtaining contracts with both the Salish-Shidhe Council and the Sioux Nation. Saeder-Krupp has encountered a few stumbling blocks in these efforts. The new regime in Tir Tairngire has proved particularly troublesome, as rival corp Horizon has effectively poisoned the new government against the former Tir Prince.

ECONOMIC OMNIPRESENCE

Saeder-Krupp is omnipresent when it comes to industries and markets. While the megacorp does not excel in all markets, it dominates the field in certain core businesses.

With the notable exceptions of certain service units and its Matrix business units, Saeder-Krupp is not consumer-oriented like diversified megas such as NeoNET, Mitsuhama, and Shiawase. Instead, Saeder-Krupp's strength and influence stems from its industrial products and fabrication operations. The megacorporation enjoys near monopolies in many heavy-industry markets, and its fabrication operations produce components and processed materials to supply corporations that produce consumer goods. In fact, Saeder-Krupp's extensive fabrication operations provide the megacorp critical leverage over numerous smaller corps and even multinationals.

Another key to Saeder-Krupp's success is its immersion in the global financial sector. Besides drawing on his own private fortune, Lofwyr can always arrange credit through his various banks when Saeder-Krupp needs extra capital to fund new ventures, acquire new targets, or employ proxies and shell holding companies to discreetly buy into firms.

Indeed, Saeder-Krupp maintains a low profile in many sectors, which often causes competitors to underestimate its reach. A number of A-ranking and national companies are Saeder-Krupp "satellite corps," which the megacorp uses to maintain portfolios in pretty much any field you can imagine (as well as newly developing fields). Many of these minor firms complement other Saeder-Krupp services, assets, and operations. For instance, a delta clinic might develop and run trials on augmentations, cyborg technologies, or biodrone research for later implementation and production by one of Saeder-Krupp's bigger companies.

Thanks to its immense and continuous diversification, Saeder-Krupp has proven largely immune to fluctuations in particular markets.

THE LONG GAME

Unlike many of its counterparts, Saeder-Krupp employs market strategies and planning devised for the long haul. Saeder-Krupp as a whole tends to be slow to react to market shifts, but so far Lofwyr has displayed remarkable foresight and remained ahead of the game. His strategies typically involve discreet maneuvering, planning three

steps ahead, patiently moving his pieces into position, and consolidating any gains before proceeding to the next element of his agenda. Such slow-burning, elaborate, and multilayered stratagems are Lofwyr's trademark (and the reason his schemes are often barely discernible to puny metahumans).

Most metahumans—even inside the corporation—lack the extremely long-term perspective and the big-picture grasp that a great dragon possesses. And since Lofwyr rarely sees fit to share his reasoning with even the corporation's upper echelons, Saeder-Krupp execs frequently find themselves instructed to proceed in specific ways when acting differently would seem to be much more lucrative and beneficial to the megacorp. Consequently, flare-ups and competition between different subsidiaries are not uncommon.

- That's also why Saeder-Krupp is slow to react to unexpected market shifts or quantum leaps in research. While such instances are uncommon, they do happen. And when they do, players willing to move more quickly usually seize the opportunity.
- Mr. Bonds

S-K MACROCOSM

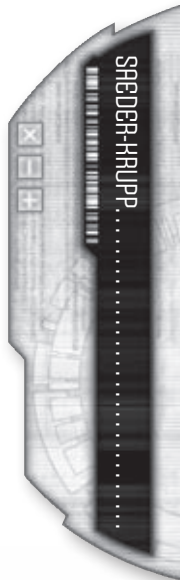
Saeder-Krupp is organized in a two-tier system. The first tier consists of a core group of corporations bearing the Saeder-Krupp name. These corporations are one hundred percent owned by Saeder-Krupp or possess Saeder-Krupp extraterritorial rights. This group forms an organizational skeleton that connects a vast number of affiliated multinationals (often with extraterritorial rights of their own), nationals, and even smaller corps. This second tier of corporations forms the bulk of the Saeder-Krupp macrocosm. Together, these two tiers constitute a complex corporate tree designed to protect its component firms from corporate predators. All important corporations in the tree are interconnected with other Saeder-Krupp-affiliated corps, which makes hostile takeovers next to impossible. Only the lowest branches of the tree can be truncated; and Saeder-Krupp can easily repair such damage, as the megacorp is well positioned in all industries that are crucial to its core businesses.

- Saeder-Krupp doesn't hesitate to reshuffle its tree when necessary. Every so often the megacorp upgrades an A-rated company from its second tier and moves it into the first tier to provide it with extraterritorial status.
- Cosmo

The two tiers of Saeder-Krupp's official family of wholly owned corporations and affiliates are only part of the story, however. Lofwyr has always made extensive use of corporate allies not affiliated with Saeder-Krupp in any official capacity. Usually these allied corporations are positioned so that competitors are rarely aware of them. Using these allies enables Lofwyr to conceal his maneuvers so that opponents have a difficult time countering or stopping them.

S-K REGIONAL DIVISIONS

Each Saeder-Krupp regional division oversees the activities of Saeder-Krupp corporations and affiliates within its region and monitors economic and political conditions within the region.



Typically, the division coordinates intelligence, counterintelligence, and military operations within its region, often in tandem with a local Saeder-Krupp Prime office. This coordination usually consists of scheduling meetings with execs from the region's corps to share intelligence about competitors and suppliers, discuss strategic moves, convey directives from higher up, and organize regional corps into a unified front when necessary.

In turn, the activities of the regional divisions are overseen by the megacorp's continental offices. Each continental office is headed by a member of Lofwyr's inner circle, who reports directly to the dragon. The continental offices also oversee Saeder-Krupp's military assets: corporate ground guards, armed forces, naval units, air force units, automated weapons platforms, combat drone squads, and battle and arcane-support magicians.

In fact, Saeder-Krupp's military assets may form the best-equipped private military units in existence—aside from independent mercenary forces and shadowrunners, of course. Saeder-Krupp rarely uses brute force to settle a conflict, although it doesn't hesitate to do so when it seems necessary—as recently displayed when Saeder-Krupp units spearheaded the combined corporate-EuroForce military strike against Winternight's main base in Scandinavia.

- Which led to a detonation of a nuke causing environmental damage that will haunt the Scandinavian Union for decades.
- Ecotope

Global black operations are usually handled by Saeder-Krupp Prime (though there have been exceptions).

CORE BUSINESSES

Saeder-Krupp's core businesses and most recent interests include heavy industry and energy, chemical production and processing, manufacturing and nanotech construction, finance, Matrix and information technologies, space assets and colonization, and magical research.

Heavy Industry & Energy

Saeder-Krupp is the largest producer of modern steels and composites in the world today. Besides selling these materials, the megacorp uses them to fabricate parts, sub-assemblies, and modules for the nanoforge-assisted manufacture of automobiles, engines, reactors, and factory components such as machines, tools, bearings, and hydraulic systems. Additionally, Saeder-Krupp manufactures land-based weapons ranging from light arms to heavy artillery, as well as aerospace, naval, and orbital-defense systems.

To provide raw materials and fuel for its manufacturing operations, the megacorp has long focused on mining, extracting, and refining biotic and abiotic resources (such as oil and minerals). As resources in conventionally exploited regions have become increasingly depleted, Saeder-Krupp has been venturing into more exotic fields, including lunar, asteroid, and underwater mining and drilling to lay its hands on resources before its competitors can do so.

Typically, the megacorp undertakes its extraterrestrial mining and prospecting ventures with as little fanfare as possible to prevent unintended effects on the global economy. (Imagine what would happen if someone found an asteroid containing

significant amounts of gold. This is why the Corporate Court keeps close tabs on such finds and secures them in Z-O vaults whenever possible.)

• While minerals and ores can be found in asteroids, oil can't. That means the supply of oil remains finite, even as demand—and its price—continues to rise. This situation has led to extremely vicious competition as Saeder-Krupp's oil-producing companies such as Fatima Petrochemicals, Deutsche Erdöl-Aktiengesellschaft, and Iraq Oil fight fang and claw against rivals such as Global Sandstorm, Regulus Joint Industries, Mærsk, AG Chemie, and United Oil for control of the planet's remaining oil fields. With most reserves severely depleted, even oil fields that are hard to reach have become a lucrative option for those corps with the technical means to exploit them. Consequently, information about the locations of such potential oil fields is the purest payday there is.

- The Smiling Bandit

Energy production is a sideline of Saeder-Krupp's heavy-industry ventures. Besides extracting energy from gas, oil, and coal, the megacorp's energy subsidiaries also operate nuclear fission reactors, geothermal and hydroelectric plants, as well as land-based and orbiting solar collectors. Saeder-Krupp's energy production operations also encompass the miniaturization and production of energy cells, such as the storage batteries that power most comlinks these days.

• Shiawase Energy and Gaeatronics hold more energy-supply contracts than Saeder-Krupp, but the megacorp's Ruhr-Nuklear operation and its other nuclear facilities lead the field in fission reactor technology. That means Shiawase and Gaea must rely on Saeder-Krupp for their reactor technology. Ruhr-Nuklear's headquarters are in the Rhine-Ruhr-sprawl, but it has a huge research facility for experimental reactor technology—the Curie Nuclear Base—in the SOX. Saeder-Krupp also manufactures and stockpiles its nuclear weapons at the base.

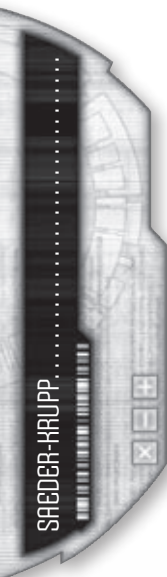
- Clockwork

Chemical Production and Processing

Most Saeder-Krupp chemical subsidiaries produce and process chemicals for industrial applications rather than consumer products. The output of these subsidiaries includes chemicals for the pharmaceutical, (nano)construction, textile, and automotive industries; metallo- and bio-plastics and composites (including smart materials) for the cybertechnology, construction, and electronics industries; specialty coatings and other performance products such as car paints; and polymers such as leather chemicals, varnishes, pigments, and adhesives.

The typical Saeder-Krupp chemical plant is an integrated-production site that contains a large number of individual production lines, each producing a specific chemical. This arrangement promotes resource efficiency by allowing the production lines to share a common raw-material source; byproducts from production lines can be routed to other lines in the plant and recycled.

Needless to say, the main client for Saeder-Krupp's chemical output is the megacorp's own heavy industry, manufacturing, and construction operations.



Manufacturing and Nanotech Construction

Saeder-Krupp's manufacturing divisions design and produce vehicles ranging from monowheel ground craft to large sub-orbital-capable planes, space shuttles, naval ships, and even parts for the construction of buildings, satellites, and orbital stations. The manufacturing divisions typically employ micro-gravity production processes, nanoforges, and nanotech-aided construction procedures that have led to numerous breakthroughs in the areas of miniaturization, optimization, and re-invention of conventional applications.

Finance

Saeder-Krupp's financial subsidiaries are rivaled only by the holdings of ZO-G, Wuxing (now including the MIB), and lesser banking AAs such as the Frankfurt Bank Association and Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal. The big banks that are partly or wholly owned by Saeder-Krupp—including Commerzbank, the Swiss Bank Corporation, and Nippon Credit and Trust—go out of their way to downplay their affiliations with the dragon. They possess a great deal of autonomy, as most are AA corporations with their own extraterritorial status, but they defer to Saeder-Krupp Prime nevertheless.

Saeder-Krupp financial subsidiaries provide all manner of financial services, and also offer brokerage services on the main stock exchanges—New York, Zurich, Moscow, and Australia—and many smaller ones.

Matrix and Information Technologies

Prior to Crash 2.0, Saeder-Krupp's Matrix and computer-technology assets consisted of a plethora of European service providers and other telecom companies, most notably Hermes Eurocom and Ruhr-Datafax. When new competitors appeared after the Crash—namely NeoNET, Xiao-Renraku, and Horizon's Singularity—Saeder-Krupp reorganized those assets into a single entity, Matrix powerhouse Ætherlink. Under the leadership of Wernher Julius Davids, Ætherlink is a fully owned subsidiary of Saeder-Krupp, which provides the corporation with its extraterritorial status. The new firm is not yet AA-rated, although it is working toward the rating.

By outmaneuvering NeoNET in the political arena, Ætherlink has managed to reclaim most of Saeder-Krupp's old digital dominion and now operates the grid infrastructure in most European countries and sprawls (excepting those in the Scandinavian Union), as well as numerous networks in Russia and the Middle East.

- Placing Ætherlink's headquarters in Hamburg enables Saeder-Krupp to keep close tabs on NeoNET's Scandinavian operations (read: Erika) and helps the megacorp leverage its new influence with European media giant Deutsche Medien und Kommunikations AG, which also maintains its headquarters in the city.
- Red Anya

And the runaway popularity of Ætherlink's Ætherpedia—a free, multilingual online database/encyclopedia—quickly garnered global recognition for the firm and greatly frustrated Horizon, which had a similar project in the works.

But Ætherlink isn't Saeder-Krupp's only Matrix and information-technology interest. The megacorp also devotes considerable resources to the development of new supercomputers and infrastructure to process vast amounts of data. And Saeder-Krupp continues to develop, manufacture, and sell consumer electronics, electronic components including biochips and batteries, and software.

Digital surveillance remains a primary (but hidden) agenda for the dragon as well. Saeder-Krupp's former signal intelligence and analysis networks (digital listening posts hardwired to grid networks run or infiltrated by Saeder-Krupp) were disbanded after Crash 2.0. But the megacorp now uses intelligence-gathering worms that scour the Matrix, using keywords to identify communications of interest to the megacorp. After identifying such communications, the worms copy the data and deposit copies of the data in virtual "drop posts" for crypto-analysis.

- I've never encountered one of these worms, but I know that they're packed with the latest software. I was lucky enough to acquire the dragoncloak program these worms use, and damn, the coding is just amazing.
- Slamm-0!

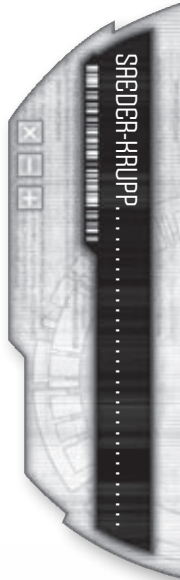
Space Assets and Colonization

Saeder-Krupp scored quite a coup recently when it landed the contracts to develop and manage the docking and launch facilities on the asteroid that will anchor the Corporate Court's planned Skyhook space elevator. Coinciding with this development, Saeder-Krupp has been boosting its space assets by opening its Ariane Spaceport in Kourou to the public and heavily investing money in all its launching sites, orbital stations, lunar operations, numerous Mars operations, and associated subsidiaries. Most observers believe this push has been driven by the megacorp's Skyhook contracts, but who knows what goes on in a dragon's brain? Personally, I'm never comfortable assuming the obvious when it comes to Lofwyr's motivations.

- I've heard that Saeder-Krupp is also responsible for bringing the counterweight asteroid into Earth orbit. According to the buzz up the well, Saeder-Krupp's fleet of Sternensucher automated retrievers (remember the probe the AI Rigel hijacked a couple of years back?) have already roped a suitable NEO object and are currently dragging it back to Earth. Arrival is scheduled for late 2073.
- Orbital DK

Magical Research

Although Saeder-Krupp's magical-research operations turn relatively small profits compared to the earnings of the megacorp's industrial branches, the Saeder-Krupp magical-research labs compete fiercely with Aztechnology's and Mitsuhama's arcane branches for the top slot in the field. Saeder-Krupp subsidiaries such as Awakened World Research and the Spellweaver Consortium are leading lights in various fields of thaumaturgical development. These operations create and license spell formulae, metamagical techniques, and enchanting processes to the Awakened community. Royalties from these licensing deals enable these subsidiaries to sustain themselves.



Additionally, Saeder-Krupp sponsors a number of magical groups and draws on these groups when it hires new staff or requires magical assistance.

- Many magicians believe that Saeder-Krupp is using its dominance in the research and arcane consumer goods market to control what becomes available for magicians and what remains restricted.
- Winterhawk

While it hasn't made the headlines yet, Saeder-Krupp has undertaken a joint venture with the great dragon Schwartzkopf. The venture came to light when Saeder-Krupp Prime recently retrofitted a research lab in Karlsruhe as part of a "special project" involving Prof. Dr. Makram Zharan and his team of researchers.

CURRENT INVOLVEMENTS

Saeder-Krupp's global presence means that its divisions and subsidiaries are often engaged in fierce struggles with one or more of the other ten megacorps, not to mention other multinationals. This state seems to assuage Lofwyr's own Darwinistic perspective on everything, but it puts constant pressure on section heads to satisfy the big boss or at least not draw negative attention to themselves.

Those who endure and survive the game are usually brought into the dragon's inner circle. These execs carry out the most important long-term strategies devised by Saeder-Krupp Prime or Lofwyr himself. Additionally, they often become involved in the dragon's personal schemes.

- Lucky them.
- Baka Dabora

S-K Asia

Saeder-Krupp Asia maintains headquarters in Dhaka, Bangla Commonwealth, and is headed by Mariene Carstairs. Most Saeder-Krupp assets in the region are run at arm's length and are relatively small and diversified compared to assets in other regions. According to rumors, the Pacific Prosperity Group contains a Saeder-Krupp mole corporation. The group remains a strong political force in the region, event though some of its notable members—namely the Malaysian Independent Bank and Pacific Rim Communications—went bankrupt after Crash 2.0.

- Political insiders have long suspected that Saeder-Krupp secretly owns at least one of the Prosperity Group's lesser members, such as the Vietnamese Kuoang Combine, Polynesian Fuels, or Kwonsham Industries.
- Cosmo

Saeder-Krupp Asia has been quite active since the Crash. It's made strategic moves to limit the influence of Sri Lankan-based Vedacorp and has been extending Saeder-Krupp's influence in Japan and Hong Kong/China through Nippon Credit and Trust and the Swiss Bank Corporation.

S-K Middle East

Reza Mohammad Bakr, a former brigadier general of the Iraqi army, leads Saeder-Krupp's Middle East division. Division

headquarters were recently moved to Dubai, Arabian Caliphate, due to increasingly volatile political conditions in Istanbul.

Bakr shuttles between his Dubai offices, Baghdad, Basra, Medina, and Esfahan to broker deals with sheiks, arms dealers, and negotiators from oil-producing and chemical corporations. Most of Saeder-Krupp's petrochem operations are clustered in Basra, while its arms-manufacturing operations are centered in Damascus. The Caliph maintains his domicile in Medina, and Esfahan is the new capital of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Fatima Petrochemicals and Iraq Oil are Saeder-Krupp's biggest operations in the region.

S-K South America

Often overlooked in the past, Saeder-Krupp's Buenos Aires-based South America division began attracting attention when António Ortega recently jumped ship from NeoNET. Following the bloody end of the Arrojo dictatorship in Argentina, Ortega has been using Saeder-Krupp South America's resources to support the new Argentine government and cement the megacorp's economic and political influence in the country. Besides Argentina, Saeder-Krupp maintains powerful influence in French Guiana, site of the corp's Ariane Space Port in Kourou; Montevideo in former Uruguay; and Curacao, which is personally owned by Lofwyr.

Saeder-Krupp Prime has been using the megacorp's new Argentine stronghold to keep an eye on the volatile situation between Amazonia and Aztlan, but Saeder-Krupp's interest in South America and the Caribbean League seems to be primarily economic.

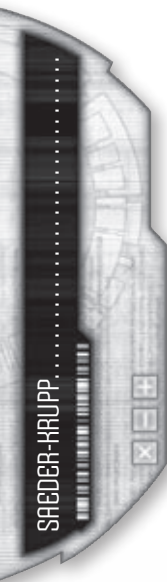
S-K Africa

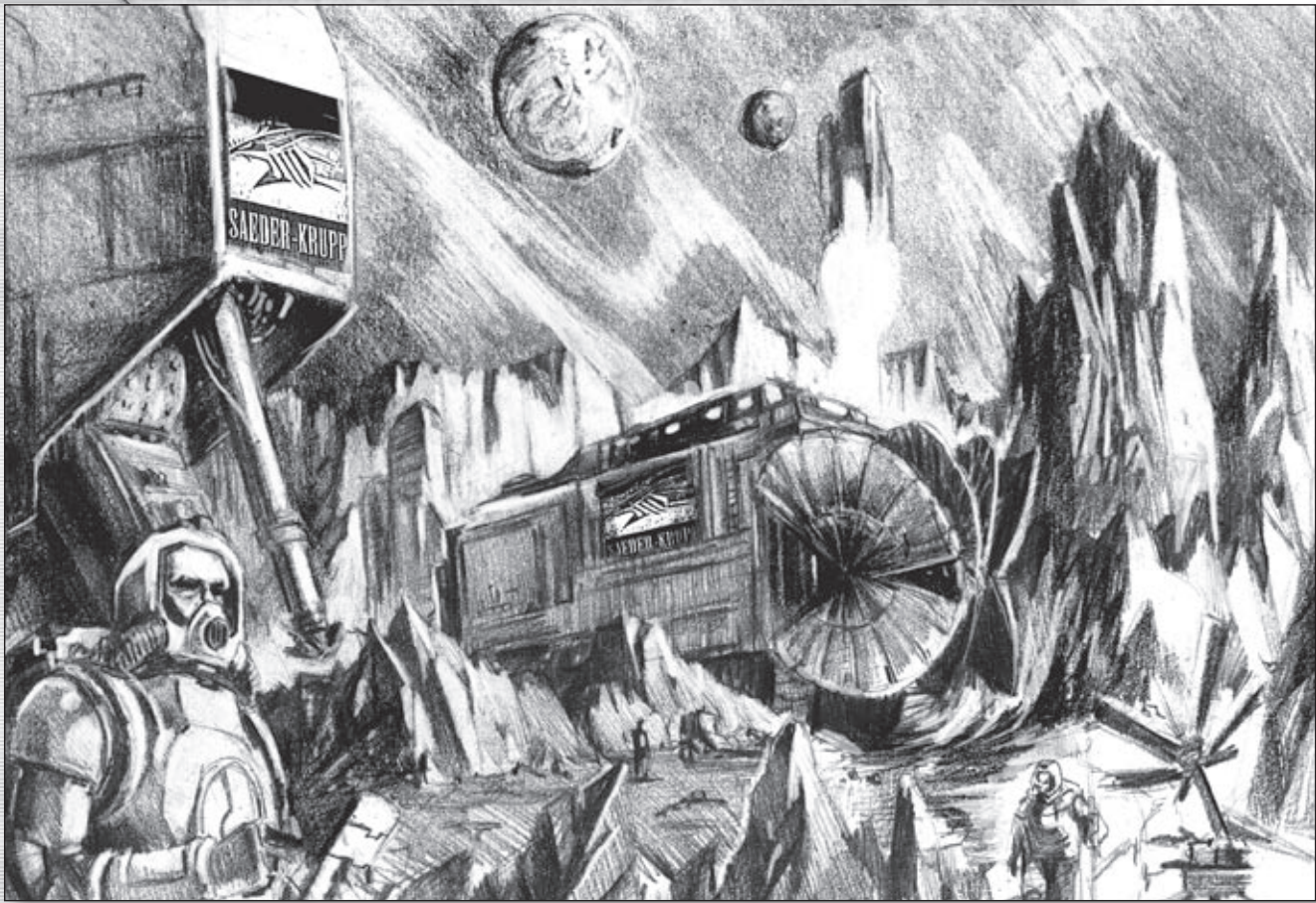
Saeder-Krupp Africa is headquartered in Cape Town, Azanian Confederation. The division's primary responsibility is maintaining Saeder-Krupp's access to Africa's vast natural resources. The man in charge of the megacorp's African operations is Mathis Asamoah, a native of the Allied German States and a graduate of Saeder-Krupp's best corporate schools.

Saeder-Krupp's main rival in the region is the Universal Omnitech subsidiary DeBeers-Omnitech, which remains a major force in Africa due to its history in the diamond business. So far, Asamoah has been playing nice with DeBeers-Omnitech, although Cape Town or Sekondi is likely to be the scene of some serious backstabbing when the opportunity arises. Because Saeder-Krupp is under continuous monitoring by the Rain Queen's agents, Asamoah typically uses deniable assets—such as rebels and other politically motivated groups from Angola, Liberia, and Azania—to meddle in African politics for Saeder-Krupp's benefit.

S-K North America

Saeder-Krupp North America is headquartered in Portland, Tir Tairngire, and led by Ludmilla Reanka, under whose direction the division has been thriving. After recently inaugurating the division's Seattle office, Reanka began negotiating with other NAN member states and the CAS for new contracts and began initiating joint ventures with local players such as Mesametric, High Plains Coding, and Barrett Firearms Manufacturing. Reanka has also attempted to resume economic relations with the UCAS government, but Damien Knight has used his UCAS government ties (the senators he keeps in Ares's pocket) to block those efforts.





INCOMING FEED.....



SAEDER-KRUPP.....

Still, I would keep an eye on the guinea pigs working at the Seattle Saeder-Krupp arcology. Not all of those executives have been exiled to Seattle for disciplinary reasons.

- Interestingly, Saeder-Krupp has been buying loads of real estate in Kitimat. Given Reanka's displeasure with the new Tir establishment (and its Horizon ass-kissing) and the inroads she's made with the NAN gov's, we may soon see Saeder-Krupp NorthAm move into the Tsimshian Protectorate and fill the void left by Mitsuhamas's pullout. Some folks believe Reanka may even move her headquarters to the protectorate.

- Axis Mundi

S-K Europe

Saeder-Krupp's main headquarters are located in Essen, Allied German States, and the megacorp maintains numerous subsidiaries and operations that pervade Central Europe and parts of Eastern Europe. Small regional offices located throughout the Continent route all communications to Lofwyr directly, so the megacorp maintains no separate European regional division or leader.

Although the Eurocorp pack regularly checks to see if the alpha dog still has teeth, Saeder-Krupp's economic dominance in the region is virtually uncontested. Consequently, Saeder-Krupp is free to focus on Lofwyr's pet project in the region—the NEEC.

- Which is why Saeder-Krupp desperately wants Horizon's know-how on memes. A powerful propaganda campaign may be vital to

making a unified Europe happen. God knows the Eurocrats have been pushing the idea for decades.

- Red Anya

- I agree about the futility of unifying Europe, but Lofwyr's interest in Horizon goes deeper than that. Reportedly, the dragon was furious (in an office-had-to-be-renovated kind of way) when Horizon was welcomed into the Corporate Court. Horizon has been number one on Saeder-Krupp Prime's watch list ever since.

- Kernel

S-K Australia

After decades of slow but steady growth, Perth-based Saeder-Krupp Australia has been taking some lumps lately.

Division head Edwin Hauser had been skillfully keeping the megacorp's main competitors, Azetchnology Australasia and Shiawase, occupied with feints and smoke screens. This enabled local Saeder-Krupp assets—such as mining-subsidary Kinesys Heavy Industries, Awakened World Research (a leading researcher of Australia's para-fauna and para-flora and other magical phenomena), energy subsidiary Vulcan, and oil company AN Meridian—to root themselves in Australia's economy. But this progress came to a halt in the late '60s when Hauser vanished in the Outback without a trace.

With Hauser—and his invaluable contacts with local ANZAC politicians and military forces—gone, Aztech and Shiawase joined forces to strike back at Saeder-Krupp. They gave the megacorp's

Australian subsidiaries a serious beating until Tanamyre Resources (Australia's home-grown AA) finally decided to step in and shield Saeder-Krupp Australia from the concerted assaults.

- Tanamyre's execs are no fools. After Aztech and Shiawase finished trimming Saeder-Krupp, Tanamyre would have been their next target. Additionally, Tanamyre's timely assistance laid the groundwork for a strategic partnership with Saeder-Krupp. Tanamyre's desire to expand into Indonesia has been no secret since its subsidiaries Commonwealth Aerospace Systems and Armament Solutions provided support to the ANZAC invasion of Papua New Guinea. From what I hear, Tanamyre CEO Peter Lawler and a Saeder-Krupp Prime negotiator have been discussing a future joint venture to further Tanamyre's expansionist goals.
- Black Mamba

Since then, a newcomer, a Polynesian named Kura Reed (hailing from the Corporate Republic of Fiji, if you believe her profile), has been heading the division. In case you're wondering why such a greenhorn was assigned to such an important position—she's a dragon.

- Probably just looking for protection.
- Frosty

WORKING FOR THE MAN DRAGON

Most Saeder-Krupp employees work in the megacorp's second-tier assets—those corporations that do not bear the Saeder-Krupp name and are not officially affiliated with the megacorp. Typically, these second-tier firms receive financial injections and directives from Saeder-Krupp or through an intermediary corp, but only the highest-ranking executives in these firms are aware of their affiliation with Saeder-Krupp.

The boss-dragon always keeps an eye open for new talent, however, and second-tier execs and employees who demonstrate exceptional competence, achievement, and work ethic are rewarded with positions in one of Saeder-Krupp's first-tier assets—the core divisions and subsidiaries that are officially part of the empire and bear the Saeder-Krupp name. Working for a first-tier Saeder-Krupp corp is demanding and labor-intensive, but the benefits are extremely generous. These benefits include above-average salaries; full health-care, including augmentations and care for employees' family members; old-age pensions; reduced prices on Saeder-Krupp products such as cars, fuel, and services; free holidays in Saeder-Krupp's worldwide resorts; free flights on Saeder-Krupp airlines; living amenities such as pay-per-view trideo channels; free education and protection service for family members; and more.

- Greed has always been a good motivator.
- Aufheben
- "Worldwide resorts" does it for me. Sounds like the dragon knows how to treat his people right.
- Baka Dabora
- Those resorts aren't just there to keep employees happy. They also provide the perfect front for Saeder-Krupp Prime operations in foreign countries.
- Kay St. Irregular

While some of these benefits can be acquired by reaching certain positions, employees can also earn them through Saeder-Krupp's "AcCentives" bonus program. Workers earn "Cents" through the achievement of project milestones such as: working overtime; volunteering for community service in Saeder-Krupp arcologies, remote-research facilities, space habitats, or underwater habitats; or any other display of devotion that their superiors see fit to reward. Employees can use their Cents to purchase benefits for themselves or they can donate their Cents to other Saeder-Krupp citizens.

- These benefits make Saeder-Krupp employees damn hard to extract since they're so afraid of losing the utopian life the corporation offers them.
- Stone

By generously rewarding employees for their work—with promotions as well as benefits—Lofwyr has also managed to keep internal conflict, sabotage, blackmail, and nepotism to a minimum within his corporate empire.

There are three serious downsides for ambitious Saeder-Krupp execs, however. First is the fact that the higher you rise, the greater the risk of getting punished by a dragon when you fuck up. Second, there is no possibility of getting to the top spot, as Saeder-Krupp is led by an immortal CEO with no apparent desire to resign. Third, Lofwyr expects his underlings to execute his orders without discussion, which can severely limit their autonomy. In fact, these downsides lead many execs to leave and form their own companies. But the dragon seems to bear no ill will for such departures—usually Saeder-Krupp banks provide favorable start-up loans to these execs.

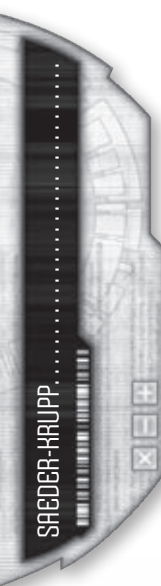
- Actually another smart way of increasing the Saeder-Krupp macrocosm through new companies that remain connected to the empire.
- Cosmo

THE SAEDER-KRUPP SWAGGER

As the number-one megacorporation in the world—and the only megacorp led by an immortal great dragon—Saeder-Krupp enjoys unrivaled prestige. This prestige, along with the megacorp's generous benefits, has led to a corporate supremacist attitude among Saeder-Krupp citizens. In less polite terms, Saeder-Krupp citizens are arrogant bastards that feel superior to all outsiders—both non-corporate citizens and citizens of other corps and megacorps. This attitude even has a name—the "Saeder-Krupp swagger."

- The swagger comes straight from Saeder-Krupp policy. Cultivating prejudice against other corporations lowers the rate of defections. The resulting arrogant and self-confident behavior can help a lot when engaging in negotiations with other companies.
- Sunshine

Beyond the swagger, the typical Saeder-Krupp employee displays no unusual biases against individuals of particular metatype, gender, sexual preference, religion or abilities (magician, adept, or technomancer).



- Saeder-Krupp Prime deliberately chose not to interfere in the events of the technomancer's Emergence in 2070. Since Lofwyr apparently decided that technomancers are a worthwhile metahuman asset, Saeder-Krupp Prime has been working to integrate technomancers into the megacorp's workforce and quelling anti-technomancer sentiment among the public.

- Icarus

Saeder-Krupp has so far abstained from officially hiring sapient AIs, contracting them as freelancers only. This is particularly unusual given that Saeder-Krupp has a significant number of non-metahuman employees and citizens on staff. Unofficially, there is still a lot of mistrust towards synthetic intelligences within Saeder-Krupp Prime from the top down. Some observers believe this coolness stems from the fact that AIs and SIs have no need for food, money, vice, or any of the megacorp's employee benefits—so ensuring their loyalty is virtually impossible.

SAEDER-KRUPP KEY CORPORATE FIGURES

While Lofwyr frequently limits his execs' autonomy, the Saeder-Krupp empire is simply too vast for him to oversee everything. Consequently, he depends on several trusted employees to help with the corp's strategic operations. His current inner circle consists of the following individuals.

Jean-Claude Priault

If there is one person who shares the dragon's viciousness (and monofilament wit), it is former Corporate Court judge Jean-Claude Priault. After managing Saeder-Krupp's assets in his hometown, Marseille, in the '40s, Priault served four terms for the dragon on Zurich-Orbital. He resigned his seat after the Crash 2.0 and returned to Earth.

After some time for re-acclimatization (and some cutting-edge augmentations, from what I've heard), Priault has been working closely with Lofwyr and heading Saeder-Krupp Prime's strategic division. He has also acted as a direct emissary of the dragon on political matters and brokered backroom deals with other A and AA corporations that involve direct negotiations.

Dmitri Baichik

One could say that Dmitri Baichik is a man ahead of his time. Most, however, would describe the bald-headed and goggle-eyed man as an egghead and a geek, which is exactly the image he wants to project (the glasses are packed with cutting-edge tech). Born and bred in the Saeder-Krupp-run factory town of Smolensk, Baichik served as an official on the Smolensk City Council before rising through the party ranks to the Supreme Soviet. He was even tipped as a candidate for Secretary General before the Crash 2.0.

Unbeknownst to even his closest friends, Baichik—a techno- and virtuophile with an unaugmented IQ over 150—led a hidden career as a skilled hacker. After Saeder-Krupp managed to snatch the contracts for the Russian Matrix infrastructure—leaving both NeoNET and Evo in the dust—Baichik was recalled from Russia. He took command of Saeder-Krupp Prime's hidden networks, virtual resources, intelligence, and Matrix surveillance operations, including spysats, after Rolf Bremen was released from service.

Baichik's knack for all things virtual has led to rumors that he is a technomancer, but I have yet to see any evidence of this.

- I'd say the nerd look's a good argument against him being one of us. Cuz, you know, we're so cool.

- Netcat

- Anyone who knows or has heard of Baichik isn't going to be fooled by his appearance—but there's always new people to meet in a world this big, so Baichik keeps his look.

- Red Anya

Ludmilla Reanka

Ludmilla Reanka, a smart and surprisingly young elven aristocrat hailing from the German Duchy of Pomorya, is something of a mystery. Her affiliation with Lofwyr has made her *persona non grata* in her home country and within the Reanka family, one of the leading houses of the Duchy. Reanka personally handles operations within Tir Tairngire, including black ops, and also heads Saeder-Krupp's North American operations, including the megacorp's dealings with the NAN, Tir Tairngire, and the CAS. She also flies to Essen on a regular basis for "private briefings" with Lofwyr.

Mariene Carstairs

Saeder-Krupp Asia head Mariene Carstairs looks the part of the consummate stateswoman, distinguished and razor sharp in the latest Saeder-Krupp corporate chic. But there is far more to her than meets the eye. For starters, she's at least twice the age she appears to be (late thirties). And she's one of the very few associates of the Beloit family who not only survived Lofwyr's purges, but also prospered under his rule.

Carstairs should not be underestimated. She's a canny manipulator and skilled negotiator (as her term of service as a Corporate Court justice attests). Unsubstantiated rumors also suggest that Carstairs possesses magical talent.

- I've long had a simple rule of thumb—survivors of vicious purges can be more ruthless than the people who started the purge in the first place. Carstairs is a great example.

- Haze

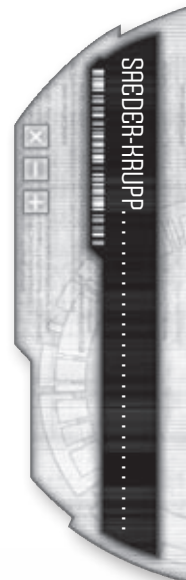
Stanislaw Wiacek

Stanislaw Wiacek served as Polish Minister of State and Saeder-Krupp's chief undercover meddler in the Polish Civil War (2061–2065) until the recent liberation of Poland (aided by Saeder-Krupp, of course).

Since then, Wiacek has been keeping a low profile due to his involvement with the former Russian-installed Rybinski regime. But that has not kept him from consolidating Saeder-Krupp's economic influence and assets in Warsaw, Krakow, and the Malopolska Free Trade Zone. He is also rumored to be overseeing all Eastern European corporations, working closely with political manipulator Julian Sergetti to extend Saeder-Krupp's influence in the Baltic States, Belarus, and Ukraine, and counterbalancing Evo's and NeoNET's growing influence in Central Asia by throwing Saeder-Krupp support behind the regional development pact, the Philike Hetairia (Friendly Society).

António Ortega

António Ortega is Saeder-Krupp's man in Latin America and one of the megacorp's most highly protected metahuman assets.



Long before Crash 2.0, Ortega worked for Fuchi in Argentina, nurturing ties with several government ministers. Ortega jumped ship to Saeder-Krupp South America in 2064, when violent civil unrest in the wake of the Crash brought down the authoritarian Arrojo regime. Since then he's been using his political contacts and old friends to reach out to the new government. He's been trying to convince Argentina's new leaders that Saeder-Krupp is vital to improving the country's depleted economy and protecting Argentina should the tense situation between Amazonia and Aztlan explode into a wider Latin American conflict. Ortega's campaign has royally pissed off Mitsuhama, NeoNET, Ares, and particularly Aztechnology—who all bankrolled the former Argentine government. In fact, all of these players have been trying to thwart Saeder-Krupp's strategic Latin American operations by killing Ortega. Consequently, Ortega is guarded by several operatives around the clock.

- He's not just looking to protect Argentina—current theory says that if things blow up between Amazonia and Aztlan, the Argentina/Amazonia border is going to get less attention and become easier to cross. Ortega's marshalling an army of smugglers willing to break into Amazonia at the drop of a hat and raid the rain forest of some of its riches.
- Lyran

Prof. Dr. Makram Zharan

Prof. Makram Zharan is the chief research officer of the Spellweaver's Consortium and serves as chief advisor on all major arcane projects within Saeder-Krupp. Zharan originally studied Renewed Hermeticism at the University of Cairo before attending several minor arcane colleges. After extensive traveling—including visits to New Orleans, Varanasi, and Urgan—he founded his own research group in Cairo. Later, he relocated to Prague, where he met Lofwyr sometime in the '60s and subsequently joined Saeder-Krupp. It's rumored that Zharan still runs his own research group within Awakened World Research. Zharan also continues to travel often, sometimes to quite exotic locations such as the North and South Poles, the "Living City" of Asunción, and Manchuria.

Wernher Julius Davids

Wernher Julius Davids currently heads the Hamburg-based multinational Matrix corporation Ætherlink. Davids served as an officer in MET2000 under the command of Rolf Bremen, who recruited the savvy and ambitious Davids to work for Saeder-Krupp Prime. Although Davids has never directly worked for Saeder-Krupp proper and the dragon, he climbed the corporate ladder at Ruhr-Data-Fax and became CEO of Ætherlink shortly after its formation. Since then he has been waging a digital war against Ætherlink's competitors to ensure Saeder-Krupp's dominance within the Matrix-services field—under the direction of Saeder-Krupp Prime, of course. While all went well as long as Bremen was around to oversee Saeder-Krupp Prime operations, Davids seems to have difficulties taking orders from his current superior, Dmitri Baichik.

SAEDER-KRUPP PRIME

Saeder-Krupp Prime is the nerve center of all Saeder-Krupp operations and intelligence. Staffed by cybertacticians, tech wizards, data analysts, troubleshooters, and augmented field agents, Saeder-Krupp Prime is a vast, decentralized network, organized as a parallel structure of free-floating cells that link to one another and Saeder-Krupp at critical junctures. The organization maintains "stations" (i.e., hardwired networks in secured facilities and safe houses) that provide access to Saeder-Krupp Prime VPNs, but otherwise it exists entirely over the Matrix. Detecting and targeting Saeder-Krupp Prime is nearly impossible, thanks to this near-total lack of physical facilities and the organization's extensive use of hidden and vanishing networks, the latest encryption keys, a unique proprietary file format, and all kinds of access restrictions.

Funded by a very generous black budget, Saeder-Krupp Prime works like a global military intelligence agency tasked with ensuring that Lofwyr's wishes come true. To this end, the organization conducts intelligence-gathering and counter-intelligence operations to keep Saeder-Krupp ahead of the competition, works with regional and local offices to keep the Saeder-Krupp macrocosm intact, takes command of troublesome subsidiaries when necessary, and keeps tabs on all Saeder-Krupp corporate networks (including the networks of non-affiliated corps working with the megacorp).

Saeder-Krupp Prime's purview also includes internal security. The organization performs periodic audits of employees' physical and online activities (both at work and during off hours), security recordings, financial transactions, and consumer habits. While Saeder-Krupp Prime doesn't give a toss about the skeletons hidden in employees' closets, analysts use the data from these audits to create "information patterns" for employees. This enables the organization to quickly notice when employees display unusual behavior.

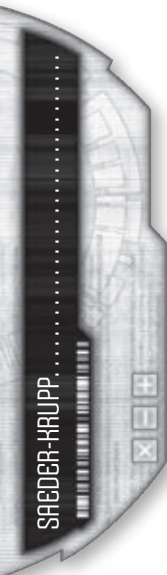
- A tactic Saeder-Krupp Prime put to admirable use to red-flag technomancers in its ranks.
- Clockwork

SHADOWRUNNERS VS. COMPANY MEN

Although Saeder-Krupp Prime maintains a wide range of black operatives on its staff, the organization extensively contracts black ops work to shadowrunners as well.

Typically, Saeder-Krupp Prime uses staff operatives for its most highly sensitive missions, as well as long-term missions, such as the infiltration of corps or political organizations by sleeper agents or doppelgangers. Such long-term missions usually require that operatives undergo extensive training and receive implants; additionally, such missions often contain goals that take months, years, or decades to achieve. Consequently, Saeder-Krupp Prime entrusts such work to only its most devoted staff agents.

- Saeder-Krupp's delta clinics are infamous for making metahuman clones that are really, really hard to identify. Yes, I know, it's scary.
- KAM



The organization contracts shadowrunners for “patching jobs”—tasks that must be completed quickly, missions that entail high risks or require brute force, and nearly all other types of black ops. Failure is not tolerated, and Saeder-Krupp Prime tends to work with shadowrunners who have proven themselves to be capable, reliable, and versatile.

POWER SHUFFLE

Until recently, Saeder-Krupp Prime was basically a one-man show, led by Rolf Bremen. Bremen personally directed virtually all operations and maintained a staff of dedicated and loyal operatives who generally remained with him until they died or became irreversibly incapacitated in the course of their duties.

Shortly before Crash 2.0, however, things started changing. Saied Bey, the organization’s Middle East insider, got the boot after failing the dragon on several occasions. Rolf Bremen himself went missing in 2062, reportedly abducted while on a visit to Russia, if the grapevine is to be believed. Though he resurfaced later, things weren’t the same, and Lofwyr never afforded Bremen the same trust he had before. Things went downhill from there, and though I’d long since jumped ship, I heard Bremen left the company in 2071, apparently with the dragon’s blessing.

Following Bremen’s departure, Lofwyr restructured Saeder-Krupp Prime, effectively creating two divisions: a strategic division responsible for planning, picking targets, and overseeing the everyday management of the Saeder-Krupp macrocosm, and a separate intelligence division responsible for tactical operations and Matrix issues. Dual leadership was assigned to former Corporate Court justice Jean-Claude Priault and Matrix expert Dmitri Baichik.

- Saeder-Krupp Prime was showing cracks before the reorganization. There was the Bremen disappearance, and the huge Telestrian scandal. Things were obviously slipping. Bremen was a ruthless bastard with brains, but not enough to lead Saeder-Krupp Prime on his own. That’s why Lofwyr has entrusted the job to Priault and Baichik. The division ensures that each has his own playground.

- Fianchetto

- I find it interesting that Bremen invested his severance package in a new, yet-to-be-named private intelligence company. Given his considerable assets and contacts, I’m pretty sure we’ll be hearing more about this new group in the future. From what I’ve learned, Bremen has also been recruiting former Cross Seraphim operatives disillusioned by the Ares leadership.

- Kay St. Irregular

- As with everything Lofwyr does, things may not be what they seem. It’s not entirely clear whether Bremen and Bey have both really severed ties with Saeder-Krupp. The old wyrm is the grandmaster of the long game, and this might be a move that pays off years down the line.

- Kay St. Irregular

BLACK OPERATIVES

The following individuals are Saeder-Krupp Prime’s most valuable identified operatives. All of them interact primarily with the shadow community.

Hans Brackhaus

If you care to look into old corporate records, you’ll find a man named Hans Brackhaus on Thyssen-Krupp’s payroll all the way back in the ‘20s. He was believed to be the mastermind behind the takeover of German Telekom by the small German IT company Ruhr Data Transfer Technologies (later renamed Ruhr-Data-Fax) following the original Crash. Over the years, Brackhaus continued to operate in the shadows. Gradually, folks began to suspect that Brackhaus had become an alter ego used by the dragon as well as the individual (or individuals) who hires shadowrunners for Saeder-Krupp Prime. In fact, some people believe there never was a real Mr. Brackhaus.

Rumor has it that Lofwyr himself still uses the identity when hiring operatives for his own agenda. Whether that’s true or not is beside the point. The “Brackhaus ruse” is a perfect smokescreen, especially since other corporations (including Saeder-Krupp itself) have begun employing it.

- Interestingly, the number of Brackhaus jobs has exploded in the last few years. A considerable number of them are ops targeting intel on subsidiaries, research facilities, offices, and individuals connected to Horizon. Rumor has it Saeder-Krupp Prime is either sending the newcomer a message or preparing to take Horizon down bigtime. Why? Your guess is as good as mine.

- Stone

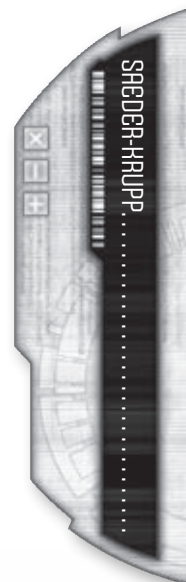
Claudia Romanov

An elf of striking appearance and poise, Claudia Romanov is a prominent figure in global high society, where she serves as the dragon’s eyes and ears. Romanov is masterful at forwarding her own (and Lofwyr’s) aims by getting the right people together—mainly figureheads of national, corporate, and society circles—or by thwarting opponents and obstacles by discreetly blocking their ambitions, trashing their reputations, or blackmailing them. Not much is known about Romanov before her meteoric modeling career in her teens, but she was active on the European social circuit and caused a big splash when she made a match between Mina Graff and Michael Beloit.

In 2067, Romanov caused quite another stir when she announced her pregnancy. After twelve months of extensive media coverage, virtual magazine covers, and the birth of the baby, she returned to the Grand Tour in as good a shape as ever. One month later she filed a paternity suit against corporate entrepreneur and bon vivant Johnny Spinrad, effectively driving a wedge into his relationship with Princess (now Queen) Caroline. When genetic testing conducted by an independent third party confirmed the paternity claim, Caroline had no choice but to sever the engagement.

- Despite the distasteful ethics of this maneuver, it was an extremely clever one. Through Romanov, Lofwyr virtually crucified Spinrad in public, simultaneously thwarting Spinrad Industries’ plans for the United Kingdom and paving the way for Saeder-Krupp’s expansion. I just wonder how Lofwyr pulled it off and whether Spinrad is as innocent as he claimed.

- Dr. Spin



Julian Sergetti

Julian Sergetti, the silver-tongued Neapolitan lobbyist, is Saeder-Krupp's chief political meddler and one of the most influential men in Brussels. Sergetti played a decisive role in bringing the NEEC to fruition, and he proved his worth to the dragon by tamping down the political backlash following Lofwyr's little kill-switch stunt during the Crash 2.0. Sergetti has been out of the public eye lately, causing some observers to speculate that he is quietly positioning various pieces in preparation for the next big step in a master plan to unify Europe.

If I were to hazard a guess, I'd say the biggest obstacle to his plans right now is NeoNET. With control of the Scandinavian bloc and two Eurocorp seats it inherited from Erika and Transys Neuronet, NeoNET is on the fast track in Europe and the one major player in a position to block Sergetti's game.

Awrah

"Awrah" is a fictional identity used by a group of female Saeder-Krupp agents operating in North Africa and the Middle East—including the Ethiomalian Territories, the Maghreb Confederation, the Balkans, and Turkey. Awrah always assumes the guise of an unremarkable Islamic woman wearing a hijab

(or burqa, chador, or the like, depending on the cultural setting) that hides her face. Using a female identity has proven quite effective, as women still often go unnoticed in male-dominated Islamic countries. Recently, Reza Mohammad Bakr assigned the Awrah operatives the task of shooting down Global Sandstorm's Middle East expansion plans and disrupting its friendly relations with the Caliph.

Scale

Saeder-Krupp's top field operative, Scale, is believed to be a drake that Awakened long before the first reported sightings of drakes in 2061. Scale reportedly possesses immense power and usually appears as a slick-looking raven-haired elf male with dark gray eyes and sharply defined features, although he reportedly assumes other metahuman and non-metahuman guises in his operations. While he portrays himself as a simple emissary that conveys his master's wishes, he often acts as a troubleshooter.

- I had the dubious honor of working with Scale—once. He hired my team to escort him and a Dr. Antonio Vieri to a location in Iran and back to Europort. Two words: scary and arrogant.
- Stone

Megawatch Buzz

//**Keyword:** Saeder-Krupp
//**Date:** 01/01/2072–Current

On the Quantum Edge

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA—Saeder-Krupp North America is set to double its budgeted sponsorship of projects exploring the practical applications of developments in quantum sciences, the megacorporation announced today. The sponsorship grants will be targeted at projects focused on recent breakthroughs in quantum entanglement theory, computing, and communication, according to a corporate spokesman. Saeder-Krupp financing typically comes with a first-look, first-buy option for any original patented material produced with the aid of Saeder-Krupp grant money. Saeder-Krupp already provides sponsorship grants to academic research groups at the Zurich Technical University, Caltech, and Cambridge, as well as start-ups.

Exploiting Mars

DEVIL'S ISLAND, FRENCH GUYANA—Anonymous sources at Saeder-Krupp Aerospace today confirmed that the megacorporation launched an unmanned robot-probe to Mars during the past month. Observers believe that growing an arcology on the planet or one of its moons is the objective of the probe mission; Saeder-Krupp recently announced successful "living building" nanite trials at its Seattle and Portland labs. Experts are split on the likelihood of the mission's success. Although hard nanites able to survive the harsh conditions of Mars have been patented recently,

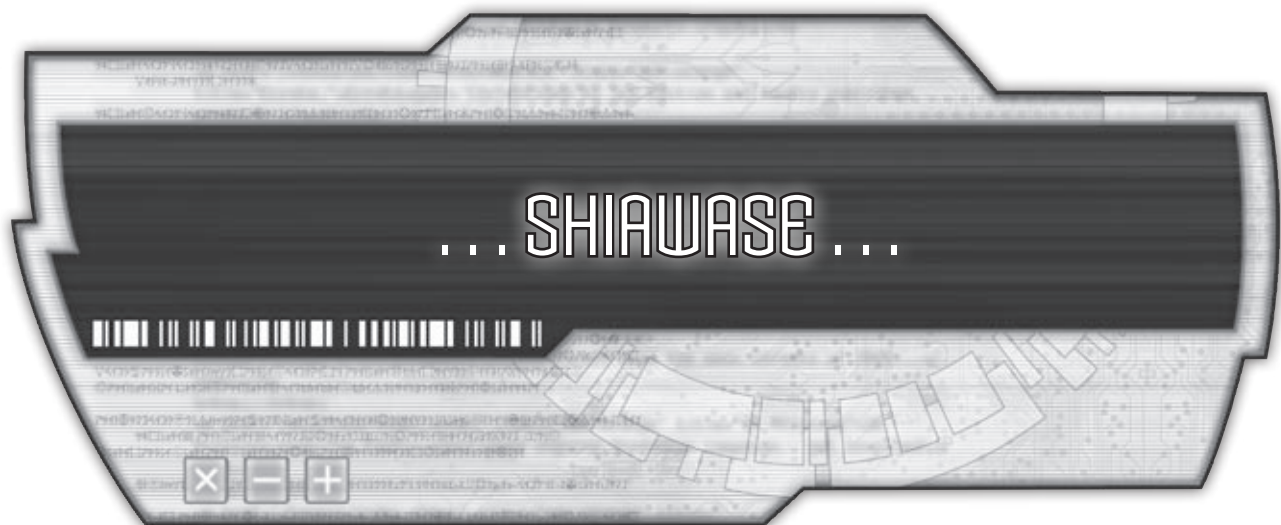
some observers openly doubt whether such an ambitious project is possible with current nanotechnology. Saeder-Krupp declined to comment.

SI Leash in Development

ZURICH, SWITZERLAND—Saeder-Krupp is secretly beta-testing a software "control collar," according to Matrix watchdog groups and several synthetic-intelligence rights organizations. The accusation is backed by evidence from an anonymous source within the megacorp, the groups claim. Preliminary analysis indicates the so-called "SI leash" does not reprogram the targeted AI or SI, but rather works as a locator and surveillance program, according to the leaked account. Apparently, the control-collar software resembles older Renraku designs, which came to light during last year's Halycon v. Renraku trial. SI-rights advocates believe Saeder-Krupp plans to use the software to monitor its AI and SI citizens.

The Big X

ESSEN, ALLIED GERMAN STATES—No news might be big news when it comes to Saeder-Krupp. The great dragon Lofwyr has been piling up cash like there's no tomorrow and being awfully coy about it, according to business pundits. Among the big questions is whether the development is related to Lofwyr's private agenda or a corporate project. While conspiracy SIGs have been going crazy about the purpose of the funding—speculation ranges from space-related operations to arcane happenings in the magical nexus in Karlsruhe—no concrete clues have surfaced so far.



Suspect #2 looked like all goblins—ugly and out of place. He was wearing a shoddy brown duster by Bum of Redmond and a stained SoyDog T-shirt. The reek of Eau de Booze oozed from his pores and filled the subway car. Of course, I can't really vouch for the aroma. I was riding three cars behind, watching him through the car's security cams.

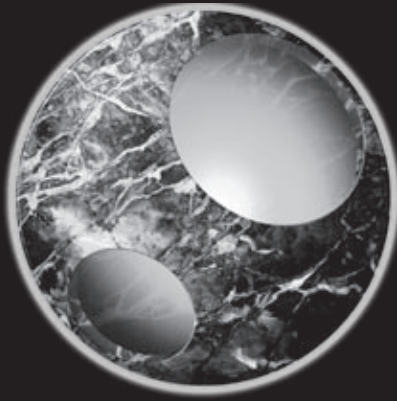
Nah, I'm no hacker. Just a pair of eyes for hire. A private eye with access.

Trog talked to the face, Suspect #1. Average appearance, average build, average biometrics. Easy to lose in a crowd. Too bad his hornhead pal stood out like blood on snow. Amateurs.

My assignment was the same as always. Sit in on Shiawase's corporate culture class and watch for the usual clues. Anyone asking the right questions, showing the wrong posture—I dunno. I follow my gut and usually end up following some borks like Trog and his pal. Sometimes I'd visit other classes, just to keep up with stuff. It's amazing what they can teach you about other corps' lingo and customs. No wonder the school is popular with runners. Don't know why they care to pick up Shiawase customs, though. There isn't a meta's chance in a Humanis rally that a gaijin could fool a Shiawase citizen worth his soy. I should know, I'm gaijin myself.

The train came to a halt and the suspects stepped off. I closed the link and followed. The station was almost deserted, so I ran a scripted scan and found a Sensei Snacks vending machine at one end of the platform and a Nippon Noodles kiosk at the other. Sensei and Nippon Noodles are both part of the same happy family, and both use the same Shiawase BasIQ autocam system. The system provides a convincing illusion of security for customers, but a decent hacker can crack into it using a hubcap for a commlink. I'm no hacker, but my gear's a step up from a hubcap, so I was in after thirty seconds or so. Then I could get out of sight and still keep an eye on the suspects and anyone watching for tails.

I passed a loitering razorbabe who gave me a cautious once over—conveniently looking straight into the cam in my glasses. Paydata. I zipped her face through the encrypted link to my handler, and before I left the station I got a ping confirming a criminal record. A shadowrunner. Mission complete for tonight. Another run thwarted before it even began, and the dupes were none the wiser. The department would pick it up from there. Tomorrow there would be agents waiting at J. Slaby's Public School for Inter-Corporate Business Studies. Not that she'd spot them—the entire school is an MFID operation.



SHIAWASE

SHIAWASE CORPORATION

Corporate Court Ranking (2072): #8

Corporate Slogan: "Advancing Life"

Corporate Status: AAA, public corporation

World Headquarters: Osaka, Japan

President/CEO: Korin Yamana

Chairman of the Board: Empress Hitomi

Major Shareholders: Korin Yamana (17%), Tadeshi Shiawase (15%), Reiko Shiawase-Shimada (13%), Empress Hitomi (13%), Shiawase Shinto Advisory Board (6%), Mitsuko Shiawase-Yamana (4%), Nigel Coltrane (4%), Soko Shiawase (2%)

Major Divisions and Associated Subsidiaries/Brands:

Shiawase Biofood: Sensei Snacks [MySoy fast foods, Nippon Noodles] (Consumer Goods/Foodstuffs), Yamato Restaurants (Consumer Goods/Foodstuffs)

Shiawase Biotech: Shiawase Biodrones (Drones), Shiawase Cybernetics [Shiawase-Vector] (Cybernetics), Shiawase Laboratories [Vasocon] (Biotech/Genetech), Shiawase Nanotech (Nanotech/Medtech)

Shiawase Energy: Shiawase Amaterasu Solar (Energy), Shiawase Atomics (Energy), Shiawase Fuzion (Energy)

Shiawase Envirotech: Arboritech [Terres Du Monde], Kuroyama Geosource [Kuroyama Minerals, MegaMine] (Mining/Resource Processing), SECCA Co-op Commercial [Agricola] (Agribusiness), Shiawase City Services (Utilities Service Provider)

Shiawase Financial: Shiawase House Bank (Banking)

Shiawase Logistics: Resha Corporation [UCASTrak] (Rail Transport), Shiawase Cargolifting (Shipping), Shiawase City Transports (Urban Transport), Shiawase SeaWays (Shipping)

Shiawase Manufacturing: Shiawase Advanced Robotics [Abyssal Industries, Genuine Gynoids] (Drones/Industrial Robotics), Shiawase Electronics [Kawaii Electronics, Shiawase Sim Station] (Matrix/Consumer Electronics), Shiawase Fashion [Jean-Paul, Wellington Bros., Vashon Island] (Fashion/Consumer Products), Shiawase Industries [Hephaestus Technologies] (Heavy Industry/Vehicles), Shiawase Motors [Hongqisama, Protoreva, Purosu] (Automotive), Shiawase Toys [Hello Puppy, MegaToys, Mycross Diecast] (Consumer Products)

Shiawase Mediatech: Shiawase & Rubicon Advertisement (Publicity), Shiawase Simsense Studios (Media/Sim), Shiawase Vector Matrix Services [SXTsoft] (Matrix/Software)

Shiawase Market Information & Forecasting Department

Shiawase Omnicare: Reblissom Centres (Health Care), Shiawase Diagnostics [euroGenetix, myGene, Senpaitek] (Genetech/Pharmaceuticals), Shiawase Health [Da Fang Rejuvenation Clinics, Shiawase Medical Response & Rescue] (Medical Service Provider), Shiawase Welfare [Shady Pines Retirement Homes, Tengoku Enclave] (Health Care Service Providers)

Shiawase Security Services: Desert Storm Security (Security Service Provider), Imperial Tech Services (Miltech), Kami Consulting (Military Consultancy), Shiawase Armaments/Nemesis Arms (Armament)

Dominant Business Language: Japanese

Secondary Business Languages: English

NEW SENSE OF FAMILY SPIRIT

Posted by: Naginata

Minasan konbanwa.

Kawaru—change—is at the heart of Emperor Yasuhito's political agenda. And while Japan has been in a state of transition since even before he assumed the throne, none of the Japanacorps has been struck by—or blessed with—more *kawaru* than Shiawase, eldest of the megacorps. Rising from a *zaibatsu* that was old and powerful when the Sixth World was just Awakening, Shiawase has survived and flourished despite all the world's tribulations, both magic and economic. Now, the megacorp is torn between magic and economics, faith and reason, in search of its corporate spirit.

I have been a member of the Shiawase family for most of my life and have stayed in close contact even after the unfortunate incident that led to my departure. So when FastJack asked me to

provide an update on the megacorp that started the whole ball rolling, how could I refuse?

THE LIFE OF A ZAIBATSU

To understand the present and the future, one has to look at the past. For Shiawase, that means taking a long look back, back to the years after World War II.

The Emperor, living *kami* and invincible descendant of the sun goddess Amaterasu, had been defeated. Japan's economy was in ruins. Japan was under occupation by the victorious Americans, who dissolved the great *zaibatus* of the Empire—and created a void waiting to be filled.

Keiretsus—many no more than poorly disguised *zaibatus*—emerged to fill the void. Once such *keiretsu*, the Shiawase family enterprise, rose to international preeminence after winning



several post-war reconstruction commissions. And in 2001, the Shiawase Decision marked the birth of the megacorporation we know today. Besides being the first corp with recognized rights of extraterritoriality, Shiawase was also the first to own and operate a nuclear power plant. Propelled by the economic success of its breakthroughs in energy and biotechnology, the corporation quickly diversified with operations in different business fields and soon boasted a portfolio more diverse than any other at the time.

By the end of the second decade of the 21st century, Shiawase stood as the most powerful corporation in the world. The first true megacorp. But the world was rapidly changing, literally and figuratively transformed by the return of magic—a reality Emori Shiawase, head of both the Shiawase family and business enterprise, was simply unable to face. When he died of heart failure in 2019, none of the other family members possessed the brilliance or, dare I say it, the spirit to fully replace him.

The surviving family members—expecting that the return of magic would strengthen the kami—turned to the Shiawase Shinto shrine and sought guidance from Emori, the new *ujigami* (ancestral patron spirit) of both family and corporation.

Private Message...

From: Kia
Re: Shinto and Kami

I can understand your confusion regarding Shinto. Hell, even I get confused sometimes, and I believe in this stuff. To make a very long story very short, followers of Shinto believe in the *kami*—usually translated by Westerners as “spirits” or “gods.” In reality, they are neither and both. Yes, if you are a shaman and you conjure a spirit, a Shinto believer would call it a kami, because in Shinto everything has a kami. And there are a damn near infinite number of them—*yaoyorozu no kami* as the saying goes. And therein lies the problem. For example, there is a kami for a certain tree, and a kami for all trees, and another kami for the concept of trees. Similarly, you have your family kami, individual ancestor kami, and a kami for the idea of your family. Trying to fit that into Western magic theory can get ugly.

Despite their entreaties, Shiawase stagnated. The corporation wallowed in its privilege and success for more than a decade until Sadato Shiawase rose to preeminence and became chairman of the board a few years after the original Crash. Strong-willed and calculating, Sadato differed from the unremarkable family members who had preceded him. He established the now-infamous Market Forecasting and Information Department (MFID) as a defense against corporate espionage and a tool to assess emerging business markets and trends. With MFID assistance and several bold moves in Japan and abroad, he was able to re-establish Shiawase as a power to be reckoned with. Sadato’s golden age would last more than a decade.

Lingering envy and tensions within the family turned to open hostility in 2049 when Sadato authorized Shiawase agents

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ARE THE KAMI “REAL”?

To Japan, the Emperor, the Japanacops, and especially Shiawase, the answer is a resounding “yes.” Shinto isn’t about praying or serving. It is about mediating relationships between humans and kami, with Shinto clergy acting as supreme negotiators. If a *shinshoku* priest or *miko* shrine maiden also happens to be a mage and conjures a spirit, all the better. This does not imply that a priest incapable of conjuring spirits is a fraud, because kamis don’t need to be conjured—just heeded and appeased. All spirits identified and recognized in classic magical theory are kami, according to Shinto belief—but there are kami beyond those. If a Shinto priest tells you he is speaking on behalf of, say, your dead grandfather, a believer won’t even flinch. Neither will someone on the path of Wuxing, by the way. That doesn’t mean that Japanese people—about ninety percent of whom profess to believe in Shinto, among other things—are gullible and will believe anything. They know that the biggest charlatans have always operated among magicians and clergymen. They just won’t dismiss anything outright. And in this world, neither should you.

to apprehend the fiancé of his elder sister, Soko, on the apparently unfounded suspicion of espionage and treason. Deeply insulted, Soko sent assassins against Sadato. Sadato survived the escalating series of attempts on his life, but a younger brother, Ryoji, would not be so fortunate. Ryoji’s tragic death led to an uneasy truce between the elder siblings. In an unprecedented move, they persuaded the board to override Ryoji’s will, which left his shares to his only daughter, Reiko. Instead, the shares would be held by the hired medium Jerri Howard, an albino woman who claimed to be in contact with Ryoji’s kami.

For years to come, Shiawase politics were dominated by the slow-burning feud between Sadato and Soko, with Jerri Howard controlling the balance of power in many board decisions. This changed when Fuchi imploded in 2061. Korin Yamana, head of Fuchi-Pan Europe, married Mitsuko Shiawase and traded his share of the Fuchi empire for a significant slice of Shiawase family stock and a seat on the Shiawase board. Three years later, Sadato’s son Tadeshi moved to advance his own position by marrying his estranged daughter Hitomi to the Child-Emperor Yasuhito.

In 2064, Shiawase changed forever. In the wake of a disastrous attempt to take over Novatech and the ensuing chaos of the Crash 2.0, Sadato was forced to step down following a no-confidence vote orchestrated by Soko. Meanwhile, Jerri Howard was found dead, an apparent suicide. The medium gone, Reiko finally inherited her father’s shares. When the board next gathered, the two warring elders—Sadato and Soko—were shocked to discover that Yamana, Reiko, and Hitomi now controlled a majority share of Shiawase stock. Consequently, Hitomi took over as chairman of the board, and Yamana was voted in as CEO.

Urgent Message...

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Shiawase Timeline

1989: Emori Shiawase assumes control of Shiawase corporation.

2000: Shiawase assumes control of the first privately owned nuclear power plant.

2001: Shiawase Decision grants Shiawase extraterritoriality.

2006: Japan proclaims itself Japanese Imperial State.

2011: Disastrous meltdown of Shiawase plant in Europe.

2019: Emori Shiawase dies of heart failure. Idolized as *ujigami* (patron spirit).

2027: Shiawase obtains patent for fusion-reactor technology.

2033: Sadato Shiawase of Shiawase Atomics assumes leadership of Shiawase board.

2035: MFID founded.

2037: Imperial Japanese forces seize San Francisco.

2049: Fiancé of Soko Shiawase arrested on suspicion of espionage.

2050: Ryoji Shiawase killed in fuel-air bombing of Shiawase Atomics headquarters, San Francisco. Ryoji's shares placed in custody of medium Jerri Howard, who acts on behalf of Ryoji's kami.

2050: Crown Prince Yasuhito born.

2060: Fuchi officially dissolved. Korin Yamana marries Mitsuko Shiawase. Yamana takes Fuchi-Pan Europe to Shiawase.

2061: Ring of Fire disaster strikes Tokyo. Emperor Kenichi and large part of royal family dies.

2062: Emperor Yasuhito assumes the Chrysanthemum Throne. Beginning of Gen-Yu era.

2063: Emperor Yasuhito announces alliance with Shinto shamans and kami to rebuild Japan.

2064: Emperor Yasuhito marries Hitomi, granddaughter of Shiawase CEO Sadato Shiawase. Shiawase's attempted takeover of Novatech fails. Crash 2.0 occurs. Medium Jerri Howard found dead. Ryoji's shares bequeathed to his daughter, Reiko. Computer error awards four percent of Shiawase shares to Stuffer Shack employee James Mancuso.

2065: Shiawase Coup. Korin Yamana assumes position as CEO. Empress Hitomi becomes Chairwoman of the Board. "Yamana business doctrine" introduced. Nigel Coltrane replaces Ichiro Kiyomoto as head of the MFID.

2066: Sadato Shiawase commits seppuku, bequeaths shares to son, Tadeshi, and the Shiawase kami. Board of directors founds Shiawase Shinto advisory board and grants it voting power on behalf of the Shiawase kami.

2067: James Mancuso sells shares to anonymous broker and dies in plane crash. Shares reappear in hands of Tadeshi.

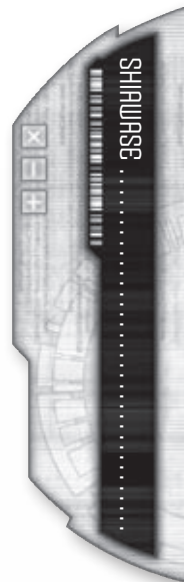
2068: Ichiro Kiyomoto retired by express order of Nigel Coltrane.

2069: Empress Hitomi backs Yamana doctrine against criticism by Shinto board. The Shiawase shadow war begins.

2070: Rhonabwy "donates" shares to the Shinto board, increasing its voting power. Transformation of Jengi-Kan advisory group into new Shinshoku department begins.

2071: New business vision of Shiawase Damashii issued by Hitomi, Yamana and Shinto board as next step in ongoing rebalancing process. Shinto board influence grows further by shares inherited from deceased long-term employees.

Urgent Message ...



- How Yamana, Reiko, and Hitomi orchestrated this maneuver is still not entirely clear. Allegedly, much of the coup was planned by Yamana and his wife, Mitsuko. But in the wake of the Crash accounts were lost and paper trails vanished.

- Mr. Bonds

- Yes, the Crash came in very handy. Either they were very quick—or suspiciously well prepared.

- Axis Mundi

- At the next *matsuri* (a kami festival) after the coup, Hitomi, Mitsuko, and Reiko wore yukata kimonos with orchids printed on them. It was then the media dubbed them "The Orchids," a name that persists to this day.

- Ma'fan

- Don't forget that some orchids live by killing other plants. Guess what the message is here.

- The Smiling Bandit

- It goes even deeper. The *yukata* is a rather plain summer kimono, not very fitting for three women of such high rank attending such an event. But the sartorial choice takes on significance when you realize that the yukata is also a traditional after-bath garment, and that bathing is a traditional Shinto purification rite. Tokyo was still reeling from the Ring of Fire flare up of '61, and the Emperor had decreed that any proposed reconstruction project would have to be approved by the Shinto priests, regardless of the project's importance to the Japanacorp's interests. In this light, the symbolism was clear. The Orchids' choice of kimonos was an entreaty to both the government and Shinto priesthood, an entreaty intended to put the megacorp in the good grace of both and a step toward winning Shiawase access to big government contracts.

- Kia

- How very spiritual.

- Baka Dabora

A year later, Sadato committed *seppuku*—he couldn't bear the loss of face. His sister, Soko, and his son, Tadashi, are the last remaining "true blood" Shiawase family members on the board. The Orchids are married women—whose allegiance therefore lies with their husbands' families per Japanese tradition. Does this mean the spirit of the family corporation no longer lies in the hands of the Shiawase family? Maybe. Maybe not.

THE FUCHI DRIVE

When Korin Yamana ascended to CEO, he tried to change Shiawase's "old-fashioned" policies and strategies by introducing a set of basic Fuchi management principles that became known as the "Yamana doctrine." Effective as those principles were, they generated a lot of dissent, even uproar, as they represented the abandonment of Shiawase's long-held policy of *nenko joretsu*—a system of automatic advancement in salary and rank aimed at bringing maximum experience to the executive ranks. Yamana—himself genetically rejuvenated to the virtual age of 35—foresaw that the combination of *nenko joretsu* and the growing popularity of genetic-rejuvenation technology posed a very real risk of causing stagnation among Shiawase's executive ranks, as genetically rejuvenated employees no longer felt the need to retire and make room for new blood. To remedy this, he introduced a system in which advancement and job assignments were based solely on each individual's relevant experience and qualifications for the job at hand.

- A new system that incidentally allowed him to start pruning the eldest employees from the payroll. In a single brilliant move he provided a means to rid himself of both the most expensive employees and those most loyal to Sadato and Tadashi.
- Cosmo
- He also froze payments to the *sodanyaku*, retired employees who were still drawing large salaries as "advisors." Why they still were on payroll is beyond me. From all reports their attendance record at meetings seemed close to null.
- Mr. Bonds
- Remember that the Japanese have much greater respect for their elders than do Westerners. Reducing salary for overpaid, grey-haired execs would be met with enthusiasm in the West. In Japan, some view this as a sign that Yamana's gene therapy has tainted him; his decisions weren't those you'd expect from a centenarian. The unease with his policies has been further fueled by the Japanese aversion to tampering with the natural cycles of life, stemming from Shinto traditions.
- Kia
- You hit it on the head. Yamana's rejuvenated face spouting the message that old men are a burden to society hasn't done the cause of genetweaking any favors in Shinto circles.
- Baka Dabora
- Between following Shinto and looking younger, the Japanese have chosen fresh and sexy like the rest of us. Maybe even more so. Nu-furries and changelings are all the rage in some quarters.
- Plan 9

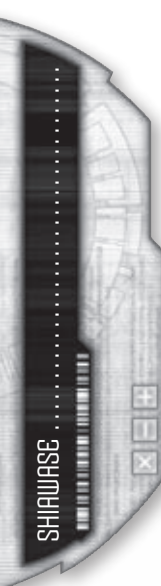
- True. But the jury's still out on the Yamana doctrine, and it represents a serious gamble on Korin's part. Many Japanese have embraced "fresh and sexy," but there are more conservative and still influential groups who view rejuvenation as an affront to Shinto beliefs. The more traction their arguments gain, the higher the risk that both Yamana and his doctrine will be seen as a serious contradiction to Shiawase's cleansing efforts. And if the Shinto priesthood comes out with a unified denunciation of Shiawase as just another tainted Japanacorp—they are using Fuchi business practices after all, aren't they?—it could end up costing Shiawase much more than it's gaining through the Yamana doctrine.
- The Smiling Bandit

Yamana also reorganized the diverse Shiawase business units, employing tried-and-true Fuchi principles to cut redundancies. The result has been a clearly more efficient business structure but it has further alienated Shiawase subsidiary managers, many of whom feel they were deliberately sidelined in the restructuring—and they've taken it as a serious affront. Of course, a lot of the ensuing—and ongoing—dissent has been exploited and encouraged by Sadato and Tadashi loyalists, who believe that the changes aren't in keeping with the Shiawase family spirit.

- Well, in fact they are—if you recognize that backstabbing and murder are a time-honored part of said spirit.
- Baka Dabora
- Good point. But don't mistake all this family spirit stuff as so much hot air. I have no doubt Sadato and Soko truly bought into the company line as much as everyone else over the decades. Shiawase *is* an extended family. And it's infinitely easier to conceptualize an ideal family—or family ideal—than to actually live up to the ideal.
- Dr. Spin

The Yamana doctrine might be economically brilliant, but its introduction was potential political suicide. Outraged by the affront to the elder employees by a younger man—and an outsider—Shiawase citizens reflexively turned to Empress Hitomi. By marrying the Emperor, she already had brought great honor to the Shiawase name. With the support she receives from the Shinto priesthood and the adoration of the Japanese public, forcing Korin Yamana to reverse his policies would have been a mere formality for her. But when she finally did step in, she requested only token changes—much less than what the conservatives had hoped for and expected of her.

As it became obvious that Hitomi had no intention of reversing the changes introduced by Yamana, internal strife at Shiawase developed a new quality, taking a darker turn into the shadows. While hiring shadowrunners for inside jobs is a time-honored tradition at Shiawase, it has always been one evoked with a certain reluctance. Working to correct a situation that the Empress doesn't consider in need of correction, however, is a moral transgression of a much greater dimension. Not just because the Empress would view such efforts as a personal insult, but because simply implying that she—and by extension, the Emperor—is wrong goes against the very pillars of loyalty and allegiance the traditionalists hold so dear. And such a treasonous position could easily be used to bring down anyone proved



to be supporting it. This moral conundrum has made Shiawase managers more willing to call on deniable assets than to trust underlings or henchmen with operations that fall into this political minefield.

KAMI, INC.

On his deathbed Sadato bequeathed some of his shares to “the Shiawase spirit.” In his will, Sadato claimed that Korin Yamana was leading Shiawase away from the path set by Emori, and the only way back to the true path was by following the guidance of the Shiawase kami—which can be interpreted as either the spirit of Emori himself or literally, as Shiawase’s “esprit de corps.” But instead of giving the shares to yet another dubious medium, Sadato suggested that Shiawase create a Shinto advisory board that would vote on behalf of the Shiawase kami. When Tadeshi brought the proposal before the board of directors, Soko, Mitsuko, and—surprisingly—Hitomi all supported it. The motion was adopted, an advisory board of Shinto priests was created, and Shinto assumed an official place in the Shiawase boardroom.

- Surprisingly? What choice did Hitomi have? The reconstruction of Japan rests on the Emperor’s alliance with Shinto priesthood. How could she refuse, when Shiawase has been hammering its family spirit into the minds of its citizenry for generations? Sadato was always a calculating bastard. He knew that his testament, while intended to disrupt The Orchids’—and Yamana’s—plans, was perfectly consistent with Imperial policy. Furthermore, it increased his own claim to a better position in the Shiawase pantheon; there are fates worse than being worshipped as a god.

- Baka Dabora

- Any guess on how Rhonabwy voted in the matter? He’s still got his shares, right?

- Cosmo

- The great dragon Rhonabwy was a backer of Jerri Howard. He recently donated some of his stake to the Shinto board, so I think it is safe to say that he supported its establishment.

- Mr. Bonds

- Wait—Rhonabwy? What did he stand to gain by giving up shares?

- Frosty

- Nothing tangible. There was a transfer of shares from the dragon to the board, but no traceable money transfer. I think Soko made Rhonabwy an offer too good to refuse. Soko is rich beyond belief—the only thing that keeps her from buying more shares is the other shareholders’ unwillingness to sell. Maybe Rhonabwy needed cash, but he didn’t want it known that he was actually selling to Soko, so they arranged a deal in which the board would get his shares. Maybe what happened to Nachtmeister gave Rhonabwy pause for thought—what with rising tensions between Shiawase and Saeder-Krupp in Europe and him owning an eight percent stake.

- Mr. Bonds

The ideals of Shinto were by no means new to the Shiawase mindset. Shrines have been dedicated to Emori’s kami since 2019. But Shiawase’s claim to uphold family and—by

extension—traditional Shinto values has always grown louder whenever the dysfunction of the Shiawase family has become more apparent. And with Ryoi’s death whetting Soko’s appetite for mystical things, it’s no wonder that corporate Shintoism has developed, especially considering Shiawase’s long cultivation of its distinct corporate spirit.

- Shiawase’s Jingi-Kan Bureau of Worship was first formed four months after the new Emperor declared he was petitioning the Shinto priesthood and the kami spirits to aid in the rebuilding of Japan. Of course, back then it was just a marketing gimmick devised to win favor with the Emperor. But the people on the current Shinto advisory board started out as corporate priests of that department.

- Kia

- Does the bureau still exist?

- DangerSensei

- Not as such. Up until 2069 it remained a small advisory group at Shiawase headquarters. But the central Shinto advisory board took over the Jengi-Kan’s facilities at headquarters, and most of the former Jengi-Kan members were promoted to head the Shinshoku offices of one Shiawase division or another. The Shinshoku department’s main task is managing Shiawase’s Shinto shrines—real, AR, and VR—and mediating with local spirits. It also has some influence on the design of new installations, advising on “requirements” such as baths, shrines, and green areas. Services of the department are provided on an-demand basis; generally its influence lessens the farther you get from Shiawase Japan, both in terms of geographic space and distance from headquarters within the Shiawase corporate infrastructure.

- Kia

- What about religious bias? What about mages that bind and enslave spirits/kami?

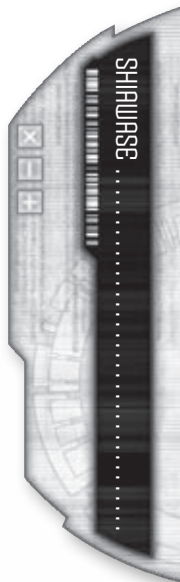
- Aufheben

- Strictly speaking, Shinto dogma does not dictate a right or wrong way to handle spirits. It contains little inherent bias against other belief systems and practices. Non-Shinto mages will usually have no trouble relating with Shinto priests, who tend to see binding rituals as nothing more than a clever—but fair—means to trick a kami into hearing one’s “prayers.” Of course, there are radical sects or individuals who may have different opinions, but tolerance seems to be the norm.

- Naginata

CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

At the same time Yamana became CEO—and just a year before the Shinto advisory board was formed—Empress Hitomi received the dubious honor of becoming chair of the board. This has caused no end of uproar and controversy among traditionalists. As she is now nominally responsible for all Shiawase business—including stuff she has no knowledge of—she is in grave danger of becoming just as tainted as any other megacorporate player. The Japanese people, Shiawase citizens, the clergy, and the Imperial Household are not at all happy with the situation.





INCOMING FEED.....

Her guarded support of the Yamana doctrine is viewed by some as a first step down a dark road. In the traditionalist view, her support of the doctrine may be necessary from a business stance, but not necessarily right in a moral or spiritual sense.

- The Empress clearly realizes the necessity of the Yamana doctrine. Some even suggest she ordered Yamana to introduce the doctrine. If this is true, he took a bullet for her, sacrificing his reputation for the Empress and the corporation. That means that the Empress's gratitude could make Korin Yamana an incredibly influential man—far more influential than Shiawase itself.
- Mr. Bonds

ADVANCING LIFE

The first thing most people notice about Shiawase is that its sub-companies and brands are easily identifiable. While some megacorps try to cloud their connections to their subsidiaries, Shiawase proudly emblazons its name and logo on products distributed by its diverse subsidiaries.

The second defining characteristic of Shiawase is its organizational scheme—it organizes its divisions by area of interest, rather than region. This model has proven so successful that other megacorporations are adopting it. True, Shiawase maintains regional marketing departments and liaisons with local governments—lobbyists, in other words. But the requirements of the business at hand dictate how work and production are organized, not the country or region where a facility happens to be located.

This non-localized approach allows for great flexibility but comes at the price of diminished brand loyalty in each country, save Japan. At the same time, this approach adds to the impression of Shiawase as a monolithic, faceless corporation. Shiawase's long-held policy of maintaining a neutral facade contributes to this impression as well, as the mega maintains a guarded distance from everyone.

At heart, Shiawase is a true holding company, a keiretsu. The core company doesn't produce anything and doesn't offer any services. But like the zaibatsu of old, Shiawase wholly controls its own house bank, Shiawase Financial, which manages cash flow, stock trading, and credit issues for employees and prints Shiawase scrip.

Shiawase prefers to maintain sole ownership of its subsidiaries, but it also gives those subsidiaries the utmost autonomy. This has led to a multitude of distinct business approaches within the Shiawase network. But no matter how different their approaches may be, all units of the Shiawase enterprise follow a common agenda, subscribe to one central brand philosophy, and follow a limited number of set standardized procedures. And all ultimately report to the Shiawase board, of course.

The Shiawase business spirit is rooted in Japanese tradition, of which Shinto forms an integral part. This influence is especially visible in Shiawase's embrace of the four central Shinto affirmations: tradition and family, respect of nature, physical cleanliness, and the *matsuri*, festivals held for the kami spirits. Shiawase practices and propaganda have always exhibited the strong influence

of the first three affirmations; the fourth affirmation was formally introduced into Shiawase culture in 2069, as part of an effort by Yamana to appease his traditionalist critics.

Energy

Shiawase Energy (formerly Shiawase Atomics) is still the world's leading energy provider, despite the expiration of the corporation's fusion-technology patent in 2020. The first pillar of Shiawase's core businesses, the division was renamed to stress Shiawase's commitment to sustainable-energy technology, such as solar satellites, geothermal energy, and underwater tidal plants.

The energy division is Shiawase's major cash cow and dominates energy markets throughout much of the world, with the exception of Europe. The Continent has proven to be a difficult business arena for Shiawase Energy ever since the 2011 meltdown, mainly due to the stiff competition it faces from Saeder-Krupp's dominant Ruhr-Nuclear subsidiary. Fuchi's European operations were stepping on Saeder-Krupp's toes long before 2060, so when Korin Yamana brought Fuchi Pan-Europe into the Shiawase fold, the lingering effects of that rivalry added fuel to the rekindled Shiawase-Saeder-Krupp competition. In fact, Shiawase and Saeder-Krupp have gone from being earnest competitors to dire enemies. Some observers believe this development may point to a conflict between Lofwyr and Rhonabwy, the Welsh great dragon who still holds Shiawase stock.

Recently, Shiawase Energy has also locked horns with Wuxing. This conflict began in 2068, when Shiawase Envirotech attempted to stake a claim to a site of manganese-56 in the Sea of China. Initially, Shiawase Amaterasu—one of Shiawase Energy's larger subsidiaries—claimed the location as a construction site for vast, floating solar fields. But when Shiawase Amaterasu attempted to cede mining rights to the sea floor below—a site that just happened to be a likely hotspot of manganese-56—to Shiawase Envirotech, Wuxing vigorously protested. Tensions between Shiawase and Wuxing have been rising ever since. And in January 2072, observers reported corporate warships from both sides, as well as privateers, en route to Shiawase and Wuxing mining stations in the Sea of China.

Augmentation & Medical Services

Shiawase was the first provider of custom cyberware and remains the world's most diversified biotech corporation. Cyberware, bioware, nanoware, and all sorts of genetic tampering are handled by Shiawase Biotech, the second of the three pillars that are the megacorp's core businesses.

As one of his first steps as CEO, Yamana separated certain biotech businesses from the Shiawase Biotech division and combined them with other subsidiaries to form two new divisions: Biofood and Omnicare. While Shiawase Biofood is now a leading manufacturer of fast-moving consumer goods, Shiawase Omnicare is just starting out as a new player in the fields of medical response, health, and welfare services. But Omnicare's managing director, Achim Vandergaard, seems determined to transform his division into a major player. Known as a merciless business shark, the bald, dark-eyed Dutchman with the cruel, biosculpted face recently announced his intention to make Shiawase Medical the world's leader in response-and-rescue services by the end of this decade.

Meanwhile, those companies that were part of Shiawase Biotech before the reorganization maintain strong connections to one another, if only to see ongoing projects to their respective ends.

Resources & Waste Management

Shiawase Envirotech, the company's division for mining operations, city cleaning, and waste disposal, is the third pillar of Shiawase's core businesses. Besides operating in its official business markets, the Envirotech division also functions as an important public-relations tool for the megacorp. Whenever possible, Shiawase Media Services trumpets the work of the division in its ongoing fight against environmental hazards and global pollution and its continuing campaign to restore wildlife habitats.

- All the good PR Shiawase earns from Envirotech may prove to be the division's undoing. Since the beginning of its so-called "cleansing" campaign, Shiawase has gone to great lengths to emphasize its efforts to protect nature. Now that the Empress is the Shiawase chair, she is honor-bound to fulfill the promises made by Shiawase's public-relations machinery, at least to some degree. If any rival can convince the public that Envirotech is no better than your average waste-disposal company—which it isn't—the Empress loses face big time.

- Kat o' Nine Tales

- Are you gloating? Is it unthinkable that the Empress takes the policy of kawaru to heart? Isn't it possible that polluting just doesn't pay anymore? Don't get me wrong. Megas will be megas, I'm not arguing that. But if soulless corporate calculations determine that a corporation has more to gain by acting as a proper, responsible member of society than by raping the Earth further, why wouldn't the corp want to change?

- Aufheben

- Because it's fun? Seriously—no matter how much I would like things to be different, they aren't. So some Shinto geeks got the Emperor of an earthquake-stricken island nation to form a pact with shamans to rebuild the land instead of throwing cash into the maws of the megas like everyone else. So the megacorps have suddenly turned all image-conscious. So what? Recycling waste is still more expensive than tossing it somewhere, preferably in some African ghoul nation like that Aztech waste firm did some years back. The sad truth of your corporate calculations is that the costs of being good outweigh the benefits. So, Shiawase will drown in good intentions. I don't care, as long as I land me one of those contracts to dig up dirt on Envirotech.

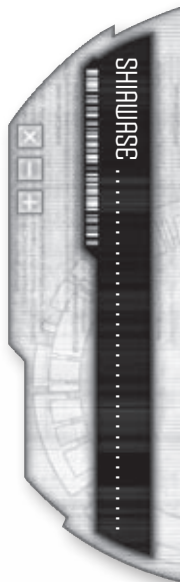
- Mihoshi Oni

- Lighthearted as always, I see.

- Kia

Market Forecasting & Information Department

Despite its innocuous-sounding name, the Market Forecasting & Information Department (MFID) is Shiawase's corporate intelligence service. The MFID's official function is detecting and countering threats—both external and internal—to Shiawase. In the course of performing this duty, the MFID routinely manipulates share prices, blackmails people, and otherwise does the dirty work you'd expect of a corporate intelligence



department. And like most other corp security arms, the MFID is authorized to screen and hire deniable assets—most often shadowrunners—for the megacorp.

As Shiawase infighting has reached an all-time high, however, Shiawase executives and managers have become more likely to develop their own shadow connections and hire runners without informing the MFID. This development hasn't gone unnoticed by the MFID, whose personnel continually try to protect their status as the only Shiawase department authorized to deal with shadowrun teams. But this struggle has been a losing battle for the MFID, whose effectiveness has been greatly hampered by the internal struggles that have raged within the department ever since Hitomi-loyalist Nigel Coltrane replaced Sadato-loyalist Ichiro Kiyomoto as MFID director in 2066. Although Kiyomoto lives and works outside of Shiawase facilities and supervision, many of his people still work in all levels of the MFID—a situation that places him in an excellent position to strike at his enemies in Shiawase.

Other Businesses

“What don't they do?” is the most common question asked about Shiawase. The megacorp's businesses range from food production and agriculture to nanofabrication and automated drone engineering, from fashion labels to shipyards to affordable electric scooters, from advanced-weapons technology to the officially sanctioned Empress Hitomi Doll for the annual Hina Matsuri doll festival, from tasty instant noodles to commlink powercells to biodrones, from Hello Puppy camcorders to Sim Station XX6500 consoles to trideo shopping stations to urban ferries to funparks. In short, Shiawase truly does virtually everything—or at least provides components for it.

SHIAWASE DAMASHII

No megacorporation has a longer history of building a distinct corporate culture than Shiawase. Under Sadato Shiawase, this culture was called *Shiawase-Do*—the Way of Shiawase. With his introduction of the Yamana doctrine, Korin Yamana tried to change the direction the corporation was taking, but the amount of change a traditional Japanacorp can integrate within its established culture is limited. With Empress Hitomi's support, however, a new culture has emerged within the megacorp—*Shiawase Damashii*, or “the Soul of Shiawase.”

Formally codified as the future corporate spirit of the corporation, Shiawase Damashii integrates principles of Shiawase-Do, Shinto, and the Yamana doctrine. Working from a central vision of the Shiawase ideal, the Shiawase Damashii prescribes the way a good and proper Shiawase citizen thinks, acts, dresses, lives, marries, educates his children, and even dies.

- If indeed death is the end of it. Shiawase Damashii contains the ceremony of becoming an *ujiko*, or “family child.” When a child is born to a Shiawase citizen, its name is written on the list of the corresponding Shiawase shrine. This ties the spirit of the newborn to that corporate shrine, and when the child dies its spirit enters the pantheon of kami worshipped at that shrine. Given what little is known about the spirits of the deceased, I find this somewhat unsettling.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- You may find it unsettling, but most followers of Shiawase Shinto don't have any problem with it. Don't forget that Shiawase citizens usually benefit from *shuushon koyou*—lifelong employment. A person who has dedicated his whole life to a single corporation

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SHIAWASE TOP-LEVEL BUSINESSES

DIVISION/DEPARTMENT	HEADQUARTERS	MANAGING DIRECTOR
Shiawase Corporation	Osaka, Japan	Korin Yamana
Shiawase Financial	Neo-Tokyo, Japan	Takeshi Matsukawa
Shiawase Energy	Washington FDC, UCAS	Christopher Keratsu
Shiawase Biotech	Neo-Tokyo, Japan	Kazuja Shiawase
Shiawase Envirotech	Osaka, Japan	Mamoru Shiawase
Shiawase Biofood	Lille, France	Isabelle Corbeau
Shiawase Omnicare	Manila, Phillipines	Achim Vandergaard
Shiawase Manufacturing	Brussels, EC	Patrick Bösherz
Shiawase Security Services	Tallinn, Estonia	Voldemar Kohv
Shiawase Mediatech	Calcutta, Indian Union	Farrokh Shankar
Shiawase Logistics	Osaka, Japan	Ryosuke Oda
Shiawase Market Forecasting & Information Dept.	Osaka, Japan	Nigel Coltrane

doesn't mind giving the rest of eternity to it, too. If indeed such a thing as an afterlife exists.

- Kia
- There has been talk on some boards about unexplained difficulties controlling spirits conjured in Shiawase facilities. Makes you wonder if there's some kind of connection between regular spirits and Shiawase kami?
- Lyran
- Once gullible people start believing, does it really matter if such a connection truly exists? Personally, I think all the talk about Shiawase making spirits in the vicinity of its facilities some sort of allies or loyal followers is pure urban myth. Maybe even myth intentionally spread by the MFID. It would be a damn smart move, after all.
- Dr. Spin
- Well, theoretically speaking, if enough people actively believe in the power of the kami, the focused belief could create some kind of background noise or astral "aspecting."
- Ethernaut
- Sorry for interrupting your highly interesting but totally unsupported speculation, but I just want to note that not all Shiawase facilities have a Shinto shrine—especially not second-tier subsidiaries or corporate facilities in parts of the world where Shinto isn't that popular. True, you can spot the *torii* gates of the Osaka Matrix shrine from virtually anywhere, but the local AR and central VR shrines maintained by many divisions and subsidiaries are not nearly as impressive. And while Shiawase generally encourages Shinto as a sort of corporate religion, it makes no effort to force it on anyone. Remember, Shiawase subsidiaries—even those that are wholly owned—have great freedom in how they do business, especially those located outside Asia.
- Naginata
- Just out of curiosity—what happens if a child dies before it becomes an *ujiko* or if its family gets transferred to another plant halfway around the globe?
- Axis Mundi
- In the first case, the child become a *mizuko*—a "water child." Such children are thought to be a source of troubles, especially if they are aborted. There are special shrines dedicated to appeasing them. In the case of a family being moved, the names of the family members will be written on the list of their new shrine, too. There is no penalty for being worshipped at multiple places. At Matrix shrines these lists are datafiles, so moving names to another shrine is a simple copy/paste operation.
- Naginata

One Big Happy

Family is central to Shiawase Damashii, of course. But not just an individual citizen's family. The entire Shiawase corporate family—all corporate citizens, from sararimen to execs to the lowliest laborer—is equally important, if not more so. But it doesn't end there. By extending its "family" beyond the boundaries of the

megacorporation, Shiawase has developed this theme into a new and ingenious marketing philosophy as well. The brand has always been an omnipresent symbol. And fueled by a multi-billion-nuyen ad campaign by Shiawase-Rubicon, the ubiquitous Shiawase logo has taken on a deeper meaning and has become a vision of the future. Now the Shiawase family includes even customers and fans of the megacorporate brand. That's why you see Shiawase Shinto shrines outside Shiawase facilities; Shiawase-sponsored public schools; Shiawase daycare centers; and public medical, welfare, and retirement facilities operated by Shiawase Omnicare.

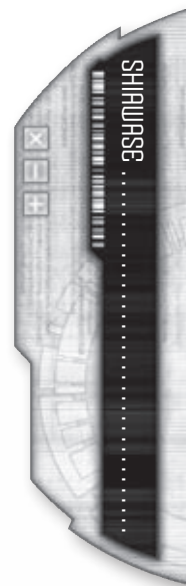
This campaign has given Shiawase's citizens and employees a renewed sense of pride and dedication. Some of these sentiments may be linked to the feeling of working for the Emperor himself and rebuilding what has been lost—in Japan and, by extension, the world over. Of course, among critical observers all this sudden enthusiasm renews rumors of brainwashing and psychotropic tampering on a massive scale.

- Sounds like a case the Dawkins Group would be interested in.
- Fianchetto

Into the Shinto

A culmination of more than 150 years of corporate success, Shiawase Damashii encompasses several data tomes of business principles and management files. Some of the most striking changes introduced in this vast system are several new corporate positions, most in the new Shinshoku department of worship. At the top of the Shinshoku hierarchy of any Shiawase division stands a chief ritualist—the *kuni no miyatsuko*—who is more often than not a Shinto shaman. Managing a local Shinshoku department is a chief priest called a *guji*, who is aided by several supplicant priests called *negi*. *Guji* and *negi* are mundanes for the most part, but sometimes there is the special position—the *hafuri*—that can be best described as a combination of security shaman and advisor to the division security chief. Last are the *miko*—shrine maidens who perform most of the everyday duties, including but not limited to counseling, mediating, and acting as oracles. The *miko* also manage the *omikuji*—a sacred lottery that has developed into a highly popular AR feature.

- Matrix shrines provide a natural backdoor to many Shiawase nodes, as they usually see high traffic and some even provide open access for non-Shiawase personnel. I've heard of a case where someone hacked into one facility's *omikuji*—everyone who played that day received a prophecy of illness, death, and betrayal. Supposedly, this led to such low morale that nearly a third of the facility's security guards called in sick, and the hacker and his team had a remarkably easy time infiltrating the place.
- Pistons
- Well, that case happened three years ago at a Shiawase toy plant in India. Security's been tightened at all Matrix shrines since then, let me assure you. The trick might still work—just don't put all your money on it.
- Otaku-zuku
- Wasn't that the plant all the highly poisonous toys were traced to?
- Arete



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SHIAWASE DAMASHII ETIQUETTE

- **Be polite. Never lose your temper. Always show respect.** Never violate this rule.
- **Make yourself knowledgeable**—not only in Japanese business customs, but Shinto as well. The more cultured you appear, the less likely you will be regarded as expendable.
- **Bring a meishi.** A *meishi* is a business card. Even in this wireless age you are expected to present a meishi printed on real paper. Don't show off, though. Having a card that's more elaborate than your boss's can cost you points.
- **Note how you're addressed.** This will indicate what the speaker thinks of you. Shadowrunners are rarely addressed with the honorific suffix *-san*. Being a criminal, the best you can usually hope for is a *-hikoku* (defendant) or *-yogisha* (suspect). If he calls you a *burakumin*, he sees you as expendable.
- **Call your Johnson "Naka-udo-san."** *Naka-udo* is the internal Shiawase name for a professional go-between. (Actually, a *naka-udo* is an archaic name for a professional marriage arranger, a function that is currently regaining popularity.) Just by knowing this, you will distinguish yourself from the riffraff your Shiawase Johnsons usually deal with.
- **Watch out for sokaiya runs.** No, *sokaiya* ain't milk. A *sokaiya* run is a specialized type of shadowrun in which you'll be required to attend a shareholder meeting of a rival corporation or corporate takeover target. Your job will be to disrupt the meeting and cause the rival to lose face or to dig up dirt and blackmail it. *Sokaiya* runs are very well paid because they demand a high degree of flair and fine instincts.
- **Be aware of genchi genbutsu.** *Genchi genbutsu*—"Go and see for yourself"—is a guiding principle in Shiawase Damashii. Following this principle, Shiawase security personnel do not rely solely on sensor feeds and other forms of remote observation. If an alarm sounds, someone will come and check out the situation. You can count it. The trick is to make *genchi genbutsu* work for you.
- **Never say things directly.** It's highly impolite. The art of beating around the bush is called *ishin-denshin*, in case you're looking for a class or chip on the topic.
- **If you screw up, apologize.** Never blame others. It just increases your shame.
- **Hurry.** If you run against Shiawase, the MFID will be your most dire enemy. MFID personnel make extensive use of external sources, private eyes, tabs, even holistic probability models. The more time that passes between your briefing and the start of your shadowrun, the greater the chance the MFID has already alerted Shiawase security or is hot on your tail.
- **Don't follow this list blindly.** Remember, Shiawase divisions and their subsidiaries have great autonomy in how they do business. And countless Shiawase people outside of Japan have never heard of a *meishi*, *naka-udo*, or *burakumin* before.

Another major change introduced in Shiawase Damashii is the official acknowledgment of gay couples and the change in attitude toward metahumans, who now are to be addressed as *kawarubito*—"changed persons"—rather than *oni*—"demons." The wide-ranging edicts of Shiawase Damashii even include prescriptions for architectural features at Shiawase facilities, such as Japanese gardens, *ofuro* baths for employees, and sleeping cubicles for those employees who show their effort and dedication by practicing *inemuri*—falling asleep at the office due to overwork.

FAMILY BUSINESS

The following are brief profiles of those Shiawase people you must know about.

THE THREE ORCHIDS

Empress Hitomi is probably the most intriguing figure of the megacorporate world. Once a rebellious teenager and rumored otaku, she married fourteen-year-old Emperor Yasuhito at the orders of her father, Tadeshi Shiawase, who saw the marriage as a strategic move to secure his position within Shiawase. Since then, her husband has grown into a young man who has earned the adoration, even worship of his people. Like her husband, Hitomi too has grown beyond the wildest expectations of her father and her family. In fact, she repaid her father for her forced marriage by removing him from power and driving her grandfather to commit suicide. As the chairwoman of Shiawase, the Empress seems all but untouchable.

Mitsuko Shiawase-Yamana gained a lot of power in the 2065 Shiawase coup. But is it enough? Per Japanese tradition, she belongs to her husband's family—the Yamana—not Shiawase, a fact that is sure to provide trouble in the future. According to rumors, Mitsuko fears that Tadeshi will one day attempt to claim his de facto position as head of the Shiawase corporate family. As insurance against this, Mitsuko has supposedly retained an army of lawyers charged with the single task of finding a way to reinterpret her marriage as an ancient form common during the Middle Ages in Japan. Under this archaic marriage tradition, the husband marries into the family of his wife, who then adopts her husband as a true family member, even heir. If successful, this juridical maneuver would make Korin Yamana the new head of the Shiawase family, a position not even the Empress herself could challenge. But other rumors suggest that Mitsuko had expected Korin to retire and die of old age fairly quickly. According to this view, she has grown to hate her husband with a vengeance since his rejuvenation to an apparent age of 35 years foiled her plans.

Reiko Shiawase-Shimada came to much the same conclusion as Mitsuko regarding her position and apparently sees her husband as an expendable burden. Only two weeks before this upload, she filed for divorce. Interestingly enough, she has also been spotted visiting Tenjin Information Services, Ichiro Kiyomoto's new startup company.

THE THREE PATRONS

Tadeshi Shiawase was left down and out by the 2065 Shiawase coup. Ousted by his own daughter and stripped of most of his shares, many observers thought he would take the same

from sitting idle, Kityomoto has been remarkably active. Some observers even suggest that Kiyomoto has founded his own secret society/covert strike force within Shiawase: the Neo-Genyosha.

Korin Yamana is viewed by many as the knight in shining armor who will guide Shiawase into the next century. Thanks to modern rejuvenation treatments, there are no natural limits to the career of the centenarian. Soon, centenarian CEOs will be common the world over, and the world still has no answer to the so-called “Methuselah issue.” Yamana has no interest in spiritual matters at all, a fact that would be problematic if he wasn’t so good at paying lip service to Shinto. Many people with similar sentiments view Yamana as the last guardian of common sense, valiantly preventing Shiawase from falling into the clutches of theocratic rule.

// article tag added :: user Snopes :: //

NEO-GENYOSHA

After a series of seemingly unrelated accidents and suicides within the greater Shiawase network, rumors about a secret group working within the MFID began to appear. Dubbed the “Neo-Genyosha” after the ultranationalist secret society of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this group is allegedly responsible for the deaths of James Mancuso and Jerri Howard, who each controlled significant portions of Shiawase stock until shortly before their deaths. According to the rumors, the Neo-Genyosha consist of veteran MFID members whose loyalties lie with former MFID chief Ichiro Kiyomoto. (Kiyomoto was replaced by Nigel Coltrane after the Shiawase coup of 2065.) Some conspiracy theorists suggest that the Neo-Genyosha are directly descended from the original Genyosha.

Urgent Message...

Megawatch Buzz

MEGAWATCH BUZZ

//Keyword: Shiawase

//Date: 01/01/2072 - Current

Shiawase Energy Advisors to Visit Asante

ACCRA, ASANTE—Shiawase Energy advisors are scheduled to visit Asante in the wake of serious power and Matrix outages that have struck the West African nation for the third time in two months. Both outages were caused by human error, and the situation was under control at all times, according to power provider DeBeers-Omnitech. Shortly after the latest outage, King Osai Agyemang accepted an offer from Shiawase Energy to send technical advisors to provide an independent look at the situation. Observers view this as evidence of a Shiawase bid to enter the Asante market and replace DeBeers-Omnitech as Asante’s sole supplier of energy services. Long-term contracts between Asante and DeBeers-Omnitech expire in late 2073. DeBeers-Omnitech is one of the few corporations allowed to operate within the territory of the anti-corporate monarchy.

Chocozashi Chocpot to Aid CalFree Quake Victims

SAN FRANCISCO, CFS—More than 4,500,000¥ will be sent to aid victims of the 2069 South California earthquake, a Sensei Snack spokesman announced today. The award is the result of last year’s charity promotion by Sensei Snack, a trusted Shiawase brand. During the promotion, consumers were asked to find matching RFID tags in Chocozashi bars. For every match, Sensei added one nuyen to a “chocpot.” More than 135,000 Shiawase citizens from 100 clans competed in a grueling DemoZone

5 match for the right to name the chocpot beneficiary and take home the Golden Chocozashi trophy (estimated value—2,500 perquisite points). After 188 hours of play, the runaway favorite California Crusaders of Shiawase Biotech defeated PowerPlant of Arboritech New Zealand.

Corporate Military Strike, Downtown Berlin

BERLIN, AGS—Corporate forces have seized a five-to-ten-block area within the walled anarchist zone of Berlin, according to several independent media sources. The landings of unmarked helicopters, paratroopers, and gunfire in the area have been documented by several eyecam feeds. A reported missile strike that preceded the landings remains unconfirmed. Shiawase may be behind the operation, according to the same media sources. Erika Thyssen, the new head of Shiawase’s European Business Center in Brussels E.C., called the accusation “absurd” when questioned by DeMeKo reporters. Thyssen’s predecessor, Otomo Kasai, was abducted from his residence in Den Haag last month by terrorists of unidentified affiliation.

Wuxing and Shiawase Skirmish

SOUTH CHINA SEA—Arboritech CEO James Elder II has personally apologized for last week’s sinking of the Wuxing freighter *Xiaoqing*. Elder called the incident a “tragic accident” at a news conference today. Apparently, an automated defense system of Arboritech’s Vanguard mobile research facility mistook the *Xiaoqing* for a pirate cruiser and launched the torpedo that sank the ship. Wuxing has declined to press charges in the matter, leading to speculation about the true nature of the incident.

SHIAWASE





Lei Kung tried not to gasp for air. With their new cyberears, security was sure to hear him. He needed to calm down. He'd seen worse and made it out. This time was no different. No reason to use the subvocal, the others were already getting out. Snow Tiger's pop-up display showed him where the goons were.

They were better than most, but Wuxing now had astral shallows at two skytowers. It wasn't surprising. He hadn't made it to the building and they were already closing in. He'd thought this plan would work but obviously it hadn't. Perhaps, if they came in from the northwest ... He shook his head. Focus on now. Get out, regroup, *then* plan the next step.

Unfortunately, his little detour down memory lane was costly. The guards now blocked his retreat. Time for a little disappearing act. All he needed was to ...

Flames erupted around him. His armor was fire resistant and would protect a little, but it didn't ease the rising panic. Willing himself to calm down, he recognized the source. Fortunately he had a water spirit on call for just such an emergency.

At his mental command, the two spirits started tearing one another apart. But the effort cost him. Smoking and singed, he lay in the open. If he expected a conversation, he was sadly mistaken. The first bullets impacted against his ribs. This was going to hurt a lot.

With a groan, Lei took the trodes off. Across the table Song Min stared at him impassively. She'd have her own agenda after this was over. She knew the result, everybody did. The kid's little demonstration had its desired effect. Next to her, the kid was packing up, his face a mixture of resignation and "I-told-you-so." Ni Ming, that's what they called him, nobody wanted to know any more. He'd been begging for scraps since the Sons of Thunder extracted him from Petrovsky Security (and Hong Kong) after the Watada-rengo scandal.

He hated to admit it, but the kid was right. Magic could only compensate for so much; his aging body was beginning to show the signs. He reflected on his life in the shadows, his brush with the First Coin of Luck, so many entanglements with the triads. For a second he considered what it would take to get a little more time. After all, he could call in some favors at Evolution. High-end bioware wouldn't be too horrible. He just needed that edge back. But the nagging voice in his head cut that short. To what end? So he could go out in a blaze of glory, for real this time instead of practice?

He had a place. It wasn't much but it was quiet and all his. And the truth was, the kid's demonstration scared him. Better to go out with his head held high. Let the others get their client's info on Wuxing's new astral shallow. After all, this was no sprawl for old runners.



WUXING INCORPORATED

Corporate Slogan: "We're behind everything you do."

Corporate Court Ranking (2072): #9

Corporate Status: Public Corporation

World Headquarters: Hong Kong Free Enterprise Enclave

President/CEO: Wu Lung-Wei

Major Shareholders: Wu Lung-Wei, Sharon Chiang-Wu, Fu Peng, James Harper-Smythe, Lu Bao Ling

Major Subsidiaries:

Heavy Industry/Energy/Resources: Red Wheel Engineering

Matrix: Eastern Electronics

Entertainment: AA Entertainment, Jam Bo Games, Lotus Multimedia, Tiger Trideo and Simsense, Saito Studios

Finance: Albion Mutual Funds, Fidelity Mutual Insurance, Malaysian Independent Bank, Prosperity Development Corporation, Wuxing Financial Services

Automotive/Vehicles/Drones: ESSY Motors

Arcane: Ming Solutions

Service Providers: Cartwright Cartage and Freight, Minh-Pao Exports, Soba Foods, Swift Wind Deliveries, Wuxing Worldwide Shipping

Prime Facilities: Hong Kong, Fuzhou, Boston, London, Adis Ababa

Dominant Business Language: Cantonese

Secondary Business Languages: English

THE DRAGON'S TAIL

Posted by: Lei Kung

After many years, it's time for me to step into the light. I hadn't decided what to do yet when FastJack's request for another update on Wuxing arrived. Maybe I should look into information brokering.

HISTORY

Wuxing began as a small Hong Kong-based import/export company. Founded over eighty years ago by Wu Kuan-Lei, it funneled goods in and out of Communist China through Hong Kong and all over the Pacific Rim. Wu's efforts were successful enough to garner the support of the Harper-Smythes, ex-British aristos and long-standing Honk Kong fixtures. Using their clout and finances, Wu bought other import/export companies like Minh-Pao Imports, Swift Wind Deliveries, and Cartwright Cartage and Freight Inc. These companies were incorporated with Wuxing Inc., and a small "A" was born.

In 1997 mainland China began to re-assimilate Hong Kong. At first there was a very hands-off attitude, but most knew it was just for show. After all, Hong Kong's standard of living was significantly higher than the mainland's. Wu became an outstanding proponent of a free and independent Hong Kong. He rallied other business owners and financial supporters to the cause.

- Not to mention importing guns and other supplies to the budding Free Enterprise Enclave.

- 2XL

- And buying up lots of other small businesses at rock-bottom prices while everyone was looking the other way.

- Kia

By itself Hong Kong couldn't sustain a bid for independence, so they needed time. Wu enlisted British diplomats and implored local business owners to use their contacts. While the diplomats were busy talking in circles Hong Kong had a chance to prepare.

In 2015 a crumbling Communist China admitted defeat. With the local corps and a few megas firmly entrenched, the Hong Kong Free Enterprise Enclave was born. Wu, the loudest voice and one of the men behind the plan, went from local to international hero.

Every hero needs a monument to their greatness. So Wu consulted the best geomancers before settling on a spot overlooking Aberdeen. The choice was odd given its remoteness and distance from Hong Kong. But the existence of intersecting dragon lines explained the decision.

That was just the beginning of Wu's vision. Wuxing, and many of the Pacific Rim businesses, chafed under the economic stranglehold of the Japanese megacorporations. Wu began making inroads to these other companies to develop a conglomerate of allied businesses whose goal was to compete directly with the Japanacorps.

He might have succeeded if not for the Crash of '29. The financial devastation sent many of the smaller corps scrambling. Survival became the watchword of the day. Wuxing was big enough to hold its own, but Wu never got to see his dream come to fruition. In '39, he died peacefully in his sleep at 71.



Wuxing reverted to his son, Wu Lung-Wei. The younger Wu vowed to make his father's dream come true, and with a little draconic help along the way, he managed to turn Wuxing into one of the ten most powerful corps on Earth.

- What's this data, like 33 years old? Come on! Get to something I can use.
- Baka Dabora
- Oh hush, you. Some of us haven't heard this.
- /dev/grrl

TODAY

Wuxing today is a product of the younger Wu's vision. Keeping his father's principle of diversifying, Wu was able to get megacorporate status in just six years. However, old grudges die hard and some weren't happy about Wuxing's rapid growth and prosperity.

Among the detractors were the Japanacops and the Canton Confederation. The Japanacops didn't want to see any regional upstart gain megacorporate status. They were also angry that Wuxing was drawing together allies against their dominance in the PacRim. For their part, the Canton Confederation looked to profit off the Hong Kong turnover. They'd been looking for payback since the elder Wu ended that plan. Each was looking for some way to teach Hong Kong and Wuxing a lesson.

The Canton Confederation was first to make problems. Wuxing's new status earned them extraterritoriality and freedom from governmental oversight. Incensed, the Cantonese leveled serious allegations of corporate malpractice, seized Wuxing's property, and froze their assets.

Wuxing appealed to the Corporate Court to adjudicate the matter against the Cantonese. The issue was quickly called to a vote before the court judges.

This put the Japanacops in a curious position. On the one hand, they were glad Wuxing was having problems, as contemporary rumors implied they sent emissaries to the Canton Confederation as "advisors." On the other hand, not supporting Wuxing meant not enforcing the decrees that protected their own corporations.

- Advisors nothing! They wanted to take control of Wuxing's assets once they were gone.
- Glitch
- And risk extraterritoriality? I seriously doubt that.
- Kay St. Irregular

In the end, enlightened self-interest won out, and the court enforced the decree. The Canton Confederation suddenly found itself dealing with wildcat strikes, missing or pirated shipments, late payments for goods, and the like. They held out almost three months before internal problems took down their leaders. The new government learned its lesson and afforded Wuxing all due courtesy.

After that, it seemed Wuxing's expansion had played out. They made a few acquisitions, but the stupendous growth of the last six years had stalled. It turned out, however, that the lull was just the eye of the hurricane.

PACIFIC PROSPERITY GROUP TIMELINE

2020-2028: Wu Kuan-Lei begins speaking to business contacts about forming a unified group to combat the influence of the Japanacops. Most contacts support him but are afraid to do so openly. Progress is slow but steady.

2029: Crash 1.0 destroys most of Wu's progress as small corps are too busy trying to stay afloat to worry about the Japanacops.

2039: Wu Kuan-Lei dies, and his son Wu Lung-Wei takes over Wuxing.

2039-2056: The younger Wu re-forms relationships with many of his father's old contacts. He encounters problems similar to those of his father.

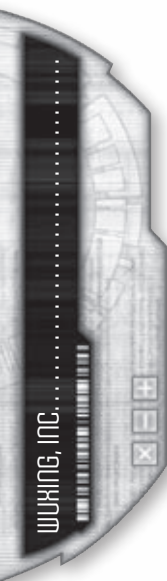
2057-2058: Flush with capital and gifts from Dunkelzahn's will, Wu forms the Pacific Prosperity Group with dozens of second- and third-tier megacops. They are successful enough to cause trouble for individual Japanacops.

2059: Buttercup, board member of Yamatetsu, approaches the PPG. Over the course of three months she convinces them of her corp's desire to join. With Yamatetsu, the PPG becomes a serious factor in the PacRim.

Urgent Message...

Starting in August '57, the attention of the powers of the world focused on the will of a certain deceased dragon. Surprisingly three of its gifts were given directly or indirectly to Wuxing. The first, 200 million nuyen, was bequeathed directly to Wuxing to be used "at the sole discretion of the CEO and principal shareholders." After a bit of wrangling, the money was placed in several holding companies before showing up in their magic research division. The second bequest, the Jade Dragon of Wind and Fire, was given to Wu Lung-Wei. It adorned his office before he moved it to a specially built temple in the Aberdeen Skytower. The final item was the Third Coin of Luck, given to Wu's wife, Sharon Chang-Wu. Legend says the coin gives the luck of fertility.

- After the will was read, Wu did some nifty corporate reshuffling and ended up with virtually sole discretion over the nuyen's use. He ordered the research division to examine the Jade Dragon and its possible utility in geomancy.
- Jimmy No
- That's the prevailing theory, but no one's got any proof.
- Icarus
- Okay, the cash went to research and the Jade Dragon's at the temple. So, where's the Coin?
- Ma'fan
- Sharon's worn it on a necklace to various functions in the past. Recently she's been less in the public eye. When she has made an appearance, the Coin has not been with her.
- Lei Kung



- I recall you had a brush with one of the other Coins, Lei. Any idea where it might be now?
- Man-of-Many-Names
- I make it a point to know as little about it as possible. Last place I saw it was an anonymous drop box in the heart of Kowloon Walled City. If I were looking, that's where I'd start. Then, just follow the bodies. Actually, considering what went down in Kowloon last year, even that's a bad idea.
- Lei Kung

Wuxing's growth became astronomical. Within a year, they grew from a small AA to a seat on the Corporate Court. All Wuxing's business acquisitions seemed to turn a profit. Wuxing's diversity was astounding.

Around the PacRim, the corps buried by the Crash 1.0 got back on their feet and turned to Wuxing for guidance. In addition, one of the Japanacorps, Yamatetsu, turned their back on the others and relocated to Vladivostok. Wuxing found itself with a powerful ally and the ability to compete with the Japanacorps. In '59 the younger Wu realized his father's dream by forming the Pacific Prosperity Group.

On the homefront, Wu and his wife announced the birth of their identical quintuplet girls in '61. They were named after the five major Wujen elements of the Earth, and instantly rumors started flying.

- And continue to this day.
- Dr. Spin

The Crash 2.0 severely damaged Wuxing's bottom line. But more importantly, it decimated the smaller corporations in the PPG. Wuxing and Yamatetsu (now Evo) swooped in and bought up the floundering companies. Wuxing got the lion's share, making Red Wheel Engineering, SsangYong Motors, and the Malaysian Independent Bank subsidiaries.

The MIB purchase caused strains within the PPG. While every member had an equal vote in PPG matters, those with MIB loans worried that Wuxing might try to influence their votes. Several members considered withdrawing from the PPG over the incident.

- Inadvertently or not, owning MIB now sets Wuxing against the other worldwide financial institutions like Saeder-Krupp, Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal, and potentially Zurich-Orbital.
- Mr. Bonds

Evo also voiced dissent over the matter, and Wuxing found itself without its longtime ally. Worse, Evo had settled some differences with Shiawase, leading to further tension and worry within the PPG.

Recently, Aztechnology, a long-time applicant for membership, was finally approved. Backed by Wuxing (which had previously opposed their inclusion several times), this has increased tensions and further distanced Wuxing from the rest of the PPG.

PROFILE

Wuxing's primary business is financial (especially since buying MIB). Their holdings include various financial institutions (e.g., Wuxing Financial Services, Prosperity Development Corporation, Albion Mutual Funds, Fidelity Mutual Insurance Corporation, and MIB).

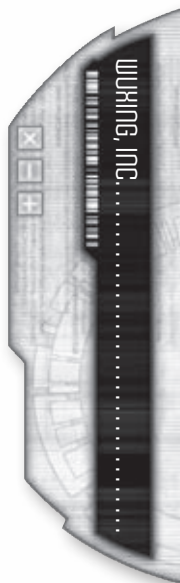
Having control over so many lending companies puts Wuxing in an interesting position. Thousands of A- and AA-rated corporations have loans from these institutions. Owing them means owing Wuxing. Now, it is blatantly illegal for Wuxing to demand concessions from these corporations. However, Wuxing has the statutory right to call for the immediate payment of any loan that's been late even one day.

- Yup, you read that right. If any single payment is late, Wuxing can ask for *all* their money back.
- Kay St. Irregular
- So, does Wuxing have staff to ensuring troublesome corps have a "late" payment?
- Snopes
- Actually, it's worse than that. "Late" means the payment hasn't threaded the proper channels at the financial institution to arrive at its final destination. In other words, MIB could record that the payment was received from the payee, but if it doesn't make it through the maze of MIB's internal node, it's still late.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Ouch.
- Snopes

Wuxing's secondary business comes from their extensive shipping and import/export services. While the triple-As all have their own logistical services, many A and AA corps do not. Again, Wuxing is in a unique position among its peers. Most shipping companies ship exclusively for their parent company or don't have the perks that come with extraterritoriality

- Otherwise known as the "We ship illegal goods without concern for pesky things like governments or other busybodies" guarantee.
- Kane
- The problem with smuggling isn't the thousands of kilometers between different Wuxing properties. It's the small move *off* their property afterwards. Wuxing's not about to get fined or sued for dealing with smalltime crap unless they're getting something really good in trade.
- 2XL

Extraterritoriality and willingness to ship for others gives Wuxing influence over its customers beyond price setting or refusing to do business. Wuxing also likes to buy up or drive off their competition so their customers have no options. Smaller companies with good logistics divisions (like Maersk, ESUS, Telestrian, and KondOrchid) are learning this the hard way.



Next in profitability are Wuxing's consumer goods and services. Wuxing products run the gamut from soft drinks and comm units to manufacturing and security services. Wuxing does a little bit of everything. About the only commodity where you'd be hard pressed to find Wuxing products is computer software.

- The Koreans just make software knockoffs too fast and too cheap, no one's been able to compete. Most don't even try.
- Kia

Recently, Wuxing has seen profit from new areas. Both their magical research and automotive manufacturing divisions have seen an upsurge. Some of this surge is tied to Ming Solutions, which is a magical-assets-integration corp. Essentially, they design spaces within corporate assets that maximize the natural flow of mana, otherwise known as feng shui. From spearheading a one million nuyen re-design of the Golden Mile in Hong Kong to examining the mana storms over Sydney to their "research and development" venture in the Yucatán, this company is all over the map.

- The Azzies tore down and relocated several *teocalli* in the Yucatán a few months back. Coincidence?
- Glasswalker

• I don't know 'bout that, but this little story might make your blood run cold. I was hired a while ago to take charge of some corp middle-man from Ming Solutions who'd been forcibly extracted. When my team shows, the package is trussed up like some kind of magic serial killer from the trids. I ask what's up, and their leader tells me they found five blood charms buried in the corper's chest. We did the job, but it was a tense few days.

- Stone

- Did you actually look at these "blood charms?"
- Sticks

- Not even on a dare.
- Stone

SsangYong Motors seemed to be Wuxing's only poor takeover choice after Crash 2.0. Their profitability had been sagging for some time, and the Crash was the nail in their coffin. For five years, Wuxing struggled to make SsangYong profitable. Then Sharon Chang-Wu took it as one of her pet projects. Within months, she'd re-named and reorganized the corp. Rather than keep up with industry standards, she aimed at a lower demographic. ESSY Motors began building new, ultra-cheap vehicles. Currently, the profits aren't phenomenal. But if worldwide sales of the ESSY 1 keep pace with current projections, ESSY could break its previous sales record.

- Way I hear it, the ESSY 1 has a lot of empty space. The kind of space that shadowrunners can fill with gadgets.
- Turbo Bunny

- For half the price of a Jackrabbit? I doubt it.
- Baka Dabora

CORPORATE CULTURE

If Aztechnology feeds the world, and Horizon looks to the future, then Wuxing is the little AAA everyone forgets. Despite what's in Hong Kong, they don't have flashy, easy-to-recognize logos or shiny, cutting-edge technology. Wuxing is the grease that keeps everyone else going. Need a loan to diversify or just a quick infusion of cash? Wuxing can help. Need to make sure your product gets where it's supposed to go, or more importantly need to make sure you receive your raw materials promptly? Wuxing can help.

Obviously, it's more than that; a look at their portfolio shows Wuxing is as diversified as some of the largest AAAs. However, nothing is cutting edge. They sell good, reliable, inexpensive products, and for the most part, do it under the radar.

- You get a job in Wuxing's PR department, Lei?
- Kia

- The power behind the power, eh? I think that sums them up nicely.
- Dr. Spin

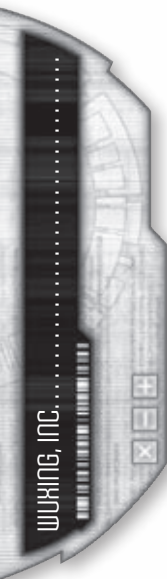
• Not being flashy tends to work in their favor. The general public knows very little about them, and many corps tend to underestimate Wuxing, thinking of them as just that "Hong Kong Corp." Nothing could be further from the truth.

- Lei Kung

Wuxing's conservatism is reflected in its citizens, who quickly learn that flash and individualism are not the way to promotion. Instead, in keeping with Wuxing's origins and the outlook of its board, Wuxing employees are encouraged to develop relationships with superiors, fellow employees, and supervisees. While many employees outside the PacRim view this as "Wuxing-is-a-family" attitude, it really stems from the Chinese concept of *guanxi*. Employees who develop supervisor-supervisee relationships find rising up the corporate ladder to be easier than those who rely on talent and ability.

In many cases this relationship-building alleviates some of the stress of corporate life. However, employees can never be sure that their supervisor isn't happier with another employee's work or that they've chosen the right supervisor with whom to develop a relationship.

Occasionally, an employee will sabotage a co-worker (usually because they sense a *guanxi* relationship slipping). The consequences of getting caught are so extreme, however, that most just quietly fume. In addition, employees who backstab and aren't caught are often less successful than employees who take the blame for their supervisor's mistakes.



ORGANIZATION

Despite the influence Wuxing has, it still retains some small-corp mentality. Wuxing's rapid expansions have created a bottom-heavy company, with management, oversight, and accountability thinner the higher you move up the corporate ladder. The CEO and major shareholders simply cannot give their full attention to all Wuxing's business interests.

- Important tip. If you're running against Wuxing, find out what the board members' current pet projects are. Defenses can change rapidly depending on who's looking (or not looking) in from above.
- Ma'fan

Worse, Wuxing's frequent restructuring has created a labyrinthian corporate structure at the local level. As subsidiaries are resized, merged, separated, or eliminated altogether, it can take days or even weeks to get everything straight in the system. Many have likened it to the civil service system of ancient China.

- So what? I'm not looking for a job; I just want to get inside.
- Slamm-O!
- You might want to rethink your attitude. I've seen hackers get lost inside Wuxing's node just trying to track down the location of a middle-management wageslave.
- Fastjack

Despite the complexity, the system works. Local and regional management oversee their own departments, mainly because the infrastructure required to administer the operations doesn't exist. This isn't the best structure for passing down and implementing cutting-edge operations, but since nothing Wuxing does is cutting-edge, it works for them.

DIVISIONS

Wuxing's overly complex organizational structure defies easy description. Instead, I've divided Wuxing's assets by region. Trust me, this'll be the easiest way to cover everything.

Asia

Stationed in Hong Kong, Sharon Chang-Wu controls the business for most of Asia. She is noted for her quiet demeanor and efficiency. She is quite competitive, however, and not above using dirty tricks or taking advantage of her opponents' weaknesses.

- Dong Zhi Entertainment recently announced plans to open a games division. It was direct competition for Jam Bo Games. Sharon pulled some strings and got MIB to buy the note on their startup cash. That allowed her to look through their records; she learned they'd oversold their shares. So Wuxing bought enough shares to take the division away. Then, she had Jam Bo Games release the games under the Wuxing label.
- Icarus

Wuxing continues to expand. Ten months ago, they completed a second Skytower just outside of Fuzhou. Like its predecessor, it is 88 stories high and has a temple built into the upper floors. Wu picked the site after extensive consultation with

feng shui masters and considerable shadow work. It seems to have paid off, as the new tower has already had two astral shallows. One of the dragon lines at the Fuzhou site can be traced directly back to Aberdeen.

- That's not all. It seems Wu is looking to make a series of Skytowers throughout the Ring of Fire, with all of them connected directly or indirectly by dragonlines to Aberdeen.
- Elijah
- He's going to do this right under the snouts of Lung and Ryumyo? Yea, good luck with that.
- Ecotope
- Just you watch, the next one'll be either Seattle or Vancouver. I'm telling you.
- Elijah

Some of the Wuxing divisions you're likely to encounter in Asia include the **Malaysian Independent Bank**, one of the top financial institutions in the world; **Minh-Pao Exports**, a staple around the South China Sea; **Jam Bo Games**, maker of several inexpensive and highly addictive Matrix games; and **Eastern Electronics**, makers of the most popular knockoff Meta Link in Southeast Asia.

Australia

Given the relationship between the Aussies and various Japanacorps, it's surprising Wuxing has a large presence there. They built their presence the old-fashioned way—rave reviews about Ming Solutions led the Australian Federation to request their help with mana storms over Sydney. If they don't follow through, though, their reputation's going to take a big hit, and so far they've had no success. If Ming is successful, however, the government has promised a favorable renegotiation of Wuxing's shipping contracts.

- The way I hear it, there are a bunch of corps looking into the mana storms. The Australian shadows are gonna heat up awfully quick.
- Mr. Bonds

Wuxing Worldwide Shipping is the largest shipping company in Australia, controlling nearly forty percent of the market. Recently, they've looked into purchasing defunct rail lines through the Outback. While currently unusable, insiders point out that if Ming Solutions is successful in Sydney, they'd likely be able to deal with the rail line issues also.

Another Wuxing division you're likely to encounter in Australia is **Soba Foods**, manufacturers of the popular Aussie Chips and other treats.

North America

Things in NorthAm haven't been rosy lately for Wuxing. When Winternight destroyed the old Matrix with their EMP bombs, it had devastating effects on Wuxing as a whole and **Fidelity Mutual Insurance** in particular. Headquartered in Boston, FMI was one of the major insurance carriers for the city, the ECSE, and the residents.



Given the large number of claims, Wuxing decided it was cheaper to pay out on the policies and health insurance claims than risk a lengthy legal battle. FMI was financially devastated but came out with their reputation intact.

The **Malaysian Independent Bank** has been making some serious inroads into NorthAm. They've been loaning money at lower interest rates than most, which has not endeared them to the established institutions. Recently MIB was denied a business permit in NYC, as the Manhattan Development Consortium cited irregularities in their application. The denial came without prejudice, however—should Wuxing fix the irregularities, the MDC is open to revisiting the matter.

- The question is, did the MDC really find problems or is this just a stall? Ask yourself why the MDC wouldn't want another financial institution in NYC. Do the letters Z, O, and G help?
- Kay St. Irregular

The UCAS has been significantly more receptive to Wuxing subsidiaries. **Wuxing Financial Services** just secured a multi-billion-nuyen contract with the UCAS government to “streamline several necessary but overly bureaucratic governmental agencies.” Their stated goal is to revamp most of the government's failing infrastructure. Hidden within this contract is a promise by WFS to secure a loan for the UCAS. This loan is to be used “to buy or otherwise secure extraterritorial properties to be used by and for the citizens of the UCAS.”

- So they're buying land to put government buildings on?
- Ma'fan
- It says “extraterritorial properties,” land that isn't already a part of the UCAS. And it doesn't say they have to buy it, they can also “secure” it, whatever that means.
- Cosmo

Red Wheel Engineering, Wuxing's recent addition, has a contract in NorthAm. Out in CalFree, LA has hired them to design and implement some unique pumping mechanisms in order to reclaim some lost sections of the city.

South America

The big news from Wuxing in SouthAm is **Ming Solutions**. Their research and design team has been working in Yucatán for some time now. Details are scarce but whatever they're doing seems to be working. Several Yucatán-based corporations have undertaken serious reconstruction efforts recently.

Ming's latest contracts are with several smaller corps in Amazonia. Under Hualpa's regime, these corps were having trouble expanding their manufacturing and technology assets without impeding the local mana flow in any way, as mana reductions tend to piss off the dragon at the top. The corps hoped Ming could help, and it turns out they could. One of the corps even found a way to increase the ambient mana by redesigning some of their manufacturing facilities.

- If Ming was working with AZT, Wuxing's playing a dangerous game.
- Fianchetto

Europe

Wuxing has a smaller presence in Europe than any other region. It may have to do with saturation levels or an inborn desire to avoid dragons, but whatever the reason, Wuxing has limited itself to several shipping outlets, a new trid station, and a financial institution.

Wuxing Worldwide Shipping has a presence in Copenhagen, Le Havre, Lisbon, and Portsmouth. They primarily do shipping for some of the smaller corps who don't have shipping contracts elsewhere.

Wuxing's largest European subsidiary, **Albion Mutual Funds**, is headquartered in London, England. From there, Wuxing manages the portfolios of several members of the British aristocracy, as well as prominent politicians and members of the Lord Protector's Office. Ironically, AMF is frequently mentioned as a representatively British business.

Lotus Multimedia has a small presence throughout Europe with its meta-friendly subsidiary **Channel 1 Inclusive**. In a joint venture with Evo, CII broadcasts metahuman-centric programming, news, information, and current events. Headquartered in Copenhagen, CII has very few actual employees. Instead it relies on locals, thus its slogan, “Get the news from those affected by it.”

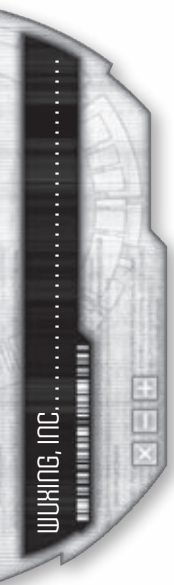
Africa

Problems along Africa's east coast have turned it into a budding resource for Wuxing. It began when several local corporations in Addis Ababa were looking to develop land outside of the city. Due to the ongoing chaotic nature of the Ethiomalian Territories, land inside the city was at a premium, but the chaos outside the city led to losses from theft that made the project prohibitively expensive. The local corps solicited bids, but most offers came in higher than they were willing to pay. The **Prosperity Development Corporation** turned in the only reasonable bid, so they got the job, and so far they've managed to keep theft to a minimum. Since PDC uses Wuxing Worldwide Shipping exclusively, corps have to open their ports to Wuxing if they want to do business with PDC. That means that in the past few months, Wuxing products have flooded Africa's east coast.

Interestingly, in port towns with a strong Wuxing presence, piracy and smuggling have decreased. Since this finding is recent, experts are unsure whether this due to coincidence, some artifact of the data collection method, or lack of reporting on Wuxing's part.

- I wonder what deal Wuxing made with the pirates.
- 2XL
- I'm guessing the first time those pirates went after a Wuxing cargo, they got a taste of their own medicine and decided to move along.
- DangerSensei

Wuxing subsidiaries are cropping up all over the east coast. **Lotus Multimedia** just bought out Addis Abbaba's entertainment conglomerate, **AA Entertainment**. Meanwhile, **Red Wheel Engineering** has been contracted to build a floating prison island off the coast of Kenya and redesign several saltwater reclamation systems along the African coast of the Red Sea.





INCOMING FEED.....

MAJOR FIGURES

As described previously, Wuxing is a bottom-heavy corp. The higher up you go, the more oversight begins to suffer. At the top there are precious few names, and most of them begin with Wu. Nepotism is certainly not dead.

Wu Lung-Wei

Despite the years and their effects on his body, Wu is still a fixture at both Wuxing and Hong Kong. Not a day goes by that he doesn't attend some function, discuss some new venture on trid, or get mentioned in this or that gossip rag. As the head of one of the top corps, he gets his fair share of face time and then some

Regarding the effects of age, Wu has steadfastly refused to undergo cosmetic surgery. He has stated on numerous occasions that wrinkles add a certain dignity to the position. His detractors, however, say that maybe if he eased up on his micromanagement tendencies and became more comfortable delegating authority, he'd have fewer things to worry about and thus a few less wrinkles.

- Maybe there's another reason. Look at recent trid of Wu. Eyes sunken, skin pale and sallow, he looks malnourished. Making public appearances has to be exhausting, especially as you get older. Think he might be using pick-me-ups to keep up this pace?

- Sunshine

- Drugs, really? I'd have guessed, especially if those rumors about the Jade Dragon are true, that he'd found something more interesting to focus on.

- Winterhawk

- Wu'd have to be a mage, wouldn't he? As far as I can tell, no one's ever seen him sling any mojo.

- Dr. Spin

- Maybe he's a late bloomer.

- Arete

Wu is seen without his family with increasing frequency. This has led to speculation all is not well in the Wu household. However, Wuxing public relations representatives call those claims preposterous, pointing to many events both Mr. and Mrs. Wu or their entire family attended.

Behind the scenes, Wu's schedule is remarkably free of appointments. The few he has are often cancelled, rescheduled, or redirected to other board members. In the meantime, Wu's whereabouts are unknown.

Sharon Chang-Wu

As Wu becomes more public, Mrs. Chang-Wu becomes more reclusive. Most reports have her spending most of her time at the Aberdeen Skytower, dealing with board issues and taking care

WUXING, INC.

of her five children. Several entertainment trids have, however, pointed to clandestine meetings between her and various members of the board. One in particular, James Harper-Smythe, seems to have gotten the lion's share of her attentions. Rumors have gotten so prevalent that some have questioned whether the relationship between the two is entirely proper.

- Wu's busy with his jade fishes and Sharon starts playing the field? I thought they were a happy couple.

- Ma'fan

- Remember, those entertainment trids are owned by Horizon. I'm sure they'd have no reason to lie about such a sensitive issue would they?

- Dr. Spin

- Gossiping aside, Sharon might be looking for a promotion. Since the MIB buyout, she did some consolidating of her own. If she can swing the right vote, she could oust Wu.

- Icarus

Despite the rumors, most admit that Mrs. Chang-Wu is the workhorse of the board. She organizes meetings, ensures all signatures are where they're supposed to be, puts out little fires and soothes ruffled feathers when necessary. Since Wuxing continues to grow, it seems that whatever Mrs. Chang-Wu is doing, it's working.

- Seems like she's already in charge.

- The Smiling Bandit

- Maybe she'd just like the title to go with it.

- Snopes

- Or, maybe she's just trying to save the company she and her husband helped build. If Wu's abdicated, someone's gotta stand up.

- Hard Exit

The Quints

Back in 2061, the Wus were blessed with five identical daughters. They're named Fo, Shui, Moak, Tou, and Gum, after the five major elements of the Earth. This year marks their eleventh birthday, and with such busy parents, they have a great deal of free time.

Information on the girls isn't scarce, but it's virtually impossible to separate the many conflicting stories. Fact and fiction merge into one giant mess. Fortunately, there's no need to go into detail when their lives are readily available on the Matrix. Don't think so? Take a look at the attached *Quint-Essentials* document.

- Well, that's seven minutes of my life I'll never get back.

- Butch

- Are you kidding? This thing's a font of information. Cut through the angst, pre-tween, emo hyperbole, and you've got yourself a trid recording of their comings and goings, their friends, contacts, enemies, and handlers. If you needed to get close to them, this stuff is gold.

- Haze

- Yeah, and it's all been carefully filtered through Wuxing's Matrix police. Notice you can only see what they did, not what they're going to do.

- Dr. Spin

Fu Peng

On the board of directors since its inception, Fu Peng is as much an enigma as ever. Despite hundreds of very thorough data searches, there is still precious little information about him. All that can be said with certainty is he is a board member, he owns about twelve percent of Wuxing, Inc., and there are records that he has attended every single board meeting.

But Fu has no recorded residence (not even in the Aberdeen Skytower), no bank accounts, no bills, and no Matrix presence at all. There is no death certificate on file, so he should be alive. However, none of the many birth certificates for "Fu Peng" in Hong Kong are his. Wuxing employees in the Aberdeen Skytower often claim to have seen Fu during their tenure. However, upon closer inspection, they seem to be "friend of a friend" stories.

- That's not exactly true. You just weren't looking high enough in the corporation. I've spoken to one of the Quints' early babysitters. She's been ushered out of the room prior to his visits on several occasions. She told me the Quints have all spoken with him at various times.

- Jimmy No

- So what you're saying is, you have some friends of a friend who's spoken to Fu?

- Man-of-Many-Names

James Harper-Smythe

The other old man of the board is still as crotchety and curmudgeonly as ever. As Harper-Smythe rushes toward seventy, he still rants about the "damned British aristos," even though he's outlived most of those he complains about. Despite his complaints, Harper-Smythe enjoys a good life. In Wu's absence, he and Sharon have been running operations together. He's the conservative voice to her expansionist ideas. They've had some pretty heated arguments in recent years, but out of the boardroom, James is Sharon's support system. This has led to rumors of personal interaction between the two, and those rumors are not helped by James' recent visit to Evolution.

- What a visit it was. He spent some serious nuyen. Once he was done, I barely recognized him from the trid of his scholarship donation to Beijing University earlier this month.

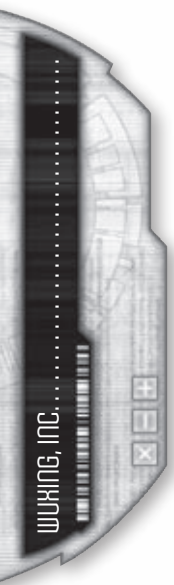
- Sunshine

- Wasn't Beijing U. one of the schools Sharon was looking into for the girls? Why would they need to buy an acceptance? The Universities are probably falling over themselves trying to court Wuxing.

- Dr. Spin

Lu Bao Ling

Lu is a semi-notorious ne'er-do-well from mainland China. Entertainment reports paint him as a self-made billionaire, but the majority of his wealth came before he was old enough to work—his parents died when he was young and left him a sizeable inheritance. He spends the bulk of his time and money on leisure.



QUINT-ESSENTIALS

The round-the-clock news, gossip, sightings, and rumor node for all things Wu Quintuplets.

Top News

Unless you've been living under a rock, you know about *the* party event of this year. The Quints are turning eleven, and all of Hong Kong's been invited. We seriously doubt Tou will be there despite the fact that Mom and Dad spared no expense this year. After all, the girls have been extra special good. The party's set to begin at midnight and go for the whole day.

Read more details about the party under Future Engagements

Read about what presents the Quints have asked for under Daily Rumors

Read about who's been invited (and who hasn't) under Latest Gossip

Latest Gossip

You didn't hear this from us, but it appears that Lo Bei is on the outs. The Quints (all save Tou, of course) went for a nice luncheon at Luk Yu Teahouse earlier this week but Mr. Lo (and his entourage) were conspicuously missing.

Read more about Luk Yu under Top News

Seems Mom is going forward with the "separate colleges" plan. One of our undercover agents confirmed Mom sent out feelers to five different universities around Beijing. We might not think much about it, save that she only inquired about one application at each spot.

Read about each of the Universities under Future Engagements

Mysterious benefactor or Big Hoax? By now we've heard about the Quints' relationship to the ever-elusive Fu Peng. When asked, the Quints are especially tight-lipped about him. So does he even exist? We've asked our sources and the answer may surprise you.

Read more about Fu Peng under Daily Rumors

Recent Sightings

Big shopping day. The Quints were out in force today as the new season's fashions are unveiled. The others even convinced Tou to join. Though, as usual she came covered head to toe. Their first stops were The Golden Mile and a little out-of-the-way shop called, appropriately enough, Sightings.

Read more about what the Quints bought under Top News

Daily Rumors

One of our roving reporters lets us in on a secret too crazy not to be true. She swears that while attending a small gathering of the Quints and a few close friends, she witnessed the Quints actually using telepathic powers. We thought it was far-fetched (especially given that the Quints often use hidden comm units). But our gal swears she watched them drop off their comm units for a cozier gathering.

Watch the trid of the Quints dropping off their comm units under Recent Sightings

Have a crazy idea about the Quints you swear is true? Got some evidence behind the scenes? Share it with us here.

Future Engagements

Coming Soon

Vital Statistics

Height: (All) 1.21 m

Weight: (All) 42 kg

Birthday: (All) 3/9/61

Favorite Color: Fo, Green; Shui, Red; Moak, Yellow; Tou, White; Gum, Black

Interesting Facts:

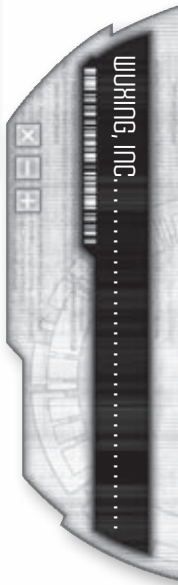
Fo has a green thumb and is very good with plants.

Shui, the social one, gathers crowds easily.

Moak, the negotiator, calms even the rowdiest people down.

Tou, the silent one, is never seen uncovered and never speaks in public.

Gum, the genius, never forgets anything.



- After his parents died, he disappeared until he was in his mid-twenties. Some reporter tracked him to a small tropical island. Turns out he was *living la vida BTL* and trying to drink himself to death. While the reporter was trying to convince him to talk, Lu had a heart attack. They managed to get him to a hospital but he spent three weeks in a coma. When he woke up, he swore he was a changed man, he gave up the BTLs right there, and he started making a new life.

- Dr. Spin

- Nobody just “gives up” BTLs.

- Turbo Bunny

Just before Crash 2.0 he was interested in banking. When MIB crashed and burned, he picked up some choice stocks at a substantial savings. Later he realized he’d bought four percent of Wuxing. Somehow he’s managed to remain interested for over six years now. He rarely attends meetings but insists on receiving full transcripts.

- I wonder why? He doesn’t seem like the detail-oriented type.

- Winterhawk

- I asked myself that too—turns out that while he was living on that tropical island his BTLs were supplied by The Crimson Scorpions, a local street gang with ties to the Red Dragons.

- 2XL

THE PACIFIC PROSPERITY GROUP

The PPG did not survive the Crash 2.0 intact. The name still exists and several corporations that survived the Crash are still members, but the coalition of allied businesses banded together for mutual benefit is gone. After the Crash, Wuxing and Evo gobbled up the remnants of their former allies. They turned favored status into a battering ram, buying companies out before anyone else knew what was going on.

All the benefits of membership still apply, from favored trade status with the other PPG members and several allied countries to joint projects and exchange programs. Members currently stay for protection from the Japanacorps—or from their own allies.

Since Wuxing bought MIB, they have more influence than ever before. Wuxing still maintains the façade of equal votes, but corps with MIB loans inevitably vote with Wuxing. Those corps not under Wuxing’s thumb know the score and have decided the benefits outweigh the drawbacks. That philosophy was seriously put to the test recently as Aztechnology was finally accepted into the PPG.

As his last official act as Chairman of the PPG, Tzu Cheng made an impassioned speech for AZT’s acceptance, likening it to the culmination of the elder Wu’s dream of breaking the backs of the Japanacorps. Once everyone knew where Wuxing stood, the vote was superfluous. Still, four PPG representatives walked out of the proceedings—not that it had any effect.

- So, who were the four?

- Sunshine

- Universal Omnitech, Lami Look Pagkaon, Polynesian Fuels, and Evo. However, all continue to maintain membership in the PPG.

- Kay St. Irregular

From a purely financial standpoint, accepting AZT was a sound business decision. The PPG now has three members of the Corporate Court, equaling the Japanacorps. If played right, this could swing the balance of power in the PacRim to the PPG.

- Before you get too excited, let me remind you Aztechnology has a history of leaving partnerships in the lurch when things aren’t going their way. Remember the NAN?

- Man-of-Many-Names

PECULIARITIES

Despite being one of the most powerful corporations on Earth, Wuxing likes to fly under the radar. Their logo, while recognizable, doesn’t evoke strong feelings. Ask ten people to name Wuxing’s big contribution to business and you’ll get ten answers. Finance and shipping subsidiaries are their largest moneymakers, but that means little to Joe Sarariman. Wuxing’s business model doesn’t require name recognition or eye-catching products. They make their business from those who do business, quietly amassing their influence while staying in the background.

- Makes it easier to get away with some of their less savory business dealings, like smuggling for the Triads.

- 2XL

- It’s not just for the Triads.

- Traveler Jones

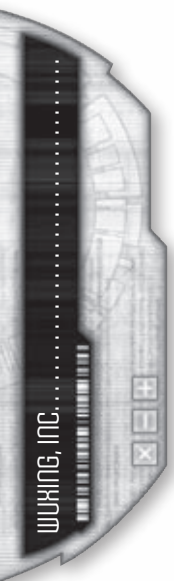
It’s no secret Wuxing has close relationships to several Triads. In Hong Kong, the reformed remnants of the Yellow Lotus have several mages whose style is suspiciously similar to Wuxing’s Wujen. Under Rizal Fei’s leadership, the Ten Thousand Lions are carving a niche in the underground market. Recent talk in the shadows has mentioned allied gangs sporting Lions colors. These gangs do very unpleasant things to the corpses of their enemies—police reports on the aftermath of some Triad clashes report strange puncture or slash marks on the body. These so-called Bleeding Triads are worrisome to both law enforcement and other Triads.

- These Bleeding Triads are in Seattle, too. They’re the Ten Thousand Lions’ allies, the Yellow Lotus.

- Sunshine

Wuxing’s magic assets are growing. Their magical research division is now profitable, and the Aberdeen shallow is growing again. In the late ‘60s the shallows seemed to peak as the area’s appearance and size became consistent. Then, six months ago, researchers reported it started another growth period. It’s currently approaching four kilometers in diameter.

Interestingly, the growth period followed the arrival of Wuxing’s second astral shallow. The Fuzhou skytower (designed after the Aberdeen skytower) has been the site of two astral



shallows since its completion ten months ago. Research has shown one of the dragon lines crossing the Fuzhou skytower feeds into and out of an Aberdeen dragon line. No one knows whether Aberdeen is feeding Fuzhou or vice versa, but all observers agree that these shallows are somehow related.

Rumors abound of a planned third skytower, but the final site for it has not been decided. Expect Wuxing to start hiring shadow talent to research this.

SHADOW OPS

Wuxing employs shadowrunners for everything you'd expect, but there are some runs you're more likely to see them involved in. First, there are PPG-related runs. Wuxing uses shadowrunners as both the whip and the carrot for the smaller corps. Go against Wuxing on an important issue? Suddenly your competitors have access to some serious talent extractors. Fall in line? Your competitor's latest invention is suddenly destroyed in a fire.

Running against Wuxing means intel. Wuxing's reach outspans their assets. If they don't own the company, the corp might have a loan with MIB or be shipping their products through Wuxing. Even if they don't, you can bet someone there owes a debt to a Wuxing employee. *Guanxi* relationships can make shadowruns difficult as seeming allies suddenly turn on you.

- *Guanxi*—I can't emphasize its importance enough. While Wuxing subsidiaries around the globe adhere differently to the concept, it underlies everything at the home offices and has filtered out to the remotest corners of Wuxing's empire.
- Lei Kung

Guanxi also guides the hiring and use of company men. Deniable assets are good, but deniable assets that will take a bullet for you are better. Wuxing employees are encouraged to build relationships with key shadowrunners.

- "Key" being code for successful and easily manipulated.
- Cosmo
- I prefer to think of them as seeing the big picture.
- Kia

Wuxing treats their company men to a level of comfort rarely seen by the average shadowrunner. The perks tend to outweigh the fact that such runners are expected to perform their duty whenever requested. Remember, though, that Wuxing prides itself on such important relationships, and it would set a bad precedent for a company man to die needlessly at the request of his better.

- So, if you sell out, you can expect them not to lie to you when they send you to die.
- Snopes

Like all megas, Wuxing has a black ops unit that does the dirty work too sensitive, important, or tricky to be left in the hands of shadowrunners. Called *Dà Di Xiāo* (literally Earth and Heaven), they specialize in urban environments, but they've been known to train in inclement areas such as Vladivostok and the North Sea.

- They recently did a stint in the jungle near Bogota, Colombia.
- Picador

In keeping with their behind-the-scenes image, Wuxing does not have a freestanding army, instead relying on basic corporate security to protect Wuxing assets. There is a special division of Wuxing Worldwide Shipping dedicated to protecting the goods that Wuxing ships, with different units specializing in tactics in the air, on land, or at sea.

- *Dà Di Xiāo* operatives often get their start protecting WWS transports.
- Picador

CORPORATE RELATIONS

Despite having little public face, Wuxing has more than their share of friction with other corporations. Among the most contentious are members of the PPG and the Japanacorps.

When Wuxing purchased MIB, it sent shockwaves through the PPG. The formerly cooperative corps suddenly found themselves having to reconsider Wuxing's motives. Worse, in a group founded on equality, Wuxing changed the balance of power. Their sudden about-face on the Aztechnology application showed PPG members that Wuxing was untrustworthy.

Wuxing's relationship with the various Japanacorps (including the megas Mitsuhama, Renraku, and Shiawase) has always been contentious. Starting a group that is designed, among other things, to "break the economic stranglehold Japanese businesses have upon the Pacific Rim" ensured hard feelings all around.

- And made me lots of nuyen.
- Black Mamba

Wuxing's recent business deals seem to be about gathering resources under their aegis. This has led to a separation from their long-time ally, Evo.

Evo and Shiawase are making efforts to resolve old grudges. Meanwhile, Wuxing makes a power grab and forces the PPG to accept Aztechnology's bid for inclusion. They do this despite frequent and serious concerns. As a result, Evo has been pulling away, spending more time on projects outside the PPG.

But all is not bad news for Wuxing. Their relationship with Aztechnology has increased their profit margin and kick-started several new business ventures. Since there is no love lost between AZT and the Japanacorps, their inclusion gives the PPG (and Wuxing) a strong new ally.





//**Keyword:** Wuxing

//**Date:** 01/01/2072–Current

ESSY Motors Emerges from Ssang Yong's Ashes

SEOUL-INCHON MEGAPLEX—Ten years ago, SsangYong Motors, was in financial straits. Production and exports were down. When the Crash 2.0 bankrupted the company, experts called it a mercy killing. After the Crash, Wuxing bought most of it, and the SsangYong brand disappeared. Two years ago, Wuxing rebranded the company, and ESSY Motors unveiled its new low-cost, no frills automobiles.

Earlier this week, Dae-Ho Bae, ESSY's CEO, announced plans to bring their best-selling ESSY 1 to a worldwide market, stating "It's time to bring the cost of a reliable car within the reach of the average consumer." Using Wuxing's extensive shipping network, the ESSY 1 should be available next year. If current models are an indication, the ESSY 1 could be half the price of the GM-Nissan Jackrabbit. Asked if this could spark a price war, Deo-Ho stated, "We believe there are enough consumers to justify all models."

Gunfire Interrupts Worship at Jagannath Temple

PURI, INDIAN UNION—Five unidentified men and two women were killed in a shootout at the famed temple of Jagannath, this morning. The shootout began when worshippers found the seven attempting to steal the

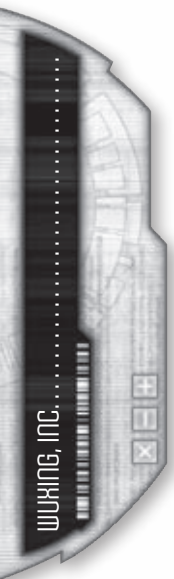
statue of Subhadra. According to officials, local priests attempted a peaceful resolution. However, negotiations broke down. Two officers were wounded during the fight, but no one else was harmed. The temple sustained minimal damage.

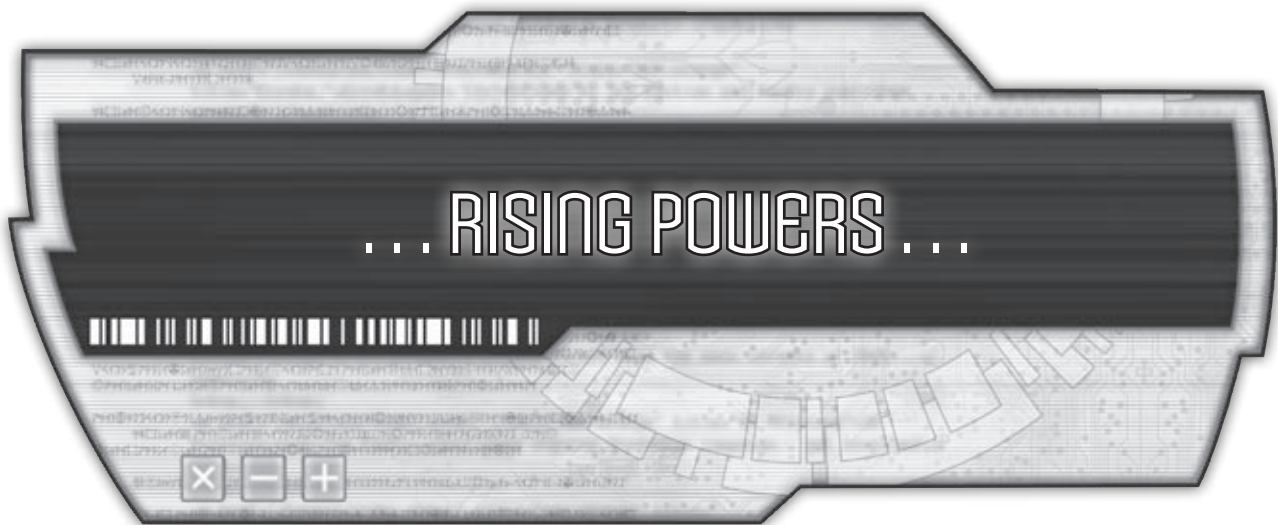
The attack marred an otherwise fruitful visit from several Hong Kong Wujen. Representatives from the Po Lin Monastery, Wuxing, and elsewhere were not in the temple at the time. The Wujen are on a fact-finding and information exchange tour of the entire Orissa Triangle. They have visited a number of temples in the area. Officials do not believe the intruders' timing to be related to the Wujens' visit.

Fidelity Mutual Falls Under FTC Magnifying Glass

BOSTON, UCAS—Wuxing subsidiary Fidelity Mutual Insurance may have used up some of the goodwill it gained by paying out all health and insurance claims on policies it held following the wake of the Crash 2.0 as the Federal Trade Commission last week leveled serious allegations against FMI. While looking into unrelated matters, the FTC reports they found suspicious payouts to individuals in a position to ease regulations on the financial giant.

FMI representatives would not comment, citing company policy against discussing upcoming litigation. However, employees speaking on the condition of anonymity called the claims "wholly without merit."





We pay the AAAs a lot of attention, and deservedly so, but they're not the only economic powers out there. There's AAs capable of dominating an industry or geographic area, companies quite capable of taking care of a runner for life—or seeing to it that we meet a premature end. Here's a rundown of some of the up-and-comers, corps you should get to know now before they find a way to muscle their way to AAA status.

AEGIS COGNITO

Posted by: Red Anya

Aegis Cognito is generally regarded as the premiere privately held corporation for espionage services. That's an awfully tricky field to be in. In fact, it's one where name recognition may be even more dangerous than anonymity. In spite of that fact, Aegis has managed to leverage their intelligence skills into a position of relative stability.

The company was founded by Gustavo Carvalho in 2030, in the wake of the first Crash. At the time, the organization was dedicated to information recovery—a field in which they continue to excel. As there were ample clients at the time, and their employees were exceptionally skilled, Aegis quickly grew from a small operation into a successful mid-tier consulting firm. They currently have twenty-five offices globally, most located near some of the most politically volatile locations on the planet.

Corporate Profile

AEGIS COGNITO

Corporate Status: A, Privately Held

World Headquarters: Lisbon, Portugal

COO: Teresa Santos

Core Businesses: Data consulting, Data reconstruction, Intelligence gathering

Carvalho's brilliance enabled the company to expand into intelligence services and evolve into a company with substantial influence. This was because Aegis was allowed to maintain a copy, with limited distribution rights, of every scrap of information that they recovered. Though this was initially intended as an additional back-up service, it soon became much more. Carvalho expanded his data recovery company into one that was also capable of data warehousing. Then, he discreetly contracted analysts who could effectively mine those data and extrapolate future trends.

From there, it was simply a matter of securing the data facilities and making sure that all of the information contained within his company continued to grow. The issue of securing the data was resolved when Aegis Cognito was able to move its warehousing into the *Torre de Tombo* facility in Lisbon, Portugal. Integrating their existing data with the surviving information from the Portuguese National Archive quickly expanded their scope and created one of the largest privately held data warehouses in the world. Since that time, Aegis has generated a significant amount of revenue by selling structured monthly subscriptions that allow Matrix access to its data services.

Of course, a dataset like this is only as good as its updates. Technical material can become outdated extremely quickly, as can political or business information, especially in volatile environments. In order to keep their business viable, Aegis had to establish a mechanism for ensuring that its information was always kept up to date. The company initially established three separate mechanisms to accomplish this, and those three continue to this day.

The first mechanism was their data recovery and back-up services. Though the number of opportunities dwindled in the years as the world recovered from the first Crash, there were always instances of researchers losing data due to user error, hardware failure, and malware. In the wake of Crash 2.0, this branch of Aegis saw substantial growth. While it's reduced from the levels seen just a few years ago, it still remains a much larger department than it was in the '50s.

The second mechanism for data expansion was through a ceaseless combing of publicly accessible data sources. While these data are all theoretically freely available, Aegis adds substantial value by cataloging and annotating the sources. They employ a talented cadre of hackers and meticulously programmed agents to continuously scour the Matrix for new information.

- It's not just hackers and agents. Aegis has been heavily recruiting technomancers as well. I know of a few who are working with them, and they're among the more skilled compilers that I know. I'm confident that they're pulling some of their information directly from the Deep Resonance.
- Netcat
- I'm not sure all of those sources are Resonant ones. Some of their researchers may be dabbling in darker things.
- Icarus
- I've read a few reports that AIs are consistently turned down for work by Aegis.
- Snopes

In many cases, they'll exploit inadvertent corporate leaks or assemble seemingly unrelated bits of data to provide substantial insights into more secretive projects. Remember, these bits of information are the ones that are available for the cost of mid-tier subscriptions. It's all material that's been gained legally, which means it's information that can also be freely used for stock market manipulation and is admissible in court. This part of the data warehouse has earned Aegis a lot of cautious respect in the halls of power.

- It's this part of the database that is most crucial for Aegis to maintain an independent existence. They swim with a lot of vicious sharks. It seems that they've got dirt on almost every one of those sharks. Apparently, enough dirt to take to the Corporate Court if necessary.
- Mr. Bonds

Finally, Aegis has also grown their database through directly contracted acts of corporate espionage. Best estimates, meaning those provided by their competitors, suggest that Aegis has several thousand deep cover agents planted within corporations, governments, and special interest groups all over the world. I suspect that's an exaggeration. If they really had that many agents in place, it's unlikely that they would need to contract out to freelancers (read: shadowrunners) as often as they choose to. Regardless of the numbers, this branch of the company is the one that has led to the blackest information in their data warehouses and is also the one that has been most instrumental in developing the company's reputation.

As Aegis has done from the start, all information obtained for clients continues to be entered into their data warehouse. However, information that's garnered for a client is, typically, held for six months before it becomes accessible to external clients. As a consequence, particularly volatile data may be useless by the time subscribers gain access to it. For those clients who have deep pockets and demand secrecy, the delay on submitting the data into

the warehouse may be increased. The longest delay I've heard of is two years, but it's entirely possible that some particularly secretive organizations may have paid for longer holds.

In 2051, Carvalho apparently died of cancer. Since that time, no one has been publicly identified as the company's owner. It's clear that some people know, including current Chief Operations Officer Teresa Santos and the Portuguese government. However, while rumors abound, no one's managed to definitively identify the owners.

- I've seen some recent rumors that Carvalho may not be as dead as the public story goes. Might be that he decided to pull an Elvis and run things from a quieter locale.
- Plan 9
- Deaths can be faked, but he didn't seem the sort to seek a quiet retirement. If he's still active, there'd be more than just rumors circulating.
- Fianchetto

STRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

Aegis Cognito headquarters are located in Lisbon, Portugal at the *Torre de Tombo*. The location has housed an archive since at least the fourteenth century. While different organizations have been responsible for the storage, there's no question that the modern incarnation is the most secure. All of the data is religiously backed up at regular intervals and kept in offline storage, which allowed the facility to weather Crash 2.0 with little difficulty. In addition, most, if not all, of their data is also available to clients over the Matrix through their subscription program. The vast majority of Aegis' in-house hackers and technomancers work directly from their corporate headquarters.

Their twenty-five branch offices include locations in Bangkok, Denver, Metropole, Neo-Tokyo, New York, Seattle, and Washington. All of these locations are staffed primarily by "case managers." These agents interact directly with clients in their inconspicuous facilities. The offices are universally well protected from both electronic and magical surveillance. In most cases, the meetings are held face-to-face, as the majority of clients are extremely wary of having their meetings intercepted through even the most secure Matrix connections.

For those instances where the data required is not already available in the Aegis stores, case managers generally contact handlers, who maintain relationships with freelance acquisition specialists. While some shadowrunner teams are kept on retainer, others are called in for specific assignments. In all cases, freelancers are selected based upon a solid reputation for both success and discretion. Handlers work out of safehouses that are never located near a branch office.

- Stick with the freelancer side as long as you can. Their retainers sound nice, but the assignments can become a chore, and the handlers treat you differently.
- Kay St. Irregular

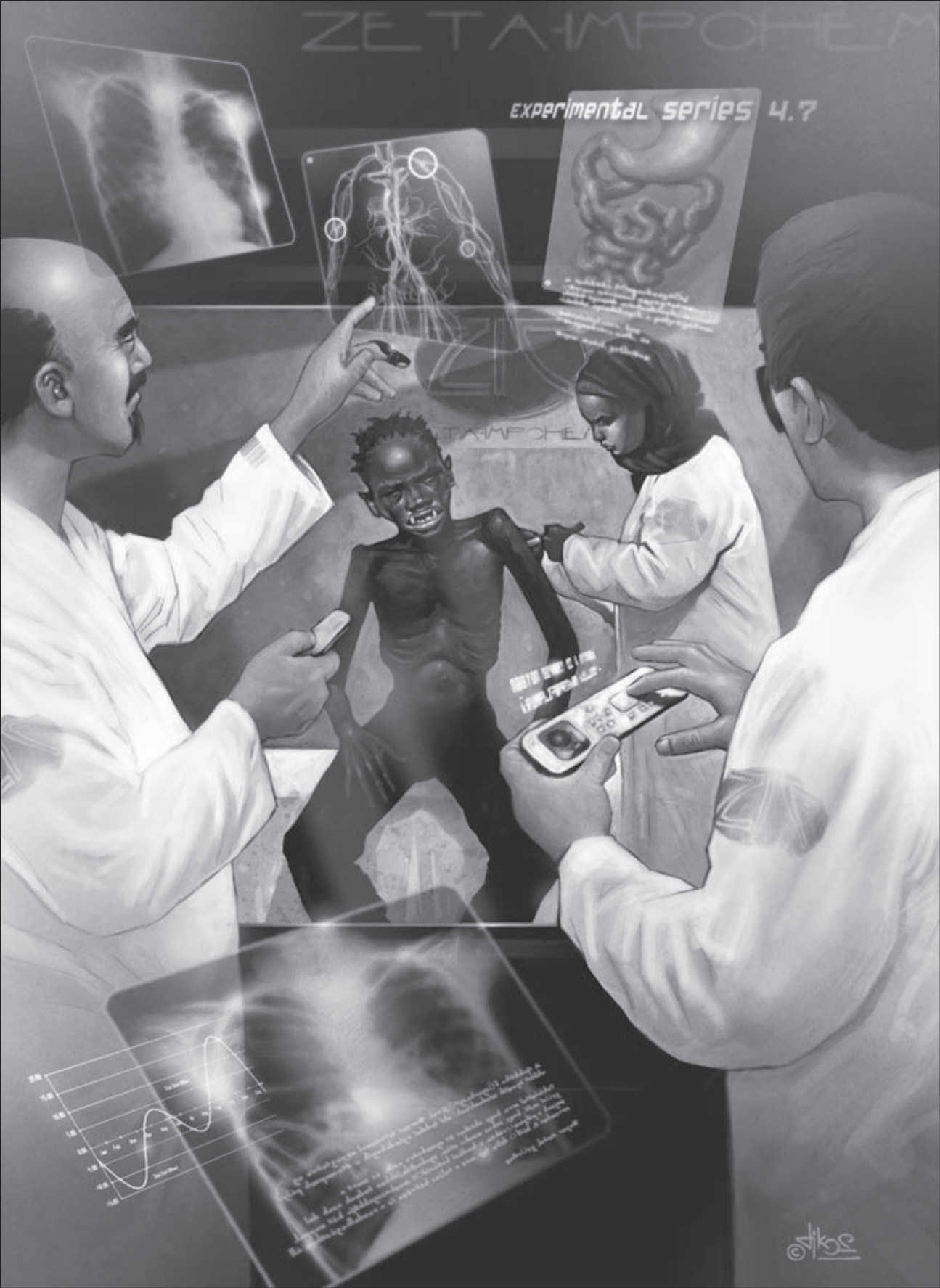
ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments from Aegis are always intended to be discreet and generally non-destructive. Their datasteals are intended to



ZETA-IMPICHEM

EXPERIMENTAL series 4.7



ALICE

obtain information for their clients, but not to destroy the target's information. Aegis has a tradition of preserving information that it is extremely reluctant to compromise.

- Aegis would usually prefer to see a job failed than to see the data lost. Their contracts allow for failure; data destruction is anathema.
- Glitch

Targets are always extremely secure facilities, particularly ones that are largely isolated from the Matrix. Their in-house specialists are more than capable of acquiring data from less secure facilities. It's only when deniability and physical intrusion are required that Aegis Cognito turns to outside resources.

AMALGAMATED STUDIOS

Posted by: Sunshine

How the mighty have fallen. For nearly thirty years, Amalgamated Studios dominated the Hollywood trid and sim scene. Almost every blockbuster that came out of tinseltown came out of one of Amalgamated's divisions. That all changed when Horizon formed and started inducting nearly every studio into their organization, including several of Amalgamated's subsidiaries. The loss of their four largest studios to Horizon was a heavy blow that left Amalgamated scrambling for talent.

Corporate Profile

AMALGAMATED STUDIOS

Corporate Status: A, Privately Held

World Headquarters: Los Angeles, Pueblo

CEO: *Not disclosed*

Core Businesses: Advertising production, Simsense production, Trideo Production

Major Divisions: E.T. Studios, Global Studios, LivingWorld Productions, MagicMind

Crash 2.0 was crucial in initiating Amalgamated's fall. The company's equipment was much more focused on productivity and cutting-edge technology than it was on security or redundancy. When the Dissonance Worm struck, it had its way with Amalgamated's systems. Nearly every project that was in production was lost, and a substantial portion of their archives was also destroyed. Everything that the studio had prepared for release over the next two years was completely eliminated.

Executives panicked. Their budgets were decimated. Huge quantities of money were lost with nothing to show for it. Contracts for upcoming releases had to be reconstructed from memory or the occasional hardcopy—all too often a copy that an agent held, not one from Amalgamated's files. In nearly all cases, projects had to be restarted from scratch with nowhere near the funds that had originally been allocated.

In order to get back on track, Amalgamated took out a massive loan against their ownership of Virtual World Disney, Taylor Satellite Services, Concert Sims, and WorldVision—their four biggest studios.

As these things often go, it took longer than expected for several of Amalgamated's new projects to hit release. When that happened, they defaulted on the loan. Within hours of their default, Horizon swooped in and took possession of all four studios. Suddenly, Amalgamated was the second largest studio in Hollywood, by a substantial margin. Without their stranglehold, it abruptly became necessary for them to find a new way of doing business.

- The loss of these properties reduced Amalgamated Studios to A classification. They have yet to recover AA status. In spite of the reclassification, the non-PCC ownership of Amalgamated remains a mystery.
- Mr. Bonds

For years, all of the other studios in town had recruited talent by offering them greater creative freedom, while Amalgamated had offered the bigger paychecks. With Horizon's worker-friendly policies, Amalgamated couldn't compete on either front. When artists started to realize this, a lot of major talent moved over to Pathfinder Studios like rats fleeing a sinking ship. Even Pueblo's legal system was unable to stop the tide. Though the PCC held a majority share in Amalgamated, Horizon was willing to pay the necessary fees to sever contracts in all of the cases that were brought before the Corporate Court.

Since then, Amalgamated has become heavily dependent upon recovered and surviving materials from their still-vast archives, and upon even more carefully worded contracts and the abilities of their legal department. While Amalgamated continues to develop a substantial number of sims and trids, they've had to develop new formulae. The blockbusters and the glamorous names that had been their cash cow are no longer feasible for them. Instead, they've begun to aggressively recruit new talent, with an even broader web of scouts working on a global basis. Once artists are locked in to long-term contracts, they're driven to be as productive as they can on as tight a budget as possible. Amalgamated is now releasing substantially more new properties than they did prior to Crash 2.0. However, the average net on these properties is a fraction of their old return.

- A substantial portion of their new market is edutainment videos for several other corps, including Aztechnology. These are generally only released to corp employees and always are written to strongly portray the values of their corp ideology. From an entertainment perspective, they're crap, though they are fun to heckle. But they apparently pay the bills.

- Kat o' Nine Tales

- That's not the only work that Amalgamated has been doing for other corps. There are more than a few megas that remain reluctant to deal with Horizon. Amalgamated's Global Studios division has picked up quite a few deals to produce advertising from those corps. They've also been expanding their number of non-English productions and translations in an effort to find new markets to tap.

- Dr. Spin

E.T. Studios

This action trid and sim house has become Amalgamated's largest cash cow. The shows they produce aren't as spectacular

as they were a few years ago, but they follow the same formula, and the masses still eat them up. Orxploitation films continue to be major revenue generators, though the number of them being produced has decreased. It may be that the studio fears this trend is starting to fade.

As the studio has tightened its belt, it has become even more selective about the productions that are green-lit. The focus has been on those that the execs identify as lower risk projects. Quite a few of the most recently approved productions are re-makes of classic sims and even old films and print books. At the moment, an update of *Romeo and Juliet* is slated as one of this summer's major releases.

- That's one of their more tolerable scheduled releases. Some of the film remakes date back to abominations from the turn of the century. I don't get how a film that bombed when it opened back then could be expected to be a successful trid.
- Dr. Spin

Global Studios

Though it was a studio dedicated to nature shows for many years, Global Studios has recently undergone retooling at Amalgamated's hands. With very few actors and artists under contract, Global was less injured by Amalgamated's losses than most of the other studios under their umbrella. Because of this, Amalgamated chose to use Global as a central part of its rebuilding efforts. The studio has been completely retooled, with a bottom line focused on profitability rather than ecologically conscious artistic pieces.

At this time, Global still sends some teams out to capture high-quality footage of natural and paranatural creatures, but that's become a very small portion of the studio's assignments. Nature films simply were not generating the necessary revenue for Amalgamated to allow the studio to continue producing them. Instead, they've begun bringing in relative novices and involved them in advertising production.

- There's a cost in environmental awareness that will hurt causes worldwide. Global's work made it a whole lot easier to find sympathetic donors. Without having that to rely on, ecological groups have been scrambling more than usual.
- Ecotope

The end products are rarely pretty, though Global isn't involved in any of the scripts. In spite of that, the overhead is low and there are a lot of opportunities for easy revenue. Since Global already had all of the equipment necessary, the transition seems to be a fairly profitable one for Amalgamated.

LivingWorld Productions

This conservative film studio seems to have become down-right paranoid since the *Twins* hit. When the earth shook, the floodwalls broke, and the fires lit up, Michael van Heiken, the chief of operations for the studio at the time, proclaimed that the Rapture had come. He was last seen jumping off the wall of Studio City into the toxic tides of El Infierno.

- He may not have been quite as crazy as everyone thought. It seems he had at least two mistresses looking for him at the time. He may have also taken a substantial chunk of LivingWorld's on-hand nuyen with him.
- Sounder
- For a dead guy, his name's still in active circulation. There's a 50,000¥ bounty on his head.
- Sticks

Since van Heiken's disappearance, LivingWorld's new projects have taken on an increasingly apocalyptic and judgmental tone. Many of the newer releases have openly degraded meta-humans and magicians. Most have featured insulting religious and racial stereotypes. These productions have garnered a huge amount of criticism, but they've also seen some of the highest sales figures in the label's history.

MagicMind

While LivingWorld feeds the spirit, MagicMind takes care of the baser instincts with an increased production of pornographic sims. They've most recently been working to develop feeds that place the viewer into the perspective of a variety of different metasapient paranormal animals—generally while copulating. The feeds are credited as artificially generated, though the Yakut government has waged a formal protest with Pueblo over their distribution.

- It seems Amalgamated is willing to be an equal opportunity offender.
- Cosmo

Most of MagicMind's other materials have been comparatively mundane. Their releases have been steady and continue to sell well, but few projects have had the luster that built their reputation. Subtle rumblings through the shadows suggest that MagicMind is actively on the prowl for some new technical talent. It's unlikely they'll find a willing extraction target in Studio City, so they may be expanding the scope of their search.

CHALMERS & COLE

Posted by: Mr. Bonds

A relative newcomer on the international finance and investment scene, Chalmers & Cole recently broke into the AA league, meaning we should pay a bit more attention to how and why they got there.

Corporate Profile

Chalmers & Cole Assoc.

Corporation Name: Chalmers & Cole Assoc.

Corporate Status: AA

World Headquarters: Paris, France

President: Francis Cole

CEO: Emerson Chalmers

Core Business: High Risk Investment, Emerging Markets finances

Major Subsidiaries/Divisions: Shore & Associates, Tarbuck McClintock Financial, Overmann Consulting

TIES THAT BIND

On the outside, C&C was officially founded by Emerson Chalmers and Francis Cole in 2065 and achieved A level status in '67. As with most things finance and investment however, the devil's in the details. Though coming from opposite ends of the economic spectrum, Chalmers and Cole first met in Oxford University through their mutual friend, Gustavo Carvalho, the late founder of Aegis Cognito. Their career choices after graduation brought them to different corners of the world, but they managed to keep in touch with each other, over the years relying on Carvalho's information and intelligence network capabilities.

Carvalho returned to Lisbon to set up Aegis, and UK-born Emerson Chalmers went on to become a skilled risk investment lawyer with British powerhouse Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal (HKB) (which sponsored his Oxford education in the first place). Francis Cole's career is harder to trace, but what little intel there is implies he switched jobs quite often before the foundation of C&C. From diplomatic assignments for Balkan nation states over managing global operations for several humanitarian aid organizations to coordinating mercenary assignments in Southeast Asia, Cole became an expert on Sixth World's crisis zones—or emerging markets, as they are called in the world of finance.

In 2051 both Chalmers and Cole left their current jobs only a few weeks apart from each other. The timing of their resignations implies no obvious connection to Gustavo Carvalho's death from cancer the same year, but relations between Aegis's new COO Teresa Santos and Chalmers and Cole turned ice cold almost overnight.

• Maybe they saw a chance to claim the top spots at AC. We still

don't know who really owns Aegis.

• Fianchetto

Launching what over the next decade seemed to be separate entrepreneurial careers in financial risk management (Chalmers) and political lobbying (Cole) was in hindsight laying the groundwork for founding Chalmers & Cole as a corporation in 2065. Chalmers became an expert on predicting the economic dynamics of resource-wealthy but unstable banana republics and backwater kingdoms, while Cole expanded his personal network of contacts by arranging secretive meetings between the emerging markets' political movers and shakers and parties willing to support a dictator du jour's cause by supplying arms and related technology.

• Cole is the golden child of many second- and third-tier arms manufacturers. They almost roll out the red carpet for him during the Athens Arms fair every year and fall over backwards to beef up his personal security and bodyguards.

• Picador

• Chalmers is a typical bean counter with a nervous streak. The total opposite of his business decisions, outside the office he is overly careful bordering on being paranoid.

• Kat o' Nine Tales

When the plug was pulled on the Matrix and more importantly the global markets a second time, many governments, megacorporations and NGOs had enough trouble looking after their own nations, citizens, and assets to circle in on the crippled competition. Exploiting the power vacuum, smaller fish like Chalmers or Cole had profitable contracts with several Asian and Eastern European nation states to show by the time of their official business registration the day the British business registration agency reopened their Matrix communication lines again after the Crash. Avoiding the expansion targets of AAAs like Saeder-Krupp or Ares, they managed to operate under the megacorp's radars and form profitable business relationships with guerrilla leaders smelling a revolution or warlords in need of securing their resource-rich territory from rival tribal kings and their megacorp puppet masters.

• Except for that one time when they hit too close to home for Wuxing. A far bigger investor than Chalmers & Cole, Wuxing made a strong point to put them back in their corner when C&C funded a bunch of Chinese opium farmers near a dragon line nexus Wuxing had their eyes on.

• Lei Kung

• While many metahuman rights organizations have C&C in their crosshairs, the megacorp still view them as too small a fish to make an impact. Which, not surprisingly, is exactly the way C&C want to be viewed.

• Dr. Spin



FUNDS FOR YOUR COUP D'ETAT

A cutthroat high-risk investment bank, C&C will open a credit line for literally anyone. Where C&C excels, however, is in the interpretation of the legal limits in which they are allowed to consult a client. Account management responsibilities first and foremost include ensuring safe communication with the client to allow strategic consulting and determination of the scale and scope of the account. The consulting phase concludes with a strategy paper handed to the client, containing recommendations for public, political, and military strategies as well as a first indication on potential funding and suggestions on forms of repayment.

- Usually, C&C either dispatches a small team of “freelance consultants” or brings their client to a safe location, preferably politically neutral and without extradition agreements with the customer’s rivals. After a thorough risk assessment, they will charge a hefty interest rate but also will demand a share of their client’s profit after a successful coup or ethnic cleansing of the rival’s home base.
- Marcos

While officially, C&C’s services end with the strategy paper, they remain involved throughout the outlined next phases. Setting up a seemingly independent shell corp within their client’s sphere of influence, this local office has full access to C&C’s global network of contacts, and it coordinates the communication and arrangements with arms dealers, smugglers, and mercenaries on their client’s behalf. To the outside, these companies look like your typical import/export joint venture, designed to inject some lifeblood into a crisis region’s battered economy. The targeted industries or market sectors to a large degree depend on the client’s natural resources, niche export goods, or other sources of income (ranging from technology and patents over exotic goods like timber or diamonds to drugs and BTLs). A second bogus corp handles all finances and monetary transactions, whether to launder money from drug or slave trade to pay for incoming arms shipments or for the money owed to Chalmers & Cole. A complex network of offshore accounts and shell corps is used to channel the funds to the right accounts and into the right pockets, eventually including those of Chalmers & Cole.

- While Cole handles the military aspect of the client’s account, Chalmers might act as the unofficial liaison to economic councils or the political scene. Since they relocated their head offices to Paris a few months ago, Chalmers & Cole have announced that they will be a major sponsor of the European Grand Tour.
- Kat o’ Nine Tales

2072 CRISIS HOT SPOTS OVERVIEW

Republika ng Pilipinas

After the liberation from the Japanese empire by the Great Dragon Masaru, Crash 2.0 was a catalyst for a series of succession wars and civil unrest across the island republic. Only with the help of NeoNET did Masaru manage to hold his republic together a bit longer, but he now seems to have lost what little control he had over the “Huk,” the People’s Anti-Japanese Army. NeoNET’s increasing influence turned many of the dragon’s former allies against him, funded by ominous backers pursuing their own agendas.

Tsimshian

Ever since the Salish Shidhe Council decided to invade and annex the spat-out remains of the Tsimshian Nation after Mitsuhama abandoned the region shortly before the Crash 2.0, tensions have been increasing between the Haida, the Tsimshian, and the Salish—and anyone else bold or suicidal enough to get involved. The Tsimshian tribe, crippled after the Salish and Haida took control, have now applied the similar guerrilla tactics the Haida terrorists were feared for. Resorting to outside funding to further their cause, the Tsimshian have become utterly dependent on anonymous investors. Analysts fear the ongoing strife will soon expand into other NAN regions, such as the Salish Shidhe or the Sioux Nation.

Geneva

The technomancer and AI siege of 2070 crippled the European banking capital and brought daily life to a halt. While the UN confirmed ongoing negotiations with the major Matrix activist cells’ representatives, a lack of coordination with several corporate initiatives prevents any significant progress. NeoNET, Horizon, Chalmers & Cole and technomancer lawyers Schmidt, Jakob & Lei all separately confirmed that they are in contact with the activist cells and working on a peaceful solution. Neither the Swiss government nor the UN sanctioned these corporate initiatives or were invited to participate.

Kingdoms of Nigeria

The Nigerian tribal kingdoms have been a center of civil unrest and strife for decades. The various tribal kingdoms and warlords fight over the remaining natural resources, manipulated by corporate interests and greed. Prominent megacorporations like Saeder-Krupp, Ares, or local hero DeBeers Omnitech support several tribes and ethnic groups, in some cases using investment firms such as Chalmers & Cole or even the Frankfurt Bank Association as a front for their morally questionable funding.

FRANKFURT BANK ASSOCIATION

Posted by: Cosmo

Corporate Profile

FRANKFURT BANK ASSOCIATION

Corporate Status: AA, Public Corporation
(Frankfurt Bank Association Holding)

CEO: Monika Stüeler-Waffenschmidt

World Headquarters: Frankfurt, Allied German States

Corporate Slogan: "Trust you can bank on"

Major Shareholders: Monika Stüeler-Waffenschmidt

Important Subsidiaries: Deutsche Bank AG, DZ Bank AG, Banco Espaniol, Frankfurt and Madrid Stock Exchange, Bankers Trust, Development Bank of China, European Transaction Bank, Islamic Cooperative Development Bank, Allianz SE, Munich Re, McKinsey & Company, Sternschutz

Corporate Profile: Universal and Specialized (Investment and Commercial) Banks, Personal and Corporate Finance, Investments and Financial Services, Stock Exchange, (Re-)Insurances, Law and Jurisdiction, Global Management Consulting, Business and Financial Analysis, Real Estate, Economic and Business Education, Police, Security and Protection Services, Network Security

The Frankfurt Bank Association, sometimes referred to by its German name the *Frankfurter Bankenverein*, is one of the oldest financial conglomerates still in existence. The FBA was formed in 2003 when two huge financial powerhouses, the Deutsche Bank AG and the DZ Bank (or German Central Co-operative Bank), merged in Frankfurt. After absorbing several European banks, the FBA became entrenched in European macroeconomics (and beyond) through their financial operations and corporate stock ownership. In the '20s, control of the FBA was seized by financier and jurist Dr. Gideo Schreiber, the metahuman form of the great dragon Nachtmeister. Under Schreiber, whose hunch for financial operations was not unlike his later rival Lofwyr, the FBA expanded post-Crash 1.0.

From the '30s to the '50s Schreiber ventured into the Middle Eastern financial business, acquiring some Islamic banks that became the foundation of today's FBA influence in the region. In 2052, Nachtmeister withdrew as both CEO and CFO from the management board (although he still owned the conglomerate), appointing Monika Stüeler-Waffenschmidt as new CEO.

- Which was a surprise—Waffenschmidt had just turned thirty when the great dragon promoted her. While many considered her to be too young and callow to lead the empire, she silenced the skeptics when she snatched two major Munich-based insurance companies (the Münchner Rückversicherung and the multinational Allianz Group) shortly after her ascension.

- Fianchetto

Despite Lofwyr's major expansion phase after the birth of Saeder-Krupp, the FBA survived in S-K's backyard for more than thirty years, evading the great dragon's cutthroat tactics until 2062, when both great dragons duked it out in an aerial duel to the death above Frankfurt.

Nachtmeister's demise in that fight left a void in the FBA due to the absence of a will. While everyone expected Lofwyr to claim Nachtmeister's riches (including his 86.3 percent ownership of the FBA), this did not happen. Instead, Stüeler-Waffenschmidt (probably the only one close enough to the dragon to know about his private resources) assumed control of Nachtmeister's holdings, which granted near-complete ownership of the FBA.

In subsequent years, FBA weathered Crash 2.0 without much trouble, bringing their systems and the Frankfurt Stock Exchange online sooner than others because the Greater Frankfurt grid was saved by Lofwyr's little kill-switch trick. After the Crash, the FBA assisted Ares in taking down Cross Applied Technologies together with Bank of America (an Ares financial subsidiary). More importantly, they successfully conquered Banco Espaniol in 2068 after that bank was weakened by Spain's troubled post-Crash 2.0 economy. This move made FBA larger than the British-based Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal,

- Right time, right place. Banco Espaniol is a pillar of Spain's economy and owns a piece of nearly every major Spanish corporation, including multinationals like Meridional Agronomics and Sol Media.
- Kia

FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

While FBA's physical assets are insignificant compared to other companies their size, their impressive virtual assets and shareholdings give the corp immense leverage with corporations, institutions, and countries.

The three main pillars of FBA's financial services are the global banking business, insurances, and investments and shareholdings. Though the FBA's main markets are in the Middle East and Central and Eastern Europe, the corp holds offices in all major finance hubs, including Frankfurt, London, Zurich, New York, Dubai, Singapore, Sydney, Hong Kong and Neo-Tokyo and runs the stock exchanges of Frankfurt and Madrid. It is also investing in expanding markets such as Latin America and Africa.

Banking

Currently, the 50+ major banks that are part of the financial conglomerate are involved in retail banking (personal wealth and small businesses), business banking (mid-market companies), corporate banking (directed at large corporate entities such as multinationals), private banking (so called "high-net worth" individuals or super-rich), and Islamic banking.

- The FBA tried for decades to leverage its Middle Eastern Islamic bank into greater holdings in Asian Islamic finance markets, but the Malaysian Independent Bank kept them out. When the MIB crashed and burned during Crash 2.0 and was assimilated by Wuxing, many Islamic customers went looking for alternatives, finding the FBA's very traditional subsidiaries to be viable options.
- Goat Foot



INCOMING FEED.....



The conglomerate's vast network of banks makes it the ideal enterprise for obfuscating money, and a number of rich individuals, private or government agencies (such as Argus or the MET2000), and underworld syndicates (like the Mafia) use the FBA's black account services to deposit or launder money.

Insurance

The FBA's insurance companies offer a comprehensive range of property, casualty, life, and liability insurances. Shadowrunners are in high demand by this branch—no insurance company wants to pay out, and it's often cheaper to hire shadowrunners to gather some intel if there is reasonable suspicion of insurance fraud, or to have runners recover stolen property that otherwise the FBA would need to pay for.

Investments and Shareholding

Once the laws prohibiting banks from owning non-financial companies were abolished and globally reformed due to the Corporate Court, banks' influence in corporations has dramatically increased. This is why powerful multinationals and megacorporations have their own financial assets ("house banks") and control the public sales of their shares (if they're a public corporation) quite restrictively.

The FBA holds shares of at least a dozen Eurocorps including AGC, European Motor Company, Renault-Fiat, Ruhmetall, Sol

Media, Meridional Agronomics (via the recent Banco Espaniol takeover), and MET2000, to name a few. The amount of shares varies, ranging from small percentages to controlling stocks.

Brokerage

The FBA works hard to keep the oft-questionable financial operations of its brokerage companies under the radar. Since the FBA utilizes offshore financial centers to obscure its transactions, participates in highly speculative and risky trading to profit from fluctuations in prices, and has participated in overvaluation of stocks, FBA Schmidts are sometimes required to revert to specialists to prevent high-risk maneuvers from blowing up in their face.

Another field where the FBA has been taking an active role is in bringing down Brokerage X, a shadow brokerage company run by European prime hackers 0111011001, Espion, and associates under the allegation of insider trade.

- They don't want to bring down BX—they want to take it over, since it's so damn profitable in turning secrets into money.
- Mr. Bonds

OUTSIDE ECONOMICS

It isn't all about finances, however. The FBA oversees a number of complementary businesses that tie into the financial sector and helped secure the bank's assets.

Law and Jurisdiction

The FBA's legal division covers a number of law firms engaged in the practice of national, international, corporate, and megacorporate law. These firms advise the FBA and its clients about their legal rights and responsibilities and represent them in civil or criminal cases, business transactions (mergers and acquisitions), and any other case where legal assistance is required.

- Nachtmeister formed this division to use the law as a weapon of mass destruction, bringing down opponents by litigating every issue and drowning them in megapulses of legal terminology until they cave.
- Fianchetto

Management Consulting and Headhunting

This branch helps organizations improve their performance through analysis of existing business problems and development of plans for improvement. One of the advantages of the FBA is its impressive knowledge management system, which supports its field consultants in providing objective and rational expertise and advice to clients.

- The FBA has invested millions into this system post-Crash 2.0, which is why it has been targeted several times by different megacorps like Renraku or Horizon, as it would augment their own systems.
- Snopes

Since many business problems arise from flawed managers or general executives, this branch also provides manager-training programs (coaching) as well as headhunting.

Protection and Security

The FBA supports military assets to protect their extraterritorial grounds (often hiring Knight Errant to guard their office and server compounds), and it recently acquired the Sternschutz, the private security division of the Internationale Fahrzeug- und Maschinenunion (IFMU) when the corp imploded in the wake of Crash 2.0. The Sternschutz has become AGS's private police corporation, holding police contracts for Greater Frankfurt, and the cities of Stuttgart and Hannover, with negotiations in Berlin pending.

The FBA also acquired the IFMU's 21 percent stake in MET2000, making them the second biggest shareholder of the merc-corp behind the Allied German States.

- Their influence is even bigger than that, since the FBA possesses roughly 25 percent of the voting shares of Ruhrmetall who is MET2K's number three shareholder, with about an 18 percent stake.
- Mr. Bonds

SecureNET, a fully owned subsidiary of the FBA located in Frankfurt, provides Matrix security for FBA's banks, assets, and financial networks. S-NET focuses on keeping the FBA's tech cutting edge and systems clean of hackers, while also utilizing a small but savvy R&D department that develops security innovations.

LONE STAR

Posted by: Hard Exit

We briefly touched on the Star's operational side and their role as a runner's natural enemy in the recent Organized Crime overview here on JackPoint, but it pays to take a look at the corporation that is Lone Star. To the public, they serve and protect, but they still need to make money to continue to do so.

Corporate Profile



Corporation Name: Lone Star Security Services Inc.

Corporation Status: AA

World Headquarters: Austin, Texas (CAS)

Global Presence: UCAS, CAS; Quebec, Hong Kong, Nairobi, Scandinavian Union

CEO: Gerald T. Hampton

Chairman of the Board: James

Wilson

Core Businesses: Municipal law enforcement

Major Divisions: Law Enforcement Services, Defense and Protection R&D, Security Consultancy Services, Penal and Correction Services, Licensing and Patent Administration

Major Subsidiaries: Gendarmerie (Quebec), LS Security Services Hong Kong, Silver Shield, Silver Dawn, Lone Star Correctional Services

BACK IN THE DAY

CAS-based Lone Star was founded in Austin (Texas) in 2020 and went from local private security services outfit to becoming North America's predominant public police service provider in little more than a decade. Moving through the chaotic '20s, the first Crash, and the UCAS union like a bullet through a tin can, the corporation's founder, **Clayton Wilson**—yes, yes, he's with Ares now, more on that later—always found ways to profit from the latest upheaval. After a rapid series of acquisitions and rival service provider buyouts, Lone Star was granted extraterritorial rights in 2032. Ready for massive expansion throughout the newly formed UCAS, Wilson used the series of public police strikes throughout major metroplexes to his advantage, scoring several profitable service contracts all over the continent, somewhat stabilizing its borderline AA status.

- A common theory is that Damien Knight founded Knight Errant because of Lone Star's success. A Star (pun intended) pinned to Ares' chest would round off the "world police corp" image.
- DangerSensei

A living example of the Star's "Shoot first, ask questions later" reputation, Wilson's cowboy mentality became a liability in the eyes of the board of directors, escalating in a dirty game of betrayed family loyalties and cold-hearted payback in 2036. Clayton Wilson

found himself outvoted by rival (read: female) board member **Wendy Manderscheid** and her supporters—including Wilson's half-brother James—and shortly thereafter relieved from his duties as CEO and chair of the board. Manderscheid herself claimed the chair's seat, instating **James Wilson** as Lone Star's CEO.

Under Manderscheid's and James Wilson's leadership, Lone Star's own academy implemented classes on political correctness and metahuman rights in an effort to replace pervasive racist and chauvinist behavior, modernizing the corp's image in the public eye.

- Now that's a euphemism if I ever saw one. Even today in parts of the CAS, Lone Star still represents the "Shoot first, interrogate later, shoot twice if it's got pointy ears" faction, proudly wearing their Stetsons and ever ready to draw a racist insult.
- Mr. Bonds
- Biased, much? Seriously, though, the Star's corporate image in the South is different than the clean "upright, politically correct cop" spin they put on for the UCAS. Truth is the racist undertone was never fully rooted out, regardless of the marketing department's spiel.
- Sunshine

Reacting to the Sixth World's unique aspects, magic and the Matrix, specialized departments were added to the corporation's roster, focusing on crimes involving the Awakened and paranormal as well as improving the Star's reputation in Matrix and computer security services. Over the next twenty years, Wilson and Manderscheid successfully established Lone Star as *the* private law enforcement contractor throughout North America.

Manderscheid retired as chairwoman in '51 and passed the torch to James Wilson, who named **Theodore Winslow** his successor as CEO. By then Lone Star's success in metropolitan law enforcement pushed rival Knight Errant into corporate and contract security services.

AFTER THE CRASH

All went well for Lone Star until the plug was pulled on the Matrix a second time, and even then the chaos and riots caused by the second Crash at first seemed little more than training exercises for Lone Star's street patrols and riot control squads. During the following cleanup, reports showed that riot-control measures in predominantly metahuman or Awakened areas resulted in significantly higher numbers of casualties than similar actions in mundane or mostly human neighborhoods. Lone Star received the first big dents in its otherwise shiny armor during 2070's technomancer crises and last year's tempo-induced gang wars, and those issues forced the corporation's board to remove CEO Winslow. His replacement was **Gerald Hampton**, a highly decorated CFS military general and security advisor to the city of Los Angeles, traditionally a city with ongoing gang warfare. Immediately recognizing the dire situation the Star was in, Hampton changed the direction of the ongoing internal restructuring program, aiming for a rapid and more importantly palpable improvement of the corporation's customer service orientation.

While the restructuring efforts received much praise from quite a few showcase clients like Atlanta or the corp's home turf Austin, it could not prevent Lone Star from losing the crown jewel contract in Seattle, and it risks also losing the Toronto contract. The fallout from the gang wars also intensified the rivalry between the Star and Knight Errant, as both corporations were surprised by the quickly escalating gang violence and lost several profitable contracts to their respective rival.

- The board's expectations for Hampton are high, and he needs to provide results fast. While he's got the board's support, the enforcement division feels like this time, *they've* been bent over and subjected to a body cavity search.
- DangerSensei
- The tempo crisis put Lone Star's credibility and public image through the wringer. Jane Q Public doesn't care about the legislative loopholes that prevented Lone Star from doing its job, she just sees they failed. Miserably.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

Just as things seemed to calm down, news broke that Clayton Wilson had just accepted the position as vice president of Knight Errant. Though Wilson was out of the picture for almost forty years, news of Lone Star's founder helming its biggest rival plunged the corporation back into a state of ambiguity. To avoid a conflict of interest, Wilson had to sell his twenty-five percent interest in Lone Star when jumping ship to KE. The buyer and now Lone Star's latest major shareholder is **Reality Inc.**, an investment company with little history in law enforcement. In 2062, Reality attempted a hostile takeover of Miami-based Atlantic Security when Atlantic's mother corp Gunderson was falling apart. Atlantic's CEO Harvin, however, sold the corp (and quite possibly his soul) to Aztechnology in exchange for a seat on the board. Reality gave up on Atlantic, but after the Crash 2.0 swallowed Eagle Security, a third-tier security service provider.

- Hold it, skip! Reality Inc.? Their shopping spree's been making headlines recently. Don't know how (yet), but they also acquired Cavalier Arms, a Texan arms manufacturer and former Novatech, then NeoNET asset. I wonder where they got the funds to buy Wilson's stock that quick after snatching Cavalier from under Villiers' nose.
- Mr. Bonds

REBOOT AND REMODEL

While the restructuring program under former CEO Winslow was geared towards modernizing the enforcement arm's communications and technology, new CEO Hampton instead focuses on a customer orientation, remodeling the organization itself. Following a classic service-provider model, a Lone Star account representative is assigned to every client and is responsible for customer satisfaction (while maintaining the contract's profitability, of course). Depending on the size of a contract, a service rep might get assigned to multiple minor accounts or might have an entire team of account managers dealing with the special aspects of a major account (enforcement services, corporate security, matrix

SEATTLE NEWS INTELLIGENCER ARCHIVE—SEA-UCAS 03/15/72

Brackhaven tendering Metroplex police services

As a result of the ongoing gang violence and turf conflicts even after the end of the tempo drug wars, Governor Brackhaven today announced an all-inclusive tendering process for Seattle's police and public security services. In a media conference following the press release, the Governor stated "[we] must ensure our current service provider can guarantee the level of security we promised our voters and citizens with the 'Safe Seattle' program. A tendering process is the next logical step to make our streets safe again, without having to rely on our own Metroplex Guard for assistance."

Knight Errant's new VP and former CEO of Lone Star, Clayton Wilson, issued a statement saying that "the call for a tender is proof for this administration's commitment to the 'Safe Seattle' initiative. As the world's premiere security service provider, Knight Errant is honored by the governor's request for a service proposal. We promise to bring our full expertise to the table, and into the streets of Seattle."

Lone Star representatives confirmed their participation in the tender, but refused further comments. Throughout the first quarter of 2072, gang related crime remains at eighteen percent up over last year, despite Lone Star's continuous efforts to squash the fallout from 2071's tempo drug wars.

Urgent Message...

security, etc.). At the end of the day, all customer reps report directly to their regional account executive, who reports to the Austin-based global account director.

While the account reps have no authority to question the m.o. of a contract's chief of police, they are ultimately responsible for budget allocations and the account's overall profitability. Since this new direction is still very fresh, the account reps have their hands full going through service contracts and reviewing the allocated budgets. In most cases, budget allocations won't come up until the new fiscal year starts in 2073, but irregular tenders can ruin the day for an account rep and the affected Lone Star chief of police.

- Hampton is turning Lone Star into a service provider—before him, they still were "the cops," only with a bottom line. Generations of traditional cops seriously dislike the armchair detectives from corporate HQ giving the orders now.
- Traveler Jones
- Let me get this straight, they're seriously letting bean counters handle the budget for a municipal service contract? No wonder the street patrols are even grumpier than normal.
- Pistons

Though initial customer feedback on this new policy has been outright positive, reputable police chiefs complain about

their account reps' inexperience with municipal law enforcement or crime fighting in general. They claim that the transfer of budget responsibility to the account rep robs each enforcement division of its much-needed flexibility. Corporate HQ responds by presenting improved figures on several contracts, ranging from simple service level efficiency (comparing a metroplex's crime rate development since last year) to delicate numbers such as significantly lower corruption ratios.

Despite Lone Star's battered reputation in Seattle and other cities after the tempo debacles, the board of directors seems satisfied with Hampton's direction. Likewise, many metroplex authorities are happy to receive "preferred customer" treatment after decades of courting the local Lone Star chief of police only to see his pockets fill with contributions from crime syndicates or powerful corps.

- Speaking of corruption, don't hold your breath for change. Street cops still barely make a living, and if a city's government has ties to the mob or is controlled by the corporations, they will make sure certain districts or illegal operations remain untouchable.
- Beaker

Regardless of Hampton's good standing, he'll soon have to present more than polished statistics. **Carl Walsh**, a living legend within the corp and currently the chief of Lone Star police in Denver's CAS sector, is rallying up his supporters to kick Hampton off his throne. Walsh was a supporter of former CEO Winslow and is also a close friend of retired Seattle Chief of Police William Loudon. But even without these two allies, he remains an influential man within the corporation and has repeatedly voiced his disdain for Hampton's strategy and Lone Star's overall new direction.

MAKING MONEY

While municipal enforcement contracts account for over forty-five percent of the corporation's income, Lone Star is pretty diverse for a simple police corp. Administrative services like testing for and registering a municipality's Awakened or Emerged population and issuing licenses for personal firearms and augmentations all add up to a healthy revenue stream. The Star's legal division is another cash cow, handling much more than the city's traffic fines and public offenses. In fact, by taking precautions against lawsuits from clients or insurance claims, the division has become a central pillar of the corporation.

- The legal division is also in of the internal affairs department, both of which are the source for lots of recent freelance work. One department tries to uncover dirty cops, the other tries to keep the collateral damage and legal impact to a minimum. Fun times.
- DangerSensei

The income from these administrative divisions also covers the liaison branch's expenses. Handling information exchanges with not only provincial, federal, and international organizations but also megacorporate security and intelligence divisions, the Liaison department is considered a cost of doing business. Good relations with overseas authorities and government-funded international law enforcement agencies are nurtured to exploit potential business opportunities beyond North America. Under

INTERNATIONAL AND EXTRATERRITORIAL LIAISONS

As a global law enforcement and security service provider, Lone Star's legal division worked out collaboration protocols with several international agencies, and also a fair share of corporations. These collaboration protocols are categorized as follows:

Full extradition (level 3)

The level 3 collaboration protocol includes full extradition of a wanted criminal or prime suspect by providing plausible evidence to the agency or extraterritorial corporation holding the subject in custody or possessing information on his or her whereabouts. Currently, agencies and corporations who have signed a level 3 agreement with Lone Star include:

Horizon
NeoNET
Mitsuhamma
UCAS FBI
UCAS CIA

Extensive cooperation (level 2)

A level 2 collaboration includes detailed information and data exchange and also grants permission to provide a liaison body to participate in local investigations by international police and/or extraterritorial corporate security agencies. Extradition agreements are negotiated on a case-by-case basis. Currently, agencies and corporations who have a level 2 agreement with Lone Star include:

Interpol

Europol
Saeder-Krupp
Renraku
NAN Tribal Council Police
United Kingdom Oversight Board

Limited collaboration (level 1)

The level 1 agreement limits the collaboration to high-level information exchange or similar requests. A limited permission to investigate on foreign or extraterritorial territory is evaluated on a case-by-case basis following detailed court hearings and negotiations. In case of a joint investigation task force, the domestic law enforcement acts as the commanding body and decides on the extent of Lone Star personnel presence and participation. Agencies and corporations who have a current level 1 agreement with Lone Star include:

Ares Macrotechnology
Aztechnology

- This article has been tagged by someone in your network.
- Accessing tag...
- Level 1 agreements are volatile at worst, and temporary permits at best. Aztech's agreement is a leftover from their days in Denver, but the Azzies usually give a fuck about the Star's investigation applications. As does Ares. Still, be careful if you ever become the target of a joint investigation. If for nothing else than to save their faces, they'll come down on you with full force.
- Kane

the new business model, the Military Liaison department was shifted to the newly founded Security Consulting Service division, thereby adding military consulting to its service portfolio—clearly a move to challenge Ares's domination in this sector.

- Clayton Wilson always had good contacts in both Washington and Atlanta, which might open some doors for Knight.
- Kay St.Irregular

The Consulting branch spearheads the corporation's expansion beyond North America. Sales reps are traveling through Europe and the Middle East, providing free security assessments to corporations, city councils, and government authorities. International and (especially) local competitors make it difficult for the Star to gain more than a token presence in some regions.

Within the Enforcement Services division, Matrix security services and penal systems are the second and third biggest revenue streams after regular law enforcement. Besides providing Matrix security for city councils' and bureaus' online presence, many corporate customers also would rather entrust Lone Star with their hosts than Knight Errant.

Lone Star's Correction division maintains a large number of prison facilities for several metroplexes and runs the majority of the UCAS' federal jails. Renting inmates to corporations as

cheap warehouse labor or for construction projects increases the Star's bottom line, in addition to regular operating service and maintenance payments from their clients. Supported by the FDA, biotech corps pay handsome fees for inmates to test experimental pharmaceuticals or medical treatments.

- Quite a few inmates pick voluntary applied pharmaceutical research over road construction or sweat shop slave labor. Depending on the medical facilities, security during these tests usually is less tight than on prison grounds, but trying to bail while being drugged to the nines can pose some unique challenges.
- Marcos
- With Eagle's correction facilities and penal service contracts as a welcome gift from new shareholder Reality Inc., the Star gains a significant foothold in the NAN and now practically owns and runs eighty percent of the continent's prisons.
- Mika

Over the past decades, Lone Star's psychological research helped to build a solid reputation in related fields like social reintegration, addiction treatment and conditioning methodologies. Combining pharmaceutical means with state of the art simsense technology, many of today's advertising and even simsense

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY SERVICE PROVIDERS—THE TOP TEN

- 1. Ares Macrotechnology (Knight Errant)**
Sector: Corporate security **Presence:** global
- 2. Lone Star Security Services**
Sector: Public security **Presence:** North America, Scandinavian Union, Hong Kong, Nairobi
- 3. Tyr Security**
Sector: Corporate Security **Presence:** Scandinavian Union, Baltic
- 4. Mitsuhamma (Parashield, Petrovski Security, Ertxanta Police)**
Sector: Paranormal security **Presence:** Asia, Russia, Spain & Euskalherria
- 5. Yakashima (Sakura Security)**
Sector: Municipal and corporate security **Presence:** Japan
- 6. Renraku (Najima Securities, Securitech International)**
Sector: Matrix Security **Presence:** global
- 7. Pueblo Security Enterprises Inc.**
Sector: Corporate Security **Presence:** NAN, Denver FRFZ
- 8. Sternschutz**
Sector: Municipal Security **Presence:** AGS
- 9. Esprit Industries**
Sector: National, municipal, and corporate security **Presence:** France
- 10. Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal (ScotSecure, Midland Guards)**
Sector: Corporate Security **Presence:** UK

experience goes back to Lone Star's groundbreaking research from over twenty years ago. For example, findings from Lone Star's early projects enabled the development of psychotropic intrusion countermeasures, among other things. The joint Genom, AGC, and NeoNET research initiative to develop means to suppress and/or control technomantic abilities also builds on a few key results discovered in Lone Star's research projects.

- I know on good authority that Lone Star has gotten their hands on some of Genom's latest data. The resources of a megacorp and two AA corps outmatch even Lone Star's premium research department, and the Star was eager to learn if NeoNET et al. found a way to control these freaks.
- Clockwork
- What you're saying is that you've helped the Star acquire the data? Always fighting the good fight, aren't you?
- Pistons
- To each his own, lady, to each his own.
- Clockwork

Another cash cow is Lone Star's (in)famous R&D department. As opposed to manufacturing its own products, Lone Star

does research work only, making money on patents and licenses. Kept tightly under wraps until the new developments are patented, research is not limited to firearms or melee weapons, but includes armor and protection, surveillance technologies, and even vehicles and drones. An entire side branch is dedicated to the Arcane, developing spell formulas, ritual tracking and tracing and general magical investigation methodologies.

Frequently renting out its personnel and facilities to A-level arms manufacturers, the R&D division on rare occasions also enters collaborative projects with other corporations. Yamaha's Pulsar wireless taser and Fichetti's microwave laser beam weapon range are perfect examples of these projects; advanced know-how and premium pricing conditions are the prime reasons for Lone Star to enter a collaboration.

- Few corps actually dare to spy on Lone Star or hire runners for B&E runs and data steals. Ares, of course has no such qualms.
- DangerSensei

MAERSK INCORPORATED ASSETS

Posted by: Cosmo

In order to assist with FastJack's attempt to provide an overview of potential employers, here's a profile of a Scandinavian Corporate giant I bet few of you had on your radar. Still, many of you probably had encounters with them whether you knew it or not.

Corporate Profile

CORPORATION NAME: Maersk Incorporated
Assets A/S

Corporate Status: AA

World Headquarters: Copenhagen, Scandinavian Union

President: Peter Frödin

CEO: Lars Gyldebrandt

Core Businesses: Logistics Services, Ship and Sea Facility Building, Oil & Gas Mining, Medical and Financial Services, Software Programming

Major Subsidiaries: Maersk-Sealand (Shipping Company), Maersk Oil & Gas (Oil & Gas Mining), Kvaerner-Maersk (Ship construction), Deutsche Lufthansa AG (Airline), Tyr Inc. (Security Company), Maersk Matrix Inc. (Software Programming), Danske Bank (Bank), Maersk Medical Inc. (Biotech)

HISTORY AND SERVICES

Maersk Incorporated Assets is an AA corp with its strongest assets in the logistics industry. Initially a Danish sea-freight forwarding company formed about 170 years ago, Maersk quickly became the world's number one ocean freight service provider. After securing its top position, the company expanded into other transportation modes (air freight, trucking, railway, and even blimps) and quickly started offering more general supply chain services, like warehouse facility or production plant operations, customs clearance and general supply chain engineering.



INCOMING FEED.....



Now managed from Copenhagen, Maersk logistics subsidiaries operate several seaports directly, among them major cargo hubs like Hamburg, Copenhagen, Tampa, and Chennai. Though still focusing on cargo handling and related port operations, the acquisition of German Lufthansa in 2005 allowed them to expand into public transport, managing the Copenhagen, Hamburg, Istanbul, and Warsaw airports. Others might follow, as contract negotiations for Tricity, Metropole and Cape Town are coming up or are tendered right now.

Benefiting from a century of experience in shipbuilding, repair dock construction, and port architecture, Maersk's mobile port facilities are used in Europort, Boston, and Shanghai, and the corporation itself owns several second-tier sea and airports across the globe. In these fields of business, Maersk is actually second to none. One of the main reasons is the acquisition of the Norwegian shipbuilding corp Kvaerner, which is now one of the crown jewels in Maersk's portfolio.

- These mobile port facilities are a step up from the pre-Crash mobile aqualogies and arcoblocks designed by Maersk and German Proteus. Maersk filed a lawsuit with the NEEC against Proteus after discovering their involvement in industrial espionage while delaying the joint arcoblock projects.
- DangerSensei

With this excellent track record to show, Maersk is now out for more challenging contracts in regions like the port of Santos in Metropole, Lagos in West Africa, and the war-ruined Baltic. Here, Maersk is contracted to (re)construct and operate the logistics infrastructure, building and operating new air and seaports, warehouses and central freight hubs. Exerting their influence with local subcontractors, Maersk ensures most of the profit stays with them, throwing mere crumbs to the locals doing most of the work.

- It's the combination of their assets and global presence that makes the difference. Maersk operates or downright owns many sea and airports in Central and Northern Europe, thereby controlling the flow of goods. Their influence with authorities and subcontractors alike could mean a customer's goods will be shipped on time, with less chances of going lost or suffering from "customs issues."
- Fianchetto
- Now that KondOrchid has almost been finished off by global law agencies, the only competitors worth mentioning are Worldwide Shipping—a joint venture of Wuxing and Lusiada—and European ESUS. These three corps share almost seventy percent of the market. In terms of freight forwarding, there aren't really any alternatives.
- Kia

In addition, Maersk entered the oil producing business over a century ago, another major source of income. Initially concentrating on Denmark and the North Sea, they nowadays operate oilfields worldwide. Over time, Maersk added medical services, banking, and other services to their portfolio to diversify as much as possible. Maersk Medical is growing increasingly important in Scandinavia after the merger with Tyr's armed medical services

subsidiary, becoming a more serious competitor to Euromedis and BuMoNa. While the medical division is a growing concern, Maersk Matrix, the subsidiary for Matrix services, remains a division that demands particular focus.

A SERVICE PROVIDER'S TROUBLES

Despite the corporation's vast service portfolio, freight forwarding remains Maersk's core business. Today, they handle large chunks of the Big Ten's cargo volumes and manage entire supply chains for numerous AAs. These services add up to sixty percent of Maersk's annual income, but they also make up eighty percent of the problems. Despite its size, Maersk still is little more than a second tier cog in the complex and vast net of megacorporate competition, time to market, and global sales.

Providing similar services to market competitors puts Maersk between a rock and a hard place. To give you an example, let's assume Shiawase needs to delay the arrival of a certain Ares product destined for distribution throughout Europe. Expendable assets are hired to reroute, delay, or even destroy the cargo. While at first glance, this looks like the scuffle between two megas we're all used to, take into consideration the fact that Ares contracted Maersk as the responsible freight forwarder. Suddenly, you have to deal with Ares's as well as Maersk's security, systems, and other periphery, not to mention the problem that you pissed off not one but two corps if the run goes foul.

- So, Cosmo, sounds like you were involved in the failed run on the vessel Claudius Maersk in Europort last year?
- Baka Dabora
- I really like to hear how people come up with their foolish speculations. Sounds like you didn't have something important to say, did you?
- Cosmo
- Being responsible for many AAA's lifelines (i.e., their flow of goods towards their production sites and their customers), Maersk invests heavily into their impressive legal issues department. Thanks to the numerous strategic alliances and the problems that come with them, they were defending against lawsuits in front of the NEEC nearly on regular terms.
- Fianchetto
- Except Wuxing, no AAA-corp maintains significant international logistics assets. Usually, most megacorps outsource their logistics services to the experts in these fields, knowing that their size gives them influence they need on their service providers. So Maersk and their fellow competitors are the ones responsible for the transportation and distribution of most of the megacorps' products from the production site to the end market.
- Mr. Bonds

To protect their customers' cargo and Maersk's own reputation, the corporation makes full use of nearly unlimited influence in directly managed ports or with befriended authorities, going to great lengths to recover stolen shipments, retrieve sensitive cargo manifests, or plug similar leaks. While they try to stay within legal boundaries, Maersk is known to hire freelance operatives in urgent cases or where they have no clout with the local authorities.

Usually however, Maersk relies on excellent relations with customs authorities and security service providers, and also maintains tight connections to Europol and other international agencies. At all costs, Maersk tries to avoid having to inform their customer about a rerouted and now-missing prototype shipment, a pirate attack due to leaked vessel schedules, or other service failures,

- The connections to port authorities where the Vory are messing around are more difficult. Here, often runners or Tyr Inc. are used as a more heavy-handed approach to fix any problems.
- Red Anya

One word on pirate attacks: Maersk deals with them as does every upright corp, by finding the most cost-efficient response. Depending on the stolen shipment's value and importance as well as the pirates' demands, the pirates are either ignored, paid, or subjected to Tyr Security's compassionate negotiation skills. It's also worth noting the role of the freight insurances of Maersk and their customers. If a shipment is captured, these insurances are included in the efforts of regaining the goods and the ship. So, based on our previous example, you will face the unpleasant attention from Tyr, Knight Errant and the FBA (or some equivalent) as the insurance responsible for this "baggage claim."

- Usually, Maersk's freight ships are equipped with automated defense systems such as Vanquisher Autocannons, self-produced torpedo launchers and on-board sentry systems. Thanks to NeoNET, Matrix security on board is at least extremely challenging, with satellite uplinks and multiple hidden backdoors for Maersk Hackers in order to maintain and regain control of the ship if needed. When ordered to, Tyr Inc. sends some highly equipped, augmented, and trained Reaction-Teams, specialized in seaside operations and boarding of kidnapped ships. These guys, called Fardrengir (after ancient Nordic for warriors noted for sailing to far countries), are among the best in this field of business. Sometimes, freelancers are hired to do this job, when a failure will mean a very public loss of face, or none of their own teams are available.
- Picador

To keep the flow of goods running, Maersk relies on local subsidiaries, subcontracted service providers, and authorities. In true corporate style, however, they're passing down the trouble they get from their customers to the locals. Small local truckers or warehousing companies have no choice but to follow Maersk's orders and pricing. Dictating service levels and more importantly, legal responsibilities, Maersk reduces these independents to mere wageslave contractors.

- Maersk really holds a gun to the local trucker's head. To retain a small degree of independence from Maersk, the locals often resort to semi-legal activities, such as blackmailing the port authorities.
- Haze
- To stay in business, more and more trucking companies of all sizes became desperate enough to start smuggling drugs, contraband, and even metahuman cargo for the syndicates, realizing too late they'd handed their independence to an even more dangerous partner.
- Red Anya

REUTERS INTERNATIONAL NEWSFLASH: Europort, UNL: Nov 23, 2071 Vessel Raid successfully stopped

Tonight, a security team from Tyr Inc. reacted to a raiding attempt by unidentified criminals on the 11,500 TEU Container vessel *Claudius Maersk* a few miles from Europort. The security forces boarded the container vessel while the criminals' raid was ongoing. Totally surprised, most of the criminals have been captured, and only a few managed to escape with their own vessel to the Dutch coast. There, a Knight Errant SWAT-Team successfully prepared an ambush on the returning criminals and their landside supporters. In total, fourteen people have been arrested and all stolen goods have been saved. Although the organizers of this criminal operation were not identified or captured, spokespeople of both security companies stated that they were very satisfied with this combined assault on the threads of the European sea trade.

- This article has been tagged by someone in your network.
- Accessing tag...
- Here you see what they're talking about. Guess Cosmo has some firsthand stories about it, so you might wanna ask him for details.
- Baka Dabora
- Thanks, Baka for this really exciting update, you just made our day. Now please get lost and find someone else to annoy.
- Cosmo

- The small involuntary long-term partners aren't the only ones facing Maersk's harsh approaches in negotiations. Even port authorities may face the threat of Maersk switching their operations to another port, endangering thousands of jobs and the economic development of entire regions.

- Kia

- Maersk's global logistics network puts them in the crosshairs of different organized crime outfits and syndicates. Being granted extraterritorial rights in many countries, Maersk can import all kinds of goods under the authorities' noses. For the syndicates, getting their fingers into Maersk's networks is often the key to undetected smuggling or black-market operations.

- Red Anya

EBB AND FLOW—SHIFTING ALLIANCES

In the few places where Maersk isn't the biggest fish in the pond or can't seem to get a foot in the door, they apply a different strategy. Strategic partnerships with local heroes like Regulus Transport Services in Europort or ESUS in the irradiated SOX wasteland improve the range of services Maersk can offer worldwide. Even entering temporary alliances with major competitors

isn't out of the question.

The knots of these partnerships are never tied for eternity. It shouldn't be surprising, then, to find ESUS and Maersk cooperating peacefully in Europort, while competing fiercely in Poland, West Africa, and almost everywhere else. It seems a nature of the industry to form alliances among competitors in one place while sabotaging each other's operations elsewhere. Take SeaGate, for example, a Regulus and Worldwide Shipping joint venture constructing an adaptive and modular port terminal in Hamburg that is in direct competition to Maersk's comparable facilities in Europort. In every corner of the world where new market opportunities arise, the cards are dealt anew and the strongest rival from last time might become an important ally.

- As long as the contracts aren't signed, all gloves are off. From stealing information about the rival's offer to provoking service failures at the competitor's facility the day of a customer's visit, these events create job opportunities galore. Even after the ink is dry, competition might still continue. The operational problems SeaGate has experienced for over a year now are no coincidence.
- Icarus

Maersk successfully applies this strategy to other business divisions as well, like their oil and gas-producing operations using so-called PRobos—huge automated underwater-vehicles for finding and mining new potential oil or gas fields. Unfortunately, there have never been enough resources for everybody, so clashes of interests are still daily business. Today, Maersk's biggest competitors in this market are Saeder-Krupp, AGC, Regulus, Proteus, and Universal Omnitech. Next up on the list of potential untapped reservoirs are the Amazonian and West African coastlines. These projects have recently entered the proposal stage, and Maersk is spending large sums to stay ahead of their competitors.

- Needless to say, a healthy bottom line justifies the destruction of protected natural sites, leaving them ruined and poisoned for centuries. Maersk has moved its way up the hit list of eco-activist groups worldwide and receives opposition from governments supporting our cause, including Amazonia and Tir na nOg.

- Ecotope

- Oh the irony of eco-activist globalization.

- Snopes

The PRobos and the port facilities originated from a joint venture with Proteus, which nominated Maersk as its exclusive freight forwarder. Proteus was a former enemy over years of corporate cold war, but it is now one of Maersk's biggest allies.

Maersk Matrix

While it hasn't always been the most important link in the Maersk corporate chain, Maersk Matrix has stood out lately by making some interesting headlines. After the implementation of wifi technology, Maersk Matrix started to make a name for themselves providing supply chain-related Matrix and software solutions. This niche strategy in a market where big boys like Ætherlink and NeoNET are competing proved successful. Warehouse and port facilities, vessels and automated cargo drones

AGE, Copenhagen Aug 05, 2070

Serial ID thief Jens Bundgaard today was taken into custody by Knight Errant Copenhagen. A suspected technomancer, Bundgaard is accused of orchestrating a series of ID thefts and system intrusions, posing as a customs officer inspecting shipments at the Copenhagen port. Focusing on consumer goods as well as medical supplies and even small firearms, Bundgaard sold confiscated shipments to local grey and black marketeers and gangs. Tyr Inc., Maersk's nominated security service provider, declined any comment so as not to influence the ongoing police investigations.

- This article has been tagged by someone in your network.
- Accessing tag...
- Unfortunately, the devil's advocates Schmidt, Jakob, & Lei managed to get an acquittal for Bundgaard. The usual dirty tricks amoral shysters have on stock.
- Clockwork

are implemented for Maersk's customers, associated subcontractors and even competitors. During the technomancer crisis, however, Maersk's nominated security company, Tyr Inc., had to report repeated security breaches apparently caused by insufficient matrix security, affecting many of Maersk's major customers. Maersk was unable to locate the intruders or prevent further intrusions, so their customers immediately reacted with significant fines and contractual penalties. Despite the difficulty these fines caused, Maersk surprised most observers when its CEO announced the acquisition of Tyr Inc.

- Some say Tyr Inc. was sacrificed to save Maersk's face. Others say the debacle was orchestrated by Maersk to purchase Tyr for a bag of NERPS.
- Red Anya

To help pull Maersk's reputation out of the ditch, VP Paavo Vänkä activated his old ties to former Erika—now NeoNET—executives, offering them a whopping forty percent of Maersk Matrix shares. In exchange, Maersk Matrix became the first company installing wifi capabilities in emerging markets on a large scale, opening the door into these markets for NeoNET. Unfortunately, SK's Ætherlink must have had similar plans, and the corp filed an (unsuccessful) formal complaint with the NEEC's Commission for Corporate Politics.

- One of the few incidents where Saeder-Krupp was overruled. The commission rejected the complaint, backed by the votes of corps like HKB, Proteus, Regulus, Z-IC, and ESUS. Seems a small miracle, but many Eurocorps wish to give Lofwyr a taste of his own medicine. As far as I know, NeoNET also called in lots of favors behind the scenes.
- Fianchetto

- I wonder if Maersk Medical won't get another boost from this new ally. Some sort of privileged supply with biotech from NeoNET to get better access to Maersk's Medical customers will certainly be good for both.
- Nephrine

THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

Despite the limited lifespan of its strategic alliances, Maersk developed some lasting relationships with other corporations, though mostly because of a common enemy—Saeder-Krupp. Whenever possible, the Euro corps gang up to limit or even reduce S-K's influence in Europe.

Joint R&D initiatives are another opportunity for long-term partnerships. Research Maersk shared with Proteus resulted in the mobile port facilities and PRobos, the main reason for Maersk's market share in these segments. Nevertheless, the competition with ESUS and Regulus in several emerging markets mirrors that of Maersk and Worldwide Shipping, creating job opportunities galore for people like us.

- More so than in other business conflicts, the different groups here try to prevent any casualties among execs and especially among their customers. Extraction, sabotage, property damage, thefts or blackmailing are all fine, but no wetwork.
- Kia

Maersk carries a grudge against Lofwyr ever since Saeder-Krupp assisted Proteus during the NEEC lawsuit. Later, Maersk acquired German Lufthansa, in one swing extending its operations on Saeder-Krupp's home turf and cutting into Lofwyr's sphere of influence. The last chapter in this drama was the refusal of SK's lawsuit against the Maersk/NeoNET-joint venture. Now, NeoNET is able to use Maersk's involvement in the local logistics development as a beachhead for snatching market share from S-K's Ætherlink.

- The story continues. Two days after the NEEC's decision, local police authorities closed the branch of Maersk-Sealand in Duisburg, AGS, only a stone's throw away from SK's headquarter in Essen. According to official police statements, the local branch is suspected to be involved in smuggling of the drug Tempo from Europort into the AGS.
- Red Anya

- S-K seems to be moving in on Maersk other fronts, too. Maersk was about to announce they won the contracts for large-scale infrastructure projects in Tricity and Warsaw when somehow ESUS's initially rejected counter-offer was pushed back into the ring. It's no secret S-K calls the shots in the Polish government, and the politicians seem willing to accept the considerably higher ESUS offer if it means kicking Maersk in the nuts.
- Fianchetto

- Call me paranoid, but this starts to look like a typical game between dragons. Maybe Maersk has become a mere pawn in a complex grudge match between Celedyr and Lofwyr?
- Ethernaut



INCOMING FEED.....



Another feud that needs to be mentioned is the one between Maersk, or more precisely Tyr Inc., and the Lobatchevski-Vory in Scandinavia, the AGS, UK, and the UCAS. I don't know how to describe it other than that it's a lot like a mob war. Many Tyr investigation and strike teams have been dispatched to find and attack Vory operations, often in clear violation of the laws.

- "Clear violation of the laws" means exactly what it sounds like. Either they give the finger to local security forces and start their war right in front of them, or they try to be discreet by looking for disposable assets. The Vory reacted the same way, hiring runners to teach Maersk and Tyr some lessons.
- Red Anya

TENSIONS FROM INSIDE

Like most corps, there's lots more going on behind the scenes than their carefully cultivated exterior would indicate. And as is usually the case, that means there's lots of hidden opportunities for us.

Lars Gyldendal was elected as CEO directly after his predecessor was killed during the Crash 2.0. He introduced a policy to end the feuds with some rivals like Proteus while forming strategic alliances with rivals including ESUS, Proteus,

and Regulus. His new approach worked very well until recently, so Peter Frödin, Maersk's president, has supported him despite some early hesitations. Patrick Windaus, the former Lufthansa CEO, now VP for Maersk Logistics, has a similar mind about following Gyldendal's policy. At the moment, he is laboring under the burdens tied to Vory initiatives against Maersk's logistics operations.

Paavo Vänkä, the actual VP of Maersk Matrix and one of the old guard of Maersk Execs, is not thrilled with Gyldendal's approach at the moment. Vänkä is an old friend of Frödin, and he doesn't hide his problems with the new leadership. In his role as troubleshooter for Maersk Matrix, he scored a great success when his good relations with Erika helped make the joint venture during the Technomancer crisis possible. He took credit for this success at first, but he later gathered blame for the subsequent souring of relations with S-K.

With the acquisition of Tyr, Helje Jensen entered the game. At the moment, he and Vänkä are very close, but the reasons for this new alliance are unclear. Unknown to his fellow execs, he has a skeleton in the closet that better be left hidden. Back in the early 2060s, Jensen cut a deal with some Viking gangs in Scandinavia, allowing them to smuggle some weapons and drugs while occasionally getting their hands on some select shipments in exchange for nice kickbacks from the gangs' profits.

- Windaus is trying to settle the tensions with the Vory peacefully by looking out for Vory willing and able to negotiate a compromise. To keep these deals with criminals a secret, only a handful of Maersk execs know about this. Jensen is one of them, but he's worried that his secret deals will be discovered during Windaus' search for a peaceful solution. The whole conflict between Tyr and the Vory is Jensen's attempt to prevent this peace and keep further investigations from becoming unpleasant for him.

- Icarus

- All sides in this conflict are looking for runners to investigate Vory connections and operations, find negotiation partners or targets for raids, directly attack Tyr or Vory assets, deploy fake evidence to distract other investigations, or blackmail execs to find more information.

- Red Anya

- Sadly, two of the most important Maersk execs are dinosaurs—Windaus (92) and Vänkä (77). Many Maersk strategies depend on these guys' health, but not everyone in Maersk is wishing them a long life. Plenty of younger execs are waiting for these guys to topple, hoping for some room at the top to open up before they get too old to push their way up there.

- Baka Dabora

MANADYNE

Posted by: Winterhawk

Founded in 2049, Manadyne was built around a diversified magical consultancy firm led by Carolyn Winters and supported by members of Boston's magical cognoscenti. The corporation grew on the back of these connections, first adding private education for Awakened youth to their list of services. The company has since expanded to include mainstays of magical servicing such as talismongering, metamagical patents, and magical lifestyle goods.

Manadyne Corporation became a media darling following the death of the great dragon, Dunkelzahn. The dragon left the corporation 80 million nuyen in accordance with a long-standing agreement regarding magical research. That influx of capital, and the fame it brought, sent investors scurrying to their brokers to discover what was so special about this corporation that someone would leave it a fortune.

- Rumor has it ol' Dunky left the corporation more than money. Manadyne is suspected to have amassed a large stock of dragon nail clippings and other genetic material over the years as part of whatever arrangement the great dragon had with the corporation. Several organizations have ordered raids on Manadyne facilities suspected to house this genetic cache. So far everyone has come up empty.

- Nephrine

Elite multinational corporations have to be good at many things, even sciences that differ diametrically. Manadyne embraced this principle in 2066 with the purchase of Mangadyne, a technology corporation founded by Manadyne shareholder (and brother of former Manadyne founder Carolyn Winters) Cale Winters.

Corporate Profile



MANADYNE

Corporate Status: AA, Public Corporation

CEO: Malcolm Grant

World Headquarters: Boston, UCAS

Corporate Slogan: "Experience your reality"

Major Shareholders: Cale Winters (8%), Kazuko Yoshiyuki (5%), Christopher Winters (7%), Chandra Patel (3%)

Important Subsidiaries: Mangadyne, TalisPoint, LoreNet, Living Touch Studios, Asclepius International, Reality Arts, ZenPet

Corporate Profile: Personal Magical Enhancement, Magical Consulting, Medicinal Supplies, Data Recovery and Analysis, Magical Education, Magical Security and Protection Services, Network Security, Personal and Corporate VR Management, Electronic Gaming, Data Science Education, Real Estate

The acquisition provided Manadyne with a powerful technology arm that allowed the company to mount serious competition to Magicknet. Despite its growth, Manadyne promotes itself as the corporation next door, focusing on distribution models that limit the physical distance their goods are shipped. The company remains in the spotlight by providing specialized services to high-profile organizations such as the DIMR, the Illuminati, and the Dr. Faustus Society.

- Those specialized services include database support, query scripting, matrix security, VR hosting, and, believe it or not, real estate management.

- Mr. Bonds

Manadyne is led by CEO Malcolm Grant, a former Harvard and MIT&T professor, who succeeded founder Dr. Carolyn Winters. Dr. Winters vanished in March 2069, triggering a four-day stock tumble that nearly resulted in a hostile takeover by the Wuxing Corporation. She was declared legally deceased in 2071, and her stock options were transferred to her brother Cale in accordance with her will.

- Grant's awfully smart, but a little bookish. He sometimes gets caught up in the theoretical, and his board needs to force him to think about how the stuff he wants to do will actually make money.

- Cosmo

- Wuxing's takeover bid was less a matter of absorbing the competition than it was protecting its own interests. The corp has a large stake in the research that Mangadyne is doing into real-time, online simsense. Mangadyne is promoting the technology as next-level gaming, but my contacts in Wuxing told me they think there are some solid military applications to the technology.

- Lei Kung

- How would real-time simsense be any different than jacking in?

- Baka Dabora

- If it were possible, real-time simsense would revolutionize modern entertainment, pushing reality-based trids to a new level. Users would be able to jack into a live actor, and even provide instructions to tailor the experience.

- Turbo Bunny

- This stuff's interesting enough that Wuxing isn't the only one poking around it—Horizon has made a few overtures about acquiring Manadyne. Insiders say it's about adding magical services and entertainment components to their operation, but I can't see how Horizon would allow Wuxing to bring this technology to market before they can.

- Cosmo

Pre-Crash 2.0, Mangadyne was a market changer, teaming up with smaller corporations X-Venture and Eastern Electronics to snap Renraku's stranglehold on the Asian data market. But they were hurt badly in the Crash, and two years after the e-cataclysm, CEO Cale Winters went to the Manadyne board of directors hat in hand. The board agreed to absorb the failing company under the condition that he divest a portion of his twenty percent controlling interest in Manadyne. Winters sold off five percent to Kazuko Yoshiyuki and split the remaining percentage with his nephew, a retired CIA officer. The arrangement allowed Mangadyne to survive and function with a significant degree of autonomy, though inevitably there are times when the parent company makes sure its preferences are carried out.

On the surface, Manadyne remains a diversified magical services corporation integrated into the circles of the world's top academics. Within the corporation there is a growing belief that magic is just the beginning of what it is capable of. With Mangadyne's connections in the scientific community, Manadyne aims to brand itself as a leader in reality engineering. Whether it is working on the virtual realities of ARE and the Matrix, or the countless unexplored realms of the metaplanes, Manadyne believes that it can help shape how future generations interface with reality.

MAGICAL OPERATIONS

The backbone of Manadyne is its work in the magical sector. Over the years it has diversified that work into five key units, three of which operate primarily under the Manadyne label. The remaining two services are provided through subsidiaries operating within the parameters of the parent corporation.

Talismongering

Presently, Manadyne is ranked eighth among the multinationals as a magical goods wholesaler. Other suppliers sell more,

but the quality of goods that Manadyne provides allows it to hold its place in the rankings. When possible, Manadyne relies on local manufacturing to create the magical material it provides. This distribution model limits the distance their materials travel to sale, and Manadyne has turned this limitation into a selling point by talking incessantly about its "local investment." Often, this helps it squeeze some concessions out of local governments in exchange for basing operations in a certain place. In the run-up to getting these concessions, Manadyne often hires shadowrunners to collect information on targeted government officials.

- The talismongering business provides leverage for the corporation in its side business of buying government officials. It's a well-established routine for it now—Manadyne can turn to a government official and offer five hundred new jobs in exchange for a vote. Once it has those votes, Manadyne uses them to gain hold of what the corp is really after: land.

- Sunshine

Megawatch Search:

Top Lore Stores

- Ipissimus (Mitsuhamma)
- Lore Stores Inc. (Shiawese)
- MageWerks (Aztechnology)
- Yin and Yang (Wuxing)
- Pentacles (Ares)
- Pentagrams (Manadyne)

Security Consulting

Manadyne provides astral security to a handful of third-world governments. The work is mostly handled by spirits summoned by off-site personnel. When a larger security presence is needed, Manadyne subcontracts the work to local shadowrunners and mercenaries vetted through reliable fixers. Because it is government work, everything is done on the books, meaning that in order to get paid, workers need to have an established SIN.

- Sometimes Manadyne will establish fake SINs as part of the advance payment on a mission. If it does that for you, take a careful look at what the corp provides—it's not above constructing SINs that fall apart under careful scrutiny, leaving you hanging high and dry once they do.

- Fianchetto

Paracritter Breeding and Training

Manadyne holds controlling interest in more than a dozen paracritter breeding businesses, and it has been battling Mitsuhamma for leadership in this growing field. All of their breeders serve as suppliers to the company's ZenPet subsidiary. ZenPet is a high-end chain store specializing in the sale of Awakened animals. The company advertises anwuma bavole, devil rats, storm crows, and even hell hounds as pets that can be trained to meet your needs. For an additional fee, the company hires out trainers who can transform your pet into a home defender. This is especially popular with young, rich corporate types who see having a hell hound as a status symbol.

- I've heard about runners being contacted to clean up the scene of a "pet" attack. Remember, these Awakened breeds have been in existence for a very short time. We don't know enough about them to be certain that they can be domesticated. When something goes wrong, it's much cheaper for the company to sweep it under the rug than to deal with the lawsuit and bad publicity.

- Dr. Spin

Thaumaturgical Research

Dunkehlzahn's 80-million-nuyen bequest helped expand this area of the corporation. Manadyne's research arm covers everything from proprietary formulae to advanced astral studies, and it remains the corporation's primary moneymaker. Its close relationship with the DIMR has opened a lot of doors, providing access to rare magical sites as well as top university thaumaturgists. The research division operates out of Boston, UCAS, under the leadership of shareholder Chandra Patel. The corporation has satellite research offices all over the world, but, after Boston, most new patents come out of the Kuala Lumpur site.

- The company does a lot of formula hacking as well. It hires shadowrunners to steal proprietary work from private magicians who aren't willing to sell. There's plenty of that kind of work in Boston.
- Cosmo

Medical Services

Asclepius International is Manadyne's medical services division. Under the Asclepius brand, Manadyne offers what it calls "mana-based medical solutions." In essence, the company contracts magic users to provide magical healing to its wealthiest customers. For the average customer, Manadyne offers a wide selection of supplements supposedly infused with Awakened flora, though not all of the drugs it sells fall into the category of BADs. In fact, most drugs sold through Asclepius are placebos. The handful of drugs that are effective generate enough revenue to keep Manadyne's profits soaring. This division is also tasked with the recovery of rare Awakened flora and discovering new medical applications for them. The majority of Awakened flora grow in places like Amazonia and West Africa, where the governments often aren't interested in dealing with multinational corporations. This creates a lot of work for recovery specialists who can be hired off the books to go into these nations and retrieve valuable flora.

NETWORK SERVICES

Post-Crash 2.0, Mangadyne has served as the Matrix face for Manadyne. The company continues to provide hosting and landscaping services throughout Asia and Eastern Europe. Recently it launched a media push to break into African and American markets. The services it provides are not new, but the company's image appeals to a new generation of consumers.

Data Management

This branch designs advanced data storage algorithms meant to improve how data is stored in a nexus. The corporation sells proprietary agent programs keyed to encode and decode data with a unique algorithm that only you, and your employer, know. Manadyne customers tend to be small businesses that can't afford

PROJECT MONAD

As long as corporations have been around, they've understood the value of moving into unexplored, uncharted territory. Back at the end of the twentieth century, there was precious little frontier left for corporations to exploit, but the current century changed all that. Manadyne has made a lot of hay exploring new frontiers in magic, and now Mangadyne is looking to find a way into another type of new territory—the resonance realms. As was the case when empires rubbed their greedy hands together at the prospect of getting their hands on the wealth of a land an ocean away, the primary obstacle to extracting wealth from the resonance realms is getting people there. Technomancers can get there easily, of course, but they generally haven't been willing to share the secrets of the realms with those who would like to exploit them.

That's where Project Monad comes in. Its goal is simple: let non-TMs access the resonance realms. MGM are excited by this project, and they're not the only ones—plenty of megacorps have their eyes on it, and a few have waved some big sums of nuyen to get a piece of the action. The main hitch, of course, is the interface—figuring out just how TMs work, and then bringing that over to non-TMs. If that can be developed, Mangadyne believes that resonance realms tourism would be a billion-nuyen business, and any further uses they could discover for the realms would just sweeten the deal.

- For those of you wondering, yes, this means Mangadyne is fully in the willing-to-experiment-on-TMs camp. They're always on the lookout for subjects, so be careful.
- Netcat

the more sophisticated systems offered by Mitsuhamu or Renraku. The division's research centers throughout Central Asia are often targeted by shadowrunners, since the data management division creates the encryption software for the company's popular sculpted hosting suites.

- Manadyne has been financing data runs on the HR databases of Evo, Renraku, Mitsuhamu, and NeoNET. Popular opinion is they're looking for employees with a specific skillset in order to improve their data-encryption speeds. Manadyne encryption algorithms are average at best—their encryption time is much slower than any other major provider.
- FastJack

AR/VR Landscaping and Management

The popularity of Mangadyne's sculpted hosting suites has provided another significant vein of profits for the parent company, one that, if Mangadyne had hit on it earlier, might have helped them avoid the Manadyne buyout. The division

Urgent Message...



RIISING POWERS



thrives on the forward thinking of their chief technology officer, Kazuko Yoshiyuki, and under her leadership, Mangadyne products have focused on the user experience. As a rule, Mangadyne's suites are simple, aesthetically pleasing interfaces that a layman can customize in order to have their unique environment surrounding them at all times.

- Yoshiyuki was the target of multiple extraction attempts before she bought a five percent stake in the company. Some say that rivals within her own corp initiated the extraction attempts because they wanted her gone, either to clear the way for themselves or just to get her to leave them alone. My theory is that Yoshiyuki was trying to extract herself, either to gain leverage or to move to a better situation at a larger corporation.

- Snopes

Network Security

Mangadyne was never big on producing network security protocols. In fact, the division only sprang into being after Manadyne bought it, because some of Manadyne's larger clients felt that they wanted to deal with a company that understood them. Once the corporation began to produce IC, it discovered that there was a niche market it could exploit. Manadyne understands that there is a market for simplicity, especially in the magic industry where technology is often seen as antithetical to the pursuits of magic users. The company takes advantage of these presumptions by offering simplified commercial tools for personal defense. Its strategy has been to convince individual users to purchase security software geared toward defending mesh networks, then gently lead these customers to purchase the more expensive business IC suites that Mangadyne markets as "Intrusion Killers."

- Manadyne IC follows Greek creature nomenclature. Early warning IC is called Harpy 18, and the deadliest defensive software they offer is Cerebrus 7, which is loaded with an advanced version of the blackout program.

- Glitch

OTHER SERVICES

Manadyne holds on to the services that carried them to success. Though some have been compartmentalized into subsidiaries, the board of directors closely watches all of these services.

Educational Services

Manadyne started out as an educational provider in the Boston sprawl. The company targeted children with magical aptitude and helped hone those abilities into practical magic. Since that time the company has taken this hometown brand of magical tutoring and turned it into an international franchise. Manadyne Learning Centers are located all over the world in cities where Manadyne has a significant presence. The centers function like charter schools—children generally attend from kindergarten through high school, and 71 percent of Manadyne Learning Center graduates go on to higher education.

- The growth of these learning centers is a great example of public-private logrolling. Manadyne was pivotal in the Chicago bug war, and

after Mandyne's mages helped turn the tide, government officials were in a particularly giving mood. The corporation received financial incentives to buy up Universal Brotherhood sites and turn them into Manadyne Learning Centers.

- Kay St. Irregular

Electronic Gaming

Online role-playing gaming is a staple of youth culture. Mangadyne holds the rights to eleven gaming franchises ranging from sports simulators to shoot-'em-uporefests. The gaming market is extremely volatile—if a game doesn't get good feedback on release it's not likely to ever sell much. This means that game-market competitors often resort to corporate espionage, blackmail, and even bribery to ensure their product gets the top buzz.

- Evo's Kill squad has been the market leader since '69 (a remarkably long reign for a game), but Manadyne's Maelstrom had a strong showing at the E3 conference. The game uses the same AI engine as Kill squad, but the storyline follows a team of magic users from different disciplines as they navigate the astral realms.

- Sunshine

MONOBE INTERNATIONAL

Posted by: Kia

Monobe remains the fourth largest of the Japanacorp, which puts them in a consistently challenging situation. They're well enough known that they've got fantastic name recognition—with the positive and negative aspects of that situation—but they remain unable to garner the benefits of AAA status. As a consequence, they need to be careful about avoiding situations that would require those benefits. Extraterritoriality is invaluable, but the inability to have a vote in Corporate Court matters is a severe limitation for an organization the size of Monobe.

Corporate Profile

MONOBE INTERNATIONAL

Corporate Status: AA, Public Corporation

World Headquarters: Matsuyama, Japan

President & CEO: Toshio Mitsukuri

Core Businesses: Biotechnology, Retail, Customer Service

Major Divisions: Cryptec, Herstal, Mapen Technologies, Monobe Biotech, Monobe Engineering, Monobe World Enterprises, Vantage Partners

Since the fifties, Monobe International has been an AA on the cusp of gaining a seat on the Corporate Court. Every opportunity they have had to gain such a seat, however, has met with defeat. They've made backroom deals with several of the Big 10 to gain AAA status, but in each instance, when it came to a vote, other factors prevented them from improving their status. This is a matter of no small frustration for Monobe, as AAA-status would



have a substantial effect on their way of doing business. At the same time, as an AA, their business model is helped in that many of the other AAAs are more willing to work with them because they do not view them as equal competitors.

- The collaborations aren't always in Monobe's best interest. In a number of instances, their balance sheets have shown a loss directly due to collaboration with one of the AAAs. I suspect that this is a consequence of backroom deals tied to their continued efforts to garner AAA status.
- Mr. Bonds

Politically, Monobe is affiliated with the right-wing Imperialists in Japan. Though this means that they are often politically at odds with some of the other Japanese megas, this does not prevent them from joining them in business ventures. In many cases, it appears that they have used the votes of the legislators they control as bargaining chips in corporate negotiations.

In many ways, their inability to garner AAA status has been instrumental in molding Monobe. The opportunities they have to collaborate with the big boys have allowed the corp to continue to grow horizontally, diversifying into a broader number of markets and fields. Though this leaves them exposed in many ways, their diversification also puts them in a better position to absorb any potential losses.

Their most recent failure to garner a Corporate Court seat in 2065, when Horizon nabbed it, left Monobe disenfranchised in their dealings with the AAA Japanacorp. Though they obviously continue to work together, their loyalty to the others has been diminished. Further, Monobe International still holds a strong grudge towards Horizon. Since the Corporate Court decision, Monobe has avoided using Horizon associated marketing tools and has waged a largely one-sided shadow war against the AAA. Another apparently retaliatory move has Monobe carrying expanded Aztechnology product lines in many of their shops, including those located in the PCC.

- Monobe Mr. Johnsons have been targeting extraction jobs against Horizon marketing experts. In a few cases, though, I've seen repeat jobs to nab the same person from Horizon. It seems Monobe's deprogramming efforts just aren't good enough.
- Turbo Bunny
- Between their HIP system, their constantly changing work groups, and their meritocracy system, Horizon extractions are just a bad idea. Once you're in, everyone's up in arms when they fail to recognize you. Once you've got a target, they don't want to leave. I don't see Monobe keeping these attempts up for long.
- Sunshine

AREAS OF INFLUENCE

As with any of the successful megas, diversification is a crucial element to Monobe's ongoing success, but they've gone a step further than most. Monobe has worked hard to form strategic alignments with almost all of the AAAs and many of the AAs. This is because they have more assets in the retail and customer service fields than any organization on the globe. Forty percent of all retail outlets with an annual net income of over 1,000,000¥ are subsidiaries of Monobe International.

MONOBE AND THE PPG

For well over a decade, Monobe International was defined by their competition with the members of the Pacific Prosperity Group. As the largest Japanacorp AA, there was a tremendous enmity between the PPG members and Monobe and all of its subsidiaries. Their AA status in conjunction with their global presence allowed PPG members to easily see Monobe as their primary competitive target—best name recognition of the AAs, yet a more vulnerable target than the Japanese AAAs.

With the PPG's fall from grace after Crash 2.0, the direct conflict with Monobe International diminished substantially. While the PPG continues to conduct shadow operations against Monobe, and vice versa, the frequency and intensity of these actions are no longer exceptional. Though they remain competitors in many fields, there have also been instances of collaboration. In a number of cases, Monobe has even begun carrying products produced by PPG member corporations in their retail outlets.

Monobe, of course, still does some of their own manufacturing and research—Monobe Biotechnical is a particular testament to this fact—but new products and patents are only a minor portion of the parent mega's income streams. Instead, Monobe has made their success dependent upon delivering the goods of other megas to the consumer and to other corporations. They support their branding and the branding of their subsidiaries through their physical and virtual retail outlets, which, indirectly, provide name recognition for the megacorporation whose products they sell. This also enables Monobe to benefit from the advertising efforts of other megas and to sell advertising within their retail outlets to provide additional name recognition to other organizations.

Designer Genes

Though their headquarters are in Jakarta, Designer Genes has retail outlets in almost every major sprawl globally. Their flashy shops create an environment for metahumankind to dabble in the ways of God through genetic engineering and personal biological enhancement. Their shops have found a niche in mainstream culture, which means they generally won't perform bleeding-edge modifications. Full body immersion tanks are available in all of their shops to handle enhancements in shop, with concierge service to assist in the selection and tailoring of genetic modifications. While their most consistent revenue streams come from personal genetech augmentations, they also do a steady walk-in business retailing both genetic art and specialty pets.

A great deal of their sales—both enhancements and living organisms—come from projects that were developed in house. The organization has a solid internal staff of genetic engineers and artists working in a vast array of different template organisms. Much of their preliminary development is, reportedly, done in VR using bleeding-edge systems developed in collaboration with Renraku.

Urgent Message...

Final growth experiments are conducted in the corp's testing and growth facilities in their headquarters, with conceptually similar, but smaller-scale, rapid growth tanks capable of building organisms from computational templates in many of their retail outlets.

In addition to their own creations, Designer Genes licenses a number of different enhancement products and organisms from other megacorporations and freelance artists. In most cases, a patient's DNA sequence is quickly sequenced at the retail location, and then sent over the Matrix to the designer for final tweaks before the transfection is performed.

- It's worth pointing out that a client's DNA sequence doesn't get deleted. Designer Genes has compiled a sizable database of sequence information on its clients. This certainly has its uses ... and its security holes.
- The Smiling Bandit

This typically requires a two- to three-day turnaround, with a physician at the retail outlet approving all final changes before the patient is augmented. Patients, of course, are required to sign indemnity waivers for all transfections performed, though the incidence of rejection in most of the treatments that Designer Genes is willing to perform are quite low.

- Those indemnity waivers mean that any health care contract you have won't cover their screw-ups. If you've spent money

on DocWagon, you're better off going through them for minor genetic enhancements.

- Butch

Recently, their retail outlets have added DesignAPet kiosks in their playland section. These dedicated terminals run a program where children can design the pet of their dreams—from neotenuous puppies that never mature to cats with wings to miniature shaggy elephants. A broad selection of the most popular designs has already been engineered and can be produced in a few days from the on-site cloning facilities. For children with parents who have more money than sense, particularly innovative designs can be sent to engineers for custom creation at exorbitant rates.

Weapons World

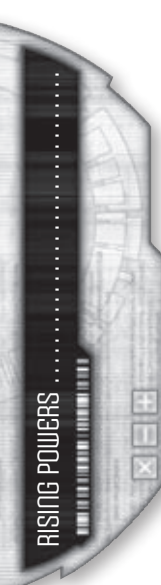
Monobe's Weapons World division is the largest distributor and retailer of consumer firearms on the planet. Though they carry—and offer the best pricing on—products from Monobe's Fabrique Nationale division, they also carry products from all of the major manufacturers and most minor manufacturers. What they don't normally stock, they can special order, assuming it's legally available in the jurisdiction of their retail outlet.

- Which is why many of their outlets are located within corporate extraterritorial sites. After all, it's not their fault if a buyer took the weapon into a zone where it wasn't legal. The sale was done above



INCOMING FEED.....





board and, in many places, the transaction information and serial numbers were immediately registered to the user's SIN. At that point, it's the responsibility of the local law enforcement organization to decide if they want to act on the information. That usually means the purchaser has plenty of time to use the newly acquired weapon.

- DangerSensei

Their target consumer is not the high end weapons specialist. They deal primarily in weapons that are sold to either give the illusion of security or that make a fashion statement. They can get higher end materials, but it requires a delivery. Instead, they have a tremendous stock of light pistols and hunting rifles—all in this season's most popular colors—along with the appropriate ammunition. On the plus side, all of these weapons will be the real deal, Monobe won't stick their neck out by carrying knock offs. These firearms will be every bit as reliable as the original manufacturer intended. But, if you're in a hurry to get something a bit more specialized, don't waste your time here.

- Something like eighty-five percent of the firearms used in criminal acts by known gang members can be traced to Weapons World stores. A lot of these are ones that "fell off the truck," but sometimes their delivery trucks are targeted by gangers looking for small arms.
- Sticks

In addition to their broad range of armaments, Weapons World also deals in accessories and a laughably meaningless firearms certification program. The accessories are on par with their armaments. If you need a laser sight, a custom grip, or a professional cleaning for your stock weapons, Weapons World will do an adequate job at a reasonable price. If your smartgun system is acting up, or if you're running into some compatibility issues with your feed mechanism and the specialty ammo you've been using, then they won't be able to help you. If your life regularly depends upon your weapons, then you don't want to depend upon the workmanship of the pimply kid in the green vest behind the counter.

Société Suisse Technique

This division handles the majority of Monobe's industrial and manufacturing work. Their plants are always located on extraterritorial locations so that they can completely ignore any local environmental legislation and any employee safety concerns—assuming the nation they locate in has those in the first place. Société Suisse Technique's manufacturing plants are universally focused on completing manufacturing that is just barely within acceptable specifications at the lowest possible cost. Most of these plants are located in areas where their employees are simply too desperate to find another job.

- The rivers, streams, and sewage systems around their facilities are often devastated. There have been instances where individuals chose to take rather direct action to clean up the source of these problems.
- Ecotope

SST generally accomplishes this by using the least expensive and most dangerous methods possible. Employees are provided subsistence housing and food on corporate territory. Medical care is never provided, and employees who are unable to maintain their quotas due to

injury are fired and either dumped outside the extraterritorial facility or into the raw materials vat. Nearly all labor used in SST manufacturing facilities is unskilled. Training, environmental filtration, and safety concerns add too much to overhead. Instead, engineers set up "fool-proof" systems with a minimal amount of automation. Employees generally work a manual assembly line at their own risk.

- The lack of automation can create a problem if you're trying to hack one of their sites. Sure, there's basic wireless security, but an absurd amount of their systems rely on manual labor. It's essentially impossible to hack one of these systems so that they'll produce a different product or a flawed product. There's nothing there to hack.
- Pistons

While some of Monobe International's other subsidiaries contract exclusively with SST, Fabrique Nationale in particular, quite a few of them instead choose to use other subsidiaries or external corporations for their manufacturing. The manual labor and lack of quality control means that their products have too much variation for high-quality and highly processed goods. This also means that, even with their substandard quality control, a lot of their end products end up getting reused as raw materials. It adds to their expenses, but they save so much by using cheap labor instead of automation that it works out in their favor.

Chips 'n' Tech

This ubiquitous electronics dealer is generally located in the same shopping centers as Monobe's Weapons World stores. In many cases, the stores are adjacent or across the street from each other. They target the same market—the undereducated consumer with more money than sense. Sometimes, the two chains will offer cross promotions, like a Miracle Shooter package from Weapons World can be pre-installed on a commlink available at Chips 'n' Tech if both are purchased at the same time.

Almost all of the products available from Chips 'n' Tech are manufactured by corporations outside of Monobe. Though they often have exclusive distribution deals, in most cases the products can be purchased from any number of retailers. Chips 'n' Tech has gained their success by providing the hands-on sales experience that so many consumers continue to crave, in spite of the convenience that AR or VR Matrix sales offer.

- Keep in mind that these places deal in consumer-grade goods. You're not going to pick up a 'link that's powerful enough to blow through Lone Star's jammers or firewall software that's capable of stopping their in-store spam advertising. Their gear is convenient to pick up and nearly disposable, and that's the nicest thing you can say about it.
- Sounder

Offering this experience means overhead—pushy sales clerks, retail buildings, and warehousing space aren't cheap. So, to offset this, their prices are typically thirty to forty percent higher than the same products online. Instead of low prices, Chips 'n' Tech offers consumers the satisfaction of instant gratification and a chance to play with a display product in the store before they purchase it. In spite of the price increase, the lack of knowledge of most of the sales staff, and the obnoxious atmosphere, the retailer has been extremely successful. Last year, the division's net global profits were in excess of four billion nuyen.

So, if you need a trid, a low-end 'link, or a soy processor in a hurry, this is the place to hit. If you've got time to think through the purchase, you're probably better off going to a Matrix vendor or hitting a mom-and-pop joint that needs the sale and will cut you a better deal. Chips 'n' Tech has an established reputation and every location cycles through hundreds of customers a day. If you're not spending money there, then they don't have the time or the inclination to help you.

Monobe Medical

A minor division until Yamatetsu pulled out of Japan and changed their name, Monobe Medical has rapidly grown to be the major emergency medical service in Japan. In large part, this was because the Japanacops were anxious to move their contracts from CrashCart to anything held by a Japanese mega. This meant that over the span of about six months, the division went from a few hundred employees to having tens of thousands of employees. There were inevitable growing pains.

- These growing pains continue. They're still making extractions, and they've increasingly been targeted for them. Monobe's internal security is not yet up to snuff. Extracting an employee, or even a patient, from Monobe Medical is easier than you'd expect.
- Kia

Because they were selling themselves as the Japanese solution, Monobe Medical had to be very careful to only hire Japanese citizens. To do this, they had to perform a lot of carefully targeted extractions of skilled medical personnel, in many cases from CrashCart. During the course of their growth, there were a number of incidents with high-profile patients. Fortunately, none of the incidents that became public involved fatalities.

Over the past five years, they've overcome most of those difficulties and continued to expand their coverage throughout Asia and into Russia. An attempt to expand into Africa, however, has been retracted. The contracts that they obtained in a number of African sprawls have been sold off to the UK-based Careline.

- The shadow war that made this sale possible resulted in thousands of deaths, including employees of both corporations and of contract holders from both corps. For several months, both organizations were willing to pull out all the stops to take control. Then, Monobe Medical abruptly backed off. I still haven't heard why.
- Black Mamba

As is the case with most of Monobe's divisions, customer service is the focus of Monobe Medical. They want their clients to firmly believe that they're getting the best service possible, regardless of the actual quality of care. This means that they publish a lot of pretty numbers about their response time, patient survival rates, and quality maintenance logs. Most of this is bullshit. They do a decent job, but there aren't any real numbers to indicate that they're more capable than any of the other emergency medical services.

Other Subsidiaries

Monobe International maintains divisions to run their interests in most major countries. In general, these are simply local management organizations to oversee that their other divisions within those nations continue to function successfully. For the

most part, these branches are focused on successful distribution schemes and in establishing relationships with local delivery and realty organizations.

However, Monobe does maintain a few subsidiaries that focus on product research and development. UCAS Compustat, Monobe Biotechnical, and Mapen Technologies are among their best known research divisions. These companies have a history of successful innovation and are capable of bringing decent quality products to market. However, Monobe's overarching corporate vision is not as well suited to R&D as it is to customer service.

Though Monobe is certainly capable of recruiting quality workers, they're often not able to maintain an ideal environment to hold onto them. This means that many of their best young scientists and engineers willingly agree to extractions to enter employment at other companies. In order for Monobe to become a successful AAA megacorporation, they need to stop this talent leakage.

PROTEUS

Posted by: Ecotope

Corporate Profile

PROTEUS

Corporate Status: AA, Private Corporation

CEO: Kevin Goldammer

World Headquarters: Helgoland, Allied German States

Corporate Slogan: "Reach out to a Better Tomorrow"

Major Shareholder: Prometheus Foundation (Private Foundation of the Goldammer family)

Important Subsidiaries: all Arkoblocks, Airbus Aerials, Zeppelinwerke, Prodigy

Corporate Profile: Heavy Industry and Habitat Construction, Smart Materials, Military Technology, Naval architecture (submarines, ships, drones), Aircraft Construction (planes, flightships, zeppelins, drones), Underwater Mining, Space Technology and Exploration, Aqua Technology and Underwater Mining, Green and Blue Biotechnology, Environmental Technology, (Trans-) Genetics (biogenesis, reprognetics, procreation, environmental adaptation), Fringe Sciences

Proteus is an AA corporate oddity mostly infamous for its transgenetic "visions" and ultra-secure offshore arcology-habitats (known as arkoblocks) all over the globe.

The history and nature of the German multinational has always been some kind of a mystery for both the mundane and the corporate world, inspiring conspiracy boards because of its clandestine business operations and mysterious growth.

A HISTORY OF MYSTERY

Proteus was founded in the late '40s (although rumours claim that they had been active before then under a different name), and one of the corporation's first actions besides the

installation of corporate headquarters on Helgoland (a small archipelago in the North Sea) was the takeover of the remnants of Project Arkoblock.

In the subsequent years Proteus started to build more arkoblocks, mostly in the North Sea and off the coast of Japan. Where the money to bankroll them came from is anyone's guess.

- Although they were as heavily immersed in biotech and genetic research back then as they are now, they never came up with any biotech product or patents on their own until the '60s, indicating that they sold their inventions and patents to other companies (Shiawase and former Yamatetsu would be my best guess) to fund their arkoblocks—not unlike what Tan Tien does today. Still, there's always been speculation that other corporations backed Proteus or that they got special funding from unknown sources.

- Mr. Bonds

After continuous diversification and qualifying for extraterrestriality in the beginning of the '50s, Proteus grew silently without anyone taking much notice (they were not much of a competitor for other corps), constructing more arkoblocks and research habitats all over the world in remote areas (usually off-shore or underwater). The most public event was in 2056 when Proteus became the target of an attempted hostile takeover by AG Chemie that ended with armed hostilities on Helgoland and the death of large quantities of AGC personnel and an adult eastern dragon (assumed to be a financial sponsor of Proteus).

Aetherpedia Search: Project Arkoblock

The first arkoblocks (today owned by the German Proteus AG) were originally planned and partially constructed by a multinational consortium (mainly European and Japanese) that involved governmental funding as well. Started in the '30s, a time when the planet was ravaged by ecological, economical and political disasters (including the Black Tide of 2011, several nuclear meltdowns in Europe, Crash 1.0, and the balkanization of Asia), the prototype arkoblocks in the North Sea were designed as shelters in hostile environments that could recoup parts of the anthroposphere lost to environmental pollution or shape new ones due to geographical limitations of city growth (explaining the interest of Japanese investors during the time). Due to the enormous costs the construction devoured along with considerable mistrust and internal strife between the consortium members, the Project Arkoblock became bankrupt in the late '40s, shortly before the remnants (including the first unfinished arkoblock) were bought up by Proteus.

- Actually it was the (now deceased) great dragon Nachtmeister who intervened in the conflict, frying both the dragon and the AG Chemie forces to put an end to the takeover. Nachtmeister supposedly intervened for "financial reasons."

- Frosty

After the incident, Proteus became even more paranoid regarding the security of its networks and arkoblocks. The only time it granted foreigners (meaning non-Proteus personnel) access to the arkoblocks was in 2058, when Proteus submitted a claim to the Draco Foundation for the construction of an autonomous underwater habitat and gave the Draco reps a tour through the North Sea arkoblocks. After the Draco Foundation decided that none of the arkoblocks met the specifications laid down in Dunkelzahn's Will, they resumed their strict policy of seclusion.

- It has been speculated that Proteus already possessed a deep-sea habitat that fulfilled and probably even exceeded the Draco Foundation's specs at the time (located near the Mariana Trench as far as I have heard). Why they were not willing to reveal it but staged this public evaluation eludes me. Probably showing off what they were capable of.

- Sounder

- People probably would have been cautious if they hadn't applied. They are a big shot in the aquatech biz after all. On the other hand it could have been just a sleight of hand to keep people looking elsewhere while they were building their space station Treffpunkt: Raumhafen.

- Orbital DK

This didn't change until 2063, when all executive officers (who also controlled the majority of shares) were assassinated in a plot apparently masterminded by several AG Chemie executives (including former AGC CEO Endermann) to absorb the company (AGC's second try to gobble up this asset).

After some time of legal reconsiderations by the Corporate Court and the Corporate Policy Commission of the NEEC, ownership of Proteus was finally handed to the Prometheus Foundation, a private bioethical research foundation of German biotech entrepreneur Frederick Goldammer, which originally provided substantial funding to found Proteus as a start-up in 2049 and which still held a significant portion of the shares.

- At least that's the official story. The AG Chemie Scandal made it big time in the news headlines for weeks. Since killing whole executive boards is a major no-go and violation of megacorporate law, the Corporate Court ordered Ares to arrest the culprits in AGC's former Frankfurt headquarters, sending the chemical corporation's stock exchange price into freefall, from which the AGC hasn't recovered (the AGC's extraterritorial status is up in the next twelve months for re-evaluation by the CC). Still, many think that the AGC just took the bullet for something greater that was hushed up with approval of the Big Ten, driving conspiracy theorists even crazier.

- Kia

- Not without reason. Just a few weeks before the management was killed, Ares mauled the Proteus Rømmø arkoblock with a Thorshammer (supposedly as legitimate retaliation in an ongoing skirmish between the two corps). Then, the shares of all executive members were not bequeathed to the heirs but instead reverted back to Proteus itself due to a special testament clause. On top of that, all activities in the last thirty years of the now-governing Prometheus Foundation—which many people thought had fallen



INCOMING FEED.....



into bankruptcy in the late '40s—showed up mysteriously on the Matrix. There was plenty of funny business going on, but for some reason the Corporate Court chose to protect, save or spare Proteus.

- Axis Mundi

Kevin Goldammer, grandson of the foundation's founder (and current director), became CEO of a multinational corporate empire at the age of 60. Upholding his grandfather's transhumanist vision to "lead metahumanity to new shores" he reorganized and opened the company to make it more transparent and less monolithic and eerie.

- I would rather call him utopian than transhuman. The Goldammer family and their Foundation facilitated communal research allowing scientists and free-thinkers from around the globe to pursue research (not only scientific but social as well) without having to worry about scientific publications or funding. Kevin Goldammer, at least, seems to be following in his family's altruistic and philanthropic steps and has done some ethical house-cleaning since he became CEO, kicking out several managers and researchers that Proteus could afford to lose.

- Plan 9

- Still, one of the first things he did was to use Proteus's cutting-edge genetic augmentations to rejuvenate and improve himself.

Let's hope he avoids the same hubris that corrupted the founders of the company.

- Arete

Since then Proteus has started to market its own products and services and make itself more present to the public through commercials and advertisements. Still, their corporate practice and code of conduct is unorthodox at best.

Arkoblock Economy

Proteus possesses few companies, offices, subsidiaries, or assets beyond their nearly twenty known arkoblocks. The arkoblocks themselves are rated as at least A companies due to the size (the bigger ones have a base of 500 square meters and a height of 1,700 meters, at least a third of it underwater) and are self-sustaining microenvironments with living quarters, large research labs, office accommodations, and other facilities, including those in which Proteus' commodities are manufactured. While the arkoblocks involved in manufacturing have certain specialties, functioning either as impressive naval construction yards, dry docks, working plants, or engineering sites, others serve as space-launch platforms (like those near Devil's Island), mining platforms, refineries, oil rigs, or as huge R&D think tanks, inventing the next generation of mass biotech and genetic applications for the industrial sector and consumer augmentations market.

INCOMING FEED.....



- They even have a site off the coast of Fiji that that was retrofitted to serve as a resort for the overwrought corporate citizen, providing all the amenities you can imagine.
- Sunshine

- Their remote location (outside urban centres and corporate enclaves) makes them extremely resistant against industrial espionage. And they are as paranoid as you can get when it comes to network safety. Each arkoblock has a local wireless network that is limited to the vicinity of the arkoblock. To hack the network you have to infiltrate the arkoblock or come very close to its security perimeter (consisting of minefields and other cutting-edge underwater safety installations of 2nd and 3rd generation hydroweapons originally invented by Ares). A safer option is to hack the Proteus Net, a sat network stolen from Fuchi during the Corp War which survived Crash 2.0 and which exchanges information between the arkoblocks and the Matrix but which is riddled with security agents and safeguards.
- Clitch

Besides their function as gigantic multi-factories, each arkoblock produces its own energy (by tidal or geothermal energy production), food (by blue biotechnology and aqua farming), and has an enclosed waste management system.

There is usually a lot of traffic going between the arkoblocks or to the mainland to deliver equipment or move goods and products to their destinations. Since they began to sell their own products these shipments and the transportation logistics are exclusively handled by Mærsk by a strategic agreement between both corps signed in the wake of Crash 2.0.

- Which is one of these weird things nobody gets. Before the Crash, Proteus was locked in a Cold War with Mærsk because of quarrels that led to the shutdown of their mutual mobile arkoblock joint venture (it is said that Proteus used the project as a smokescreen for corporate espionage against their partner). Since Goldammer became CEO, Proteus and Mærsk suddenly became buddy-buddy again with grudges disappearing like they had never existed.
- Axis Mundi

- When it comes down to biz you just sometimes cannot afford to be picky. And it is a huge contract even by Mærsk standards.
- Cosmo

Oceanic Divisions

Organizationally, each arkoblock (and subsidiaries as well) belongs to one of the five divisions (North Sea, Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Ocean, and Space) named after oceans (with Space being observed as a kind of "ocean" itself) with regional managers directly answering to the management board located on Helgoland. Still the arkoblocks are just the tip of the iceberg since the corporation owns a number of remote habitats and underwater labs in which the fringe and often borderline (ethically speaking) genetic research (aquatic biodrones, phenotypic gene treatments, you name it) is done.

uploaded Uniformat text file :: posted by Ecotope ::

KNOWN PROTEUS DIVISIONS WITH THEIR ASSOCIATED ARKOBLOCKS AND OFFICES

North Sea Division

Allied German States: Helgoland, Emden, Berlin, Wilhelmshaven, Cuxhaven, SOX

United Netherlands: Groningen, Europort

Scandinavian Union: Rømø

Poland: Gdansk

Pacific Ocean Division

Japan Imperial State: Osaka, Okinawa (both off-coast)

Corporate Republic of Fiji, Oceania: off-coast Fiji

Salish-Shidhe, North America: near Vancouver

Atlantic Division

Africa: Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal (Oranje Vrystaat), Tristan da Cunha

Space Division

Space Launch Facilities: Devil's Island (French Guyana), Isla Puna (Ecuador)

LaGrange Point 1: Treffpunkt Raumhafen

- Genetic applications don't come to market without trial and error in R&D. Since you cannot prove genetic concepts in animals (not even monkeys) due to differences in their genome you have to test the treatment in man at a certain point. While drug related "adverse reactions" (toxicity, carcinogenicity, drug-related impairments and deaths) of normal pharmaceuticals can really be bad, fucking around with the genome can get *a lot* worse. And you don't want the truth about those "failures" to leak to the public.

- Nephrine

PROTEAN PORTFOLIO

Proteus has an immense corporate portfolio, which is more diverse that one would normally expect. Besides being expert in designing and constructing autonomous habitats no matter where (from toxic zones to extreme climates to sea, underwater, and even space), they are also renowned for their submarine fleets, deep-sea mining facilities, and all varieties of aquatechnology and aquatic and extraterrestrial heavy industry. Since Proteus gobbled up parts of the **Internationale Fahrzeug- und Maschinen-Union (IFMU)** post-Crash 2.0, it has also extended its assets from under- and on-water crafts to aircrafts through the **German Zeppelinwerke** and the revived **Airbus** branch (now called **Airbus Aerials**).

It is worthwhile to mention that it is the one of few AA corporations which has the financial power to back a full-fledged space program on its own with two launch sites in Latin America (Devil's Island and Isla Puna) and its own space station Treffpunkt:Raumhafen at the L1 LaGrange point between Earth and the sun.

- Most of their impressive space assets that deal with space adaptation, radiation shielding, deep space research, hydroponic farming, and even terraforming (if you believe the rumor mill), are financed by granting other AA corporations access to parts of their station. Currently, both Z-IC and Monobe have access to their own research and production facilities on the space station, leasing Proteus launch sites to bring their equipment and personnel up the gravity well.

- Orbital DK

Publicly, most people associate Proteus with blue biotechnology products (marine and aquatic applications of biotechnology that have become more frequent in the past decades), environmental biotechnology and their (trans-)genetic research and applications (such as genetic restoration, phenotype adjustments, or transgenics) which are usually licensed out to medical service providers like DocWagon or EuroMedis in exchange for royalties in the seven figures.

- Colonization of the oceans is one of the big things to come. While small quasi-self-sustainable deep-sea habitats, underwater farming, sea life, and biotech adaptation of terrestrial life to the sea have already become a reality for Proteus-run habitats and corporate resorts in the '70s, it is rumoured that Proteus would be already technologically capable of constructing a whole underwater city but are lacking the funding to pull it off on their own.

- Sounder

With genetic liberal eugenics being in vogue, their "designer child" subsidiary **Progeny** has turned into a major cash cow in the last few years. While Progeny's main office is headquartered in Paris, it is mainly a service-based organisation whose geneticists and sales reps work together with public and private hospitals and healthcare providers worldwide for parents to "choose what is best for the next generation."

- Is it just me or does Proteus' new slogan "Reach out to a better tomorrow" and their commercials about their intention to preserve human life and promote well-being of metahumanity have Horizon written all over it?

- Dr. Spin

Adaptation

On the surface, Proteus's corporate attitude may resemble Evo's in many ways, but it is inherently different. While Evo strives for evolution of metahumanity towards transhumanism or even posthumanism, making augmentations and alterations trendy and sexy for the single individual, mass scale biotech and personal gene-tweaking is just a means to an end from an industrial point of view. Like the Greek sea god of the same name who is capable of assuming many forms, Proteus seeks to adapt metahumanity (as a whole or selected individuals) to otherwise uninhabitable environments (such as deep sea, space, or other ecosystems) and make them fitter for environmental selection.

Assignments or promotions of corporate personnel to work in different habitats are usually a choice for life (or at least a long period of time) as certain workstations require environmental microadaptations to ensure efficiency. These changes aren't easily reversed (taking a couple of months) besides being still awfully expensive.

Additionally, executives or researchers in higher positions often become genetically enhanced or optimized as a salary bonus for good work or devotion to the company.

- To me, this is nothing more than a modern form of fascist eugenics. Remember the class that Proteus just graduated? They were genetically altered to be stronger, more intelligent, and indoctrinated to be the top of the food chain. Do you really think those “homo superiors” will view normal humans as equals? With worker “drones” task-specialized and their execs optimized, it sounds as if Proteus is breeding the equivalent of a genetic-based corporate caste society.
- Aufheben

Transversely, making environments or whole ecosystems adaptable to man through the use of mass biotech, (i.e., terraforming and planetary reengineering, processes that are crucial in the colonization of most planets in our solar system) is also a field Proteus is deeply researching.

- As far as the rumour-mill goes, S-K’s Ariane Space has made a multi-million deal with Proteus with exclusive access to Proteus’s designs and the research to terraform Mars.
- Orbital DK

FRINGE SCIENCES

One of the most prominent characteristics of Proteus is its function as a huge scientific think tank. What separates them from the research departments of Z-IC, AG Chemie, Universal Omnitech, or other mega-corporate divisions is their dedication to esoteric research areas, sometimes called “fringe sciences,” that few sane companies would ever invest money into because of the chance of revenues being extremely low. Despite low probability of success, Proteus has continued this research even after Goldammer took the helm to acquire pioneering technologies on their path to expand given frontiers.

Research areas include the amalgamation of technology and magic, research into mobile arkoblocks and floating cities, quantum sciences such as quantum teleportation, akashic records and subconscious collective memories, uplifting of animals to sapience, mind digitalization, vat-grown integration and the creation of metahuman biodrones, non-magical regeneration techniques, and dark matter generation. So, in case you happen to run across a Proteus research compound, word to the wise: expect the unexpected.

UNIVERSAL OMNITECH

Posted by: The Smiling Bandit

Over the years I’ve become an amateur UO trivia buff. It’s partly professional (they are, after all, one of the cyber-technology giants) and partly personal (among them, their bleeding edge Bioengineering and Genetics divisions). But mostly I’m hoping they’ll finally get their comeuppance.

Unless you’ve got your entire meat body and haven’t been near a hospital in seventy years, you probably know Universal Omnitech. Even if you don’t, it’s likely you’ve got something of theirs attached to or floating around in your body. So how’d that happen?

Corporate Profile

UNIVERSAL OMNITECH

Corporate Status: Public Corporation

World Headquarters: Vancouver, Salish-Shidhe

President: Thomas Roxborough

CEO: Hamilton Grimes

Core Businesses: Cyber-technology, Bioengineering, Genetics

Major Subsidiaries/Divisions: Riveros Applied Mimetics, DeBeers-Omnitech, Ingersoll and Berkeley

HISTORY

Universal Omnitech is an AA-rated biotech corporation. They’ve been headquartered in Vancouver since near the turn of the century, making them the oldest, largest, most profitable corp in the Salish-Shidhe. There are very few megacorps in Vancouver, giving UO virtually unrestricted access to the city’s infrastructure and government.

- UO does some governmental manipulation but mostly they ignore Vancouver.
- Kay St. Irregular
- You want to be the industry leader, you can’t get distracted.
- Butch
- More like, “Don’t shit on your own doorstep.”
- Cosmo

UO has remained close to its original business model, but business practicalities led to diversification in recent years. It seems to have worked as Shiawase, Evo, and Proteus remain their principal serious competitors.

In the 2060s Shiawase attempted to corner the biotech market through a hostile takeover of UO, but their efforts were thwarted by the majority shareholder, Thomas Roxborough. Shiawase was sent packing and Roxborough was rewarded with greater market share.

Universal Omnitech’s diversity helped them weather the Crash 2.0 better than most, and they only lost two small subsidiaries. More importantly, though, they lost a significant amount of bleeding-edge research, but the damage from that was not lasting. Since UO has so many experts in the field, their research overlapped a great deal. They were able to piece together enough to get a jump on corps that weren’t so lucky.

Currently, UO is moving into cyber-technology and other augmentations. But the real news is their attempt to bring genfixing and germline therapies to the average consumer.

- “Average consumer” is a suitably vague term. They’re trying to make their products less expensive, but currently they’re out of reach to all but the wealthiest clients. At half price, it’s still out of reach of most.
- Sunshine

For those not up on trends in biotechnology, genefixing involves identifying genetic markers for desirable (or undesirable) traits prior to fertilization, then manipulating the markers to ensure (or eliminate) those traits. Germline therapy involves making genetic changes in the germ cells of gametes. The change does not affect the host but will change any offspring from the host.

- If, for example, some corp bigwig and his trophy wife don't want a troll baby, they go through this procedure and voila, no trolls. Sounds like genocide, doesn't it?
- Aufheben
- It can also be used to eliminate potentially life-threatening disorders like, cancer, sickle-cell anemia, cystic fibrosis, etc.
- The Smiling Bandit

In late 2071, UO leveraged a hostile takeover against Riveros Applied Mimetics, a small Caracas-based biotech corp. With the CEO, Graciela Riveros, underground, the corp was easy pickings. UO hasn't discussed the purchase much, but smart money says they're planning on bringing genetic infusions to the common market.

PROFILE

Universal Omnitech is a leading research and development corporation in biotechnology and genetics. Through their work with nanotechnology they've also branched out into cybertechnology. Through their subsidiaries, UO is involved in mining, diamondoid and carbon buckytubes, carbon coating, and diamond industrial tools (DeBeers-Omnitech) and underwater growth farms, seaweed protein, and raw soy food additives (Ingersoll and Berkeley).

With their increased diversification, UO is seeing growing competition with companies like Evo, Proteus, South American Genesis, and Shiawase. UO tries to stay ahead through shadow ops or by investing heavily in three of the highest-rated biotechnology and genetics programs on Earth.

- So even if they don't hire the best right out of college, they know who did.
- Icarus
- Not to mention manipulating grades to hide who really is the best.
- The Smiling Bandit

UO's focus on biotechnology and genetics is neatly summed up in their tagline, "A better you for tomorrow." They are involved in every step of human life, so anyone can come to them for a little improving. They developed the first vat-farms for growing bio-replacements, set the standard for research in genetic improvements, were among the first to explore xenografting technology, and developed state of the art datasofts for teaching surgical grafting techniques.

To stay on top, UO ensures their researchers are willing to do anything in the pursuit of knowledge. One good example is

UO's recent breakthrough on their "wimp" project. Wimps are vat-produced clones with blank brains. They were designed as spare parts for clients rich enough to afford the cloning process and storage fees. But UO found another purpose for them—if one of their clients wished to disappear, the clone could be substituted for the original and killed. In some situations, however, the wimps would have to do more than just look right, so UO has been working with specialized medical nanodrones dubbed "Cognitive Planters" that are designed to duplicate existing synapses in the brain. At this point it's unclear how successful they've been.

- So if this works, what's to keep UO from supplanting someone with a clone they control?
- Cosmo
- Quite a bit actually. In addition to a genetic sample of the subject, UO would have to work out the issue of personal memories and trained skills. Neither of these has (as yet) been successfully duplicated using bioengineering methods. Certainly a personafix chip would suffice. But that assumes UO has access to enough information about the original to make such a chip.
- KAM

As an offshoot of UO's bio-replacement and genetics work, they've added medical nanotechnology to their list of accomplishments. Genetic manipulation and cyber and bioware implant surgeries would be either impossible or significantly more invasive without them. There has been talk about whether UO would enter the industrial and macro biotechnology field given its overlap with UO's current research, but UO representatives have been unusually tight-lipped about the matter.

- DB-0 used carbon buckytubes to build those space elevator cables in Cape Town. That certainly indicates that UO is involved with industrial biotech.
- Clockwork
- So if it's common knowledge, why the pretense?
- Dr. Spin
- Maybe they're hiding something bigger.
- The Smiling Bandit

If the reasons for UO's purchase of RAM are correct, they may get back into genetic infusions. For the uninitiated, genetic infusions are similar to genefixing and germline therapy. However, genetic infusions are introduced subsequent to fertilization.

Unfortunately, the process is dangerous. Infusions use modified viruses to manipulate genetic markers. However, the technology hasn't been perfected and the viruses currently used are likely to mutate, leading to unexpected side-effects or death.

- UO pioneered genetic infusions years ago. This doesn't make sense, unless RAM was making it significantly cheaper.
- KAM

ORGANIZATION

Universal Omnitech is a rigidly structured corporation, and communications between divisions and subsidiaries are heavily monitored. Despite that, contact is encouraged. Informal inter-communications have proven to be the catalyst for breakthroughs in cross-related fields.

Their subsidiaries cover a range of interests including precious and rare metals and aquatic and medical horticulture. However, almost all can be related back to biotechnology or genetics. Here's a look at their biggest or best-known subsidiaries.

Riveros Applied Mimetics

Name sound familiar? Can't quite place it? What about bio-engineered awakened drugs (BADs), tempo—any of this ringing a bell? That's right, RAM is at the heart of it all. The founder and former CEO, Graciela Riveros, started her illustrious career at RAM making improvements in genetic infusions. Only trouble was, they used the desperate and SINless as guinea pigs for their experiments.

- Sounds like RAM will fit right in at UO.
- Cosmo

Look around Caracas and you can find test subjects everywhere. Well, at least all those who survived the procedure. Stunted, twisted, horrible mutations are the results of infusions gone wrong. So what would make them willing to subject themselves to this? A chance. RAM marketed the infusions as a shot at a better, more productive life. Since there were possible side-effects (most of which hadn't been fully researched), they offered substantial discounts in exchange for testing. Many lost on the gamble, big.

Riveros moved on to better things (I'm certain you've perused *Ghost Cartels*, so I won't rehash her other business here), but when it started to go bad, she had to get out quick. RAM wasn't just easy pickings for UO, it also had detailed data about all of Riveros's work up to now.

So, while tempo has played itself out, you can rest assured that UO has the data on it. What they might do with it remains to be seen.

DeBeers-Omnitech

This UO subsidiary was big news back in '61 during the Orichalcum Rush. Thanks to the Pacific Prosperity Group, they entered into a joint venture with Wuxing to research, utilize, and mine natural deposits of orichalcum from several untapped sources.

Unfortunately, they got a little greedy and started buying up every unutilized property they could find. Their purchases were limited, however, by DeBeers-Omnitech's liquidity problems. To counter this they leveraged several of their assets against a loan from Malaysian Independent Bank. At this point, Wuxing decided to dissolve their partnership, fearing a loss of profitability.

- Seems once again luck was on Wuxing's side.
- Ma'fan

When the orichalcum began drying up, DeBeers-Omnitech ended up losing assets in exchange for empty properties. UO stepped in at that point and reorganized the subsidiary.

Currently, DB-O has gone back to their original business, mining. They supply most of the precious and rare metals used by UO to make cybernetic relays, macro-tubules, surgical tools, and a host of other products.

- Let's not forget their groundbreaking work on dikoted blades.
- Riser

Ingersoll and Berkeley

This horticultural conglomerate began on the growth and raw materials end of the business. Ingersoll Aquaculture has several underwater growth farms where they develop seaweed protein. Berkeley Soy Products produces and distributes various grades of raw soy for use as food additives. Together they developed more nutrient-rich seaweed-soy base, which saw some promise as a pure soy alternative.

Since the UO buyout, the corp has continued their original business, though they have added research and development divisions for medicinal chemicals. Several of the aquafarms have been completely re-designed to accommodate these new crops and a host of research staff.

- Did this re-design take place before or after the RAM buyout?
- Glasswalker

- Before. But now that you mention it, the aquafarms are a good place to do private research. I'll have to look into that.
- The Smiling Bandit

MAJOR FIGURES

Without a doubt, the most influential "person" in UO is the majority shareholder, Thomas Roxborough. His hand-picked CEO, Hamilton Grimes, is a piece of work too.

Thomas Roxborough

Roxborough is a corporate raider who until recently held positions on the boards of directors of both UO and Aztechnology. He was virtually unstoppable until he got into a fight with a very nasty degenerative autoimmune disease. In an attempt to stave off the inevitable, he gambled on some bleeding-edge experimental gene therapies from UO and lost. Prior to the procedure, they connected him to the Matrix, and by the time the procedure was over, Roxborough's body had become nothing more than an expanding tub of goo. At least it was a tub of goo that could interact through the Matrix, so Roxborough continued to run things. His new physical state, though, had the unfortunate effect of driving him a little crazy.

- You know who else went a *little* crazy?
- Sunshine

Roxborough's never stopped searching for a solution to his situation, even when researchers wanted to let it go. So he's been using his clout and position to force UO to continue the research.

Recently UO and Aztechnology have been on the outs, and it stems from problems between Roxborough and AZT's major shareholders. No one seems to know the exact details, but it probably has

to do with UO's loss of their former director of research, Kristine Martin (a.k.a. KAM). Roxborough dumped his stock in AZT, and the remaining major shareholders couldn't be happier.

Roxborough currently resides in near-Earth orbit in a vat somewhere. While some of Roxborough's mutated cells continue growing, UO researchers' largest fear is his mass will eventually be too large to contain. He's still growing in the microgravity environment, but at least his bulk is easier to contain there.

Hamilton Grimes

Grimes took the helm of UO back in '61 thanks to Thomas Roxborough. Before that, Grimes was head of UO's highly successful marketing division. Roxborough's decision must have been purely financial, as the two had no contact prior to that.

By all accounts, Grimes is a marketing genius. Since he took over, UO's consumer trust index has increased dramatically. But his work outside the corp pales compared to the changes he's made inside. Back in '65, just after Crash 2.0 when it became apparent how much data had been lost, Grimes instituted his "Scientific Values" philosophy. He argued UO's business was science. Anything outside of the pursuit of scientific knowledge (e.g., feelings, worries, doubts, etc.) was an impediment to that knowledge.

Despite how it sounds, the message resonated with UO's researchers. The fact was the data was lost. Their choice was complain about it or replace it. Since then, Scientific Values has become a rallying cry within the company.

AGENDAS

Universal Omnitech's overriding agenda is to be the best bio-engineering, genetic and cybertechnological research, design, and implementation corporation on Earth. They encourage scientific rigor and exploration in all forms. Their employees are instructed to pursue scientific inquiry wherever the data may take them. They are to find answers to every question they have.

Being the best means doing it better, faster, and most importantly cheaper than the competition. To that end, UO has announced plans to bring gene fixing and germline therapies to the average consumer.

Peculiarities

UO has a love/hate relationship with Aztechnology spanning several decades. Their overlapping interests and shared board members created some lucrative joint ventures and some dirty shadow work. It remains to be seen whether Thomas Roxborough's departure from AZT will calm the waters or heat them up.

The Scientific Values philosophy espoused by UO is a radical form of post-humanism and moral relativism. The limitations of humanity can only be overcome by the rigid application of science. Researchers should not concern themselves with feelings about or moral and ethical dilemmas arising from their work. These dilemmas are a limitation of humanity, and in the end they only serve to limit potential outcomes.

- So, if torturing someone may achieve a desirable scientific outcome but I'm morally opposed to it, I should ignore my worries and let the poor sap have it?
- Hannibelle

• That's an extreme example, but yes. But as they say, "the Devil's in the details." Say a subject comes to you wanting to cease testing (it's causing them distress). If you let them stop, your research may suffer (both from the loss of a test subject and future inquiry into their unique response to treatment). If you believe in "Scientific Values," you ignore their request and continue the testing.

- KAM
- Evil for the greater good.
- Ecotope

SHADOW/BLACK OPS

Shadowruns for Universal Omnitech run the gamut, but for the most part their objectives can be traced back to biotech or genetics-related areas. Data thefts and extractions tend to be near the top of their list, with impeding the competition following behind.

There are several things to remember when running against UO. First, they really are the leaders in the biotech/genetics field. While it's not official policy, their employees are encouraged to make use of their technology. A generous discount and liberal recuperation times mean a higher-than-average percentage of UO workers have been modified.

- While they don't like to advertise, there comes a point where the average researcher's creativity begins to wane. You'll find many 40+ researchers going in for all kinds of headware.
- Icarus

Runners have been surprised by the augmented capabilities of some of UO's typical wageslaves. Conversely, magic is at a premium. Don't misunderstand; mages can't just waltz in and out of UO unimpeded, but their magical resources tend to be a bit sparser than other megacorps. I should also mention the "ick" factor that often comes into play in UO runs. Runners are, by and large, hardened to the suffering they see every day, but UO research often pushes those boundaries. There are runners who refuse jobs for or against UO for just this reason.

- It's no life for the squeamish.
- Haze
- Or the choosy
- Black Mamba

While UO does not have a standing army, they do have an augmented black-ops unit whose specialties are high-level extractions and sensitive data thefts. They rely on mercenaries for offsite security duties, but for everything else they prefer to work with dispensable assets.

Onsite security is handled in house. As expected, staff is more augmented than average, with significant drone support. They also have excellent Matrix security. Perhaps in an effort to make up for their lack of magical resources elsewhere, UO Security has an above-average proportion of magically active staff.

CORPORATE RELATIONS

After the rather public blowout between Aztechnology leadership and Thomas Roxborough, the two companies have separated and become decidedly hostile toward one another—which seems only natural given the overlap in their business interests. There's more to it than that, though, as the personal rancor of a few board members seems to have expanded into UO's business model.

Data theft and corporate extractions between the two are at an all-time high. For several months now it's appeared as though shadow ops would turn into open hostilities. Recently, though, it seems cooler heads prevailed and the two corps have reached a kind of détente.

- There's only so much posturing and antagonism you can get away with. Eventually you either put up or shut up.
- Picador

- And, unless it's your business, war isn't profitable.
- Nephrine

For many years, UO had an excellent relationship with Wuxing, Inc. Their subsidiary DeBeers-Omnitech worked in partnership with them during the Orichalcum Rush.

Relations started to cool, however, when DeBeers overextended itself and was left holding the bag when the orichalcum deposits dried up. After the AZT blowup, Wuxing began working with the Azzies, further alienating UO. Recently, Wuxing, who'd long argued against AZT's inclusion in the PPG, made an about-face and pushed through their acceptance.

- Ouch, that's like having to work with your ex every day.
- Slamm-O!

During the Aztechnology vote, four PPG members, including UO, walked out of the proceedings in protest. While the symbolic gesture was ultimately futile, it opened the doors to a joint UO/Evo venture. The business was largely inconsequential but successful, and the two corps have cautiously looked into further joint efforts.

ZETA-IMPICHEM

Posted by: Nephrine

Although still perceived as a chemical company due to its company history, Zeta-ImpChem has become the globe's next-generation pharma giant over the recent decades. While Z-IC is publicly known for its wide portfolio of pharmaceutical products (both prescription and non-prescription), initiatives to eradicate diseases, production of healthy foods and involvement in global healthcare, its lapses related to weaponized medical technology and ruthless code of conduct (also in the Shadows) rarely make the headlines.

CV OF A BAD GUY

Zeta-ImpChem originally formed as a desperate Anglo-Swiss merger of British ICI (Imperial Chemical Industries) and Swiss Clariant-Syngenta (chemicals and agribusiness) and Ciba (specialty chemicals) in 2017 in response to the amalgamation of Novartis and

Corporate Profile

ZETA-IMPICHEM

Corporate Status: AA, Public Corporation

CEO: Katrina Thyssen

World Headquarters: Interlaken, Switzerland

Corporate Slogan: "Committed to Cure"

Major Shareholders: Zurich Investments, Bernard Gasser, Francoise Gulli, private shareholders

Important Subsidiaries: Alxon Pharma, Sanofi-Aventis, EuroMedis, Nestlé, Natal, Schering Pharma, MicroFlek, Lonza Life Sciences

Corporate Profile: Classical Pharmaceuticals, Biopharmaceuticals (vaccines, biologicals) and Biomedicals, Consumer Healthcare, Armed Medical Services, Medical Supplies and Diagnostics, Red and White Biotechnology, Green Biotechnology (plantfacs and fabricows), food and nutrition industry, Medical Nanotechnology, Weaponized Med-Tech (chemical, biological, nanotech)

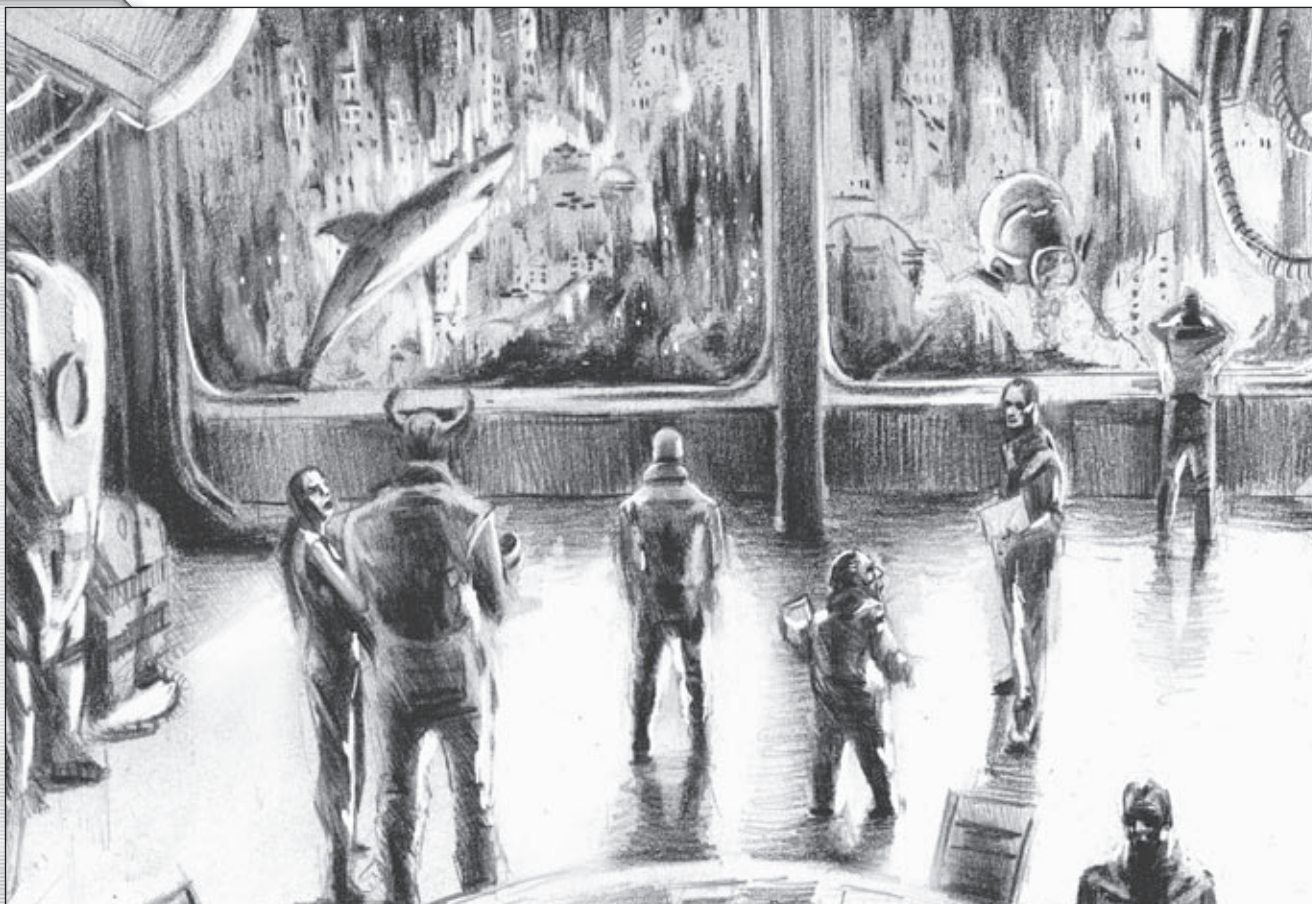
Roche in 2006 (as the Genom Corporation), and the formation of AG Chemie from several German powerhouses in 2011. While chemical and pharmaceutical markets thrived in the post-VITAS-1 environment, Z-IC had a mixed record. On the plus side, they manufactured the antiviral and allergic antagonists developed by the Johns Hopkins university, but several missteps had them eventually looking into other areas to become more prosperous.

• Z-IC's survival during those times was just pure luck. Back then, Z-IC was rather small compared to the other behemoths. What pushed Z-IC to the next level was the big deal with Genom, which happened after the Basle-based pharmaceutical corporation fell from public grace after it mistakenly called goblinzation an unidentified disease in 2021, putting metahumans in quarantine camps and experimenting on them. After their formal apology to the world, Genom withdrew from the market, licensing their products exclusively via Z-IC (a deal that has endured the past decades) while obstructing them from ever becoming a true AA with extraterritorial rights.

- The Smiling Bandit

VITAS proved that common pharmaceuticals were only partially effective in combating globe-spanning plagues, so Z-IC reinvested its revenues from the Genom deal to venture into biopharmaceuticals during the '30s. That led to the invention of adaptable biomedical raised from genetic engineered immunological cells (of which Antibac, Binder, and Zeta-Inferon are the best known).

In addition, Richard Bührle, a financial magnate whose family had made a fortune in arms manufacturing, invested into the company. Some say it was Bührle who persuaded then-CEO Bernard Gasser to turn a blind eye to ethics and moral boundaries and divert parts of Z-IC's chemical and biopharmaceutical research into the development of weapons of mass destruction. The company also started defying regulatory bodies to speed up timelines for new drugs with high market potential.



INCOMING FEED.....



• The next generation of WMDs had just become available when the EuroWars struck. The scars left in Carinthia from intense biochemical warfare at Austria's southern front to Slovenia during the invasion of the Alliance of Allah bear the nasty handwriting of Z-IC.

- Ecotope
- Project Bioshield, the biological R&D branch installed to develop these universal medical countermeasures, was mainly funded to be prepared if a governmental or corporate-created pathogen (like Z-IC's own) ever got out of hand. Now, making, keeping, or even researching biological or biogenetic weaponry was officially outlawed in 2041 by the Copenhagen Accords, but those accords aren't worth the electrons they're written on. They've been violated several times by General Genetics Worldwide (AG Chemie), Z-IC, Shiawase, Universal Omnitech, Aztlan/Aztechnology and France, and those are only the ones we know about. Naturally, no corp or country has ever been prosecuted.
- The Smiling Bandit

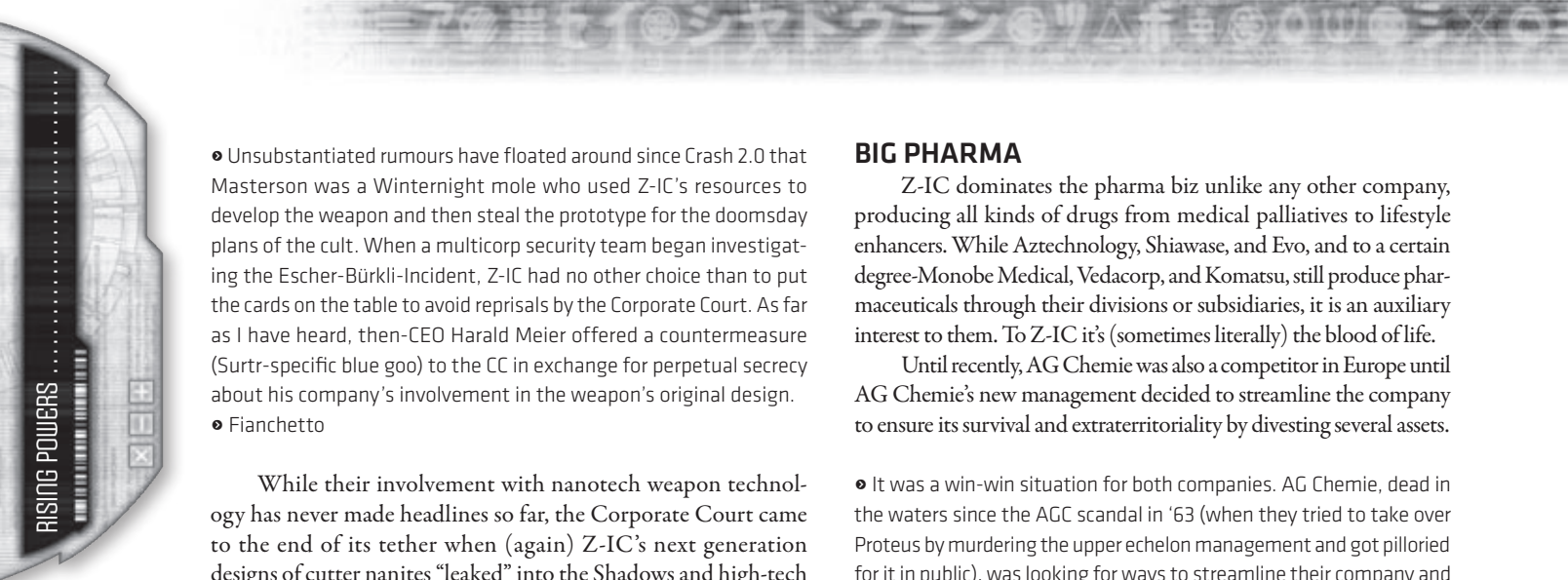
Growing through their success and huge pipeline of drugs, along with the earnings from their weapon tech sold via shell companies, Z-IC absorbed many international chemical and pharmaceutical giants that were facing problems, and it also took over a number of other companies (mainly, Russian, Indian, and European, but some American companies as well) for further

diversification. Additionally, it acquired some significant portions of AG Chemie, which had already become Z-IC's main European supplier of specialty chemicals.

The '40s, however, proved to be a pitfall. The fallout of the Polydopa Scandal in 2042 (which Z-IC wasn't able to hush up) cost Z-IC the seat on the Corporate Court, and the failed takeover of Transys Neuronet in the '50s caused some dark stains on the pharmacorp's otherwise lily-white labcoat. With increasing pressure from Saeder-Krupp they kept a low profile in the late '50s and '60s, only making corporate headlines when they assimilated another corp such as Nestlé or Natal, or created new branches such as the (armed) medical healthcare provider Euromedis.

In truth, Zeta-ImpChem used the low-key tactics to obfuscate the fact that they had ventured into new territory: nanotech. Recognizing the signs of change for the healthcare business with the emerging nanotech market (spearheaded by megacorps such as Shiawase, S-K, Renraku, and Evo), Z-IC hired Norwegian nanotech entrepreneur Jorgen Masterson and bought his company Microflek and its multimillion nuyen licences in 2062.

Even after Masterson's defection two years later, Z-IC's nanotech R&D prospered until the Escher-Bürkli Incident in 2064, during which Surtr, a cutting edge aerosol nanotech weapon, was accidentally released by Winternight cultists infiltrating the main Zurich bank hub, killing anyone in its vicinity—terrorists and guards alike.



- Unsubstantiated rumours have floated around since Crash 2.0 that Masterson was a Winternight mole who used Z-IC's resources to develop the weapon and then steal the prototype for the doomsday plans of the cult. When a multicorp security team began investigating the Escher-Bürkli-Incident, Z-IC had no other choice than to put the cards on the table to avoid reprisals by the Corporate Court. As far as I have heard, then-CEO Harald Meier offered a countermeasure (Surtr-specific blue goo) to the CC in exchange for perpetual secrecy about his company's involvement in the weapon's original design.
- Fianchetto

While their involvement with nanotech weapon technology has never made headlines so far, the Corporate Court came to the end of its tether when (again) Z-IC's next generation designs of cutter nanites "leaked" into the Shadows and high-tech underworld in 2069. After taking a deserved beating and paying compensation in the million nuyen scale, both major shareholders and board directors Gasser and Bührle demanded Meier's head (metaphorically speaking), promoting former NEEC-rep Katrina Thyssen to CEO.

- Even Meier's recent successes taking over former Cross Biomedical assets in the Québec Republic, Russia, and parts of Europe weren't enough to save his seat. Contrary to common belief, however, Meier did not resign from the company but became director of Z-IC's newly minted intelligence and counterintelligence division to make sure that such leaks were plugged in the future.
- Fianchetto

With the emergence of technomancers in 2070 and the recent Geneva siege, Z-IC (together with Genom) has hastened its efforts in bringing an anti-technomancer drug to the market.

- They have actually two promising eggs in their basket. One is a chemical drug that affects the technomancer's bioelectric field by altering brain neurochemistry, while the other is a special breed of nanites that thwarts the TM's abilities by infesting certain cerebral regions. Luckily, both pipelines suffered some drawbacks lately, most likely due to outside meddling.
- The Smiling Bandit

BIG PHARMA

Z-IC dominates the pharma biz unlike any other company, producing all kinds of drugs from medical palliatives to lifestyle enhancers. While Aztechnology, Shiawase, and Evo, and to a certain degree-Monobe Medical, Vedacorp, and Komatsu, still produce pharmaceuticals through their divisions or subsidiaries, it is an auxiliary interest to them. To Z-IC it's (sometimes literally) the blood of life.

Until recently, AG Chemie was also a competitor in Europe until AG Chemie's new management decided to streamline the company to ensure its survival and extraterritoriality by divesting several assets.

- It was a win-win situation for both companies. AG Chemie, dead in the waters since the AGC scandal in '63 (when they tried to take over Proteus by murdering the upper echelon management and got pilloried for it in public), was looking for ways to streamline their company and reclaim their roots as industrial supplier for "essentials" (all varieties of chemicals but also meat surrogates for food production). Since Z-IC already owned significant chunks of AGC, shares were traded back to AG Chemie (liberating it from Z-IC influence and the conflicts of interests that had overshadowed their relationship for decades) in exchange for some core pharma assets including Schering Pharma, which granted Z-IC access to Berlin and a seat in the *Konzernrat*.
- Ecotope

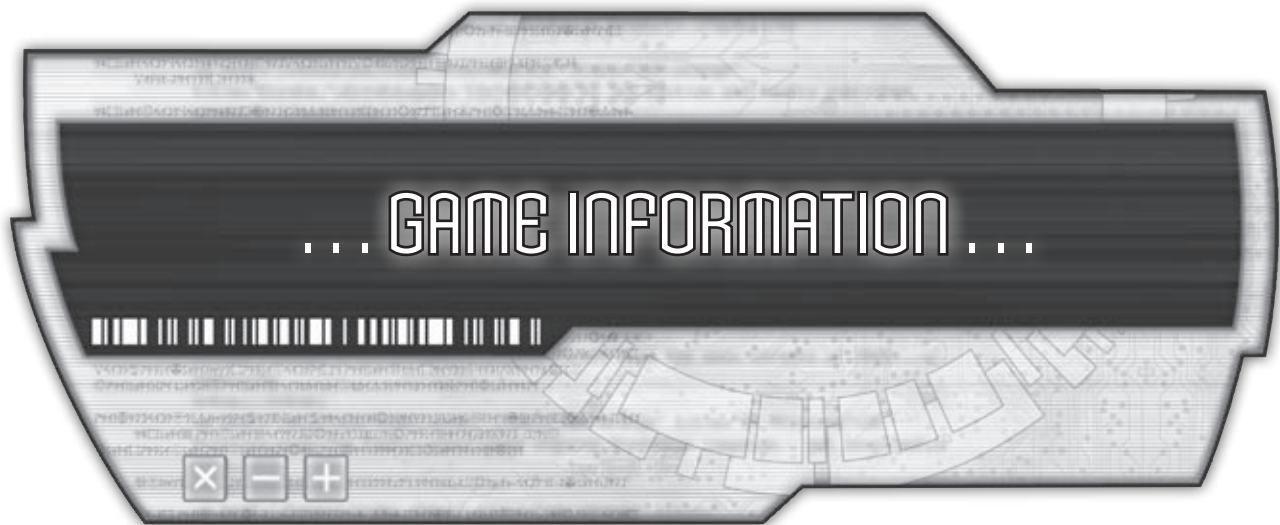
In terms of classical chemical pharmaceuticals, Z-IC covers all areas from R&D to preclinical and clinical development and pharmaceutical production. Due to its core chemical facilities in Russia, UK, and India, they are still able to produce a number of chemicals needed in the synthesis or formulation process on their own, although they usually draw on AG Chemie (and to a lesser extent S-K and Komatsu) to provide chemical components.

- Z-IC is pretty tight with the Russian oligarchy (Kremlin, UGB, SVR, whatever). While some industrial connections go back to early investments of British ICI into Russian economy, it is rumored that Z-IC supervises some ongoing R&D projects with the government and military. What exactly those may be is unclear, but it's speculated that one revolves around a development of some kind of bioawakened agent to suppress metagenetic traits to deal with the Yakut separatists.
- Red Anya

Aetherpedia Search: Polydopa Scandal

In 2042, a number of high-level researchers belonging to Zeta-ImpChem's neuro-research department were found guilty of massive unethical and illegal human population drug testing in sub-Saharan Africa. For four years and in collaboration and knowledge of members of the Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), doctors provided different developmental versions of Polydopa (a new chemical relative of the neurotransmitter dopamine) to African tribesmen and woman, claiming they were just a "performance enhancer for men" and "good mood stimulant". While it was never made clear what kind of drug Z-IC was developing, it is believed that the company was researching a new class of neurofacilitators known to enhance attention span and alertness while also facilitating learning and memory (an "intelligence enhancer" lifestyle drug). However, all versions of Polydopa tested in the illegal trial proved to be seriously neurotoxic, amounting to 4,000 estimated drug-related deaths and over 30,000 cases of irreversible neuro-degeneration and brain damage. <Read more>





Sergeant Anderson's headphones feel like oversized earmuffs on my head, but they reduce the cabin noise from the Ares Dragon to zero. Unfortunately, they tie me into the team's comm channel as well. These guys aren't the type for small talk, not over the pubic channel at least. I look across the cabin at a dozen faces, some in their twenties like me, some, like the captain, much older. At least three should still be in high school. But here they are, cutting through the night in an unmarked helicopter on the way to do the kind of black ops shit you only ever hear about on trids.

These guys are scary calm; almost nonchalant as they check the seals on their armor, recheck their clips. And here I am, fighting not to shiver in my 7,000¥ Vashon Island suit. It's my first ride along, and everyone knows it.

"You're Colonel Narayan's kid, right?" Captain Mertens breaks the silence. He is wearing his helmet, but I can see his eyes through the visor lit up by his HUD. A few of the other men are listening while trying to act like they're not.

"Yes, sir."

His eyes never leave mine. "I would have thought you'd have gone security OS, like your old man."

"Me too, but the company didn't see it that way. They said I was better suited to making deals than enforcing them." Captain Mertens laughs. Several others join him.

I relax. Words are my element, and the next few come naturally. "I'm sure Dad's a little disappointed, but at least I was able to put his security knowledge to good use."

"How's that, son?"

I flash him my closer's smile, all white teeth and good humor, "I knew if the company wanted this op done right, I needed to make sure they gave me your team to run it."

Three shrill beeps signal our proximity to the drop zone. The pilot confirms over the headset. "Your intelligence was correct, Mr. Narayan, thank you. LEBD confirms null contacts along the flight path. Weather is holding, so we should be able to drop in relatively silent."

I am feeling my thunder. "Don't thank me, pilot, thank oppo. Their man on the inside cleared us a route."

Captain Mertens taps me on the shoulder. "Don't you think its time you briefed my men, Mr. Narayan?"

I nod. Everything my team gathered for the operation is on an optical chip locked away in my briefcase. We still don't know who helped the runners extract our man in the first place, so I'm not taking any chances by sharing mission intel until the moment I absolutely have to. Not with a promotion on the line.

It takes a moment to run the bioscan. I fish around inside, find the chip, and hand it to the captain. He slots it into his armor and one by one, each soldier's HUD fills with the relevant data.

I have their attention.

The Sixth World is built upon the crystalline towers of the megacorporate world. Publicly these companies provide jobs and make the goods that support society. Privately, corporations represent the primary employer for shadowrunners, waging secret wars to gain leverage in an ever-shifting financial landscape.

Corporate Guide delves into the most notable corporations in the Sixth World. Though to shadowrunners “corporation” is often synonymous with “opposition,” it is possible to run a campaign from inside the crystalline tower. A corporate campaign generally falls into one of two categories: catching crooks or being crooks. On the security side of corporate life, employees can range from security officers to head of security. If wearing a uniform isn't your style, corporations are filled with special operators. Some of these employees work secretly as the eyes and ears of internal security to ensure that no one is stealing from the corp. Other corporate agents live in dusty corner offices and hold obtuse titles such as Recovery Specialist or Acquisitions Advisor. All of these employees operate under the same rule: Protect the company and the company will protect you.

WORKING FOR THE MAN

Life in the streets is a meritocracy. You are judged by your reputation, a résumé forged from the success of your last job. In the corporate realm, individual advancement is at the mercy of the employee review. In addition to doing your job on the floor, a corporate employee needs to stay aware of office politics, making sure that what they say, what they do, and even who they associate with off the clock, is in line with corporate ideology. To be a member of a corporation, be it small or large, you must show that you are invested in the corporate culture. You must work to strengthen adherence to corporate ideology.

IDENTITY

Corporate employees want to be known. Unlike shadowrunners who hide behind street names, corporate employees put their names out in front of their actions. Players in a corporate campaign, however, need to be careful to present themselves in a way that promotes the corp and their working team first. Much of the corporate world is based on the dichotomy of promoting teamwork while honoring individual achievement. In order to excel, an employee needs to set himself apart from the rest. Unfortunately, doing so exposes him to risk, because he is seen as an achiever. There is no way to climb the corporate ladder without stepping over someone along the way.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

Adherence to management and protocol is paramount in the corporation. Employees who fail to follow orders from their superiors can find themselves transferred, demoted, or even fired. Corporate employees are evaluated by their immediate superiors using classic methods such as annual reviews and after-action reports. Some companies, especially those involved in private security, also perform unconventional assessments, even going so far as spying on employees. Positive performances will lead to rewards and perhaps even notoriety. Before long the player may be the one giving orders.

REWARDS

Rewarding employees for a job well done is a hallmark of the corporate world. Generally employees are rewarded with holidays, more luxurious quarters, and bonus pay. Raises and stock options are other financial rewards a player can aspire to. Other rewards are closely linked with a player's notoriety as well as their position in the chain of command. Players who continually receive rewards will graduate to promotions. Security professionals will find themselves with more clearance and likely more responsibility. Johnsons, researchers, and other suits will be blessed with larger project budgets.

Money and promotions are not the only way to be recognized. Sometimes a simple pat on the back, division-wide email, or even a special mention at an employee meeting will do. Adulation comes publicly and privately. Perhaps the best reward a player can hope for is an improved relationship with employees higher up in the chain of command. After announcing the successful results of a promising experiment, an employee could find herself invited to the director's house for dinner, or perhaps her name will appear on the guest list for an exclusive corporate retreat.

In game terms, rewards translate as earned Karma. That Karma provides characters with a Street Cred rating as in a standard campaign. At the gamemaster's discretion, additional points may be added for promotions, yearly bonuses, and any other suitable achievement. However, a corporate employee's Street Cred rating only applies to the corporation for which they work. Their hard work on the inside means nothing on the streets. On the other hand, a player with high Street Cred could find herself courted and even extracted by a rival corporation.

CONTACTS

Megacorporate employees tend to be born into the corporation they are a part of. This means that many of their initial contacts will also work for the corporation. In-corp contacts can be horizontal or vertical. Horizontal contacts are associates who work at the same level as the player but in a different department. Vertical contacts are usually within the player's department but are either lower or higher up the chain of command.

Not all of a player's contacts need to come from within the corporation. A player may have associates within other industries, even other corps. These out-of-network contacts, if the corporation is aware of them, are surreptitiously monitored by the corporation to ensure that the employee isn't feeding proprietary information to a rival or planning to switch sides. A player's association with street criminals (shadowrunners and other street contacts) is also monitored, though for different reasons. Guilt by association is alive and well in the corporate world. Publicly associating with known criminal elements such as gangs and syndicates can hold you back from promotion. When a corporation puts someone in a position of power they aren't just promoting the person, they're promoting the image of that person. This is especially true of Japancorps, given their close association with Yakuza Gumi. A player known to be associated with members of a rival gumi, or worse a gaijin syndicate, are unlikely to advance very far in the corporation. For this reason players need to have two sets of contacts: the ones they are publicly linked to, and the valuable few that remain a personal secret.



Johnsons are the exception to the rule. This class of corporate operator is expected to have scurrilous connections. In fact, a Johnson's professional livelihood relies on the scope of his shadowy connections.

NOTORIETY

The negative side of popularity has a particularly large impact in a corporate campaign. Word travels faster in an office than on the street. Employees whose behaviors lead to notoriety will find coworkers unwilling to associate with them. More importantly, their selection of work assignments will tend to narrow until they find themselves pigeonholed into taking the jobs that nobody else wants, or until they find a way to solve the problem.

Notoriety points can be earned for activities such as brown-nosing, associating with inappropriate contacts, failing to complete a task, and being seen as an individualist. Players who jump ship to other corporations earn Notoriety points in that new corporation equal to the Street Cred points they had in their former position. This number replaces their current Notoriety points. This indicates the work it takes to be accepted, and eventually trusted, in a new working environment.

RACE AND THE WORKING WORLD

Though times are changing, the corporate world remains a difficult place to be a metahuman. Racial hierarchy puts elves at the top of the metahuman pyramid in terms of public acceptability, followed by dwarves, orks, and at the bottom of the pyramid, trolls. The so-called "lesser metatypes" orks and trolls are highly regarded as security grunts, but it is difficult for them to climb the corporate ladder. In Japancorps, it is nearly impossible for metas of any type to move above middle management.

TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT

Corporate employees are assigned roles based on their individual skillset. According to standard corporate philosophy, there is a right person for every job. What sets you apart from the rest locks you into your career path. Magic wielders and technomancers are at a premium and usually end up working as researchers or security specialists. Ex-athletes, people with an eye for detail, and individuals with natural bulk also make good security professionals. Meanwhile, those whose cerebral skills outweigh everything else usually end up sitting behind a desk.

WORKING THE GATES

The security officer is an important cog in the machine. He may be the man at the front gate waving cars through, or the woman doing rounds at 3 AM. Security officers represent the first line of defense in any corporate security structure. As they progress and learn the system, some officers have an opportunity to move up the ranks. Security workers may earn their way to a higher level of security clearance, special operations, or a cushy corner office.

If you are using the Build Point (BP) system, new security officers should begin with 250 BP. This reflects the relatively low level of training that security officers have starting out. Upper-level security officers, supervisors, and those in special units such as the Red Samurai and Jaguar Guards are on par with shadowrunners in terms of their abilities. Starting characters in these positions should be given 400 BP to start.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS

In corporations as with governments, there are certain operations that need to stay off the books. For the majority of these jobs, corporations turn to private contractors, either outside companies specializing in black ops or independents known collectively as shadowrunners. For more sensitive jobs, larger corporations keep matters in house. All of the megas have elite security teams. Some are well known, like the Jaguar Guards, the Red Samurai, or Ares Firewatch. Others are more secretive about their existence.

Special operations or black teams are called in to deal with the toughest external, and occasionally internal, threats. Black teams handle high-level assassinations, extractions, and other jobs that corporations cannot be associated with but require in order to function. The teams recruit their own members, often pulling from the top security personnel and ex-military. Shadowrunners are rarely recruited to corporate black teams, as their independent streak makes it unlikely that they will follow orders leading them into the mouth of danger or, worse, to their own death.

When building a black operative, characters should follow the high-level campaign BP rules, with characters receiving 500 BP to start.

TATENOKAI

A Japanese term that translates as "shield society," Tatenokai has come to symbolize executive security attachments. Playing as a member of these teams is part special operations and part corporate insider. Most corporations have a special section devoted to executive protection. The personnel involved are recruited from rank-and-file security, having proven themselves knowledgeable about the corporate culture and, more importantly, capable of keeping secrets.

A personal security team is privy to every detail of their subject's private life. It is their responsibility to keep those details secret as well as protect their charge. However, security teams are ultimately employed by the corporation. If there is a dispute between the corporation and the employee, the security team is supposed to side with the corporation.

Security represents status, so everyone wants to have a detail. However, corporations cannot afford personal security for every middle manager with aspirations. So, corporate managers, particularly Johnsons, tend to contract with private firms that have arrangements with their corporations, allowing the corps to lease security teams that the corporate workers pay for. Though the employee is paying, those security teams are also loyal to the corporation first.

Tatenokai may begin the game with either 400 BP or 500 BP. They represent a step up from the average security officer and are often on par with starting shadowrunners.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

The mission of an internal affairs division (IA) is to ensure all corporate employees operate in a manner commensurate with the corporate mission. Corpspeak aside, internal affairs agents are corporate watchdogs assigned to investigate those who are or may be intending to betray the corporation. Since it is impossible to intuit who will eventually betray a corporation, IA relies on informants, electronic surveillance, and old-fashioned detective work to uncover suspects.



Players in an IA campaign work as the corporation's silent protectors, either on the surface or undercover, getting close to potential suspects to uncover their secret dealings. This type of work breeds notoriety, so IA players revealed to be members of the division automatically receive 3 points of Notoriety.

BEING MR. JOHNSON

Corporate administrators make their mark by being known as exceptional motivators, numbers wizards, or sometimes just by doing the tough jobs that no one else will. A corporate Johnson is the administrator a company turns to in order to handle messy situations. These are the brokers for off-book operations such as extraction, sabotage, and theft. A Johnson is a corporate survivor. He is someone who has learned that making it in the office requires going beyond the corporate structure and reaching out to the streets for support.

Though a Johnson may have physical talents, their skillset runs more toward the political than combat. The street equivalent of a Johnson would be a fixer. In fact, many fixers are Johnsons who have left the corporate world. The Johnson is the primary contact for shadowrunners within a corporation.

CORPORATE RESEARCH

Maybe you were extracted and put to work under the threat of losing your family. Maybe you were born into research, your specific talents handed down across the generations. Corporate researchers are among the most heavily scrutinized individuals in the organization. Researchers create most of the sensitive material that shadowrunners try to steal. A researcher wields a technically oriented skill set, and their field of expertise may cover anything from cryptozoology to ballistics. However, researchers don't necessarily trade in their Glock for a lab coat. Many opt for field-testing assignments, which allow them an opportunity to challenge themselves outside the sterile lab environment.

Awakened and technomancer researchers represent a fraction of the scientific community. Individuals born with these gifts are highly sought after. Awakened and technomancer characters usually advance faster through the scientific ranks but receive more scrutiny than their non-Awakened counterparts.

Researchers are chosen not only for their knowledge skills but also for their critical-thinking attributes. Therefore, any player wishing to be a scientist or tech must have a minimum augmented Logic of 4.

OPPOSITION RESEARCH

Also referred to as corporate insurgency, opposition research (oppo) is the act of illegally gathering damaging data on opponents. The goal of oppo is to cripple your competitor while increasing your market position. This is accomplished through a number of shadowy actions, most notably misinformation, disinformation, and sabotage.

When your job is to stir the pot at another corp, people tend to notice you. Some of it is the mystery of what exactly you do. A part of it is the understanding that when your department succeeds, everyone makes money. Oppo is a highly sought after and respected position. In game terms this translates into Street Cred. Players working for oppo receive 2 additional starting Street Cred points.

Oppo offices never officially exist. A lot of what they do is quasi-legal, but the rest of it so sensitive that any exposure of their operations may damage pending mergers, or worse, negatively affect a company's stock price. Therefore, these groups hide under names like acquisitions and mergers. Even private oppo corporations masquerade as "market consultants."

STANDARD OPERATIONS

There are similarities between what shadowrunners and corporate employees do, but the motivations are different. One group charges a fee and the other works on a salary basis. But with that salary comes legalities and operational restrictions, including an adherence to rules of engagement much like in military operations. Corporate ROE pertains to how these jobs are used in the workplace as well as who carries them out.

ASSASSINATION

Murder is the specific domain of special operations. Corporations can never officially sanction a murder, so it must be carried out with the utmost secrecy. Assassination is a last resort when other forms of deterrence or retrieval fail. Operations of this type are often contracted through third-party fixers to professional hit men such as the Chimera organization. When companies look in-house for assassins, the work is given with the understanding that if the operative is caught, the company will disavow all knowledge of his mission and existence.

ASSET RECOVERY

Corporate espionage, including theft and extraction, is a way of life in corporate corridors. The majority of corporations have personnel who can be relied on to retrieve what has gone missing. Recovering lost items is in the jurisdiction of on-site security. If a crate is stolen from a warehouse, it should be recovered by members of the security team that allowed it to be stolen. Compartmentalizing security in this fashion prevents the security department from losing face due to failures. It also makes it easier to point the blame. Depending on the sensitivity of what was lost, specialists may be called in to track down the persons responsible and ultimately recover the sensitive asset. If security continues to go poorly in a location, people may get laid off, or new faces can be called in to clean up the situation.

Recovery also applies to persons extracted or otherwise gone missing from the corporation. A business invests large amounts of money in every employee through training, salary, and exposure to sensitive information. Losing employees, be it to competitors or the shadows, is an embarrassment to the corporation. It shows that they cannot secure their employees, and that affects the bottom line.

BLACKMAIL

Acquisitions and mergers don't always benefit the party being absorbed. In cases like these, the acquiring company needs leverage to ensure the deal goes through. Opposition research provides that leverage. Specifically, blackmail is the act of gathering or creating incriminating information against a target. Blackmail can be outsourced, but keeping the work in-house ensures that third-party operators don't go rogue and sell the blackmail information to a higher bidder.

BODYGUARD

The core operation for Tatenokai is protecting their client. This includes advance work, where a protection detail investigates locations where their client is going to be. Protection work is not exclusive to Tatenokai. Security grunts get pressed into bodyguard service, often as backup muscle. There are times where heavier security teams, such as the Leopard Guard, are used when moving personnel through dangerous areas.

COUNTERFEITING

Producing or distributing knockoffs can help to discredit rival merchandise. It is a very effective method of flooding the market and reducing demand for particular products. Corporations look to hackers and ops teams to steal prototypes. Researchers are tasked to reverse-engineer prototypes in order to rush fakes into production before copyrights can be filed.

COURIER/SMUGGLING

Traditionally, courier ops are a job that Johnsons assign as a way to evaluate shadowrunners. The same strategy applies when corporations are trying to decide if an employee can be trusted to move into a special branch of service like an elite combat team, special operations, or opposition research. Another situation where employees are more likely to be contracted is when sensitive material is being moved, or material requires a researcher to go with the cargo.

DATASTEAL

Data theft is a large part of what oppo hackers do. Any information that can benefit the corporation is likely to be copied or stolen outright from rival corporations. Targets include personnel files, email, blueprints, test results, itineraries, and invoices. Stolen data plays a central role in all operations against other corporations because it provides the relevant intelligence on any location being infiltrated.

DISTRACTION (MISDIRECTION)

Diversions missions distract the focus from the real operation being undertaken. Corporations are fond of bringing in shadowrunners to divert attention and resources from a target they are going after. Often Johnsons get their start booking these types of missions. It is also an opportunity for internal special operators to showcase their talents.

A distraction job could be an immediate activity, such as blowing up a building to pave the way for another operation. Long-term missions include elements from other types of jobs such as creating false data trails or break-ins to misdirect corporate investigators as to whom a company is actually trying to extract. Misdirection is a standard post-extraction technique to confuse investigators as to the whereabouts of extraction victims and to obscure which corp actually took them.

ENCRYPTION/DECRYPTION

Research fuels corporate growth, and corporations spend billions protecting their data. They also spend billions hiring people to decrypt what they steal. Employees working encryption/decryption jobs are assigned to a department and are responsible for that area's data services. Occasionally a Johnson will hire runners to decrypt something that has been stolen or encrypt something they don't want their corporation to know about.

EXTRACTION (EMPLOYEE ACQUISITION)

Headhunters are in constant contact with corporations, trying to arrange a better situation for their clients. When a corporation decides to acquire an employee, they assign an ops team to handle all phases of the operation. A security team is commissioned to cover the negotiating Johnson during the meetings leading up to the extraction. Depending on the lead administrator's preference, internal security staff or shadowrunners are assigned to perform the actual extraction.

INVESTIGATION

Local law enforcement rarely has jurisdiction on corporate soil. Therefore, all criminal investigations are handled internally when possible. Work can range from handling a routine accident investigation to uncovering a spy. Special assignments include forensic investigation and gang intervention. Efficiency investigations are part of the workload. Monthly security site checks, employee status reviews, and budget reviews are all lead-ins to investigations that can uncover employee wrongdoing.

SABOTAGE

Getting to the marketplace first may require slowing down your opponents. Sabotage is a common method used to help push back a competitor's rollout date. On a small scale, sabotage could mean blasting a product shipment. Larger jobs include destroying warehouses and manipulating suppliers to convince them to abandon contracts.



THE CENTERS OF POWER

There is nothing in the Sixth World more powerful than the megacorporations. Even great dragons scratch and claw to get a piece of the power wielded by the Big Ten. If you're running the shadows, you need to know about the megas, because they deal out the biggest paydays—and, if you cross them, the harshest paybacks.

Corporate Guide helps runners learn what the ten AAA-rated corporations are up to in 2072 and answers pressing questions such as: How is Aztechnology dealing with Amazonia these days? How is Horizon's continuing prominence affecting its laid-back culture? How many times can Richard Villiers have one mega rise up from the ashes of another?



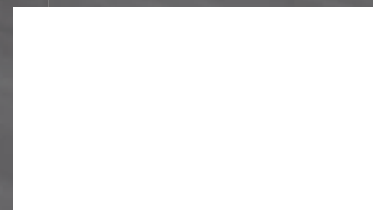
Corporate Guide offers details on all of the Big Ten megacorporations and briefings on some of the rising powers of the corp world. It also provides the basics every shadowrunner should know about how corporations work and what life is like for the drones trapped inside them, along with rules for greater interaction of player characters with these monoliths of power.



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