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American Calamity

The Continentals

by Edward S. Pocock III

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EDWARD S. POCOCK III

AMERICAN CALAMITY

THE CONTINENTALS



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PROLOGUE

2023. The United States was at war with itself, again. Except this time the borders were not North and South; they were Red and Blue.

A story of internal political hatred had grown for years in the United States. Fanning those flames of hate and division were foreign enemies working hand in glove with domestic enemies of American Freedom. Their collective goal? The elimination of American and worldwide homogeny. The Communist China Party leadership (CCP) had a plan.

The final two stages of their multi-generational strategy were remarkably simple: let the Americans kill each other; then we (the CCP) take their resources. In essence, the same strategy the United States planned for Ukraine and Russia. Kill each other, then we can take your vast resources. For China, the question was how?

25 FEB 2022. First, the CCP inferred Democrat Party involvement in fixing the 2020 Presidential election to their favor. A feat achieved with Chinese help, per the request of Democrats and the fourth branch of the U.S. Government—the Bureaucracies. Both lies.

The already politically smoldering United States ignited. Violence erupted nationwide. Congressional members, state legislatures, and a slew of local officials were killed. Brother fought brother as the country paired off into Red and Blue corners. The Federal response? Blue was good; Red was bad. The fire of hate and distrust only grew.

2 NOV 2022. Even the CCP couldn't have predicted the results of the big lie. They laughed at our folly, our simplicity, and our ignorance. By early November, the CCP determined the time was right to deliver the coup de grâce by way of their proxy, North Korea.

The North Koreans used three south-to-north orbiting satellites to deliver a crippling Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) attack across the United States. It worked. America was dark. The internal chaos only got worse.

Internationally, World War III was on. More EMP devices detonated around the world. The northern hemisphere's 6.4 billion residents (88% of humanity) plunged into total darkness. Starvation and disease soon became the real enemy by the end of November 2022; then, more nuclear bombs launched in early December. By May 2023, 5.7 billion people were dead worldwide.

In America, the real war transitioned from overseas to control of what remained of the United States. President Sirrah, the former Vice President under President Crowder, wasn't going to let this opportunity pass her by. It was time to functionally change America. She needed total control first. She would, in her view, control America's *Fourth Turning* crisis.

Secretary of Defense Aldridge, a loyal compatriot of Sirrah, focused his dwindling resources on the socialist Blue northeastern states—New England. The Megalopolis East Government, otherwise known as *the Meg*, was established during the martial law of 2022. For the Federals, *the Meg* represented a new center of operations outside of the irradiated

Washington D.C. metropolis. All Aldridge needed to do was wipe out the Red areas of northern Maine and New Hampshire.

For this, he planned an invasion off the coast of Maine and an Army attack from Vermont and Massachusetts. Lastly, Aldridge would split northern Maine and New Hampshire using what he thought was a compliant military officer, Stephen T. Moore. He wasn't.

Moore, his family, and friends had had enough and just wanted to be left alone in Andover, Maine. Aldridge pushed, sending a platoon of Rangers to ensure Moore's loyalty on 20 June 2023.

Moore, however, pushed back, killing all the Rangers sent to his home and joined the growing rebel cause.

**CHAPTER 1:
C’EST QUOI CE BORDEL
31 AUGUST 2023 ORFORD,
NH / FAIRLEE, VT
SAMUEL MOREY MEMORIAL BRIDGE**

The Ridge Houses in Orford, New Hampshire before the war were an architecturally significant assemblage. Built in the Asher Benjamin / Charles Bulfinch era, from 1771 to 1839, they overlooked the Connecticut River and were beautiful. Now, they and the higher ridge behind them guarded a strategic river crossing.

At stake was the Samuel Morey Memorial Bridge, connecting Fairlee, Vermont, and Orford, New Hampshire. It was the only surviving bridge that crossed the Connecticut River from the Massachusetts state line to the Canadian border. All others were destroyed at the start of the Megalopolis East hostilities in 2022 to contain the red political disease in New Hampshire. That effort made the steel arch bridge’s survival and control a federal priority and by default, important to the rebels, too.

Starting on June 8, 2023, leaflets were dropped by planes announcing that the United States Air Force (USAF) would be active around the bridge area. The “area” was defined as everything within a rectangular box south of Piermont, NH, north of Lyme, NH, extending east along State Highway 25A to Wentworth, NH. The air-dropped notices stated: “EVACUATE NOW—THIS WILL BE A MILITARY

TARGETED ZONE—THIS IS NOT A DRILL.” A dizzying amount of paper littered the area, all containing this “get out” message.

The messages had a negligible effect. Many survivors chose to stay in place, including the small group of local rebels guarding the bridge. The tiny Orford population had survived the winter, starvation, lawlessness and the other 2022 and 2023 disasters and thought, *Move now? The U.S. Government has done nothing to help our suffering. Bomb us? For what, a bridge?*

Those collective thoughts were shattered on June 10, 2023, around 10 p.m. The first bomb since the Civil War of 1861 was dropped on an American target by the Federal Government, striking the southernmost point of the Ridge. A single F-16C from the 119th Fighter Squadron, New Jersey Air National Guard (ANG), received this dubious honor. Inside this infamous target was a family listening to a U.S Government radio broadcast promising a quick return to normalcy. They didn’t even know what hit them. The 500-lb bomb obliterated their home and their existence.

This one ANG squadron dropped twenty-five 500-lb bombs that night. The area of Orford nearest the banks of the Connecticut River was flattened. Stores, homes, and any other semblance of civilian life were erased. Every bomb found either a structure that was empty or one that held a family grateful for surviving the winter. The bridge, however, remained untouched. Outwardly, it was a tactical success. Inside military circles, it caused dissention among the ranks, affecting a dramatic shift in the Federal air campaign plans.

Originally, the 134th Fighter Squadron, Vermont ANG, with their F-35s, were scheduled to complete the task on June 9, 2023. Their seemingly motivated commander promised a devastating salvo. The fighters, along with support cargo laden C-17s, left the airbase for a rebel airfield in northern Maine. The Vermont ANG was not going to take part in the bombing of Americans. Its commander orchestrated the ruse to allow their escape. His warning, after learning of the June 10th action: “Make another bombing run in New Hampshire and it’s a dogfight.”

Active-duty bases, like Hill Air Force Base (AFB), Moody AFB, and Shaw AFB, decided quite early that the bombing of American citizens was not what they signed up for. Most of these people watched as relatives starved or froze to death the previous winter, while the military “circled the wagons.” Americans had been left to the winds of chance. *That was bad enough*, military members thought, *and now we’re bombing them?* For those on active duty, it was the final limit.

Things were even worse in the reserve and National Air Guard units. Many of these grizzled war veterans would not kill fellow Americans. Mass defection to the rebel cause saw every A-10 and F-15-unit CONUS (CONTinental United States) join the rebel cause in New England. There were many others. The NJ ANG was a glowing exception.

By mid-June, the Federal government and rebel sides effectively split USAF resources in two. Defense Secretary Aldridge and the Federal government had a severe problem.

Shortly after the bombing of Orford, NH, the skies over America were devoid of aviation. Both sides were fully aware

that each had the ability to blow the other out of the sky. This condition remained throughout the Summer of '23 while the Joint Chiefs “worked things out.” They had even bigger nuclear problems: securing nuclear triad assets (silos, subs, and bombers) from rebel control.

The unthinkable was becoming reality. Several USAF missile silo crews sabotaged ICBM's (Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles) because of the rumor that the President planned on nuking parts of Texas. It wasn't true, but it didn't matter. Truth had died some time ago in America. USAF Security Forces, the blue-bereted protection force, found themselves in force-on-force firefights in and around these missile silo sites. Some were loyal to those who vowed not to kill Americans; others were loyal to the President. The Montana ANG, already in rebel hands, threatened to bomb the federally controlled missile silo sites that did not stand down.

As the ICBM field drama unfolded, the Joint Chiefs took a different tact with the bomber wings. They were fearful that nuclear armed bomber assets would begin falling into rebel hands. Aldridge prevented their defection by guaranteeing them that their only targets would be foreign threats. This assuaged the problem and the bomber wings never saw the chaos that was unfolding in America's missile silo fields.

Building on this internal control success of bomber commands, the U.S. Navy submarine and surface assets were given the same assurances by Aldridge. There would be no further bombing or shelling of Americans.

What was left of the nuclear assets was now under control. For now.

That left the Army and Marine ground game in two operational theatres, New Chicago/The District (Detroit) theatre in the Midwest and *The Meg* campaign in the East. The plan was straightforward. Consolidate the central United States, establish command and control of the Meg's remaining areas, and then expand from their merged politically blue-power bases.

Here, the news wasn't so pleasant.

A series of quick military actions between the New Chicago Metropolis and The District created a land bridge between the two. Shortly afterward, accumulation of land south of the Ohio River, west to the Mississippi River, and east to the Pennsylvania/Ohio State line became targets. The federal goal was to secure this area for food sources. While initially successful, they encountered a problem. Citizens fought back and formed a fighting force in West Virginia and western Pennsylvania. Its leader, Roger T. Otis, "The Bandit," ground the Federals to a stall using vicious partisan attacks.

After securing the flat lands of Ohio, rolling hills near Erie, Pennsylvania, and parts of western New York, the Federal's left Otis's hillbillies to their own devices. Kentucky, West Virginia, Tennessee, most of central Pennsylvania, and western Maryland remained in rebel hands. Alridge explained to President Amanda Sirrah, "There is nothing in those mountains we need. We have the food-producing prairies all the way from the Ohio / Pennsylvania line to Nebraska. More importantly, Madam President, we will soon link up with the *Meg* campaign theater in Rochester, New York."

While Aldridge, the imposing six-foot-tall pal of Sirrah, made his report, Sirrah smiled at him. *I know Amanda.* Aldridge thought of his old friend from Snow Shoe, Pennsylvania; *your priority is the Meg, but if I don't figure a way to feed this Army, we're done for.* Sirrah, who he knew, didn't give a damn about boring logistical nonsense. She wanted *the Meg* to herself, to make Albany, New York, the new U.S. capitol city.

After finishing the brief on The District and New Chicago front, all attention moved to *the Meg*. *The Meg* was an area that consisted of parts of New York, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maine, and Vermont and the entireties of Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, and Washington, DC. Key to victory here would be the elimination of a small rebel force in northern Maine and some rag tag New Hampshire nut jobs.

Aldridge's original May 2023 grand plan had included Stephen Moore. Aldridge considered Moore, a former CIA asset, as the man he was going to reactivate for the job of splitting the rebels in two. Moore was also perfectly positioned in Andover, Oxford County, Maine. It was a western hamlet that would allow a quick concentration of Federal forces in the area. This masterstroke would provide a growing firewall that would effectively split rebel northern Maine and problematic New Hampshire.

The U.S. Army would attack from the south (Vermont and Massachusetts) and the USMC would land in Washington County, Maine, effectively pressing the rebels into Moore's

firewall. The divided rebels would be squeezed like a tube of toothpaste and destroyed.

For the Federals, things were looking very promising in early June 2023 as they kicked off their military campaign.

From the south, U.S. Army mechanized infantry units, supported by armor, took control of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in the first three days of fighting. These troops just needed to hold the three bridges crossing the Piscataqua River and wait for either the Marines or Moore. Other U.S. Army elements pushed northward into New Hampshire. A line between Keene and Manchester, New Hampshire, was as far north as the Federal forces could reach. U.S. Army movement north ground to a halt.

Complicating the Federals northward movement were the guerrilla activities of the Old Mountain Man Militia (O-triple-M) of New Hampshire. They blew up local bridges, removed highway signage, cratered highways, took down utility poles, and made mechanized vehicles useless in the mountainous chokepoints of southern New Hampshire.

In response, the U.S. Army shifted gears to invading New Hampshire from Vermont. And because of *the Meg's* earlier efforts to isolate the “red disease” in New Hampshire, the Fairlee, Vermont, to Orford, New Hampshire, Samuel Morey Memorial Bridge would have to do as their most expedient entry point.

After the Orford bombing raid on June 10th, a battalion of U.S./ Army Rangers performed the mop-up operation. They made short work of the twenty O-triple-M volunteers stationed here. Only two O-triple-M volunteers made it out alive. It was

a massacre and the U.S. Army had its beachhead into New Hampshire.

Nonetheless, the Federal highwater mark of progress had peeked in Orford, New Hampshire.

The first major Federal defeat came on June 20th, when Stephen Moore ambushed Deputy Secretary of Defense Dunn and a light platoon of Rangers at his home. Some of the Rangers were those who took part in the O-triple-M massacre in Orford.

Moore, at the time of his rebellion, was not aware of the events unfolding in the region. Nor was he aware of the Federal plans for him until he interrogated Dunn. Once he learned of their plans from Dunn, his desire to live peaceably in western Maine was over. He joined the rebels led by Oxford County Sheriff Robert Jenkins on June 21st; Sheriff Jenkins decided that, "If the Federal government wants Moore that bad, he is just the man we need."

The Federal firewall plan went up in smoke.

Moore became Jenkins's Chief Deputy and Brigadier General. As a bonus, he captured Dunn, Aldridge's messenger boy, alive.

Dunn was a treasure trove of information, he even knew the fate of the missing western Press Corps. The same Press Corps that saw Xiang Ling, leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), deliver his now infamous 2022 speech that started this worldwide mess. All were killed in a nuclear blast in North Korea, which was launched by the U.S.S. Nebraska (SSBN-739).

By June 25th, the remaining Rangers in Orford redeployed to embattled federal forces in Ohio that faced partisan raids by Otis. Their replacements? Two heavy platoons of the New York Army National Guard (NY NG). These were the same units that had been sent to Vermont early in *the Meg's* formative days to secure Vermont for *the Meg*. All were considered very loyal.

On June 30th, the NY NG swore allegiance to the rebels.

“But why?” Aldridge bellowed when he received word.

Colonel Edward Trainor, Commander of the NY NG, was a reservist. His real occupation was Sheriff of Putnam County, New York. He and Sheriff Jenkins were members of at least two policy committees formed by the nationwide Sheriff's Association. Their mutual respect and the atrocities seen by Trainor in Orford flipped the loyalty switch for him. His soldiers agreed, especially when they found the remains of little girls and their teddy bears in Orford's ruins. The NY NG disillusionment with the Federal government was complete.

Trainor, like every other American, believed that helping the populace should have been the Federal priority from the beginning. Not this banana republic horseshit. Trainor was not alone. Another respected military leader was reconsidering, too.

Two full Divisions of the U.S. Marine Corps were slowly conducting their invasion of Washington County, Maine. Disgust about their mission was setting in.

Stories in the enlisted information grapevine painted President Sirrah as commie loving whore. A President who wanted to institute a wokey society after the Devil Dogs

completed her dirty work. Work that included the killing of Americans. These Marines and their leader weren't having it.

On July 4th, USMC Brigadier General Hap "Gibraltar" Gibber, their Commander, announced their separation from Federal command. The announcement caused a brief but bloody struggle between July 4th and the 10th.

A handful of companies, some 920 Marines, did not agree with Gibber's mutiny. Force-on-force fighting ensued. Coastal Sheriff Departments in Maine and the Maine State Police aided the Federal loyalist Marines. Aldridge, realizing he had a serious shit show in progress, ordered a Navy Seal team to abduct and arrest Gibber. "Cut off the fucking head of this snake!" he ordered.

On July 8th, the Seal team executed their plan. It was different from what Aldridge ordered. They joined Gibber instead.

By July 10th, the Federal loyalist Marines, facing complete annihilation, were ready to talk. Gibber offered their commander and his old classmate, Colonel Joseph Wright, a choice. Leave unarmed and return to USN vessels just off the coast of Maine or face complete destruction. Gibber completed his offer with, "Joe, just so I am clear. I ain't takin' any prisoners, including those cops that helped you. I shoot communists, including you."

By July 15th, the last of the remaining Federal loyalist Marines and loyalist law enforcement officials left with only the clothes on their backs.

USMC General Gibber's victory was short lived. Of the 10,000 Marines under his command, he understood that many

of them wanted to be with family. Leave papers were drawn up, and 4,200 Marines started for points unknown. The remaining force became the Continental Marines.

Aldridge's plans in *the Meg* were devastated. *Moore, that son of a bitch*, Aldridge internally fumed, *fucked up my firewall. Then traitor Trainor, and now traitor Gibber. Cocksuckers—all of them.*

By the first week of August, the Federals were desperate.

As to rebel leadership in New England, all roads led to Jenkins and the other Sheriffs of northern Maine. Unlike many of the recent recruits, they had resisted *the Meg's* liberty intrusions from day one. Now, Jenkins' responsibility was to organize a proper rebel army. He was off to a good start. General Gibber had command of coastal operations and General Moore commanded his western flank. To his north, the Canadians were quiet. *We can concentrate on moving this party into Massachusetts and Vermont*, Jenkins thought.

On August 31st, Stephen's orders were to secure Orford and begin operations in Vermont. Then, when possible, enter New York. Plans were underway to fulfill the start of that mission when a new wrinkle appeared. Quiet Canada was invading. It was an unwelcome surprise. The Federals had called in the Canadians to open a northern front.

Moore found himself kicking an old bronze plaque in the basement of a Ridge House remnant when he received news of the invasion. Spanky, their fully functional WWII-era M5A1 Stuart tank, occupied the home's basement space, concealed under burned-out wooden planks and other debris. The interior

of the tank was swelteringly hot, even with all the hatches open and in the shade.

Before this all began, Spanky and her crew participated in WWII reenactment fairs. Tony Moreno, their assistant driver/bow gunner, was dead. The Road Ravagers MC had killed him and his girl months ago while escaping the EMP horrors in Connecticut enroute to the Moore Estate in Andover, ME. The rest of the crew, Stephen Moore, John Clements, and Jake “Freezie” Tertio, were alive. Old Spanky had now become a fighting command post.

Command Sergeant Major (CSM) John Clements, Spanky’s gunner, had bore-sighted the tank’s 37-mm gun to the bridge. This practice preset the aim on the main gun. Any vehicle crossing the bridge was now an easy target for a hit. Destruction was dependent on the target vehicle’s armor and that news wasn’t looking so good.

Stephen hoped that the Green Mountain Boys (GMB), Vermont’s rebel militia, were wrong with their intel, but he knew that they were normally spot on. Staff Sergeant Jake Tertio, Spanky’s driver, was the first to speak up.

“General?”

Stephen had an idea about what Jake was going to ask, but a simple “Yes” was all he could muster in response. Stephen was in some serious deep thought, although he could see Jake’s skinny 5’-10” frame weaving up to where Stephen was standing. It was hard to be mean to his future son in law, plus his Italian charm made it nearly impossible to get angry with him.

“Been readin’ up on the Canadian Army...that org chart and equipment book you gave me. <Pointing at a well-worn book> They have LAV three’s <eight-wheeled Light Armored Vehicle 3rd generation> and Leopard 2 tanks <German made-main battle tanks>. The Command Sergeant Major is a good shot, but I don’t think the 37mm can even dent a Leopard’s rear armor. Annoy—possibly, actually probably not; kill—no way. Those are serious tanks. Even those 25-mm chain guns on the LAVs would chew through ole’ Spanky here,” Jake said as he patted the exposed turret facing, then pointed toward the bridge. Even hull down, Spanky was outgunned and vulnerable.

Stephen knew he was correct and nodded his head in agreement.

Clements grunted, “Suhr, how sure are you about this intel?” Clements, a U.S. Army retiree, would often play on words, like sir with “suhr.” John always reminded Stephen of a black drill sergeant. Fuck with him at your own demise. That was John Clements: big, black, wisdom to match his size, and a hell of a mean fighter. He also happened to be Stephen’s closest friend. Brothers, if one was to ask them.

Stephen appreciated John’s pivoting the subject from survivability to planning, saying, “Not sure. I expected something from the south, coming up I-91. Like Aldridge’s U.S. Army. Not the damn Canadians coming from the north. I’m trying to have Major Adcock’s techies either reach Sheriff Jenkins for added info or hear some kind of other radio chatter. So far...nothing. That means we wait for Major Kolb. He is with the GMB, so if the Canadian army is coming here, Kolb

will let us know.” Then Stephen looked at Tertio and continued, “We have one job here, to stop whatever comes onto the bridge’s decking. Need to cause a roadblock. If it gets hairy, you <pointing at Jake> are to hightail the fuck out of here.”

Jake nodded but both he and Clements knew that Stephen was not one to simply hope. He had developed his redoubt plan—hold the bridge, destroy it if necessary. The larger operations completely depended on the information he needed from Kolb and whatever the Canadians decided to do next. Until then, Stephen would make sure Colonel Trainor’s people were ready.

Clements and Jake watched Stephen’s six-foot frame walk toward Trainor’s command bunker. They would spend the next 48-hours moving positions up from the south of Orford to meet and prepare for the new threat, a Canadian invasion.

Clever Aldridge, Stephen thought, but desperate. Desperate or not, we need to shut down Canada’s move—hard.

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“Sierra 1 to 766” was the faint radio message that arrived over Spanky’s radio a few days later. CSM Clements was napping on Spanky’s shaded back deck, booted feet dangling off the side, when he heard the call. Scrambling for the mike he answered, “Go for 766 <Moore’s call sign>, this is Mudslide.” Clements, always one to break balls, was ordered by Stephen to create a radio call sign. Stephen figured he would pick a random number or a tough guy name. Nope. Not John

Clements. Fucking “mudslide” was his answer. Then he defended his call sign as both racially and factually correct. “Mudslide” it was.

What John didn’t say was that a mudslide was his dead wife’s favorite drink. John was still coping with Melissa and their unborn child’s deaths last year due to a gunfight started by the Road Ravagers MC at a New Hampshire Welcome Center.

“Roger Mudslide, prepare to copy,” Kolb broadcast.

“Go,” Clements responded as soon as he had his pad ready.

“Four Leopard 2 tanks, eight LAV IIIs, four of the LAVs are Kodiaks *<with the M242 Bushmaster 25-mm autocannon, crew of three>*, three others are ISCs *<armored personnel carrier config, designed to carry seven soldiers>* and the last one is a CPV *<command vehicle, designed to carry six soldiers>*, a full complement of personnel and equipment. Currently on I-91, in Bradford (VT). Stopped now. Likely to arrive tomorrow. Armor traveling in the middle, forward two Kodiaks, two ISC. Remaining taking up the rear. We are heading to position two-three-two. Channel Foxtrot-Niner-Fore (changing radio stations code). Copy?” Position 2-3-2 was the Palisades that overlooked Fairlee, VT, from the west. It was a near perfect perch for Kolb’s snipers.

Clements responded, Kolb affirmed, and then Clements asked, “Anything else behind them?”

“Negative.” And Kolb was gone. He would remain radio silent until he reached his next destination.

Clements was gaining serious respect for Kolb. He was a natural in the field. The GMB loved him. Many of Kolb's future sniper teams would come from Vermont and this group.

Stephen walked up to the tank just as Clements hung the radio mike up inside Spanky. "Your timing is impeccable, General." John began.

Stephen said, "I heard you talking and figured if it woke you up, it had to be good."

Clements went about describing Kolb's radio message. "Appears the GMB was right about the force size. One thing is certain, those Leopard 2 motherfuckers are going to be tough. They need to go first," John advised. He knew that the odds would only fall in their favor if they took the Canadians by surprise and took out those tanks.

Stephen answered, "Agreed. What else?"

"Twenty-one, more or less, infantry, plus the Kodiaks. Seems like a pretty light invasion force." John paused and added, "Kolb says nothing behind them. Odd. I don't like fucking odd." Whenever Command Sergeant Major John Clements used words like "odd," Stephen knew that he was drawing on his decades in the U.S. Army. He also knew that John referred to some of America's worst moments, like the Afghanistan withdrawal, as "odd with a heavy dose of dishonor." It was *the* event that sped along his honorable retirement from service.

Stephen decided to offer some optimism. "It is better that the attack is coming from the north and not the south. Just north of here, the rail, Route 5, and I-91 collapse into one another. It's nice and close and provides a clear top-down killing zone

for the three Javelin CLUs <*Command Launch Unit—a necessary targeting module for the Javelin that interfaces with a loaded missile tube.*> we have. Adcock’s squad of rocket nerds are holing up on the edge of a wood line on our side of the river, around that estuary north of us. He knows the Leopards are priority number one, and then the 25-mm armed Kodiaks. It’s in Adcock’s hands, John.”

The Lockheed Martin Javelin CLUs were courtesy of the Rangers they ambushed at the Moore Estate in June. They ended up collecting three Javelin CLUs along with 14 rockets. Stephen declared their capture as divine providence. Today’s circumstances certainly affirmed that statement.

John figured that they would get off six rockets. In John’s mind THAT would be divine providence. He hoped they could fire two from each of the three-man teams BEFORE their discovery. *If they could do that successfully, the Canadians would be done for*, John speculated. *Otherwise, well—they were done for*. Adcock’s teams were all still very new at this, even with the in-depth training by CSM Clements on Javelin operation.

John finally agreed. “It is a good choke point. I concur, that’s the place to ambush these invaders. Adcock’s crews should have three off in quick order. If so, we should be good with two-thirds of this operation.”

Stephen responded, “Once the first three are fired off, Adcock has his best crew focusing on the fourth tank, while the other two hit LAVs in the rear column. Gunna be tight. That leaves the lead element.”

“What’s the plan for that, General?” Jake, who was listening, asked.

Stephen paused a few seconds, and then spoke about the part of the plan that had everyone on edge. “The 37-mm on Spanky and a few disposable LAWs <*Light Anti-Armor Weapon, a 66-mm high explosive anti-tank (HEAT) unguided direct fire weapon*> are all we have down here. The NY National Guard group brought a few dozen LAWs when they were deployed to this area.”

John laughed a bit before answering, “M72 LAW rockets. Good Christ. Tits on a bull...there is a reason why the Guard got them, Stephen.” Clements, like a lot of guys in the service, was not overly impressed with the throwaway rocket launcher. He also viewed the Guard as a place where the Regular Army dumped its worthless equipment.

Stephen nodded and said, “We just need to shut the Kodiak LAVs down. I don’t give a shit if we blow one tire off at a time.”

“You’ll give more than a shit if those turrets stay operational,” John countered.

Stephen answered sharply, “If we have to fire all those little rockets at what remains, we will, repeat, will, stop these fuckers. Our goal is to make the Canadians regret ever venturing into America. We’ll finalize things once we hear back from Kolb. Until then, this is the plan.”

“Roger that,” John responded, “It’s as good as a plan as any. Better than what we had to do a few months ago at the estate.”

With that, they waited for Kolb’s report.

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Major David Kolb's morning was not starting off well. Most of the Canadian contingent had stopped near a Drive-In Theater on US Route 5, just north of Fairlee, VT. A team of men were working on the starboard side of one of the Leopard 2 tanks parked inside the Drive-In. The remaining operational tanks stood guard.

One French-speaking member of the GMBs, who had secreted himself close to the Canadian positions, thought he heard them yelling about a field-repairable track problem. It explained their overall slow movement south.

The lead section of the column continued down I-91, and then split into two parts. One Kodiak and the two ISC configured LAV 3s began to make their way up the top of the Palisades where Kolb had positioned himself. A power line path, which cut directly behind his position, put his back against the cliffs over Fairlee. The remaining Kodiak made its way south down I-91 in tandem with the ascending team. It was clear the Canadians also saw the value of the Palisades (a cliff formation west of Fairlee, VT). This was a pending encirclement disaster for Kolb and unexpected.

All these facts were passed on to General Moore, Colonel Trainor and, Major Adcock over a silent Meshtastic messaging system (an encrypted point-to-point texting system using a 915 MHz radio bandwidth). When Kolb finished his report, Adcock didn't need direction. He messaged back, "Got it, we will take care of those tanks. As soon as we reposition, we will

shoot.” He looked at the maps and added, “Give me a few hours, no more than four.” And he was off.

Adcock spent the next three hours moving around the back side of a small ridge that overlooked the Drive-In from the New Hampshire side of the Connecticut River. Finally positioned in, Adcock had each of his three teams locked into one of the three working tanks. “Flatten that rear-most working tank first,” Adcock directed position number 1. “They’re all static, so lock on, fire when position three fires.” The team nodded in agreement as he continued, “Forget the one with the track off. After your primary target is destroyed, engage the cannon armed eight-wheelers <Kodiaks>. Work rear to front.”

Adcock gave similar orders to position number two, providing a different Leopard target and secondary target. He moved to position number three, instructed the crew, and said, “You two are kicking this ambush off. Lock onto that lead tank’s position. I’ll direct the second.”

Adcock looked through his binoculars from position number three. One Kodiak was in the Theater complex, a second just north of the Drive-In, and a third Kodiak was on I-91 near Kolb’s position. Adcock could also see the fourth Kodiak and troop carriers ascending the power line trail, and then they moved out of sight. *Kolb is running out of time*, Adcock thought.

For all the tactical smarts of the lead element cleaning off the ridge, Adcock thought the group in the Drive-In were a bunch of boobs. The broken Leopard had its crew working feverishly to make the needed repairs. A Kodiak was parked nearby. Two of the still-operational tanks were posted on

Route 5 north / south and the last was in a small farm field closer to the river. They were oblivious to any real threat. It was a perfect killing zone for the Javelin system.

Just before Adcock's position three team fired their Javelin, shots began to ring out on the Palisades' south ridge. A team of Green Mountain Boys were under fire from Canadian infantry units moving to take control of the high ground. Adcock could see soldiers in the Drive-In looking in that direction when the 25-mm cannon on the Kodiak, parked on I-91, opened up. Trees, rocks, and ricocheting tracers lit up the north ridge line where two, three-man fire teams of Green Mountain Boys hunkered down. *Six men are not going to hold up to that firepower long*, Adcock thought. *We need to strike now*. He then told his team, "Ready when you are, gents..."

He barely said "gents" when position number three fired. Two, then one followed suit. Adcock lifted his binoculars to watch.

Fire and forget, the Javelin has two modes—direct fire and top-side attack. The latter was the choice for anti-tank operations, causing the missile to arc up in the air and then strike down onto the weak topside turret armor. The first Javelin hit the Leopard sitting south of the Drive-In. It was a solid hit on the turret's flat top. The enormous tank appeared to press into the pavement, and then bounced upwards like a toy, ejecting the entire turret into the ground beside the port side track. Similar hits took out the other two working tanks.

Adcock could hear his teams changing out missile tubes as he continued to view the combat field. He could see a rear-guard Kodiak start to spin its turret in their general direction.

Back at the bridge, before the shooting began, Stephen climbed into the commander's spot inside Spanky's right side turret hatch. Jake had already fired up Spanky and was backing out of the basement. Comms connected; Stephen began giving orders to the crew. "Sounds like Adcock found his marks. Take us around the east side road of Lake Morey <west of *The Palisades*>. We should pop out behind them on the power line trail. Then we can support Kolb on the ridge. Hustle her, Jake!"

Spanky, along with a company of NY NG infantry soldiers, crossed into Vermont. Most of the guardsmen scrambled up the south side power line pathway, joining Major Kolb. The remaining guard members would cover the highway approach, complete with the LAWs. Spanky trundled by the ground troops and headed to the east side of Lake Morey.

Just as the group reached Main Street in Fairlee, VT, Adcock's second set of Javelin missiles began hitting their targets. While the devastation on the three Leopard tanks was amazing, the damage to the LAVs was clearly overkill.

The three Kodiaks were nearly turned inside out. The northernmost one that had taken interest in Adcock's position went first, followed by the lone Kodiak on I-91, and, finally, the Kodiak parked near the broken Leopard inside the Drive-In complex.

Adcock broadcast that he did not have eyes on the remaining Kodiak, noting that it was somewhere on the powerline road, moving up the Palisades out of view. Other vehicle targets at the Drive-In remained hidden behind buildings.

John, who sat with Stephen in Spanky's turret, instinctively looked at Stephen to see if he should leave the AP (armor piercing) loaded or change out to HE (high explosive). Stephen motioned for him to leave what he had in the pipe. John knew exactly why; there was only one serious threat left for Spanky. It was the single Kodiak still in the fight, now crawling its way up the powerline trail. That Kodiak would be priority one for destruction.

Inside the Canadian-held Drive-In compound, chaos reigned. The commander, Lieutenant Colonel Jerome Bouchée, was stunned. *Where are the Americans we were supposed to meet here?* the Canadian commander thought. He had one mission, to support American units in capturing the bridge. His unit's goal was to control the Palisades ridgeline overlooking the bridge and the town of Fairlee, VT, then wait. What he encountered was something completely different. It was a slaughter of his Quebecois force by well-entrenched rebel forces with Javelins. Rebel strength and ability were two serious details omitted by the United States Government.

Man and machine burned around Bouchée's command LAV, which was concealed behind a building. The tank crew, working on the remaining Leopard, died from the Kodiak's explosive destruction just 20 meters away from him. Bouchée looked to his left and north up Route 5. The remaining ISC LAV was hiding behind a small house. The burning Leopard tank obscured his vision further north. He deployed his infantry to create a defensive perimeter. *A second column was due in three weeks—they could hold. Defensive!* Bouchée steamed inside, looking south to the Palisades and the burning wreck of

another Kodiak. Then he heard what he thought was the squealing of tracks, nothing like a Leopard's.

Bouchée was hearing Spanky's ancient WWII- era tracks, working off the rust from sitting a month in a wet basement on the Ridge. The racket was offset by Jake, who was expertly cutting through a small opening in the trees with quick precision. Spanky emerged on the same power line access road that the eight-wheeled Kodiak had passed minutes ago. Seventy-five meters up the hill, John quartered the rear end of the Kodiak in his 37mm gun sight.

The Kodiak was completely unaware of the relic tank at its rear.

This was a chip shot for him. The 37-mm AP round ripped through the rear of the firing Kodiak. Stephen could see through his open hatch that the Kodiak was done; the 37-mm easily penetrated the rear armor. Its crew inside were dead.

Stephen opened up with the top side M1919 30-06 caliber machine gun, yelling into the intercom as he fired, "John, save the transports. Aim at infantry with HE, co-ax everything else!"

John looked at Stephen as he grabbed for an HE round. It was quite a sight, Stephen yelling orders while firing the M1919 at the Canadian infantry. Hot ejected brass rained down inside the tank, bouncing off Stephen's booted feet.

John loaded Spanky's main gun, then opened fire with the co-axial machine gun *<an internal machine gun in-line with the turret's main gun>*, simultaneously firing a blind HE round into the wood line where some Canadian infantry had gathered.

Hands went up in the air. The action on the Palisades was over. Spanky hadn't even received one shot from Canadian fire.

Bouchée was screaming into his radio when Stephen grabbed the handset in a captured ISC LAV. Major Kolb and the NY NG placed the eleven prisoners in a neat space close by. Bouchée was speaking French and Stephen had no idea what he was saying. Stephen looked at the prisoners and asked, "Who the fuck speaks frog?" All hands went up. This was a Quebec unit. Stephen pointed to the man he thought wore the highest rank and called him over. Kolb followed.

"He clean?" Stephen asked Kolb.

Kolb nodded.

"Untie him." Stephen ordered. As Kolb untied the Canadian captain, Stephen asked what Bouchée was saying.

The captain then said, "He wants us to secure the high ground above that patch my commander currently occupies. He also wants a Kodiak to provide suppressing fire on a clearing across the river. Javelins? No?"

"Javelins, oui," Stephen responded with a smile. "Oui, oui."

The Canadian captain was not amused, sneering his nose.

"Your commander understands English?" Stephen asked.

The captain fired back, "He does. Unlike you, we speak two languages."

"Wonderful. Let's see if he understands surrender."

By early evening, Stephen coordinated with Adcock to ensure his Javelin teams would not shoot at the next LAVs they

saw. They currently owned two and Stephen wanted the other two. Spanky was in command of the battlefield now.

Loading up NY NG members in the captured ISC LAVs, they moved to the small ridge line, overlooking the Drive-In. The remaining Canadians were now surrounded.

Bouchée was about to reprimand his subordinate for recklessly exposing the LAVs to Javelin attack when Stephen spoke into the microphone.

“I want to discuss your terms of surrender, Colonel.”

Bouchée looked at his sergeant and said, “C’est quoi ce bordel!? <What the fuck?>” The wounded sergeant shrugged his shoulders. Bouchée asked in English, “Who is this?”

The conversation was brief. The surrender was unconditional. The Canadian commander was to leave all his equipment, save pistols for his officers. Their northbound retreat would be in an assortment of abandoned cars with stale gas and a flatbed loaded with their dead. All were released with a stern warning...return and no prisoners will be taken!

15 JULY 2053 The Moore Estate Andover, Maine

“The Canadian Army?!” Captain Edward Tooley exclaimed. “Whoa, General Adcock just glossed over this one. Seems to explain the armistice with Ontario we have today.” Then he paused, “Or does it? And how did Quebec become so darn friendly with us?” Tooley was genuinely excited. He knew that his historical recording of New England Continental actions was about to get even more interesting.

Ever since his arrival in February 2053, Tooley had learned that the events between the formation of the Megalopolis East Government, affectionately called “*the Meg*,” in 2022 and the attack on the Moore residence were crazy enough. *Now the Canadians!* Tooley thought. Then he had a light-bulb moment, *This is the start...of what became the Continental Army.*

General Moore knew Tooley would enjoy that story, plus he knew that General Adcock would not toot his own horn. Funny wise ass, yes; braggart, no. “Jeffrey saved our bacon that day,” Stephen added. Stephen was happy to sing Adcock’s praise. Stephen figured he would put a bow on this package, “Assistant Secretary of Defense Dunn, the guy I gave over to Sheriff Jenkins, warned us that President Sirrah and Prime Minister Castreau might align. Even he didn’t think America would stoop to having Canadians venture into our land. Ole’ Dunn was an asshole but that kinda pissed him off when we told him. Anyway, that was the last Canadian army that came across the border by land. By air, well, that was just getting warmed up.”

“Air?” Tooley injected.

“Our air units had made it abundantly clear that **no bombing** was to take place in the CONUS (CONTinental United States). The Canadian Air Force did not believe it applied to their invitation by the U.S. President. It wasn’t the Battle of Britain, but our boys and girls annihilated them. The official Canadian Air Force ceased to exist by October 2023. The Federal U.S. Air Force didn’t help them one iota—they got the fucking memo and most of our pilots were grizzled vets with

“William Tell” tags on their jets. So, the Canadians got shot out of the damn sky.”

Tooley didn’t know what “William Tell tags” meant, so he asked.

“Old U.S. Air Force air-to-air combat competition. No slouches there. If you see a tail wing with an apple with an arrow through it...you found a bad ass that flies that jet. Anyway, enough blowing deserved smoke up the pilots’ asses. That same month we bombed the shit out of their Parliament building complex. By November 2023, I was in Derby Line, VT, on the Canadian border, meeting with Prime Minister Castreau on behalf of Sheriff Jenkins.”

Tooley was beside himself now, “You met with Castreau? *The* Castreau?!” He also wanted to ask what the Battle of Britain was but decided to look the subject up later. Bad enough he asked about William Tell tags.

“I did. Don’t be so amazed. He was a communist sympathizing pussy. Feel free to print that.”

Tooley did just that.

CHAPTER 11:
DENIED
15 MARCH 2024, OVER BOSTON

The M61A1 six-barrel 20-mm Gatling gun affixed left of the cockpit on every F-16 pours out about 100 rounds per second. A stock F-16 can only carry enough ammunition for about a five-second burp. These statistics were not lost on the Moaning Mona crew as they took nasty broadside hits from a pair of F-16s. Seventy of the fired rounds hit their mark.

Major Franky “Vienna” Peters, the pilot of Moaning Mona, was on the internal comms, trying to assess the status of the crew. The line was dead, a condition shared by engines three and four on the starboard wing. Both were on fire. The co-pilot feverishly worked a series of buttons to shut down various systems and control the fire. Peters flipped to cockpit communications, allowing direct communications with his co-pilot.

“We have to take her down...can we get some of these things to shut off?” Major Peters spoke calmly, like he was upset at a low battery smoke detector alarm. “Fire alarm...no shit Sherlock,” he muttered to himself over the open mike, aggravated by what he considered an unnecessary distraction. All his attention was on keeping the bird from spinning out of control, using his rudder, and reducing power to engines one and two. Controls were sluggish, nearly a dead stick.

Captain Mary “Ice Queen” Roberts, Major Peters’ co-pilot, blurted back, “A chunk of the wing near three and four is gone.” Captain Roberts was hoping the wing wouldn’t buckle before they could land. *This is fucking doable*, she thought to herself. “Can we make old Pease?” she asked. Pease being the old Air Force Base, renamed Portsmouth International Airport in New Hampshire.

“Negative, Ice Queen,” was his quick reply.

She knew that if he said “negative” it was actually “no damn way.” Moaning Mona was going down.

After they delivered their mission payload on Boston’s Logan International Airport, their escape route was to hug the coast back to Pease. A pair of Federal F-16s ended that idea. All they could do now is try and set the plane down.

Captain Roberts looked out the window, she could see the Eastern Point Lighthouse, just south of Gloucester, MA. Their altitude was slipping away quickly. “We’d be better off landing her in the water, Vienna,” said the co-pilot. She could see that he was doing everything he could to keep the plane from ripping apart.

“Go aft, tell the crew to prepare for a water landing...Ipswich Bay. I’m losing oil pressure in number 1. Fucking bastards, shooting ole’ Mona...” More alarms sounded.

Captain Roberts’ comm set was disconnected for the short walk back into the belly of the aircraft. Opening the access door, she was greeted by smoke and wind. She could see chunks of the aircraft’s skin missing, allowing wind inside the massive cavity. The area was a wreck and she wondered how

many of the seven-member crew were still alive. She saw one, working on a flight crew member who lost his left leg. She watched as he professionally applied a tourniquet and looked up at her.

Senior Airman Eli Kolb, a weapons system operator on Moaning Mona, was blood soaked. He had watched as the 20-mm rounds tore through the main body of the aircraft, shredding everything human- and machine-related. Eli was only a few feet away from the combat systems officer when she was nearly torn in half by a 20-mm round. Her body emptied its contents all over the floor and onto him. Captain Roberts approached Eli.

“Airman!” Eli looked up at Roberts. “Prepare any survivors for a water landing. Ipswich Bay!” Eli nodded his understanding. The plane was making strange creaking sounds. The noise inside was deafening. *This thing is going to rip apart*, she thought.

Eli nodded his understanding when another series of rounds hit the front of the aircraft. Both stumbled to the cockpit.

Not done with his prey, a Federal F-16 made another pass by Moaning Mona, firing a quick burst at the cockpit before being shot out of the sky by a Continental F-15. Major Peters was struck in the femoral artery by a piece of aircraft metal pushed into his leg by a passing 20-mm round. Captain Roberts tried to plug into comms but it was destroyed.

“Take mine!” Peters yelled, “It works!”

“Ghostrider Moaning Mona to Tower, this is Ice Queen, mayday mayday, four souls on board, two in need of

immediate medical attention, Ipswich Bay...” Captain Roberts relayed to Pease. Moaning Mona moved deeper into the Bay.

She received a weak parroting reply, “Copy Moaning Mona, copy your mayday, four souls. Ipswich Bay.” As she looked out the window past Major Peters, she saw a Continental F-15 pull alongside. His wingman circled nearby.

“Bullfrog to Ice Queen, we ain’t leaving you. They have nothing left in the air, and you ruined their airport. Me and Soothsayer will stay until relieved.” Bullfrog, the pilot of the F-15, said in a Texan accent, giving a thumbs-up before accelerating ahead.

Their stricken plane had cleared Babson Point by only 100 feet and the water was coming close. Eli slipped his way to the rear of the aircraft to find the wounded airman. He was dead. Looking through a hole in the floor, Eli saw the water was close enough that he could make out wave details. *I need to strap in*, he thought as he found a crash seat in the rear of the plane. Then he prayed to God and Jesus Christ to look after him, his dad, and his brother.

About a half mile offshore, Moaning Mona touched the water.

At first, Eli believed that it would be a smooth glide over the water. Those thoughts ended when the first wave crashed into the cockpit, breaking the cockpit glass, and knocking Roberts unconscious. Peters was dead, killed by the same metal that had cut his leg and had now pushed into his chest cavity.

Moaning Mona then made a violent clockwise turn that ripped the starboard wing off, creating a large open gash on the

plane's side. Then, as quickly as the carnival ride started, it was over.

Ice-cold water filled the compartment at a furious rate. Eli could hear the plane creaking just before it split in two behind the wings, near the 105mm howitzer. He unbuckled and pulled the small life raft kit near him. The combination of metal ripping apart and rushing icy water stunned Eli as he tried to figure out an escape plan.

Captain Roberts' first gulp of ice-cold saltwater snapped her back to consciousness. The plane was sinking, fast. The waves were choppy, eagerly pushing the plane's bulk downward. *I gotta get out of this plane*, she thought, then saw her escape path through a gaping hole where cockpit glass had been. The cockpit continued to fill with water, activating her automatic life vest. "Son of a bitch!" she yelled as she squeezed through the broken glass opening. Her vest began to hiss where the jagged glass cut a small hole. Her forehead ached.

Popping above the waterline like a cork, she saw the tail section of the stricken plane. It was an odd sight. Roberts could see clearly into the rear cavity of the plane and looked for potential survivors.

Through the mist of the crashing waves, she could see movement. *Good Christ*, she thought, *that kid is still alive*. She could see Eli sloshing through the frigid water inside the sinking tail section to gather items, including what looked like a bright yellow survival kit.

Captain Roberts swam toward his location, her ripped vest leaking the CO₂ gas she was trying to hold in with her left hand. Then she heard fighter jets. When she looked up, she saw the

F-15s flying low over her location, wagging their wings for reassurance. She could see three more F-15s inbound from the north. *These guys are great*, she thought. In that moment of relief, which lasted only a couple seconds, she looked back to the tail section remains of Mona. As quickly as she saw it, Moaning Mona sank from view. “AIRMAN!!” she yelled and feverishly scanned the waves for any signs of the brave young man.

Some 50 meters away, Captain Roberts saw Eli climbing onto an inflated raft. Both saw each other at the same time. Eli waved her over as he looked for a way to paddle to her.

Meeting in the choppy icy waters of Ipswich Bay, Eli grabbed an exhausted Roberts by her collar and hoisted her aboard. Cold and wounded, the two fell onto the raft exhausted. Eli’s first words to Captain Roberts, “Cap, you have a nasty gash on your forehead. Looks like your modeling career is done.”

“Thank you,” she responded, smiling at him. Roberts could taste her own blood. Eli was already opening a sealed bandage package when they heard the horn blast of a large ship. The shivering pair both looked up, Roberts cursed at the burning in her eyes.

“U.S. Navy. Terrific,” Roberts said sarcastically, and then sank back into the raft. She privately wondered if they still hang people from the yardarm for treason.

15 MARCH 2024, ANDOVER, MAINE

The news concerning Moaning Mona’s final fate quickly made its way around the command center. General Gibber was

already barking orders to his Continental Marines over the radio, “Get a landing craft out to there. Recover those survivors.”

A young Marine captain broke the unwelcome news, “General, no way we can go out, the seas are rough, too rough, but that isn’t the only thing. Our F-15 flyovers tell us that the USS Forrest Sherman is flying a white flag, no country ensign, sir. F-15s are still buzzing the ship and the destroyer captain complained they were taking off his paint. He also complained that they are interfering with the rescue operation of our survivors in the raft.”

“White flag, you say?”

“Seven white flags to be exact, General. Seems they didn’t want us to miss it.”

“Interesting. We have contact with this USS Forest Sherman?” Gibber asked.

“Yes, sir. They are asking for a friendly rebel port, to deliver the survivors,” the captain answered quickly.

Saluting, their conversation ended as Sheriff Jenkins walked up and said, “Otis told us that Colonel Waller has what’s left of the Atlantic Navy Fleet. Maybe them?”

“Only one way to truly find out,” Gibber answered, then called for the captain again.

“General,” the aide-de-camp answered.

“Direct them to,” looking at the harbor map of Portland, ME, “Ocean Gateway Pier, in Portland, Maine. We will honor their white flags. Kindly tell the pilots not to antagonize that ship any further but have a pair of F-15s ready to blow them out of the water. Just in case. While on that subject, get me our

SEAL team leader. Let's have a plan to kill everyone on that ship when it docks...just in case."

"Sir!" And the captain was off.

Gibber then turned to Sheriff Jenkins. "We need Moore back here. I'm not sure which Navy this is yet. One loves me. The other will hang me. As for you, one never sends the principal—that would be you Sheriff—into the fray. Moore is the guy."

15 MARCH 2024, HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

"Mr. Johnson to Tower, permission to land." The pilot radioed Capital City Airport (near Harrisburg, PA) control tower. Mr. Johnson was the Ghost rider assigned to Moore and Otis.

"Roger, Mr. Johnson, you are cleared to land. Runway Two - Six."

"Copy, Runway Two - Six."

Moore and Otis listened to the tower in their Humvee when Moore broke the silence, "I wonder if all the birds came back safe like ours?"

"Hope so, Stephen. Dangerous day. Dangerous outcomes usually." Otis responded.

No one expected Mr. Johnson to return home. Unlike Heavy Cabbage, which had more targets but significantly less danger; and Moaning Mona, which had only a few targets and copious fighter protection. Mr. Johnson was hitting one target deep in Federal territory without fighter protection.

Kalamazoo, MI, was a ferrying point between The District and New Chicago. All truck, rail, and short flight traffic traversed and converged through Kalamazoo. Mr. Johnson

would layover in Lexington, KY, and make tracks due north to Kalamazoo and unload every round he had onboard there. The devastation in Kalamazoo would prove to be frightful.

The Kalamazoo/Battle Creek Airport and Kellogg Field were thoroughly cratered and when Mr. Johnson spied multiple supply planes on their respective tarmacs, he destroyed those too. Bridged sections of I-94 were ruined, special preference was given for concrete bridges that overpassed railway lines. Anything that looked like a military base was destroyed. The 20 minutes of mayhem caused fires and devastation that would set back the Federals for months, if not years.

The pilots of Mr. Johnson, Major Kenny “Lunatic” Till, and his co-pilot, Captain Roger “Heckler” Moriarty, were the perfect pair to pull this mission off. Not so much because of what they needed to do but rather how they would get home after the mission. Both were nearly booted from the U.S. Air Force because of reckless flying.

This pair’s plan for a safe return home was to fake a crash in a farm field southeast of Kalamazoo. The trickery was highlighted by a burst of anti-missile flares for enemy observers on the ground to see. The pilots would then pull out of the “crash” dive and buzz home at tree top level with the big plane.

This would likely still get them blown out of the sky but Lunatic was convinced it would work. Heckler agreed and the pair’s plan was formed. Of the three missions, Lunatic and Heckler had the easiest time finding volunteers. Reckless or not, they had a reputation for getting home.

As Mr. Johnson stopped on the hot pad designated for a quick refueling, Major Till exited the parked Ghost rider and made a beeline toward Generals Otis and Moore. Saluting the two Generals he started with, “Only damage may be some pine bow scratches on the belly. I have some news from Heavy Cabbage, who told me about Moaning Mona’s fate.”

Stephen began by congratulating Major Till on his mission success and said, “We know Heavy Cabbage got home. What about Moaning Mona?”

“Yes, sir,” Till started, “She went down just off the coast. F-16’s took her out. Some crew made it. Two, maybe one. All chatter, sirs. Not completely sure. Whoever the lucky bastards were, they were picked up by a Navy frigate. Ole’ Vienna is a solid pilot and Ice Queen, well, it’s self-defining. If anyone survived, it was their skill set that saved them.”

Moore’s face flushed and before he could cough out his next sentence, Otis said, “Stephen, we’re done. Screw the chopper. Go home with Major Till. I’ll get to Kolb and let him know. I need to get there anyway with some rail assets. We’ll have a radio link up by the time you get solid news.”

Stephen Moore was having a moment. His thoughts flashed back to the assault on his property back in June 2023, barely eight months ago. Eli Kolb held down the barn with his MP5 and a hay loft fort made of steel plate. “Can I go, General?” Eli asked Moore just a few weeks ago. The kid was a natural mechanic. “Denied” was Stephen’s answer. Colonel Falkry reminded Stephen that they needed a good, qualified crew and volunteers were scarce. And, according to Falkry, “Eli is good with armaments, a natural mechanic. We could use a good

flight crew member on that crew.” Then came the words Stephen now regretted, “Fine, he can go. Approved.” Senior Airman Eli Kolb saluted and was assigned to Moaning Mona because he thought that was a cool name for a plane.

Stephen snapped back to the present, “Major Till, permission to hitch a ride with you.”

It wasn’t really an ask.

15 MARCH 2024, OFFUTT AFB, NEBRASKA

Aldridge, assuming his new role of referee, was no longer the punching bag he was just a few weeks ago. Now he was calling balls and strikes. The meeting with his Joint Chiefs began with, “Okay folks, anyone care to tell me how in the hell we didn’t intercept these Ghostriders? They’re like flying boxes. Is anyone watching radar?”

Joint Chiefs Chairman General Christine Filiccio answered, “Few points. One. We did receive an answer from the rebels. They answered, in unison, that they would reply by the 19th. We fully expect that after this little display of rebellion an affirmative reply is likely.”

Aldridge interrupted, “Little display of rebellion!” Emphasizing the sentence in air quotes. “So, you are going to simply wait until tomorrow? For a damn reply?”

Filiccio didn’t miss a beat. “In essence, yes. Our position has not changed, Mr. Secretary. We need this ceasefire to regroup. They have quite literally eliminated any air presence east of the Pennsylvania / Ohio state line. We have no major air assets south of Kentucky either. It appears their leadership understands how to create a box. Ground assets in New York

City are engaged in street combat with gangs. We are leaving New York City now that we have removed the gold at 33 Liberty Street over to our staging area at LaGuardia. No reason to hold New York City. Besides it being a logistical drain, there is nothing there but fighting gangs AND these New England rebels. We need the ceasefire to get them out. As for Boston, a ground ceasefire is our only hope if we want to keep a toehold in New England. So, we need to wait.”

Aldridge, for one of the few times in his life, was at a loss for words.

Filiccio wasn't in a mood to wait, continuing: “Point two. The rebels managed to capture several Tomahawks. They destroyed Logan Airport (Boston). Thus, our New York City assets are going to Chicago. The Boston air battle cost the rebels a dozen fighters, a Ghost rider, and for us, we lost our F-16s in Boston. Boston will have no air cover. Another reason we need the ceasefire.”

The briefing went on for two hours. Filiccio and her attending generals pointed out the destruction leveled on the Federals by the rebel Ghost riders. By the end, Feliccio made her final recommendation. “Mr. Secretary. I think it's time the President and command leave Offutt and move to Cheyenne Mountain.”

“Why?” Aldridge asked.

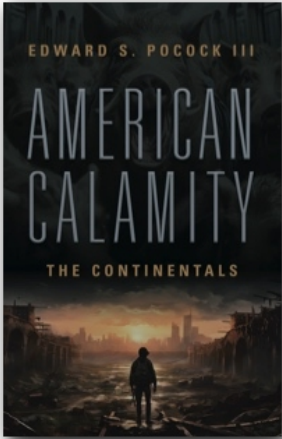
“You asked about flying bricks earlier and our perceived sleepiness in radar observations.”

“I did. It's a reasonable question, General.”

“Mr. Secretary, with all respect, sir. We don't have any damn radar. Haven't had radar since the EMPs hit us.” This

statement caused Feliccio to internally muse, *he is that out of touch*. “Satellite dependability is gone. We lose more every day. Today’s events confirm our vulnerability and, more importantly, the President’s vulnerability to what is a unifying rebel army.”

By 2300 hours (11 p.m.), Aldridge was briefing the President. Offutt would no longer be the command center; the President and her staff would need to move.



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